

My Philosophy of Career and Academic Advising

I believe the purpose of advising is to provide information and resources to students to allow them to make better decisions and to guide them without coercion in the right direction. When I advise students, I aspire to help them to the best of my abilities, and to show them how to help themselves through difficult and often confusing decisions. I enjoy working with students in and out of the classroom. The thing I value most about working with students is knowing that I have made a difference in the lives of another, that my words and deeds inspire them to further their education and their lives. This philosophy of advising works for both academic advising and career advising.

My advising style requires me to be knowledgeable about more than just the classes offered and requirements for graduation. My job as an advisor is to allow students' dreams to become reality while keeping them focused on both the probable and the practical. There is no one-size-fits-all model for advising students, but I strive to include some personal interaction after resolving any issues or problems. For those not in their final year of study, I ask about internships or co-ops, job fairs, resume prep, and encourage them to sign up for Handshake and LinkedIn. I tell them about the great services of the Career Center with interview preparation, resume workshops, and help with applications. When students are actively working internships between semesters or while on break, I remind them to log their hours with the various accreditation agencies.

For students in their final year of study, I verify their activity level on LinkedIn, talk to them about their specific job goals, and give them additional resources such as the graduate coordinator in our college who can provide names of firms that have historically hired Virginia Tech graduates. When I meet with faculty members, I also ask what advice they give to students so that I am not providing conflicting advice. I check with the program chairs to make sure that what I discuss with the students is relevant and accurate. Finally, while discussing graduation I again go over all of the steps to make sure they are putting themselves in the best position for their new career. At graduation, I ask that they keep in contact and let me know how about their career. My greatest accomplishment as an advisor is when I see my students graduate and later hear about their successes in life.

When I was a student, my advisors, especially those who took the time to get to know me, guided my own academic successes. I strive to emulate that same style of advising. The ideas, theories, and methods that have most affected my advising are keeping an open ear and mind, to both hear and listen to the students, and to empathize with them and see their viewpoint. I know I am making a difference for students when they stop by to tell me how their semester is going, even when I am no longer their advisor. What excites me about working with students is the knowledge that I can help make a difference in their lives.

Vern Ferguson