



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #957

Career Counseling and Advising Services (UW System)

[LFB 2001-03 Budget Summary: Page 689, #25]

CURRENT LAW

While there is no standard structure for advising that is used by all UW System institutions, campuses generally follow either a centralized or decentralized structure, or a combination of the two. Centralized advising is characterized by a central advising office staffed by professional advisors who serve undergraduate students who have not declared a major and other groups of students with special needs such as athletes and students on academic probation. After a student has declared a major, he or she is usually assigned a faculty advisor in the appropriate department. Campuses with decentralized advising structures primarily use faculty members to provide both general academic advising and advising in the student's major. Campuses that have a combined structure usually rely on faculty to provide most individual advising services but also have a central advising office.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$750,000 PR and 15.0 PR positions starting in 2002-03 to enhance student career counseling and advising services at all UW System institutions.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Of the \$750,000 provided in the bill for Systemwide advising efforts, \$723,100 would support the cost of salaries and fringe benefits for the 15.0 advising staff positions. According to DOA staff, the UW System would have the flexibility to use the advising positions at UW institutions. According to UW System staff, the positions would be allocated among the UW institutions as follows: one position to each doctoral/four-year institution and two positions in total

to colleges. In addition, \$26,900 would be available for supplies and services for the new positions.

2. The 15.0 positions provided in the Governor's proposal would be in addition to advising positions provided to UW campuses under 1999 Act 9. The 1999-01 budget provided 28.5 PR advising staff, which were allocated as follows: 3.0 positions at UW-Madison; 2.5 at UW-Milwaukee; a total of 16.5 at the comprehensive campuses; and a total of 6.5 at the UW College campuses. In addition, the 1999-01 budget provided 5.5 GPR positions to UW colleges for recruitment, advising and counseling positions for UW Colleges.

3. The University's budget requests relating to advising over the last few biennia have been in response to student requests for better access to advising. The availability and quality of student advising were among the categories rated the lowest in a student satisfaction survey conducted in July 1995. In the survey, 95% of students indicated satisfaction with their overall experience in the University, and 95% were satisfied with the quality of instruction. However, some of the lowest student satisfaction ratings were reported in the areas of academic advising and the quality of academic advising. In response to a question about the overall quality of the academic advising services they received, only 75% said that they were satisfied with the quality of advising. Of the students in the survey that had sought advising services, 73% responded that advising was always or usually available.

4. While most UW undergraduate programs require students to complete 124 credits, in recent years, the average number of credits attempted by students prior to graduation has been 139. The large number of students taking excess credits results in some students having difficulty enrolling in required courses reduces access to the University for other students and increases costs. Improvements in academic and career advising are often cited as a way to encourage better credit management by students, thus reducing the number of excess credits and shortening the amount of time students take to graduate. The University indicates that increases in the number of transfer and nontraditional students and the proliferation of distance education courses also contribute to the need to increase the number of advisors and improve advising efforts.

5. It could be argued that the additional advisor positions are necessary given that enrollment has increased by approximately 2,500 students since 1998 and student advisor ratios remain below recommended standards. According to the ACT Center for Educational Enhancement, a target ratio of 300 students per full-time advisor is recommended. The center recommends a lower ratio for high-risk students or students with undeclared majors than for students who enroll in more structured programs. Data from a 2001 survey of UW institutions showed that, of the seven institutions where academic staff advisors are responsible for a large proportion of advising for undeclared students, only UW-Eau Claire, UW-Parkside and UW-Stevens Point have student/advisor ratios of less than 300 to one. UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee and UW-Green Bay have ratios of approximately 500 to one, and UW Oshkosh has a ratio of 900 to one.

6. The bill would provide only PR funding for advising requested in the UW System's economic stimulus package proposal. In its agency budget request, the UW asked for these

positions using the traditional 65% GPR/35% PR funding split. To accomplish this, funding in the bill could be adjusted adding GPR funding and reducing PR funding by a corresponding amount. As an alternative, an additional 7.5 advising positions could be provided in 2002-03 using 65% GPR/35% PR funding, which would be consistent with the UW's agency budget request, although the UW had requested a half-year of funding in 2001-02. The new advising positions would be used to enhance academic advising throughout the system for freshmen and students who have not yet declared majors.

7. Typically, funding for instruction-related initiatives in the UW System's budget is provided through a combination of 65% GPR and 35% program revenues derived from tuition. According to DOA staff, the advising initiative would be funded exclusively with tuition because it would directly benefit UW students and students would be more likely to be involved in decisions regarding the expenditure of tuition monies. In addition, it could be argued that if students are required to pay for improvements in advising, they may be more likely to take advantage of the advising services available to them. The average increase in tuition that would result from the Governor's advising initiative proposal is estimated at 0.15%, or about \$5 per year for resident undergraduate students.

ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Approve Governor's recommendation to provide \$750,000 PR and 15.0 PR positions in 2002-03 to improve academic and career counseling services at all UW System institutions.
2. Modify the Governor's recommendation by providing an additional \$865,000 GPR and 22.5 GPR positions and deleting \$285,000 PR and 15.0 PR positions in 2002-03 to provide the 2002-03 funding requested by the UW System in its agency budget request.

| Alternative 2 | GPR | PR | TOTAL |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Bill) | \$865,000 | - \$285,000 | \$580,000 |
| 2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Bill) | 22.50 | - 15.00 | 7.50 |

3. Modify the Governor's recommendation by providing an additional \$1,000,000 PR and 7.5 PR positions in 2002-03 to provide the PR funding for the amount and number of positions requested by the University to improve advising.

| Alternative 3 | PR |
|---|-------------|
| 2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Bill) | \$1,000,000 |
| 2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Bill) | 7.50 |

4. Modify the Governor's recommendation by providing \$488,000 GPR and 15.0 GPR positions and deleting \$488,000 PR and 15.0 PR positions in 2002-03 to provide the funding based

on a 65% GPR/35% PR split.

| Alternative 4 | GPR | PR | TOTAL |
|---|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Bill) | \$488,000 | - \$488,000 | \$0 |
| 2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Bill) | 15.00 | - 15.00 | 0.00 |

5. Maintain current law.

| Alternative 5 | PR |
|---|-------------|
| 2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Bill) | - \$750,000 |
| 2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Bill) | - 15.00 |

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