Summary of Case Scenarios & Skill-Building Sessions: Personal Reflection

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 The information presented in the lessons and the corresponding discussions has highlighted the student-centered approach that is foundational for a successful academic adviser. Academic advisers are often the first line of defense in predicting or assisting a student in crisis. To do this effectively, advisers must establish a strong rapport and be dynamic in their approach to student issues. This will likely require collaboration between departments and professional peers. Furthermore, an academic adviser must be organized and intuitive when providing individualized counseling to each student they advise.

 The skill-building sessions simulated real interactions between an academic adviser and their advisee. These interactions highlighted the unexpected nature of meeting with students because I, as an adviser, did not know what the nature of the meetings would entail. The first interaction with my student was casual and we discussed how he was adapting to his classes as well as what sort of major he is considering pursuing. The second interaction, however, was drastically different with the student exhibiting symptoms of mental health crisis related to his isolation from the Covid-19 pandemic. Both of these skill-building sessions demonstrated the need to think quickly about how to best approach the situation and provide potential solutions for the student to utilize. They also reflected the importance of remaining impartial and approachable so the student is willing to listen to my suggestions and further confide in me.

 The skill-building sessions highlighted the importance of being mindful of my non-verbal interaction to be perceived as welcoming, invested, and caring. These skills were particularly important in the second session with my student where we needed to discuss the long-term impact of isolation and the importance of actively leaving the house to go on a walk or joining virtual study groups. I also referred the student to the mental health services on campus following concerns of growing depression and isolation. If I had not been attentive to my tone, body language, and choice of words, the student could have felt unsafe in sharing his concerns with me and I would not have been able to help him.

 I hope to incorporate my learning into my current career as a high school teacher through further acknowledging my role as a first responder to student crisis through paying attention to their non-verbal communication and academic performance to better identify a student who may be struggling. In the future, I hope to work as an international student adviser, so the skills learned through the case scenarios and skill-building sessions will be directly applicable to the demands of that position. I particularly enjoyed the case scenarios involving the international student, Allen, and the adult student, Monica. Considering issues that these two nontraditional students encountered helped me apply the knowledge from the course material in ways I had not previously considered. Through encountering issues like these, I was able to begin applying the ideas from class to situations I will likely encounter in the future as an international student adviser.

 In order to continue learning about academic advising, I plan to read books, articles, and news reports concerning international students, university policy, and political educational debates. I will also apply the concepts learned in class to my daily life as a teacher. This practical application will help solidify the importance of valuing rapport with my students as well as other foundational ideas. I will also follow academic advising professional societies on social media and through email. Finally, I will stay in contact with my classmates to continue building and maintaining my professional network of peers.

 My academic advising portfolio as a whole reflects a philosophy change from simply viewing academic advising from my personal experience as a student, to now viewing it as a higher education professional. Before this class, I viewed academic advising through a one-dimensional lens, but now after practicing advising and interviewing an adviser, I realize there is much more to academic advising than simply giving advice to students. I can now acknowledge the necessity of being dynamic, communicative, organized, and ethical while prioritizing student advocacy and upholding the university’s mission. The written work within my academic advising portfolio will reflect my ability to apply these foundational qualities to various situations and my overall philosophical shift to that of an adviser rather than a student.