

Agricultural in Our Society class is to understand what is required and what can be transferred to the state four year agriculture programs.

Saxowsky and Leitch (1983) indicated: "As an alternative to requiring all faculty members to serve as academic advisers, departments may want to implement a procedure to identify and utilize only their most effective advisers." The feeling in our Agribusiness Department at CCCC is that all are committed to the advising program.

In conclusion advising transfer agriculture students can be time consuming. Each student is a different case and must be handled accordingly. The time involved, the understanding of the student, the counseling provided, the decisions made, and the results to be obtained are all brought about by proper advising. Advisers must have a good understanding of the transfer agreement, they must have good rapport with the four year school, there must be a good communication link between the schools, and both

should have an open mind as to what is accepted. Proper advising is always a learning experience. Frequently the four year schools ask us: "When are you going to send us another Alan Nelson, or a Pat Pfizenmaier, or a Veryl Kennedy, or a Jon Nelson?" Then we feel we have succeeded in advising.

Literature Reviewed

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Advising Freshmen

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Introduction

When advising freshmen, one of the best means of preparing for the task is to become sympathetic with the many changes the students are undergoing during their first year in college. Due to these many transitions (e.g. transition to adulthood, transition to college life, etc.), freshmen have critical needs that are unique to them. These critical needs are often accompanied by chronic problems that experienced faculty and advisors have observed in freshmen. This paper will describe student challenges and needs, and will highlight several programs that meet the needs of freshmen and help them make a successful transition from high school to university life.

How Freshmen Feel

At the beginning of each academic year advisors may prepare themselves for their interactions with freshmen by remembering what they felt like as a freshman. Excitement and chaos overtake our campuses as each new academic year begins. Parking becomes a problem, traffic becomes congested, confusion seems omnipresent, and for new freshmen and their parents it is also an exciting and frightening world.

One of the most common feelings for freshmen is one of being overwhelmed. Students are overwhelmed from a variety of directions including:

- an unparalleled sense of freedom;
- a substantial amount of responsibility;

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- high expectations of self;
- pressure from parental expectations;
- uncertainty about faculty expectations;
- breadth of careers to choose from;
- new people.

The quantity of new information confronting freshmen is staggering. At the University of Missouri-Columbia, for example, there are over 250 degree programs. Students often have identified only a limited number of occupations, e.g., medicine, law, journalism, business, veterinary medicine, dentistry, and teaching. The challenge of selecting among those 250 opportunities is overwhelming. Mastering "the system" is another substantial challenge. The routine of pre-registration, adding/dropping classes, changing grading systems, etc., are all new jargon and procedures for freshmen.

Additionally, freshmen are exposed to a wide variety of people, personalities, and cultures. It is common for us to observe a student who has led a "sheltered life" being confronted with a radically different personality and cultural type.

A substantial portion of the freshman challenge is identifying and facing their own expectations. Some examples of student sentiments that reflect their expectations include: (1) "These will be the best years of my life," (2) "I have to make good grades," (3) "I want to be a social success," (4) "I must fulfill my family's dreams," and (5) "I can't let anyone know I'm afraid of failing."

At the same time students encounter these new situations, they are continuing the transition from

adolescence to adulthood. This process entails the re-evaluation of individual assumptions and values. The juxtaposition of this major life process at the same time students are coping with foreign language requirements, tuition payment and section changes, etc., exacerbates the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Critical Needs of Freshmen

Freshmen have a critical need for a well-defined sense of purpose. Many of the sentiments mentioned previously can be comfortably handled if the student has a reasonable and identifiable sense of purpose. Students need to understand the institution's mission and the rationale behind general education or departmental requirements. A sense of purpose allows students to be much better equipped to make sense out of their courses and extracurricular opportunities.

Students also have a strong need to belong. One of the difficulties of the freshman year associated with the need to belong is that the student's traditional support systems have been left behind. Friends may have stayed at home to work or may have gone to other colleges. Familiar places and faces are no longer available for security. The need for students to establish their own sense of self-worth and establish themselves as a part of the group often overrides our academic aspirations for them. As a result, experienced advisors often consider that the first freshman semester integrates students into the university community. In light of all the transitions students are experiencing, completing assignments may almost be considered as a low priority exercise rather than a focal point.

Also critical during the freshman year is a sense of being cared for and of being nurtured. Compensation for the absence of parental and familial support systems takes a variety of forms in our freshmen. If you observe students pass by mailboxes in residence halls, they never pass without looking to see if there is a letter from home or from a friend. Students need to sense that people care for them. Faculty can provide students with nurturing in a different context than parents or friends; they can help students to develop their academic abilities. The student's advisor is typically a faculty member who was hired for competency in a technical subject matter, yet the student/advisor relationship implies that students may look to their advisor as someone to confide in, particularly during their freshman year. Establishing this supportive network is important for a successful freshman year.

Providing students with correct information at the right point in time is critical also. The information may include: (1) terms which are new to students (e.g., Chancellor); (2) services available to support their academic and social development (e.g., learning centers, writing laboratories, etc.); (3) career information; and (4) self-assessment tools.

Of importance in student retention and ultimate ability to achieve at the University is a feeling of success. Many students are afraid that they won't be able to "make the grade." Students who close their

freshman year with a slate of good grades, a handful of close friends, and a sense of being accepted by the faculty will continue pursuing their education.

