

## **I. Executive Summary**

Christian Brothers University (CBU) is committed to providing students of all backgrounds and faith traditions with a rich educational experience in a supportive environment designed to prepare them to meet the challenges of a complex, ever-changing world. Although faculty members are required to be actively engaged in research and professional development, CBU places primary emphasis on teaching excellence and service to the University and wider community. Indeed, a firm belief in the vocational nature of teaching extends beyond the classroom to a faculty member's role as an advisor.

Key faculty members view our reaffirmation effort as a comprehensive process designed to enhance the learning culture at CBU. An extensive series of university-wide conversations and focus groups led to our decision to focus on improving academic advising for our Quality Enhancement Plan. This focus reflects our mission, vision, and Catholic identity as a university that values its calling to care for each individual student, and since advising is an especially important form of teaching (and learning), this focus will significantly increase our prospects for improving student learning. Indeed, the literature in this area suggests that effective advising is perhaps "the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience."

As a result of a careful review and consideration of the literature and institutional data relevant to effective advising practices and improving academic advising at CBU, we have developed a QEP designed to engage students in creating dynamic plans to realize their personal, educational, and career goals and in developing commitments to lifelong learning and service to society. This engagement of students will occur within a culture of shared responsibility among students and advisors. To this end, we will (1) implement essential advising processes and practices, (2) develop a systematic advisor training program, and (3) create a centralized center for academic advising.

## II. Process Used to Develop the QEP

The process of developing a Quality Enhancement Plan at Christian Brothers University has not been devoid of obstacles and interruptions; most notably, the departure of our Academic Vice President, Dr. Anthony Aretz, at the end of the 2007-2008 academic year for a presidential post at a Catholic college in Cincinnati and, tragically, the death of our president, Brother Vincent Malham, as a result of a car accident in May 2008. Consequently, CBU was granted a one-year deferral of its reaffirmation of accreditation to 2011. In spite of these setbacks, and as a result of the efforts of all key university constituencies, CBU finds itself in a prime position to develop a Plan with the potential to transform the learning culture on campus and advance the mission of this distinctly Lasallian institution. Essential to this process is providing “evidence of the involvement of all appropriate campus constituencies (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘includes a broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development . . . of the QEP’*).”

One of the keynote speakers at the 2007 SACS Annual Meeting in New Orleans was Dr. Ben Carson, director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University, perhaps known best for his pioneering work in separating conjoined twins. At one point in his presentation, Carson defined “success” as “using your God-given talents and abilities to elevate other people.” This definition – or charge – seems entirely consistent with our privileges and responsibilities as Lasallian educators since, as St. John Baptist de La Salle once wrote, “To touch the hearts of [our] pupils and to inspire them with the Christian spirit is the greatest miracle [we] can perform, and one which God expects of [us].” Unfortunately, as academics and educators, we sometimes emphasize institutions over individuals, maintenance over mission, routine over risk. Fortunately, as a university community called not only to teach but also to serve, we have been given the unique opportunity to re-think and re-envision who we are and what it is, exactly, that we have been called to do and be on behalf of our students. That

opportunity is the Quality Enhancement Plan. Under the leadership of our first permanent lay president, Dr. John Smarrelli, we have developed a Plan that demonstrates – first and foremost to our students, and only secondarily to SACS – our firm and unwavering commitment to improve student learning at Christian Brothers University, and to do so in a way that persists long past our SACS on-site visit in March 2011.

Prior to his untimely death, Brother Vincent Malham organized a SACS Compliance Reaffirmation Leadership Team, “charged with providing oversight for the development of both the Compliance Certification and the Quality Enhancement Plan.” (SACS, 35) The Leadership Team currently consists of Dr. John Smarrelli (President), Dr. Frank Buscher (Academic Vice President), Mr. Dan Wortham (Administration and Finance Vice President), Mr. Jack Hargett (Associate Academic Vice President), Brother Louis Althaus (Assistant to the President), and Dr. Scott Geis (Associate Professor of Religion & Philosophy and QEP Chair). Given the importance of broad-based involvement and support in relation to the QEP, former Academic Vice President, Dr. Anthony Aretz introduced the CBU community to this essential component of our reaffirmation effort in the fall of 2007, and also to the role of the QEP chair. In a correspondence sent to all CBU faculty and staff members, Dr. Aretz outlined the QEP requirements as set forth by SACS and asked for assistance in selecting a topic that focuses on improving student learning and that is consistent with said requirements.

As preparation for the reaffirmation process, several administrators as well as faculty and staff members attended the 2007 (New Orleans) and 2008 (San Antonio) SACSCOC Annual Meetings, and CBU sent administrative and faculty representatives to the 2008, 2009, and 2010 SACSCOC Institutes on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation. As well, CBU’s SACS Compliance Reaffirmation Leadership Team attended the 2009 SACS Leadership Team Orientation in Atlanta.

In view of the aforementioned change in University leadership – including both an interim president (Mr. Lance Forsdick) and vice president (Dr. Frank Buscher) – and time line adjustment, it became necessary to “re-introduce” the nature and importance of the QEP to the CBU community; there were also a number of new faculty and staff members, not to mention a new freshman class. This being the case, Interim President Forsdick highlighted the importance of the reaffirmation process – and the QEP in particular – to the faculty and staff at the annual President’s Workshop in August 2008. In February 2009, the QEP chair sent a preliminary correspondence to all CBU faculty and staff members regarding the Quality Enhancement Plan, and then followed with a much more detailed missive designed both to give everyone a clearer sense of what the QEP is all about and to emphasize the extent to which successful reaffirmation is directly tied to broad-based, university-wide support, buy-in, and involvement – from development to implementation. In his March correspondence, the QEP chair highlighted the fact that, whereas the Compliance Certification component of the reaffirmation process focuses primarily on the past and the present, the QEP is “forward-looking” and will be an “ongoing activity,” the implementation of which begins after our 2011 SACS on-site visit; the QEP is thus not to be viewed as an “episodic event.”

In order to succeed, then, our Plan must be aligned and in accordance with Core Requirement 2.12 of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation* (SACSCOC, 2010), wherein CBU demonstrates: (1) an inclusive, broad-based process that focuses on issues tied to institutional assessment; (2) a focus on student learning outcomes and an environment supportive of student learning, and these with a view to advancing CBU’s mission; (3) institutional capability for developing, implementing, and completing our Plan; (4) broad-based support and involvement in the development and implementation of the Plan; and (5) clear identification of the intended outcomes of our QEP and a reasonable, feasible assessment plan.

