

**STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**March 27, 2015**

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 12:07 p.m. by Governor Trent in Room FGH of the McGregor Memorial Conference Center. Secretary Miller called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Committee Members Present:** Governors Dunaskiss (via telephone), Massaron, O'Brien, Pollard, and Trent, Faculty Representative Naida Simon and Victoria Dallas, Faculty Alternate Representative; and Ahmad El-Moussa, Student Alternate Representative

**Committee Members Absent:** Student Representative Rohit Anand

**Also Present:** Governors Kelly and Thompson, and President Wilson; Provost Winters, Vice Presidents Johnson, Lanier, Lessem, Lindsey, Nork, Staebler and Wright, and Secretary Miller

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES, DECEMBER 5, 2014**

**ACTION** — Upon motion by Governor Massaron and seconded by Ms. Simon, the Minutes of the December 5, 2014 meeting of the Student Affairs Committee were approved as presented. The motion carried.

## **UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ADVISING INITIATIVE**

Provost Winters introduced Associate Provost Monica Brockmeyer and Cheryl Kollin, Director of the University Advising Center, to discuss the Undergraduate Academic Advising Initiative.

Professor Brockmeyer began by providing a brief review of academic advising at the University and what changes have been implemented since the Undergraduate Retention Initiative was approved in 2012. In the past, the ratio of students to advisors was close to 500 to 1, and about half of the undergraduate students on campus received some or all of their advising through a generalist advisor. The departments and programs often had no advisor at all, or had advisor-student ratios as high as 1200 to 1. As a result, advising was reactive and chaotic, with the advisors working as quickly as possible to just assist students without having the time to develop the relationships that are essential to student success.

A key component of the Undergraduate Retention Initiative in 2012 was to hire 45 advisors who were placed in schools, colleges, and academic departments throughout the campus. The student-advisor ratio, currently at 264 to one, is moving closer to the goal of 250 to one. In addition, rather than being referred to a pool of generalist advisors, all undergraduates now have a primary advisor assigned to them in their school or college from whom they receive advising on their major as well as general education advising. This has freed up the Advising Center to provide supplemental advising for students in special programs such as pre-med which a primary advisory may be unable to provide, or offer a special exploratory program for students who have not yet declared their majors or who may be at elevated risk.

Student satisfaction studies have shown a consistent preference for advisors within departments or programs rather than generalists, and many more students are now

receiving advising from program advisors rather than generalists. The no-show rates for advising appointments are down from about 40% to 13%, partly due to the Wayne Advising Management System (WAMS) technology initiative. There have also been academic gains across the campus. The percentage of first-year students earning more than 12 credits per semester in their first semester is up about 9%. Retention in the third and fourth years is at its highest level in 16 years, and graduation rates have also increased eight percentage points since 2011.

Ms. Collin continued the presentation, explaining that the philosophy of advising at WSU has transitioned from a reactive program with insufficient advisors to one that is proactive, developmental and comprehensive. The Center wants advisors to develop relationships with students beginning at Orientation, and to give students a sense of belonging at the University. Ms. Collin then described the various programs within the Advising Center.

**Advising Training Academy** — There are currently a little over 100 professional advisors, and the Center has developed the Wayne State Advising Training Academy to provide training for both new and seasoned advisors, professional development opportunities, and recognition for their work. They are also developing a Master Certification program which will provide advisors who have completed the curriculum a certificate indicating they are a Master advisor.

**Exploratory Student Program** — This program is intended for any incoming freshman – not transfer students – who enter WSU in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences still deciding on a major. The advisors work with students to explore their interests, majors and career options. General education provides an opportunity for students to explore different disciplines, discover their strengths and challenges, and how to align that into a major. It is important that students explore their interests during the first 45 credits, when they are required to connect with a department and declare a major.

**Office of Military Veterans Academic Excellence (OMVAE)** — The office has increased from one person to a complete department, headed by an assistant director, Matt McClain, with a staff of dedicated advisors, support staff, and outreach specialists who work with veterans from the point of application to graduation, and provide them support as they transition from military life to civilian life. A Student Veteran Resource Center provides them areas for quiet study as well as a social area.

