

Final Report - Support Services Sub-committee of the Committee on Undergraduate Life

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Support Services and the Neighborhoods

As part of their traditional programming, all Williams support service offices organize many workshops and seminars throughout the year. These programs are easily adapted to the new housing system. Neighborhoods will co-sponsor events with each service group, and workshops/seminars will be held in the neighborhood common rooms. Representatives/ambassadors from each service group will also hold office hours within the neighborhoods.

It is also expected that additional programs in collaboration with representatives/ambassadors from other components of the neighborhood governing body will be arranged. For example, an OCC rep, a rep from the Fellowships office, and those from the different academic divisions could present information about summer opportunities. The neighborhood would bring together offices and services that are currently located all across campus.

To summarize, here is a list of possible ambassadors, representing various entities on campus:

1. Sexual-assault response trained person
2. Health Center trained person
3. Multicultural Center point person
4. Queer-peers / Safe-space oriented person
5. Career Counseling point person
6. Academic Resources/ Peer Advisers Program point person
7. Community Service/Chaplain point person
8. ACE liaison
9. Dining Services & Facilities point person
10. Campus Safety point person

For this model to work, we believe it essential that there be a central meeting place for the House Governing Board. Additionally, a larger space for the entire neighborhood to meet would have to be identified.

Addendum #1 – Definition of the Neighborhood Ambassador

Through the ambassadors, offices and groups may reach out and establish a presence in each neighborhood. The ambassadors will facilitate the provision of services within the neighborhood that the offices usually furnish in their own spaces. The ambassadors will be mentored by their corresponding offices throughout the year. In regular meetings with their offices, the ambassadors can provide feedback to the office, as well as carry information from the office to the neighborhood.

The application process should take place concurrently with HC selection in the spring. Each office or group is responsible for appointing its neighborhood ambassadors and selections should be announced at least ten days before the reading period.

Students may apply for more than one ambassador position. They may also apply for HC positions, or mid-orientation leader positions. However, a student may only hold one ambassador position.

After the first year, ambassadors currently in the post may be expected to aid in the selection for the following year if they are not reapplying themselves. Ambassadors will be evaluated and reviewed at the end of the fall semester and should their performance be deemed unsatisfactory, the office can re-start the recruiting process within the affected neighborhood for winter study/spring.

If an ambassador is not on campus for winter study, he or she must identify a suitable replacement for the period away. The replacement may be an ambassador from another neighborhood or a student who works closely with the organization/office.

Mandatory fall training will be scheduled and structured by each office for one full day in the period between JA training and the beginning of the semester.

The specific expectations for ambassadors will be dictated by the office/organization that mentors them; however, there are some general expectations for all ambassadors:

- Ambassador facebook to be posted on neighborhood bulletin boards and web sites
- Attendance & introductions at a ‘first snacks’ within the first 2 weeks of the semester
- ‘Office hours’ of at least 1 hour a week in a common space in the neighborhood where they are accessible to all students to communicate about any relevant issues
- Meetings with organization/department that they are associated with (frequency depends on department)
- 1 program per semester (at least) in the neighborhood through the office/organization

In coordination with the House System Oversight Committee, the following Governance Board members will serve as point persons for ambassadors as specified below:

- 1) House Life Coordinator
Serve as point person for the support service ambassadors from: Community Service, ACE, Campus Safety and Dining Services/Facilities
- 2) Community Liaison
Serve as point person for the support service ambassadors from: Sexual Assault, Health Center/Psych Services, Multicultural Center and Queer Peers/Safe Space
- 3) Faculty Associates
Serve as point people from: Career Counseling and Academic Resources

Addendum #2 – The Advising Partnership & Academic Peer Advisors

We propose strengthening advising with an academic peer advisor program. Personal and purposeful choices—curricular and co-curricular/extra-curricular—are fundamental to the meaning of a liberal arts education. The deepening and broadening of perspectives gained through interactions with a variety of individuals and offices greatly inform such choices. We view these different pieces as one collective whole - the “advising partnership.”

