

University of South Carolina Union

Act 629 – Summary Reports on Institutional Effectiveness
Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008

Academic Affairs

Academic advising is a long-term relationship between student and advisor providing students with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities for completion of their degrees, programs, and/or career preparation and that helps students reach their educational goals. It consists of regular discussions of those goals, consideration of alternatives available to the student, the planning of appropriate course work, the monitoring of student progress, and referral to other campus and University resources.

At the beginning of the orientation process, the student is assigned an academic advisor by either the Admissions Director or the Institutional Effectiveness Officer based on the intended major of the student upon transfer. Academic advisors are all full-time faculty members, the Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP) Director and the OSP Transfer Councilor. Academic advisors are separated into clusters based on the expertise of the faculty member: Nursing/Health Sciences, Biology/Chemistry/ Environmental Sciences, Humanities/Social Science, Business, Mathematics/ Physics/ Engineering, Elementary/Middle School Education, Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) and Undecided. Students at the Laurens Campus are advised by the Administrative Assistant unless the student is in the BLS program. At the end of orientation and before placement tests are administered, students make an appointment with their assigned advisor for a 30-minute advising session. Prior to the session, the advisor is sent the results of the placement tests, the proscribed courses in English and mathematics in which the student should enroll, and links to the catalogs of the institution to which the student intends to transfer.

Following the initial advising session, students typically meet with their academic advisor to be advised for courses for subsequent semesters during the preregistration period. The student may need to meet with the advisor for other academic and/or personal issues. To facilitate this, all full-time faculty members post their office and class hours on their doors and the administrative assistants in their area keep a schedule of these hours. Students who change their intended major or are dissatisfied with their academic advisor may request a change in advisor from the Admissions Director.

Training for academic advisors is provided on a continuing basis by the Institutional Effectiveness Officer. Full-time faculty members are provided with a comprehensive advising workshop at the beginning of their second semester of employment and shadow an experienced advisor during that semester's main registration period. All academic advisors are provided continuing education yearly prior to main registration for fall semester. Updates are disseminated throughout the year as needed by members of the administration.

Indicators

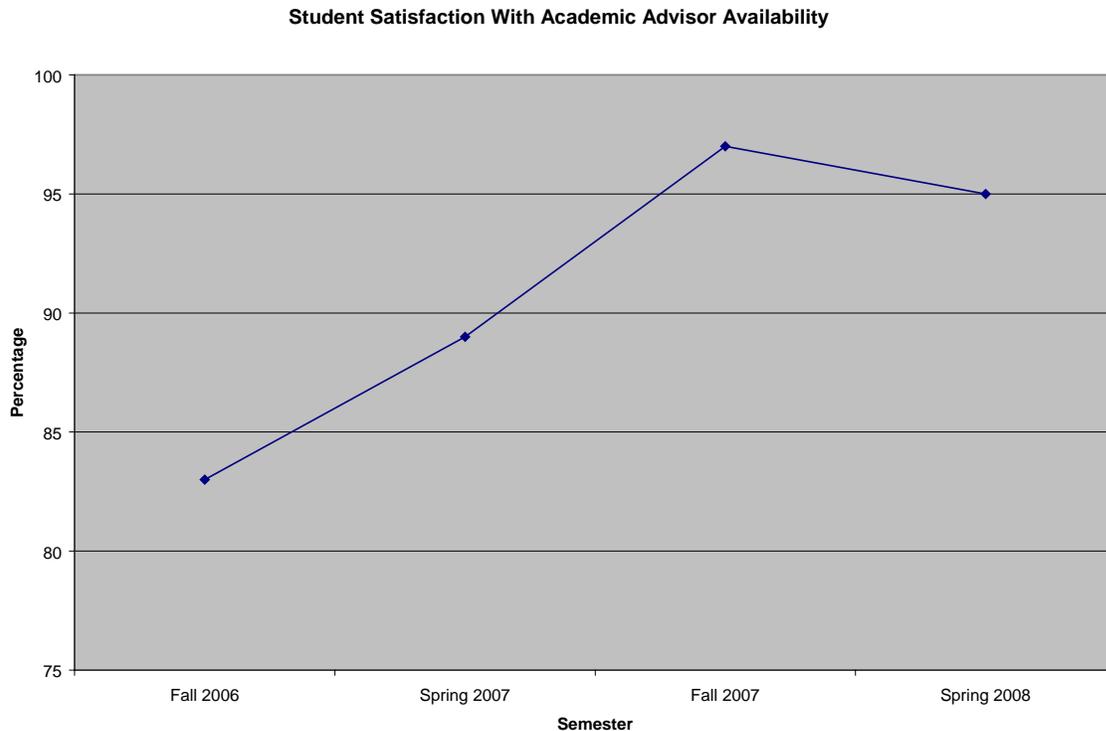
1. Student satisfaction with academic advising.
2. Retention of students.
3. Graduation of students.

