

UNIVERSITY SENATE

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Introduced by: Undergraduate Academic Council

Date: April 11, 2005

**POLICIES AND PRACTICES CONCERNING
UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AND MENTORING**

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the attached “Proposed Policy on Academic Advisement” and its “Preamble” be adopted as University policy and that the philosophy and definition of advisement and mentoring contained therein be endorsed by the University.
2. That these policies be forwarded to the President for approval.

Rationale:

The Undergraduate Academic Council has carefully reviewed both the report and recommendations of the ad hoc Task Force on Advisement and has solicited and considered faculty feedback concerning that document.

Particularly in view of current concerns about student satisfaction, attrition, graduation rates, and general education, the Council believes these recommendations are timely and important.

PREAMBLE AND PROPOSED POLICY ON ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT FROM UAC
March 30, 2005

PREAMBLE:

The policy outlined in this document assumes that academic advisement is an essential factor in the quality of the educational experience provided by the University at Albany to its students. Indeed, next to instruction itself, the institution has no more important academic responsibility than advising and mentoring.

The policy detailed here is intended to articulate and implement a simple philosophy: first, it is vital that the faculty as a whole be actively engaged with students not only in the classroom as teachers but also outside of it as advisors and mentors, and, second, of equal importance, is that individual departments must guarantee the quality of advising services offered to their students.

While the University at Albany has always been fully committed to the quality of undergraduate education, implementation of this policy--and the development of a new culture of student-faculty interaction that we hope will follow upon it--will require a significant and a reliable commitment of resources.

If departments are to be held accountable, then they must also be provided with the means to establish new--and to improve existing--advising services. Summer advising for new students; web-based services(and their maintenance); co-ordination among departments, the Advising Services Center, and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning--all require resources. We cannot stress too strongly the importance of the financial, as well as the philosophical, commitment of the University to the success of this policy, nor can we overestimate the potential benefits that these investments, combined with those of the faculty and staff, will provide to students particularly and the University community generally.

POLICY:

I. POLICY AND DEFINITION

Academic advisement at the University at Albany represents a vital component of the undergraduate program that encourages students' active engagement in their education, supports their development as self-directed learners and independent decision makers, and promotes their participation as members of a learning community.

The principal objectives of academic advisement are: 1) to promote students' intellectual development through interaction with faculty and other mentors; 2) to increase students' awareness of the range of academic and co-curricular opportunities available to enrich their undergraduate educational experience; 3) to assist students in understanding and meeting the requirements of completing a degree; 4) to encourage development of self-direction and independent decision making by students; and 5) to provide guidance and mentoring for careers and opportunities upon graduation.

Academic advisement is mandatory for students each semester in order to register. Before providing access to course registration to a student, each academic advisement unit must ensure that it has met its responsibility to provide advisement to the student as outlined below.

II. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Given the centrality of academic advisement to the undergraduate program, the responsibility for academic advisement rests with the Faculty of the University at Albany. The Undergraduate Academic Council is the governance body with oversight responsibility for policies related to academic advisement. School/college and academic administrators are responsible for ensuring compliance with these policies.

Academic departments have the primary responsibility for advising students with declared majors in their discipline. At minimum, this means ensuring that students understand the courses, sequencing, grade point average, and special circumstances that comprise requirements for the successful completion of

the major, minor and General Education requirements, as well as ensuring that students are apprised regularly of their progress in meeting them. Toward these ends, academic departments must develop routine and effective procedures for monitoring students' progress through the major and create contexts in which this information is communicated to students so that

PREAMBLE AND PROPOSED POLICY ON ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT FROM UAC

Page 2 of 5

they have the time and opportunity to make the best decisions about how to satisfy the technical requirements for completing the major.

Beyond the routine matter of technical administration of the major, departments also bear responsibility for addressing the needs of their declared majors for growth and development, i.e., for mentorship and career advice, for special research and learning opportunities, for honors programs and accelerated degree options, for remediation or special assistance, and for participating in a community of learners. These latter responsibilities in particular seem most appropriately fulfilled by the department's teaching faculty.

