



AMHERST COLLEGE
Office of the Dean of Students

July 16, 2011

Dean Greg Call
Dean of the Faculty
Amherst College

Dear Greg:

We are pleased to submit the report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising. We want to express our gratitude to our colleagues on the committee and on the Committee of Six for allowing us the time we needed to complete our work.

Appended are the major recommendations of the report.

Some of our recommendations would require changes to the faculty handbook and ratification by faculty vote. Others, such as the creation of an Associate Dean of Advising or the elimination of Orientation Advising, do not. Nevertheless, we are sure that the faculty will wish to discuss the recommendations in their entirety and look forward to a lively debate.

Our report could not have been written without Nancy Ratner's wonderful help and the research skills and insight provided by Marian Matheson and her staff, in particular, Kate Doria. In the Registrar's Office, Jesse Barba was most helpful and has our thanks.

We look forward to hearing from you and will be happy to discuss this with the Committee of Six this fall.

For the Committee,

Pat O'Hara
Amanda and Lisa Cross Professor of Chemistry
and Biophysics
Dean of New Students

Austin Sarat
William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence &
Political Science
Director, Mellon Project on Student-Faculty Research

Our recommendations derive from a model in which advising is seen as teaching.

- Every student is advised by a single advisor, who is not necessarily a member of the student's major department; and, inasmuch as it is possible, each student stays with a single advisor.
- The number of advisees per advisor is capped at sixteen.
- That, in addition to meetings required for course registration, advisors should meet for approximately 30 minutes with their assigned advisees at the beginning of each semester and at the end of each semester. The College should designate advising weeks so that faculty and students can schedule their meetings. In anticipation of the first meetings each semester students should prepare a statement of their learning goals and, before their last meeting of the semester, a reflection on their progress in attaining those goals.
- That in our advising meetings we should focus on the articulation of student learning goals and the development of strategies for facilitating progress in the attainment of those goals.
- That evaluation of advising should be a component of the processes of reappointment, tenure and promotion, and that all faculty participate in the evaluation of their advising.
- Directors of Studies are available for students to consult about matters pertaining to courses or direction within the major; the Directors of Studies are responsible for larger numbers of students but in a more restricted fashion. Directors of Studies will have their advising loads take into account the number of majors in the department.
- Responsibility for overseeing advising rest within the Dean of Faculty's Office, at an Associate Dean's level. Since advising is teaching, the person in that position could work with an existing committee focused on educational practices, such as the Committee on Educational Policy
- The model of Orientation advising changes from a temporary Orientation advisor to an Orientation Registration Team. Regular advisors meet with their advisees during the first days of the semester, and stay with students as long as possible so that students can have continuity in advising and faculty can have greater equity in advising loads.