

TIPS FOR ADVISING AS A RETENTION TOOL

The adviser/advisee relationship is the only one on one relationship with a staff member that is guaranteed to a student at UW-Eau Claire. While great advising will not, in itself, retain a student, both the relationship and the content provided can help the student be successful.

FIRST YEAR

When first year students were asked to give advice to advisers, two comments stood out:

- Just know we are really confused about everything.
- No matter how much of a pain we are, try to stay patient. Hopefully in the end we can reward you.

Departmental suggestions:

- **Use Phase II meetings** to welcome students AND set expectations for the adviser/advisee relationship. Have as many advisers there as possible—students love to see their actual adviser. Do something fun--- they've been sitting too long.
- Consider having group meetings for such things as: 1) introducing the planner; 2) explaining registration information/requirements; 3) Introducing high impact practices. Always include a social component.
- Develop a plan to help all students populate the on-line planner to introduce the concept of planning for their education, including high impact practices, time to graduate and liberal education.
- Consider having advisers who are particularly in-tune with the advising needs of particular groups and assign students accordingly (students of color, low-income, first generation, non-traditional, transfers, etc.)
- Consider having one person in the department develop template emails (e.g., welcome to campus, registration appointments) that everyone can send out to their own advisees.
- Consider having someone in the department who is an expert on Study Abroad, NSE, student/faculty research—to whom advisers can refer a student.

Individual Advisers:

- Send a welcome message to your advisees - telling them about your office hours or appointment policy and inviting them to come in and get acquainted.
- Send another email at registration time, explaining how you set up appointments and including links to on-line resources to help them register.
- When meeting with students, always start with an open ended question---- How are things going; how are you adjusting to college?
- Always allow for the possibility that the student is no longer interested in your major or is considering another major.
- **Look at mid-term grades and contact students who are not doing well.**
- Send emails about help that is available to all your advisees.
- Use the on-line planner to introduce the concept of overall planning for their education, including high impact practices
- **Always check final grades to see if a student needs to change their schedule.**

SECOND YEAR

It is important to make the transition from freshman advising--- where you need to spend a lot of time explaining requirements -- to the second year, when the emphasis needs to shift to helping students purposefully plan their education (which includes sequencing of courses) and think about what happens after they graduate. A national survey found that the top three things second year students wanted help with were related to career planning--- even though they may not actually seek out this help.

Departmental level—questions to ask

- Are second year students in courses that introduce them to the major or are they still in large introductory courses? Are there ways to create “major specific” study groups or other gatherings within large classes?

- Are there ways to create sophomore level internships or encourage service- learning activities related to the major at the lower division level?
- Can you create ways to introduce second year students to research and help them find projects for their junior year?
- Are second year students connected to upper division students through organizations or in other ways that make them feel connected to the major?
- Have you connected with the Second Year Experience program in Career Services to see how you can work together to help these students explore possible career options?

Adviser level

- Be certain to confirm that the student is still interested in the major. If they have any hesitation, refer them to Career Services.
- If you are in a competitive program or the student has post-graduation plans, review their academic progress and be honest about their chances. Career Services has an adviser (Jana Schilmoeller) who specializes in helping students who are not going to make it into the major/career of choice.
- If the student needs and doesn't have a minor, now is the time to get serious about this.
- Review the "academic planner" for accuracy. It is in their second year that students should really be able to plan in a meaningful way.
- If you haven't already, first semester of the second year is the perfect time to talk about high impact practices and to begin the discussion of future plans (what do I do with a major in?) The "sophomore slump" is real and often results from not understanding how their courses relate to "the rest of their life."

TRANSFER STUDENTS

On the one hand, transfer students don't want to be identified as such once they are on campus; on the other hand, they do have special needs

Department level

- Designate someone in the department to follow-up with transfers once they have attended orientation to check to see if they need help getting into courses they need. That could be the person they met with or it could be transferred to their permanent adviser.
- Make certain that advisers know when they have been assigned a new transfer student.
- Consider having a student (preferably a transfer student) contact them to see if they have questions.
- As a department, consider having a meeting just for new transfer students, inviting both faculty and continuing students.
- As a department, make certain that the adviser assigned to the student knows about consults/defers/petitions related to this student. (Advising notes is, obviously, ideal)
- Reach out specifically to transfer students to invite them to student organizations.

Individual adviser

- Send a welcoming message to all your new transfer students asking them to come meet with you.
- Go through the transfer evaluation and degree audit to see if there are any courses that could be substituted. If the student has courses that aren't being "used" for a requirement, try to explain the "why." Remember, when they were at Orientation they were overwhelmed—once they are here they can take in more information.
- Remember that transfer students often think they know more than they do about how things work here. Be open to questions that would usually be asked by freshmen.
- Having said that, once they are here for a semester, recognize that they want to be treated like all other students.