

Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
FOCUS ON ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING

PART ONE. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE, “A [DEEPER] LOOK IN THE MIRROR”

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which Academic Advising is done at the departmental level?

Strengths

- The PBS advising office serves over **1800 majors** with diverse interests and needs.
- An effective **team of advisors** to meet these needs:
 - Three faculty advisors (each ½ FTE); one staff advisor (1/2 FTE);
 - Several additional “specialty” advisors including 3 honors advisors, 2 neuroscience advisors, 1 clinical advisor, 1 developmental disabilities specialization advisor, 1 internship coordinator.
 - One graduate student advisor whose focus is on new majors
 - 11-14 trained peer advisors
- **Direct advising services** which include both walk-in advising and advising by appointment:
 - Over 42 hours/week of scheduled one-on-one faculty/staff advising available to majors
 - Every faculty/staff advisor meets with students for several hours beyond the scheduled hours as well (adding anywhere from 10-15 extra hours per week)
 - Over 35 additional hours/week of scheduled one-on-one peer advising availability to majors
 - An additional 10 hours/week of graduate student advising specifically geared towards new majors
 - An additional 4 hours/week of advising for neuroscience-track majors
 - Flexible advisor-student connection – students can meet with ANY of our advisors
 - Advising Email – students can email the advising office with any advising concern. This is a very effective form of communication as the advising email receives thousands of student queries every semester.
- A variety of **informational workshops and training sessions** offered every semester/year (5-7 per semester)
 - **Opportunities workshops:** Making the Most of the Psychology Major; What seniors need to know; Study abroad and domestic exchange; The Developmental Disabilities and Human Services (DDHS) Specialization program;

- **Graduate School focused workshops** Getting into Graduate School; Differentiating among graduate school options; Filling out the graduate school applications;
- **Career focused workshops:** How to get an internship; What to do with a BA, MA, PhD in psychology; Various career information sessions from career services and outside agencies (see section below);
- **Special services for Freshmen/New majors:**
 - Every freshman is required to complete online training on SPIRE use, course selection, major requirements etc. and pass a competency quiz on this material.
 - Every freshman is contacted and strongly recommended to meet individually with an advisor before registration and scheduled appointments are available specifically for this task (about 200 of 260 elect to do so).
 - Required one-on-one meetings for every new major - to learn how to navigate the major etc. (20 minutes)
- **Online communications**
 - **Website:** an extensive, regularly updated website containing information regarding the major, opportunities, internships and jobs, research and teaching assistantships etc.
 - **Newsletter:** a monthly newsletter emailed to majors with timely information and opportunities
 - **Email:** regular email reminders about workshops, events, issues regarding courses, major requirements etc.
- **Creation of new position: Associate Chair of Teaching, Learning and Advising**
 - Signaling our department's commitment to undergraduate education and advising we created this position in 2015 to raise the profile of these efforts department—wide.

Weaknesses

- **Lack of resources:** In the past 10 years, the size of the major has grown from 1200-1800 students; Resources for providing for this number of majors is remarkably inadequate and leads to problems in:
 - **Career preparation:** our advisors (academics) have no training in career counseling yet are expected to provide such counseling. ***We need to hire a trained career counselor for the advising office.***
 - **Individual tracking of every major:** Ideally we would like to track every major and touch base with him/her every semester. This is impossible with the number of staff hours we have dedicated to advising.
- **Size of the major:** the Psychology major is TOO BIG (currently 1800 students). Effective advising cannot be done for all of our majors unless ***either*** the number of majors is reduced (Goal: 1200) ***or*** resources for advising are increased. Problems based on our size include:

- Students are not assigned an individual advisor that follows them through their UMASS experience. Although this allows flexibility, departmental surveys suggest students would prefer an assigned advisor.
- Students cannot always enroll in courses that they would like/need because courses fill up very quickly.
- Size of major limits the amount of individual time any advisor can spend with each student.
- Size of major limits the ability for advisors to track individual progress of every major (i.e. use the Student Success Collaborative [SSC] in this way).
- Size of major also limits the ability to require ALL majors to meet with advisor before each registration period.
- Long wait times during busy periods (first two weeks of classes; registration weeks)
- Need for a better system of communication of information
 - Students don't always read emails/newsletter/website

How is Career Advising currently performed at the Departmental level and what do you see as strengths and weaknesses of your current approach.

