

Administrative Activities Review Buchtel College of Arts & Sciences

I. Basic Facts and Description of the Unit.

a. Mission and goals. The *mission* of the BCAS Dean's Office is to support and serve the students, faculty and staff of the college. By extension, given the size and service orientation of the college and the interdisciplinary/collaborative nature of our work, the BCAS Dean's Office supports and serves the entire UA campus community and our numerous community partners.

Short term goals include responding to the needs communicated to us by students, faculty, staff and university administrators. Some examples include resolving course or program issues raised by students, providing guidance or support to college staff for course scheduling, budget management and hiring, providing advising to support students' progress to their degree, managing college recruitment activities, enforcement of academic requirements and policies, and generation of data and reports needed by other university offices.

Long term goals include improving the quality and marketing of our programs, fostering the professional development of faculty and staff, and enhancing the success rates of our students.

b. Services. The BCAS Dean's office provides the following services:

- Academic advising and student support,
- Academic program/policy support services,
- Administrative support to the 24 units in the college.

There is great overlap in who provides these services, but for the sake of this report it is assumed that 1) academic advising and student support are provided by the BCAS Advising Office personnel, the Pre-Health Adviser, the Secretary for the Advising office and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, 2) academic program/policy support services are provided by the two program specialists in the Dean's office, and 3) administrative support to the 24 units in the college is provided by the divisional Associate Deans, Coordinator of Administrative Services and Director of Operations and Technology. The Interim Dean of the College oversees all of these areas, manages curricular issues and serves as campus liaison to the state for Transfer and Articulation issues.

All areas of service are essential, but responding to student and faculty needs is the highest priority. The magnitude of the workload in the college can be grasped through these statistics:

- 24 Departments and Schools
- Over 4500 active UG students pursuing BCAS programs
- Approximately 250 graduate students
- Number of SCHs delivered
 - Graduate – 10,580 for 2017-18
 - Undergraduate – 229,130 for 2017-18
- 275 FT faculty in 2017-18
- 312 PT faculty in 2017-18
- 27 FT Contract professionals
- 51 FT Administrative staff
- Total budget for Dean's office is over \$8M

Academic advising and student support

There are 12 Academic Advisers and a Pre-Health Adviser who are all supervised by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and supported by one Secretary who is supervised by the Coordinator of Administrative Services. At times there are Student Assistants to augment the Advising Office desk staffing.

- **Critical partners.** Key partnerships inside the university include BCAS Departments and Schools, Admissions, Transfer Services, New Student Orientation, Registrar, Enrollment Management, Student Accounts, Financial Aid, Career Services, Developmental Programs, International Center, Adult Focus, Office of Accessibility, Office of Multicultural Development (OMD), Athletics, Office of Student Conduct, Military Services, Counseling Services, Health Services, Tutorial Services, ZipAssist, and all other UA colleges. At times there may be some overlap of advising services with OMD, Athletics and Honors but these issues have been lessened of late and are being resolved. There are no critical partners outside the university for personnel in academic advising and student support.

- **Customers or end-users of your services.** End users of academic advising and student support services are students and their departments/schools. In 2017-18 year (5/7/17-5/8/18) approximately 4,500 students visited the BCAS Advising Office for appointments and 3,190 students attended a walk-in meeting with an adviser. Advisers logged 340 telephone calls with students and approximately 4,700 e-mails. These numbers represent a staffing of 5 advisers from May 2017 to February 2018 and 12 advisers for the remainder of the year. Advisers oriented 551 students in summer and fall 2017 (a period when we advised and oriented only direct admit students) and expect to orient nearly 1000 in 2018 based on the current new first year student matriculation numbers provided by Admissions. Advisers work with all categories of undergraduate admits (e.g., direct, college ready, emergent, adult, transfer, international) and advise by program of study. In addition to their work directly with students, advisers work with departments to update curriculum guides, to consult on curriculum and course substitutions (when needed to clear a student for graduation), and to assist transfer students who need coursework evaluated for equivalency. Finally, advisers staff various recruitment events throughout the year and each semester they work through lists of unenrolled students to assist the office of enrollment management and enhance UA student retention and completion.

