DRAFT 1 POLICY ON ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT
November 29, 2004

I. POLICY AND DEFINITION
Academic advisement at the University at Albany represents a vital component of the undergraduate program that encourages students’ active engagement in their education, supports their development as self-directed learners and independent decision makers, and promotes their participation as members of a learning community.

The principal objectives of academic advisement are: 1) to promote students’ intellectual development through interaction with faculty and other mentors; 2) to increase students’ awareness of the range of academic and cocurricular opportunities available to enrich their undergraduate educational experience; 3) to assist students in understanding and meeting the requirements of completing a degree; 4) to encourage development of self-direction and independent decision making by students; and 5) to provide guidance and mentoring for careers and opportunities upon graduation.

Academic advisement is mandatory for students each semester in order to register. Before providing access to course registration to a student, each academic advisement unit must ensure that it has met its responsibility to provide advisement to the student as outlined below.

II. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT
Given the centrality of academic advisement to the undergraduate program, the responsibility for academic advisement rests with the Faculty of the University at Albany. The Undergraduate Academic Council is the governance body with oversight responsibility for policies related to academic advisement. School/college and academic administrators are responsible for ensuring compliance with these policies.

Academic departments have the primary responsibility for advising students with declared majors in their discipline. At minimum, this means ensuring that students understand the courses, sequencing, grade point average, and special circumstances that comprise requirements for the successful completion of the major, minor and General Education requirements, as well as ensuring that students are apprised regularly of their progress in meeting them. Toward these ends, academic departments must develop routine and effective procedures for monitoring students’ progress through the major and create contexts in which this information is communicated to students so that they have the time and opportunity to make the best decisions about how to satisfy the technical requirements for completing the major.

Beyond the routine matter of technical administration of the major, departments also bear responsibility for addressing the needs of their declared majors for growth and development, i.e., for mentorship and career advice, for special research and learning opportunities, for honors programs and accelerated degree options, for remediation or special assistance, and for participating in a community of learners. These latter responsibilities in particular seem most appropriately fulfilled by the department’s teaching faculty.

Primary responsibility for the advisement of students prior to declaration of a major rests with the Advisement Services Center and the Educational Opportunity Program (for academic advisement of EOP students). Additional responsibility for providing guidance and assistance to interested pre-major students also rests with the faculty of that discipline. The Advisement Services Center and Educational Opportunity Program are expected to develop effective methods for supporting students’ transition into the University at Albany, and their growth and development as self-directed learners and independent decision makers, including assistance with major and career exploration, information on enrichment opportunities within the
University, use of the University tools and resources that support academic progress, and remediation or special assistance. These units bear responsibility for monitoring students’ progress toward one or more majors and minors and for creating contexts in which information is communicated to students so that they have the time and opportunity to make the best decisions about their educational program.

Furthermore, because students require different kinds of advisement at different stages in their education, and because most students change advisors at least once during their undergraduate program, the University community shares responsibility for ensuring that academic advisement is a coherent continuum of services that supports and facilitates students’ progress through the various stages of their academic program, and their development as self-directed, independent decision makers. Specifically, the following student development tasks should be addressed as appropriate:

- **Academic advisement of freshmen** focuses on issues of transition into college, exploration and evaluation of their initial academic plans, development of the initial skills required to assume responsibility and self-direction, including understanding the basic structure of the undergraduate program (major, minor, General Education Program, electives, bachelor’s-master’s options), using the Degree Audit, finding relevant policies in the Undergraduate Bulletin, and understanding the procedures of the University (registration, add/drop, etc.).

- **Academic advisement of pre-major or “intended major” students** assists them to evaluate their academic experiences as they work toward declaring a major and minor that supports their academic and career plans.

- **Academic advisement of declared majors (departmentally-based advisement)** orients students to the major, focuses on timely degree completion, including firm timetables for completing major, minor and general education requirements, provides a deeper understanding of the discipline, and provides information and advice about departmental honors program, internship and research opportunities, as appropriate, and career/graduate school planning.

- **Because transfer students**, regardless of their academic status, are new to the University at Albany, academic advisement of transfer students, wherever it is provided, also includes discussion of the basic policies and procedures, the academic environment of UAlbany (e.g., University academic standards, values, curricular flexibility, etc.), preliminary development of a timetable for completing the degree, and expectations for the student to assume responsibility for his/her academic plan, as well as discussion of other academic policies of special relevance to transfer students.

