

2017-2018 First Year of Studies' Anniversary Lecture Series on Advising

The 2017-2018 First Year of Studies' Anniversary Lecture Series on Advising was designed to celebrate the University of Notre Dame's First Year of Studies' dedication to and innovation in the field of undergraduate advising. The presentations in the series were as follows:

- *Introductions to The First Year of Studies Anniversary Lecture Series* by Hugh R. Page
- *Not an Easy Place: New Strategies for Helping Anxious Students* by Elizabeth Wilcox, September 25, 2017
- *The Architect of Hope* by Elizabeth Wilcox, September 25, 2017
- *Culturally Competent Advising: Beyond the Demographics*, by Pamela Nolan Young, November 13, 2017
- *Encouraging Achievement on an Uneven Playing Field: Framing the Discussion*, by Jennifer Fox and Holly Martin, November 13, 2017
- *Establishing an Advising Community: Launching an Organization and Fostering Scholarship*, by Mathew Bumbalough, February 26, 2018

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Culturally Competent Advising: Beyond the Demographics

Pamela Nolan Young, Director for Academic Diversity and Inclusion, University of Notre Dame

Thank you to Jenny Fox and Holly Martin for inviting me to address you, as you mark the 55th year of First Year Advising.

I have titled my remarks *Culturally Competent Advising beyond the Demographics*. I feel especially honored to be with you, as you have among your midst many experts on this subject; in fact Maureen Dawson and Cecilia Lucero are going to be addressing faculty on inclusive advising tomorrow. As is said in the African American tradition, I am preaching to the choir. As you know that expression refers to what appears to be the pointlessness of a preacher trying to convert the choir as it is assumed, the choir already shares the preacher's beliefs. I know you all share many of the beliefs I will describe. Nonetheless, the choir needs to hear the sermon as well. I hope my remarks will be like a good sermon, remind you of the good work you are called to do, inspire you to do more, and suggest an approach that you might use to accomplish your work.

Throughout my remarks, I will use the terms "inclusive advising" and "culturally competent advising" interchangeably. As I will discuss shortly, my preference is inclusive advising.

Before I go on, I should acknowledge that there are many methodologies for conducting student advising. Appreciative advising, intrusive advising, developmental advising, shared advising, strengths-based advising, and Socratic advising just to name a few. Each of these models shares one goal - student success. Inclusive advising is no different – the goal remains student success. Some of you may be familiar with the term inclusive advising used in reference to students with a disability. I am, however, using the term in a different context.

Over a decade ago, the Association of American Colleges and Universities commissioned a series of white papers on inclusive excellence. Each of the three commissioned papers - first— *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective*; the second *Achieving Equitable Educational Outcomes with All Students: The Institution's Roles and Responsibilities*; and the third, *Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions*— were designed to answer several key questions: "What will the next generation of work on inclusion and excellence look like? How will both our thinking and our actions need to

shift? Who will need to be involved? How will we know we are accomplishing our goals?” The work in the papers serves as a guide to assist colleges and universities to (a) integrate their diversity and quality efforts, (b) situate this work at the core of institutional functioning, and (c) realize the educational benefits available to students and to the institution when this integration is done well and sustained over time.¹

The central premise of inclusive excellence holds that universities should intentionally integrate their diversity efforts into the core aspects of their institutions—such as their academic priorities, leadership, quality improvement initiatives, decision-making, day-to-day operations, and organizational cultures—in order to maximize success.

The work of the AACU (Association of American Colleges and Universities) asks institutions to reexamine practices and policies from a holistic point of view. It recognizes the interconnectedness of access, equity, inclusion and diversity, and further asserts that these concepts are not independent of academic rigor, but rather, are indicators of academic excellence.

My use of inclusive advising is based on this definition. Inclusive advising asks whether advisors are applying a holistic approach that addresses diversity, equity, inclusion and excellence. We will examine the four components of inclusive advising and follow the definitions with a few case studies. I will close my remarks with a summary of the main points and some suggestions for you as you consider next steps for your work.

The first component in the AACU approach is **diversity**. Diversity in this context is defined in terms of both compositional or proportional demographic diversity and individual diversity or difference. Thus, advisors would take note of personality, learning styles, life experiences, social and group differences, as well as race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, country of origin, ability, and cultural, religious or political affiliations.

