

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
TEACHING, LEARNING AND ACADEMIC RESOURCES COMMITTEE
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

PRESENTED BY: Aaron Phoenix, Chair, TLARC

DATE OF MEETING: November 21, 2013

SUBJECT: Item for Information: Academic Advising Charter

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

BACKGROUND:

One of the initiatives of the second Integrated Plan was to improve the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan through improvements in services for students. A primary component of these services is academic advising. An external review of student advising across the university was done in 2010, from which a number of recommendations were developed to enact changes to advising programs. These included implementation of a degree audit program, commitment to improved advisor training, and development of a university-wide advising body which would promote communication, develop professional training opportunities, and clarify the mission and purpose of academic advising.

In 2011, the Advising Council was established, under the chair of the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning. One of the tasks the Council set for itself was to develop a “mission statement” to help guide advising on campus. The Council chose to follow the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter as a format for this mission statement, and so it has developed the attached document, An Academic Advising Charter for the University of Saskatchewan.

SUMMARY:

The Advising Charter defines the focus of academic advising as student success, with the purpose of academic advising as assisting students to complete their program and achieve their academic goals. The Charter outlines the roles to be played by staff, faculty and peer advisors in improving the academic advising experience which the University of Saskatchewan provides for students and prospective students.

REVIEW:

The Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, brought the draft Advising Charter to the Teaching and Learning Committee for discussion in early 2013. The final version of the Charter was accepted by the Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee at its October 30, 2013 meeting. Because the document does not require action on the part of Council, it was agreed that the Advising Charter does not require Council approval.

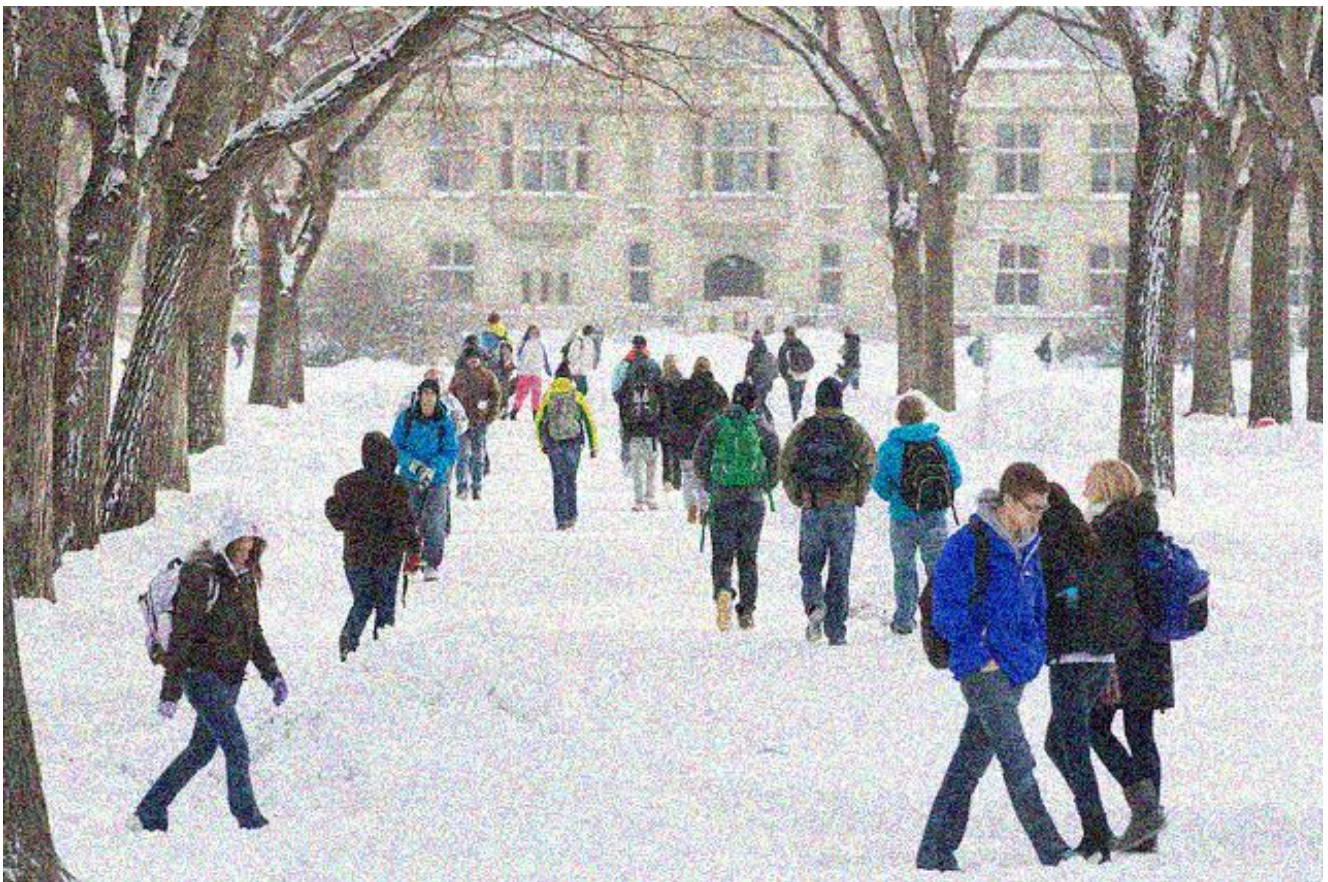
ATTACHMENTS:

University of Saskatchewan Advising Charter
Background memo from Patti McDougall, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning
Terms of reference and membership of the Advising Council



Academic Advising Charter

The Advising Council of the University of Saskatchewan





An Academic Advising Charter for the University of Saskatchewan

The University of Saskatchewan Academic Advising Charter defines the academic advising experience that the university aims to provide students, along with the roles to be played by designated academic advisors – including college advisors, departmental and program advisors, faculty advisors, and student peer advisors – and by the students they advise and support.

Advising is an integral part of the teaching and learning mission of the University. Broadly construed, advising involves the offering of well-informed guidance that can be imparted formally or informally; in person or via technology; and it can take academic or non-academic forms. In addition to understanding advising as a form of teaching and learning, another guiding principle is that advising always starts with a holistic appreciation of the student as a whole person. For that reason, much advising involves a blend of academic and non-academic advice. Academic advising can, however, be distinguished from other allied forms of advising on campus – tutoring and learning support, or career, psychological, financial, disability, or legal counseling, etc. – by the fact that the primary focus of academic advising is on student success as revealed primarily in their academic progression towards identifying, pursuing, and completing their intended academic program and achieving their academic goals.

The Academic Advising Charter is modeled on the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter¹, with particular focus on the references to academic supports embedded in that document:

Honouring this commitment requires that the University help students to select programs appropriate to their particular abilities and preparation. Where better preparation is required, the University will counsel students on how they might obtain this preparation. The University will ensure that students understand their commitments and responsibilities—as identified in this Learning Charter—as a guide to how they can best achieve success in their learning pursuits. Honouring this commitment also requires that the University provide appropriate academic and other supports to students who experience various challenges to their learning, including challenges of a cultural, social, psychological, or physical nature.²

1 A Learning Charter for the University of Saskatchewan was approved by University Council on June 17, 2010, and can be found online at http://www.usask.ca/learning_charter/.

2 Learning Charter, p.6.



Core Academic Advising Goals

The core goals of academic advising are:

- to help students to identify and understand their own aspirations and aptitudes;
- to define and refine their academic and career goals;
- to take maximum advantage of their prior learning experiences; and
- identify their most effective and efficient route to academic success, degree completion, and a future career.

Commitments and Responsibilities

Students

Academic advising is an aspect of the broader learning partnership, in which students' commitments can be summarized as "Learn Actively, Think Broadly, Act Ethically, and Engage Respectfully."³ Students, academic advisors, faculty mentors, and the institution at large are the four key players in the academic advising process. "While all three roles are important, the role of the learner is most fundamental to the learning partnership."⁴

Students are responsible for seeking the advice and support that they need, when they need it.

As partners in the advising enterprise, students are responsible for providing advisors with sufficient personal or circumstantial information to enable them to offer the most appropriate advice.

Students are free to accept or reject academic advice or offers of support, but (except in cases where the advice can be shown to have been erroneous) they are accountable for their own outcomes.

Academic Advisors

Academic advice is imparted by a wide representation of the campus community. At the core of advising activities, however, there exists a formal role on campus for the group of academic services specialists known as "academic advisors". The University of Saskatchewan is "a unique community of learning and discovery, where people can embark on a process of development through which they grow, create, and learn, in a context characterized by *diversity*."⁵ Academic advisors will honour and embrace this diversity – of academic programs, of ways of knowing and learning, and, above all, of the individual learners they encounter.

3 *Learning Charter*, p.3, "Students".

4 *Learning Charter*, p.3, "Students".

5 *Learning Charter*, p.1: "Our Learning Vision".



Academic advisors will help students choose the academic path that best aligns with their individual aspirations, aptitudes, and prior learning experiences, and which offers the most effective and efficient route to academic success, degree completion, and a future career. In professional colleges, academic advisors also share in the responsibility of communicating the standards of the profession. Trained student peer advisors assume a supporting role, delivering carefully delineated advising assistance under the direction of professional academic advisors within a college.

