Conference criticizes advisory system, offers improvements

By Karen Wattel

In your advisor really too busy to see you, even though he has his three offices a week posted on his door? Does your advisor react fast, even after repeated appeals? How can it be made available? How can people be made to take advantage of the resources already available to them?

Some students would like nothing more than to talk with a professor about what's going on around them in the college community, and where they all taking them. The professor seems a natural person to turn to in a university, but the advisor who has not come to know the student in a casual, every-day sense is well outside the classroom. It is not in a good position to be of help and guidance when problems with that student arise.

How many students do you think go in to see their advisors just to talk? Not many, unless they've had them for a class, or have spent time with them in some other comfortable, informal way. Most students are afraid to go in to talk; they feel they would be wasting the professor's time, or he thought of as obnoxious, an unnecessary distraction. The advisor, on the other hand, seems to be fearful and shy of "imposing" himself upon the student. Often he doesn't realize that the desire to sit and talk even exists. In this age of student independence, our advisors are not going to chase the student until he comes in.

More recognition needed

Much of the trouble with the advisory system seems to stem from the lack of recognition of its importance and for its real service in the area. Can the faculty in the system which places so much value upon professional standards afford to spend their time listening and speaking with students? Student input would be used as one measure of its skill, if it were included in a ratings system for promotion and tenure, as has been done at other universities.

The problem of closer relations between faculty and students in a larger one can be chalked up to the inadequacies of the advisory system. Since warm relationships do not often develop in the classroom, the problem exists. It is necessary, then, to start patching up a system with mechanisms such as assigning each student a faculty member for a registration process. It was suggested that allowing the student to choose his own advisor would make for better communication between the two.

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