

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of February 18, 2010 meeting

Bert Garza
Pat Byrne
Pat DeLeeuw
Hassan Tehranian
Lillie Albert
Kathy Dunn
Katie O'Dair
Marilyn Matelski

Tom Wall
Anna Rhodes
Brian Jacek
Amy Hutton
John Spinard
Kevin Bedell
David Quigley
Gilda Morelli

Jenny Baglivo
Ce Shen
Joe Burns
Ellen Winner
Susan Gennaro
Anita Tien

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1. The summary for the meeting of December 3, 2009 was approved and will be sent to the President's Office. All summaries are posted on the Provost's Office website; members are encouraged to share the summary with colleagues.
 2. Denise Der, chair of the Quality of Student Life Committee, and Brian Jacek, Anna Rhodes from UGBC joined Council to review the results of a survey of 400 students. They reported that:
 - 65% of students meet with their advisor only once per semester
 - 63% of students feel their advisor is less than knowledgeable about social issues at BC
 - 48% of students disagree with the statement that their advisory is knowledgeable about information regarding classes outside their major
 - 23% of students rated their overall advising experience as poor; 33% rated it fair
 - Students' expectations of advisors included:
 - being available to meet at least once a semester, and having knowledge of core requirements and major requirements
 - being able to refer students to the appropriate offices for more information, and following up with students as needed
 - establishing a comfortable advising environment
 - encouraging questions
 - helping students to develop an academic plan for all four years of college
 - Students' understanding of their responsibilities included:
 - having a basic plan for course registration
 - knowing how to ask and answer questions about their own academic aspirations
 - working toward a relationship with the advisor

It was noted that the structure and quality of advising varies greatly, and that there are divergent approaches to advisement across departments and schools.

The UGBC presented several long-term and short-term suggestions to improve advising at the University, including expanding the scope of the Academic Advising Center to include major students as well as pre-major students; providing biannual training for advisors from the Academic Advising Center, and semi-annual training for advisors from the departments; considering the development of a peer advising program; developing student evaluations of

their advisors and departmental assessments of advising effectiveness; and increasing the amount of time allotted to academic planning during summer Orientation sessions.

- It was observed that there is wide divergence in how students approach their responsibilities as advisees, and that it would be helpful to develop a similar evaluative instrument for advisees.
- It was noted that the mechanism for assigning students to advisors does not always result in the most effective matches.
- A question was raised about the merits of a voluntary advising system, in which students may self-select for a minimal level of advising (i.e., for students who want only to pick up their degree audits), a medium level (i.e., with group sessions), or a greater level (i.e., for matching with an individual advising). It was noted that an assigned advising system provides some structural support and incentive for students to approach their advisors, and that without that structure it may be more difficult for students to develop relationships with their advisors.
- It was noted that faculty advisors bring intellectual and academic expertise to their advising, and that it would be more effective--for advisees and advisors alike--for faculty to be supported with the technical aspects of advising (e.g., how to log onto UIS, etc.) as much as possible.
- It was observed that resources allocated for advising vary widely across offices and schools, and a question was raised whether the Provost's Office should take a more active role in allocating those resources.
- It was suggested that the requirement that advisors undergo biannual training from the Academic Advising Center might prompt resentment among some faculty.
- It was noted that the evaluation instrument might include information about how frequently students availed themselves of their advisors.
- It was reported that first-year students frequently raised the fact that Orientation was notably lacking in academic content and specific information about course selection and add/drop, which caused significant anxiety, and that transfer students reported a general lack of knowledge among advisors about how courses completed at their prior institutions would transfer over. Transfer students also reported a general sense that BC's advising system was deficient compared to those at their prior institutions.
- It was noted that there should be a balance between highly-structured advising and self-reliance.
- Given that relationships between students and advisors tend to develop spontaneously, the importance of smaller classes and a greater number of seminar rooms was noted.
- It was also noted that many of the qualities that students look for in an advising system are more typical of a small liberal arts college.