

2012

THE STAR FAMILY
PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE
IN ADVISING

 Promotion
Time
PERSONAL

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Established by James A. Star '83

IN THE CATEGORY OF FRESHMAN ADVISING...

Allen Aloise, Freshman Adviser

Director of Laboratories, Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology

In his nominators' words:

Allen has been described by students as knowledgeable, helpful, and always available. He has inspired his students to have faith in themselves and was particularly instrumental in helping one of his advisees explore research opportunities at Harvard. One of his advisees said, "I thought it was extremely unlikely that I could successfully secure a lab position and funding as a freshman. Allen urged me to at least apply – he said, "of course it would be competitive, but it would be competitive every year."

In his own words:

I try to be mindful that it is my advisees' responsibility to make their own choices. I might help them examine their assumptions, encourage them to take a risk, advise them to avoid a course of action, or provide them with missing information. But I firmly believe that they have the right to make an unwise decision without me stopping them. I'll help them with the consequences of a bad decision, but they must learn how to be their own advocate and take control of their own education.

Kenneth Blum, Freshman Adviser

Executive Director of the Center for Brain Science

In his nominators' words:

"Kenneth was always willing to make time whenever they needed help or anything else. During meetings, he asked his advisees insightful questions about, as one advisee states, "... my academic plans, which allowed me to clarify my intentions, and contemplate my actions more carefully. Kenneth truly shined with the amount of time and effort he dedicated beyond these e-mails and meetings. He has helped me find a research mentor for the summer, carefully analyze my study habits and identify where they could be improved, and urged me to think about what sort of role I envisioned for myself within the scientific community."

In his own words:

"I have been a freshman adviser for several years now, and as my own daughter approaches college age, I find myself adopting a more parental approach to academic advising. I have developed Blum's Rule of Academic Advising, a corollary or extension of the Golden Rule: Do unto your advisee as you would have an adviser do unto your own child. This means I really care about the person; try to get to know her or him; reassure and encourage; ask about sleep, exercise, recreation, friends, things at home. If the student has fixed ideas, I gently see if the binds can be loosened. If the student is at sea, I offer some practical beacons to head for shore."

Mateo Munoz, Freshman Adviser

Proctor and Teaching Fellow in the History of Science

In his nominators' words:

"When one of his advisees considered transferring out of Harvard, he helped her come out of her shell and gain confidence. Mateo instilled in her a sense of power and belief that she could make a difference in the lives of those around her. Mateo constantly checked on his students, nurtured them, spent hours just listening to what they had to say, and helped them grow as people."

IN THE CATEGORY OF SOPHOMORE ADVISING...

Hermioni Lokko, Sophomore Adviser

Fellowship Tutor, Quincy House

In her nominators' words:

Hermioni has been described as open, approachable, and passionate. She is personally invested in her tutees. For instance, she encourages those students who are planning on writing a thesis to form close relationships with faculty advisers and therefore delve into a particular topic more deeply early on. She provides honest advice and helps students navigate the stress that comes with a challenge. Hermioni often takes a deep interest in helping students explore various courses in the curriculum and pursue their passions by asking them questions related directly to their interests. Her idea of advising is not of a one-conversation-and-go mentality, but one of consistent and continuous guidance to guide her advisees in achieving their goals.

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In her own words:

"Effective academic advising requires partnering with students as a team. Tutors have the unique advantage of being the neutral, fresh perspective for students to share their interests, passions, concerns and challenges. Students value tutors who are sincerely interested in their lives as individuals with unique interests. Although I have high expectations for students I interact with, I acknowledge with them that no one is perfect and that being a college student is not easy. Providing a safe space where students can be vulnerable and actually share their challenges and interests which may not be conventional allows students to open up so that we can work better together. Keeping an open mind as a tutor and knowing where to find resources at Harvard helps me to direct students to the right resources they need to succeed here. I make a conscious effort to follow-up consistently with students about what they are doing around campus."

Andrew Sternlight, Sophomore Adviser
Sophomore Adviser in Pforzheimer House

In his nominators' words:

He has been described by his advisees as an extraordinarily kind and caring individual who displayed a tremendous amount of patience and attentiveness on a daily basis. He offered directive and nondirective advice as necessary, paid close attention to his advisees' course selection decisions and personal development. Moreover, he has wholeheartedly encouraged his advisees to apply to an array of opportunities: PhD programs, fellowship and internship opportunities.

IN THE CATEGORY OF CONCENTRATION ADVISING...

Bill Anderson, Concentration Adviser

Associate Director of Education, Lecturer on Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology

In his nominators' words:

He is always helpful, friendly, patient, dedicated, thoughtful, and supportive. Hence, he can be credited with the fact that many students have chosen this concentration. He conducts his advising in an environment of trust, humor, and acceptance, therefore helping to foster and form a learning community within the SCRB concentration. This community, often holds informal brown bag lunches with a distinguished faculty member; thus, enhancing the academic and communal experience of our undergraduate students. If Bill finds students taking the easy way out with electives, he challenges them to take something that might enhance their intellectual interests. At the same time, if students were extremely anxious, he provided them with a sense of calm and advice that lessened their worries. He talks to students about their intellectual interests, the significance of conducting research, thesis projects and post-graduate plans, while reviewing their résumés or applications to medical school, and encouraging them to establish mentoring relationships with faculty.

