

May 11, 2018 response to “The Application of Theories of Development to Academic Advising Proactice” by Sherri Williams, 2007.

Within the three theory clusters applicable to identity development in students, my favorite theory is one established by Crookston as he draws on Chickering’s developmental vectors: developing competence, developing autonomy, and developing a purpose. These three vectors sound quite similar to MSU’s three pillars of a public affairs mission. Crookston calls this style “developmental advising,” and he has been credited for the origination of this concept. This style feels closest to how I tend to advise students, which should come as no surprise because Crookston describes this type as akin to teaching.

Williams tells us that Crookston sees this process as “a teaching function based on a negotiated agreement between the student and the teacher [or advisor] in which varying degrees of learning by both parties to the transaction are the product.” This two-way learning leads to individual, group, and community growth and development. This advising style is perfect for my THE 515 *Theatre for Social Change* course because I have set this course up as an integrated service-learning class where my students apply what they learn from written material to practical work within a diverse community. This course also serves as the BA/BS Theater students’ Public Affairs Capstone.

The very nature of service-learning involves a two-way process where students learn through service and their charges are served by learning from my students. Given that Fielstein argues the need for more prescriptive prerequisites prior to developmental advising/teaching, it makes sense that my course is a 500-level capstone. In fact, the “intrusive advising model” geared toward first generation, minority, or cognitively different students may serve as my students’ approach to the work they do in this class with their community partners. My students work with kids who have cognitive disabilities, an involvement that often requires more prescriptive or regulatory activity. In this respect, we might say that my students use their developmental advising skills to foster growth in younger charges who themselves need a more intrusive advising approach.

In this way, both my students and their charges experience academic success. For my students in particular, at the end of their academic career, this course of action achieves what Lowenstein describes as a way to “gain perspective on her or his entire education and provide an opportunity to develop higher-order thinking skills” that comes about through what is known as the learning-centered paradigm. I teach my students, they in turn teach their charges, so this cycle of learning/advising continues outside of my classroom.

Mid-semester in my course we turn from readings on theatre for social change to practical work that incorporates both my students’ accumulated academic knowledge from book learning as well as their experiential knowledge with their community partners. The class then better resembles the social constructivist model

mentioned at the article's end. This is a praxis-oriented approach that lets my students learn collaboratively from and through each other. Knowledge in this model is gained through social interaction wherein my THE 515 students work as a group to build an original performance piece. Here, each member of the group becomes both actor in the performance and contributing construction role: set design, community outreach, costuming, directing, etc.

My students in this class thus walk away with an individual understanding of materials covered as well as a sense of group purpose in relation to both their service-learning work with community partners and their collaboratively built ensemble piece. In all of these ways, my THE 515 capstone course institutes a style of teaching and learning that works successfully toward developmental advising practice, both in and outside of the classroom. It thus functions as one form of dissemination into both the student environment and the surrounding cultural community.