January 6, 2014

Adela de la Torre, Chair
Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience
Office of the Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs

RE: Davis Division of the Academic Senate Response:
     Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience Report

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience report (BRC) was forwarded to all Davis Division of the Academic Senate standing committees and the Faculty Executive Committees in each school and college. Detailed responses were received from the Committees on Faculty Welfare, Library, Admissions and Enrollment, Undergraduate Council, and Graduate Council as well as from the Faculty Executive Committees from the College of Engineering and Letters and Science.

Along with this letter I am also sending you a summary report of the Academic Advising Survey conducted by the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. The responses to our survey together with the committee responses to the BRC report received give a clear overview of the importance faculty attach to their role in student advising. Overall, there was consensus that faculty time is best spent on academic and career advising for which faculty are the most knowledgeable and hold primary responsibility. The Advising Portal, when completed, is expected to be a great help. It was repeatedly pointed out that faculty time is a serious impediment to faculty member's ability to perform their advising role well. The increased student to faculty ratio has acerbated this situation in recent years. It was noted that it is important to keep advising closely tied to the departments. Each department's curriculum requires tailored advising that is optimally delivered by departmental faculty and professional advising staff.

The following summarizes detailed responses submitted in response to the BRC:

- We concur with the BRC that the library could play a new and larger role in the development of student information literacy; and a greater effort is needed to make students aware of the resources available to them. Being able to locate and critically assess information is a fundamental academic skill. As online course websites and hybrid online/in-person courses gain in popularity, the library's collections and service, including instruction in information literacy training, should be integrated. Learning how to use the library and its resources should be a requirement. Social media, on-line resources and applications could be used to enhance the students' social or extra-curricular experiences.

- We note that many BRC suggestions about faculty advising appear to ignore the realities of programs with large numbers of students. (Psychology, for example, has 1740 majors and 40 faculty members).

- We oppose mandating training for instructors with low teaching evaluations. In fact we doubt mandated training is desirable or would be effective. Most faculty members are interested in improving their teaching and will take advantage of tools to help them do so. Overreliance on teaching evaluation scores would discourage faculty from teaching larger classes and may also discourage them from experimenting with hybrid and fully online courses.

- Undergraduate Council (UGC) encourages completion of the Advising Portal as soon as possible and sees a particular need to focus on advising for new students (both freshmen and transfer students). Early identification of students experiencing academic difficulty and the ability to refer them to appropriate resources (e.g., SASC, CAPS) are factors of paramount importance to overall success.

- Student mental health is an increasing concern. Mental health professionals on campus need sufficient resources to be effective. Faculty members are often the first to suspect that a student is in distress. Information or training to better prepare faculty to intervene in appropriate and effective ways is desirable, and should minimize the negative consequences of mental health crises.

- It is important to acknowledge that we also need to provide better training opportunities for professional staff advisors.

- Support for student to student mentorship should be encouraged. Student mentors should receive targeted training to ensure their responsibilities complement faculty and professional staff advisor advising.   Student mentors should not be viewed as a replacement for faculty and professional staff advisors.

- Every department that supports Teaching Assistants (TA) should create and maintain an internal TA training program; it is recommended that the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning take charge of such a program.

- UGC strongly believes that in order to improve the student experience the campus needs to create more opportunities for students and faculty to meet in small groups. The current trend of increasing student-to-faculty ratios needs to be reversed. In addition to more small-enrollment regular classes, first-year seminars and internship opportunities should be increased. Building a strong alumni network, hosting alumni career panels and seminars, and job-shadowing programs would be beneficial.

We commend the Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience for under-taking a comprehensive review of the student experience. The BRC provides an excellent starting point for making the campus a better place for all our students.

Sincerely,

Bruno Nachtergaele, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Mathematics

Enclosure: Academic Advising Survey Summary
c: Chancellor Katehi (w/enclosure)
    Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Hexter (w/enclosure)
    Interim Vice Provost de la Pena (w/enclosure)

Faculty Role in Academic Advising
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
January 6, 2014

The Davis Division of the Academic Senate surveyed the departmental representatives to the Representative Assembly in November/December 2013.   The following represents a results summary for each question:

1. **How do your departmental faculty see their role in advising of undergraduate students?**

Responses unanimously reflect that faculty advising of undergraduates is important.   In general respondents see class time, office hours, and e-mail as the main communication venues through which they advise students. The how varies because each department manages advising in a manner that best suits their curriculum. Retaining and enhancing this flexibility to tailor advising needs at the department level is important to the faculty. The following are response examples that describe the faculty's role in undergraduate advising:

