First Year Advising Taskforce Final Report
Table of Contents
April 10, 2013

I. Introduction
   The Origins of the Taskforce
   The Work of the Taskforce

II. First Year Advising Cohort Program (FYAC)
   History
   The 2012 Proposal & the Origins of the Taskforce
   Current Structure
   Statistics
   Past Survey Data – Student Surveys 2009 & 2011
   Past Survey Data – YFCY Student Survey 2011
   Past Survey Data – FYAC Faculty Survey 2010

III. Items for Consideration from OUTSIDE SMC
   General First Year Practices and Seminar Organization
   Comparison Data from Other Institutions

IV. Items for Consideration from INSIDE SMC
   The Academic Advising Taskforce Report
   New Survey Data – Senior Survey 2012
   New Survey Data – All-faculty Survey 2012

V. Taskforce Conclusions
   Weaknesses of the Current Program
   Strengths of the Current Program
   Future Priorities

VI. The Models the First Year Advising Taskforce puts forward for consideration
   Model 1
   Model 2
   Thinking About Costs for Model 1 and Model 2

VII. Proposed Path Forward

VIII. Appendices
   Appendix 1: Charge to the First Year Advising Taskforce Spring 2012
   Appendix 2: Materials presented to the UEPC in February of 2012
   Appendix 3: Academic Advising Taskforce Report Fall 2009
   Appendix 4: Original FYAC Proposal Spring 2009
   Appendix 5: Academic Success and Retention of Those Entering as Freshmen 2002-2011

A Note from the Editor: This report includes the writing and ideas of all nine faculty members on the Taskforce. One of the side effects of this is that the text can be somewhat repetitive, as each person tried to summarize his/her section of data, etc. Also, I have tried to reconcile terminology, spelling, hyphenation, and capitalization, as time allowed, but apologize for any inconsistencies that may remain. – Cynthia Van Gilder

I. Introduction
Whereas the Core Curriculum forms the habits of mind, trains in the pathways to knowledge, and opens the ways of engaging the world that a student will use for a lifetime of thoughtful, engaged citizenship, the First Year Experience ought to form the habits of mind, pathways to knowledge and ways of engaging the world of Saint Mary’s College that the student will use in their years as an undergraduate. First year advising is the primary structure through which faculty members engage with first year students, and should be treated as an opportunity to shape a thoughtful, engaged citizenry for our College.

**The First Year Advising Taskforce Charge**

The First Year Advising Taskforce (hereafter the Taskforce) was created by the Academic Senate in May 2012 in response to a request by the Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee (UEPC). Its charge [Appendix 1] was to review the current First Year Advising Cohort Program (FYAC) and make a recommendation to the Senate regarding the future of first year advising at SMC. This is the Taskforce’s report, including our two models for consideration by the Senate.

**The Work of the Taskforce 2012 - 2013**

Table 1 shows the Taskforce’s membership. Eight meetings were held over the course of the summer (2012), and an additional four during the fall semester (2012). During this time the Taskforce read materials on first year advising, first year seminars, and researched programs at various other colleges. Additionally, members reviewed survey data collected from faculty members and students involved with the FYAC Program since 2009.

**Table 1: Taskforce Membership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Van Gilder (SOLA)</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Tiberii (Dean, Academic Advising…)</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Bird (SOLA)</td>
<td>Senate Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Lee (SEBA)</td>
<td>AARC Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costanza Dopfle (SOLA)</td>
<td>UEPC Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Jabbour (SOS)</td>
<td>CCC Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidya Chandrasekaran (SOS)</td>
<td>Faculty with Two Years FYAC Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Tsukahara (SOLA &amp; SEBA)</td>
<td>Faculty with Two Years FYAC Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Sigman (SOS)</td>
<td>Faculty At-Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Fitzgerald (SOLA)</td>
<td>Faculty At-Large</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the fall of 2012, the Taskforce conducted two new surveys; one of the 2012-2013 fourth year students who were the first class of first year students to participate in FYAC and one of ALL-faculty regarding first year advising. Additionally, the Taskforce conducted three town hall style open meetings for members of the community to gather and discuss first year advising. Finally, in February of 2013 the Taskforce realized that in order to give the community adequate time to select and most importantly, implement a new first year program there would need to be an extension of the existing program to 2013-2014. Being very aware of the perceived weaknesses of the current FYAC structure, the Taskforce proposed the Academic Senate that a few changes be implemented on an experimental basis. That proposal is discussed below.
II. First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC) Program

History

In May of 2008 the existing first year advising structure, one of advising cohorts assigned through the Greek Thought Collegiate Seminar, was discontinued. While the reasons for this were complicated, those most commonly cited were that 1) melding advising material with Seminar material was costing time that should be spent on the Seminar material; and 2) it was thought that the burden of taking on 18 extra advisees was discouraging ranked faculty from teaching this Seminar, leaving both academic advising of first year students and instruction in one of the College’s signature programs primarily in the hands of part-time faculty members. Characteristics of this program included regular advising information disseminated to faculty members to share with their students during the Seminar class time, as well as a budget of $1000 per class section to facilitate group activities such as attendance at cultural events, dinners, Bay Area trips, etc.

During the following year, 2008-2009, first year students were assigned in groups of 10 to a faculty member representing a particular disciplinary interest. Advisors and advisees met once during the Weekend of Welcome, and then it was up to them to continue connecting for advising purposes.

Meanwhile, the Building on Strengths Strategic Plan called for a review of all aspects of academic advising at the College and recommendations to be made by a subcommittee of the Admissions and Academic Regulations Committee (AARC). This subcommittee, referred to either as the BOS 1.5 committee or the Academic Advising Taskforce (AATF), was comprised of two members of the AARC as well as several other interested faculty members from around campus. As part of their charge they surveyed the faculty on its current advising practices and opinions on how they would like to see advising organized. The AATF read many general and theoretical works on academic advising and several members attended National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conferences. They were focused on creating Mission and Vision Statements for Faculty Academic Advising at SMC.

In late fall of 2008, then Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academics, Frances Sweeney, visited the AATF and said that first year advising was in a crisis. It was understood from faculty complaints and student difficulties that the system of assigning 10 students to an advisor and providing no further structure was causing frustration and missed opportunities for timely communication all around. Dr. Sweeney asked the AATF to please take on the task of proposing an alternative model for first year academic advising.

In response to this request, taskforce members, particularly Larisa Genin and Cynthia Van Gilder, conducted informal group discussions with 65+ first year students, collected brief survey data from those same first year students, and then held three follow-up hour long interviews with 9 students, an effort assisted by Frank Murray. This data was brought back to the AATF and considered in combination with the results of the earlier faculty survey.

Meanwhile, in a separate initiative undertaken with the support of then Dean of Academic Development, Frank Murray, and Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement, Russell Tiberii, a series of “College 101” style .25 credit courses titled “My SMC” were being piloted with a very limited number of faculty members.

Faculty members involved in the “10 per person” model were reporting issues around the following: inability to contact students, inability to get students to come to office appointments, insufficient interaction with the students to really get to know them, and frustration with having to
repeat the same information (e.g., how to use GaelXpress) to ten separate advisees. Students reported: not knowing who their advisor was, not understanding when and why they might need to contact their advisor, not remembering where their advisor could be found, inconsistent ability to get a timely appointment with the advisor when they did contact him or her. The AATF research also found that there were widely varying expectations of what constituted good advising and myriad implementations of the faculty advisor/student advisee relationship across campus.

The FYAC program was created to address these and other issues perceived by the AATF. The full report of the AATF, authored by Co-Chair Edward Tywoniak and submitted in the fall of 2009 can be found in Appendix 3. A proposal was drafted in early spring of 2009 and approved by Paul Zarnoth in his capacity as the Chair of the UEPC [Appendix 4]. The program structure did not specify how it would actually be implemented and so in May of 2009, Cynthia Van Gilder, a member of the AATF, was asked to lead the implementation of the program. She has continued in this position, under various titles, until today.

**Current Structure**

All first year students are enrolled in a .25 activities course (EDUC-70) for their first-year. The instructor of the course serves as his/her faculty advisor for the first-year. Students are placed in a section in consultation with a faculty member at summer orientation. Most students are placed in a section advised by a faculty member who teaches in the academic school that is of most interest to the student. Others are placed in “Undecided” sections, or specialized sections for programs such as Integral or Teachers for Tomorrow (Liberal and Civic Studies). Students who are admitted with Honors at Entrance may opt into an Honors Program section and those who are first in their family to attend college may opt into a High Potential Program section. EDUC-70 sections are capped at 15 students, although exceptions to this have been made upon the request of various academic programs on campus.

The First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC) is first and foremost a delivery system for academic advising by a faculty mentor. To meet the requirements of the FYAC .25-credit course as approved by the UEPC in 2009, there must be 21 contact hours spread over the fall and spring semesters. This is a total of 14 sessions of 1.5 hours each. The first of these sessions is held on the Friday of Weekend of Welcome (WoW).

The recommended distribution is 9 meetings in the fall (including WoW) and 5 meetings in the spring, however, this may be altered as long as 14 total cohort meetings occur, and no fewer than 7 meetings occur in the fall semester.

The curricular themes of the fall semester are *Transitioning to College Academics & Understanding SMC*, while in the spring they are *College Academic Planning & Exploring a Major*.

The learning goals articulated in the original program proposal (2009) are as follows: **Students who are enrolled in this class will**…

1. Be introduced to aspects of the Saint Mary’s College community, including the Lasallian, Catholic, and Liberal Arts traditions, as they are experienced here.
2. Engage in a variety of community building experiences with their FYAC.
3. Be informed of the role of faculty and academic advisors and of campus support resources.
4. Become familiar with the core curriculum, general education, and basic structure of major/minor requirements, and how to use the course catalog and GaelXpress to find information and assess their degree progress.
5. Be given the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship with a faculty advisor.
7. Begin to set personal academic goals and develop habits as responsible decision makers.

Most FYAC faculty members develop their own course syllabi in consultation with the FYAC Faculty Liaison, however, those teaching in the Honors, High Potential, and SEBA sections are given standardized (or partially standardized) syllabi to follow. SEBA also meets in much larger groups (instead of individualized cohorts) most of the time.

A list of workshops that have been developed by various offices on campus to supplement the curriculum ideas provided by the FYAC Faculty Liaison. Faculty may request these workshops for their section if they feel they are appropriate. Examples include: Time Management by the Academic Advising Center; The Lasallian World by the Mission and Ministry Center; and Library Literacy by the Library staff.

Advisors are expected to attend the sessions even if they are not in charge so that they can experience/learn the programming along with their cohort and have another opportunity to bond and check-in with students.

In addition to the group sessions listed above, each advisor meets with each student one-on-one a minimum of two times per semester. These are likely to be: Fall 1st – to get to know the student, discuss first impressions of classes, etc.; Fall 2nd – to assess midterm grades and select classes for the spring semester; Spring 1st – to discuss Jan Term, possible major choices, and goals for the spring semester; Spring 2nd – to continue major exploration, select courses for the fall (and possibly summer), and confirm that the student understands how he/she will be assigned an academic advisor for her/his sophomore year.

The Dean of Academic Advising and the staff of the Academic Advising Center are available as back up for students who need more (or different) support than a faculty member can reasonably offer.

It is up to each instructor to determine the way the course will be graded, however, we ask that attendance at all sessions be enforced, and rewarded significantly in the weighting of the Pass/Fail grade. Grades are given at the end of the spring semester only. The Registrar automatically enters a grade of *IP (in progress) at the end of the fall semester.

Faculty members new to FYAC undergo a 2.5-hour orientation session during the summer before they teach in the program. This information session includes syllabus development support and an explanation of the structure and resources available to FYAC instructors. All FYAC faculty members attend an informational “update” luncheon on the Friday of Weekend of Welcome. Additionally, a faculty development session is provided before the start of the spring semester on how to best guide students in their exploration of various majors. Other than the initial orientation to the program, which is conducted by the FYAC Faculty Liaison, the faculty development opportunities are voluntary. Over the four years of the program they have included: a shared book reading with lunch discussion sessions; the opportunity to meet with an outside consultant whose
expertise was first year adjustment courses; roundtable discussions of the program and its goals; academic school support sessions; information sessions on relevant software (such as the “My Road” major and career exploration website); and how to advise in the new core curriculum.

Faculty members receive a $1500 stipend for their service as a FYAC advisor (in two installments).

The 2012 Proposal & the Origins of the Taskforce

In February of 2012, James Sauerberg, in his capacity as Chair of the Core Curriculum Committee, and Cynthia Van Gilder took a proposal to make FYAC a permanent part of the SMC first year curriculum to the UEPC. The proposal had been developed by a group of faculty, including representatives from each of the major Senate sub-committees, and relevant administrators. The UEPC was significantly divided on substantial parts of the proposal, for example, whether advising should be done in the context of a course, whether the existing Learning goals were appropriate, etc. The full text of that proposal follows. Several of the accompanying documents that were given to the UEPC at that time are presented as Appendix 2.

First Year Advising Cohort Program Proposal
Submitted to the UEPC for consideration on Feb. 13, 2012
Approved and Endorsed by the AARC, Feb. 3, 2012

This proposal is the result of the collaboration of Cynthia Van Gilder (Faculty Liaison for First Year Advising), James Sauerberg (Director of the Core Curriculum Committee), Richard Carp (Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academics), Russell Tiberii (Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement), Tomas Gomez-Arias (President of the Faculty Senate), David Bird (Faculty Senate Liaison to the Admissions and Academic Regulations Committee), Ellen Rigsby (Chair of the Faculty Welfare Committee), Zach Flanagin (Chair of the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee).

Proposal
It is proposed that the First Year Advising Cohort Program be formally adopted as the academic advising structure for first year students at Saint Mary's College.

Organization: Students will be divided into groups of no more than 15 and assigned to a faculty advisor. The cohort will be structured as a .25 credit academic class (EDUC-70) with 25 required contact hours (as a group) over the full academic year. Advisors will also meet with students one-on-one twice per semester. Students will sign up for a section of EDUC-70 at summer orientation based on academic interest and/or group affiliation (e.g., athletes enroll in Champ's Life). Students will receive a final grade of Pass or Fail at the end of the spring semester. Sections will be taught by ranked faculty members only, although exceptions to this rule may be granted by the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) in consultation with the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academics (VPUA).

Oversight, Administration, and Implementation: The Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) will be charged with determining the learning goals and curricular content of EDUC-70. They will be responsible for gaining approval for the curriculum by the Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee (UEPC). The responsibility for recruitment of faculty members will lie with the Deans of the Schools of Science (SOS), Economics and Business Administration (SEBA), and Liberal Arts (SOLA) (hereafter referred to as the Academic Deans). The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academics (VPUA) will be charged with overseeing quality control, standardization across sections, and appropriate faculty member compensation. The implementation and day-to-day management of the program will be the responsibility of the Office of Academic Advising and Achievement (AAA). The AAA will also be responsible for gathering assessment data and coordinating efforts to present this data to the Program Review Committee (PRC) for periodic appropriate review.
A position will be created for a faculty member who will serve as a liaison to the AAA, CCC, FYE, Academic Deans, Office of the Registrar, and FYAC instructors. This individual will be responsible for maintaining lines of communication amongst these groups. This person will also be responsible for planning faculty development and training in consultation with the AAA, CCC, and Academic Deans. Consequently, this individual will be tasked with staying abreast of developments in faculty advising and first year seminars, with the support (financial and scheduling) of the Dean of AAA and the VPUA.

