

YEAR END REPORT/RECOMMENDATIONS ACADEMIC YEAR 2009-2010

Advisement and Registration Council

The Advisement and Registration Council worked hard to fulfill our charges. In doing so, we met with representatives from the following offices: Office of Student Services, Office of Testing, Registration Services, and Career Development and Advisement.

With each meeting, what became more and more clear was that many of the policies and procedures that faculty would like to see in place, including those that came out of the A & R Forum and Focus Group of 2008-09, have been established. Further, elements of many of the charges for the council for 2009-2010 are already in place. What is lacking is sufficient communication between faculty advisors/academic departments and the various offices that deal with the policies and procedures. The council has therefore been looking into ways to improve communication, and plans to share means by which various offices intend to communicate more effectively with students.

What follows is a description of proposed plans to improve communication regarding issues relevant to the council's charges, as well as responses to each of the individual charges from Academic Year 2009-2010.

The council recommends, in collaboration with Jae Kim and Sandra Miller from IRT, Ken Schneider, Brian Fanning, and Nina Trelisky, looking into creating an interactive website which would serve both as a FAQ and as a means to disseminate information about implementations, to academic departments and to advisors. Two possible models include IRT's "Ask an STC" (<http://euphrates.wpunj.edu/irt/askanstc/>) and Student Services "Ask Willy P" (<http://www.wpunj.edu/centerss/>). The council currently plans to continue discussions with representatives from these offices as well as the Office of Registration Services to further explore this possibility, and to come up with a possible model. Ken Schneider, Jae Kim, and Julie Rosenthal met on April 21 to discuss the possibility of implementing such a site, and it was agreed that it could be done relatively easily. ***While initial content could come from responses to the recent charges to the council, the A & R council recommends that a focus group be held with department chairs and other central faculty and staff to flesh out the content of such a resource. We are recommending that this be included as a charge for Academic Year 2010-2011.

Another method for disseminating information on changes made to Banner and to other procedures related to registration was a quarterly "registration newsflash" sent out by Nina Trelisky. Ms. Trelisky sent out the first of these in the fall, but it is not yet apparent how effective this was. It is recognized that busy faculty and other advisors may not read such documents as they come in, and therefore housing information where it can be accessed on demand is considered to be preferable.

What follows next are responses to each of the individual charges from Academic Year 2009-2010.

1. Follow up on the recommendations of the Council in its 2008-2009 Year-End Report not yet addressed by the appropriate offices.

Follow up was made with appropriate offices. Apparently, several of the recommendations of the council were implemented, are in the process of being implemented, or are being considered for implementation. From the 2008-2009 Year-End Report, these include (*with current state of implementation in italics*):

1. Course waiver/substitution forms should be electronic rather than paper. Papers get misplaced and then not entered; chairs/deans should be able to enter these approvals directly.

The Office of Registration Services is looking into putting these forms on-line. If it is determined by that office that this can be done, we can expect to see this feature available before too long although a precise time frame has not been given. An estimate is by fall.

2. Faculty 855 numbers should be removed from transcript/degree audit print outs.

855 numbers have been removed. However, faculty should be alert for their reappearance: The inclusion of 855 numbers is the default in Banner, so when upgrades, etc. are implemented, the 855 numbers reappear and must manually be prohibited.

3. Degree audits for students with double majors should show the same information for both majors/both degree audits. As it is, students are given different information depending on which advisor (which major) they speak to. Degree audits for double majors should be unified.

In Banner, double majors cannot be combined: Each program is its own entity. Advisors should look at the audit for the first major for all Gen Ed requirements, and should only look at major requirements for the second major.

4. It is confusing to have two options of degree audit types (general versus detailed) and it would be a better idea to JUST have the general.

Improvement to this function is on the "to do" list although we were unable to get a time frame for project completion.

5. It would be helpful to have additional color coding, i.e. adding salience to courses needed for major(s), GE's, electives.

Improvement to this function is on the "to do" list. The new version of Banner will allow for greater flexibility, and faculty/advisors can look forward to a more user friendly version by Fall.

6. Do we need so many screens where we enter our information (you have to choose faculty, then advisor, etc)?

It may be that faculty training is needed. There ARE channels in the faculty tab that allow for quicker, more direct access to student/course information. It MIGHT be that there are easier ways than what is known to most faculty, and that the new A & R website/query page will help faculty understand shortcuts. (A QUESTION RAISED BY A COUNCIL MEMBER BUT FOR WHICH WE WERE AS YET UNABLE TO GET AN ANSWER WAS: Can these specific shortcuts be documented? And, if shortcuts exist, then why are there still 'long' ways of doing things?)

