

To: Dr. Timothy L. Hall, President Austin Peay State University
Dr. David Denton, Interim Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs

From: Student Academic Success Initiative (SASI) Taskforce

Date: 4/24/2008

Re: Recommendations

The Student Academic Success Initiative (SASI) Taskforce narrowed our recommendations to six items that will have a dramatic impact on faculty/student interactions and/or student academic success and that can realistically be implemented during the next academic year. Four of the recommendations can be implemented at no cost to the university. The other two are affordable, and the cost is more than justifiable because the impact they will have on APSU students. The recommendations are not prioritized.

1. Common Hour

At APSU it is difficult to conduct meetings that involve combinations of administrators, faculty, staff, and students because no time exists during the day when classes are not offered.

We are proposing a "common hour" be instituted during which fulltime faculty do not teach courses. We understand that it would be necessary for adjunct faculty to teach during this time because of the classroom shortage, however, the common hour would at least increase the proportion of students who could participate in meetings and would eliminate many of the difficulties faced by administrators, faculty and staff.

We can identify no class time we can identify that will not negatively affect some constituency on campus. After careful consideration, however, we have chosen the **Tuesday-Thursday 2:30-3:45** class period for the following reasons.

- a. It provides a 75 minute time block which is necessary at times (e.g., personnel actions, guest speakers, etc...)
- b. The times students most prefer to have classes (8:00-2:00) are still available Monday-Friday.
- c. It allows faculty and students who are involved in evening and graduate classes (typically taught starting at 4:00 pm) to participate in university activities.
- d. It affects only two days of the week rather than the three that would be affected by choosing a MWF class period.

We propose that a schedule such as the following be constructed to prevent conflicts, to maximize the impact, and to allow the university community to better predict how meetings will occur.

Tuesdays would be reserved for meetings that involve individuals from across the university (e.g., standing committees, faculty senate, university search committees, etc....). Student meetings that cross academic boundaries (e.g., student life activities, Greek, SGA. etc...)

Thursdays would be reserved for meetings that involve individuals from a college, school, or department only. Students could also hold academic organization meetings that need the participation of a departmental faculty advisor.

The specific sequencing of meetings (e.g., faculty senate 3rd Tuesday, Academic Council 1st Tuesday) could be determined at a later date by a campus committee, but this format should prevent a fair amount of conflict.

2. Transparent Funding Processes

Based on the examples described below the SASI Committee would like to recommend that future APSU funding initiatives be as transparent as possible. We think that good will is fostered when the playing field is level and when the process and procedures for the disbursement of funds are known up front and ideally followed from year to year. Such transparency engenders a culture of shared governance in which everyone works toward the common purpose of serving our students well.

We think that it is important that opportunities to access funding be made in a timely manner and be equally accessible to all faculty members on campus. Therefore, we recommend that a continually updated "calendar for funding opportunities" be provided which lists all the initiatives that will occur in a given academic year and the associated deadlines, as soon as they are known (e.g., SASI, TAF, Faculty Development, Socrates, Distinguished Professor, etc...).

It is our experience that relying on individual committees, faculty, deans, directors and chairs to disseminate information about opportunities for funding or awards has consistently failed to produce transparency and has the potential to inadvertently create the perception that bias is involved. To avoid wasting opportunities to build faculty morale and student success we suggest that information be distributed directly to faculty through email whenever possible rather than indirectly to deans, directors and chairs for subsequent distribution.

Examples of how transparency worked during the 2007-2008 academic year

The process for disbursement of Student Academic Success Initiatives (SASI) Grant monies provided by the President – This process allowed for broad-based faculty involvement, as well as needed checks and balances provided by the SASI Committee and the Faculty Senate. Information about the opportunity was directly provided to faculty at

departmental meetings, and it is thought that the opportunity just to apply for these grants has revitalized faculty morale.

The process for disbursement of funds given to the College of Science and Mathematics for "stuff" – A committee was formed with a representative from each department/school within the college. Proposals were submitted by each department. These proposals were then evaluated based on the needs of the particular department and the proposals' merits. Because many of the requests were for scientific equipment or for items needed for departments to conduct business, this committee was much better able to evaluate the proposals than would have been a committee put together at the university level, such as the committee that evaluated "end of year" proposals in the past.

3. Clickers

The benefits of using clickers in large lecture classrooms (50 to 100) are well documented. They can also be beneficial in classes with 30 or less students. Two factors that have limited the use of clickers at APSU are the cost and the logistics associated with using them effectively.

Clickers have been purchased by a few departments through Technology Access Fee (TAF) funds. This has not been a huge expense, but it will become one as more departments start requesting them. (At least two departments submitted clicker requests to TAF this year.)

The university or departments purchasing the clickers as opposed to students purchasing them causes logistical problems. Specifically if a faculty member wants to collect data associated with how each individual responds to a question, the faculty member has to number the clickers and make sure the same student gets the same clicker at the beginning of each class. Both of these problems can be resolved if the clickers are sold in the APSU bookstore and registered to students.

The committee recommends that the university put out a bid to select a company to supply the bookstore with clickers. The clickers would cost students from \$17 to \$30 each and could be used for the entire four years a student is at APSU. Professors who want to use clickers in their courses will let the bookstore know to require students to purchase a clicker and get it registered in the system when they purchase books for the course.

