

**URI Initiative:
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: ADVISING FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS
FROM ADMISSIONS TO GRADUATION**

Introduction

The role of academic advising in student success (retention and graduation) is clear: students who engage with advisors are more successful than those who do not. Still, we have not yet developed a comprehensive advising model that will support student advising at the level we believe is needed. The Provost has asked University College to help lead the effort for improved advising across the institution. Because student learning and success must be seen as a campus-wide initiative, it is important that all departments involved in advising be part of the planning and delivery of advising services that are effective and efficient. We will use our expertise in advising to help identify a plan that will allow students to navigate successfully through URI from Orientation to Graduation. In this plan we will 1) identify goals of effective academic advising, 2) maximize current resources, 3) identify new resources needed to reach our goals, and 4) evaluate success in each initiative.

Our current advising services in University College and through the Degree-granting Colleges are adequate at best. We know from NSSE data and various surveys on student satisfaction at the University of Rhode Island that advising across the undergraduate experience is not consistent and remains an area of concern. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First of all, while we excel in caring about students and being knowledgeable about what they may need, we simply have too few people serving too many students. Further, too many faculty are cajoled into this role. Many view their advising responsibilities as a burden, added to already full schedules of teaching and research.

Some faculty are simply more comfortable advising juniors and seniors, working more as “mentors” for career and professional advice; they are not as comfortable in the more technical aspect of advising. Good advising requires both knowledge of the curriculum and strong listening and mentoring skills. Advisor training can help make advisors more effective in both of these roles. Combined with a program of recognition and reward for faculty serving as advisors, this strategy is a way to maximize our limited resources.

Since first year retention is a strong indicator of eventual graduation, focusing on excellence in first year advising makes sense. We have been working on ways to build a solid advising foundation in the first year experience, but we must pay attention as well to how those services continue throughout a student’s undergraduate years. We need, for example, clear communication between and among Admissions, University College and the degree granting colleges, so that we can follow the progress of students and be ready to help them find solutions to whatever problem they encounter. Each degree granting college has its own unique model for addressing advising, and it is important that everyone involved knows how those processes work. We must be committed to

maximizing current resources through 1) improved faculty and staff knowledge and skill in the advising role and 2) improved communication between departments/colleges.

Each campus office involved in advising provides unique information and perspectives that must be considered in a comprehensive advising plan. The degree-granting colleges (including ASFCCE), our colleagues at CCRI, Admissions and Enrollment Management are essential partners for University College in guiding the process in developing an excellent (i.e., accessible, knowledgeable and caring) advising model for the institution. Improving academic advising at the University of Rhode Island-- faculty advisor preparation, advisor reward structures, interdepartmental communication, and better data management--requires the diligent work of many people.

The goals and strategies below should serve as a guide for discussing essential elements of a comprehensive advising plan for the University of Rhode Island.

URI/University College Initiative: Develop a comprehensive advising plan for student academic success

Goal 1: Develop and design an advising model that is consistent across the University and addresses the academic advising needs of all students from admission through to graduation.

Strategy 1: Identify the leadership who will coordinate with all degree granting colleges, CCE, Enrollment Services, and Admissions to design a comprehensive advising model

Action 1: Under the direction of the Provost, convene a steering committee with representatives from each of the above offices to outline an advising model that includes standards for guidelines and processes.

Action 2: Seek endorsement and cooperation from the Council of Deans, the Enrollment Management Advisory Committee, and the Enrollment Services Advisory Committee to ensure that practices and policies are cohesive.

Action 3: Each Dean will approve the implementation plan created by the steering committee, which will include unique and specific requirements for each college, and which will then be approved by the Provost.

Strategy 2: Focus on first year students and advising in University College.

Action 1: All colleges will assign advisors to Summer Orientation who will then serve as the UC advisor for their majors, for at least one year, preferably two.

Action 2: Departments that do not have an orientation advisor (due to small numbers) will collaborate with the assigned orientation

advisor of the compatible major, providing updated curriculum sheets and any other major advising issues.

