

Integrated Advising Workgroup – Recommendations for Improved Advising

Rationale:

When it comes to student success and retention, required advising is the most important student service offered by colleges. According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement, students who receive more advising, including more time with advisors and more in-depth discussions with their advisors, are more engaged, and thus, more likely to succeed. Students who meet with advisors in longer, more frequent sessions are more likely to give more effort, actively engage in learning, interact with faculty, and seek out student supports. Furthermore, advising facilitates the opportunity to provide a ‘home’ for students, actively making them a part of the community and providing a support network for them. For the purposes of increasing student success and quality of services, the Integrated Advising Workgroup seeks to improve the College’s academic advisement system by recommending a more student-focused system that helps students from the start explore academic and career options, develop academic and career plans, provides frequent feedback and targeted support, as well as ensuring students build skills needed to succeed in employment and further education in their respective programs. This system will address the following six success factors identified by the RP Groups as being instrumental in promoting student success: 1) directed – students have a goal and know how to achieve it, 2) focused – students stay on track, keeping their eyes on the prize, 3) nurtured – students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed, 4) engaged – students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities, 5) connected – students feel like they are part of the college community, and 6) valued – students’ skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized.

Change of title from Faculty Advisor to Faculty Mentor:

In an effort to clarify roles between the academic advisors (or the one-point of contact), faculty advisors should be referred to and seen as faculty mentors. Changing the title to faculty mentor will also help to emphasize that interactions between students and faculty mentors should be less transactional and more relational.

The role of the Faculty Mentor:

The role of the faculty mentor is to build a connection with the student, making them feel a part of the college community. It is the mentor’s role to discuss career and transfer goals with the student, as well as applied learning opportunities, such as internships and job shadowing, scholarship opportunities, college activities such as clubs and organizations, writing contests, etc. The mentor will also discuss transfer applications and resume building and posting to CareerWorks. When a student has a question regarding various issues (financial aid, scheduling, college resources), the mentor will serve as a source to find answers to those questions for the student. The mentor will also discuss designated educational transactions (e.g., schedule, drop/adds, withdrawals, change of major, waivers, and graduation petitions) with the student.

Convocation Meeting:

To ensure the student is helped from the start, the faculty mentor will meet with all new students during convocation. This meeting will serve as an introduction. At this time, the mentor may double check a mentee’s schedule, direct mentees to correct classrooms, faculty offices, student support offices, or the Learning Commons.

First Month Meeting:

The mentor will also meet with the student within the first month of the semester. The purpose of this meeting will be to serve as a touchpoint and to confirm appropriate program selection in relation to career and transfer plan. This meeting may be held in small group settings with multiple mentees. Scheduling of these small group meetings may necessitate administrative support.

Registration Meeting:

The faculty mentor will also meet with mentee at least once during registration. This meeting will be a relational interaction between mentor and mentee. Topics discussed should include goals (academic, transfer, and career) and overall academic and career plan. At this time, the mentor may refer students to appropriate supports when academic, attitudinal, attendance, or other personal problems require intervention by other campus professionals. The mentor may inform students of special services available to them for remediation, academic assistance, and other needs. The mentor will also assist the mentee in identifying internship and scholarship opportunities. Because the timing of registration falls in the middle of the semester while faculty are focused on their teaching and office hours are consumed with assisting students with course material, it is recommended that to better facilitate this meeting, a day be added on to the schedule (possibly from obligation) to accommodate a college-wide mentoring day during registration. This would be a day in which classes would not be scheduled, but students would be scheduled to meet with their mentors. To ensure students are given access to faculty members for both course material and mentoring purposes, office hours should be devoted to helping students in their courses, mentoring appointments should be separate from office hours.

The registration meeting will not be for scheduling classes with the student. In an effort to move away from transactional interactions between mentor and mentee, it is recommended the student's schedule be created for them by the academic advisors. Furthermore, to prevent students from getting off track, it is recommended advising (registration) holds be placed on all student accounts. The student's schedule will be created behind the scene by the advisor. It is recommended that whenever possible, the College should use block scheduling for programs. The student's schedule can then be generated by the advisor based on discussions with the student, information listed on the intake surveys, and the block scheduling for the program. Students will receive their schedules when they meet with their mentors. The mentor will discuss the schedule with mentee. If changes need to be made to the schedule, the mentor must approve the specified changes before sending all changes to the academic advisor. To allow for a more efficient process, academic advisors must be able to register students without having to use paper (in the form of a Course Selection Form).

Mentoring Overflow Day – During Obligation

To allow students an opportunity to change their schedule and/or reassess program goals after receiving their grades, we recommend a day during the week of May obligation be devoted to mentoring. This will also allow a final touchpoint with students before they leave for the summer.

The Relationship between the Faculty Mentor and the Advisor:

To ensure the student receives the best possible experience, the relationship between the faculty mentor and the advisor is critical. It is recommended that advisors and faculty mentors work in a collaborative relationship. This collaborative relationship promotes more clear information concerning degrees/certificates and regarding transfer/career/financial paths for students. To assist with fostering this collaboration, we suggest having a common time during the week in which both mentor and advisor are free to meet and discuss relevant information.

When Mentors are Not Meeting with Students:

The mentor will maintain an electronic file for each mentee. This file will be consistently used and accessed by all groups involved with the student. It is the mentor's responsibility to maintain and update this file with appropriate information. The mentor will keep abreast of advising and monitoring software (example – transfer finder). The mentor will also attend advising/mentoring training and professional development. This can be in-house training hosted by Student Affairs.

