

Academic Advising at UC Santa Cruz

Undergraduate Academic Advising Improvement Project

6/30/04

Final Version

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Snapshot of Advising at UC Santa Cruz
3. Current issues in Academic Advising at UC Santa Cruz
4. An Agenda for Improving Academic Advising at UC Santa Cruz
5. Appendix 1: Advising System Schematic
6. Appendix 2: Campus Advising Mission Statement
7. Appendix 3: College Advising Mission Statement

Audience

Dean of Undergraduate Education
Committee on Educational Policy
The campus at large, for comment and discussion;
WASC Educational Effectiveness Review

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Introduction

The prototypical act of academic advising is a conversation between a faculty member and a student¹ in which the student is stimulated to articulate his educational goals and the faculty member, drawing on her knowledge of the institution and her prior experience of students with comparable backgrounds and goals, provides relevant advice on how to pursue them. The result is that the student is better able to refine and achieve those goals, with concomitant appreciation of the value of his educational experience at the institution.

Like all prototypes, this image anchors the concept but acquires a penumbra of related activities, which depart from the prototype but function in a similar way. Providing information about institutional expectations and opportunities is a fundamental part of academic advising. Monitoring students' compliance with regulations and institutional expectations is a fundamental obligation of the university. But both of these are potential distractions from the most valuable function of academic advice, the development of the student's goals and formulation of a plan to achieve them.

Trends in Development of Academic Advising

The history of academic advising in American universities grows out of this prototype.² Until the mid 1970's, the academic advising system of most American universities assigned groups of entering students to all faculty. Where possible, faculty expertise and prospective academic interests of the students were matched up. But faculty were assumed to have the expertise, interest, and time to provide both discipline-oriented advice to advanced students and to guide students who were undecided about their ultimate programmatic goals.

Beginning in the mid 1970's, universities sought to support this "faculty-only" process of academic advising by providing staff to manage advisor assignment, prepare informational material, and to carry out the bureaucratic tasks of tracking student records and to monitor student compliance with institutional regulations, tasks in which faculty had little interest and for which they had variable talents.

Over time, particularly in large research universities, where faculty have multiple calls on their time and attention, academic advising became a joint production of faculty and professional staff. The natural fit between expertise and talent to the relevant tasks resulted in several trends:

¹ The focus of this essay is on undergraduate academic advising. Many of the concepts and issues could apply to academic advising for graduate students as well.

² The historical and conceptual perspective for this essay draws heavily on the essays in Gordon, Virginia N., Wesley R. Habley, and Associates. 2000. *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*. National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Faculty attention became increasingly devoted to advising students affiliated with their own programs, relegating early orientation and advising of undecided students to professional staff.
- Staff originally responsible for maintaining student records and supporting the business processes of enrollment and monitoring student progress took on an increased role in representing the ethos and possibilities of the institution to entering students.
- As the institutions increased in size, complexity of academic programs and policies, and diversity of student backgrounds and interests, critical student mass within particular programs justified creation of staff positions to support those programs and populations. As a result, staff advisors, like faculty, developed specialized expertise in working with particular student groups, such as “pre-med” students, honors students, under-prepared students, and eventually particular majors.
- The support of institutional business processes by information management systems required advisors to develop specialized skills in using those systems as well as to comply with increasingly complex protocols for reporting information and satisfying institutional regulations, tasks for which staff were better adapted than faculty.
- Efforts to achieve “economies of scale” in staffing created centralized “advising units”, where professional staff readily accessible to students provided advising at some remove from contact with faculty and particular academic programs.

Each development resulted in academic advising systems that were more complex than the prototypical advising conversation and more removed from faculty and the energy of the academic enterprise.

As a result of these trends, such institutions acquired a common set of issues regarding the effectiveness of academic advising from both the student’s and the institution’s perspective.

- Contact between undergraduate students and the faculty, apart from the classroom, shifted to the later stages of the undergraduate career, when it was difficult to change direction or expand a limited view of their university careers.
- The students’ view of the institution and how to make good use of its resources was developed in conversation with staff who were not engaged on a day-to-day basis with the academic enterprise of teaching and research.
- The students’ experience of what “advising” means was as likely to center on merely choosing available courses from a catalog and carrying out bureaucratic processes as it was to engage the development of larger educational plans and exploration of possibilities.

- As faculty and staff advisors specialized, they lost incentive or ability to see the big picture of the institution. As a result, the advice offered was not always the most relevant or useful to students who were not definitively oriented toward a particular program at the outset.
- An unanticipated side effect of withdrawing staff advisors to centralized units removed from regular contact with the faculty was a loss of visibility, appreciation, and ultimately support for the work carried out by the centralized units.
- Without conscious coordination, the staff units of academic advising can lose familiarity with the current reality of the institution's academic programs and understanding of how the various specialized components of the advising system should collaborate.
- Faculty frequently developed new initiatives and policies without regard to their consequences for staff workload and without sound ways of informing students of those developments.

As a result, effectiveness of academic advising in a complex institution has come to depend not only on providing many specialized components for delivering academic advice to students but also a certain level of institutional coordination to monitor effectiveness and address issues when they arise.

Models for Delivering Academic Advising

Regular surveys of the academic advising systems over the last twenty years³ have shown a trend toward models that aim to blend faculty and staff expertise. These models attempt to divide the challenges of orienting all students to the expectations of the institution and leading undecided students to affiliation with appropriate academic programs from the task of providing specific advice within those specific academic programs.

While some small liberal arts institutions have managed to remain near to the prototypical faculty-based individual advising and community colleges have relied on central staff advising units, large research universities have tended toward one of two "shared models" for their academic advising systems.

