

July 21, 2006

President William C. Powers, Jr.  
Office of the President  
Main Building 400  
Campus Mail G3400

Dear President Powers,

The Advisory Council of the Academic Counselors Association (ACA) at the University consists of experienced academic advisors and other student service professionals, representing a cross section of the colleges and units at UT. Per an invitation from the Faculty Council, we are providing a response to the Task Force on Curricular Reform.

The following commentary and recommendations come as a result of lengthy discussions amongst the Advisory Council, and with feedback from the entire ACA membership. As any change to the advising structure on campus will directly affect many ACA members, we believe our recommendations reflect a genuine understanding of the implementation of successful advising services. Our members are also more than willing to provide further information or feedback as this process continues.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or desire further clarification on any of our recommendations. Our organization looks forward to working with you and your office to continually enhance the student experience at the university.

Respectfully,



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**Task Force on Curricular Reform**

Members



Response to the  
Task Force on Curricular Reform:  
Recommendations for Meeting  
Advising Needs

July 24, 2006

**ACA Advisory Council, 2005-2006**

**Chair**

Greg Murphy, Red McCombs School of Business

**Members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>
Stacey Amorous	Humanities/Liberal Arts Honors
Vonya Baldrige	Natural Sciences TRAC
Jana Cole	Economics
Stephanie Crouch	Astronomy/Graduate Coordinator
Aida Gonzalez	Communication Studies
Kathy Goodwin	Natural Sciences
Tricia Gore	Engineering
Eirin Gould	Health Professions
Liz Hastings	Spanish/Portuguese
Kristen Hotopp	Liberal Arts Dean
Jeff Igoe	Career Exploration Center
Jennifer Jordan	Education
Dan Knauft	Registrar
Katrina Kosted	Connexus
Heather Meacham-Thompson	C-GEO
Joel Mendolusky	Psychology
Christina Perkins	Communications Dean
Shane Sullivan	Art and Art History/Fine Arts
John Theofanis	Natural Sciences
Brett Westbrook	Natural Sciences UTeach

**Task Force and Faculty Council Response Sub-Committee**

Christine Fisher	Spanish/Portuguese
Melva Harbin	Government
Liz Hastings	Spanish/Portuguese
Katrina Kosted	Connexus
Shane Sullivan	Art and Art History/Fine Arts
Brett Westbrook	Natural Sciences UTeach

**Submitted:**

July 24, 2006

"Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic  
of a successful college experience."

Richard J. Light

*Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*

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## Timeline

1989 Doluisio Report Issued in Two Parts:

(July) Part 1: Report on Quality of Instruction at UT Austin

(August) Part 2: Report on Admissions/Enrollment Policy in Schools/Colleges

1989 (December) ACA Response to the Doluisio Report

1990 (December) Vick Proposal on Centralized Advising

1991 (March) James Vick Letter to Dave Stones Re: New Admission/Advising Code

1991 (September) Undergraduate Advising Center Opens

1991 (November) Bean Report Issued

1992 (June) UAC Begins Reporting to Vice Provost per William Cunningham

1992 James Vick Wins the First NACADA Pacesetter in Advising Award

1994 (June) *Ad Hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Advising (Finds UAC Exemplary)

1994 (July) Letter from Romo to Carver Thanking Him for His Findings (See Above)

1995 (March) Report from *Ad Hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Academic Advising Issued

1995 (Fall) NACADA Honors UAC with Outstanding Programming Award

1996 (November) Action Plan on Academic Advising University-wide

1997 (June) UAC Closed; UAC merged with College of Liberal Arts Student Division

2004 (September 20) Commission of 125 Report Issued

2005 (October 27) Task Force on Curricular Reform Report Issued

2006 (July 24) ACA Advisory Council Response Issued

## Abstract

This report delineates recommendations made by the Advisory Council to the Academic Advising Association in response to the centralized advising center proposed by the Task Force on Curricular Reform. As advisors, we are, of course, deeply invested in the nature and quality of the courses being offered. As we work closely with students, we see first-hand many of the discontinuities that the Task Force Report addresses; however, despite the varied academic expertise to be found in the professional advising community here at UT Austin, we chose to stay focused on this particular area of expertise in order to best contribute to the continuing dialogue concerning the proposed changes.

