Advising System

An external review of the advising system and its effectiveness may be needed and the advising system may need to be adjusted to address the findings of the review. Advisees should be assigned to advisors as carefully as possible. Advisors need to be monitored, evaluated and the quality of advising considered for promotion and tenure decisions. New advisors and experienced advisors need to receive training through workshops at the beginning of the academic year and electronic advice throughout the academic year. Advisors should utilize the mentor-mentee relationship described in the Mentor Network document in their advising. Many other resources such as CEL, DOS, and ASC are available on campus including designated preprofessional advisors. Advisors should see advising as a holistic team approach and refer students to appropriate individuals or office when needed. Online portfolios will be a part of the SIS system and advisors will have access to the reflections of their advisees.

Mentor Network for Oles

Establish an alum-parent student-mentoring program to enhance the St. Olaf experience for students and assist them in life planning. A “gatekeeper” administrator or faculty member will pair up students with alumni-parent mentors in two different mentor-mentee configurations delineated below. Mentor volunteers will be acquired from alumni and parents of St. Olaf students. Once the mentor has been assigned, the mentee and mentor optimally will meet initially face to face. The gatekeeper will facilitate training if needed and will monitor the mentor-mentee relationship to ensure accountability as well as commitment. The mentee or mentor can withdraw from the relationship at any time and participation will be voluntary by the student. The mentor-mentee relationship will be integrated with the advisor-advisee and will hopefully enhance the interaction of the advisee with the advisor. The mentor and mentee will interact in person or electronically. The mentor-mentee will engage in reflection, vocational discernment, career exploration and “life planning.” The gatekeeper will monitor the relationship to ensure accountability of the mentor and the mentee and will adjust the assignment when appropriate. Initially a pilot program will be conducted and evaluated to determine if a large-scale program is beneficial.

Two levels of mentoring:

1. Early mentor: Establish in the sophomore year with the mentor-mentee not matched by background or major but perhaps by common geography. Mentoring will begin as part of the proposed sophomore seminar during interim. Mentor will act as a resource, provide feedback and be willing to discuss ideas and dreams with the mentee. Advisor will be included where appropriate and the mentor-mentee relationship will be synergistic with the advisor-advisee relationship. The mentor-mentee relationship could last 1 year or longer. Mentor will hopefully benefit from the enhanced connection with the college and St. Olaf students.

2. Late mentor: In the junior or senior year mentors will be assigned by career areas and common vocational interests. Mentors would be assigned by using the Career Network for Oles or other programs through the Center for Experiential Learning. Mentor-mentee relationships will be guided by the gatekeeper.

Week One and Sophomore Interim Seminars
**Rationale:** While St. Olaf does a good job of orienting first year students to college life through a series of activities and events that begin during “Week One,” we lack similar opportunities (advising, skill development, experiential learning opportunities, etc.) for sophomores, juniors and seniors. The sophomore year is particularly critical in terms of a student’s sense of self and life plan.

**Two Proposals: Week One for each class year, and Sophomore Seminars at Interim**

The Week One activities for each class year and the sophomore seminar will be pieces of an ongoing developmentally-based series in which students will have an opportunity to grow in their awareness of available resources to explore vocational goals and develop career skills in each of their years at St. Olaf. Administrative oversight needs to be determined.

**NOTE: CEL currently hosts a series of events focused in the first year residence halls that includes opportunities for first years to do the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and to receive an orientation to CEL services. This will continue to happen each January for all first years. It is characterized by collaboration between Residence Life staff and CEL.**

