A Report of Findings and Recommendations of the Academic Advising Task Force

I. Introduction

The Academic Advising Task Force (AATF) was established in January of 2001 by the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, Randy Richardson. The AATF is composed of academic advisors, undergraduates, counselors, administrators, and faculty from across campus. Its general charge is to examine the academic advising system to identify the problems that exist that undermine the success of the system for undergraduate students and to propose solutions to these problems so as to create a strong, stable, and effective advising system. (Appendix A: Charge Statement)

The AATF has met continuously since its inception. In addition, it has gathered data from a broad array of sources including meetings with interested parties, documentation and studies from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), institutional data, existing surveys of the satisfaction of University of Arizona students with the academic advising they receive, and the AATF’s own surveys of students, faculty departments, and colleges. The AATF has benefited from the contribution of more than 2,000 individuals, including input from every college and virtually every academic unit that serves undergraduate students.

The AATF defines academic advising as the delivery of advice and assistance to students concerning the academic and personal development by advisors who have authority to sign off on their academic degree program (Appendix B: Definition of Academic Advising). Academic advising involves a close collaboration among units of the institution, knowledgeable academic advisors, and students. (Appendix C: Academic Advising Mission Statement).

The AATF spent approximately six months in its effort to identify strengths and weaknesses that exist in the present academic advising system. The Task Force described the problems it identified with the academic advising system in its Preliminary Report, issued by the Task Force in May 2001. The most significant problems described in the Preliminary Report are summarized below:

- For approximately half of all students, general education and major academic advising are split between the Office for Academic Services (OAS), the Freshmen Year Center (FYC), and their department or college. Many students find this system difficult and highly confusing, not to mention time consuming. Students would like general education and major advising to occur with one advisor as much as possible. Resolving the problem of split advising is among the highest priorities of students.

- Many students feel that they cannot obtain timely access to their advisors. Many academic advisors themselves are overwhelmed by the large numbers of students for whom they are responsible. More than half of all undergraduate students at the University are served by academic advising processes that are overloaded, sometimes substantially so, according to standards that can be defended as good practice (Appendix D: Recommended Ratios).

- Both students and academic advisors say they don't have any place to turn when they have questions that they don't know how to answer. Students also find the help they receive from advisors to be highly inconsistent.

The AATF then turned to the development of recommendations to address these and other concerns that had been identified. The recommendations of the AATF follow as does a statement about the financial requirements and phasing in of the recommendations. Our recommendations are in bold italics. The AATF adopted each of the recommendations by unanimity or near unanimity. Evidentiary sources of support for the recommendations are contained in the appendices of this report. These appendices also contain suggestions we believe may be helpful in implementing the recommendations as well as a statement of areas or topics the AATF has determined require further investigation and evaluation.

The overall purpose of the recommendations herein is to establish an academic advising system for undergraduate students that is coherent; that delivers effective, timely, and accurate advising services to students; that is accountable for achieving results; and that is supported at the level necessary to attain these results.

II. Recommendations to Strengthen Academic Advising Services

A. Advising Within a College or Department

The AATF believes that academic advising for each individual student should be carried out within a single
The AATF recommends that the general education advising functions currently provided by OAS/FYC should move into the colleges of the students they serve. To retain a consistent model for advising, all undergraduate students with no major selected should be advised by University College until they have selected a major.

Students with no major selected, as a result, will be a part of University College until they have selected a major. Implementing this recommendation will mean that all students will receive their academic advising for general education and the education within their college - rather than from split units. [Note: Students with a second major or a minor in a different college, and other similar situations, will by necessity have advisors outside of their primary college for those specified purposes.] The result will not only be that advising for all students for the major and general education will occur within the college, but most students will be able to receive their advising from a single academic advisor within their college. Responses that the AATF received from advisors indicate that at least half of all students now served through two units by two different advisors will end up with a single advisor within their college for both university requirements and their major. For the reasons indicated earlier, achieving this goal is a priority for students.

It is further recommended that University College accept responsibility for advising two additional groups of students: those who have been disqualified from their college and have not gained entry into another, and those students who have been excluded from future enrollment in their present college due to failure to qualify for advanced standing and are also undecided about their academic options. Often these students in transition have nowhere to turn in the short-term for their academic advising. However, it important for these students to understand that access to advising from University College under these circumstances does not imply any guarantee of future admission either to University College or another UA college.