The report begins by providing context for the Task Force Report in terms of previous *ad hoc* committees and reports. Because the centralized advising recommended by the Report resembles the now-defunct Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC) and because of the misinformation surrounding the dismantling of the UAC, this response also provides a brief history of the UAC.

The response concludes with our recommendations for centralized advising. Feedback on the Task Force Report was solicited from the ACA membership and is included. The general recommendation is in favor of centralized advising and we have included some specifics in terms of staffing and facilities. While this response does not address funding specifically, reservations expressed by the membership about funding barriers are noted. The response concludes with our invitation to the Task Force to think of the professional advising community as a resource as they move ahead.

## Preface

The Report produced by the distinguished members of the Task Force on Curricular Reform at The University of Texas at Austin points to the pivotal role played by advising from the moment students first arrive on campus.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the report makes clear that advising is the principal delivery mechanism for any reform that will be instituted.<sup>2</sup> This view is reinforced in the National Academic Advising Association's (NACADA) *Statement of Core Values* which notes that "advisors interpret their institution's mission as well as its goals and values."<sup>3</sup> Whatever the ultimate decisions might be, advisors will remain the principal point of contact for students about their on-going campus life.

Academic advisors on The University of Texas at Austin campus are uniquely qualified to discuss the impact of reforms on the undergraduate student population.<sup>4</sup> We see students during their entire undergraduate career, providing "continuity throughout students' academic experiences"<sup>5</sup> as we assist them "in developing intellectual potential and exploring educational opportunities."<sup>6</sup> Further, advisors work with students as they learn how to make good decisions not only about their majors and their careers, but their lives as well. As noted in the *Undergraduate Catalog 2004-2006*, the "University of Texas at Austin views sound academic advising as a significant responsibility in educating students."<sup>7</sup> There is an important correlation

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Curricular Reform*, October 2005: 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Curricular Reform*, October 2005: 13.

<sup>3</sup> NACADA 2005. "NACADA statement of core values of academic advising." Retrieved 21 June 2006 from the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values.htm>>

<sup>4</sup> For a complete description of the educational qualifications for Academic Advisors I, II, and III (from an M.A. to a Ph.D.), see Appendix A1. For a survey of current statistics of personnel delivering advising services and their summarized feedback in response to the Report of the Task Force for Curricular Reform, please see Appendix A2.

<sup>5</sup> *Academic Counselors Association* 17 April 2006. 21 June 2006 <<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~acadv/>>

<sup>6</sup> University of Texas at Austin. *Undergraduate Catalog 2004-2006*: 17.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*



between effective advising and retention. For details on the positive impact of advisors on attrition, retention and graduation rates, please see Appendix B.

We are the students' link to the rest of the University and are often the first point of contact for non-academic issues. Students come to advisors in times of need or crisis, and we are charged with guiding them through the various mazes of financial aid, student health services, the International Office, and decision-making processes with regard to both majors and careers. We also mentor students in the work place and in student groups, helping to shape them into true professionals and leaders. We provide a service that helps students form the critical thinking skills that will serve them in their future endeavors. The one thing advisors do not do is make decisions for students. Rather, we give them the materials and tools they need to make their own decisions.

In addition to already full caseloads, advisors fulfill a vital role in some of the most important student success programs on campus. For example, the First Year Interest Group (FIG) program, arguably one of the most effective first-year retention tools at UT Austin, operates at a high quality level because advisors are willing, or required, to shoulder the majority of the responsibilities involved in executing the program. These same advisors comprise the bulk of professional staff participation in the Honors Colloquium, Gone To Texas, Moov In, Parents' Weekend, Explore UT, commencement and more events at the college, departmental, and program levels.