**Curriculum Content and Structure:** Mandatory learning outcomes will be set by the CCC. There will be some common texts/materials required for use by all sections, and the standards for earning a Pass or Fail grade will be set by the CCC. Some portion of the curriculum will be developed by the CCC and required for all sections (see Appendix A). The CCC in conjunction with the Academic Deans will develop additional content. Faculty members will have the ability to select specific meeting dates (beyond the Weekend of Welcome) and the manner in which the curriculum is implemented. Successfully completing EDUC-70 will become a graduation requirement for all students entering SMC with fewer than 9 credits. Students who fail EDUC-70 will be required to complete a sophomore level EDUC in order to graduate. Please note that although we propose requiring students to successfully complete EDUC-70 to graduate, we recommend keeping the total number of credits required to graduate at 36, especially pending further decisions regarding SMC credit hours in general.

**Faculty Expectations and Compensation:** ranked faculty selected and recruited by the Academic Deans will teach EDUC-70 sections. These faculty members will be compensated with a $1500 stipend per EDUC-70 section. Faculty will be asked to make a three-year commitment to the program (not necessarily in a row) and after completing three years of teaching EDUC-70 will receive one course release, the timing of which will be negotiated with the Academic Dean of his/her home school. FYAC faculty members are required to attend four faculty development events per year. Two of these will be sponsored by the Academic Deans, and faculty members will attend based on the School affiliation of his or her EDUC-70. In addition, first time FYAC instructors are required to attend two additional faculty development sessions.

**Learning Goals and Common Curriculum**

**Learning Goals**
1. Be introduced to aspects of the Saint Mary’s College community, including the Lasallian, Catholic, and Liberal Arts traditions as they are experienced here.
2. Engage in a variety of community building experiences with their FYAC.
3. Be informed of the role of faculty and academic advisors and of campus support resources.
4. Learn the structure of the Core Curriculum and be introduced to the rationale of the requirements surrounding Habits of Mind, Pathways to Knowledge, and Engaging the World learning goals.
5. Become familiar with the basic structure of major/minor requirements, and how to use the course catalog and GaelXpress to find information and assess their degree progress.
6. Be given the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship with a faculty advisor.
7. Explore strategies for academic success and selecting an appropriate major.
8. Begin to set personal academic goals and develop habits as responsible decision makers.

**Assessment and Evaluation Thus Far**

* A list of the assessments related to FYAC conducted to date
  - Fall 2008 Faculty Practices and Preferences in Advising Survey (AATF)
  - January 2009 First Year Advising Focus Groups and Survey (AATF)
  - Fall 2010 FYAC Faculty Program Survey (FYAC)
  - Spring 2011 YFCY Survey of First Year Students (FYE)
  - Spring 2012 FYAC Student Survey (FYAC) currently underway

As stated above, the UEPC decided to ask the Senate to commission a new taskforce to study the FYAC program more intentionally and propose a way forward. This Taskforce was asked to bring its review and recommendations directly to the Senate.
Changes to FYAC for 2013-2014

Below you will find the text of the recommendations made to the Academic Senate in March 2013. The Senate passed a resolution to implement the changes detailed below for 2013-2014.

A MEMO FROM THE FIRST YEAR ADVISING TASKFORCE REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADVISING FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS DURING ACADEMIC YEAR 2013-2014

Given that several of the most frequently cited problems with existing FYAC program are:

1) faculty feel like there are too many group, in-class meetings
2) faculty feel like they are being asked to deliver and/or sit through material that is not a “best use of their time and talents” to fill these meetings
3) many faculty/departments need to teach in the 12:40-2:10MF timeslot at least one of the semesters to accommodate the new course scheduling expectations
4) coordinating the students’ move to the spring semester is a disaster that has literally cost hundreds of staff and professorial hours to try to implement/fix

AND that

5) students and faculty both overwhelmingly value the one-on-one aspects of FYAC above all others
6) the spring semester is primarily focused on exploring a major and academic planning which is most effectively accomplished one-on-one,

We propose that for 2013-2014 year FYAC look very similar to the way it has from 2009-2013, with slight modifications to the organization of the fall and spring semester portions of the course:

1) Students will continue to enroll in a .25 credit yearlong course, using the same enrollment parameters previously implemented (ex., 15 student cap, based on academic interest, etc.).

2) Faculty will be compensated with the same $1500 stipend.

3) Cohorts will meet with their faculty advisors twice during the Weekend of Wow (as was discussed for 2012) during which they will do i) the usual greeting, orientation, information and ii) Academic Honor Code as in the past was done with Seminar professors.

4) Faculty expectations of one-on-one meetings will remain the same for the fall semester (two 15 minute meetings), but be increased to a minimum of two 25 minute meetings for the spring semester to allow for greater discussion of major selection and four year/academic planning.

5) Cohorts will be scheduled at various times during the fall semester with the majority falling MF 12:40-2:10, but others arranged in the evenings and during late afternoons for athletes and other programming needs.

6) Cohorts will meet 8 times in the fall during weeks of the faculty advisor’s choosing. (With the two WoW meetings, this makes 10 meetings.)

7) The curricular content of these cohorts will be the same as they have been in the past.

8) Students will stay enrolled in the same EDUC-70/FYAC for the spring semester, and thus have the same faculty advisor for the entirety of the first year, however, no meeting times will be assigned for the spring sections...
9) *Instead, all EDUC-70 sections will meet once during the 1st or 2nd week community time slot (classrooms to be coordinated through FYAC Program with Bill Sullivan) and the 9th or 10th week during community time (before advising for the fall term begins).*

10) *This will be 2 more group sessions, bringing the total to 12 for the year. The remaining two “class” sessions will be accomplished by having all first year students attend 2 mandatory workshops/sessions sponsored by other units on campus. These would be signed-up for and attended by the students on their own during the spring semester using the online enrollment model currently employed by the Major Exploration Workshops through the Academic Advising Center. The first of these two could be the Major Exploration Workshop (to support declaration of the major by March 31) and the second could be a combined presentation by the Career Development Center and the Study Abroad Office to support effective four year academic planning. Attendance would be taken and reported to the advisors and students would be asked to file electronic thought/reaction pieces to these two workshops for discussion in a one-on-one setting with the advisor.*

Use of this model for 2013-2014 will allow departments to plan courses and recruit faculty as advisors starting immediately, since the bulk of the expectations are exactly the same as they have been in previous years. It will allow the 50+ faculties who have already advised in the existing system to proceed without any additional training, and existing training/orientation materials to be used for incoming faculty for 2013-2014. **Most importantly, it will quickly and easily eliminate the most egregious hurdles that impede the functioning of the existing system and preserve its best aspects, while giving the community ample time to consider the full First Year Advising Taskforce report and recommendations for implementation in 2014-2015.**

**Statistics**
FYAC has been in operation for four years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 and will be in operation for 2013-2014 in a modified form (see above).

During this time 93 faculty members have participated. Five faculty members have participated all four years. Please see Table 3 for details.

**Table 3: Faculty Member Participation in FYAC By School and Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOLA</th>
<th>SOS</th>
<th>SEBA</th>
<th>Total Faculty Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four Times</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Times</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Times</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Time</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Faculty Participation** (of the 93 over 4 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOLA</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEBA</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First year students were surveyed in 2009 and 2011. The two surveys asked different questions about FYAC, so the results will be addressed separately and then synthesized.

Student Survey 2009

This survey included four questions that directly referenced FYAC. Three of the four questions had an open response format; therefore, categories were created by First Year Advising Task Force members to capture the range of individual responses.

What issues/questions did you have that were addressed well in your FYAC?
Note: This question is not simply asking what questions were addressed well but more specifically what questions the respondent had that were addressed well. In other words, FYAC may have addressed other questions well, but the respondent is presumably only mentioning issues that were important to him or her.

Responses: 113 (one response may be counted under more than one category)
The categories mentioned by the largest numbers of students were **picking classes (n=41)** and **academic advising (n=27)**. The categories mentioned by the next-largest numbers of students were student life/campus resources (n=21) and adjustment to college (n=18). Some students (n=10) said “none” (or something similar), which could mean they had no questions or could mean their questions were not addressed well. Some students (n=6) said everything was addressed well. Several students mentioned the importance of one-on-one mentoring here (n=4).

**What issues/questions did you have that were NOT addressed well in your FYAC?**

Responses: 80
The majority of respondents (n=47) said something like, “None.” This could mean that all of their questions were addressed well, or it could mean they had no questions.
Small numbers of respondents (≤6) mentioned academic questions, choosing a major, choosing courses, financial issues, careers, or college life.

**What advice would you give to a cohort faculty about FYAC?**

Responses: 98
The most common categories of response were that FYAC is fine the way it is (n=22) and that FYAC is a waste of time (n=21). Of the more specific responses, students suggested more one-on-one time (n=16), less homework (n=14), meeting for a shorter time (n=11), and more/better structure (n=10). Small numbers (n≤6) mentioned more fun activities, better or friendlier advisors, more on adjustment issues, more on academic topics, and other suggestions.

**Please rate the following:**
Respondents are asked to use a five-point scale from “poor” to “outstanding”, with “good” in the middle.

A much larger percentage of students expressed dissatisfaction with FYAC than with Saint Mary’s in general.

**Overall satisfaction with FYAC (Responses: 166)**
Less than Good = 39.2%
Good to Outstanding = 60.8%
Most common response: Good = 26.5%

**Overall satisfaction with SMC (Responses: 165)**
Less than Good = 8.5%
Good to Outstanding = 91.5%
Most common response: Outstanding = 33.9%

**Overall satisfaction with Academic Advising (Responses: 162)**
Note: Possible confusion between Academic Advising (campus unit) and the student’s experience with his or her faculty advisor.

Less than Good = 15.4%
Good to Outstanding = 84.6%
Most common response: Good = 33.3%

Student Survey 2011

This survey included five questions about FYAC, in addition to an initial informational question. Four of the five questions had an open-response format; therefore, categories were created by Freshman Year Advising Task Force members to capture the range of individual responses.

What I thought was most helpful about FYAC this Fall was:

Responses: 211
Top categories of response included adjustment-to-college issues (n=61) and academic issues (picking classes/registration [n=45] and other academic advising issues [n=43]). Another top response (n=48) was that one-on-one meetings with the advisor were most helpful. A smaller number (n=12) mentioned student life issues. Some students (n=20) thought nothing was helpful about FYAC.

I think FYAC could be improved by:

Responses: 196
Many responses reflected negative feelings about the amount of time students spent in FYAC, including suggestions that there be fewer meetings (n=40) and that meetings be shorter (n=26), as well as general statements that FYAC is a waste of time (n=22). Another common response (n=28) was the suggestion that FYAC include more on academic topics. Some suggestions reflected the importance of the relationship between student and advisor, including more one-on-one time with advisors (n=20) and better advisors (n=11). Among other recommendations were less homework (n=19) and more/better structure (n=12).

What I appreciated most about my advisor was:

Responses: 214
The most common responses reflect the general supportiveness and availability of the advisor. Many students felt their advisor was helpful/understanding (n=80), available (n=79), and friendly/nice (n=67). Other common responses reflect the advisor’s knowledge of academic issues (n=44) and resources (n=26).

For each of the following there are three responses to choose from: I definitely AGREE with this statement, I SOMEWHAT AGREE with this statement or I definitely DISAGREE with this statement.

Responses: 302
Of the twelve statements to which students were asked to respond, three addressed the general structure of the student’s FYAC advising, three addressed the helpfulness of FYAC advising, and six addressed the content of FYAC. Focusing only on the three statements about the helpfulness of FYAC advising, respondents felt that one-on-one sessions with their advisors were much more
helpful than group sessions with their cohorts. Only 41.1% of respondents agreed that their cohort sessions were helpful, and 19.9% disagreed. At the same time, 63.9% agreed that their one-on-one sessions with their advisors were helpful, while 9.6% disagreed. In response to the statement, “I feel that my advisor was helpful,” even more students agreed (69.8%) and fewer students disagreed (6.3%).

Synthesis

1. There are high levels of student dissatisfaction with FYAC as currently constructed, especially with the amount of time spent in group sessions, although many students are satisfied.
2. Students generally value their relationships with their advisors, and many emphasize the importance of one-on-one time with their advisors.
3. While students have a wide range of issues and questions that are, or can be, addressed by FYAC, academic issues came up most frequently as an important category.

Past Survey Data – Your First College Year 2011

Your First College Year (YFCY) – FYAC EVALUATION ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
<th>Number Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to understand the history, traditions, mission, and identity of SMC</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC provided me with opportunities to feel a part of the SMC community, both within my FYAC and in the larger campus community</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to understand the role of faculty advisors in planning my course of study at SMC</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to understand the core curriculum, general education requirements, majors/minors, and course selection at SMC</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me establish a mentoring relationship with my faculty advisor</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to generate useful strategies for promoting my own academic success</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to gain a better understanding about my own personal goals, interests, and habits</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC helped me to understand the course catalog and GaelXpress</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC was available to me as a resource in my transition to SMC</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My FYAC provided me with opportunities to connect with other SMC departments such as the Academic Advising Center, Tutorial &amp; Academic Skills Center, and the Career Center</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CIRP Your Freshman College Year Survey (YFCY) - Additional FYAC Items - Spring 2011 Prepared by Office of Institutional Research, sja, 8-26-11

Past Survey Data – Faculty Surveys

Faculty Survey results 2010 regarding FYAC

Class meetings: Frequency, length and comparison to individual meetings
• Number of meetings in Fall 2009: 70% met nine times or more (27% meeting nine times; 21% met 13 times); the remaining 30% met 6-8 times.
• 21.6% of the instructors facilitated all of the meeting sessions of their FYAC sections; 57% facilitated 6 or more of the sessions; 5% facilitated none.
• 38% of instructors never shortened the length of class, 40% shortened it between 1-4 times; 16% shortened 5-8 times. Only one instructor shortened it every class meeting.
• 68% met during their assigned time when they did meet; the others cited field trips, lectures, and outside activities as meeting times.

Textbooks, usage and non-usage
• 83% of instructors did not use the Foundations essay anthology; of those that used it 80% thought it was a useful text for students.
• 60% of instructors did use the Coping with College study skills book, assigning on average 3-4 chapters; half of them found it useful to somewhat useful. 56% said they planned to use it in the spring.
• 50% of the instructors used the Lasallian Education booklet. Of those who used it 53% used it only once; 21% used it every class meeting, and the rest used it several times
• 72% of instructors had students interact/read/discuss the Mission of the College; 67% reported that they intended to use it in the spring.
• 95% of instructors report using the Catalog. Those who did used it an average of 4 times in class; 90% reported they planned to use it in spring
• 84% of instructors report using the GaelXpress program evaluation/audit. And those who did used it multiple times, and some reported frequent use. 97% said they plan to use it in the spring.
• 50% of instructors added a reading on their own, often associated with student learning skills, or discipline specific interests.
• 71% of instructors report assigning various kinds of out-of-class work, ranging from lectures, field trips, reflections, essays, presentations, and vocabulary work.

