

## **Academic Advising and Disability Resources Self-Assessment for Program Review, October 2012**

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Lucy Chang, Interpreter/Classroom Aide (part time, 9 mo)

Ann Isgrig, Administrative Assistant

Latoya Johnson, Residence Life Coordinator and Academic Advising Counselor (10 hrs/wk)

Hanna Langley, Academic and International Advisor (20 hrs/wk)

Joyce Stern, Dean for Student Success and Academic Advising

Autumn Wilke, Residence Life Coordinator and Academic Advising Counselor (10 hrs/wk)

Marlene Jacks, Intercultural Affairs Associate, Diversity & Inclusion (~5 hrs/wk)

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- 1. Giving due consideration to the educational directions of your program or service field, to the college's stated educational goals, and to changes within the college, how would you currently define your department or program mission?**

Our mission:

*The Academic Advising Office, within the Division of Student Affairs, helps students develop the skills and strategies they need to be effective, independent, active learners so they can succeed in their academic endeavors. We fulfill our mission by collaborating with students, faculty and other offices, integrating a variety of resources and services in a respectful and supportive environment.*

The name of our office is somewhat misleading, thus our work begs a short description. It should be clarified that faculty are students' advisers from the time they set foot on campus until graduation. Faculty work with their advisees to create a four-year program of study grounded in the liberal arts and consistent with the student's personal goals. Our staff works with students for academic planning when questions or issues become complex, often due to a student's personal circumstances.

We also function as a learning center. We coordinate academic accommodations for students with disabilities, and we offer peer tutoring for 24 academic departments and programs in the humanities and social studies divisions. We do a great deal of teaching of study skills, effective time management, resourcefulness, self regulation and other skills. Thus, we are part of what is called the Academic Resource Centers (ARC). ARC consists of the Reading Lab, the Writing Lab, the Math Lab, the Science Learning Center, and the Libraries, among others.

- 2. Explain *how* the department or program provides the best possible educational experience for students who comprise the department's or program's clientele, giving particular attention to student learning outcomes.**

There are seven major areas of focus of this office. Each has a section in this binder with examples and further information. Briefly, here is a description with desired learning outcomes for students.

- i. Individual and group instruction on *academic and life skills and academic planning.*** Staff members meet individually, or occasionally in groups such as in a workshop setting, with students to reinforce a variety of academic skills. Resources are also posted on our webpage. The academic planning work we do with students is mostly done one-on-one at the request of the student. Our advising is designed to be concert with what faculty advisers offer and with services the Registrar’s Office provides. We *supplement* the information that each of those areas offers, rather than *supplanting* either of their work.

*Desired learning outcomes: Students who meet with an academic advising staff member will feel more confident in their ability to manage their situations or handle similar situations in the future; learn about resources on campus that they did not know about or learn how to best access and use resources they already knew existed; and/or learn a new academic skill or strategy such as organization/planning, time management, study skills, note taking, speaking up in class, or how to talk with a faculty member.*

- ii. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities.** Joyce meets with students individually who need academic accommodation. She talks with the student, reviews documentation, and then – in a follow up meeting that includes the student and his/her adviser – she makes a determination about reasonable accommodations. She works in partnership with Jennifer Krohn to arrange for access needs (mostly mobility) and with Karen McRitchie to implement assistive technology. Ann Isgrig is critical in implementing a number of accommodations related to testing and note takers. Joyce may also make referrals to other offices to support additional needs, such as residence life or dining. Hanna offers co-active coaching to students with ADHD and other disorders of executive functioning.

*Desired learning outcome: Students who meet with a staff member to request academic accommodations for a disability will understand the process of requesting and being provided academic accommodations. Over time they will become more effective self-advocates. Ideally they will also achieve learning outcomes mentioned in item i. above.*

- iii. Peer tutoring for subjects within the humanities and social studies divisions.** Hanna coordinates tutoring for students who need supplemental assistance in any course offered in our humanities and social studies divisions. She collaborates with instructors and department chairs to identify and recruit potential tutors, offers individual tutor training, and maintains all tutor training materials. She meets with students individually who express need for tutoring, matches them with a tutor, then compiles tutor/tutee records for payroll. Ann administers payroll. Hanna also coordinates the Mentoring Program for the Economics department and, recently, Music. Mentors are upper-class students who attend class for the course they are mentoring; once weekly they hold “mentor sessions” for students in class to review material.

*Desired learning outcome: Students who use the tutoring program will be able to better understand their course material, course expectations, and become more independent learners.*

- iv. **Academic difficulty reports from faculty and follow up with students and advisers.** Every few weeks we solicit information from teaching faculty about students who are achieving less than C-level work, missing class, or exhibiting concerning behaviors. Ann enters this information into a database, and reports are shared with the students and the students' advisers through campus mail. Our staff meets weekly to discuss problematic patterns and brainstorm interventions. Every other week a larger group called the "Academic Difficulty Triage Team" meets and has a similar conversation. Academic Advising staff also does outreach to students who have already exhibited academic difficulty in a prior semester and are on academic probation, pre- or post-suspension.

