Advising Center News

The Advising Center
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New role for Director of Advising

Effective academic advising is a cornerstone to the success of every student. With the launch of the QEP, it has become even more evident that Western Carolina University must have a fully integrated advising system, one that is seamless regardless of the focus, e.g. undeclared students, liberal studies, or the major. Too often these activities have been treated as separate functions without proper handoff or articulation. To address these and other advising related issues, effective December 1, 2009 David Goss, Director of the Advising Center will assume a broader campus role as Director of Undergraduate Advising. In addition to directing the efforts of the Advising Center, David will work closely with the Colleges and the Kimmel School in support of their advising related activities and assure that faculty have the latest information and training to provide effective advising.
Kyle R. Carter
Provost and Sr. Vice Chancellor

University Advising Council Appointed

Following a recommendation of the Task Force on Advising, a University Advising Council has been established to coordinate academic advising campus wide. The council will be charged first and foremost with providing a forum and a structure for identifying and addressing advising related issues. Specific areas to be addressed include the ongoing development and coordination of Advising Day, campus processes that directly or indirectly impact advising, coordination of advisor training and workshops, professional development, assessment strategies, and the overall campus mission of advising
The work of the Council will ensure that:

- advising policies and procedures as well as resources are clearly communicated to students, faculty, and staff
- changes that impact advising are shared
- best practices in advising are shared
- retention and graduation rates are enhanced through the delivery of quality advising services

The Council has representation from each of the Colleges and the Kimmel School, as well as the Advising Center, Registrar, Admissions, Residential Living, Honors College, Student Support Services, the Academic Success Program, and Educational Outreach. Membership includes:

David Goss, Chair	Advising Center
Joni Bugden-Storie	Arts & Sciences
Sarah Meltzer	Education & Allied Professions
Joey Long	College of Business
Jeanne Dulworth	Health & Human Sciences
Erin Adams	Fine &Performing Arts
George Ford	Kimmel School
Chris Parrish	Office of Admissions
Anita Samuel	Registrar's Office
Mistie Bibbee	Residential Living
Racheal Stimpson	Student Support Services
Janina DeHart	Academic Success Program
Emily Sharpe	Honors College
Regis Gilman	Educational Outreach

Student Advising Council

A Student Advising Council is being appointed in collaboration with the Student Government Association to give students a voice in decisions regarding advising processes. This Council will provide student representatives a line of communication to the Director of Undergraduate Advising on issues related to advising, provide the student perspective on current advising practice, and provide a working relationship between the Student Advising Council and the University Advising Council.

Advising Center Announces Webcast Series

The Advising Center is hosting four National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) sponsored webcasts this spring. Each webcast provides information and strategies to assist faculty and staff in support of students. The webcasts include:

Reaching and Retaining Students: Advising Students on Academic Probation
Thursday, February 4
Killian 104, 2:00 – 3:30 PM

Academic probation is a reality for all institutions, whether the institution is highly selective or one that supports open access. All members of the academic community have an interest in and responsibility for fostering student success. There is no single type of student or student population or characteristic that makes a student destined for academic probation: no one is exempt from the possibility. What factors put students at risk for academic probation? What are some typical probationary policies? Who are the stakeholders and what are their roles in supporting students on academic probation? What can advisors do? In this broadcast, our Presentation Panel will discuss these questions and more! Institutional programs that are supportive of the student on academic probation and useful resources for academic advisors will be shared.

A CD copy of this webcast will be added to the Advising Center library and made available to interested faculty and staff for viewing later this semester.

Reaching and Retaining Students: Effective Academic Advising Strategies
Wednesday, March 3, 2010
Killian 104, 2:00-3:30 pm

The CAS Standards for Academic Advising tell us that "the primary purpose of the Academic Advising Program is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans." The NACADA Statement of Core Values tells us that "Academic advisors work to strengthen the importance, dignity, potential, and unique nature of each individual within the academic setting." Again and again, we hear advisors ask, *"Exactly how do I go about doing that? What are some specific strategies I can use?"* And in response to our question, *"What topics would you like us to consider for future Webcasts?"* we repeatedly hear such phrases as: *"demonstrate advising techniques*," *"highlight best practices*," and *"show how the process works."*

