

Teaching Effectiveness Committee
Annual Report
March 2008

The charge to the committee

The Teaching Effectiveness Committee shall promote good teaching at the University by: conducting and reporting to the Faculty Senate an annual audit of programs, activities, policies, etc., which are available at the University to support good teaching; serving as an advisory committee to the Instructional Development Program; undertaking each year, in cooperation with other interested parties, an initiative designed to improve teaching practices at the University. The Director of the Instructional Development Program and the Director of Information and Instructional Technology Services shall serve as *ex officio* members of this committee.

The members of the committee

Susan Trostle Brand, EDC (09)
Kathryn Jervis, BUS (09)
Jim Kinnie, LIB (09) Chair
Rita Marcoux, PHP (08)
Kathleen Torrens, COM (08) Faculty Senator
Paula Viau, NUR (09)
Bette Erickson, Director of IDP, *ex officio*
David Porter, Information and Technology Services, *ex officio*

Activities of the committee

At our first meeting in October, the committee agreed to take up the issue of advising on campus, especially for juniors and seniors, based on a request from Provost Swan. The provost's concerns about advising were raised by the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) - <http://www.uri.edu/ir/uriinfobank/nsse.html>. To the question, "Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?" 45% answered Fair or Poor. In addition, "72% of seniors would choose this school again if they could start their college career over" meaning 28% would not choose URI. This affects student retention and even alumni contributions.

The initial discussion explored possible reasons for this high percentage as they relate to advising. Once students leave University College there seems to be no consistency in how departments handle advising. URI has relied on faculty for advising as a way to encourage faculty/student relations but problems arise in departments that have a large number of students and a limited number of faculty; the University has not had a policy of hiring experts for advising. Also, the promotion and tenure process does not give much weight to advising so there is no added value for faculty to get too involved.

More discussion centered on what does work and on ways that the advising system could be improved. Advising seems to work better for transfer students, especially those from CCRI. A list of resources or training by UC could be part of a solution and perhaps group advising could be implemented in larger departments.

In subsequent meetings in November, December, and February members of the TEC planned various methods to gather more detailed information from students about their advising experience after they leave University College. The committee decided against a general survey because there are too many surveys already and there would probably be a low return rate. We decided to set up focus groups in various colleges and departments and to add questions about advising to end-of-program surveys in departments that require them. Questions for the students were consolidated into three basic ones: "What were your expectations about advising in your program?" "What has been your experience with advising?" and "How could your advising have been improved to better meet your (past, present, and future) needs?"

Several student focus groups were conducted during the spring semester: one with the College of Arts and Sciences Student Advisory Board, two groups from the College of Business, and one each from Communication Studies, Psychology and Human Development/Early Childhood Education. The questions will be added to the end-of-program surveys for the Colleges of Pharmacy and Nursing, and the School of Education.

As of the date of this report, focus groups and surveys of graduating seniors have not been completed, so the committee has not met to discuss the findings. A preliminary look at the results so far shows a wide range of expectations and experiences, both positive and negative. A careful analysis of our results will be presented in a future report.