Assessment Methods

1. Ongoing student satisfaction with academic advising.
2. Student satisfaction with academic advising upon withdrawal from USC Union.
3. Success rate of first-time, full-time degree seeking students.
4. Success rate of first-time, full-time degree seeking students receiving 4-year degrees in 150% of program time.

Assessment Results & Uses of Results:

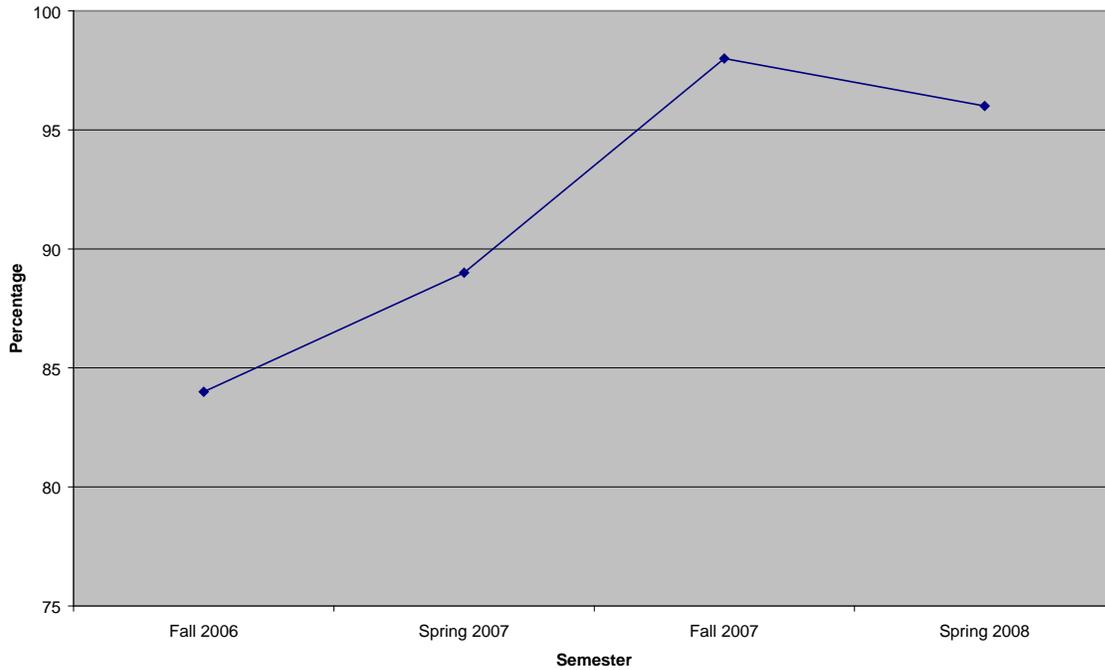
Ongoing Student Satisfaction with Academic Advising



USC Union students are very satisfied with the availability of their academic advisor. The percentage of students indicating that they are very satisfied or satisfied with the availability of their academic advisor has been trending upward with a rate of at least 95% for the 2007 – 2008 academic year.

In an attempt to increase student satisfaction with advisor availability, academic advisors were offered financial remuneration to advise students following the summer 2007 orientation sessions rather than having the students wait for main registration. This will continue in 2008.

