

**Improving student learning and student retention at the undergraduate level
Application Cover Sheet**

*Maximum funding for any single grant: \$50,000.
Proposal must be limited to two pages plus a budget page, in addition to the cover sheet.*

DIRECTIONS:

1. Complete cover sheet
2. Attach 2 page proposal summary
3. Attach 1 page budget
4. Submit your proposal electronically to your college office for approval. College offices will submit recommended college proposals to the Provost office **no later than June 23, 2006 for FY'07 funding.**

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Date **June 19, 2006**

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Collaborators (other departments, if any): **Christopher Henrich (also Psychology)**

Title of Your Proposal **Developing an Innovative Advisement System in the Department of Psychology Through Individual, Group and Peer Advising**

Theme of Your Proposal (Support for students; Fostering connections; Enhancing advisement; Other innovations): **Enhancing advisement**

College rating (approved; not approved) **APPROVED**

Developing an Innovative Advisement System in the Department of Psychology Through Individual, Group and Peer Advising

Summary

Purpose: Currently, the Department provides advising to undergraduate students through a departmental advisor (full-time staff) and two graduate student assistants, each who work five hours per week. Findings from our self-study clearly demonstrate that this structure is not adequate to meet the needs of approximately 1,500 majors plus students contemplating a psychology major. To strengthen the department's advising system, the external review committee from the self-study suggested developing group advisement modules to meet common needs and a system of peer advisement. Additionally, an initial review of our peer and aspirational peer institutions finds that many involve peers in the advising process. Further, the effectiveness of peer advisors has been documented (e.g., Layman, 1981). In addition to peer and group advising, another possible avenue for improvement, especially in a department as large as Psychology, is the utilization of existing software packages to make advisement a user-friendly environment process that does not always require a visit to the Department and to free up advisors to focus their time on more "higher order" advising (Braggs, 2004).

To these ends, the Department proposes to enhance advisement by appointing a faculty member who will direct the development of a new and innovative advising system and provide consistent oversight to the department advisor, graduate student assistant advisors, and peer advisors through a model of vertical supervision. This system will be developed in the context of an ongoing comprehensive review of the undergraduate curriculum. Furthermore, the proposed advising system will place particular emphasis on increasing the number of sophomores receiving advisement services. In addition to sophomore year being critical for student retention, in the Department's curriculum it is important for students to be directed to gateway courses, such as Statistics and Research Methods, in their sophomore year.

Goals

I. Increase the quality of academic advising in the Department of Psychology.

Project Activities

To meet this goal, the appointed faculty member will:

1. Identify and research successful, innovative advising models from GSU COAS departments, peer, and aspirational peer institutions and adapt features to the Department of Psychology environment.
2. Develop, implement, and evaluate an individualized system of in person advisement specific to students' developmental status as a college student (e.g. Meeting Core Requirements; Planning for a Psychology Major; Consider a Concentration; Applied and Research Practicum Advising, etc.), with particular focus on the sophomore year.
3. Develop, implement, and evaluate an in-person *group* advising system. Advising modules may consist of topics such as: What is the psychology major and is it for me; Approaches to planning a coherent curriculum for my interests; Psychology and the COAS Honors Program; Is graduate school in my future; Career Trajectories for psychology majors, etc.
4. Coordinate relevant module content and implementation with University Career Services.
5. Identify software that will facilitate continuity in advisement and clear communication between advisors and between students and advisors.
6. Update Department website with respect to new advising system; implement ability for students to make appointments via the web.

7. Compile a library of materials (e.g., books, journals) on best practices in undergraduate advising.
8. Communicate features of new advising system to psychology majors and interested students.
9. Institute vertical supervision of departmental, graduate assistant, and peer advisors.

II. Increase the quantity of students who receive advising on a semester basis, with special emphasis on sophomores.

Project Activities

To meet this goal, the appointed faculty member will:

1. Identify successful *peer* advising models from peer and aspirational peer institutions and adapt to the GSU COAS environment.
2. Develop, implement, and evaluate undergraduate peer advising system to administer individual and group advisement.
3. Recruit, hire, train, and review undergraduate peer advisors.
4. Develop opportunities for off-site advising to supplement individual and group advising that uses chat room features available in WebCT.

Timeline

These activities will span one academic year.

- Research on innovative external models of advisement and the development of a model for the Psychology Department will occur through the Fall semester.
- Implementation of the newly developed individual and group advising models, plus the use of advising software and web- based tools, will begin in January.
- Potential peer advisors will be identified in January, recruited and hired in February, and trained in March.
- The peer advising system will be implemented April 1 to July 1.

Evaluation

With multiple changes occurring with respect to the undergraduate curriculum, attributing change in retention of majors, progression or graduation will not be possible. However, careful and ongoing *process* evaluation will be critical to evaluate how well the new advising system works.

1. Collect baseline data on fall/spring 2006 use of and satisfaction of advisement services.
2. Develop ongoing process evaluation for individual, group, chat, and peer advising services that includes measures of
 - a. Student satisfaction
 - b. Number of students seeking initial advisement
 - c. Number of students returning for additional advisement
 - d. Number of students completing full individualized advisement cycle
 - e. Number of students using group advisement
 - f. Number of students using peer advisement
 - g. Number of students using WebCT chat room advisement.

Year 1 Budget Justification

Personnel:

- One faculty member will receive two course releases to devote 33% effort over the academic year to researching, developing and implementing the proposed advising system.
- The two Graduate Learning Assistants who assist in advising will be upgraded to Graduate Teaching Assistants, and their time commitment increased from 5 hours per week to 10 hours per week.
- Eight undergraduate peer mentors will be trained and hired as peer advisors.

Equipment:

- One new computer will be purchased for the peer advisors, and one new computer will be purchased for use of students when they come to the advising office.
- Advising software will be purchased.
- A library of 'undergraduate advising best practices' will be compiled.

Year 1 Budget

Personnel:

One faculty member, 33% effort	\$19,200
Upgrade from GLA to GTA for 2 students, \$6,000 per student	\$12,000
Undergraduate peer advisor training for 8 students, \$10/hour, 5 hours/ week for 4 weeks	\$1,600
Undergraduate peer advisor stipends for 8 students, \$10/ hour, 5 hours/ week for 4 weeks	\$4,800
Subtotal personnel	\$37,600

Equipment:

Computers (2) for peer advisors and students	\$4,000
Software	\$750
Library	\$1,000
Subtotal equipment	\$5,750
Total	\$43,350

Budget for Continuing Years

Starting in Year 2, the faculty time will be reduced to 16.7% effort, and the peer advisement module will be taken to scale, spanning 30 weeks per year (4 weeks training, 26 weeks advisement). The budget will be as follows:

One faculty member, 16.7% effort	\$10,400
GTA for 2 students, \$6,000 per student	\$12,000
Undergraduate peer advisor training for 8 students, \$10/hour, 5 hours/ week for 4 weeks	\$1,600
Undergraduate peer advisor stipends for 8 students, \$10/ hour, 5 hours/ week for 26 weeks	\$10,400
Total	\$34,400