MEMO

To: John Martin, Chair, Campus Senate  
    Lynn Pardie, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

From: Undergraduate Advising Task Force – Implementation Team

RE: Report to Senate with Accompanying Materials

Date: April 19, 2012

The Undergraduate Advising Task Force – Implementation Team submits the following report on its accomplishments during the 2011-12 Academic Year as an ad hoc Senate Committee. The UATF-IT met regularly during AY2011-12. Originally charged this year with the task of implementing the recommendations outlined in the March 30, 2011 UATF Reports and Recommendations, that implementation process needed to be adjusted to account for college advising plans that were created by the deans in a process that was separate from UATF-IT discussions between October 2011 and January 2012. The UATF-IT requested an opportunity to respond to those college plans, and we provide those responses as an attachment to this report [See Appendix A]. The Chair of UATF-IT met with all four college executive committees to discuss transitions. The UATF-IT has, however, made progress in implementing many of the recommendations of its 2011 report, which include the following items:

- **Letter to Students.** Members of the UATF-IT worked with Banner support staff and staff in Admissions to prepare a letter through the Banner Relationship Management system to undergraduate students from the Office of Undergraduate Education, which provides information about a student’s catalog term, academic programs, and advisor information. The letter will be scheduled to go out each fall and spring between weeks 4 and 6 of the semester. An example of the letter is attached to this report [See Appendix B].

- **Advising Reports for Departments.** The UATF-IT has worked with the Office of Records and Registration and Instructional Technology Support to develop advising reports for departments. These reports will contain more accurate, timely, and refreshable information for departments about their advisees in majors and minors. The UATF urges every department chair to examine the reports thoroughly to ensure that their department advising lists are updated and accurate. Refining the reports will be a process. A draft version of the report was released to each academic program in spring 2012 so that departments would have the opportunity to correct their advising rosters in Banner. The reports are incredibly challenging to produce because they compile information across Banner universes. Terry Powell (on a part-time basis) and Brian Catherwood are now working with staff in IT to refine the reports, solve technical issues, and separate the reports by department and academic program. A final refreshable version will likely not be ready until summer 2012.

- **Faculty and Student Surveys.** UATF-IT has analyzed the Faculty and Student Advising Surveys from spring 2011. Those surveys are being released to appropriate audiences on campus in spring 2012. The reports are attached [See Appendices C (Faculty Survey – Quantitative), D (Faculty Survey – Qualitative), E (Student Survey – Quantitative) and F (Student Survey – Qualitative).]
- **Starfish.** Members of the UATF-IT have worked on the staged implementation of *STARFISH Alert* and *STARFISH Connect*. The Office of Undergraduate Education and the Undergraduate Academic Advising Center have undertaken faculty development pertaining to the use of STARFISH for advising and early alert.

- **Personnel Policies and Evaluations of Advising.** The UATF-IT worked with the Personnel Policies Committee to draft a resolution to change the Faculty Personnel Policies to emphasize the importance of advising as a faculty responsibility and to require the documentation of excellence in advising services. This recommendation was subsequently passed by the Faculty Senate and became an integral part of the formal faculty personnel policy on retention, advancement and promotion. The new policy states that, because

  “teaching remains the central function and excellence in teaching continues as the overriding goal” at the University of Illinois at Springfield (Vision Statement), those activities related to the academic development of students have the highest priority in the evaluation of faculty. Advising of students is a critical component of faculty duties, and advising activities and outcomes are an important consideration in the evaluation of faculty. As such, faculty will need to be prepared to demonstrate that they are actively and effectively engaging in academic advising of students on an ongoing and consistent basis. Teaching and advising will be assessed through a variety of means. Any quantitative assessments such as student evaluations of teaching and advising must should be evaluated in the context of qualitative measures such as documented comments by students and colleagues, reports on student advising activities, course syllabi, and other relevant materials. Contributions to the enhancement of teaching and learning will be assessed by the former means as well as other relevant documentation. See Appendix 10, UIS Portfolio Guidelines for more details.

The members of UATF believe that the quantitative measurement of students’ satisfaction with individual advisors is a critical component of advising. Making additional progress in improving advising at UIS will depend on implementation of this component.

The UATF-IT, led by its student members, has drafted a student satisfaction survey on advising for faculty and, with modifications, for professional advising staff to use in documenting excellence in advising services. This instrument has not yet been tested and can be used at the discretion of the colleges. UATF-IT recommends that some version of this instrument should eventually be mandatory to help implement the new personnel policies language and to insure accountability for individual advisors. The draft is attached to this report [See Appendix G].

The UATF strongly recommends that the colleges implement this expanded advising component of the personnel policy as an import point of emphasis in the annual review process for faculty as well.

- **Advising Roles and Responsibilities.** UATF-IT has developed a document that explained and differentiated the roles of faculty and professional advisors, based on a collaborative model of advising services. Some of the plans recently developed by the colleges, however, distinguish between those roles differently. While Task Force members recognize and appreciate the desire for college, and even departmental autonomy in advising, they collectively expressed concern that multiple definitions could lead to confusion among students, particularly students who switch majors. Inconsistencies in advising definitions may also lead to confusion in assessing our advising
services and our success and in implementing new personnel policies measures surrounding advising. The UATF-IT document is attached [See Appendix H].