*Desired learning outcomes: same as item i. above.*

- v. **Transfer student orientation.** Hanna coordinates the orientation for new transfer students. She communicates with new transfer students and department chairs to identify faculty advisers for each transfer student prior to arrival. She also recruits and trains transfer student mentors. In the fall Transfer Orientation is a component of the New Student Orientation program. For transfer students arriving in the spring semester, Hanna collaborates with Dining Services, ITS, Campus Safety and Security, Admission, Libraries, and Registrar to plan and execute their entire orientation.

*Desired learning outcome: By participating in the transfer student orientation, students will acquire skills and knowledge to make a successful academic transition to Grinnell College.*

- vi. **Exceptions to enrollment.** Joyce administers requests for leaves of absence from the College including both planned personal leaves and emergency leaves of absence (typically for medical reasons). She also reviews requests for exceptional course withdrawals, which occur after the regular deadline and allow a student to exit a course and receive a "W."

*Desired learning outcomes: same as item i. above.*

- vii. **Cooperative, cross-departmental programs.** Joyce works closely with the office of the Associate Dean of the College to administer the campus' advising program for faculty, the First-Year Tutorial program (the College's first-year seminar program), and she serves on the Committee on Academic Standing (a faculty committee charged with determining exceptions to academic policy and a student's academic standing upon review of semester grades). Joyce is also the administrative director for the Grinnell Science Project, which has rotating faculty directors and includes a week-long pre-orientation for new students who are underrepresented in the sciences. Hanna and Joyce both work with the Academic Resource Centers (ARC).

*Desired learning outcome: Learning outcomes for these programs reside with each program.*

**3. Explain how you evaluate student achievement of learning outcomes and how the results of this assessment are integrated into department or program planning processes.**

We employ a variety of assessments. You may see these statistics and results of surveys in this packet of materials. They are included as part of the end-of-year reports.

- Office use statistics are kept annually. We routinely have about 1000 student contacts each year, and we survey these students.
- In Spring 2011 we surveyed students with disabilities. Three findings from this survey stand out. Students speak well of their experience arranging for and receiving academic accommodations at Grinnell. 88% of students agree that Academic Advising is doing a good job of fulfilling its mission. As a result of going through the process of arranging academic accommodations, 83% of students report that they agree that “I better understand my disability(ies) and my needs,” and 90% report that “I have become better at self-advocating for my needs.”
- In Spring 2012 we surveyed all students who utilized our office. Several findings point to some success with achieving our learning goals for students. Most students (70%) agreed that they felt more confident in their ability to manage their academic situation after meeting with a staff person. More than half of students (53%) said they learned about resources on campus they weren’t aware of or learned how to access those resources. The majority (52%) of students also agreed that they learned a new skill or strategy while in the Academic Advising Office.
- We also compile end-of-semester evaluations of the Mentorship Program.

After each survey collection, staff discuss the findings and adjustments are made individually and collectively. As a result of our most recent Spring survey administration, we have decided to make further surveys more tailored to the various populations we serve, that is, students hired as tutors, students receiving tutoring, students receiving individual academic counseling and students arranging for academic accommodations for a disability.

**4. In what ways does the work of your department or program *reflect and foster* understanding of the diversity of our society and on campus?**

Inclusion work is an *explicit* part of our program in one particular way, of course, by serving students with disabilities. As a group, there is very little that is the same across individuals, so one of our exciting challenges is to support the vast diversity *within* this population of students. We also foster campus awareness of disability by the accommodation process itself (which intentionally includes advisers), frequent individual conversations with instructors, active participation in the Accessibility Committee, and very occasional educational programming for faculty and/or students.

Inclusion is also *infused* in a variety of ways we do business. Particular efforts to support students of color, first-generation college students, international students, women interested

in fields where they are under-represented, and students with diverse gender identities, religions, and personal backgrounds are manifest in a variety of ways. Some examples:

- Weekly meetings of the Academic Advising staff include Marlene Jacks in her role as Intercultural Affairs Associate. The purpose is to enhance outreach to and understanding of students of concern from diverse backgrounds who come to our attention as needing specific help.
- We have frequent outreach to Posse Mentors and Posse city staff.
- Hanna is both an academic and international advisor allowing us close access to international students and heightened openness and sensitivity to diverse cultures.
- Individually staff are encouraged to continue to enhance their awareness of people of diverse backgrounds through campus and professional programming.
- Joyce's work with the Grinnell Science Project allows us to bring knowledge of needs of diverse students to the program itself and encourages students from GSP to utilize Academic Advising.

