

An Updated Model for Developmental Advisement at The College of New Jersey
April 23, 2003

The Developmental Advising Task Force respectfully submits this proposal of an updated model for undergraduate advisement at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ).

Executive Summary

The guiding principle for the design of an updated model of undergraduate advisement was to create a model that strongly supports faculty in their role as primary academic advisors. The task force wanted to strengthen and reinforce this role by first acknowledging that faculty have felt overwhelmed by the unclear and daunting expectations often placed on them as they advise students. To insure that faculty can successfully fulfill their role in advisement, and concentrate on the developmental relationship between themselves and their advisees, administrative staff have been included in the advising team and their role will be to focus on the administrative functions of advising. Therefore, by clearly identifying manageable responsibilities of faculty advisors, as well as the support, training, and electronic resources needed to assist them, the task force hopes to provide a model in which advising will be wholeheartedly accepted by faculty, and delivered in a manner that provides excellent advising services to our students.

The model proposed by the task force requires the integrated efforts of the administration, staff, faculty, and students. Therefore, if the model is to be successfully implemented, it is essential that the institution support *all* aspects of the model. If all aspects of the model are not adopted, supported, and implemented essentially simultaneously, the model will, in the estimation of the task force, fail to meet its goal of improving the advising of our students at TCNJ.

Part I: Background and Introduction

Background

The charge to our task force was to develop a new model for advisement at TCNJ (please see our Preliminary Report). In the literature on advisement evaluated by the task force one central concept emerged, which was that there is no ideal model for advisement. There are several different models that have been implemented by numerous colleges and universities, each of which is sometimes successful and sometimes not. However, what was clear was that there are two key elements of every system that is deemed successful:

- The model reflects the mission of the institution
- The model is actively embraced by the entire community

In addition, as indicated in our Preliminary Report we identified four elements of advisement models that we felt made implementation possible, and matched the mission of TCNJ. These four elements (listed below) provide the framework for an advisement model and are expanded upon in this report.

- Faculty as primary advisors
- Advisement as a team effort
- Central coordination
- Electronic advisory resources

Introduction: An Evolving Model

Based on the research we conducted on advisement models at over 10 institutions that are similar in size and composition to TCNJ, and discussions held with many constituents at TCNJ, we find ourselves in agreement with the First Year Experience Task Force in strongly endorsing the idea that students should not declare their major upon arrival at TCNJ. *Note that this does not mean that first-year students would not enroll in courses in a major of interest, but simply that they would not be required to formally declare that area as their major upon enrollment.* In fact we anticipate that the vast majority of students would enroll in precisely those courses they would have enrolled in had they been forced to declare. However, the advantage of creating a system in which students wait to formally declare a major is that it communicates a clear message to students; that they are encouraged to explore their options.

However, in light of the current system on campus and the system for admitting students, and in light of the fact that our task force recognizes the need to propose an advisement model that could be implemented as soon as possible, we have designed a model that outlines two approaches to advisement. Approach I was designed for immediate implementation because it addresses the needs of both declared and undeclared students. Approach II, which only requires one substantive change, could be adopted in the future *if* the college decides to have all students enroll as what we would call “exploratory” students (undeclared students in our current system).

The single change in the model outlined in Approach II regards the role of the instructor of the First Year Seminar. In Approach I, this person is mentor to all students in the course, and is also advisor to the students in the course who have not declared a major. First-year students who have declared a major would be assigned a faculty advisor in their major. In Approach II, the First Year Seminar instructor would be both mentor and advisor to all students in the course. Even using this second approach however, exceptions could be made for professional schools so that students in those schools are assigned a formal advisor in the professional school.

Our research also made us aware of the importance of a college orientation/ developmental advisement “course” for students. Given that the First Year Seminar instructor will be a mentor to the students, much of this orientation will occur in that course, which we endorse and encourage. However, we do not believe this role can be fulfilled by the First Year Seminar alone. Therefore in our model a formal program of orientation experiences is re-instated, but it is now run by professional staff, the majority of whom will be from Academic Services.