Class mechanics
• 85% addressed the Liberal Arts tradition; 47% Catholic tradition; 77% discussed Lasallian traditions. Nearly all of the instructors discussed Jan Term, GaelXpress, Advising, GE requirements. Only 71% discussed majors. The First-year Common Reading was addressed by 79%
• 49% of instructors tailored class content to suit their academic disciplines.
• 71% of instructors report that a sense of “cohort camaraderie” was achieved in their sections.
• 91% of the instructors report encouraging the students to contact them “outside their mandatory meetings.”
• More than half of the instructors referred students to Counseling Center, Tutoring Center, math Center, Advising Office, Health and Wellness Center. Between 31% and 49% referred students to Writing Center, Chemistry, Dean of Advising, Mission and Ministry, Women’s Resource Center, Career Center, and Residents Life Office
• The vast majority of instructors did not utilize any of the workshops.
• Vast majority of instructors did not suggest any further workshops.

Student needs and behavior
• 94% of instructors report that students meet the expectation of attendance “mostly” or “absolutely.”
• 60% of instructors report that students are “mostly” or “absolutely” interested in the topics covered.
• 97% of instructors report students “mostly” or “absolutely” attended individual meetings.
• 94% of instructors report that students initiate individual meetings.
• 100% of instructors report no or little problems contacting students when necessary.
• 85% of instructors report mostly or absolutely no problems with getting students to complete outside work.
• 94% instructors report that students are mostly or absolutely interested in the topics covered.
• 33% of instructors report being asked a question that they had “no idea” how to answer, but all report they were able to resolve these questions after engaging with campus resources.

**First-year Advising at SMC—questions for the future**

• 60% believe that we should continue first-year cohorts
• 91% do not believe we should switch to a schedule of meeting every week in the fall and not at all in the spring.
• 65% believe that meeting on a common schedule may work, with 16% saying absolutely.
• 54% believe that meeting more often with a shorter class period is a bad idea, with 6% supporting that idea.
• 50% said we should maybe switch to meeting more often for shorter sessions, and 6% said absolutely.
• Almost all instructors objected to any sort of 1.0 unit configuration.
• 62% said it may be a good idea to move to a more flexible schedule.
• 77% rejected making cohorts larger than 15; and 66% said it may or absolutely was a good idea to have them smaller than 15.
• 65% rejected mandatory faculty training.
• The majority were interested in the idea of having “specialists” as faculty teach the FYAC (i.e., some faculty members specifically become first year advising specialists)
• They rejected having Student life or Professional advisors by 56% and 53% respectively.

**Instructors’ Perceptions of the FYAC Program in 2010**

• Positive perceptions
  o Cohort format and organizing them by major/interest
  o Efficient way to advise students, opportunity to help students
  o Interaction with students, ability to develop relationships
  o Students get to know faculty
  o Good introduction to SMC

• Negative perceptions
  o Waste of faculty time; not adequately compensated
  o Faculty not equipped to deliver certain content, like SMC coping, sexual assault, etc.
  o No set curriculum driving content
  o Meets too much

From the faculty surveys, the following trends emerge regarding the configuration of FYAC:
Faculty members strongly support the first year advising cohort, and assert that it is an important means for them to develop relationships with students. The majority also believes we can reduce the number of meetings for FYAC, maintain smaller cohorts (15), have academic credit attached (but no grades), and that the cohorts be somehow organized around major and school. A vast majority of the faculty support the idea of having peer mentors help facilitate the FYAC in some way (80% for maybe/always), but there should be some faculty involvement. Faculty do not think it should be mandatory for faculty to teach in FYAC.

Faculty members think their most important role is academic advising around course selection, majors, and overall academic planning. There is interest in having peer mentors deliver the student life/adjustment modules. Compensation and R&T recognition remain areas of concern. Faculty believe the following issues are important for students to gain exposure to, either through Student Life office or peer mentor:

- Activities for students to become involved in
- Sexual Harassment issues
- Health and Nutrition
- Finances/financial management
- Study Abroad
- Study Skills

In the Fora conversations, some faculty observed that the best modules may vary for different students, and that having some sort of options might serve students the best. For example, some high achieving students may not need sessions on study skills or time management.

Overall, faculty members believe that much of the content we currently deliver in FYAC is valuable to students. But, that in order to make the best use of faculty time, some hybrid could be developed with peer mentors/other advisors. Faculty want to be able to academically advise students and share their expertise about majors/courses/fields of study/careers and have others deliver the rest of the content.

III. Items for Consideration from Outside SMC

General First Year Student Success Practices

The following information is derived primarily from The First Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success, Volume One, by Jennifer R. Keup and Joni Webb Petschauer (published in 2011 by the National Resource Center for First Year Experience and Students in Transition). In many cases information utilized below is derived by Keup and Petschauer from other studies and sources. Individuals wishing to see the original book chapter in order to derive primary data sources are welcome to request a copy.

Although courses devoted to helping students adjust to college existed as long ago as the 1800’s, the modern phenomenon commonly referred to as a First Year Seminar (hereafter, FYS) took off in the 1970’s concurrently with the enrollment in higher education by larger and more diverse populations that ever before. As a group nationally, students attending college in the 2000’s are known to be “studying only about half as much as faculty say is necessary to be successful in their classes, are underutilizing support services and staff, are working more hours than is optimal...
for their academic experience, and are managing more profound mental and emotional health care needs during their adjustment than ever before” (Keup and Petschauer 2011: 1). By and large, FYS are designed to mitigate the effects of these and other challenges to successful adjustment to the learning environment of higher education, such as academic underpreparation and students used to “helicopter parents” who are therefore underprepared for the demands on their own initiative.

In general these FYS are conceived as a “gateway for student involvement in the academic and social communities of a college” (Keup and Petschauer 2011: 2). According to data collected in 2006 by the National Survey of First Year Seminars, 94% of accredited four-year institutions offer some form of a FYS for college credit. In many cases these are not-required of all students and/or they may be targeted at sub-populations of the student body such as first generation to college students or those who were conditionally admitted due to their academic records. More than 50% of the schools that have FYS offer them/require them to/of 90% or more of their first year students. In those at selective four-year liberal arts institutions, they are most commonly required of all students as part of a comprehensive First Year Experience.

The literature in the field of first year adjustment has generally employed a classification system for FYS developed by Dr. Elizabeth Barefoot. These five are described below.

1) Extended Orientation
This is the most common of the FYS offered at four-year institutions. As the name implies, these courses are conceived of as an extension of the efforts begun during first year orientation. The most important objectives of this type of adjustment to college course (as reported by schools who teach them) are orientation to campus resources and services, development of academic skills, and encouragement of self-exploration and personal development. Some schools use faculty members, others staff members, and some a combination of the two to teach these seminars.

2) Academic Seminar With Uniform Content
In these FYS, a particular academic theme is used as a means through which to develop critical thinking and writing skills and intentionally (and self-reflexively) introduce the students to the expectations of college-level scholarship in a supportive, small group environment. The most important objectives of this type of adjustment to college course are developing academic skills, increasing student-faculty interaction, and creating a common first year academic experience. These FYS are always taught by faculty members.

3) Academic Seminar With Variable Content
Generally, these FYS have faculty chosen academic emphases (either through the vehicle of an introductory course to a discipline or a thematic course like those in our January Term) which are used to convey a common set of academic skills. The most important objectives of this type of adjustment to college course are developing academic skills, increasing student-faculty interaction, and creating a common first year academic experience. These FYS are always taught by faculty members.

4) Basic Study Skills
Examples of the types of topics covered by these FYS include time management, library information, academic planning, note-taking, campus resources, reading strategies, and critical thinking. The most important objectives of this type of adjustment to college course are developing study skills, time management and academic planning and advising. These FYS were taught by faculty members at some schools, staff members at some schools, and at some a combination was used.
5) Preprofessional
These courses are designed to introduce students to a specific major, discipline and/or profession. They are the least commonly offered FYS; in fact the authors reported that the data are so slim that very little can be said about the general patterns for preprofessional FYS. Not surprisingly, they are almost exclusively offered at professional schools. The most important objectives of this type of adjustment to college course are developing academic skills, introduction to a discipline, and creating a common first year experience. Faculty members most commonly taught this type of FYS.

Despite these differences in approach, seven commonalities of highly successful FYS programs were identified:

1) are offered for academic credit; 2) are centered in the first year curriculum; 3) involve both faculty and student affairs professionals in a program design and instruction; 4) include instructor training and development as an integral part of the program; 5) compensate or otherwise reward instructors for teaching the seminar; 6) involve upper-level students in seminar delivery; and 7) include ways of assessing their effectiveness and disseminating these assessments to the campus community. (Keup and Petschauer 2011: 4 from Barefoot and Fidler 1996)

The authors of this synthesis note that in the current proliferation there were many, many schools that had developed hybrid courses that combined attributes of several of the types described above. In some cases schools also offered a combination of FYS, for example, a mandatory basic skills FYS for students with conditional admission, but an optional academic FYS for other students.

In discussing how to decide which type of FYS best suits a particular institution, the authors stress two important factors that the Taskforce took to heart. These were: 1) Begin with a student-centered approach that considers the characteristics (strengths and challenges) of your particular student body; 2) Carefully consider your campus culture, mission, and resource availability.

Ultimately, a “strong sense of shared purpose” is the greatest determinant of program success.

Comparison Data from Other Institutions

Table 5: Comparison Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type of program</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Instructor Faculty or Professional Advisor</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Portland</td>
<td>Freshmen Seminar – They have a Shepard’s Freshmen Resource Center</td>
<td>Every week, for one semester</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Adjustment to college topics – time management, study skills, choosing a major etc.</td>
<td>Sophomores, juniors and seniors. Every student has a faculty advisor.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.up.edu/advising">http://www.up.edu/advising</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Brothers University</td>
<td>One semester</td>
<td>Get credit but not sure how much</td>
<td>Adjustment to college.</td>
<td>Student Life. Faculty participate but not primary instructors.</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.cbu.edu/studentcounseling/peer.html">https://www.cbu.edu/studentcounseling/peer.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC</td>
<td>* First year Investigations</td>
<td>One semester</td>
<td>2 credit</td>
<td>Each year – different seminars offered by Faculty</td>
<td>Faculty Fellows and Distinguished</td>
<td><a href="http://dornsife.usc.edu/fyi/">http://dornsife.usc.edu/fyi/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Program Type</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Faculty/Support</td>
<td>Link</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USF</td>
<td>First year Seminar</td>
<td>One semester – either Fall or Spring</td>
<td>Topics range from Philosophy of Science to Molecular Gastronomy incorporate academic support – such as choosing the major, Four Year Plan. Faculty Also, advanced undergraduate as a mentor.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.usfca.edu/artsci/firstyearsem/Introductory">http://www.usfca.edu/artsci/firstyearsem/Introductory</a> page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>Freshmen Cluster and Seminar (voluntary)</td>
<td>Year - Fall and Winter: 3 hr lecture, 2 hr discussion Spring: One 3 hr seminar</td>
<td>15 units of credit – satisfies GE and writing requirement</td>
<td>Faculty, Graduate Student Instructors</td>
<td><a href="http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/clusters/reports.html">http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/clusters/reports.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis University</td>
<td>Introduction to College Experience</td>
<td>1 credit hour</td>
<td>Student advising, campus resources, frequently choose a contemporary text- 15-18 students</td>
<td>Faculty or staff mentor</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lewissu.edu/resources/larc/pdf/Road%20Map%20Booklet.pdf">www.lewissu.edu/resources/larc/pdf/Road%20Map%20Booklet.pdf</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>Orientation Residential Learning Community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing specific for First year students</td>
<td>RLC have faculty and student leaders</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scu.edu/admitted/orientation/">http://www.scu.edu/admitted/orientation/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Mary’s University at Minnesota</td>
<td>First year Seminar</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
<td>Transition to college Develop academic skills</td>
<td>Not sure.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smumn.edu/undergraduate/home/areas-of-study/general-education-program/lasallian-core-traditions-program">http://www.smumn.edu/undergraduate/home/areas-of-study/general-education-program/lasallian-core-traditions-program</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>Preceptorial Program</td>
<td>One semester</td>
<td>Assist student transition. Fulfills part of their core requirement Content dependent on course title – Intro level courses Student success workshops.</td>
<td>Faculty advisor with peer mentors (help with transition to college)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sandiego.edu/usdcss/fye/">http://www.sandiego.edu/usdcss/fye/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola Marymount</td>
<td>First year Experience – seems more like Week of Welcome</td>
<td></td>
<td>New student orientation : 6 2-day mandatory orientation session, August orientation and WoW</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.lmu.edu/studentlife/studentaffairs/newstudents/fye/programs.htm">http://www.lmu.edu/studentlife/studentaffairs/newstudents/fye/programs.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pacific</td>
<td>No specific Freshmen program besides RLC and orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azusa Pacific</td>
<td>Strengths based approach –</td>
<td></td>
<td>First year seminar, advising. Leadership programs, mentoring Strength Quest as text. 4 class sessions – 1 1/2 hr to find strengths 30 min interview with advisor</td>
<td>Faculty and peer mentors</td>
<td><a href="http://www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy/download/first_year_strategy.pdf">www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy/download/first_year_strategy.pdf</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlebury College</td>
<td>First year seminar program</td>
<td>Discipline based</td>
<td>Seminar on topics based on instructor interest – foster critical thinking and intellectual development. Do not mention adjustment to college</td>
<td>faculty</td>
<td><a href="http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/fys/mission">http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/fys/mission</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occidental College</td>
<td>Academic seminar for core and Advising</td>
<td>Advising center takes care of adjustment to college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saint Mary’s FYAC Program is a hybrid FYS that combines elements of the Extended Orientation and Basic Skills programs. This seems appropriate to the members of the Taskforce given the demographics of our student body and our College Mission. It is also well within the norm of first year programming at similar schools. The Taskforce recommends that the Steering Committee, in consultation with the FYE Committee, continue to assess and adjust the proportions of the content.

IV. Items for Consideration from Inside SMC

**The Academic Advising Taskforce Report from Fall 2009 (AATF)**

As part of their research, the AATF distributed an online survey to all TUG faculty in April 2008 regarding academic advising. Although the full report is available as Appendix 3, the following material has been excerpted from those survey results. Please note that these results do NOT pertain specifically to first year advising, but rather to advising undergraduate students in general. Also, please note that 36 faculty members completed this survey, despite its being sent to all TUG faculty members.

Following is a ranked order of the perceived primary role of advising by faculty:

- Course selection for graduation: 72%
- Authorize course selections: 67%
- Course selection for Major: 66%
- Assist in understanding implications of course changes: 56%
- Recommend future courses: 55%
- Authorize “Adds” (of courses): 51%
- Review progress towards graduation: 50%

All of the other categories listed were selected by fewer than 50% of the respondents.