Action 3: Whenever possible, first year advisors will teach URI 101 for their majors.

Action 4: Ensure that all majors provide the necessary number of advisors per majors.

Action 5: Develop group-advising approaches in and out of the classroom (living learning communities, URI 101, gateway courses for majors)

Strategy 3: Ensure a smooth transition from University College to the Degree Granting College

Action 1: Each advisor and liaison (see Goal 2, Strategy 2) will determine the process for student transcript evaluation for transfer from UC. This will be completed in February and again in July.

Action 2: Once students are ready to transfer, they will be administratively moved and the welcoming DGC will communicate immediately with students regarding who their advisor is and how to contact their advisor.

Action 3: Faculty advisors will receive immediate updates concerning advisees' contact information so advisors can send a welcoming and informative letter to each advisee, encouraging them to make an appointment for advising.

Action 4: DGC will use "URI Advisement" System to inform students about their college home (communication function).

Strategy 4: A unified Advising Plan will be created across all DGCs outlining the advising process for their majors through to graduation (see Goal 3).

Action 1. Each Department Chair will agree upon and sign off on the unified Advising Plan.

Action 2. Each college will assign faculty advisors to advise within their respective colleges.

Action 3. Each DGC will train faculty advisors for advising within their college

Action 4. All DGC will utilize the "URI Advisement" System (contact log function).

Action 5. All DGC will conduct an evaluation of the Advising Plan within their college.

Strategy 5: Create incentives (recognition and rewards) for outstanding faculty advising

Action 1: Make advising part of the Tenure and Promotion process

Action 2: Add advising role to new faculty letter of employment

Action 3: Establish stipends when appropriate

Action 4: Include advising in consideration of sabbatical leave

Action 5: Establish protocol for release time

Action 6: Establish guidelines for University-wide (URI Foundation) Excellence award for advising with monetary reward

Goal 2: Engage committed faculty advisors, liaisons, and department chairpersons who will address the academic advising needs for their major/college.

Strategy 1: By April, identify faculty who will be advisors in UC, willing to serve a minimum of one year

Action 1: Provost will require that each college dean and department select and assign faculty advisors who are interested in and committed to the advising role in University College, for no less than one year, by April 1, 2006 for the following year. This time is essential for trainings to occur.

Strategy 2: Appoint a liaison for each degree college (as appropriate) who will work 20 hours per week assisting in the advising process in UC

Action 1: The Dean of each college, in collaboration with University College, will appoint a 20-hour per week advising liaison to University College who will support the work of the faculty advisors.

Action 2: Establish job description for each liaison to include managing of transfer credit evaluations; managing the transfer of majors from University College to each degree granting college; summer advising for continuing as well as incoming new and transfer students to the major who do not attend orientation; work with readmitted students; be responsible for communicating to their college faculty any changes in policies or curriculum for their majors; assist with training faculty advisors in their colleges to use the URI Advisement System

Action 3: Liaisons will be available at the very start of the semester to deal with “walk-ins” in their colleges. UC manages over 200 walk-ins per day during the first week of school, with only two advisors on staff. These students across majors need schedule adjustments and access to upper level classes that should be addressed by major advisors and departments. Liaisons are ready to assist in this critical time of student academic support.

Action 4: Liaisons will work with the Assistant Deans and Chairs to ensure that updated/accurate advising materials are made available to the University College advising resource website.

Strategy 3: Each Department Chair will assign DGC Advisors

Action 1. The department chair will ensure that all faculty who do advising are able and willing to use the advising system.

Action 2. Each department chair will ensure that all faculty advisors have updated rosters of advisees and will assist in the communication with advisees whenever necessary.

Strategy 4: Peer advisors will provide assistance and support to academic advising

Action 1. Provide walk-in hours in Roosevelt Hall

Action 2. Provide walk-in hours within Living/Learning Communities in the residence halls

Action 3. Assist in URI101 academic advising presentations

Action 4. Assist with coordination and presentation of group pre-registration sessions

Action 5. Assist all UC liaisons with DGC administrative processes

Action 6. Assist faculty advisors in communicating with students

Action 7. Provide evening peer advising hours

Action 8. Host evening homework tables in AEC for high-failure courses

Goal 3: Provide opportunities for advisors to be more knowledgeable and supported in developmental and prescriptive advising processes.

