STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC ADVISING AT UVM

Report of the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

April 4, 2014

Executive Summary

This report presents a proposal for strengthening student advising at UVM based on an assessment of the present system of advising, a gap analysis, a vision for what advising should be, and the best thinking of faculty, staff and students. The report distills and updates the key findings of multiple reports on advising that have been done over the past decade and provides a context of emerging new needs. We propose a vision and infrastructure for academic advising and an action plan for achieving the outcomes.

The present system of advising is mostly an informal one that takes place at the level of the academic unit. There are no quality standards and no uniform method of assessment. The most notable strengths are the many excellent, dedicated advisors and some excellent advising systems at the program, department and college levels at UVM. In addition, recent innovations such as the student and faculty portals and the Academic Alert System early warning system are excellent tools. Nevertheless, qualitative and quantitative data make clear that student advising is not uniformly excellent and the present system has a number of weaknesses, especially in light of changing needs.

Achieving an integrated, seamless, well functioning system of academic advising will require attention at multiple levels: students, advisors, school/college Student Services offices, the Provost's Office, the Faculty Senate and the academic units. We propose a vision and infrastructure for academic advising at UVM in which we define academic advising and its purposes as well as the roles and responsibilities at each level. Finally, we present a proposed action plan for achieving the vision based on a three-component model and the creation of a centrally located Advising Center.

Key Recommendations (various parties to be responsible for actions):

1. The Provost should charge the deans to establish an advising plan for their respective units. The plans should be based on best practices and tailored to the unique needs of students in the unit. The plans should:
   - ➢ Include course equivalency guidelines for advising responsibilities in workload assignments
   - ➢ Identify, reward and increase the responsibility of faculty members that excel at student advising
   - ➢ Ensure developmentally responsive advisement sessions targeted by class year (First-Year Advising sessions, Sophomore Advising sessions, Junior Advising sessions, Senior Advising sessions, Minor Advising sessions, Study Abroad Advising Sessions) coordinated by faculty members or advising professionals.

> ➢ Involve/incentivize third and fourth year students to be peer mentors to first-year students in designated First-Year courses and help them get them get the most out of the advising system.
> ➢ Ensure that all first-year students are enrolled in a First-Year Experience (FYE) course during their first semester, course to contain a component on advising.

2. Establish an Advising Center in a central location on campus near the *Career and Experience Hub* in the Davis Center. The Advising Center would be staffed on a rotating basis by the members of the Student Services Collaborative and would have as its primary focus to serve specialized advising needs including those of undeclared, undecided, transfer, and exchange students, as well as training students in the of advisement tools such as the *4-Year Plan for Career Success*. The Advising Center would also serve a routing function, directing students where to go on campus for various needs. The Advising Center should report to the Provost's Office.

3. Create an Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Advising, charged with monitoring advising quality and making recommendations to improve practices. The Advisory Committee will report to the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate.

4. Conduct focus groups with students at all class levels to determine what students say they need and want with regard to advising.

5. Establish a Faculty/Staff professional development Program in student advising. Purpose: educate re: roles and responsibilities, advising strategies and tools, skills in dealing with special issues such as alcohol and drug abuse.

6. Put the definitions and respective roles and responsibilities of students and advisors on the advising webpage and advising portals.

7. Conduct standardized evaluations of advising using the same platform used for online course evaluations (pending). Data use and security to be handled in the same manner as for the online course evaluations.

8. Require all undergraduate students at the University of Vermont to meet with an advisor each semester before being able to register for classes.

9. Establish an ex officio seat on the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate for a member of the Student Services Collaborative for the purpose of promoting an excellent educational experience for students, including advising.

10. Establish a University Award in recognition of Excellence in Student Advising

11. Reformat CAT reports to emulate the Curriculum advising worksheets with a summary check list view.

12. Strengthen the advising component of June Orientation sessions and establish with students an understanding of shared responsibilities in advising

The Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate:

Jane Alsofrom	CNHS
Stephen Brown	MED
Thomas Chittenden	BSAD
Sally Huber	MED
Jeffrey Hughes	RSENR
Karla Karstens	CEMS
Char Mehrtens	CAS
Aaron Nichols	LIB
Leonard Perry	EXT
Stephen Pintauro	CALS
Jennifer Prue, CHAIR	CESS
Scott Van Keuren	CAS
Taylor Ducharme	Student Representative
Brian Reed	Associate Provost for Curricular Affairs (ex officio, non-voting)

Consultations:
Joel Goldberg, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Abu Rizvi, Dean, Honors College
Associate Deans Group
First-Year Experience Advisory Board
Student Success and Satisfaction Committee
Student Services Collaborative
Student Government Association
Provost's Academic Leadership Council
Faculty Senate standing committees
Faculty Senate at large

Introduction:

We would all agree that good academic advising is critical to students' success, the quality of their educational experience and student retention. The purpose of this report is to make the case that student advising at UVM is not as good as it could be for all students, and to propose an actionable plan that can finally move us forward to strengthen advising. The report contains background information, research on best practices, and data including 1) multiple reports that have identified weaknesses in and proposed solutions for our present advising system; and 2) a growing awareness of the changing needs for academic advising related to experiential learning and career development.

Undergraduate advising at UVM has been studied a good deal over the past ten years, and so our intent is not to recreate that work, but to distill and update the important findings and put them in the context of emerging new needs. In the past ten years there have been three internal reports[1,2,3] and one external report[4] from which problems and potential solutions were identified, however, no coordinated plan for strengthening advising has been implemented. Furthermore, there is growing recognition nationally and at UVM of the importance of experiential learning and career development through venues such as internships, undergraduate research, and service-learning. Specialized advising services are needed in addition to academic advising to make students aware of and get connected with experiential learning opportunities. President Sullivan's strategic action plan for the University, *Enhancing Quality and Affordability* (November 7, 2012), emphasizes academic advising as a way to achieve key University goals. It asks us to ensure "optimal academic support" including career advising, "so that students may "achieve academic and career success." The Plan asks us to improve the "whole student campus life experience, (academic, cultural, developmental, and social)." A key way to accomplish this is to ensure we have an optimal system of advising. This will enhance the academic experience and student success as reflected in retention and graduation rates and the success of our alumni.

Objectives:
1) To describe the present system of academic advising at the University of Vermont and identify what needs to be fixed
2) To present a vision for what academic advising should be
3) To present a realistic, actionable plan for strengthening advising based on a gap analysis and the best thinking of faculty, staff and students.

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[1] Report of the Student Experience Task force of the Strategic Enrollment Management Council, 2005 (Appendix A)
[2] Report of the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, 2012 (Appendix B)
[3] Recommendations on academic advising passed by the Faculty Senate but which were not fully implemented (2001)
[4] the Art and Science Group completed a retention study in that included recommendations on advising (2011)

The Present System of Academic Advising at UVM

The present system of advising takes place at the level of the academic unit. In all units students are assigned an advisor (faculty or professional staff, depending on the school/college) with whom they can consult for advice in making course and curriculum choices and to discuss social, emotional and campus life issues. Advisors help their advisees explore their interests, abilities, and goals. They help students define and develop realistic educational and career plans and relate them to academic majors. They track the academic performance of their advisees to help ensure they are on track for meeting degree requirements. They refer students to support services as appropriate. Although faculty advisors and professional staff advisors share many of these roles, faculty are especially important for helping students with course and curriculum decisions; student services professionals are especially important for general assistance and for addressing student academic issues that are unusually complex (e.g., cross-college or multiple degree programs) or other issues that would benefit from referral to an appropriate campus support office.

Student surveys are our only means at present for evaluating the quality of advising, and it is important to consider the fact there is no established standard by which to judge advising quality. Therefore, students provide ratings of satisfaction without a common understanding of what an excellent advising relationship might look like.

The available data suggest the overall quality of advising at UVM is neither better nor worse than national benchmarks. According to a 2011 analysis by the Office of Institutional Research (see appendix C) which was culled from two sources, the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE) and the *Survey of Recent Graduates*, about 72% of the respondents indicated that the quality of academic advising at UVM was either "good" or "excellent" and only 8% said "poor."

In the most recent *Survey of Recent Graduates* (August 2012), 48.5% of respondents rated the quality of advising as Good or Excellent (5-point scale) with a range from 40% to 60% across the various undergraduate schools and colleges (see Appendix D; full report at http://www.uvm.edu/~isis/alum/alum11.pdf)

The below chart from the 2012 *Survey of Recent Graduates* reveals that when viewed in the spectrum of quality factors surveyed, Advising rated near the bottom.

The 2011 report from the Office of Institutional Research made the following observations:
- First year students are generally more positive about the academic advising they received than seniors.

- Students who are more positive about their "entire UVM experience" are also more likely to rate academic advising higher.
- Students who say they would come back to UVM are more likely to rate academic advising higher.
- Students who feel that faculty members are helpful and supportive are more likely to rate academic advising higher.
- Students who say they have to work hard to meet instructors' expectations are more likely to rate academic advising higher.
- Students who feel that UVM provides the support to help them achieve academically are more likely to rate academic advising higher.

