

Be Advised!

A Newsletter for UMD Faculty Advisors

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Advice for Advisors and the Sophomore Slump or, Practical Advice for Advisors and the Sophomore Pivotal Year

by Michele Hatcher, Undeclared Student Advising Services Coordinator



UMD's efforts toward easing transition and increasing retention for freshman have produced positive results. Many at UMD now recognize the

unique challenges students face in the sophomore year. This article will provide faculty advisors with a view of developmental considerations and characteristics of students during what is a pivotal year for many. Resources are offered to faculty advisors to connect with and engage our sophomores.

UMD sophomore student experiences are in line with research of the students who are termed "millennial" and who now populate our campus. There are high expectations for academic success from parents and educational institutions. There is increased enrollment in college courses in high school with expectations of getting ahead in order to save money and be able to begin major course work earlier. In addition, students are very connected to their parents with highly managed schedules and little down time.

These expectations are not always congruent with students' developmental ability to process information and reason. While students successfully manage to move forward, they often do not know why they are involved in activities or what the purpose is of taking the courses and how it connects to their future goals. When students go to college, their world no longer exists as they knew it. Their scheduling supports (parent/guardian) no longer reside with them and they may face time management issues. In previous generations, going to college was a rite of passage that signified a sense of freedom and opportunity. For the

millennial student, the feelings may be fear and isolation rather than freedom.

UMD has great success with its first-year students who enter programs aimed at decreasing fears and ensuring successful transition to college. Faculty Advisors and Professional Advisors work to provide a smooth transition into college-level coursework through Advisement and Registration sessions. A first year student may be enrolled in an Intro to College Learning or a Learning Community course connecting him or her with resources and knowledge of campus activities, educational tools, and career exploration. Further support through housing brings freshman to campus already knowing who their roommates will be. In addition, UMD's Bulldog Welcome Week is filled with multiple activities that help create a smooth initial transition.

Entering second year, students find the experiences they had during their first year no longer exist. They move from a life of complete structure to one with little structure. Students experience more difficulty in registering for courses, especially if they have advanced course standing and are finished with their liberal education courses. For some second year students, the excitement and the newness of the first year have ended. Friends change or they may be taking part in study abroad programs, leaving students feeling alone. They face immense pressure to choose a major not only from themselves and parents, but also from their institution. Our students face increased financial pressure and are working in addition to taking courses. They also find changes in housing, roommates and even a change in the academic support structure to which they have become accustomed.

Sophomores, continued from p.1

Some students manage this transition, others enter into a time of developmental confusion as they examine their values, relationships, goals and purpose along with the other challenges. You may have heard of the senior slump in high school, at the collegiate level, students may enter what is coined the “sophomore slump.” Typical sophomores begin to ask themselves: Do I really want this major? What am I doing here and should I transfer? Why does everything take so much work and why do I have so little time? How can I make a decision about a major when I don’t know what I want to do? Why is everything so different this year? Why do I have more questions now than when I got here? Who are these people I hang around with that I thought were my friends?

What does this mean for faculty advisors who come in contact with students? Understanding transition issues is the first step in assisting sophomores. Also important is recognizing the areas in which faculty advisors can provide assistance and when to refer to a collegiate specialist for more in-depth consideration. Students do appreciate it when an advisor says, “I don’t know, but I will be glad to connect you will someone who knows more in this area.”

Whether a student faces challenges mentioned above or not, the following are general recommendations that faculty advisors can consider when working with students during their sophomore year:

- Talk with students about their interests and abilities, connect them with academic and social opportunities that will enhance their knowledge of self, independence, and competence. Encourage involvement in one or two co-curricular activities or suggest cutting back if the student is over-extended. Some sources for connecting UMD students are:
 - Engage- Engage.umn.edu
 - Kirby Student Center
 - International Education office
 - UROP and other research opportunities
 - Multicultural Center
 - Campus Employment
- Assist with their questions or refer them to a Professional Advisor in your college Student Affairs Office if more assistance is needed. Encourage students to use academic tools that will help them gain autonomy, to facilitate making informed decisions, and to take ownership of their education:
 - APAS
 - Graduation Planner
 - 30-60-90 Student Success Roadmap
 - UMD Catalog and online departmental information when researching majors/minors
- Refer students to Career Services for more in-depth career and major exploration to:
 - Get help in deciding a major by taking assessments
 - Find out about major/career options
 - Assist in resume development, internship placement, and job fairs opportunity
 - Take a career and major exploration course
- Refer students to Student Health Services if they need to talk about:(Refer to Mitzi Doane’s article in this issue)
 - Physical problems
 - Stress or anxiety
 - Sleep deprivation
 - Family or friendship issues
 - Test anxiety
 - Depression
- Encourage students to ask themselves probing questions that dig deeper into their choices. Do you like what you are studying? What is important to you? What will change for you if you transfer?
- It is also helpful to remind students that they are not alone. Encourage them to seek support from fellow students and others on campus. Students are encouraged when they hear about other similar sophomore-year challenges.

