

#6 Task Force Report – Undergraduate Academic Advising

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The task force was charged with identifying alternatives to the current advising model that would maintain acceptable academic advising at a lower cost to the college. We reviewed various advising models that are used on the OSU campus including:

- a. Professorial major-based advisors in a department-oriented structure (Engineering)
- b. Combination of major-based professorial and professional advisors (Forestry, Ag. Sci.)
- c. Professional advisors in a major-based decentralized advising structure
- d. Professional advisors in a centralized advising office (Business, HHS)
- e. No advising, only web-based and print information available from a central office
- f. Combination of professorial and professional advisors in a pre- and pro- advising structure (2 year pre- / 2 year pro-, 3 year pre- / 1 year pro-, 1 year pre- / 3 year pro-)

The merits and benefits of each of these structures were discussed in three weekly two-hour meetings of the advising committee. In proposing an advising model that would best serve the college and its undergraduate student population, the following factors were deemed important:

- a. Providing sufficient advising support and resources to maintain student academic success
- b. Maintain mentoring opportunities for professional understanding and career growth
- c. Facilitating the advisor/student relationship early in the college experience
- d. Understanding that academic abilities and life skills vary widely among students
- e. Acknowledgement that the number of high-need students has been increasing and this trend will most likely continue (SSD, VA, Voc-Rehab, NAFTA, etc.)
- f. Recognition that over half of new students are transfer rather than first-year students, and that student population is likely to increase in the near future

The model that was identified by the majority of the committee as providing the greatest advising support to students as well as reducing the advising load on professorial faculty was a hybrid model consisting of **centralized major-based professional advising for the first year, followed by three years of major-based professorial advisors**. (Note: because of the unique nature of the Natural Resources program, campus-based NR students would continue to be advised by a professional advisor for their latter three years; distance NR students would remain with the same advisor throughout their program.)

This advising model would require that each academic major have a prescribed first-year curriculum including math and science sequences as well as baccalaureate core and appropriate major-specific courses. All new students would work with professional advisors located in a centralized advising office beginning at START and continuing until their completion of the first-year curriculum. Upon satisfactory completion of the first-year curriculum a student would be “promoted” to their professorial advisor.

Recognizing that almost 60% of new students come to the college as transfer students, some students may progress to their professorial advisors in less than one academic year. Other students may take significantly longer than one year to complete the “first-year” curriculum.

This proposal will increase professorial efficiency by:

- a. reducing the time spent with students who have not yet demonstrated success at the university level or in the College of Forestry
- b. reducing the burden of advising students undecided about forestry as a profession
- c. re-directing student questions that are more efficiently answered by a centralized advising office (orientation to curricula and university procedures, financial aid petitions, athletic certification, Voc-Rehab reports, national and international exchange opportunities, etc.)
- d. re-directing special-needs or high-needs students to the centralized advising office for continued or remedial advising service

This proposal will:

- a. connect students with professional advisors trained specifically in referring students to college and university academic success resources
- b. require students to follow a prescribed first-year academic plan and develop a three-year academic plan prior to working with professorial advisors
- c. provide a centralized location for advising and life skills assistance
- d. ensure that students demonstrate college-level success before promotion to a professorial advisor
- e. centralize the location of professional advisors, enabling better service

Economic Impact to the College:

This advising model would lead to efficiencies in that it would “cull” students who cannot, or choose not to, successfully complete the first year prescribed curriculum. A larger proportion of entering students would not advance to higher-level forestry courses, either because they are not capable of “passing” beyond the first-year curriculum, or because—during the first-year advising process—they are redirected out of the COF to other majors or community colleges better suited to their abilities and interests. Students who *have* demonstrated first-year success at the university level will move on to higher-level COF coursework and will have better access to courses where seat space is currently often greatly limited. This model could also reduce the advising load of some professorial faculty, possibly freeing them to engage in activities that will generate revenue for the college or reduce the expense now allocated to contract faculty instructing selected courses.

Additional professional faculty positions will need to be created and staffed to provide first-year advising service and support. **The committee did not identify the FTE that would be needed to sufficiently staff this advising model or calculate the opportunity costs of the professorial faculty with the reduced advising load.**¹ Further analysis by this committee or others is recommended before further movement towards implementation is considered.

¹ A primary reason for not identifying budget dollars or FTE is that the College, in so far as we know, has no cost accounting data to serve as a basis for estimating budget impacts. We did collect current budget estimate data, but this is not a basis for future budgeting.