

A Note on the Current Advising Mess (Or, Professor Baldup's Advising Day)

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Recently one of our "college" deans was be-moaning the lack of decent faculty advising. If only the faculty would take their advising responsibilities more seriously, closer and better relations could be maintained with the students. I would certainly agree with this position; however, many obstacles prevent its easy fulfillment. This is especially true in this year of changeover to new General Education guidelines. Some of the problems faced by the conscientious faculty member can be seen by a review of a typical day of advising.

Professor Aul Baldup arrives at his office at the beginning of Fall Quarter, 1981, and discovers several students waiting for consultation. The first student, Mr. Smith, is a continuing student and desires to complete his Emphasis Phase requirements in the most economical manner possible. Professor Baldup spends twenty minutes shuffling through old papers from the previous quarter and finally turns up the memorandum on the new General Education Guidelines issued by Vice-President Dobkin on May 7, 1981. There exists no update on this memorandum, so Professor Baldup assumes it contains the last word on the subject. He wonders whether it might not be simpler for Mr. Smith to change to the new catalogue. Under Section V of the Memorandum Professor Baldup finds the following statement:

The changes are not retroactive. Students who have been pursuing a baccalaureate program. . . before Fall 1981 can qualify for graduation under an earlier catalog and may thus meet the "old" requirements. (If they elect a 1981-82 or subsequent catalog they must meet all new requirements) [my italics].

Since the new requirements demand a twelve-unit package plus four units of a previously unrequired "Human Integration" component, the difference between the "new" requirements and the "old" twenty unit requirement seems minimal. But as

Professor Baldup continues reading Section V, things become more complex:

Students defined as "native students" under the old requirements are permitted to elect a "new style" 12-unit emphasis phase program and to count United States institution requirements toward the "old" 70 unit minimum. . . . Students eligible for these must complete either an old 20-unit program or a new 12-unit program.

Thus, apparently, a continuing native student can meet his emphasis phase requirement by taking merely a twelve-unit package and he can omit any "Human Integration" course. No such set of requirements appears in any catalog. But the previous paragraph has just stated the opposite—that a student must complete *all* catalog requirements. Professor Baldup tells his advisee that some "complications" exist and asks him to come back another day.

The second student in line, Ms. Smyth, appears to have a simpler problem. She is a sophomore, entering HSU for the first time. She anticipates heavy upper division requirements in her science-oriented major and wishes to begin immediately on her emphasis phase. Professor Baldup outlines the new twelve-unit packages and advises her to sign up for one of the many offered. Ms. Smyth leaves satisfied. Her satisfaction may soon turn to anger. Unmentioned in the Dobkin Memorandum is a crucial new rule: that *no upper division GE units may be taken before the junior year*. All the courses that Ms. Smyth will take towards her emphasis requirement may well be thrown out during graduation check and she could be required to repeat all twelve units.

The third advisee of the day is Mr. Smooth, a senior who transferred to HSU last year. He has only a ten-unit emphasis phase requirement and wishes to complete it during his final year. He wants to know which packages are still being offered and how frequently. He indicates three packages that particularly interest him. Professor

Baldup promptly consults a brochure on this very subject that had just arrived that morning in his mailbox. Sadly, he informs Mr. Smoth that none of his preferred packages will be offered on a regular basis this coming year. The student then grudgingly chooses a fourth package, which the brochure says will be regularly taught, and, chastened, leaves the office. As Professor Baldup is about to replace the brochure on the shelf, it falls open to the page containing information on a package given by his own department. Aghast, Professor Baldup realizes that the data is wholly inaccurate. A quick check suggests that the brochure was compiled by Ouija Board; no one ever sought the requisite information from Professor Baldup's chair or departmental secretary.

The next student, Ms. Smythe, has a different problem. After attending three different universities with three different majors, she finally arrived at HSU and is in senior year, now happily completing a major in Medieval Japanese Rug Weaving. She hopes to attend graduate school and requests a letter of recommendation. Professor Baldup properly desires to examine her overall transcript in order to write a competent and informed recommendation.

He calls Admissions and Records and requests that the transcript of his advisee Ms. Smythe be forwarded to him. His request is instantly refused—he may examine Ms. Smythe's lengthy transcript, but only if he, after obtaining her permission, personally comes down to Siemens Hall. He may take notes, but may not make a copy of this document. Faced with this burdensome and time-consuming task, and by now suffering from a severe migraine, Professor Aul Baldup decides to call it a day and leaves, ignoring the remaining student waiting at his door.

Professor Baldup's experience highlights some of this year's problems in advising. There are contradictory directives, mass misunderstanding, fallacious information brochures (to which no one will now lay claim), and unhelpful administrative organs. Before sound advising can take place, better and more up to date information must be disseminated. In fact, advisors desperately need sessions clearly explaining the new rules and how they affect students old and new. Until something of this sort is done, deans will continue to rue faculty performance and students will continue to find advising largely a waste of time.