

# Virginia Gordon: Developing Academic Advisors Through Theory-Based Intentional Training

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*Virginia Gordon contributed considerable and comprehensive work in the field of academic advising, including writings on topics ranging from the history of academic advising to her groundbreaking research on the undecided student population. Her model for training and developing new academic advisors stood out as exemplary. This article focuses on Gordon's theory-based, intentional approach to the training and development of new academic advisors in what was then University College at The Ohio State University and the influence she had on those she trained and taught.*

[doi:10.12930/NACADA-19-011]

KEY WORDS: advisor training, undecided students, professional development

Virginia Gordon contributed to the literature on academic advising in significant ways. Her work as a practitioner and researcher in academic advising focused on the importance of providing effective training and development programs for academic advisors to meet the needs of changing student populations. I had the opportunity to work under Virginia as my supervisor while doing graduate studies at The Ohio State University and learned firsthand how to advise students from someone who truly understood students and how to help them succeed. This article traces her work of developing and delivering training programs for academic advisors in the former University College at Ohio State.

## The Need for Academic Advisor Training and Development

As early as 1984, Virginia Gordon was keenly aware of academic advisors' need for training in order to meet the needs of a changing student population amid increasing and varied curricular opportunities:

Advising was once viewed by many as a simple exchange of procedural information between advisor and students. While this personal contact is still at the heart of the process, the types of students and the

complexity and breadth of information have changed. (Gordon, 1984, p. 440)

For Gordon, "the multidimensional nature of advising is reflected in the many types of individuals it serves and the diversity of its functions. This makes the need for comprehensive and ongoing staff development essential" (1984, p. 440).

Gordon's *Handbook of Academic Advising* (1992) built an argument for advisor training on the foundation of the Standards for Academic Advising promulgated by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The CAS advising standards emphasize the importance of academic advising in college students' persistence and success: "A crucial component of the college experience, academic advising encourages students to cultivate meaning in their lives, make significant decisions about their futures, and access institutional resources" (CAS, 2018, p. 2). Gordon knew well that these outcomes could not happen without the expertise of academic advisors to guide and assist students throughout their college careers. In the words of the CAS standards, "academic advisors must develop the tools and skills necessary to address the many issues that influence student success and do so with respect to the increasing diversity on college and university campuses" (CAS, 2018, p. 3).

Gordon was the lead author of a 3-week preservice training program for new advisors in what was then called University College at The Ohio State University. Teaching was at the core of Gordon's approach to helping new advisors grow professionally. The training program she developed was based on a teaching-learning model, with clearly defined learning objectives and an evaluation following each training module. She described the learning objectives as follows:

to prepare advisers 1) to understand the processes and tasks involved in academic advising; 2) to understand the principles involved in college student development and how these can be integrated into the advising process; 3) to understand the career-

development process and the factors involved in educational and vocational decision-making; and 4) to understand the nature and patterns of organizational functioning of the university and the resources necessary to academic advisement. (Gordon, 1980, pp. 335–336)

Never satisfied until she was sure her new advisors understood a concept fully and could actualize it in practice, Gordon measured participants' learning under each objective and changed her teaching methods based on the results.

Relevant topics for training academic advisors include career development and career decision theories, the career choice process, the role that interests play in career satisfaction, abilities, values clarification, sex-role identity, decision-making styles and strategies, and occupational information (Gordon, 1980). The University College training program was organized into four interrelated strands: advising, administrative, teaching, and curricular academic program (CAP)–specific information, with each CAP area corresponding to an academic field of study or group of related fields, plus the undecided area. The training program aimed to ensure that new advisors had reached the following objectives by the first day of classes:

