

## **General Information and Best Practices for Directors of Undergraduate Studies (DUSes) in the College of Arts and Sciences**

This information and best practices guide was developed from conversations with DUSes attending a 2012 fall workshop and was modeled on similar guides for directors of graduate admissions and graduate study prepared by The Graduate School. This guide also contains information provided by the Office of Undergraduate Curricula and others who provide support for undergraduate students. Suggestions for additions or clarifications may be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula.

### **Appointment and Personal Considerations**

DUSes tend to be tenured, experienced faculty members who have demonstrated a commitment to undergraduate students and excellence in undergraduate teaching. They may have previous experience as an advisor, sponsor of a student group, or member of a curriculum committee. DUSes are appointed by the chairs of departments and curricula for a specific term, with the conditions of the appointment described in writing.

The following questions address some of the personal considerations that prospective DUSes discuss with their chairs in advance of the appointment:

Specifically, what are the responsibilities of this administrative role? Which duties require collaboration with others? Which decisions is the DUS authorized to make without consulting others?

Does the unit offer incentives such as course release time or salary supplements (either as a fixed stipend or a percentage of the base salary)?

If course release time is provided, what is the best timing for the release? Consider that duties will fluctuate depending on the time of year, the weeks at the beginning and end of the semester being especially demanding.

What is the best way to balance the work of this administrative role with the expectations for teaching and research? Establishing a percentage of time expected for administrative work is common.

How will serving as a DUS be considered in performance reviews?

### **Role of the DUS**

The role of the DUS varies from unit to unit in the College of Arts and Sciences. Depending on the size of the unit, its governance structure, and its customary practices, DUSes may be responsible for the following activities:

Serving as the primary resource for undergraduate students concerning academic requirements, especially those for the undergraduate major(s) and minor(s).

Cultivating a climate that encourages students to seek campus resources that will ensure their academic and personal success. The DUS often serves as a faculty sponsor for the unit's student organizations and as an initial point of contact for information concerning processes and procedures, many of which are published as University Policy Memoranda (UPMs) on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

Providing leadership for efforts to support, evaluate, and improve the requirements and standards of the undergraduate program. This may involve chairing the unit's curriculum or undergraduate program committee, working with representatives of undergraduate student groups, and overseeing the updating of written and electronic documents that provide information about the program.

Advising instructors, especially new faculty, about course requirements, expectations for student work, office hours, and information that should be included on a course syllabus.

Monitoring the progress of undergraduate majors and minors to ensure graduation within eight semesters with a minimum of 120 credit hours and a minimum GPA of 2.0. Support processes within the unit for selecting outstanding students for special awards.

Serving as the authority for various University functions, such as

- Acting as a liaison to the Office of Undergraduate Education

- Helping to revise annually the unit's entry for the *Undergraduate Bulletin*

- Making adjustments to a student's Tar Heel Tracker

- Signing University forms

Counseling students and faculty members about ways to resolve difficult situations. Such work requires knowing when and how to refer someone to campus resources such as Academic Advising, Counseling and Wellness, Student Aid, Student Retention, the Honor Court, and Accessibility & Service. A knowledge of FERPA requirements and grade appeals procedures is essential.

Working closely with the unit's student services manager or registrar to ensure consistent policies and procedures, especially for scheduling undergraduate courses, establishing or revising courses via the course request approval system (CRAS), collecting and storing syllabi, managing student course evaluations, monitoring the timely submission of final grades for all undergraduate courses, and ensuring that learning contracts for all independent study courses are approved before students register for them (no later than the last day of the registration period).

### **Best Practices**

The DUS need not work alone. Most units have an advisory committee devoted to the undergraduate curriculum or a committee that advises the chair that can be consulted about difficult issues and requests for exceptions. You should also feel welcome to confer with other DUSes, the staff in the Office of Undergraduate Curricula and the Academic Advising Program, and directors of numerous support programs dedicated to helping undergraduate students succeed. The Office of Undergraduate Education sponsors half-day informational workshops twice a year for DUSes, offering both information and an

opportunity to discuss concerns with other DUSes. Information from these workshops is posted on the Web at <http://college.unc.edu/undergraduateed/directors-of-undergraduate-studies/>.

Communicate regularly with faculty, students, and staff, and invite them to discuss ways to improve the program, undergraduate instruction, and opportunities for students to succeed. Your leadership is crucial to involving the entire unit in the continued progress of its students.

Try to maintain a balance between your role as an advocate for students and your responsibility to uphold the integrity of the undergraduate program. Most of the time, students' needs, faculty expectations, and program requirements will be in alignment. When that is not the case, open discussion may identify a way forward.

Keep the chair of your unit informed. Regular meetings offer opportunities to discuss accomplishments, provide information about upcoming events, strategize ways to approach important decisions, and explain the need for resources.

Consider keeping a weekly journal. Reflecting once a week on the work you have accomplished can help you devise a to-do list for the following week. Over time, these entries may reveal and help you correct imbalances in your roles as teacher, scholar, administrator, and family member. They will also show you how much progress you have made in leading the undergraduate program.