

December 18, 2014

ADELA DE LA TORRE

Vice Chancellor—Student Affairs
Office of Student Affairs

**RE: Davis Division of the Academic Response:
Blue Ribbon Committee on the Student Experience – Advising Implementation
Subcommittee Report**

The Advising Implementation Subcommittee Report was forwarded to all Davis Division of the Academic Senate standing committees including school and college Faculty Executive Committees. Detailed responses were received from Undergraduate Council (UGC) and the Faculty Executive Committees from College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), College of Biological Sciences (CBS), College of Engineering (COE), College of Letters and Science (CLS), Graduate School of Management (GSM) and School of Education (Education). The following position is based on the responses received.

The Academic Senate agrees with and supports the objective to improve advising. We thank our colleagues serving on the subcommittee for their service and thoughtful consideration of the issues. Some aspects of the report generated discussion and deserve further consideration before an advising implementation plan is formalized; specifically:

Chapter 1: Delivery of Advising Services

Most responses pointed out that the document fails to distinguish two very different types of advising. The CLS response summarizes the issues as, "...helping students choose the right course of study and mentoring student research." Distinguishing these two different types of advising is important for many reasons. The most critical is the ability to identify measures needed to meet student needs and provide faculty incentives. Furthermore, the identification of effective online tools will be impacted based on the type of advising.

As conveyed in previous responses, the campus must distinguish between advising services to be provided by professional staff advisors and those by faculty. We believe "transactional" advising such as course planning, minimum progress, particularly across majors/colleges, and degree certification are best provided by professional staff advisors. Faculty should provide "transformational" advising such as the type of courses or experience that will prepare undergraduates for particular post-graduate training or careers, advice on graduate programs, research areas that may interest the student, etc. We must agree on terminology that will find universal acceptance and will clarify the respective expectations of professional advising staff and faculty engaged in student advising.

We need to move away from a strategy of one size fits all for undergraduate student advising even within a college. As pointed out by CAES "...concern was expressed with the adherence to the standard of 1:350 advising to student ratio as different majors have different advising needs and complexities such that a strict reliance on this standard will place some students at a disadvantage."

In response to Objective 1, #2a Target Audience, CBS indicated, "This should state Master Advisors or other faculty dedicated to advising. New faculty may not be involved directly in undergraduate advising when they first start." As stated by UGC, "With experience in the various types of advising, few, if any departments involve all faculty in advising. A few faculty take on the role, perhaps a few years at a time. Perhaps those few faculty need some special training." While we support the view that there should be

no requirement that all faculty be involved in advising, we do expect that in each major some faculty members are dedicated to the advising of their students.

Chapter 2: Campus-Wide Improvements

Discussion of the title to be assigned to faculty responsible for advising students caused concern and confusion. The title Master Advisor is widely used. Many felt the use of "Chair of Undergraduate Program in X" would be confused with the Department Chair. The Academic Senate wishes to have faculty referred to as "Master Advisor." To this end, it is important that we come to agreement on the staff vs. faculty role in undergraduate advising. The Academic Senate would like to receive a draft document from your office delineating the advising responsibilities between professional staff advisors and Master Advisors by June 15, 2015. At which time, the Academic Senate will study the draft before forwarding it for official review and comment. The Academic Senate will respond to the draft with additional suggestions to allow us to work toward collective agreement.

The Academic Senate does not support the suggestion that advising be a required part of the tenure agreement. When read literally, the proposal suggests a change in faculty expectations of "teaching, research and service" to be "teaching, research, service and advising." We are in support of GSM's suggestion that rather than attempting to redefine faculty expectations, it may be useful to draw a distinction between recognizing undergraduate student advising as a legitimate form of service rather than requiring faculty to elevate it above other forms of service such as graduate student advising.

Chapter 3: College-Level Recommendations

In order to evaluate and provide an informed decision on the impacted course recommendation, we would like to receive quantitative data concerning the number and college location of impacted courses. If the data is provided by January 15, 2015, the Academic Senate will respond to the impacted course recommendation by February 17, 2015.

Conclusion

The volume of campus and unit initiatives/priorities associated with 2020 goals impacts efforts to improve quality of instruction and undergraduate advising. While staff advisors are struggling to manage the increase in undergraduates, particularly the special needs of international incoming and transfer students, the hiring of faculty is not yet keeping pace with student enrollment increases; therefore, faculty, departments and programs are struggling to provide instruction. Upon arrival on a research university campus, new faculty launch their research programs, which translates into an increased teaching demand on existing faculty. Since the bedrock of a unique educational experience for our undergraduates is our experienced faculty who effectively translate their research experience into teaching undergraduates, hiring temporary teachers and lecturers is not the only answer. The campus is struggling to identify usable teaching space for larger classes and increased sections as well as implement measures to maximize effectiveness of large class instruction. While instruction in large classes has long been a reality at a large research university, the undergraduate student's experience is gained through their involvement in ongoing faculty research activities. Pedagogy may invariably demand small group if not individual instruction. An effective link between research and instruction is what differentiates a successful research university from competing educational institutions. The campus must prioritize implementation of goals and strategies in order to avoid the deterioration of educational quality.

Finally, given we agree that improving advising is an important objective, it is critical to assess the workload impact of the subcommittee's recommendations. Following a realistic workload assessment, the campus must develop a management plan designed to assure the entire campus is prepared and resourced to successfully implement the advising recommendations adopted.

I look forward to receiving the data on the number and college location of impacted courses by mid-January; as well as the document describing the advising responsibilities of professional staff advisors and Master Advisors by mid-June.

Sincerely,



André Knoesen, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Electrical and Computer Engineering

c: Chancellor Katehi
Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor Hexter
Vice Provost/Dean de la Peña