Primary responsibility for the advisement of students prior to declaration of a major rests with the Advisement Services Center and the Educational Opportunity Program (for academic advisement of EOP students). Additional responsibility for providing guidance and assistance to interested pre-major students also rests with the faculty of that discipline. The Advisement Services Center and Educational Opportunity Program are expected to develop effective methods for supporting students' transition into the University at Albany, and their growth and development as self-directed learners and independent decision makers, including assistance with major and career exploration, information on enrichment opportunities within the University, use of the University tools and resources that support academic progress, and remediation or special assistance. These units bear responsibility for monitoring students' progress toward one or more majors and minors and for creating contexts in which information is communicated to students so that they have the time and opportunity to make the best decisions about their educational program.

Furthermore, because students require different kinds of advisement at different stages in their education, and because most students change advisors at least once during their undergraduate program, the University community shares responsibility for ensuring that academic advisement is a coherent continuum of services that supports and facilitates students' progress through the various stages of their academic program, and their development as self-directed, independent decision makers. Specifically, the following student development tasks should be addressed as appropriate:

- 1• Academic advisement of freshmen focuses on issues of transition into college, exploration and evaluation of their initial academic plans, development of the initial skills required to assume responsibility and self-direction, including understanding the basic structure of the undergraduate program (major, minor, General Education Program, electives, bachelor's-master's options), using the Degree Audit, finding relevant policies in the Undergraduate Bulletin, and understanding the procedures of the University (registration, add/drop, etc.).
- 2
- 3• Academic advisement of pre-major or "intended major" students assists them to evaluate their academic experiences as they work toward declaring a major and minor that supports their academic and career plans.
- 5
- 6• Academic advisement of declared majors (departmentally-based advisement) orients

7students to the major, focuses on timely degree completion, including firm timetables for completing major, minor and general education requirements, provides a deeper understanding of the discipline, and provides information and advice about departmental honors program, internship and research opportunities, as appropriate, and career/graduate school planning.

8

- 9• Because transfer students, regardless of their academic status, are new to the University at Albany, academic advisement of transfer students, wherever it is provided, also includes discussion of the basic policies and procedures, the academic environment of UAlbany (e.g., University academic standards, values, curricular flexibility, etc.), preliminary development of a timetable for completing the degree, and expectations for the student to assume responsibility for his/her academic plan, as well as discussion of other academic policies of special relevance to transfer students.

1

2

3PREAMBLE AND PROPOSED POLICY ON ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT FROM UAC

4Page 3 of 5

4

III. STRUCTURE OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT/MENTORING

While each academic department and administrative unit has the autonomy to develop its own methods contribute to intellectual development, such as honors, bachelor's-master's combined and formats for the delivery of academic advisement, it is expected that contact will be made with each student and the following activities and interactions will be part of every department's or unit's academic advisement program:

11. Developing/confirming students' academic plans
22. Addressing appropriate student development tasks and issues as described above
33. Reviewing progress toward degree, including the student's major, minor, and general education requirements, using the University's Degree Audit
44. Reviewing course selection, including evaluating whether courseload and course choices are appropriate for the student for each given semester
55. Reviewing the student's overall plan for future semesters, especially for programs with specific timetables, including plans for summer study at UAlbany or elsewhere
66. Reviewing plans for improving academic success for students on academic and terminal probation. Review and discussion of Academic Improvement Form as necessary
77. Discussing other opportunities that may enrich the student's academic experience or degrees, independent study, interdisciplinary opportunities, professional academic or artistic organization chapters or career clubs, research, internship, and study abroad options
88. Discussing career or graduate school options and necessary steps a student should take
99. Making appropriate referrals to address matters beyond the scope of the advisor

Delivery of Academic Advisement

In fulfilling the responsibility to provide academic advisement to its students, departments may establish structures and procedures and strategies that best fit their resources and curriculum, while accommodating the needs of all its advisees. Each department will provide academic advisement of new students during scheduled planning conferences, as appropriate.

