

**June 13, 2018**

**MARIA PANTELIA, CHAIR  
ACADEMIC SENATE – IRVINE DIVISION**

**RE: SENATE AD HOC ADVISING COMMITTEE**

During Spring Quarter 2018, an ad hoc committee was formed to review current advising efforts on the campus and provide recommendations for their improved coordination and support of the student academic, social, and career preparation experience. The committee was composed of fourteen members; two of which were staff members in the Division of Career Pathways and two were directors of student affairs.

The committee interviewed a variety of stakeholders on the campus involved in advising, gathered data on workloads in student services offices, and committee members met with student affairs officers in their respective areas.

On behalf of the ad hoc committee, please see the attached report and recommendations for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rodrigo Lazo,  
Chair  
Senate ad hoc Advising Committee

C: Natalie Schonfeld, Executive Director  
Academic Senate



June 13, 2018

## **REPORT OF THE SENATE AD HOC ADVISING COMMITTEE**

In March of this year, Chair of the Irvine Academic Senate Maria Pantelia empaneled an ad hoc committee to review the “coordination and support of the student academic, social, and career preparation experience.” The committee’s charge included the following:

- Recommendations for how UCI can improve its communication about what advising is;
- Recommendations for the improved coordination between the units responsible for advising students on academic, social and career preparation matters;
- Best practices to strengthen advising that the campus might implement; and
- The committee’s view of what would constitute an ideal advising scenario for an evolving campus. (Full charge in Appendix 1)

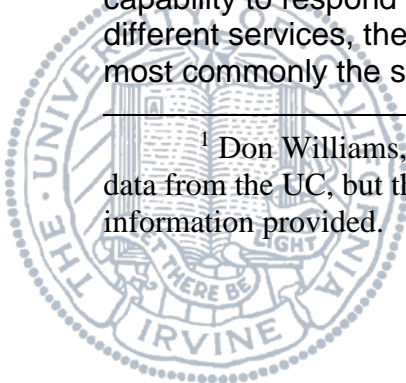
The committee decided at the outset that it would focus on undergraduate advising because graduate education presented complex advising scenarios that would call for time beyond the scope of the appointment. In addition, a Graduate Mentoring and Advising Policy had been approved by the UCI Graduate Council in April 2017. The committee met almost weekly during the spring quarter and interviewed a variety of stake-holders on the campus involved in advising: students, counselors from Student Affairs, and administrators (list of visitors in Appendix 2). It also gathered data on work-level in student-services offices on the Irvine campus and attempted to begin a comparison across the UC system.<sup>1</sup> In addition, some individual committee members met with student-affairs officers in their schools and gathered information.

### **Introduction**

Advising and counseling on the Irvine campus are delivered through multiple programs, including Student Affairs offices based in the schools; Division of Career Pathways; Counseling Center (mental health and well-being); programs such as Campuswide Honors and Undecided/Undeclared; seminars required for specific majors; and interaction with faculty. As students approach various units, they may receive advising in a variety of ways, including individual meetings, peer-support meetings, peer groups, and workshops. Some schools are using on-line chat capability to respond to questions that do not call for a face-to-face meeting. Despite different services, the committee found that the front line for counseling services was most commonly the school-based Student Affairs offices, which handle everything

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<sup>1</sup> Don Williams, director of student affairs in the School of Physical Sciences, gathered data from the UC, but the committee found it difficult to compare the different types of information provided.



from questions about requirements and requests for enrollment in oversubscribed classes to students who face mental-health challenges. Part of the work of student affairs is determining whether a student needs a referral to another unit, either for career advice or non-academic concerns.

Due to its limited time, the committee decided to focus primarily on academic and career advising, although we found that students might approach student-affairs counselors with issues that seem to be academic but may be connected to larger holistic considerations (e.g. depression). This report does not offer recommendations in relation to the Counseling Center.

## **Overall Findings**

The committee found that academic counseling services are staffed by highly dedicated and concerned professionals whose main concern is often how to be more helpful and informative to students. In addition, schools use student peer advisers, undergraduates who go through training, to support advising. One counselor told us that his main goal is to provide holistic counseling, but often limited time makes it impossible to approach all students in this way. Most surprising was that students are encountering a range of experiences in terms of the availability of services offered: The types of advising offered across the campus are uneven and affected by enrollments in popular majors, overall enrollments in schools, and the resources provided at the school level. In some cases students wait an hour for questions that might be addressed quickly (e.g. about requirements). In others, students receive highly individualized advising that at times resembles a personal counselor.