An example may aid in comprehension. It is common for an advisor to be knowledgeable about the percentage of Asian Americans in a class, to know if a particular student so identifies and/or

¹ Williams, D. A., Berger, J. B., & McClendon, S. A. (2005). *Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-Secondary Institutions* [Pamphlet]. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

to have information about that student's religious background and, in some instances, cultural preferences. Inclusive advising suggests that such knowledge is the beginning of the conversation regarding advising. In our example, the advisor has knowledge of the demographic information and some information about personal differences, but the advisor has yet to examine or consider equity, inclusion, and excellence.

Let us continue with **equity**. Practitioners of inclusive advising exhibit equity when they are mindful or take note of patterns of inequality in student outcomes, and they take personal and institutional responsibility to eliminate the inequality. Another example may be helpful here. In a recent discussion with a colleague from a small liberal arts college in the North East, we discussed the process of assessment she and other colleagues used to review a study abroad program after one advisor had suggested a program to a student and the student had expressed concerns. Anecdotally, the advisors noted that many students from underrepresented groups did not take advantage of the college's study abroad options even though those options posed limited additional financial cost. Some had assumed erroneously that cost or financial reasons were a barrier.

The equity analysis utilized by my friend and her colleagues revealed that students from underrepresented groups were indeed not taking advantage of study abroad options at the same rate as their peers. The analysis revealed a number of factors contributed to the disparity. For example, the terminology used "study abroad" harken to a past ages when only the wealthy traveled. The office underwent a face-lift and became the Office of International Study. Additionally, the program learned that many families were concerned about sending a daughter unchaperoned to a foreign country. As a result, additional information was produced for parents to assist them in better understanding the risks and advantages of international study. Further, other resources that explained finances or promoted scholarships were more prominently displayed. These actions met the needs of the initial student the advisor was trying to assist and they lead to changes on an institutional level that will benefit all students. Yes, this is a true story.

Several colleges have adopted inclusive excellence as the benchmark for their work. Each defines **inclusion** a little differently. I am particularly fond of the definition used at the University of Colorado, which simply states, "Inclusion intentionally creates work, learning,

and service environments, which are mindful of every member reaching their full potential.” However, the definition at the University of Wisconsin is certainly more comprehensive. Inclusion at Wisconsin is defined as “the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.” (<https://www.wisconsin.edu/inclusive-excellence/>) That is quite a mouthful! You can see why I prefer the more simple definition from the University of Colorado.

Inclusion asks who and what have we left out, and it seeks ways to bring in or encompass the missing. Further, inclusion recognizes the positive benefits we derive from our interconnectedness - greater awareness, knowledge and empathy.

Again, an illustration might be useful, so let us focus on an example among you advisors. Many of you have worked for the university for many years and some of you have prior experience from other departments. Those of you with extensive experience may have extensive knowledge. Often, we take for granted the information that to us has become common knowledge or routine. One way you can ensure that the students you work with have an equitable and inclusive advising experience is to share information amongst yourselves. I have to admit here that I do not know the interworking of the unit well enough to know whether you have a formal method in place for information sharing. If you do, I applaud you. If you do not, may I suggest that you start a formal process for sharing information and that you document it in a manner that is searchable and updatable? Unintentional inequity can come from difference in the knowledge of advisors. I am not suggesting here that any one of you would not ask a question of a peer to learn the answer to a question one did not know; rather what I am suggesting is that institutions that seek diversity, inclusion, equity and excellence have in place structures that support that objective. Therefore, you should be asking yourselves: how do you ensure your work meets these objectives systematically?

Excellence. We all know the definition of excellence - the quality of being outstanding or extremely good. The many synonyms for excellence include brilliance, greatness, superiority, distinctiveness, first rate, and the one I would like to use, preeminent. Late last week I had the opportunity to facilitate a workshop on fairness and respect for the Enrollment Division. I started my presentation with an excerpt from their mission statement. Paraphrased it reads, “The Enrollment Division supports the University’s mission of becoming a preeminent research university with a distinctive Catholic mission and an unsurpassed undergraduate education.” <https://enrollmentdivision.nd.edu/>) This statement is both their mission and I would argue their definition of excellence. What I love about this statement is that it could be used for any department or division on campus, especially if we altered the last phrase to state an unsurpassed learning environment. For example, “the facilities department supports the University’s mission of becoming a preeminent research university with a distinctive Catholic mission and an unsurpassed learning environment.” If only it was that simple. The truth is that being excellent requires intentionality. The inclusive excellence model recognizes that excellence requires intentional actions by both individuals and institutions. Here, in part, is the definition used at the University of Arizona, “Inclusive Excellence — the systemic, institutional, cultural transformation approach to campus diversity — is designed to engage the rich array of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni in the work of embedding diversity and inclusiveness throughout the University of Arizona.” Inclusive excellence is defined as a strategy for transforming the University of Arizona into an institution that conceptualizes inclusiveness and excellence as one in the same, makes inclusiveness ubiquitous, assigns responsibility for inclusiveness to everyone on campus, and utilizes a broad definition of diversity and inclusiveness.

