

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

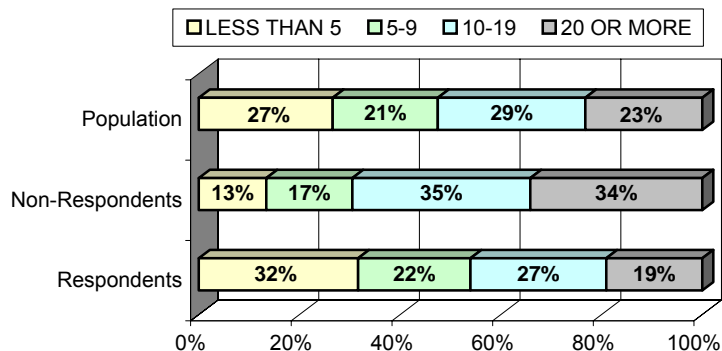
(ADVISOR SURVEY)

In September 2006, 297 current advisors of undergraduate degree-seeking students were asked to complete a survey on their attitudes/perceptions of students' attitudes toward the advising process. About 72% (215) of them responded. This report covers the major findings of the survey.

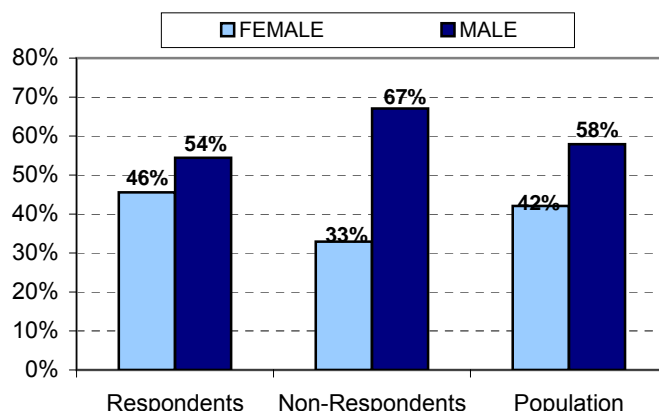
Population, Respondents, and Non-Respondents:

Differences Between Those who Responded and Those who did not Respond

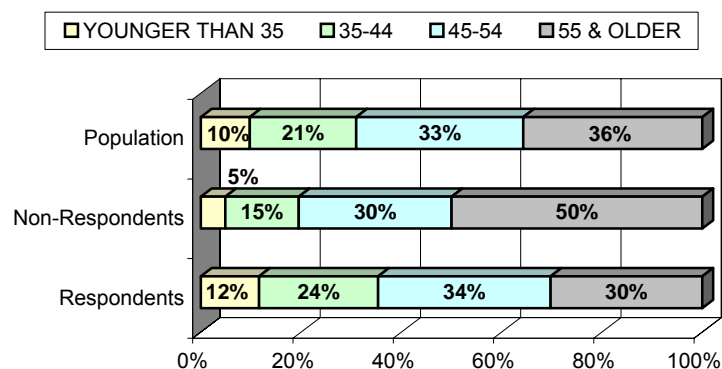
Respondents and Non-Respondents by the Number of Years with the University



Respondents and Non-Respondents by Gender



Respondents and Non-Respondents by Age

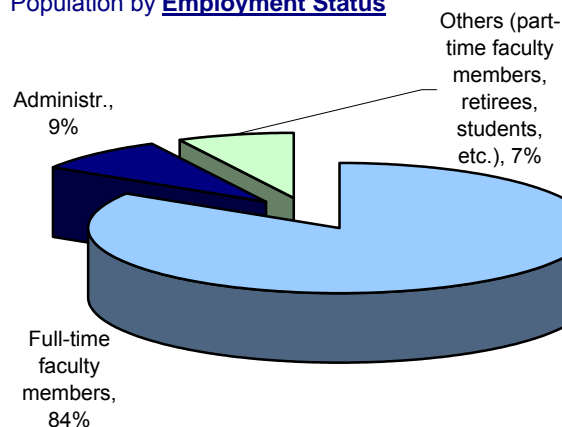


► A negative relationship was found between the number of years with the University and the odds of responding to the survey. The percent of advisors with less than 5 years of affiliation with ISU is substantially higher among respondents and the percent of those who worked at the university for 20 years or longer is higher among non-respondents.