- Mentoring students on career goals and networking.
- The main role of faculty in advising is transformational advising (which may include, career and major exploration and hosting industry tours and speakers) with undergraduate students.
- Faculty should not being involved in transactional advising that involved administrative details, as they have other responsibilities to teaching and research.
- Recommending courses, especially according to the student's career plans and research interests for graduate schools
- Assist students in formulating life plans and define career goals.
- Inform and provide advice about professions and careers and what majors are best suited to meeting their goals.
- Advice on metacognitive learning processes such as how to effectively read, study, and work in teams.
- Expose students to a variety of ideas and help them think critically.
- Research internships in their labs and obtaining summer internships.
- Faculty mentor undergraduates concerning personal issues that affect their academics.
- Faculty provides mentorship to re-entry or transfer students about child care issues, commuting, financial problems and other issues related to their academic success.
- Because of the multiple potential foci that are underneath a degree in Theatre and Dance (acting, choreography, design, directing, management, writing, scholarship) it is important to directly assist students in negotiating the possibilities in and outside of the university setting. Insofar as the development of the individual is also the development of the artist and the student, there is a high degree of importance placed on knowledge of the self and working to understand how an individual can engage with intellectual, artistic and career possibilities. Since one of our primary

capstone experiences is the production of theatre and dance, in working closely with students who must take significant independent responsibility to realize these projects, we highly value direct and individual engagement. As a result of these we operate on a first name basis with all of our majors. We as a department strongly believe that faculty investment in student mentoring and advising is a crucial part of the value of a UC Davis education.

- Provide advice to undergraduate students, particularly getting them to look at graduate school, and clarifying confusing situations in regards to their future plans.

2. Provide examples of faculty advising activities in your department that you believe contribute to student success.

Faculty participate in a variety of campus and departmental student centered activities, provide advice on a wide range of topics. There is consensus among faculty that being available to students for academic and career counseling, as well as advising on areas that are affecting their health and academics, is essential for student success. Provided below are specific examples of faculty advising activities and areas of advising.

Student Centered Events:

- Faculty participation in Previews Days, Decision Days, Freshmen Orientation, Transfer Student Advising, summer advising and programs associated with Regents Scholars, Jastro Scholars, and Honors Challenge
- Faculty participation in Little I, Ag Science Field Day, and department sponsored barbeques.
- Faculty mentoring of students in MURALS, the Davis Honors Challenge and other University programs.
- Faculty participation in student clubs, including AIChE, MASC and ISPE. Among their activities, the student branch sponsors an industry night, workshops and seminars, Picnic Day activities, an ice cream social, and "pizza with a professor".

Advising by faculty in the following areas:

- Career counseling, undergraduate classes, campus research opportunities, preparation for graduate/professional school, study abroad programs, fellowships, summer research opportunities and internships.
- Travel awards, readership and grants.
- Study habits, time management, stress management, life crisis and health issues that affect academic success.
- How to work with mentors and colleagues.
- Employment opportunities, networking, and professionalism.
- Support for student chapters of national organizations.

3. **In your department what is the faculty expectation of staff in advising undergraduate students?**

    In general, staff and peer advisers help with the nuts and bolts of transactional academic planning . Student peer advisers are expected to seek out the students that need help and pull them in, but not provide definitive transaction or transformative advice. Overall, staff and peer advisers reduce the workload for faculty advisers and master advisers. Several respondents expressed concern about staff advisor workload being too heavy.

    Expectations of staff advisors
    - Be familiar with the program requirements, the goals of the major, and all policies related to the coursework, prerequisites, and the options that exist in the major.
    - Give undergraduates a clear understanding of major requirements, course choices, course schedule planning, graduation requirements, and handle administrative forms related to student advising.
    - Correctly recording units and ensure completion of degree requirements in a timely manner.
    - Advise on minor (matching requirements, forms, etc.).
    - Have knowledge of upcoming course schedules.
    - Check on their degree requirements when students file for graduation.
    - Work with students to make a four year completion plan.
    - Provide students with CRNs.
    - Provide students with course availability info.

    Additional advising support
    - Faculty rely on the staff and peer advisors to monitor all aspects of a students' progress and success in the major.
    - Staff advisors guide students to the faculty that is best able to assist them with personal difficulties affecting their academics.
    - Faculty direct students to campus advising resources and encourage students to directly interact with other faculty.
    - Faculty establishes a close relationship with students to provide a more professional specific level of support.

    Concerns
    - Faculty in large majors cannot engage in the more transactional advising activities.
    - Student peer advising is not a reliable source of information for course requirements.

- Unfavorable faculty to student ratio in the larger departments.

4. How can faculty and staff effectively work together so that students achieve academic success?

There is agreement among faculty that having a formal system in place which includes understanding of advising duties, responsibilities, expectations and challenges would contribute to academic success of students. Improved communication between faculty and staff is considered essential to student success. Various departments currently have a referral system that works to maximize their effectiveness with students. Provided below is a list of recommendations for improvement.