Strategy 1: Provide mandatory professional development for all faculty advisors in each college (including workshops, listserves, web sites).

Action 1. University College, working with each liaison, will assist in advisor training programs in each DGC.

Action 2. Each degree granting college, through their department chairpersons or each Dean's student services office will ensure participation in advising workshops.

Strategy 2: Require that all advisors and department chairs be trained on the use of the "URI Advisement" System.

Action 1: University College will provide training to each DGC (dean's office, student services), to department chairs, and to all college liaisons to ensure that all faculty are able to use the system

Action 2: Each Dean will schedule mandatory meetings for training on the system for all advisors, in all colleges, run by the college liaisons and when desired, UC staff.

Action 3: Assigned UC advisors will assist in training faculty in their home departments in the use of the system

Action 4: All advisors and department chairs will use the on-line data management system to record all advising notes

Action 5: All faculty advisor assignments will be posted on the on-line system so students may use e-campus to make appointments and know where and when to find their advisor.

Strategy 3: Develop effective model for group advising

Action 1: Use major focused URI 101's and specific major-required courses as an opportunity for group/classroom advising.

Action 2: Enhance the URI Advisement System to further allow for the management of group sessions.

Action 3: Renovate classroom space in Roosevelt (room 20) to accommodate faculty group advising for all majors, including computers and projection system.

Action 4: Explore use of upper-class Peer Mentors to assist Faculty Advisors in group advising.

Action 5: Use Living Learning Communities to do group advising in the residence halls.

Goal 4: Improve communication and data sharing between colleges, enrollment management and admissions

Strategy 1: Improve the integrity of the academic record

Action 1: Policy concerning all prior approval decisions (currently decentralized) will be developed. Approved courses will be added to an electronic data base for consistency across the colleges.

Action 2: Degree audits will be used for both transfer to and graduation from each degree-granting college

Action 3: Each DGC liaison will ensure that transcripts are evaluated using the current articulation guide and the electronic data transfer system, so records are evaluated based on URI requirements, rather than specific college requirements.

Strategy 2: Expand the utilization of the URI Advising Data Management System

Action 1: Set policy and expectations for all advisors use of the on-line system

Action 2: Hire a half-time person to assist IT to maintain and enhance the advising management system as needed.

Action 3: Continuously expand and improve the system to include more automated processes (lifting of advisor holds, processing change of majors, transfer to degree granting colleges, prior approvals for off campus study, group advising record keeping, and more).

Action 4: Aggressively work to sell this system to other schools so that URI can re-invest the money to make this flagship system better for URI students, faculty, and staff.

Strategy 3: Update curriculum templates and web pages for all majors

Action 1: Each Dean, with support from the college's UC advising liaison, will work with each department to ensure they have

updated materials for advising guidelines and updated web pages regarding the curriculum, and will ensure that these materials will be distributed to University College before the start of each academic year.

Strategy 4: Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of transfer credit evaluations

Action 1: Admissions and University College will work together to insure that new incoming and transfer students are accurately assigned to either UC or an appropriate DGC.

Action 2: Each DGC will work within the agreed-upon time line for college transcript evaluation.

Action 3: Admissions and colleges will use electronic transfer of data whenever possible.

Goal 5: The advising steering committee will develop an assessment of advising services at URI.

Strategy 1: The committee will work with the Office of Student Learning Outcomes to design evaluation measures of advising across the university

Action 1: Identify what students should *know* through Academic Advising

Action 2: Identify what students should *value*

Action 3: Identify what students should *do*

Strategy 2: Each college will provide Provost with annual evaluation of effectiveness of advising strategies.

Action 1: Satisfaction survey

Action 2. Needs Assessment Surveys

Action 3. Evaluations of academic support services