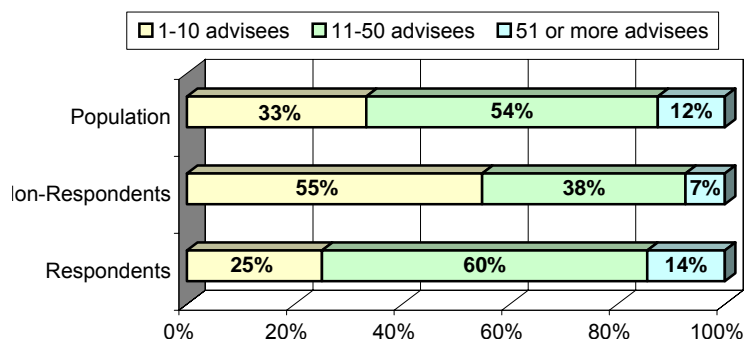
► Similarly, age was negatively correlated with the odds of response. Half of non-respondents were 55 years of age or older. Among respondents, only 30% of advisors were 55 years of age or older.

► Female advisors were more likely to respond than male advisors. (The percent of females was higher among respondents.)

Population by Employment Status



Respondents and Non-Respondents by the Number of Advisees

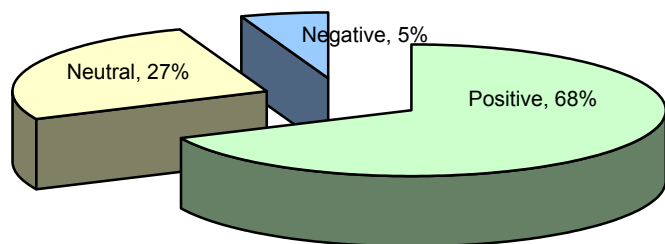


► The majority of advisors (84%) are full-time faculty members. The group of administrators and others (part-time faculty members, librarians, retirees, students, dorm directors, and coaches) constitute 9% and 7% of the population consecutively. Full-time faculty members and administrators were more likely to respond: faculty members constitute 87% of respondents and 77% of non-respondents; administrators constitute 10% of respondents and 6% of non-respondents. About 4% of respondents and 17% of non-respondents were others.

► Advisors who had less advisees were less likely to respond. About 55% of non-respondents had 10 or fewer advisees, and only 25% of respondents had 10 or fewer advisees.

Despite differences found between respondents and non-respondents, sample simulation (via weighting/deleting cases) does not appear to be appropriate because of a small population and sample size and the nature of the questionnaire (most of the questions are open-ended). Description of differences between respondents and non-respondents is provided to show a possible sample bias.

Attitude toward Advising



► About 68% of respondents indicated that they find advising pleasant and rewarding, 27% had neither very positive nor very negative feelings toward the advising, and 5% found advising very unpleasant.

Most of **respondents who find advising pleasant and rewarding** indicated that they enjoy assisting students in accomplishment of their academic and career goals and appreciate a chance to get to know students personally (enjoy one-to-one interaction). Few respondents stated that advising makes them feel that they are part of student

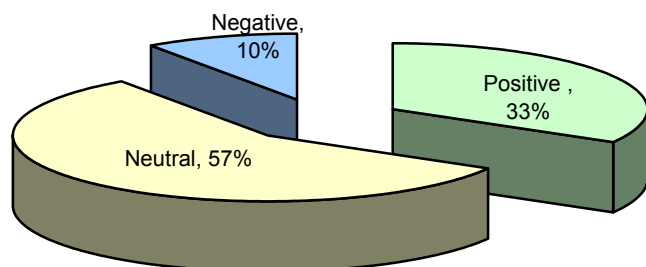
success. Some respondents also indicated that they see advising as a chance to improve students' feelings toward ISU. Only few negative comments were found among those who find advising pleasant and rewarding. Two comments were related to scheduling and recordkeeping ("one more thing to do in a busy schedule"), two were related to the fact that advising is not rewarded/compensated by the university. Few interviewees stated that advising experience depends on the students: "For those students who actually come and see me and properly prepare for the advising process, it is GREAT. For those students who wait until the last minute or never come and see me, it is a waste of my time and theirs."