In what Pardee 2000 terms the "dual model", all students are assigned a generalist staff advisor on entrance, who is responsible for general orientation to university expectations and insuring that all students affiliate with a particular program of study. At program affiliation ("major declaration"), the students acquire an advisor, usually a faculty member, who provides program-specific expertise in developing and approving a study plan and who also can direct the student to educational opportunities within the program and beyond. Under this model, students always have two advisors to turn to: one who is responsible for global supervision of the student's academic

³ Celeste F. Pardee. Organizational Models for Academic Advising. Chapter 13 of Gordon et al. 2000.

career and one who is responsible for success within the academic program. In such a system, the balance of contact with the student changes over time, from the generalist advisor early in the career to the program-based advisor later in the career.

A second shared model, what Pardee terms the “Total Intake Model”, begins in the same way, with a general advisor assigned to all students at entrance. But at the point of program affiliation, the link with the general advisor is dissolved (unless the student later leaves the program).

Pardee summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of these models insightfully:

“The Dual Model has some of the strengths of centralized and decentralized organizational structures. Potential problems with this model lie in the definition of advising and the communication of responsibilities. Unless there is frequent and clear communication among the advising staff and students, department advisors may not be clear on the boundaries of their jurisdiction, and students may not understand which advisor can help them in a given situation. Thus the success of the Dual Model depends upon effective coordination of the campus-wide system.” (Pardee 2000:197)

“Like the Dual Model, the Total Intake Model realizes the best aspects of trained staff, central access, and economy of scale for a portion of the advising function, balanced with the resources offered by advisors in their academic departments. The structure of shared responsibilities is sequential in the Total Intake Model, as opposed to simultaneous in the Dual Model. This reduces the amount of student confusion connected with the Dual Model. Care needs to be taken when students shift to department advisors that their advising needs continue to be met. Likewise, department advisors need to know that students have been adequately prepared to begin their chosen major.” (Pardee 2000:198)

Even concentrating on one type of institution, research shows that there is no single most effective model. Each model has inherent strengths and weaknesses. The fact that large research universities have over time tended toward the two models described above is relevant for understanding UCSC’s academic advising system. However the comments above point to the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of the whole system and resolving issues that arise as the institution changes. Ultimately effective advising programs naturally evolve over time in phases when there are systemic ways to identify problems and pressures and to develop intelligent responses to them.

Functional Components of Academic Advising

Given the size and complexity of large research universities, it is not surprising that they provide many people who are engaged in one way or another in academic advising, broadly construed. Given the scale of staff and faculty effort devoted to advising, it is also not surprising that national attention in academic advising is focused on ways of assessing the effectiveness, and efficiency, of a campus academic advising system.

Any assessment of effectiveness must grow out of the mission of academic advising, which is essentially to assist students in formulating educational goals and developing plans for achieving those goals within the resources of the institution.

But to intelligently assess efficiency, it is useful to discern three distinct functional components of academic advising:

Developmental Function

The component of most value to the student (and, frequently, to the advisor) is the assistance in clarifying goals and developing plans for achieving them. This is the “world changing” work that is frequently accomplished in one-on-one interaction between a student and an experienced and informed advisor.

This is the function that lies at the heart of the prototypical advising conference with which we began. The value of this function of advising is eloquently described by Richard Light in *Making the Most of College*, which is based upon his many years experience as a Harvard faculty advisor and on extensive interviews with students at many different universities.

But this developmental function depends upon two other functional components that generally fall under the rubric of advising.

Informational Function

Effective developmental advising depends upon students having access to (and using) information about the expectations of the institution and available opportunities within it. All students who enter the university must learn the rules of the road: how to enroll in classes, what the degree requirements are, how to get information about and connect with programs and opportunities, and what to do when unanticipated circumstances arise.

This information should be sound, truly reflecting the institution and its programs. And it should be readily available when it becomes relevant to the student. Part of the work of the advising system is to manage this flow of information, to insure that students get the information that they need when they can make the best use of it.

Supervisory Function

Merely providing information to students about requirements and expectations does not insure that they effectively use it to make progress toward their (and the institution's) goals. For a variety of reasons, the university must be

proactive in recording and supervising students' progress through their programs.

Students who fail courses may fall into academic difficulty. They may not in fact enroll in the courses that lead them effectively to achieve their stated goals. And some may also drift without developing clear goals to pursue.

For the institution's own best interest, the advising system must also carry out a supervisory function, monitoring student progress and intervening where appropriate to either get them on track or remove them from the institution.

These three functions are not entirely separable. Good academic advising interactions may move fluidly among informational, developmental, and supervisory work. All have a reasonable claim on the term 'advising', though different components of the advising system may focus more on one function.

But when we turn to questions of how to efficiently accomplish the goals of academic advising, we see that each of these components responds differently to different techniques.

While one-on-one discussions may be the most effective way to accomplish the developmental function of advising, it is neither an efficient or effective way of providing the large amount of information that students must assimilate to accomplish their goals. Such developmental work is most effective when students have already become familiar with certain general information. (This is why "advising" conferences should follow general orientation sessions.)

When we depend upon many different individuals, who are often removed from authoritative sources, to provide crucial information, the result can be like a game of "telephone", where students receive conflicting accounts of what is expected or possible.

Interventions by advisors responsible for monitoring student progress and compliance with policies and procedures can be occasions on which developmental work can also be carried out. But if the system relies heavily on such reactive interactions to develop contact with students, attention to the details of policies and procedures can crowd out valuable developmental work. Students whose progress triggers such contacts are likely to receive good advice too late, and students whose progress does not trigger such interventions may lose the benefits of proactive developmental work.

