

Student Mentoring and Academic Advising Team Charter

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Timeline: September 1 – November 30, 2016

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As Belmont seeks to find ways to develop the whole student, we must begin with the most basic of academic relationships – mentoring and advising, an essential component to student success. While traditional academic advising can often be seen as simply helping students select courses, in reality mentoring and advising is much more complicated, and the development of comprehensive mentoring and advising programs can take on many formats. Tools like DegreeWorks, for example, can help, but the importance interpersonal relationships and deep conversations must be emphasized to make sure that we provide all of our students an opportunity to grow and develop fully while they are at Belmont. What types of training should we offer to faculty and staff members? How can we better define the roles and opportunities for adviser and advisee? How can we ensure that students are ready and able to fully participate in mentoring and advising?

Project Objectives:

- Research and explore current advising and mentoring activities across campus.
- Identify characteristics of effective advising and mentoring that strengthen the connection between faculty and students.
- Provide a recommendation to Senior Leadership that includes steps required over the next six months to implement a model that supports consistency of student experience across academic disciplines and strengthens the connection between faculty and students through accurate curriculum planning and effective mentoring.

Notes on Student Mentoring and Academic Advising: June Summit and August Board Meetings

Student Mentoring/Academic Advising (JUNE)

TABLE 4

Accuracy for Advising

- Professional advising center
- Create/define a more unified core for all advising
- Faculty advisor training
- Audit what each area currently does to prepare faculty to be advisors
 - Look for best practices
 - Do a needs assessment from faculty
 - Student satisfaction survey on the advising experience at the end of each classification year
 - Design a unified core model to be used university wide
- Degree requirements, academic success, registration, convo, early warning signs

Multi-layer mentorship program

- Credit or compensation for mentors
- Student leadership program
 - in the industry→1 hour elective credit
 - seniors→sophomores and juniors
 - alumni→seniors
 - faculty→students
- Partnerships with
 - Alumni relations
 - Career and professional development
 - Academic departments
 - External alumni in the industry
 - Young alumni council

Characteristics of an effective advisor

- Knowledgeable (Gen Ed & degree)
- Detail oriented
- Listener
- Personable
- Degree specialization

Characteristics of an effective mentor

- Mature
- Experience in the field
- Available
- Engaged

TABLE 5

- Identify alumni mentors from our local parents/families to “adopt” a student
- For connectedness—could we develop a systematic way of measuring or creating on-campus internships for current students?

TABLE 1

- Required annual training for academic advising
 - How does an advisor learn to be an advisor?
- Be proactive in course planning and course availability
 - Manage fluctuations in student numbers
- Simplified Gen Ed
 - Make a single Gen Ed curriculum that could ease confusion of switching majors
- Advising seminars with experts
- Award for the best advisor w/monetary incentive
- Teaching and learning center
- Advising center with staff advisors

TABLE 2

- Reimagine GenEd/simplified
 - For every GenEd class scheduled, comes out of finite adjunct budget
 - Why are there different #s of hours for every degree?
 - Should degrees require the same # of hours?
- FAQs
- Create student tools to guide them through the process?
 - Maybe open up what if scenario?
 - Our system is so complicated it makes “what if” scenarios difficult
- Required training program for academic advisors
- Competency-based goals & outcomes
 - Students need a chance to apply new skills over & over again
 - If students come to class with competencies, frees faculty to focus on content
 - Need to define competencies that are sustainable
- No checklists—use interactive model
- Build a software to help with schedule—use conversation for deeper understanding of competencies

Characteristics

- Connect competencies to different courses so students understand why and how—logic behind Gen Ed core
- Asks “what are your goals?”
- Content knowledge
- Explain how courses build over time—progression of verticality
- Peer mentors can help when have been through it

Ideal Next Steps

Current

- Students advised in current college
- Undeclared through GPS
- Departments: interest in how to reach out to undecided
- Faculty meet with undeclared advisors to inform
- First year seminar started with goal of competency based learning
- Students don’t understand why having to take so many global courses
- Different Gen Ed requirement for different majors makes system complicated

Ideas

- Could we use academic literacy as a goal?
- Invite undeclared to sessions
- Ways to identify potential areas of interest
 - Is there a way to use technology?
- Need something scalable/group advising/peer advising
 - Employ student leaders—train & trust
- Collaborating with other departments
- Training for current advisors?—faculty go through training program
- Go back to simplicity—what can people understand and communicate
- Not advise to check list
- Same language—consistent language
 - i.e. free elective vs Gen Ed elective vs Art elective
- Technology—videos with scenarios—as a student, how would you advise this student?

TABLE 7

- Peer advisors trained
- Dean advisory council
- Faculty to possibly do all advising
- Professional or staff advisor needed (prepare/mentor faculty)
 - Annual tutorials
 - Annual training
- Blend of peer, staff, and faculty advising
- Possible advising department (future)
- Research suggests professional advising is best
- Key is to keep faculty connection
- Database for transfer credits

TABLE 8

How do we create a mentoring/advising model that enhances the connection between faculty and students, ensures students' advising needs are met, and supports consistency of experience across academic disciplines?

- Evaluate best practices throughout the industries
- Assign the numbers of advisees to a ratio that is more student focused. Currently 1:40—with a smaller ration, advisors will be able to focus on advisees in depth
- Develop student mentors—TT leaders/SLA's
- Utilize staff as mentors
- Utilize alumni as mentors

What model would support accurate academic advising and effective student mentoring?

- Separating advising and mentoring models

Student Mentoring/Academic Advising (BOARD)

Student Mentoring and Academic Advising

- Very connected to Student Centeredness
- Discuss/think about how we engage/include external mentors
- How do we integrate career outcomes vs “having a major”
- Include mentoring as part of First Year Seminar
- Make mentoring part of all of Gen Ed courses
- Provide professional development for faculty that goes beyond informal mentoring to mentoring as part of teaching → mentoring as a learning outcome.