These points suggest that high quality, supportive advising enriches students' educational experience, and this will logically be reflected in high student retention rates.
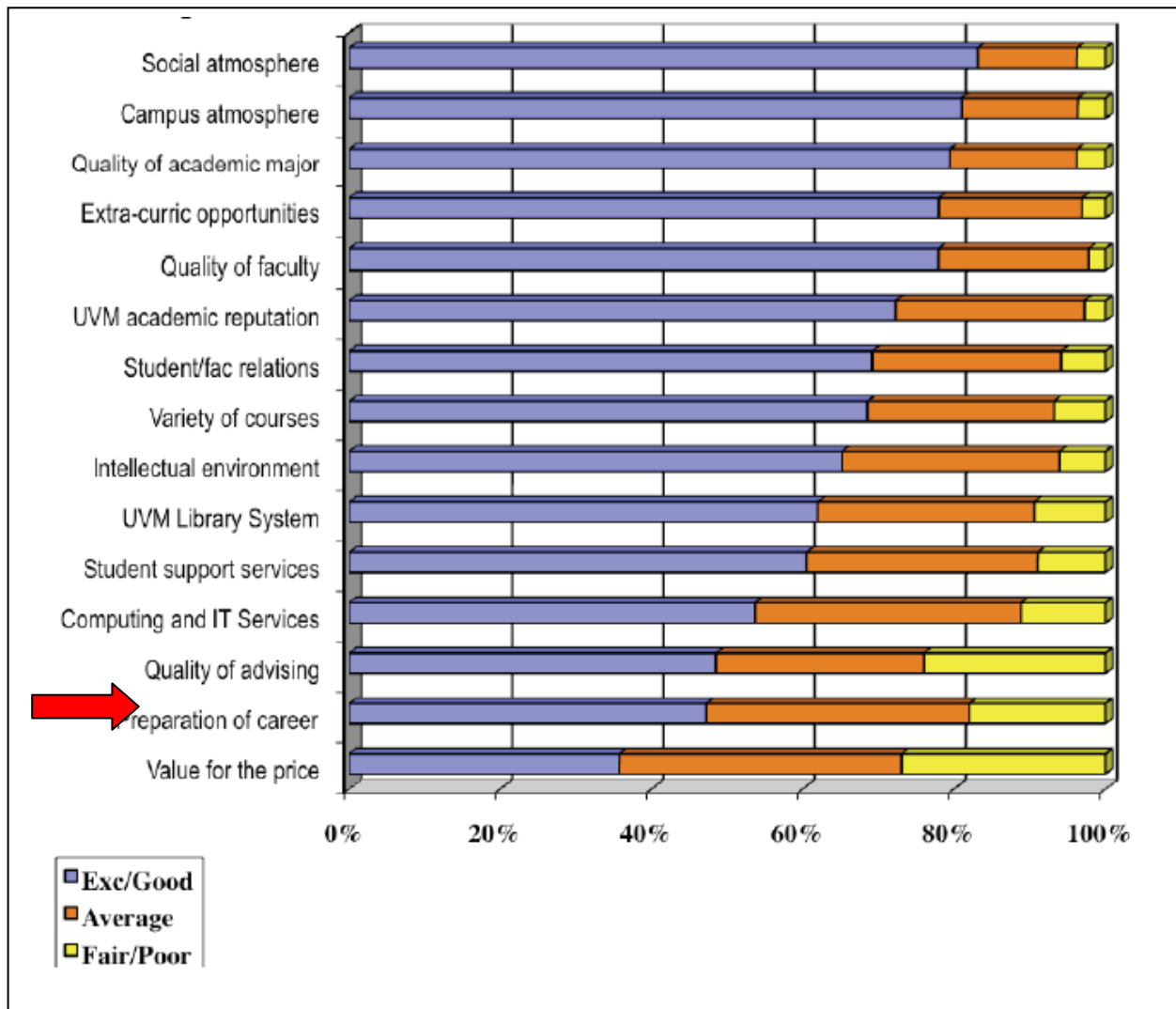
Changing Needs for Student Advising

The needs for student advising are changing. We need to connect students with experiential learning opportunities on campus, in the community and beyond. There is a good body of evidence and growing recognition of the importance of experiential learning through venues such as learning communities, internships, undergraduate research, service-learning, and outreach activities.[5] As noted in *Preparing for Life After UVM: A Career Success Plan[6]*, these practices enhance learning and skill development, and this promotes student success and satisfaction, which in turn leads to improved student retention and career preparation.   The present system of advising is not well designed for making students aware of and connecting them to the many options and opportunities for intellectual and personal growth outside the classroom.

Gap Analysis

The present system of student advising has some strengths, most notably the many excellent, dedicated advisors and some excellent advising systems at the program, department and college levels at UVM. In addition, the recent advent of the student and faculty portals has proven them to be excellent tools that fulfill one of the recommendations of past reports on advising. Finally, the Academic Alert System early warning system is another recent innovation (although it appears to be underutilized). Nevertheless, it is clear that student advising is not uniformly excellent and the present system has a number of weaknesses especially in light of changing needs. The following list has been gleaned from the past reports on advising and input from campus constituencies:

- Lack of rewards for excellence in advising at the University and unit levels and in RPT processes
- Lack of a holistic, shared vision for advising across the academic units in support of students' success
- Lack of a strategic approach to advising at the University level
- Lack of clarity about respective roles and responsibilities in advising
- Lack of coordinated efforts in support of advising across the academic units
- Lack of clear expectations for faculty and staff advisors
- Lack of meaningful and consistent evaluation of the nature and quality of advising and advising systems
- Lack of regular faculty and staff training in student advising
- Faculty advisors, while well versed in their own disciplines, are typically not well versed in all academic and experiential opportunities and student support services across campus. This is less than optimal for all students, but especially those who are undecided about their major or who may be struggling.
- Faculty advising workloads are sometimes so high as to preclude availability to advisees

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[5] Kuh, G.D. (2008) High Impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them and why they matter. Washington DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities.
[6] S. Abu Turab Rizvi, March 17, 2013, report to President Sullivan

- Lack of structured mechanisms by which students have regular contact with their faculty and staff advisors
- Inefficiency: Students often need to visit several different offices dispersed across campus, to get information or to accomplish an advising task.
- External transfer students often have difficulty getting get good advising due to being "off-cycle", and having atypical situations
- The present system is not well tuned to the special needs of non-traditional undergraduate students
- There is good information available online, but getting students to understand where to look is a challenge, especially since many students do not regularly read e-mail messages.

A Vision for Academic Advising at UVM

We propose a new vision to define, strengthen and support academic advising at the unit level as well as the University level. The intent is to preserve and build on the components of advising that are working well while addressing the identified weaknesses in the present system. First we will provide definitions and philosophical bases, then a proposed infrastructure and system for advising.

Philosophical Bases

The key tenet for an effective system of advising is *shared responsibility*. A student is ultimately responsible for the choices he or she makes in college, but in order to make informed decisions, students need the mentoring and advice of academic advisors, student services staff and others in the University community. An effective system of advising ensures that the advising needs of all populations of students are addressed.

Responsibility for promoting excellent advising should rest at several levels including the central administration, Faculty Senate, the academic units, faculty and staff advisors and students. Undergraduate student advising should be assessed at the University level, the unit level and the individual faculty and staff levels, and the information gained should inform actions to improve advising.

Purposes of Academic Advising

The purposes of academic advising are to provide students with informational, developmental and integrative advice in order to:
- assist students in making the transition to college, having a rewarding college experience, planning for life after graduation, and in clarifying their goals and direction
- provide guidance to students in interpreting academic requirements, policies and practices in order to make good decisions related to their academic programs and progression
- make students aware of opportunities for academic and personal growth and development

- help students create and make use of formal and informal networks throughout the University
- connect students with on-campus resources and support services as appropriate

Definitions

Academic Advising Defined[7]

"Academic advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary" (David S. Crockett, Ed., (1987), *Advising Skills, Techniques and Resources: A Compilation of Materials Related to the Organization and Delivery of Advising Services* (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT Corporation). From Crockett's definition we can tease out three strands of academic advising.

Informational advising is concerned with conveying and interpreting information about rules, requirements, and policies of the University. This form of advising is important and needed, but is not by itself enough for the multi-faceted student success that we are aiming for. Partly, this is because scheduling, and program and course choice depend on clarity about academic direction.

