

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

ACADEMIC ADVISING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Excellent academic advising, much like excellent teaching, is a primary goal of the University College. In order to assess advising effectiveness and to determine excellence, a philosophy of advising must be developed that outlines a rubric of characteristics and competencies for success against which advising at the twelve campuses of the College can be measured.

This policy is intended to accomplish the following:

1. Present a philosophy of academic advising for the University College.
2. Outline the policy's primary components.
3. Define what is perceived to be the successful practice of advising.
4. Enable the design of an assessment plan that supports the formative evaluation of academic advising across the College.

University Faculty Senate legislation (32-20) calls for each College to develop an advising policy to include the College's philosophy and practices for academic advising in addition to a statement regarding what students can and should expect from the College's advising program. Also legislated is the requirement that each College must define the roles and responsibilities of all participants in the advising process, including the dynamics that exist between University-wide advising tools (technologies) and the professional advising relationship inherent between academic adviser and advisee.

The University College seeks to develop in each student strong decision-making skills and increased self efficacy in regard to his or her ability to achieve and maintain successful academic progress. Because of the nature of the College and its proclivity to attract first-generation college students, it is critically important that the College's policy statement describes the differences between academic advising and career services; that it highlights the complexities of advising in the campus environment; and that it underscores the value of exploration. In addition, It is understood that to achieve and maintain excellence in academic advising, there must be an on-going assessment of the academic advisement process, one that regularly links academic advising to FTCAP, freshman orientation, and First Year Seminar experiences.

PHILOSOPHY

The primary goal of the College is to have each student succeed academically. This is accomplished when students take responsibility for their individual academic progress, and are able to make well informed choices in consultation with the network of professional and faculty advisers and available advising technologies. Since Penn State campuses are geographically dispersed across the state, it is imperative that an active network for advising be maintained that is well informed and well connected. The flow of advising information must be consistent, accurate and timely. Since the majority of University College students are in the process of defining their career goals, strong and effective advising is a critical element. Furthermore, since the University College (UC) offers the first four semesters of most University programs, advisers need to be familiar with all University programs and the basic policies governing them, including those programs offered by the University College and the other campus colleges. Because of the broad scope of advising information necessary for students' academic progress and career exploration, most UC locations support:

- Regular regimen of faculty adviser training
- Adviser leadership provided by the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS)
- Formal advising centers
- Career Counseling Services
- Advising in the College is focused on
- Achieving student academic success and progress toward program completion
- Supporting student career and academic exploration
- Teaching students to become good decision-makers

As students navigate the complex Penn State University system, they need to be made aware of the options available to them in order to make appropriate career decisions. The link between academic and career advising is a critical one and is an integral part of the UC advising policy.

ADVISING GOALS

In AY 2002-2003, the UC began working with the College of Science (COS) to define appropriate goals for academic advising in the College. Using an instrument designed by COS and adapted by the UC Faculty Senate Student Services Committee, twenty (20) goals were established. The first eight (8) goals are termed "enabling goals" or goals necessary to accommodate college policy. They are focused on the role of "adviser." They are as follows:

1. Advisers will post reasonable office hours.
2. Advisers will be available during office hours.
3. Advisers will be accessible to students.
4. Advisers will be able to be contacted via e-mail, phone, or other electronic means.
5. Advisers will respond to student initiated e-mails, phone calls or other electronic communications.
6. Advisers will have access to students' records and keep records of advising contacts.
7. Advisers will be able to answer students' questions accurately and/or make appropriate referrals.
8. Advisers will be respectful of advisees.

The last twelve (12) goals are termed "college advising goals." They are focused on the role of students:

9. Students will understand their abilities.
10. Students will understand their interests.
11. Students will understand the relevant policies and procedures of Penn State.
12. Students will understand the relevant academic environments of Penn State.
13. Students will understand the relationship between their abilities/interests and the expected standards of achievement and the likelihood of success in certain areas of study at Penn State and other institutions.
14. Students will understand the academic standards (e.g. courses, GPA, relevant experiences).
15. Students will understand the relationship between their demonstrated abilities and expressed interests and the professional standards of their post-graduation and career objectives.
16. Students will understand the importance of intellectual discovery in attaining their goals.
17. Students will understand the importance of participating in both in- and out-of-class educational opportunities in attaining their goals.
18. Students will understand the importance of general education in attaining their goals.
19. Students will understand the importance of career exploration in attaining their goals.
20. Students will understand their responsibilities as advisees.

STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "An organizational model for the delivery of effective advising."

The structure of advising in the UC is faculty centered, professionally supported, dependent upon close collaboration between various academic support systems. Because of limited faculty resources in specific disciplines, faculty may be expected to advise outside their disciplines. College and University support through a matrix of information systems, therefore, is critical to ensure advising expertise for those advising outside their disciplines.