The QEP chair's duties began officially in January 2009, and included a one-course release; this was increased to two courses in fall 2009. His first task was to bring together representatives from as many CBU constituencies as possible in order to listen to them; to hear what they had to say about our students and how we might – “together and by association” – take very concrete, practical steps to improve student learning on campus. From January through August, the QEP chair met with representatives from each of the Schools of Science, Business, Arts, and Engineering – including the Deans of each of these Schools as well as department chairs – the Library staff, Advising, Admissions, the Registrar, Graduate and Professional Studies, Student Life, Career Services, Campus Ministry, Campus Safety, the Faculty Assembly Curriculum Committee, the Student Government Association, the Honors Program, CBU's Alumni Association, and several Christian Brothers. (Please see Appendix for complete list of participants)

In late August 2009, the QEP chair invited a group of ten individuals – which included various administrators and faculty and staff members – for a series of meetings designed to wade through the sum and substance of the aforementioned conversations, with a view to identifying no more than a handful of recurring themes that seemed to emerge. These meetings resulted in the identification of three possible focus areas for CBU's Quality Enhancement Plan: (1) improving academic advising; (2) creation of a first year experience program linked to freshman orientation; and (3) incorporating a service learning component into the university curriculum. In the interest of transparency, and in an effort to involve as many individuals and groups in the CBU community as possible in the process from start to finish, regular updates were provided to the student body, Faculty Assembly, President's Council, Board of Trustees, CBU alumni, and members of the SACS Compliance Reaffirmation Leadership Team. Updates were also provided at the annual President's Workshop in August (2008-2010) – now the CBU Community Convocation – and Community Conversations with the President that began in

spring 2010. And although these updates were primarily informational in nature, they were also used to alert the university community to various opportunities for participation in the development process.

### **III. Identification of the Topic**

As previously mentioned, the first attempt to initiate discussions regarding possible QEP topics was made by former Academic Vice President Anthony Aretz in a correspondence sent to all faculty and staff, in which he asked that all ideas be forwarded to the newly-appointed QEP chair. Nothing really came of this solicitation for possible topics, however, and this was due primarily to the aforementioned circumstances that resulted in SACS granting CBU a one-year reaffirmation deferral. Thus, the process of selecting a topic began in earnest in January 2009, when the membership of the SACS Compliance Reaffirmation Leadership Team was in place.

As indicated above, the process for identifying the topic that would best enable us to improve student learning and enhance the overall learning climate and culture at CBU began with an extensive series of campus-wide conversations about the purpose and promise of the Quality Enhancement Plan. For this crucial component of our reaffirmation effort, it was imperative that the CBU community participate in a process that would result in the selection of a topic “that is creative and vital to the long-term improvement of student learning (*providing support for compliance with CR 2.12 ‘focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning’*).” Given the importance of demonstrating a “broad-based institutional process” informed by institutional assessment data, tied to our institutional mission and vision, and integral to the university’s strategic plan, a correspondence to this effect was sent to all CBU faculty and staff. This included both an invitation to be involved in the process of identifying our topic along with a sampling of topics generated by various institutions and approved by SACS for implementation. (Providing the list of topics was in no way designed to

influence the outcome but, rather, to help CBU to think creatively and concretely about this particular piece of the overall reaffirmation process.)

Commencing in January 2009 and continuing on through August of the same year, the QEP chair invited representatives from all major constituencies to participate in a series of open conversations about student learning, and how we might improve the “environment supporting student learning” at CBU. In an effort to ensure consistency, each conversation was scheduled for one hour and began with a brief introduction to the nature, purpose, importance, and promise of the QEP; this was followed by a statement regarding the basic requirements each institution must satisfy in relation to its chosen topic. Participants were told that we must demonstrate: (1) the relationship of our topic to student learning; (2) the relationship of our topic to CBU’s mission; (3) the relationship of our topic to CBU’s strategic plan, and how it will serve to promote and advance this plan; and (4) CBU’s capability for the development, initiation, implementation, and successful completion of our QEP. In other words, we must provide clear, concrete evidence that we have not only the need, desire, and will to succeed in this endeavor, but also sufficient human, physical, and financial resources.

Participants of various constituencies were then presented with the following questions to initiate their conversation: (1) What kind of educational experience do we want for our students to have? (2) What do we most want for our students to learn? (3) How can we best provide excellence in education and prepare our students to meet the challenges of a complex world? (The third question was excerpted from a message delivered by former Board of Trustees chair, Mr. Willis Willey, in 2009 to the CBU community.) With one exception, audio recordings were made of all the conversations – with the permission of all participants – in order to ensure the accuracy of all responses, as summaries of each and all of the meetings would be generated for the purpose of analyzing the results. As expected, the conversations were lively and the range of possible topics wide and varied, as seen in this abbreviated list of topics:

- Writing across the curriculum
- Information literacy
- Academic advising
- Critical reading and writing
- First year experience program
- Interdisciplinary studies course
- Service learning component in CBU curriculum
- Learning communities
- Enhance freshman orientation
- Faculty development program(s)
- Mentoring program
- Improve communication skills
- Undergraduate research
- Emphasis on Lasallian identity
- Enhance faculty-student relationships
- Improve basic academic skills
- Increase student retention and persistence
- Enhance and expand Academic Services
- Increase global awareness
- Expand the role of Peer Counselors

In the course of these campus conversations, it was emphasized that our topic must not only be consistent with and/or reflective of our institutional mission and vision, but also serve to advance CBU's mission, vision, and strategic plan. Thus, all participants were encouraged to review these statements/documents in advance, and to be mindful of their contents in the course of our conversations. The mission and vision statements of Christian Brothers University read as follows:

### **Mission**

*Christian Brothers University is a private, Catholic, comprehensive university committed to preparing students of all faiths and backgrounds to excel in their professional and public lives by providing challenging educational opportunities in the arts, business, engineering, the sciences, and teacher education.*

### **Vision**

*Christian Brothers University seeks to be the finest Catholic university in the South whose graduates will be distinguished by professional excellence, leadership, and ethical character.*

Correlative to these are the three **Core Values** of *Faith* (“Our belief in God permeates every facet of the University’s life”), *Service* (“We reach out to serve one another and those beyond our campus”), and *Community* (“We work to build better communities and a better society”).

Toward the conclusion of our twelve campus conversations – which included a total of 85 representatives from eighteen university constituencies – a correspondence dated July 8, 2009 was sent to ten individuals representing faculty, staff, students, administration, and alumni. The purpose of this was to ask for assistance with reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting the fruits of our collective labor in order to identify recurring themes and narrow the list of possible topics to no more than three. Eight individuals representing faculty, staff, and administration responded and, in the course of two meetings in mid-August 2009, successfully narrowed the list of possible topics to three: (1) a first year experience program; (2) service learning; and (3) academic advising. The original plan was to bring this short list of topics before the Faculty Assembly for discussion and a vote in early fall 2009. However, given the importance of broad-based involvement and campus-wide support for our topic, it was recommended that we develop an electronic survey wherein the voices of all CBU stakeholders might be heard.