Developmental advising focuses on the evolution of life, vocational, and educational goals of the student. There needs to be sufficient clarity about these broad issues for finer-grained informational advising to be successful. Yet these matters may be unclear for students so a goal of advising is to work with the student to achieve sufficient clarity in this area. Such clarity may not arise readily and may involve exploration, reflection and integration on part of the student.
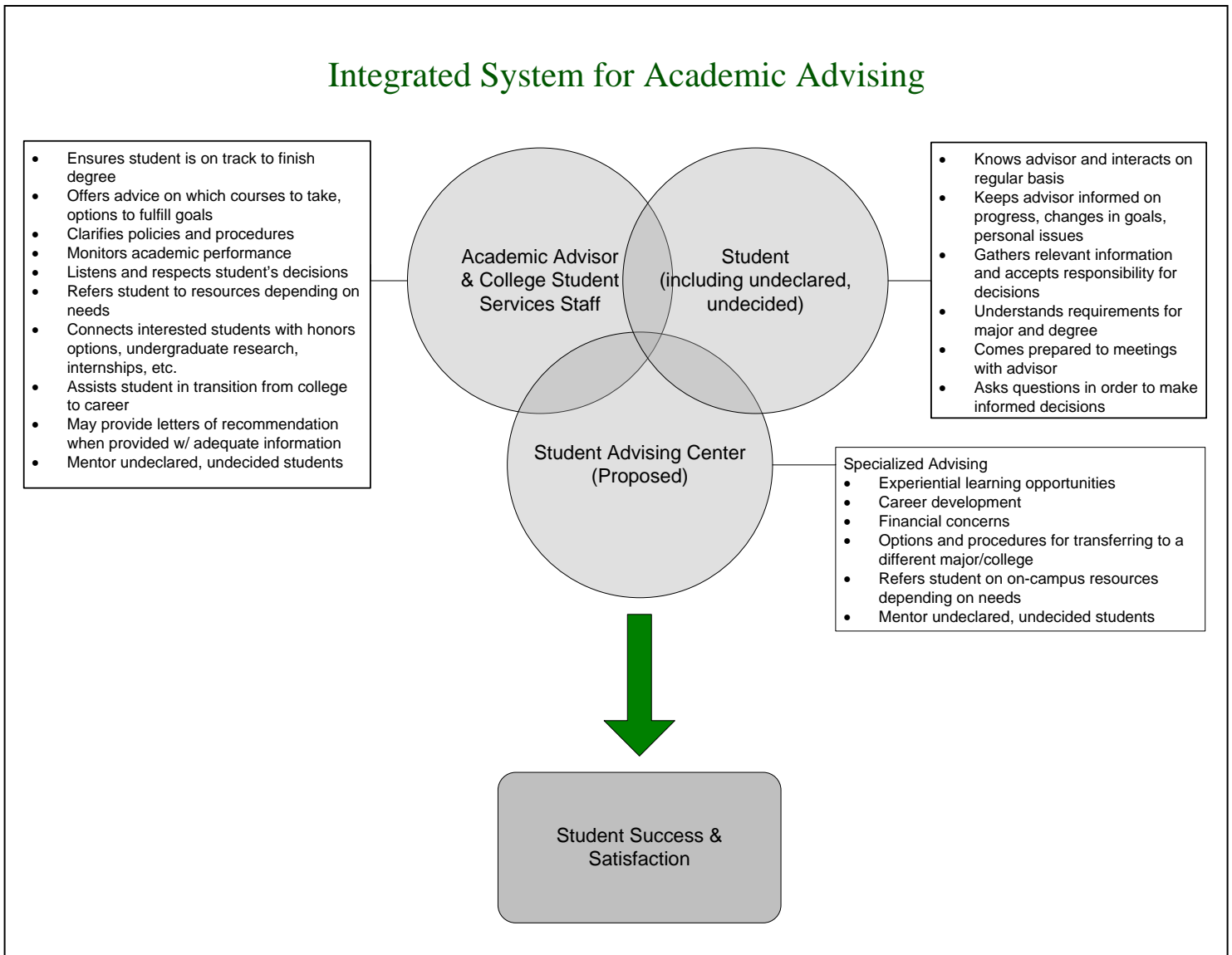
Integrative advising is the attempt to facilitate connections among the student's courses, professors and mentors, experiences in and out of the classroom, ideas and aspirations, and practical goals. The advisor-student relationship is only one of many important relationships a student will have at the University and, ideally, the student will be able to benefit from a rich network of University connections for life-long educational, social, and career purposes. This richness reflects also the fact that no single person will have the knowledge or expertise to provide all aspects of advising for the student. Thus successful academic advising is based on the successful integration of many types of interactions and experiences leading to increased

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[7] The noted considerations rely on the NACADA, Boston University, College of New Jersey, Concordia, Berry College, and other academic advising websites.

clarity about goals and plans, which will, along the way, lead to particular program and curricular choices.

Infrastructure

The vision for an integrated system of student advising draws on the research and the best thinking of the recent reports and integrates it with the Student Career Development initiative. The vision is for a seamless, comprehensive system of student advising in which there are adequate infrastructures to support advising and where all parties understand their respective roles and responsibilities. We propose a three component model as illustrated in the diagram.

Integrated System for Academic Advising

- Ensures student is on track to finish degree
- Offers advice on which courses to take, options to fulfill goals
- Clarifies policies and procedures
- Monitors academic performance
- Listens and respects student's decisions
- Refers student to resources depending on needs
- Connects interested students with honors options, undergraduate research, internships, etc.
- Assists student in transition from college to career
- May provide letters of recommendation when provided w/ adequate information
- Mentor undeclared, undecided students

Academic Advisor & College Student Services Staff

Student (including undeclared, undecided)

- Knows advisor and interacts on regular basis
- Keeps advisor informed on progress, changes in goals, personal issues
- Gathers relevant information and accepts responsibility for decisions
- Understands requirements for major and degree
- Comes prepared to meetings with advisor
- Asks questions in order to make informed decisions

Student Advising Center (Proposed)

Specialized Advising
- Experiential learning opportunities
- Career development
- Financial concerns
- Options and procedures for transferring to a different major/college
- Refers student on on-campus resources depending on needs
- Mentor undeclared, undecided students

Student Success & Satisfaction

We propose the creation of an Advising Center to complement the other two existing components of the model (the Student and the Academic Advisor/Student Services Staff). Such

an Advising Center was recommended by both the 2005 report of the Student experience Task Force and the 2012 Report of the Student Affairs Committee. The Advising Center, which would report to the Provost's Office, would have as its primary focus to serve specialized advising needs including those of undeclared, undecided, transfer, and exchange students. The Advising Center will serve a routing function, directing students where to go on campus for various needs. This go-to place will be responsible for maintaining and continually updating a comprehensive UVM Advising FAQ that will be accessible through the student and faculty portals.

The Davis Center would be an ideal central location for this office, although the services desk at the main entrance to Waterman would work well too. The Center will be charged with coordinating the annual two-day Advising Fair that takes place just prior to the first week of class registration. The Advising Center will also be tasked with student retention tracking, recommendations and management. The staff in the Advising Center will coordinate closely with Career Development staff to make students aware of internships, co-ops, service-learning and other experiential learning opportunities. The Student Services Collaborative, comprised of the student services professionals in each of the undergraduate schools and colleges, has offered to staff the proposed Advising Center on a rotating basis.

As previously noted, the new Student Career Development initiative is designed to help students with career planning and get them connected with internships and other experiential learning opportunities. It makes sense to link academic advising to this new centralized service, and in doing so better provide students with other specialized advising services such as information on the breadth of academic offerings across campus and procedures for changing majors and/or transferring to another college. This is information that academic advisors are not always facile with, so having an authoritative source(s) would help ensure universal availability.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students' Role and Responsibilities
Students must be proactive and responsible for their education. Advisors can help students understand fully all options and avoid needless mistakes only if they take the initiative to seek advice. Student responsibilities include:
- To stay informed about University policies, programs, and codes of conduct.
- To read communications from advisors, faculty members, and other University officials.
- To act on information received during individual appointments.
- To keep the UVM e-mail account current and check it regularly. Other e-mail accounts should be linked the student's UVM e-mail and checked daily.
- To be proactive and take the initiative to contact the advisor.

- ➢ Prepare a list of questions or concerns before each meeting with the advisor.
- ➢ Ask specific questions about policies, procedures, requirements, etc until understood.
- ➢ Seek sources of information that will assist in making academic and career decisions.
- To keep the advisor informed about changes in academic progress, course selection, and academic and career goals.
- To understand the student has the final responsibility to select and register for courses that meet the program plan requirements.
  - ➢ Be familiar with the requirements of the major(s) that you are pursuing, and schedule courses each semester in accordance with those requirements.
  - ➢ Be aware of the prerequisites for each course that you include in your semester schedule and discuss with your advisor how prerequisites will affect the sequencing of your courses.
  - ➢ Follow University procedures for registering courses and for making adjustments to your class schedule.
  - ➢ To comply with academic deadlines for registration, Drop/Add, course withdrawals, etc.
  - ➢ Set up appointments with the advisor well in advance of the deadlines.
- To monitor their own progress towards their degree.
  - ➢ Organize official University documents and notes from meetings in a way that enables retrieval when needed.
  - ➢ Understand academic performance standards (GPA and required courses) for continuation and graduation.
- To keep in touch.