The statements, indicating that the advising experience depends on students were prevailing among those who **had neither very positive nor very negative feelings toward advising**: "I enjoy advising some students; I do not enjoy advising others"; "with some students I find advising very rewarding, with others the process is not very rewarding"; etc. Few negative comments were related to scheduling classes and passing out PIN numbers: "it is a wasted effort" and, sometimes, PIN number and problems with DARS are the main reason students would come to see an advisor. Some respondents indicated that lack of time is a problem: "I have so little time for it that it becomes a burden"; "my day is more crowded now"; "advising keeps me from doing other things the University requires me to do"; etc. One critical comment was related to "undefinable expectations from the administration that advising should help retain students": these expectations make advising stressful. Another critical comment was related to "frustrating multiple tracts and delivery formats (RNBS, generic BS, LPNBS, distance, campus based, etc.)". It was also indicated that advising distance students is less rewarding.

Few interviewees stated that they just started advising and do not always have answers to students' questions.

Respondents who **find advising very unpleasant** are concerned with lack of "real training on advising or systematic way to hear updates or change" (I might make a mistake in lieu of the many changes that occur with Gen Ed requirements, changes in our program, etc. I get nervous") and lack of support from administration ("as usual, the administration just keeps giving faculty more to do without aid"). Other concerns were related to inequitable load distribution: "I have so many advisees that I spend about 10 weeks each semester doing advising..."

Perception of Students' Attitudes toward the Advising Process



► About 33% of respondents believe that students find the advising process pleasant and rewarding, 57% believe that students have neither very positive nor very negative feelings about the advising process, and 10% think that students find the advising process unpleasant and frustrating.

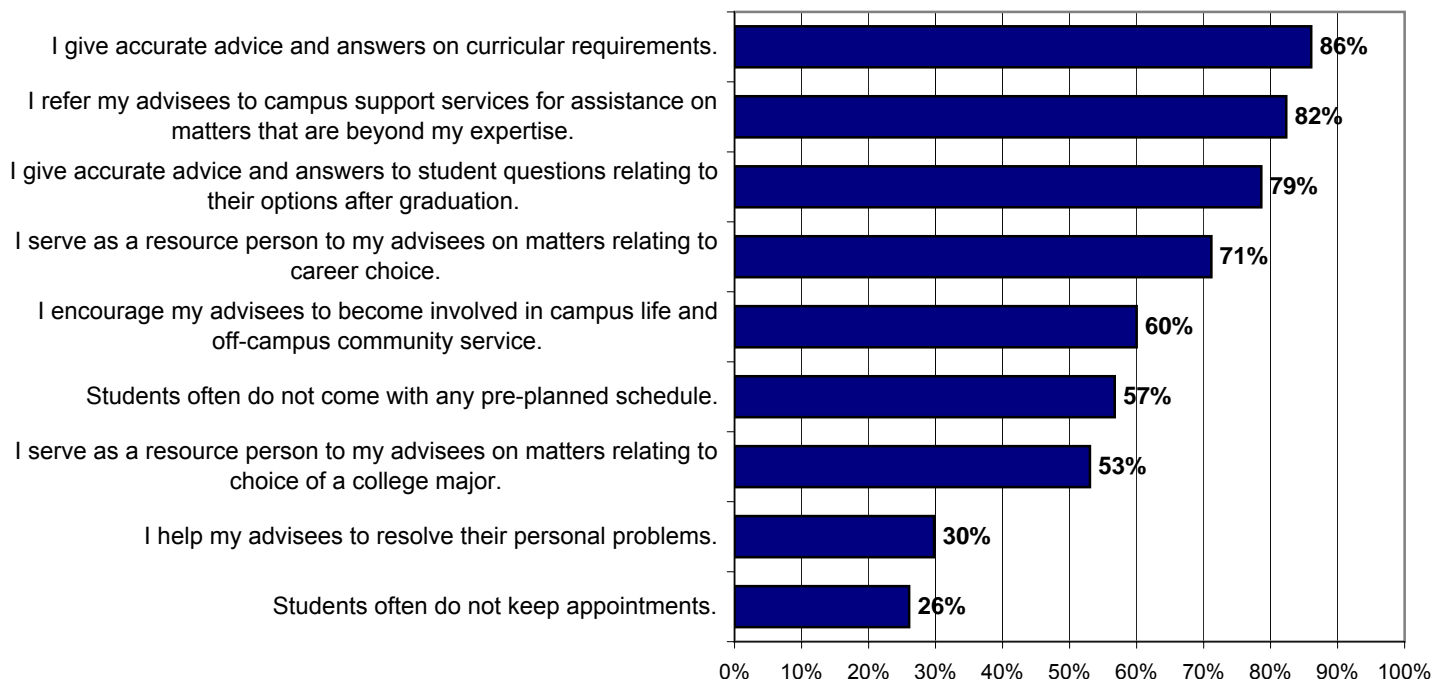
Respondents who believe that **students find the advising process pleasant and rewarding** provided the following rationales for their answer: anecdotal reports from advisees, data from the Summer 2006 Sycamore Advantage, advisor assessments/department

