

# Peer Advising During Peak Periods

## Letting Students Do What They Know Best

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# Outline

- Our previous Peer Advising Program, in brief
- Pros and Cons of the old program
- Goals
- Our new Peer Advising Program
- Outcomes so far
- Potential pitfalls and how to avoid them



# Our previous Peer Advising Program

- About 20-25 Peer Advisors
- Recruited in Spring for Fall (sometimes replacements recruited in Fall)
- Students applied and were chosen based upon applications and interviews
- Recruitment and selection done by current Peer Advising Coordinators
- New Coordinators also chosen by current Coordinators, with approval from Advising staff.
- Staffing is self-perpetuating once established



# Our previous Peer Advising Program

- Peer Advisors underwent 2 hours of mandatory training EACH semester they were in the program.
- Peer Advisors were trained to:
  - Serve as Mentors and Role Models
  - Assist with planning course schedules
  - Suggest Gen. Eds, Electives and Advanced Courses
  - REFER when necessary
- Expected to have complete understanding of all major and minor requirements in order to help plan student schedules
- **Stats:** Peer Advisors would typically see 50-60 students TOTAL over the course of 3 weeks (about 25 hours total of Peer Advising). **This averaged about 2 students/peer advisor/semester.**



# Our previous Peer Advising Program: Pros and Cons

- **Pros:**

- Students receive some information more readily from their peers
- Can theoretically relieve overload during busy times of the semester
- Large program ensured enough staffing and that Peer Advisors, themselves could conduct recruitment each semester
- Training (once per semester) was not too extensive
- Several students were able to list “Peer Advising” on their resumes

- **Cons:**

- Numbers of Peer Advisors did not match utilization of the program by the student body
- Peer Advisors made mistakes—perhaps due to minimal training, but more likely because they did not have enough actual experience advising to develop good habits and strategies for avoiding mistakes



# Goals

- Use Peer Advisors more efficiently
- Avoid mistakes
- Minimize training needed by Peer Advisors
- Ease advising burden during peak advising periods



# Main Changes

- **Program was downsized to 7 Peer Advisors**
- **Utilized Peer Advisors during Peek periods**
  - first ten days of the semester
  - drop deadline
  - registration
- **Peer Advisors no longer give advice on course schedules**
  - Minimizes training
  - Avoids potential mistakes due to incorrect advice
- Rather—they focus on **WHAT THEY KNOW BEST**
  - Help students navigate the registration system
  - Help students make changes to their class schedules (drop/add)

**Note:** you don't have to train your students to do this, they are already experts!



# Things we kept from the old program

Peer Advisors still:

- Serve as *Mentors* and *Role Models*
- Offer *Insight* and *Suggestions* for being a successful MCB student
- *Suggest* Gen Eds, Electives and Adv. Courses in the major
- *Listen*
- *Advise* based on personal experience (with exceptions)
- *Refer* when necessary

**Again:** you don't have to train your students to do any of these, but the last!





# Outcomes so far

- Peer Advisors staffed the majority of our Express Advising hours along-side Staff Advisors
  - Day before classes began and first 10 days of classes
  - Two days before the drop deadline
  - Three weeks of Registration (starting on priority registration date)
  - About 50 hours total
- Peer Advisors saw about 60 (probably more) students  
**This averaged about 8-9 students/peer advisor/semester.**



# Outcomes so far

- Pros
  - Less training
  - Fewer potential mistakes
  - Peer Advisors were especially helpful during first ten days and before drop deadline with schedule changes, finding open 2<sup>nd</sup> week courses, etc. Especially with freshmen.
  - Peer Advisors were more active when “on the job”—better utilized and gained more experience
- Cons
  - Fewer Peer Advisors meant we sometimes had trouble staffing all the hours needed



# Potential Pit-falls

- Advise based on personal experience, **HOWEVER**
  - Always remind your peer advisers that they are NOT the “average/typical” student
- Remind them that they should **NEVER** speak negatively about instructors or courses in the major
- The main training needed is when and who to **REFER** to—never answer questions to which they do not know the answers!
- Also decide what paperwork/recordkeeping you need and make sure they are trained to do it.



# Final Questions and Comments



# What the Best Peer Advisors Do

Do:

- Be Courteous, Friendly and Respectful to ALL Students
- Be a Good Listener
- Give Advice based upon the “typical/average” MCB student
- Follow all University, College and School Rules

*PAPERWORK IS IMPORTANT*

**MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY**

- Be On Time and Ready to Work
- Maintain a Professional Relationship with Advisees
- Have Fun, Meet New People, Stay Positive



# What the Best Peer Advisors Do

REFER WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER!

- Full-Time Advisors
- Web Sites ([www.las.illinois.edu](http://www.las.illinois.edu))
- AROs in College Office (2002 Lincoln Hall)
- The Career Center
- The Counseling Center
- Advisors in other majors for minors or changing major.



# Paperwork

## Fill out for every student

**WRITE LEGIBLY!!!!**

Must Include:

- Student Name
- UIN (very important to have this)
- Date (very important to have this)
- What you talked about
- Any referrals made

***PRINT YOUR NAME AT THE BOTTOM***



# What to Avoid

Successful Peer Advisors Do Not:

- Show up late or miss their assigned time
- Act rude or disrespectful
- Bad mouth instructors or courses
- Answer questions that they do not know
- Give advice based upon personal experience (peer advisors are not an “average” MCB student)