The availability of counselors and types of services offered can be affected by the number of students in a school or program and the number of counselors employed in student affairs. Appendix 3 shows a comparison among schools in terms of majors and the number of counselors. The range is most obvious when one compares the School of Social Sciences, with a ratio of 797 students to 1 staff member and the Nursing program with a ratio of 86:1. Other schools are along a spectrum such as 238:1 for Business and 615:1 for Physical Sciences. Appendix 3 charts a workload increase for some schools as the number of students and the popularity of certain majors have increased. The ratios can be affected not only by the resources provided at the school level but also by problems with retention and the effects of retirement on staff. As one guest told us, a unit can get into a mode of “surviving, not thriving,” meaning that they can barely keep up with the most pressing demands. The committee also found that schools do not always offer advising services to non-majors, making it difficult for students who are considering changing majors to see a counselor in the new prospective major. Also, the committee received reports of differential treatment in response to student requests, with vocal students - or those whose parents intervened - receiving different treatment compared to students who were not in a position of advocating for themselves.

While advising can differ among schools, the committee found instances in which greater communication is needed between faculty/department chairs and student-affairs counselors. The counselors are often the ones who first hear from students who cannot get into required classes.

UCI is facing challenges related to a changing demographic among its student body. As the university has focused on serving low-income, first-generation students and become a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the counseling needs of the students have changed also. The university has responded with a variety of programs aimed at students with particular needs (DACA, first-gen), but it is not clear that these programs reach all students who may need specific types of attention. In general, UCI has seen a sharp increase in undergraduates, from 4411 first-year students in 2010-2011 to 6545 in 2017-18. The total undergraduate enrollment has grown from 21976 in 2010-2011 to 29307 in 2017-18.<sup>2</sup> The committee's meetings and deliberations led us to believe that programs are doing a good job of supporting the top students (including those in the CHP) and students who are struggling (including those facing academic probation); however, we believe that counseling services are insufficient for those in a silent middle.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on general observations and may be more relevant to some schools than others. As we have already noted, advising services are by no means uniform throughout the campus.

Challenge: Provide better and more effective advising to students.

**RECOMMENDATION #1** – Provide a robust and consistent set of web-based resources across the campus through technology experts that can ensure quality web-based content and programs across schools. This support should come from a central unit that can provide a common set of technological tools. Strong web-based programs should be a supplement to (not a replacement for) a variety of existing resources and approaches to delivering information, including walk-in hours. One web-based application that some schools are using is a chat program that can help students quickly with questions that do not require a face-to-face meeting. In this spirit, we recommend that some web-based tools be generic across schools but others tailored to the needs of specific schools or programs. In addition, several schools call for more workshops that can deliver information to a group of students at one time. These workshops should be taped and made available on-line. We also believe certain forms should be made available on-line.

Challenge: Making sure students have the information they need.

**RECOMMENDATION #2** -- Require workshops or a one-credit course to familiarize students with campus services, requirements, change of major information, etc. The committee was impressed with the current system being used by the Biological

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<sup>2</sup> Information from Common Data Set provided by OIR.

Sciences, which requires incoming freshmen to take Bio Sci 2A, a 2-credit seminar that provides information on navigating the major. Other schools, including Engineering, also offer these types of seminars. Still other majors offer seminars that are oriented toward academic questions, and these academic seminars might include academic and career advising. If a school does not have the resources to offer such a course, then it should at least make available a series of workshops to help students become acquainted with campus advising and counseling services and other opportunities. Students are not always in a mind-set to take in all this type of information at orientation.

Challenge: Uneven resources for Student Affairs across schools.

**RECOMMENDATION #3** -- Schools with very high ratios of students to counselors need to bring down that number. While the committee does not have the information necessary to recommend an optimum ratio (and needs are likely to be different across programs), the university should make sure that there is some consistency in availability of advising across the campus.

Challenge: Improved communication between student affairs and faculty and school administration.

**RECOMMENDATION #4** – Schedule quarterly or biannual meetings in which chairs of departments interact with student-affairs staff to make sure they are working together. Associate deans should be well informed about the complexities and depth of the student affairs office in order to help facilitate this communication. Associate deans should be proactive in informing the faculty about curriculum.

Challenge: Better coordination between career services and academic affairs.

**RECOMMENDATION #5** -- A significant part of career services advising is handled by the Division of Career Pathways program. But since students most often approach school-based advising services, we need school-based counselors to receive cross-training in this area. One option would be for each school to have a designated career counselor who then becomes the point person in communication with Career Pathways. Another option is to appoint Career Pathways Career Community Engagement Specialists to coordinate with the schools' staff and faculty to present career related programs, advising, and resources for the schools' students, student organizations, and employers of interest.

