

Academic Advisement Council
October 8, 2007 Meeting
President's Conference Room
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Present: A. Heaston (Chair), V. Burden, M. Hale, V. Miller, E. Murkison, K. Robinson, K. Roughton, C. Thompson, L. Vance, B. Williams, and C. Griffith (Recorder)

Guests: J. O'Brien, V. Richards

1. NACADA Webinars

- *Academic Advising's Integral Role in the Academic Success and Persistence of Students*
What are you using?
 - academic advisement syllabus
 - ½ page freshman questionnaire to help advisors get to know the student better
 - plan to contact institutions noted in the webinar for their best practices in advisor training as a preliminary step in developing center's own advisor training program
 - would like Academic Advisement Council to explore creating a short video that could be used in all college sessions during the first day of SOAR to communicate a common message
 - plan to host a "meet the faculty member" roundtable in Fall 2008
- *Legal and Ethical Issues in Academic Advising*
What did you learn?
 - reinforced that the way advisement centers treat/handle parents is appropriate

2. Midterm Grades Follow-Up

- Centers' Action Plans/Results
 - Placed flier in each student's file who received one or more U grades to remind the advisor to speak with the student about academic progress. Flier included information on tutorial resources available to help students. It is recognized that this action plan does not proactively reach out to students before they may drop a course.
 - Targeted students with three or more U's. Peer advisors contacted 120 students; scheduled 40 advising appointments. Of these 40 appointments, 20 students came in for advisement to discuss academic progress. These students also received a flier on available resources. Students with fewer than 3 U's received emails with link to the flier on available resources.
 - College newsletter that contained information on how students should approach receiving a U in their midterm grade progress report was sent to all students.
 - Dean followed-up with parents by announcing that midterm grade progress reports were out, and parents should contact their student to follow-up on the student's academic progress.
 - Blanket email sent to all students with fewer than 30 credit hours indicating that they need to check their midterm grades and make an appointment with their advisor to discuss if they have questions or concerns.
 - Academic Success Center sent out emails on tutorial services available.

- Recommended language included in CLASS emails:
“All appointments need to be scheduled by October 5th to avoid a call home to determine how best to reach to you.”

Centers need to evaluate how their fall plan of action worked and think about how they can enhance their plan for the spring midterm grade progress report. *How can centers be more proactive in reaching students before they automatically drop classes with U's?*

Centers reported that they had difficulty receiving their midterm grade progress report. Velma Burden will follow-up with Mike Deal and either (1) have spring reports emailed directly to the center coordinators or (2) provide center coordinators with instructions for running the reports themselves.

Overall, centers reported that they are hearing from more students and that the time spent talking with the students is rewarding. Coordinators agreed that a common student problem was time management. Students need to be more proactive in planning out their semester obligations. Amy agreed to share the semester-at-a-glance with the coordinators (attached to minutes).

It was recommended that advisors send message to students in different ways and in terms that the students can understand. For example, students are hearing that they should not miss class, but failing to recognize the significance of class absences. In high school, missing a class that meets five days a week has different implications than missing a class in college that meets one, two or three times a week.

3. Approval of 2007-2008 Goals

The Council unanimously approved the following 2007-2008 goals:

- **Academic advisement centers will implement the new online change of major process.**
Status: *continuation goal* (waiting for Information Technology Services [ITS] to complete its piece so advisement centers can begin implementation)—ITS has pushed this project back to sometime between October 19th and November 16th. Amy will follow-up with ITS around November 16th.
- **The Academic Advisement Council will investigate an online system for making advisement appointments.**
Status: *continuation goal* (waiting for ITS)—this goal has fallen off line and may need to wait pending the outcome of DegreeWorks.
- **The Academic Advisement Council will evaluate advisement practices.**
Status: *extension goal* (developed evaluation tool; needs to be reviewed and implemented)

Amy disseminated the *Georgia Southern University Student Evaluation Instrument for Academic Advisement* for the Council's final approval. The Council unanimously approved this evaluation instrument, and Amy will now vet it through the Deans Council. Pending the deans' review, target implementation is scheduled for Spring 2008.