Role and Responsibilities of Faculty Advisors
The advisor helps the student talk through issues and provides information and advice. The advisor refers the student to appropriate contacts within UVM, including advisors and faculty in other programs that the student may want to transfer to. The advisor can be an advocate for the student and provide support or a reality check when needed. Advisor responsibilities include:
- To help the student become more independent and self-directed and to assume responsibility for your decisions and your actions through a mentoring relationship.
- To inform the student of program policies, procedures, and requirements.
- To clarify, interpret, and explain college policies, regulations, programs, and procedures about which the student may have questions.
- To help the student explore his/her interests, abilities, and goals and to help the student define and develop realistic educational and career plans and relate them to academic majors, including referral to Career Services. Other individuals who may help may be in

Residential Life, the Counseling Center, the ALANA Student Center, the Office of International Education, and other areas.

- To offer advice on selecting courses and to assist the student in developing, semester by semester, an academic plan that satisfies degree requirements.
- To monitor the student's progress toward his/her educational goals.
- To discuss with the student his/her academic performance and the implications of performance for degree completion, curricular choices, and graduate programs and professional programs the student wishes to pursue.
- To help the student identify any special needs he/she might have and acquaint him/her with services and programs provided by UVM.
- To connect interested students with honors options, opportunities for undergraduate research and scholarship, and other experiential learning options.
- To be a responsive listener and to refer the student to appropriate resources within the University as necessary in cases where academic or personal problems can be helped by the intervention by other professionals.
- To assist with course adds, drops, withdrawals, and change of academic status.
- To be available to meet with the student several times each semester.
- At the advisor's discretion, to provide letters of recommendation when provided with adequate information

Role and Responsibilities of School/College Student Services Offices

Student services advisors provide and oversee advising activities within each School or College, often serving many of the roles described for faculty advisors. In addition, student services advisors work with targeted student populations requiring additional attention (e.g., first-year, new transfer, ALANA, first-generation college, etc. students) or requiring assistance in areas in which faculty expertise is limited (e.g., mental health and other non-academic circumstances).

Student Services Office advisors activities also include:
- Addressing concerns raised by campus partners:
  o Collaboration with CSES (Center for Student Ethics and Standards) and follow-up
  o Follow-up on faculty concerns about students
  o Collaborating with the Assistant Dean of Students
  o Collaborating with unit academic leaders (Dean and Associate Dean(s))
- Being a responsive listener and to facilitate connections so that the student may access appropriate resources within the University, as necessary (e.g., in cases where academic or personal problems can be helped by the intervention of other professionals; help students with special needs acquaint themselves with services and programs provided by UVM).
- Providing an ongoing advising relationship with students on an individual basis as dictated by student need and situation.

- Initiating outreach to general and targeted student populations. Request meetings with students as appropriate to support those whose circumstances and/or performance warrant extra attention.
- Facilitating connections so that students may explore their interests, abilities, and goals and to help them define and develop realistic educational and career plans. This may result in connecting the student to various other campus resources, such as Career Services, Residential Life, the Counseling Center, the ALANA Student Center, the Office of International Education, and other areas.
- Supporting faculty advisors by serving as a resource for addressing student academic issues that are unusually complex (e.g., cross-college or multiple degree programs) or other issues that would benefit from referral to an appropriate campus support office.

Role and Responsibilities of the Central Administration

Role: To establish and oversee University-wide infrastructures to promote and support high quality academic advising

Responsibilities:

- Administer early warning systems such as Academic Alert and track usage
- Maintain an effective advising web portal for students
- Support and oversee the operations of a proposed Student Advising Center
- Provide faculty development opportunities and resources re: academic advising
  Examples:
    ➢ New Faculty Orientation Workshop
    ➢ Ongoing faculty development workshops throughout the academic year
    ➢ Faculty advising certificate program

Role and Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

Role: To establish and enforce expectations for all faculty advisors and to recognize at the University level outstanding performance in advising

Responsibilities:

- Establish general standards and expectations for all faculty advisors
- Ensure that advising is evaluated rigorously in faculty RPT processes
- To recognize at the University level outstanding performance in advising

Role and Responsibilities of the Academic Units

Role: To promote, support and reward high quality academic advising within the school or college.

Responsibilities:

- To establish an effective system for academic advising based on acknowledged best practices

- To establish assessments of advising appropriate to the discipline and which are formative are well as summative in nature
- To be responsible for the overall quality of academic advising in the unit, quality to be determined by appropriate commonly applied metrics

Role and Responsibilities of the Proposed Advising Center

Role: Specialized advising to students at the University level; special role in helping undecided majors understand options, opportunities, etc.

Responsibilities:
- Open advising and triage for all students (including undeclared, undecided, transfer and exchange students) seeking assistance.
- Serve a routing function, directing students to various offices and services on campus as appropriate.
- Maintain a comprehensive UVM Advising FAQ accessible through the student and faculty portal.
- Coordinate the two-day Advising Fair that is held during advising week.
- Coordinate closely with co-located Career Development staff to make students aware of internships, co-ops, service-learning and other experiential learning opportunities
- Maintain and evaluate data on students served; the number, types and success of experiential learning student retention matches; cross-college transfers and barriers encountered; etc.

IV. Assessment of Advising

Assessments of the quality of undergraduate student advising will be conducted at the University level, the unit level and the individual faculty and staff levels.

The *National Survey of Student Engagement* (**NSSE**) will record UVM students' rating of the quality of advising, and this will be benchmarked against the national data from NSSE. The NSSE will be administered by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) and the results will be posted on OIR's webpage. These data include overall ratings of advising as well as an additional module focused on advising and particular best practices. These data can be benchmarked at both the institutional and college/major program area level. Additional correlational and predictive analyses can be conducted.

UVM's *Recent Graduate Survey* (**RGS**) also will include items to assess the overall quality of advising, and these data will also be stratified by the graduates' home unit. The RGS will contain specific items to assess the quality of advising in the Advising Center. The RGS will be administered by OIR and the results will be posted on OIR's webpage.

Student focus groups will be conducted annually by the Provost's Office to help assess the quality of advising overall and in the Advising Center specifically. The focus groups will be framed in the shared responsibility model. Structured interview questions will be posed, asking students to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the advising system and to propose ideas for improvement.

A tool for the assessment of individual faculty members' performance in advising will be developed by the Professional Standards Committee of the Faculty Senate. This instrument will be administered annually by each academic unit to the advisees of each of its faculty members who have advising responsibilities. The assessment will be framed in the shared responsibility model and students will be asked to assess their own engagement in the advising process, as well as the performance of their academic advisor. The survey data will be kept with appropriate confidentiality safeguards by the college, department chair and faculty member, and used in annual performance evaluations and RPT processes.

A tool for the assessment of the performance of the Advising Center will be developed by the Provost's Office with input from the Student Services Collaborative and the Associates Deans. This instrument will be administered annually by the Provost's Office, and the data will be used in annual assessments of the Center's performance.

Each academic unit will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate mechanisms for assessing the advising performance of their Student Services Staff are in place.

The Provost's Office and the Office of Institutional Research will produce an **annual report on advising**. The report will summarizing the status of undergraduate student advising at UVM, including advising structures and processes as well as the quality of advising. The report will provide recommendations for maintaining excellent advising practices and improving identified areas of weaknesses.

V. Action Plan to Achieve the Vision

To achieve the vision for an integrated system of student advising we recommend the following action steps:

	Recommended Actions	Timeline	Status	Responsible
1	The Provost should charge the deans to establish an advising plan for their respective units. The plans should be based on best practices and tailored to the unique needs of students in the unit. The plans should: ➢ Include course equivalency guidelines for advising responsibilities in workload assignments ➢ identify, reward and increase the responsibility of faculty members that excel at student advising ➢ ensure developmentally responsive advisement sessions targeted by class year (First-Year Advising sessions, Sophomore Advising sessions, Junior Advising sessions, Senior Advising sessions, Minor Advising sessions, Study Abroad Advising Sessions) coordinated by faculty members or advising professionals. ➢ Involve/incentivize third and fourth year students to be peer mentors to first-year students in designated First-Year courses and help them get them get the most out of the advising system. ➢ Ensure that all first-year students are enrolled in a First-Year Experience (FYE) course during their first semester, course to contain a component on advising.			Provost Academic Deans
2	Establish an Advising Center in a central location on campus. The Advising Center should be charged with the functions described above in the Vision and should work integrally with the *Career + Experience Hub*. The Advising Center should report to the Provost's Office.			President and Provost, Student Services Collaborative
3	Create an Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Advising, charged with monitoring advising quality and making recommendations to improve practices. The Advisory Committee will report to the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate.			Student Affairs Committee
4	Conduct focus groups with students at all class levels to determine what students say they need and want with regard to advising.			To be Determined
5	Establish a Faculty/Staff professional development Program in student advising. Purpose: educate re: roles and responsibilities, advising strategies and tools, skills in dealing with special issues such as alcohol and drug abuse.			Provost's Office in collaboration with CTL and involved Offices
6	Put the definitions and respective roles and responsibilities of students and advisors on the advising webpage and advising portals.			Provost's Office in collaboration with the Registrar's Office
7	Conduct standardized evaluations of advising using the same platform used for online course evaluations (pending). Data use and security to be handled in the same manner as for the online course evaluations.			Provost's Office and OIR in collaboration with Professional Standards Committee
8	Require all undergraduate students at the University of Vermont to meet with an advisor each semester before being able to register for classes.			Registrar's Office