Programs that Work

Orientation Programs

Orientation programs have been instituted at most colleges and universities to fill the need of introducing students and their families to the mission of the institution and to the individuals with whom their son/daughter will be interacting. Variations among orientation programs include timing (e.g., summer vs. fall), duration, separate programs for parents and students, etc. Most institutions find orientation very helpful and well-received.

Social Events

Building a rapport with students during their freshman year may be facilitated with social events such as picnics. These events are used to build a sense of community and connectedness among the students, faculty and staff. At such events faculty frequently will serve hamburgers, hot dogs, etc. to emphasize their human side.

Freshmen Postcards

Providing students with correct information in a timely fashion is a critical need during the freshman year. One of the frustrations most advisors feel is that students do not come to them with questions or concerns. As a result, correct information cannot be conveyed in a timely fashion. To alleviate this problem, UMC's College of Agriculture instituted a program of freshman postcards two years ago. Approximately once a week postcards are mailed to entering freshmen and transfer students. Key messages coincide with critical events such as pre-registration, mid-term exams, etc. In addition to being effective at getting correct information directly to the students, the postcards help create a sense of belonging and of being cared for. Even though only a postcard from the College, the students appreciate finding something in their mailbox. The concern conveyed by the College to its students with this technique has been very positively received.

Placement Offices

An introduction to career development and placement services is important when advising freshmen since many arrive with unrealistic or uninformed career expectations. Many students need to evaluate their skills and assess their values. Self-awareness and career development materials may help them do this. Introduction of students to career development and placement services is also useful because it sets the stage for use of these facilities when students prepare for job interviews.

Faculty Advising

Advisement is one of the keys to a successful freshman year. One-on-one contact with a faculty member not only makes all faculty seem more approachable, but it also greatly increases the student's sense of belonging. Whenever possible we encourage students to be paired with faculty advisors who are in a

student's specialty area. If possible, we seek compatible personalities also. Because students change majors and become acquainted with other faculty we make it easy for students to change advisors. The faculty-student relationship is so critical to successful matriculation that we do whatever possible to ensure a strong relationship. Publishing a code of ethics/responsibilities that articulates university or divisional policy and expectations also helps faculty with advisement. Advisement evaluations, similar to course evaluations, may provide useful feedback.

Mentoring

Many departments and divisions have found that mentor programs are helpful to freshmen. Mentor programs typically exist with upperclass students helping freshmen become adjusted to university life. Although not formally termed mentor programs, many fraternities and sororities provide the same type of supportive and integrative function as mentor programs.

Freshman Experience Course

Freshman experience courses are becoming more common across the country. It has been proven that freshman experience/orientation courses are designed to help students make the transition to university life. They improve student satisfaction with their educational experience and are becoming more common nationwide. The content of freshman courses varies considerably, but common topics include the importance of communication skills, getting involved, campus services, time/stress/money management, goal setting and career planning.

Undecided Students

Some institutions have developed advising programs which treat all entering freshmen as if they were undecided students. Considering the fact that the average student will change majors three times, it may be very valid to assume this approach. These programs incorporate exposure to career opportunities and self-assessment in their activities. Advisors participating in these programs may receive special training to improve their effectiveness in advising freshmen.

Conclusion

Keys to successful advising of freshmen include a sensitivity to the unique demands of the freshman year and effective communication of goals, aspirations, and problems. Means of improving our effectiveness in advising freshmen include orientation programs, freshman courses, mentor programs, special advisement programs and intervention techniques.

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Advising Women

Mary Lewnes Albrecht

Some advisers probably say there is no difference in advising women students than there is in advising men. In many cases, they are probably right. The recent high school graduate, regardless of sex, will have the same problems adjusting to being away from home for the first time, making new friends, and living in a larger community than in the one they grew up.

Since 1977, there has been a steady increase in the number of Bachelor degrees being awarded to women in agriculture and natural resources through 1982, the last year data were available (Table 1).

In 1978, 71% of the students enrolled in agriculture and natural resources were men; by 1980, 68% were men (Table 2). Of equal importance is the fact that while enrollment in agriculture and natural resources has decreased over this period, there was an increase in women looking towards agriculture for career opportunities. This trend will continue as we recruit more minority and urban students.

In 1979, the total number of women attending institutions of higher education in all majors exceeded that for men for the first time. According to **The Digest of Education Statistics 1985-1986 Report**, published by the U.S. Department of Education, this trend has continued through 1983, the last year data were available. At the graduate level, there are still more men than women.

Men tend to outnumber the women on the order of 2 to 1 (Table 3). Certain programs tend to attract more women than others, most notably horticulture, food science and technology, as well as the animal sciences including poultry and dairy science. At K-State, there were 70 women and 54 men in horticulture, and 73 women and 77 men in preveterinarian science this past spring semester. Prevet is administered by our Department of Animal Sciences, which includes poultry and dairy sciences, which had 234 men and 90 women (this does not include the prevet students). Areas which are traditionally low in women enrollment in proportion to men are agronomy, agricultural economics and business, forestry and forestry technology, and range management. These will vary at each institution.

Another aspect of women's enrollment is age distribution. At K-State, 29.6% of the women and 34.7% of the men are over the age of 21. At K-State the non-traditional student is considered to be those over 25 years of age. In that age group we have 11% of the women and 6.2% of the men. This has great implications when dealing with advising. These are not

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