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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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April 1, 1994

SURVEY SHOWS POSITIVE STUDENT ATTITUDE ABOUT UM'S ACADEMIC ADVISING PRACTICES

MISSOULA --

University of Montana faculty, staff and administrators worried about students feeling lost in a maze of course descriptions and graduation requirements got good news recently from a survey of student responses to UM's academic advising practices.

"Students are thinking better about advising than we thought they were," said survey coordinator Melanie Hoell, assistant director of University College. Especially gratifying was the large number of respondents -- 85 percent -- who said they had used the system, she said.

The survey, the first of its kind conducted at UM, was sent to a cross section of 400 undergraduate students and was completed by 336. In all but one category included in the poll, a majority of respondents gave UM a thumbs up, Hoell said. The exception was transfer student advising, an area the campus will target for further investigation and improvement, she said.

Survey questions were designed to measure student satisfaction with advising by members of the faculty and departmental staff as well as professional and trained peer advisers. Questions addressed a range of issues, including adviser accessibility, listening skills, punctuality in keeping appointments, sensitivity to issues of gender and race and respect for students' decisions.

On questions about accessibility, listening skills and punctuality, 69 percent or more of the respondents reported satisfaction with advisers' performance. On sensitivity to issues of gender and

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race, advisers earned satisfactory marks from 79 percent of respondents; on respect for students' decisions, 74 percent.

Lower-division students responded more favorably than upper-division students in those areas and on advisers' knowledge of academic requirements and effectiveness in discussing academic and career goals. Survey results also showed that more freshman and sophomores meet with advisers than do juniors and seniors. In several areas, including listening skills and knowledge of requirements, more respondents were satisfied with peer advisers than with faculty advisers. When judged on being accessible to advisees, though, faculty advisers got a higher percentage of satisfied respondents.

Transfer students reported the least satisfaction with UM's academic advising practices. Slightly more than half thought their adviser allowed enough time for advising sessions. Fewer than a third deemed their advisers well-prepared.

The survey, endorsed by the Provost's Advising Council, was conducted by business graduate students David Risdon and Patricia Martin under the direction of business Dean Larry Gianchetta and accounting and finance Chair Bruce Budge. It will provide a basis for measuring future improvements in UM's advising system, Hoell said. It also will also help the campus navigate changes in advising procedures that will be necessary when UM implements telephone registration, she said.

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