

2013

THE STAR FAMILY
PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE
IN ADVISING

Preparation
Time
Economic
Personal



Established by James A. Star '83

THE STAR FAMILY SIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN ADVISING

THE STAR FAMILY PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN ADVISING WERE ESTABLISHED BY JAMES A. STAR '83 TO RECOGNIZE AND REWARD INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLLEGE THROUGH THEIR EXEMPLARY INTELLECTUAL AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS. IN ADDITION TO RECOGNITION, PRIZE RECIPIENTS ARE AWARDED A STIPEND AND ASKED TO SUMMARIZE THEIR SUCCESSFUL ADVISING PRACTICES FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE COLLEGE ADVISERS.

The mission of Harvard College is:

- to create knowledge
- to open the minds of students to that knowledge
- to enable students to take best advantage of their educational opportunities

Harvard realizes this mission, in part, by pairing students with academic advisers in every phase of their undergraduate careers. Advisers provide sustained personal and intellectual guidance to their advisees. Their impact on their advisees is, at times, subtle, at other times profound. Although academic advising takes many forms, outstanding advising is characterized by a few key principles and practices, as the words of this year's Star Prize winners reveal...

IN THE CATEGORY OF FRESHMAN ADVISING...

Bob Doyle, Freshman Adviser,
*Associate Dean of Media and
Technology Services*

My approach with advisees is to work with them as unique individuals and not to repeat a formula every year with every student. My role is one of listening to their ideas and posing questions to help them to answer their inquiries. In addition, I encourage them to better understand their area(s) of specialized study through the study of unrelated topics.

Explaining what I studied as a freshman or courses in which I would enroll today provides little value to my advisees. The freshman year is their experience, not mine. Advisers should encourage their advisees to consult with a range of additional resources, including subject matter experts, those in the field, labs and libraries, and upper class students in the concentrations they are considering.

One item of practical tutoring that an adviser can provide is that of time management. Advisers might discuss how to better prepare for challenging course experiences through schedule mapping.

Ask questions, explain the goal of a liberal arts education and a balanced roster of courses, and provide some guidance to advisees in finding solutions to their questions.

Waqas Jawaid, Freshman Adviser,
*Proctor; Master's candidate in
Architecture at the Harvard Design
School*

Here is some advice I would give:

1. Your goal is to be fully committed to the success of your advisees.

Ask them about their past accomplishments and goals. Ask what they care about and how they want to impact the world. Keep track of their (changing) interests and aspirations. Do not make decisions for them but convey to them that you truly care about their success at Harvard.

2. Learn as much as you can but don't be afraid to say "I don't know."

"To be honest, I have no idea but I can find out for you." I have said this a hundred times. Students can sense when you are trying to explain something you know nothing about. Offer to make phone calls, e-mail relevant advisers, or set up meetings. This is especially helpful at the beginning of the year.

3. Question your advisees' assumptions and challenge them to think in new ways.

When you do know a lot about something, don't just be an "objective" and noncommittal voice; be honest about your opinions.

4. Zoom out and contextualize.

Competition can be motivating. It can also be paralyzing. Students can benefit from hearing: “You’re not the only one going through this.”

5. Delve into minute details.

How many hours do you spend on this course? Where do you work best? Do you use an online calendar for scheduling? You’ll find out a lot when you ask specific questions.

Jason Outlaw, Freshman Adviser,
Proctor, Candidate in the Dental Post-Doctoral Program

“Be careful not to discover a career before you’ve discovered yourself”
- Moxie Marlinspike

Many students find it difficult to say, “I don’t know what I want to do.” Others wrestle with lingering anxiety because they seem to be the only one without an extensive life plan. For those with the courage to admit that they are still searching, I congratulate them.



The first thing I attempt to convey to my advisees is that uncertainty is a gift. Instead of focusing exclusively on “what they want to do,” I also ask, “what don’t you want to do, and what experiences led you to that conclusion?” This prioritizes direct experience over dogma, hearsay, and speculation.

Next, I encourage my advisees to think beyond disciplines and professions. I challenge them to write down a list of problems and challenges they want to address in the world. Problems and challenges are inherently transdisciplinary. No matter the students’ course of study, there are methodologies, skills, and insights relevant to addressing growing challenges. I attempt to convey that education is much more than a stepping stone to a job, but is an opportunity to create value for the world.