“The University of Saskatchewan offers a diversity of academic and professional programs that is matched by few other institutions of learning.”⁶ No academic advisor can be expected to master the academic standards and regulations pertaining to all of the university’s many programs. Academic advisors will, however, have sufficient training, experience, and expertise (including awareness and understanding of relevant university and college policies) to provide timely and accurate advice appropriate to their particular advising role.

Academic advisors will also know the limits of their particular advising responsibilities and expertise, and know when, where, and how best to direct students to the specific advice and support they need.

Faculty mentors

Faculty play a key mentorship role in contributing to academic success by helping (particularly senior) students identify disciplinary and interdisciplinary degree pathways as well as providing guidance on potential academic and/or professional career trajectories. The role of faculty mentor is not limited to department heads and/or undergraduate chairs but rather, extends to all faculty as teacher-scholars.

The Institution

In keeping with the University’s commitment to provide appropriate academic and other supports to students, the institution will ensure that sufficient staff with the necessary skills are available to provide timely and accurate academic advising attuned to the individual needs of each student, along with the technological support necessary to extend the availability and enhance the quality of advising.

In the event that a student has followed documented advice from a designated academic advisor that proves to have been incorrect and to have had adverse consequences that could reasonably have been foreseen, the institution will work with the student to rectify the error and, if possible, minimize any negative academic impacts, while honouring the commitment to fairness and equity for all students.

6 *Learning Charter*, p.1: “Core Learning Goals”.



TO: Teaching and Learning Committee of Council

FROM: Patti McDougall
Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning

SUBJECT: Academic Advising Charter for the University of Saskatchewan

DATE: January 11, 2013

Many of you will recall that several years ago, the University of Saskatchewan undertook an external review of campus-wide undergraduate advising. This external review process resulted in a report that was widely circulated and invited much discussion. At that time (June, 2010), then vice provost teaching and learning, Ernie Barber wrote to members of the campus community outlining a series of recommendations as to how the external report could be operationalized and implemented on our campus.

One of the key recommendations for change was to establish a campus advising council. In 2010-2011, with the assistance of a steering committee, vice provost teaching and learning, Angela Ward developed terms of reference and an organizational structure for what has become the U of S Advising Council. The Advising Council is chaired by the vice provost, teaching and learning and includes subcommittees to work on a variety of action and discussion areas (e.g., Aboriginal Advisors Subcommittee, Professional Development, Communications).

In addition to its early (and on-going) focus on creating advisor training and professional development curriculum, the Advising Council worked to articulate a mission statement for academic advising at the U of S. The development of a mission statement was a key idea in the external report of 2010. The Advising Council chose to model the mission statement after the Learning Charter produced by the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council (and approved by University Council in 2008). The resulting document, known as the *Academic Advising Charter for the University of Saskatchewan* (attached), is intended to map out “a common vision and understanding of what academic advising is, and who provides academic advising” at this institution (NACADA External Academic Advising Review, 2010). The Academic Advising Charter maps out core goals for academic advising as well as clarifying roles, commitments and responsibilities.

At this time, members of the Executive of the Advising Council seek the appropriate governance mechanism through which to bring the Academic Advising Charter to University Council. Accordingly, I am looking for advice from members of the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council (alongside advice sought from the University Secretary) on how to proceed to move this charter forward.

I look forward to discussing this with you at the January 15th meeting.

Patti McDougall

ADVISING COUNCIL
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Goals of the Advising Council

1. Advance the professionalization of advisors to create a strong and transformative advising community that serves the needs of students.
2. Ensure all academic advisors have access to professional development opportunities and resources, including mentorship, building a community of practice and membership in professional organizations.
3. Communicate with both on- and off-campus communities the importance of advising, changes in advising and other relevant information as it becomes available.

Membership of the Advising Council

Ex-officio

Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning (Chair)
Associate Dean of Students, Arts and Science
Associate Vice-President, Student Affairs
Manager & Assistant Registrar (Student Central), SESD
Director of Student Advising, Arts and Science
Vice-President Academic, USSU
Chair/President, Indigenous Students Council

1 Representative from each of the following (unless otherwise stated):

College of Agriculture and Bioresources	Western College of Veterinary Medicine
College of Arts and Science (2)	St. Thomas More
College of Kinesiology	Indian Teacher Education Program
College of Nursing	Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (Saskatoon)
College of Education	ISSAC
College of Engineering	Aboriginal Student Advisors
College of Medicine	DSS
College of Pharmacy & Nutrition	SECC
College of Law	CCDE
Edwards School of Business	
College of Dentistry	

From the larger body of the Undergraduate Advising Council, subcommittees will be formed to address specific issues as needed, for example: Professional education; Communication