This broadcast has been designed with these questions in mind. If you have ever asked, *"What works in academic advising?"* you'll want to join us as our Presentation Panel discusses six strategic approaches to advising that they have found beneficial in their advising practice:

1. Strengths-based Advising
2. Appreciative Advising
3. Motivational Interviewing
4. Self Authorship
5. Intrusive Advising
6. Academic Coaching

The presentation panel includes:
Jayne Drake, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, Temple University
Maura Reynolds, Director of Academic Advising and Associate Professor of Latin, Hope College
Laurie Schreiner, Professor and Chair of Doctoral Higher Education, Azusa Pacific University
Scott Amundsen, Associate Dean, University College, University of North Carolina-Wilmington
Robert Pettay, Instructor/Advising Coordinator, Department of Kinesiology, Kansas State University
Kerry Kincanon, Head Advisor, Oregon State University,
Janet Schulenburg, Senior Undergraduate Studies Advisor, Penn State University
Jennifer Varney, Assistant Director of Advising, Southern New Hampshire University
Patricia Kriska, Senior Associate Director, BBA Advising & Records, Southern Methodist University
Jeffrey McClellan, Assistant Professor of Management/Advisor, Frostburg State University

Reaching and Retaining Students: **Breaking Bad News: Delivery Techniques that Help Students Make Good Alternative Choices**
Thursday, April 8, 2010
Killian 104, 2:00-3:30 pm

We experience it every day -- a student is denied entry to her desired transfer program, another falls below the requirements for his program of study and faces potential dismissal; our advisee has chosen a major that is clearly a very poor fit. How do we tell a student he may not be ready for the next step in his intended path, or she might want to consider an alternative direction? *Are you responsible for delivering potentially distressing news - or do you work with*

someone who is? Then this event is for you! In this Webinar broadcast, our Presenters will look at effective communication behaviors to help us understand how to deliver bad news to students. They will examine the role of the advisor in teaching the student to reassess, redefine, and redistribute their goals and intentions. Ways to package the news in the best possible light, strategies for better student understanding, alternative paths and follow-up strategies will be offered. Case studies will be provided for follow-up group discussion.
Presenters include:
José Rodríguez, Assistant Dean of Student Services, Florida International University
Susan Kolls, Internal Transfer Advisor , Northeastern University
Nicole Kent, Assistant Head Advisor, College of Pharmacy , Oregon State University

Reaching and Retaining Students: *The Role of Faculty Advisors in Student Success*
Thursday, May 13, 2010
TBD, 2:00-3:30 pm

Fulfilling the Potential of Faculty Advising - At most institutions, faculty are expected to advise as part of their contractual obligation. Few if any, however, have been hired, much less been awarded tenure or promoted, because of their skill as advisors. And even at institutions which emphasize teaching and mentoring undergraduates, expectations for faculty, especially in conducting research and finding external support, have increased. Whether you're a faculty member, a professional advisor who works with faculty, or an advising administrator, this Webinar will give you practical ideas about enhancing and supporting the important work of advising done by faculty.
Presenters include:
Kathy Stockwell, Associate Dean, Fox Valley Technical College
Maura Reynolds, Director of Academic Advising and Associate Professor of Latin, Hope College

For more information on these webcasts as well as presenter profiles, please visit http://nacada.ksu.edu/Webinars/events.htm

For more information about NACADA, please visit http://nacada.ksu.edu/index.htm

Recent Changes in Orientation Advising Announced

Beginning with the Fall 2009 entering class, the Advising Center implemented important changes in the advising process for new freshman and transfer students at Orientation. These changes were introduced to ensure that all students receive the same information about institutional policies and procedures, campus resources, and academic information as well as to teach students how to adjust their schedules in My Cat and see the impact of schedule adjustment in their degree audit/evaluation. It is equally important that parents have a consistent experience while attending Orientation, so that they understand what they can expect once their student begins classes and how they can best support their student.

To accomplish these goals, new power point presentations were developed to provide structure to the information we want to share while still allowing for the personal style of individual advisors. During their respective presentations, students and parents receive important information and are given the opportunity to apply that information immediately. For example, during the schedule adjustment session all students register for at least one class, either ENGL 101 or a First Year Seminar for freshman students, and then see how that course registration impacts the degree audit. Understanding the degree audit and checking it frequently is important for students as it allows them to monitor their progress toward degree completion, helps them prepare for advising sessions, and is a key piece in the online graduation application process.

