

## I. Summary

The AQIP Review team read the **May 7, 2007 Action Project: Faculty Advising Pilot**, including the faculty participant survey data as well as the survey data from the academic advising staff. The team believes that the success of the Faculty Advising Initiative has opened the door to much greater cooperation and integration of outreach opportunities between faculty and student services. From studying the responses from the surveys done, it seems the Faculty Advising initiative has met with great success. The faculty report great enthusiasm and professional growth from the experience. The Academic advisors also report positively on the experience.

Credit must be given to Cindy Somers, faculty coordinator, Judy Bowers, Director of Advising and Recruiting, the Advising Department, and participating faculty for the dedication to bring this project along so successfully. Because of such a positive outcome, the AQIP Review Team is curious about the status of the remaining AQIP suggestions for Advising. These are listed later in the Overview.

## II. Overview

Because we had data from the hosts (advising) and participants (faculty), the review team decided to gather data informally from students who met with faculty advisors during the peak registration periods. We also interviewed Cindy Somers and Judy Bowers, including the questions asked in the student survey we created. Their responses are included following the Recommendations.

The student survey was to determine student satisfaction with working with faculty advisors. The team also wanted to gather data on a question we developed based on reading the AQIP Action Project narrative: Should advising, of some kind, be required before a student's first semester of coursework at Red Rocks Community College?

Faculty advisor participants and Academic Advisors had been surveyed at regular intervals with the data reported in the AQIP narrative. The student feedback provided the third view of the initiative. The sample size of 16 provided the following data:

**Question:** **Did you receive the help you needed at the hallway advising area?** [Where faculty advisors were located]

**Yes: 15**

**No: 1**

This respondent noted in the comments section of the survey that the question was answered by a four-year college representative, to whom the respondent was referred.

**Question:** **Do you think RRCC students should be required to meet with an advisor before registering for their first classes as a new student?**

**Yes: 11**

**No: 5**

The Director of Advising and Recruitment and the Faculty Coordinator were interviewed for their impressions of the success of the initiative. While both felt it is a successful program, they differed on the question of mandatory initial advising. Judy Bowers is open to considering it, but concerned about how to accommodate the greater volume of student visits in Advising that this would cause. Cindy Somers stated that requiring initial advising would not be appropriate for all students, as some students are already college students and taking coursework purely for transfer to their home institution or do not need the services of an advisor for a single course.

The AQIP team's modest effort at gathering data revealed the following:

- **Effectiveness for students** Overwhelmingly, students received the help they were seeking at registration time. Ultimately, this is the primary goal: to effectively and creatively meet student needs during peak times.
- **Foster collaboration between Student Services & Instructional Services** Reading from the *AQIP Summary* as well as prior surveys and faculty self-report during the team's investigation, there is a high level of enthusiasm on the part of faculty participants and the Academic Advising staff.
- **Mandatory Initial Advising** The team found a positive response on the part of new and returning students for the idea of requiring an advising experience prior to the first semester of classes taken at Red Rocks Community College.

The team prioritized the issues listed in the *AQIP Summary* into the following sequence:

- **Mandatory Advising** AQIP members feel strongly that this piece is critical for student success and retention. Anecdotally, the team, in advising students on their own, feel that these basics should be covered: the elements of degree plans, how to add/drop/withdraw from classes, the RRCC grading system, Student Services available for students, probation policy, etc.

Faculty members on the team self reported and carried reports from colleagues that initial advising, covering all the basics, would allow faculty advisors to concentrate on content and program specifics. It is thought that a consistent delivery of an orientation to academic life at Red Rocks would help students, advisors, and faculty in any subsequent advising encounters; faculty and staff can more efficiently work on each student's individual issues.

We recommend a vigorous examination of this issue and perhaps a pilot program. The team also believes having this element as part of the initial entry process would aid in compiling data for retention and academic success.

- **Academic Tune-up** The team is strongly in favor of this element. Occurring at the time a student accrues 23-30 credits, it could be done by either an academic advisor or a faculty advisor, to assist students as they become more focused on their educational goals.
- **Group Advising** We envision general information sessions covering much of what was listed in the Mandatory Advising element. The team also suggested scheduling group advising sessions during peak registration periods; this would assist Academic Advisors by covering the basics. This may satisfy a student's initial advising needs, relieving the congestion in Advising during these times.
- **Group Faculty/Advising Meetings** The team believes that increased contact between department faculty and the Advising staff would greatly help in each group having accurate information to share with students. An option could be for each department to schedule a time to meet with Advising during their regularly scheduled weekly meetings, but to enhance the experience by inviting department staff, rather than just the department or program chair to present information. It is thought that meeting more faculty would assist the Advisors and faculty are interested in developing a closer relationship with all the advisors. We propose that these meetings occur yearly to facilitate greater communication and understanding.

## Recommendations

- The AQIP team recommends further investigation of the idea of initial mandatory advising for students new to Red Rocks Community College. To manage the increased volume of advisor visits, the team also recommends investigating the use of regularly scheduled Group Advising sessions that would cover the basics of a successful start at Red Rocks. This could be a coordinated effort between a variety of existing Student Services and Instructional Services programs: Advising, Financial Aid, Student Success Initiative, Student Life, and faculty etc.

