

112th Student Senate of the University of South Carolina

Sponsored by Senator Windsor

A RECOMMENDATION

-TO-

INVEST IN UNIVERSAL, CAMPUS-WIDE PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS
PER COLLEGE, SCHOOL, AND/OR DEPARTMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
UNIVERSITY ADVISING CENTER

WHEREAS, academic advising is a requirement for every student at the University of South Carolina in order to register for classes. Advising is the only required and structured service on campus that involves one on one contact with a concerned representative of the institution; and

WHEREAS, academic advising is the single most powerful predictor of satisfaction within a campus environment for students at four year schools; and

WHEREAS, undergraduate students have regularly recognized inequitable advising experiences across all colleges and schools. It is the goal of the university and University Advising Center (UAC) to promote equity and excellence in academic advising; and

WHEREAS, the central goal for the UAC is standardization in academic advising, so that all students have the opportunity for enhanced and equitable advising experiences;

WHEREAS, one of the key standards involves an advisor's assigned case load of students. The UAC follows the National Academic Advising Association's recommendation for a 300:1 advising caseload. There are currently departments that exceed this standard and even have twice that amount of students per academic advisor; and

WHEREAS, an overloaded case of students per advisor yields negative advising experiences according to advising survey results. Poor academic advising is reflected in data related to the rates for first to second-year retention, six-year graduation, first-year probation, and change of major; and

WHEREAS, advising appointments will be time constrained, so students may not have adequate time to ask questions and/or discuss longer term goals or questions beyond the next semester's class registration. Students meeting with their Advisor thirty minutes (or more) for their advising appointment indicated a higher level of satisfaction with the appointment overall in comparison to students who met with their Advisor less than thirty minutes; and

WHEREAS, UAC employed Undergraduate Academic Advisors (UAA) are assigned with an assigned caseload of approximately 300 undergraduate students including first-year students, sophomores, and incoming transfer students within a specific major or set of majors. UAA advising sessions are guaranteed to last at least 30 minutes and advisors make frequent contact throughout the year; and

WHEREAS, 78% of UAAs also discuss career opportunities and graduate school with advisees. Data from the 2019 Student Advising Survey implies that UAAs are more likely to have these discussions than other advisors on campus. In addition, discussion of beyond-the-classroom activities and post-graduation opportunities in advisement is positively linked to greater overall satisfaction with advising. Thus, UAAs will play a key role in the university's accreditation as this integration and reflection on

experiential education in the advising setting is being written into UofSC's new Quality Enhancement Plan; and

WHEREAS, UAAs provide transfer students in their caseload additional support to address challenges for transfer students. This is especially important to have full time advisors handling transfer students, who need more personal attention and academic guidance during their transition to a new institution; and

WHEREAS, according to results from the 2019 Student Academic Advising Survey students in the College of Arts and Sciences report greater overall satisfaction with their advising experience when assigned to a UAA (M=3.13/4.00) compared to students assigned to faculty and staff advisors beyond the first-year (2.61/4.00); and

WHEREAS, the College of Arts and Sciences and the College for Engineering and Computing use faculty advising models for upperclassmen. These two schools comprise a large amount of students, but they are not receiving excellent and equitable advising experiences compared to other colleges and schools with more full time advisors; and

WHEREAS, it is evident from a comparison of 2015 and 2018 UAC survey data that a large portion of faculty advisors do not enjoy advising and do not find it to be an effective use of their time. Faculty do not report feeling well trained to advise. Faculty were less likely to refer students to campus and academic resources and beyond the classroom opportunities. Faculty advisors were less likely to explain Carolina Core and use Degree Works; and

WHEREAS, faculty have the priority to teach and research, so they should not be held responsible to take on another full-time job to advise students. Faculty advising does not fall under the training, standards, and best practices upheld by the UAC. Advising issues such as misadvising, lifting the hold without advisement, or not communicating with the student are addressed per department instead of the UAC; and

WHEREAS, professional staff advisors are usually Student Service Coordinators and about 50% of their position description is dedicated to advising in comparison to 80% for UAA. The heavy advising load has competed with other departmental job duties such as building and maintaining the master schedule of classes, administering course evaluations, coordinating and promoting programming for students, and coordinating information sessions and tours for prospective students. This breath of department responsibility is not realistic with 400 or more assigned advisees as seen in departments across campus. Considering student enrollment and lack of advisor staffing, the current advising infrastructure is unsustainable; and

WHEREAS, the allocation of additional advisors in the department would allow for a consistent, high-quality advising experience across all four years within the majors. This will improve upon the current multi-advisor, "hand-off" model from a UAA to a departmental advisor. Transitioning to a four-year advising model in these departments would also allow highly-trained staff to build relationships with students that remain throughout the student's college career; and

WHEREAS, Strategic Priority #1 states the goal to recruit, retain and graduate high-achieving students. The current model of academic advising that relies too heavily on faculty advisors does not fulfill this goal adequately. Instead, the UAC's goals clearly align with these priorities to increase retention and promote an equitable and excellent advising and academic experience; and

WHEREAS, student retention is important for institutional budgeting since it costs the university about \$10,000 per drop out or transfer due to the high costs of recruiting new students to replace that admission. Excellent advising helps students to remain at UofSC and become future alumni; and

WHEREAS, colleges and schools with more professional advisors would see the value, return on investment, and direct impact quality academic advising has on the student experience and the university's efforts to retain and graduate students with a world-class academic and co-curricular experience.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RECOMMENDED by the 112th Student Senate

THAT, for a student population of about 28,000, the university needs to invest in at least 94 full time employees at the UAC in order to fulfill the 300:1 caseload best practice model; and

THAT, colleges and schools should shift from faculty or student service coordinators advising models that rely on part time advisors to fulfill a time-consuming and critical requirement for each student. Colleges and schools should better partner with the UAC and hire full time employees to undertake the full time job of advising students multiple times throughout the year; and

THAT, colleges and schools should examine their budget model to ensure that enough priority is given to equitable and excellent academic advising. If there are caseloads above 300:1 or there are significant and recurring advising issues, colleges and schools should consider investing in additional academic advisors that have the full time capacity to address academic advising needs and concerns.

BE IT FURTHER RECOMMENDED that upon passage copies are to be sent to the Board of Trustees; Robert L. Caslen Jr., University President; Dr. Dennis Pruitt, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Dr. Anna Edwards, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; Dr. William Tate, University Provost; Dr. Sandra Kelly, University Vice Provost; Dr. Mark Cooper, Faculty Senate Chair; Dr. Claire Robinson, Director of University Advising Center; Dr. Joel Samuels, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Peter Brews, Dean of the Moore School of Business; Dr. Jon Pederson, Dean of College of Education; Dr. Hossein Haj-Hariri, Dean of Engineering and Computing; Dr. Matt Brown, Interim Dean of Hospitality, Retail and Sports Management; Dr. William Hubbard, Dean of School of Law; Dr. Tom Reichert, Dean of Information and Communications; Dr. Tayloe Harding, Dean of School of Music; Dr. Jeannette Andrews, Dean of College of Nursing; Dr. G. Thomas Chandler, Dean of Norman J. Arnold of Public Health; Dr. Ronald Pitner, Interim Dean of College of Social Work; Dr. Cherly Addy, Dean of Graduate School; Dr. Steven Lynn, Dean of South Carolina Honors College; Issy Rushton, Student Body President; and The Daily Gamecock.

JD Jacobus, Speaker of the Student Senate

Date