What follows is a description of the model in Part II (The Model: An Overview), and an outline of additional support needed to make the model successful in Part III. In addition, in order to view the model from the student’s perspective, a timeline for the advisement process is provided in Part IV (The Model: A Student’s Timeline). This report concludes with a Summary (Part V).

Part II: The Model: An Overview

II.A. The Advisement Team

The core relationship in advisement is between the faculty member and the student. However, in order to create the support network necessary for this relationship to flourish and be productive, each incoming student (both first-year and transfer) would be assigned an advisement team. The advisement team would consist of three people; a faculty advisor, an administrative staff member from Academic Services or a related office (the specific delivery model needs to be determined by Academic Services, but one option is that this is the individual responsible for the student’s orientation program) and a peer mentor. Upper-class students would have both a faculty advisor

and a staff advisor, again provided by Academic Services (the specific delivery model for this advisor will also be determined by Academic Services, but might be cohort based –e.g. by class year, or by major, or randomly). Members of the advisement team will communicate regularly via e-portfolios, e-mail, and/or phone.

II.B. The Philosophy of Freshman Advising

The model we propose relies on the creation of a sufficient number of First Year Seminars, proportionately distributed across schools, to serve the entire first-year class. Therefore, in addition to the relationships established with the members of the advisement team, students will form a new and unique kind of mentoring relationship with the instructor of their First Year Seminar. We have recognized this new opportunity in both approaches of our model. In Approach I this instructor will mentor all students, and provide formal advisement to those students who are exploratory. In Approach II, this instructor will be both mentor and formal advisor to all students.

A brief summary of the goals of the First Year Seminar course (adapted from the First Year Seminar: Proposal for Pilots for Fall 2003) and those of the orientation programs to be run by professional staff are outlined below. The goals are followed by a description of the advisement and mentoring roles of faculty according to the two approaches.

Goals of First Year Seminar versus Orientation programs:

First Year Seminar goals:

- Provide an in-depth academic experience
- Provide a forum in which students engage in the exchange of ideas
- Engage students in the process of honing their writing skills
- Provide a faculty member who mentors students as they “chart their path through college” (see Proposal For Pilots)

Orientation Program goals:

- Introduce students to opportunities on and off campus
- Engage students in the college environment
- Initiate the construction of an “electronic portfolio”

Faculty roles in first year advising and mentoring:

Approach I: First-Year advisement and mentoring in our current system where the majority of students declare a major upon entry to the College:

- The First Year Seminar instructor will serve as mentor to all students in the course.
- First-year students who are exploratory will also be advised by the First-Year Seminar instructor, and will be expected to contact one of the designated first-year advising specialists (a faculty member) in the discipline(s) they hope to pursue. They will also be encouraged to interact with the faculty member teaching a course in an area of interest.
- Upon declaring a major, each student will be assigned a faculty advisor in that discipline. This includes first-year students who declare their major. This advisor will be the faculty advisor for the rest of the student’s time at the college,

unless the student chooses a different advisor, which they are free to do following guidelines provided by the Director of Advisement.

Approach II: First-Year advisement and mentoring in a system where all students are exploratory during first year.

- The instructor of the First Year Seminar will serve as both mentor and advisor to all students in the course, except potentially in those professional schools that choose to have their students advised by an individual in that school.
- All students will be expected to contact one of the designated advising specialists (a faculty member or Assistant Dean, as determined by each school) in any area of interest.

II.C. Team Interactions and Roles

Overview

The literature on developmental advising indicates that students must take responsibility for their role in the advisement process, and be pro-active in seeking out the members of their advisement team. However, this expectation must be made clear to first-year students and reinforced throughout their academic careers.

Since personal one-on-one contact is critical for good advisement, during the **first year** the student will meet with their seminar instructor and all members of his/her team (see Timeline, Part IV). The student's seminar instructor will serve as mentor and will guide student as he/she develops a responsible approach to his/her education. The roles of the other members of the team are described in our Preliminary Report and expanded upon below.