- Begun the process of getting acquainted with their colleagues in University College,
- Increased their understanding of how to function in the complex organizational structure of The Ohio State University,
- Been provided with the essential “tools” of academic advisement,
- Been given some insight into the advising process, including an introduction to theories of student and career development,
- Learned the requirements, priorities and options of the appropriate CAP curriculum, including BER [basic education requirements] and GEC [general education curriculum] information, and some of the typical concerns of students in that CAP,
- Become familiar with the issues involved and the procedures necessary in counseling students who have procedural requests,
- Practiced some of the procedures in a supervised situation,

- Acquired some familiarity with University resources,
- Learned guidelines for planning and teaching University Survey, including teaching objectives, course content, teaching methods, and classroom resources, and
- Received specific instructions on the goals of the September “Welcome Week” sessions of University Survey. (Gordon, 1998, p. 2)

Gordon's program provided a comprehensive and thorough approach to the training and development of academic advisors, with intentional and clear learning goals. Although much of Gordon's work was developed in the early 1980s, those approaches and concepts remain relevant and can be seen in NACADA's Academic Advising Core Competencies Model, a framework for effective advisor training programs (NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, 2018b), as well as in current academic advising training programs at major institutions.

### The Advising Process

The academic advising process provides a framework for working with students in academic advising sessions. Gordon emphasized the importance of communication skills in this process, referencing Egan's (1975) developmental model “as a basis for identifying the progressive stages of the helping relationship” (Gordon, 1980, p. 336). She also pointed out “the importance of providing a climate of acceptance and caring. Listening for the student's internal frame of reference and the need for conveying a nonjudgmental attitude are included in the communication skills aspect of the training program” (Gordon, 1980, p. 336). Gordon's background and training as a counselor educator is evident in her explanation of the advising process and the importance of establishing rapport with the student. Advisors and counselors alike know that unless a helping relationship is developed between the advisor and the student, little progress can be made.

Gordon made a clear distinction between “educational counseling” and “psychological counseling.” Although different types of helping skills (informational, explanatory, analytic, and therapeutic) may come into play in an advising session, the goal of the advisor is to help students sort out the various academic and personal issues that come up during an advising meeting. Advisors

need to know when to refer students for help with issues that are outside an academic advisor's skill set. Gordon emphasized the importance of doing so in a supportive and understanding way that does not interfere with the advisor-student relationship:

Advisors can help students identify the elements of the problem and clarify the issues involved. Students need to feel the support and warmth of their advisor as they focus on an event or relationship that is impeding their academic progress. (Gordon, 1998, p. 29)

New advisors may be good at providing information about majors and courses, but they may not be as comfortable with listening, attending, and letting students "tell their story." Advisors in training can fall into the trap of using their own experiences (and the decisions they made) as an undergraduate student to help direct students who are going through the major/career choice process. In order to help new advisors develop appropriate communication and helping skills, Gordon created a training document titled "Communication/Helping Skills in the Academic Advising Process" (Appendix A), outlining the helping skills needed to establish rapport, identify the problem, resolve the problem, and summarize the session. These advisor helping skills are used in conjunction with the "Advising Interview," found in Gordon's *Handbook of Academic Advising*, which includes the components of opening the interview, identifying the problem, identifying possible solutions, taking action on the solution, and summarizing the transaction (Gordon, 1992, pp. 52–53). These five steps serve as a way to organize the advisor-student interaction and help new advisors understand the communication and helping skills needed to conduct a successful advising session.

Perhaps a hallmark of Gordon's approach to training academic advisors was her belief that in order to understand students and provide good academic advising, advisors must know themselves: their communication, decision-making, and information perception and processing styles (1980). Gordon administered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to advisors as part of the Ohio State advisor training program. An understanding of self, she believed, allows advisors to understand individual differences more readily. Such an understanding leads to meaningful connections with students and, in turn, better success at helping them accomplish goals and

objectives. Gordon and Carberry promoted use of tools such as the MBTI for students as well as advisors:

A resource like the MBTI not only can help students understand their preferences and why they react in certain situations in almost predictable ways, but also can help advisors to be more understanding, more adept in communicating and more skilled in helping students select, explore, and confirm academic and career choices. (1984, pp. 80–81)

A highly extroverted advisor without insight, for example, may overwhelm a student who needs time to think before answering questions. Similarly, an advisor who approaches decisions from a logical and rational perspective may dismiss a student's reliance on feelings to evaluate choices. For Gordon, understanding differences in people's decision-making and communication styles was a cornerstone of the advising process.

