

Academic Advising Task Force Update

July 28, 2010

The Academic Advising Task Force (ATF), appointed by Dr. Dusty Johnston, includes members who represent each component of the college: Criquett Lehman, Chair, Katrina Brasuell, Lana Carter, Clara Garza, John Hardin, Gary Don Harkey, Joe Hite, Barbara Jinks, Shana Munson, and Mike Ruhl. The ATF has met on 11 separate occasions from February 18 to June 23, 2010 to review current policies, procedures, processes, practices, timelines, and functions and to make suggested additions, deletions, and changes to ensure effectiveness, student friendliness, and compliance with state and federal regulations where applicable. Audio minutes are maintained for each meeting in addition to weekly agenda's which include highlights from the previous meeting.

The ATF began by researching, reviewing and assessing policies, procedures, processes, practices, timelines, and functions of similar Texas community colleges.

- *Findings:*
 - Reviewed best practices from several colleges including Austin Community College, Del Mar College, South Plains College, and Madisonville Community College in addition to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).
 - Identified advising best practices which included examples of advising manuals, advisor training programs, resource materials such as degree plans, referral guides, portal instructions, and course placement guides.
 - Participated in an on-site visit to South Plains College to view a demonstration of the Student Success Plan Module and learn about the Master Texan Advisor training program.

- *Recommendations/Actions:*
 - Develop advisor position responsibilities to be titled Course Schedule Advisor (CSA) and to be filled by full-time faculty.
 - The role of "Course Schedule Advisor" began June 1, 2010 with volunteer faculty.
 - Develop a CSA Resource Guide to assist in training CSA's and to be made available as a resource for future reference.
 - Draft currently under review by ATF with final to be completed by August 12, 2010.
 - Create resource materials including CSA Referral Guide, CSA Session-Student Questions, and New Student Responsibilities and Checklist.
 - Drafts currently under review by ATF with final to be completed by August 12, 2010.
 - Coordinate existing resources (e.g., degree plans, campus connect instructions, math placement guide) and provide access for CSA's and students.
 - The CSA Resource Guide is designed to be an interactive document to facilitate the coordination of resources. The guide is formatted to be a printed hardcopy or accessed via computer and navigated through as a website. Draft currently under review by ATF with final to be completed by August 12, 2010.
 - Purchase the Student Success Plan Module, a Poise module, to be used by Course Schedule Advisors, Career and Technical Education Course Schedule Advisors, and Student Services Counselors. The module will permit shared access to student degree plans and course schedule advising notes as well as provide each student with instant view access to their trial schedules/degree plans.
 - Module was purchased in June 2010 with training to begin in August 2010 and final implementation by November 2010.

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Next the ATF worked to identify barriers in present Vernon College policies, procedures, processes, practices, timelines, and functions to enhance effectiveness and student friendliness.

- *Findings:*
 - Absence of a written course schedule advising process.
 - Absence of a formalized training process for new advisors or faculty advisors.
 - No system of assigning advisors to those students deemed TSI Clear.
 - The need for an additional location, other than the Student Services Counseling offices, to serve those TSI Clear students who request assistance with course schedule advising.

- *Recommendations/Actions:*
 - Develop a written process for advising students on course scheduling.
 - A “Steps to Course Schedule Advising” section is included in the CSA Resource Guide. Draft is currently under review by ATF with final to be completed by August 12, 2010.
 - Coordinate and implement CSA training sessions using the CSA Resource Guide as an educational tool.
 - All faculty, adjunct and full-time, will receive initial CSA education/training during Faculty Development August 20, 2010.
 - As TSI status is determined, assign an advisor to all new students to Vernon College through Poise to be viewed in MyVC/Faculty Access. Initially the assigned advisor will either be “CSA” or “Counselor”. During the CSA’s first contact with a student, a specific CSA will be assigned. This assigned advisor will not be mandatory but will be available for students who need/want continued assistance with course scheduling.
 - The TSI Exemption Form, initiated by the Counselor, was updated June 1, 2010 to include a field for entering an advisor. The process of entering this information, by Admissions, into the Poise system was also implemented June 1, 2010.
 - Establish a CSA Center on each campus to be staffed by CSA’s who will be available at all times (as scheduled).
 - CSA Centers were established June 1, 2010 on the Vernon Campus RM 419 and the Century City Center RM 100. Schedule times and dates have been posted to the website and signage is available throughout both campuses.
 - For the Spring 2010 semester, mandatory course schedule advising will begin for all new students to Vernon College. CSAs will meet with students in the CSA Center beginning with the time period between the publishing of the schedule of classes and Campus Connect opening for registration.

The Academic Advising Task Force will continue to monitor and evaluate the recommendations/actions to ensure effectiveness and student friendliness. During the first year of implementation, student and faculty feedback will be used to enhance the course schedule advising process. Emphasis will be placed on educating students about the course schedule advising service required by Vernon College.