**Week One Structure:**

<table>
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<th>Day(s) before classes begin in September; series of specialized opportunities; combination of small and large group discussions; on or off campus; faculty-led, staff-supported</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Years</strong></td>
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| **Sophomores** | **Discussion of summer readings:** For example, The Nature of College by Jim Farrell; also, *St. Olaf 2000* with focus on how institutional goals and objectives align (or not) with individual goals and objectives  
**Reflective discussion** about major and vocational exploration, and practical skill development  
**Students will gain an awareness of** academic advising resources, strategies to develop meaningful working relationships with faculty, CEL services, and strategies to explore and choose a major |
| **Juniors** | **Discussion of summer readings,** including *St. Olaf 2000* with focus on what it means to live lives of worth and service  
**Reflective discussion** about values/interests/skills/abilities, practical skill development, experiential learning opportunities (internship search or undergraduate research, networking, ongoing exploration of interests and fit)  
**Elements of online portfolio** include a polished resume, a revised reflective essay, list of professional/alumni/faculty mentors  
**Students will gain an awareness of** internship or undergrad research search skills, Fulbright and related opportunities that require thought and planning, Career Network for Oles as a mentoring tool, etc. |
| **Seniors** | **Discussion of summer readings,** including *St. Olaf 2000* with focus on lifelong learning and inclusion of its ideals in everyday life  
**Reflective discussion** about making meaning of practical and experiential opportunities, refining future goals  
**Elements of online portfolio** include a revised reflective essay or personal mission statement to express their sense of vocation and thoughts about post-graduate life; growing list of professional/alumni/faculty mentors; examples of work from internship or undergrad research; a written action plan that will include job or grad school search activities  
**Students gain an awareness of** job search tools, grad school resources, post-graduate service options, what it means to be an alum |
**Sophomore Seminar, Interim:**
In selected interim seminars, students will 1) gain a heightened understanding of the rich, inclusive notion of vocation and the challenges they face in developing their own sense of meaning and purpose in life, and 2) become equipped with tools/strategies and knowledge of available resources to support them in their exploration of vocation throughout their St. Olaf experience and beyond.
- Multiple sections together with large group evening and weekend events (perhaps one or two sections over spring term in order to include students who go abroad over interim)
- Extended opportunity for discussion and reflection
- **Mentoring involving alumni, parents, community partners, and on-campus mentors**
(faculty, upper-class students, staff)
- In-course experiential opportunities (site visits, panels, etc.)
- Interdisciplinary team-teaching would be encouraged
- Requirement of online portfolio is the start of an ongoing reflective essay related to identity, strengths, passions, values, understanding of the world
- In order to be successful, needs to be imbedded in the curriculum and orchestrated by faculty with the assistance of CEL

**On-line Activities Journal**

**Proposal:** We propose an *Academic Activities Journal* to be maintained on campus, not available to the general public, perhaps as an add-on to the existing Student Information System (SIS). The student activities related to the journal would not be graded. Ideally, the contents would be available to students after graduation. The journal would consist of two sections.

1. A bulleted **list of personal skills and attributes** that we hope all liberal arts students accumulate during their time on campus. These would be based on the college’s mission statement, institutional intended learning outcomes, college general education requirements and general expectations surrounding a liberal education. Examples might include critical thinking, team work, leadership, effective writing, quantitative literacy, problem solving, cultural sensitivity, oral communication, etc. All students will be required to consider the list and briefly indicate whether and how each skill on the list has been reinforced during the most recent semester. While these entries would be very brief (a sentence or two), references to specific activities or courses would be encouraged. These entries would be updated every term and be considered by academic advisors as part of the regular academic advising process—most likely during meetings with advisees, providing students with a solid deadline for completing their entries, and for exhibiting some care in crafting them. Registration “holds” could be maintained for students failing to address the skills list.

2. Short paragraphs, written by students, detailing **term-by-term goals** for both the next semester and longer term objectives. These paragraphs would be required every term and would also be read and considered by the student’s academic advisor. A second paragraph would include a short justification for the courses a student is considering for the following term.

**Justification:** Articulation of goals and prospects provides students and advisors an efficient way to make sure important curricular choices are made in a thoughtful and intentional way. The history created by placing these goals in a permanent repository facilitates the identification of trends and the accurate recollection of students, advisors, and others. The articulation of skills
accrual, particularly done in tandem with registration deliberations, is a very powerful way for students to see the intellectual progress they have achieved, and to quietly focus for a few minutes to ensure the growth process continues into the future.

These entries will be useful to many other advising functions on campus. We can see great utility to advisors in the CEL having access to this information. Many students, particularly those with multiple majors, have unofficial academic advisors who play key roles in course selection, internship planning, etc. These entries would support these relationships as well. Other advisors, both on campus and off, may also benefit from having this information available.

The students themselves would also directly benefit from the existence of this log. It is easy to imagine a student getting ready for a job or graduate school interview taking a look at the “diary” for a quick reminder of his or her skills inventory and career planning trajectory. The diary would be invaluable in putting together CVs and other application materials. The diary may also help remind students of past ideas or goals that may have been forgotten as time passes and more immediate pressures and concerns consume their attention.