

CASL Meeting Minutes #8
January 24th, 2022
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Meeting held via Zoom

Attendees: Scott Barton (Chair), Francesca Bernardi (Secretary), Jeannine Coburn, Paul Reilly, Edward Gutierrez, Arne Gericke, Meha Chopra Mohapatra. Invited guests: Rachael Heard (Associate Director, Multicultural Education and First-Generation Success).

Agenda

1. Call to order

Chair Barton called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM.

2. Academic holds on students' accounts

Jeannine Coburn and Paul Reilly will be meeting to discuss how to approach the issue of having holds placed on students' accounts at the last minute as they are planning to register for courses. The goal is to avoid stress and anxiety (along with technical difficulties) due to the fact that students are not allowed to register for classes at the time registration opens to them.

3. Discussion of the Mental Health and Well-Being (MHWB) task force report

The MHWB task force has released its first report focused on students in January 2022: https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/2022/01/19/WPI_MHWB_FindingsAndRecommendations_Phase1_2022.pdf

- Edward Gutierrez suggests that we as CASL insist that mental-health and well-being surveys are done every year to keep monitoring the situation on campus, the effects of any implemented changes, and the long-term repercussions of the pandemic.
- **Action item: CASL** will review the entire report.

Chrys Demetry (co-chair of the Academic subcommittee) has prepared a document summarizing the task force academic recommendations and mapping them to faculty governance committees, department, and other offices on campus. CASL will be using this document as a place to start the conversation on which tasks to tackle and how.

Relieving academic pressure and transforming culture of overwork to one that values balance and self-care.

1. Proactively teach academic success skills and self care in offerings for newly enrolled students.

- b. Ask CASL and Marketing/Communications to develop and implement communications plan for students, faculty, and staff with the rationale for 7-week terms and reason for student effort- hour expectations, data, and conditions for balance, success, and well-being (e.g., a small number of student organizations, eating, sleeping, help-seeking).
 - Jeannine Coburn suggests digging up the original ideas, rationale, marketing materials behind choosing the 7-week terms to develop materials for communicating the system better to students, faculty, and staff.

- **Action item: Jeannine Coburn** will take the lead on this task and liaise with Marketing/Communications.

Increasing access to culturally-responsive education, academic support, connections, and mentorship.

6. Improve academic advising/mentorship at the department level.

- a. Ask CASL to formally define roles and responsibilities for high quality academic advising.
 - b. Act on recommendations of Task Force on Academic Advising (2017) to create departmental plans for academic advising and support for advisors.
- The 2017 Task Force on Academic Advising prepared a report on needs and actions for Academic Advising. The report was submitted to the then Provost. To our knowledge, none of those suggestions were implemented.
 - **Action item: Paul Reilly, Francesca Bernardi, and Rachael Heard** will review the report from 2017 and report back to CASL.
 - Arne Gericke reports that 2 years ago students were surveyed regarding their experiences with advising. At the time, it seemed students were pleased with their interactions with the Office of Academic Advising but became less satisfied with their experiences when advising responsibilities shifted directly to the Departments.
 - Arne Gericke suggests making mandatory one or two meetings with faculty advisors per year. To keep track of this, students could be asked to submit a quick form on Workday to attest that such meetings have happened and when.
 - Without some accountability system in place for faculty advisors, only some faculty will do it diligently. Advising should also be recognized as part of the workload and valued by the administration. One way this could happen is to have it take a more prominent role in tenure decisions. For example, CTAF now allows for a 6-page document to be submitted by candidates for tenure review; this is meant so that teaching/advising content can be explicitly included in the materials.
 - Francesca Bernardi suggests including information for new hires regarding advising responsibilities at the New Faculty Orientation. This would put it on people's radar so that folks become aware it is part of their responsibilities, when it will happen, what the basic expectations are, etc.
 - Arne Gericke suggests producing a larger guide/tool to be distributed to the Departments with guidance for Department Heads regarding providing support for their faculty based on their specific departmental needs as well as reviewing how advising is going within departments.
 - Paul Reilly mentions that something along these lines already exists, but it is generally directed at individual faculty rather than departments. It is available at: <https://www.wpi.edu/academics/faculty/advising/resources>
 - CASL should review the existing guide, condense it, and make it so that it can become more specific to each Department's needs. CASL also needs to make sure individual faculty and departments know the guide is there and/or find a way to distribute it widely.
 - Jeannine Coburn suggests instituting an annual workshop in January for everyone on campus. This could provide timely information that is useful for new faculty as well as faculty that have been advising for years.

- **Action item: CASL** will survey Departments to collect information regarding what they are already doing internally to support advising.
- c. Create a centralized domain in Workday where graduate and undergraduate students can look up their network of support including: Academic Advisor, Faculty Advisor, Program Advisor, Resident Assistant, Community Advisor, Student Senator, Admissions Counselor, etc.
- **Action item: Scott Barton** will discuss within the Technology Subcommittee of the MHWB task force what is technically achievable with Workday regarding setting up a centralized place for students to look up their network of support.

4. Adjournment

CASL will reconvene in two weeks. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Minutes prepared by:

Francesca Bernardi

CASL Secretary