**5. What is the extent of departmental staff involvement in college courses, non-departmental programs, interprogram or interdisciplinary collaborations, or college governance? Assess how such commitments have enhanced or limited the department or program.**

Academic Advising staff is itself interdepartmental. Joyce is full-time, and, within her dean's role she, effectively, serves as director of both academic advising and coordinator of disability services. Ann's work is split between Academic Advising and the Vice President for Student Affairs. Hanna has a half-time appointment split between Academic Advising and International Student Affairs. Two Residence Life Coordinators work about quarter time in Academic Advising. Marlene Jacks, Intercultural Affairs Associate, gives considerable time to Academic Advising as part of her work in the Diversity and Inclusion. Lucy has a unique role working directly with one student. At times this arrangement is cumbersome because of workloads and multiple responsibilities. However, forming a team of people from various departments enhances our work with students because a wide cross-section of staff is likely to connect with a variety of students. At a small college, students more readily respond to outreach from people that they already know, thus our arrangement can have a bigger impact.

Additionally we have many collaborative programs and serve on a variety of College committees. These include Grinnell Science Project, the First-Year Tutorial Program, the Committee on Academic Standing, the Accessibility Committee and various College initiatives at any given time.

**6. In what ways is the mission of your department or program supported by other departments/programs? What factors have contributed to good collaboration across departments/programs? In what ways does your department/program mission support the DSA mission/values/vision and the mission of the College?**

Two of our closest allies in our work with and for students are the Registrar's Office for advising-related concerns and with the Academic Resource Centers (ARC) for student learning support. Individually-tailored advising and student academic success requires a complex network of support and communication. Several members of both groups, along with representation from the Career Development Office, Athletics, and Diversity & Inclusion, form the Academic Triage Team which meets every other week to discuss students who are experiencing academic difficulty and offers outreach.

Learning support on our campus is spread across multiple areas, so collegiality is necessary. Several of us recognized that we may have untapped benefits which could arise from close collaboration, and beginning in the 2009-10 academic year the ARC was formed.

Having decentralized systems for both advising and learning support has plusses and minuses. The benefit is the breadth of expertise that we can draw on to identify issues and solve problems, from the institutional level down to the student level. Occasionally the drawback is a lack of swiftness when we need to move due to myriad organizational reporting lines. But, in general, the various networks that Academic Advising is a part of greatly enhance our work rather than detract from it.

Within the Division of Student Affairs (DSA), Academic Advising has very close partnerships. In particular, collaboration with the Office of International Student Affairs, Student Health and Counseling Services and Residence Life and Orientation, help us fulfill our mission of student academic success by assisting with development of and care for the entire person.

Symbiotically, the Academic Advising Office helps to fulfill the DSA Mission and Values by emphasizing *student learning* and *personal responsibility*. We use a *student-centered* approach in reaching out to students who are clearly struggling academically. We build *relationships* with them – and with their advisers and instructors – working *one-on-one* with them to get them back on track and achieve their goals. We provide both *challenge* and *support*. If they fail and end up on probation or are suspended, we work to help them identify new strategies that they can employ to have a different outcome next time. As another example, we provide *services and support*, *feedback*, and *encouragement* to students with disabilities – both students who seek formal academic accommodations as well as students who simply need individual attention. We also run a tutoring program which squarely engages the *student learning* part of the DSA mission.

Finally, Academic Advising contributes to the College's mission "to graduate women and men who can think clearly, who can speak and write persuasively and even eloquently, who can evaluate critically both their own and others' ideas, who can acquire new knowledge, and who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good." Each of the steps we take with students is meant to directly contribute, first and foremost, to the possibility of them graduating, and also to being able to use their knowledge and abilities in their lives after Grinnell.



- 7. If the department or program is adding new activities, programs, or services, please explain how they will be staffed within the existing complement of staff. If the department or program is retaining activities or programs with consistently low involvement, explain any reasons for their retention.**

We currently have no plans for adding *new* activities or programs. In the past two years we added an extended workshop series in Jan/Feb for first-year students who struggled in their first semester taught by the RLCs. Hanna also added mentoring in the Music department. With no added staffing or funding, we are unable to accommodate new initiatives without significantly cutting back other programs.

- 8. Explain how you evaluate the department or program's achievement of management goals and objectives. What means are used for short-term and long-term planning? How is assessment of the operation of the department or program integrated into planning?**

Short-term planning happens collaboratively with all staff within Academic Advising, woven into staff meetings primarily at the start of each semester.

A comprehensive 360-degree annual performance review of each staff member allows for staffing review and development. Individual staff members' goals are also reviewed and new ones created at the start of each academic cycle. Once per week, staff meet individually one-on-one with Joyce for collaborative feedback.