With this submission, the Academic Counselors Association seeks to provide the Task Force with our insights into the proposals outlined in their Report that are specific to advising. In order to provide a greater context for the Task Force, this response includes a brief history of similar *ad hoc* and Task Force reports beginning with the two-part 1989 Doluisio Report

(Appendices C1 and C2), moving on to a proposal by James Vick in 1990 calling for centralized advising (Appendix D), and including the 1991 Bean Report (Appendix E). Within this context, we felt it important to include a history of the Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC). One goal is to do our part to clear up the misinformation that continues to swirl about the dismantling of the UAC in 1997. The second goal is to provide the Task Force with an advisor's point of view on the advantages of and obstacles to centralized advising on the University of Texas at Austin campus. The rise and fall of the UAC is highly instructive in terms of how best to proceed with the Task Force's recommendations for centralized advising. This submission concludes with specific suggestions and recommendations.

The Academic Counselors Association is grateful for the attention and consideration that we know the Task Force will give to our response and recommendations. Academic advisors acknowledge the complexities faced by the Task Force and the challenges faced by The University in attempting to alter the manner in which its undergraduates are educated. We are pleased to play our role in such an understanding of how an institution of higher learning the caliber of The University of Texas at Austin should function. For these reasons, we welcome the opportunity to work closely with the faculty, students, and administrators who will implement curriculum reform here at UT Austin. With this response, we respectfully offer our unique perspective and professional expertise in the service of curriculum reform.

## Introduction

As academic advisors, we encourage students to think in terms of their entire education, instead of seeing their degree merely as a means to an end. Every day, advisors hear students say that they want to “get rid of requirements” rather than exploring the tremendous diversity of resources at an institution such as The University of Texas at Austin. Many seem overwhelmed by degree requirements, resulting in a diminished capacity for inquiry, exploration, and the overall opportunity to become truly educated. We agree with H. T. Parlin when he argued that “if either culture or training has to be scanted, professional training rather than enlightenment should be scanted in college.” The “whole meaning and inspiration of disinterested enlightenment,” such as Parlin proposed, “must be given to men and women when they are young and impressionable—that is, when they are in college and when the colleges are responsible for their teaching.” Such an education, producing “disinterested enlightenment,”<sup>8</sup> is necessarily labor-intensive. We agree with the Task Force Report when it notes that “revitalizing the core curriculum”<sup>9</sup> must become a “top priority, not just in theory but in its decisions about where to spend its resources.”<sup>10</sup>

## Previous Reports

The Task Force’s report recommends centralized advising that includes a “university-wide advising and career center that coordinates and expands”<sup>11</sup> current programs for students. This proposal from the current Task Force echoes similar proposals made in the past.<sup>12</sup> In 1989,

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<sup>8</sup> Parlin, H.T. “H.T. Parlin, Father of Plan II.” *Plan II Honors*. 21 June 2006.

<[http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/plan2/general\\_info/history/father\\_of\\_plan\\_2/](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/plan2/general_info/history/father_of_plan_2/)>

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Curricular Reform*, October 2005: 4.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Curricular Reform*, October 2005: 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Doluisio Report* submitted by the *ad hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Education, Dr. James T. Doluisio Chair, 1989; “A Proposal on Centralized Advising and Decision-Making for First Year Students,” Dr. James Vick, 1990; *Enriching the Undergraduate Experience at The University of Texas at Austin*, submitted by The Committee on the

UT Austin President William H. Cunningham established an *ad hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Education. They too recommended a centralized advising office that would be known as the Ashbel Smith Division.<sup>13</sup> Similar in scope to the current proposal, the Ashbel Smith Division would have served “older, non-degree-seeking students, undetermined majors . . . those in transition from one major to another, those who are unable to gain entry to certain upper-division programs, pre-law students, health professions students, and those entering the University through Provisional Admission.” The Division would require a “strong academic leader with additional academic support but including no faculty of its own and offering no courses.” The *ad hoc* committee proposed that “the leader be a Dean, chosen from the senior faculty, who would report directly to the president.” In addition, the “Division must be adequately provided with a professional staff of trained advisors and a cadre of faculty advisers.”<sup>14</sup> As is obvious, the Ashbel Smith Division is markedly similar to the proposal from the Task Force, with the exception of the call for faculty advising.<sup>15</sup>

In October of 1990, Dr. James Vick also proposed more centralized advising. In his proposal, Dr. Vick expressed concern for undecided students who

frequently lack adequate information on college majors and careers and mature insight into their own interests and abilities; consequently, they are likely to choose more obvious, vocationally oriented majors. They also feel pressured to make a choice just to begin college studies.<sup>16</sup>

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Undergraduate Experience, Dr. Frank D. Bean Chair, 1991; *A Report and Recommendations Prepared by the ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Academic Advising*, Dr. Ricardo Romo Chair, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on Ashbel Smith, one of the Fathers of The University of Texas at Austin, see the *Handbook of Texas Online*. *Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/fsm4.html>> (accessed June 23, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> *Doluisio Report*: 12534.

<sup>15</sup> The Task Force may be interested in the *ad hoc* committee’s description of a “Bachelors of Comparative Studies.” This is similar to the inclusion of a more cohesive core curriculum into the existing major.

<sup>16</sup> Vick, James W. “A Proposal on Centralized Advising and Decision-making for First Year Students.” MS, draft. 8 October 1990: 1.

Dr. Vick found it to be “no surprise that more than 50% of college freshmen change majors within the first year.” At the same time, however, he found it “unfortunate that both the original choice and the subsequent election of another major are typically made without benefit of guidance.”<sup>17</sup> He felt that the

needs of these students can best be met by a centrally-located, highly-visible advising office staffed by counselors who can expand academic decision-making beyond just course selection, to include the clarification of goals, the resolution of conflicting interests, and the development of mature insight into abilities and limitations.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Vick saw the need, as does this present Task Force, that such advising must include career counseling, learning skills, and other services that contribute to a more global advising climate.

In 1990, Dr. Cunningham also constituted a committee to explore the state of undergraduate education at UT Austin. This committee was chaired by Dr. Frank Bean. Like the Task Force, the Bean Committee found a need to “foster greater intellectual community and institutional integration” at the University.<sup>19</sup> Similar in scope to the Doluisio proposal for the Ashbel Smith Division, the Bean Report called for centralized advising in the form of the Academic Advising and Information Center. This center would be charged with “providing accurate information about academic progress and answers to more routine informational matters.”<sup>20</sup> Professional staff were seen as those on campus who “know details about course requirements for degrees, know how social and personal student experience relates to wise academic decisions, know about common problems involving study skills and common pitfalls such as taking too heavy a course

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Vick, 2

<sup>19</sup> Bean, Frank D. “Enriching the Undergraduate Experience at the University of Texas at Austin: A Report and Recommendations Prepared by the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience.” November 1991: 5.

<sup>20</sup> Bean Report, 35

load.”<sup>21</sup> While faculty were seen as the “appropriate advising resource for information about trends in a student’s field of study and how best to prepare for the future work in their discipline,” the Bean Report recognized that the rest of the students’ needs could best be met by a professional advising staff.

A recommendation for centralized advising is also found in the Romo Report (1995) from the *ad hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Academic Advising: “All academic advising activities will be coordinated campus wide.”<sup>22</sup> (Appendix F) According to the committee, which relied on professional consultants for recommendations, it “does not make sense . . . to have each college operating independently and in isolation in such an important aspect of academic life as advising.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Undergraduate Advising Center, 1991-1997**

About the time of the Doluisio, Vick and Bean reports, the Undergraduate Advising Center was established under the leadership of then Vice President for Student Affairs, James W. Vick, taking up residence in the Flawn Academic Center, September 1991.<sup>24</sup> With a small, but dedicated and hard-working staff and an equally small budget, it operated with great success. The UAC had a Faculty Director, a Coordinator, five full-time academic advisors, and eight student peers. The advisor caseload was about 300 students per advisor. Two more full-time advisors were hired in the first few years of the UAC’s existence. Clearly, this represented a high level of institutional support that contributed to the UAC’s success. In July of 1994, Vice Provost Ricardo Romo wrote to Dr. Larry Carver thanking him and his *ad hoc* Committee on

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<sup>21</sup> Bean Report, 34/35

<sup>22</sup> Romo, 10

<sup>23</sup> Romo, 15

<sup>24</sup> In 1992, responsibility for the UAC shifted from the Vice President for Student Affairs Office to the office of Vice Provost George Wright. Cunningham, William. Letter to Alice Reinarz. 1 May 1992. (Appendix G)

Undergraduate Advising (1994) for their report on the UAC. He noted that he was “very pleased to learn . . . that we have an exemplary program in UAC’s individual academic advising system.”<sup>25</sup> The report itself noted that the

Committee finds the UAC’s individualized academic advising program to be exemplary. It provides first-year students who have not declared a major with sound information that helps them make good decisions about their academic life at U.T. Austin, and it does so in a professional, supportive, and positive way.<sup>26</sup>

As an entity, the UAC was regularly monitored. In fact, the UAC pioneered the use of electronic record keeping through \*ADRET, a prototype of later mainframe modules such as \*NRSTAR. They used these records to track student flow, graduation and attrition rates, etc., in addition to which they conducted regular student satisfaction surveys in order to determine how best to meet student needs. The UAC also held annual “Summits” with the Colleges in order to facilitate communication and keep the individual colleges informed about various student populations. The Committee submitting its report to Provost Romo noted that it was “particularly impressed with the willingness of the UAC to respond to criticism and to monitor its program and, in turn, to change where it believes change needs to be made.”<sup>27</sup>

The UAC was so successful, in fact, that it won two national advising awards from the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). In 1992, Dr. James Vick won the first ever Pacesetter Award for his leadership of the UAC. This award is presented by NACADA to upper-level administrators who “exemplify a commitment to advising and are true advocates for students and advisors.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Romo, Ricardo. Letter to Larry Carver. 18 July 1994 (Appendix H1)

<sup>26</sup> “*Ad Hoc* Committee on Undergraduate Advising Report,” June 24, 1994. (Appendix H2)

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> “Pacesetter Winners.” *NACADA*. 2005. 18 July 2006

<[http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Awards/Pacesetter\\_Winners.htm](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Awards/Pacesetter_Winners.htm)>.

The UAC itself won the Outstanding Advising Program Award in 1995. University President Dr. Robert Berdahl wrote in support of the nomination: “The UAC’s energetic, effective and innovative leadership is exemplary, and is an enormous service to our students and the institution. I am delighted to endorse and support the UAC’s nomination for this award, for I believe that the UAC is providing model academic advising services from which all of higher education stands to benefit.”<sup>29</sup> Also in support, Dr. Romo noted, “UAC staff make a concerted effort to treat students as individuals and tailor advising to their personal needs.” For this reason, he felt that while “students benefit most from their programs, the mission of the institution, to provide an excellent undergraduate educational experience, is advanced as well.”<sup>30</sup>

If there was, as seems apparent, institutional support for the UAC, and if it was both successful and willing to evolve, the obvious question is why was it closed? In his dissenting addendum to the Task Force Report, Dr. David Hillis suggests that the UAC “was terminated in 1997 because advising was found to be more effectively administered within individual academic colleges.” To be succinct, this is simply not the case. None of the reports preceding or following the establishment of the UAC, including the Task Force Report, support Dr. Hillis’ statement that effective advising is best carried out in departments and colleges.

While there is plenty of information leading up to the founding of the UAC, its dismantling was not as well-documented. The UAC was folded into the College of Liberal Arts Dean’s Office; that much is known. Then Interim Provost Stephen Monti claimed that, “It is important not to view the Undergraduate Advising Center as closing.”<sup>31</sup> He attributed the closure to economics: “Certainly there’s a funding piece to it. The liberal arts department had

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<sup>29</sup> Berdahl, Robert. Letter to Alice Reinartz. 8 March 1995. (Appendix I1)

<sup>30</sup> Ricardo, Romo. Letter to the NACADA National Awards Program Selection Committee. (Appendix I2)

<sup>31</sup> Hunter, Velda. “2 Campus Advising Centers to Merge in the Fall,” *The Daily Texan* [Austin, Texas] 30 June 1997: 5. (Appendix J1)



the resources.” Dr. Alice Reinartz, the UAC’s director, indicated in the same article that she did not know the center was slated for closure: “Clearly, the change came as a shock to me and I am very disappointed.”<sup>32</sup> The plan, as outlined in *The Daily Texan* article, dictated that the services provided to undeclared students by the UAC would instead be provided by Student Division advisors in the Dean’s Office of the College of Liberal Arts. Not surprisingly, the immediate effect was that only Liberal Arts undeclared students were seen by these advisors. “Firing Line” letters and “Viewpoint” columns in *The Daily Texan* at the time indicate a general sense of outrage from students that the closure happened over the summer, when most students are not able to be part of the decision-making process for a mandate of this magnitude. One student deemed this phenomenon the “summer solution.”

With the demise of the UAC, undecided or undeclared students no longer had access to university-wide advising services. At the same time, advising services in certain schools and colleges, and even some majors, became less accessible. As these barriers to effective college-wide advising evolved, advisors strove to find ways to overcome the obstacles that kept them from providing the kind of advising that all of the previously-mentioned committees and Task Forces have recognized as essential to student success. The Academic Counselors Association, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005, has always functioned as an important point of information exchange; this function became even more vital after 1997. However, the fact of the matter is that advising, before, during, and after the UAC, has always operated in an integrative manner out of necessity. The UAC simply formalized that mode of advising. Students have always received much more than degree advising from academic professionals simply because a certain level of comprehensiveness is required in order to achieve effective advising in all areas of student development.

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* (Appendices J2, J3)

## Recommendations

The ACA has consistently agreed with the need for integrative advising—from 1989, through the founding and dismantling of the UAC, and again in 2006, 17 years later. To cite the ACA response to the 1989 report, academic advisors “wholeheartedly support the creation of a comprehensive student services office and favor developing and expanding opportunities for interdisciplinary studies. This office should include professional staff to provide academic and career counseling.”<sup>33</sup> We still agree now that proposed university-wide advising services should target “undeclared lower division students, students in academic difficulty, provisional students, returning adult students, students considering a change in major, students whose range of interests require interdisciplinary study, and students rejected for failing to meet college GPA constraints in their chosen major.”<sup>34</sup> To support this, and regardless whether Baccalaureate College is created or not, The University should create a non-college specific university-wide “undetermined” admission/application/advising code for use in identifying some of these populations. This undetermined code will replace the current undeclared majors codes of Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences, into which students are currently cascaded.<sup>35</sup> As have a host of previous University presidents, provosts and faculty, professional advisors can see clearly the advantages of centralized advising and the UAC, even in its short tenure, bears out the validity of this proposal.

To begin with, such a center cannot function with any degree of efficiency or efficacy without inhabiting a physical building. The ACA Advisory Council recommends the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors of the Flawn Academic Center for this purpose. Of course, a university advising center

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<sup>33</sup> ACA. “ACA Response to the Doluisio Report,” ms. December 2005: 1.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> In 1991, James W. Vick directed Dave Stones to proceed with plans for a similar advising code. Vick, James W. “New Advising Code.” Memo to Dave Stones. 14 Mar. 1991. (Appendix K)

must be staffed with advisors trained specifically in integrative advising, which enhances the first year experience. Advisors will also be trained to advise for specific colleges, programs, and majors. This kind of training will ensure the delivery of the services proposed by the Task Force. Such a university advising center will serve as an umbrella organization, bringing together the services that already exist on campus, such as: Career Exploration Center, Connexus, FIG Program, Health Professions Office, Instructional Assessment and Evaluation, Pre-Law advising, Texas Success Initiative, Undergraduate Writing Center, UT Learning Center, and appropriate services for new students. The advising center will thus provide a structural framework for the kind of multi-faceted advising that is the staple of how student professionals interact with their populations. If such an integrated center is to provide the labor-intensive advising such as the Task Force describes, adequate staffing becomes paramount.

For a single point of entry such as the proposed Baccalaureate College, to establish a manageable case load for the 7000-8000 incoming freshmen expected at UT, a university advising center will require a minimum advising staff of 25 full-time professional advisors. This makes a caseload of 280-320 students per advisor. While this is fewer than the typical 350 – 400 more often seen at UT Austin, the amount of time required by each student calls for a substantial reduction in case load.

