FINAL REPORT OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2009-2010
ADMISSIONS AND ACADEMIC REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

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I: Initial Charge of the Committee

The initial charge of the Admissions and Academic Regulations Committee (AARC) for academic year 2009-2010 included the following items:

1. Review of Faculty Handbook (FH) language concerning Faculty Advising
2. Review of the inaugural 2009 First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC)
3. Review of the inaugural 2009 June Term summer session
4. Review of the 2010 June Term summer session
5. Partial Credit Courses for Graduation

II: History of This Report

The 2008-2009 AARC committee was charged with the major task of addressing issues pertaining to academic advising as stipulated in Section 1.5 of the Building On Strengths (BOS) Report, a task that became the primary focus of the committee during that year. As charged in BOS Section 1.5, the Academic Advising Task Force of the AARC submitted a report to the BOS committee and the Senate dated September 8, 2009. The report contained a (1) history of the task force, (2) a draft of a Saint Mary’s Advising Concept, (3) a review of the process for the development of the FYAC program, (4) faculty and student survey data on academic advising, and (5) a set of findings and conclusions.

Of particular note in this report were the critical questions of: (1) should academic advising be handled solely by a professional staff or is academic advising the purview of the faculty, and (2) if it is the role of the faculty, how is this responsibility defined in the Faculty Handbook and what types of assessment measurements are in place to demonstrate student success as a result of the advising process.

A summary of the findings and conclusions from the 2009 report are as follows:

**Recommendation #1:** It is recommended that the question of advising equity across academic departments and programs continue to be evaluated by the AARC on a department-by-department basis, and, in conjunction with the PRC and UEPC, determine if any adjustments in workload equity need to be implemented.

**Recommendation #2:** It is recommended that the AARC gather assessment data pertaining to the 2009-10 First Year Advising Cohort program to be evaluated by the AARC in 2010-11.

**Recommendation #3:** It is recommended that the AARC, in conjunction with the PRC and UEPC, continue the evaluation of advising equity within each department and program including developing criteria for systematically determining workload disparities.
Recommendation #4: It is further recommended that that the AARC, in conjunction with the UEPC and the office of Academic Advising and Achievement, develop strategies to assist departments in maximizing advising efforts for their majors.

Recommendation #5: It is recommended that the Academic Senate actively encourage and support the creation of a campus culture in which faculty are understanding of the importance of advising in the education of our students, are adequately trained in best advising practices, and are provided appropriate support and resources.

Recommendation #6: It is further recommended that the Rank and Tenure Subcommittee of the Academic Senate be reconstituted during the 2009-10 academic year to evaluate and clarify Faculty Handbook language relating to how advising affects faculty promotion and tenure.

Recommendation #7: It is recommended that the AARC set up a permanent subcommittee known as the Academic Advising Subcommittee (AAS) whose charged to work with the office of Academic Advising and Achievement on an ongoing basis in the development of programs and support services designed to foster a faculty understanding of, and engagement with, academic advising and other programs supporting student academic achievement.

Recommendation #8: It is further recommended that the AARC continue to work in close collaboration with the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC) to ensure that advising and achievement services are developed and ready for the role-out of the new core curriculum.

Recommendation #9: It is finally recommended that the AARC work in collaboration with the NCAA Reaccredidation Committee and the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to assess the effects of both the upcoming NCAA reaccredidation report and the newly instituted summer session program on student athletes with respect to issues pertaining to academic eligibility and graduation rates.

The work of the 2008-09 Academic Advising Task Force continued to shape the initial conversations for the work of the 2009-10 AARC with respect to academic advising, along with concurrent work performed by the committee on the assessment of the newly initiated June Term summer school program, and other initiatives put before the committee.