While this evaluation instrument provides a general overview, centers were reminded that they need to be accountable for evaluating the advisement in each of their centers. Several of the coordinators agreed to bring their evaluation instruments to the November Council meeting to share with the group. During the spring semester, the Council will

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finalize overall advisement assessment plans that include both center and university-wide evaluations.

Lisa Vance briefly reported on the *COST Change of Major Exit Survey* (copies distributed) and change of major statistics compiled on last year's change of majors (copies distributed). This information is collected to help department chairs be aware of the reasons why students are leaving their programs. COST also conducts pre- and post-advisement surveys which will be shared with the group at the November meeting.

- The Academic Advisement Council will identify activities that advisement centers can do to support retention, progression, and graduation (RPG) initiatives and potential resource implications.
Status: *new goal*
- The Academic Advisement Council will investigate methods for faculty to alert them to potential problems with advisees.
Status: *new goal* (early alert system)
- The Academic Advisement Council will develop training materials to assist new and returning advisors.
- The Academic Advisement Council will explore ways to promote professional development for professional and faculty advisors.

4. Expectations

What are and should be our expectations?

- There was strong and unanimous agreement that expecting students to take 15 credits hours per semester is a reasonable academic load. [Note: coordinators indicated that their perception is that students actually perform better when they enroll for 15 credit hours versus 12 credit hours per semester. Students enrolled for 12 hours tend to slack off with too much time on their hands. Coordinators suggested gathering evidence to support this perception. Candace checked the *Toolbox Revisited*. However, this study reported that “less than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment is a serious drag on degree completion.”]

What message do we send?

Coordinators agreed that a major problem for students is time management. *How can we say this message differently so that they understand it better?*

- Have all GSU 1210 classes address topic within first three weeks
- Place time management skills in context—revisit after first exam
- Bring in a dynamic speaker to address students on time management (Amy will speak with Chris Caplinger about the feasibility of adding this to the First Year Experience agenda)
- Coordinators also considered using upper-level students to send message to freshmen, but recognized that the success of this initiative is really dependent upon the student. There would need to be advance training for the upper-level students. Amy will discuss with Chris Caplinger the possibility of developing a prepared student panel as a resource for 1210 classes.
- Develop an online, pre-SOAR exercise that all students must complete and that would be referred back to by the advisors at SOAR or in 1210 classes.

Coordinators need to educate themselves better on how to help students learn study skills and understand academic concepts like the syllabus. It was suggested that coordinators develop a website resource of study skills that could be referred to by both advisors and students.

- *Anatomy of a Syllabus*—students do not “get” the syllabus; students are still waiting for the professor to remind them of deadlines. Amy will work with Chris Caplinger to see if First Year Experience can develop a resource that breaks down syllabi into common elements and explain them for students.
- Think about how coordinators can build on the message of SOAR and extend into the semester (GSU 1210 one means); students need to hear the same message in multiple ways and multiple times. *How can we help students achieve our expectations of them?*

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It was noted that the combination of classes a student takes during a semester can impact their ability to succeed. The Council will begin to look more closely at typical freshman classes, determining if, like Western Civilization, there are courses that students should not be enrolling in during their first semester.

5. Professional Development for Professional and Faculty Advisors

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- One-page Fact Sheet of Resources
A subcommittee was established comprised of Ellen Murkison (organizer), Chris Thompson, and Lisa Vance. This subcommittee will draft a one-page fact sheet for the Council’s consideration. The subcommittee will also begin to think about what items might go into an advisor handbook. Other centers that have ideas for either the fact sheet or handbook should share their thoughts/materials with Ellen via email before the next meeting.
- In-house workshops
Amy distributed a list of possible professional development topics drafted by Lisa Vance after consultation with COST faculty. These workshops would be open to all professional advisors, faculty advisors, peer advisors, and anyone else affiliated with advisement or interested in the topic.

