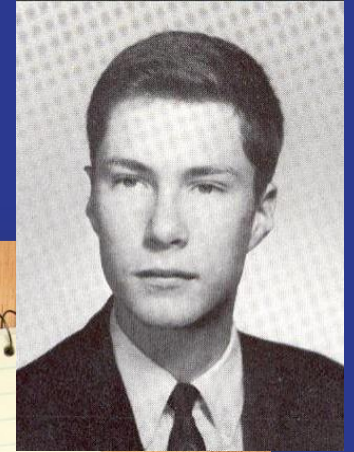# Tennessee Board of Regents Advising Academy:

What Matters Most in Academic Advising

John N. Gardner, President

John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education

NOTE:

this message is delivered by a former academic advisee whom his first academic advisor described as "one of the stupidest kids I have ever met….!"

F
F
F
D
D
A

… and by a recovering former academic advisor who contributed to the organizing of the first meeting of the National Academic Advising Association in October of 1977 - influencing the selection of the keynote speaker who was the inspiration of the University 101 course concept

… and by an advisor who always cherished his academic advising role and still hears from some of his advisees since his moving on from this opportunity in 1999 - what kind of feedback do they give him?
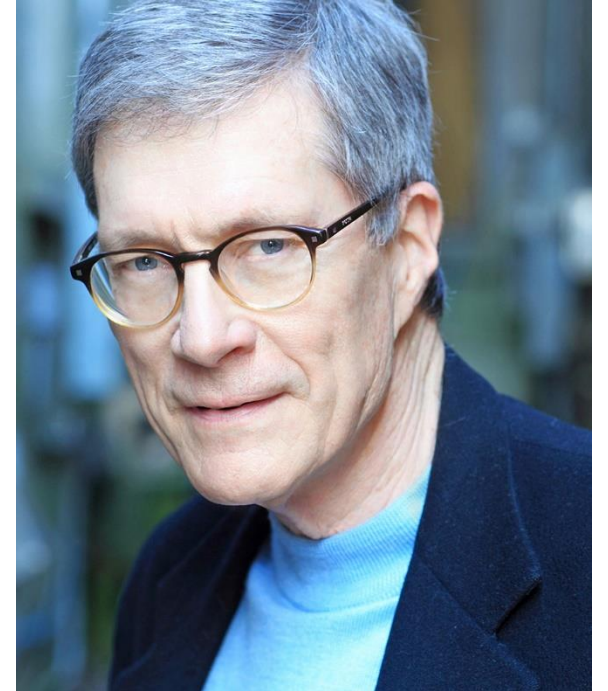
the gift of self

…..and by an advisor who fooled the reviewers and was awarded NACADA's Virginia Gordon Award "for Excellence in the Field of Academic Advising"

And who is Virginia Gordon?
A past NACADA president who was the national champion for "undecided" students – just like this advisor used to be.
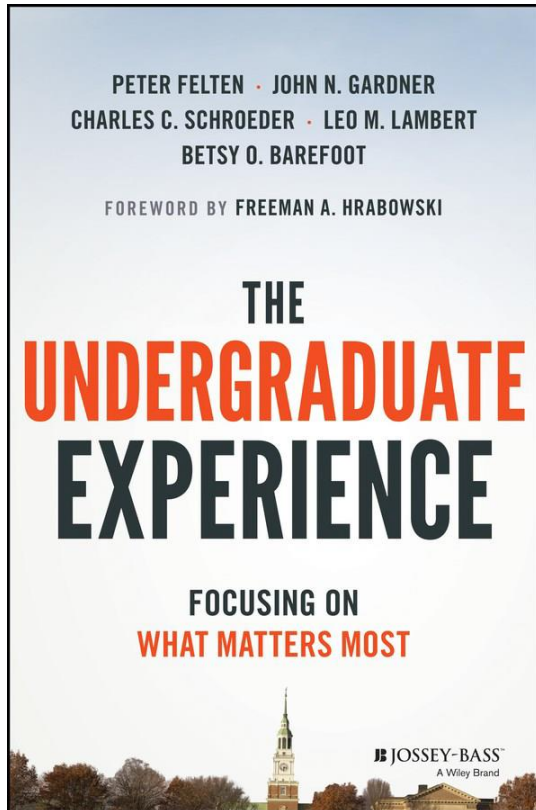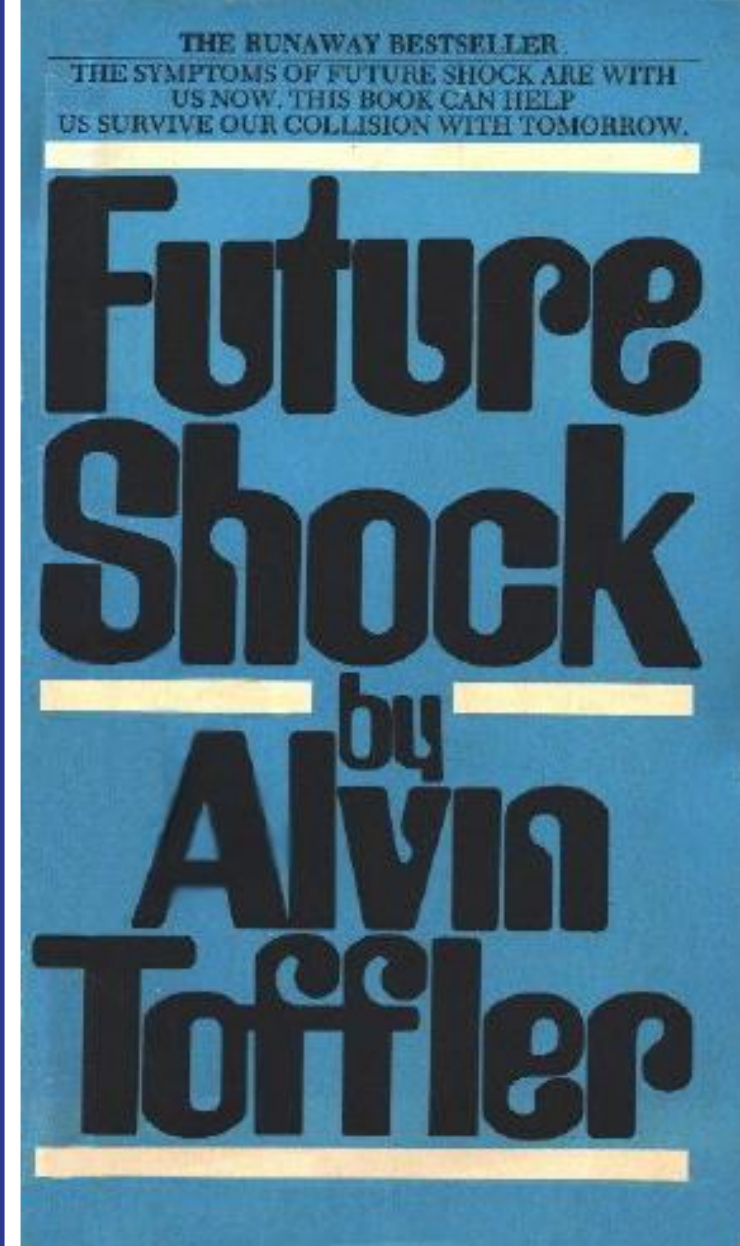
I have just spent six years working on a book published in May 2016 by Jossey-Bass: *The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most*; Peter Felten, Leo Lambert, Charles Schroeder; and Betsy Barefoot (my wife!) and yours truly