Challenge: Provide better advising for students considering a change of major.

**RECOMMENDATION #6** -- Under current practices some schools do not make advising appointments for non-majors. The school hosting the new major should provide some type of advising for prospective majors. At the very least biannual workshops for change of majors should be offered. If a workshop is not possible, perhaps a webinar could be made available on-line. (This latter point takes us back to Recommendation #1.)

Challenge: Professional development and career preparation of student-affairs staff

**RECOMMENDATION #7** -- Offer improved training for all staff, including attendance at a national or state conference each year. In addition to improving retention, many offices could use support with transition from one staff person to another. Perhaps cross-training would help, or each school should keep a repository of information on specific positions.

The changing needs of UCI at this time of growth and change in the student population calls for a strengthening of academic counseling and advising services. The campus should make resources available and create more consistency in its advising across the campus. We would like to see a process by which the campus is able to track the availability of services and thus able to respond accordingly as new resources are needed. Some UCs have devoted significant sums to strengthen advising. In the case of UC Davis, advising ratios have been cut significantly. We believe UCI is currently understaffed and needs to direct more resources to its advising mission.

Rodrigo Lazo, Humanities (Chair)  
Jeanett Castellanos, Social Sciences  
Susan Coutin, Social Ecology  
Penelope Collins, Education  
Quoc-Viet Dang, Engineering  
Suzanne Helbig, Career Pathways  
Amy Kim, Arts  
Annie Lai, Law  
Catherine Loudon, Biological Sciences  
Tammy Smecker-Hane, Physical Sciences  
Veronica Vieira, Public Health, Health Sciences  
Jay Wall, Career Pathways  
Patricia Wellmeyer, Business  
Don Williams, Physical Sciences

## APPENDIX #1



March 7, 2018

Academic Senate  
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**JEANETT CASTELLANOS, SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**SUSAN COUTIN, SOCIAL ECOLOGY**  
**PENELOPE COLLINS, EDUCATION**  
**QUOC-VIET DANG, ENGINEERING**  
**SUZANNE HELBIG, CAREER PATHWAYS**  
**AMY KIM, ARTS**  
**ANNIE LAI, LAW**  
**RODRIGO LAZO, HUMANITIES**  
**CATHERINE LOUDON, BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**  
**TAMMY SMECKER-HANE, PHYSICAL SCIENCES**  
**VERONICA VIEIRA, PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**JAY WALL, CAREER PATHWAYS**  
**PATRICIA WELLMEYER, BUSINESS**  
**DON WILLIAMS, PHYSICAL SCIENCES**

**RE: Senate Ad Hoc Advising Committee**

The Senate is committed to maintaining a supportive and responsive student experience and ensuring that student services are addressing the needs of our growing undergraduate and graduate populations. The Senate wants to make sure the different types of available student advising services, academic, personal, and professional, are effective and properly coordinated.

With this in mind, I am writing to invite you to participate in a Senate Ad Hoc Advising Committee to review current advising efforts on the campus and provide recommendations for their improved coordination and support of the student academic, social, and career preparation experience. Professor Rodrigo Lazo has graciously agreed to convene the committee. The report this group will generate should include the following:

- Recommendations for how UCI can improve its communication about what advising is;
- Recommendations for the improved coordination between the units responsible for advising students on academic, social and career preparation matters;
- Best practices to strengthen advising that the campus might implement; and
- The committee's view of what would constitute an ideal advising scenario for an evolving campus.

I would like your report and recommendations by the end of June 2018 or earlier. Your report will subsequently be presented for discussion with the Senate and the administration.

The Academic Senate Office will be in touch with you shortly to schedule the first meeting of the ad hoc committee.

Thank you for your commitment to this important Senate effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MPantelia".

Maria Pantelia, Chair  
Academic Senate, Irvine Division

CC: Linda Cohen, Chair-Elect, Academic Senate



Enrique Lavernia, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor  
Julie Kennedy, Senate Analyst  
Natalie Schonfeld, Executive Director, Academic Senate



## **APPENDIX #2**

### **Guests to the Ad Hoc Committee:**

#### **Academic Counselors:**

1. Mary Gillis, CHP
2. Geoff Murry, Social Ecology
3. Ushma Patel, Engineering
4. Christine Tran, ICS
5. Priscilla de Lara, ICS
6. Kristin Fung, Biological Sciences
7. Estela Magana, Social Sciences
8. Andrea Licata, Undergrad/Undeclared