After a series of meetings in early fall 2009 involving faculty members with the skills needed to develop such an instrument – which resulted in the development of an actual survey – a recommendation was made in September 2009 by the QEP chair, in consultation with members of the SACS Leadership Team, to abandon this plan in favor of a process that would prove more efficient and effective: namely, a series of focus groups. This recommendation was brought before the Faculty Assembly, Alumni Board, President’s Council, and Board of Trustees in mid-fall 2009 and received unanimous approval. A University-wide e-invitation to participate in one of three focus groups was sent on October 13, 2009; a total of 102 responses were received and included 40 alumni, 23 students, 15 staff members, and 24 from the CBU faculty.

After a survey of best practices for conducting focus groups was completed by faculty volunteers, a follow-up correspondence was sent to all respondents to get a sense of their availability in November and December of 2009. From those who responded – and who indicated they would be available Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoons from 12:30-2:00 (time slots reserved at CBU for faculty, staff, and/or department meetings) – nine faculty members, nine staff members, nine students, and nine alumni were randomly selected. Thus, each of the three focus groups was comprised of twelve individuals: three faculty members, three staff members, three students, and three alumni; the respective groups met on November 24, December 3, and December 4, 2009. Once the logistics were worked out, a final correspondence was sent to all participants that included their charge, the protocol, and, of course, expressed gratitude for their willingness to serve our students in this capacity.

Upon providing the participants with a brief background on the QEP, the importance of aligning our plan with Core Requirement 2.12 of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation* was emphasized by including its content in the correspondence:

The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (1) includes a broad-based institutional process identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment, (2) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution, (3) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP, (4) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP, and (5) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement.

With this in mind, the fundamental question with which we were concerned was: Have we, as a University, provided a comprehensive and clear analysis of the critical importance of our QEP for improving the learning environment at CBU? Thus, developing a QEP that is tied to our institutional mission and strategic plan provides us with the opportunity “to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness” and demonstrate our commitment to improving student learning at Christian Brothers University.

In an effort to assist participants in their focus groups, the following definitions or synopses of the three topics were provided:

- **Academic Advising** – As a Lasallian university, CBU values the kind of individual attention that can inspire students to succeed in the classroom, and to make a difference in their communities and in the world. Such a topic would obviously – or, at least, ideally – affect retention, but the inclusion of a mentoring component would also tie in to mission. Central to this topic is the perceived need for the systematization and/or automation of CBU’s advising program, and also tying academic advising to admissions and the overall admissions process.
- **First Year Experience Program** – At the heart of this topic is the importance of creating and nurturing a positive environment within which to foster student success (i.e., academic skills, dispositions, attitudes). There is an emphasis here on information

literacy, and also protocols and programs for the identification of and intervention for “at risk” students. This would be distinct from the Freshman Orientation Program, but could conceivably dovetail with what is already in place.

- **Service Learning** – This topic is obviously tied to CBU’s Lasallian identity, and envisions a service learning component – or service learning opportunities – in the curriculum to provide various opportunities for community involvement and outreach. Appropriate and relevant internships were also highlighted here, as there is a perceived need to provide and promote practical, real-world learning experiences.

Participants were then reminded that they were not to develop any of the topics but, rather, make the strongest argument possible, first, for each of the three topics and, second, for one of the topics over the other two. Each focus group was given 90 minutes to discuss all three topics, devoting no more than 30 minutes to each one. In an effort to provide the participants with some structure and direction as they began their discussions, they were encouraged to think about the following questions which served more or less as “talking points”:

- How do you believe this topic will enhance student learning at CBU?
- How would we go about measuring whether this topic has improved student learning?
- What would we like to see come of this particular focus on improving student learning?
- Are we close to a consensus on which one of the three topics might best enhance or improve student learning at CBU?

Toward the end of the allotted time, each participant was given a ballot wherein they were asked to indicate – from their perspective – the topic for which the strongest argument had been made. Participants were told that a group would be appointed to review the results of each focus group – not simply the ballot tally but, most especially, the tenor and general direction of the discourse – paying close attention to, for example, which topic conversation

evoked the most passionate exchanges; the literature suggests this may provide evidence of the sorts of things we care most about and to which we are most committed. Each of the focus groups was facilitated by the QEP chair and, in addition to the twelve participants, included at least one observer who documented group dynamics and offered an un-biased impression of the proceedings in accordance with an observation form developed for this portion of the selection process.

Not surprisingly, strong and sometimes impassioned arguments were offered both for and against adopting each and all of the three topics for our QEP. However, after devoting many hours to reviewing the results of these conversations, listening to audio recordings of all three focus groups, and in consultation with members of the SACS Leadership Team as well as various faculty and staff members – who were kind and generous enough to review not only the summaries of the focus groups but also some of the institutional data – the consensus was that, at this juncture in the life of our university, we need to take a careful, honest, critical look at our current system of advising. It was agreed that the successful initiation, development, implementation, and completion of our QEP necessitated the articulation of clear, achievable goals and outcomes, identification of the appropriate means by which to assess the extent to which improving the current system of advising has, in fact, impacted and enhanced student learning, and, of course, the necessary institutional resources to bring all of this about.

As indicated above, strong arguments were made for both the potential benefits of a first year experience program and the value of introducing a service learning component into the CBU curriculum. However, some rather serious concerns were also raised in relation to both initiatives, many – or most – of which were tied to the well-intentioned but ill-fated experiment that was IDS (Interdisciplinary Studies) between 2004-2008. And although participants agreed that there is nothing especially admirable about taking the path of least resistance, they also agreed that prudence and common sense would seem to counsel that we select the topic that

possessed the greatest potential for bringing us together as an academic community committed to embodying the Lasallian principles of faith, community, and service.

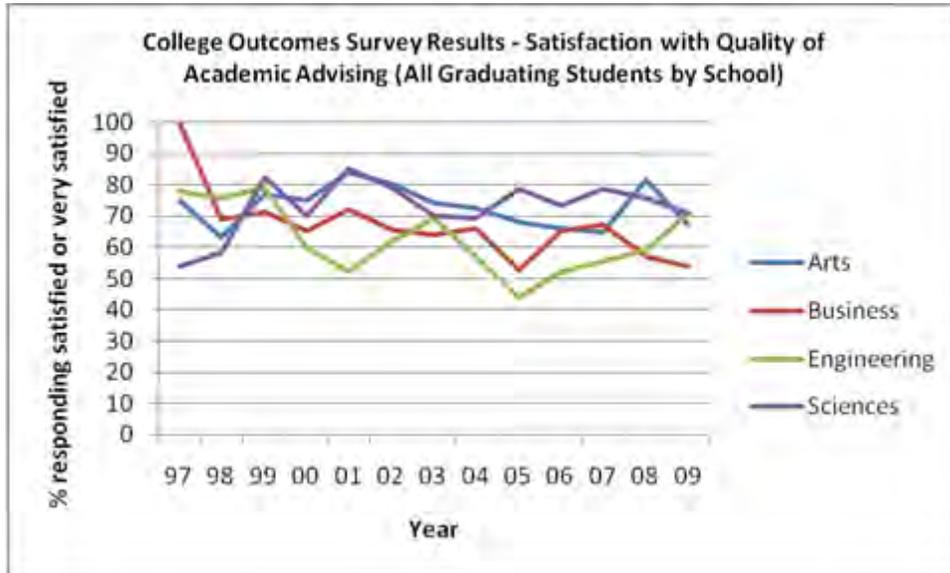
On the more practical – and perhaps more persuasive – side of things, several other compelling reasons for selecting academic advising as our QEP topic emerged from consultation of the QEP chair with key university constituencies over the past two years, including the following:

- There is currently no formal system of advising in place: advisors receive no formal training in effective advising practices, they have no handbook with which to guide them, there is no advising syllabus outlining advisor-advisee goals and responsibilities and, as a result, many students – as well as faculty, staff, and alumni – point to the apparent “inconsistency” or “un-evenness” in type and quality of academic advising across the various departments and schools
- Caring about and being attentive to the particular needs of each, individual student is clearly tied both to our Lasallian mission and strategic plan
- Focusing on improving academic advising would eventually impact the greatest number of students in our undergraduate programs
- Academic advising has the greatest potential for enlisting and ensuring the kind of broad-based support and involvement of institutional constituencies in the initiation, development, implementation, and completion of our QEP that we desire for our students (and that SACS requires)
- Our prospects for identifying and agreeing upon specific program goals and a reasonable plan to assess their achievement appear best in relation to improving academic advising at CBU

- The institutional capability for initiating, developing, implementing, and completing our QEP is greatest – and most realistic – in relation to academic advising
- Through the implementation of *Degree Works* (our new electronic degree audit program), development of an advisor handbook and advising syllabus, implementation of a three-session (June, July, August) summer advising and registration program, and development of a systematic advisor training program (including an on-line component delivered through various Moodle courses), CBU will be able to provide an effective, comprehensive advising program that promotes student learning and persistence with measurable outcomes
- In 2008, CBU hired a new Dean of Academic Services who has extensive background and training in academic advising and developing advising programs, and who has a fresh vision for and commitment to the relationship between effective advising and improved student learning
- CBU's first permanent lay president, Dr. John Smarrelli, has expressed a firm belief in and commitment to improving academic advising, and has even published in this area
- The institutional data clearly indicate there is room for improvement in the area of academic advising, and thus supports this focus and the potential that exists for enhancing the environment that leads to improved student learning

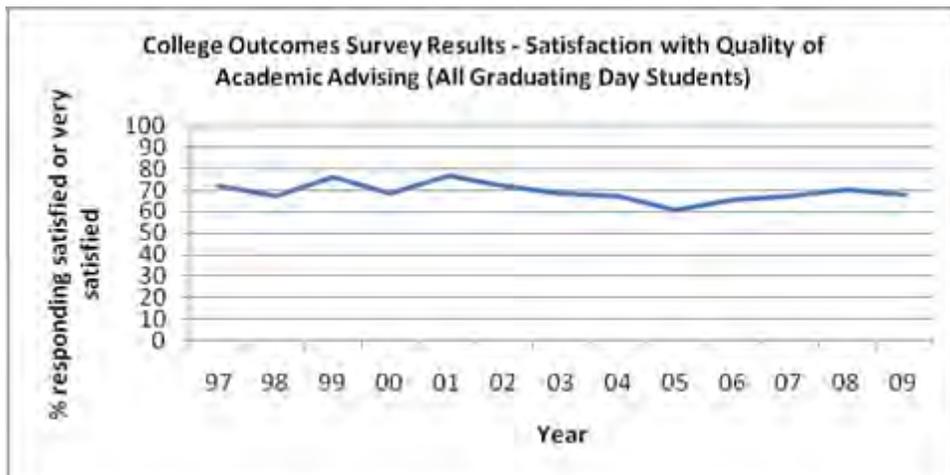
In consultation with our Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, representatives of the QEP Leadership Team were supplied with data most relevant to the perceived quality of academic advising on campus. What follows are statistical (and some narrative) summaries of these surveys, as they relate to academic advising at CBU.

**College Outcomes Survey Results – Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising  
(All Graduating Students by School)**



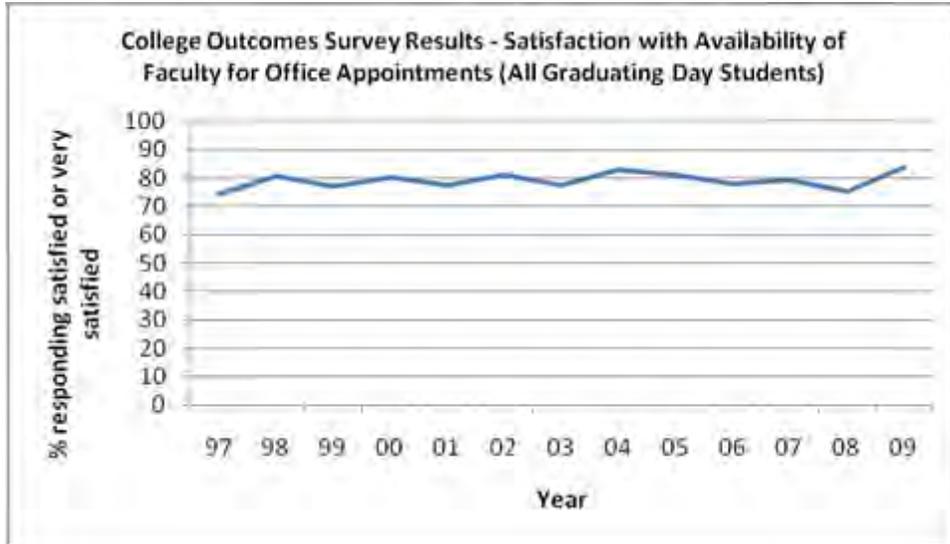
- **Arts: 2009 = 68%**; High = 83% (2001); Low = 65% (2007)
- **Business: 2009 = 53%**; High = 100% (1997); Low = 52% (2005)
- **Engineering: 2009 = 70%**; High = 78% (1997); Low = 44% (2005)
- **Sciences: 2009 = 70%**; High = 85% (2001); Low = 53% (1997)

**College Outcomes Survey Results – Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising  
(All Graduating Day Students)**