In his own words:

"Richard Light's book, Making The Most of College, highlights important points to ponder for undergraduate education. Two are particularly worth noting: first, the majority of students say that the moments that changed them in a profound way occurred outside of the classroom. Second, students feel that solid, more personalized advising is the single most underestimated feature of a great college experience. These sentiments inspire me."

Ryan Draft, Concentration Adviser

Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies in Neurobiology, Lecturer on Molecular and Cellular Biology

In his nominators' words:

In his advising, Ryan is willing to provide help in every possible manner, is incredibly friendly and always available to spend quality time with each of his students. He advises students in course selection, switching concentrations, picking tutorials, and labs with great understanding. He has been the most influential person in the lives of many of our undergraduate students. Ryan encourages students to balance their academic and personal lives while thinking critically and selecting courses that are intellectually stimulating.

In his own words:

"Fundamentally, effective academic advising requires having time to spend on advising. Advisers must engage students personally, establish relationships, and respond quickly. Beyond this pre-requisite, effective advising can be cast in as many styles as there are personalities. In my own experience, direct advice is rarely useful; instead, students benefit most from a conversation that helps broaden how they think (to see beyond their analysis). Lastly, I adhere to the adage that good advising means spending 90% of your time with the 10% who really need it. I find advising is most important for struggling students - those missed by awards and prizes - who need hope."

Zarin Machanda, Concentration Adviser

Lecturer on Human Evolutionary Biology

In her nominators' words:

Described as caring, attentive, nurturing and patient, she devoted her time tutoring and advising those students who struggle academically or have difficulty deciding on future plans. Students often talked about how lucky they were to have her as an adviser as she helped them grow academically and personally. Zarin gives students the confidence to succeed in their course work and fulfill their academic goals. Additionally, she attends her students' chamber music concerts, prepares them to conduct research successfully or helps them in finding the right medical school.

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In her own words:

"I believe that one of the most effective ways to academically advise students is to get to know each of them personally. To give the best possible advice to a student, I need to know about their extra-curricular commitments, their career goals, their academic background, and their family situation. When students are struggling in their coursework, it often is the result of difficulty in their social or non-academic lives and if I don't know about it, I can't help. Most of my conversations with students are not simply about picking classes but more about getting to know them and working together to find the best path through Harvard for each of them individually. My other philosophy about advising is to be direct and honest with students - even if it means telling them something that they might have difficulty hearing. For example, if a student is going to struggle getting into medical school, it is my responsibility to give them that information so that we can work together to have a back-up plan. Although those conversations are often difficult, I think the students appreciate that someone is being honest with them and looking out for them."

IN THE CATEGORY OF FACULTY ADVISING...

Evelyn Higginbotham, Faculty Adviser

Victor S. Thomas Professor of History and of African and African American Studies

AAAS Department Chair

In her nominators' words:

"She is a strong role model for her students, and her relationships have been defined by her advisees as transformational. As a thesis adviser, she has instilled in her students a sense of self-confidence and burning intellectual curiosity. She shared with her students her personal stories and trajectories. Thus, students look forward to being in touch with her for many years after they leave Harvard."

Francis Macdonald, Faculty Adviser

Assistant Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences

In his nominators' words:

"Francis is an Assistant Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences. He has encouraged students to participate in different scientific endeavors at Harvard and has been accessible and enthusiastic. He has cultivated among the undergraduates in his department a dedication to the inquiry of the most pressing questions concerning the history of his discipline. The problem-solving skills and comprehensive way of thinking acquired through Francis' advising will stay with his students forever."

SPECIAL AWARD TO A GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISER

Kimberly Pernell, Graduate Student

Teaching Fellow in Sociology

In her nominators' words:

"Her advisees described her as approachable with a great sense of humor. She assisted students in developing writing and analytical skills. At the same time, she has dedicated herself to encouraging students to understand the world around them. When students tell their peers that Kim is their thesis adviser, the response they often get is that they are very lucky."

In her own words:

"I think the key to effective academic advising is simply listening to the student. Harvard students are generally smart, talented, and motivated. In other words, they're generally pretty good at figuring out things for themselves, when given the chance. I think I serve my students best when I act as more of a sounding board and facilitator. I have found that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to academic advising. I always start by asking each student what they hope to get out of the experience in question, whether it's our writing consultation, the course I'm teaching, or college in general. I really listen to the answer, and try to offer advice, resources, or feedback that fits their goals, not my own. When students feel that they are being respected and taken seriously, they tend to return the favor. Beyond that, I find that it's important to just be there for students when they need you. Here at Harvard, we all have competing demands on our time. By taking the time to respond to all student emails, by holding extended office hours, and by generally trying my best to accommodate students' busy schedules, I signal that students are high on my list of priorities, and I think they recognize and respect that. Effective advising requires trust: effective advisers are those who come through for their students, particularly when it really counts."