

**CoE Strategic Planning: Response To Questions**  
**Advising and Certification Center**  
**Christine Anthony, Manager**

(1) In view of your unit's history and the evolving nature of your work, what different directions are you considering for your future? For each possible direction you identify, please indicate the reasons and your sense of opportunities.

(A) **Increased focus on recruitment and retention:** Historically, the responsibility for planning and implementation of recruitment and retention activities and initiatives related to undergraduate programs has lied with the staff of the Advising and Certification Center.

Retention: Retention at UP has shown a significant decline in the cohorts starting approximately program year 2010. For example, for the PY 2012, semester 3 retention percentage is 87.% and the beginning class size was 138, a significant decline from previous years. Retention and graduation data for students starting at a Commonwealth campus are worse. Of the program starters in 2009, only 35.1% graduated in 4 years (data represent retention and graduation rates regardless of ending campus or college). Of the starters in Fall 2007, the 6 year graduation rate was 54.6%. This coupled with an significant drop in enrollment (high = 434 in 2010; low = 280 in 2012) is a significant concern.

OPPORTUNITIES: The admission's office has several recruitment platforms that the CoE has historically has not participated in. The opportunity exists to kick-start recruitment by opting in to some of their platforms. In terms of retention, the College of Ag Sciences has a dedicated role that works to ensure higher retention of students that start at Commonwealth campuses. The opportunity to tap into these resources is immediate.

CHALLENGES: The primary challenge is resources. Although thankful for the ability to use one of our advisors as a half-time role dedicated to these initiatives, it is not enough if there is to be a comprehensive, coordinated effort by the College. Additionally, there is a skill set that is associated with recruitment and retention that is not necessarily the same as the skill set of an academic advisor. Some of the admission's office platforms require travel and the Advising and Certification Center does not have a budget adequate to pay for this travel.

(B) **Development of a comprehensive, reciprocal communication** plan that ensures timely and accurate information is being shared with appropriate audiences. There is a significant need to make sure prospective students, current students, CCRRs, departments/programs, relevant units across campus, and internal CoE advisors are kept up to date with changing program requirements, opportunities, PDE changes, and general CoE information.

Opportunities: There are some PSU products that could assist with this initiative. I am working on an action plan at the Advising Administration Conference I am attending related to this. I am learning of several vendor products that would assist in this area.

Challenges: There are no significant challenges. There may be a resource implication if a vendor products seems like a good solution to some of the communication challenges.

**(C) Comprehensive undergraduate student support center:** A new direction would be to recognize the Advising and Certification Center for what is truly is: An undergraduate student support and certification center. The office is charged with far more than academic advisement and certification services as shown in our draft mission statement and the list of tasks we complete for the College that was shared with Dr. Knight.

Opportunities: In my research and at the Institute I am currently attending, most advising services are part of a larger College or School office of student services or student support. At PSU, there is precedent for this as well. It is an opportunity for all CoE constituents to understand the comprehensive role that ACC plays in the functioning of the CoE, especially with respect to undergraduates.

Challenges: The most significant challenge might be buy-in from some individuals. Another challenge might be needing to re-evaluate the personnel roles encompassed by the office. For example, would retention/recruitment or certification services (serve grad students as well) remain a good fit? The leadership position of a comprehensive unit should be re-evaluated. For example, the CIFE office is led by a "director" and the Multicultural Student Center is led by an "assistant dean."

## **(2) What is your preferred direction for the future and why?**

My preferred direction for the future involves a re-conceptualizing of what the Advising and Certification center is and does. As mentioned above, we are truly far more comprehensive than our name suggests. I would prefer that the office be recognized as what it truly is: Center for Undergraduate Student Services and Certification. Along with a title change, a thoughtful consideration of the types of initiatives and responsibilities that should be housed in the center is important. Academic advisement, support services to the Dean's office, undergraduate recruitment/retention, certification services, and student record maintenance all seem to be a good fit for the office.

In addition, when looking at the OHR job profiles, all of the academic advisors, the advising center manager, and one of the support positions are fulfilling job duties and responsibilities at a level at least one increment higher than their assigned level. For example, the advisors are assigned a Level 2 but in reality do all of the job duties for a Level 3. I would like for the staff of the ACC to be recognized at the appropriate level or readjust their assigned duties to the current level.

**(3) To what degree does consensus exist around the pursuit of this preferred direction within your unit?** If there are minority positions within your department or unit, what are they and how are you addressing the differences of opinion?

I am not aware of a minority opinion. In the past, I am told there was a desire to have "advising" in the title of our office but no one has expressed the desire to keep it there.

**(4) What are the concrete next steps you wish to take?**

Shorter term: (1) Hire a full-time recruitment/retention coordinator. In the list of OHR job profiles, an enrollment services manager seems a good fit

(2) Create and implement a plan for a comprehensive, reciprocal communication plan

(3) Change the name of the office and determine services it will provide

(4) Submit job reviews for the advisors, the advising manager, and one of the support positions

Longer Term:

(1) Creation of an undergraduate student lounge/hub

**(5) What are the budget implications?** Resources will be needed primarily for staff compensation and recruitment/retention initiatives. For the advisors, if their job reviews are successful, they would go from a level 2 to 3, salary band G to H. For the manager, the level would move from a 3, salary band J to a level 4, salary band K. The support position would move from a level 2, salary band D to a level 3, salary band F. For the administrative support position, the College posted an ad of a similar job (with fewer responsibilities) at a level 3, salary band F. An enrollment services manager would most likely be a Level 1, salary band I position.

**(6) What does your unit wish to be known for in the future?**

As a hub/center for undergraduates in the CoE to receive the support and services they need to fully engage in the educational process at Penn State.