

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

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Catherine Riordan, Provost
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Provost Riordan,

Pursuant to your request that all academic colleges provide you, as part of the budget planning process, a revised SCOT analysis accompanied by a memo outlining priorities for future initiatives, I provide the present information. The CHSS SCOT Analysis has been forwarded to you electronically, and below please find information regarding initiatives. The decision packages for speech pathology and digital archives were both fully vetted in 2007-08 and were submitted to the Legislature. Because your office already has copies of the decision packages, I only list them here but will forward them to your office via email attachment at your request. The General Studies Advising proposal is described in full below.

In terms of priorities, I would be remiss were I not to emphasize that after last year's reductions the College priority has to be operating funds. New and exciting initiatives are wonderful to consider, but the simple ability to offer an adequate number of classes remains the concern that most closely reflects the principles outlined in our mission and in our SCOT analysis. *Please consider the decision package initiatives below as secondary to more urgent needs reflected by NTT funding and the General Studies advising.*

- 1. Funding for NTT sections (Amounts are registered in annual requests, but \$1,500,000 - \$2,000,000 would be a reasonable estimate.)**
- 2. Speech Pathology Decision Package (2008)**
- 3. Digital Archives Decision Package (2008)**
- 4. General Studies Advising (see below)**

Having had the opportunity to administer the General Studies Major in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences for approximately one year now, it is clear that the current funding arrangement for advising is not workable. The present memo is intended as a proposal for how, in the short term at least, we might best support an advising configuration that would serve the many students in the major without placing undue or unfairly compensated responsibilities on advisors.

Context

One of our largest majors on campus, the General Studies major is comprised of distinct populations. These include:

- Some students who wish to be social science majors but cannot pass the second statistics course choose to major in General Studies. These are typically students who are pursuing a Psychology or Sociology degree and who find out late in their career – perhaps in their Junior year – that they just cannot pass statistics.
- Many students who cannot get into their major of choice opt for General Studies.
- Students who have drifted along without a direction and who wish now to graduate often choose General Studies.
- Students who wish to create an individualized, combined program of several majors often select General Studies.
- The General Studies major fulfills an important role on campus because without it many of these students would never graduate. In this sense, it is key to the graduation success of the lion's share of students we might consider "at risk."
- As it turns out, the General Studies degree also includes the largest concentration of students of color on campus. A study by the VPUE found that 50% of the students who declared General Studies as their major of interest were students of color.

General Studies students have difficulty registering for upper-division courses because these courses typically open for General Studies majors only in Phase II. Consequently, General Studies students are frequently frustrated during registration and seek the assistance of their advisor rather continuously. Advising under these circumstances is difficult and time consuming.

In CHSS we have worked to strengthen the degree, to improve advising, and to advise more students away from General Studies and into a departmental major. We wish to continue to make these improvements but cannot do so on the resources we received with the program.

Current Situation

When General Studies was moved out of the Office of the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education and into CHSS, the staff person who had been doing the advising retired. The College did not receive her budgeted position, or even a portion of it, to fund advising. What we did receive was a permanent operating commitment to \$15,000 annually to fund advising. After making what we believe to have been some significant changes to the major and improving the

advising scheme, we felt strongly that we wanted a faculty member to be the primary advisor for the major. Given the fact that there are approximately 200 students in the General Studies Major, we definitely needed to provide course release or equivalent compensation to an advisor. We settled on a one-course release per quarter (approximately \$5,000 in replacement cost), or a stipend of \$5,000. Two department chairs, Prof. Shearlean Duke (Journalism) and Prof. Anna Eblen (Communication), volunteered to share the duties and to alternate quarters for the course release. Replacement cost in those two departments is relatively low, especially if the buy-out is for a three-credit course, so we were actually able to compensate during Winter, Spring, and Summer Quarter with the budgeted \$15,000. Clearly, however, that amount of funding will not suffice to support an advising position that requires work during all four quarters of the year. We're now on our fourth academic quarter of advising funded by the original \$15,000. Now that Prof. Duke is on medical leave and Prof. Eblen is on professional leave, we've appointed Prof. Mike Mana (PSYCH) to the advisor position. He has been overwhelmed by the amount of work involved and time required; we definitely have to make this a more manageable task.

Proposal

Simply put, we need at least \$20,000 to fund course release during the academic year (\$5,000 x 3) and a summer stipend (\$3,000-\$5,000). That, however, really won't address the workload issue. For that reason we propose the funding of a dedicated staff position, 1/2 - time, to assist the faculty advisor with the General Studies website, with making sure that students arrive to advising with appropriate paperwork in order, and to do many of the managerial tasks that currently consume a great amount of the advisor's time. Funding a 1/2 - time staff position would most likely cost approximately \$15,000.

Conclusion

We propose an increase in General Studies advising support from \$15,000 annually to \$35,000 annually. As described above, this would allow us to better serve what is one of the larger majors on campus, to fairly compensate advisors, and to properly conduct programmatic activities related to assessment and student satisfaction, curriculum, and coordination of the internships that we believe will eventually become a uniquely beneficial component of the major. If this proposal were to be approved, we would commit to assessing the efficiency of the arrangement on a yearly basis to determine if perhaps a different model would work better. At present, however, the College is very committed to the idea that the formal advisor should be a faculty member.

Sincerely,

Brent Carbajal

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Dean