Finally, I encourage my advisees to strategically say no so that they can give more powerful yeses. I encourage them to streamline their commitments and to carve out ample time for study, sleep, exercise, and for socialization. Most importantly, I encourage them to carve out time that is free of electronic distractions in order to embrace solitude, and to let their inner voice speak.

IN THE CATEGORY OF SOPHOMORE ADVISING...

Marguerite Thorp Basilico, *Sophomore Adviser, Resident Tutor in Adams House*

One of the lessons I've learned from advising sophomores is to know what you don't know – and to know whom you know who does know. Students have come to me with plenty of questions for which I have no preparation or expertise. Any answer I would provide on these questions is no better than a coin toss, and I probably bring less knowledge of the topic than my students do. But the asset I have is a much bigger network. Compared to students confined to the bubble of Harvard College, tutors and advisers can offer a wealth of connections and relationships to the “real world” who will give students better advising than any one adviser could hope to provide alone.

This is even truer for career advising. While offering personal experience is usually a good bet (with heavy warnings that it is, in fact, just one person's experience), I have found great value in turning to my own advising network for many of the questions students present.

And finally, when in doubt, I try to *ask* a lot of questions. The answer to most dilemmas is hidden within each student. Asking the right questions (and asking a lot of them) will help advisees unlock the solutions that, in the end, only they can really provide.

Sherry Deckman, *Sophomore Adviser, Senior Resident Tutor, Sophomore Advising Coordinator in Adams House*

One thing I have learned from six years of sophomore advising is that the small moments matter. The day to day interactions that can happen in person when, say, you bump into your advisee in the dining hall, or online, add up to form the basis of the relationship. Finding ways to build on those small moments and build them into your advising practice can be an important component of building the relationship. Send random check in e-mails. Invite students to have meals to just chat and catch up. Find small moments to celebrate and learn about your advisees' non-academic interests. One gesture that had some of the biggest impact on my advisees was preparing “finals survival kits” that I distributed during reading period in December. These simple kits included ear plugs, pencils, chewing gum, and the like, as well as a good luck note. During a stressful time, my advisees got a small boost from this unexpected package.



These small moments build relationships that can in turn prompt advisees to seek out support from their adviser and ultimately supports their academic success. It can mean the difference between an advisee approaching an adviser proactively to seek help or waiting until a situation becomes dire. To me, then, outstanding advising is finding ways to build the advising relationship not only within the context of the academic requirements, but also beyond that. It is not only about requirements and commitment, but also care.

Charlotte Personn-Gulda, *Sophomore Adviser, Teaching Fellow in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Sophomore Advising Coordinator in Winthrop House*

As part of the Harvard College community, I have had the honor of serving as the Sophomore Advising Coordinator for Winthrop House. It has provided me with the opportunity to be involved with the students' academic performances, as well as their personal successes and struggles. As a leader, I wanted the program to focus not only on academic advising, but also on strengthening student-advisor relationships so that they form a bond that will last throughout the duration of their college career and beyond.

As an advisor, my approach has been to invest time with students early to build a strong relationship based on trust. I go about this by attending their extracurricular activities, being available and approachable, and always offering a listening ear. Having this type of relationship has helped me when issues

arise – academic or personal – because students already feel comfortable with me and are more likely to reach out for help, knowing I am here to support them.

I also take great pride in treating all my students equally, yet not the same. Every student is different and thus responds to advice in unique ways. Getting to know each individual's personality and goals has been key to serving them well and bringing out their best. When you know your students on this level, you can give them meaningful advice and help them navigate their path through the many opportunities available at Harvard.

Another thing I feel strongly about is encouraging students to be involved in the Harvard community and to take part in the house activities. By organizing events that combine advising and socializing, I help students build fruitful relationships with their housemates and tutors, creating a stronger community.

Nothing makes me more proud than to help our students transition from arriving at Winthrop as curious students to leaving as confident, prepared, and thoughtful alums.



IN THE CATEGORY OF CONCENTRATION ADVISING...