- **Advising Referral Service.** The UATF-IT has devised a plan for an advising referral service for on-ground students, to be maintained by the reconstituted Advising Center perhaps with help from faculty, administrators, and other units on campus including Student Affairs, which will provide staffing for a stand, with a computer, phone, and printer (dubbed by Task Force members the “Lucy Is In” Stand). The service could be available starting in the fall and Task Force members suggested a location in the UIS Food Emporium. Staff and students from the Advising Center can print out DARS reports, help students find out who their advisors are, and direct them to those advisors. This suggestion came from the UATF-IT student member Sean Miller. The staff at this stand would not under any circumstances advise students, but would only direct them to the appropriate services. It is important that this service be clearly identified as a referral service rather than as real advising.

- **Faculty and Staff Development.** The UATF-IT has developed faculty and staff development sessions for spring 2012 to help prepare faculty and college staff for sophomore advising. These sessions will also be held in fall 2012.

- **Academic Success Center.** The UATF 2011 Report recommended the development of an Academic Success Center that coordinates campus academic support services, and the UATF-IT has been involved in discussions regarding the components of an Academic Success Center. UATF-IT understands those discussions are now being pursued at an administrative level. UATF-IT has provided the Provost’s Office with a bulleted list of job responsibilities for the administrator in Advising. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education is initiating the approval process for the advising position.

- **Job Descriptions for Professional Advisors.** UATF-IT has been asked to cede responsibility for job descriptions for professional advisors in the colleges to the colleges. UATF-IT recommends some discussion and analysis of the differences between the colleges at the Dean’s Council level, as potential differences in salary and job responsibilities may be problematic.

- **Advising Handbook.** UATF-IT continues to draft an Advising Handbook for faculty that should be ready for use in fall 2012.

The UATF-IT has identified the following issues from its March 2011 recommendations as still needing to be resolved:

- A series of online orientation modules for transfer students (currently the responsibility of Student Affairs); these modules will address such topics as what advising means at UIS, the importance of the team advising approach, resources for students (financial aid, health service, athletic facilities), and others to be determined.

- Assessment of advising; this task was impossible to achieve because the Task Force’s response to the college plans took considerable time this year; assessment of advising across colleges will be complex as a result of differences between the colleges; this issue will need to be addressed, however, since the campus community—especially in light of the changes to the personnel policy emphasizing the importance of faculty advising—will need to be able to measure improvements and target challenges in advising.
Training of Office Support Specialists could be scheduled in summer or fall 2012 following successful implementation of the Advising Reports mentioned above. Staff surveys could also be done in summer or fall 2012 if necessary;

- The development of faculty fellows in the Advising Center;
- UATF was going to explore data regarding advising loads in departments, but now recommends those data be examined in the colleges;
- An advising handbook for students or comparison of student advising handbooks across colleges and units.

On-going Recommendations

- UATF-IT recommends continuing to work towards a team approach to advising that combines the skills of faculty and professional advisors. That model has been implemented at least partially in the plans of the colleges. Even within colleges, however, advising plans and the team approach differ by department, which may increase inconsistency in advising services. UATF’s 2011 plan was designed to promote consistency in the quality and content of advising for students across the campus, and Task Force members have expressed concern that differences between the college plans may impact the consistency of advising services.

- UATF-IT remains concerned about the balance of responsibility between faculty and professional advisors, so recommends the campus continue to discuss and evaluate that balance. UATF-IT recommends both accountability measures for individual advisors and assessment of advising by unit or by department and college.

- UATF-IT recommends continued training for faculty and professional advisors. Training should be mandatory but could be implemented and tracked through online modules, much as the current ethics training is accomplished. It could be modified, if needed, to occur in the colleges where faculty in particular feel more comfortable, as well as emphasized in Faculty Development workshops. Trainers should include faculty, students, and professional advisors. Training should be put online in modules.

- Online advising modules for students should be developed. If developed at the campus level, such modules will need to account for differences in services across the colleges. Another option is for the colleges to develop online advising modules that reflect the practices within individual colleges and departments.

- UATF-IT continues to recommend structured and regular coordination of advising services within and among colleges and between the colleges and the newly constituted Advising Center, led by the new Director of the Advising Center. The concern is that a lack of coordination will lead to continued unevenness in training and services and to continued communication gaps and unproductive fault-finding about advising services. More importantly, UATF-IT members believe that a lack of coordination will impact students negatively.

- Training of office support specialists and staff across campus needs to continue to stress the importance of referral rather than providing advising services.

- UATF-IT members do not recommend continuing the current task force—its charges have been met—but does recommend that campus-level advising discussions continue. In fact, Task Force members believe campus-level discussions are essential to the continued improvement of advising on campus. Assessment of advising and meta-analysis of assessment should occur both within and beyond the colleges.