

# **Committee on Advising and Student Life (CASL)**

## **Annual Report for the 2022-2023 Academic Year**

### **Membership**

Committee members included Prof. Jeannine Coburn, Prof. Francesca Bernardi, Prof. Adam Powell, Prof. Edward Gutierrez, Prof. Daniel DiMassa, Prof. Jim Doyle, Greg Snoddy (Assistant VP and Dean of Students, ex-officio), Prof. Arne Gericke (Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Provost's Representative), Paul Reilly (Assistant Dean for Student Success, ex-officio), Adish Jain (undergraduate student, SGA appointment), Megan Barry (undergraduate student, SGA appointment), Naitik Zaveri (graduate student, GSG appointment). Arnold Lane (Director of Multicultural Education and Community Engagement) from the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education also joined the meetings as a standing invited guest.

### **Officers**

Jeannine Coburn served as chair; Edward Gutierrez served as secretary.

### **COMMITTEE ACTIVITY**

The committee met twelve times during the 2022-2023 academic year to address the following areas:

1. **Campus-wide undergraduate advising.** The work of the committee predominantly focused on addressing concerns with academic advising. CASL:
  - a. Coordinated and facilitated the first "just in-time" advisor training for faculty.
  - b. Worked with the Office of Academic Advising to update the Faculty Advising Handbook. The updated handbook was distributed to all WPI faculty by way of the Faculty email alias.
  - c. Completed and distributed several documents to Deans, Department Heads, and Program Coordinators including a one-page Guide on Advising Best Practices compiled based on practices that seem to be working in various departments/programs at WPI and a one-page document on the Roles of the Office of Academic Advising and Faculty Advisors.
    - i. The one-page Guide on Advising Best Practices included individual sections to address both undergraduate and graduate student advising.
  - d. Meeting minutes included a link to the HUA requirements to increase knowledge.
  - e. Proposed a survey, which was selected, for the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center mini studies to build a better understanding of what is working and what is not working for academic advising.
    - i. Worked with Kimberly LeChasseur (Sr. Research and Evaluation Associate) to formulate the survey, which evolved into focus group interviews due to the actual project scope; these were led by Kimberly LeChasseur.
  - f. Worked on the Enrolled Student Survey with Emily Perlow (Associate Dean of Students) to ensure questions could assess the advising climate at WPI.
2. **Campus-wide graduate advising.**
  - a. See Section 1.C.i

- b. CASL developed and executed a survey on Graduate Student advising practices to collect data from department and program Graduate Coordinators.
3. **Office of Equal Opportunity and Outreach.** CASL met with Stan Horton (Director of Equal Opportunity and Outreach/Title IX Coordinator) to discuss changes to Title IX compliance requirements. A Campus Climate survey for all higher education institutions in the state will include baseline questions issued by the state of MA to be released to universities in late Spring 2023. Each institution will be allowed to include campus-specific questions and CASL offered to participate in designing these questions. The climate survey is set to be distributed to students in 2024.
4. **Committee Administration.** All committee files (agendas, minutes, notes, resources, etc.) were consolidated and moved to a SharePoint site to improve access, transparency, and continuity for the committee members.
5. **Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Academic Advising.** Prof. Doyle (Arts & Sciences) and Prof. Powell (Engineering) volunteered to serve on the award committee to review nominations and make recommendations for the award.
6. **Invited guests (not mentioned above)**
  - a. Harin Vashi, Graduate Student Government (GSG) President, discussed the results of a GSG survey sent to the graduate student community in February, which included topics related to academic advising. Overall respondents indicated a desire for more interaction with faculty advisors, issues with advisors not checking in or responding to emails, and student's interest in ways they can effectively provide feedback to Department Heads.
  - b. Students also expressed an interest in ways they can effectively provide feedback to Department Heads. Jeannine Coburn, on behalf of CASL, will share the survey results with Department Heads and graduate coordinators.
  - c. LeeAnn LeClerc, Chief Information Security Officer, discussed with CASL concerns around the visibility of data in portal.azure.com, WPI's Azure Active Directory environment for all @wpi.edu users. CASL unanimously supported moving forward with removing the ability of all @wpi.edu users to see most if not all information available in WPI's Azure Active Directory.
  - d. Paula Fitzpatrick, Director of the Center for Well Being, reviewed the mission of the Center, introduced its staff, and described its services and programs and interest in partnering with faculty.
  - e. Lindsey Van Gieson, Instructional Technology Systems Manager, on Canvas sites created for each department/major/minor as a convenient location for the purpose of distribution academic advising information to degree-seeking students (majors and minors). Usage of the sites is optional, but all sites now exist on Canvas as unpublished sites.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE ACTION IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2023-2024**

- Work with Emily Perlow to evaluate the advising-related question responses from the AY22/23 enrolled student survey to identify action items to improve advising and student life at WPI.

- Continue the discussion on advising as criteria for tenure and promotion with appropriate faculty governance committees.
- Work with Chrys Demetry and Aaron Deskin to continue the “just in-time” advisor training yearly.
- Continue with initiatives to improve graduate student advising at WPI including utilizing results from the graduate advising practices survey and GSG survey and working with the Office of Graduate Students and the Committee on Graduate Student Research to centralize advising documents (e.g., department and/or program graduate tracking documents).
- Office of Equal Opportunity and Outreach: CASL should engage with reviewing the questions for the Title IX climate survey and provide feedback on supplementing the questions, where possible.

### **Academic Year 2023-2024 Membership transition**

Prof. Jeannine Coburn and Edward Gutierrez completed their 3-year CASL term (2020-2023). Prof. Rudra Kafle and Jane Li were nominated to serve 3-year terms on CASL (2023-2026).

### **Academic Year 2023-2024 Officers**

Daniel DiMassa will serve as chair; Jim Doyle will serve as secretary.

Jeannine M. Coburn

Chair of CASL 2022-2023