- **Key performance analysis.** The performance of the academic advising and student support area can be judged by the overall number of 2017-18 undergraduate students who graduated (N=902), who sought assistance or consultation from their academic adviser (N=12,730), and who were on probation and required to work with their adviser (N=392). During peak periods of the semester (i.e., immediately before a semester, during the first 2 weeks, and during the month long registration period), advisers are scheduled nonstop and struggle to meet the demand. Careful scheduling and proactive efforts to spread other work with probation or at risk students to less intensive periods are utilized by advisers to manage their workload.

- **Brief assessment.** The BCAS Advising Office has always worked closely with the academic program/policy support personnel in the college to provide students, departments/schools and other university offices with accurate and efficient services. The expansion of the office in spring 2018 from 5 to 12 advisers offers an opportunity to better serve all students on campus who have declared a BCAS major, but also challenges us to develop new business practices to accomplish our expanded responsibilities and staffing.

Academic program/policy support services

There are two College Program Specialists supervised by the Coordinator of Administrative Services.

- **Critical partners.** Key partnerships inside the university include BCAS Departments and Schools, Admissions, Transfer Services, New Student Orientation, Registrar, Enrollment Management, Student Accounts, Financial Aid, International Center, Graduate School, Military Services, ZipAssist, and all other UA

colleges. There are no critical partners outside the university for personnel in academic program/policy support services.

- **Customers or end-users of your services.** End users of academic program/policy support services are students and the faculty and staff of BCAS departments/schools as well as administrators and staff in all other UA colleges and offices. In 2017-18 there were 4500 students in programs in the college and 902 students were cleared for graduation. These staff members respond to queries from students, faculty and staff across the campus on a daily basis with contacts being face to face, on the telephone and by e-mail. It is not possible to quantify the number of contacts so the number of students in the college provides context for the magnitude of their work responsibilities.

- **Key performance analysis.** The primary responsibility of these staff members is to ensure that a student's progress to graduation is supported while academic standards for enrollment and graduation and university policies are maintained. The 902 students who graduated in 2017-18 were all touched in some manner by the work of these staff members. Similarly, the 551 new first year students in the college last year all needed holds placed and adviser panels updated in Peoplesoft. From the perspective of the overall student population of the college, in 2017-18 these staff members notified almost 400 students of their probation/dismissal status (with direction as to how to proceed), processed 85 transient permission forms, and made at least 3479 adjustments to student records based on the weekly reports received from the registrar's office (e.g., major change, adding a minor, transferring out of the college). Countless e-mails and phone calls regarding academic status and policies are received and require responses. These staff members consult on a daily basis with advisers and faculty and unit administrators regarding curricular issues. The Program Specialists are exceptionally busy and their reputation on campus is that their student records work is timely and accurate. These staff often receive calls from other offices requesting consultation on how to resolve a problem or how BCAS interprets a particular UA policy.

- **Brief assessment.** The personnel who provide this service are extremely experienced and knowledgeable regarding academic policies and programs. They strongly value adherence to university policies, consistency of application of such policies, and the importance of correct documentation. They critically evaluate questions and issues that are brought to them and routinely think beyond the initial question to evaluate the larger picture. Their biggest challenge is that their workload has increased as the numbers of students in the college have grown due to adding units and types of students.

Administrative support to the 24 units in the college

There are four Associate Deans, a Coordinator of Administrative Services and a Director of Operations and Technology supervised by the Interim Dean. Each Associate Dean is responsible for serving units in one Division of the College. In addition, the Associate Dean responsible for the Humanities is also responsible for student affairs and advising, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences is also the shared Chair for Anthropology and Sociology, the Associate Dean for Natural Sciences is Chair of Geosciences, and the Associate Dean for Fine Arts is also Interim Director of the School of Music. The Interim Dean is responsible for curricular oversight in the college and serves the larger university as a liaison to the state for transfer and articulation issues.

- **Critical partners.** Key partnerships inside the University are other BCAS Departments and Schools, other UA colleges, the Graduate School, OAA, ORA, HR, the Office of General Counsel, the Budget Office, PFOC, Capital Planning and Athletics. External to UA these personnel work with donors and industry partners, Akron Public Schools, ODHE and regional universities that include NEOMED, Kent, CSU, and YSU. There is no overlap or duplication of services with other units at UA.

