



Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

Report: Enhancing the Student Experience

December 6, 2013

The campus formed a Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience in 2012-2013. The report was delivered to the Academic Senate in June 2013. The Divisional Chair advised the Chancellor that report review would commence in fall 2013. Please note the first few pages, of document provided for review, are excerpts from the report. The excerpts are provided to highlight areas that should be addressed during review. Additionally, the Divisional Chair and Vice Chair intend to initiate a broader discussion among the committees and Academic Senate membership concerning advising in general.

Admissions & Enrollment

December 6, 2013 6:02 PM

The Admissions & Enrollment committee felt the report on Enhancing the Student Experience relates to our concerns mainly indirectly, in that improving students' experience will help attract good students to the campus. Admissions data are already used to identify students who can benefit from certain programs. This could go too far, for example if students are made to feel from the start of their time at UC Davis that they don't belong or were barely accepted, but the committee saw no indication of such problems in the report.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (ENGINEERING)

December 4, 2013 2:41 PM

See the attached pdf file.

Response continued on next page.

Date: December 3, 2013

From: College of Engineering Faculty Executive Committee

Re: Comments on the Blue Ribbon Report on Enhancing the Student Experience

Our committee reviewed the extensive Blue Ribbon Report on Enhancing the Student Experience. The College of Engineering (COE) undergraduate programs must undergo periodic reviews by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) which mandates several advising standards. These include yearly advising for all undergraduate students and, for Upper Division students, mandatory faculty advising. The mandatory faculty advising requirement during the Junior and Senior years is implemented by placing holds on student registrations. Typically, Student Affairs Officers (SAOs) in the Departments meet with students to advise them on how to meet program requirements, and the faculty advising focuses on ensuring that the courses selected match career goals after graduation. Note in this respect that in the engineering professions a MS (instead of a BS) is often viewed as the true professional degree, so many students seek advice on selecting graduate schools and ensuring that their undergraduate program prepares them for graduate school success. Several of the College Departments are impacted (such as Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering or Computer Science), so these Departments supplement SAO time with Peer Advisers, upper division students who assist in advising lower division students.

In addition to formal advising, engineering students have also ample opportunities to interact informally with faculty members during their Capstone Design Projects in the Senior year (also required by ABET), during faculty office hours, or by working as undergraduate student researchers on faculty research projects, either during the academic year or the summer. These informal interactions have often a greater impact on the future career of undergraduate students than the ABET mandated faculty advising process.

The College is facing several important challenges. The most significant is the large attrition rate during the first two years, about 40% for some majors (although these figures include transfers between COE majors). This attrition rate is due in part to inadequate student preparation or poor study habits, but some causes are specific to the College. For example, due to the Transfer Agreement between Junior Colleges and UCs, during their first 2 years Engineering majors take primarily basic sciences courses in math, physics, or chemistry. During that period they have limited contact with engineering departments and often lose track of the reasons why they selected engineering majors. This is currently being addressed by a combination of improved lower division advising and the introduction of Freshman or Sophomore design projects.

Other challenges faced by the College include an increase in Junior College transfer students with specific advising needs, as well as an increase in international students (also with distinctive needs) brought by the 2020 initiative. The College is currently discussing a way to restructure its advising services to meet these challenges. Finally, due to the stress brought by the high demands of engineering programs, mental health issues have become an

important concern to our College, since 3 undergraduate students took their lives last year. This problem has been addressed by securing the part-time assignment of a psychologist to our College, who is assisting students with emotional needs.

Our Committee believes that the Blue Ribbon Report contains many useful recommendations, some of which are already in place in our College. However, our feeling is that we would prefer to deploy locally based solutions that meet the specific problems of COE students instead of undertaking the implementation of the extensive list of recommendations contained in the report. The committee is also somewhat skeptical about the proposal to increase the weight of ordinary advising activities in faculty advancement files. A useful first step would be to ensure that faculty members who serve as Master Advisors get proper recognition for this work in the advancement process.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (LS: SOC SCI)

December 2, 2013 5:35 PM

The L&S Executive Committee discussed "Enhancing the Student Experience" and had a number of comments on it. (1) In large departments (such as in the larger social sciences departments) there is not a faculty advisor assigned to every student. All faculty members have students in their labs, honors students, etc. All have office hours and spend time talking with students after classes. In some departments there are student organizations that invite faculty members to attend meetings and consult about job possibilities, graduate schools, etc. But the professional staff advisors handle all advising that has to do with requirements, progress toward a degree, etc. Most of the suggestions about faculty advising in the "Enhancing" report seem out of synch with real life in large departments. (Psychology, for example, there are 1740 majors for 40 faculty members, and many students who are not majors take psychology courses.) (2) Counting advising in merit and promotion decisions doesn't make sense in large departments, where faculty do not have a fixed number of advisees. (3) It would be fine to tell new faculty members about counseling and advising resources, etc., in their orientation meetings, which all new faculty members attend. (4) It would also make sense for departments to create websites that answer many students' questions about a major, graduate education possibilities in that field, and job opportunities in the field. But this would not be something that individual faculty members would be expected to know in detail.

Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

December 12, 2013 10:22 AM

No response at this time.

Faculty Welfare

November 27, 2013 3:51 PM

Response continued on next page.

**Response of the Faculty Welfare Committee to Report : Enhancing the Student Experience
November 27, 2013**

The following concerns regarding the report were expressed by the committee:

- Response to time-to-degree problem appears to neglect course availability.
- To enhance the undergraduate student experience, students should be required to learn how to use the library and its resources.
- Faculty with poor teaching evaluations are required to undergo mandated pedagogical training. The opportunity for this should be offered but not mandated.
 - It may discourage faculty to teach larger class sizes (which are associated with lower course evaluations).
 - It may discourage faculty to experiment with hybrid and fully online courses (which could lead to temporary lowered course evaluations as the bugs get worked out).
- While the comment that students feel that some faculty prioritize research over student-related activities is valid, there is skepticism that the merit system would adapt to recognize advising and/or teaching over research. Since the time and effort necessary to successfully advise students may be to the detriment of other faculty assignments and responsibilities, it is unlikely that faculty will fully engage in advising without clear changes in the merit review process.

The following suggestions were made by the committee:

- It would be helpful to acknowledge some non-faculty and student advising barriers to on-time graduation.
- It would be helpful to provide more training and resources for advisors.
- It is essential that students are aware of the resources available and improve or optimize access to those resources.
- Student social or extra-curricular experiences could be enhanced through social media or on-line resources and applications.
- Encourage support for student to student mentorship.

Graduate Council

December 6, 2013 12:37 PM

Response continued on next page.

December 6, 2013

RFC: REPORT ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The Graduate Council met on December 6, 2013 to give careful consideration and discussion of the aforementioned Academic Senate Request for Consultation (AS RFC).

The Graduate Council accepted the recommendations of the Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholars (GSPS) Welfare Committee which indicated that if this report is aimed at enhancing undergraduate students' experience with Senate faculty, then there is little to comment upon. However, if it is aimed at enhancing the first-year and transfer student experience, then there is a great deal at stake for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars—right now, first-year and to a lesser extent transfer students' experience involves quite a bit of contact graduate instructors and TAs.

Here, then, were the majority of the GSPS Welfare committee's concerns, assuming that the recommendations in the report pertain to all instructors of first-year and transfer students:

1. We recommend that intellectual mentorship be separate from advising about policies, requirements, and so on, and that instructors and TAs not be responsible for the latter. Our hope would be that program-level staff advising would be increased.
2. Our committee feels strongly that the training of TAs before they take on TA duties, or at least concurrent with their first encounter with these duties, is an essential component in their early success as TAs and stands to have a very positive impact on the undergraduate students they serve. Every department which supports TAs should create and maintain an internal TA Training program, perhaps in the form of a course offered during Fall Quarter. Because there are ideas, issues and policies that apply to all TAs (e.g., general teaching philosophy, the instructor-TA relationship, involving sexual harassment, discrimination, the handling of cheating), it makes sense to sustain a campus-wide TA Orientation just before Fall Quarter in which new TAs are introduced to these common elements of their work. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning should take charge of the latter program. The two programs should be complementary, with both stressing the joy of teaching as well as the responsibility for doing it well. The quality of the campus-wide program, and each department's TA training efforts, should be evaluated regularly.
3. Some committee members find the current TA evaluations weak, with few metrics and little to no direction forward for improvement.
4. In general, we urge that any additional advisory or training duties expected of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars serving as instructors or TAs be considered part of the 10-hour weekly limit for 25% employment and 20-hour weekly limit for 50% employment, and thus be fully compensated.
5. We feel that the high student-instructor ratio is a detriment to the undergraduate experience at UC Davis and to the experience of TAs and graduate instructors as they offer mentorship to undergraduates.