During the **second year** the student will continue to meet with a faculty advisor (either the First Year Seminar instructor or a new advisor from the student's chosen department), and be in contact with a professional staff advisor and the same peer advisor they were assigned when they arrived. Contacts with professional staff and peer advisors may now be more frequently accomplished by e-mail and/or phone.

During the **third and fourth** years the student will continue to meet with the faculty advisor, who is now in every case a faculty member in their discipline. The student will still have an assigned staff advisor and can continue to use them as a resource. The peer advisor would in most cases have graduated.

What follows are the implementation details for the each member of the team.

1. The faculty advisor

- The faculty member is the primary advisor for the student.
- All faculty members will participate in advisement during their careers, though not necessarily to the same extent throughout their careers.
- During any given semester, the majority of the faculty members in each department will have advisees.
- In every department, several (depending on the number of majors) of the faculty members will be dedicated to advising first-year students. Individual departments will decide whether students who declare a major upon arrival will

stay with the same faculty advisor or be assigned to a new faculty advisor during the first or second year. If the student is exploratory, the pattern outlined above is repeated until the student declares a major.

- Each department will assign individual faculty dedicated to advising only those students majoring in both education and a content area.
- Each department and/or school will determine their own method for assigning advisors to their majors, but efforts must be made to keep the number of students per advisee below 35.
- Exemption from advisement will be given to faculty during their first year at the college, and for other special circumstances. Faculty beyond their first year who do not have a standard number of advisees will be expected to compensate by increasing their service activities to the department in comparable activities.
- Faculty who voluntarily take on a larger role in advisement will have a commensurate decrease in other service activities.
- Assessment of advisement will be included in applications for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and five-year review. The governance committee charged with advisement should determine the nature of this assessment (see Part IV).

2. The Academic Services Staff Advisor

- The staff advisor will meet with the student during June Orientation Week and assist the student in negotiating the web-based resources that allow him/her to enroll in the courses appropriate for any potential area(s) of interest.
- Students can communicate with their staff advisor at any time during the academic year when they require assistance with issues or tasks related to academic service areas including Career Services, Records and Registration (including Degree Audit) and Student Financial Services.
- Staff advisors will refer students experiencing problems to the appropriate resource on campus, such as Psychological Counseling or the Dean of Student Life Office.
- Orientation and training programs on advisement for new students, faculty advisors, and peer advisors will include interactions with staff advisors so that they can share information and recommendations related to their areas of expertise.
- Communication between the staff advisor and other members of the student's advisement team will occur as needed, and will be facilitated by the electronic portfolio system.
- Special populations such as EOF, transfer or differently-abled students will be assigned to the appropriately trained staff advisors, and these assignments may be by class year or other cohort identities.
- Students who have declared their major, but are seeking to change majors, will receive assistance from the staff advisor in their decision making process and in the execution of the change.
- Staff advisors will be assessed in the performance of their advisement responsibilities.

3. The peer advisor

- Upper-class students will be recruited, selected and trained by the Advisement Office to serve as peer advisors.

- Peer advisors will be official members of the team, and play critical roles in orientation for first-year and transfer students.
- Peer advisors will be present during June Orientation and Welcome Week, and at the new orientation sessions created for transfer students.
- A system of reward for peer advisors will be established by the Director of Advisement.
- Since these students will graduate before their “advisees” graduate, they will not be members of the team beyond the second year.

4. The student

- The student will be made aware of the identity of all members of his/her advisement team.
- Students must be proactive in seeking contact with all members of their advisement teams, on a schedule consistent with the recommended timeline.
- If a student is exploratory, it is the student’s responsibility to contact faculty members in disciplines of interest, and register for courses in those disciplines, in order to gain enough experience to guide his/her eventual choice of major.
- Students must review their electronic portfolio on a regular basis to ensure that it is up to date and complete.
- Students must attend all orientation programs to gain information on the policies and procedures related to the process of advisement.
- Students must remain aware of the policies and procedures that impact their academic program.

