

Minutes
University Council on Teaching
January 22, 2003
3:30 pm
Bourneuf House Conference Room

Attendees

Committee Members

Chris Hepburn, chair
Sue Barrett
Theresa Hammond
Mary Jo Hughes
Larry Ludlow
Bill Petrie
Judy Vessey
Fred Yen

Guests

Associate Academic Vice President for Faculties Pat De Leeuw
Associate Dean, Arts & Sciences Clare Dunsford
Graduate Assistant Marlene Kuhlmann
Academic Vice President and Dean of Faculties Jack Neuhauser
College of Arts & Sciences Dean Joseph Quinn

A&S Dean Joe Quinn and Associate Dean Clare Dunsford presented the proposal for the Center for Academic Advising, which has been in process for years. (See summary report distributed at the meeting.) Reasons cited for the need for such a center included:

- Early-year students have wider and different needs than do those who have declared their majors; a center might be better able to meet those needs.
- Many students are unimpressed with the current system and the UGBC is pushing for advising improvement.
- Some majors have so many students (*i.e.* Biology, Political Science, Psychology, English, and Communications) that their faculty cannot meet student needs; excess students are assigned to faculty in smaller departments—faculty who may not be able to answer pertinent questions.
- Need a stopgap for freshmen, who have no advisor between when they register in July or August through most of their first semester.

Fred Yen expressed concern that demands on faculty involved in the center would take away from time spent advising juniors and seniors; Associate Dean Dunsford replied that faculty involved in the center would be compensated and were likely to be part-time or emeritus.

Dean Quinn relayed concerns of some faculty that this center would make BC more of a bureaucracy of professionals rather than an intellectual environment, and drew attention to the types of advising that does work, including the Cornerstone program.

Having worked in a variety of advising environments, Judy Vessey stressed that the structure itself isn't as key as is managing the details well. An Academic Advising Center could, rather than being more bureaucratic, simply be part of the excellent education we offer.

Associate Dean Dunsford pointed out that the four A&S Associate Deans each advise 1600 students—they are currently acting as an Academic Advising Center, but are overwhelmed by the demand.

Fred Yen expressed concern that professional advisors might just have a stock speech for everyone.

Mary Jo Hughes suggested that the Center could include counseling and career counseling. She would like it to play more of a backup role to faculty. Mentoring can best be done by faculty with students in their classes. A better balance might be struck by expanding Cornerstone and giving faculty a course reduction for advising.

Larry Ludlow thought this was a good idea, and drew on the example of the School of Education. He believes it's key that we institute measures to determine if the Center is effective, and disagrees with the quote in the distributed materials saying that "if faculty aren't doing it well, then make them do it better."

Chris Hepburn repeated the worry of many faculty that professionals—unlike faculty—might not share with students an enthusiasm for learning.

Bill Petrie talked about the various issues students raise in advising sessions, from academic to professional to personal. Faculty may not be equipped to deal with personal issues in a way that professional advisers can. Also, student questions can need immediate attention; they need a place to turn at critical times. Faculty may not be available at these critical times. The Advising Center could be magnificent, also, in coordinating all these activities. Still, we need to think about expanding Cornerstone courses to meet students' needs. (In response to a question about how many students take Cornerstone, Associate Dean Dunsford reported 210 most fall semesters, with an additional 90 students taking "Courage to Know." This is out of 1500-1600 freshmen.)

Sue Barrett described the Cornerstone course, and the role it plays in advising.

Fred Yen, Mary Jo Hughes, and Judy Vessey all expressed interested in scaling up Cornerstone.

Mary Jo Hughes wondered if we could have a smaller Center; Judy Vessey suggested that we start small and grow gradually as needed. Dean Quinn pointed out that this would make it difficult to meet the mandatory component. (Dean Quinn left about this point.)

General discussion then ensued about advising during orientation and the availability of post-orientation advising for freshmen, with concern expressed about the lack of availability of faculty during that time of year. The mandatory component was also discussed, with Bill Petri suggesting one mandatory visit rather than three.

Theresa Hammond pointed out that an Advising Center would provide visibility to the advising function.

Associate Dean Clare Dunsford, Graduate Assistant Marlene Kuhlmann, and Associate Academic Vice President Pat DeLeeuw left about this point, and Academic Vice President Jack Neuhauser arrived.

AVP Neuhauser introduced the topic of freshmen research seminars, as held at Stanford. Students listen to faculty present their research. General discussion followed favoring the idea of more small seminars with faculty, as held at several leading institutions.

Larry Ludlow suggested that the Advising Center could coordinate such seminars. Some discussion about whether students should be required to take these seminars ensued.

Other worries were expressed, such as the fact that we spend a lot of time and attention on summer orientation, when it may be a more important tool for universities with high attrition levels in the summer before freshman year. The question was raised over whether summer orientation can be considered advising, or simply a way to please parents. Responsibilities of students, and their seeming inability to answer simple questions for themselves, were also discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30; our next meeting is February 19 from 3:30 to 5:30, Room TBA or Bourneuf Conference Room.