**Pre-Med and Health Science Center** – About 500 students a year express an interest in medicine, and the Center provides additional support in conjunction with the advising they receive in their departments. Students are offered opportunities for volunteer work, community service, and research, as well as information meetings and workshops, application support, and two learning communities.

**Probation, Pre-Exclusion, and Reinstatement** — At WSU, students may be on probation for no more than three semesters. During the first two semesters, interventions happen within the department or, if there is no declared major, at the Advising Center. By the third semester, the Advising Center steps in and works with the students on a pre-exclusion status. The Center's goal is to help students stay in school, be successful, continue and progress toward a degree. For some students, however, it may be in their best interests to leave school for a year. Nevertheless, the Center wants to keep the door open for them and has developed a re-instatement program for students who have been excluded from the University.

**New Student Orientation** — A new associate director was hired March 16, and the Center is busy preparing for the summer orientation programs. This is not a one-day event, but a transition into college, with programs on the day of orientation, Orientation Part 2, Parent Orientation Program, Convocation and Festifall, and the Welcome Week. There will be an increased focus on the first year and setting high expectations for students. The Center is working closely with the schools and colleges to develop a robust program for both incoming freshmen and transfer students.

Associate Provost Brockmeyer returned to discuss the new technology that has facilitated the transition from generalists to specialists and has freed up the advisors for their new roles. Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer Joseph Sawasky gave a presentation earlier in the morning at the Academic Affairs Committee describing WAMS, an electronic appointment system, and the Change of Major or Program technology which have reduced the number of undecided students to about half of the number five years ago. The Center also uses two other technology programs. The first, the Degree Works Degree Audit System, is an on-line system that allows students and their advisors to have a clear snapshot of their degree requirements and how far along they are by means of a progress bar. In addition, an on-track, off-track indicator shows if the student is making curricular choices not consistent with the degree plan. Both items, the progress bar and the off-track indicator, will be exported to *Academica*, so that whenever students log into the main university system, they will have a quick reminder of their degree status as well as other warnings the Advising Center may wish to share. The Degree Audit system also provides a "what if" analysis. If students wish to change majors or add minors, they and their advisors can see immediately the impact the change would have on the graduation date. Other advantages include increased analytics and the ability to use course planning data and student plan of work data to inform course scheduling, so that courses can be scheduled to meet student demands.

The second use of technology will be in proactive advising. The current practice is to pull lists of students from the data systems, contact those students who may be at risk, such as a low grade point average or low mid-term grades, and urge them to see an advisor. This process is often too slow; the list may be pulled some time after the student experienced the distress and possibly may be too late for an intervention. Therefore, an early warning system for advisors will be introduced next year. With the help of predictive analytics of the data on the application, new student survey, transcript, and other data, an alert can be raised when something happens that causes

a student to become off-track. That will create a communication both to the advisor and the student through *Academica* and electronic media, which in turn will trigger an advising appointment and get students to see their advisors more proactively and hopefully back onto the path to success. Professor Brockmeyer concluded her presentation and opened the floor for questions.

President Wilson asked Mr. El-Moussa whether students are generally satisfied with the Advising Center. Mr. El-Moussa replied that there has been considerable improvement. His personal experience is that he knew his major upon entering the University, set up his four-year plan of work, and is still on schedule. Other students, however, are unsure of their majors, and changing majors previously involved a long tedious paper process, so that the electronic process has proved to be very helpful. Hiring additional advisors has also helped, and all the changes have received positive feedback from students.

