

**CASL Meeting #2 Minutes**  
**September 26 2023**  
**9:00AM – 10:00AM**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:** Francesca Bernardi, Greg Cesar (guest), Daniel DiMassa (chair), Jim Doyle (secretary), Rory Flinn (guest), Adish Jain, Rudra Kafle, Arnold Lane, Jane Li, Emily Perlow, Adam Powell, Paul Reilly

**Call to Order:** 9:02AM

1. Rory Flinn (Assistant Dean, Graduate Studies) and Greg Cesar (Associate Director, Graduate Studies) joined the committee to discuss advising practices in graduate programs. Last year CASL noted wide discrepancies between departments and programs in how they implemented graduate advising, and proceeded to conduct a survey of graduate program coordinators. The committee also drafted and circulated a memorandum on best practices for graduate student advising.

It was noted that unlike undergraduate advising there is no graduate advising office. Departments and programs have autonomy, and the graduate studies office supports and facilitates their efforts. Some programs don't currently assign advisors to terminal M.S. students, which may impact their ability to enroll in courses and their time to degree. Many programs do not currently assign advisers over the Summer when onboarding students need help choosing their initial courses and getting started at WPI. It would be helpful if each program could establish an onboarding process to ensure new students get timely information and advice. These students are generally transitioning from an undergraduate system where their program was highly proscribed to a system that offers much more freedom and flexibility.

The potential benefits of a more uniform, centralized approach to graduate advising were discussed. The graduate studies website may be able to serve as an appropriate landing page for students in all departments and programs to begin their search for resources and advice. It was noted that BS/MS advising also needs attention.

The role of graduate coordinators was discussed. The duties of graduate coordinators currently vary widely across departments and programs. The need for continuity across years was noted, as well as the need to have someone in the role over the Summer to assist onboarding graduate students. It was suggested that CASL could develop a job description for graduate coordinators to encourage consistency across departments and programs and promote best practices. CASL agreed to work on it. It was also agreed that CASL would send a representative to the regular meetings of graduate coordinators.

The question was raised as to whether student perceptions of academic advising could be publicly accessible. It was noted that the data from the graduate student survey conducted last year is broken down by program and that data was shared with departments. The graduate studies office can follow up with low-rated programs.

It was noted that graduate advising will only increase in importance going forward due to the strategic initiative to increase graduate enrollments.

2. The minutes of the September 1, 2023 CASL meeting were reviewed and approved.

3. Daniel DiMassa reported on the recent meeting of the Campus Wellness Coalition.
4. Arne Gericke is rotating off CASL due to other committee assignments. The Provost will appoint a replacement.
5. Francesca Bernardi reported on her conversation with Stan Horton, Director of Equal Opportunity & Outreach and Title IX Coordinator. A campus climate survey will be administered to students in the Spring. CASL is interested in providing input during survey development. Stan will be invited to a future CASL meeting to discuss.
6. It was noted that last year CASL concluded it may be helpful to have a representative from graduate studies on the committee going forward. CASL will revisit this issue.
7. The next meeting of CASL will be on Friday, October 13 at 9:00 a.m. Emily Perlow (Dean of Students) and Rachel LeBlanc (Associate VP, Strategic Initiatives) will give a presentation on the results of the enrolled student survey.

**Adjournment:** 9:51AM

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Doyle (Secretary)