- ***Career advising at the individual level***
 - Faculty advisors spend much time aiding students in identifying career paths and assisting majors with career planning. Advisors are familiar with the Career Services Office and its resources, job and internship databases and recommended career websites.
 - Faculty advisors will often review resumes, but regularly advise students to seek help from certified persons at career services.
 - Faculty advisors help students with obtaining letters of recommendation for both internships and job opportunities.
- Non-advising faculty will often provide informal career mentoring in the classroom and laboratory setting and will also serve as guest speakers for our various psychology student organizations.
- ***Career advising at the group level***
 - The advising office offers several informational workshops tailored toward career development including: “Getting into Graduate School”, “Career Opportunities for Psychology Majors”, “Working a Career Fair”; “Understanding Graduate Admissions”; “What Jobs can Psychology Majors with a BA, MA, PsyD, PhD get?”
 - **DDHS Specialization:** PBS offers a specialization in developmental disabilities and human services. This specialization allows students to take specialized courses and complete an internship working with individuals/families with disabilities. The goal of this specialization is to prepare students for careers focused on disabilities. Over the last 10 years, 100% of students completing the program who sought employment in the disabilities field were placed in jobs within 6 months after graduation. 100 students are currently enrolled in this program. We intend to grow this high-quality program through CPE.

- ***Career advising at the course level***

- In the fall of 2015, PBS piloted a seminar entitled “**Psychology Career Preparation**” for junior majors. The course received very good reviews, so the department plans to increase the size of the course from 40 to 80 students and offer it every semester (depending on funding). This course covers all aspects of the career preparation process including what students can do during their undergraduate years, the ins and outs of graduate school, applying for jobs, and career paths both in and outside of psychology well suited for psychology majors. The PBS Undergraduate Curriculum Task Force plans to recommend this career preparation course become a required course for all psychology majors.
- Career Panels in courses: The Psychology Career Preparation seminar and the required Jr. Writing and IE courses for PBS provide students with multiple career panel sessions during class periods. Instructors of these courses take special care in assembling these panels so they represent many career path options for students to consider.
- Research and Teaching assistantships. Over 250 undergraduate majors participate in research and teaching assistantships every semester. These opportunities provide invaluable experience that prepare students for careers in academia, research, teaching, medicine, public policy, business and related fields. These assistantships are unpaid but carry course credit.

- ***Internship advising***

- In the Fall of 2015, PBS created a new process for psychology majors wishing to complete a psychology-related internship for course credit. Two faculty members sponsor all internships. One oversees disabilities related internships; one oversees mental health, counseling, hospital and school related internships.
- The internship process has become standardized to ensure all students have educational and positive internship experiences. 1) Majors must attend one of several internship workshops to begin the process; 2) Students can select from lengthy lists of approved internship sites (or propose one of their own) and faculty sponsors assist students on site selection; 3) students meet regularly with their faculty sponsor during the internship and are required to submit weekly papers regarding their internship experiences
- Beginning Fall, 2016, students participating in a psychology-based internship will be able to register for a one-credit seminar concurrently. This seminar will focus on general internship issues and will facilitate the internship experience.

- ***General Strengths and Weaknesses of Career Advising in PBS***

- **Strengths:** The advising office provides many outlets for students to learn about career related issues and has maintained a very active internship program for many years. Additionally, the number of career related workshops offered by PBS has tripled in the last two years. The new careers course has been very successful. Faculty advisors are excellent resources for students interested in graduate school options.
- **Weaknesses:** The PBS Advising Office has never viewed itself as a career services office. Our faculty advisors are not trained in career services and refer many students to the Career Services Office for career related support. Because of our large size (1800 majors), we strongly believe that if departments are expected to offer career services for

students, then resources should be allocated for the hiring of a career services specialist specifically for PBS.

