FACILITATING GRADUATION
Progress Report
May 2007

The Facilitating Graduating Task Force submitted its final report in July 2006. The report identified two primary areas that are most likely to assist students in meeting their graduation goals: advising and curriculum planning. Within each of these areas, several concrete recommendations were offered to create a "better system for advising, for program planning, and for creating a culture of graduation." This progress report summarizes the steps that have been taken during the 2006-07 academic year to improve students' ability to make steady progress toward their degree objective and graduate.

ADVISING

Frequent Communication with Students

The moment students declare their Intent to Register at San Francisco State, they are required to establish an sfsu.edu email address. This email address is the source of crucial communication related to their studies at SF State. In the past year, email messages have been developed and sent to continuing students on numerous topics to assist in their degree progress. A sample of the messages sent in the past year include:

- o Greeting to new undergraduates from Dean of Undergraduate Studies
- o "Get Advising" message sent to continuing students prior to Spring 2007 and Fall 2007 registration
- o Message to incoming undergraduates who are undeclared describing where and how to get advising
- o Welcome message from department chairs sent to incoming undergraduates who have declared a major
- o Message to students nearing graduation on "Top 10 Reasons" why graduation applications are denied
- o FYI (First Year Information) newsletter sent periodically to all first-year students giving them tips and information about navigating their way through academic processes and requirements

Choosing a Major

Academic Senate policy requires that students who have not declared a major by designated points in their studies lose registration priority. Students who enter SFSU as freshmen are expected to declare a major by the time they earn 70 units; students who enter as upper division transfers must declare a major by the end of the second semester in attendance. These policies are enforced through the registration process by lowering a student's registration priority to the last day of registration if these limits are exceeded, reinforcing the importance of timely declaration of a major. An academic counselor in the Undergraduate Advising Center serves as the Undeclared Program Coordinator, assisting and advising students as they explore options before choosing a major.

Roadmaps

Roadmaps provide students with an ideal picture of how to sequence their major and general education requirements to progress steadily through their degree programs. Roadmaps have been created for all departments and all but a few have been reviewed and approved by the departments. When the roadmaps are fully vetted, they are submitted to the Registrar's Office for coding and posting on the University web site. It is expected that by the end of Summer 2007, 80% of the roadmaps will be available on the Registrar's Office web page – www.sfsu.edu/~reg for use by students and departments. Roadmaps are now incorporated in the Curriculum Review and Approval process when departments request new degree programs or revise existing programs. Eventually, degree roadmaps will be folded into the interactive Graduation Planner tool being developed to give students the ability to create an on-line Graduation Plan in consultation with an advisor.

Expanded Role for Advising Center

The Task Force concurred with the recently passed Academic Senate Advising Policy (S06-191) that recommended that the Advising Center be seen as the central point for university advising issues. In keeping with this principle, the following activities occurred in the past year:

- o Communication was initiated with College Resource Centers and Deans regarding the formation of the Undergraduate Advising Council.
- o A complete listing of all advisors on campus was created and is being finalized with input from Departments and Colleges.
- o Academic Progress Reports by major (a requirements worksheet) were created for use at transfer orientations where all majors are advised by Advising Center personnel with support from Colleges.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

As stated in the final report of the Facilitating Graduation Task Force, "The best advising will not help students graduate unless the recommended courses are available….When it comes to scheduling classes, the operative principle should be: no bottlenecks." To help departments determine which courses students need to graduate, the following new mechanisms have been developed and implemented in 2006-07.

Two-Tier Registration

A new registration process with two priority registration periods is being implemented for students to use when enrolling in classes for Fall 2007. Beginning on May 14, 2007, all continuing students may register for up to 8 units during the Early Priority Registration period. A second "pass" called Final Priority Registration will occur in July for students to add the rest of their classes. The benefits of the new registration procedure are:

- o Students will have access to a wider selection of courses before they fill.

