



 **MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY** **The Academic Advisor Newsletter**

Welcome to the Morgan State University's Fall 2018 Academic Advisor Newsletter. This electronic newsletter is a resource for all academic advisors at Morgan State University. Each month, The Academic Advisor Newsletter will include a Morgan State University student support program or initiative, a featured academic advising article excerpt centered on best practices in academic advising, professional development opportunities for academic advisors, important dates to remember, and other pertinent information to support academic advisors.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**September 2018**

**In this Issue:**

- ⇒ *Student Services Spotlight:*  
**Second Year Experience (SYE) Program**
- ⇒ **Important Dates**
- ⇒ *Featured Academic Advising Excerpt:*  
**The 21st Century Academic Advisor: 3 Critical Skill Sets**



## ***Student Services Spotlight:* Second Year Experience (SYE) Program**

Morgan State University was awarded a Lumina Grant in 2017. A significant component of this grant has been the designing and planning for implementation of a Second Year Experience (SYE) program which is being coordinated through the Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA). The SYE program is designed to engage and support students and help drive them to personal and academic success in the second year.

One of the high impact practices of SYE programs that has been shown to have a positive influence on second year engagement and retention includes activities that enhance career readiness. The program is designed to increase the second to third year retention rate. A major part of the SYE at Morgan is providing all second-year students (approximately 850) with opportunities to engage in an experiential learning experience. Experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experience outside a traditional academic setting. Well-planned, supervised and assessed experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry, promote interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional and intellectual skills.

Second-year students at MSU are provided opportunities to participate in internships, research projects, community service, service-learning courses, study abroad, field trips and job shadowing. Student participation is being documented and assessed through the completion of an Experiential Learning Plan (ELP) which is developed by the student and with the support of the student's academic advisor.

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*Source: Dr. Brenda James, Director,  
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# Important Dates

## September 2018

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**September 6th**

**Work Study & Part-Time Job Fair**

**1pm-4pm**

**USC Ballroom**

**September 14th**

**SYE @ Student Organization Fun Fair**

**12pm-4pm**

**USC Front Patio**

**September 17th**

**Advisor Development:**

**Advising 101**

**10am-12pm**

**2pm-4pm**

**USC Room 212**

**September 19th**

**Advisor Development:**

**Advising 201**

**10am-12pm**

**2pm-4pm**

**Library Room 117**

## *Featured Academic Advising Excerpt:*

### **The 21st Century Academic Advisor: 3 Critical Skill Sets**

The role of the academic advisor is complex, requiring advisors to effectively communicate with students, understand and interpret policies and procedures, follow institutional protocols, maintain student records, utilize technology, and engage in problem-solving. These activities can be categorized into three distinct skill sets: **interpersonal**, **operational**, and **analytical**. To deliver comprehensive advising assistance, an advisor needs to blend all of these skills.

Here are some strategies for developing these essential skill sets and maximizing your effectiveness as an advisor.

#### **Interpersonal Skills**

Most often, when asked what is the most important skill an advisor can bring to the position, prospective advisor candidates respond, “working with people.” While I’m sure they think this is the “best” answer, it is really a simplification of the complex nature of the application of interpersonal skills in the advising relationship.

Some strategies for effectively infusing interpersonal skills into the advising session include:

1. **Demonstrate caring every time:** Ask how the student is. Ask about new events, successes, and challenges. Ask about adjustment issues.
2. **Inquire and validate:** Instead of assuming a student's experience and perceptions based on developmental theory or on your own years of experience, ask the student. Use open-ended questions to better understand the student's unique experience and perceptions.
3. **Provide support and encouragement:** Students value receiving support and encouragement from university personnel. Students may doubt themselves and experience fear and anxiety about the academic process. An advisor can help reduce those fears in order to help students succeed.

#### **Operational Skills**

Effective advisors are able to develop systems and strategies for completing paperwork and following up on administrative tasks.

*Continued on page 4*

## **The 21st Century Academic Advisor: 3 Critical Skill Sets**

Some strategies for effectively infusing operational skills into the advising role include:

1. **Complete the necessary processes right away:** While meeting with a student, you may notice that the major has not been changed. Send an email, complete a form, or make a call during or following the session to facilitate the change.
2. **Learn your systems and identify best practices:** If you don't know how to see if a student's major has been changed or what kind of hold she has, learn more about how to use the student database. If you're finding that filling out forms, signing, scanning and forwarding them is too cumbersome, ask if there is an alternative method to initiate change.
3. **Develop a "tickler" system for follow-up:** Strategies may include flagging emails, leaving them unread until resolved, or categorizing them as "waiting for response."
4. **Identify a system that works best for you:** To-do lists, scratch pads, color-coded folders, online reminders, all-day events. While there are many tools and methods to stay organized, each person must find what works best for him/herself.

### **Analytical Skills**

One of the most important skills that an effective advisor can apply is that of analytical thinking. If advisors simply provide links to resources or hand out policies, they are not much more valuable than the resources themselves. Advisors can maximize their impact on the student experience by anticipating their needs, understanding the university system, and problem-solving on behalf of the student.

Some strategies for effectively infusing analytical skills into the advising process include:

1. **Avoid "blind" overrides:** When students encounter an obstacle such as not being able to register for a class, advisors who have the authority to override the barrier may do so without research -- a situation that is far from ideal. An analytical advisor will want to know why the student [encountered the obstacle].
2. **Investigate student claims:** A student may insist that she has already taken a course that you've indicated she needs. Rather than simply insisting that the student has not taken the course, ask questions and engage in further research.
3. **Identify problems within the system and work to have them fixed.**

By building relationships with students through developing strong interpersonal skills, reliably providing information and processing necessary administrative duties, and engaging in strategic problem-solving, you can maximize your effectiveness both in meeting students' needs and in meeting institutional objectives for advising.

Source: Ohrablo, S. (2016, Jan). The 21st century academic advisor: 3 critical skill sets. Retrieved from <https://www.academicimpressions.com/the-21st-century-academic-advisor-3-critical-skill-sets/>