Particularly when we examine ways to use technology to improve the efficiency of academic advising, failure to appreciate the difference among these functions can inadvertently reduce the overall effectiveness of an advising system. But applying technology where it is most effective and reserving staff and faculty attention to places where it is most effective can enhance both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the advising system.

Overview of This Essay

The aim of this essay is to understand academic advising at UCSC in this larger context, to describe some issues about the effectiveness and efficiency of our current advising program, and to suggest steps that can be taken to improve it within available resources.

In the next section I describe the current academic advising system at UCSC, relating it to the larger themes developed here and briefly comparing it to models at other UC campuses.

I then turn to discussion of some issues of effectiveness and efficiency, concentrating on campus-wide coordination of the advising effort, the anticipated effects of the implementation of the new campus Academic Information System (AIS), and the complementary roles of faculty and staff.

It concludes with some suggested steps by which UCSC can address these issues.

Snapshot of Advising at UCSC

The key functions of academic advising related to campus academic regulations and academic programs are divided between two components, one associated with UCSC's residential colleges and one consisting of the academic advising done by faculty and staff within departmental programs. Together with the office of Admissions (which supervises the campus orientation programs) and the office of the Registrar, these components can be considered the core of the campus academic advising system.

In addition, there are three units within Student Affairs that provide support for students that should be considered germane to the campus advising system more broadly construed. For example, the offices of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Services to Transfer and Re-Entry Students (STARS), and the Career Center also provide information and advice to students to support their academic success, collaborating with and enhancing college and departmental advising efforts. Within the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences, the Health Careers Advising Office provides specialist advice for students in a variety of academic programs.

Finally the various learning support programs and resource centers within student affairs and the academic divisions also contribute to the understanding that many students have of the university and its expectations and opportunities. Though not part of the academic advising system, they carry out their missions in its context.

Core Academic Advising Components

UCSC's current academic advising system fits the description given above of a "dual model".

All students are assigned staff advisors in their college upon entrance. These advisors, who carry the title "academic preceptor" or "academic advisor", provide general orientation to the university, initial advice in course selection, and counseling on options for affiliating with academic programs. In addition, these staff are charged with administering the campus's review of academic standing and progress, counseling students on academic probation, and implementing decisions regarding disbarment or disqualification from the university.

When a student affiliates with one or more academic programs, departmental staff and faculty provide advice and approval of study plans. The department is responsible for all matters regarding satisfaction of the program's requirements, including articulation of transfer work to program requirements, final certification of satisfaction of program requirements, and supervision of departmental regulations for continued good standing in the program.

College-based Advising

As expected under a dual model, college advisors do most of their informational and developmental work with entering students. They are the primary advisors for entering frosh through the point of program affiliation (“major declaration”). Entering junior transfer students receive initial advice from college advisors but are rapidly assigned to program-based advisors.

However the college advising offices continue supervisory functions regarding academic standing and progress for all of their affiliated students throughout their careers. In addition, they are the advising office of re-resort for students who fail to be admitted to their chosen program of study or are “de-majored” based upon their (lack of) progress in their declared program.

Currently approximately 24 (state-funded) staff FTE distributed among the 10 colleges. Most of those FTE are held by full- or part-time academic advisors. A few FTE are devoted to clerical support for those staff.⁴ The faculty who serve as college provosts are responsible for supervision of the college advising staff.

College advising staff meet regularly with each other in a “Council of Academic Preceptors”. This insures uniform practice and policy within the college academic advising component. In addition, they meet regularly with representatives of other advising components to discuss issues of joint interest. A college provost and a representative academic preceptor regularly attend CEP meetings to insure clear communication with the academic senate. The college advising group has also provided leadership for programs in training and development that serve all campus advisors.

Program-based Advising

Practice in providing academic advising to students in the academic programs⁵ varies depending upon the size of the program and the way in which the department has chosen to blend faculty and staff effort. In large programs, where the department can provide staff entirely devoted to undergraduate academic affairs, those staff may have a large role in developing and approving student plans in addition to carrying out the administrative support tasks associated with tracking student progress through the program. In smaller departments, faculty may provide advising from the beginning of the affiliation process, with a departmental staff member

⁴ The positions range in classifications from Assistant 1 through SAO 2.

⁵ Throughout this essay, I speak of “program-based” rather than “department-based” academic advising, despite the obvious fact that every academic program is administered by some academic department. This is partly to prevent entirely reducing this category of advising to “major advising”, which omits consideration of the advising of students pursuing minor concentrations and the combined major programs which blend two independent majors together. The latter require the attention of more than one department. There are also a variety of small interdisciplinary programs that draw on the engagement of faculty from several departments but depend upon the staff of an administering department to carry out program support tasks.

providing undergraduate program support as only a part of a larger assignment of duties.

All programs share the common responsibilities of defining program requirements, orienting students during affiliation, officially admitting students to the program, assisting them to develop appropriate plans of study within it, and finally certifying their completion of it (or dismissing them for failure to make acceptable progress). In addition to the advising focused on course study plans and other degree requirements, there are a variety of other program-based opportunities (such as internships, independent studies, and senior theses) which faculty and staff in programs must manage and advise on.

Program-based advisors are the soundest sources of information about the expectations and opportunities for students within their programs. Effective academic advising of their prospective as well as their affiliated students, requires that they provide this information so students can make use of it as early as possible in the academic careers.

Because student study plans are based on program curriculum, it is natural that departmental staff who provide program-based advising frequently also perform a variety of tasks related to the support of a department's undergraduate curriculum. In this latter capacity, they can be involved in curriculum planning and scheduling as well as in administering various processes associated with enrollment in the department's courses, even when the students involved are not affiliates of the program.