9	Establish an ex officio seat on the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate for a member of the Student Services Collaborative for the purpose of promoting an excellent educational experience for students, including advising.			Student Affairs Committee
10	Establish a University Award in recognition of Excellence in Student Advising			Faculty Senate
11	Reformat CAT reports to emulate the Curriculum advising worksheets with a summary check list view.			Registrar
12	Strengthen advising component of June Orientation sessions and establish with students an understanding of shared responsibilities in advising			Student Affairs

Advising at UVM: Recommended Actions
Executive Summary

The recommendations that follow are based on nearly a year of study, discussion and deliberation by a group of faculty, administrators and students. We believe that, as UVM embarks upon its ambitious plan for growing its undergraduate population, that a more coherent approach towards advising is essential to the success of this plan if we are to ensure a high-quality student experience for students. Critical to this effort is the need to ensure that there is a single, high-level administrator (the Vice President for Undergraduate Education) charged with oversight of advising across the campus, who is given the financial and staff resources necessary to support advising activities in the three areas that are outlined below. These recommendations focus on areas that will have a direct impact on the quality of the academic experience for the most vulnerable student group: first-year students.

Oversight and Commitment: Administrative Office in Charge of Advising
We propose that the administrator with direct responsibility for the coordination and oversight of undergraduate advising across the University (the Vice President for Undergraduate Education) be supported in this mission and supplied with the resources and direction needed to both successfully coordinate and support existing advising activities as well as oversee and implement the recommendations presented below.

A. Student Advising Resources

1. Comprehensive University Advising Resources Website
Provide a single web location from which students and advisors can access advising resources.

2. Bring Back the Print(able) Catalog
At the very least, a downloadable and printable version of the catalog (pdf would be an appropriate format) should be made available for each "html-only" version of the online catalog

3. Integration of CATSweb into Advising Programs
With the rollout of CATSweb this fall, units should receive guidance on training their faculty and students to access and use the CATSweb degree audit system; in addition, advisors should receive direction and training on how to incorporate this system into their advising activities.

B. University Advising Infrastructure

1. University Student Advising Center
Where possible and desirable, consolidate advising or advising-related student service offices into a single location, centrally-located, on campus.

2. Evaluation of Advising
Advising assessment should be coordinated and directed centrally and departments and units should be provided with assistance and direction in constructing and delivering assessment tools for the meaningful evaluation of advising.

3. Orientation and 1st-Year Advising Schedule
The VP for Undergraduate Education, in consultation with individual units, should be responsible for establishing a schedule of student/advisor meetings.

4. Mid-Term Warning Letter
Management and integration of the MTWL system into the advising infrastructure at UVM should be the responsibility of the VP for Undergraduate Education.

C. Student-Faculty Connections

1. Faculty Advising Certificate Program/Faculty and Staff Training
All new faculty should be required to attend and participate in a University-wide "Introduction to Advising" workshop as well as additional advisor training in their home units during their 1st semester at UVM.

All faculty, and staff who informally advise students, should be encouraged to attend advising workshops offered regularly at the university level and at the college/school levels.

Faculty participation in these advising "professional development" workshops should be encouraged and recognized by establishing a faculty advising certificate program.

2. First-Year Seminar/Advising Programs
The VP for Undergraduate Education should be responsible for working with each of the units to develop, revise and refine, and implement 1st-year seminar/advising programs that serve both the academic and advising needs of their students.

3. Required Pre-Registration Advising Meeting
We should require students to meet with their advisors prior to being allowed to register for courses .

4. Faculty/Advisor Accessibility
Guidelines for faculty regarding both the number of office hours/week they should offer and how they should be posted/publicized should be established.

ADVISING at UVM: Recommended Actions

Presented by the
Student Experience Task Force
of the
Strategic Enrollment Management Council

Background.

In the fall of 2004, a group of faculty, administrators and students began meeting to discuss the status of undergraduate advising at UVM. We sought to answer three questions: How is advising done across the campus? What are the "best-practices" of these activities? and, 3) How can advising be improved? The so-called "Integrated Advising Group" surveyed all academic and student service/support units, compiling an inventory of advising activities and practices. Student response to these advising resources were solicited and compiled so as to better understand how well these advising initiatives were received. A subset of this group attended an academic advising workshop in order to survey best-practices at other institutions and to better understand how academic advising at UVM fit into the broader picture of our peer and competitor institutions. This advising group was subsequently folded into the bigger "Student Experience" task force (part of the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) council) and now, as a component of its forthcoming report on advising, presents a series of recommendations for improving advising at UVM.

Two points to consider when assessing these recommendations: 1) a number of the recommendations are duplicative of or a based upon recommendations on academic advising passed by the Faculty Senate about 4 years ago that have not been fully implemented, and 2) while advising is rated highly by seniors on the most recent NSSE survey (relative to other schools), first-year students rank advising at UVM on a par with other comparator institutions, most of which dwarf UVM in size. These recommendations, then, address issues that have previously been identified as needing attention as well as focus on the addressing the needs of students early in their UVM careers, when they are most vulnerable to failure (and, thus, most likely to leave UVM) and where students have not indicated as high a level of satisfaction with their advising experience as do those students who stay at UVM to their 4th year.

The recommendations that follow fall into three areas, but one recommendation impacts on all of the others and, so, is presented separately:

Oversight and Commitment: Administrative Office in Charge of Advising

> The advising practices and activities across campus represent significant investments of thought and time and personnel, but suffer from a lack of coherent oversight, decreasing their efficacy. Each unit has unique student, faculty and curricular needs and, as such, should be free to implement advising programs that meet those needs. However, the lack of coherent

coordination of resources across the units hinders the ability of each unit to best advise their students.

RECOMMENDATION: *We propose that the administrator with direct responsibility for the coordination and oversight of undergraduate advising across the University (the Vice President for Undergraduate Education) be supported in this mission and supplied with the resources and direction needed to both successfully coordinate and support existing advising activities as well as oversee and implement the recommendations presented in this report.* Oversight and support for advising must ultimately come at the University level and be recognized as an essential component of ensuring the quality of the student experience at UVM. This impacts directly on student retention (especially first-year to second-year retention) and on our students' ability to find the programs at UVM that will make their experience here valuable. Accordingly, *the VP for Undergraduate Education's charge with respect to advising should be enhanced and refocused* so that it is possible to provide the broad oversight and coordination of advising that is needed to ensure a high-quality student experience at UVM.

More specifically, the VP for Undergraduate Education should be charged with:

- Maintaining an inventory of existing advising resources and programs across the UVM campus

- Coordinating advising resources and programs across the UVM campus

- Promoting and providing student/faculty/staff access to advising resources and programs across the UVM campus

- Evaluating advising – both programs and individuals engaged in advising activities

- Overseeing advisor training activities, including evaluating the effectiveness of training programs and implementing new training programs where needed

- Where necessary, establishing programs and/or procedures to provide advising activities not currently available

- Implementing advising enhancement recommendations detailed later in this document

- Serving as a central source for information about or procedures relating to undergraduate advising at UVM

- Coordinating advising of academically at-risk students across the University (e.g., students on academic probation in one unit who

would like to transfer to another UVM unit more appropriate to their interests and abilities)

- Working with the Student Government Association and Orientation Leaders to coordinate peer advising initiatives

The recommendations that follow are grouped according to the area of the intended impact on advising activities – they are presented in no particular order as we feel that all of the recommended actions fill important gaps in our current advising system.

A. Student Advising Resources

Students need to be empowered to take greater responsibility for planning their academic programs, but the tools needed for them to do so are not always appropriate or sufficient to support them. We make three recommendations here that will empower students to play a more significant role in planning their academic future at UVM.

1. Comprehensive University Advising Resources Website

Advising resources on the UVM website are currently distributed such that, unless a student (or advisor) knows what they are looking for, it is often difficult or impossible to find the information sought.

While there currently is an advising website at UVM (see: http://www.uvm.edu/academics/undergraduate/advising/), the focus of this site is to *describe and define* advising, but not to provide a practical consolidation of the disparate resources available for advising on campus.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide a single web location from which students and advisors can access advising resources. Although this could ultimately become the web presence for a *physical* campus advising center, this can initially be established as a *virtual* advising center and include links to currently available UVM web resources. This site would be established and maintained centrally, through the office of the VP for Undergraduate Education.