### Developmental Advising

Gordon approached advising through a student development lens that was evident in both her work with students and her training of advisors. Her University College training manual for advisors (Gordon, 1998) included both O'Banion's (2009) academic advising model and Ender, Winston, and Miller's (1982) seven essential conditions for developmental advising. Likewise, her *Handbook of Academic Advising* pointed out, "One of the most important aspects to be recognized in the field of advising in the 1970's and 1980's was developmental advising" (Gordon, 1992, p. 4). Influenced by a wave of theoretical perspectives, including those of William Perry (1970), Arthur Chickering (1981), Lawrence Kohlberg (1984), Carol Gilligan (1982), and others, academic advising grew during those decades from a mere series of transactional encounters to a relationship in which students were viewed in individual contexts. The advising process began to include discussion of not only academics but career goals and cocurricular activities. It began to take into consideration students' needs and concerns—financial and personal—and their well-being—mental and physical—in the process of helping them persist to graduation. "Advisors using developmental advising [take] all of these personal attributes into account in an effort to help students negotiate the curriculum most productively, effectively, and intellectually, as well as to set realistic

academic and personal goals” (Grites & Gordon, 2009, p. 13).

Virginia Gordon foresaw a more individualized future for academic advising as more students with varied backgrounds entered college:

In fact, advising, like many student services, will need to become more specialized to serve the continuing growth of special populations. Developmental advising will become the only acceptable approach, and eventually “developmental” will be dropped when the [terms] “advising” and “developmental” become synonymous. (Gordon, 1992, p. 5)

Gordon’s statements such as these pushed the field forward, toward an academic advising process that takes into account all aspects of the student.

In conjunction with student development, understanding student characteristics was a key topic in Gordon’s training for new academic advisors at Ohio State. Discussions encouraged new advisors to consider the identities in various contexts—at large, at the university, and in the college—of the students with whom they would be working. Gordon emphasized that groups of students with different characteristics and issues also had different advising needs (Gordon, 1980). The training discussed the unique needs of special student populations—international students, those with physical disabilities, veterans, athletes, older adult students, minority students—and where to refer them if they needed more assistance. “A developmental approach to advising is stressed throughout the training program, but this section emphasizes the methods for recognizing unique backgrounds, experiences, levels of maturity, and stages of student development and applies the methods to academic advising” (Gordon, 1980, p. 337). Through Gordon’s training, advisors developed the expertise and knowledge to work effectively with students in a variety of circumstances.

### **Institutional Knowledge**

As important as understanding student development and characteristics is having a thorough knowledge of the institution. New advisors may come from different colleges and universities where there are different ways of getting things done (through the different offices, programs, and academic units that make up the organization of a university or college). Advisors also have knowl-

edge of higher education institutions from their own experience as an undergraduate students (Gordon, 1992). Understanding the college environment from both the student and the advisor perspectives is vital to advising students on how to navigate the university. Although the learning curve on this task varies depending on the size of the university, it nonetheless takes advisors time to gain the knowledge needed to connect students to appropriate campus and community resources.

One valuable aspect of Gordon’s ongoing training with advisors at Ohio State was that she arranged field trips during staff meetings. Going to the Math and Statistics Learning Center or the Disability Services Office and meeting the coordinators of these programs gave advisors a deeper understanding of the available resources and how to connect students with them.

### **Academic and Career Advising**

Gordon referred to academic and career advising as being “so closely related that it is often difficult to separate them in an advising transaction” (1998, p. 53). Especially with undecided students, effective advising incorporates both an academic and a career advising perspective. In the Ohio State program, the training for advisors in the undecided CAP area included learning about all the majors available at the University and how to discuss them in terms of a student’s strengths, abilities, interests, and values.

