

## **DUS Best Practices Panel Discussion**

Toy Lounge, Dey Hall

Tuesday, 9/25/12, 11:00-12:00am

### **Question 1: What is one thing that you wish you had known before getting into the position?**

One panelist mentioned that they wish they would have known right off how easy it is to communicate with the Office of Undergraduate Education. Knowing who to call (key people to contact) and knowing about issues with the study abroad program were all brought up by multiple panelists. A panelist mentioned the fact that every time that you make a decision, it establishes a precedent that you will have to follow over and over again. Being aware of that is important. Training up-front as a career services officer or part-time faculty advisor were mentioned as being very helpful in the DUS position.

### **Question 2: What has been your experience and attitude toward students taking similar courses outside your major, and how would you treat requests to have them count toward your major?**

In this instance, it really depends on the department. If the department is built on an interdisciplinary foundation, then the department tends to be more flexible with courses that are interdisciplinary in nature. Some departments are more flexible with the study abroad courses since they can be difficult to relate to specific course requirements in the major. Other departments don't count anything outside of major course lists, except for cross-listed courses. Still other departments are very strict; requirements for the major are based on courses on their course lists. No exceptions. It also depends on the context of the substitution. Is this a new course, recently introduced? Is this a student who has had opportunities to take this course at other times? This can be approached case-by-case. Synergy between the DUS and the Department Chair/Associate Chair can make this process easier.

### **Question 3: Tell us a little about your study abroad evaluation process?**

It can be helpful to deputize other faculty members to help with this process if the department has many different units. In some departments, the DUS may ask to see students before they sign up for a study abroad so that they know in advance if it will be approved for their major. Given the work load, other DUS may designate someone else to look over the proposal in advance to pre-approve in the major. Still others make sure to have a syllabus and department-specific form filled out in advance. Keeping a regular, open channel with the Study Abroad Office is very helpful regardless of the departmental process.

### **Question 4: How do you handle administrative responsibilities?**

Some departments form committees specifically for majors and minors within their unit. If unsure of how to proceed, it's always good to have the rest of the department informed and on board. Some departments will send out semi-regular emails to the rest of the faculty, asking for questions and concerns. These concerns are then addressed before moving forward. Others have a "Curriculum Committee" to help with curriculum, policy, and scheduling decisions. Sometimes a nested committee approach is useful; the policy questions are hammered out initially by one committee, which would pass it on to the next committee, eventually going up the chain so that there is buy-in at all levels of approval.

### **Question 5: Is continuity better, with one member of your department taking on the role of DUS for an extended period of time, or do you prefer to have shared knowledge, with the position of DUS changing hands more often within the department?**

Having shared knowledge is important because as more faculty share the responsibility, they better understand how the policies and procedures work throughout the department. There is more buy-in collectively that way. Institutional knowledge is indispensable, but it's not good if only one person has it; ideally, it should be shared. It makes departments more explicit about how the role functions. This can be difficult, though, as many faculty do not want to take on this additional role.

**Question 6: How do you balance responsibility with research and teaching?**

Time management can be difficult. The position tends to be reactive, and it can interrupt time put aside for research and teaching. Some DUS use the summer to get much of their research done. Others negotiate with the department chair for separate time to work on research. A course release policy was suggested. Some DUS believe that teaching is still the priority, and ultimately the primary job function. The DUS position is very important, but you must find time for teaching, too.

**Question 7: How do you deal with the lack of time to meet students?**

It would be nice to require all students to meet with the DUS, but this is not possible for most departments. Small group meetings would be one solution, though not optimal. There is an area at the beginning of every department's entry in the Undergraduate Bulletin where a department may now talk about their departmental advising process. This could be helpful for some students. Some DUS use a listserv to send out advising reminders to students. This listserv can be set up in the College of Arts and Sciences' Intranet, through OASIS.