Some examples from other Universities:
University of Florida:
http://www.advising.ufl.edu/
University of Arizona:
http://advising.arizona.edu/
UNH:
http://www.unh.edu/uacc/index.html
Brown University:
http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/advising/

2. Bring Back the Print(able) Catalog

The most significant advising tool used at any academic institution is the catalog, a listing of officially-approved courses, programs, majors, minors, concentrations, degrees and degree options offered by the school. UVM's switch to an online-only catalog has made advising more difficult (it requires a computer connected to the web in order to be accessed, making the advising process more clumsy at best and, often, impossible). The need for a printed catalog is highlighted by the introduction and steady yearly growth of the so-called "Advising Handbook," which is simply a more cheaply printed subset of what used to be the catalog. This printed handbook has grown to such a point that it now duplicates much of what is available online and, oddly enough, is itself now available online (as a pdf file). This duplication of effort now requires departments and units to compose and proof copy for *TWO* different "catalogs," sometimes resulting in information on the same program that differs from one "catalog" to the other in the same year.

Furthermore, while initially there were pdf versions of the online catalog that could be downloaded and used off-line (and locally archived digitally or on paper), beginning with the 2003-2004 catalog, the catalog is only available as "html-only" and so *cannot be archived at all off-line or printed as a reference*.

While there are obvious benefits to a "hypertext" catalog format, they accrue only when online and can be a hindrance when advising, especially when access to a computer or an internet connection is not possible. As an historical reference for advising purposes, the online catalog has proved to be unreliable, with some entries changing within and after the academic year as new curricular changes are implemented in newer versions of the catalog (example: try finding a Women's Studies course by browsing the "course by subject" listing in the 2003-2004 online catalog – the Women's Studies entry vanished when the program name changed last year).

RECOMMENDATIONS: *At the very least, a downloadable and printable version of the catalog (pdf would be an appropriate format) should be made available for each "html-only" version of the online catalog* so that curricular information from each academic year can be easily accessed for advising purposes both online and offline. We strongly urge that a printed version of the catalog (similar in print format to what preceded the online catalog) be made available at least on an every-other-year basis and, preferably, every year. There should be sufficient numbers of the catalog printed so that each incoming student and every advising faculty and staff member can be provided with a copy.

3. **Integration of CATSweb into Advising Programs**

The introduction of the CATSweb degree audit system this year should be recognized as an opportunity to rethink the ways in which students and their advisors interact. This is an enormously powerful system that has been designed and implemented with great care so that accurate information is available to students and their advisors, automating the course "bookkeeping" process.

One possible danger accompanying the introduction of this system is that it could lead to *greater disengagement* of students and advisors if both parties view CATSweb availability as decreasing the need for students to meet with their advisors when planning their course schedules. Instead, CATSweb should be positioned and promoted as a schedule-planning tool that students and their advisors use when engaged in schedule-planning discussions. This tool should decrease the need for them to spend time on the more mundane planning tasks, allowing them to focus on more substantive issues (choosing a major, timing of courses, career and research opportunities, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION: With the rollout of CATSweb this fall, units should receive guidance on training their faculty and students to access and use the CATSweb degree audit system; in addition, advisors should receive direction and training on how to incorporate this system into their advising activities. As with the other advising training and assessment activities we've recommended (see below), we think that this is best accomplished with coordination and direction from the VP for Undergraduate Education. At the very least, there should be information and support for training made available for faculty in all units (from central administration) and promotion of CATSweb within the university community as a powerful new advising tool designed to enhance and facilitate student/faculty-advisor interactions.

We have an unusual opportunity to utilize the introduction of CATSweb as a vehicle for building and improving advising relationships between students and faculty; it would be a shame if we did not capitalize on this opportunity and maximize the benefit from the introduction of our new degree audit system.

B. University Advising Infrastructure

The culture of advising at UVM is reflected in the infrastructure in place to support advising activities. We make four recommendations here that directly address infrastructure limitations that have, thus far, limited support for student success. Development, initiation, implementation and on-going management of these initiatives would be the purview of the VP for Undergraduate Education.

1. University Student Advising Center

Currently, students need to visit several different offices, often dispersed across campus, either to get advising information or to accomplish an advising task. While there are many times when it is most appropriate and necessary for a student to visit their unit's Dean's Office or the office of a department or program, often the dispersion of offices serving students is due to administrative convenience and hinders the ability of students to receive the advice and services they need.

RECOMMENDATION: *Where possible and desirable, consolidate advising or advising-related student service offices into a single location, centrally-located, on campus.* We see the genesis of such a facility with the student services desk on the first floor of Waterman. We envision students walking up to such a receiving desk and asking questions relating to course registration, academic advising, career planning, summer internships, tutoring, financial aid, scholarships, workshops, etc. This should be a "one-stop" location for student services with the front desk providing general support and direction to the appropriate offices, all located within the building or nearby. While not all such offices could be (or should be) located in a single place, common major services should be available, including functions provided by, for example, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid/Scholarship Aid, Career Services, ACCESS, the Learning Coop, Study Abroad, the Counseling Center, as well as general academic advising services.

Academic advising might be available on a walk-in basis for students who are not able to reach their assigned faculty advisor or who have unique problems that go beyond the expertise of their faculty advisor – much as is done in some units' Dean's Offices currently. These advising services would not necessarily *replace* those currently offered, but would serve as another location where units can offer those services (either via assigned specially-trained faculty or by providing advising staff at designated times at this central facility).

2. Evaluation of Advising

Although advising is now a component of faculty annual and RPT review processes, advising as a whole and in particular is evaluated only sporadically and inconsistently across the University. Some departments and units across

campus have developed and implemented evaluation surveys to assess their advising systems. Much of what is presented, however, serves either to detail advising *efforts* or to evaluate advising that is inconsistently accessed by students. Often the survey results serve more to evaluate *whether* advising was sought, rather than the value of the advising activities themselves.

Meaningful assessment of advising is difficult and deserves attention by those well-versed in designing and implementing advising evaluation tools. Assessment methods should be consistent across units, if possible, so that the efficacy of the different approaches towards advising can be fairly measured and compared.

RECOMMENDATION: Advising assessment should be coordinated and directed centrally (ultimately by the office of the VP for Undergraduate Education) and departments and units should be provided with assistance and direction in constructing and delivering assessment tools for the meaningful evaluation of advising. Initial work should involve pilot evaluation programs to ensure that the needs of the individual programs and faculty advisors are met. Ultimately, the results of these assessments should be utilized in faculty and program review processes and form the basis for ongoing improvements to existing advising programs and advising policies.

3. Orientation and 1st-Year Advising Schedule

If advising relationships are to be successful once students declare their majors and enter into the academic community of their major department or program, both students and faculty need to establish those relationships early in a student's UVM career. From the first UVM advising experiences at June Orientation through the first year, a schedule of student/faculty advising opportunities should be established. Some units do this explicitly while others may or may not, depending upon the academic circumstances of their students.

RECOMMENDATION: The VP for Undergraduate Education, in consultation with individual units, should be responsible for establishing a schedule of student/advisor meetings in which students and their advisors are prompted to meet (or communicate) at appropriate times between June Orientation and the end of the student's first year. For many units, this will involve a codification of already existing practices – but for all, it will involve establishing and publicizing a mutual commitment between students and their advisors (a commitment that will form the basis of the advising expectations for both students and faculty across all of the undergraduate years).

4. Mid-Term Warning Letter

The mid-term warning letter (MTWL) is an important mechanism for identifying students who show potential for academic failure. Implemented over the years by some units, last year (2004-2005 AY) it was made available for all units via an online system incorporated into the BANNER student information system, as a result of the efforts of the now-defunct First-Year Experience committee. This online MTWL system interfaces directly into the advising system so that when a MTWL is generated, a copy is emailed not only to the student, but also to the student's academic advisor and the Dean's Office of the college or school in which the student is enrolled.

RECOMMENDATION: *Management and integration of the MTWL system into the advising infrastructure at UVM should be the responsibility of the VP for Undergraduate Education.* We make this recommendation based on two concerns: the group that implemented the MTWL system during the previous academic year no longer exists, leaving the system without any responsible party charged with its administration and, the value of this system as an advising tool is currently limited to the voluntary use of the system by units and faculty. We are pleased to see that the MTWL system has been updated and its availability advertised for the current academic year (2005-2006 AY), but we wish to ensure that it will continue to be updated and promoted (without our prompting) and, possibly more importantly, its use promoted and standardized across units so that students and faculty have a consistent expectation for the academic circumstances under which the MTWL will be sent by faculty and received by students and their advisors.

