

Preparing an Inclusive Advisor-Advisee Relationship at UMKC

Accessibility

- Provide as much information as possible about how to navigate university and college processes. Use different methods to provide this information: verbal communication, handouts, emails, diagrams, pamphlets, maps, etc. Do *not* make assumptions about what advisees already understand about university life.
- Be willing and able to provide holistic advising where advisors provide resources beyond academic resources, but also resources about campus life, mental and physical health, social activities and dilemmas, and family support.
- Provide multiple formats (paper, digital, audio) of materials to accommodate different abilities.
- Work with UMKC Student [Disability Services](#) to find additional support accommodations.

Representation

- Learn about and accommodate for religious and other cultural holidays when working with advisees.
- In your office space, if you decorate for holidays, ensure that you represent a variety of religious and cultural holidays.
- In your office space, if you have decorations, ensure that different cultural, racial and gender identities are represented.

Advising Climate

- Ask all advisees if they would like to provide the phonetic pronunciation of their names and use these to correctly address and identify advisees.
- Ask advisees for their [pronouns](#) and use their pronouns accordingly.
- Recognize that all of your advisees have multiple identities that inform their cultural practices, beliefs, behaviors and expectations. Acknowledge that because someone does something differently than you would expect does not make it wrong.
- Recognize that you have multiple identities that inform your cultural practices, beliefs, behaviors and expectations. Reflect on how these may differ from your advisees' practices, beliefs and behaviors and how that might affect your advisees' success at the university.
- Recognize the power you hold as an advisor. Consider how this dynamic may affect an advisee's ability to do things such as ask for help, provide feedback to an advisor or respond to an advisor's request.
- Monitor the assumptions you make about your advisees and work to challenge negative assumptions or biases that do not support the advisees' success.
- Be open to multiple perspectives and experiences of others. Advisees may have

varying ideas about what is helpful for them. Seek to understand their perspective before offering yours particularly when there is disagreement.

Relationship and Communication

- Be curious about who your advisees are. Ask them questions about themselves and actively listen to their answers. The more you learn about your advisees, the more information you have to help meet their needs. Recognize that not all advisees will feel comfortable sharing or may need multiple interactions to feel comfortable enough to do so. If they do not share, do not pressure advisees to do so.
- Share information about yourself. This humanizes you and can help build trust in the relationship. Be cautious about oversharing and taking up too much space from your advisees. The purpose of sharing your story is to help advisees feel comfortable enough to be open with you.
- Use intrusive and proactive advising techniques; meet advisees outside of the office environment, go with them to their appointments, personally introduce them to relevant personnel, etc.
- Validate advisees' experiences. Do *not* challenge or negate the experiences of your advisees.
- Verbally express and affirm your advisees' ability to be successful.
- Take note of advisees with which you struggle to maintain contact. Are there other methods of connecting that might be more effective?
- Regularly ask your advisees for feedback on what has or has not been effective in your advisor-advisee relationship. This kind of information from your advisees can help you fine-tune your service and may be helpful with other advisees.
- Understand that *intention* is not the same thing as *impact*. The impact of what you say or do may be harmful even when you do not intend it.
- Make repairs when harm is caused even when the harm is not fully understood. This is critical to maintaining a safe climate. This can involve you admitting mistakes openly and modeling your own self-improvement.
- Ask open-ended questions to gather information about advisees' academic performance. This builds trust by minimizing potential harm from implicit negative biases you might hold toward your advisees. Examples of open-ended and unbiased questions include, "What classes do you think you performed best in?," "Why do you think you performed better in that class?," and "What do you think is the relationship between your grade and what you have learned in that class?"

Other Considerations

- How can I build trust with the advisees?
- How am I empowering advisees to take risks and be confident in their ability to be successful?
- Am I making assumptions about advisees' knowledge of the higher education process? In what ways can I support advisees' transitions through the higher education process?
- How can I infuse issues of social justice and civic engagement in our advising relationship?
- Seek to learn about your own biases through diversity and inclusion trainings, [The Kirwan Institute](#), [the Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#), or other [resources](#).

Additional Resources

- Accessibility, Representation, Climate and Assessment Toolkit from University of Missouri System Diversity and Inclusion
- [Ukpokodu, O.N. \(2010\). How a sustainable campus-wide diversity curriculum fosters academic success. *Multicultural Education*, 27-36.](#)
- Carnaje, E.G. (2016). Advising Across Race: Providing Culturally-Sensitive Academic Advising at Predominantly White Institutions, *The Vermont Connection*, 37, 38-47.
- Museus, S.D. & Ravello, J.N. (2010). Characteristics of Academic Advising That Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions, *NACADA Journal*, 30(1), 47-58.

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