The First-Year Testing, Counseling and Advising Program (FTCAP), as the first stage of academic advising for all Penn State students, is coordinated by the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS). Each campus has a DUS coordinator who oversees the academic advising function for students enrolled in DUS and who serves as a primary academic advising resource for faculty advisers. It is the DUS Coordinator who most often implements the University Faculty Senate legislation that calls for "Appropriate information, resources, and electronic systems to work effectively with students."

In order to deliver effective advising in the UC, adequate computer access is necessary for all faculty, students and professional advisers including access to eLion and the Internet. Appropriate and comprehensive information must be consistently available from all university colleges. DUS representatives at all locations provide the clearinghouse function for the dissemination of appropriate and pertinent information from all Penn State colleges at all locations. Support for the University-wide structure of DUS is an important link in the network and one that is consistently maintained at all locations. Adequate staff support for both professional advisers and faculty advisers is necessary to support the advising function throughout the University College.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students are entitled to expect the following in regard to academic advising services:

- Availability of an adviser who is responsive and available.
- Accurate information.
- Assistance in the preparation of a plan of study.
- Technical expertise on the use of eLion and other advising technologies.

COLLEGE FUNCTIONS

RECOGNITION & REWARDS SYSTEM

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "Recognition of the place of advising in the general rewards structure".

In the University College, academic advisers (both faculty and professional) must be appropriately recognized and rewarded for strong performance in the advising role. Since advising is outlined in HR23 as a type of teaching, faculty advisers (tenured, tenure track, and fixed term) are evaluated for their advising during the annual March reviews. The role of academic advising is also included the Faculty Annual Report (FAR) and in the College's Promotion and Tenure Dossier .

Professional advisers are evaluated during their annual staff reviews. Each campus has established annual advising awards and the College has created advising awards for both faculty and professional advisers. Other appropriate rewards are being explored and will be established to recognize excellence in academic advising.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of academic advising in the UC is a work in progress. A plan for implementation of a structured survey instrument has been institutionalized and annual assessment will take place according to pre-established guidelines beginning in fall of 2004. Assessment at each location will reflect the unique structure in place at a specific location and will include recommendations for improvement in both structure and delivery of academic advising services.

CAMPUS FUNCTIONS

TRAINING

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "On-going training for all advisers within a comprehensive development program". The University College sees regular and comprehensive adviser training as critical to student success. Since faculty advisers may advise outside their disciplines, professional advisers play a central role in training new advisers and updating veteran ones. Campus College Contact and Referral Representatives (CCRR) act as conduits for college specific information and will assist in the dissemination of updated and timely college information. Training can and should include regular workshops,

information sessions, newsletters, one-on-one mentoring partnerships, and campus advising meetings.

Training at each location reflects the unique needs and specific programs that are approved for delivery at that individual campus as well as those that exist across the system. As new programs are introduced at various locations, appropriate training for faculty advisers is needed. This training is often facilitated by professional advisers and/or program coordinators who have the expertise to inform faculty about the complexities of the University and its curricula.

DELIVERY OF ACADEMIC ADVISING SERVICES

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "Strategies to accommodate the specific advising needs of the unit's advisees".

Advising in the UC is delivered by both professional and faculty advisers. Advising begins with FTCAP and continues throughout the student's enrollment at a University College campus. As the student moves on to complete the academic program of choice, both professional and faculty advisers work collaboratively with career services to facilitate the transition to the world of work or to the world of post graduate education. Advising in the College continues on through to graduation and may include preparation for post baccalaureate work. On campuses where students are changing assignments to another upper division location, advisers should facilitate the transition to the new location.

SPECIAL NEEDS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "Assurance that all students in their first two semesters of study at the university, including all transfer students, will consult with an academic adviser."

All first-year students will enter the University via the DUS-administered FTCAP program. Transfer and advance standing students will be advised of Penn State requirements as well as transfer credit evaluation by assigned advisers appropriate to students' intended academic and career goals.

New baccalaureate students in the UC will participate in a first year seminar during the first year, preferably during the initial semester. The seminar can/may be offered in various formats; however, each first year seminar will be portable to all other Penn State-colleges and should include a component on academic advising, including the effective use of eLion.

FREQUENCY OF CONSULTATION

The University Faculty Senate legislation calls for "Workable guidelines concerning the ratio of advisees to adviser and the frequency with which they should consult."

All students in the UC are expected to meet regularly with their academic advisers. The frequency and type of consultation can vary but should, at minimum, include at least one meeting per semester for the duration of the student's stay at that campus. Minimally, students should consult advisers with respect to course scheduling, entrance to major requirements, career decisions, and academic difficulties. Advisees should be assigned to advisers who have been trained in a particular discipline (not necessarily their own) with advising loads appropriate to each location. Students can request adviser reassignment when appropriate. Advising Centers can/should be used as supplements to faculty advising.