Advisory Council for Academic Planning and Advising/ACAPA
November 9, 2012

Minutes


Members Absent: Molly Lynch, Mark Mannheimer, and Tauheeda Yasin.

College Recorder: Norie Flowers

State of QEP: Dr. Bowman informed the Committee that the GPS website was up and running with the following link: http://www.nvcc.edu/about-nova/sacsaccreditation/qep/gps/index.html

All of the Faculty Advising Managers/FAMs have been selected and the initial training date was scheduled for November 16 at the Annandale campus. A developmental module describing the role of the faculty advising manager will be featured, with input from current FAMs. The release time form 105-085 will be required, with Dean approval.

After the Thanksgiving week, Dr. Bowman will begin visits to the Loudoun and Woodbridge campuses to hold day-long focus groups with faculty advising managers and advising specialists. Discussions will also take place with current GPS students to solicit their input. A triage attempt will be made to capture students and get the assessments done. Well over 100 students have already been reached through the SDV courses.

Committee members suggested that lead time would be important to ensure student participation. Suggestions for encouraging student participation included reaching out to top students, along with those who were not “caught,” to find out what those students did to complete their assessments and meet with their advisors.

The Handoff: Is it Working? What Lessons Can we Learn? Dr. Leidig explained that there were some significant issues with how the handoff was working, whether it was working, and whether students were following through. There was a need to understand the problems before resolutions could be proposed.

• Observations Included:
  o Committee member and FAM Joe Agnich felt that the problems with the handoff appeared to have less to do with the advising specialists than student behavior. Students did not appear to see the overall value of the process and were not responding to faculty invitations. He suggested the root cause was mistiming on the handoff, as students felt the advising specialists had just answered all their questions.
  o Students were overwhelmed by the basic challenges of their first semester in college and couldn’t relate to the administrative task of doing the assessment and meeting with the advisers.
  o Students had difficulty distinguishing between an advising specialist and a faculty advisor.
Students did not appear to have a desire to see anyone until registration occurred.

Coordinators felt that because students had just seen the advising specialist, the handoff may be done too early. In addition, students developed a relationship with the advising specialist and therefore did not perceive the need to see someone else.

Moving from a culture of prescriptive advising to helping students manage their academic programs appeared difficult for students. Some of them expressed a desire to be told what to do instead of being taught how to make good choices.

Not wanting to let go with the advising specialist needed to be addressed. This is a culture change for both students and faculty. The advising specialist prepares the students to be able to move to the faculty advisor to focus on specific program coursework. The SOAR sessions may not provide sufficient time to explain and shape student thinking in the context of moving from high school to college.

A later handoff might benefit the students as they learn what a college environment is – the issues of transition from high school to college. The development time would teach expectations and would give them permission to meet with their faculty advisors. Handing off during the spring semester might be a solution.

The advising specialists assisted students with planning both fall and spring semester courses; as a result, students are saying that they have already planned for spring and don’t need additional advising. It might be better to allow planning one semester at a time.

The name “advising specialist” could be confusing. It might be advisable to use the term “advising liaisons” instead. The wording might change the mindset to move the students to the faculty advisor.

Requiring SDV the first semester would help students learn sufficient skills: putting a hold on the record until the course is taken. This would also include meeting with the faculty advisor during that time period.

- Dr. Gabriel stated there are benefits to the two ideas, and putting a block on the GPS students is possible until they take SDV. However, if you push this to spring – much time will be lost because many faculty are not at the college in the summer. The end of the fall semester would be the cut-off period for at least visiting with the faculty advisor for the first time, to be prepared for the early part of the spring semester.

Need to look at the capacity of the SDV courses to be sure there are sufficient classes available.

The Advising Specialist and Faculty Advisor need to have a good relationship: having faculty advisors speak at the SDV classes would help the students.

Committee member Pat Deavers suggested that Developmental English instructors could be a support system. Students could be given an assignment as an incentive to find out who their faculty advisors are and seek them out. The Advising Specialist and Faculty Advisor could together do the handoff with the student.

This generation of students communicates differently. They text and tweet and are more resistant to face-to-face meetings. They are also resistant to doing assessments on their own. Student viewpoints are important and need to be included in the process.
Recommendations Proposed:

- Getting information to students as early as possible – going into the high schools and emphasizing the advising and registration process. During NSO sessions, stressing the process to parents.
- Establishing an SDV requirement for an assessment piece and reflection paper. This would replace the current expectation that students complete the assessments on their own.
- Dr. Gabriel stated there is a college policy that could make it mandatory to take SDV in the fall semester. Capacity building could then be done in the spring semester for the following fall semester.
- Defining the students is important: Dr. Gabriel stated that as of October of the previous year – anyone who had graduated within that time frame and below the age of 25 could be flagged for an SDV requirement.
- Need to make a good clean list to catch all GPS students.
- Better communication is vital to all students and faculty to market the new policy.

The timing of assigning students to a faculty advisor was reviewed by Committee members. Faculty advisors were assigned at the Woodbridge campus at the beginning of the process during NSO; at the Loudoun campus, faculty advisor assignments were made later. One issue identified in advocating for a later assignment was that if students change their interests, they then need to be assigned another faculty advisor. Doing the handoff in the spring might be better, but prior to early registration for the following fall semester. Others added that a hold could be put on a record for the following fall until the student meets with the faculty advisor. Some Committee members felt students needed a second meeting with their advising specialist after the SOAR sessions late in the fall semester.

Action:

- A draft Recommendation was developed from the Committee to do the following:
  - Add hold on all GPS students who are directly entering, including anyone who is studying part-time.
  - Add a requirement to take SDV in the first semester.
  - Build the capacity to offer sufficient sections of SDV.
  - Establish early and clear communication with students about the requirement.

The Chair asked Dr. Bowman to work with the key players on this issue and bring final recommendations back to the Committee.

Subcommittee Report on Student Communication: Dr. Bowman explained the GPS plan calls for mandatory advising and the need to fulfill the advising requirements before registering. FAMs and advisors had to make special efforts to reach students: phone calls have been made but have not been effective. Suggested solutions were utilizing “Google voice,” and placing holds on student records.

Subcommittee Report – CRM Selection: Ms. Thimblin distributed a handout that described the features of the vendors they are considering, to make a decision on the vendor that best fits the needs of NOVA. The CRM is a communication tool and a data management system that is vital to tracks all levels of student data and allows direct communication with the students.
The top two choices were Talisma and Hobsons. With Talisma, the one feature absent is the academic planning and advising option. Hobsons does offer this option, and this software is also being used by George Mason. They both offer the important needed features including:

- Accessibility/Security
- Admissions
- Appointments
- Assessments
- Checklists
- Communication vehicles to students (more than e-mail)
- Customizability
- Discussion sites
- Early Alerts
- Enrollment
- Mobil Apps
- Notes
- PeopleSoft compatible
- Queries
- Recruitment
- Referrals

Once the decision is made, time will be required to move through the RFP process.

**GPS for Success Scorecard and Issues Log:** Mr. Agnich distributed a handout that featured benchmarks and reported data. The scorecard measured goals, objectives and performances.

Student response rates were low, and only 50 percent of the students at each campus in the correct age range attended the SOAR sessions. Mr. Agnich suggested more clearly defined roles and accountability tools were needed, in addition to more retention data.

Dr. Leidig stressed the need to have something fully developed to bring to the Administrative Council.

The next meeting will take place January 18 at 1:00 p.m., following by meetings on February 8, March 8, and April 12.

**Other:**

- Bryan Brown, alternate, will be departing as Cristal Edwards will be coming back. He was thanked by Dr. Leidig for all his committee support.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.