

Make the Connection: Improving Academic Advising at CBU

Christian Brothers University (CBU) in Memphis, Tennessee, is committed to providing students of all backgrounds and faith traditions with a rich educational experience in a supportive environment designed to prepare them to meet the challenges of a complex, ever-changing world. Although faculty members are required to be actively engaged in research and professional development, CBU places primary emphasis on teaching excellence and service to the University and wider community. Indeed, a firm belief in the vocational nature of teaching extends beyond the classroom to a faculty member's role as an advisor.

Key faculty members view our reaffirmation effort as a comprehensive process designed to enhance the learning culture at CBU. An extensive series of university-wide conversations and focus groups led to our decision to focus on improving academic advising for our Quality Enhancement Plan. This focus reflects our mission, vision, and Catholic identity as a university that values its calling to care for each individual student, and since advising is an especially important form of teaching (and learning), this focus will significantly increase our prospects for improving student learning. Indeed, the literature in this area suggests that effective advising is perhaps "the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience."

As a result of a careful review and consideration of the literature and institutional data relevant to effective advising practices and improving academic advising at CBU, we have developed a QEP designed to engage students in creating dynamic plans to realize their personal, educational, and career goals and in developing commitments to lifelong learning and service to society. This engagement of students will occur within a culture of shared responsibility among students and advisors. To this end, we will (1) implement essential advising processes and practices, (2) develop a systematic advisor training program, and (3) create a centralized center for academic advising.

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