One of Gordon’s first lessons for advisors-in-training was that undecided students are often confused about how to begin the process of career exploration and planning: “Exploration of career and life goals can lead to academic program choice, although many students do this in reverse. Students do not always realize that their choice of academic major may imply work values and lifestyles” (Gordon, 1980, p. 337). One of the most helpful tools for guiding students through this process is Gordon’s framework “Making Satisfying Career Decisions—What Questions Do I Ask” (Appendix B), which outlines four areas of knowledge that students need to move through to make informed decisions about their majors: self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, educational knowledge, and decision-making knowledge (Gordon, 1998, p. 57).

Self-knowledge focuses students’ understanding of themselves in terms of interests, aptitudes, values, and goal setting. It is an important first step in the exploration process and probably the most difficult one. Many students have little experience

with self-reflection or understanding of its value. Helping a student understand, for instance, that a successful career in engineering requires not only interest but also certain quantitative skills may entail a tough conversation between advisor and student. Similarly, students need to consider their personal values in relation to different occupations—for example, how many hours they want to work in a week versus how much time they want to devote to outside interests and family.

Occupational knowledge involves helping students understand the world of work and how to research occupations. Educational knowledge comes from looking at a field of study that is interesting to a student and matches his or her values, in order to find out what the curriculum entails. Both of these types of knowledge require students to ask themselves whether they have the abilities to be successful in a particular major/career.

Decision-making knowledge helps students understand how to put personal information, occupational information, and educational information together. Students need to learn about their own decision-making style and then use it to integrate the information they have gathered about themselves, occupations, and academic fields. Putting this all together and making a decision moves the student closer to a satisfying outcome.

Not only did Gordon want students to choose a realistic and satisfying major, but she was adamant that they needed to learn how to develop lifelong decision-making skills. Although her career advising framework remains a valuable way to work with students as they move through the career exploration and planning process, Gordon emphasized that it is not enough to use a process once—the value in a process is that it can be learned and used repeatedly. This focus on teaching and learning was at the core of Gordon's advising philosophy.

Gordon believed that an effective advisor needed to know about both career opportunities and the choice process. The Ohio State training program emphasized the following concepts, which led to the framework that Gordon laid out later in her career:

1. Each student's approach to the career choice process is influenced by a unique background (i.e., home influences, personal characteristics, attitudes, educational and work experiences).

2. The career choice process is complex and incorporates knowledge of self and the work world. This information is best processed in an organized decision-making framework.
3. Each student makes initial career choices with differing levels of commitment to those choices. Different levels of commitment will indicate different approaches to exploration and planning. (1980, p. 337)

### Training Methods

Because Gordon recognized that individuals have different learning styles or preferences, the training methods she used and developed were many and varied. "The way information is organized and presented must be varied so that every trainee will be able to learn in a personalized way" (Gordon, 1984, p. 447). Gordon's training approach highlighted the different learning styles in Kolb's (1981) learning style model:

Some advisers might prefer a more concrete experiential method that would include role playing, simulations or videotaping. Those who learn best through observation and reflection will prefer to watch experienced advisers as they work directly with students. Advisers who prefer a more abstract or conceptual way of learning might prefer the lecture or interviewing methods or even the opportunity to read material on their own. (as cited in Gordon, 1992, p. 148)

Gordon emphasized that each learning style is valid and that trainers need to be cognizant of these differences when planning training programs. In addition to meeting new advisors' different preferences for learning, Gordon believed that using a variety of training methods would strengthen trainees' understanding of the topics presented and the advising process.