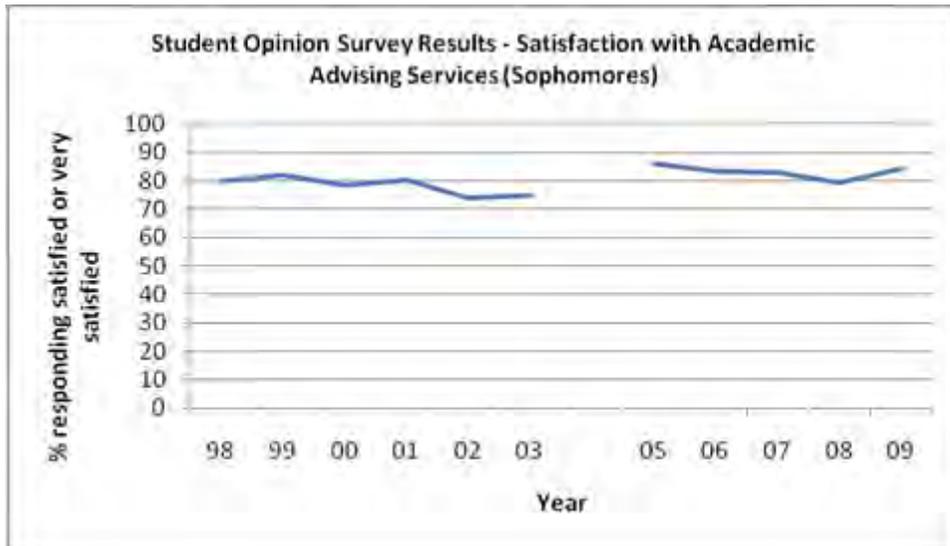
- **2009 = 68%**; High = 78% (2001); Low = 65% (2005)

**College Outcomes Survey Results – Satisfaction with Availability of Faculty for Office Appointments (All Graduating Day Students)**



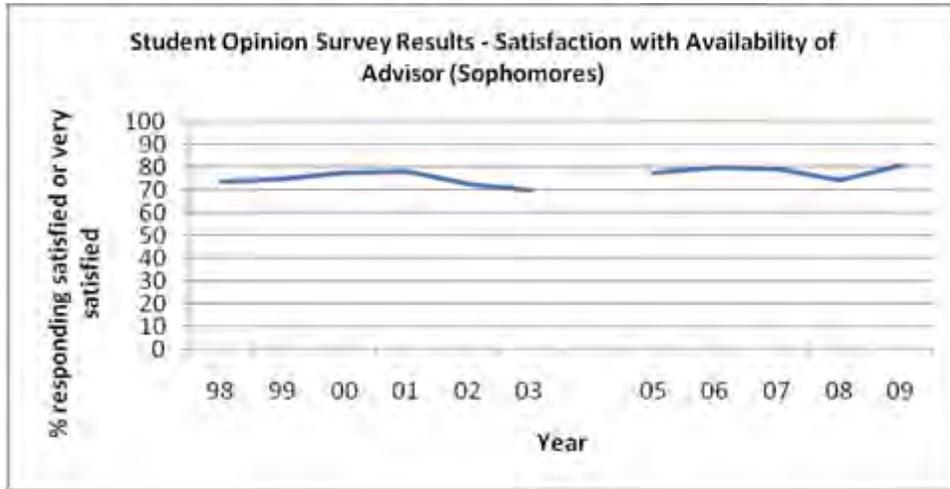
- 2009 = 83%; High = 83% (2009); Low = 74% (1997)

**Student Opinion Survey Results – Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising Services (Sophomore Day Students)**



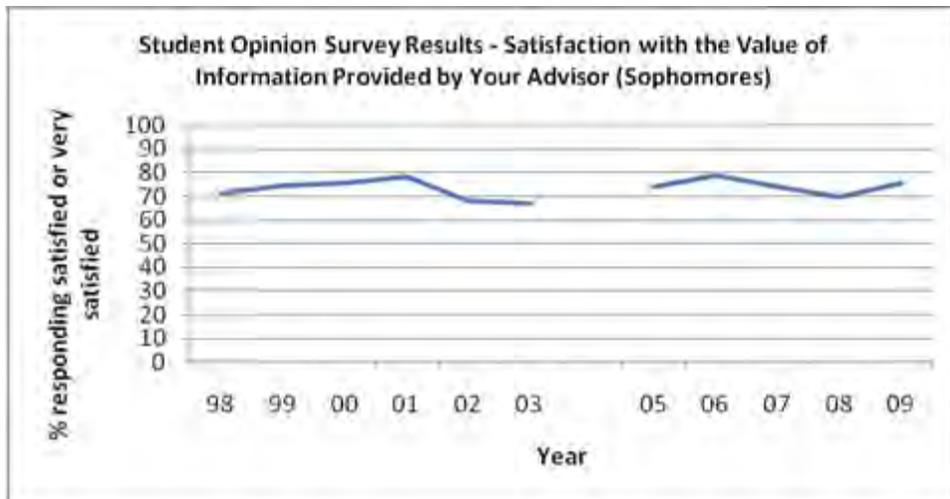
- 2009 = 83%; High = 86% (2005); Low = 73% (2002)

**Student Opinion Survey Results – Satisfaction with Availability of Advisor  
(Sophomore Day Students)**



- 2009 = 81%; High = 81% (2009); Low = 70% (2003)

**Student Opinion Survey Results – Satisfaction with the Value of Information Provided by Your Advisor (Sophomore Day Students)**



- 2009 = 75%; High = 80% (2006); Low = 68% (2003)

**College Outcomes Survey Results – Satisfaction with Advising, Instruction, Orientation, Placement, Career Planning, and Job Placement (All Graduating Students)**

- **2009: Advising = 64%**; Instruction = 79%; Orientation = 70%; Placement = 54%; Career Planning = 58%; Job Placement = 49%

**National Survey of Student Engagement (2008) – Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising (First and Fourth Year Students)**

- 78% of first and fourth year students
- 84% of first year students
- 66% of fourth year students
- 76% of first and fourth year students in Arts
- 72% of first and fourth year students in Business
- 80% of first and fourth year students in Engineering
- 88% of first and fourth year students in Science

(Students' evaluation of quality of advising tends to decrease by year.)

**College Outcomes Survey Results (2009) – Hours per Week on Course Related Activities (i.e. class, studying, lab) (All Graduating Day Students)**

- 2.8% = more than 30 hours
- 13.3% = more than 20 hours
- 28.9% = more than 15 hours
- 48.2% = more than 10 hours
- 51.8% = at most 10 hours
- 10.9% = 0 hours

(Most students spend very little time per week on course related activities.)

**National Survey of Student Engagement (2008) – Hours in a Typical Seven-Day Week  
Preparing for Class (i.e. studying, reading, writing, homework or lab work, analyzing  
data, rehearsing and other academic activities)**

- 2.1% = more than 30 hours
- 11.8% = more than 20 hours
- 28.5% = more than 15 hours
- 50.7% = more than 10 hours
- 49.3% = at most 10 hours
- 0.7% = 0 hours

(A CBU student spends on average 11.7 hours per week on academics; the number of hours per week a student spends on academics is roughly equivalent to the number of hours spent socializing.)

