

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO: All Faculty**

**FROM: John Bramley, Interim Provost  
Dave Dummit, Chair, Senate Faculty Affairs Committee**

**DATE: January 3, 2002**

**RE: Student Advising**

### **Evaluation of Student Advising as part of the processes of reappointment, promotion and tenure.**

The Officers Handbook has required the systematic evaluation of advising for many years. In March 2001 the faculty senate reaffirmed the importance of advising as an integral part of academic life of the campus and emphasized the need to evaluate advising as part of faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure activities. Toward that end the resolution that was approved included a definition of academic advising, recommended the development of an advising website, an advising award and the introduction of adviser training. It appears from some statements in academic units that there are concerns about what this will mean, particularly for faculty currently preparing "greensheets". This joint note from the Provost and the Faculty Affairs Committee is intended to eliminate unnecessary consternation and provide a context for the role of advising evaluation in RPT procedures. We are including examples of the types of data that may be useful in documenting advising quality, and the steps that academic units need to take to ensure that this process occurs in a smooth and equitable way allowing both faculty and administrators time to begin the acquisition of data.

### **Faculty Advising Role.**

It is clear that high quality advising of students is a priority of the university, the faculty senate and the student government association. Consequently, we must provide mechanisms to enhance the advising skills of our faculty and to recognize and reward excellent performance in this important endeavor. Generally undergraduate advising is not a responsibility of Officers of Research, Officers of Extension or Officers of Libraries. Furthermore, we recognize that there will be substantial variation in the advising responsibilities of Officers of Instruction. Many factors will come into play to determine advising roles and responsibilities including the unit, academic department or program, the academic discipline, number of majors, proportion of service teaching, and also the skills and career stage of the faculty member. We wish to provide Departments with the flexibility to select the best approach that will provide excellent faculty advising of their undergraduate students. In some departments a few faculty members might do extensive student advising, while others have little or no advising; other departments may

use particular faculty members to concentrate on first year advising. Where such strategies are employed teaching and other responsibilities should be appropriately adjusted to ensure equity in workloads among faculty. Where a faculty member's responsibilities do include advising duties, it is expected that appropriate on-going and systematic evaluative data, beyond simply reporting the numbers of students advised, will be included to assess the performance of those duties.

### **Implementation.**

By the fall of 2003 it is our expectation that RPT dossiers of faculty having academic advising responsibilities will include some documentation addressing faculty performance in this role. In some units faculty advising is already being evaluated on a periodic or systematic basis, usually by student questionnaires administered at the unit or department level. If faculty wish to include such material in their RPT dossiers prior to Fall 2003 that is welcomed. Academic units will develop plans for the development of such evaluative material during Spring 2002 and existing unit RPT documents should be amended to reflect these plans. While some flexibility at the local level is both necessary and desirable, departmental procedures must comply with college or school guidelines and these, in turn, must be consistent with the faculty senate definition of advising and section 223 of the faculty handbook.

### **Evaluation of advising.**

The elements of advising in the senate definition and the evaluative criteria outlined include:

- providing guidance with academic program planning compatible with a student's life goals
- helping students explore and define their educational and career goals in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning
- encouraging students to think critically, seek out resources, and develop action steps
- remaining alert to any barriers to student academic performance and guide students to address these appropriately
- referring students to appropriate academic and support services to enhance both their student experience and their academic success
- meeting with and listening to advisees on a regular basis
- sharing responsibility equally for the success of the advising relationship.

Advising narratives and evaluative data should be included in the teaching section of the RPT dossier. Both the Faculty Handbook and the "Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Dossiers" prepared by the Faculty Affairs Committee address advising duties along with other teaching responsibilities.

*Faculty member's narrative.*

This would have a similar role to the teaching narrative: it is the faculty member's responsibility to inform reviewers of their approach to this aspect of their professional life. Typically the section might include:

- statements on the faculty member's approach to or philosophy of advising and their expectations for themselves and their advisees
- information on the extent and nature of the advising responsibilities (number of advisees, do advisees constitute a special group e.g. first year, or honors students)
- mechanics of the process (e.g. establishing and keeping contact with their advisees, email lists, group advising sessions)
- innovative approaches or special information (e.g. participation in advising training or workshops)
- any aspect of the faculty member's advising workload which may appear unusual and worthy of recognition.

#### *Chair's section.*

As noted in the "Guidelines for the Preparation and Evaluation of Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Dossiers," the Chair's statement (included as "Page 3" of the Green Sheets) should offer a clear, documented analysis of the candidate's advising record, including specific reference to the candidate's fulfillment of departmental expectations for the particular type of RPT action involved. No single set of satisfactory measures for assessing advising can be prescribed, just as no single set of measures can be prescribed for assessing teaching activities; indeed, there is broad leeway in the selection of measurement instruments, provided that those chosen are *evaluated and documented* appropriately. Finding meaningful measures is one part of the charge of the Senate motion. Given the wide range of advising activities for faculty across campus, it would be expected that a concomitantly wide range of measurement instruments would be used to assess the quality of advising activities.

#### *Supporting data.*

- Letters from current or former advisees.
- Letters from faculty peers speaking to the faculty member's skills or dedication in this area.
- Student survey data providing feedback on advising skills (knowledge of major, college and university academics, familiarity with university services, career and graduate school opportunities, availability and responsiveness etc.).
- Nomination for or receipt of advising awards
- Publications or articles on advising

As is the case for teaching evaluations, analysis of raw data and comparison to department or unit means is desirable, placing the data in the appropriate departmental

and unit context. One method of acquiring comparative data is annual or biennial advising surveys of students as conducted by some units. Some additional information is also collected centrally by the annual graduate survey that incorporates questions on the quality of academic guidance received – this information can be broken down to the college or school level and the data for the last five years has been provided to Deans.

### **Summary.**

Faculty performance in student advising represents an important area of endeavor and should be evaluated as part of the teaching activity for those faculty engaged in it. The Senate motion is a directive to *strengthen rewards* for advising. Many faculty devote considerable effort and energy in advising activities of many kinds, effort and energy that has to date been relatively marginalized in part because of the absence of appropriate evaluation for quality. Partly as a result of the Senate motion, attention is now being turned toward providing such regular and systematic assessment. The Provost and the Faculty Affairs Committee look forward to being able to more appropriately recognize and reward those faculty members involved in this important activity for their contributions to this part of the University's mission. Finally, we note that other graduate/undergraduate advising/mentoring activities of faculty are also an important and often undervalued component of faculty dossiers that would also benefit from similar attention to questions of assessment.

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