

University of South Carolina Beaufort

Act 629 - Report on Institutional Effectiveness

Fiscal Year 2000-2001

Advisement at USCB

USCB sees advisement as a critical means of linking students and the campus, especially critical to a commuter student body.

Commuter students often lack a sense of belonging, of "feeling wanted" by the institution. ... In many cases, institutions do not provide adequate opportunities for commuter students to develop relationships with faculty, staff, and other students. Individuals rarely feel connected to a place where they have no significant relationships. Students do not have a sense of belonging complain about a "supermarket" nature of their college experience. (Jacoby, Barbara The Student as Commuter.)

Thus, USCB seeks to assess advisement with an eye toward advancing these critical aspects of engagement:

- 1) Approachability/Accessibility: Freedom to contact faculty for consultation"
- 2) Personal Utility: As Lee Noel describes (a "staying environment") where students perceive they will progress toward their educational goals as influenced by the advising process.
- 3) Social/psychological factors: including emotional support and personal interest in student as a person

Measures:

USCB employed the following instruments in the assessment of advisement on campus

- Spring 2001 In-class Survey (Administered over one week in Spring 2001 at 4 "peaks.")

Development of Survey:

In April, 2001, USCB faculty were surveyed **to identify key elements of advisement**. In attempting to put together a list of "core" issues of advisement, the advisement team analyzed data from USCB's earlier instruments. With these, and informed by a survey of faculty and other advisors, USCB social scientist Beth Cralley developed a list of factors which constitute advisor effectiveness, reducing to five questions the earlier list of some dozen:

- Assessment of student status
- Careful charting of course work
- Interest in student
- Courtesy/friendliness of advisor in interview

Results:

Assessment of the Instrument: As stated, the questions on advisement were developed from responses by faculty and other advisors to an email. In "testing" our questions for validity (against the question measuring overall satisfaction with advisement), some 84% of the variance

was accounted for by the variables chosen. Interestingly, the mandated question (“Availability” variable first on the table below) did not correlate significantly with the overall measure.

Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.266	.200		-1.331	.186
CHE (Availability) Question	6.617E-02	.056	.051	1.181	.240
(2) REQUIRE	.201	.089	.190	2.253	.026
(3) ASSESS	.326	.083	.319	3.927	.000
(4) INTEREST	.226	.063	.244	3.565	.001
(5) COURTEOUS	.251	.070	.221	3.595	.000

Dependent Variable: OVERALL

Happily, this indicates that the four questions that USCB faculty (and other advisors) distilled apparently do address issues that are key to good advisement. It appears that the correlation was strongest with question #3 (.319) and that 4 and 5 were also significant although not as strongly correlated (as seen above.)

Feedback on Advisor Quality: USCB has been alarmed to observe a decline in Indicator 2E2 response of students which addresses issue of availability. Students expressed consistent rates of satisfaction.

Variable							Total
OVERALL: I am satisfied with the quality of my academic advisement.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Beaufort	Count	6	14	26	34	52	132
	% within Location	4.50%	10.60%	19.70%	25.80%	39.40%	100.00%
Hilton Head	Count	1	3	8	21	27	60
	% within Location	1.70%	5.00%	13.30%	35.00%	45.00%	100.00%
Military Bases	Count	3	4	8	19	20	54
	% within Location	5.60%	7.40%	14.80%	35.20%	37.00%	100.00%
Total	Count	10	21	42	74	99	246
	% within Location	4.10%	8.50%	17.10%	30.10%	40.20%	100.00%
Cumulative %		4.10%	12.60%	29.70%	59.80%	100.00%	

Variable							Total
My advisor has helped me understand the REQUIREments for my program of study or degree.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Beaufort	Count	6	10	34	35	48	133
	% within Location	4.50%	7.50%	25.60%	26.30%	36.10%	100.00%
Hilton Head	Count		4	9	20	26	59
	% within Location		6.80%	15.30%	33.90%	44.10%	100.00%
Military Base	Count	4	3	7	20	20	54
	% within Location	7.40%	5.60%	13.00%	37.00%	37.00%	100.00%
Total	Count	10	17	50	75	94	246
	% within Location	4.10%	6.90%	20.30%	30.50%	38.20%	100.00%
Cumulative %		4.10%	11.00%	31.30%	61.80%	100.00%	

Variable							Total
ACCESS: My advisor has helped me assess my academic status and progress.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Beaufort	Count	6	14	25	44	44	133
	% within Location	4.50%	10.50%	18.80%	33.10%	33.10%	100.00%
Hilton Head	Count		3	12	17	27	59
	% within Location		5.10%	20.30%	28.80%	45.80%	100.00%
Military Base	Count	4	4	8	20	19	55
	% within Location	7.30%	7.30%	14.50%	36.40%	34.50%	100.00%
Total	Count	10	21	45	81	90	247
	% within Location	4.05%	8.50%	18.22%	32.79%	36.44%	100.00%
Cumulative %		4.05%	12.55%	30.77%	63.56%	100.00%	

Variable							Total
INTEREST: My advisor showed an interest in learning about my long-term goals.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Beaufort	Count	11	11	21	39	51	133
	% within Location	8.30%	8.30%	15.80%	29.30%	38.30%	100.00%
Hilton Head	Count	1	3	11	16	28	59
	% within Location	1.70%	5.10%	18.60%	27.10%	47.50%	100.00%
Military Base	Count	4	4	6	26	15	55
	% within Location	7.30%	7.30%	10.90%	47.30%	27.30%	100.00%
Total	Count	16	18	38	81	94	247
	% within Location	6.48%	7.29%	15.38%	32.79%	38.06%	100.00%
Cumulative %		6.48%	13.77%	29.15%	61.94%	100.00%	