- **Customers or end-users of your services.** Administrative support personnel respond to ongoing requests for information and action from Departments/Schools and OAA. The Interim Dean also responds to

requests for information and action from ODHE. The internal requests relate to RTP, hiring, NTT review, program review, merit review, PDLs, budgeting, support for innovation (online/mode of delivery course redesign, flexible scheduling options, internationalizing curriculum and more), curriculum proposal system support, grant writing, PAFs, course maintenance (monitoring enrollment and adjusting offerings accordingly), review of assessment reports and activities, processing graduate student contacts, technology needs, management of building and classroom enhancements and general operations, graduate faculty status requests, conflict of interest/commitment paperwork, faculty load and start-up expenditures. The Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Humanities supervises the advising staff and leads recruitment and retention efforts in addition to responding to all student inquiries regarding academic policies and classroom problems. These Administrative Support personnel spend inordinate amounts of time and energy problem solving, putting out small fires, mediating disagreements, and explaining UA policy or the meaning of the CBA, university rules, any new call for information (like APR and the more recent administrative review), and more. They serve as an institutional bridge between the needs and desires of the upper administration and those of the many divergent disciplinary communities in the 24 BCAS academic units.

• **Key performance analysis.** Key indicators of the amount and quality of work carried out by these administrative personnel may be gleaned from the number of BCAS faculty and students served via their efforts (see below).

- Over 4500 active UG students pursuing BCAS programs
- Approximately 250 graduate students
- 275 FT faculty in 2017-18
- 312 PT faculty in 2017-18
- 27 FT Contract professionals
- 51 FT Administrative staff

For the most part, the units in the college run smoothly and efficiently and budgets and processes are managed effectively. This is despite ongoing budget cutting and limited hiring; BCAS academic units continue to focus on their mission to ensure students learn and graduate. As the college engages in more interdisciplinary efforts and joint hires in the future, the complexity of the work of these personnel will increase as it will need to be done in concert with other colleges and offices at UA. The Interim Dean worked with ODHE to manage the state's OTM, TAG, CTAG and MTAG efforts and to facilitate the construction of degree pathways to bridge academic work from 2 and 4 year schools.

• **Brief assessment.** The Interim Dean, Associate Deans, Coordinator of Administrative Services and Director of Operations and Technology work as a cohesive team to facilitate the smooth operation of the college in accordance with the policies and accepted procedures of the university. Associate Deans work to address potentially problematic student and faculty situations so they do not escalate, and the Coordinator of Administrative Services and Director of Operations and Technology monitor and provide feedback to units to ensure their hiring, RTP, spending and scheduling processes, etc. are consistent with UA policies and procedures. The Director of Operations and Technology manages budget and physical resources to support all college units in fulfilling their missions. The paucity of financial and personnel resources in recent years has severely limited the College's ability to proactively move forward on strategic issues or initiatives.

c. Resources. The strength of the BCAS Dean's office is the quality of the personnel who staff it. They are experienced faculty, contract professionals and staff who are committed to serving the college and its students. Strengths of the college administration include strong relationships with chairs/directors, fairly high levels of trust between our office and faculty, a collaborative and pragmatic and problem-solving

culture/focus in the college office. There is enormous faculty energy in the college just waiting to be tapped to innovate in a variety of areas, but it has been difficult to be proactive in our current circumstances, even though there are still many illustrations of proactive innovation in scholarship, teaching and community engagement.

- **Personnel.** The attached organizational chart details the responsibilities and lines of responsibility of the college personnel. These personnel are adequate to meet the responsibilities of the BCAS Dean's office, but additional resources in the form of staff to maintain webpages and support recruitment efforts via social media or web modalities would add to the college's effectiveness.
- **Financials.** The attached budget spreadsheets provide a line-item summary of the college's budgeted and actual expenses over the past five years. There have been so many changes in the office and its personnel over the last 5 years that interpreting budget trends is difficult (other than to note that budget cuts occur annually and the college and its units attempt to do more with less). In that regard, however, it is notable that administrative units in the college typically have underspent even their shrinking budgets; personnel have not only absorbed large cuts but also found ways to (temporarily, as team players) spend even less to help the university get through this period. Sweeping and/or freezing of carry-over funds has unreasonably restricted the ability of the Dean's Office and its units to plan for and respond to critical needs in a timely manner.
- **Equipment and technology.** There is no special equipment or technology that is critical to operations in the BCAS Dean's office.
- **Space.** The BCAS Dean's office occupies space on the first floor of the CAS building (i.e., all Academic Advising & Student Support except for the Pre-Health Adviser who resides on the fourth floor of CAS), and on the fourth floor (i.e., offices for the Academic Program/Policy Support staff, and the Administrative Support personnel). The college also maintains a larger conference room on the first floor of the CAS and a smaller meeting room on the fourth floor of the building that are used for college meetings. This space is adequate for our needs.

