



Highlighting Academic Advisors

00:08–00:31

Andrew Coletti: Hello and welcome to this episode of The T in Teaching. This episode is focused on how to best utilize advisors and the advising department. In this episode, I interviewed the senior director of the Center for Undergraduate advising Julian White. Julian White has spent the last 12 years working in Temple's center for undergraduate advising, 10 of which he has spent as the senior director.

00:31–00:56

Andrew Coletti: Before becoming the Senior Director of the Center for Advising Julian White worked as an academic advisor, working directly with students, developing academic plans, and helping them with personal goals. Prior to working at Temple, he served as an academic counselor at Syracuse University. Later, transitioning to associate director of Graduate Preparation programs. Thank you for listening and please enjoy. With me, I have Julian White. Thanks for being here, Julian.

00:56–00:58

Julian White: Thank you, Andrew. It's a pleasure to be here.

00:58–01:16

Andrew Coletti: Yeah, it's great to have you and I'm really excited to get your perspective on advising. I mean, you've worked for Temple for a while, and I want to start about just broadly defining giving an overview of the advising department's mission and the objectives and how you guys in your department are able to help both faculty and students succeed, especially at the start of the semester.

01:16–01:35

Julian White: Sure. So first, I do want to say again how grateful I am for this opportunity. I always, when I'm ever asked to talk about undergraduate advising, I always start by conceding that if you were asked traditional freshman sort of, what made them choose their particular school, whether it's Temple University or Fox, I doubt anyone would say academic advising. Right?

01:35–01:54

Julian White: And yet, when you think about how important it is to their ability to successfully graduate, once they've actually done their first year, you'd be hard pressed to find a single student who didn't: A) not only use it wisely, but recognize how critical and vital a role it plays in their undergraduate experience. So I'll start with your question, which is, so what's our mission?

01:54–02:17

Julian White: And it is very much that. So, if you go to our website, you know, spoiler, it's right there front and center and our purpose, our goal is really to provide quality academic advising services that a) empower students to make informed decisions. You know, we always tell the students it's not for us to tell you what to do. We just want to help you make an informed decision about your education, your future career, and also your personal and professional life.

02:17–02:28

Julian White: As a temple student and certainly as a Fox student. In simplest terms, we simply want to equip students with the resources and the services that will help them to graduate on time from this university.

02:28–02:45

Andrew Coletti: Great. Thank you. And just as a side note, it should be worth saying that this podcast will have the link to Fox's academic advising page. So, if you do want to go and learn a little bit more information as you just said, that link will be provided. So, let's talk a little bit about the range of academic and nonacademic services that your department provides.

02:45–02:53

Andrew Coletti: Specifically, I like, as you put it, both for succeeding at higher education but also professional development. Can you talk a little about those services that you guys provide?

02:53–03:16

Julian White: Yeah, sure. So, when I talk about first succeeding, it's important to acknowledge that the average freshman has had zero or very limited exposure to college. And so, advising first and foremost, tries to set them up on the right path to give them the tools and services that will get them ready to thrive. Many folks who aren't familiar with higher ed. aren't aware of this.

03:16–03:40

Julian White: But, you know, we facilitate orientation. So as soon as the students are admitted to Temple, one of the first hands, all handoffs is to undergraduate advising. We sort of become the first face for the fox school, if you are. And so, we take it from there. In terms of their professional growth., one of the things that I think distinguishes both advising and Fox and maybe at Temple is that we always strive to work collaboratively with the students.

03:40–04:02

Julian White: You know, we want to help the students: a) develop individual plans for academic success because we realize that their path is not always going to reflect what their peers looks like. So we want to find the path that works best for them. We do want them to understand Temple's policies; There are a lot of them. So, part of our goal and part of our job is to help them make sense of the different rules and regulations and follow them appropriately.