### III. STRUCTURE OF ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

While each academic department and administrative unit has the autonomy to develop its own methods and formats for the delivery of academic advisement, it is expected that contact will be made with each student and the following activities and interactions will be part of every department’s or unit’s academic advisement program:

1. Developing/confirming students’ academic plans
2. Addressing appropriate student development tasks and issues as described above
3. Reviewing progress toward degree, including the student’s major, minor, and general education requirements, using the University’s Degree Audit
4. Reviewing course selection, including evaluating whether course load and course choices are appropriate for the student for each given semester
5. Reviewing the student’s overall plan for future semesters, especially for programs with specific timetables, including plans for summer study at UAlbany or elsewhere
6. Reviewing plans for improving academic success for students on academic and terminal probation. Review and discussion of Academic Improvement Form as necessary
7. Discussing other opportunities that may enrich the student’s academic experience or contribute to intellectual development, such as honors, bachelor’s-master’s combined degrees, independent study, interdisciplinary opportunities, professional academic or artistic organization chapters or career clubs, research, internship, and study abroad options
8. Discussing career or graduate school options and necessary steps a student should take
9. Making appropriate referrals to address matters beyond the scope of the advisor

Delivery of Academic Advisement
In fulfilling the responsibility to provide academic advisement to its students, departments may establish structures and procedures and strategies that best fit their resources and curriculum, while accommodating the needs of all its advisees. Each department will provide academic advisement of new students during scheduled planning conferences, as appropriate.

Advisement in General Education
The University at Albany’s General Education program has been established as a four-year experience that is required of all students. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student’s primary advisement department to provide advisement regarding General Education, and all advisors have the responsibility to understand its components and to ensure (along with the advisee) that advisees are completing its requirements.

Advisement of Minor or Second Major
Because University policy requires that all students have a minor or second major, advisement to fulfill this requirement must be systematically available. Therefore, responsibility for advisement regarding the minor or second major is as follows: 1) the responsibility to provide basic information about the requirements for a minor or second major rests with the primary department of advisement; and 2) responsibility to address substantive questions regarding course content, sequencing, etc., as well as providing access to courses rests with the department offering the minor or second major.

Assessment
Through University-wide surveys of the student experience, student satisfaction with academic advisement should be regularly measured and reported to the University community. In addition, each department or unit providing academic advisement should make provision to measure student satisfaction with advisement. Advisement should also be assessed as part of academic program review.

Recognition and Reward
Participation in academic advisement and mentoring activities by faculty and professional staff should be recognized and rewarded by the University and by the individual departments and units to the greatest degree possible.

IV. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT
Students are expected to be active participants in the academic advisement program, just as they are expected to be active participants in their educational program. While it is the responsibility of the department and advisor to ensure that students receive accurate and timely assistance in choosing courses and in developing and implementing an academic plan, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student to ensure that she/he understands and is actively engaged in monitoring his/her academic progress.
Early in the academic career, students are expected to focus on becoming acquainted with the requirements of the academic program, including policies and procedures, and to work to master the tools that support their active participation in their academic progress (including the use of the Undergraduate Bulletin, the degree audit, and the student registration system).

As they advance through their academic program, students will be expected to assume responsibility for acquiring the information needed to complete the degree requirements, and for preparing for their academic advisement sessions by reviewing their degree audit, formulating questions, and developing preliminary plans for the semester and beyond. Additionally, students are expected to follow up on referrals made by advisors. Students experiencing academic difficulty are expected to meet with their academic advisor to discuss the details of their plans for academic improvement.

Students who transfer from other institutions directly into majors should also be given early opportunities to become familiar with the policies, procedures, and tools that support their academic progress at the University at Albany.

V. RESOURCES FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENTS

Resources for Advisors in Support of Academic Advisement
A dynamic educational environment such as the University at Albany requires that academic advisors have access to a wide range of information resources and tools as well as opportunities to enrich their ability to deliver academic advisement. To the greatest extent possible, academic and administrative units should collaborate to develop and share such resources through electronic and paper means.

Resources for Students in Support of Academic Advisement
Similarly, the responsible departments and units shall provide for their advisees the necessary information resources and tools to support their academic participation in their academic advisement.

The Undergraduate Academic Council shall provide advice and oversight to appropriate administrative units in the preparation and continuing improvement of such resources.

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