

An Academic Senate

Position Paper

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

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Instructor Advisement

The Academic Senate recognizes the critical role that counseling plays in the educational process and adheres to the general principle that counseling is most effective when it is performed by professional counselors, who have been educated and trained in the diverse functions of their field. Moreover, the Senate believes that there is no substitute for an adequate number of fully trained and certified professional counselors and that institutions which lack such a number are undermining both the efficiency and the quality of all their college programs.

Nevertheless, the Senate believes that community college instructors can supplement the functions of counselors in the specific area of academic advisement and that such advisement can have distinct benefits for community colleges. Instructor advisement may extend the reach and influence of counselors, increase the amount of information students are provided about specific majors and careers, improve retention through the development of a more personal interest on the part of faculty in students' academic progress, improve instructor awareness of both program offerings and educational requirements within the institution, improve the early identification of potential transfer students and create a more effective working relationship between counselors and instructional faculty.

The importance of instructors participating in advisement in a systematic way has recently been noted in the National Institute of Education's report on excellence in undergraduate education (see "Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education" - recommendation #4). In addition, the recent CPEC report on community college transfer ("Reaffirming California's Commitment to Transfers) recommends instructor advisement specifically as a means of identifying and helping potential transfer students.

If instructor advisement programs are to succeed, however, it is critical that there be a clear identification of duties for instructional faculty and a clear delineation of duties between counselors and instructional faculty. That delineation will depend on the specific needs of the institution and on the interest and training of the instructional faculty. The success of the program requires that the faculty, both counseling and instructional, collaborate to develop a program for their campus. However, there are certain goals and guidelines which all instructor advisement programs should have in common.

GOALS:

1. to help students select courses appropriate to their stated academic goals
2. to help students select courses appropriate to their abilities
3. to help students select courses in an appropriate sequence
4. to facilitate the early identification of those whose goals and abilities indicate that they are potential transfer students
5. to direct students toward appropriate sources of help within the institution
6. to provide information on matters related to academic majors and career possibilities
7. to promote retention through personal interest in a student's academic progress
8. to develop a better understanding and a closer working relationship between counselors and instructional faculty
9. to provide contacts with professionals in the field
10. to provide contacts with colleagues and programs at transfer institutions

GUIDELINES:

1. Advisement should be limited to areas of the instructors' expertise, though not necessarily to specific teaching disciplines.
2. Advisement should begin as early as possible in the student's career.
3. Advisors should be given appropriate training and tools, including predictability models for various courses in the curriculum.
4. There should be a formal exchange of information between counselors and instructional faculty regarding majors and academic requirements.
5. Advisors should be provided with directions which clearly stipulate the types of questions they should attempt to answer and the types of questions they should refer to other resources.
6. Advisement should be voluntary and should be compensated in an equitable manner if it is beyond the instructors' normal duties.
7. Instructional advisement programs should be developed only as a means of enhancing educational programs and never as a means of reducing costs.