In sum: after careful examination and consideration of the results produced by the University-wide process used to identify our QEP topic, and on the basis of the strength of the arguments made in favor of academic advising as a particularly effective way to improve student learning at CBU, the QEP chair met with representatives of the SACS Leadership Team and offered a rationale for selecting and focusing on this topic. After receiving affirmation and approval from the President and Academic Vice President, a similar presentation was made to the entire Faculty Assembly on February 11, 2010. Although not required for final approval, the proposal to focus on academic advising, in satisfaction of one of the two core requirements for successful reaffirmation of accreditation, was passed by a unanimous vote.

#### IV. Desired Student Learning Outcomes

With student learning being central to the successful development of our QEP, it was necessary for us, as a community, to identify “specific, well-defined goals related to an issue of substance and depth, expected to lead to observable results (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘identifies goals’*).” An extensive review of the literature and “best practices” related to academic advising highlights the value, first, of crafting a succinct definition that is specific to our institution and desired program and, second, of developing a mission statement that will serve to guide and inform the “desired student learning outcomes.” According to Susan Campbell of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), beginning with a clear definition of and mission statement for academic advising serves two primary purposes:

The first is that they anchor the advising program, forming the foundation from which activities and initiatives are derived and guided. Without these foundational components, an unintended consequence is that the relationship between and among initiatives can be perceived by others as at best serendipitous and at worst of marginal importance or value . . . . Further, [such statements] frame action and guide the design of intentionally sequenced educational opportunities to support desired student learning and advising delivery outcomes . . . . Initiatives without the anchor of crafted statements of vision, mission, goals, and program objectives are nothing more than good intentions. (Campbell 2008)

With these insights in mind, and after perusing numerous definitions of academic advising crafted by various institutions, the QEP Leadership Team devoted considerable time to developing the following **definition** for CBU’s advising program:

*Academic advising is an intentional process through which a qualified representative of Christian Brothers University assists students in achieving meaningful academic, vocational, and personal goals within a culture of shared responsibility.*

We then began work on a mission statement for our proposed program in academic advising, informed again by a literature review. The most logical starting point was the *Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education: Standards and Guidelines for Academic Advising (CAS)*, which states that an institution's academic advising program must "develop, record, disseminate, implement, and regularly review its mission and goals."

Tying our advising program's mission statement to our institutional mission statement is of first importance, and we do this by asking a fundamental question: How can our advising program contribute to the realization of our University mission? According to Wes Habley, "the [institutional] mission statement should serve as a guide to the decisions we make about what we do and how we accomplish what we do." Essential to this process is broad-based involvement of university constituencies, in order "to ensure constituent ownership of the mission statement." And because the names and faces of faculty, staff, administrators, programs, and, most obviously and importantly, students change, it is imperative that the statement be reviewed and, when and where appropriate, revised and/or reaffirmed to reflect these changes.

As far as content is concerned, Habley suggests that an institution's advising program mission statement be *visionary* (providing an opportunity for our community to be creative and imaginative in terms of the contributions such a program could make to the lives of our students), *broad* (while it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt to be "all things to all people," our mission should not be defined too narrowly), *realistic* (our program should be extremely practical, financially feasible, and fiscally responsible, lest frustration and disillusionment set in), *motivational* (inspiring all constituencies to be involved and engaged in advising), *short and concise* (favoring "clarity and brevity" over "verbosity and detail"), *easily understood* (shunning jargon and ambiguity), and *memorable* (the prospects of living the

mission increase to the degree that it is easily articulated). With these principles in mind and with CBU's mission statement in hand, the QEP Leadership Team engaged in a deliberative process that resulted in the following **mission statement** for our advising program:

*Academic advising at Christian Brothers University is a teaching and learning process dedicated to student success. It engages students in creating dynamic plans to realize their personal, educational, and career goals and in developing commitments to lifelong learning and service to society.*

Understanding the importance of broad-based involvement in securing “constituent ownership,” a draft of our advising program mission statement was sent to all CBU academic officers – which include the President, Registrar, and all Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors – in an attempt to solicit feedback and recommendations for revision(s). The feedback was all positive and affirmed the statement in its present form.

With a working definition of academic advising in place along with a program mission statement to guide us, the QEP Leadership Team set about identifying our program's desired student learning outcomes, using as a guide the Commission on Colleges' definition of “student learning” as “changes in (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) behaviors, or (4) values,” and ensuring that the outcome statements be “(1) specific, (2) focused, and (3) measurable.” With our Dean of Academic Services serving as a resource and consultant, we were able to identify the philosophical and programmatic shift that we, as a community, envisioned: namely, departing from a prescriptive approach to advising and moving toward one that is more developmental or teaching-centered. (A more detailed explanation and rationale for this shift can be found in the next section of this document: Literature Review and Best Practices.)

As with our advising program mission statement, the leadership team began the process of identifying student learning outcomes by looking at the *CAS Standards and Guidelines*, which includes examples of desirable student learning outcomes. The team also read and discussed several articles and selected chapters from various publications that focused on both the process and content of identifying and measuring student learning outcomes, including “Constructing Learning Objectives for Academic Advising” by Holly Martin (University of Notre Dame). In this insightful and instructive piece, Martin argues that student learning outcomes for advising are typically organized according to three main areas: information, skills, and cognitive development. In addition, she offers some practical suggestions for developing, incorporating, and assessing these outcomes. For example:

- Keep the learning outcomes reasonable in number
- List the learning outcomes sequentially
- Include only those learning goals that advisors can reasonably teach
- Design concrete strategies for each outcome
- Distribute and discuss outcomes with advisors early on
- Learning outcomes must be dynamic, and thus reviewed and revised regularly

With these guidelines and principles in mind, and with a view to advancing CBU’s institutional mission, the following **desired student learning outcomes** have been defined and will be measured:

1. **Students will craft educational plans based on assessment of abilities, goals, interests, and values.**
  - a. Students will engage in realistic self-appraisal.
  - b. Students will identify the goals of academic advising.
  - c. Students will understand the respective roles and responsibilities of advisor and advisee.
  
2. **Students will implement educational plans tailored to attain their educational and professional goals.**
  - a. Students will articulate the connection between their major field of study and desired career path.
  - b. Students will incorporate curricular and extra-curricular elements – and will consider including service on campus and in the community – into their educational plans.
  - c. Students will access appropriate support services to address their particular needs.
  
3. **Students will assume responsibility for meeting academic program requirements.**
  - a. Students will use appropriate resources to observe educational requirements, policies, procedures, and opportunities in their educational plans.
  - b. Students will use appropriate planning guides to prepare a preliminary course schedule prior to consulting with their academic advisors.
  - c. Students will identify the four major learning goals of the general education program as well as the student learning outcomes associated with each goal.
  - d. Students will regularly review and adjust their academic plans in consultation with their advisors.
  
