EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (SCEP)
MINUTES
OCTOBER 14, 2015

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

[In these minutes: Grad SERU results, Undergraduate Advising Task Force, Amendment to one administrative policy – Timely Graduation for Undergraduates, Approval of alternate teaching evaluation form at Rochester]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Michael Anderson, William Dammann, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Karla Hemesath, Ken Leopold, Keith Mayes, Alon McCormick, Henning Schroeder, Rachna Shah, Nevin Young, Henry Zurn.

ABSENT: Lauren Lindquist, Hamza Musse, Savio Poovathingal.

REGRETS: Nicola Alexander, Robert McMaster.

GUESTS: Angela Bowlus, Manager, CLA Advising; Suzanne Bardouche, Assistant Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education; Belinda Cheung, Assistant Vice Provost, Graduate Education; Amy Gunter, Director, CSE Advising; Daniel Jones-White, Analyst, Institutional Research; Chris Leighton, Professor, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science; LeeAnn Melin Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Education; Les Opatz, Assistant Program Director, CLA Advising; Nikki Letawsky Shultz, Assistant Dean, CBS; Stacey Tidball, Associate Director, Academic Support Resources.

OTHERS ATTENDING: Leslie Schiff.

1. DISCUSSION OF GRAD SERU RESULTS

Dean Henning Schroeder began the discussion by noting that the Grad SERU was a new initiative last year to receive information on post-baccalaureate education at the University. The survey instrument was developed and refined during the previous year before being administered to all post-baccalaureate students, excluding students enrolled in a first professional degree. There was a 30 percent response rate, which is similar to that for other student surveys.

Daniel Jones-White then walked the committee through a series of slides, highlighting the following information:

- Survey assesses the post-baccalaureate experience University-wide
- GAPSA, COGS, Institutional Research, Measurement Services, Boynton, Writing Center, Student Affairs, and Graduate School all helped develop the survey
- There is a national desire for this instrument
- Instrument is jointly owned by the University and the University of California-Berkeley
- In spring 2016 the survey will be administered here again and at other institutions
- Low response rate for students later in their careers is because they are harder to reach than students who are on campus consistently for courses
- Students in programs for a longer period of time are less from the medical/science fields and more from the arts and humanities due to the time to degree in those programs
- For Master's student, the top reasons for a leave of absence from the program include job issues, relocation, returning home for international students, and program requirements
- For research doctorate students, the top reasons for a leave of absence from the program include moving to follow a spouse, family issues, and internships

- Students reported low rates of advisors helping them with teaching as compared to advice on research
- Program climate by race and ethnicity was collected, and shows a small yet notable difference between white and non-white student responses. This difference is also seen on the undergraduate SERU.
- Online tool will allow anyone to see responses at the college level

Belinda Cheung said that a policy decision was made to not require a reason for requesting a leave of absence. Instead this decision is left to the departments and programs. The Graduate School is now looking at what is being reported and considering whether finances should be an eligible reason for a leave of absence.

Q: Are results available by discipline?

A: No. Most reports were done by college.

2. DISCUSSION OF WORK BY THE UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING TASK FORCE

Nikki Letawsky Shultz, Assistant Dean, CBS; LeeAnn Melin Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Education; Chris Leighton, Professor, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science; and Les Opatz, Assistant Program Director, CLA Advising then joined the meeting to discuss work being done by the Undergraduate Advising Task Force. [The following discussion is based on the draft report dated October 13, 2015, and may not reflect content in the final report.]

Nikki Letawsky-Shultz noted that the task force charge was to develop recommendations to enhance and support undergraduate advising on the Twin Cities campus. Work began in mid-July by reviewing current practices for advisors, students, and administrators, as well as national models and best practices. The draft report identifies gaps, provides insight, and offers feedback. It will be presented to the Provost and then 22 listening sessions are scheduled to receive additional feedback.

LeeAnn Melin stated that the report has six recommendations. The first is that current advising is uneven between colleges and the University needs to develop standard services for all undergraduates. A revised advising framework and structure are being proposed, including departmental advising which is not offered in four colleges. : A revised advising framework and structure are being proposed which includes a collegiate advisor for four years and major advising through departmental/faculty advisors or faculty mentoring.