II.D. Central Coordination

There will be a Director of Advisement housed in Academic Services who will have additional support from existing Academic Services staff. The four primary roles of the Director are to 1) coordinate the activities of those who participate in advising in Academic Services and other service offices, 2) create and implement the resources used for orientation, 3) create and/or coordinate existing the web-based resources for advisement that are central to a successful advisement system, and 4) provide on-going training to all members of the advising team.

The responsibilities of the Director and his/her staff are listed below.

- Assign entering students to their First Year seminar course based on their preference (see Part IV).
- Coordinate the advisement activities of Academic Services staff, and assign advisees by the cohort model designed by Academic Services.
- Administer orientation programs for first-year and transfer students.
- Recruit, select, train, evaluate and develop a system of reward for peer advisors.
- Ensure that the needs of special populations of students are met by training and assigning appropriate academic services advisors to those students.
- Provide central advisement information to the students, faculty, and staff, and ensure that there is communication between all involved.
- Configure and maintain student information systems to support advising.
- Provide in-person support and resources to new faculty, peer advisors, and academic services staff.

- Create support materials for faculty (e.g., a list of questions to ask your advisees, a list of resources and contacts for counseling, and information on study abroad, student finances, student life, etc.).
- Coordinate with the First Year Experience staff and peer advisors to implement the orientation programs that used to be carried out in the freshman seminar.
- Create and maintain general advisement web resources.
- Place holds on all students' records immediately *following* Add/Drop. These holds will ensure that the student meets with his/her advisor, but by adding them following Add/Drop, will not interfere with registration. They would be removed by the advisor as soon as the student has met with them regarding the next semester's registration (see Part III The Model: Timeline).
- Serve on a First-Year experience team if such a team is created.

II.E. Electronic Advising Resources

Electronic advising resources can take many forms. Certainly enhanced department web sites and sites specifically geared to advising should be developed. Another component of the electronic resources can be called an "electronic portfolio." While this term means many different things to different members of the higher education community, and the Task Force does not mean to define the many possible forms a portfolio could take, we endorse the investigation and development of an appropriate electronic portfolio through which the two following goals can be attained.

The first goal can be viewed as providing an "advising capstone" such that the portfolio represents a synthesis and summary of a student's college career. In this way, the student can capture his/her four year development as a student, scholar, and community member (see Timeline, Part IV). This could include, for example, a section that served as a repository of a student's work, which would both reflect his/her development as a student and prepare him/her for career opportunities.

A second equally important purpose of a portfolio is to serve as a tool for the advisement team to document and track the student's academic record, and to communicate with one another. It is also within this portfolio that the outline of a developmental framework for advisement could be presented. The outline would contain relevant advisement activities by academic year, thus encouraging the student and advisor to consider developmentally appropriate questions and activities. For example it would begin with an introduction to the college experience, and proceed through the selection of a major, increased involvement in the discipline, and participation in research and internships. It would then finish with a section describing plans for the future, such as applying to graduate/professional school and/or for employment.

The development of electronic advising resources is defined as a primary responsibility of the Director of Advisement, and one of the first tasks of the individual in this role will be to further explore the possibility of adopting this kind of resource.

Part III Additional Support

In order for the model to work, we have outlined additional responsibilities for departments and schools, and described the role of a new governance committee.

III.A. Schools

The Dean's office in each school will be responsible for providing the coordination and interfacing required between schools, and for designating the individual(s) for whom this is a responsibility (Assistant Dean, chair, faculty member, staff member). In some schools, there will be a significant role for the Assistant Dean in coordinating advisement in the school. This could include, but is not limited to, assisting departments as they develop their own model for the implementation of the new advisement system, providing resources for and coordinating advising sessions, assigning advisors, and advising special populations of students.