Decentralization raises issues of consistency across colleges. To address these issues, the AATF recommends that a representative working group of the colleges and other appropriate units should meet regularly to discuss questions relevant to academic advising and review how University-wide requirements are interpreted, adjusted, and upheld. This working group could be similar in function to the existing committee that links the Colleges of Science, Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and University College.

The AATF notes that the present OAS/FYC model does have a number of advantages. One is that it provides a central location for both students and department advisors to gain information about the general education curriculum and University policies and procedures. Although it is not an expected function of the office, OAS/FYC has also taken on the ad hoc role of providing training to new advisors in the colleges served by this office. The AATF addresses these advantages through its recommendation to develop a common resource (section C).

B. An Assured Minimum Level of Service

Developing a coherent advising model throughout the University is one goal. A second goal is to attain a reasonable level of advising for each undergraduate student, what the AATF calls an assured minimum level of service.

1. Mandatory Advising

The AATF recommends that all new students, including transfer students, keep mandatory advising appointments during each of their first two semesters. Such advising should take place in individual meetings that occur between students and their academic advisors. To assure that students are prepared for graduation, the AATF recommends that each student keep a mandatory advising appointment upon reaching 90 units (or some other identifier for nearing program completion). Once again, such advising should take place in individual meetings that occur between the student and the academic advisor.

The academic advising system should have sufficient capacity and resources to both carry out mandatory advising and to enable the large majority of all other continuing students to discuss their academic progress with their advisors in individual sessions once a semester, if so desired. The AATF recommends that tuition revenue earmarked to improve undergraduate advising be targeted to create this capacity. Considering that the present system is substantially overburdened, the projected cost to attain an assured minimum level of service for all students amounts to approximately $1.3 million annually in continuing funds. (Appendix D: Recommended Ratios)
2. Orientation Program

The Summer Orientation Program provides the first academic advising experience for all new freshmen and for most transfer students. The program needs to describe clearly and carefully how academic advising works, what students can expect from their academic advisors, and the responsibilities of each student. Also, evaluating advising during these programs is paramount in understanding the student response to this critical first step towards becoming a UA student. The experience of students in these programs influences how students utilize advising services throughout their academic career. Knowledge about the system and a solid first impression of academic advising services benefit future student use of and satisfaction with the advising system.

Two of the AATF co-chairs attended a freshman orientation program in June 2001. Their comments are included in Appendix E: Orientation Program. The AATF recommends that, through the Vice President for Undergraduate Education working with Admissions and consulting with the Co-Chairs of the AATF, further investigation of the summer orientation program be conducted during the 2002-2003 academic year specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of how the advising system is presented to students and the effectiveness of the advising experience itself during orientation.

Further, the AATF observes that when application deadlines are extended well into the summer (or January, for the spring term), students generally cannot be well served through the advising process in orientation or other advising venues, and access to classes is dramatically diminished.

3. Training and Support for the Advising Community

Part of providing an assured minimum level of service is that advisors be of high quality and that they also be knowledgeable, accurate, and personable, the combination of which requires training, effective evaluation, and proper compensation. The next five sets of recommendations below (sections 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) relate to the ways in which this foundation for academic advising interaction can be developed at the University.

The results of the AATF's May 2001 survey of the advising community and a focus group session with the University Professional Advising Council (UPAC) in October 2001 point to the fact that there is a great unevenness in training material available for advisors across the colleges, which results in considerable variation of knowledge that advisors possess when meeting with students. This unevenness of knowledge leads to variations in advising accuracy throughout campus.

The AATF recommends that advisors engage in training, respectful of their time, enabling them to have the appropriate information needed to be effective advisors and ensure that a basic foundation of knowledge about University and college policies, procedures, and program requirements exists for all advising appointments.

Training, then, refers to gaining command of a set of information and does not refer to the specifics of an advisor's degree or level of education. Instead, it involves gaining the procedural, technical, and professional foundation needed to effectively assist undergraduate students. To be respectful of an advisor's time, the AATF recommends that training be provided on-line as much as possible. It should require time only in those areas where the advisor is not already sufficiently knowledgeable. The AATF encourages the University also to consider a time frame in which seasoned advisors should refresh their knowledge base (perhaps every three years). The training programs should vary according to whether the advisor has authority to sign off on general education courses, on the major and minor requirements, or both (for suggestions as to a process to be followed, see Appendix K: Work to be Done During Year One. The AATF estimates that an on-line advising manual and a training program, together, would have a one-time cost of $45,000 (Appendix F: Technology)

4. Evaluation, Recognition, and Reward for Advisors

Another important piece in the puzzle when creating a coherent, consistent, and accurate advising experience for students is sending the message to advisors that their work is valuable and valued. The recommendations of this section relate to ways in which the University can construct a framework that reliably evaluates the work of advisors and compensates and recognizes them for excellence.