Advisement in General Education

The University at Albany's General Education program has been established as a four-year experience that is required of all students. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student's primary advisement department to provide advisement regarding General Education, and all advisors have the responsibility to understand its components and to ensure (along with the advisee) that advisees are completing its requirements.

Advisement of Minor or Second Major

Because University policy requires that all students (except those in combined major-minor or similar programs) have a minor or second major, advisement to fulfill this requirement must be systematically available.

Therefore, responsibility for advisement regarding the minor or second major is as follows: 1) the responsibility to provide basic information about the requirements for a minor or second major rests with the primary department of advisement; and 2) responsibility to address substantive questions regarding course content, sequencing, etc., as well as providing access to courses rests with the department offering the minor or second major.

Assessment

Through University-wide surveys of the student experience, student satisfaction with academic advisement should be regularly measured and reported to the University community. In addition, each department or unit providing academic advisement should make provision to measure student satisfaction with advisement. Advisement should also be assessed as part of academic program review.

Recognition and Reward

Participation in academic advisement and mentoring activities by faculty and professional staff should be recognized and rewarded by the University and by the individual departments and units to the greatest degree possible. Narrative line activity will be added to faculty activity reports.

In addition to the number of students advised, the University Faculty Activity Report shall include, in the section for Teaching, a line item for a narrative report of Advisement and Mentoring Activities.

Deans are responsible for monitoring advisement activity in their schools and colleges and should request reports from departments and programs on a regular basis. Departments will be expected to include information on individual faculty advisement activity as part of the review processes for renewal, promotion and continuing appointment, discretionary increases and appropriate departmental, college and University recognitions and awards.

IV. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Students are expected to be active participants in the academic advisement program, just as they are expected to be active participants in their educational program. While it is the responsibility of the department and advisor to ensure that students receive accurate and timely assistance in choosing courses and in developing and implementing an academic plan, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student to ensure that she/he understands and is actively engaged in monitoring his/her academic progress.

Early in the academic career, students are expected to focus on becoming acquainted with the requirements of the academic program, including policies and procedures, and to work to master the tools that support their active participation in their academic progress (including the use of the Undergraduate Bulletin, the degree audit, and the student registration system).

As they advance through their academic program, students will be expected to assume responsibility for acquiring the information needed to complete the degree requirements, and for preparing for their academic advisement sessions by reviewing their degree audit, formulating questions, and developing preliminary plans for the semester and beyond. Additionally, students are expected to follow up on referrals made by advisors. Students experiencing academic difficulty are expected to meet with their academic advisor to discuss the details of their plans for academic improvement.

Students who transfer from other institutions directly into majors should also be given early opportunities to become familiar with the policies, procedures, and tools that support their academic progress at the University at Albany.

1V. RESOURCES FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENTS

Resources for Advisors in Support of Academic Advisement

A dynamic educational environment such as the University at Albany requires that academic advisors have access to a wide range of information resources and tools as well as opportunities to enrich their ability to deliver academic advisement. To the greatest extent possible, academic and administrative units should collaborate to develop and share such resources through electronic and paper means.

Resources for Students in Support of Academic Advisement

Similarly, the responsible departments and units shall provide for their advisees the necessary information resources and tools to support their academic participation in their academic advisement.

The Undergraduate Academic Council shall provide advice and oversight to appropriate administrative units in the preparation and continuing improvement of such resources.

2VI. IMPLEMENTATION

As the campus unit charged with providing leadership on matters concerning undergraduate academic advisement, the Advisement Services Center shall convene an advisory board to implement, monitor and maintain this policy. This board shall contain representatives from the Advisement Services Center, Educational Opportunity Program, Teaching Faculty, Departmental and other advisors, undergraduate students and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