Andrew Berry, Concentration Adviser in the Life Sciences, Lecturer on Organismic & Evolutionary Biology

My watchword as an adviser is 'responsiveness'. Accessibility is an absolutely key component of this: I make a point of being available 24/7 and I try to respond as instantly as possible to e-mails and texts (though I admit that your 4am-at-the-end-of-a-long-and-unhappy-encounter-with-a-p'set messages will get responded to a few hours after they are sent). An adviser should be available when you need them, not a day and a half later. And responsiveness involves combining both my experience as an adviser -- there's a good chance that I have advised dozens of students in the past who have faced the same dilemma as the one you're confronting -- with an awareness of what makes your situation unique -- different from all those students I've talked to in the past. For my response to be effective in this regard, then, there is no substitute for getting to know you. Advice is going to be a lot more useful when it is customized to you and your situation.

Sujata Bhatia, Concentration

Adviser, Proctor, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies in Biomedical Engineering

I believe in education. I believe that education is critical for the personal development of our students, as well as the international development of our global community. I believe that education has value not only for imparting practical skills and knowledge, but also for encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving. Most importantly, I believe in our students. I believe that I can learn as much from my students as they learn from me. I believe that every single student has the power to change the world.

Students are the drivers of innovation at any university. When we effectively educate and advise our undergraduate students, we are ensuring the future of the university, as well as the future of our shared planet. Every time I look into the eyes of an undergraduate student, I can see the future. On a professional level, I am in awe of my students' accomplishments. On a personal level, each student whom I advise touches my heart. These are the reasons that I love my role as an educator and adviser to Harvard students.

My main priority is to instill students with the courage and confidence in their capability to succeed, in their capability to make a difference, in their capability to have a positive impact on the world.

When I advise a student, the first question I ask is, “*What are your dreams?*” If I can convince all of my students to believe in themselves, and to believe in the strength and beauty of their dreams, then I have succeeded as an adviser.

Joe Blitzstein, *Concentration Adviser, Co-Director of Undergraduate Studies in Statistics and Professor of the Practice in Statistics*

1. Get help from others!

I am lucky to have a tremendously helpful Co-DUS (Dave Harrington), and have had great support from my colleagues, deans, the APO, and both undergrads and graduate students. I often give my own suggestions and then follow up by putting the student in touch with

someone I think would offer an especially relevant additional perspective.

2. Be responsive!

People at Harvard tend to have very busy schedules and tend to be flooded with e-mail, but many advising questions are time-sensitive and in any case they deserve a timely, helpful response.

3. Be patient!

Deciding on a concentration, on jobs, on whether/where to go to graduate school, or even just which courses to take are major and often hard decisions. I don’t always know the “right” answer but at least I can listen carefully, help talk things through, and try to give an honest, useful perspective on complicated decisions.



IN THE CATEGORY OF FACULTY ADVISING...



Justin Gest, Faculty Adviser, Lecturer
on Government and on Sociology

My advising sessions start with listening, closely and with interest.

My advising sessions end with offering students not answers, but rather the tools and perspective to consider the decisions that confront them. As students must live out their lives, they must be the ones accountable for the choices they make.

I try to solicit students' passions, insecurities and senses of obligation to get a better idea of who they want to be and why. Then it is a matter of helping them understand their choices, guiding their achievement, and passing on the value of helping others along the way.

Logan McCarty, Faculty Adviser,
*Director of Physical Sciences Education,
Lecturer on Physics and on Chemistry
and Chemical Biology*

All too often, I find myself drawn into the most comfortable and conventional sort of advising. You want to go to medical school? Here are the courses you should take. You want to do lab research in the summer? Here are some contacts. You have a question? I can tell you the answer, or at least help you find it.

The advising that truly matters, though, is much more uncomfortable. You want to go to medical school? Why? Are you sure? You were just telling me about your passion for French literature. You want to do lab research? Are you actually interested in research, or are you just trying to add another line to your resume? I don't see anything in your background that suggests a real desire to do research: you need to convince me. You have a question? I'm not going to answer it—I'm going to ask you another question. This will be an awkward and time-consuming process, but at the end of it we will both know more about each other and we will both be better equipped to make important decisions. Only then will I offer the more traditional sort of "advice."



Students here are so extraordinary in so many ways that merely aiming for “success” is setting the bar way too low. I want students to aim for rapture, for passion, for immersion. I want them to find that thing in themselves that will get them out of bed every morning and consume their thoughts late into the night.

And then—only then—I’ll help them figure out how to get there.