II. Future Plans. The BCAS Dean's office will continue to pursue its mission to support and serve students, faculty and staff in the college and the broader university. The nature of that support and service continues to evolve, however, based on changes occurring, or that have occurred, in the larger university. For example, reduced budgets with ever more limited flexibility can hinder efforts to assist units to grow enrollments and strengthen scholarship. Similarly, the loss of most Master's student funding means that the college will be able to deliver fewer General Education classes in some areas, less experiential learning, less tutoring, and will result in the loss of several million dollars in graduate SSI to the university.

a. Potential changes. The outcome of APR may dictate changes in the organization and management of several units, but that outcome is not yet known. There also will be changes needed to keep the college and its programs moving forward. Specifically:

- Once APR outcomes are determined, it is essential that the college consider and formulate a plan for moving forward. That plan must be the result of extensive discussion with all stakeholders. This plan should facilitate unit planning through explicit messaging that, as clearly as is possible, identifies for units receiving no new positions this year what new positions they can reasonably expect in the next 3-5 years.
- A key college priority, regardless of the specific outcomes of APR, is to fill interim leadership positions. Only in doing this will we be able to move units forward in growing enrollments and meeting student needs.

- Another priority will be to support the professional development of faculty, contract professionals and staff; retaining and supporting faculty and administrative personnel are critical to the long term success of the college and larger university and we need to try to do a better job in this area.
- The college also will continue to try to grow graduate programs that attract paying students through careful design of such programs and active recruitment. The new online MAP and Communication MA programs, the longstanding MS in Computer Science, and the MA in I/O Psychology are examples of candidates for these efforts.
- Innovative or high demand undergraduate programs will be supported to the extent possible. For example, majors related to criminal justice, social media, health or pre-professional areas, and global studies may open new markets to us.
- With the advising changes that occurred in spring 2018, it will be prudent to re-examine our practices and protocols to determine whether the structure and functioning of the college advising unit is optimal given the larger number of advisers and more diverse set of students served by the advisers.

b. Trends. A number of trends in recent years seem important to consider for their impact on the college and its functioning:

- The increasing control and oversight of college budgets and administrative functioning by central offices have limited creativity and initiative. It is often difficult or impossible to implement innovative initiatives within specified strictures.
- Attracting, hiring and retaining outstanding administrative personnel were hallmarks of UA in the past, but this is increasingly difficult in the current financial climate as our salaries often are not competitive with neighboring institutions. When we hire outstanding new employees, we often lose them to our competitors after they have accrued experience. Such moves are often due to limited options for merit or salary ladders at UA. This adversely impacts the experience and institutional knowledge available to the students and faculty and other administrative staff who count on the Dean's office personnel for services.
- Persistent downsizing of the administrative resources available to the college and its units has had unfortunate effects in some cases and needs to be considered carefully going forward. For example, not only may positions advertised as serving multiple units be less attractive to applicants, but the shared positions can be difficult to manage so that both units are well-served. Also, limited administrative resources can mean that certain tasks are not covered or that faculty must pick up tasks like web updates or administrative paperwork that would be best left to a professional administrator.
- Joint positions appear to be an emphasis as UA moves forward and this trend will necessitate careful coordination across departments and colleges. On the positive side, this trend may result in enhanced support for interdisciplinary efforts, but only if clear guidelines are developed that encourage and support such efforts. In the past, the lack of such guidelines, or policies that seemed to discourage faculty and administrative efforts, has been an impediment to the growth of interdisciplinary programs.