The investigative work of the AATF revealed that across campus, the evaluation of advisors’ work is uneven, at best. We cannot begin to reshape advising services on campus if we do not provide advisors with clear expectations on the level of performance and feedback about the efficacy of their work. The AATF recommends that each academic advisor be evaluated in an in-depth manner on an annual basis by his or her supervisor on criteria having to do with accessibility, knowledge, skills (e.g., interpersonal communication), and professional attitude. (Appendix G: NACADA Standards and Student Assessment). For faculty advisors, evaluation of their work should be a part of the process used to consider individuals for merit-based salary increases and for release time. Evaluation of advising must take into account information from students. In Appendix G, the AATF suggests efficient means to gain information from students for evaluations. Errors of advisors,
documented through the petition process should also be part of the evaluation. At the departmental level, the AATF also recommends that academic advising should be made a specific component of each unit's 7-year Academic Program Review.

When the evaluation of advisors' work reveals exceptional achievement, the University should recognize it. Similarly, UA should honor departments or colleges that have made a special commitment to innovation and success in advising. The AATF recommends that the University should recognize the finest academic advisors of the year (one faculty member, one professional advisor). The award should carry a substantial monetary stipend. Nominee credentials should be reviewed by a committee established for such a purpose, and the committee should include student members. The AATF also recommends that the Provost's Office sponsor an annual award for the unit or college that has achieved either the highest level of advising practice or made the greatest contributions to innovation in academic advising. Again, the stipend of the award should be substantial. Finally, the AATF recommends that money be set aside for professional development grants for academic advisors. The total amount of the continuing money needed for individual awards, unit awards, and professional development grants is estimated at $60,000 per year.

Further work must be done with regard to compensation for advisors. The AATF already knows from the advising survey that academic advisors are concerned about compensation levels and their effect on the retention of professional advisors, and on the faculty side, whether or not release time is provided when a faculty member agrees to a substantial advising role. Salary compression is also an issue. The AATF recommends that to address issues related to salary compensation and compression, $150,000 in continuing dollars be set aside. This is a preliminary estimate based on incomplete data. The University needs to conduct a more detailed investigation through Department of Human Resources to examine the salaries of advisors at the University, relative to other comparable personnel, in order to learn the precise extent of salary inequity and compression.

Finally, to address confusion regarding the similarities and differences among the roles of professional academic advisor, faculty advisor, counselor, mentor, and others, the AATF recommends that an investigation be conducted through Department of Human Resources of the position titles currently used for professional advisors. A plan should then be developed that utilizes the definition of academic advising presented in this report.

5. Other Support

The AATF realizes that in order to spend as much time as possible in face-to-face contact with students, advisors need resources in their local area which support their work. The AATF recommends that each academic advisor have assistance available from a front-line staff member who can make appointments and screen phone calls. Additionally, each academic advisor should have a computer that is Cosmos capable and access to a printer, fax machine, photocopier, telephone with voice mail, and basic office supplies. Resources for equipment and staffing are shown in sections II-G and H of this report as part of one-time funds and the general fund (see also Table II, page 16). In order to maintain confidentiality during appointments, the AATF also recommends that every academic advisor should have access to a private office with sufficient space outside of that office where students can wait comfortably for meetings. The AATF suggests that the University's Space Committee assist in developing plans to free-up or create the needed space. Finally, the AATF recommends the development of an on-line appointment scheduling system to serve academic advisors and students. The AATF estimates that such a facility will involve a one-time cost of $125,000 (Appendix F: Technology).

