Expected Outcome 1. Continuous Improvement of Undergraduate Advising

The advising aim of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences’ Student Services Office is to reliably provide the appropriate level and frequency of student advising. This level should optimize the use of available resources and provide students with the necessary information needed to graduate with a robust education in the broad area of natural resources in the shortest reasonable time.

To accomplish this goal, an entirely new group advising process was developed and implemented in the 2012-2013 academic year (see attached). The changes were initiated to 1) increase the efficient use of the SSO’s limited resources, 2) increase student/faculty interaction, moving it earlier in the students college career, and 3) place more emphasis and earlier help for at-risk students. Sending at-risk students to the Academic Counseling and Advising Center early was observed to be an effective method in other similar colleges/schools in previous years. The Provost’s letter of July 18, 2013 on Undergraduate Academic Advising Expectations supported the changes as most of the five guidelines in the letter are already covered by one or more points in the new advising plan.

Assessment Method 1: Surveys

Assessment Method Description
During the spring of 2013 the Provost’s Office delivered a survey to students across the campus, this document, along with supporting information from the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences summer practicum (both Forestry and Wildlife Ecology and Management curricula) as well as graduate surveys, provided the information for assessment this academic year.
Findings
As anticipated, the change to reliance on group advising caused a notable drop in student satisfaction with advising within the School. The time required during the scheduled evening sessions was more than students wanted and yet was not sufficient time to answer individual questions.

The surveys used, while helpful, did not provide enough information to make prescriptive changes to the advising plan or to give direction to struggling faculty advisors.

How did you use findings for improvement?
The advising plan has been revised to place more emphasis on student and faculty interaction. Group advising sessions have been moved to daytime hours and close scrutiny and signing of the Plan of Study was transferred to individual advising sessions with their faculty advisor.

A new advising survey similar to one used on campus, but with SFWS additions, is planned for the coming academic year. This survey should provide advisor specific information as well as questions that lead to incremental and continuous improvement in the advising process.

Additional Comments

Expected Outcome 2. Continuous Improvement in the Quality and Quantity of New SFWS Students
Recruiting is a major responsibility of the Student Services Office for the SFWS and is a key objective in the School’s 2013 Strategic Plan. The goal is to increase undergraduate enrollment to 500 students by Fall 2018. The majority of this growth, 200 new students, is projected to be added to the new curriculum, Natural Resources Management (NATR). Plans to meet this goal have led to a revision of the recruiting policy and practices, redesigned website and brochures, revitalizing the student ambassador program, and focusing on new (urban) recruiting locations.

Assessment Method 1: Yearly Number Reporting and Review

Assessment Method Description
Annual numbers for each degree programs within the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences are available from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. There is also an internal report generated by the Director of Student Services each fall totaling the number of new students through Camp War Eagle (true freshmen) and Successfully Orienting
Students (transfers).

**Findings**
Traditional recruiting methods focused on community colleges in rural areas have proven insufficient at meeting increasing enrollment goals. The number of students in the newest degree, Natural Resources Management, is growing, but too slowly.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
The Student Services Office is being re-organized and a new recruiting plan is in development. A new ad hoc recruiting committee was initiated by the Dean to guide this evolution toward more environmentally aware and urban recruits. Additional changes to the recruiting plan include more social media presence, further website upgrades, and newer approaches to meeting with high school students.

**Additional Comments**

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**Expected Outcome 3. Assisting Students**
Job Placement of graduates from the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is critical to recruiting new students, building dependable alumni, and maintaining the School’s reputation as a source of high-quality new employees within the natural resources industry. Internships are stressed for all students regardless of major to build stronger resumes.

**Assessment Method 1: Surveys**

**Assessment Method Description**
An email followed by a phone survey was used in fall 2012 to gather placement numbers.

**Findings**
Most forestry graduates had jobs within 90 days (all but one). Just over half of the wildlife graduates had full-time jobs in their field 90 days after graduation. The one natural resources management graduate is working.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
More emphasis has been placed on hosting employers in interviews within the Forestry and Wildlife Sciences building. A new and improved job posting page in the website went online September 25th and more announcements are being sought. Interviewing and resume skills were taught in an evening session during the fall of 2012, during the graduating seniors’
group session, and following forestry summer practicum. Additional training is necessary and planned for the new academic year.

Curriculum modifications in Wildlife Ecology and Management were made to meet employer expectations for problem solving skills. A new Forestry curriculum with an accelerated summer practicum was developed and awaits approval by the University Curriculum Committee, which will allow more internship opportunity to these students. The Natural Resources Management curriculum was approved in a truly flexible format that allows students to customize coursework for specific jobs. Employers have been actively approached to suggest a specific suite of courses for students to consider if they are interested in working for that particular company or in that segment of the industry.

Additional Comments