**Other points pulled from the survey by the AATF report include:**

- Approximately 50% of faculty reported wanting assistance from a professional staff member in providing general education information.
- No faculty wanted to be involved in discussions with students concerning extracurricular activities.
- No faculty wanted to be involved in discussions with students concerning social justice activities.
- A large percentage of faculty would like assistance from a professional staff member in discussing the Catholic, Lasallian, and Liberal Arts heritage of the college.

These data, from an admittedly tiny sample (36) and predating FYAC, which we believed has expanded faculty member’s perceptions of advising as a form of teaching, have limited utility.
They do, however, indicate that this sample of faculty members shares the students’ perception that their primary role is regarding course navigation at SMC.

The AATF urged the AARC to continue assessment of and devise a plan to address three primary issues: 1) Advising load equity among faculty and departments; 2) Faculty Advisor Training; 3) Overall effectiveness of the advising program. In all there were 9 final recommendation of the AATF; these have been achieved to varying degrees. One simply did not happen: “It is recommended that the AARC gather assessment data pertaining to the 2009-2010 First Year Advising Cohort program to be evaluated by the AARC in 2010-11.”

The Survey of Seniors from Fall 2012

In the fall of 2012 the Taskforce sent a short survey to the senior students. Those who entered as first year students in fall 2009 were part of the first class to go through the FYAC program. Although 105 students attempted to respond to the survey, 1 was politely disqualified when s/he answered no to the first question: “Were you in a First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC) your first year at Saint Mary’s?” Thus we can effectively treat this as a sample of 104 (which is approximately 1/6 of the students retained from the incoming first years of fall 2009).

What was the most important topic covered in your FYAC?
Selecting classes and making a 4-year plan 22
Time management 13
Adjustment skills 10
I don’t remember 6
Nothing was important 6
How to take notes effectively 5
Help selecting a major 4
Information about campus resources 4
Other things mentioned included: building community with other students; bonding with my advisor; how to write a paper; SMC’s Lasallian heritage; how to use the course catalog; how to make a resume; study abroad

What was the least important topic covered in your FYAC?
I don’t know 18
Many things were not important 8
Everything was important 5
Time management 5
How to study 5
Other things mentioned included: writing reflection papers; picking a major; going to San Francisco; which classes to take next; dealing with social adjustment issues; social justice issues and readings; discussing health, community service; hearing about campus resources

Are there other topics you would recommend being covered in FYAC?
Careers and internships 11
Help selecting a major for undecided students 6
Making a four-year plan 4
Get rid of FYAC 3
Other things mentioned: practical information like how to ride BART, how to get an on-campus job; what are the graduation requirements; how to handle roommates; personality/aptitude quiz; how to succeed in Seminar; how to use the library; requirements for majors; good nutrition; time management; diversity; campus resources; how to balance social life; study skills; the Lasallian tradition; stress management; campus procedures

Please share with us any other thoughts you may have regarding your personal FYAC experience.
Responses that emphasized the great personal relationship with advisor 13
Responses that emphasized how terrible the advisor was 9
Responses that encouraged eliminating the FYAC program 5
Responses that emphasized that it meets too often 3
Responses that emphasized the positive social interactions with peers 3
Other topics mentioned: do more on nutrition; FYAC helped student switch out of an inappropriate major; student wanted to switch sections mid-year but was not allowed; more coverage of diversity issues; suggestion to separate Honors program from FYAC and have Honors students mixed into other FYACs and Honors meet another way.

Students were asked to rate their FYAC from 5 (very useful) to 1 (not useful) in the areas listed below. 94 students replied to this question. In each case the two highest ratings of usefulness and the two lowest ratings of usefulness have been added for comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Highest Rating</th>
<th>Lowest Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition to college life</td>
<td>29 (4/5)</td>
<td>43 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking classes</td>
<td>39 (4/5)</td>
<td>32 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a major</td>
<td>24 (4/5)</td>
<td>50 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a 4-year plan</td>
<td>28 (4/5)</td>
<td>34 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about resources</td>
<td>37 (4/5)</td>
<td>35 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community at SMC</td>
<td>33 (4/5)</td>
<td>43 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming a relationship with a faculty member</td>
<td>45 (4/5)</td>
<td>37 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary
The data from this survey are consistent with the results of the surveys given to students while in FYAC. First, students are most appreciative of practical skills and advice around traditional advising topics (such as selecting classes, creating four year plans, and time management), and second, students place a high value on the personal relationship developed with a faculty member as an advisor. If this relationship is not a good one, or the student feels let down for whatever reason by the particular advisor, their view of the whole program is strongly colored.

The All-Faculty Survey of Fall 2012

The First Year Advising Taskforce prepared a survey, which was made available to the faculty by Survey Monkey. 139 members of the FYAC faculty responded to the survey, 122 of whom were UG faculty and 13 of whom primarily teach graduate courses.

A reading of the Faculty FYAC from Fall 2012 yields the following information:

Who are the responding faculty?
• Respondents were 61% SOLA, 12% SEBA, 22% SOS, and 5% KSOE.
• 62% tenured, 14% tenure-track, 13% adjunct, 11% lecturer.

**What should be the content of “first year faculty advising”?**

• More than 90% of respondents believe that “course selection” should be part of faculty advising; another “definitely include” item would be Core Curriculum explanations (86%), and probably also academic skills support (71%) and selecting a major (72%). The majority of respondents would also include four-year course planning (60.6%). Fewer than half would include SMC values, “joining a community issues,” and personal adjustment issues.
• This item was phrased to emphasize the faculty role; therefore many respondents commented that some of these items should certainly be done somewhere, just not necessarily with a member of the faculty
• 92% of the respondents believed that it was at least “somewhat important” that first year advising be organized by academic discipline, or at least by school; comments were made about finding a mentor early
• **Who should deliver what content?** Respondents were asked about certain content areas and who should deliver that content, choosing between “faculty advisor” and “professional advisor,” and “other.”
  o Desirable content areas that the majority of respondents believed should be delivered by a member of the faculty, ordered by descending degree of unanimity among respondents:
    1. Course selection
    2. Major selection
    3. Understanding the core curriculum
    4. Graduation requirements
    5. SMC writing standards, especially paper writing
  o Desirable content areas that the majority of respondents believed should be delivered by a professional advisor, ordered in the same way as the above:
    1. Time management

---

1 The label “Professional Advisor” refers to individuals who have been trained as college academic advisors and are hired expressly for this purpose. Currently, SMC has three such individuals in the Academic Advising Center.
2 A representative comment, for flavor: “I cannot reiterate enough how much I want all of these non-academic issues out of my hair. I will send the students to the correct people, but don’t [sic] make ME sit through these dang workshops.”
2. Financial literacy (this item received a very high “other” vote, with commenters suggesting that financially competent faculty be freed up to deliver this content to all first year students)

3. Adjustment to college life

4. Campus resources (tutoring, counseling)

5. Note taking

6. The management of GaelXpress

7. Study abroad opportunities

8. Study skills

• One content area produced so high an “other” vote that no majority was reached: “SMC Mission,” which was broadly thought to be best dealt with by Mission and Ministry.

72% of respondents answered “no” when asked whether faculty advisors should attend campus events in a structured way with their advisees. 80% would not support a mandate for such attendance.

Did you like Greek Thought Cohort Advising better?

About half the respondents answered this question. Responses were all over the place, as is to be expected.

• Some respondents strongly preferred the Greek Thought model, because they got to know the students better in the context of a “real” class.

• Many respondents did like getting to know the students better, but strongly disliked the combination of the advising relationship with a grading relationship in the context of a class.

• Some liked the encouragement to take students to off-campus events, some hated it.

Faculty formation in FYAC

• Only 9% of respondents do not support more faculty formation for first year advising, though 58% of respondents believe that such formation should be voluntary.

Potential new steps in First Year Advising—what possibilities should we consider? Ordered by strength of preference

• 88% might or would consider allowing more flexibility in the scheduling of meeting times.

• 87% might or would consider encouraging certain faculty to become first year advising “specialists,” while others do more advising in the majors, or other forms of service.
• 85% might or would consider the development of more advisor training and support sessions.
• 82% might or would consider having a more advanced student attached to cohorts as peer advisors.
• 74% might or would consider making cohorts smaller than 15 students.
• 73% would consider continuing FYAC as currently constituted.
• 69% might or would consider a more “common” meeting schedule; 31% would not.
• 68% would not consider making FYAC graded instead of pass/fail.
• 68% would not consider distributing students randomly rather than by interest.
• 67% might or would consider standardizing the advising curriculum with pre-prepared modules.
• 67% believe that we should “maybe” or “absolutely” consider not having advising cohorts at all, and instead giving some faculty a course load of first-year advisees with whom to meet one-on-one.
• 65% reject the idea of making cohorts larger than 15 students.
• 65% reject the idea of a 1.0 credit course with “an introduction to a School (SOLA, SEBA, SOS).”
• 65% might or would consider professional advisors teaching the cohorts.
• 61% would not consider moving to a 1.0 credit course with emphasis on study skills and transition.
• 60% might or would consider making FYAC a .25 Academic course, rather than Activities.
• 56% would not consider having cohorts without attached ¼ credit; the rest might or would consider that.
• 56% reject the idea of making faculty participation in the program mandatory and rotating.
• 56% might or would consider shortening the meeting time, while 44% would not.
• 53% reject the idea of expanding to a linked set of courses, one 1.0 and one .25, where certain first-year courses would also have an advising component linked (In other words, your Introduction to Sociology (for example) students would be your advisees and you would meet one additional hour per week (or some other combination) to address advising issues.) 10% would “definitely” consider such an expansion, with the rest in the middle.
• 50% of the respondents would not consider Student Life staff for teaching the cohorts.
• 50% of the respondents “absolutely” believe we should not consider meeting every week in the fall, and never in the spring; most of the other half “might” consider it.
• 47% might or would consider moving to a 1.0 credit course that would have intro subject matter for some course plus transition content (e.g., Intro to Archaeology with transition/study skills mixed in); 53% would not consider such a move.

The next question causes the survey to branch: respondents are asked whether they had taught in FYAC or not. If “no,” they are asked one more question, about why they haven’t participated; if “yes,” then the survey continues. Thus, keep in mind that after the question “what factors decided you against participating in FYAC?”, the survey is being completed by instructors who HAVE taught in the program.

Have you taught in the FYAC program?

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, but I wanted to</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and I am glad</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but I didn’t want to</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, and I was glad to</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you haven’t taught in FYAC, what factors weighed in your decision?

• 74% of respondents’ top reason for non-participation was feeling overextended in other areas, such as teaching, service and scholarship.

• Other factors adduced by more than 25% of faculty were a prior overabundance of advisees, feeling that FYAC did not represent an effective use of their time and skills, and feeling that the compensation was inadequate. Six respondents indicated that an actual objection to the FYAC program weighed in their decision.

Faculty who had participated—perceptions and history

• Instructors who have taught FYAC relate that when it works, they enjoy and think worthwhile the small group dynamic, the ability to have major interest groups together, and the possibility of finding a mentor in a member of the faculty other than someone who will be giving you a grade at the end of the semester.

• Instructors who have taught FYAC relate that when it doesn’t work, it “feels like high school.” Some instructors perceive boredom among their students. Some also worry that the instructor’s particular expertise is missing in the FYAC curriculum.
• Of the respondents, 11% were in their first year, 28% in their second, 35% in their third, 14% in their fourth, and 12% starting a fifth year. More than half the respondents skipped this question, however.

• 23 of the respondents self-identified as instructors of affinity-group FYACs, such as SEBA, High Potential, Honors, or Champ’s Life. Their comments were broadly more positive than the general instructor population.

• Faculty were invited to comment generally on the FYAC program as it currently exists. Some representative samples:

  1. I think there needs to be more structure to the curriculum. It is hard for a new faculty to know what needs to taught. Also, having more structure will enable students to recognize its importance.

  2. There needs to be more flexibility in the design of the program. Perhaps different majors need the ability to design a program that best meets their needs?

  3. I think it works pretty well as it exists. But it is hard to find enough people to cover our FYAC sections. It might be better if it is taught by professional advisers who are in contact with faculty advisers. Right now we use those people in other areas to teach workshops anyway. It might be more efficient.

  4. It's too much. I think students should meet with advisors regularly as individuals or in small groups, and resources should be available to students and instructors. But the current plan treats our students as children.

  5. A lot of good intentions and a lot of energy going into a sieve

  6. I would suggest faculty time be spent primarily on academic advising and much less on other adjustment to college topics.

    More questions on potentialities, FYAC or not

• 76% of respondents believe we should have some form of first-year adjustment or orientation, whether it’s FYAC or something else.

• 75% of respondents believe first-year advising should be organized by major or discipline.

• Faculty are evenly divided on whether the content should or should not be standardized across campus (see comments 1 and 2 in the preceding section), and also evenly divided on whether it should be standardized by school. 53% believe the content should be up to the instructor, while 47% don’t.
• 75% of respondents believe the instructor of the class, whatever it is, should be the faculty advisor.

**What are the most important outcomes for FYAC or another first-year advising model?**

• 93%, increase retention into sophomore year
• 90%, increase 4-year graduation rate
• 88%, students’ satisfaction
• 73%, faculty satisfaction
• 58%, increase GPA
• 30%, increase declaration of major by end of freshman year

**Faculty compensation**

• 74% of faculty report that compensation would be a “significant” or “primary” consideration concerning their future participation in a FYAC-like program at SMC.
• By way of compensation, 60% of faculty would prefer credit toward their teaching load; 40% would prefer a monetary stipend.

**Alternatives ranking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>35%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>45%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. First year advisees are divided amongst faculty members (in groups of 10-15) according to disciplinary interest with no particular supportive structure. They meet during Weekend of Welcome as a group, but otherwise it is up to the faculty advisor to be sure each student gets what he or she needs over the course of the year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.8% (17)</td>
<td>27.9% (24)</td>
<td>26.7% (23)</td>
<td>25.6% (22)</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Someone other than a faculty member teaches the students an “adjustment” to college class, but faculty members are paired with sections as academic advisors, primarily meeting with the students one-on-one.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
<td>31.4% (27)</td>
<td>19.8% (17)</td>
<td>12.8% (11)</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. A version of the existing FYAC program continues as a .25 credit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41.9% (36)</td>
<td>27.9% (24)</td>
<td>22.1% (19)</td>
<td>8.1% (7)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activities class and a faculty governing board is created to supervise and coordinate content. Groups of 15 students are taught primarily by faculty members with support from various offices on campus through workshops.

D. Groups of faculty members (perhaps one from each school) are affiliated with sections of residence halls as academic advisors in a loose version of a living-learning community.

| 2.3% (2) | 12.8% (11) | 31.4% (27) | 53.5% (46) | 3.36 | 86 |

V. Taskforce Conclusions

Weaknesses of Existing Program
The weaknesses of greatest concern to the Taskforce include:

- There was no clear mandate from the faculty for the original FYAC Program. It was not subject to community-wide discussion at its inception (or even extended UEPC or Senate discussion), and the AARC did not follow through with the AATF’s request that they review, assess, and recommend a future for the program in a timely fashion.