assessments, and the fact that Junior and Senior level students continue to come for advising even though they are not required to. "Less serious" rationales were: "I believe meeting with me is a positive experience" and "I can tell from their smile". Some interviewees also indicated that only those students who actually come to see them find advising pleasant and rewarding and stated that there are differences among students.

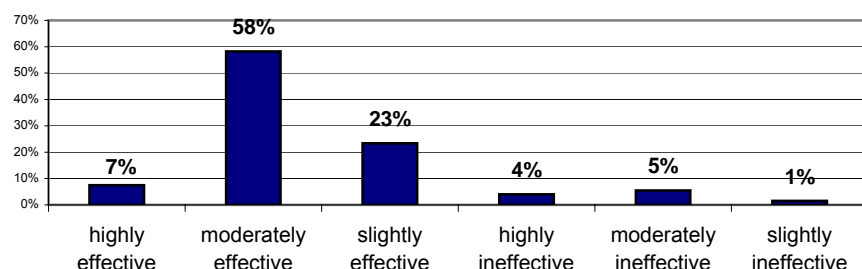
In most cases, advisors indicated that **students have neither very positive nor very negative feelings about the advising process** because "some students find it very helpful and rewarding, while others seem to completely tune you out and do whatever they want to anyway". For some advisors, this response was rather associated with "hard to say"/"have never received a feedback": "I don't have many students who change from me to others, so I guess I'm doing alright." Few interviewees indicated that students see advising as a "necessary evil".

Those who believe that **students find the advising process unpleasant and frustrating** pointed out the following problems: "[students] complain that they can't get a hold of advisors and that the DARS are difficult to read", "on this campus, many faculty do not hold regular office hours, do not advise, and provide no mentoring", "students don't take any ownership or responsibility in their degree path", "students feel unwanted or completely lost when it comes to the value/benefit of the advisor/advisee process"; "it commonly takes months (sometimes 6 or more) to get a transfer student's transcripts fully evaluated. This semester I worked with a transfer student who is a graduating senior and DARS still did not recognize his transfer work!"; "requirement for teaching certification is too complicated"; "student and faculty's schedule might not coincide".

Perception of Personal Academic Advising Experience



Overall Rating of the Academic Advisement System at ISU



► The majority (58%) of interviewees believe that the Academic Advisement system at ISU is moderately effective. About 10% find it slightly to highly ineffective. About 30% stated that it is slightly effective, and 7% - that it is highly effective.

The Most Rewarding Aspect of Academic Advising

Most answers to the question (What do you find the most rewarding aspect of academic advising?) fell into three categories: (1) getting to know students (or, one-to one interaction with students), (2) being able to help succeed academically and professionally, and (3) seeing students succeed. Some answers could be related to two, some - to all of these categories.

Almost half of the 185 advisors who responded to this question indicated that the opportunity for one-to-one interaction with students was the most rewarding aspect of advising. Some of the answers in this category were: "getting to know students"; "having personal interactions with students"; "knowing my students as individuals"; "personal, one-on-one time with students"; "talking to a student as a complete person as opposed to just a student"; "teacher to student relationship"; "working with students"; "you get to know your advisees better"; etc.