6. Student Information Accuracy

Academic advising cannot be accurate unless advisors have accurate information available to them in the advising process. Many questions exist about the accuracy of student information accessible to advisors through Advisor Link (transfer evaluations, SAPRs, and so forth). The AATF has heard reports from advisors that they spend an inordinate amount of time because of erroneous information contained in students' records. The Task Force is in no way commenting on Advisor Link, but instead on the information available through Advisor Link. The AATF recommends that the Vice President for Undergraduate Education form a working group in 2002-2003 to investigate the magnitude of the problem by measuring the proportion of students' records accessible through Advisor Link in which errors exist as well as the overall proportion of data contained in students' records that is inaccurate. The working group should propose effective remedies if it considers the proportion of inaccurate data to be too great. In section II-F, below, the AATF also recommends that a measure of the accuracy of information accessible to advisors through Advisor Link be included as an outcome measure in the process of accountability of the advising system.

7. Adhering to Academic Standards and Policies

As part of an assured minimum level of service, students should be able to count on the...
information they receive regarding curricula and academic programs. The adequate preparation and updating of academic advisors through training programs that are as much as possible on-line should help attain this objective. Effective evaluation should be encouraged to further as should improving the accuracy of information with which advisors work. The AATF understands that errors in advice about curricula and academic programs will occur in even the best of advising systems when advisors are trained, updated, and effectively evaluated. However, if students are to rely on their academic advisors, they need to know that their graduation will not be delayed because of an advising error unless the error in question will undermine the integrity of the degree. The **AATF recommends that the University alter its policies and petitions procedure in this manner once the assured minimum level of service has been implemented.**

### C. A Common Resource to Support Academic Advising

Two goals are to develop a coherent advising system and an advising system able to deliver an assured minimum level of service to all students. A third need has to do with providing a place to turn for expert reference when students and advisors themselves are confused and have questions about advising - which is the case for nearly every student and every advisor at times - and also a place to gather and disseminate information about effective advising practices. The present system contains no such capabilities. The AATF recommends that a central resource, the Common Place, be established to assist both advisors and students. The Common Place should be both a physical space and a web space, in part serving to refer advisors and students to the appropriate sources of advice and information and to be a home for an on-line academic advising manual and training modules for advisors.

Details regarding the Common Place follow. As conceptualized by the AATF, the Common Place has five main objectives:

1. to provide accurate and thorough referral services for students which enhance access to academic advising, counseling, and other student services they seek;
2. to assist advisors in developing a working knowledge of the range of counseling and student services available to students, and answer questions they may have in assisting individual students (Appendix J: Academic Counseling);
3. to provide a program of coherent and timely training and professional development for advisors (and potentially other student service providers);
4. to collect and maintain data about advising practices nationally and at the University; and
5. to consult with colleges and departments about aspects of good advising practices, recognition and reward, and assessment.

The Common Place should have a central and conspicuous location, both physically and on UAWeb. Space has been allocated in the Student Union. It should be administratively housed under the umbrella of the Vice President for Undergraduate Education. Service delivery should be evaluated yearly to measure effectiveness. The Common Place will not deliver academic advising services to students. Rather, it will facilitate the advising process by referring students who desire assistance but are unsure where to turn. The Common Place will also serve as a communication vehicle for advisors, students, and administrators; facilitate solutions and/or refer questions to the office responsible for that information (e.g., academic policy issues would be referred to the Office of Curriculum and Registration). A comprehensive listserv of advisors and an on-line academic advising manual will be developed and maintained through the Common Place. In addition, the Common Place will serve as a repository for other information on academic advising and related student service programs. Finally, it will coordinate basic technical, procedural, and professional development for advisors.

Staffing the Common Place should be adequate, yet limited. During a transitional phase, staffing resources would be required to initially develop on-line tools, such as training modules, an on-line manual, home page, and inventory of advising and counseling services and personnel. Once development is complete, one FTE staff member with technical expertise will be able to maintain the systems and provide limited information technology services. A Director should manage the Common Place, with a title recognizing the visibility and importance of the center. Initially, staffing should include two FTE advising coordinators, one FTE administrative assistant, and funds for student assistants. One-time resources will be needed to purchase computer hardware and furniture. **The AATF recommends an allocation of $200,000 in continuing funds be made to adequately support the Common Place.**

### D. Populations Requiring Specialized Advising Services

#### 1. Transfer Students

The AATF Transfer Subcommittee described a set of transfer student issues and recommendations in its final report (Appendix H: Transfer Students Subcommittee Advising Report). The subcommittee developed its report based on the information collected from a number of sources, including the Transfer Student Advising Survey. In summary, its recommendations support/complement the AATF recommendations for:

1) a Common Place as a central location for advising referral and information, including web-based information; and 2) appropriate training for all advisors.