Finally, feel free to forward the student to me when they are struggling with knowing where to begin or having difficulty with direction. By working together and assisting our sophomores they can beat the **S.L.U.M.P.** by: Sophomores Learning, Understanding, and Mapping a Plan!

Undeclared Students Advising Services: The mission of the program, through integrated UMD campus services, is to further develop student knowledge of self, skills in decision-making, increase access of resources and information pertaining to academic inquiry and majors, and to form connections within the UMD community and beyond. Students served through the program encompass those who are undecided, indecisive, undeclared, deciding and exploratory with emphasis of programming geared toward Freshman and Sophomore years. Any questions regarding the program are welcomed. Please contact Michele Hatcher, Advising Services Coordinator for Undeclared Students, at mhatcher@d.umn.edu.

Advisement Coordination Center
78-82 Solon Campus Center
University of Minnesota Duluth

The mission of the Advisement Coordination Center (ACC) is to coordinate, support, and be a resource to a campus wide developmental advising program. The ACC collaborates with the collegiate Student Affairs Offices that provide faculty members with the information and resources to help students develop sound educational, professional, and life goals.

The Advisement Coordination Center supplements and supports the University of Minnesota Duluth's faculty advising initiatives.
The Advisement Coordination Center provides walk-in access for any student.

Linking Freshman Engagement to Sophomore Success

Contributed by Mary Keenan

The National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) assesses the extent to which freshmen and seniors engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. UMD's most recent participation in the NSSE was in 2007.

Freshman NSSE results provide one context for understanding students' experiences as they enter their sophomore year. Below are a few highlights from UMD's NSSE results that provide a little "food for thought" as we strive to further support success during the sophomore year:

Academic Challenge: 43% of UMD freshmen indicated they often or very often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations; 30% of freshmen reported spending 16 or more hours per week preparing for class.

Quality of Relationships: 63% of UMD freshmen indicated having positive relationships with faculty; 79% of freshmen indicated having positive relationships with other students; 54% of freshmen indicated having positive relationships with administrative personnel and offices.

Student Satisfaction – 83% of freshmen described their entire educational experience at UMD as *good* or *excellent*; 72% evaluated the quality of academic advising as *good* or *excellent*; 79% indicated, if they could start over again, they would choose to attend UMD.

For additional information, contact Mary Keenan, Coordinator of Student Success Initiatives, mkeenan@d.umn.edu.

And finally . . .

The UMD Student Association at UMD has made Faculty Advising their number 1 priority this academic year. Toward that end, in a few weeks, faculty and students will be receiving an electronic survey to help determine the gaps in expectations between students and faculty advisors. The intention is to close those gaps by more clearly communicating advisee responsibilities and advisor expectations to students and faculty. The survey is partially based on two articles, *Faculty and Staff Perceptions of Advising: Implications for Student Dissatisfaction* and *Importance of, Responsibility for, and Satisfaction With Academic Advising: A Faculty Perspective*. These and other articles can be accessed at www.d.umn.edu/advising, under Faculty and Staff, Assessment of Advising.

While we all have Assessment on our minds, you may also want to access the article by Joe Cuseo (www.d.umn.edu/advising), *Assessment of Academic Advisors and Academic Advising Programs by Joe Cuseo*. Many of you know that Joe Cuseo visited UMD in 2007.

Have a look at the "Featured Faculty Advisor" column. If you or a colleague are willing to share your best practices in advising, email kroufs@d.umn.edu. Forward any suggestions for additions to or improvements of the Advising web site to kroufs@d.umn.edu or rthelen@d.umn.edu.