Admissions and Registrar

The office of Admissions is responsible for developing enrollment for the campus by offering admission to students under policy articulated by the faculty through the academic senate's Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA). The Registrar is the steward of the student's official academic record and responsible for administering the policies of the senate's Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). In pursuing these core missions, however, these two offices play a key role as components in the academic advising system.

Admissions

Both in their outreach activities, in which they seek to develop undergraduate applicants to the campus, and in their yield activities, in which they encourage admitted students to enroll, the staff of the admissions office convey information about the campus and its programs to prospective students. To do this effectively, they must have ready access to sound information about those programs and the cooperation of the faculty and staff from all campus units. Similarly, successful implementation of their campus orientation programs requires that admissions connect entering students with college-based and program-based advice. In this respect, the admissions office plays

a fundamental role in the undergraduate's earliest understanding of the expectations and opportunities of the university.

For two populations of students, however, there is a particular need for close collaboration between academic programs and the office of admissions.

Students who apply to the university as junior transfers bring a substantial amount of academic credit earned at a variety of institutions. Those students need an understanding of how that work will (or will not) help them in progressing toward completion of a degree at UCSC. Ideally, program-based advising should be projected in a way that can be used by these students even before they apply. The staff who steward transfer articulation information need to be confident that the information that they provide students soundly reflects the expectations and decisions of the program's faculty.

As certain programs become impacted, drawing more prospective students than can be admitted to the program, they must find ways to work with Admissions to insure that students who choose to enroll at UCSC have a realistic understanding of what their possible academic goals can be.

Registrar

The registrar is the official steward of the catalog, which legally defines the curriculum and the requirements of the academic programs. Many campus procedures and practices are determined by the need to reconcile the authority and creativity of the academic enterprise with the obligations of maintaining legal student records and complying with university policy and state and federal laws and mandates.

Some of the duties of the college and department advising staff are projections of the work of the registrar's office. The clarity and efficiency of the advising system in its supervisory functions depends upon the staff distributed in the various units having a sound understanding of the regulations that the registrar must enforce. The soundness of the student's academic record depends upon the registrar's ability to effectively draw information from those units.

A schematic representation of the functions of the core components of the academic advising system is displayed in Appendix 1.

Auxiliary Advising Components

Some of the campus units that provide advising services to students do not fall neatly into the two classes defined above. Each of these is specialized, either in the area in which they provide advising or the populations that they serve.

The EOP office provides staff who do some of the same kinds of informational and developmental advising that the college advisors provide, but who have

no role in the supervisory functions. These advisors serve EOP students and counsel them on developing educational goals, finding appropriate programs to affiliate with, and connect students with appropriate learning support programs. These advisors play an important role in articulating the expectations and the opportunities of the university to their students and hence need to be well integrated into the training and evaluation of the advising system overall.

The STARS office works with transfer and re-entry students to support their academic success and build community among these students, who face different issues as they enter the university from the entering frosh students. To the extent that their advice to these students sometimes fills some of the developmental work of academic advising, they need to be able to draw on sound sources of information about institution expectations and opportunities.

The health career advising office provides information and program-planning advice for students in a variety of majors who intend to pursue a health sciences career. These activities parallel and feed into the advice on study plan development of many students, separate from the advice they receive in their individual programs aimed at specific degree requirements, but it has no supervisory function for those students.

The Education Abroad Program office provides advisors familiar with the academic programs of EAP study center institutions and information about local articulation of EAP as well as advice on the application, screening, and participation processes.

The Career Center provides a variety of services that connect in various ways with the campus advising system. They routinely provide “Choosing a Major” workshops, a key developmental function for undecided students, either as part of orientation programs or through the school term. In these activities they collaborate with the college-based advising program. In addition, they form (and seek to form) a variety of connections to specific programs, offering assistance to faculty and staff in those programs in providing good understandings of post-graduate career opportunities. They also act as a clearing center for a variety of internship opportunities that students from many programs can integrate into their educational plan.

Comparison to other UC campuses

Some brief comments about the advising systems on other UC campuses will illustrate the generality of the analysis of the local situation and also put it into a larger context.⁶

The core advising system on all the UC campuses do the following:

- Provide career supervision of student standing and progress in the university in a unit that spans a number of academic programs.

⁶ The information provided in this section is based upon a survey conducted in 2001. I do not know of any major changes in structure that have happened since that time.

- Provide specific attention to undecided and undeclared undergraduates aimed at developing affiliation with particular academic programs.
- Provide program-based advising and supervision.

At the oldest campuses (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara), the first two functions are served by units within the large College of Letters and Sciences (L&S). This is the college (or school⁷) to which students are admitted at entrance by default. Some of the staff in these large advising offices specialize in the supervisory functions, counseling students in academic difficulty and taking actions on disbarment, approving petitions of various sorts, and monitoring and reporting on student progress. Other staff serve as generalist advisors counseling undecided students on program affiliation and resolving issues when students do not successfully affiliate with their intended programs. Each department or program within the college provides faculty, and in some cases staff, who do program-based advising. The L&S advising offices also provide support for those program advisors and manage training and development programs for campus advisors. Special schools (such as Engineering) admit students directly or from L&S. These schools maintain separate advising offices, which take over all the supervisory functions for their students.

Riverside and Davis are variations on this model.

At Riverside, some departments in our division of Physical and Biological Sciences are aggregated with the agricultural programs in a separate School of Natural and Agricultural Sciences that, like Engineering, have separate admissions policies and take charge of the supervisory functions for their students. The school of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences fills the usual role of L&S, providing the advising for undecided students as well as managing advising and supervision for its students.

At Davis, the academic departments that would fall in a general School of Letters and Sciences are divided into separate divisions, each with their own dean. Though there is no academic dean for the whole school, student academic affairs are organized uniformly across all of these divisions, with a school-level student academic affairs office led by a dean who supervises staff who fill the supervisory functions and advise undecided and undeclared students on affiliation with programs.