Michael Puett, *Faculty Adviser, Chair of the Committee on the Study of Religion, Professor of Chinese History*

The most important aspect of advising involves helping students to find their own interests and to discover what excites and inspires them deeply. This process of discovery will often take the students in surprising and counterintuitive directions. The role of the adviser should accordingly be, first, to encourage the students to have the confidence to explore these exciting new directions and, second, to help the students develop the skills they will need to do so successfully.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR’S WINNERS

Marguerite Thorp Basilico



Justin Gest



Andrew Berry



Waqas Jawaid

Sujata Bhatia



Logan McCarty



Joe Blitzstein



Jason Outlaw

Sherry Deckman



Bob Doyle



Charlotte Personn-Gulda



Michael Puett



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL NOMINEES

Names in bold are those of past winners:

Jason Ahn • **William Anderson** • Eleni Arzoglou • Sa'ed Atshan • Timnah Baker • Mahzarin Banaji • **Chiwen Bao** • Thomas Batchelder • Vanessa Beary • Eric Beerbohm • Abhiram Bhashyam • James Biblarz • Kelly Blondin • Steven Bloomfield • Peter Bol • Kirsten Bomblies • Joshua Bookin • Michelle Borkin • Lauren Brandt • John Briscoe • Virginia Brooks • Jonathan Bruno • Joshua Buckholtz • Stephen Burt • Raul Campillo • Charles Cardillo • Benjamin Castleman • Judith Chapman • Jonas Clark • David E. Cohen • Shawn Cole • Anna Deeny • Nara Dillo • Jonathan Doochin • Rowan Dorin • **Ryan Draft** • Danielle Early • Brandon Edwards • Ryan Enos • Ellsworth Fersch • Judith Flynn Chapman • Laurie Forcier • Deborah Foster • Melissa Franklin • Brendan Gaesser • Dennis Gaitsgory • Kiran Gajwani • Katie Gallagher • Brandon Geller • Ann Georgi • Kathy Gerlach • Andrew Gitchel • Ray Goldberg • Jamey Graham • Maleka Gramling • William • Granara • Trey Grayson • Hyun Ju Ha • Frances Hagopian • Jay Harris • Meghan Healy-Clancy • Caitlin Henningsen • Seth Herbst • James Herron • Yui Hirohashi • Alisha Holland • Carole Hooven • Jackelyn Hwang • Amos Irwin • Laura Johnson • David Johnston • Brett Kalikow • Gabriel Katsh • Stephanie Kenen • Stephanie Khurana • Rakesh Khurana • Melinda Kuritzky • David Laibson • Anne Le Brun • Ilya Leskov • Margo Levine • Christopher Liedl • Caroline Light • Emily Lin • Charles Lockwood • **Hermioni Lokko** • Christopher Lombardo • Richard Losick • Alexandru Lupsasca • **Zarin Machanda** • Jeffrey Macklis • Navid Madani • Laura Magnotti • Geoff Marietta • Christopher Marx • Jennifer Massa • Kerry Masteller • John McLaughlin • Doug Melton • Jay Miller • Devarati Mitra • Robb Moss • **Mateo Munoz** • Judith Murciano • Mako Nagasawa • Elinathan Ohiomoba • David Orwig • Eylem Ozaltun • Lindsay Page • Hanspeter Pfister • Serhii Plokhii • Maria Polinsky • Alia Qatarneh • Shawn Ramirez • Andrew Richardson • Memory Risinger • Jacob Risinger • Kathryn Roberts • David Roxburgh • Greg Rudolph • Dustin Saldarriaga • Dimitar Sasselov • Jarupon Fah Sathirapongsasuti • Sheehan Scarborough • Adam Scheffler • Melissa Schellberg • John Scott • Kirstin Scott • Gamze Seten • Shauna Shames • John Shaw • Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington • Timothy Smith • Leah Somerville • Katherine Stanton • Justin Strauss • Christopher Stubbs • Rory Sullivan • Brandon Terry • Adrienne Tierney • Jessica Tollette • Thomas Torello • Gregory Tucci • Ece Turnator • Helen Vendler • Julie Vultaggio • Erin Walczewski • Leonard Wood • Thomas Wooten • Winston Yan • Wendi Zhang



APO.FAS.HARVARD.EDU