The next step is to ask how you will, as advisors in the First Year Studies exhibit inclusive excellence in the work that you do. This is not a question I can answer for you; however, it is one we could begin to explore together with a few case studies.

I would like us to divide into small groups, each group will take 5 minutes to read and discuss a case study. Thereafter, in a large group, we will review the case studies answering the questions presented and thinking about the issues presented through the lens of inclusive excellence – diversity, equity, inclusion and excellence.

Slide 8	Diversity	Equity	Inclusion	Excellence
Case Study 1 Denisa's Dilemma	We don't know race but might guess this is a student of color	? Is there something systemic that prevented entry into the club?	Need to explore the inclusion in the club	
Slide 9 Case Study 2 Isaiah's Issues	Race, sexual orientation of Isaiah and roommate	Make sure Isaiah has support to be successful, a failure is obviously bad for Isaiah and will also reinforce a stereotype	Education needed	
Slide 10 Case Study 3 Amal's Angst	Amal, gender ethnicity	No equitable learning environment if Amal is excluded	Amal excluded	
Personal				
Additional Resources	University of Southern California Equity Score Card, Center for Urban Education AACU Diversity Score card based on research by Berger and others			

	Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Utica College and at New England Resource Center for Higher Ed
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Thank you for your participation. I would like to close with the takeaway: inclusive advising or culturally competent advising goes beyond demographics. As practitioners of inclusive excellence, we recognize that excellence will not be achieved if we are not attentive to diversity, inclusion, and equity. Their interconnectedness allows true excellence to occur. Inclusive excellence requires intentional action as individuals and through the institutions we belong to. Further, we seek for ourselves and the institutions we represent the benefits of inclusive excellence - greater awareness, knowledge and empathy. As we saw in the discussions from the case studies together, we can identify issues and assist all students in navigating the obstacles that present barriers to their success.

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55th Anniversary Lecture Series for the Moreau First Year Studies Program

Pamela Nolan Young,
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University Of Notre Dame
November 13, 2017

*Culturally Competent Advising:
Beyond the Demographics*

Inclusive Excellence

The central premise of Inclusive Excellence holds that universities should intentionally integrate their diversity efforts into the core aspects of their institutions—such as their academic priorities, leadership, quality improvement initiatives, decision-making, day-to-day operations, and organizational cultures—in order to maximize success.