The two campuses founded in the same wave as UCSC have very different structures from each other.

⁷ In the terminology of UC academic senate regulations that are relevant to the undergraduate program, the terms *school* and *college* are synonymous. A school or college is a unit which subsumes several academic programs and departments and is united by a single set of regulations regarding admissions, degree requirements, and regulations regarding standing, progress, and other curriculum administration.

San Diego, which like UCSC organizes its undergraduate population by colleges that have both residential and academic roles, is parallel to our system. Each college has an academic advising office, supervised by the faculty provost and the staff dean of advising. The college provides career supervision of student progress and academic advising for undecided and undeclared students prior to program affiliation.

The Irvine campus was founded with schools, corresponding roughly to UCSC's divisions, as the fundamental unit at both the faculty and student level. As a result, it has what Pardee would term a "split model" of academic advising. Students are admitted directly to individual schools based upon their intended majors at entrance, each of which maintains its own advising office responsible for supervision and advising of its students. Undecided students are assigned at admission to a "division of undecided and undeclared students," which provides supervision and advising aimed at transferring those students into a school. In addition, they serve students whose goals change after admission by facilitating their re-affiliation with a school. Departments within schools provide faculty advisors for their students, but staff support for academic process is handled at the school level.

Stepping back from this survey, it is clear that all of the UC campuses except Irvine have a common structure in combining the career supervisory functions and the advising of undecided students together and do program-based advising within the departments that administer the programs. Even where the advising offices are housed with residential colleges, as at San Diego and Santa Cruz, the policies and practices in advising are uniform across all of the colleges. In this regard, it is interesting note the decision by the UCLA L&S advising office to locate some of its advisors in satellite offices in residential halls to improve service to the residential population of the campus.

Current Issues in Academic Advising at UCSC

The 1994 WASC Accreditation Report (p. 38) pointed out the need for UCSC to address several issues of coordination in academic advising. Their six specific suggestions were:

- Clarification of the goals and purposes of academic advising at all levels of the undergraduate experience.
- Definition of the different roles of staff, faculty, and peer advisors ... in both the Colleges and the [departments] with respect to the undergraduate curriculum.
- Development of a consistent campus policy for the recruitment, selection, and training of staff advisers and preceptors.
- Coordination of all academic advising, including that which takes place in the various first-year and transfer orientations, perhaps through the establishment of a campus advising coordinating council.
- Development of an advising brochure or expanded section in *The Navigator* that provides a clear road map to campus advising services.
- Analysis of the technical support needed to facilitate effective academic advising campus-wide, and allocation of appropriate resources to achieve those ends.

One of the goals of this essay is to lay the foundation for carrying out the first two suggestions. I discuss these points more in the next section. The next two suggestions deal with a gap in UCSC's current advising system: the lack of an effective means of coordinating academic advising at the campus level. I discuss these issues in the section on Campus-wide Coordination. The last two points are being addressed within the current campus project for implementing the new Academic Information System (AIS).

In addition, there are two issues regarding the conceptual structure of the campus advising system: improvement of the process by which students affiliate with academic programs and consideration of the future development of the School of Engineering with regard to student academic affairs.

Clarification of the Mission of Academic Advising

I hope that the discussion in the first section of this essay clarifies to some extent why academic advising systems develop the complexity that they do and provides the basis for a judgment that this complexity is not a *prima facie* indication of redundancy.

Nonetheless, to insure that everyone involved in academic advising—the students, staff, faculty, and administration—understands the relationships among the various components, how they should collaborate and where the boundaries of responsibility lie, it is useful for each component to have a clear

idea of its mission. Clarity of mission is important to insure that redundancy—or worse, inconsistency—does not arise as a byproduct of a complex system. In addition, an articulation of the mission of each component is needed as the basis on which to develop criteria for assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of each component and the system as a whole.

Following a model developed by the National Association for Academic Advising (NACADA), I have drafted a campus mission statement for academic advising. It is included here for discussion and comment as Appendix 2.

Coordination of Academic Advising

The situation in advising coordination that was observed by the 1994 WASC Accreditation team was a 'bottom-up' system developed out of necessity. In the absence of any central support for academic advising coordination, informal structures for advising in each of the components were created by the advising staff to achieve the common goals of clarifying and resolving issues in common.

The council of college academic preceptors met regularly to insure common practice across the colleges and to escalate concerns for consideration by CEP, the Council of Provosts, the Registrar, and Admissions. Periodically, an expanded council ("Preceptors and Friends") met, drawing in representatives of department advisors, the Registrar, Admissions, and student affairs advising units like EOP.

Later a parallel group, the Department Advisors Group (DAG), formed to provide similar functions for the program-based advisors on campus. This group likewise formed useful but informal connections with other units.

There was no lack of work for these groups to do. As staff on the front lines of advising, they were very well informed on issues in need of resolution. And they formed the only means by which campus-wide activities, such as the design and implementation of summer and fall orientation programs, could be effectively mounted.

Much of this work was invisible to the faculty and administration at large. None of it was reflected in job descriptions. Leadership emerged naturally, but was not acknowledged in compensation or, in some cases, evaluation.

As a grass-roots staff organizational structure, it managed to accomplish a great deal of practical value. But as model of coordination for academic advising, it suffered from two problems: it was difficult to include faculty perspective on advising and it was unclear where to find the authority to resolve some of the issues that arose.

When the position of Vice-Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Education was created five years ago, it was officially assigned responsibility for the campus-wide perspective on academic advising. In 1999, VP/Dean Goff secured funding for a position of campus-wide advising coordinator and convened a

committee to formulate a job description and conduct a search for a coordinator.