04:02–04:21

Julian White: How to make use of all the resources. Often times students aren't aware of what's out there and so our goal is to help not only educate them on what exists, but to be the touch point, to help them move to that resource that hopefully get them over any roadblocks and then really start to engage in what I like to call a process of reflection and decision making that will hopefully promote their achievement.

04:21–04:42

Julian White: It really is a partnership. And, you know, I know that word gets bounced around a lot, but I do want to think of it as a partnership. We're working together and it's the same with faculty, right? So, we partner with faculty to promote their respective majors. Obviously, some of the events and programs that are happening in their departments, I mentioned that at the point of the students at mission were that touch point.

04:42–05:05

Julian White: I don't think we ever lose that right. So, because there are so many services, there's so many. I mean, if you look at everything that exists at Temple, it'd be like the size of a phone book if students even know what that still is today. But it's very easy to tell the student to talk to their academic advisor because we are the people, the office, the individuals that can sort of help them cut through the noise and get exactly to where they want to go.

05:05–05:25

Julian White: So, whether it's tutoring, whether it's wellness resources, whether it's accessibility to a class or learning disability, we can help connect into all of that. Certainly, how to find financial resources. There are

very few offices that advising doesn't interact with you, and because we are often the first point of contact for the students, my hope is that it's easier for them to reach out to us and find us when they need something.

05:25–05:43

Andrew Coletti: Yeah, that's great. And I mean, I think you find the range and what a wide range of services it really is that you guys provide. And one a couple of things that were standing out to me and what you said was things like the word facility, collaborate and partnership specifically with students, but also faculty as well. And I want to start with faculty.

05:43–05:54

Andrew Coletti: Can you share a few examples or maybe some ways in which your department is able to collaborate with faculty members and find success, whether it is in any one of those ranges of services that you provide?

05:54–06:16

Julian White: Certainly. So, I mentioned that we are a big of a touchpoint to the student. Just as important in terms of establishing a connection are the instructors and the faculty who teach their courses. So as much as the students are going to be getting to know their instructors and learning their material, we can sort of be that sort of a bridge between what's happening in the class and how outside of the classroom can maybe supplement that in some ways.

06:16–06:43

Julian White: So, what I mean by that, So it's the rare temple or even college student who at some point doesn't take a course where despite their best efforts, it's not going the way they thought and they want to maybe need some help. That's usually how advising and faculty work hand in hand, because if it's an academic struggle or a challenge, the student may reach out to the instructor or the instructor may see that student struggling and reach out to advising, and then we get the student the help they need.

06:44–07:04

Julian White: More and more we're seeing that it's not always the academic challenges, it's the interpersonal challenges. It's the getting along with roommates, adjusting with the stress of college. It's time management. Again, instructors can sometimes see that, realize that maybe the student needs a bit of help, reach out to advising and we become the bridge to then connect them to the university.

07:04–07:21

Julian White: A resource exists to help them, but there are also some positives there too, right? So, we realize that for many students, college is all about discovery. It's about finding their path. It's about finding the perfect major. It's about finding that perfect career. And those are the different ways that we partner with faculty. We pivoted lots of events during the academic year.

07:21–07:43

Julian White: Everything ranging from major minor fairs to different organizational events. We have student organizations, and so we work with the departments to both connect students to those events, to connect students with the majors, to help them figure out why does this major make more sense for me versus another? And then what are the organizations that exist both in the professional realm on campus and how we connect the students to it?

07:43–08:03

Julian White: The third one, and this is actually one we developed intentionally because of some of the developmental challenges and really goals we set with students. So we have two courses that are developed out of advising and taught by undergraduate advisors. One is our BA 1001 freshman seminar class. The goal of that class is to help students, freshmen transition to college.

08:03–08:24

Julian White: But we have a supplement course, our BA 1002 course, which is all about major exploration. And that class really invites the different faculty from every Fox Department to really come in and explain the different majors to students. One thing I've always found is that we get some freshmen who come in, know they're going to be accounting and don't then look at anything else, and they know they're going to be finding a story.

