

Clark College- Disability Supp. | Penguin Pathways - Advising and Career Services with Emily Meoz

Good morning, good morning, Penguin Nation. Rhianna Johnson here, director of Guided Pathways, welcoming you to our *Penguin Pathways* podcast. We have an exciting guest in the building today, and I'm excited to introduce her soon. Here we go.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

All right. So welcome to the studio, Emily Meoz. We've got the director of advising and career services with us today. And I'm really interested to hear about everything that's happening in those areas.

Thanks for having me. Really excited to be here.

Wonderful. So how long have you been in the role now?

I've been in the role for about eight months.

OK, great. So relatively newer.

Still relatively new.

Awesome. Well, we're excited to hear about all the good things happening for student success related to advising and career services. So let's dig in and talk a little bit about the importance of academic planning in students' pathways.

Advising and career services are really a fundamental component of the Guided Pathways model, critical in providing students with a strong framework for understanding what courses they need to take in order to reach their goals, whether that be to obtain a vocational degree or certificate, or whether they want to transfer into a university. In many of the state documents, advising, in particular, is just really a fundamental aspect of all of the pillars of Guided Pathways. So can you tell us a little bit about the advising structure and the main services that are provided by advising?

Absolutely. So our office is made up of myself, as the director, and then we have two associate directors of advising services. And they provide the direct support and supervision for 10 academic advisors. And then we have a front desk program support supervisor and one part-time staff member and work-study student.

So what are the primary services that are provided in advising? I think sometimes people might get a little confused about what advising does versus what admissions does versus what success coaches do. So tell us a little bit what's the bread and butter of advising.

Absolutely. I think that's a really common question that we get, is trying to understand what academic advising is and, I think more importantly, like what it should be and what we're striving to at Clark for academic advising. So academic advising is co-creating long-term or short-term academic plans with students that take into account their past education and experiences, their life realities, whether they're part-time students, they're working parents, they have other responsibilities outside of school, and helping create a plan with the student that helps them achieve their academic goals here at Clark, and then to transfer to a four-year if that's in their sights. And so that's the goal, is that we have students that are leaving academic advising having a better long-term plan towards their academics.

And so a lot of what we are doing is talking about degree and graduation requirements, walking students through like exception processes, connecting them to specific resources that they need to continue to get support at Clark, reviewing unofficial transcripts to help make a plan, and really taking into account all of the individual things that a student comes in with, and helping make a plan for them to have the most success here at Clark and beyond.

Excellent. Yeah, obviously very important for a Guided Pathways sort of structure. I like to think of it as if you were going to a new country and knew absolutely nothing about that area, you would need a guide, someone to kind of point out some things and help you create an itinerary for yourself, if you will. So what are some Guided Pathways projects that advising is working on this year?

We're doing a lot. It's been a really exciting eight months, and looking forward to what's ahead. So we just recently realigned all of our advising caseloads by area of study. So that's in line with Guided Pathways and is something that I think is really important for students to have a home base in academic advising. And so each academic advisor has been assigned one or two or sometimes three areas of study.

And just this last week, we assigned students ctcLink to a specific advisor through area of study case loading. And so our next iteration for this plan is to put into place our case management strategy and our communication strategy to these students. So that's a big one. And then we're looking at also this year building out student learning outcomes and what our assessment plan is, to make sure that students are walking away with what we hope they are from advising.

Wonderful. As they say in NACADA, advising is teaching.

Absolutely.

So how is career exploration and planning kind of woven into that? I think sometimes people maybe don't recognize sort of that delineation between academic advising and sort of career services planning. So you oversee both of those. Can you talk a little bit about that piece of things?

I'm really excited to oversee both of these departments because there is and should be really intentional collaboration between academic advising and career services or career advising. We can't really have great advising conversations and support for students on the advising side if we're not talking about the long-term career plan about why they're here at Clark and where they're going and how what they're studying ties to their career plans and hopes.

And so that is part of that conversation with students, and is something that I'm working with our two teams to build out our relationships to be working together really well, understanding the work each other does to be able to provide those specific referrals when it gets to a point that, like, this is out of the scope of an academic advising role, you really need to get connected with a career advisor.

And then vice versa with career services, supporting a student on their job planning or preparing for informational interviews or internships or thinking about why they're here at Clark and what their career goal is, that's tied to academic advising, as well, because you can't really talk about what's going on at the end or your end goal without talking about the education that's going to help support you in getting there.

So it's highly collaborative. We have more to do to work together on this, but I'm really excited to be in a space where I can pull these two teams together.

Wonderful. Yes, very important to know what your end goal is. I know I've been an advisor before, and classic visit is, "hi, student, what would you like to do at Clark?" "I don't know, but I need to be full-time."

Right, or "I need to get a good job."

Yes. Yeah, we can probably say with pretty good confidence that most students are here to get a good job, whatever the pathway to that is.

Right. And I think every pathway is so different for students. And that's something really important for us to all keep in mind when we're working with students, is there's not a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting students in career support or academic advising.

Yeah, for sure. So speaking of that, all students have different needs and are coming from different backgrounds and experiences, what are some of the specific things happening in advising to address equity gaps, which is a big part of the Guided Pathways model, as well?

Yeah, so some of the things we're working on and we're getting started to work on is pulling together student data to have a better understanding of our baseline data with the students that we're serving at Clark. So between the various systems that we've used and a lot of the transitions that have been happening at Clark with leadership or technology, such as ctcLink, we're now trying to establish what's our baseline, who are the students that we're serving and advising, but I think, more importantly, who are the students we're not serving in advising, who are not coming in.

Our approach up through this point has largely been just open for students to come find us. And so some of the planning we're doing is around doing more proactive outreach to students. Once we have a clearer understanding of our data and who the students are that we're missing or who the students are that could benefit more from advising, we're going to be doing more strategic outreach through our case management approach.

But some of the work we're doing right now in pockets in advising that is serving as a model of how I want to move forward is we're doing advising where students are. So for example, one of our advisors has been pre-creating long-term plans for automotive students, and going down to the lab and meeting with each student for 10 minutes one on one, right after another, in collaboration with the faculty.

And all of those students are leaving with advisor-approved long-term plans in a really short period of time, and that doesn't require the student to have to come find us. We're going to find the student. So I think that's a really important model, and it's something we're going to be looking at moving forward with.

Related to that, some of the ways that we are reducing barriers to accessing advising, though, besides that example that I shared, is we're offering 18 hours of quick drop-in questions per week for students who have urgent questions. So it reduces the need for students to have to schedule an appointment if they just have something really quick they need help with. And then with our caseload advisors, we're lessening the confusion around who advisors are for a student and making that connection more intentional for students.

Wonderful. Well, I hear so many wonderful things happening for our students. Just really appreciate having you here. It's great to have you at the college. Love your energy and all the vision that you have for the departments, and we're excited to see what comes from advising and career services in the future. Thank you, Emily.

Thank you.