Division of Labor/Usage of Personnel. Describe how professional staff, faculty, and peers are all involved in supporting students; academic and career advising. Comment on the optimal use of personnel time

- **PBS use of academic advising professional staff**

- PBS employs one professional staff academic advisor (Julie Pahl, ½ FTE).
- PBS employs one administrative staff person (Laurie Dove) who spends most of her time on advising office assistance.
- The primary responsibilities of Ms. Pahl include meeting individually with majors; attending majors events such as the major's fair, open house etc.; advising incoming freshman psychology majors during new student's orientation in the summer, serving on the undergraduate studies committee, running/planning various workshops for majors.
- The primary responsibilities of Ms. Dove include managing all academic records for the undergraduate psychology program; graduation tracking of 1800 majors; processing and analyzing relevant data, email correspondence, student personnel oversight, faculty course evaluation management and serving as the intermediary between the undergraduate advising office and several other departmental and university offices.
- ***Optimal use of time:*** The advising office feels that Ms. Pahl's time is used optimally but would benefit from adding another ½ time professional advisor (due to size of major). Ms. Dove is, simply, overworked. In her time at PBS, the number of majors has increased by 50%, yet she has received no additional resources to manage the work.

- **PBS use of career advising professional staff**

- Currently, PBS does not have a professional career advisor on staff
- The advising office believes that if career advising (in terms of job placement etc.) is going to become a responsibility of individual departments, then it is necessary to hire a professional career advisor specifically for PBS. Our size and student makeup distinguish us from other CNS departments. The types of jobs graduating senior psychology majors seek are likely to be quite different from other CNS graduates and require different career support than other majors in the college.
- The advising office does have two faculty advisors coordinating internship placement for our majors (see above). These advisors are very effective at both ensuring high quality placement for our majors and mentoring interns throughout their internships.

- **PBS use of faculty for academic advising and career advising.**

- The department has three faculty serving the advising office (1/2 FTE each): Prof. Rahhal, Prof. Metevier, and Prof. Astheimer. Additionally, several other PBS faculty

serve advising roles on a more minimal level (e.g. internship advising, neuroscience track advising, honors advising).

- Please refer to the Questions 1 (on academic advising) and 2 (on career advising) for the responsibilities of faculty advisors.
- **Optimal use of time:** Faculty advisors' use of time is, for the most part, optimal. However, the advising office is increasingly asked to assume paperwork and recordkeeping once done by the registrar's office. We believe that filling out forms etc. is NOT an optimal use of time for our faculty advisors. Over the past several years, this sort of work has increased steadily and now requires several hours per week of faculty time because the administrative assistant is overburdened with this work (see above).
- **PBS use of peer advisors to support academic advising**
 - The advising office trains and supervises 11-14 undergraduate *peer advisors* per semester.
 - Peer advisors are selected based on applications assessing advanced academic achievement, involvement in the major, and faculty references.
 - Peer advisors receive extensive training prior to and during their advising time.
 - **Peer advisor responsibilities:** answering basic questions regarding major requirements, specialized programs, selecting courses and navigating SPIRE; referring students to faculty and staff advisors when necessary, assisting at university recruiting events (e.g. majors fair; open house) and departmental events (e.g. various workshops). Peer advisors receive one psychology credit for working 3 hours/week in the advising office.
 - **New Peer Mentoring Program:** PBS is currently developing a program that will match advanced undergraduate students to freshman and sophomore majors who are academically at-risk (GPA < 2.3) and desire peer support. Mentees will be selected using the Student Success Initiative database which can identify academically "at-risk" students. This program is still in development but will pilot using a few students in Fall, 2016.
 - **Optimal use of time:** Our peer-advising model works very well. It has been used by many other departments and colleges at UMASS as a model for effective peer-advising.

What type of data analytics/tracking of students is happening at the departmental level? How are students identified and what interventions are in place? Do you know what percentage of students see an academic advisor or career advisor on a yearly basis? Are there sources you wish you had that are not presently available?

- **PBS tracking of students.**
 - Psychology majors' progress is tracked as they complete the three foundational courses of the major (Psychology 100, 240, 241). Data analytics demonstrate performance in these classes is predictive of success in the major.

