

Minority Report  
from the Department of Wood Science & Engineering  
for the College of Forestry Task Force on Undergraduate Advising  
prepared by Charles Brunner

The Department of Wood Science & Engineering considers the one plus three advising plan in the majority report to be suboptimal for our students because we use student advising for more than a mechanism to assist students with scheduling classes. It is a major retention tool in our program, especially for our first year students. Studies continually show that students with a personal connection to faculty are more likely to remain at an institution and graduate. While professional advisors can forge a personal relationship with students, they cannot develop a professional relationship based on knowledge of wood science or the forest products industry. Our experience is that this professional connection with a WSE faculty member is very important to the retention of WST students and to the development of a strong student cohort.

WST students generally take prerequisite courses across campus during their first four quarters and then enroll in the WSE classes that give them familiarity with the profession and their classmates. Meeting with a faculty advisor each term affords the advisor the opportunity to develop an early professional relationship, to help students identify their interests within WST, and to guide students to the option among our five that best suits their interests and abilities. Transfer students from the Colleges of Business and Engineering continually tell us that they find the professional relationships they develop with faculty to be the biggest, and most desirable, difference between their old colleges and our program. This will be lost to our first year students in the one plus three plan.

It is not clear that the proposed centralized advising plan will reduce costs and deliver a better advising experience to our students—in WSE at least. Transferring a fourth of our advising resources to centralized advising will buy very little in terms of FTE, especially considering the probable increased in student attrition. We suggest that a more productive use of resources might be the development of better web-based tools to assist faculty advisors and students with the scheduling of classes.