Whereas lectures offer an opportunity to learn about information and theory, discussions let new advisors ask questions and learn how to integrate theory into practice. Gordon also realized the value in learning from one another. She built discussions so as to encourage sharing of opinions in an atmosphere in which no one's ideas were discounted. The University College advisor training manual contained a quiz after each module to ensure that advisors had learned material to inform their

advising sessions. In addition, each quiz was designed to guide advisors toward further research and exploration of resources, programs, and facts.

New advisors also learned about different advising approaches and styles through observation, guided by questions such as these: How do experienced advisors establish rapport with students and help them move through the advising process? How do they handle a resistant student or one who is on academic probation? Did the student leave the advising session satisfied, and if so, how did the advisor accomplish this outcome? In addition, new advisors tested out their advising approaches through role-playing with other advisors and received feedback from those playing the students about how they felt during the session.

Perhaps the most impactful training method Gordon used was videotaping (Gordon, 1982). She videotaped both role plays and actual situations, such as a scene acted out between an experienced advisor and a student, a role play with a trainee as the advisor and an experienced advisor as the student, or a new advisor in an actual advising session. Each scenario offered new advisors insight about an advising session and what to expect; moreover, seeing oneself on a video is revealing and helpful in the training process. As Gordon pointed out, one of the values of videotaping is that “non-verbal communication skills can be noted and critiqued” (1992, p. 147). Whereas a new advisor may receive feedback after a role play, for instance, about an off-putting facial expression, actually seeing the expression makes it easier to understand and correct. The other value of videotaping is that the session can be replayed multiple times (Gordon, 1982) for discussion and analysis.

Case studies used in training present new advisors with information on students’ background and academic performance in a form that mimics real-life advising records. Such a record of previous advising visits can help inform an advisor’s next session with the same student. Case studies encourage advisors-in-training to think critically about a student’s situation and what strategies or approaches they might use in the next session. According to Steele, “Trainers have historically used case studies because they provide a selection of student issues that can be highlighted and addressed through focused inquiry” (2003, p. 10). Trainers can formulate questions that new advisors may not have considered, creating teaching-learning environments that both experienced and new advisors can learn from.

Although the majority of Gordon’s training was with new advisors (graduate students and newly hired professional advisors), Gordon also developed and taught a preservice graduate-level course on academic advising at Ohio State (1982). The two-credit-hour course was designed for graduate students in student affairs, higher education administration, psychology, and counseling programs, as well as faculty in any discipline. Gordon understood that most faculty members did not undergo any type of training prior to taking on the responsibilities of an academic advisor. Faculty are usually best at providing information about their disciplines, but they may fall short in their ability to talk with students in a comprehensive way about the curriculum. It is the rare faculty member who works at improving his or her advising skills (Gordon, 1982). The class provided a foundation in the academic advising process and the reasons why academic advising is important to students’ success. Its objectives were as follows:

- (1) a general introduction to academic advising from historical, philosophical, and practical perspectives; (2) readings and materials to acquaint students with a variety of advising delivery systems, advising skills and techniques, and resources required to accomplish advising tasks; and (3) an opportunity for graduate students to become familiar with academic advising literature and to apply what they read to practical assignments. (Gordon, 1982, p. 36)

Many of the topics covered in a typical advisor training program were also included in this preservice course. One major difference was the addition of historical and philosophical aspects of advising in the preservice course, topics more appropriate for a graduate-level course. Students in the class were required to interview both an academic advisor and an undergraduate student, critically review articles on academic advising, present in class an issue or topic on academic advising, and complete a final paper on designing an academic advising program for a university. Evaluations for the class were excellent.

About this course, Gordon wrote, “When taught at the graduate level, advising becomes a legitimate and important part of higher education. The Ohio State University experience suggests that the preservice approach to training academic advisors is an idea worth pursuing on a national scale” (1982, p. 40). According to the NACADA Clearinghouse,

close to 30 institutions in the United States offer graduate-level advising courses in student affairs departments. Several institutions offer graduate certificate programs in academic advising, and some student affairs graduate programs offer academic advising as a focus area. Finally, a single master's of academic advising degree program exists in the United States, offered through the Kansas State University Global Campus (NACADA, 2018a).