At least one third of the advisors who responded to the question stated that the opportunity to help students was the most rewarding aspect of advising. The following answers fell within this category: "being able to better understand their situations, and to advise accordingly"; "empowering students to decide their future and academic progress"; "explaining to students information that will assist them with making good choices and raising their confidence levels through increasing their knowledge"; "helping students see all of their academic and career options more clearly"; "helping students see a big picture in linking education to skills and career"; "helping students to graduate"; "helping students to make difficult major, minor, career and professional goals choices"; "providing students with information and assistance to help them complete their degree requirements smoothly"; etc.

About a quarter of the advisors indicated that seeing students succeed was the most rewarding aspect of advising. Answers that fell within this category were: "seeing the developmental process of a student occur in front of my eyes"; "the transformation from their initial experience with me to their graduation is very rewarding"; "successful graduation rates, good grades, and people happy in their careers"; "student success during and after college"; "when a student "discovers" true interests (and likely career path) through a combination of courses they have taken and advisement"; "hearing from my former students about their successes in their careers"; etc.

Few answers could not be classified in either of the above mentioned categories. Two respondents indicated that there are no rewarding aspects of advising: "At this point NONE. In the past it was rewarding and enjoyable but changes in the last 5-8 years have destroyed the system." On the contrary, one respondent felt that there were improvements: "With the adoption of the policy where each advisee must come to the advisor to receive his/her advisement PIN, advisement has vastly improved from what it had been previously". Few answers were related to improving the image of a department and University in general: "I enjoy seeing students pleased with our department and university". Few advisors indicated that their experience was rewarding with some students and not rewarding with others.

The Most Frustrating or Dissatisfying Aspect of Academic Advising

About two fifth of the 185 answers to this question were related to **students**: "students who are unwilling to do the work"; "students being unprepared or expecting you to do everything for them"; "to see some students throw themselves under the bus"; "when students do not appear and desire help"; "when students do not appreciate your time and advise"; "students not showing up"; "students who do not care"; "lack of interest among juniors/seniors"; etc.

At least one tenth of the advisors find **lack of time** as the most frustrating aspect. Here is how the concern over the lack of time was expressed in one of the interviews: "The biggest problem is time, in a variety of ways... I believe the administration is asking advisors to do things that amount to the time (at least) that it would take to teach a course, and I do not have sufficient hours left in my life to take that time. The types of technology and other resources we are expected to use also require time to learn to use."

The problem of **insufficient training/lack of knowledge** was pointed out by about one seventh of the advisors: "I didn't get much training, and I am advising for a major that I was not familiar with"; "fear of telling them something wrong"; "it still takes me too long to figure out which classes fulfill the different requirements"; "lack of folks here that know the answers to faculty questions as we advise"; "since I am new to advising, I often have to seek the advise of other advisors"; "I still feel (after three years of advising) that I have not been taught a solid basis to advise from. We never get formal training..."; "trying to keep info straight"; "lack of training/knowledge regarding changes in licensures impacting students, information on course changes impacting students"; etc.

About one seventh of respondents expressed concerns related to **schedule/lack of classes/requirements**. Some of these concerns were related to **DARS**: "Trying to interpret the DARS. It should be possible to come up with something that is easier to understand than that"; "DARS errors"; "Out-of-date DARS"; "the complexity of DARS and the lack of departmental online forms for student reference"; "mismatch between DARS information and some students' actual requirements" etc. Some advisors were dissatisfied with program requirements: "students being forced to take courses that are not relevant or useful for their long-term goals"; "Trying to justify our General Education multicultural studies requirements"; etc. Other advisors expressed concerns about lack of classes: "finding General Education classes for distance students"; "lack of upper division liberal studies course offering for distance students"; etc.

Not being rewarded by the University/department was pointed out by almost one tenth of the advisors: "Not being rewarded for it specifically (apart from teaching) in tenure and promotion considerations"; "Advising is underappreciated; it becomes a burden because its importance is not always recognized"; "One more thing to take up my time that the university does not truly value or it would play a more prominent role in the promotion and tenure process"; "lack of recognition from administration of the time and effort it takes to effectively advise someone"; etc. Some advisors also mentioned **uneven load distribution**.

Up to 5% of respondents were unhappy with **other advisors** and having to "clean up their messes": "having students near graduation and finding out they have not met their requirements due to lack of advising on the part of other advisors"; "having to 'clean up the messes' of incompetent/indifferent advisors"; "advisors telling students what to take with no thought given to the 'whole picture'; etc.