That search resulted in the appointment of a person with relevant program experience who was asked to survey the current advising system and to support all the advisors on campus through facilitating coordinating meetings and developing a training program for advisors. During the period of her appointment, the advising coordinator was successful in convening meetings with a campus-wide perspective and providing analysis to the Dean of the current situation in advising. However she left the campus in 2001.

In academic years 2002-03 and 2003-04, some specific coordination functions have been addressed by designating four of the college academic preceptors as "Coordinating Academic Preceptors" (CAPs). They were assigned three specific tasks:

- Overseeing the implementation of the advising cluster program (see below).
- Organizing a campus-wide forum for advisors to provide staff development specifically targeted to improving academic advising in all components.
- Providing leadership in developing technical support for the campus advising system through the implementation of AIS.

The budget cuts allocated to college advising in June 2004 ended this program.

Each approach has demonstrated the value of having staff who attend to issues in advising with a campus-wide perspective. In each case, the importance of clarifying points of authority for resolving issues and providing support from the senate (for policy issues), administration (for resources issues), and engagement with faculty have been demonstrated.

An important for resolution on the campus at this time is: what is the future model that we should adopt to insure that academic advising continues to have overall coordination and that staff who are hired to do advising are provided with training and development of the specialized skills needed to perform their jobs effectively.

Technical Support for Advising

The many issues in this area can be summarized under two generalizations in play on every campus and in the society at large:

- The shift from paper to web.
- The shift from synchronous to asynchronous communication.

Campus business processes which have formerly depended upon paper to document the process and on people and physical mail to move the process

forward have increasingly shifted to using the web and electronic documentation. However this shift has been a “bottom-up” process, in which individual units have developed their own local systems. These systems have been effective in their local environments, but they vary depending upon the expertise and resources of the individual units developing them. At this point, these “pilot” systems are in need of integration in a way that insures that they can be effectively be used by everyone involved in the process.

The campus has also shifted from paper-based toward web-based means of delivering information relevant to academic advising. The registrar has developed web-based versions of the university catalog, schedule of classes, and *The Navigator*, which surveys in preparation for the 1994 WASC review revealed as very valuable to the students and advising staff alike. Departments have developed websites to provide their students with information about available classes and requirements. But again, the bottom-up approach to development has aggravated the problem of insuring that students and staff across campus understand where to get authoritative versions of the information.

With students in particular, the value of finding “asynchronous” modes of communication in advising has become particularly clear. When information and advice is chiefly delivered in person or by paper handouts from relevant programs, access by students to the information is gated by the hours of operation of campus offices. E-mail has provided the chief way of communicating without requiring the people involved to be present at the same time (or place). But until the recent development of policies regarding the legal status of e-mail as authoritative documentation, much of this communication has been duplicated by paper.

The campus is currently engaged in parallel projects to provide greatly improved IT support for its academic operation: the implementation of the new AIS (PeopleSoft Student Administration) and the creation of a campus-wide web portal (PeopleSoft Enterprise Portal). Together these two projects will stimulate the refinement of many business processes and improved access to and delivery of information and services to everyone on campus, students, staff, and faculty alike.

A full discussion of the issues which will arise as a side effect of these projects for academic policy, institutional practice, and organization in advising cannot be fully discussed here. However there are two important issues to raise for consultation at this point:

- How can current institutional practice within academic departments, academic support units, and the senate’s committees respond to the need to provide sound and relevant information about curriculum, program requirements, and policy changes to insure that they can be integrated within these systems while still insuring appropriate oversight of the senate and effective distribution to students and other relevant constituencies?

- How can staff structure within the advising system and in other units be adjusted to insure on-going support for maintaining these systems without unduly burdening staff and faculty in the programs and support units with the need to develop special technical expertise?

Undecided vs. Undeclared Students

The affiliation of students with academic programs has been managed for several years by a paper-based “major declaration” process. Every student must go through this process at least once to become officially “declared” in a program. The process is a complex one, as it attempts to insure that the student has an officially sanctioned understanding of what degree requirements remain to be satisfied, the time frame within which they are expected to complete their degree, to trigger development of a study plan for completing the degree under advice from the program’s faculty, and official admission into the program.

The complexity of the process has been an incentive for students to minimize the number of times that they go through it. The campus has enforced major declaration for entering frosh only at point at which they transition from sophomore to junior standing.

The trend for enrollment impacted programs to hold off on official admission of students into their programs until a substantial amount of lower-division work has been completed has been a barrier to some students’ desire to declare early.⁸ As a result, the program planning meetings between faculty and declaring students have come in the mid-point of the student’s career.

Each student is assigned upon entrance to a “proposed” major based upon what they reported on their original application to UC. For entering frosh, this has typically been between their junior and senior years in high school. Many students arrive on campus having refined their academic goals since that time. The major declaration process is the only process that the campus provides to alter this initial information after they matriculate. Between admission and the point at which students officially declare a major, that information grows stale. As a result, it has been difficult for programs to get a sound idea about their prospective students in the entering class.

The joint effect of these circumstances is that the campus has little sound information about the actual intended goals of lower division students many of whom have clear goals for their degrees. It also allows a few students to drift without being forced to develop a concrete goal, until a point at which their options are limited.

The last ten years has seen a 42% increase in the number of available degree programs for undergraduates. But as entering students are provided

⁸ This effect is somewhat ameliorated by the creation in some cases of “pre-major” major programs, which insure that students are officially connected to the programs but does not convey official permission to pursue the degree in that program.

in the application only with the names of these programs, the increase in the range of choices provided has led, perhaps naturally, to a decline in the number of students who actually designate a particular major on their applications. In the entering class of 2001, 42% of the students chose the “undeclared” option on the application, depriving the institution of even a general indication of what divisional area their major was likely to be. An unknown percentage of the rest of the students reported majors that they knew that they were unlikely to pursue at the time they entered the university.