C. Student-Faculty Connections

Students and their advisors are more likely to meet and develop meaningful relationships when there is institutional support ensuring that advisors are trained and available for targeted advising interactions. The following four recommendations, then, address programs that can be put into place to enhance these connections between students and their advisors. These recommendations should be implemented by the office of the VP for Undergraduate Education.

1. Faculty Advising Certificate Program/Faculty and Staff Training

Faculty are expected to provide accurate information on issues as far reaching as curriculum, campus activities, pre-professional and graduate schools, major/minor/degree choice, careers and career paths in addition to being a personal contact and mentor to students. In addition, informal advising occurs in such places as ACCESS, the ALANA Student Center, Athletics, Career Services, the Center for Health and Wellbeing, Orientation, TRiO, etc. Training for these tasks is, however, subject to great variation across the units and staff learn what they can on their own. While there is

much information that is unit-based and should be presented at that level, there is much that can be presented to faculty advisors across *all of the units* that would be of value.

Currently there is no oversight of the training faculty receive as advisors, nor is there a university-wide training program for faculty advisors. This not only leaves many of our faculty (especially new faculty) without the training necessary to be an effective advisor, but also sends a message to faculty that their advising efforts are not valued or supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1) All new faculty should be required to attend and participate in a University-wide "Introduction to Advising" workshop during their 1st semester at UVM,

2) All new faculty should receive additional advisor training in their home units during their 1st semester at UVM – this can be accomplished either via workshop and/or via faculty mentor assigned to work with the new faculty member,

3) All faculty, and staff who informally advise students, should be encouraged to attend advising workshops offered regularly at the university level and at the college/school level – these workshops can vary in topic area from "curriculum/requirements refreshers" to special topics (such as FERPA and student privacy laws, student mental health issues, advising undecided students, career advising, advising challenges, advising non-traditional students, first-year student advising, etc.). Staff who do informal advising might be invited to attend general advising workshops (and in some cases they might be the presenters).

4) Faculty participation in these advising "professional development" workshops should be encouraged and recognized by establishing a faculty advising certificate program. In this program, faculty participation in a specified number and level of advising workshops would be officially recognized through an advising program "certificate." A "master advisor" program for more senior accomplished advisors would encourage and recognize our very best faculty advisors and engage them in leading advising workshops and in mentoring junior faculty. Incentives (financial and other) should be considered as a means of encouraging and rewarding faculty who participate in these activities.

2. First-Year Seminar/Advising Programs
The first-year experience is critical to establishing effective advising relationships and habits and a successful start to a student's UVM education.

Some courses (e.g., EDHI 55, PSYC 15) have been designed and offered specifically to address skills often lacking in first-year students. In response to this obvious need for engaging students with faculty advisors during the first semester of their first year, many first-year programs have been developed across the University – the Teacher Advisor Program (TAP) offered by the College of Arts and Sciences is one successful example, but there are also other examples across the units. Some have been extremely successful in engaging students in an academic discipline as well as ensuring students have significant interaction with their faculty advisor at a time when they are making the critical transition to being a UVM student. Currently, these programs vary considerably from unit to unit with respect to both their availability and their efficacy.

RECOMMENDATION: *The VP for Undergraduate Education should be responsible for working with each of the units to develop, revise and refine, and implement 1ˢᵗ-year seminar/advising programs that serve both the academic and advising needs of their students.* Resource issues must be addressed centrally if these programs are to be made available to at least *all* first-semester first-year students.

3. Required Pre-Registration Advising Meeting
Prior to the introduction of online registration at UVM, students were required to obtain their advisor's signature on a pre-registration form, ensuring that they had met with their advisor. At that time, there was an expectation that both students and faculty were responsible for ensuring that advising meetings took place – over the years, this expectation has vanished, resulting in a situation where students often seek out their advisors only in order to obtain information or required signatures relating to academic difficulties (e.g., course withdrawal forms). Faculty spend too much of their time trying to convince students to see them regularly (and in documenting those attempts) and not enough time actually interacting with students. Advising is a shared responsibility between students and faculty, but our current system does not encourage and support that relationship.

RECOMMENDATION: *We should require students to meet with their advisors prior to being allowed to register for courses* – an electronic version of the old "pre-registration advisor signature." We suggest that this be implemented initially for first-year students only as it will take some time to rebuild the advising expectations of faculty and students and because advising is such a critical component of the 1ˢᵗ-year experience. Expanding the program to the sophomore and later years should be explored based on the experiences of students and faculty to the 1ˢᵗ-year advising experience.

(NOTE: this program is being piloted by the College of Arts and Sciences beginning in the Fall 2005 semester for all of their first-time first-year students. The results of this pilot program should be evaluated and considered when determining whether to expand this requirement to other school/colleges and to students other than first-years.)

4. Faculty/Advisor Accessibility

The accessibility of faculty for advising purposes should not be a limitation for students seeking to meet with their advisors. While many faculty advisors have clearly posted office hours and make themselves available for appointments outside of those hours, there are no uniform expectations for either the number of hours/week that faculty should be available for meeting outside of class with students or for the mechanism of publicizing those hours.

RECOMMENDATION: Guidelines for faculty regarding both the number of office hours/week they should offer and how they should be posted/publicized should be established. This impacts on faculty workload issues, and so must be coordinated by the VP for Undergraduate Education with the Provost, but every student should be able to easily determine when their faculty advisor is available for consultation and to be able, if necessary, to contact them to have advising questions answered.

Advising at UVM: Recommended Actions

Presented by the
Student Affairs Committee
May 17th, 2012

The Student Affairs Committee recommend the university articulate guidelines for an advisement policy to improve student retention, student course enrollment management and student satisfaction. In addition to improving the student experience, enhanced advising guidelines and tools will enable faculty to better meet expectations of the administration and of their advisees.

A comprehensive and developmentally responsible advising model enhancement at UVM should include the following items.

1. **CATs Report Enhancement.** The committee finds the font, layout and unnecessary text on the CATs reports to be challenging to interpret compared to the traditional curriculum worksheets (e.g. [Bachelor of Science in Business Administration](#)). The committee recommends the CATs report be reformatted and restructured to emulate the Curriculum advising worksheets with a summary check list view.

2. **Student Advising Service Center.** The committee recommends that the University create an Advising Service Center in a centrally located facility. This committee recommends that the Office of the Provost be charged with coordinating the creation and management of an advising center at the University of Vermont.
   a. The Student Advising Center would be the first stop for all students (undeclared, undecided, transfer, exchange…) to seek advising assistance and serve as routing desk for where to go on campus for their questions. This go-to place would be responsible for maintaining a comprehensive and continually maintained UVM Advising FAQ to be accessible through the student and faculty portal. The committee suggests the Davis Center would be an ideal centralized location for this type of office.
   b. The committee recommends this department coordinate an Advising Fair to be held in the Davis Center for two days during advising week. Each unit on campus would be responsible for sending advising representation to this fair occurring very close to the first week of class registration
   c. This center would be tasked with student retention tracking, recommendations and management.

3. **Adaptive Advising Assignments.** The committee recommends that units on campus identify, reward and increase the responsibility of faculty members that excel at student advising.
   a. The committee recommends that deans develop student advising plans and course equivalency guidelines for advising responsibilities.
   b. The committee recommends that the university conduct standardized advising evaluations using the same platform used for the course evaluations.
   c. The committee recommends that advising be removed from the RPT model until such time that the advising responsibilities of faculty are clearly defined.
   d. The committee recommends that the university have an Excellence in Student Advising reward.

4. **Required First Year Advising Sessions.** The committee proposes that all first year students at the University of Vermont be required to meet with an advisor each semester of their first year *before* being able to register for classes.
   a. The committee recommends units on campus consider more developmentally responsive advisement sessions targeted by class year (First Year Advising sessions, Sophomore Advising sessions, Junior Advising sessions, Senior Advising sessions, Minor Advising sessions, Study Abroad Advising Sessions) coordinated by faculty members or advising professionals in their departments.
   b. The committee recommends that this group advising model include peer advising by involving/incentivizing third and fourth year students to take part in this advising experience.
   c. The Committee recommends that all first year students be enrolled in a course their first semester at UVM with an advising component.

5. **Advising Task Force.** The committee recommends that a Task Force be formed with representation of all committees involved in discussions around Student Advising.
   a. This task force would be to clearly define committee responsibilities in the area of advising.

Quality of Academic Advising at UVM:
A Brief Overview

The data used in this report are culled from two sources: the "National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)" and the "Survey of Recent Graduates." In both cases, data points are weighted to correct an imbalance in gender participation. In general, one expects that responses from the Survey of Recent Graduates to be slightly more positive than those from current students (especially first-year students) because the most dissatisfied students would have been more likely to have dropped out or transferred out before graduation.

PART 1: National Survey of Student Engagement

Acad Advise	Freq	Percent
Poor	227.2	8.02
Fair	564.5	19.92
Good	1236.4	43.63
Excellent	806.0	28.44
Missing =	371.6	

About 72% of the respondents (3 surveys combined) indicated that the quality of academic advising at UVM was either "good" or "excellent" and only 8% said "poor."