Paperwork as the most frustrating aspect was mentioned by three respondents. Several respondents mentioned that they have been **advising students assigned to their colleagues/chairs**: "I am taken advantage of by the Chairperson. All advising issues are sent to me, even though all faculty in the Dept. serve as advisors"; "Advising colleague's students year after year"; etc. One respondent has expressed the following concern/suggestion: "With the adoption of the policy where each advisee had to visit the advisor to receive his/her advisement PIN, advisement was vastly improved from what it had been previously. When that policy was cancelled last year for upperclassmen, precisely the students who most benefit from advisement stopped coming to me for their advisement PIN. We invented the wheel and then were told that it would no longer be used. Please don't eliminate excellent policies. If you do, wise up and reinstate them." Two respondents were unhappy about the advisement period. Few respondents did not find anything dissatisfying about the advising process.

Ways to Improve Academic Advisement System

About one third of respondents stressed the importance of **adequate rewarding, resources and workload**. Twelve of them pointed out that "we need **faculty members who really enjoy advising** and mentoring advisees." Here is one of the responses stressing the importance of advisor's willingness to advise: "Advising should be done by the faculty who enjoy it. Great damage can be done by those who don't take it seriously or do it with passing interest. I would suggest that volunteer faculty who 'want' to advise, would be the best route from a faculty perspective and a chairperson perspective." Few respondents pointed out the necessity to **redistribute the workload**: "reduce the number of advisees per faculty member"; "have one person in the department to advise all students and give them sufficient release time to allow for the job to be done correctly." **Adequate rewarding** was the focus of others in this answer category. Here is how one of the respondents expressed the necessity of resource shift and adequate rewarding: "I understand resources are limited in the current environment, but faculty and staff at ISU have heard in the last few years about lots of different priorities for future success, and seen resources devoted to some and not others. If academic advising is a priority, shift resources to advisors and advising in ways that benefit students and advisors WITHOUT adding to the workload."

About one fifth of the respondents indicated the importance of **workshops/trainings/web site for advisors**. Here are some answers that fall within this category: "giving more guidance about what individual advisors should be doing"; "an advisement handbook"; "Universal training/workshops for the Advising Coordinators that can then work with the advisors in their unit in an appropriate manner for their unit"; "CAS put many resource materials for advisors online; this is excellent"; "train the academic advisors"; "provide advisor training for new faculty, training for old faculty"; "unification in advising: provide training, cross-training..."; "establish Q&A web site to answer questions regarding advising"; "mandatory training"; "written guidelines for distance and campus based courses"; etc.

About a quarter of respondents had recommendations on **whether advising should be required**. Seven advisors specifically mentioned PIN regulations. Two of them suggested that PIN should be eliminated: "it often became more about getting the PIN than advising". Others suggest that PIN regulation should not be abandoned and required for all students, "not just freshmen and sophomores". Overall, the majority of answers within this category suggest that advising in some form should be required: "required advising sessions at least annually, not necessarily individual meetings with advisor, but could be group sessions..."; "setting up mandatory meetings between all majors and all advisors at the beginning of each year"; "make it mandated, count as part of their graduation requirement"; "require students to see their advisor"; etc.

Over 5% of respondents recommended **separating "academic" and "technical" advising**: "Define it as 'academic' and have technical academic advisors give technical advice. If students would like to get a broader advice such as choice of major, identify and compensate specific faculty to be available for the work. Use the Career Center and the satellites (like we have in our College) to give advice regarding the afterlife to those that have not been able to develop a relationship with a faculty member by the time they are juniors/seniors"; "Faculty should continue advising while the administration takes care of scheduling"; etc.

Centralized advising system was suggested by at least 5% of respondents: "centralized advising system for each unit would be useful in providing consistency for the first two years"; "more systematic, more involvement from more faculty"; "a more organized, trained, centrally located, professional staff of advisors for first year students and for anyone else who cannot locate or does not like his/her advisor"; "centralize in each college..."; "have a centralized advising center, i.e., scheduling center, that way time is freed for faculty to offer advising"; "A more central location for advisees - one that is coordinated within the whole university"; etc.