Diversity



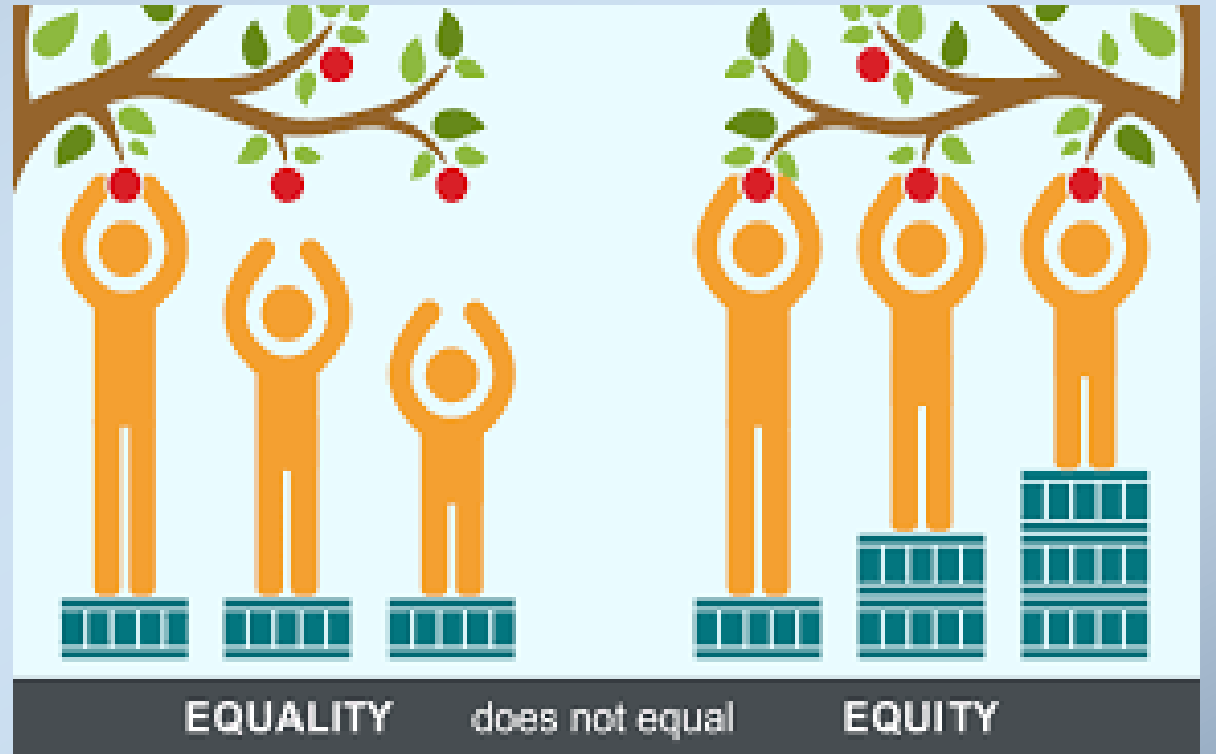
Compositional or
proportional demographic
diversity

Individual diversity or
difference

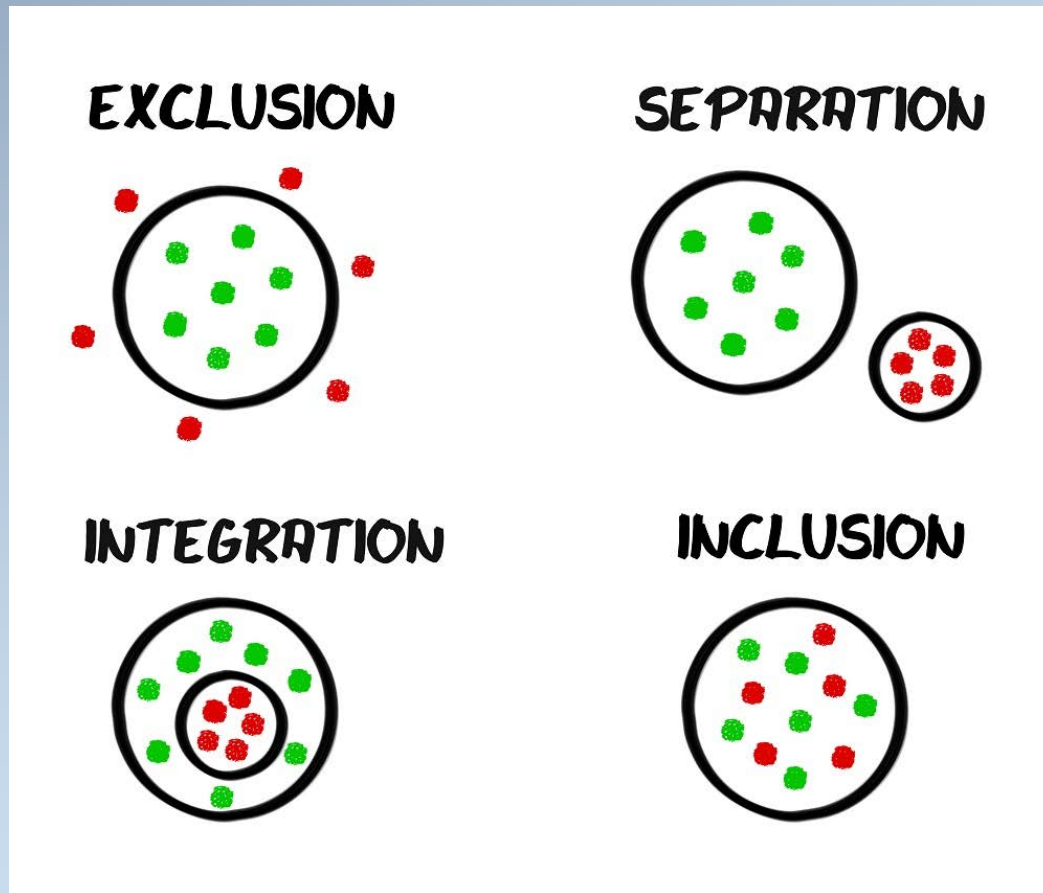
Equity

Take note of patterns of inequality in student outcomes

Take personal and institutional responsibility to eliminate the inequality



Inclusion



Active, intentional, and ongoing engagement—in ways that increase one's awareness and content knowledge.