7. Can we generate another document that just says what the student STILL NEEDS to take?

In Banner 8, it is possible to make this distinction more salient, although including both filled and unfilled requirements allows for the double checking of the accuracy of Degree Audit. Office of Reg. will investigate a more salient way of displaying "met" and "unmet" using Banner 8.

8. Make it easier to find Non-Western courses, i.e. by having them under their own listing, or by somehow identifying them when students try to register.

Using “Attribute Type” at the bottom of the look up courses screen allows you to do this. (This is one of many recommendations that already were, or have been put into place, and is evidence of the need for better communication.)

10. It would be helpful to be able to know if a transfer student has an A.A. degree from a community college.

The student needs to follow up with the Undergraduate Admissions Office to be sure degree is posted. On Degree Audit, AS/AA degree Met/Unmet shows; however, this is not always up to date and requires that student be sure degree is posted.

11. Student should not need to contact advisor for Alternate Pin after initial contact for each semester.

This is another example of our requests being met – but perhaps faculty not hearing about it. Students can now see their PIN within self-service once they have registered for the term, and can therefore add/drop courses with ease. Information like this will be more easily disseminated through the in-progress A & R FAQ page.

2. Work with the Office of Student Accounts and the Office of Student Services to make the billing process more user-friendly for students.

The council met with Ken Schneider of the Office of Student Services to learn what changes are being made to improve this process, several of which have already been made. The recently created Office of Student Services, located in Morrison Hall includes records and payment services, and it is planned to additionally house the Office of Financial Aid by next year, providing a joint service and call center. Student Accounts remains at College Hall as the back end office with account reconciliation, etc.; however, customer service questions are directed to the Office of Student Services. Additional changes made and forthcoming include: students are now able to view billing statements on-line; current charges are real time; students do not need to wait for new bill to come in the mail.

When payment is late, several emails are sent to students reminding them to pay to avoid being dropped from classes. Understanding that students do not habitually read email, Ken Schneider and his associates are looking into alternative channels of communication, such as use of students’ mobile devices, and distribution of information through social media. A balance must be struck between maintaining official communication channels and not risking impinging on privacy.

3. Work with the Office of Testing to establish an effective system of communicating Basic Skills and Foreign-language placement exam schedules to the Office of the Registrar and academic departments.

Placement tests are primarily scheduled during Orientation sessions throughout the summer and prior to the spring semester. Incoming freshman are questioned about their foreign language background, and are offered the opportunity to take a language proficiency exam along with basic skills tests. Transfer students who have not yet taken a foreign language have the opportunity to do so as well, although admittedly some can “fall through the cracks”, i.e. if they transfer late in the season. Advisors need to be reminded to speak to their advisees about F.L.

CLEP exams. The triangulation of information about F.L. placement would reduce the number of students who take basic language courses in error. For transfer or midyear entering students, F.L. placement exams can be arranged by the Office of Testing as well as the Languages & Cultures department.

Student placement status is available in Banner under “Test Scores”. Scores on Basic Skills will be either 10 (needs a course) or 20 (satisfactory). The Languages department determines placement in language courses; these appear as recommended course number (i.e. SPAN 210).

4. Continue to work with the Advisement Office to ensure that all advisers are clear on how to guide transfer students based on the new community college transfer agreement and that programs in Banner have been adjusted accordingly.

Undergraduate Admissions needs to be sure that courses are posted correctly. The onus of following up on this rests with the student, but advisors should be reminded to have students follow up, if for example, their AA/ AS degree is not posted, or if a course transfers in improperly.

On the “to do” list (Office of Registration Services) is to have transfer students’ actual scanned transcripts available to advisors as part of a student’s record. This would allow/help advisors to assist students in reviewing transferred credits for accuracy.

The Advisement Office (Career Development) would be happy to offer additional training on how to advise transfer students. Another suggestion made was that training of this type be part of an all-college meeting so that faculty advisors would be more likely and willing to attend.

5. Encourage the administration to propose an integrated advisement system that can be reviewed by the Council and the Senate.

This charge will need additional follow up for Academic Year 2010-2011. Further clarification is needed since the council had difficulty in understanding what this charge requests be done.