Joyce manages long-term planning with incidental feedback from department members, reflection during the writing of the end-of-year report, input from various committees and campus initiatives (for example, recent initiatives related to academic success and retention of students of color), and deliberation with Houston Dougharty. Participation in professional development opportunities often drives reflection on how we are accomplishing existing goals and ways to do this better.

No specific mechanism is used to integrate departmental assessment into future planning. Honestly, this could be done more intentionally.

- 9. What are the ethical principles, professional standards, statements, or codes that guide the department or program and its staff members? What are the crucial legal issues, if any, faced by the department or program? How does the department or program ensure non-discriminatory, fair, and equitable treatment to all constituents?**

We have membership in two organizations, NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) and AHEAD (Association for Higher Education and Disability). NACADA has a statement of core values ([www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/advisingissues/Core-Values.htm](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/advisingissues/Core-Values.htm)). AHEAD has a code of ethics and both professional and program standards ([www.ahead.org/resources](http://www.ahead.org/resources)). These, along with the ACPA/NASPA Professional

Competencies ([www.naspa.org/regions/regioniii/Professional%20Competency.pdf](http://www.naspa.org/regions/regioniii/Professional%20Competency.pdf)) and CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) standards, provide national frameworks for our professional work and practice.

We must understand and follow various laws. Much of our work with individual students involves very private information – sometimes educational, sometimes medical – and thus FERPA and HIPAA are relevant when information is shared. On campus that happens only on a need-to-know basis. Off campus (to parents or medical service providers) sharing requires a FERPA or HIPAA-compliant release signed by the student. For disability, the ADA, ADAAA, Section 504 and related disability laws drive the main reason for our work. In addition to the fact that it is legally required, providing equal access and full support for students with disabilities is simply the right thing to do.

**10. As you look ahead to the next five year period, what if any resource needs (personnel, equipment, space, operational funding) demand attention? What goals or objectives for the next five years could be met within existing resources? What goals or objectives would require additional resources?**

We have several goals for the next five years. Some can be met with existing staffing and resources. Others cannot to come to fruition unless we have a significant one-time influx of funds and/or are able to add staff.

For the past five years, Academic Advising has **requested a new staff position, Disability Services Coordinator**. The full position request is included in disability section of these materials. Services for students with disabilities at Grinnell have historically been decentralized. Grinnell does not have an Office of Disability Services to streamline requests and enhance communication among offices and programs on campus. Grinnell has long-needed a position to coordinate disability resources for students, and meeting growing needs has been challenging. The College has seen an upturn in the number of students with disabilities who need academic accommodation – growing from 2.3% to over 4% of our student body in the last decade. Within this population the number of students with significant disabilities who need more extensive accommodations has also increased, requiring additional staff time.

For many years we have been refining and enhancing the **technology we use to track our students who experience academic difficulty** (i.e., the Academic Difficulty Reports), but it is inefficient. The system is homegrown, created by programmers in ITS. It is adequate but doesn't fully take advantage of the technology. Faculty send in their reports on paper or by email; Ann enters the reports into an electronic database; then those entries are printed and distributed in campus mail to advisers and students. This paper-to-electronic-to-paper system is time intensive. We have been searching for new technology – which would also dovetail with our broader tracking of students of concern led by Dean of Students, Travis Greene – but funding has not been made available for this purpose.



There is a significant need for **professional development for faculty on a number of advising and disability-related topics**. Faculty have often asked for more information about accommodating students with disabilities in the classroom, starting with baseline knowledge of different disabilities, the relevant laws, and guidance about making reasonable accommodation, especially for students with mental health disabilities. Related, faculty also struggle with fairness to all students when an exception is requested – what are the limits of flexibility? Faculty also seek guidance about advising students, from basic advising rules and techniques for new advisers to advising students with disabilities. Other offices have also approached us about ways to help faculty become more informed about their particular student population, such as international students and first-generation college students, to name just two.

We must examine the 2012 guidance from AHEAD on guidelines for accommodations of students with disabilities ([www.ahead.org/resources/documentation\\_guidance](http://www.ahead.org/resources/documentation_guidance)) and **re-write existing policies to reflect current interpretation of the law**.

We should review and, likely, **re-write grievance procedures for accommodation decisions**. The current grievance procedure has not been enacted in the time that Joyce has served in her role, but certainly could be at any time. We could have a better process given our current organizational structure.

Finally our **webpage needs revision and enhancement**. In particular, we would like to ensure that our best informational handouts are available online. ([www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/academic-advising](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/academic-advising))

We sincerely look forward to feedback from the Review Team. Hearing your insights will provide opportunities to strengthen our work.