The committee further recommends that the Technology Standing Committee be responsible for developing a bid. In essence, the clicker companies will propose what they will supply APSU for the privilege of being the clicker provider for APSU. The bid needs to include how many radio frequency (RF) systems, how much faculty training, and what type of software the company plans to provide to APSU as well as how the software provided is compatible with other software in use at APSU.

4. Student Work as a Means to Connect with an Academic Departmental Home

Student on-campus work opportunities available through scholarships, federal work-study, general campus monies, and other means, should be structured wherever possible, toward guiding students to their academic departmental homes. The value of providing students on-campus work opportunities that take into consideration their "student" status in terms of the number of hours worked and other factors and that lead them to experiences and relationships that prepare them for their future professions, cannot be overstated. Work within the academic departments that support their major areas of study enables students to learn more about their future disciplines and professions, provides a means for students to encounter their professors and departmental graduate assistants outside the classroom, and affords students with experiences that prepare them for their futures. While not always feasible when students first arrive on campus, such work opportunities may become possible as students rise toward junior and senior status; indeed, this is already the case in some departments. Please note that this should not lead to denying other campus areas the opportunity to obtain the student workers that are needed to maintain campus operations; in fact, such jobs do provide students with valuable work experience. For example, student workers in the library gain valuable work experience troubleshooting computer issues for other students, which in turn helps them to learn computer skills and how to work with others to solve problems. The bottom line is that students who work on-campus can gain valuable work experience in a nurturing environment. Also in many cases, they can be provided an opportunity to connect within their academic departmental homes.

5. Student Access to Facilities after Hours – Swipe Card Systems

Nearly every APSU physics alumnus will state the one thing that had the most impact on their identifying with the physics department was the access they were given to facilities. This access demonstrated that the faculty cared about them, trusted them, and understood the importance of having a place to meet in large groups to study.

Learning communities are a recognized method for getting students to work outside the standard classroom environment. They help with retention, development of a career path, and much more. There are many methods for getting learning communities initiated; however, for the communities to work students must have a place where more than five or six can meet at a time. Because many students work or have other obligations, that place needs to be available to students after normal operating hours.

Do all departments at APSU have access to such a place? Classroom spaces turn out to be an ideal place for students to gather to study. Many classroom spaces are available at night and weekends, definitely enough for each department to identify one for their students.

The biology and physics programs at APSU have a long history of providing students with keys to buildings and to rooms within those building. Doing this is problematic because no mechanism exists for retrieving keys once students graduate. Having students in facilities after hours creates additional security risk. Many buildings already have video surveillance,

and the swipe card system will allow security to know who is in the facilities at any given time.

Providing students with swipe card access to spaces solves many of the problems associated with allowing students access to facilities after hours on a large scale. Each department can develop a policy to determine which students in their discipline will be given access. Students can easily be added to the system or access can easily be taken away. The key request process that is already in place at APSU can be used to get students entered into the swipe card system.

Much of the cost associated with swipe card access has already been made. Each building on campus is being setup to have swipe card systems on external doors. Students can already be given access to buildings through this system. The next step is to identify internal spaces to which departments want students to have access.

As recently as two months ago, a faculty member was questioned for being in SSC after hours. They were told they needed to contact Public Safety anytime they were in a building after hours. The situation is much worse for students. Students have been escorted out of SSC when they have been working at night. Nothing says, "We do not want you here," more than someone escorting a student or faculty member out of a building and saying, "We do not want you here." So how should security determine who should be in buildings after hours? If students or faculty members have swipe card access or if they are in the swipe card system, that should be sufficient to allow them to be in the facility after hours.

This particular recommendation should be implemented over several years. Doing this will not over burden university funds and it will provide the university time to work out any issues that arise during implementation.

6. *Austin Peay Faculty Advising Committee (AP-FAC)*

The *Student Academic Success Committee* recommends the formation of an *Austin Peay Faculty Advising Committee (AP-FAC)*. This committee will ensure that the faculty members, who ultimately advise all of the students at APSU (once they declare a major) will have a voice in decisions about academic advising. One function of this advisory committee will be to coordinate with the Career and Advising Center, the *Austin Peay Professional Advising Council (AP-PAC)* and the Coordinator of New Student Programs to discuss academic advising on campus and recommend campus-wide changes to improve the academic advising experiences of our students.

The Faculty Advising Committee working with AP-PAC will allow faculty representation from all colleges on campus and professional advisors working on campus. Members of AP-PAC including the professional advisors in the Career and Advising Center, the athletic advisor, the early alert coordinator and the professional advisors at Austin Peay at Ft. Campbell. Inclusion of the Coordinator of New Student Programs will ensure that APSU

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1000 continues to function as an introduction to the advising process at APSU. That is, APSU 1000 instructors introduce the students to resources where they can find important information, tell students what to do to prepare for pre-registration and determine that all new students have been assigned an advisor before pre-registration

Additional activities for the Faculty Advising Committee can include developing faculty advisor training programs, continuing education events and coordinating the recognition of outstanding faculty advisors. We recommend that the composition of this advisory committee be the previous year's recipients of the University Academic Advising Awards for Excellence.