**Additionally, the subcommittee members and the AATF encourage the rapid**
completion of DARS implementation to attain accurate information about transfer credits on students' transcripts. With the full implementation of DARS, the University will be able to participate more fully in the Arizona Course Applicability System (CAS). This will enable students to access information regarding the applicability of their Arizona community college courses toward their UA degree long before enrollment. This service is already available for students transferring to Arizona State University.

Further, while the AATF recommends that each college take responsibility for all of the advising needs of its students, the advising of prospective transfer students should be complemented and supported through the outreach efforts of the Transfer Academic Counselors. The AATF recommends that these staff members have authority to evaluate transfer credit (in and out-of-state) and file any adjustments in the student record system upon the student's admission to the University. This will enable transfer students to be better informed about how their transfer course work will apply toward their stated degree program once they are admitted and complete the transfer process. It should be noted that the Eller College of Business and Public Administration does not agree with this recommendation for their prospective students. Further details are included in Appendix H of this report.

2. Supplemental Academic Advising

The AATF also examined substantive areas that require supplemental academic advising, such as pre-law and pre-health. It found that a substantial need for assistance beyond present resources exists in the area of students pursuing the health professions.

A proposal titled “Arizona Health Sciences Center and Main Campus Partnership for Advising Undergraduates Interested in Health Professions” was developed by the Arizona Health Sciences Center Colleges (Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and the School of Health Professionals), working in cooperation with main campus personnel, to improve health professions advising for all current and prospective University of Arizona undergraduate students. The proposal is included in Appendix I: Pre-Health Professions Advising Proposal.

The proposal describes the need for an expanded mission and additional advising personnel to staff a Pre-Health Professions Advising Center for undergraduate students on main campus. The present Pre-Health Professions Advising Office (which would constitute the nucleus of the Center) has only one full-time advisor and a part-time administrative assistant to serve an estimated 3,000+ students. Virtually all of these students interested in health professions will seek advice regarding the academic and admission requirements for various health careers. However, this office currently serves students interested in only six health careers, only one of which (Medicine) is offered at the University of Arizona. The May, 2001, "Progress Report" of the AATF noted that this office "is viewed by many of its constituents as under-staffed and under-funded for its mission." The proposal to expand this office into a center has the goal of better serving UA undergraduate students interested in all health professions. The AATF supports the principles of this proposal and recommends a level of funding according to the guidelines set forth in section II, G-1 of the Report, below, and in Appendix D: Recommended Ratios. Further, the AATF recommends that the Pre-Health Professions Advising Center be located centrally on main campus and administratively within the University College.

E. The Advising Community and Service to the Institution

Advisors' first-hand knowledge of students' experiences and problems as students navigate the college and University regulations and resources, provides a unique perspective of great use to the campus community. The University should expect advisors to dedicate a portion of their time for service to the institution. Advisors can bring extensive knowledge they possess regarding the implications of policy decisions concerning students and programs to those groups that need to understand how decisions they make will impact students. The AATF recommends that representative academic advisors serve on University bodies concerned with these issues. Examples of these bodies include but are not limited to, the Undergraduate Council, the General Education Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the President's Advisory Council. Academic advisors should select their own representatives, potentially through a University Professional Advising Council expanded to involve faculty academic advisors.

F. System Accountability

The academic advising system should be accountable as a system. Accountability for the proper functioning of academic advising exists on many levels. At the most fundamental level, we are accountable to our students: we owe it to them to provide accurate and accessible services, rendered in a professional and respectful way, to guide their academic careers and personal development. At another level, we are accountable to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR). Data about academic advising are included in the Undergraduate Consolidated Accountability Report (UCAR) presented annually to ABOR. Between these constituencies, each advising unit--be it at the department, college, or multi-college level--must be accountable for the efficient use of resources as well as its performance in providing accurate, accessible, and effective academic advising services to students.

System accountability implies agreement on desired outcomes, the measurement of those outcomes, and the evaluation of each unit as well as the institution as a whole with respect to positive change and ultimate attainment of those outcomes. There is also the necessity for individual units to have adequate resources to make progress toward the desired outcomes. An accountability system must thus assess both the
adequacy of resources and the degree of success in attaining the stated outcomes.