About 10% of respondents expressed suggestions related to **Banner/DARS**. "Problems with Banner such as learning communities not being flagged so advisors can see that before they try to register a student in that course. Also, the system needs to be set up so that students cannot drop University 101." Other suggestions included simplifying DARS and Banner ("The Banner system seems overly complicated and somewhat frustrating to learn"); "[getting] rid of DARS errors"; making DARS easy for students to read; "would be nice to have a graphic layout and ability to view the DARS by sections, mainly visual improvements with the DARS report..."; etc.

Among **other** suggestions were: "encouraging faculty to e-mail their advisees" (suggested by three respondents) and "linking systematic assessment to rewards" (three respondents). Two respondents mentioned an excellent work of Dean Hantzis's office.

Additional Personal or Institutional Support that Would Make Advising Process More Effective and Satisfying

About a quarter of those who answered this question indicated the importance of **adequate rewards**: "more emphasis on advising as part of the teaching load for P/T purposes; until this happens, it will not be taken seriously by many faculty"; "I would like it to count for something; my department doesn't value advising so I get no support or appreciation"; "RECOGNITION of good advising"; "department awards for the best advisor; some type of system that recognizes faculty"; "release time or monetary support for internship coordinators"; "count advising as part of our teaching load"; "pat on the back; coupon for a coffee/bagel in the Commons; letter thanking you; social hour for advisors to meet and discuss strategies, organization, schedules"; etc.

One fifth of the respondents suggested **central advising, professional advising, and separating "technical", "academic" and "career" advising**: "create undergraduate advising centers for each college"; "centralized office of advising to coordinate advising across campus"; "regular full time advisors"; "one or two individuals should be designated advisors from each department"; professional advisors for each department"; "it should be centralized and handled by EAPs within each of the colleges"; "different units should work closely to ensure the consistent information"; "we need a department or group just for advising alone"; "make an office of advising for ALL programs"; "a university advisement system rather than leaning on faculty to do it out-of-hide"; etc. However, it is also important to mention that some respondents opposed the idea of professional advising: "If a 'professional advising staff' is established, they will likely be regarded as inferior to both faculty and administration. And if you credential/certify advisors from faculty ranks, those faculty will be stigmatized as not being competent at the 'truly' important thing (research) that gets you tenured/promoted."

Comments related to **DARS** were found in about 10% of responses: "fix DARS; evaluate transcripts quickly (day or weeks instead of months and months)"; "I would appreciate a session where the 'nuts and bolts' of DARS (software design, data entry, adjustment of fields, etc.) is explained"; "being able to print a DARS from BANNER"; "there are so many screens to look at when advising students..."; "online advising database listing all advises ... [with] a link to DARS and a template to list topics often covered in advising sessions"; "keeping the DARS up to date and as accurate as possible for ALL students". Some of respondents expressed satisfaction with continued improvements in DARS: "The DARS has improved quite a great deal (more accurate for one). However, the information is not all inclusive..."; "the continued improvement of the DARS has been particularly helpful. The DARS has developed into an exceptionally helpful tool for advisors."

Several comments were related to **PIN numbers** and **advising being required**: "we need easier access to PIN numbers, transcripts and schedules. The software is cumbersome and frustrating to use"; "continue to require all undergraduates to use PIN numbers so that they will seek out the academic advisor"; etc.

About a quarter of respondents indicated the necessity of **training/courses** for advisors: "Dean's letter requiring all advisers to attend training/developmental sessions"; "institutionalize training for new advisors"; "on-line forum"; "we also need substantive training"; "attending national advising meetings"; "in-house advising training sessions mandatory for all new advisors"; "written guidelines"; "having more information and having it all in one document"; "updated advisement guide"; "have I mentioned training?"; etc. One interviewee pointed out that training sessions were in place but no longer exist. However, there was one negative comment related to advising sessions: "When I first started at ISU, I was required to attend university wide advising meetings. If the purpose of these meetings was to turn me off of advising, they succeeded."