Governor Thompson asked what kind of role the new Office of Diversity and Inclusion will play, given the poor graduation rates of African Americans and Latino students. Associate Provost Brockmeyer replied that Ms. Chamblee, the director of that office, is working closely not only with her and Ms. Collins, but also with all the directors of the Academic Support Staff as part of the planning for that center. She sees that office as providing additional support for students to supplement the help they receive from academic advising. The offices will collaborate in other areas; for example, the Academic Success Center is hiring a new financial literacy coach. She and Ms. Chamblee are actively exploring ways to share staff in order to improve support for students. In response to Governor Thompson's next question, Professor Brockmeyer said that 41 of the desired 45 advisors have been hired, and they are very close to completing the hiring phase of the initiative.

Ms. Simon asked what percentage of students are on probation, and whether there is any data on the success rate of getting them back on track. Professor Brockmeyer

responded that about 20 to 22% of students are on probation, but the data depends on their level of compliance with the program. For those who choose to participate in a pre-exclusion contact, about 80% get back on track; but not all students participate, often for financial reasons.

Governor O'Brien asked about the Advising Center's participation in the Pre-Exclusion Intervention (P-3) stage. Professor Brockmeyer said that some students do go on and off probation somewhat regularly. The main goal in those instances is to maintain the original student-advisor relationship as much as possible, so that student stays in P-1 and P-2 with their departmental advisor. The Advising Center will enter the process at the P-3 level and will work collaboratively with the various departments. Professor Brockmeyer explained that an advising implementation team, consisting of her, Ms. Collin, the Registrar, and the associate deans and directors of advising in each of the colleges, meet regularly to coordinate the outcomes and strategies around those students.

In response to Mr. El-Moussa's question about collaboration between and workshops for the general advisors and departmental advisors, Ms. Collin explained that her office offers workshops through the ATA for both general advisors as well as the departmental advisors. In addition, specific training in general education is offered to the departmental advisors. An advising summit is held each year during which national speakers are invited, and which provides an opportunity for all the advisors to come together and discuss their work.

Ms. Dallas asked what percentage of students enter the University as freshmen not knowing their major. Ms. Collin said when the program was fully implemented for Fall 2014, there were 290 students, about 15%, in the exploratory program. By the end of the current semester, about 15 students will have reached 45 credit hours without declaring a major. The team is working intensively with these students and expect that only six students will remain without declaring a major.

Governor Massaron asked if it is possible to get a breakdown of the demographics of the 41 recently hired advisors. Professor Brockmeyer replied that such a breakdown was provided after the 36<sup>th</sup> hiring; she will update the information and send it to the committee members as well as to the entire Board. At the time, as she recalled, the demographics were very similar to the composition of WSU's student body.

Referring to the 41 new advisors, Governor O'Brien asked whether they have sufficient professional training to immediately proceed with their advising duties, rather than learning on the job. Associate Provost Brockmeyer said that the new advisors have Master's degrees in higher education, psychology, school counseling, and similar fields, so they are well trained and well prepared. However, they need to understand how to deliver that support within Wayne State, and the Advising Training Academy will explain WSU's Gen Ed process and degree requirements, the characteristics and experiences of WSU's student body that might differ from students at their previous institution; in essence, they are trained to translate their expertise into WSU's current environment.

In response to Governor Trent's question about using recent college graduates as peer mentors, Professor Brockmeyer said there are about 280 peer mentors within the learning communities program for about 3,000 undergraduate students, and these mentors receive training that is professionally certified. Ms. Simon added that Provost Winters formed an academic staff mentoring committee that is now in its third year. When new people are hired, they are matched with seasoned advisors and academic staff throughout the university, a process which has proved very beneficial to the new hires.

Governor Trent asked if orientation programs are mandatory, and whether an orientation class that used to be mandatory many years ago would be re-instituted. Professor Brockmeyer responded that orientation is mandated by the Board, so all



incoming freshmen attend orientation. If for some reason they were unable to do so, a reduced orientation program would be held with their advisor. With respect to the mandatory orientation class, the General Education reform committee is considering the shared curricular requirements in light of students' needs and transition into college, but no decision has been made about such a class.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Governor Trent said the discussion on Campus Life would be postponed to another meeting. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie H. Miller  
Secretary to the Board of Governors

**DRAFT**