08:25–08:49

Julian White: They know they're going to be risky, like about the BA 1002 course, about like about the ability for us to connect with students and explore other options is that you don't know what you don't know. And so, you're able to sort of see the range of options that are available to you and hopefully, even if it becomes a secondary major or even a minor, your pathway, your trajectory, your future is now open in a way because we've established that kind of bond.

08:49–09:06

Andrew Coletti: Thank you. That was really well said. And I think you guys serve a really pivotal role, especially because faculty have so many classes, so many students, it's hard for them to and this word kept coming up was the individual, the individual person, the individual needs, whether it's academic goals or their personal goals or issues that they may be dealing with.

09:06–09:26

Andrew Coletti: And you're able to kind of reach out, identify those issues for students and faculty alike, and kind of provide that service. So I think that made a lot of sense about how you guys are able to help faculty. But you also obviously mentioned a lot about students as well. And one thing was creating those, whether again, it's an academic or personal plan to help a student and the individual.

09:26–09:37

Andrew Coletti: You talked about some of the strategies that your department employs to try and help them. You talk a little bit more about how and what strategies your office tries to use to help the individual student get on their level.

09:37–10:01

Julian White: Sure. So, if you know anything about undergraduate advisor and Fox, you realize that we take what's called a developmental approach. And what it means is how we treat our freshman is going to be very different than how we treat a senior. The biggest difference that it sometimes takes students a little bit of time to figure out is that at the freshman sophomore level, they're not really assigned a specific academic advisor, and some of them are shocked by that.

10:01–10:27

Julian White: Yeah, because we recognize really quickly that there are a lot more of them than there are of us. But we also know how badly freshmen and sophomores typically need advice because they're just getting started. And so what we've done is we've tried to create a model where because they're not assigned one specific advisor, if they're a freshman or a sophomore, which our temple is, any one less whose earned less than 60 credits, they can see any member of our freshman sophomore team.

10:27–10:47

Julian White: Now they've got choices. So instead of going into our appointment system and only seeing the availability of one advisor, they may now have the availability of five advisors that they can see. And now they have more options to come in and start doing some of that developmental work that will see them successfully making progression through their academic years.

10:47–11:07

Julian White: But we often get the response. But then what if I really like this advisor? What if I only want to work with one? Well, they can do that too. So as much as they're not assigned one advisor, when they go to our appointment system, they'll see every freshman, sophomore advisor, if there is one that they've established a good connection or a rapport with, then they can always work and seek that specific advisor out.

11:07–11:28

Julian White: So, we wouldn't stop them from doing that. When they become a junior, they will then be assigned their specific advisor based on their declared major, because if you look at our foundation too, you're going to find that most of our Fox students are taking the exact same courses until their junior year, and that's when it starts to shift and evolve based on their declared major.

11:28–11:51

Julian White: And it's at that point that they really then want to work with someone to make sure that they're taking the courses in their proper sequence, but also starting to pad out their courses, their coursework with experiences that we know are going to enrich both their resume down the road, but also their experience, like going abroad, like finding an internship, and that's where they're declared major advisor that they get their junior year will help them.

11:51–12:12

Julian White: And then of course the important thing is: graduate, right? So, it's not just that we sort of help them figure out their specific major, but those junior senior advisors are also responsible for clearing the students for their degrees. So, we kind of before they enter their senior year, we work with the students to develop what's called a graduation audit and that all it helps them plug out their last two semesters and make sure that they're ready to graduate.

12:12–12:33

Andrew Coletti: Well, I think the developmental approach that you guys take makes a lot of sense, both based on where students are at in their time and graduating freshman and sophomore, but also along their majors. I think that makes a ton of sense and it really lets students in because I remember my time in undergraduate and especially as a freshman running into the advising office on the last day that I could to change classes or think about what I would take for next semester.