- o Departments will learn earlier which courses are in highest demand and can adjust the class schedule when possible.
- o Students will be able to get advising from faculty advisors who are on campus in May when Early Priority Registration is in progress.
- o Newly admitted transfer students will be able to get advising and register for up to 8 units at their Transfer Orientation Workshop in early July.

Department chairs can use the results of Early Priority Registration (EPR) to give a good picture of the demand for courses in their departments. If possible, they can make some adjustments to the class schedule based on the demand expressed in EPR. Before EPR begins, chairs can also assign registration edits to limit certain sections to students at different class levels. The Wait List function is another tool that can be used to determine where there is excess demand for classes. Because signing up for a Wait List counts toward the 8-unit limit students can reserve during EPR, numbers on a Wait List give a clear indication of demand.

Use of these techniques will make Two-Tier Registration a powerful tool for providing students with better access to the classes they need to graduate.

Two Semester Class Schedule

To assist students in planning their academic schedules, departments now develop and post class schedules for two semesters, rather just the one next semester. Although the schedule for the later semester is clearly identified as "a preliminary schedule available for your planning purposes," having two semesters available for review on-line helps students and their advisors have a much better vision of what courses to choose when they register.

Curricular Roadblocks

The Facilitating Graduation Task Force heard from many different sources that students view access to classes they need in general education and in their major as frequent roadblocks to their progress. The review of All-University Requirements that is currently underway may identify changes in requirements that can be made to help students progress steadily toward their degrees. In the meantime, departments will have better access to information about courses that may be roadblocks in their programs through use of Two Tier Registration enrollment data. Awareness of where roadblocks occur can help departments adjust their schedules when possible to be more closely aligned with student demand.

In response to the need to improve student access to the courses they need to graduate in a timely manner, Academic Affairs and Academic Senate faculty and staff have been working together this year to develop a policy on repeating courses. There is currently no university-wide policy on repeating courses and departments and colleges have been dealing with this issue individually and in different ways. A policy will provide a consistent university-wide approach to this issue.

OTHER FACILITATING GRADUATION TOOLS

DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System)

The Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) is an advising and evaluation tool that students can use to track progress toward their degrees. Students and their advisors can run an on-line audit at any time to find out which requirements a student has completed both in the general education and major components of their degrees. DARS also works as a planning tool to help students select courses and complete degree requirements more efficiently. Major requirements for nearly all (95%) of undergraduate majors have been coded on DARS. All 109 California Community Colleges and 5 California State Universities have transfer courses fully coded on DARS for lower division GE and statutory requirements. One-to-one articulations as published in ASSIST (California's Articulation System Stimulating Interinstitutional Student Transfer) are also coded for these institutions. Students and faculty can access a student's DARS report at any time on the SF State Web site, giving students a much better sense of their degree progress and another tool for making good choices each semester when they register for classes.

Welcome Days

For the first time in SF State history, all new freshmen will be welcomed to campus at a two-day welcome event designed to expose them to the wide-range of activities and services available to assist them in their college experience. Although not a direct outgrowth of the Facilitating Graduation Task Force, the inaugural offering of Welcome Days feeds naturally into building commitment to San Francisco State and to focusing students' energies on progress toward the ultimate goal of graduation.

Department Enrollment Management

To Assist Chairs in knowing more about the tools available for them to manage enrollments in their departments, members of the Facilitating Graduation Task Force met with Chairs on November 17, 2006 and shared information about enrollment management tools available to them. A resource sheet of on-line statistical and student data resource was distributed and Chairs were given a chance to explore the resources in a computer lab setting. Chairs were also encouraged to consider methods for managing enrollments such as limiting registration in key classes to majors or specified class levels.

CONCLUSION

Although the Facilitating Graduation Task Force has officially concluded its formal charge, the spirit of collaboration it engendered continues to mobilize campus change. Many initiatives that grew out of the Task Force deliberations have been institutionalized into on-going policies and practices. As each new initiative becomes real, San Francisco State makes further progress toward creating a "culture of graduation" that informs decision-making and permeates every aspect of campus life.