There are four presentations that advisors use; one for the parent session on Day One of Orientation, one for students on Day One, and one each for Freshman and Transfer students for schedule adjustment session on Day Two. Key topics in each of the sessions include:

Day One Parent session

- how advisors help students and some advising myths
- declaration of major process
- student schedule explanation
- academic success centers
- important dates on the academic calendar
- transition issues and FERPA regulations

Day One student session

- what advisors do and don't do
- "what makes a degree" - academic requirements explained; Liberal Studies, major/minor, electives
- schedule explanation
- ferpa regulations and student responsibility
- academic policies and transition issues
- success centers
- declaration of major process
- important dates

Day Two Freshman schedule adjustment session

- liberal studies review
- My Cat student portal and log in
- degree evaluation/audit explanation and demonstration
- schedule change considerations, terminology, error messages
- schedule adjustment - alt pins and add a class (ENGL 101 or first year seminar)

Day Two Transfer schedule adjustment session

- My Cat student portal and log in
- degree evaluation/audit explanation and demonstration
- schedule change considerations, terminology, error messages
- schedule adjustment - alt pins and add a class

Advising Syllabus Introduced

This past fall the Advising Center introduced an Advising Syllabus for students structured with the same elements as a class syllabus. It includes a mission statement for the Advising Center, office location and contact information, learning objectives for the advising process, advisor and advisee responsibilities, policies and procedures for the Advising Center, and advising tools and resources. By introducing students to academic advising in this way, we are placing the advising process squarely on the teaching and learning side of the equation and shifting the perception of advising as a purely administrative process based on course registration toward that of an academic process that has administrative elements.

Through the use of Advising Syllabus, advisors can define the roles and responsibilities for both students and advisors in the advising process and provide context for teaching students responsibility for their educational plan and the tools to manage that plan (My Cat, Catamount email, registration, degree audit, campus resources). These concepts are reinforced for students through the initial meeting with their Advising Center advisor as well as in the USI/ Transition Courses. Other opportunities for reinforcing these concepts include the First Year Seminars, existing or yet to be developed foundation/introduction to major classes, and during Advising Day activities. An example of the Advising Syllabus can be found on the Advising Center webpage at advising.wcu.edu.

Starting the Catamount Climb with the Catamount Gateway

The Catamount Gateway is the result of a collaborative effort between the Advising Center, Admissions, and Information Technology. Conceived in the summer of 2007 and launched November 2008, the Gateway fills the gap that previously existed for new students following admission to the University. Designed to ease the transition to Western Carolina, students are directed to log in to the Gateway in their receipt of application letter. Once logged in, the Gateway allows students to check their admission status

and follow a timeline that directs them to information about the processes they need to complete prior to beginning their first semester at WCU and when they need to complete them. This includes things like making deposits, completing Financial Aid processes, accessing and completing CatWalk, and signing up for Orientation. All of this information is presented in the appropriate sequence so students and their families don't get ahead of the game or fall behind. Initially piloted with four subgroups of admit types; Freshman, Transfer, Academic Success Program, and Distance Learning Program students, the Gateway is being expanded to include all types of undergraduate students admitted to WCU.

The success of the Gateway was immediately apparent. During the initial implementation period of December 2008 - March 2009 the Gateway had 500-800 unique visitors per week with many of them returning more than once generating 900-1500 total visits per week. The benefits to WCU include a general decrease in the number of inquiries by phone and a greater awareness of the processes required for successful matriculation. And, of course, happier new students and families who have a virtual One Stop for the transition to Western Carolina University.

The Catamount Gateway can be accessed from the Admissions webpage as well as via the Recently Accepted Students link on the WCU home page.

Continuing the Climb with CatWalk

CatWalk is a web application designed to help guide and prepare newly admitted students from the point of admission to orientation. CatWalk is completed by all newly admitted undergraduate students, including Freshman, Transfer, Academic Success Program, Honors, and International students. In CatWalk, students find majors that are best suited to their personality and interests and can also declare their major. CatWalk allows students to select preferred courses, check the status of their tuition deposit and immunization, register for Orientation, and find out who their assigned professional advisor is, whether assigned in the Advising Center, Student Support Services, or the Honors College.