The office responsible for carrying out an effective university-wide system of accountability for undergraduate academic advising should be the Vice President for Undergraduate Education. There must be assurance, however, that the Provost will follow through with the Deans of the Colleges regarding the findings about outcomes, since the Deans and their colleges are responsible directly to the Provost. Accountability is effective only if the assessments regarding outcomes and adequacy of resources are used to improve programs and levels of service.

The AATF recommends that a working group be established to determine the specific areas that should be measured as well as how to measure each area, the ultimate outcome desired in each area, and the annual progress toward the expected outcome in each area. These measures should also include assessments of resources that have been expended to determine if they are sufficient to meet the recommended ratios of students to advisors; training and updating of advisors; and funding necessary for institution-wide resources, such as the Common Place.

If the ratios are met and other AATF recommendations have been implemented, certain outcomes should result. There should be increased levels of overall student satisfaction with their academic advising (measured through an annual survey). Also, the great majority of students should have positive experiences in individual meetings with their advisors and should feel they have had sufficient time with their advisors (measured through requested student feedback electronically following these meetings). The accessibility of nearly all students to academic advising should be timely (again, measured through student feedback after the meetings). The advice coming from academic advisors should be accurate (measured by general petitions that involve advisor-related errors, the proportion of information on students accessible through Advisor Link that is inaccurate, and levels of student confidence). All of these are important outcomes that the University should attain for its students.

The AATF recognizes that good academic advising promotes student success. As a result, the AATF supports using retention and time to graduation as outcome measures provided that effective ways are devised to control for other key variables that also affect these outcomes, such as changes in the economy, the general student/faculty ratio, the students’ evolving values and goals, course availability, and many other similar intervening variables. These intervening variables are so strong that they can overwhelm positive change that successful academic advising brings, making it wrongly appear as if advising has made little difference and had no effect. The AATF supports using variables such as retention as outcome measures only if suitable controls for intervening variables are devised and included.

Of the measurement areas suggested, the UCAR already includes measures of overall student satisfaction and student reports of accessibility. Students are surveyed in these regards at the end of their lower-division coursework and when they are graduating seniors, providing ABOR with measures each year. Results from these surveys are available at http://aer.arizona.edu. One difficulty with these measures is that students’ answers are probably not referring to academic advising alone but also to the wide variety of other advising and counseling services students experience on campus. In these surveys, it is impossible to determine the degree to which students are separating academic advising from the other services. To address this problem, some of the measures the AATF has suggested in the previous paragraph involve student feedback directly regarding (and following) services rendered by academic advisors.

**The AATF also recommends that academic advisors be surveyed regularly about training and job effectiveness and satisfaction, using some of the results of the 2001 AATF advisor survey as benchmarks, to assist in the making of future recommendations.**

G. Financial Requirements

Many recommendations of the AATF have financial implications. Taken together, the funding that the AATF estimates is required for the recommendations totals approximately $440,000 in one-time expenditures and $2.1 million in continuing funds by the fourth year, including inflation. The resources can channel through either professional or faculty academic advising (Appendix D: Recommended Ratios).

1. The most significant need for funding concerns the recommendations having to do with attaining the appropriate ratio of faculty and professional academic advisors to undergraduate students in the colleges and departments. The details are found in Appendix D. The need for funding here arises from the substantial overloads on the advising system that currently exist when compared to the recommended ratios of students per advisor. For reasons set forth in Appendix D, **these recommended ratios are 20–25 majors or fewer per faculty member, or 400 majors per professional advisor, 300 undecided students per professional advisor, 750 students in need of general education advising per professional advisor, and 1000 students in need of supplemental academic advising (such as in the case of the health professions) per professional advisor. The ratios are higher than those proposed by the Auditor General of the State of Arizona (see Appendix D).**

| Table I: Recommended Ratios of Advisors to Undergraduate Student Advisees |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Faculty Advisors                | 20 – 25 or fewer advisees/faculty member |
|                                 | 400 major advisees/professional advisor, or |
|                                 | 300 undecided advisees/professional advisor, or |
| Professional Advisors          | 750 advisees for general education advising only/ professional advisor, or |
For reasons also outlined in Appendix D, the AATF can only estimate the gap that exists between the number of students and present advising resources because of inconsistencies in the data. There is a need to make decisions and develop a database that fairly and equitably represents the number of advisees per department and college. The AATF recommends that a representative group be established to decide upon and develop the necessary database for making decisions about this issue, and to check on the accuracy of all data upon which resource decisions are being made. Based upon the preliminary data available to the Task Force, the AATF estimates that attaining the recommended ratios across the University will require approximately $1.3 million in continuing funds. The AATF proposes a plan to phase in this recommendation in the next section of the Report.