- Students must earn a “C” or better in Psychology 100 and complete their R1 math requirement to take Psychology 240.
 - Students must earn a “C” or better in Psychology 240 to take Psychology 241.
- If students do not meet these minimum standards, they are contacted and explained the consequences of their performance (e.g. must repeat a course; must meet with academic dean or advisor)
- Students are also provided with information about the importance of satisfactory performance in these courses (when they become psychology majors) and the relationship of these courses’ content to all other subsequent courses in the major.
- PBS academic advisors have been trained to use the Student Success Collaborative (SSC) data analytics and tracking software.
 - Advisors have used this software to some extent in the past two years, but have been unable to use it more fully because faculty resources are already over-extended.
 - Advisors have identified factors in SSC that put our majors at risk (e.g. number of course withdrawals, course repeats, minimum GPA) and are beginning to create lists of targeted students in need of additional advising. We plan to encourage these students to meet individually with advisors and to provide them with resources of support.
- As mentioned above, PBS plans to pilot a peer-mentoring program matching these at-risk students with upper-class peers to provide additional advising support.
- PBS would love to be able to track the number of majors that see academic advising every year, but do not currently have the resources to manage such a large database of information.

Experiential Opportunities: How does the department support matching students with appropriate opportunities? Does the department include internship and/or employment related opportunities as part of the credit bearing curriculum requirements.

PBS encourages and supports our majors in a variety of opportunities. The opportunities listed below are publicized/encouraged in a variety of ways including:

- Undergraduate section of department website lists opportunities and updates these on a weekly basis
- Several of our departmental workshops (described above) focus on engaging students in these opportunities (e.g. internship workshop, study abroad workshop, opportunities in the major workshop, workshops for each specialization)
- Every semester, faculty post research assistantship and teaching assistantship opportunities on our website and in the advising office
- Faculty discuss opportunities (e.g. research assistantships) individually and in panels during specific courses in our major (e.g. Psych 393) and at regular club meetings for our majors (e.g. Neuroscience Club; Psi Chi, Multicultural Association for Psychology majors [MAPS])
- A monthly newsletter for majors lists all opportunities and workshops and provides links/information relevant to learning more about these opportunities.

- Regular emails are sent to all majors regarding these opportunities and relevant deadlines for applications
- Academic advisors assist majors individually in both locating and obtaining relevant opportunities
- PBS internship coordinator assists in matching students with credit-bearing internships

List of Experiential Opportunities available in PBS

- We offer a specialization in Developmental Disabilities for students interested in careers in disabilities. In this program, students take specialized courses and complete an internship working with individuals/families with disabilities. Approximately 100 majors participate in this program
- We offer the “Advancing Diversity in Research and Practice” program for students of diversity and students interested in careers focused on diversity issues. Students complete coursework, research and internships involving diversity issues. Approximately 15-20 majors participate in this program
- We will offer a new specialization in Psychological Modeling (focus on expressing our psychological theories in mathematical form so we know what specific predictions the theories make) beginning Fall, 2016. Students in this program will be matched with an active research lab and complete coursework relevant to the specialization.
- We offer the Neuroscience track option for students who have a particular research or career interest in neuroscience. This track is very popular and has grown every year in the last 10 years. Currently over 200 students participate in the neuroscience track option. This track has an advanced lab requirement that most students fulfill with independent study research in a faculty-run neuroscience lab.
- We have a very active and rigorous honors program. Currently, 262 psychology majors participate in the honors program. An average of 10 psychology honors courses are offered each academic year. Over 50 honors students complete a senior honors thesis or capstone project each year. One of our Assistant Professors is a joint hire with the Commonwealth Honors College.
- We offer credit bearing internships which focus on areas related to psychology. Our internship coordinator oversees this process which requires majors attending a group informational meeting and an individual meeting with the IC to locate and secure an internship. Our IC also vets every internship site before adding it to our ever-growing list of approved placements. Internship credit can count towards our elective major requirement. Approximately 100 majors receive psychology credit for internships per year.
- We offer credit bearing undergraduate teaching assistantships for a variety of undergraduate courses. Faculty sponsor students for the TA, and duties vary by course. Students receive three credits for a Psychology TA. TA credit can count towards our elective major requirement. Approximately 280 majors receive credit for teaching assistantships every year.
- We offer credit bearing research assistantships in most of our faculty-run laboratories. Faculty sponsor students for the RA, and duties vary by lab. Students receive one credit

for every 3 hours spent in the lab per week. RA credit can count towards our elective major requirement. Approximately 400 majors receive credit for research assistantships every year. An additional 100 majors receive credit for advanced, independent research study every year.

