

November 22, 2010

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

We are writing to you as the Chair and Vice Chair of Faculty Assembly and as members of the Advising Systems Task Force. As you may remember, Faculty Assembly passed a resolution toward the end of the last academic year that requested a stay in implementing any restructuring of academic advising until a formal and open process of faculty consultation and review occurred while faculty were under contract. The resolution was accepted by the VCAA, and the Advising Systems Task Force was formed.

This Task Force began meeting over the summer and conducted much of its data collection effort during this time, when faculty were not on contract. Meetings of the Task Force slowed during the fall quarter, once faculty were actually back on contract. The Task Force met on September 16th and had what ended up being its last formal meeting on October 15th. The October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting was called with one week's notice prohibiting some Task Force members including, faculty, student and administrative representatives, from attending.

During the October 15th meeting, the Task Force began its assessment of three different models of advising relative to a set of evaluation criteria that had been identified but not yet ranked or prioritized by the Task Force. The following models were discussed at this meeting in regards to these criteria: (1) the existing, decentralized model, (2) a hybrid model as proposed by the Advising Council (a model consistent with the recommendation made by the previous Advising Task Force in 2008-09), and (3) a fully centralized model. At the close of the October 15th meeting, consensus among a majority of Task Force members was emerging in support of a hybrid model. A minority of Task Force members at this juncture of our discussions supported a fully centralized model. The group did not develop or offer to the VCAA any formal recommendation as to the restructuring of the advising function during this meeting, nor did the VCAA request from the group any such recommendation regarding which specific model of advising should be adopted. Indeed, the VCAA and two other Task Force members were tasked with gathering additional data from two of the academic programs. This data was to be shared back with the Task Force. It was sought by Task Force members so that they might identify some of the implementation challenges associated with both a split and a fully centralized model. The advising outcomes of the two programs from which data were solicited would be similar under either a hybrid or centralized model. There was no discussion by the Task Force as a whole, or indication from the VCAA, about how feedback would be solicited from other academic programs. No indication was made at this meeting that it was to be the last meeting of the Task Force prior to a formal decision being made by the VCAA.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the VCAA emailed the members of the Task Force and others, including the program directors and academic advisers, calling a meeting. In this email, she indicated that “we will meet to discuss where we are with the development of an advising system, and next steps. We’ll be joined by a consultant who will work with us on implementing the new advising system.”

Both Zoe and I independently emailed the VCAA to express our concern with what appeared to be a decision to abbreviate the process prior to the completion of the Advising Systems Task Force's work. She indicated in response that she was "ready to make an announcement" and that "we are at the stage of this work where we have a lot of valuable information from the work of the groups in this Task Force and the work of the previous Task Force. . . .The outline I present on the 16<sup>th</sup> will reflect the work of both task forces, as well as the recommendations of the Advising Council." At the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting she then announced that a centralized model of advising for undergraduates would be implemented with the exception of the nursing program, which would retain its undergraduate advising function. (For more information, please see the VCAA's communication sent to the UWTline November 18<sup>th</sup> entitled Advising Systems Changes.) The VCAA's decision is consistent with neither the recommendation of the first Advising Task Force (2008-2009), the recommendation of the Advising Council, the emerging consensus among the majority of the current Advising Systems Task Force members, or the minority view of members of the current Advising Systems Task Force.

Zoe and I are expressing disappointment in the VCAA's decision based on the following concerns:

- Abbreviation of the current Advising Systems Task Force's work before a full assessment of the three possible organizational models was completed and a formal Task Force recommendation made.
- This decision was made without formal input from all affected academic programs being solicited and considered. Only two academic programs were consulted to the best of our knowledge.
- The VCAA has not made public the specific constituencies from whom she gathered data independent of the work of the Advising Systems Task Force.
- Based on data collected by the current Advising Systems Task Force, it appears that this model may be more costly to implement and sustain than either a hybrid, fully centralized, or the current model. In any case, she has not yet presented data that this is a cost efficient solution.

We are not opposed to change in principle. Indeed, we both volunteered to serve on the Task Force because we recognized that changes were likely needed to address shortcomings in the current model in regards to the delivery of advising services across our different student populations. We are confounded, however, because the model that VCAA has chosen does not adequately address the problems identified by the Task Force in the current model nor does it sustain the successful levels of coordination between academic programs and the advising function that the current model delivers. It is also unclear how the chosen model will impact our ability to successfully target and grow enrollment as well as to retain students: two efforts that are now broadly acknowledged as critical to our survival in the current budget crisis.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcie Lazzari, Chair

Zoe Barsness, Vice Chair