#### **ASUCI Representative**

1. Angeline Phan

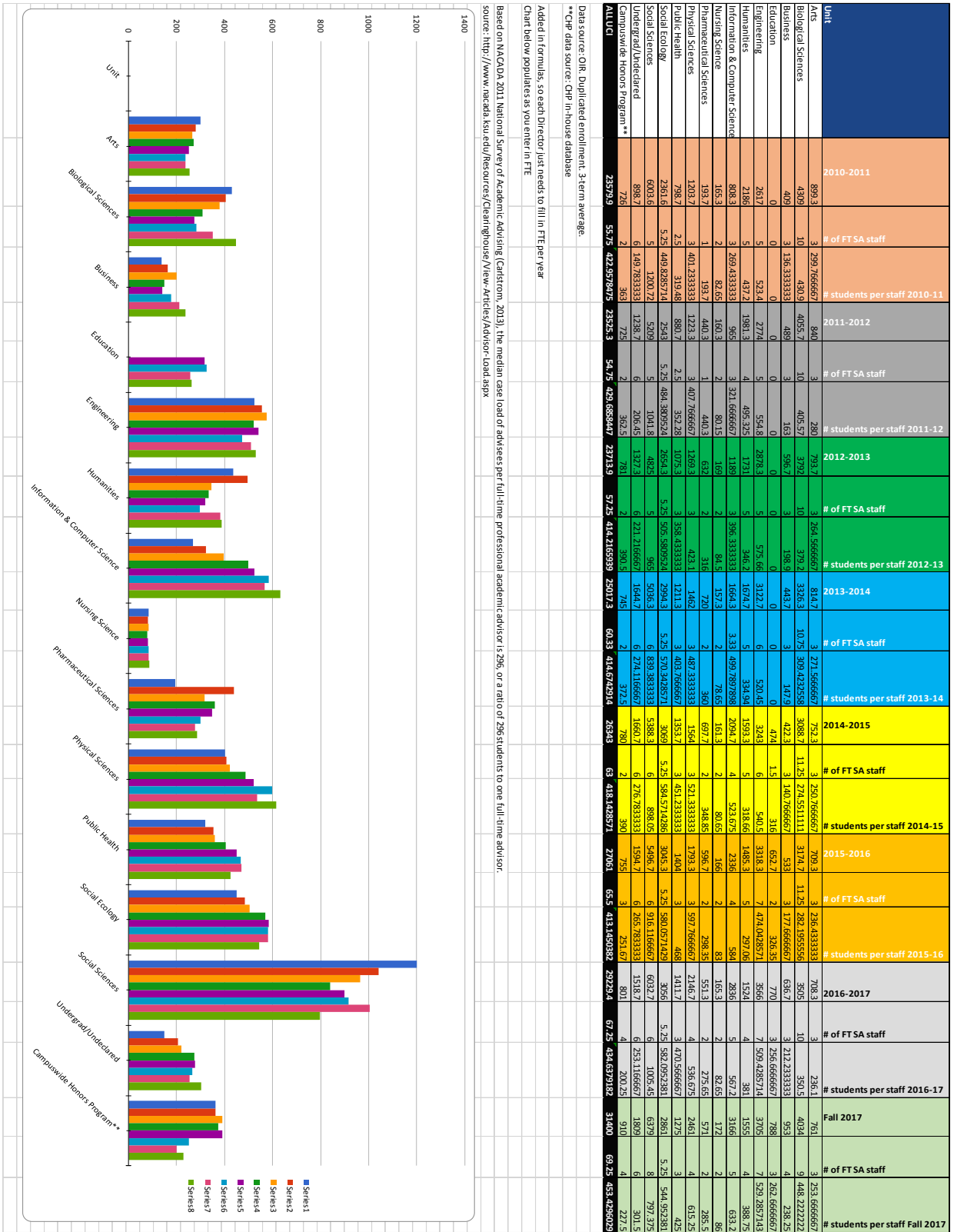
#### **Peer Academic Advisors**

1. Rosalind Ball
2. Amy Hu
3. Michael Cruz

#### **Administration**

1. Kimberly Ayala, Director, Undergraduate/Undeclared Advising
2. Michael Dennin, Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning

# APPENDIX #3



Data source: OIR, Duplicated enrollment, 3 term average.  
 \*\*CHP data source: CHP in-house database

Added in formulas, so each Director just needs to fill in FTE per year  
 Chart below populates as you enter in FTE

Based on NAACADA 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising (Carristrom, 2013), the median case load of advisors per full-time professional academic advisor is 295, or a ratio of 295 students to one full-time advisor.  
 source: [http://www.naacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor\\_Load.aspx](http://www.naacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor_Load.aspx)