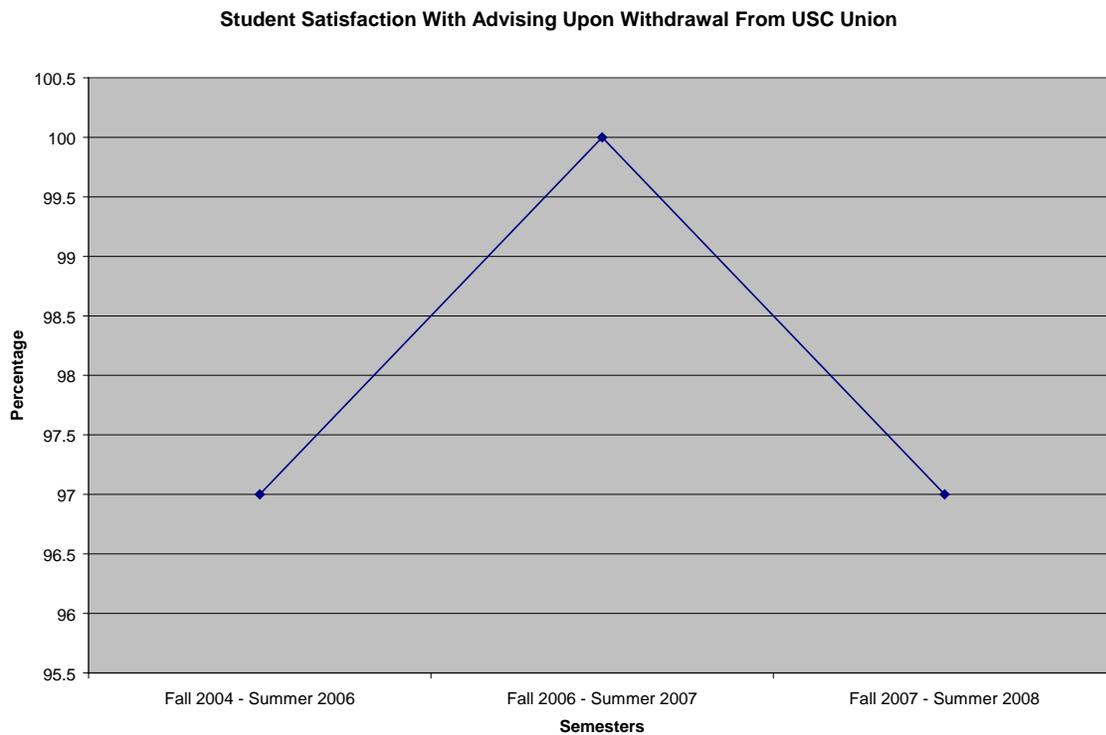
Student Satisfaction With Academic Advising Quality



USC Union students are very satisfied with the quality of their academic advising. The percentage of students indicating that they are very satisfied or satisfied with the availability of their academic advisor has been trending upward with a rate of at least 96% for the 2007 – 2008 academic year.

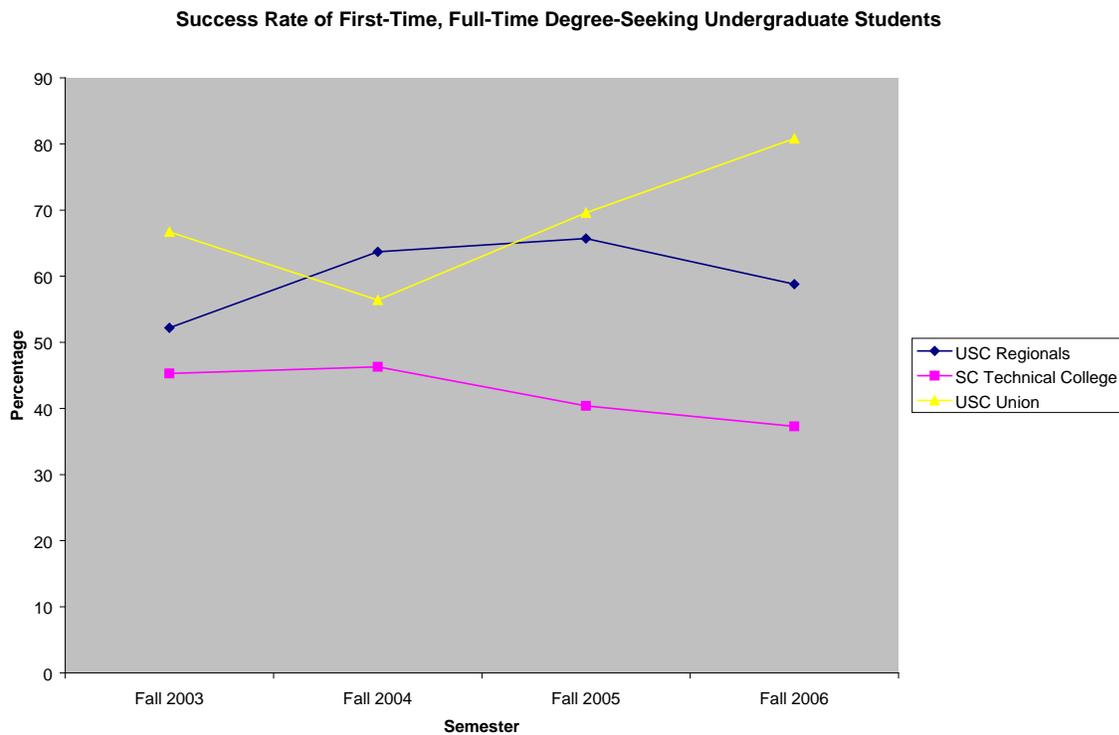
In an attempt to increase student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising, in 2007 students were assigned to an advisor based on their intended major upon transfer with a faculty member specializing in that field. Advisors were also given specific information on the degree requirements for the institution that the student indicated was their choice for transfer. The Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degree checklists were also expanded to include specific courses students needed for the requirements. This will continue in 2008 and will expand to include degrees at USC Columbia and USC Upstate.