- The implementation of the program is inconsistent. Some of these inconsistencies are due to individual faculty members’ decisions, such as those who deliberately do not meet the required number of times or enforce attendance. Some are due to the lack of a faculty-driven academic home for the program (see below). Still others are most visible at the level of the School, for example the clear departure of SEBA sections from the stated maximum of 15 students per section (and in theory, advisor).

- The program is in dire need of a faculty-driven academic home. At the moment there is no clear authority over the curriculum, nor members of the faculty responsible for its on-going development and assessment.

- Both students and faculty members find that the current structure requires too many group meetings, thus leading to a sense of “busy-work” and “doing-time” after awhile.

- Many students and faculty members need to make use of the MF 12:40 class timeslot for at least one of the two semesters of the year.

- Some faculty members feel that they are being asked to present material for which they do not have an appropriate background. Some responded to this by wanting more training, others by wanting better staff–led workshops for these topics and still others by wanting those topics stricken from the curriculum.

29
• Faculty members feel under-compensated for their participation in this program and it can be difficult to recruit people to serve as advisors for this reason. The current system of recruitment and compensation would appear to be unsustainable.

• There remain many equity issues with regards to academic advising at SMC (across both departments and individuals) and FYAC shows those tensions even more clearly than other aspects of the system.

• There needs to be greater communication and coordination with the First Year Experience Committee and the faculty as a whole to create a sustainable, coherent experience for first year students.

Strengths of Existing Program
The strengths that were most evident to the Taskforce include:

• Students self-report at extremely high levels that they are successfully meeting the learning goals as evidenced by the YFCY survey data.

• Faculty members who have taught in the program are generally pleased with it and report significant rates of enthusiasm to return and teach again. This is born out by the number of returning faculty shown in Table 3.

• The program successfully eliminated the issues identified by the 2008-2009 faculty advisors of being unable to find their advisees to speak to them, let alone get them to the relevant resources.

• The program successfully eliminated the issues identified by the 2008-2009 student advisees of not being sure who their advisor was or why they would need or want to talk to him/her.

• FYAC regularly accomplishes one of the most important goals of the faculty and students at SMC: it puts them in regular, sustained contact. Students and faculty members both cited the one-on-one relationships built through the structure of FYAC as valuable.

• The program provides an important academic lynchpin in the First Year Experience, which is otherwise dominated by extra- and co-curricular programming.

• The data show that since FYAC was instituted, first year student retention rates have risen (FYAC is more than likely not the sole, nor perhaps even the most significant cause, but the correlation is there). [Appendix 5]

• The data show that since FYAC was instituted, first year students are slightly less likely to be placed on academic probation (FYAC is more than likely not the sole, nor perhaps even the most significant cause, but the correlation is there). [Appendix 5]
• With Seminar 1 in the spring semester, FYAC provides the first year students with a common experience in the fall semester. There is much potential to develop this aspect of the program.

VI. The Models the First Year Advising Taskforce Puts Forward for Consideration

Critical Points for Development

The Taskforce feels that no matter which of the two models proposed here is chosen, there are some factors that must be addressed around first year advising:

There needs to be a **faculty steering committee** of some kind that is responsible for content and assessment of first year advising in an on-going fashion. Although we recognize that there is a fear of the proliferation of committees and that many of our colleagues are stretched to the breaking point, this is a fairly simple choice: someone has to develop and steer the curriculum and set expectations for first year advising. If the faculty does not do it, someone else will do it, either Deans or staff members from New Students and Family Programs and Academic Advising and Achievement. Since our data suggest that faculty members want to continue doing first year advising, it is in their best interest to retain control of the program. If the Senate elects not to authorize a Steering Committee, there will be consequences that the Taskforce does not recommend exploring.

There needs to be a **faculty member who coordinates, trains, and supports faculty advisors** in conjunction with the Dean of Academic Advising and Student Achievement. All of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) research indicates that faculty members are best trained and developed by other faculty members. Additionally, this faculty member and the proposed Steering Committee will serve as crucial connections between the faculty, FYE, and the Office of Academic Advising and Achievement. The flow of information and exchange of ideas must be in both directions.

There needs to be a **forum for greater communication and coordination** between the efforts of first year advising/academic support and first year student life/co- & extra-curricular support to form a coherent First Year Experience. This is potentially the FYE Committee, but Academic Affairs needs a stronger presence in the planning stages and goal setting of FYE.

There needs to be **appropriate compensation and institutional support for faculty members** who participate and succeed in this program. We have proposed two different forms of compensation below. For the model that does not carry academic credit, we suggest a monetary stipend. For the model that carries academic credit, we suggest compensation in the form of accumulated credits to a course release.

It was clear to the Taskforce that many opportunities for development of this program exist, particularly in the areas of supporting with the Core Curriculum and the First Year Experience,
however, there need to be both adequate resources and adequate authority provided to the appropriate bodies to allow such collaboration to occur.

Models 1 & 2
The Taskforce is well aware that neither of these models is completely elaborated down to the details of implementation. As a group, we believe that with appropriate institutional support and carefully developed infrastructure either model could succeed. As individuals, some of us have strong preferences for one model over the other for a variety of reasons. We have tried to present enough data in the preceding pages to enable members of the Senate and faculty at-large to read it and come to a decision of their own.

Again, we are aware that the models below remain rough outlines of a general direction first year advising could proceed. We are assuming that the First Year Advising Steering Committee called for in the proposal will be given the charge of developing the next, more detailed versions of the models. These will include specific learning outcomes, specific implementation models, specific advisor compensation programs, etc.. During 2013-2014, those more detailed models will be submitted for consideration to the AARC and the UEPC (and subsequently, the Senate) as appropriate.

Model 1
Members of the Taskforce were divided over whether the .25 credit currently associated with FYAC is necessary as an incentive and accountability factor for effective first year advising. As a result, we have presented one model that removes the credit associated with first year advising, and sets up a system where the primary “pressure points” for accountability and participation would be registration for courses. Students who failed to adequately participate in the advising program would not be allowed to register for January Term or the Spring Term until they made contact with their advisors and satisfied certain requirements.

In Model 1, advising will be delivered without course credit associated with it. Each faculty member will be assigned no more than 15 students. The cohort will be formed on the basis of major area of interest for the students.

In addition to a faculty member, an upper class student will be assigned to each cohort as a peer mentor. The peer mentor will serve as additional resource to help the first year students with their adjustment to college.

Curriculum:

The faculty member will be responsible for the academic advising component of the FYAC and will meet with the students in small groups or individually multiple times during the year. In this model, the faculty member will meet with their cohort twice during the Weekend of Welcome and once or twice throughout the year, most likely during Community Time. Most of the faculty meetings with the students will be individual meetings. The faculty advisor will be required to meet with the individual students at least four times during the Fall Semester (after 2-3 weeks of fall semester,
after midterm grades, before Jan term courses and before Spring registration). In addition, the faculty member will meet with the students at least twice in the Spring semester (approval for Fall registration and to create the four-year plan). These meetings will enable the faculty member to know the students and help the students with adjustment to college.

In addition to these meetings with their faculty advisors, students will be required to attend seminar/workshops on topics relating to the college mission, academic support, adjustment to college and community resources. Each student will be required to attend at least 2 workshops/events/seminars in each category and write a short reflection about the session in the form of an electronic portfolio. The students will maintain this portfolio and submit it periodically to the faculty advisor, who will read and respond to the student regarding its content. The attendance of a minimum number of events/seminars/workshops will be required prior to approval for course registration.

Please note that in this model, students are being asked to access the FYE material (library orientation, study skills workshops, orientation to the Career Development Center, etc.) on their own time. It acknowledges that these areas of knowledge are important for first year students, but removes the faculty advisor from their delivery, allowing him/her to focus on the individual relationship with the student and a core set of academic issues. Through the reflective portfolio the faculty advisor monitors and is able to converse with the student on broader FYE issues. If this is combined with the use of early warning and communication advising software, for example, faculty advisors would know which students were not attending FYE programming and with the assistance of a peer mentor and other support staff on campus could mobilize an appropriate intervention. This model would allow for greater standardization of certain aspects of the program (through the programming required of students outside of the relationship with the faculty-advisor), but would also still leave a great deal of room for the personality and the priorities of individual faculty members, departments, and schools to be expressed. Student assignment length and work expectations would be standardized across sections, although there would be some flexibility in the exact configuration of the assignments.

This model relies significantly on increased co-ordination and cooperation with the FYE Committee in terms of developing the overall experiential curriculum. As well as a successful and robust peer mentor program. Faculty advisors would be in a position to converse with students regarding the total FYE, but would be responsible primarily for a narrow range of academic advising topics and tasks.

**Faculty Development and Compensation:**

In this model, the faculty member will be spending a substantial amount of time in individual meetings with the students. The structure and topics of the portfolio inclusions will be determined by the Steering Committee in conjunction with the FYE and Dean of Academic Advising (see below). The faculty advisor will need to coordinate with the peer mentor, whose job would be to explain portfolio assignments, provide peer encouragement, and support the faculty advisor in his/her efforts to reach out to advisees. Faculty advisors would need development around assessing experiential learning assignments and how to work with a student-peer facilitator, as well as, ongoing support in outreach to their advisees. Therefore, this model proposes a stipend of $3000 for the faculty members. We also suggest that there be a $500 budget for faculty members to engage in activities such as lunch with advisees at Oliver Hall, or coffee at Café Louis, etc.. Faculty advisors
would be expected to have written records of meetings with students as individuals and groups, along with written assessments of portfolio submissions. It is considered to be a high priority that ranked faculty be recruited to advise in this program, however we are aware that given the College’s current faculty size, this may not be possible.\(^3\)

**Model 2**

This model is a modification of the current FYAC, with a decrease in the number of group meetings and increase in individual meeting times. It would take the model currently approved for 2013-2014 and make a variation of it the basis for the permanent model.

In Model 2, FYAC will be a 0.25 credit course that is taken over the course of the first year, as is the current FYAC. Each faculty member will be assigned no more than 15 students in their cohort. The cohort will be organized based on major area of interest for the students.

**Curriculum:**

In this model, the faculty advisor will meet with their cohort at least 9-10 times during the year.\(^4\) All of the cohorts will meet twice during the Weekend of Welcome and then approximately 8 more times in the Fall. Some of the session topics will be mandatory for every FYAC. For example, these would likely include 1 session on College Mission, 2 sessions on the Core Curriculum importance and requirements for graduation, 1 session on the Academic Honor Code, 1 session on the Catalog and GaelXpress, etc. In addition, faculty advisors can develop and present school/major specific content in the remaining 4-5 sessions. These could include library training for major related topics, reading and writing in the discipline, mock seminar, other school specific resources, resume and career related topics. Cohorts will then meet twice in the Spring.

In addition to cohort meetings, the faculty advisor will have individual meetings with the students at least 4 times during the year (after midterm grades, prior to Spring and Fall registration and to make

---

\(^3\) The Taskforce is very mindful of the fact that one of the reasons the Collegiate Seminar Greek Thought Cohort Program did not thrive was that ranked faculty were self-selecting out of the responsibility. If we are going to say that first year advising is an important program, that first year students are among our most vulnerable populations, and that SMC is about relational teaching/learning, we have to be able and willing to create a program that will attract and retrain our ranked professors. We are well aware that taken as individuals, there are many people who do not measure up to the stereotype of this divide – there are wonderful professors/advisors amongst our un-ranked faculty and at least a few less than wonderful professors/advisors amongst those who are ranked.

\(^4\) Summary of personal communication from the Chair of the UEPC 2013 regarding course contact hours: Our current policy is to adhere to the Carnegie standard of 2250 minutes of work for one Carnegie unit. SMC units are 3.5 Carnegie units so one SMC unit is 7875 minutes, and 0.25 SMC units is 1967 minutes or 33 hours. These hours are the total time spent by the student, not just time in class. Depending on the type of class there will be more or less time spent in the classroom. Thus, a 0.25 unit class that requires little time outside of class should meet for the full 33 hours. In contrast, a lecture class is commonly assumed to require two or three hours of work outside of class for every hour in class, and so a lecture 0.25 unit class might meet for only 11 hours. **With this in mind, the Steering Committee would work out the optimal ratio of meetings and outside assignments such that most of the group meeting time is spent in the fall semester (when both research and faculty surveys indicate students need them most in a group) and most of the individual time is spent in the spring (when both research and faculty surveys indicate students need individualized advising).**
a four-year academic plan), with those in the spring being longer and more substantially dedicated to long range planning.

In addition to attending the group meetings, during the spring semester students will be expected to attend a variety of relevant FYE programming. The students will use a portfolio or electronic submission system to communicate with their advisors regarding reflection on these learning experiences. Student assignment length and work expectations would be standardized across sections, although there would be some flexibility in the exact configuration of the assignments.

Please note that in this model, students are being asked to access only the spring FYE material focused on major exploration and academic planning, on their own time. Through the reflective portfolio begun in the fall, but substantially undertaken in the spring, the faculty advisor monitors and is able to converse with the student on broader FYE issues. This model would allow for greater standardization of certain aspects of the program, but would also still leave a great deal of room for the personality and the priorities of individual faculty members, departments, and schools to be expressed.

**Faculty Development and Compensation**

In this model, the faculty member will be leading 10-12 cohort sessions and attending some of the workshops in addition to the substantial individual meetings. The structure and topics of the portfolio inclusions will be determined by the Steering Committee in conjunction with the FYE and Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement (see below). Faculty advisors would need development around the standardized portions of the course, how to assess experiential learning assignments, and on-going support in outreach to their advisees for the spring semester. Faculty members would be compensated by a 1 credit course release (to be coordinated with Department Chairs and School Deans) after teaching 3 FYAC courses. This system of compensation requires ranked faculty be the advisors/instructors of this class, and thus if non-ranked faculty were needed to teach it, there would need to be an alternative for them. We suggest that $300 per section also be available for class use.

**Thinking About Costs for Model 1 and Model 2**

CAVEAT: Please note that these rough budget outlines are provided for gross comparison purposes only. They are not meant to be actual budget proposals, but to generally show comparative costs and “where the money would go” in each of the models.

**Current FYAC Costs**

- Yearly stipend to faculty advisors ($1500 X 50 = $75,000) +/- 5 faculty or so
- The FYAC Liaison is provided two course releases and a summer stipend (approximately $28,000)
- A variety of faculty development initiatives with lunches, etc. (approximately $2,000)
- Books for faculty members, photocopying, resources (approximately $2,000)
- The Assistant to the Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement provides administrative support along with the student employees in that office.

---

5 The Taskforce was undecided on how to handle advisors who do not meet the three-year commitment (can be non-sequential years). Should there be compensation along the way? Asking for a three-year commitment benefits faculty advisors who then become eligible for this significant compensation (time earned for time spent) and benefits the program and students through having a committed and experienced faculty advisor.
The High Potential, Honors and SEBA Programs have different costs associated with them depending on the programming, materials and staffing from year to year.