This report addresses these two primary tasks of the 2009-10 AARC as well as provides a summary of the other issues worked on by the committee during last academic year.
III: Review of Faculty Handbook language concerning Faculty Advising

In the Senate meeting of September 7, 2009, a motion was moved and carried that requested the insertion of the following language in Section 1.7.4.8 of the FH, which addressed the role of the AARC in evaluating faculty academic advising [note that proposed language is denoted by text that is bolded and italicized]:

1. After investigations and review, make recommendations to the Academic Senate concerning:

   f. standards and evaluation processes of faculty academic advising including how academic advising affects students’ persistence to graduation beginning in their first year of enrollment.

It should be noted that the inserted language above was crafted to begin the process of how the Senate monitors the role of faculty advising with respect to the two questions mentioned earlier in this report which address the role of faculty within the advising process: (1) should academic advising be handled solely by a professional staff or is academic advising the purview of the faculty, and (2) if it is the role of the faculty, how is this responsibility defined in the Faculty Handbook and what types of assessment measurements are in place to demonstrate student success as a result of the advising process.

It should be further noted that the following language “The committee should also work closely with the Dean for Academic Advising and Achievement towards the development of faculty advising resources and professional development” was struck from the motion as creating an unnecessary connection between “faculty” advising and “professional advising support” that was outside of the purview of the Senate and the AARC.

With this language in place, the AARC became the Senate governing body charged with the ongoing evaluation of academic advising.

IV: Review of the inaugural 2009-10 First Year Advising Cohort

The AARC performed a review of the 2009-10 First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC) by electronically distributing a survey to all FYAC students and faculty in the Spring of 2010. Following is a summary of the data.

Faculty Survey
A 32-question survey was electronically distributed to the 2009-10 FYAC faculty cohort with 25 total respondents. Following is an abridged summary of the results.
FACULTY STATUS
- Part-time (lecturer or adjunct) 4% \(n = 1\)
- Full-time adjunct 16% \(n = 4\)
- Full-time tenure-track 20% \(n = 5\)
- Tenured 60% \(n = 15\)

SCHOOL AFFILIATION
- SEBA 8% \(n = 2\)
- KSOE 0% \(n = 0\)
- LA 64% \(n = 16\)
- SOS 28% \(n = 7\)

HOW MANY MEETINGS IN SEMESTER?
- 4-6 8% \(n = 2\)
- 7-8 28% \(n = 7\)
- 9-10 40% \(n = 10\)
- 11-12 12% \(n = 3\)
- 13-14 12% \(n = 3\)

TOPICS OFFERED (top 6 of 24)
- January Term 92% \(n = 23\)
- Time Management 88% \(n = 22\)
- Registration/Course Selection 84% \(n = 21\)
- Learning Styles Inventory 72% \(n = 18\)
- How to Study 72% \(n = 18\)
- Academic Success 72% \(n = 18\)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF FYAC
- Outstanding 16% \(n = 4\)
- Very Good 20% \(n = 5\)
- Good 40% \(n = 10\)
- Fair 24% \(n = 6\)
- Poor 00% \(n = 0\)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE TOPICS
- Outstanding 12% \(n = 3\)
- Very Good 24% \(n = 6\)
- Good 36% \(n = 9\)
- Fair 24% \(n = 6\)
- Poor 04% \(n = 1\)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE MATERIALS
- Outstanding 8% \(n = 2\)
- Very Good 24% \(n = 6\)
- Good 44% \(n = 11\)
- Fair 20% \(n = 5\)
- Poor 04% \(n = 1\)
OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORT FROM SUPPORT OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

- Outstanding 24% n = 6
- Very Good 28% n = 7
- Good 32% n = 8
- Fair 16% n = 4
- Poor 00% n = 0

A sampling of faculty comments from open-ended questions:

WHAT ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED WELL IN FYAC?
- Selection of major
- Registration and course selection
- Overall adjustment to college
- Critical thinking
- Time Management
- Study skills
- Difficulties with teachers
- Campus community issues

WHAT ISSUES WERE NOT ADDRESS WED WELL IN FYAC?
- Developing genuine academic goals
- The SMC three traditions
- Financial issues
- Immaturity
- Career resources / Internship opportunities

WAS IT YOUR SENSE THAT COLLEGE WAS A BIG ADJUSTMENT FOR YOUR STUDENTS?
- There was near unanimity that the first year experience is much more difficult for students than they initially thought upon entering.