- We encourage our majors to study abroad and meet individually with students to arrange their coursework so that they can both 1) take courses abroad that satisfy major requirements and 2) complete their degree on time. Nearly 200 psychology majors have studied abroad in the last two years. This is higher than every other STEM major at UMASS.
- We have three, very active student organizations in psychology which both expose students to various career opportunities in relevant fields and encourage students to participate in community service opportunities.
 - **Psi Chi.** The psychology department has a very active honor society (Psi Chi – approximately 70 members) which holds meetings twice a month. These meetings focus on research activity, community service and career opportunities. They are very well attended. In 2014, Our Psi Chi chapter won the National award for “Officer/Team Leadership”.
 - **Multicultural Association of Psychology Students (MAPS).** MAPS is a 5-college organization focused on issues of diversity (20 members). This club holds monthly meetings and also engages in community outreach.
 - **Neuroscience Club.** This club is an interdisciplinary club for all students interested in neuroscience (30 members). Nu Ro Psi, a neuroscience honors society is also an organization in which our students participate (30 inductees).

Based on key data metrics and student responses found in sources (described below), what would you describe as your department strengths and areas in need of attention with academic and career advising?

One year retention rates, four and six year graduation rates and time to degree.

- The Psychological and Brain Sciences department does a very good job at retaining our freshman majors.
 - One year retention rates are higher than the campus average (Psychology – 76%; UMASS – 63%)
- Compared to UMASS, which graduates 58.7% of its students in 4 years and 73% of its students in 6 years, 40% of students *entering the university as a psychology major* will *graduate with a degree in psychology* in 4 years; 63% in 6 years. However, many entering psychology majors end up graduating in other UMASS majors (an additional 12.7% in 4 years; 15.6% in 6 years).
- Of our total graduating majors, **84% graduate in 4 years; 98% in 6 years** (this includes students who switched into psychology as a major after matriculating).

Student Experience: Access to classes and Career preparation

- Senior majors rate their departmental overall experience at a 3.36 (out of 4.0) which meets the university average rating and is higher than the next largest major, biology, but lower than our expectations.
- Unfortunately, we are a victim of our own popularity as seen by:
 - An advising office that is overwhelmed and strained to its limits.
 - Too few faculty (tenure system and/or lecturers) to teach the number of courses needed to educate 1800 majors and many non-majors.
 - Too little graduate student TA support to help manage course enrollment.
 - Unavailability of courses to majors in an appropriate time frame resulting in graduation delays.
- Consequently, the psychology department has lower than average reviews in the student experience categories of Access to classes (2.9 of 4) and Career Preparation and Guidance (2.7 of 4).

Student Engagement: Faculty Contact and Engagement in Advising

- PBS has mixed reviews in the student experience advising categories.
 - Senior majors rate the quality of interactions with their advisors near the average of all departments across the university (4.35 vs. 4.76 on a 7 pt. scale).
 - However, our majors rate their satisfaction with overall advising somewhat lower than the university average (2.83 vs. 3.18).
- PBS recognizes that these ratings are lower than desired, but strongly believe that without additional resources, specifically more dedicated advisors, these ratings are likely to remain stable. Currently, the **advisor/major ratio is one ½ time advisor for every 450 majors**. It is simply impossible to provide students with the individual guidance and preparation they deserve without more support.

PART TWO. GOALS FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Please develop specific goals in these areas: Academic advising; Career advising; Division of Labor/Usage of personnel; Data analytics/Tracking; experiential opportunities

Goals for Academic Advising

- Provide individual advising and assign an individual advisor to ALL of our majors. As mentioned earlier, we have a ratio of one full time advisor for 900 students (i.e. we employ four, ½ time advisors for our 1800 majors). As it stands, it is impossible to assign advisors to individual students, and to meet with each of our 1800 majors on a regular basis.
 - We would love to have the staff to provide not only full coverage for walk-in advising but also to provide appointment based advising for students. An increase in advising staff would also allow us to allocate resources to data analytics, career advising, and other areas that we currently are unable to focus.