*During the first year of the FYAC Program, the textbooks were purchased for all of the incoming class ($35 X 650 = $23,625) in addition to the de la Salle booklets and binders/etc. (approximately $6,000)

Total (without consideration of HP, Honors, etc.) = approximately $136,625

The current model, while clearly costing less than the ones currently proposed, is not sustainable. Faculty members are very displeased by the compensation, which is less than .25 of their pay per course, and significantly less than .33 of their pay per course, which is the minimum compensation for teaching any other .25 classes. The stipend is not a motivation to participate at all, as evidenced by the comments in the faculty survey, and as is borne out anecdotally by the experience of recruiting advisors to participate each year. Also, by treating the course as a .25, but not “really” a .25, the College sends the message to the faculty that EDUC-70 is not a “real course.” This perception is also passed to the students.

**Model 1**
Yearly stipend to faculty advisors ($3500 X 50 = $175,000) +/- 5 faculty members or so
The FYAC Liaison is provided two course releases and a summer stipend (approximately $28,000)
A variety of faculty development initiatives with lunches, etc. (approximately $5,000)
Books for faculty members, photocopying, resources (approximately $2000)
Development of a Peer Mentor Program ($10,000 to $30,000 or more, depending on whether students receive a stipend, go on a weekend retreat, etc.)
Class monies for food, events, etc. (50 X $500 = $25,000)
The Assistant to the Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement provides administrative support along with the student employees in that office.
The High Potential, Honors (and possibly still SEBA) Programs have different costs associated with them depending on the programming, materials and staffing from year to year.

Total (without consideration of HP, Honors, etc.) = approximately $245,000 to $265,000

The Taskforce believes that $3500 is an appropriate stipend for the amount of work faculty would be doing for this program. It might, in fact, still be low. The lack of formal structure, while reflecting what some advisors wanted very much, requires significant initiative and planning on the part of a faculty member to do well. A peer mentor, while a tremendous asset and an addition that most faculty members were very interested in, takes time to coordinate and provides the need for another level of organization and communication. Reaching out individually to students, while very satisfying to both faculty members and students, is intensive in both time and energy.

**Model 2**
Assuming approx. 1/3rd of faculty advisors take a course release per year (17 X $11,000 = $187,000)
The FYAC Liaison is provided two course releases and a summer stipend (approximately $28,000)
A variety of faculty development initiatives with lunches, etc. (approximately $5,000)
Books for faculty members, photocopying, resources (approximately $2,000)
Class monies for food, events, etc. (50 X $300 = $15,000)
The Assistant to the Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement provides administrative support along with the student employees in that office.
The High Potential, Honors (and possibly still SEBA) Programs have different costs associated with them depending on the programming, materials and staffing from year to year.

Total (without consideration of HP, Honors, etc.) = approximately $237,000

In this model, the existing program is bolstered to become sustainable with the faculty advisors’ compensation being more similar to that of another kind of .25 course load. It also explicitly allocates funds to support extra- and co-curricular programming that some faculty advisors have been asking for in the existing program, and increases the faculty development funds available to provide additional programming support to the advisors. It should be noted once again, that a peer mentor program could be added to this model as well, but it would significantly raise the cost and the administrative overhead.
CAVEAT: Please note that these rough budget outlines are provided for gross comparison purposes only. They are not meant to be actual budget proposals, but to generally show comparative costs and “where the money would go” in each of the models.

VII. Proposed Path Forward
The Taskforce asks that the Senate take three votes on this proposal.

1) That a First Year Advising Steering Committee be formed and charged with a) developing the first year advising curriculum; b) creating standards and expectations for faculty members involved in first year advising; c) assessing and recommending changes to the first year advising program on an on-going basis. It is suggested that this Committee be composed of four members plus a chair (all to be ranked faculty members) who will be selected by the Senate from a pool of nominees (recruited through a general call for nomination, including self-nominees). These Committee members must have participated in the program during the year preceding their nomination and will serve for a two-year term, subject to possible reappointment. The Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement will work in close consultation with this Steering Committee, serving as an ex-officio member. The chair will be the faculty member holding the first year advising coordinator/liaison position described below.

2) That a recommendation be made to the Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement, the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Academics, and the Provost, that a position be created for a faculty coordinator of first year advising. Under whatever title is deemed appropriate, this person will liaise with the Steering Committee, the FYE Committee, the Dean of Academic Advising (and his Directors as appropriate), and the AARC (the Senate Committee charged with oversight of academic advising). This person will serve as the chair of the Steering Committee and provide appropriate training and support for the faculty members participating in first year advising, in coordination with the Office of the Dean of Academic Advising. The individual will need to have a reassigned course time for the fall semester and one for the spring semester (2 total), as well as a summer stipend for developing curriculum and, in Model 1 – working with Peer Mentors, or in Model 2 – helping to get first year students into sections at Orientation, etc. We suggest that candidates be asked to apply/nominate from the general community of tenured faculty, with the final appointment being made by the Dean of Academic Advising and the VPUA.

3) That one of the two models described above be selected as the permanent model for First Year Advising for SMC. The Steering Committee will then be tasked with developing the model more fully with a comprehensive plan for implementation to be brought back to the Senate for review during 2013-2014 (after passing through the appropriate sub-committees, e.g., AARC).

VIII. Appendices
Appendix 1
Date: April 6, 2012
To: Tomas Gomez, Chair, Academic Senate
From: Dave Gentry-Akin, Chair, Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee
Re: First Year Advising

At the March 5, 2012 meeting of the Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee, Professors Cynthia Van Gilder and Jim Sauerberg presented a plan for the approval of the current FYAC first year advising structure and the accompanying .25 credit course.

After extensive discussion, it is the position of the UEPC that this structure may not be the optimal structure for First Year Advising at the College. Further, there are many unanswered questions about the FYAC course itself. The curriculum for the course, taught experimentally in recent years but for which permanent approval is now being sought, is unclear. Faculty responsibility for oversight and development of the course is unclear.

In a vote of 8 for/0 against/ and 2 abstaining, the UEPC voted via email ballot to send the following resolution to the Academic Senate for its discussion and approval:

1) The current FYAC program should continue to be offered as an experimental course through academic year 2012-2013 and all first year students should be required to enroll in it.

2) The Academic Senate should immediately constitute a Task Force that will serve for no longer than eighteen (18) months. Its charge is to review the history of discussions around the appropriate design of First Year Advising at Saint Mary's College, with particular attention to the report of the Academic Advising Task Force (BOS Section 1.5), and other relevant documentation. Further, the Task Force will review research about national trends in Academic Advising that has already been gathered and discussed in other bodies. Because most of this work has already been done, the work of this particular Task Force is primarily to review the work that has been and make recommendations for the implementation of a new model. No later than November 2012, the Task Force is to recommend to the Academic Senate for its adoption the model for First Year Advising that it considers to be optimal for the culture of Saint Mary's College, as well as appropriate means for sustaining the model (e.g., Is there to be a required course in conjunction with First Year Advising? If so, where should such a course be housed? How should faculty participation be elicited and encouraged? How should faculty oversight of First Year Advising be structured and maintained?)

3) Because of her level of expertise and commitment, it is our recommendation that Professor Cynthia Van Gilder should be named chair of this Task Force. Further, the Task force should be made up of representatives from the following categories:

1) Senator
2) AARC member
3) CCC member
4) UEPC member
5 & 6) two faculty who have taught in the FYAC program a minimum of two times.

Invitations to serve on the Task Force will be based on: 1) representation of all three undergraduate schools, 2) interest and experience in first year advising. The chair of the Task Force will seek representatives from the various committees listed above in consultation with the chairs of each committee. In the case of the two members who qualify based on a minimum of two years of FYAC experience, volunteers will be called for, and the selection made by the chair of the task force, in accordance with the criteria listed above. The Dean of Academic Advising will be invited to consult with the Task Force at appropriate periodic intervals.
Appendix 2
UEPC – FYAC Proposal Supplement 1

Please note that this proposal calls for the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) to oversee development of the EDUC-70, or First Year Advising Cohort (FYAC) curriculum, within the guidelines set by the learning goals in the proposal.

With a required 25 contact hours, cohort groups will meet with their groups for 17 (1.5 hour sessions) over the course of the fall and spring semesters. Specific weeks will be recommended, but faculty will make the final selection of meeting dates based on CCC guidelines.

Fall Semester
The curriculum during the fall semester will focus on two areas 1) adjustment to college life and academics; and 2) introduction to Saint Mary's College, including the Core Curriculum.

1. Weekend of Welcome Meeting
2. Meeting
3. Meeting
4. Meeting
5. Meeting
6. Meeting
7. Meeting
8. Meeting
9. Meeting
10. Meeting

Spring Semester
The curriculum during the spring semester will focus on two areas 1) exploring and selecting a major; and 2) long range academic planning.

11. Meeting
12. Meeting
13. Meeting
14. Meeting
15. Meeting
16. Meeting
17. Meeting

The Core Curriculum Committee (via the Habits of Mind Working Group) will develop resources to support faculty instructors. Each faculty member will set his or her own syllabus, consisting of a combination of 1) required units created by the CCC; 2) support workshops provided by various on-campus offices; and 3) class sessions of the faculty member’s choosing.

Please find below a sample course structure:

Fall Semester
1. WoW - Intro. to FYAC, drop/add, distribution of syllabus, basic tips for starting college
2. Community building/introductions, college classroom etiquette, basic skills
3. Workshop: Introduction to the Library, sign up for individual appointments
4. Campus resources, general education requirements, report on student involvement fair
5. Unit on Habits of Mind, Jan Term registration
7. Preparing for midterms, academic honor code, GaelXpress
8. Unit on Pathways to Knowledge, sign up for advising for spring registration
9. Workshop: Health Education
10. Surviving finals, what to expect during Jan Term

Spring Semester
11. Welcome back, schedule for spring, review of graduation requirements, SMC catalog skills
12. Unit on Engaging the World, sign up for individual appointments
13. Workshop: "How do I get from here to there?" Intro. to the Career Development Center
14. Unit on Selecting a Major at SMC
15. Workshop: Study Abroad, sign up for advising for fall registration
16. Report on major selection, creating a four year plan, summer school
17. Farewell party, advice for sophomore year

UEPC – FYAC Proposal Supplement 3

Saint Mary’s College of CA - First Year Advising Cohorts
Spring 2012
Exploring Major Choices with First Year Students:
A Resource Guide for FYAC Faculty

Table of Contents
I. Activities For You and Your FYAC as a Group
   MyRoad
   Career Development Exploration Workshop
   Upper Division Student Panel
   “Taking Stock”

II. Resources to Work One-on-One with Students
    Academic Advising Center Choosing a Major Workshops
    Continuing the MyRoad Conversation
    Continuing the “Taking Stock” Conversation

III. Support Services on Campus
    Career Development Center One-on-One
    Advising Center Coordinators One-on-One

IV. Putting the Pieces Together
    Suggested Timeline
See the Big Picture
"The Relationship Between College and Work," D. Asher

V. Exploring the Larger Context of First Year Students and Major Choice
Statistics for Declared Majors at Saint Mary's College
"The Targeted Advising Model for Undecided Students," by P. Cate
"Using the Transformative," by K. Kincanon
"Undecided/Exploratory Students and Persistence," D. Spright

VI. Appendix
(A1) "Student Handout: Setting Up Your MyRoad Account"
(A2) MyRoad Exploration Results
(A3) Selecting a College Major Table of Contents
(A4) "Taking Stock"
(A5) Academic Advising Center Workshop Sample (available Spring 2012)
(A6) MyRoad Conversation Starters for FYAC Faculty at SMC
(A7) "Task Analysis Worksheet"
(A8) Statistics from SMC Regarding Major Declaration and Changing
(A9) "How to Read Your Academic Evaluation"
(A10) Career Development Center Four-Year Plan
(A11) "Do Majors Really Matter?" by S. Welz
REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISING TASKFORCE

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS STRATEGIC PLAN
BOS SECTION 1.5

PRESENTED TO:
THE ADMISSIONS AND ACADEMIC REGULATIONS COMMITTEE (AARC)

FOR SUBMITAL TO:
THE PROVOST, and
THE STRATEGIC PLAN ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

September 8, 2009

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Lynyonne Cotton, Psychology (for the AARC)
Larisa Genin, Business Administration
Rosemary Graham, English (for the AARC)
Christa Kell, Nursing (Co-Chair)
Annalee Lamoreaux, Education (Past Chair)
Frances Sweeney, Vice Provost (BOS 1.5 Liaison)
Russ Tiborrii, Dean Academic Advising & Achievement (BOS 1.5 Liaison)
Ed Tywoniak, Communication (Co-Chair)
Cynthia Van Gilder, Anthropology
Roy Wensley, Physics (for the CCTF)
Paul Zarnothe, Psychology (for the UEPC)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I  History of the Academic Advising Task Force  p. 2
II Summary of Data  p. 7
III Findings and Recommendations  p. 11
IV Summary of Recommendations  p. 15
V Concluding Comments  p. 16
Appendix A: Sample Draft of Faculty Academic Advising Survey  p. 17
I HISTORY OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISING TASKFORCE

Academic Advising Taskforce, 2007-2008
The Academic Advising Task Force (AATF) was charged into existence in July of 2007 as part of the Building on Strengths (BOS) Strategic Plan. The task force was specifically initiated by BOS section 1.5 as a subcommittee of the Admissions and Academic Regulations Committee (AARC), and was to report its findings to the AARC, and then subsequently to the Vice-Provost, the Dean for Academic Advising and Achievement, and the Provost; with further reporting to the Academic Senate, and the Strategic Plan Assessment and Review Committee Co-Chaired by Deans Roy Allen and Chris Sindt. The specific language of the BOS 1.5 report is as follows:

By July 1, 2007, the provost will charge the vice provost for undergraduate academics, the dean of academic advising and achievement, and the Admission and Academic Regulations Committee with providing an assessment of undergraduate academic advising. This task force will consider equity among professors and departments, training, and overall effectiveness of the system. The task force will submit their assessment and recommendations to the provost by February 1, 2008.

Acting on this mandate under then-task force Chair Annalee Lamoreaux, the AATF began educating itself by reading and exploring academic advising theories and practices. The beginning point for this examination began with the description of “Advising” as found in the current Faculty Handbook in section 2.11.3:

FACULTY HANDBOOK STATEMENT ON ADVISING (section 2.11.3)
Saint Mary’s College recognizes that guidance and education are inseparable, and considers academic advising to be an extension of the teaching responsibilities of its faculty. Accordingly, all full-time faculty members are assigned a group of advisees. Faculty Advisors are supported by the Office of Academic Advising and Achievement. Advisors are expected to make themselves available to these advisees on a regular basis and should familiarize themselves with the academic requirements of the College and its departments to assist students in formulating short- and long-term goals. All faculty are responsible for making themselves available to offer advice to students in their classes. As a faculty advisor, a faculty member is responsible for academic program planning, referral of advisees to other sources of assistance when appropriate, and making contact with students in academic difficulty when receiving notification from the Office of Academic Advising and Achievement. The promotion and tenure process takes student advising into consideration.