CatWalk is only accessed by campus-based students; it is not intended for Distance Learning Program students. CatWalk user accounts are created 24 hours after a student is admitted. Students are sent an invitation to complete CatWalk and are also directed to CatWalk via the Catamount Gateway.

CatWalk assists the Advising Center, Student Support Services, and the Honors College by streamlining and organizing administrative processes in preparation for Orientation. It enables us to assign professional advisors to incoming students, build tentative course schedules before a student arrives for orientation, and create reports related to class seating demands, major selection, and important enrollment requirements (i.e. tuition deposit and immunization requirements).

The timeline for a typical student would look like this:

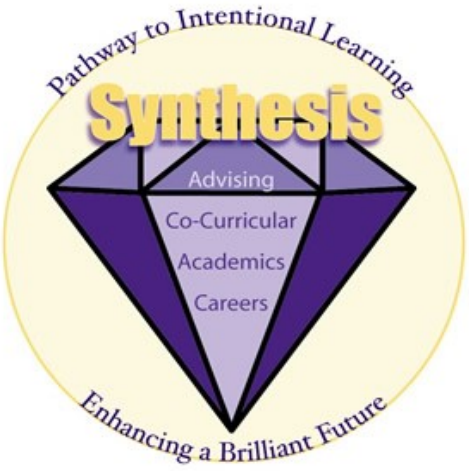
- New Catamount admitted.
- New Catamount receives CatWalk invitation.
- New Catamount completes CatWalk and registers for Orientation.
- A professional advisor is assigned.
- The new Catamount is displayed on the advisor's advisee list.
- The advisor reminds the new Catamount to complete any remaining processes; i.e. immunization, tuition deposit.
- New Catamount completes immunization and makes tuition deposit.
- The advisor creates a tentative first semester schedule.
- New Catamount attends Orientation, receives tentative schedule, adjusts their schedule as needed, and goes home excited about attending WCU!

Declaration of Major Process & Advisor Assignment

There are two ways students can declare their major at Western Carolina. They can declare during Orientation or they can declare after classes have begun. For students who choose their major during Orientation, the Advising Center sends a list of those students' names to the appropriate departments so that a faculty advisor can be assigned. The departments then send the lists to the Registrar's Office for entry into Banner. Students who declare after classes have begun fill out a paper form either in the Advising Center or in the academic department of their new major. For students who declare in the Advising Center, those forms are then sent to the appropriate department for processing. The departments then forward the forms to the Registrar's office for entry in Banner.

Students are assigned two advisors at WCU. Their initial advisor is a professional advisor in the Advising Center, Student Support Services, or the Honors College. The professional advisor is assigned based on the their major interest expressed in CatWalk. Students meet with the professional advisor several times in the first semester to ensure that they are making a smooth transition to WCU.

Once a student declares a major, they are assigned a faculty advisor who then becomes their primary advisor. The professional advisor in the Advising Center remains attached to the student as a secondary resource should the student have general questions about WCU policies and procedures or are considering a change in major. Honors College students also continue to have their professional advisor as a secondary resource as needed and to ensure they are satisfying Honors College requirements. Students who are accepted into Student Support Services continue to meet with their SSS advisor as a part of the requirements for continuation in that program.

When students declare their major, the department assigns the faculty advisor and forwards that information to the Registrar's office for entry in Banner. A missing advisor report is run at key points in time (at the beginning of the semester, before advising for early registration) to identify students for whom an advisor is not assigned. The report is sent to departments to assign an advisor and this list is also sent to the RO to be entered in Banner.

Students can change their majors by filling out the declaration of major form either in the Advising Center or their new department. It is highly recommended that the student talk to their professional advisor if they are uncertain about what they want to do. The professional advisor can provide guidance and connect the student to resources that will help them find the right fit. Students should also talk to faculty in departments that have programs they may be interested in to get more information. For example, some programs have admission requirements that students must satisfy in order to be fully admitted to the major. Most of these programs will have a pre-major designation so the student can be attached to the program in Banner and assigned a faculty advisor. If the student is really struggling with a decision or unable to articulate interests, Career Services has a number of resources that can be a tremendous help in guiding the student toward a decision. Visit careers.wcu.edu for more information about Career Services resources.