This circumstance has several negative effects on the effectiveness of the academic advising system as a whole.

First, it prevents programs from having a clear idea how many entering students are interested in their programs. As a result, it is impossible for them to project important information on how to prepare for success in those programs to the earliest stages of the student’s career. It also makes it difficult for departments to adjust their curricula to insure that the lower division courses have the capacity to prepare students for admission to the program or to confirm their interest in pursuing that program.

Second, it places an undue burden on college-based advising, to quickly discern the individual student’s actual goals (and provide appropriate advice in program planning) as well as obscuring which of the entering students really need developmental work to move them from truly undecided to having specific options for exploration.

The scale and complexity of program requirements and the impact of the capacity of the curriculum ultimately have a negative effect in time to degree for some students. The delay of enforcement of declaration to the end of the sophomore year has meant that problematic cases are often found only when it is difficult to address them within reasonable time frames for enrollment. This is a circumstance that will only get worse as budget cuts trim capacity in the curriculum and stimulate efforts to bring students to timely graduation.

Beginning with the class of 2002, after consultation with CEP, CAFA, the divisional deans, and representatives of campus advising components, the campus implemented a system through Admissions in which students who initially indicated that they were “undeclared” were asked to specify one of ten very general areas of interests. These “advising clusters” provided a way to connect programs interested in outreach to potential students a way to communicate with them even before they entered UCSC. In addition, departments were asked to approve “first-year foundation” advice for students interested in their majors to follow in early program planning. First-year foundation recommendations were provided through college advising for students in advising clusters.

This pilot program was very successful. Through the web self service provided by Admissions, nearly all entering students who had originally been “undeclared” provided an advising cluster (or an updated major goal). Additionally, many other students updated their stated goal.

Following on this pilot, the UCSC part of the general UC application was updated to remove “Undeclared” as an option and to provide the advising clusters as flavors of “undecided”. As a result, the entering cohort of fall 2004 will arrive with sound information on each student of at least the likely area of eventual affiliation.

The Development of the School of Engineering

Implicit in the brief survey of the organization of academic advising at other UC campuses above is the fact that specialized schools like Engineering generally have advising units separate from those in the general “L&S” school. When a school has separate admissions criteria, they generally become responsible for supervision of their students for all campus regulations (including academic standing/progress and disbarment actions) subject to the school’s policies, which may differ from the L&S policies.

As UCSC’s School of Engineering has developed, it has followed the path expected of such a school. It has organized its advising operation at the level of the school. It has recently developed a separate admissions policy for entering students and clarified the terms under which students who are not initially admitted to the school can reasonably expect to succeed in a mid-career request for admission.

It has also taken steps to develop policies and monitoring practices to assess the “standing” in the school, independent of the general senate regulations regarding standing in the university.

As it continues to mature, it will be natural to raise the question of whether the school should begin to assume some of the supervisory functions currently discharged by college-based advisors rather than developing a parallel system which is to a certain degree independent of the general campus regulations on standing and progress.

An Agenda for Improving Academic Advising at UCSC

With these issues as background, I offer some recommendations to change the campus advising system in ways that address them. Implementing these recommendations will make it possible to continue to study its effectiveness and efficiency as a guide to further improvement.

Creation of Campus-wide Coordination Structures

To insure that there is continuing attention to issues of analysis and improvement of the campus advising system, I recommend that the position of campus-wide advising coordinator be reinstated and that a formal advising council be established with representation from the various components of the academic advising system under the auspices of the Dean of Undergraduate Education.

The primary duties of the coordinator will be to insure that advising issues are effectively formulated and resolved working with appropriate campus offices, to conduct on-going analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of the advising system, and to be responsible for implementing a plan for training and supporting the development of staff and faculty engaged in academic advising.

Re-engineering the Major Declaration Process

Building on the initial success of the pilot advising cluster program and taking advantage of the potential of the new academic information system, I recommend that the advising system be reoriented to distinguish clearly between undecided students (in advising clusters) and decided students (who are willing to designate a major goal) in their first year.

AIS will provide, for the first time on this campus, an automated “degree audit” system which provides students self-service access to a formal check of their records against general campus requirements and the specific requirements of their declared or prospective majors.

As a result, the current major declaration process can be replaced by a simpler program-based process, which will insure that students work with faculty advisors to develop a meaningful study plan for their goals. It will also allow each program to tailor the process to fit with their local requirements for review of admission of students to the program.

College-based advising can take its primary focus to be assisting students to choose among programs and updating the system with information about the students’ current goals. They can deliver the information provided by those programs that is relevant to early study plan development during orientation.

Under this plan, programs will have sound information about their prospective students earlier than they do now. They will also have facilities through the campus portal to push information to them, insuring that students are smoothly integrated into their own advising operations.