With the increase in numbers of programs being developed for peer advisors, peer mentors, and academic coaches, training paraprofessionals is vital. As Gordon put it, "The key to an effective peer advising system is training" (1992, p. 151). Training can be accomplished through a credit course offered before peer advisors begin their jobs or through workshops and ongoing in-service training. Course instructors must have a clear understanding of communication and counseling skills as well as student development concepts (Gordon, 1992).

Some programs bring in new peer advisors the week prior to the beginning of classes. Although this approach is not as thorough as a semester-long course, the advantage is timing. The topics for the training program have recently been covered and therefore appear more relevant when the peer advisors meet with students the following week. However, Gordon emphasized, "If a course is not offered, frequent training meetings are necessary so that peer advisers' contacts with advisees can be carefully supervised and monitored" (1992, p. 152). Advisors who manage a peer advising program need to keep in mind that the students-helping-students model is a major responsibility that requires strict oversight.

### Training Program Evaluation

Gordon proposed that advisor training evaluations include both formative (given at the end of each training activity) and summative (given at the end of a series of training activities, typically at year-end) strategies (1992). Along with Steele, she proposed the following five purposes for evaluating academic advisor training programs:

1. To determine if the training session/program has fulfilled its stated objectives.
2. To determine from the participants how it has fulfilled their needs.
3. To determine the failure of training advisers on a long-term basis (e.g.,

through student evaluations, retention data).

4. To identify topics for future in-service sessions.
5. To secure administrative support for future training efforts. (Gordon & Steele, 1994)

Similar to the way Gordon used assessment data, she used the results from evaluations to make changes to preservice training programs as well as in-service programs. She was quick to capitalize on feedback that could improve the ways in which information was presented or that indicated a need for more explanation, discussion, role play, or observation. Gordon never took any type of feedback as criticism, only as an opportunity to strengthen the program. She used a variety of evaluation methods, both direct (surveys, questionnaires, group discussions, individual interviews, focus groups) and indirect (student satisfaction with advising/advisors, advisor job satisfaction, retention, and administrative support). Once again, "Gordon as educator" is evident in the use of evaluation data to improve and refine teaching methods.

### A Unique Legacy

What was unique about Gordon's approach to training was that for many new advisors, it functioned as a training ground for a career in higher education. Many advisors who were pursuing a higher education student personnel graduate program were fortunate to have their graduate position serve as an informal "practicum." Though not all of the graduate students Gordon supervised were pursuing careers in academic advising, the training program's foundation (theoretical and practical) in student development, career advising, and decision making was invaluable for further studies in higher education. In fact, even some who were not initially planning on a career in higher education changed their minds—going on to positions in career and academic advising, higher education administration, and teaching—due to not only the satisfaction they gained from working with students but also the inspiration of working with and learning from the mentor we knew simply as "Virginia." Because Gordon was so curious about the impact that "good, well-thought-out" advising had on students, she was constantly doing research. Advisors administered many surveys in first-year University Survey classes and felt a part of something important and real.

Another unique feature of Gordon's advisor training program was the way advisors were treated. Graduate students were not treated any differently than primary-role advisors. The only difference was that graduate students worked 20 hours a week and primary-role advisors worked 40 hours a week. Graduate students were given keys to the academic buildings where they worked, allowing them to come in during the weekends and evenings, and they were included in all college events and holiday parties. Graduate students participated in the same training as new full-time advisors and were held to the same set of expectations as their full-time colleagues. Graduate students and full-time advisors alike were viewed as "primary-role advisors."

