



INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND

TO: Professional Advisors

FROM: Jann L. Joseph
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

DATE: April 12, 2017

SUBJ: On-Line Feedback on Advising and other Concerns

Since placing an item on the agenda of Academic Senate in March about advising on campus, we have continued to receive feedback about the idea of two e-mail addresses for campus feedback. The original proposal was to have one e-mail for feedback about advising and another about other issues. Based on feedback, we are now working on a publicly available online site where students and others can provide feedback on any number of issues.

We will build this site as a means of encouraging positive and reaffirming input as well as suggestions for improvement. Students have told us consistently that a great number of students have very positive advising experiences while acknowledging that others do not. We are trying to understand how students define positive interactions as well as where they see room for improvement. Naturally, some of the positive comments are about the staff or faculty advisor who goes out of her or his way to help students or who in other ways demonstrates engagement and concern. Students perceive advisors favorably when they demonstrate care, reach out prospectively to students, when advisors demonstrate great knowledge of the student's field of study, and when they provide options and demonstrate flexibility in approaching degree requirements.

A number of other conversations have arisen about what students mean when they say, as they have said consistently, that they would like to improve advising. Our most recent NSSE data shows advising as an area of improvement, but the information provided is not specific enough. Advising appears regularly as a concern within internal studies of retention and in regular focus groups with students. After analyzing student feedback, one set of comments refers to IU South Bend's curricular requirements. A student's comments exemplifies these concerns: "It seems that you keep looking for ways to turn us down for credits rather than to apply the credits we've earned towards our degree."

We are aware that concerns about advising are ultimately tied to our curricular requirements. Students believe that we are overly rigid in how we evaluate transfer courses and that certain general education courses do not even transfer between academic units on campus. So too, students have complained about contradictory advising from one advisor to another. This indicates our continuing need to evaluate how our curriculum works and the challenge of coordinating between and among academic units. This website will help us to pinpoint continuing bottlenecks in how we serve our students.

It is hoped that this site will enable the campus to respond more quickly to student concerns about advising and other issues. It will also provide us with another means to understand more fully the obstacles students face in their interactions with the campus and to showcase areas where things are working well.

Once created, the comments to the websites, which can only be submitted by people with an IU account and is not anonymous, will be monitored by the Office of Student Engagement and Success. Summaries of the concerns and kudos raised will be submitted to my office and used to identify areas for further review including a commitment to professional development.