

Academic Advising at the University of Regina
Submitted by the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs)
February 25, 2015

Models for delivering advising services may be categorized as one of three organizational structures:

- **Centralized:** where professional and faculty advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit
- **Decentralized:** professional or faculty advisors are located in their respective academic departments.
- **Shared:** where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise students in the academic department of their major discipline.

According to the Sixth National Survey on Academic Advising conducted in 2003 by ACT (Habley, 2004), more institutions use a shared model of delivering advising services (55%) than use centralized (32%) or decentralized (14%) structures. This distribution is similar to that found in 1997 when the Fifth National Survey was conducted.

- See more at: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Organizational-Models-for-Advising.aspx#sthash.s3wrwjyF.dpuf>

The University of Regina currently subscribes to the **Decentralized** model, which is assumed to have been inherited from the University of Saskatchewan. This is the model least used within post-secondary institutions but preferred by small 2 and 4 year private institutions.

What we are hearing from Students:

- Wait times can be weeks to see an advisor
- Walk in appointments not always available
- Many advisors can talk only about their specific faculty programs
- Many advisors seen as class schedulers as opposed to advisors

What we heard when we asked the Advisors themselves:

- No standardized training when you are a new advisor
- Often no overlapping between new and outgoing advisor
- No one to cover vacations or sick time in smaller areas
- We have no standardized method of advising students
- We don't have a voice as a collective

I am a strong advocate of the **Shared** model of advising, as I recognize the specialized information and knowledge within the specific faculties and how third and fourth year students benefit greatly from this knowledge, the staff, and the faculty members.

The **Shared** model at the U of R could be structured as follows:

- First and Second year students, transfer students, RTD students, and students wishing to switch programs or faculties are served by a centralized Academic Advising Centre.
- Third, Fourth and Fifth year students would be served by the Faculty Advisors who would advise on graduation requirements, graduate school, connections in the field of study, what to do with their degree, specialization areas, etc.
- The centralized Academic Advising Centre serves Undecided students and students within the first two years of Arts, Fine Arts, Science, Kinesiology and Health Studies, Pre-Social Work and Education. (Business and Nursing could participate; Engineering usually does not.)
- The focus is on successful navigation of the University system and dealing with transitional issues that arise with new students, transfer students, and students in academic jeopardy.
- 8-10 Advisors would be hired from the current complement of advisors within the faculties and become part of the new centralized Academic Advising Centre.
- The remaining advisors would serve the 3rd and 4th year students within the faculty offices.
- Each faculty would have a designated lead advisor within the Academic Advising Centre that coordinates with the Associate Dean, attends faculty meetings, and brings the latest approved information back to the team. This is the continued connection to the happenings and policies within the faculties.
- All advisors within the Academic Advising Centre would be cross trained with the lead Advisor being the specialist when there are difficult questions or scenarios.
- There would always be a Quick Question Desk open at the front.
- There would be a rotating schedule of advisors taking walk ins, advisors taking appointments, and advisors taking phone or Skype appointments. Walk in appointments for academic triages are always available.
- There would be a computer bank within the unit where peer student workers would help register students if needed after their appointments with the advisors.
- There would be standardized training for new advisors, as well as coverage when an advisor was sick, on leave, on vacation, or when an advisor leaves and we rehire.

Many higher education practitioners and scholars believe that “retention is advising.” My focus is on the best experience for the students and aiding their success towards graduation in an efficient and effective manner. I think it would relieve all of the worries named to me by the advisors in the past.