The team offers the following options for students that could be considered for **exclusion** from the mandatory initial advising would be:

- i. Any student who has successfully completed a course at RRCC (other than online) in the past could be exempted, or at least it could be optional.
  - ii. Any student having enrolled and successfully completed a course at any other Colorado college could be exempted, or at least it could be optional.
  - iii. Any student having successfully completed a college course at any other campus in the US could be exempted, or at least it could be optional.
  - iv. A student could “waive” the mandatory advising meeting if they are not seeking a degree or a certificate at RRCC.
- Academic Tune-up is also an important milestone for the student and the college. The team believes this is an opportunity to keep a student “on track” and express confidence in a student’s ability to complete a degree as well as provide guidance for course choices to efficiently complete a degree and options beyond RRCC for education or career choices. The team envisions these meetings occurring with content area faculty.
  - The collaborative experience of faculty advising during peak periods is one that can continue beyond the start of the semester. The AQIP team recommends that the faculty of academic departments meet yearly with the Advising staff to foster even greater integration. This can be facilitated through the weekly Advising meetings that already occur. The faculty members of the AQIP team believe that meeting on an individual level will create and improve alliances as well as assist in getting accurate and timely information to students by both groups.

The AQIP team finds that the Faculty Advising initiative has been extremely successful. We believe the enthusiasm and momentum generated by this experience can now be used by the administrative leaders of both Instructional and Student Services to expand offerings to both students and staff, through required advising for students and yearly meetings between content area faculty and the advising staff.

**AQIP Advising External Review Committee**  
**Interview with Judy Bowers, Director of Advising & Recruitment**  
**January 24, 2008**

- 1. Identify the strengths of the Faculty Advising program.**
  - a. Provides a meaningful connection between faculty and advisors.
  - b. Establishes a comfort level that fosters more communication.
  - c. Helps advising during a busy time period.
  - d. Sharing of knowledge is always positive.
  
- 2. Identify the weaknesses of the Faculty Advising program.**
  - a. Judy felt that triage eliminated most of the problems that were occurring.
  - b. She provided two examples. Many of the faculty who participated in the advising pilot felt they didn't have enough office space to perform their duties. They also felt unsure about their knowledge and use of the Banner system. Judy believes that the new triage approach allows faculty to answer pertinent questions without needing to know everything about the Banner system. Locating the triage center outside of advising also solved the space issue.
  
- 3. What further improvements can be made to the program?**
  - a. Advising is going to provide students with two computer pods to log on for appointments and request advisors. In the future students will also be able to print transcripts and put together questions they have.
  - b. Students will no longer need to be manually counted by advisors. Hopefully this new data collection system will allow advisors to devote more time and energy to meeting with and helping students.
  
- 4. Value to:**
  - a. **Advising** – See question one.
  - b. **Students** – Less waiting, more help, more knowledgeable advisors and faculty. More information about programs in general.
  - c. **College** – Open communication has fostered trust between faculty and advising. The Advising Department has earned a better reputation.
  
- 5. Do you think RRCC students should be required to attend an advising session prior to registering for their first class(es) as a new student?**
  - a. In a perfect world – yes.
  - b. Judy was concerned with rather or not we had the manpower for this. She was very open to the idea of group sessions.

**AQIP Advising External Review Committee**  
**Interview with Cindy Somers, Faculty Coordinator**

1. What do you see are the main strengths of the Faculty Advising program?
  1. An increased connection between advising and faculty on campus.
  2. Increased knowledge for both faculty and advisors.
  3. Supplying an additional, temporary, cheap work force during peak periods.
  
2. What do you see as a weakness (if any) of the Faculty Advising program?

I'm biased but I don't think there are any.
  
3. What suggestions do you have for further improvements?

I'm not sure I understand the question.

  - Advisor based -
  - Faculty based -
  - Student based –
  - Other -
  
4. What do you think are the main value(s) to:
  - Advising Department - Specific department based information not located in any written document.
  - Students - More access to advisors.
  - College - Additional, knowledgeable, cost effective, temporary advisors.
  
4. Do you think RRCC students should be required to attend an advising session prior to registering for the their first class(es) as a new student? If not, why not?

No, because not all first time RRCC students are first time students. I see mandatory advising as a potential barrier for some students attending RRCC.

## TRIAGE FACULTY REACTION SURVEY

- Was your training adequate?
  - Yes
  - No
- Are the facilities adequate?
  - Yes
  - No
- Did you have enough “backup” support when difficult questions arose?
  - Yes
  - No
- Comments

---

---

---

## TRIAGE STUDENT REACTION SURVEY

- Did you receive the help you needed at the hallway advising area?
  - Yes
  - If no:
    - Were you referred to an academic advisor?
      - Yes
      - No
    - What problem or question was not resolved?
      - 
      - 
      -
- Do you think RRCC students should be required to meet with an advisor **before** registering for their first class(es) as a new student?
  - Yes
  - No

- Comments

---

---