2. Personnel for the Common Place, as described in section II-C, will require approximately $200,000 in continuing funds.

3. Based on admittedly incomplete data, the preliminary estimate of the AATF is that salary adjustments for academic advisors will call for approximately $150,000 in continuing funds to bring professional academic advisors’ salaries up to those of other comparable personnel at the University and peer institutions in terms of qualifications and responsibilities, and to address problems of compression.

4. Recognition, reward, and professional development, as described in section II-B.4, requires approximately $60,000 annually.

5. The AATF recommends, finally, that a general fund be established with $400,000 in continuing dollars needed to finance a variety of areas. These areas include (a) one-time expenditures (for examples, to create an on-line scheduling system for advisors, to assure that academic advisors have appropriate, updated equipment, and so forth); (b) additional academic advisors called for under the recommended ratios that re-analysis of the data discovers are necessary; (c) additional academic advisors required for colleges and departments able to demonstrate that the recommended ratios are clearly inappropriate in their cases; (d) units with a heavy service burden in terms of testing for placement, such as English and Math, that demonstrate they are stretched beyond their means; (e) additional staff support to serve academic advisors where the case is shown that present staff resources are clearly inadequate; and, (f) the carrying out of innovative unit, college, and university-wide proposals that have promise to improve academic advising above and beyond the assured minimum level of service. Since this general fund is needed to finance continuing as well as one-time expenses, the total amount of the fund for each year will not remain at its original level, but rather the original level minus continuing commitments that have been funded from it. The amount needed for this fund is, and can only be, an estimate. It might need to be greater than $400,000. The amount proposed for the fund is the equivalent of ten positions plus a continuing yearly fund of $50,000 to support innovation in advising and updated equipment. The ten positions amount to less than one-third of the 36 needed new positions called for in this report. The AATF believes that this number of positions, or possibly more, will be necessary once the data are agreed upon and checked and the other areas of need described above (such as staff support) have been investigated.

There are two other crucial issues surrounding financial requirements. One has to do with changes in student demand over time. The AATF recommends that the Provost establish a system to assure that the resources for academic advising can move from college to college as needed over time to reflect changes in student enrollments so that the appropriate student/advisor ratios can be maintained. A second issue has to do with periods of time that call for budget cuts. In future years, colleges and departments may decide to cut expenditures of funds that have come to them from the University, through the students’ tuition, for the purposes of enhancing academic advising. The AATF recommends that the Provost along with the cabinet and SPBAC, with the support of representatives of the students, develop a system for determining how academic advising expenditures—especially those funded on student tuition raised for this purpose—should be treated in future department, college, and University budgetary cuts.

H. Phase-in of the Recommendations

The recommendations of the AATF are intended to be phased-in over a three year period (see Table II). Several reasons create the need for a staged implementation of the recommendations. First, many questions exist about the data used to determine each college’s and unit’s ratio. Appendix D describes these questions. Nevertheless, it is possible in the first year (2002-03) to go ahead with commitments for positions where it can be certain that the data, no matter how they are interpreted, will support such a commitment. Using existing data, the AATF has identified commitments of this order amounting to about $310,000 in continuing expenditures that are appropriate to fund in the first year.

Second, it is neither practical nor feasible to carry out some of the recommendations during the first year. For example, it is not advisable to reorganize the OAS and the FYC and devolve their responsibilities to the colleges in the first year. Planning must take place in order for this reorganization to succeed. To support planning for the reorganization, the AATF proposes that the phase-in start by creating 3.5 positions for supplemental advising only/
calorator positions (one, each, for Humanities, Science, and SBS, and a half position for University College, the last of which would be temporary). In the first year, these positions would require $120,000 in continuing expenditures and $20,000 in one-time expenses. With the help of the individuals in these positions, the four colleges will be able to plan for the reorganization during the first year. Similarly, the recommendation for the establishment of awards and professional development grants requires time both to define them and then develop a process for awarding and granting them. As a result, expenditures for this purpose would not begin until the second year, as Table II suggests.