In 2005, UVM seniors significantly above the benchmark for rating of quality of academic advising

In 2008 and 2011, both first-years and seniors at UVM were similar to the benchmark for rating of quality of academic advising

In 2011, seniors were below benchmark for agreement with the statement "institution emphasizes providing support you need to succeed academically"

NSSE Means 2005, 2008, and 2011

		2005	**2008**	**2011**
Institution emphasizes providing support you need to succeed academically				
(4-point scale, very little to very much)	**FY**	2.97	3.08	3.13
	SR	2.88(++)	2.94	2.82 (---)
Quality of academic advising you received				
(4-point scale, poor to excellent)	**FY**	2.89	2.98	3.03
	SR	2.92(++)	2.83	2.82

(++ significantly higher than benchmark;.01 level)

(--- significantly lower than benchmark; .001 level)

GLM Model Results

Using the variables listed below, a generalized linear model (GLM) is fitted with "academic advise" (a rating scale for the quality of academic advising) as the dependent variable:

- Year (the NSSE were conducted in 2005, 2008 and 2011)
- Class rank (1st year, senior)
- Gender (female, male)
- Residency (Vermont, out-of-state)
- Entirexp: How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution? (poor, fair, good, excellent)
- Samecoll: If you could start over again, would you go to the SAME INSTITUTION you are now attending? (definitely not, probably not, probably yes, definitely yes)
- Workhard: Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations (never, sometimes, often, very often)
- Envschol: Institutional emphasis: Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work (very little, some, quite a bit, very much)
- Envsuprt: Institutional emphasis: Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically (very little, some, quite a bit, very much)

Summary of Results

- **This model explains about 27% of the variation in the quality ratings for academic advising.**
- **First year students are generally more positive about the academic advising they received than seniors.**
- **Students who are more positive about their "entire UVM experience" are also more likely to rate academic advising higher.**
- **Students who say they would come back to UVM are more likely to rate academic advising higher.**
- **Students who feel that faculty members are helpful and supportive are more likely to rate academic advising higher.**
- **Students who say they have to work hard to meet instructors' expectations are more likely to rate academic advising higher.**
- **Students who feel that UVM provides the support to help them achieve academically are more likely to rate academic advising higher.**

PART 2: Survey of Recent Graduates

The "Survey of Recent Graduates" has gone through several minor changes in the last ten years. Some new questions were added, some rephrased and during this period the School of Nursing and Health Sciences merged into one. With that in mind, in 2001 the "quality of academic advising" item was written as "quality of academic guidance".

Alumni: Quality of Advising
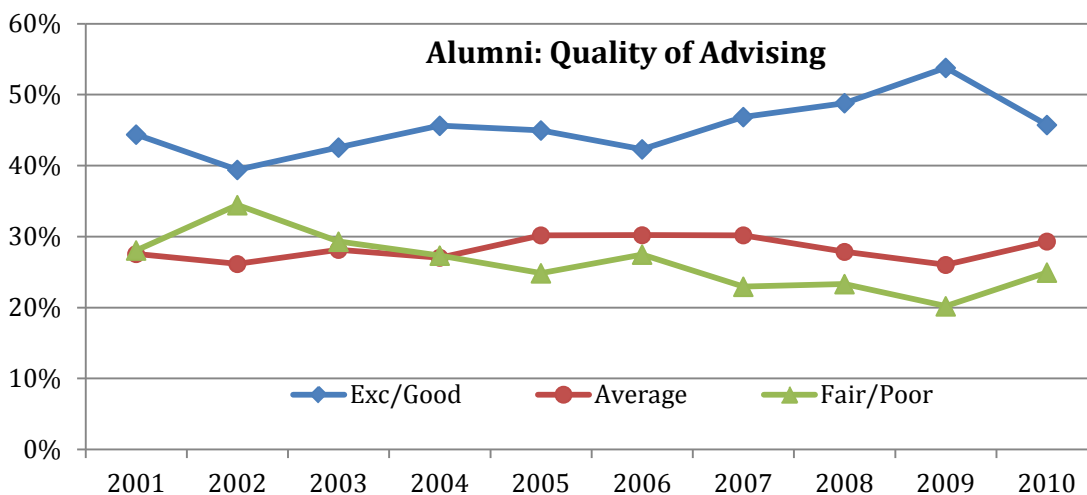
The percentage of alumni indicating that quality of advising was either "Excellent" or "Good" ranges from a low of 39% to a high of 54%. From alumni graduating in 2002 to those who graduated in 2009, there is arguably an upward trend (the lone decline was in 2006). Unfortunately, nearly half of the accumulated gain was lost based on 2010 alumni responses.

Quality of Advising by Overall Satisfaction with UVM

$R^2 = 0.4244$
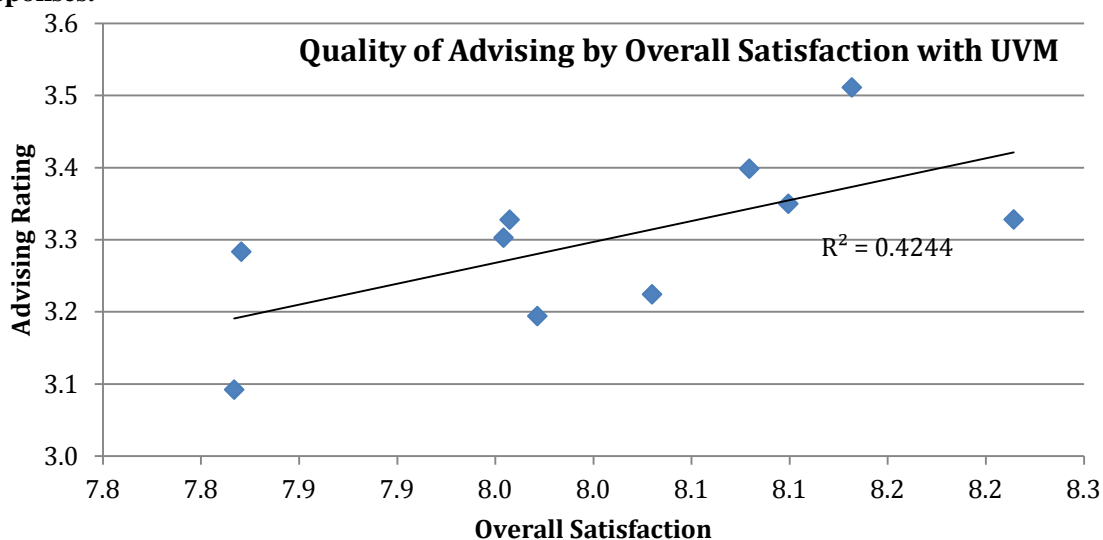
The purpose of the "Quality of Advising by Overall Satisfaction with UVM" graph above is to show a fairly strong association between the two variables. Quality of advising ratings also are consistently and significantly correlated with students' reports via NSSE of UVM's impact on various dimensions of their learning and development. Additionally, students'

self-reports in NSSE of working harder than they thought possible in order to meet an instructor's expectations were positively correlated with their quality of advising rating.

Over the decade, Business Administration and Arts & Sciences ranked near the bottom in the percentages of "Good" and "Excellent." On the other hand, Agriculture & Life Sciences and Education & Social Services hovered near the top.

It should be noted that Business Administration conducts its own surveys of alumni and finds much more positive ratings.

College/school graduated from vs Quality of advising

	Exc/Good		Average		Fair/Poor		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agriculture & Life Sci	148	52.7%	80	28.5%	53	18.9%	281	100.0%
Env & Natural Resources	63	48.8%	28	21.7%	38	29.5%	129	100.0%
Arts & Sciences	509	44.1%	319	27.7%	325	28.2%	1,153	100.0%
Business Administration	79	40.1%	72	36.5%	46	23.4%	197	100.0%
Engineering & Math	97	53.3%	41	22.5%	44	24.2%	182	100.0%
Education & Social Serv	125	62.2%	47	23.4%	29	14.4%	201	100.0%
Nursing & Health Sci	103	59.9%	49	28.5%	20	11.6%	172	100.0%
Total	1,124	48.6%	636	27.5%	555	24.0%	2,315	100.0%

	Quality of advising	
	#	%
Excellent	479	20.7%
Good	645	27.8%
Average	637	27.5%
Fair	348	15.0%
Poor	208	9.0%
Total	2,317	100.0%

College/school graduated from vs Quality of advising

Social atmosphere				
Campus atmosphere				
Quality of academic major				
Extra-curric opportunities				
Quality of faculty				
UVM academic reputation				
Student/fac relations				
Variety of courses				
Intellectual environment				
UVM Library System				
Student support services				
Computing and IT Services				
Quality of advising				
Preparation of career				
Value for the price				

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

■ Exc/Good
■ Average
■ Fair/Poor