Variable							Total
COURTEOUS: My advisor was friendly and courteous							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Beaufort	Count	6		17	37	73	133
	% within Location	4.50%		12.80%	27.80%	54.90%	100.00%
Hilton Head	Count	1	2	2	13	42	60
	% within Location	1.70%	3.30%	3.30%	21.70%	70.00%	100.00%
Military Bases	Count	3		5	16	31	55
	% within Location	5.50%		9.10%	29.10%	56.40%	100.00%
Total	Count	10	2	24	66	146	248
	% within Location	4.00%	0.80%	9.70%	26.60%	58.90%	100.00%
Cumulative %		4.00%	4.80%	14.50%	41.10%	100.00%	

USCB must confront the troubling reality that some **30% of students could not bring themselves to express satisfaction with most aspects of advisement at USCB.** There is a high likelihood that inconsistent service in advisement is impacting student retention.

Use of Assessment Results

USCB has enlisted the services of Dr. Jim Young to work with our current retinue of advisors. On August 24, 2001, Dr. Young will direct a workshop on the Beaufort Campus. In these meetings, the consultant will discuss these "*Recommendations and Considerations*" which he prepared for this campus after some half-dozen visits to the campus over the last year:

Future Considerations and Recommendations (Modified version of proposal submitted to USCB 5/18/01 by Dr. Jim Young)

1. Broaden the Scope of the USCB Advisement Process

The definition and practice of "advisement" must be expanded beyond its current limitations, which is almost exclusively confined to "academic" advising. The approach at this institution must be inclusive of career, social, and personnel advising as well. This perspective would address the full complement of issues and challenges that students bring to the college experience, and would ensure a relationship between academic choices and both the needs and abilities of such students.

2. Process Issues

*The data reported here has indicated inconsistencies. In an approach true to Improvement programs (CQI, TQM, etc.) USCB will identify key connections between **retention** and **advisement** elements, ensure focused measurement of these junctures, and devote improvement efforts to these critical processes. In sum, advisement must be more directly correlated to assessment. This will likely lead to efforts to....*

- *Improve Advising Skills of USCB Advisors* The typical faculty member comes to the institution ill-prepared for the non-teaching responsibilities such as advising. Effectiveness in this role cannot be expected without proper professional development opportunities to acquire and/or improve the particular skills needed for this task. The college must provide additional training to advisors in the approaches and processes for effective advising and the proper utilization of information needed for successful outcomes from advising.

- Improve Curricular Information USCB must identify the full scope of data/information needed by advisers in order to provide more complete and more accurate advice and counsel to advisees. This can be done through both internal surveys and consulting from outside experts in enrollment management. Then, the institution must ensure that all advisers have access to this information. This information must be accessible at the time the advising interaction occurs. Thus it must be available in a "real time" fashion. The only way to ensure such availability is to compile these data and provide them to advisors on-line. It is hoped that when critical links and inter-relationships are identified and measured, that the campus will know where adopt new methods and services.
- Increase Personal Information Advisement must be more directly correlated to assessment. The institution must ensure that its assessment process accurately captures vital information regarding each student's academic potential, career/interest aspirations, and personal attributes. Then this information must be used by advisors to fashion an academic plan which is more compatible with each student's level of ability.

Advising must result in both **goal setting** (identification of the student's reason for attending USCB) and the creation of a **Plan of Action** for each student which represents a logical and reasonable learning path for that specific student which will enable that student to reach his or her particular educational objectives.

3. Improve Advising Skills of USCB Advisors

The typical faculty member comes to the institution as a disciplinary expert; however, few if any are prepared for the non-teaching responsibilities such as advising. Effectiveness in this role cannot be expected without proper professional development opportunities to acquire and/or improve the particular skills needed for this task. The college must provide additional training to advisors in the approaches and processes for effective advising and the proper utilization of information needed for successful outcomes from advising.

Also, the institution needs to develop a comprehensive "Advisors Handbook" which walks each advisor through the process, explains the relevance of information needed for the procedure, and most importantly, ensures consistency in the process so that each student will receive the same level of quality in advising, regardless of who is his/her advisor.

4. Examine Alternative Approaches

USCB must examine alternative approaches to its current advising process. Approaches such as centralized advisement and on-line advisement have worked well at other colleges. These options should be considered, either as a new approaches or as avenues to be used in conjunction with the current approach to provide students and advisors with increased options in the advisement process. USCB personnel should attend appropriate conferences and/or visit other institutions which use these alternatives and examine the appropriateness of these options for USCB.

5. Improve Student Monitoring System

In order to more accurately assess the impacts of advisement and other student success interventions, the institution must implement a more comprehensive student tracking and progress monitoring system. Such a system must incorporate a "early alert" mechanism which identifies students who are exhibiting symptoms related to failure or difficulty BEFORE such students either fail or drop out of the institution.

Behind hopes of student satisfaction with advisement are questions of student success. One student outcome gives pause: USC Beaufort retains (fall-to-fall) at a lower rate than other regional campuses [<http://www.che400.state.sc.us/web/Perform/>]