It is also important to note that even with optimum advising and student receptivity to that advising, not all of the incoming 7000 will be ready to leave the university advising center at the end of their first two semesters. If even an optimistic 75% of those students do move on, that leaves 1750 still undecided. With a 250 student caseload, that means seven advisors for those remaining even as the next 7000 students come along the next academic cycle. In addition to any new students who are still undecided at the start of their sophomore years, students who

declare a major but then change their minds, or those who cannot move into upper-division courses will need the services provided by a university advising center. And of course, students transfer into the University from other institutions, which also augments caseloads.

In addition to the full-time advisors, a team of trained peer advisors is required for intake. A front desk staff sufficient to handle the expected student traffic, appointments, office management needs, etc. will also be required, along with technical and web support. If there is no single point of entry in a Baccalaureate College, the advisor/student ratios will be adjusted according to the number of students served.

While these numbers seem an unattainable investment of resources, especially considering that these advisors must be highly trained professionals who are appropriately compensated, ACA strongly endorses the concept of centralized, integrated advising. It is the kind of advising that we all practice on a daily basis because it is the advising method that most effectively examines the student as a whole.

At the same time, however, some points of advising must remain specialized. For example, degree-plan advising is the technical part of advising. This particular facet of advising should be performed at the departmental level, especially for upper-division students as they approach graduation. Another illustration of the need for specialization is the fact that the Career Exploration Center does not provide placement services or job fairs. Because employers look for potential hires with specific skills sets and backgrounds, these two services are best provided by the Colleges, as they are now. Again, these types of activities are targeted to seniors prior to graduation; this is *not* the target population for a university advising center. To facilitate the interaction between an undergraduate advising center and the existing colleges and departments, cross-training becomes essential, with exceptional communication between the entities and

annual (at least) summits to ensure on-going quality. Assessment, such as that conducted by the original UAC, will be essential as well. Fortunately, advances in technology make this highly feasible.

Perhaps even more daunting than finding the money to hire and retain quality professionals is finding a way to address barriers that currently exist between the Colleges. One must note that as the largest college with unrestricted access, Liberal Arts counts among its population students who were denied access to their first-choice majors. These students consider themselves in transition while they aspire to internally transfer to the major of choice in a restricted college such as business or communication. The University counts these students in the Liberal Arts population and they pay that College's advising fee. The College of Liberal Arts would be understandably reluctant to see the bulk of this population, and with them their advising fee monies, transferred to a university-wide advising center. And yet this is the very population (along with others across the university) most in need of the "way-finding" advising that the Task Force recommends and which the ACA supports. The history of the UAC makes evident that funding can easily become a source of contention. A university advising center can, and did, work successfully with the colleges and schools on the UT campus. It could do so again, but only if the source of its income were secure.

In general, the ACA membership as a whole has expressed a deep skepticism about whether administrators of UT's colleges and schools will be willing to "give up" or even allow for the allocation of new majors sources of funding, even when the evidence clearly shows that such a decision benefits the students. As was experienced during Spring 2006 when the Task Force proposals were discussed in college meetings attended by faculty, colleges do not believe they have adequate funding right now, and if new resources were to be found, the colleges will

make strong cases for why they should get some portion of any new found monies. The ACA agreed with the *ad hoc* committee's recommendation in 1989 that the "University should develop a policy of reallocation of resources among colleges, schools, and departments."<sup>36</sup> We also believe that the breaking down of budgetary barriers will prove a formidable task.

In summary, the ACA endorses the formation of a university-wide undergraduate advising center. There is staff currently on campus with an extensive background in the first-year experience on whose education, expertise, and dedication the University can draw. The ACA stands at the ready to assist in any way that we can. Please think of us as your resource on advising. We are happy to supply you with any information you may need as you continue your very important work on curriculum reform. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>36</sup> Doluisio, James T, Chair. "A Report on the Quality of Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin. MS [Austin, Texas]: 4

# Appendices A-L

*Note: Due to the extensive length of the Appendices (330 pages),  
the documents are provided here in CD format.  
The CD also includes the full report for your convenience.*

