

The University has been focused on initiatives to improve academic advising for and retention of students over the past several years. This past fall, the Faculty Senate reaffirmed the Statement of Advising Principles, first approved in Oct. 2011. Drake University strives to provide students with the opportunity to effectively assimilate the many aspects of their education experiences. Quality advising is characterized by collaborative relationships among faculty, staff, and students that facilitate the development of meaningful personal lives and professional preparation. Advisors assist students in planning their academic careers through activities such as course selection, internship opportunities, and career exploration.

Drake University defines quality advising as interactions that include:

- Contextualizing the student's professional aspiration(s) within the broader knowledge base represented by the student's program of study. As appropriate, advisors are also knowledgeable about the outcomes of the undergraduate Drake Curriculum as well as the graduate and undergraduate programs in the advisor's College/School.
- Promoting discussion and ongoing reflection regarding student academic interests and professional aspirations. Advisors enable students to appreciate how their Drake degree facilitates a range of professional opportunities.
- Assisting the student in identifying opportunities for mentorship.
- Connecting students to the appropriate campus support systems, as needed, including academic support services, career counseling, international programs, campus counseling services, student disability services, etc.
- Challenging students to examine how the many facets of their life intersect (e.g. classroom experience, student life, pre-professional activity, athletics, research, community service).
- Encouraging students to take individual responsibility for their educational plan and to be literate in policies that govern their membership within the Drake Community (e.g., academic integrity, student conduct, athletic eligibility, etc).

The following proposals fall within these advising principles that the Faculty Senate reaffirmed this fall. They aim to establish multiple touch points for students during their first year on campus. This will allow a positive advisor-advisee relationship to be established and better allow students to develop loyalty and an affinity towards the University. These proposals are submitted with a motion to implement the following policies into undergraduate advising University-wide.

**Proposal #1** - Require all first-year students to have a touch point with their faculty advisor through an initial meeting and/or greeting during Welcome Week.

**Proposal #2** - Require all first-year students to have a meeting with a faculty advisor during the semester, preferably sometime before fall and spring registrations.

The focus of the short introductory meeting and/or electronic greeting is to allow advisors to introduce themselves, explain the role of a faculty advisor, share their office location and office hours, and begin to develop a positive relationship with their advisees. Within proposal #2, the mechanism for this requirement is not being dictated. The mechanism can be determined upon adoption within College/School governance structures. However, during the Admission, Retention, and Financial Aid Committee meetings, the suggestion of embedding this required

meeting through an assignment in Bulldog Foundations was discussed at some length. Similar course assignments have been implemented with success into an Introduction course in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (CPHS).

These proposals are supported with both research and practical experience. Research has shown that academic advising can have a significant impact on student persistence and success in college (Light, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2005). Students who interact more frequently with an academic advisor have higher GPA's and increased knowledge of university policies and resources (Light, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, et al., 2005). Conversely, poor academic advising can result in student anxiety and frustration and dissatisfaction with their academic and college experiences (Astin & Astin, 2000).

Additionally, academic advising is related to student satisfaction with an institution. Particularly, advisor availability and approachability were reported as key variables (Elliot & Shin, 2002). Student satisfaction is important as it is related to student retention (DeShields Jr, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005). Additionally, there is a possible connection between advising and institutional loyalty as well (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Again, adding to the possible connection between advising and retention.

Implementing additional policies that could aid in elevating the retention rate should be considered. On the Drake campus, a push for increased retention of first-year students has led to many initiatives over the past few years. While these efforts helped us maintain our relatively strong retention numbers, the overall goals of first-year retention have not been fully met. In particular, this past year saw a decrease in the first-year retention rate by 4%. The five-year average one year retention rate stands at 87.4%, this represents a decrease from a high of 88.3%. While this proposal suggests University wide implementation, both proposals have already been implemented within some colleges/schools on campus. Within the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and CPHS, both of the proposed actions have already been incorporated into their advising policies and the faculty have overall bought into their incorporation. Additionally, students have reported positive perceptions of advising after implementing these policies. In CPHS, students' overall ratings of meetings with their advisors and the overall rating of their advisor have increased by 4-5% in the past 8 years since these policies were implemented. It is hoped that implementing these proposals University-wide will support a proactive approach to advising that positively impacts new students at Drake, no matter their major, and a subsequent positive impact on retention as well.