So, what did we decide and argue matters most?

1. Learning
2. Relationships
3. Expectations
4. Alignment
5. Leadership
6. Assessment

We are all faced with the problem of what the futurist Alvin Toffler in his 1971 book Future Shock called…

OVERCHOICE!

THE RUNAWAY BESTSELLER
THE SYMPTOMS OF FUTURE SHOCK ARE WITH US NOW. THIS BOOK CAN HELP US SURVIVE OUR COLLISION WITH TOMORROW.

Future Shock
by Alvin Toffler

So, what are John Gardner's picks for "what matters most" for excellence in academic advising?

Gardner's Principles

- Not all students are the same so one size doesn't fit all

- Providing differentiated advising for special sub populations especially first-year, undecided and transfer students - both transfer sending and transfer receiving

- All students are developmental

- All students are at risk to some degree

- Academic advising is a form of teaching

Gardner's Principles

- The overriding goal is to produce practical student learning that can be applied for student decision making

- Advising must go beyond scheduling

- Advising must be conducted as a teaching/learning process in the context of relationships

- Advising must be value based

- Advising must be intentionally integrated with career planning

Gardner's Principles

- Advising excellence is all about developing a sense of purpose; purpose=motivation; motivation=success; success = retention

- The most powerful influences on students in college are those of other students: so how are you using peer advisors?

So, what do you have to have in an excellent system of advising?

An Advising System Needs…

- A philosophy for what constitutes excellent academic advising

- A common definition for institution-wide consensus and consistency for what comprises excellence in academic advising

- Criteria for determining who performs academic advising and for selection of advisors

- An organizational structure that insures optimum communication and information both to and from advisors

- Training/professional development for academic advisors - initial and continuing

An Excellent Advising System Needs...

- Information - constantly updated and current, for both advisors and students, needed to perform this function

- Instruction for students on how to behave in the process of academic advising

- Communication to students, faculty and staff as to what to expect from academic advising

- Offering students an advising experience that clearly differentiates from expectations learned in high school

An Excellent Advising System Needs…

- A clear set of student rights for effective academic advising and consequent obligations for those who deliver advising

- A clear set of responsibilities for student advisees in the advising process

- Evaluation of individual advisors, individual advising transactions, and the larger institutional processes of academic advising (assessment)

An Excellent Advising System Needs…

- Rewards/incentives for performance of academic advising

- Building advising into larger improvement initiatives like CCA, reaffirmation of accreditation QEP's, etc.

- Narrowing students' freedom of choice to overcome the daunting effects of the problem of "overchoice"

- Mechanisms for collecting feedback and counsel from academic advisors and getting such up the line to policy makers and institutional leaders

An Excellent Advising System Needs...

- Revisiting institutional policies about whether or not participating in academic advising is optional or required

- To adopt as the primary criteria for decision making regarding academic advising what might be best for the students as opposed to institutional and employee convenience

- Making optimum use of technology for reasons other than replacing real time interaction

An Excellent Advising System Needs…

- Senior leaders and decision makers involving front line advising personnel in decisions about advising systems and technology before decisions are made about expensive technology adoption processes without input from those who will be charged with using!

- Getting the right people on the bus for a robust stakeholders group for the advancement of academic advising

An Excellent Advising System Needs…

- An intensive institution-wide self study of what it would take to achieve excellent academic advising and involving colleagues in such a process that go far beyond just those charged with the performance and supervision of academic advising. Stay tuned for an official NACADA/Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education process to do just that!

I invite you to take my principles back to campus and to develop your own!

So, what are YOUR principles for excellent academic advising and what do you think of mine?

DISCUSSION

Contact

John N. Gardner

gardner@jngi.org

Phone: 828-885-6014