So that one has empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

Excellence

A preeminent research university with a distinctive Catholic mission and an unsurpassed undergraduate education.



Denisa's Dilemma

A first-year student comes to your office on a Tuesday during fall semester Week 11 (a few weeks prior to Thanksgiving break) and tells you that she has not been to her classes for one week. She says that she "freaked out" a week ago and couldn't concentrate, get organized, or retain anything. She went home to Detroit for the weekend and hung out with her old high school friends, Stephanie and LaDonna, who are working at Maurice's, a retail clothing store. She thinks Detroit is where she belongs. She feels she is more like the people in her community than anyone here. She reports that she has no motivation or ability to complete her classes here and just needs help withdrawing. You review the midterm grades and see that the student was doing very well at midterm. She had no grade below a B-. You recall seeing her just after midterms and she was content with her grades and optimistic about doing even better.

You know that she had expressed interest in joining a student organization. She seemed to be making friends. When you ask about the club, she does not respond.

- What does the information given tell you about the issues for the student and the type of help she might need?
- What are possible issues that need to be addressed by the student?
- What are goals that might apply to the student?
- What decisions might need to be made (either by the advisor or the student)?

Isaiah issues

Isaiah an 18-year-old, first-generation, underprepared, undecided student. He is from a large urban city in his state. No one in his family has gone to college before, and yet they feel a college education is necessary. Isaiah's parents are happy that he has a chance at a career, not just a factory job. Isaiah does not know what interests him, but he knows that he does not want to work in a factory for the rest of his life. His folks encouraged him go to college and they try are supportive. They want Isaiah to pursue a career that will guarantee him a high paying salary. Recently, Isaiah realized his roommate has not been exposed to many different types of people or ideas. Tom, Isaiah's roommate, is from a small rural hometown of three hundred residents. Tom appears uncomfortable with Isaiah, who is an African American and openly gay. Although Tom has not been rude to him, Isaiah overheard him say, "I did not think there would be "people like that" here.

Isaiah, by all appearances, seems kind, responsible, and intelligent, but he does not have the same strong educational background that many of his peers do and, thus, he is entering college with many academic deficiencies. Consequently, he is insecure, nervous, and doubtful about his chances of succeeding.

- What does the information given tell you about the issues for the student and the type of help he might need?
- What are possible issues that need to be addressed by the student?
- What are goals that might apply to the student?
- What decisions might need to be made (either by the advisor or the student)?

Amal's Angst

Amal is a transfer student from the University of London. She lived most of her life in Syria, but left with her family due to the political unrest. Amal and her family are Christian, as are approximately 10 percent of all Syrians.

In her first semester, Amal is taking an interdisciplinary course on Judaism, Islam and Christianity. During a class discussion the issue of religious fundamentalism versus religious fanaticism came up, specifically the bombing of the NYC World Trade Center. This prompted further conversation on Islam, and ISIS. Many of the white students believed that all people in the Middle East were either Muslim or Jewish. The conversation grew more heated. When Amal stated she was Christian and Syrian some of her classmates told her, she was lying. Amal is one of two students from the Middle East in the class. Aminah is Muslim and from Lebanon.

Because the instructor did not intercede, Amal is now very uncomfortable speaking up or talking in class. Instead, Amal has approached you, her academic advisor, for advice and guidance. Amal tells you that she does not feel welcome in the class and is worried that the instructor will be biased against her because she is from the Middle East. Amal has never been in this situation and is wary about the institutional climate or the support she has available to her. As a result, Amal is discouraged and is considering leaving college because she feels unsupported and uncomfortable.

- What does the information given tell you about the issues for the student and the type of help she might need?
- What are possible issues that need to be addressed by the student?
- What are goals that might apply to the student?
- What decisions might need to be made (either by the advisor or the student)?

Questions and Answers



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