Third, there are some areas that need study in order to learn the dimensions of the problem. This is the case for salary adjustments. The AATF proposes that new academic advisors be hired at $28,000 annually plus ERE. This means that during the first year all current academic advisors now paid beneath $28,000 annually should be raised to that amount, or slightly higher. Using preliminary and incomplete data, once again, the AATF estimates that this will require approximately $50,000 in continuing funds. During the first year, a study will determine any further equity and compression needs that exist, needs that can then be addressed during the second year. The AATF estimates that about $100,000 in continuing funds will be needed, in addition to the $50,000 from the first year, for this purpose.

Other items on Table II deserve explanation. The Table refers in the first year to "miscalculations." These are cases where units or colleges can show that the AATF has erred, against the unit or college, in its identification of commitments that should be funded in the first year. Table II contains enough funds to support one-to-two positions in this category in the first year. As a result, since these positions will be funded in the first year instead of waiting until the second or third year, the continuing funding needed for new positions would presumably go down by the same amount in the second and third year, which is why Table II categorizes this spending as a one-year expenditure. Another item on Table II that will likely raise questions is the funding for "lost positions." These are academic advisor positions that the colleges eliminated in the latest round of budget cuts. The AATF believes that these positions should have been looked upon as strategic saves in the budget cuts, and therefore that the positions should not have been eliminated. The funding for lost positions shown in Table II is meant to support any such positions that were eliminated in the latest budget cuts and to do so for two years, giving the University time to restore them in the third year (2004-05).

Table II contains totals for spending for each year of the proposed phase in. This includes how much of each total involves continuing expenditures and how much is a one-time expense.

Table II: Funding Requirements for Three-Year Phase-In of the Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 unquestionable positions @ $34,500</td>
<td>$310,000</td>
<td>$576,000</td>
<td>$296,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 reorganization positions @ $40,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Place</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Equipment&gt;</td>
<td>60,000-95,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* On-line training, (Cosmos capable) for advisors, training, manual, scheduling, etc.</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* &gt;9 positions due to miscalculations</td>
<td>35,000-70,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* ½ reorganization position</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost positions (one-time for two years)</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compression/equity ≤ $28,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$970,000</td>
<td>$846,000</td>
<td>$296,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time dollars</td>
<td>290,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing dollars</td>
<td>680,000</td>
<td>696,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Fund (see Report, section II, H-5)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$736,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time dollars</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing dollars</td>
<td>736,000</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total (2002-2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuing Funds</th>
<th>$2,112,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-time Funds</td>
<td>440,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* General education advising moves to the colleges.

<** Mandatory advising becomes effective.

As Table II suggests, the phase-in involves numerous steps. To prepare for the second and third years, many different tasks need to be carried out during the first year (Appendix K: Work to be Done During Year One). Most of these tasks involve the need for further study before decisions can be made. Because of these considerations, the **AATF recommends that the administration appoint a phase-in team for assistance and advice.** Part of the membership of the phase-in team should include members of the AATF.

### III. Summary

By the year 2001, undergraduate students were sufficiently upset about the operation of the academic advising system that they agreed to an increase in tuition with the proviso that funds be directed toward strengthening the advising system in order to make it effective. Surveys of students, faculty, administrators, and professional academic advisors all show the existence of many concerns having to do with the delivery of academic advising services. Indeed, the Vice President for Undergraduate Education established the AATF because of the many issues brought forward by students, by Deans, by faculty, and by professional academic advisors.

The goal is to attain a coherent and accountable academic advising system able to assure effective, timely, and accurate academic advising services to all students. The recommendations of the AATF form an integrated whole. Each of the recommendations builds upon and adds to the positive effects of the others and each in turn depends upon the others. Carrying out these recommendations together, phased in as proposed, will build the academic advising system that the University community is calling for and needs to fulfill its mission as a student centered research university.

The recommendations in this report represent a first step toward fixing a fractured system. The next step is to begin the phase-in process of deciding upon and implementing the recommendations designed to build an effective academic advising system. Additionally, there is a need to continue addressing areas requiring further analysis as itemized and described in Appendix K. Creating the coherent, consistent, and accurate academic advising system we need cannot come about in a single year, but will take a continuing and on-going commitment over a number of years.

*Send us your comments or questions.*