Obligation week: before the start of the semester: The mentor should have a devoted day during obligation to review mentees' files and double check mentees are scheduled for correct classes and credit hours.

Network and Collaborate with transfer institutions and employers:

Faculty mentors will either be mentoring students in career programs, or transfer programs. To better mentor students, mentors (or mentoring chair) will need to connect to employers and transfer institutions.

- The faculty mentor will network and collaborate with Career Services to grow shadowing, internship, and job opportunities for students in their respective programs
- The mentor will attend networking opportunities with local employers
- The mentor will collaborate with the Career Services Department at MVCC to keep them abreast of program information and work together on programming
- The mentor will assist in coordinating employer site visits and employer visits to campus for faculty and students
- The faculty mentor will network and collaborate with partner four year institutions
- The mentor will monitor, evaluate, and modify articulation agreements when necessary
- The mentor will meet with transfer counselors and/or faculty from four year institutions annually
- The mentor will collaborate with the Transfer Services Department at MVCC to keep them abreast of program and transfer information
- The mentor will attend networking opportunities with local transfer institutions

Assignment of Student to the Mentor:

The practice of assigning students to faculty mentors should be a standardized process, rather than department –dependent. This practice should be based on the student’s self-assessment surveys and Career Coach. When possible, students should have a first semester course with their mentor.

Assignment of Rome-based Students to the Mentor:

Students based on the Rome campus should get the same level of mentoring as our Utica campus based students. Many of our Rome students will eventually take classes on the Utica campus. However, special consideration should be made when assigning Rome students faculty mentors. A faculty mentor should be an instructor (in the program) the student has in an intro-level course during their first semester. Therefore, faculty mentors with Rome-based students should hold mentoring hours on the Rome campus to meet the needs of these students.

Technology:

- Faculty should have technology available to be able to electronically override pre-requisites. Electronic processes should be implemented in replacement of paper documents (examples – late adds, drops, over-rides).
- Course schedule should be finalized and up to date in Banner before the student’s schedule is made.
- We need appropriate software for block scheduling.
- Starfish should be used to schedule and track mentoring appointments.
- Blackboard should be used to supplement mentoring.

- Advising learning outcomes/syllabus should be incorporated into Blackboard. This will also include career and transfer information.

Logistics:

- To ensure equitable and high quality mentoring, a case load for a mentor should be no more than 30 students. The mentor will meet with each student at a minimum twice (approximately 30 minutes each) during the semester and will maintain and update cases in Starfish and/or Blackboard. It is critical that the faculty mentor be proactive about building a strong connection with the student. Faculty that choose to mentor must be engaged, motivated to help students, proactive, and willing to take an intrusive role in a student's academic/career plan. Because of the responsibilities and commitment, faculty mentoring should be treated as a course and factored into faculty load. Because we have some high enrollment programs that will necessitate more mentors, we suggest faculty mentors make load on a mix of teaching and mentoring. A faculty mentor may take additional student mentees (beyond the caseload of 30) as an overload course. Initially to build an equitable case load, the faculty mentor should be assigned more new students. It may be best if this process is phased in over time. Another possible solution for high-enrollment departments, is to designate a mentoring chair for the department. This person may also be able to sit in for an associate dean during summer GPS appointments with students.

Assessment of Mentoring:

To emphasize the importance of mentoring, it is recommended that for annual evaluations, the mentor devote at least one goal to mentoring and the supervisor address this goal. Furthermore, mentoring should be considered in hiring practices.

Advising Evaluation Protocol (see associated documents from the RP Group):

1. Create a categorization scale for intensity of advising meetings: 1 = low intensity – 4 = high intensity.
 - Associate certain mentoring tasks to a rubric. Have faculty check off which tasks were performed. Those tasks are then tied to a rubric used to rate the intensity of the mentoring session.
2. Have mentees rate each advising meeting with the RP Groups "Success as a Student" scale.
3. Collect longitudinal data annually from mentees using the RP Groups "Student Support (Re)Defined" instrument.
 - This will track students through their programs.
4. Collect Semester to Semester and Year to Year retention data, program completion data, and any available transfer and/or career readiness data.
 - Compare number of advising meetings and intensity of advising meetings against all other measures: Success as a student, Student Support (Re)Designed, retention, completion, and employment data.

Logistics

Mentoring schedule - Start of Semester – both fall and spring

Purpose

Devoted day during obligation

1. Week of obligation – Mentor completes a monitoring check for all mentees

1st year students > schedule 1st month meeting; 2nd & 3rd year students email students mentor office hours and reminders, regarding add / drop dates, schedule changes classroom changes, (email updated schedule), etc.

Meeting facilitated by school. Small groups w/maximum of 1st year students.

2. Mentor meets with new student after convocation for introduction

Introduction and confirmation of correct program selection for new students. Confirmation of schedule built from previous semester for returning students

*Advising hold placed on all students.
Students' schedules (draft) generated by advisors.*

Advising day – day added on to schedule (start a day early or end a day late). No classes are held on this day. Students are scheduled to meet with their mentor.

3. Mentor meets with student – happens w/in 1st month

Mentor gives student their schedule. Discuss any changes that need to be made. Discuss academic, transfer, career goals...etc.

Key:
Mentor = faculty member
Advisor = one point of contact

4. Mentor meets with student during registration

Opportunity to change schedule after student receives grades

5. Week of obligation – another advising day for overload