The Graduate Council submits the recommendations of the GSPS Welfare Committee as accepted by consensus at our meetings as the Council's assessment of the effects of the report "Enhancing the Student Experience" RFC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachael E. Goodhue", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachael E. Goodhue, Chair
Graduate Council

/vm

C: Gina Anderson, Academic Senate Executive Director

Library

December 6, 2013 8:40 AM

The Library Committee has reviewed the Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Enhancing the Student Experience. The report's only reference to the library is a recommendation to "assess the potential to expand hours and otherwise increase availability and coordination of academic and behavioral support services (e.g., library, tutoring, study groups, testing center, study-skills workshops and research laboratories)." The Library Committee supports the proposal to assess the feasibility of extending the Library's hours.

We also wish to encourage the Blue Ribbon Committee to give greater consideration to the role the library plays in the development of student information literacy. The ability to locate and critically assess information is a fundamental academic skill. Without it students have little chance of academic success. The ease with which information can be accessed via the Internet has only increased the need to teach students how to critically navigate the oceans of available material.

Through the provision of reference services, purchasing decisions, customization of databases, development of library resource guides, classroom instruction, and individual consultations libraries and librarians play a crucial role in providing resources for students and training them how to use them. For example, the UC Davis Medical Library subscribes to many online medical texts hosted by diverse publishers on different platforms. The library has created a web page that organizes and provides a single portal of entry (via hyperlinks) to these electronic books. And 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 into course websites.

The university has committed to increasing student enrollments. We can expect that the ways in which scholarly information is published and disseminated will continue to change and grow more complex. Together these two trends will mean that library budgets will need to grow to support information literacy initiatives.

Planning & Budget

December 12, 2013 10:22 AM

CPB discussed the Enhancing the Student Experience report. The report is complex with dozens of recommendations and goals. The overarching goal that clearly stands out is the call for faculty advising. Although this may be laudable, it is proposed to be yet another mandate, with required training for new faculty, and rewards in the merit system for excellent advising (however this is evaluated). This proposed advising mandate is on top of all other faculty mandates including lab safety, ethics training, etc. In addition, the report calls for about \$1 billion in new funding including programs, computer systems, seminars, trainings, etc., without clearly identifying a modest set of achievable changes. Nor is there any serious attempt to demonstrate that any of the proposed changes in advising are likely to be effective. Furthermore, CPB has discussed in recent meetings the problem of constant administrative bloat. Some CPB members felt that the proposed recommendations listed in the report will only add to that bloat. CPB also suggests that a more deliberate approach be taken. One that includes allowing units to experiment with different advising models and evaluate these models using measurable outcomes.

Research

December 12, 2013 10:23 AM

No response at this time.

Undergraduate Council

November 26, 2013 11:25 AM

The Undergraduate Council (UGC) has read and discussed the Blue Ribbon Commission's report on the Undergraduate Experience. The Council congratulates the Commission on its work.

After reviewing all of the action items listed in the report, UGC would like to ensure that the following be accomplished:

1. Undergraduate Advising

- UGC urges the Vice Chancellor to get the advising portal up and running as soon as possible.
- The council endorses the commission's focus on advising for new students (both freshman admits and transfers).
- The advising system as a whole should emphasize early identification of students experiencing academic difficulty and provide referrals to appropriate resources (e.g., SASC, CAPS).
- Faculty contributions to undergraduate advising should be incentivized. Faculty contributions to advising should be given serious consideration in tenure and promotion decisions.

2. Student Mental Health

- Mental Health professionals on campus need sufficient resources to be effective.
- Faculty are often the first to suspect that a student is in distress. Faculty need knowledge and training so that they can intervene in appropriate and effective ways to minimize the negative consequences of mental health crises.
- CAPS should place counselors in college advising offices.
- Professionally trained mental health staff must have the resources to engage in outreach to the undergraduate (and graduate) student body to raise student awareness so that they can identify when mental health intervention is necessary or desirable, and to destigmatize mental health counseling for students.

3. Class Size

- UGC urges the VC to take steps to reduce class sizes. This may entail adjustments to faculty evaluation criteria (i.e., expectations that all faculty will have large numbers of contact hours). It will entail hiring new faculty to lower the overall student/faculty ratio. It may entail leveraging on-line resources.

4. Freshman seminars.

- UGC urges the VC to invest additional resources into the freshman seminar program to increase faculty participation.

5. Internships

- UGC endorses investments in developing more internship opportunities for undergraduates to link co-curricular experiences with academic education and career planning.
- UC Davis should take greater advantage of alumni resources by developing an alumni network and hosting alumni-student exchanges (e.g. alumni career panels, special seminars for undergraduates, job-shadowing programs).