In *The Bridge to Growth*, Jude Rake listed nine proven leadership principles for success. Although Rake's leadership experience came from his time spent as a business CEO, his first leadership principle applies to leaders in all professions, no matter where they work: "Leadership Principle #1: Servant leaders grow leaders and difference-makers, not just followers" (2017, p. 3). As a supervisor, Gordon was a true "servant leader." She never let her advisors forget their importance in students' lives and the impact they made in their roles. She expected high-quality advising because she cultivated a belief in oneself as a leader and a "difference-maker."

### Summary

Virginia Gordon fully embraced the training and development of academic advisors. She cared about not only advisors' ability to deliver effective academic advising but also, and more importantly, their impact on students' academic, professional, and personal lives. As a result, she influenced and inspired the next generation of academic and career advisors to carry on her good work. I am proud to be one of the many advisors whom Virginia influenced over the years. As my younger self starting a graduate program in the mid-1980s, I was not aware of the impact she would have on me and my career as an academic advisor and advising administrator. I can only look back and remember her as not just a successful, accomplished woman, but a woman whose life was one of substance. She was, to paraphrase Albert Einstein, not a person of success but rather a person of value ("Death of a Genius," 1955, p. 64). Virginia Gordon's life was certainly one of value. She continues to have a lasting impact on the field of academic advising

and on those who learned from her and continue to learn from her.

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## Appendix A. Communication/helping skills in the academic advising process

### **Establishing Rapport**

**Attending:** Communicate an interest in the student by facing him/her fully, making eye contact, greeting the student by name, and being relaxed and friendly.

**Active listening and observing:** Actively and fully listening to the content, voice, and body language of the student to hear the subtle messages communicated by him/her.

- Paying attention to aspects of the student's appearance and behavior provides us with information about the student's physical energy level, emotional state and readiness for helping.
- Be sensitive to congruence (or lack of it) between what the student is saying in words and what he/she is communicating nonverbally.

**Attitude:** Communicate respect and concern for the feelings, experiences, and potential of the student.

**Genuineness:** Implies that advisors are real in their interactions with students—reflecting honesty and openness to the student.

**Empathy:** Convey understanding of what the student is facing—experientially, cognitively, and emotionally (factual vs. emotional impact of facts on student).

**Acceptance:** Communicate understanding in a nonjudgmental manner as the student discloses the problem: (i.e., maintain a comfortable level of eye contact, head nod, “yes,” “um-huh,” calm tone of voice).

### **Problem Identification**

**Leading:** Elicit additional information or elaboration (e.g., Tell me more about . . .) or prompt the student to shift his/her thinking to a different aspect of the problem.

**Clarification:** Purpose is to: (1) ensure accuracy, (2) help the student become more aware of what he/she is saying, and (3) communicate to the student that you understand and are aware of how he/she is feeling.

**Questioning:** Ask open-ended questions (what, when, who, where or how).

**Paraphrasing:** Restate the comment in your own words conveying that you understand the content.

**Reflection of feelings:** Responding to feelings or attitudes behind the statement.

**Allowing for and interpreting silence:** Refrain from rushing in too quickly to fill silence. Listen to the silence and attend to the messages being sent [by] the student during periods of silence.

**Confronting:** Pointing out inconsistencies in/or unrealistic thinking within the context of concern (“I” statements vs. “you” statements).

### **Problem Resolution**

**Information Giving:** Provide information as it relates to problem solving and goal setting.

**Suggesting/Directing:** Encourage the student to consider or try a particular solution.

**Referral:** Provide information about the services and/or expertise of other campus or community resources. The following steps may be helpful in making an appropriate referral:

- Have a thorough knowledge of campus and community resources.
- Explain why the student would benefit from referral to the particular resource.
- Be aware of the student's reaction to the referral (especially for professional counseling).
- Explain the services that can be obtained from the resource person or office you are recommending.
- Discuss qualifications of those professionals as well as confidentiality.
- Inform the student about the process involved in making an appointment with someone in the office or using a particular resource.
  - Personalize as much as possible (i.e., provide a contact name and give direction to the office/building).