12:33–12:53

Andrew Coletti: And I remember how busy it was even for them, but they were just able to help me and how gracious I was. They were able to offer that service. So I think it's great, especially for the younger students, the freshmen and sophomores, like you said, to have that opportunity go in, see whoever they can get the help they need one way or the other, and then hammer down on whoever is right for them later and specialized down their career path.

12:53–13:08

Andrew Coletti: And I think that speaks a little bit to kind of how hectic the start of the semester gets. And nobody knows that better than advisors. So as is podcast going to be dropping, it's going to be the start of the semester. I'm sure you feel and I'm sure the students and faculty feel it as well. Finally, I just want to end on kind of what do you want to say?

13:08–13:20

Andrew Coletti: Open mic, Julian, what do you want to say to students and faculty member as the semester gets started, as we're all a little nervous about how everything's going to get going, what do they need to know and what should they be looking to your department for as the semester gets started?

13:20–13:41

Julian White: Sure. So first, I'm glad you pointing out the craziness, right? Because it's not always like that. And I think part of why you see that craziness is because oftentimes it's hard to get students to recognize and realize that when you start to plan, you don't have to find yourself having to scramble and see. So, you talked about the first couple of weeks of the semester.

13:42–14:06

Julian White: That's typically the busiest time for us, which means it's the worst time to try to sit down with an advisor and try to build a four-year plan, which we want everyone to do the first week of classes. It's all about getting you into your fall classes by that point. So, what's my takeaway? Right? So, from a from an advising standpoint, planning ahead, one of my best quotes, I should say is that planning is sort of bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it today.

14:06–14:27

Julian White: That's awesome. I like that because I cannot say enough about how many emails I get from students after they've missed the deadline, or they failed the class or a class is closed and there's not much we can do at that point. But if we could turn back the clock, if you could bring that future reality and participate and plan around there right now, well, that's what we can be most successful.

14:27–14:46

Julian White: So for me, it's about forget the first couple of weeks. The reason why I'm glad this podcast is dropping when you guys is that I would say before the end of the first month, try to schedule an appointment with your academic advisor. And there's two ways to do that. We try to make it as easy as possible. And you mentioned that this, this podcast will be going to our website.

14:46–15:05

Julian White: If you go to our website, you'll, you'll see how do you meet with an advisor and we'll take you to our website where you'll be able to book an appointment with an advisor. That's the best approach. But we realize that college students, like most people, tend to operate in the moment. And so if you just happened to be walking by our office, we have what's called same day advising.

15:05–15:24

Julian White: You don't have to book an appointment, you don't have to go to your appointment system. You can just walk in and say, Hey, can I see the same day? Advisor Now it's first come, first serve. So the earlier you come in, the more likely you'll be able to see someone. But we do try to take away some of the pressure of always planning ahead because you realize that every college student will be at that point.

15:25–15:50

Julian White: So you can come in and see us. We're open Monday through Friday 9 to 5. You can see the same day. Advisor The last thing I'll point out to is we often hear that when, when they go to the appointment system, all the appointments are booked. We are popular. It does feel very fast. The other and last takeaway I will say is that if you're looking for an appointment, if you want to schedule a time to meet with your assigned advisor, or if you're a freshman sophomore, you want to see the availability of freshman and sophomore advisors.

15:50–16:01

Julian White: The best time to check is Wednesday at 5 p.m. every Wednesday at five advisors post appointments for the following week. So you're going to have the best options Wednesdays at five.

16:02–16:16

Andrew Coletti: I like that. That's a little insider to see you guys about it. Julian, thanks so much. I know this is a busy time of the year for you as this message get started, but I really think this information is really

important for both students and faculty to have, and hopefully they've been proactive. Hopefully they've already started to make their plan.

16:16–16:46

Andrew Coletti: But if they haven't already, as you were kind of hinting at, there's no time like the present. So I want to say thank you again for joining us on the steps of the podcast, and thanks for sharing your experience. Julian Thank you, Andrea. This is great.

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