From the initial work of the task force during this first year, a draft Advising Concept Statement was crafted at the conclusion of the committee’s first year of existence. Following is the text of the Concept Statement:
DRAFT SAINT MARY'S ADVISING CONCEPT STATEMENT

Academic advising at Saint Mary's College is a comprehensive and individually tailored approach, which helps students achieve academic excellence. Academic advisors help students develop self-understanding and self-advocacy skills, set academic and personal goals, and make maximum use of all the resources available at the college.

Academic advising is an intentional and multidimensional educational process that is grounded in teaching and learning. It has its own purpose, content, and specific outcomes. Regardless of the diversities among our students, our advisors, or our organizational structures, the ultimate goals of academic advising are to:

- engage students in learning that promotes their academic success
- foster their personal and intellectual growth
- assist them in carrying these principles forward into their roles as citizens and lifelong learners

Academic advising is an integrated series of events that occur over time and are intentional in design and desired outcomes. Though a single one of these events might focus on only one dimension of a student’s life, the overall process involves educational, curricular, intellectual, career, and personal dimensions. The process requires the integration of the changing nature of student characteristics, values, and motivations, as they enter, progress through, and exit the institution. The process also utilizes all of our institutions resources to promote student success and achievement.

Our pedagogy of academic advising as a teaching-learning process requires the effective use of informational, relational, and conceptual skills to foster student learning and success. These skills are used to engage students as active learners in planning and achieving their educational, career, and personal goals through a relationship built on trust and confidence.

Academic advising at Saint Mary’s College has purpose and content. The “syllabus” for academic advising includes teaching students about: the goals of higher education; modes of thinking and learning; the institution’s mission; the meaning, value, and interrelationship of the parts of the curriculum and co-curriculum; the transferability of knowledge, values, and skills; and campus resources and processes. The academic advising process seeks to synthesize and contextualize students’ educational experiences within the frameworks of Saint Mary’s College and each student’s own aspirations, abilities and personal lives to extend learning beyond our campus boundaries and timeframes.

The student learning outcomes of academic advising are guided by our college’s mission, goals, curriculum, and co-curriculum. These outcomes will articulate what students will know, value, and be able to do as a result of the academic advising process. The outcomes incorporate the educational, curricular, intellectual, career, and personal dimensions of each student’s development.
In the 2007-08 AATF Chair’s Report, then-Chair Annalee Lamoreaux reported that the Concept Statement generated some interesting conversation when first presented to the EPB, but the faculty’s general perspective on advising has historically focused on course guidance. The report goes on to say that that:

It became apparent that many of the faculty were looking at advising (a) from the perspective of the faculty rather than that of the entire institution, (i.e. a perspective that would encompass both faculty and professional advising staff roles and responsibilities), and (b) from a relatively limited perspective that focused on advising primarily as guidance around course selection rather than a broad perspective that could include supporting students’ learning and development. (p. 1)

The report also commented on how few faculty participated in an open forum about academic advising held on May 5th, 2008. It was noted that the lack of faculty interest and participation was similar to that experienced by the Core Curriculum Taskforce (CCTF) during the same time period.

**Academic Advising Taskforce, 2008-2009**

New leadership of the task force took place in the Fall of 2008 (with Christa Kell and Ed Tywoniak assuming duties of Co-Chair), along with new core membership of the task force. One of the committee’s first tasks was to develop several surveys and focus groups with faculty and students to evaluate the general advising across campus (see section on Data Gathering below).

Key questions framing the survey instruments to faculty included:
1. What do faculty understand is the purpose and extent of an academic advisor?
2. What should be unique to faculty advising?
3. How adequate are the resources for faculty advising?
4. What should be the limits or parameters for faculty advising?
5. What skills are needed for effective advising?
6. How adequately prepared are faculty for academic advising?
7. How do academic departments assign advisee loads to faculty?
8. Should academic advising be a part of Rank & Tenure criteria?

In addition, the AATF continued to examine alternative advising models and contemporary research in the field, including sending representatives to the national meeting of the First Year Experience Association in February of 2009.

It is important to note that in the Spring of 2008 the use of the Seminar program as the advising cohort for first year (FY) students (formally known as the Cohort Program) was discontinued by the Senate, at the urging of the Educational Policies Board and with the acknowledgement and agreement by the Academic administration. To replace this program, a pilot first year advising structure called MySMC was implemented in the Fall of 2008 using 60 volunteer faculty members as FY advisors. Efforts were made to connect declared students with faculty in their major. Undeclared (now referred to as
exploratory) students were equally distributed to remaining faculty advisors in the cohort program.

The AATF deemed it necessary to assess the effects of this decision and to look at the overall effectiveness of first year advising. This led to a series of conversations with Vice Provost Sweeney and Dean Murray during the Fall 2008 term focusing on general issues of the first year experience with particular attention paid to academic advising for FY students. These conversations culminated in a meeting with the Provost in January of 2009 in which the task force was asked to research the possibility of initiating a First Year Advisor Cohort (FYAC) program for commencement in the 2009-10 academic year.

**First Year Advising Cohort Program**

Beginning in January of 2009, the AATF began to devote a good deal of its deliberation time on discussing and developing the First Year Advising Cohort Program. Significant contributions from Prof. Cynthia Van Gilder helped spearhead the project throughout the Spring term, and she was subsequently granted release time to coordinate this project for AY 2009-10.

Some of the primary work by the task force on the FYAC project included:

- Identifying faculty who were interested in FYAC
- Developing a curriculum, and select and order materials
- Researching and choosing a web-based pre- and post-test assessment program
- Developing a faculty training program and an online pre- and post-test

Efforts were also made at outreach with other first year programs across campus to ensure continuity and coordination of efforts among all concerned groups.

It was apparent during the task force deliberations that many faculty members are aware that SMC has had a growing problem with retaining students. In many cases students leaving the College are given an exit interview or questionnaire. While it is certainly the case that some students depart to find more challenging academics, and others depart because the academics are too challenging, overwhelmingly, students who choose to transfer to another school do so because they have not formed a bond with the College. Departing students routinely state that the rhetoric of support and community that is spoken by the office of Admissions is a promise that is not fulfilled beyond the Week of Welcome.

Research both nationally and within SMC indicated that the first year, and perhaps even the first six weeks, of a college student’s career are critical in setting the foundation for college success; including the fact that most students who will be on academic probation or fail out of SMC have already begun to struggle by the end of midterms of their first semester.

Faculty at SMC have an outstanding track record of advising students within their majors, where shared classes and increasing academic expertise naturally bring the two into contact; but first year students often drift, unanchored to the academic life of the College.
In fact, it is not unusual to hear faculty complain of students’ focus on their social lives to the detriment of their academic lives. An academic advisor is uniquely placed to help an entering student face his/her academic challenges, direct him/her to appropriate resources, and work side-by-side with the student to maximize his/her experience at SMC.

As a result of the committee’s research and ongoing deliberations during the Spring 2009 term, the FYAC program was designed to flexibly bring advisors and advisees together in a way that is meaningful and non-disruptive to faculty members, but also of use to all students. There is no set curriculum, but there are suggestions and many support materials.

Following are some of the more pertinent details of the FYAC program for AY 2009-10:

- The FYAC 0.25 advising (“activity”) course is required of most first year students, with some students having other programs (Honors Program, High Potential Program, CHAMPS Program for student athletes, etc.) to fulfill the learning goals.
- A $1500 stipend will be provided for faculty
- Each section will nominally have 15 students.
- The class meets 10 times in the Fall and 3 times in the Spring plus 2 individual meetings per term per student. The course will meet once a week on EITHER Monday or Friday from 12:40-2:10.
- Efforts will be made to match students’ interests and faculty with like interests
- Content will be provided for faculty to select from – however individuality is encouraged. A collection of materials and modules will be provided, and workshops organized by Advising Services will be available to students throughout the Fall term.

The task force further developed the following learning outcomes for the framing of the curriculum for the FYAC program:

First Year students will
1. Become familiar and engaged with the Saint Mary’s community and its values and mission
2. Develop a sense of community with their advising group
3. Increase their knowledge about the role of faculty, advisors and of campus resources
4. Begin to explore personal academic goals and become responsible decision makers
5. Develop active learning skills that will promote their success as college students.

As of the writing of this report, Prof. Van Gilder, in conjunction with the Office of Academic Advising and Achievement, has developed materials, training and programming support for the 2009-10 FYAC program and participating faculty and staff await the arrival of this first freshman cohort.
The Question of Process
It is important to note at this juncture the natural tension that exists between the practical need to develop programs that address critical issues regarding student success and retention, while simultaneously ensuring that such programs, especially if they have direct implications on graduation requirements, are given ample time to be thoroughly vetted through all appropriate review committees in order to ensure adequate and complete evaluation of their impact. While it is recognized that expediency in these matters is oftentimes necessary, the task force strongly recommends that continued efforts to recognize and adhere to faculty review processes be a part of all future conversations concerning the introduction of new programs such as the First Year Advising Cohort.

II SUMMARY OF DATA

In order to help in the assessment of the overall effectiveness of academic advising as well as the faculty’s attitude towards the advising program as currently configured, several instruments were used by the AATF to gather data including:

1. An online survey of all undergraduate students distributed in April of 2008
2. An online survey of undergraduate faculty distributed in April of 2008
3. An online survey of first year academic advisors in November 2008
4. Student focus groups regarding first year advising in January of 2009
5. A faculty focus groups regarding first year advising in January of 2009

Additional data used included:

1. 2008 Cooperative Institutional Research (CIRP) TFS Institutional Summary Report *
2. 2008 YFCY Institutional Profile Report *
3. 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) report
4. Academic Advising Center Student Contact Data (reported in February 2009)

* Both reports administered to first-time, full-time students.

Following is a brief summative overview of the data.

4/08 Online Survey of Undergraduate Students
An online survey was distributed to undergraduate students in April of 2008 assessing their attitude towards their overall academic advising experience. A total \( n \) of 65 students completed the survey. Of the total, 29 had academic advisors in their chosen major with 36 reporting having advisors outside of their major or were undeclared.

Forty-three of the 65 respondents met individually with their advisor one to two times during the semester with four students reporting having never met with their advisor. Twenty-nine students reported having met with their advisor at least once or twice during the semester as part of a group session.
To the question stating “I received all of the information and advice from my academic advisor that I needed to make academic choices this semester,” the following responses were given:

STRONGLY AGREE 16
AGREE 36
MOSTLY DISAGREE 09
STRONGLY DISAGREE 06

To the question stating “I felt supported and encouraged by my academic advisor this semester,” the following responses were given:

STRONGLY AGREE 18
AGREE 30
MOSTLY DISAGREE 00
STRONGLY DISAGREE 12

04/08 Online Survey of Undergraduate Faculty
An online survey was also distributed to undergraduate faculty in April of 2008 assessing their attitude towards their overall academic advising experience. A total n of 36 faculty completed the survey.

Following is a ranked order of the perceived primary role of advising by faculty:

- Course selection for graduation (72%)
- Authorize course selections (67%)
- Course Selection for Major (66%)
- Assist in understanding implications of course changes (56%)
- Recommend future courses (55%)
- Authorize Adds (51%)
- Review progress towards graduation (50%)
- Authorize Drops (49%)
- Help evaluate course selection as relates to other factors (33%)
- Discuss possible majors (31%)
- Discuss course goals (31%)
- Discuss life goals (12%)
- Discuss course content (09%)
- Discuss job information (04%)

Following is a ranked order of actual duties as reported by faculty:

- Course selection for graduation (100%)
- Course Selection for Major (100%)
- Authorize course selections (100%)
- Assist in understanding implications of course changes (100%)
- Review progress towards graduation (97%)
Authorize Adds (97%)
Authorize Drops (97%)
Help evaluate course selection as relates to other factors (97%)
Discuss possible majors (90%)
Discuss job information (72%)
Discuss course goals (80%)
Discuss life goals (80%)
Discuss course content (80%)
Recommend future courses (55%)

Further data from the survey showed that:
1. Approximately half the faculty would like shared assistance in contacting advisees
2. Approximately 80% of the faculty want graduate school information to be provided by a professional staff
3. Most faculty would not like to recommend specific instructors
4. A large percentage of faculty would like assistance from a professional staff in recommending other support services to students
5. A large percentage would like assistance from a professional staff in recommending summer school options
6. A large percentage of faculty would like assistance from a professional staff in discussing the Catholic, Lasallian and Liberal Arts heritage of the college
7. Approximately 50% of faculty reported wanting assistance from a professional staff in providing general education information
8. A large percentage of faculty would like assistance from a professional staff in reminding students of important dates and events
9. No faculty member wanted to be involved with discussions with students concerning extracurricular activities
10. No faculty wanted to be involved with discussions with students concerning social justice activities

11/08 Online Survey of First Year Academic Advisors
In November of 2008, a survey was distributed to all faculty serving as first year academic advisors for the 2008-09 academic year. Approximately ten responses were collected at that time. As a result of the low number of respondents, it was decided that the survey be redistributed during the January 2009 term.

01/09 Faculty First Year Advising Focus Group
In January of 2009 the same email questionnaire was resent to all first year advisors, with an added invitation for faculty to take part in a focus group. Several more faculty responses were received after the request. A faculty focus group was also conducted during the January 2009 term.

Results of these instruments revealed a general satisfaction with the advising program including the MySMC freshman advising program used during the 2008-09 academic year. Recommendations included:
"Include Advising Role in R&T process."
"Get younger faculty involved in first year advising."
"Provide flexibility for advisors to develop their own advising processes."

01/09 Student First Year Advising Focus Group
Another series of focus groups was performed during the January 2009 term, this time with students. A total of 85 first year students participated in six focus groups – 22 males, 66 females and 3 unspecified. There was much positive data from the focus groups, but the negative data was significant enough to primarily mention in this report.

In response to the question: "I received all of the information and advice from my academic advisor that I needed to make academic choices this semester?" 20 students (over 23%) responded mostly disagree or strongly disagree.

In response to the question: "I felt support and encouraged by my academic advisor this semester?" 22 students (over 25%) responded mostly disagree or strongly disagree.

Some of the quoted responses included:

"My advisor seemed ill prepared and she wasn’t an advisor in my department."

"I did not like anything of academic advising. It was if I didn’t have an advisor. I had to seek help elsewhere. When I tried to reach my advisor he would never be on campus or in his office hours. It would take him a long period of time to respond to my emails."

"It was good to have an advisor. Unfortunately she was not very helpful when I asked her for help."

"My academic advisor really gave me no direction further and handed me a printout of what courses are recommended to take. She gave me no feedback."
"My advisor was very disappointing."

"The academic advisor should be paired with a student according to their major."

"My advisor didn’t know my face or name . . . she wasn’t much help when it came to scheduling classes. I made decisions without my advisor’s help."

"I think academic advisors should be someone in the field that we wish to study or should at least have some information about it. My advisor knew very little about Anthropology."

"I had absolutely no idea what I was signing up for. I still feel like I’m going into everything blind."

"He would not sign my transfer papers and has not helped me out at all . . . not helpful!"
III FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original charge for the Academic Advising Taskforce from the BOS 1.5 Strategic Planning document specifically charged the AATF to research and assess:

1. Advising load equity among faculty and departments
2. Faculty advisor training
3. Overall effectiveness of advising program.