Recommendations

- Require signoff (e.g. like formal study plan) at minimum on restricted electives.
- Require the student to meet with advisors at least once a year.
- Share information about non-department courses.
- Discussion among students, staff advisor, and faculty advisor on any substitution of required courses.
- Have staff direct students to faculty when their questions are most appropriate for faculty input.
- Have SAOs work in the department instead of the college.
- Hold annual or biannual meetings or workshops with faculty and staff advisors.
- Keep advising staff and faculty co-located. Refer students interested in classes to the instructing faculty.
- The curriculum should be more translucent and less convoluted.
- Staff could provide feedback on what works and what does not for the curriculum.
- Staff advisors should go to all classes at the beginning of each quarter to let students know that they are available for advice.
- Academic advising is discipline-specific and is therefore best kept at the local departmental level.
- Additional resources are needed to support existing staff advisors and help them maintain the excellent quality of advising that they have been providing over the years.

5. **Are faculty in your program able to carry out their advising role successfully? Explain any constraints or challenges.**

There is consensus among faculty that time availability is major constraint for more involvement in student advising. As a research university, there are tremendous pressure and demands on faculty time for faculty to achieve research excellence. Faculty members also have other departmental level, college level, university level and out-of-campus editorial service responsibilities.   The time spent by faculty on advising, which is often not formally acknowledged, include participation in time is seen as the biggest constraint because of the workload associated with being a faculty member preview days, decision days, freshmen orientation, transfer advising, fall commencement etc. Additional challenges and constraints are listed below.

Challenges and Constraints

- Faculty feels that their efforts in advising are not rewarded.
- Students sometimes have difficulty finding the office hours of faculty who are not teaching those students.
- Undergraduates cannot work as many hours in the laboratory compared to graduate students. This forces mentors to adapt their time to the student's schedule.
- The training period is longer for undergraduates and this can become costly both in time and money for them to achieve their laboratory education.
- Faculty may not be up to date on course requirements for the majors that their department offer.
- Lack of familiarity with courses in other departments or colleges; not knowing what classes are cancelled, restricted or are taught irregularly. Faculty may not know how the students are advised by staff.
- There is insufficient time devoted to discussion of student advising issues in departmental faculty meetings.
- Frequent changes in online systems do not help as faculty does not have the time to master them.
- Not knowing who one's advisees are – check advising portal – make that more obvious, provide way to contact students directly (email).
- Inadequate funding to support advising.
- There are insufficient resources for faculty to become more actively involved.
- Not knowing what is expected of advising, who needs advice or what kind of advice should be provided.
- Practices are not consistent across staff/faculty nor are they consistent across faculty who are appointed year by year with no historical memory available to new appointees.
- Advisers, either as they replace prior advisers or as they jointly serve as faculty advisers do not communicate with each other about requirements etc.

- The administrative demands posed by campus restructuring (e.g., the new budgetary model, changes in summer session scheduling, requests for information/input on campus proposals) limit opportunities for reflective analysis of what is working well and what could be improved.

6. How can we improve the faculty's role in advising?

Faculty's role in advising can be improved through increased interactions between faculty and students. The faculty overwhelmingly felt that rewarding faculty advising and master advisers in the merit and promotion process will improve faculty's role in advising. Providing faculty with the appropriate resources and addressing the issues currently hindering the advising process will significantly improve the faculty's role in advising. Provided below is a list of recommendations.

General Recommendations

- Implement an online advising system with a single point of entry which then branches to specific recommendations, forms, websites, or referrals. Have an online advising chat room available at all times.
- Improve tracking (of meeting degree requirements, timing of prerequisites, etc.)
- Recruit more faculty to reduce student to faculty ratios.
- Staff support should be provided to assist with student advising.
- Monitor peer advising (e.g. course choice, and more generally the quality of advice given by peers).
- Have one or more group advising sessions that include an overview of course requirements and sample course plans.
- Hold a workshop on degree requirements for the faculty so the faculty can be better informed.
- Make better use of video and web casted advising.
- Provide paper versions of the quarterly time schedule.
- Organize a small number of seminars (for professional development, graduate school applications and career options) that students are encouraged to attend.
- Identify faculty who either are successful advisors or wish to dedicate time to advising undergraduate students, and provide them with support.
- Change the culture so that undergraduate advising is rewarded on merit actions.
- Conduct an objective study to see what the problems are and disseminate results widely.

Faculty Recommendations

- Faculty role in advising should be limited (especially in the first two years of appointment) and the curriculum should be simplified.
- Faculty should know more about where their own courses fit into the curriculum--for minors, for majors, for non-majors.
- The faculty's role in advising should continue to be complementary to that of the staff advisors, rather than overlapping.
- Advising should be departmentally based.
- Provide opportunities for faculty to teach smaller courses and students to take them.

- Brown bag sessions for new faculty, training seminars for all faculty could be offered that provide guidance on effective advising to students.
- Educate faculty about available advising resources.
- Educate faculty on student transfer process and issues.
- Provide a way to match faculty with students interested in independent study or internship opportunities.
- Formalize advising expectations for faculty.

Student Recommendations

- Make advising a requirement for students.
- Create a more welcoming environment for students when they drop by for questions or advising.
- Encourage students to seek individual advising.
- Provide entering students an introduction to physical and electronic advising services.
- Improve where to send student for resources.
- Conduct student surveys for feedback regarding the advising they receive.
- Both students and faculty should have more time to engage in advising activities.