III.B. Departments

- Create web resources to enable students to monitor their own progress.
- Ensure that all new faculty and those who advise First-Year students take advantage of the in-person training, support and resources made available by the Director of Advisement.
- Ensure that all faculty are aware of the resources available for advisement.
- Assign faculty members using an equitable system, and one in which all faculty advise during their career.
- Designate the appropriate number of advising specialists to advise students who are exploring their discipline as a potential major (both exploratory students and those interested in changing their major).
- Designate several faculty to be First-Year advisors, and ensure that they receive the support and resources necessary to be effective.
- Designate faculty to be Transfer Student Advisors and ensure that they receive the support and resources necessary to meet the special needs of transfer students.
- Designate faculty to advise students majoring in both education and a content area, and as the need arises, other students with dual majors.
- Take into account the needs of special populations in assigning advisors.
- Teach a sufficient number of First-Year Seminars to cover advisement, or designate a sufficient number of faculty as first-year advisors.
- Only assign full-time faculty to teach First-Year seminars.

III.C. Governance Committee

A new governance committee, the Advisement Advisory Committee, must be created to oversee the advisement process, monitor the success of advisement, and make recommendations for its periodic improvement. The first task of this committee will be to charge departments, schools, and Academic Services with defining a means for the implementation of the advisement model in their department/school/office, and with a system for reward and/or recognition. The make-up of the committee should include the Director of Advisement, a representative from Career Services, a representative from Academic Services, representatives from at least one liberal arts and one professional school (perhaps Assistant Deans), a first year faculty advisor, an additional faculty member, an individual from Student Life, and two students.

To ensure the success of the advising process, we recommend the governance committee consider and make recommendations on the following topics:

1. Assessment tools for advisement (for example, formal evaluations, or letters from student advisees) for faculty and professional staff.

2. Assessment of the centralized advising effort in terms of staffing levels and resource allocation.
3. Training for the advisement team and the implementation of that training by the Director of Advisement.
4. Reward systems and for faculty, staff and peer advisors, and reform procedures, both designed to reinforce accountability.
5. Assessment of the ability of the advisement system to change in response to curriculum and admissions policy changes (e.g., time of major declaration).
6. Evaluation of the mechanisms of communication between all of those involved in advisement.

IV. The Model: A Student's Timeline

In order to see how this model could be implemented, we have created a timeline for different populations of students starting from the time they enter the college as either first-year students (indicated for both Approaches I and II) or transfer students, until the time they prepare for graduation.

These time-lines are not exhaustive, and additional elements may be added as each department, school, and office designs implementation models for their area.

A. First-Year student in our current system (Approach I)

Before arrival at the college:

- Before June orientation, the student is asked to 1) indicate whether he/she chooses to declare a major or not (students will be *encouraged* to pursue whichever path makes them most comfortable) and 2) give an ordered preference list of five First Year Seminars.
- The Director of Advisement assigns students to a First Year seminar (preferably one of their top choices). If the student has not declared a major, the faculty member teaching the course is the student's advisor. If the student has declared a major, the Director of Advisement will work with each department to assign a faculty member from the department to serve as faculty advisor.
- At the June Orientation the student meets the professional staff advisor and the peer advisor. The student is provided with the name and contact information for the faculty advisor. The student now has the contact information for the Advisement Team.
- Students enroll in four courses, among which are a First Year Seminar, a course in at least one area of interest, and two additional courses.
- The staff advisor assists the student in negotiating the web-based resources that allow the student to enroll in the course(s) appropriate for any potential areas of interest (i.e., future majors).

Upon arrival:

- A session is held during Welcome Week on advisement. Faculty advising First Year students are invited to attend.

- Students attend class, and meet the faculty instructor of their First Year Seminar and the instructor of courses they are taking in any areas of interest

Immediately following Add/Drop

- A hold is placed on the student's record. This will be removed by the advisor as soon as the student has met with the advisor and discussed registration for the following semester.