Nikki Letawsky-Shultz said that consistency across campus is a bold initiative, but recommendations 2-6 will help achieve recommendation 1. The remaining recommendations are:

- #2-consistent advising capacity; a ratio of 250-300 students per advisor is the target
- #3-technology tools and infrastructure are needed, including making APLUS an enterprise tool to create commonalities across advising
- #4-clear relationships are needed with other advising working groups already in place
- #5-hiring advisors and keeping them satisfied through pay, promotion, work opportunities, and professional development, some of which might mean moving to a different college; effects of the Job Family Study are still to be seen
- #6-core common training curriculum for advisors and ongoing advisor training and professional development to give them the skills to be successful

Q: How will this initiative be funded?

A: Investments will likely be needed at the collegiate and central levels. Units have been asked to do a gap analysis to see where they are are in terms of meeting the spirit of the report.

Q: Some transfer students complaint that they cannot meet with an advisor earlier in the transfer process. Has this issue been addressed?

A: Yes it is covered in the report.

Q: If faculty are willing to serve as lower-division advisors, will that be allowed?

A: Yes. One group to target are the faculty who teach the freshmen experience courses.

Q: Students have the best experience at the University if they can make a connection with a faculty member. Is there an incentive for faculty to serve as advisors? How are willing faculty recruited? Which colleges do and do not use faculty advisors?

A: Some departments already have faculty advisors but they can be hard to use in large majors. Professional advisors can still refer students to faculty members.

Q: What are the obstacles to achieving recommendation #1?

A: The proposed advising model would need to be adopted in every college and resources would need to be provided to achieve the goals, such as a lower caseload. The roles and responsibilities of students would need to evolve as well. If there is a common framework across the Twin Cities, adoption would be easier.

Q: What types of difficult decisions do advisors make?

A: They are making or involved in making determinations regarding suspensions, credit overrides, and upholding policies. They are also the people who deliver these decisions to the students. If advisors had more time with students earlier in their academic career, these conversations might be easier.

Q: Do advisors have other assignments outside direct advising? If so, will there be uniformity in these expectations as well?

A: Outside duties vary by college and release for these activities may or may not be granted by a college. There is inequity in how these requests are handled or how opportunities are promoted. The biggest issue is that if advisors have outside obligations, then those units do not have extra space to shift caseload when an issue arises.

Q: Who will implement these changes if approved?

A: Dean and associate deans in the nine undergraduate colleges and other undergraduate programs will handle implementation. Each area will see which items it needs to address and where there is resistance or pain points. Areas can provide more than the baseline, but the baseline is needed do that students are not having a different experience based solely on the college in which they are enrolled.

Q: Are peer institutions doing something similar?

A: They have looked at the Big 10 and CIC but each institution’s approach varies. This is a common challenge that institutions are reviewing. At Wisconsin, students voted in 2009 to tax themselves to increase advising, student services, access to bottleneck courses, and scholarships.

The cost is $1000 if the family income is over $80,000 per year. One issue is that the University has direct admission to its undergraduate colleges. In the Big Ten, this is only done at four institutions.

Members made the following comments:

- Current advisor workload puts more responsibility on the student
- If a student has a clear plan, they do not require an appointment every semester
- At peak advising times, student mentors could provide responses to easy questions
- Drawback to using faculty advisors is that they do not know all the opportunities
- Departments that utilize professional and faculty advisors can work well, but not all departments want to use this hybrid model
- Professional advisors spend more time talking with other advisors about issues and opportunities, which is a learning experience
- Faculty advisors can work with students in the capacity that they are most qualified to do
- When students have multiple advisors, which happens often, their questions can be bounced between the advisors, taking longer to provide a response. One key advisor would be helpful.
- Advisors sometimes have to make unpopular decisions and therefore need the authority to do so
- To use advising time more efficiently, the technology change should include a simple pre-appointment form so that advisors and students are better prepared for meetings
- Learning Abroad Center already has a pre-appointment checklist which helps manage their appointments

In closing LeeAnn Melin said that professional advisors have a role to play, even with students who appear to be on track. Some underlying issues do not come out until students are at their appointment so the capacity for extended appointments is necessary at times. Questions from advisors also provide an opportunity to simply check-in on each student in regular intervals. She then invited everyone to attend the Provost's all-campus town hall advising meeting on December 15 at 3:30 pm.

3. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO ONE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

<u>Timely Graduation for Undergraduates</u>

Angela Bowlus, Manager, CLA Advising; Suzanne Bardouche, Assistant Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education; and Amy Gunter, Director, CSE Advising presented this policy, which combines the Administrative Policies on Promoting Timely Graduation by Undergraduates and the Declaring and Pursuing an Undergraduate Major. The revision includes language on declaring a major for new and transfer students and moving students towards the awarding of a degree.

Suzanne Bardouche noted that students need to apply to graduate although there is a process for administrative degree clearance. Current practice allows for administrative degree clearance, but this revision has the authority in writing to administratively clear the degree by the advisor and sets expectations for the student.

The University also wants students to declare a major earlier if possible. This allows programs to know how many students they have at each level and to plan courses accordingly. If a student declares a major just before graduating, they also miss all the advising resources in the program.

Angela Bowlus said that the pathway to graduate is unclear in some colleges, but can be helped once a major is declared. These revisions fit with the Student Learning Outcomes and Student Development Outcomes as well.

Amy Gunter stated that these changes also help advisors have conversations with students early in a program and may help prevent a student taking all the requirements for a major and not declaring it until the semester that they intend to graduate.

Q: How many degrees are cleared in a year?

A: About 7500. There are roughly another 10 students each year who have finished all the requires for their degree but have not applied. Students are still able to enroll after a degree has been cleared.

Q: How are these 10 students identified?

A: They are found by the advisors or by Academic Support Resources which reviews about 120 student records each year.

Q: Is there a mean number of credits that a student has at graduation?

A: The number of credits range from 120-180 depending on various circumstances.

Q: If a student is administratively cleared for graduation, what is the impact on financial aid or Visa status for international students?

A: The University is developing a list of considerations when determining if a degree should be administratively cleared.

Q: Some students choose to repeat a course to improve their GPA before applying to a graduate program. If a student's degree is administratively cleared, would they still have this option?

A: No as the University has not proposed unlocking a student's GPA once the degree is cleared. They would suggest that the student work with their advisor on how to complete their application and tell their story regarding the GPA.

Q: As undergraduate advising is being looked at, does this policy add the responsibility to find these students to an advisor's workload?

A: Advisors already do this as they watch requirements and look for changes when close to graduation. Advisors can also put a hold on a student's record when there is no degree progress. These actions go along with the recommendations of the undergraduate advising task force.

Q: If a transfer student is admitted with 60 credits or more, do they have time before they need to declare a major?

A: The policy states that a major must be declared by the end of the second semester of enrollment. Declaring a major for transfer students is dealt with by each college at the time of admission.

Q: Will this policy change help or hurt transfer students?

A: The policy simply indicates when a major must be declared. Most work is done by admissions to review transfer student coursework prior to these students being admitted.

Members made the following comments:

- Students want to be creative with their major and minor

- Career planning is needed for seniors
- Some students require extra time to decide on a degree
- Students already lose financial aid eligibility after eight semesters
- Advisors can also help a student who is not doing well in one major by suggesting alternate majors

With no further comments, the policy revision was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF ALTERNATE TEACHING EVALUATION FORM AT ROCHESTER

Professor Wick noted that last spring SCEP was asked to approve an exemption for an alternate teaching evaluation form for the Rochester campus for one course that is offered in collaboration with Mayo. She noted that some Academic Health Center schools and programs already have a similar exception, as it relates to accreditation requirements.

Members had asked for additional information regarding the promotion and tenure aspect before voting. Professor Wick reported that there are no tenured or tenure-track faculty teaching this course; all instructors at Mayo who use a 360 degree evaluation form.

She asked if members were willing to vote today. Members asked that a statement be developed so that they know what exemption is being granted. Professor Wick agreed to provide a statement prior to the next meeting so that a vote could be taken in November.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Professor Wick thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate