Evolution of a Peer Advising Program over Seven Years: A SWOT Analysis

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Lesley University

The Way Advising Should Be
NACADA Region 1 Conference
March 9th-11th
Portland, ME
About Lesley University

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- Cambridge, MA
- Small, private, four year, undergraduate residential institution
- Liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies
- Core Values: Community, Democracy, Equity, Inquiry
  - active learning
  - scholarly research
  - critical inquiry,
  - diverse forms of artistic practice
Advising Structure

Shared Advising Model

- **CLAS Academic Advising Center**
  - All first year undergraduate students
  - All first semester transfer students (<50 cr.)
- **Faculty Advising**
  - Faculty advisor in division
    - after declaration or after first year

Mandatory Academic Advising

- Academic Advising Syllabus
- Pre-Registration Advising

Peer Advising Program

- Overseen by Academic Advising Center
- Support first year transition and advising process
Peers in the Advising Process

- **Enhance student knowledge in the advising process**
  - Extension of Advising (Koring, 2005)
    - Integrate into existing advising structure
    - Enhance reach and scope of advising

- **Support new student transition and retention**
  - Mentorship influences connection and learning (Minor, 2007)
    - Program Structure and Roles influenced by specific learning community
      - Advising, role modeling, mentorship

- **Provide opportunity for student leadership and engagement**
  - Leadership Development Training (Minor, 2007)
    - Educational/Development gains
Our program through a SWOT Analysis?

Self Assessment (ISU, 2006)
- Recognition/development of action plan for improvement
  - Internal/External factors
  - Quantitative/Qualitative Assessment
Years 1-3

Program Beginnings and Challenges

- Development/Pilot program
  - Limited membership
  - Lacking a program budget
  - Limited training, student leadership opportunities
  - Limited program organization and involvement in campus community
Year 4

Strengths
- Recruitment Process
- Training/Program Orientation
- Integration in First Year Transition
- Drop In Hours

Weaknesses
- Program Size
- Ongoing training
- Program Funding

Opportunities
- Intrinsic Value to Peer Advisors
- Creation of a course
- Involvement in Orientation
- Senior Peer Advisor role

Threats
- Program Funding
- Member Commitment
- Formal Meeting times
Recruitment

Formalized Recruitment Process

- Information Packet
  - Position Description
  - Program Mission/Expectations
  - Application Information

- Online Application

- Two Online recommendations
  - (1) University faculty member
  - (1) University faculty or staff

- In person Interview
  - 30 minutes
  - With staff member & current Peer Advisor

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CLAS Peer Advisor Position Description

**Qualifications**

Those students wishing to become Peer Advisors must meet the following criteria:

- Be a full-time Lesley University CLAS undergraduate student.
- Have and maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA and be in good standing with the University.
- Have an acceptable academic record, as determined by the Academic Advising Center staff.
- For application to the 2016-2017 cohort, students must earn at least 30 credit hours by the beginning of the 2016 Fall Semester.
- Obtain two recommendations who can speak to your qualifications for the position of peer advisor.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for the Lesley experience by showing effective involvement in at least one co-curricular activity, possessing excellent leadership and peer motivation skills, showing dedication and commitment, being dependable and punctual, possessing integrity, and expressing sincere interest in volunteering time and effort to help new students adjust to life and succeed at Lesley University.
- Have a strong interest in making a difference in students' experience at Lesley University.
- Possess a positive, team-oriented, "can do" attitude.
- Must complete Peer Advising Trainings in fall and spring.

**General Responsibilities**

The position requires that Peer Advisors are involved in orientation programs as well as conducting peer advising and completing other duties as necessary. It also encourages assistance in the LU 101 workshop series with an assigned instructor from the CLAS Academic Advising Center. Each Peer Advisor will have an assigned caseload of first year students and first semester transfer students. Additionally, Peer Advisors participate in various project committees, lead pre-registration advising workshops and hold office hours during the advising period. To be successful in this endeavor, Peer Advisors must do the following:

- Be knowledgeable of general information pertaining to Lesley University's programs, policies, procedures, and services available to students.
- Participate and complete the program's credit bearing course during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semester as well as all training sessions.
- Participate in all Fall and Spring staff training and development days.
- Serve as a role model for new and returning students by acting appropriately at all times (including interactions, relationships, Facebook and other social media information, etc.).
- Maintain a positive and professional attitude during the fulfillment of all responsibilities.
- Express enthusiasm for the Lesley experience.
- Assist in an LU 101 workshop series during the fall semester
- Protect students' confidentiality.

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Lesley University
Formalized Training

Peer Advisor Orientation
- 1.5 hour session in early April 2012
- Team building with current and new Peer Advisors
- Distribution of Training binders, t-shirts, name tags

Two 1.5 hour training sessions
- Focus on expectations, advising information, procedure, forms

Refresher Training
- Best practices and specific information for working with incoming students
- Prior to summer orientation in 2013
Integration in Advising

Encourage Preparation in the Advising Process

Drop In Hours
- Pre Advising Checklist for students
- Drop In Schedule
- Assist with:
  - LOIS
  - Searching for class
  - Organizing schedule

Pre-Advising Workshops
- Peer Advisor led
- Held in dormitories, student center
- During peak of pre-advising
- Times target different student populations

Registration Preparation Checklist for Students in Academic Advising Center

Before you meet with your academic advisor in the Academic Advising Center, you are required to complete step 1 through step 5 below:

1. Download & read Registration Notes and WebReg Instructions from MyLesley Advising Community*
2. Look at classes online www.lesley.edu/lois (Course descriptions are available in LOIS and your LA&PS Academic Catalog)
3. Work out a potential schedule of classes and alternative schedule on the attached blank Block Schedule.
4. Meet with a Peer Advisor during drop in office hours within 3 weeks prior to registration.
   - Peer Advisor Name: __________________ Signature: __________________ Date: ____________
5. Contact Ahni Mooradian to schedule a meeting with your academic advisor: Call 617-349-8915
6. Meet with your academic advisor in the Academic Advising Center (37 Mellen) to finalize and sign off your WebReg form
7. Check if there are any "holds" on LOIS and clear the hold(s) BEFORE your registration date and time
8. Register online via LOIS on your assigned date & time
   - Date: ____________ Time: ____________

Student Name: __________________ Signature: __________________ Date: ____________

*To Access MyLesley Advising Community:
(Log in to MyLesley -> click on My Community -> Undergraduate Academic Advising Center Student Organization -> Registration Info located on the left hand column)
Integration into First Year Experience

- **Participate in a Course Assistant Capacity**
  - Transitions Seminar, LU101

- **Supports instructor in:**
  - Lesson planning
  - Course instruction
  - Group activity

- **Student Mentor in Course**
  - Role model
  - Support during pre-advising
  - Referral, connect to advisor
Program Size/Funding

• Program Size
  o Tripling in size resulted in challenges with:
    • Peer Advisor Commitment
    • Team Orientation
    • Coordination of meeting times

• Program Funding
  o Lack of a program budget impacted:
    • Member retention
      o Student commitment, position is volunteer
    • Intrinsic motivation
    • Training
    • Initiatives offered
Year 5

Strengths
- Team Orientation
- Committee Formation
- Senior Leadership
- Structure to Training

Weaknesses
- Program Size
- Drop In Hours

Opportunities
- Orientation
- Course Integration
- Student Intern
- Peer Feedback

Threats
- Lacking Program Budget
- Student Commitment
- Complex Curriculum
Training/Coursework

- **Creation of Meeting Guides**
  - Provide:
    - Structure
    - Ongoing training
    - Team building opportunities
  - Integration of Assigned Reading
    - *Peer Mentor Companion*

- **Staff Development**
  - Targeted team activities

- **Training Days**
  - Assigned reading, discussion, specific training topics
Team Orientation

- **Committee Development**
  - Encourage team work
  - Aimed at engaging Peer Advisors in the Campus Community
  - Workshop, Social, Social Media, Newsletter

- **Staff Development**
  - Focus on community building, working together

- **Mentorship/Engagement**
  - Senior Peer Advisor position
  - Mid/End of Year Review with Coordinators
  - Appreciation/Awards Dinner
Program Size

• Reduced membership to previous academic year:
  
  o Benefits
    • Intrinsically motivated students
    • Team orientation
  
  o Challenges
    • Unexpected member turnover greatly impacted program
    • Staffing Drop In hours
Year 6

**Strengths**
- Credit Bearing Course
- Program Budget
- Targeted Recruitment
- Orientation

**Weaknesses**
- Absence of Transitions Seminar
- Program Size

**Opportunities**
- Caseloads
- Summer Training
- Senior Peer Mentorship

**Threats**
- Renewal of Budget
- Senior Leadership
Program Funding

• Provost’s Office approved funding for program based on retention, first year initiatives, promotion of academic community

• Funding to Program included:
  (renewed yearly)
  • Member Stipend
  • Training/Staff Development
  • Appreciation/Awards Dinner
  • Apparel
  • Committee Initiatives
Credit Bearing Course

• Add additional structure/defined expectations

• Form of compensation for students joining

• Every other Friday 4:00-5:15
  o No course conflicts
  o Outside course work expectations

• 2 credits in Fall, 1 credit in Spring
  o Focus on leadership development
  o Credits based on time/responsibility
  o Allows for enrollment with internship/placement courses

CMGMT 2310: Leadership Skills Workshop
Peer Leadership Development
3 Credits
Fall 2014 (2.0 credits), Spring 2015 (1.0 credits)

Instructors:
Michael A. Lambert, M.Ed., Professional Academic Advisor
Office: 617-349-8560
Email: miember3@lesley.edu

Ahni Fritton, M.S., Professional Academic Advisor
Office: 617-349-8914
Email: afritton@lesley.edu

Undergraduate Academic Advising Center
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Lesley University
37 Mellen Street, 1st Floor

Peer Advising Main Page:
http://www.lesley.edu/services/academic_advising/peer-advising-program.html

Center Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-5pm
Evening hours by appointment

Course Meeting Time: 4:00-5:15pm, September 5, 2014 - May 1, 2015

Course Description: This two-semester long course is completed with serving as a Peer Advisor in the CLAS Academic Advising Center’s Peer Advising Program. Prior to joining the program, Peer Advisors must meet all application requirements and go through a rigorous selection process. This process includes submission of an application, providing a faculty and staff recommendation, as well engaging in an interview. The course introduces peer mentorship through the examination of student leadership within an academic community. Course instruction will examine leadership and peer mentorship through course readings and exercises, team projects, and discussion. Course instruction will be complemented with a practicum requirement of 80 hours per semester in connection to responsibilities in the program. Students will draw theory to practice on the minds and characteristics of an effective student leader while applying course concepts to the understanding of the evolution of their own leadership development. Completion of the peer advising program and minimum grade of a C- must be achieved to pass the course.
Credit Bearing Course

Assigned Reading


Assignments

- Readings and discussion analysis
- Mid Year Reflection
- Capstone Project

Included in final grade:

- Committee Goals_Participation
- Follow through in responsibilities such as caseload outreach, drop-in hours
- Attendance to all training_staff development meetings
Embedding Accountability

Peer Advising Program Fall 2015
Stipend Agreement

I, ______________________________ (name), understand that I will be awarded a stipend of $255.00, distributed at the end of the Fall 2015 term on December 11, 2015, upon successful completion of all Peer Advising responsibilities. I understand that my receipt of this stipend may be forfeited if expectations and responsibilities of the program are not met. Peer Advisors are expected to carry out the following expectations and responsibilities of the program to be awarded a semester stipend:

- Learn and demonstrate knowledge of general information pertaining to Lesley University's programs, policies, procedures, and services available to students.
- Participate and carry out all objectives and goals in one of the four committees: Newsletter, Social Media, Workshops and Social.
- Earn a satisfactory grade in CMGMT 2150 Leadership Skills Workshop, by completing all responsibilities outlined in the syllabus.
- Participate in at least one pre-advising workshop during the Fall 2015 pre-registration advising period.
- Arrive on time and participate in all Fall and Spring Staff Development and Training sessions.
- Serve as a role model for both Orientation staff members and new and returning students by acting appropriately at all times (including interactions, relationships, Facebook and other social media information, etc.).
- Maintain a positive and professional attitude during the fulfillment of all responsibilities at all times.
- Manage an assigned caseload if incoming students, including but not limited to prompt reach out, follow up, and protection of students' confidentiality.
- Arrive on time and successfully complete all of your assigned pre-advising drop in hours. If you are unable to attend, you must provide at least a day's notice and find a Peer Advisor replacement.

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________
Targeted Recruitment

- **Emphasis on Nominations**
  - Online form
  - Faculty, Staff, and Current Peer Advisors in CLAS

- **Recruitment Workshops**
  - December & February Info Sessions, Final Push Event
    - Generating awareness early
    - Maintaining program visibility

- **Tailored Outreach Emails**
  - Follow up to nominations
  - Individualized invitations to apply

- **Invitation to participate in a course meeting**
  - Meet current peer advisors
  - Engage in team building activity
New Student Orientation

• First year, transfer orientation
  o Increased Peer presence in 2014
  o Support new students in navigating course selection, schedule building, registration
  
  o Participate in:
    • Three 2 day orientations for new freshman
    • One day transfer orientation
  
  o Encourages:
    • Early connections to student academic community
    • Confidence/support in course schedule/registration
Absence of Transitions Seminar

• Restructuring of First Year Initiative
  o Professional Advisors and Peer Advisors did not have weekly face to face interaction with first year students
  o Attend First Year Seminar twice
  o Limited opportunities for Pre-Registration preparation

• Emphasis on Peer Advising drop-in hours
  o Limited membership to support high volume of student support during pre-advising

• Addition of Caseloads
  o All first year and first semester transfer students assigned to a Peer Advisor
  o Email outreach
  o Encourage community, support transition
Year 7

**Strengths**
- Caseloads
- Expansion of Committees
- Program Size
- Drop In hours
- Orientation

**Weaknesses**
- Program Growth
- Peer Advisor Communication
- Committees

**Opportunities**
- Summer Training
- Presence on Campus

**Threats**
- Budget
- Team Orientation
- Staffing in Program
Summer Training

• 2 day long training prior to Freshman Orientation

• Focus on:
  o Supporting new students
    • Communication
    • Problem Solving
    • Schedule Building
    • Case Scenarios
  o Break down of orientation and academic information
  o Fostering Team Development

### Monday, June 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:15-10:30am</td>
<td>Training 1: Icebreaker &amp; Overview of June Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>(Be sure to bring your binders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-11:45am</td>
<td>Training 2: Review of: FERPA, General Education templates, Course leveling, The Credit Equation, Advising forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45-12:45am</td>
<td>Pizza Lunch with Advising Center Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00-2:00am</td>
<td>Team Activity: Tie Dying Peer Advising T-Shirts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-3:00am</td>
<td>Case Scenarios: Putting our Training into Practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program Growth

• Growth to 25 members
  o Strengths
    • Drop In hours
    • In class discussion
    • Summer Orientation
    • Summer recruitment
  o Challenges
    • Team Dynamics
      o Communication
      o Committee Work
    • Staffing
    • Senior Peer Advisors
    • Summer recruitment
Connection to Caseloads

• Increased Developments in Caseloads
  o Guide for caseload emails
  o Important Dates/ Deadlines during term, points of outreach

• Assignments made through participation in LU 101
  o Encourage face to face contact, putting face to a name

1. September 5th: An Introduction and Encourage Questions
   • A brief introduction that includes your name, major, class year, hometown, and activities you are involved in at Lesley.
   • Your role as a Peer Advisor/member of the Lesley community.
   • Invite them to contact you with any questions they might have and to feel free to check in on how their first days at Lesley have been going.

2. September 16th: Check In & Reminder on Add/Drop Period
   • Follow up on the first week. How are classes and their campus experience going?
   • Remind that the last day to add/drop from a course is September 22. Encourage meeting with their advisor if they wish to add/drop.

3. October 13th: Reminder for Pre-Registration Advising/Drop In Hours
   • October 13th is the start of pre-registration advising. If they have not yet met with their advisor, it is an excellent time to check in on what they are thinking about for a major, craft a graduation plan, and review considerations for the Spring term.
   • Reminder that Peer Advisors will have drop in hours from 10:00-4:00 Monday/Friday from 10/13-11/6.
   • Encourage importance of planning ahead. Web registration is coming up the first week of November.

4. October 21st: Drop In Hours, Upcoming Web Registration
   • Drop in hours are in full swing, stop by the Advising Center from 10:00-4:00 Monday-Friday for support in crafting a schedule/preparing for advising meeting.
   • Look out for emails from the Peer Advising Program for Pre-registration workshops in the dorms.
   • Note that freshman registration is on November 6th. For those that are sophomores or juniors, 11/5 and 11/4 respectively. Students must complete a web registration form and be cleared by their advisor to web register.

5. November 12th: Withdrawal Deadline
   • Last day to withdraw from a class is November 17. Check in with your academic advisor if you are considering withdrawing.
   • If you have received a mid-semester evaluation or have concerns about course progress and have not spoken with your academic advisor, schedule a meeting by 11/17.

6. December 7th: Classes End, Prepping for Finals
   • Last day of classes is December 14th, final exams run until the 22nd of December.
   • Encourage preparing for finals at least a week in advance, consider using the CAA in their preparation plans.
Peer Advisor Experiences

• Peer Advisor Learning Outcomes
  o Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
  o Team Work
  o Multi-tasking
  o Interpersonal, Professional Communication
  o Mentorship
  o Leadership Development
  o Community engagement

“I definitely felt more confident at the end of this year. Peer Advising encourages me to try new things and believe in my abilities” - Kaitlyn Scrivano, Class of 2015
Future Directions

• Program Growth
  o Target: 30 members, diverse student groups
  o Consistent senior peer advisor ratio each academic year
  o Increase retention in program
  o Increase staff involved in the program

• Committee Work
  o Additional metrics for tracking outcomes, member accountability

• Program Funding
  o Budget expansion, focus on stipends, allocations for programing

• Training
  o Increase summer training to one week
  o Identify additional/target readings towards Senior Peer Advisors
  o Increase course meeting times, additional focus on majors
Complete a SWOT analysis for your Peer Advising program
References