- Depending on the student's stress level and ability to function, you may need to make an appointment for the student and/or accompany him/her to the office.
- Assist the student in formulating questions to ask or approaches to take.

**Mentoring:** Convey concern for the student and emphasize their potential.

**Support and Encouragement:** Create an open and caring environment that allows the student to share their ideas and express their feelings about the possible options.

**Teaching:** Instruct student in how to make realistic decisions and in the essential knowledge and procedures for navigating the campus.

**Taking Action:** Facilitating movement from choice to action.

**Summarizing**

**Summarizing:** Review what was covered and what the next steps are so that the student leaves with a plan and tasks to accomplish before returning.

**Closing:** Provide positive feedback to the student for taking the step to seek help and acknowledge what has been accomplished in the session.

**Monitoring:** Follow up or check on the student's progress in meeting goals.

Note. Gordon and McDonald (1996).

**Appendix B. Academic and career advising: Questions and strategies**

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE—Ohio State University  
GENERAL BACCALAUREATE CURRICULUM AND THE ALTERNATIVES ADVISING  
PROGRAM**

***MAKING SATISFYING CAREER DECISIONS: WHAT QUESTIONS DO I ASK?***

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

- Interests—What activities do you enjoy? What do you do in your leisure time? Hobbies?
- Aptitudes—What are your personal and academic strengths? What skills do you have?
- Values—What is important to you in a career? What do you believe in?
- Goal setting—Where are you going? How do you get there? What are your aspirations?

**OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

- Nature of work—What tasks are involved?
- Place of employment—Who will hire you?
- Qualifications and advancement—What entry-level expertise is expected? What experiences do you need? What are the opportunities for promotion?
- Employment outlook—What will the job market be like when I graduate?
- Earnings and working conditions—What is the pay range? What are the physical demands of the job?
- Job-seeking skills—How do you write a resume/cover letter? What job interview techniques are desirable?

**EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

- What educational programs will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need?
- What college majors interest you? What vocational programs interest you?
- What courses will you need to take?
- What degrees and/or credentials do you need?

**DECISION-MAKING KNOWLEDGE**

- Can you link self-knowledge with occupational information?
- What kind of decision maker are you? What styles or strategies do you use?
- What are the critical points in your life where you will make career decisions?
- What kind of lifelong decision-making skills do you need to learn?
- How well do you integrate your values into your decisions?
- How do you implement your decision once it is made?

***MAKING SATISFYING DECISIONS: WHAT RESOURCES CAN YOU USE?***  
**SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

- List activities you enjoy doing: in school, work, and personally.
- Review your academic transcript; identify your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- List five work values you want to have in your career (income, variety, independence, prestige, contribution to society, etc.).
- List five skills you can do well.
- Create a 40-year plan: What do you want to be doing every five years? After graduation?
- Use the computerized career search system (e.g., Sigi-Plus or Discover).
- Ask your adviser about self-assessment instruments.

**OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

- Conduct an occupational interview.
- Visit the Career Services resources on your campus.
- Use government publications such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* or *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*.
- Use a computerized career search system (e.g., Discover or Sigi-Plus).
- Use the World Wide Web.
- Use career library resources.
- Use occupational brochures/publications written by professional groups.
- Volunteer or use a co-op or internship to gain direct experience in a specific career field.

**EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

- Identify types of courses that match your interests and abilities; review the course offerings bulletin.
- Identify majors related to these courses.
- Meet with appropriate academic advisers to review curricula.
- List how skills and knowledge inherent in each major would be related to careers you are considering.
- List minors or elective course work which could supplement their skills or knowledge base.
- Develop a schedule projection for the various majors.

**DECISION-MAKING KNOWLEDGE**

- List five ways your interests and abilities are related to the occupational and educational alternatives you have identified.
- List three ways your decision-making style has helped you in your research.
- List three ways your decision-making style has not served you well in making decisions.
- Describe how you have implemented decisions once you make them.

Note. Gordon (1998, p. 57).