Student Satisfaction with Academic Advising Upon Withdrawal from USC Union



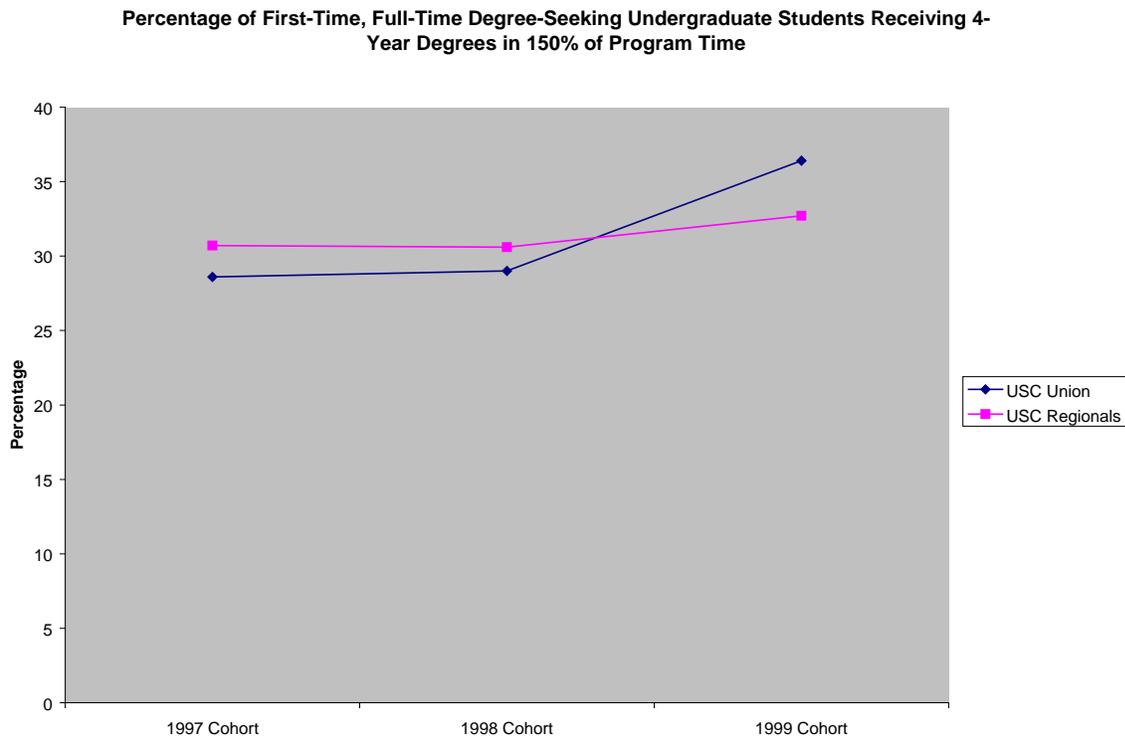
USC Union students are very satisfied with their academic advising upon withdrawal from USC Union. This group includes students who not only withdraw from USC Union but also those who transfer to another institution or switch to another USC campus. At least 97% of the students have been very satisfied or satisfied with their academic advising for the last three reporting cycles. Changes to the advising system made in 2007, continuing education of advisors are expected and regular updates in changes in degree programs at senior institutions are expected to enable USC Union to maintain a consistently high rate of student satisfaction with academic advising.

Success Rate of First-Time, Full-Time Degree Seeking Students



It is clear that strong academic advising impacts retention. It is important that the first advising session give the student a sense that the advisor not only cares for the student but also is knowledgeable of the student's intended major. From spring 2004 to summer 2005, USC Union was without an Academic Dean and without a clear plan for academic advising. The Academic Dean, the Admissions Director and the Institutional Effectiveness Officer developed an academic advising plan in summer 2006 that would hopefully impact retention and change the downward trend experienced from 2003 – 2004. The plan worked well enough that USC Union had the best retention rate of any two-year institution in S.C. for the fall 2006 semester.

Success Rate of First-Time, Full-Time Degree Seeking Students Receiving 4-Year Degrees in 150% of Program Time.



The success of students after they graduate or transfer from USC Union is directly related to the quality of their academic advising. Strong academic advising insures that students have taken the courses they need for their four-year degree. This facilitates completion of the baccalaureate degree. While USC Union has begun to outperform the USC Regional Campuses in successful degree completion, the current cohort for which data is available left USC Union before the new advising system was implemented. It will be at least 5 – 10 more years before deeper analysis will be able to be made of this measure.

Comments on the withdrawal surveys have indicated that students want their academic advisors to be more informed on the degree requirements of their intended senior institution. To improve this, the Institutional Effectiveness Officer sends advisors links to the appropriate catalogs for advisors as well as reminders to check the catalogs yearly for any changes in program requirements.