Early in the fall semester

- Students meet one-on-one with their faculty advisors early in the semester. At this meeting the list of advisement questions is asked by the advisor, the hold is removed, and, if the student is exploratory, he/she is asked whether he/she has spoken with a faculty member teaching the course in the area of interest.
- Students meet with their professional staff advisor through methods to be determined by Academic Services.
- Near registration, the student visits the web site for areas of interest, meets with their faculty advisor, and directs any additional unanswered questions to the staff advisor and/or a designated first year advisor in their area of interest.

To reiterate, students who declare a major upon arrival will either stay with the same faculty advisor or be assigned to a new faculty advisor during the first or second year (to be decided by the department). If the student is undeclared, the pattern outlined above is repeated until the student declares a major.

B. First Year student in a system where all students are exploratory (Approach II):

The only modifications to the model that would need to be made to accommodate a situation in which all students are exploratory are:

- the First-Year Seminar instructor is always the advisor for the student
- once a student declares a major they will be assigned a faculty advisor in that department
- students will be required to meet with an advising specialist in their area(s) of interest during their first semester

C. Transfer student

Transfer students will, in the majority of cases, have an area of interest and can therefore be assigned a faculty advisor from the department of interest. This advisor will specialize in advising transfer students. The students will also be enrolled in an orientation program designed for transfer students. In addition, the appropriate number of peer mentors will be trained and assigned to transfer students. The transfer student will therefore also begin their career at the college with an Advisement Team of three people.

The Director of Advisement will be charged with designing and implementing an orientation course specifically for transfer students. Peer mentors will play a central role in these orientation sessions.

D. Upper-class students

Once a student declares a major, he/she is assigned a faculty advisor in that department or school, who will remain the advisor for the rest of the student's college career, unless circumstances require a change in advisor. According to the model developed by Academic Services, students will remain in contact with a professional staff person who is trained in the developmental needs of the student. Students will meet with their faculty advisor regularly, at least once a semester. Each semester a hold flag will be placed on the student's record immediately following add/drop. This hold is then removed by the faculty advisor after meeting with the student.

The advisement needs of upper-class students are distinct from those of first-year students. Therefore in order to address those needs, and assist students as they take responsibility for their college careers, faculty will be provided with the resources developed for developmental advisement, and be trained in the use of the "electronic portfolio" system that the college chooses to adopt.

F. The advisement capstone

During a student's final year at the college, he/she will produce the final assessment of their college career, and their future goals, through conversations with their advisor. This will provide the student with the resources necessary to synthesize their experiences and reflect on themselves and their progress. This may be documented in the student's "electronic portfolio."

V. Summary

The Developmental Advisement Task Force recommends that, while aspects of the model we have proposed will need to be assessed through the governance process before the entire model is implemented, certain recommendations could be implemented immediately.

- The Director of Advisement position should be created in order that planning and/or implementation can begin.
- The new governance committee on advisement should be established.
- Academic Services should be charged with piloting orientation programs, assigning and training peer advisors, creating additional web materials, and tracking advisor assignments.

In addition, we feel that, while the model we have proposed fits well with the current situation at TCNJ and could therefore be implemented as soon as it is approved, we recommend that it be formally re-evaluated in Fall 2006 in order to specifically address the issue of whether the First Year Seminar instructor should be the advisor for all entering First Year students. This will likely depend on the number of students that, by 2006, enter without declaring their major.

We also recommend that a task force be established to address the issue of declaring a major. This task force should evaluate whether the college should go to a system where all students are

“exploratory” when they enter the college, and determine what impact this will have both on the college admissions process, and the process by which students declare/enter a major. In addition, the assignment of advisors to first and second year students should be assessed by this group.

Finally, we would like to thank the Committee on Faculty Affairs for providing their strong support of advisement by recognizing it as an integral part of faculty work (see the CFA report of Spring 2003), and the Task Force on the First Year Experience for their extensive work in this area. In addition we would like to thank the Student Government Association and the Assistant Deans for their invaluable input. We have designed a model that we feel is consistent with the recommendations made by all of these stakeholder groups.

This report was respectfully submitted by the Developmental Advisement Task Force:

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