Clarifying the Mission of all Advising Components

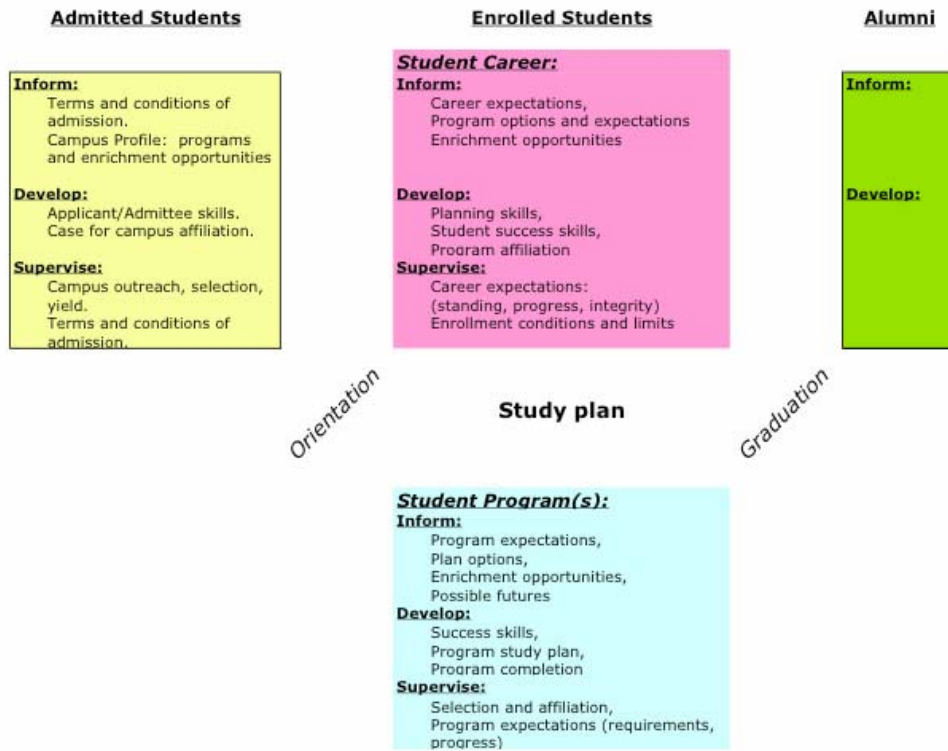
The discussion in this essay lays out a general framework for understanding how each of the components of the academic advising system relate to each other. The draft campus mission statement for academic advising provides a basis on which the various components and programs can be asked to articulate their understanding of how they fit into the larger picture.

I recommend that all units involved in academic advising, including the individual departments, be asked to formulate their own versions of a mission statement and describe their specific objectives in academic advising. In Fall 2003 the college academic preceptors were asked to provide such a mission statement for college advising. It is included here as Appendix 3.

This process need not be a complicated one. As groups engage in this task, it will provide a framework within which faculty and staff can come together to discuss what their current practice is. Experience suggests that when these discussions happen, they stimulate improvement naturally.

Appendix 1: Advising System Schematic

The following is a schematic representation of the functions of the core components of the academic advising system.



Appendix 2: Campus Advising Mission Statement

Undergraduate Academic Advising Mission

The primary purpose of undergraduate academic advising is to assist students in clarifying their educational goals and in developing academic plans to achieve them at UCSC.

As part of the educational mission of the university, the academic advising program should enable students to become self-directed learners and responsible decision-makers and encourage them to take advantage of available educational opportunities both within the formal curriculum and beyond it.

Goals

The ultimate responsibility for making decisions about educational plans and life goals rests with individual students. The university should assist them by:

1. Providing opportunities to clarify their career and life goals and assess their academic strengths and challenges.
2. Providing accurate and relevant information about academic programs and other educational experiences available to them.
3. Informing them of institutional requirements and interpreting institutional policies and procedures relevant to their success.
4. Monitoring their progress toward completion of their academic plans and compliance with institutional expectations of academic standing and progress.
5. Encouraging use of institutional and community services in support of academic success.

Draft 9/2003; WAL.

Appendix 3: College Advising Mission Statement

The primary mission of college advising is to assist students in identifying and clarifying their academic directions and educational goals, and to help them to develop meaningful and compatible plans and success strategies.

Professional academic advising is integral to the colleges, and the University, and is vital in the transition of new, continuing and non-traditional students, and in the successful completion of their undergraduate degrees. College advisers provide accurate information, as well as interpret and enforce the policies of the Academic Senate. Comprehensive college advising develops a foundation for individual and collective student achievement and institutional excellence.

Goals:

- Support the missions of the colleges as expressed in their individual mission statements. Through collaborative relationships with provosts and residential and program staff, assist students in making a successful transition to the university and in building an ongoing educational community.
- Foster respectful and meaningful adviser-advisee and institutional relationships that focus on informed decision-making and the unique development of each student, recognizing that the individual student has the ultimate responsibility for making their own educational decisions.
- Guide students through the process of clarifying their long-term goals. Assist students with selecting appropriate general courses, choosing majors, evaluating alternate plans, and with integrating multiple academic programs and experiential opportunities into a comprehensive educational plan.
- Provide accurate and timely information about the university's academic programs, procedures and resources. Assist in the interpretation of academic policies and requirements. Assist students in accessing and understanding their education records.
- Sensitively and effectively assist students who have different life experiences, class and cultural backgrounds, identities, orientations, abilities, and values and make appropriate referrals to specialized campus resources to ensure optimal integration into university culture.
- Assess students' needs and develop appropriate enrichment programs to enhance their educational experience, such as orientations, academic success courses, workshops, and co-curricular programs.
- Regularly monitor and assess students' academic standing, progress and achievements, as well as help students identify and overcome the factors that impede their academic performance, in order to facilitate retention and timely completion of degree.

- Abide by the regulations of the Academic Senate and the Committee on Educational Policy that delegate responsibility to the colleges for making decisions on individual student programs, such as appropriate course loads, leaves of absence, readmission and academic disqualification.
- Analyze available information about student needs and the changing nature of the university, and advocate for appropriate policy and procedural changes.
- Work cooperatively with campus-wide academic and administrative units with the aim of facilitating student success and reasonable individual accommodation within campus standards.
- Ensure on-going professional development and training of advisers to maintain advising excellence at the colleges.

Council of Academic Preceptors
1/28/04