4. **Students will develop a sense of social responsibility.**
  - a. Students will explain Lasallian educational principles of faith, community, and service.
  - b. Students will learn and practice academic behaviors conducive to student success and to respectful interactions with faculty, staff, and other students.
  - c. Students will identify several key components of professional ethics related to career choices.

## V. Literature Review and Best Practices

Developing a successful QEP obviously requires that we have a clear sense of who we are as an institution, who we aspire to be, and who the students are whom we seek to serve and prepare for service. Within this section of our QEP document, we will provide “evidence of consideration of best practices related to [academic advising] (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP’*).”

Founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle in 1680 in Rheims, France in response to the need – and, indeed, to the call – to provide a Christian-based education to the sons of poor and working-class families, the Christian Brothers were, and continue to be, committed to the following **Lasallian Educational Principles**:

- Respect for each individual as a unique person
- An excellent education
- A spirit of community
- A Christian perspective
- A life of service
- A quest for justice and peace

These principles certainly inform, guide, and drive CBU’s mission as well as the various components of our strategic plan. (The strategic plan is currently undergoing substantial revision, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Buscher, Academic Vice President, and so any reference(s) to this document will have in mind the one approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2006 and updated to spring 2008.) The second strategic goal of the strategic plan reads: “The University will have the reputation for providing challenging and supportive education programs focused on student success. Accordingly, we will become a leader in the south in

student retention, graduation, and employment (including graduate and professional schools) upon graduation.”

There is no doubt that things like “student success” and “student retention” can be positively influenced by the relationships that students develop with individual faculty members, which obviously includes their academic advisors. Indeed, Richard Light, in his widely-read and oft-referenced text, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (2001), wrote: “Students who get the most out of college, grow the most academically, and who are happiest organize their time to include the activities with faculty members.” And with respect to the importance of academic advising, Light suggests that, “Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.” Moreover, Wes Habley observed: “Academic advising is the only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for an on-going, one-on-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution.” (cited in: NACADA Session Guide: 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Advising Summer Institute (2010), 24)

Essential to this section of our QEP document is the establishment of a clear relationship between our chosen topic – improving academic advising – and CBU’s mission and strategic plan. In order to realize the goals of our strategic plan, it is necessary to identify certain “critical successful factors.” In relation to the aforementioned goal of “providing challenging and supportive education programs focused on student success,” one “success factor” seems especially relevant, and that is “CBU’s ability to deliver challenging and attractive academic programs [as] an important part of the University’s success.” Of course, CBU’s success is tied to the success of her students, which is at the very heart of our commitment to improve the overall system of advising available to our students, focusing on the “traditional” day student population. Who, then, are our students, and what is unique about a distinctly Lasallian approach to education and, hence, academic advising?

Of CBU's 1,773 full-time students in fall 2009, 1,137 were enrolled in the traditional day program, 266 enrolled as professional students, and the remaining 370 were graduate students. In the day program, 1,098 of 1,137 were full-time, 50.4% of whom were female (55.7% of CBU's total student population in fall 2009 were female). As far as ethnicity is concerned, 52.1% of CBU students in fall 2009 were Caucasian, 32.1% African American, 2.3% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.7% "International," 0.3% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 6.9% "Unknown." Although Christian Brothers is a Roman Catholic university, only 20.2% of the total enrollment reported being Catholic which, given its location in the heart of the mid-South, should not come as a surprise. In addition, 18% of CBU's day enrollment is made up of student athletes, a constituency with its own unique character, commitments, and needs. Finally, according to the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 17% of CBU students who completed the survey had two parents with at most a high school diploma, 28% had exactly one parent with at most a high school diploma, and 45% had at least one parent with at most a high school diploma. Thus, the percentage of CBU students who are "first generation" is fairly significant, and presents not only unique challenges but also myriad opportunities which are entirely consistent with our institutional mission.

As mentioned previously, the vision and passion of CBU's founder, John Baptist de La Salle, were inextricably tied to his divine calling to serve the poor (defined more broadly than financial poverty), by providing educational opportunities otherwise offered only to people of means. In contrast to the educational system of 17<sup>th</sup> century France, de La Salle envisioned teaching in terms of Christian ministry.

[De La Salle] offered the ideal of a new kind of teacher-student relationship based on love and mutual respect. Teachers were invited to see themselves as called by God to touch and win the hearts of their students, to be like older brothers to them, and to act as their guardian angels, and, especially, to regard the children as the children of God. (McLaughlin 2008)

The idea – the nature of one’s vocation or calling – was to see in each student what God sees: an individual person uniquely created in God’s image, possessing tremendous potential; this was in stark contrast to the “teacher-as-master” image and approach.

The idea promulgated by De La Salle was that teachers would put themselves within reach of their students and speak to children and young people on their own level, expressing sympathy with the vulnerabilities of the young and concern for the mental, physical, social, moral, and spiritual development for each student. (McLaughlin 2008)

In spite of the wide range of institutional types found among the schools established by the Christian Brothers in 81 countries – with lay men and women comprising over 90% of the administrators and teachers, and only 6% Christian Brothers – there are certain unifying characteristics: (1) educational works of quality, (2) exercise of the preferential option for the poor, even in more prosperous settings, and (3) the ideal of the school as a learning community engaged in the search for values across diverse cultural and religious traditions. (McLaughlin 2008) According to Terence McLaughlin, FSC, former Brother President of CBU, “The Lasallian teacher is mission-driven and purposeful as well as professional. He or she is also a faithful advocate for the wholeness and dignity of all persons – students, staff, and colleagues – and contributes to a strong experience of community in the school.” (McLaughlin 2008) At Christian Brothers University, this strong belief in the vocational nature or character of teaching extends beyond the bounds of the classroom to one’s role as an academic advisor, and in a commitment to advising-as-teaching.

The Christian Brothers University Strategic Plan includes, within Goal V – Increase Enrollments in All Academic Programs – the following Objective (#4): “Develop and implement a traditional student retention program that will increase our six-year graduation rate above 70% (’00 = 53.2%, ’01 = 53.5%, ’02 = 63.3%).” (Though not included in this portion of the strategic plan, the retention rates for first-time fall freshmen through ten semesters during the same

period were as follows: '00 = 55.8%, '01 = 59.2%, '02 = 62.1%. The most recent data indicate that the retention rate in 2003 dropped to 55.2% but rebounded slightly to 61.2% in 2004.) The four “action steps” under Objective #4 are: (1) Develop guidelines for improved customer service and hold workshops for each administrative office; (2) Develop a new retention plan that also addresses issues identified in the previous retention study (with the Dean of Academic Services and the Enrollment Management Committee charged with this responsibility); (3) Create a Student Success Center (to be located in the Campus Community Center) to include a Central Student Advising Office, Tutoring and Study Skills Center, Counseling Office, and Career Center; and (4) Submit a Title III Federal Grant application to fund hiring a Student Success Director to develop and deliver an integrated student success program.