- Improve communication regarding departmental/college/university opportunities for our majors
 - Although we have a website, a newsletter, regular emails etc. which communicate the vast array of opportunities for our majors, we want to better connect with all of our majors. We are currently considering blogs, Facebook, twitter etc. as options.
- PBS plans to offer a one-credit mandatory seminar for all majors (to take either freshman year or upon entering the major) called “**Navigating the Psychology Major**”.
 - This seminar would ensure all majors are made aware of opportunities (e.g. research, internship) that are available to them early in their academic careers.
 - This seminar would expose all majors to faculty in the department, their research and teaching interests etc. and would serve to connect majors with faculty early in their academic careers.
- Creation of more online tutorials similar to the one we created to prepare our freshman for registration. We have found that these tutorials can provide a wealth of information to a large number of majors in a relatively easy, inexpensive way.
- Provide more academic advising support for Transfer Students. We would like to implement similar programs, appointments, and meetings for all transfer students who enter the major.
- Involve more majors in the mentoring programs mentioned above. We think that majors who serve as peer or academic mentors would develop good leaderships and counseling skills. We think majors who serve as mentees would benefit in a multitude of ways.

Goals for Career Advising

Note: PBS strongly believes that faculty advisors are not prepared or qualified to be career counselors. Faculty advisors can provide advice for students wishing to attend graduate school or who have interests in academic or clinical careers. However, we are not trained in job searching, resume writing, interviewing etc. We also believe that the psychology major is distinct from other CNS majors in that most of our majors wish to hold jobs in mental health, education, social services, law and the like (our neuroscience track majors could be served by a general CNS career counselor). We believe that career counseling, if done at the college level, should employ a counselor with specific expertise in psychology related careers. Alternatively, if career counseling is to be housed at the departmental level, we would expect resources to hire a person trained in career counseling geared for the breadth of careers into which our majors go.

- Expand Internship Opportunities
 - Provide quality internships for the majority of our majors. Our internship coordinator is currently creating a one-credit internship seminar that all interns would take concurrently with their internship. She is also actively (and quite successfully) increasing the number of internship sites suitable for psychology interns.
- Expand our “Careers in Psychology” course
 - As mentioned above, we hope to make our career preparation course available to all majors. We also hope to make it a requirement in our major curriculum.

- Provide one-on-one career advising
 - Hire a career advisor specifically for PBS
 - Ensure our neuroscience track students also receive assistance either at the departmental or CNS level.
- Continue to grow and strengthen our informational workshops which focus on post-graduate opportunities.
- Improve resources focused on career related information.

Goals for Division of Labor/usage of personnel

- Hire or recruit more faculty/staff advisors. PBS is severely understaffed in advising and support staff.
 - Hire one ½ support staff person. Our current administrative assistant not only has had to adjust to a 50% increase (1200 – 1800 majors) in the last 7 years, but has had to take on additional work as mandated from the registrar's office.
 - Hire/recruit several additional professional/faculty advisors (see above)
 - Hire one career counselor.
- PBS believes that faculty advisors should spend time advising. Currently, much of their time is spent on paperwork that was previously done by the registrar's office (e.g. graduation clearance, change of majors etc.).

Goals for Data Analytics/tracking

- Better implement SSC to identify at-risk students and work with these students individually.
- Track numbers of students who seek advising and attend workshops so we can better assess our outreach.
- Track students at least one semester prior to graduation so that we can meet with and prepare them for graduation
- Make better use of SSC, in general.

Goals for Experiential Opportunities

- PBS would like for **every** major to be able to participate in some experiential opportunity during their undergraduate years. Currently, about 1300 students participate in one of these sorts of opportunities (RA, TA, internship, specialized program, study abroad, honors) per year which is great. However, we believe this number is inflated because many students participate in more than one opportunity per year.
- Better advertise and attract students to the many informational workshops on experiential opportunities.