HOW HELPFUL WAS SMART GRADES FOR ADVISING
- There was near unanimity that Smart Grades was NOT USEFUL at all.

OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT FYAC
- First year curriculum needs revision and refreshment
- Don’t treat students like children
- The program has many positive feature, but the expected number of contact hours is too high
- Doesn’t feel like a good fit to force the faculty-student advising into a .25 course
- The cost of materials is not worth the outcomes
- Some of the offices seemed to be staffed by underperforming individuals who are not so good at their jobs
• Meet your students early and often and get to know them
• FYAC is a way of reaching out to Freshmen as an entire class
• Faculty need to set higher expectation for students in their classes
• Appreciate the growing connection to academic life and student life
• FYAC Advisors should be given orientation about residence life
• Residence Life is sometimes helpful, sometimes not
• We have less an advising problem and more a curriculum problem
• Most students feel overwhelmed
• Don’t over-program or over-manage first year students
• We need to do much more to animate our campus
• Students need a better way to get off campus

COMMENTS ON CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF FYAC
• The idea of FYAC is good, however, we need to work on the structure of class under different instructors
• For the 20% of the students who need such an advising program, this is it. For the other 80% it’s the “Battan Death March” – too much time and effort. Not worth continuing
• I’m not sure that it’s worth it. We run the risk of recreating the high school homeroom experience. This would be very bad
• Discontinue it, return advising to the control of the Schools/Deans
• Cut your losses and delete it
• Give us a course for the year rather than stipend
• These programs are so important to retention
• The program needs a bit more buy-in from faculty to grow
• Most definitely continue it – strengthen the Mission piece
• Don’t take a one-size-fits-all approach
• Keep it – connect it to the core
• Much better than it was before
• FYAC needs a few more years of assessment
• I like the discipline-based approach, but many students moved away from a focus on the sciences. I did not sense a strong cohesion in the cohort
• It is on the right track
• Too much time and effort. Although I enjoyed it, I wouldn’t do it again
• Too early to tell

Student Survey
A 32-question survey was electronically distributed to the 2009-10 FYAC student cohort with 166 total respondents. Following is an abridged summary of the results.

STUDENT PROFILE
• First generation 49%  n = 60
• Pell recipient 19%  n = 23
• Athlete 21%  n = 26
• Lasallian high school 9%  n = 11
• Working on campus 17% \( n = 21 \)
• Working off campus 24% \( n = 30 \)
• Female 71%
• Male 29%

HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU MEET INDIVIDUALLY WITH YOUR FYAC ADVISOR
• 1-2 43% \( n = 73 \)
• 3-4 29% \( n = 49 \)
• 5-6 13% \( n = 22 \)
• 7-8 7% \( n = 12 \)
• 9-10 2% \( n = 4 \)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH FYAC
• Outstanding 11% \( n = 19 \)
• Very Good 23% \( n = 38 \)
• Good 26% \( n = 44 \)
• Fair 17% \( n = 28 \)
• Poor 22% \( n = 37 \)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH SMC
• Outstanding 34% \( n = 56 \)
• Very Good 33% \( n = 54 \)
• Good 25% \( n = 41 \)
• Fair 6% \( n = 10 \)
• Poor 2% \( n = 4 \)

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING
• Outstanding 22% \( n = 36 \)
• Very Good 30% \( n = 47 \)
• Good 33% \( n = 54 \)
• Fair 12% \( n = 19 \)
• Poor 4% \( n = 6 \)

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ABOUT FYAC?
• Waste of time/boring/unnecessary 12%
• Short meetings/optional 16%
• Less work/don’t assign work 13%
• Make meeting more fun/interesting 8%

