Council Operations

Patrick Guidotti, Mathematics, in the School of Physical Sciences, Chaired the Faculty Board for Undecided/Undeclared Students in 2008-2009. The Board met three times during the academic year (once per quarter) to review and make recommendations to the Undecided/Undeclared Advising Program.

Program Review

The 2008-2009 academic year’s activities were strongly influenced by the November 2008 Review of the Undecided/Undeclared Advising Program. Sharon Salinger, Dean of the Division of Undergraduate Education (DUE) discussed the upcoming review during the November 5 2008 Board meeting. Efficacy and impact were the central questions the reviewers would be tasked with answering. The final report would be made available to Dean’s office as well as to the Board.

In preparation for the Review, a Board member voiced concern about the amount of the Board’s and its members’ (and, more in general, regular faculty’s) involvement in the U/U Program. Agreement was reached that the issue would be addressed during the 2009-2010 academic year through, possibly, the institution of regular meeting in the form, perhaps, of monthly coffees where faculty would be directly available to students.

Since approximately half the freshman population on Campus is part of the U/U Program, a Board member asked whether the review should possibly be included in the CEP systematic reviews of non-degree granting programs.

In response to a solicitation by Associate Dean Berkelhamer, the suggestion was made that Alumni or other relevant professionals be invited through the program to share their experience with advisees or with any interested students.

The November meeting was concluded by a detailed presentation of the U/U Advising Program and its activities by its Director, Kimberly Ayala, who also made a variety of data and other informational material available.

Review Report Discussion

The February 11 2009 meeting was dedicated to a discussion of the external review. Associate Dean Berkelhamer encouraged an open discussion of the report and solicited ideas and/or suggestions from the Board in particular with regard to

- crafting of a broader vision for the Program
- finding ways to make increased faculty involvement possible.

Board members had several comments. One comment addressed the need of better integration of local/school-based advising with global/campus-wide advising (through the U/U Program). It was also observed that the services of the U/U Program could potentially benefit students with affiliation to a school who are currently excluded from them. Thus a possible vision for the future of the
program would be to provide services to all students on Campus, as affiliated students are usually no
essentially undecided than their peers who declare so. An intrinsic difficulty was noted to stem from the
variety of different rules and policies due to the strong independence of academic units. A member
proposed the creation of a panel of advisors from different schools to implement a better integration
of the various services and the potential harmonization of rules and policies. Board members were
informed that currently Associate Deans have monthly meetings to which advising directors have been
invited. The opinion was expressed that the focus of the program shift from offering remedial tools
to offering more pro-active placement tools reflecting an evolution from a ‘hand-holding’ posture to a
more empowering one capable of fostering independence among students.

Various specific suggestions were also made concerning potential changes to the University Studies
II course and a possible search for a more positive denomination of the program. A member suggested
the Engineering Gateway model for possible campus-wide adoption but a member from the Arts
observed its unsuitability for that school.

A proposal was also made to introduce entrance and exit surveys to better monitor students’
evolution through the program and better assess its long term impact on advisees.

Associate Dean Berkelhamer noted that a few changes were going to be implemented in response
to the Review Report and to Board members’ suggestions. These include mandating personal advising
only for students with low GPA, making the University Studies II course optional, providing broader
services, and involving more faculty in a variety of ways.

U/U staff members expressed frustration at perceived inconsistencies and contradictions in the
report. A motion is made that the report is too critical leading to a unanimous vote of confidence in
the U/U Advising Program by the Board.

Response to Review Report

In the Spring quarter meeting of June 4 2009 the discussion revolved around the DUE response to
the review report. In particular two recommendations are made that advising not be mandatory for
students showing good progress and that University Studies II be made optional. Associate Dean
Berkelhamer also announced the organization of a retreat (with 15/20 participants) to discuss

- a vision for the program.
- the role of the program on campus.
- improvements.

Program Director Ayala provided some data for discussion including some preliminary results from
the newly instituted surveys and introduced two U/U counselors, Cristina Luiz and Evan Gilstrap,
who gave an overview of the program’s activities and a presentation about the theoretical foundations
of the University Studies II course, respectively. A suggestion was made that the presentations also
be given at the Fall CEP meeting.

As a follow-up to previous comments about the need of better integration, it is observed that
Schools tend to prefer to hold on to their students as much as possible and that they do not necessarily
support the activities and efforts of the U/U Advising Program. The original mission of the program
was precisely to reach students not served by the Schools. The point is reiterated that the U/U
Program should offer general services to all students and that School support is not only wished but
important.
During a discussion about possible ways to improve University Studies II, a proposal is made to create online modules for the presentation of majors thus leaving more time available for addressing general concerns during the course. Use of technology is also suggested as an excellent tool to make services more personalized and user friendlier.

Patrick Guidotti, Chair
Faculty Board for Undecided/Undeclared Students

Board membership:
V.C. Choudhary, Business
Charles Gable, Biological Sciences
Patrick Guidotti, Chair, Physical Sciences
Laura Kang, Humanities
Tony McGann, Social Science
Calvin McLaughlin, Health Sciences
Michael McNally, Engineering
Gopi Meenakshisundaram, ICS
Roxanne Silver, Social Ecology
Dorothy Solinger, Social Ecology
Philip Thompson, Arts
Ex Officio:
Sharon Salinger, Dean, DUE

Consultants:
Rudi Berkelhamer, Associate Dean, DUE
Kimberly Ayala, Director of Undecided/Undeclared Advising, DUE
Cristina Luiz, U/U Advising

Analyst:
Molly McGuire, Academic Senate