Our vision is a flexible program that allows the advising partnerships to evolve along with the advisees as they journey through their first two years at Williams. Our goal is to improve academic advising, especially in the sophomore year, through the addition of a peer advising system as well as a new template for pairing students and faculty.

Interested rising juniors would apply for the position of Academic Peer Advisor. In addition, faculty would be invited to nominate strong candidates. A new student group, the Academic Peer Advising Council, composed of members from the Gargoyle Society and other students, with oversight from the Academic Resource Center, would select and train the new Academic Peer Advisors. During the summer, the Council would pair junior Peer Advisors with incoming first-year students. When possible, a first-year student would be paired with an Academic Peer Advisor who resides in the neighborhood affiliated with the first-year student’s entry. The Peer Advisor and first-year student relationship would continue for two years, even if the first-year student elected to join a neighborhood not affiliated with his or her entry. Moreover, Academic Peer Advisors could be viewed as mentors—inviting their advisees to accompany them to various academic and intellectual events. Thus the program offers first- and second-year students not only a resource for gaining the insights of more experienced students, but also an invitation for first- and second-year students to participate fully in the intellectual offerings that flourish on campus.

The partnership between the Faculty Advisor and Academic Peer Advisor would be based primarily on neighborhood affiliation—with the understanding that faculty would have an opportunity to request a particular Peer Advisor with whom to work. Each Peer Advisor would be partnered with two faculty members from the same entry. Faculty Advisors would be assigned approximately three student advisees from an entry affiliated with the Faculty Advisor’s neighborhood. The Peer Advisors would be assigned six advisees, all from the same entry. Since both the Faculty and Peer Advisors would be paired with their first-years during the summer, we encourage an initial joint meeting with the Faculty Advisor, Academic Peer Advisor, and first-year student advisees during First Days. This initial meeting would allow the first-year students to meet their Faculty and Peer Advisors officially in an informal setting. We suggest that such a meeting be held before the first-year students meet with their Faculty Advisors individually to discuss final fall course selections.

In an attempt to keep this program reasonably straightforward for the faculty, we propose that the Faculty and Peer Advisor partnership need not continue after the advisee’s first year. When a faculty member is assigned new first-year advisees, he or she will then be paired with a new Peer Advisor according to the neighborhood and entry affiliation. That is, each year a faculty member will be paired with just one Academic Peer Advisor. The technical details of the program (including selection criteria and responsibilities) have been outlined in detail in a report authored by the Gargoyle Society under the guidance of the Academic Resource Center.

Our vision is that the Academic Peer Advisors would offer an informed and thoughtful student perspective to the academic advising process. The program is designed to complement the current advising system, enhance intellectual student discourse, and offer a meaningful opportunity to connect an entry with its affiliated neighborhood.

Addendum #3: Career Services

One professional from the OCC will act as the primary liaison to each of the neighborhoods. Each OCC representative will collaborate with the neighborhood ambassadors to create a consistent OCC presence and regular programming within the neighborhoods. Each neighborhood will also have a representative or two from the OCC College Council committee.

The current College Council appoints eight representatives to serve on the OCC committee. The committee works closely with the OCC to present programs to students via open houses, tabling in the dining halls, programming in the first year residence halls, and a variety of other activities. The committee has been meeting approximately once each month during the school year. The committee has been very productive this year in helping the OCC publicize its programs and services. A very successful open house resulted in more than 250 students benefiting from an introduction to the OCC. Plans for the rest of the year include a regular series of office hours held within the residence halls. Student participation has been critical in spreading information about the OCC by effective grapevine and aggressive outreach. The OCC plans to continue this approach.

Under the new program, the current system of College Council representation can continue as long as each of the neighborhoods is represented in its number. If the College Council continues to appoint eight representatives, there should be no problem ensuring that each of the neighborhoods is represented.

The following activities will take place in neighborhood common rooms or designated spaces:

- Resume reviews
- Quick question counseling
- Summer job orientations
- Full-time job hunting workshops
- Industry overviews
- Alumni seminars

Other activities can and will be suggested by the student representatives and from input from the House Governing Boards.