The rest of the answers to this question were not classified into categories. Here are some examples. One respondent mentioned that **hosting breakfast or pizza gathering** for advisees would be a plus: "Provide funds to allow a professor the option of hosting a breakfast or pizza gathering for advisees". However, another advisor thought of Pizza hosting as an absurd idea: "One "Professional" presenter actually suggested that we professors invite all our advisees to our house for pizza! Brilliant. I wonder what the university lawyer would have to say about that...Me, a 41 year old male professor having 18 year coeds over to my house." Several **negative comments were directed towards University's administration**: "The institutional support has been a bit of a joke"; "What a funny question--you've just added to the workload of almost all faculty, you haven't given us a raise in 2 years (and perhaps you haven't noticed, but the cost of living has kept going up) the quality of MY worklife is not great, and you ask me what YOU can do to HELP--as if this administration would do ANYTHING to help faculty. Give me 25,000 and a new car and a trip to China, then maybe I'll be more satisfied." One suggestion was to "have graduate students in the advisement center to help undergraduate students (students tend to listen more to other students than faculty)". Few respondents believe that institutional support is adequate as of now. Several respondents expressed their satisfaction with Darlene's office and office of Education Student Services. One respondent had suggestions related to School of Business: "One more advisor in the College of Business USSO. Peer advisors in every major in the College of Business..."

Final Comments/Suggestions/Recommendations

In their final comments, several respondents stated that **advising should go beyond scheduling classes**. Here are some of these statements:

- ▶ I don't think students realize the wealth of information advisors can give them about careers - they just see them as people who give them their PIN numbers. Somehow we need a fundamental shift towards career advising, rather than course scheduling. This shift needs to be very public and pervasive, and students need to understand more clearly that they are in charge of their schedule. This needs to be the expectation, from the outset. The culture of advising must change for this to occur.
- ▶ The personal interaction that this gives students with working professionals is very valuable.
- ▶ True advising, that relational part, happens in every student/faculty contact. ISU appears to have no culture of thinking that way. If that culture does not change, advising will always suffer.
- ▶ The personal touch is what can make ISU stand out. I don't want to turn advising over to someone else who isn't teaching courses in the programs for which they advise, but I would greatly appreciate equity across colleges and throughout the university.
- ▶ Continue to make this a campus a priority. If we are to be distinguished as "personal" in competition with other institutions, advisement is one of the best ways to do it.

Again, few **negative comments were directed towards Administration**:

- ▶ I don't think anyone really listens--the president surrounds himself with people who tell him what he wants to hear...
- ▶ Associate Dean in charge spent far too much time being a cheerleader. I didn't need confidence boosting...

Several respondents made comments related to **evaluation**:

- ▶ We also need an instrument for evaluating advisement that is used in all units, and following the use of that, a visible reward system for advising.
- ▶ I am skeptical about measuring academic advising as it takes place today without having a chance to educate all participants about their roles and expectations.

There were several comments related to **Banner/DARS**:

- ▶ I just received a list of 38 advisees and Banner credits only 22!
- ▶ For advisors with high numbers of advisees, access to the NZAIMAG [ISU ID card image form] screen in Banner could be helpful in getting to know their advisees sooner.
- ▶ DARS reports are good but could be better - perhaps include a brief name of the classes listed besides the number of the option classes.

An exhortation to quit asking and **do something** appeared in two responses:

- ▶ Do something and quit asking the same questions. My colleagues and I have been saying the above for the 10+ years I have been here.
- ▶ We (the university) have been talking about this for SO MANY years. Let's just do something to find the problems and begin to fix them. It won't happen overnight - but it won't happen if we don't make a start.

Few respondents reinstated **centralized advising** and **professional advising**:

- ▶ Advising could be best carried out by caring professionals that are given the time to advise.
- ▶ Create a Center for Advisement.

Some advisors reinstated comments related to **training**:

- ▶ Training and cross-training are imperative.
- ▶ It would be good to have an advisor's handbook with this information.

Some respondents suggested that advising should be optional/voluntary. There was a comment related to a load distribution between the department of Ecology and Organismal Biology and Life Sciences ("It should be 50:50 split of incoming freshman"). A concern was expressed in relation to the applicability of the University College model to the Department of Music: "Unlike most other majors, music majors take about half their freshman hours in the major department. The most effective advisor for a music major is a music professor, not someone who knows nothing about the study of music.")

Thanks to Advisors Who Wished Us Good Luck with the Survey and Advising in General!