Academic Advising
Through the Eyes of UCSC Undergraduates

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2006

Abstract:

In order to better serve undergraduates at the University of California in Santa Cruz, the administration of the university must better understand student advising needs and perspectives. This report is a summary of the research conducted as Chancellor's Undergraduate Academic Advising Intern pertaining to academic advising. Through large and small scale surveys and interviews, students have provided a fresh and candid perspective on what they think advising means and what they want from it.

Introduction

Throughout the 2005-06 academic year at the University of California in Santa Cruz, I have sought to articulate the undergraduate student body's position on academic advising. This report elucidates why students attend academic advising, if students prepare before seeking the assistance of an academic advisor, and how students feel about the major declaration process and online resources. It also addresses student definitions of different types of academic advisors. The major role of this report, though, is to communicate which student needs are not being met so we may improve upon their academic experiences here at UC Santa Cruz.

I. Materials and Methods:

The main method for gathering student perspectives has been through surveying. A broad "general" questionnaire was used to survey a sample of the entire undergraduate student body. With the participation of lecturers, professors and group leaders, I was able to collect 668 of these surveys from several departments and groups of undergraduate students; a list of the groups surveyed can be seen at the end of this report. With an undergraduate population of approximately 13,600 students (Winter, 2006), this sample size gives a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 4. Here is a breakdown of the students in this sample:

General Years of Attendance:

|	
1	41%
2	30%
3	16%
4	11%
5 or More	2%
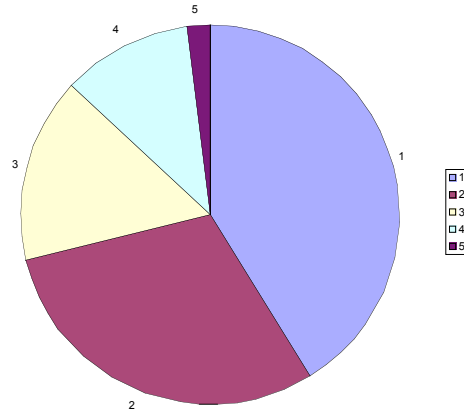
Two smaller scale surveys were conducted from the History Department and Physical and Biological Sciences (PBSci) Department. I chose to focus on PBSci because the number of undergraduates who graduate within one of their majors is the largest at UCSC (Total, 2003). The History Department was chosen to provide a different perspective than that of PBSci majors.

A total of 129 surveys were collected from History courses (see Appendix); with 378 history majors used as the population size (Total, 2003), this sample provides a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 7. Since only a few of these professors were willing to sacrifice class time for this project, many of the surveys used are not by history majors, but simply by students taking a history class. Here is a breakdown of the students in this sample:

History Survey Majors:

Chart Number	Major	Percentage Of Sample
1	Undeclared	42%
2	History	18%
3	Psychology	7%
4	Literature	4.0%
5	Physics	4.0%
6	Politics	4.0%
7	Sociology	4.0%
8	Civil Engineering	2%
9	Economics	2%
10	Legal Studies	2%
11	Art	1%
12	Astrophysics	1%
13	Chemistry	1%
14	Classical Studies	1%
15	Computer Engineering	1%
16	Computer Science	1%
17	Film and Digital Media	1%
18	History of Art and Visual Culture	1%
19	Latin American and Latino Studies	1%
20	Neuroscience	1%
21	Planet Science	1%
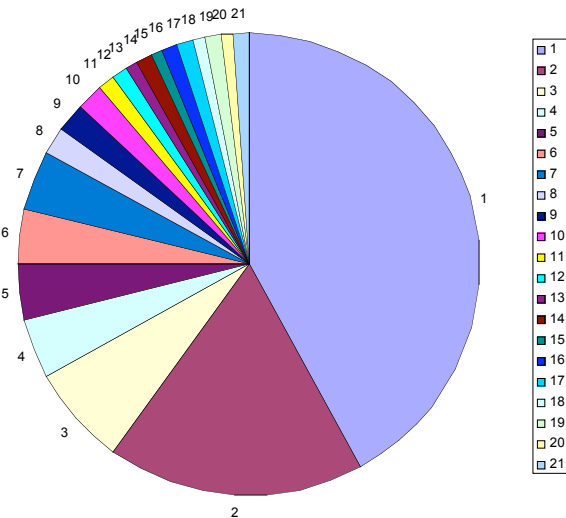
*All data has been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.
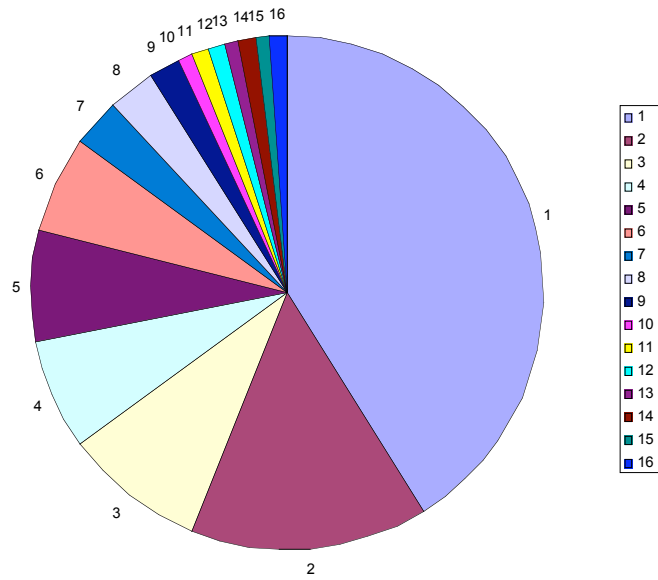
History Survey Years of Attendance:

First Year Students	40%
Second Year Students	38%
Third Year Students	15%
Forth Year Students	8%
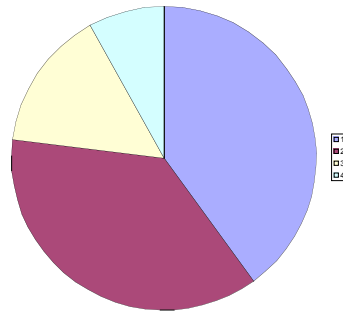
A total of 169 surveys were administered pertaining to the Physical and Biological Sciences (PBSci) advising program. Most surveys were administered and collected in the PBSci advising waiting room, and others were conducted in lectures (see Appendix) with the participation of lecturers and professors. A population size of 1,196 PBSci. majors was used (Total, 2003); this sample size provides a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 7. Here is a breakdown of the students in this sample:

Physical and Biological Sciences Majors:

Chart Number	Major	Percentage of Sample
1	MCD Biology	41%
2	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	15%
3	Neuroscience	9%
4	Biology B.S.	7%
5	Undeclared	7%
6	Marine Biology	6%
7	Ecology/Evolution	3%
8	Health Science	3%
9	Biomolecular Engineering	2%
10	Biology B.A.	1%
11	Chemistry	1%
12	Earth Science	1%
13	Environmental St.	1%
14	Psychology	1%
15	Biochemistry	1%
16	Pre-Biology	1%

Physical and Biological Sciences Years of Attendance:

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1	First Year Students	18%
2	Second Year Students	16%
3	Third Year Students	29%
4	Forth Year Students	29%
5	Fifth Year Students and Beyond	8%
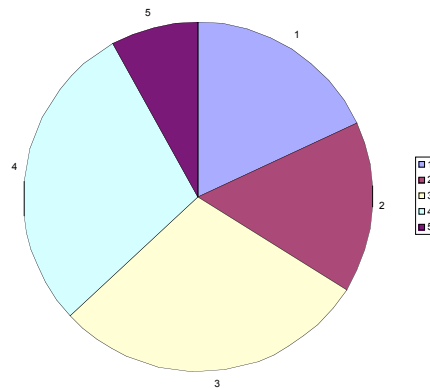
Another small-scale survey was conducted to focus on college advising of undergraduate students at UC Santa Cruz. These questionnaires were administered during class time (with the permission of professors and lecturers) in several "Writing 1" and "Writing 2" classrooms since one or the other of these composition and rhetoric courses is typically completed by first year students at UCSC. A total of 243 surveys

were completed; with a population size of 2,735 first year undergraduate students (Winter, 2006), this sample size provides a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of 6.   Here is a description of this sample:

College Survey Years of Attendance:

Chart Number	Student Description	Percentage
1	First Year Students	68%
2	Transfer Students	1%
3	Other	31%
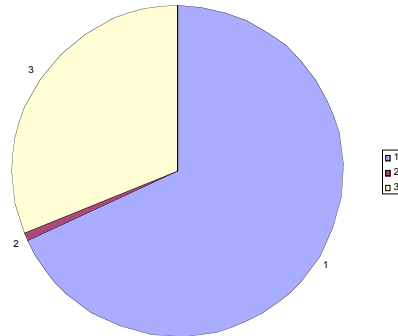
In order to provide further insight into the undergraduate academic advising experience, I met with small groups of students. These discussions gave students the opportunity to collaborate and draw upon each other's experiences in order to deliver thoughtful advice, and communicate their concerns about academic advising at UCSC.

The chief academic advising focus group was the class of 2006 Chancellors Undergraduate Internship Program (CUIP) Interns. CUIP Interns work on a variety of campus projects from efforts to improve upon campus recycling programs to revamping campus transportation. These students have demonstrated interested in improving upon UCSC for years to come, and have insightful ideas on how to do so. While most of the 18 students in this group were fourth year students, a few were transfer students or third year students. Several other small groups of two or three students met with me throughout the year to discuss academic advising; I also spoke with these students

individually on several occasions. Six of the students were fourth year students, one a third year student, and two were first-year students.

Another source of input for this report was interviews with faculty. Two faculty members at UCSC who have had several years experience as academic advisors on campus were interviewed. Similar questions to those administered to undergraduate students were addressed. These responses may provide further insight into possible miscommunications between students and faculty.

As the Chancellor's Undergraduate Intern for Academic Advising, I have been a participant in UC Santa Cruz's Academic Advising Steering Committee (AASC). This has provided me with points of view from several advisors and people who work closely with advising programs on campus. I have been familiarized with academic advising processes, challenges, and ideas for the future of academic advising at UCSC. I have served as a student ambassador for this group as well and have provided them with student input on academic advising plans.

II. Results:

A.) Why Do Students Feel They Use Academic Advising?

On the general survey, when students were asked "What have been your three most common reasons for visiting [academic advising]? (List most common #1 to least common #3)", they responded with the following (to the nearest percent):

Chart Number	Student Response	Top reason for visiting and academic advisor (#1)	Second most common reason for visiting an academic advisor (#2)	Third most common reason for visiting an academic advisor (#3)	**Total Percentage for Response (#1, #2, & #3)**
1	Class Selection / Scheduling	33.7%	24.4%	5.5%	**21%**
2	Major / Minor Selection and Process	31%	16.3%	6.3%	**18%**
3	Enrollment Issues	7.4%	13%	8.9%	**10%**
4	General Education / Graduation Requirements	6.9%	7.7%	7.7%	**7%**
5	Post-Graduation, Career, and Internship Information	3.8%	6.9%	2.8%	**5%**
6	Academic Difficulty	3.1%	3.5%	4.4%	**4%**
7	Emotional Support	0.8%	1.2%	8.4%	**4%**
8	Specific Information About Professors / Classes	0.5%	2.9%	6.0%	**3%**
9	Academic Status Inquiries	2.9%	2%	2%	**2%**
10	General Questions	1.1%	4%	1.2%	**2%**
11	It is Required	4.3%	1.8%	0%	**2%**
12	Education Abroad Program / Clubs	0.6%	1.2%	3.7%	**2%**
13	Deadline and Procedural Inquiries	1.8%	.6%	2%	**2%**
N/A	Housing Concerns	0.6%	0.5%	0%	**0%**
N/A	Translate "College Language"	0%	0.9%	0%	**0%**
N/A	Financial Concerns	0.6%	0%	0%	**0%**
14	No Response	0.9%	13.5%	41.1%	**18%**

*Total Percentages rounded to nearest whole percent.

Total Percentage Response:
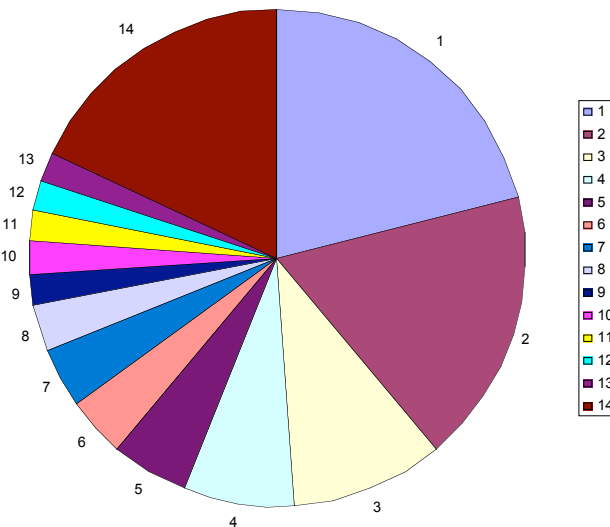
B.) Roles of Departmental Academic Advising Through the Eyes of Undergraduate
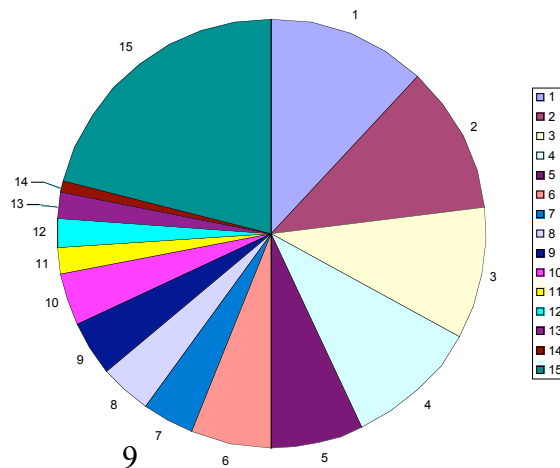
Students:

- Surveys from the Physical and Biological Sciences Program:

When students were asked to answer the question: "What do you feel are the three

most important duties of departmental academic advisors?", these were their

responses:

Chart Number	Student Responses	#1 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	#2 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	#3 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	Total Percentage for Response (#1, #2, and #3)
1	Emotional Support	3.4%	15.6%	17.7%	**12%**
2	Major / Minor Selection & Process	22.4%	7.5%	4.1%	**11%**
3	Answer Any and All Questions	13.6%	8.2%	8.2%	**10%**
4	Course Selection / Scheduling	15%	10.9%	3.4%	**10%**
5	Be Up-To-Date and Knowledgeable	12.2%	6.1%	1.4%	**7%**
6	Make Self Known and Available	6.1%	5.4%	6.8%	**6%**
7	Keep Students Informed of Important Information and Deadlines	6.8%	5.4%	0.7%	**4%**
8	Help Find Internships / on Campus Jobs / Mentors	0%	5.4%	6.8%	**4%**
9	Keep Track of Student Progress	5.4%	3.4%	3.4%	**4%**
10	Post Graduation and Career Advice	1.4%	4.8%	4.1%	**4%**
11	Enrollment Issues	1.4%	2.7%	2%	**2%**
12	Have Detailed Knowledge of Professors / Courses	0%	3.4%	1.4%	**2%**
13	Translate "College Language"	2%	0.7%	2%	**2%**
14	Graduation / General Education Requirements	0.7%	2.7%	0%	**1%**
N/A	Academic Difficulty	0%	0.7%	0%	**0%**
15	No Response	8.8%	17%	38%	**21%**

*Total Percentages rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Total Percentage Response:

- Surveys from the History Department:

When students were asked to answer the question: "What do you feel are the three most important duties of departmental academic advisors?", these were their responses:

Chart Number	Student Responses	#1 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	#2 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	#3 Role of Departmental Academic Advisors	Total Percentage for Response (#1, #2, and #3)
1	Major / Minor Selection & Process	38.2%	21.1%	7.3%	**22%**
2	Emotional Support	6.5%	18.7%	12.2%	**13%**
3	Course Selection / Scheduling	13%	16.3%	4.1%	**11%**
4	Make Self Known and Available	4.9%	7.3%	9.8%	**7%**
5	Answer Any and All Questions	12.2%	1.6%	6.5%	**7%**
6	Keep Students Informed of Important Information and Deadlines	5.7%	3.3%	8.9%	**6%**
7	Be Up-To-Date and Knowledgeable	4.9%	12.2%	0%	**6%**
8	Post Graduation and Career Advice	4.1%	2.4%	6.5%	**4%**
9	Graduation / General Education Requirements	6.5%	0.8%	1.6%	**3%**
10	Have Detailed Knowledge of Professors/Courses	0.8%	1.6%	3.3%	**2%**
10	Keep Track of Student Progress	0%	0%	5.7%	**2%**
11	Help Find Internships / on Campus Jobs / Mentors	0%	2.4%	1.6%	**1%**
12	Enrollment Issues	0%	0%	3.3%	**1%**
N/A	Academic Difficulty	0%	0%	0.8%	**0%**
N/A	Financial Assistance	0%	0%	0.8%	**0%**
13	No Response	3.3%	12.2%	28.5%	**15%**

*Total Percentages rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Total Percentage Response:
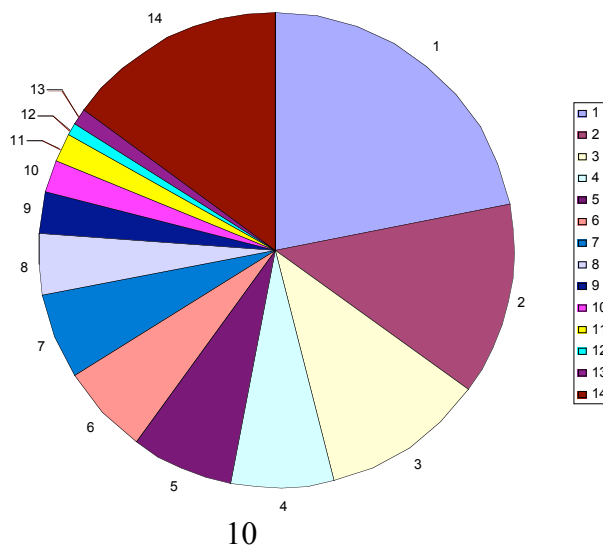
- Surveys on College Advising:

  When students were asked "What do you feel are the top three most important roles of a college advisor?", they responded:

Chart Number	Student Responses	#1 Role of College Academic Advisors	#2 Role of College Academic Advisors	#3 Role of College Academic Advisors	Total Percentage for Response (#1, #2, and #3)
1	Emotional Support / Help Adjust to College Life	9.5%	11.6%	17.7%	**13%**
2	Course Selection / Scheduling	23.7%	12.1%	2.6%	**13%**
3	Major / Minor Selection & Process	12.9%	15.5%	7.3%	**12%**
4	Make Self Known and Available	7.8%	4.7%	8.6%	**7%**
5	Answer Any and All Questions	8.6%	3.9%	8.2%	**7%**
6	Keep Track of Student Progress	6%	5.6%	6%	**6%**
7	Be Up-To-Date and Knowledgeable	4.7%	6.5%	6%	**6%**
8	Post Graduation and Career Advice	5.2%	4.7%	4.7%	**5%**
9	Academic Difficulty	2.2%	9.1%	3%	**5%**
10	Graduation / General Education Requirements	6.9%	3.9%	3.4%	**5%**
11	Translate "College Language"	2.2%	6%	2.2%	**3%**
12	Help Find Internships / on Campus Jobs / Mentors	2.6%	3.4%	3.4%	**3%**
13	Have Detailed Knowledge of Professors / Courses	2.6%	3.4%	1.3%	**2%**
14	Financial Assistance	0%	1.3%	0.9%	**2%**
15	Enrollment Issues	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	**1%**
16	Keep Students Informed of Important Information and Deadlines	1.3%	0%	3.4%	**1%**
17	No Response	2.2%	6.5%	19.4%	**9%**

*Total Percentages rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Total Percentage:
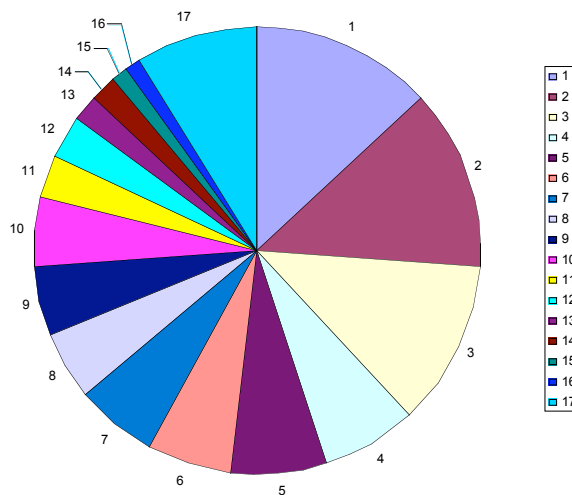
C.) Major Declaration Process:

On the departmental surveys, students were asked "If you have declared your major or are in the process of declaring your major, what did/didn't you like about the process? What role do you feel your academic advisor played?"

On the "Physical and Biological Sciences" survey, 29% of the students surveyed did not respond to this question. The most common response with 22.2% of the students agreeing thought the process was "good overall" or gave a similar response. The rest of the responses were quite unique, so here are some of the more interesting quotes:

- "There was too much back and forth"

- "I felt rushed"

- "We shouldn't be forced to declare at all"

- "It's too difficult to get into needed classes"

- "Departments and colleges are too disconnected."

- "We should have to declare earlier"

- "I liked the back and forth, I got to know people"

- "It should be done online"

- "The faculty advisor is just a pen to sign"

On the History Department surveys, 27% of declared majors (only a little over half of the sample was declared) chose not to respond, and most who did respond only responded to the first question. Here were some of their comments:

- "It was good, overall" (this and similar responses were the most common; the rest were unique responses. The ones below are particularly interesting.)

- "If the advice from advisors is 'go look online', we shouldn't have to go to the office."

- "To change my major, I had to go through the whole process again!"

- "There needs to be better communication between departments"

- "There's too much running around and it's too time consuming"

- "I didn't like 'guessing' my plan and deciding classes so far in advance"

- "It's too much paperwork"

- "I wish the advisors were easier to talk to and it was a more intimate setting"

- "My academic advisor didn't really care, just wanted to sign quickly"

- *"My academic advisor made me feel worthless"*

D.) Do Students Research on their own Before Attending Academic Advising?

- General Surveys:

When students were asked "Do you usually research on your own before going to an advisor, or are the advisors usually one of your first resources?", they responded:
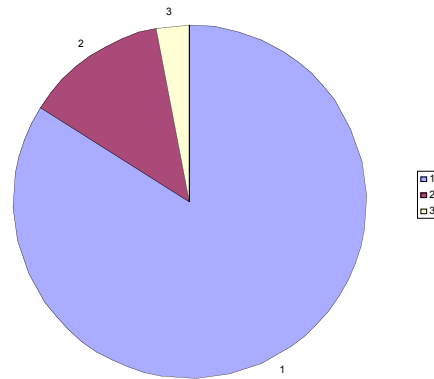
| Chart Number	Student Response:	Percentage of Students:
1	Research on own first	70%
2	Seek advisor first	17%
3	No response	13%
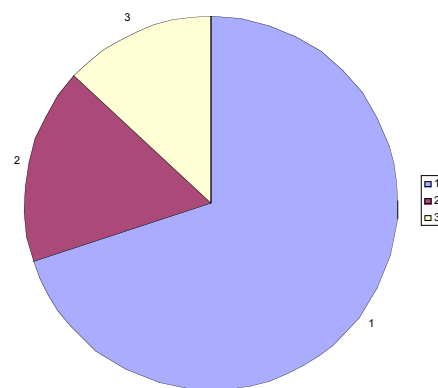
- Departmental Surveys:

When students in the Physical and Biological Sciences were asked "With questions about major requirements, deadlines, prerequisites, and so on, do you usually seek the advice of an academic advisor or research on your own first?", students responded:

Chart Number	Student Response:	Percentage of Students:
1	Research on own first	84%
2	Seek advisor first	13%
3	No response	3%

- The same question was on the History Program survey:

Chart Number	Student Response:	Percentage of Students:
1	Research on own first	73%
2	Seek advisor first	21%
3	No response	6%
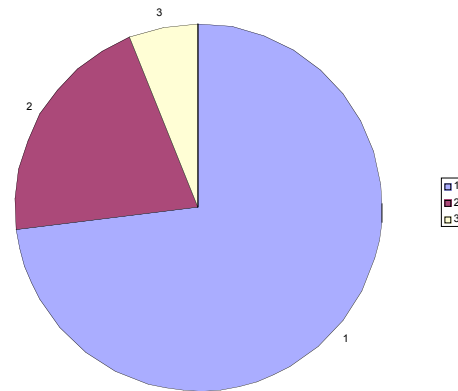
Students who shared how they researched used the internet 78% of the time, asked friends 16% of the time, used handouts 5% of the time, and asked family 1% of the time.

E.) Additional Comments from Students on First Year Advising:

I received many interesting comments about first year advising (several students mentioned they had never even visited an advisor yet, and these surveys were conducted in the winter quarter); here are the most notable ones:

- "There should be mandatory meetings at lease once per quarter" (several students shared this opinion)
- "There need to be more office hours"
- "We need to improve on communication"
- "Advisors seem too busy and grumpy" (similar responses included adjectives such as "vague", "rude", "cold and intimidating", "negative", and "discouraging")
- "I wish internship and volunteer opportunities were presented in a noticeable way"
- "Where do I go?"
- "Sometimes inaccurate information is given"
- "There aren't enough advisors. There are weeks before an appointment can be scheduled."
- "The more personalized, the better"
- "Make it easier to make appointments"
- "Give academic advising programs more money"
- "It's very short, they don't try to know you"
- "I really like the workshops offered because I attend and gain a lot of information. I fear being one-on-one with an advisor"

- "Make sure all students know about it: what it is, *what they can do for you*, when they're open, etc."

- "I'm tired of hearing 'I don't know'; if advisors don't know the answer, they should be able to tell you where to find it."

- "I've been there once for a personal problem…she helped me a lot and was really nice about it"

- "Biased and unwilling to help some students"

- "Try to make it clear to first year students what academic advising really is and enrolling in classes is a tricky ordeal indeed."

F.) Academic Difficulty

- College Advising Surveys:

When students were asked, "If you were struggling academically, but not necessarily in 'poor academic standing', would you seek the advice of an academic advisor?", they responded with:

Response	Percentage of Sample
No	53%
Yes	47%
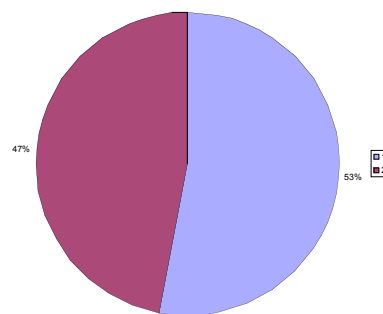
Some elaborations on "yes" answers included:

- "For me, struggling academically usually means I have lost interest or lost sight of my goals. Advisors help you realize your goals."

- "I would like to hear about options if I did bad in a class"

- "I need all of the advice I can get"

- "I would want information on course loads and tutors"

- "I would do everything possible to increase my grades before poor academic standing"

- "They have experienced these situations before"

- "I would want comfort and encouragement"

Some elaborations on "no" answers included:

- "They would tell me what I already know"

- "It's my fault, not the advisors"

- "They deal with so many problems, my academic struggles may not seem important to them"

- "It's too difficult and time consuming"

- "They can't help with coursework"

- "I don't know what academic advisors do"

- "I haven't had good academic advising experiences, they intimidate me"

- "They would just tell me to drop"

G.) Focus Group Comments:

1.) Academic Information Systems (Student Portal) and Online Resources:

- Students were concerned with how to verify what is up-to-date and what is out-dated. Also, there is a trust issue with the online resources (including student portal student information) because there have been errors and some information in the past has not been complete on the student portal (for example: one student's transfer credits weren't entered and another's major information was incorrect due to error other than

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her own).

- One student felt she was "too dependent on the system" and this was why she is in her senior year fussing to fix incorrect information. She would never have caught the error had she not visited an advisor. She now feels "a person would have caught it sooner" than the system.

- Students like "heads-up" emails to notify of important dates, deadlines, and system changes. Students within a department should be notified of changes within the department if there is a problem updating a web site frequently enough to keep the students updated.

- Students would like a simpler printout of graduation requirements. For instance, an easily accessible print out of a checklist that includes those completed and leaves a space where incomplete; the current printout is too "wordy" and confusing.

- Students would like a simple "graduation to do list" on the student portal

- When asked if everyone had run a degree progress report (DPR) on the student portal, not everyone had (one intern didn't know about this feature of the student portal).

- "A lot of people have trouble with general education requirements (GEs), there are a lot of words." This student addressed that the general education progress view on the student portal is too complicated.

- Departments have outdated websites and no up-to-date office hours online.

- Professors have difficulty entering evaluations and grades on time or the system has a glitch because several professors claim to have entered information that doesn't appear on the student portal.

- "I would like for things to read like a simple invoice"

- "I liked AIS in the beginning, it was very simple. There is too much clutter and too many extraneous links…it's too complicated now. There's too much stuff that doesn't need to be on the student portal, for example, WebCT…that's available from so many other sources, it doesn't need to be on the student's portal." "Maps and Transportation" was also mentioned as extraneous by another student.

- Small "computer issues" were mentioned such as "why do we have to press 'submit' two times to enroll in a class?", having difficulty switching sections or classes, and difficulty with email forwarding.

- Students would like to be able to see a grade point average (GPA) in the major on the student portal.

- Students like the searchable schedule of classes, but would like a link available for past quarters too, not just current or very recent quarters.

- Better promotion of features would be helpful for continuing *and* new students; for instance, have an "orientation button" for people who want to learn how to use all of the system features. Also, a "recent updates" button would be useful to show recent changes to the system that students should know about.

- Several students didn't know about the very useful features on the student portal including summaries of grades (which could serve as a simple unofficial transcript printout)

- The portal should have "basic information" such as GPA, major/minor, and number of credits completed right on the home page.

- The student portal isn't welcoming enough, it seems cold and complicated.

2.) Major Declaration

- Some students didn't like that it is "up to you to know the major declaration process"; the process wasn't presented clear enough to this person.

- A standard method amongst departments would be very useful. It's easy to miss deadlines when there are different ones for different departments.

- When a student switched from a combined major to a double major, it took a lot of running around. There were too many hoops to go through.

- The system missed a completed minor declaration for one student, so she had to re-declare. It would be useful if after a student completed the form, everyone had it in an online PDF format.

- It would be useful to "have a place to check if things went through". For instance, perhaps the Registrar could put an online note on the student portal upon receiving a document.

When students were asked if the "GE section" (general education requirements section) of the major declaration form/process helped, their comments included:

- "It was *very helpful* because I was a transfer student and didn't know the system"

- One student expressed appreciation for doing this early in her academic career because she kept the record, and used it as an ongoing checklist.
- "A lot of people are still very confused about GEs" after this process
- The process "seems archaic, we should have it online, sign up on AIS, and have the 'paperwork' online." Students were very pleased with the new online PDF version of the form which could be edited, and saved on a computer.
- When showed the new PDF major declaration form, one student mentioned that "not everyone would point to this resource, there needs to be more unity." When one department knows about and is sharing a resource with students, it would be very helpful if the other departments did the same.
- Just to switch minors within one department, a student had to fill out "3 or 4 forms." One student suggested that a "minor declaration" form be available separately, and be a much more simple process than major declaration.
- More room on the online declaration form for the course plan would be useful.
- To redeclare or change a major, the requirement to go to college advising and recheck general education requirements seemed excessive. The students would like to just go to the departments for this process.
- A student who had experienced "group advising" as part of the major declaration process spoke very poorly of it: "they didn't look closely at my classes at all, more than one person in advising is not helpful."
- When students were asked if they prefer individual or group advising, all of those who chose to respond preferred individual advising.
- Students who were *required* to have a faculty advisor were displeased; it seemed like just another signature to get. Also, faculty didn't seem to take the required meetings seriously. Students who were not required to have a faculty advisor, but initiated the relationship on their own with faculty were very pleased with faculty relationships.
- Students mentioned that it would be useful if the department encouraged more of a "real" meeting with faculty; a suggestion was made that a worksheet to facilitate a more intimate faculty meeting would be of assistance.
- Students mentioned that different departments need to have more communication with each other and need to have up to date information on each other.

- One student who had gone through a double major declaration process mentioned that she appreciated going to each department because she always had new questions and "different departments aren't the same." She found checking in with advisors regularly to also be beneficial because they helped with course selections and teacher selections.
- One student asked "I've always wondered why department advisors can't just look over the GEs" and a humm of agreement followed from the rest of the group.

3.) Roles of Advisors

A.) College

- "I went often because I would go when I was freaking out."
- College advisors should be "encouraging" and "nice."
- When asked how often students should be recommended to visit their college advisors, most responded with "annually" and two responded with "biannually."
- A student mentioned that new students are given a lot of information at orientation, but they don't need it all there (and don't know if or when they will need it), so they don't necessarily pay much attention at that time. It would be nice if there were reminders of the resources available on campus for students who have been here for a while.
- One student mentioned that there should be more advertising on "what to do if you have a personal emergency" and students should be reminded of options and support resources often.

B) Departmental

- Should make options clear and "offer other stuff to do"; for instance, jobs and internships within the department, EAP (Education Abroad Programs) for relevant majors, etc.
- One student mentioned that it would be useful for students to check in with these advisors at least once per quarter.
- Several students mentioned issues with departmental advising being unwelcoming and students felt like "an inconvenience".
- To several students, these advisors were not helpful with spurring decision making;

they didn't help facilitate with deeper insight.

- Some departments are difficult to make appointments with.

C) Advising Support Services

- One student mentioned that undergraduates should be notified whether or not they are an EOP (Educational Opportunity Programs) student early in their careers. Requirements for this status should be made clearer to students.

- Students seemed to agree that the resources offered at the ARCenter are very useful, but they said that they don't use them because of the inconvenient location ("they need to send a bus there more often") and because they forget about or don't know about the services offered, so there needs to be more advertising.

- The resources offered through EOP/ARC seem exclusive and off limits to white or privileged students.

4) Are students' needs being met? Additional comments?

- One student suggested dropping the "academic" from "academic advisor" because it seems too "academic" and not personal enough; he mentioned it would make advising seem "more friendly."

- One student mentioned that students choose advisors over online resources because they "need to talk to a human being."

- Students seemed to agree that information online is very useful. They would like office hours posted online and a clear layout of student resources in one spot. Students would also like to be able to sign up for appointments online.

- Students seemed surprised that to discuss an overall academic career choice (for instance, choosing a future career or major) the career center advisors are a useful resource.

- One student mentioned that a worksheet for students to fill out before an advising meeting would be useful for students who have difficulty in those situations.

H.) Faculty and Staff

• Individual Faculty Responses and Comments from Interviews:

When asked: "What do you think are the three most common reasons students seek

advising as undergraduates?", responses were:

Person A) 1. Course selection (depending on time of year)
             2. Graduation / Grad Check
             3. Academic difficulty
Person B) 1. Told to because of an event
             2. In trouble (kicked out, undeclared, etc.)
             3. Want an exception to rules

When asked: "What do you think students appreciate the most about academic

advising experiences they've had?", responses were:

Person A) Getting options and answers to questions, not having to go too many
places
Person B) Problems being solved

When asked: "What would you change about academic advising here at UCSC?",

responses were:

Person A) Wants to see a change in the curriculum and course offering. Not enough
spaces available in classes for students; also more staffing for outreach, workshops,
contact, and hard to do programming.
Person B) Less paperwork, more advising

When asked: "Do students usually research on their own before going to an advisor,

or are advisors usually their first resource? How about in the case of prerequisites, major

requirements, deadlines, and so on?", responses were:

Person A) It's mixed. Some know their stuff, some are clueless, some have never
looked at the schedule of classes. First year advising next year hopefully will give
students a better understanding of resources. As more information is organized online
students will do more on their own.
Person B) More research no because advisors have less time and students are aware
of the scarce resource.

When asked: "What do you feel are the top three most important roles of a college advisor?", responses were:

Person A) 1. Teach students how to go through the system.
                 2. The advisor can intervene for student in the bureaucracy.
                 3. No response.
Person B) 1. Initial discussion of student's academic plan and to create a proposal.
                 2. To acquaint students with graduation requirements and general education requirements.
                 3. Help make students aware of resources, get them connected with the university and community and make them feel like they aren't alone.

When asked: "If a student has declared her/his major or is in the process of doing so, what does a student dislike about the process? What role do faculty advisors play?

Person A) Students dislike the beurocratic hoops and unnecessary work. Faculty advisors currently play almost no role in the process.
Person B) In many departments, students have to wait until a certain time to attend a group advising discussion, this halts planning and the student is given the impression that they can't receive help before, but must wait for the workshops. Workshops are great, but the open-door policies (like in the literature and art departments) are more user-friendly.
The primary contact with the college is good. Procedures vary so much in departments that it's difficult to keep track of and isn't made very clear to college advisors. If there were a spreadsheet with how steps vary by department, it would accommodate late people, and make it easier.
The biggest issue is that we need to get students into their classes! Courses that are offered once per year, and are sequential, propose problems for getting into classes.

III. Conclusion:

According to UC Santa Cruz's Online General Catalog, "advising can help you make decisions at the university—selecting courses, choosing a major, deciding on a career, or determining prerequisites for graduate school." While these are important functions of academic advisors, students have communicated quite clearly to me that they need more developmental academic advising. According to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA):

Developmental academic advising is both a process and an orientation. It reflects the idea of movement and progression. It goes beyond simply giving information or signing a form. As Raushi (1993) suggests, 'to advise from a developmental perspective is to view students at work on life tasks in the context of their whole life settings, including the college experience'. Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person's own life stage of development. (King, 2005)

Students frequently described that they want the academic advisors to express an interest in them and treat them as a unique person. The students are reaching out for what they can't find online. I found that a vast majority of students surveyed (with the exception of the general survey), and the students I spoke with in person cited what I would classify as "Emotional Support" as an important reason for visiting and role of academic advisors. I took "Emotional Support" to be verbal reassurance, counseling, confirming information that was obtained from another resource (publication, student, family, ect.), and a person who is willing to *listen*. Developmental advising cannot take place without the "emotional support" described above. While many students cited it as an important role of academic advisors, many students also mentioned that it has been lacking in their advising experiences.

As a member of the Academic Advising Steering Committee, it became clear to me that many advisors feel that students should be more self-sufficient, and do more of their own academic advising for seemingly simple tasks. What is meant by a student "doing her/his own academic advising" is that students have the tools to keep track of their own graduation and major requirements, general education requirements, academic progress, course selections, deadlines, on campus resources (such as tutoring), etc. Most

students, according to my research and experience, *do* this self-advising before visiting and academic advisor.

Most of the students coming into UC Santa Cruz within the past few years are quite Internet and technology savvy, even if they have never owned a computer. They are reading "blogs" (web logs) instead of printed publications, they are shopping online for books, music, and movies, and many even manage their social networks online. Due to the large dependence on Internet publications and the awareness that an updated internet page is typically more accurate than printed publications, the internet is how most students do their own academic advising.

It seems as though there is the impression amongst academic advisors that going to an academic advisor and asking a question in person is somehow easier than it would be to look up information on a student portal, or on the UC Santa Cruz web site. While I do agree that self-responsibility is very important for students, a vast majority of students don't visit the academic advisors over doing their own research because they are lazy or irresponsible for their education, it's quite the contrary. Students are putting forth *more* effort by seeking the advice of an academic advisor (walking through campus, making an appointment, waiting to see drop in advisors, etc.) over researching on the internet for seemingly menial tasks because they are in need of the developmental advising described above *or* they distrust publications.

Many students are choosing advisors over other resources for seemingly menial tasks because they trust the human contact over any publication (online or otherwise), even if that advisor is just reading straight off of the same publication that the student would have had access to within seconds from the comfort of her/his dorm room. There

is largely an issue of distrust that must be dealt with before a majority of students can be expected to be more self-sufficient.

What is meant by "distrust" is that students don't trust that the information in a publication is the most current or frequently updated. They assume that the academic advisors are always the first to know about changes in important academic information such as deadlines or requirements, so even if they have done the research online, they don't trust it as much as an academic advisor. A person has something at stake, her/his credibility, while a publication's credibility is less valuable. Students are also aware that outdated information may still be in circulation.

Another meaning of "distrust" is that most undergraduate students don't trust themselves to speak the "college language" as well as an experienced academic advisor or another person who is seemingly fluent in the jargon. I have spoken with many students who have explained the frustration of trying to communicate with academic advisors with their limited "college vocabulary" as well as advisors who have explained the frustration that students don't articulate appropriate or direct questions before attending an advising session. It is largely the student's responsibility to ask when something isn't clear, but students trust academic advisors to let them know what is "important" in the sea of uncertainties.

Many students I surveyed and interviewed explained that they often feel "rushed" by academic advisors or that the academic advisors aren't being "kind" enough. When the students aren't offered information, they sometimes feel that advisors are purposely holding back. Students are also under the impression that academic advisors are aware that the student is putting forth a considerable amount of effort and time to make it to an

advising session, so they don't understand why academic advisors wouldn't reward that behavior expressively, even if the student has gone to the "wrong" advisor for the question.

Another interesting point shown by the above data is the fact that the roles of college advisors do not fall far from the roles of departmental advisors in the eyes of the students who chose to respond. The same "roles of academic advisors" appear to be on the upper ends of both college and departmental advising responses. Several of the responses overlapped across departmental and college advising as well. This brings to the surface the concept that many students see all academic advisors as being roughly equal. They are often under the impression that college academic advisors will know what departmental advisors know and vice versa.

This is important to acknowledge because this pattern of the belief that advisors are roughly equal extends beyond the college/departmental level. As mentioned to me by my mentor, Sharon Van Kirk, Academic Advising Coordinator, many students speak to and listen to employees of the university as though they are all informed of the same campus/program information and policies. Students often trust each other as valid academic advisors as well.

The question, "Are students needs being met?" cannot be answered easily. Above I have described what I see as the biggest need for improvement from my data, that students need more developmental advising and support from academic advisors. There is also a need to improve upon the means of communication between advisors and students. In such a large university, it is easy for students to feel like "just a number"; a supportive academic advisor can give students the impression that they are seen as unique

individuals by the administration and a cold or abrupt advisor can give students the impression that they are not valued by the administration.

IV. Recommendations for Academic Advising at UCSC

First and foremost, I hope that advisors take away from this report a better understanding of the UCSC undergraduate perspective on academic advising. Through understanding comes more meaningful communication and advice. Secondly, I hope that academic advisors make an attempt to treat each student as an individual, and give them the benefit of the doubt. Students often feel misunderstood or unwelcome because they are hoping for a developmental approach to academic advising and "emotional support" whereas advisors may distance themselves from that role; students should feel comfortable visiting their advisors. If the goal is to improve retention rates at UC Santa Cruz, then the students must feel as though "the administration" values them as individuals.

As mentioned above, students seem to view the roles and responsibilities of different types of academic advisors as fairly homogenous. Students expressed that they expect academic advisors to be well informed overall about campus procedures, so it would be useful (as mentioned by one of my faculty interviewees) if there were a system that kept the departments and colleges up to date with each other. Perhaps a base spreadsheet (same format for everyone) with pertinent program and college information could be emailed out by each college and each department on a quarterly basis. Academic advisors could then have direct access to current program and college

information in an orderly and easily accessible package, and the use of email as opposed to a web site would mean that no web page updates would be required.

I would also suggest that instead of being frustrated with misinformed students or students who seemingly aren't being "responsible for their own education", academic advisors should take a moment to make sure students understand how to find the information they need and should know. Academic advisors need to take care not to use too much "college language" because many students don't speak it yet. For example, instead of telling a student who doesn't know what the general education requirements are to "look on the student portal", an academic advisor could tell a student to "go to your 'myucsc' account, *also known as your student portal*, click on academic progress…" describing what a Degree Progress Report (DPR) is and what it can be used for. While students may have been introduced to this early in their careers, they could have forgotten it or underestimated its importance at that time.

V. Student Advising Handbook and Recommendations for Future Interns:

To put this research to use for future UCSC undergraduate students, I am in the process of creating a student advising "handbook". This will include tips for how students may get the most out of academic advising services at UCSC (including, as suggested by a student interviewee, worksheets to prepare for an academic or faculty advising meeting), answer questions that undergraduates usually have about advising and clear up common misconceptions amongst undergraduates at UCSC pertaining to academic advising.

Since most of my year has been spent conducting and organizing this research, I hope that in the future another intern may pick up where I have left off, improve upon the student handbook, and find other ways to help students get the most out of campus academic resources. I received a lot of thanks from students while conducting my research; the students were happy to be listened to on an issue they are rarely asked about but greatly care about as students.

Thank You,

Sharon Van Kirk for your guidance and commitment to this project as my mentor,

Bill Ladusaw for your support and leadership throughout the CUIP experience,

Tchad Sanger for your ideology and help with the CUIP focus group,

and all of the students, faculty, and staff who made this project possible by lending their

opinions and valuable time.

Appendix

Courses in which the general survey was distributed:
Biology (General Biology)
Chemistry (General Chemistry)
EOP Learning Support Services Training Day (Training for tutors in various disciplines)
Genetics*
Introduction to Film
Introduction to Visual Arts
Legal Process*
Legal Studies
Macroeconomics
Math (Calculus)
Microeconomics
Sociology* (Advanced course)
Sociology (Introductory course)

Courses in which the Physical and Biological Sciences program survey was distributed
(most of these surveys were distributed in the academic advising waiting room):
Eukaryotic Molecular Biology*
Microbiology*

Courses in which the History Program survey was distributed:
US History (1877-Present)
Medieval Russia*
Revolutionary China*
Modern Irish History*
Modern Asian History*

Courses in which the college advising survey was distributed:
Composition and Rhetoric (required Writing 1 or 2) courses only.

*Courses with an asterisk are upper division, the rest are lower division.

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