OTHER STUDENT RESPONSES
• Two thirds of the students thought that books and materials were not useful or were not integrated into the curriculum well enough
• Overwhelming majority found Smart Grades NOT helpful
• Most students thought that FYAC addressed well issues of advising and college adjustment
• Most popular topic covered was January Term (92%) followed by time management (88%)
SELECTED QUOTES

• “I don’t think that it is necessary for the class to meet so often. Rather than having so many unnecessary meetings, there should be some fun days where the group goes out on a little field trip together to bond.”
• “I really think it should be more of a first few weeks thing, and then done. Just be there for your students.”
• “I don’t know exactly, but something needs to change. Perhaps a screening process or a way to qualify to be exempt because, even though I like my advisor personally, I felt like it was a waste of my time. I am a very good student and only would like occasional help to choose classes and such.”
• “This should be a class about helping, not assigning work.”
• “Continue with everything – maybe more one on one meetings.”
• “Don’t place any more pressure on students.”
• “FYAC is a great way to pave a path through college.”
• “Make it more fun and interactive.”
• “Very helpful for first year students.”
• “A waste of time – I felt like I was still in high school.”
• “I found it made me more stressful.”
• “Continue it – it’s good having someone nagging you about academics.”

Recommendations

Based upon the survey data, other reports and committee discussions, the 2009-10 FYAC program appeared to have mixed success with issues. Issues of concern included the degree of relevance to all students, amount of classroom contact hours, and amount of required homework. These issues were juxtaposed against the positive testimonials of how the program successfully assisted in some first-year students’ transition to college.

Recommendation: It is therefore recommended that the 2010-11 FYAC continue to be evaluated by the Senate either through the AARC or some other Senate-appointed body to better ascertain the extent and the capacity to which the program should continue in subsequent years, as well as examine issues of program relevance, execution and assessment. This evaluation should also continue to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of faculty and professional support staff in the advising process, and how that relates to the larger “First Year Experience.”

It is further recommended that a broad array of options for accomplishing the end-goals of the program be examined including: (1) a Frosh workshop program arranged by interest groups, (2) a reduction of required class meetings, (3) a reduction down to one semester, or (4) an option for students to not participate.

V: Review of the Inaugural 2009 June Term Summer Session

A review of the 2009 June Term Summer session was conducted in early Spring 2010. The program was structurally designed to have no officially designated office for cost reasons, but rather operates under the auspices of the Office of the Vice Provost. The
Vice Provost’s staff absorbed the administrative duties associated with the program, with academic departments and programs providing local administrative duties for recruitment of faculty and course design. Programs involved included: Business, Communication, Kinesiology, Performing Arts, Politics, Psychology, Spanish, and Theology & Religious Studies.

Program revenue for Summer 2009 totaled $112,000. Faculty were paid a stipend of $5,997 per course. Of the total of participating faculty, 15 were ranked, 8 were lecturers, and 1 adjunct.

Total student enrollment for the term was 128, of which 41 comprised student athletes. Seniors represented the largest student demographic with 51, followed by juniors with 41, sophomores 21 and frosh totaling 6. There was no student financial aid available except for student athletes, and 40 housing spaces were reserved for students matriculated during the session.

There were no student evaluations done at the conclusion of the term.

Deliberation in the AARC included a discussion of alternate schedule lengths (e.g. six or eight week sessions), a question of whether athletic scholarships apply to summer programs, and a further discussion of the tracking of whether the summer program is succeeding in its goal of increasing graduation rates.

*Most importantly, the AARC recommended that course evaluations been done at the conclusion of each term.*

**VI: Partial Credit Courses for Graduation**

In April of 2010, the AARC forwarded a motion to the Senate requesting a policy change in the Office of the Registrar requesting a separation of .25 and .5 courses, thereby removing the limit of how many partial-credit courses a student may take during an academic semester and year while maintaining the number of fractional courses which count towards matriculation. The motion was approved by the Senate after debate over questions of fiscal efficacy and curriculum coherency.