Based upon these general themes, plus themes added by the task force during its deliberations, the following findings and recommendations are provided. These recommendations and findings represent the work of the task force during its two years of existence and includes a review of documents from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and other professional advising resources, available institutional data, and the data generated by various surveys performed by the AATF (see section on Data Gathering above).

Theme #1: Advising Load Equity Among Faculty and Departments

There is considerable inequity in advising loads, both for first-year advising and advising within the major. This inequity exists both between departments and within departments.

(Note: This analysis is limited to advising that is done by faculty. Hundreds of students have primary advisors who are not members of the faculty. These students are advised by members of the professional advising staff, the director of the nursing program, the director of the health science program, or other college staff or administrators.)

A. Advising Within the Major:

Nearly every tenure-track faculty member is an advisor for a number of sophomores, juniors and seniors who have declared their majors. Academic departments vary widely in the number of major advisees per faculty member that they serve. This is due to the fact that faculty serve as advisors for the students who have chosen majors within their academic departments. Faculty members who are in academic departments that have higher “majors per tenure-track faculty” ratios are responsible for more advisees than faculty who are in departments with lower “majors per tenure-track faculty” ratios.

Five departments (Business Administration, Communication, Kinesiology, Accounting, and Sociology) average more than 14 major advisees per faculty member. Five other departments average fewer than 4.7 advisees per faculty member. The faculty in the five most heavily impacted departments advise 5.2 times as many majors as do faculty in the five least impacted departments. The least impacted academic departments include, but are not limited to, those that provide numerous service courses to the campus (e.g., Theology and Religious Studies, Modern Languages, Math, English, and the Natural
Sciences). Thus, it could be argued that many of the departments with lighter major advising loads are serving the campus in other ways.

Recommendation #1: Based upon the preceding set of findings, 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 needs to be implemented.

B. First-Year Advising:

Faculty can choose whether or not they wish to serve as first-year advisors. As a result, the academic departments which do the most first-year advising are likely to change somewhat from year to year.

In the 2008-2009 academic year, five departments (Performing Arts, Chemistry, Math, Theology and Religious Studies, and Communications) averaged more than 4.3 first-year advisees per faculty member. Five other departments averaged fewer than 2.0 advisees per faculty member. The faculty in the five most heavily impacted academic departments advised 4.5 times as many first-year students as did faculty in the five least impacted departments.

It has been suggested that it might be possible to improve equity in advising if departments with lighter major advising loads elected to do more first-year advising. However, there is currently almost no correlation \( r = -0.10 \) between the number of first-year advisees per faculty served by a department and the number of major advisees per faculty served by a department.

With the advent of the newly develop First Year Advising Cohort, a new model of first year advising load distribution and equity payment, it is incumbent upon the Senate in conjunction with various subcommittees to closely assess and monitor the FYAC program to determine its effects on student satisfaction, retention and overall academic success.

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.

C. Equity in Advising Within Departments:

The degree of inequity is just as high within departments as it is between departments. On average, the faculty member with the highest advising load within a department advises 5.3 times as many advisees as the faculty member with the lowest advising load.
The advising load within a department can be explained by two factors: (a) the individual faculty member’s willingness to advise students and (b) the number of students who select a given faculty member to be their advisor.

It is occasionally suggested that equity within departments could be improved by dividing major advisees equally among all tenure-track faculty. However, this idea has several disadvantages. First, it would reduce student choice in advisors. It could mean that students would no longer be able to select the specific faculty member whose specialization would provide the best possible match for the students’ academic goals. It could also cause more students to be matched with less effective advisors, and would very likely increase the number of students who do not feel that they are adequately served by their advisor. Finally, although it would make advising loads appear more equitable, it might have very little impact on actual advising loads within departments. It is very possible that students would continue to seek out the same faculty members for advising, even if these faculty members were not their official advisors.

**Recommendation #3:** Based upon the preceding set of findings, 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.

**Theme #2: Faculty Advisor Training**

A look at the survey data, institutional data and national data suggests that there is much need for improvement in faculty advisor training, with “training” representing only one piece of the overall question of faculty preparation for dealing with issues of advising. It is well documented that student engagement with their faculty advisors is a critical part of retention and student satisfaction. It is also evident that Saint Mary’s has had a difficult time integrating advising into the faculty culture in any kind of systematic or sustained way.

Of primary concern for the task force is the question of faculty understanding, engagement and involvement with the advising process, especially at the senior faculty level. There is far too much inconsistency in the quantity of tenured-track faculty actively engaged in advising and the quality of the services being provided. As such the task force offers the following recommendations:

**Recommendation #5:** Based upon the findings of the survey data, it is recommended that the Academic Senate should 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.

Theme #3: Overall Effectiveness of the Advising Program

A review of the data presented in the preceding section shows a mixed reaction to the question of the effectiveness of the current advising structure. There are many reasons for this, both internal (systemic problems with faculty training as an example) and external (changes in student expectations for their education as an example). While it is evident that changes are necessary in both how faculty think about advising as well as the advising support structure itself, it is also evident that this can only be achieved through a sustained effort over the next several years to foster and nurture a faculty culture in which advising is recognized as a critical piece of the overall quality of the educational experience for our students. The importance of such an initiative becomes amplified all the more when placed within the context of the core curriculum revision and the upcoming work of the newly charged Core Curriculum Implementation Task Force (CCIT). It should be noted here that the work of the CCTF was tracked very closely during the two years of existence of the AATF due to the task force’s understanding that curriculum and advising are integrally linked. As such the task force offers the following recommendations:

Recommendation #7: Based upon the findings of the survey data, 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 Reaccreditation Committee and the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to assess the effects of both the upcoming NCAA reaccreditation report and the newly instituted summer session program on student athletes with respect to issues pertaining to academic eligibility and graduation rates.
IV SUMMARY OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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 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 Reaccreditation Committee and the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education to assess the effects of both the upcoming NCAA reaccreditation report and the newly instituted summer session program on student athletes with respect to issues pertaining to academic eligibility and graduation rates.
V Concluding Comments

This report is the final task of the AATF as charged by the BOS 1.5 strategic plan. Any further iterations of this task force or actions stemming from the recommendations contained herein will be determined by the Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement and the Academic Vice-Provost, in conjunction with the Provost and Academic Senate.

The Chairs of the task force would like to first and foremost thank the members of the Academic Advising Taskforce for their tireless work and enthusiastic energy throughout this process. Of particular note is the work of Russ Tiberrii, Brenda Kiba and the entire staff of the office of Academic Advising and Achievement, without whom this project would not have been possible nor nearly as much fun (special thanks for the wonderful lunches!). Also, a special note of thanks must be given to professors Cynthia Van Gilder for her boundless energy and tireless enthusiasm, and Christa Kell for her insight, wisdom and continued insistence that the welfare of our students is always the ultimate aim of our endeavors.
ADDENDUM A

SAMPLE DRAFT OF ONE OF SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS USED TO ASSESS FACULTY ACADEMIC ADVISING

Spring 2008

Colleagues, the Academic Advising Taskforce (established in response to item 1.5 of the BOS Strategic Plan) developed this anonymous survey to gather information about faculty perceptions and involvement with undergraduate academic advising. Our purpose is only to “inventory” the current perceived roles, responsibilities, and practices of undergraduate faculty advisors, not to evaluate the performance of faculty academic advisors. Gathering this information will help us complete the first phase of a two-year assessment of academic advising at SMC, including what the faculty role should be in academic advising. Your support and contribution are essential. We really appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey. Thank you,

Christa Kell, Annalee Lamoreaux, Ed Tywoniak, Cynthia Van Gilder, Paul Zarnoth, Russell Tiberii, Frances Sweeney

Please read each of the statements and place a P, S, or N in the blank space at the left for each statement according to the following:

P – The faculty academic advisor should have primary responsibility for this function
S – The faculty academic advisor should share the performance of this function with other offices/staff
N – The faculty academic advisor should not have responsibility for this function

On the right side of each comment please check whether you currently do or don’t provide the assistance described in the respective statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>1. Suggest course selections each semester to meet graduation requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>2. Suggest elective courses which might be beneficial or support the major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>3. Authorize “drops”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>4. Authorize “adds”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>5. Be required to authorize course selections (signature) each semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>6. Help advisee understand the implications of course choices and schedule changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>7. Help advisee evaluate course selection and course load in relation to factors such as previous academic performance, learning styles, reading or writing demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>8. Help advisee formulate schedule based on time restrictions, such as work, sports, student organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>9. Recommend courses which may be helpful in future work or career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Recommend courses which may provide a helpful foundation for future course decisions
11. Discuss advisee's course goals (grades or learning) each semester
12. Help advisee's develop life goals and values
13. Discuss advisee's learning goals for their SMC experience (baccalaureate degree)
14. Discuss educational background need for various careers
15. Provide information about job market
16. Help advisees make academic major decisions & assist advisees to choose appropriate major based on values, abilities, and interests
17. Provide information about course content in various academic disciplines
18. Review progress toward graduation each semester, including general education, major, overall unit accumulation, GPA, upper level course requirements, etc.
19. Email advisees during each advising period to encourage them to meet with you
20. Reach out to advisees periodically during the semester to ask how they are doing
21. Provide information about graduate and professional schools (including admission and GRE information)
22. Recommend specific instructors
23. Refer advisee to other campus offices and services when appropriate
24. Provide summer courses suggestions and encourage summer school attendance
25. Discuss the meaning of the Lasallian tradition
26. Discuss the meaning of the liberal arts tradition
27. Discuss the meaning of the Catholic tradition
28. Discuss general education course choices in relation to the major
29. Discuss the general education courses in relation to life pursuits and personal development
30. Alert advisees to college deadlines such as drop/add, withdrawal, incomplete grade, important campus Events
31. Acquaint advisees with extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations
32. Contact other services directly on behalf of advisee when appropriate (Tutorial and Academic Skills Center, Counseling Center, Academic Advising Center, Dean of Academic Advising and Achievement, etc.)
33. Maintain an advising file on each advisee
☐ ☐ ☐ 34. Orient advisees to use the degree audit and college catalog
☐ ☐ ☐ 35. Review advisee's academic performance at mid-term and end of semester
☐ ☐ ☐ 36. Help advisees resolve personal problems that effect academic performance
☐ ☐ ☐ 37. Help students understand the role of spirituality in their own life
☐ ☐ ☐ 38. Help students develop an awareness of behaviors that promote social and community respect and responsibility
☐ ☐ ☐ 39. Help students understand the values and practices of academic integrity and scholarship

General Questions

1. Indicate the average amount of time you spend each week in the role of academic advisor during advising period __________, and at other times of the semester __________.

2. What do you find to be pleasant and rewarding about academic advising, and to what extent?

3. What do find to be unpleasant or not rewarding about academic advising, and to what extent?

4. Do you think students find academic advising rewarding, or not very useful, and to what extent?

5. What type(s) of individual or institutional support do you think would make academic advising more effective or satisfying for faculty advisors?
First Year Advising Cohorts
A Proposal from the AATC

Background:

2006-07: Under the direction of the AARC and BOS 1.5 the Academic Advising Task Force (AATF) was established to evaluate and develop an advising system for Saint Mary’s College. The AATF began educating itself by reading and exploring Academic advising theories and practices.

2007/08: Use of Seminar as the advising cohort for first year (FY) students was discontinued by the Senate, in collaboration with Academic administration.

Fall 2008: A pilot FY advising structure was implemented using 60 volunteer faculty members as FY advisors. Efforts were made to connect declared students with faculty in their major and undeclared (now referred to as exploratory) students were equally distributed to remaining faculty advisors.

2008/09: Numerous surveys and focus groups with faculty and students were conducted to evaluate the fall 08 advising structure. In addition the AATF continued to examine alternative advising models. As a result of this exploration and the evaluative data from students and faculty, it has become apparent that advisor/student interaction will become enhanced by the scheduling of a structured time set aside for advisor/students to address the following learning objectives:

First Year students will

1. Participate in Smartgrades pre- and post- first year assessment to gain a greater understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses as a college student.
2. Be introduced to aspects of the Saint Mary’s College community, including the Lasallian, Catholic, and Liberal Arts traditions as they are experienced here.
3. Engage in a variety of community building experiences with their FYAC.
4. Be informed of the role of faculty and academic advisors and of campus support resources.
5. Become familiar with the core curriculum, general education, and basic structure of major/minor requirements, and how to use the course catalog and Gaelxpress to find information and assess their degree progress.
6. Be given the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship with a faculty advisor.
7. Explore strategies for academic success.
8. Begin to set personal academic goals and develop habits as responsible decision makers.

The following advising program “First Year Advising Cohort” is proposed for the 2009-10 academic year. This program is a pilot and will be assessed before final
recommendations are made to the UPEC, Senate and Administration for long term advising structure/program.

1. Forty first year advisors will be selected from full-time, ranked faculty. Exceptions will be made for staff members that are responsible for specified programs.

2. Each advisor will typically be assigned 15 FY advisees. As much as possible, this assignment to be made based on each student’s self-reported areas of interest. Undeclared (exploratory) students will be equally distributed to advisors who have expressed interest in advising these students.

3. Students will enroll in a 0.25 credit activity course (FYAC) with class meetings spread over both fall and spring semesters. Students will be graded Pass/Fail based on conscientious attendance, participation and completion of brief assignments. Please note that students will be allowed to enroll in up to 9.75 credits in their first year without incurring any extra cost, thus they will still have the opportunity to take other 0.25 practica and/or required laboratories.

4. The structure of the FYAC activity class will be as follows:

**FALL:**
- a. FYAC will meet as a group during Week of Welcome (1.5 hours)
- b. FYAC will meet as a group during the first week of the semester for pre-assessment using the Smartgrades online test (1.5 hours)
- c. FYAC will meet as a group 5 other weeks (5 X 1.5 = 7.5 hours) – session content will be at the advisor’s discretion – recommended topics and curriculum modules will be provided
- d. FYAC will meet as a group to attend 4 workshops/events administered by the Office of Academic Advising and the First Year Experience (4 X 1.5 = 6 hours)

**SPRING:**
- e. FYAC will meet as a group 2 times (2 X 1.5 = 3 hours) – session content will be at the advisor’s discretion – recommended topics and curriculum modules will be provided
- f. FYAC will meet as a group during the last two weeks of the semester for post-assessment using the Smartgrades online test (1.5 hours)

TOTAL GROUP CONTACT HOURS = 21 HOURS

5. In addition to the group advising sessions listed above, it is expected that faculty will meet with their advisees one-on-one a minimum of 2 times per semester.

6. FYAC advisors will receive an honorarium of $1500 for the academic year.

The AATF appreciates your support as we continue to work towards developing a model that engages our first year students in our Saint Mary’s learning community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retention Rates**

Retention rates include those who stop out and return in later terms.

*Excludes Pre-Nursing Enrolees seeking AAS degrees, transfer students in freshman year and students entering majors identified in Sophomore/Junior year.

Academic Success of Those Enrolling at SMC as Freshmen