

# You Moved My Cheese: Curricular Challenges of Student Advising Instructors

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## Workshop Outcomes

Participants will:

- identify the curricular challenges that student advising instructors face when redesigning freshman seminar courses
- articulate strategies to support student advising instructors in the course redesign process

## Institutional Background

- Doctoral research university
- Urban setting in North Carolina
- 27,232 students enrolled
- 3317 entering freshmen(Fall 2014)
  - Majority are first-generation
  - 70% receive financial aid
  - 24% enter as undeclared/undecided students

## University College

- Established in July 2007
- Home to student success initiatives such as Learning Communities, Freshman Seminar, and Prospect for Success
- Helps to manage General Education
- Houses undeclared/undecided students via the University Advising Center
- UAC has 10 professional advisors each with an average load of 250-350 students

## Freshman Seminar Purposes

- Assist with students' intellectual and social transition to the institution.
- Acclimate students to college life
- Assist students in the process of learning about and deciding on a major and/or career
- Help promote students' academic success in their courses

## Freshman Seminar Audience

- University College and College of Liberal Arts and Studies students must enroll in a Freshmen Seminar
- Many Freshmen Seminar students have not determined or declared a major
- Undeclared students are those that have decided on a major prior to enrollment but have not met the initial admission requirements to enter into the program

## Freshman Seminar Course Structure

- Taught by Academic Advisors
- Course may focus on a special populations of students or a particular themes
- Course content includes:
  - Introductions to campus resources
  - Personal Development
  - Study Skills
  - Major Exploration
  - Common Reading

## Prospect For Success Initiative

- Developed as part of the Quality Enhancement Plan required by SACSCOC
- Goal was to increase student engagement in the freshman year through the curriculum
- “Prospectize” most first-year freshman courses
  - Incorporate content, activities, and assignments addressing three student learning outcomes
  - Generate student reflections used to directly assess learning outcomes
  - Include a co-curricular experience (academic, professional, or community related)
  - Make connections between the curriculum and advising

## Planned Implementation Academic Freedom Model

- Each of the eight College Development Teams
  - Redesign curriculum to address learning outcomes
  - Complete an Engagement Curriculum Template
  - Revise Template after a review
  - Generate student work used to directly assess student learning outcomes
  - Begin instruction in Fall 2013

## Planned Implementation Academic Freedom Model

- Faculty and staff participated in the planning
  - [Team](#) leads participated on the Steering Committee where decisions were made
  - Team leads shared information with the Development Teams
  - Faculty would provide feedback to Team Leads to bring back to the Steering Committee
- Faculty and staff support was available
  - Executive Team Liaisons assigned to the Colleges
  - Educational opportunities provided

## Implementation Assumptions Academic Freedom Model

- Organizational structure would create an exchange of information and all would be “in the loop”
- Faculty knew how best to adapt the courses, so no “interference” from assessment persons
- College teams would discuss how to incorporate SLOs and link to current activities and/or develop new ones
- The provided curricular purposes, intent, outcomes, and requirements would provide enough direction to redesign the course
- New outcomes and assessments would be integrated into the course

## Implementation Challenges Academic Freedom Model

- Advisors were not included in the planning until a semester prior to the teaching course
- Advisors rather than the curriculum director prepared the course curriculum
- Advisors had little knowledge and skills of curriculum design
- Advisors unclear how to make a course with no academic content meet the learning outcomes
- Advisors unclear what components of the original course to keep and what to change
- Advisors unclear as to who to turn to for help

## Reflection

### Faced with these challenges

- As an advisor instructor, identify changes needed to the “academic freedom” model to help prepare you for next fall’s course?
- As an assessment staff person, how would you adjust the “academic freedom” model to prepare current and new instructors for next fall?

## Results

### Academic Freedom Model

- Outcomes and assessments were layered not integrated into courses
- Students were not clear about how assignments/activities related to course
- Learning Outcome targets were not achieved

## Academic Freedom Model Enhancements

- Engagement
  - Encouraged Development Teams to meet more often
  - Encouraged Steering Committee to participate more in decision making
- Guidance
  - Executive Team Liaisons play a more active role
  - Assessment Director not just relegated to assessment activities

## New Implementation Plan Consultation Model

- Collaborative reviews of curriculum with internal and external professionals
- Provided professional development opportunities (general and by College)
- Created a space and time for collaborations with colleagues
- Closer monitoring of implementation by assigned liaisons

## Consultation Model Feedback

- Increased the level of understanding and confidence in incorporating the SLOs in the course
- Increased collaboration among advising instructors to meet and share ideas/activities to meet the SLOs
- Additional support and concrete ideas are still needed to increase further confidence in incorporating the SLOs in the course

## Lessons Learned

- One size does not fit all
- All faculty are not created equal
- Academic Freedom does not mean “hands off”, expectations, structure, and support is welcomed
- Plan professional development and colleague sharing opportunities early (faculty enjoy learning)
- No matter how clear you think the SLOs and assessment are, interpretations will differ
- Don't assume prior knowledge or experience exists

# Questions

Figure 4 Organizational Chart

