Comparative Analysis

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In my action research project, there were similarities and differences between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. In both cycles, I collected information from students and program advisors from a small Christian college in rural Alberta. Nine program directors were involved in both cycles; one participated only in Cycle 1, and two participated only in Cycle 2. The student participation for Cycle 2 (n=21) was much higher than in Cycle 1 (n=8). I do not know if any students participated in both cycles as the student surveys were anonymous.

I gathered baseline data in Cycle 1. I wanted to know what program directors and students thought about academic advising, how often they met, how they communicated, and how program directors could use digital technology to develop relationships with students. In Cycle 2, I was less concerned about digital technology, but I asked if program directors could use preregistration to help build relationships with students. The research indicates that technology cannot replace advisors, but advisors can enhance advising and be more effective with digital technology (Karp et al., 2021). In both Cycles 1 and 2, I wanted to know if preregistration could be streamlined and simplified. In Cycle 1, I asked questions to determine the experience students and program directors had with preregistration. In Cycle 2, I wondered what impact my changes to preregistration had on the participants and if those changes made preregistration streamlined and simplified.

The feedback I received from Cycle 1 influenced what I did for Cycle 2. I implemented many suggestions from Cycle 1. In Cycle 1, eight out of ten program directors said they needed to learn more about the preregistration process since they were not involved. In Cycle 2, they became very involved when they led a preregistration workshop with the students. In Cycle 1, the program directors said they wanted to meet with each of their students so they could discuss

any issues or changes to their schedules. They found that meeting with students helped them get to know their students better. The research indicates that a trusting relationship between the advisor and the advisee makes advising more effective (Baird, 2020; Etway, 2017; Karp et al., 2021; Takang, 2020). To give good advice, advisors must spend time inside and outside the classroom to get to know students and discover each student's uniqueness (Takang, 2020). If students do not have a relationship with their advisor, they may not trust the advice (Etway, 2017). The students who participated in Cycle 1 said they wanted to talk to their advisor about more than academics. The research shows that the holistic approach will more effectively support the student's academic life than just focusing on academics (Karp et al., 2021).

In Cycle 1, one program director commented that the registrar should walk through preregistration with all the program directors, and then the program director could assist the students. For Cycle 2, I trained the program directors before they led the preregistration workshop. With this training, the program director can effectively help students, eliminating frustration for both the advisor and the student (Loucif et al., 2020). The students said they found the workshop very helpful. They liked that they could ask questions and get the answers right away. They appreciated the guidance and help from their program director. Some of the students commented that preregistration was easy.

The program directors asked what the student's responsibility is in preregistration. The developmental method of academic advising means the responsibility is shared between the advisor and the student (Baird, 2020; Crookston, 1975/2009; Loucif et al., 2020). In the developmental approach to academic advising, the advisor is responsible for knowing the information and providing the opportunity for the student to receive the information. The student

is responsible for availing themselves of the opportunities provided for them. The student is also responsible for initiating contact with their advisor.

It became clear from Cycles 1 and 2 that effective academic advising happens within a relationship. The relationship is a joint responsibility between the student and the advisor. Advisors can use preregistration to help build relationships with students, but they cannot use technology to replace their role in the relationship. The registrar supports the program directors by providing them with information and training. The program director is in a vital position to simplify the preregistration process for the student.

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