

Reexamining "in loco parentis": Being Mindful of Entering Freshmen

How may I fault thee? Let me count the ways:

Catamount hemper scammer	Anti-social personality	Walmart
Non-student	Predators	Impulsive Person
Marijuana monger	Dependent personality	Libbies
Homos	Emotionally disturbed student	Psychopathia

We currently face a situation at WCU where the non-academic or non-intellectual factor is being powerfully projected into university life. When one notes the typical burdens of contemporary undergraduate students at WCU, the nature of the burdens seems to be different from those experienced by former students. Part of the explanation might lie in our accommodation of a more heterogeneous group of students at WCU (i.e., nontraditional students, "conditional" or marginal students, transfer students) or in more liberal policies regarding the entering behavior or readiness of freshman. In any event, as a faculty member I have had to field a number of undergraduate burdens that were not always associated with academic matters alone. For example, characteristic undergraduate problems have recently included:

01. "I like psychology but everyone tells me that the courses are too hard." (In a telephone interview with an undergraduate student.)
05. "I'm worried about an interview that I will have soon for admission to teacher education. What do I say? I'm worried" (From a former student of mine who was scheduled for an interview)
08. "I took a psychological test. They told me that I should not go to graduate school. This really bothered me. Can I talk to you about it." (A student who recently was administered an individual intelligence test.)
09. "I'm divorced and have one child and am looking for a job. I can't go to class now until I find a job." (Silence) "I need this course to graduate." (A telephone interview with an undergraduate who had missed classes for two consecutive weeks)

My list reveals that undergraduates are as likely to verbalize burdens of a **nonacademic** nature as they would the more traditional academic burdens (Note: because of space, #02 to #04; #06 and #07, are listed in my E-mail, Chovan@WCU.edu).

Changes in contemporary students' profiles means that efforts should be directed toward redefining the role of student advising. That is, the professor, as advisor, should at least be aware of--and perhaps even receive some formal training in--how to employ a variety of approaches to dealing with the advising of undergraduates. Even more than ever in the past, advising must now involve responses to nonacademic problems. What we need in the university setting is a sensitivity to the "whole student," to their emotional as well as their intellectual character. That university life offers the opportunity for transformation of the whole student was noted at a recent assembly on Raising the Bar. While the university's guidance for the intellectual side supplies excellence of thinking and reasoning and the values of knowledge, the university must also help guide the emotional side of student life, providing the bridge between personal judgment and responsible behavior--a matter of some concern to the 100+ colleagues at the 1996-97 Forum/Assembly. Thus, we must consciously modify and extend the advisor's role to include at the very least an awareness of the concept of wholeness and the way it can prepare students for non-classroom environments.

One important part of our role as faculty members takes place inside the classroom, the implementation of effective teaching methods; but equally important is the one outside of the classroom--the advising of students and their adaptation to various learning environments. Academic advising is unmistakably critical; and it needs to be reviewed periodically in light of the contemporary profiles of entering students and in light of their needs for academic achievement and their needs for "achieving wholeness" (Jung's affective domain concerning thoughts and feelings about the self). Indeed, most of the difficulties that students are confronted with, particularly entering freshmen, though not difficulties directly related to academics, per se, are difficulties that never-the-less impact upon their academic achievement, often in very detrimental ways.

For example, undergraduates face various kinds of transactions outside of the classroom like field placement, culturally different persons, psycho-sexual confrontations, job interviews, admission into teacher education programs, etc. Students need to have some idea about how to prepare themselves for these situations, or, in another sense, how to present themselves in a realistic and coherent manner in a variety of social environments. To illustrate, quite recently I was involved in an evaluation interview for a candidate being considered for admission to a teacher education program (TEP). Needless to say, the candidate was anxious and it was apparent that the anxiety spilled over into the first and second interviews. A faculty-advisor-facilitator could have encouraged this student to practice wholeness--that is, to examine her personal attributes and roles objectively, much in the same way that an outside observer would. Through counseling an advisor might lead **her** to say, "This is my second interview; I guess I was more anxious than I thought. I see this now." Here, the student has decided on the basis of self observation that she had originally misjudged an internal state. Advisors as facilitators can prompt and encourage the undergraduate to generate an internal frame of reference and in this way monitor her/his own conscious activity prior to and during the process of behaving in a particular environment.

Through an intense engagement with faculty (in the context of advising), the student may discover an opportunity to grow emotionally. Advising provides access to the creative side of the

student's life. But how is a faculty member to stimulate this attribute of self regulation? The answer is to go beyond the traditional role of addressing methodologies in the classroom and to facilitate the practice of wholeness in students. As one faculty member expressed it so aptly in a recent Forum/Assembly, " We need to become more sensitive to the *whole* student." Or, in other words, we must "Ask students [and be concerned] about their lives and problems."

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The opinions printed here belong solely to the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editorial staff or of the Faculty Center. If you would like to respond, e-mail Nienhuis by the 8th of the month.