Possible topics:

- Communication skills
 - Academic Success Center
 - Financial Aid
 - Career Services
 - Counseling and Career Services
 - Honors Program
 - Student Disability Resource Center
 - Housing
 - Student Organizations
 - Student Leadership
 - Study Abroad
 - First Year Experience
 - Pre-medical and pre-dental programs
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- Testing
 - MAT (Master of Arts in Teaching)
 - Information Technology Services (student computer problems) & WebCT Vista
 - Judicial Affairs

Added by
coordinators

- Legal Affairs
- Health Services

Coordinators also requested information on transfer students, but it was recommended that this be handled at the November Council meeting. Amy will meet with Velma prior to the November 12th meeting to pull together information on general guidelines for transfer advisement and CAPP.

The following schedule was decided upon by the group:

October—webinar

November—Academic Success Center (Janet O'Brien): general study tips, testing

December—Counseling Center (Susan Anderson)

January—WebCT (Robby Ambler) & Information Technology Services

February—webinar

March—Financial Aid

April—webinar

Each session (with the exception of January's technology session) will be scheduled as an informal Brown Bag session using a conversation format versus a formal presentation.

6. SOAR Calendar

Vince Miller reported that they read through the comments received by Academic Affairs and will consider them, but reminded coordinators that Academic Affairs is not the only group to be considered. It was noted, however, that the comments made by Academic Affairs were made from the perspective of advisement and registration (what they do) and how to make it a positive and successful experience for students.

A discussion was also held on how to handle students arriving at SOAR with unconfirmed AP credit. A problem arose recently indicating that a check system may need to be implemented unless a change in procedure is made. Coordinators were given the following choice:

1. Agree to follow-up on student AP scores once received by the university to ensure that the student is enrolled in the appropriate course; or
2. Not place students in the higher course until AP credit confirmed.

Coordinators agreed to follow-up on student AP scores, providing that the student signs a contract at SOAR indicating that the centers will be checking AP scores and if the student does not receive at least a 3, they will be dropped from X course and enrolled in Y. The consensus was that this contract would communicate to students that they have a shared responsibility for ensuring that they end up with the correct course. Amy will follow-up with Olivia Edenfield and the Associate Deans Council and report back to the Academic Advisement Council.

7. Updates

- 1210 Early Alerts—*Are we all in agreement?*

Coordinators agreed that they all wish to receive early alerts from 1210 instructors who are still concerned about students after having met with them and discussed their lack of academic progress. Amy will speak with Chris Caplinger about implementing such an early alert system.

Velma Burden reported that it is possible to add UA to the midterm grade progress reports to indicate unsatisfactory progress due to attendance. The next step for the Council is to develop a plan for how UA grades will be handled.

Coordinators requested an early alert system where an email could be sent to the appropriate center at any time during the semester for any student (not just freshmen). The problem is finding a way in the system to direct these emails to the appropriate center. Amy will speak with Mike Deal and ITS about it. Velma will check to see how Banner pulls information on student advisors.

- COM Process (Change of Major process addressed earlier in minutes under goals.)
- University System of Georgia (USG) Task Force on Enhanced Advising Processes Report
Amy distributed the *University System of Georgia Recommendations of the Task Force on Enhanced Advising Processes*. This document will be helpful for coordinators in their planning. Coordinators were asked to read through the document and bring any comments back to the November meeting.
- Board of Regents (BOR) Strategic Plan
A copy of the revised BOR Strategic Plan was distributed for coordinators' information.

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8. For the Good of the Order

Chris Thompson reported that the NACADA spring meeting is in March in Mobile, AL. It was noted that several coordinators are attending the October meeting. They were asked to report items of interest back to the group at the November meeting.

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Meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 12, 2007, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Marvin Pittman Administration Building, President's Conference Room

Good advising is one of the key conditions that promotes retention for it reflects an institution's commitment to the education of students (Tinto, 1999, Fall NACADA Journal).