Unfortunately, the Student Success Center, which was to include a Central Student Advising Office, has yet to materialize, and although improving retention – and also student persistence – is not a stated goal or objective of CBU's proposed advising program in our QEP, the connection should not be overlooked nor its value underestimated. In fact, advising expert Vincent Tinto argues that: “Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is at the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students.” (Tinto 1993) Tinto's recent research indicates that the institutional factors that tend to affect student learning and success directly include: (1) high expectations for students; (2) support at all levels; (3) academic advising; (4) involvement in campus learning experiences; and (5) student-learning focused cultures. (Tinto 1993) Furthermore, among the variety of factors and initiatives cited in the literature that are deemed important to student retention and persistence, F. S. Glenn identifies the following as being especially important: (1) intentional and focused first year advising for all students; (2) orientation for credit; and (3) required tutoring and academic advising throughout the student's educational career. (Glenn 2007)

Although student retention and persistence are closely related, they are distinct, as Alan Seidman indicates in the definition he offers: Whereas *student retention* is “the ability of an institution to keep a student from admission through graduation,” *student persistence* has more to do with “the desires and actions of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning through degree completion.” The distinction is an important one: Whereas retention has in view degree completion, persistence is influenced more by a student’s interaction(s) with her or his institution, which also obviously affects retention. This helps to explain Seidman’s contention that, to retain students, an institution’s “intervention programs, services, and initiatives must be powerful enough to effect change in the institution and change in the student.” (Seidman 2004) Tinto agrees and reminds his readers that:

Retention is not the goal – the goal is providing quality educational experiences that affect the commitment of students . . . . the extent that students become academically and socially integrated into the formal and informal academic and social systems of an institution often determine their departure decisions. (Tinto 1993)

Central to students becoming “academically and socially integrated” into the life of their institution are the interactions and relationships forged with faculty members who, very often, serve as academic advisors. M. S. Hunter and E. R. White, both professors at Penn State University, suggested recently that academic advising is “perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee [student] interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape a meaningful learning experience for themselves.” (Hunter and White 2004) This being the case, NACADA faculty members Susan Campbell and Charlie Nutt argue that “academic advising can and should play a pivotal role in directing student behavior toward those activities that will nurture and support their success toward educational, career, and life goal achievement.” These authors note that the real challenge for advisors is “directing students toward those activities that are the ‚right’ ones for student learning and success.” (Campbell

and Nutt 2008) For this to occur, advisors need assistance offered in the form of a systematic advising program that oversees the development and delivery of a well-conceived advisor training program.

In an effort to give shape and direction to such initiatives, the National Academic Advising Association developed its *Concept of Academic Advising* in 2006, in response to an ever-increasing body of literature that acknowledges the relationship between effective academic advising and greater student engagement in learning. As well, the *Concept* aligns advising with teaching and learning, and so moves beyond the model of advising that focuses primarily on assisting students with course selection and registration. Noticeably absent in this older model of advising is a concern for student engagement in learning and student success; such concern appears to be trumped by the successful satisfaction of graduation requirements. The preamble of this *Concept* serves as an important corrective to such a caricature of academic advising:

Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community. Academic advising engages students beyond their own world views, while acknowledging their individual characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit the institution. Regardless of the diversity of our institutions, our students, our advisors, and our organizational structures, academic advising has three components: curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising).

In a frequently-referenced article entitled “Losing Sleep Over Student Success?” Purdue University President Frances Cordova declared that, “the most important agent of change is the faculty, whose commitment to student success and innovation in teaching is essential if [students] are to succeed.” (Cordova 2006)

In response to a request for a brief history of academic advising at Christian Brothers University over the past ten years or so, the current Dean of Academic Services was extremely enthusiastic and hopeful regarding the future of advising at CBU – especially given the opportunities provided by our Quality Enhancement Plan – but was also honest about the challenges her Office faces, in light of the philosophy or approach to advising she inherited. For example, when her duties began two years ago (fall 2008), the Dean “realized that Academic Services was less about advising and more about registration. I had a line of students, sitting outside my door on the first day of class; they were here to „get their pins to register.” (Students at CBU are required to have an “Alternate Pin Number” in order to register for courses on-line; some professors, rather than requiring that students meet with them for actual advising, simply attach the list of Alternate Pin Numbers to their office doors.) The Dean went on to state: “Others wanted me to force them into classes. When I required that students be advised before any [curricular] decisions were made, I was told, „That’s not how [your predecessor] did it.’ Little by little, over the last two years, I have tried to make advising a bigger part of this Office, not just in name but in deed.”

The current Dean of Academic Services was quick to acknowledge the legacy of relationship-building that had preceded her appointment and was firm in her commitment to retain the best of what her predecessor had worked so hard to achieve, which is clearly integral to CBU’s identity and charism as a Lasallian, Catholic university. Indeed, the fall 2008 issue of CBU’s official publication, *The Bell Tower*, had for its cover story a tribute to the individual who served at CBU for 34 years, the last two dozen years or so as Dean of Academic Services. One of CBU’s Vice Presidents opined that, “He epitomizes the Lasallian spirit. His care has always been first and foremost for the students, as their advocate.”

Such big shoes are obviously hard to fill, and although the current Dean holds her predecessor in the highest regard, she is convinced – and the CBU community agrees – that another philosophy or model of academic advising may better serve our students and assist them in becoming even more engaged in their learning; the literature and “best practices” are overwhelmingly supportive of these convictions and commitments. In what follows, we provide evidence to this effect by referencing the most current literature and best practices on *advising programs, advising as teaching, advisor training, and advising evaluation*.

### **Advising Programs**

In their article entitled “The Changing College Student,” Kirsten Kennedy and Jennifer Crissman Ishler argue that, in light of the many types of advising programs an institution may develop, it must first understand how college students in general have changed, and then do its level best to understand its own student population. In *Millennials Go to College*, authors Neil Howe and William Strauss make a similar point, with force:

Wherever you are in university life, you face a choice. You can ignore this breaking Millennial wave, by treating today’s collegians as you did the last generation. You can resist it, by pursuing decades-old agendas. You can ride it, by adapting as fast as you can to new needs as they arise. Or you can *lead* this new youth wave, by embracing Millennials as they arrive in full force. (Howe and Strauss 2007)

In general, student demographics, characteristics, and experiences have changed the last few decades, and academic advisors, if they are to be effective, must be aware of these changes and how they will affect advising. For example, Kennedy and Ishler report:

- Only 15% of students live on campus; campus living has changed with the development of residentially-based learning communities
- Sexual orientation has become more public and can create confusion and problems that lead to academic difficulty

- Minority enrollment rose to 30.1% in 2005, and there are many new groups being addressed as minorities; there is also an increase in the number of students with disabilities
- Students are more certain of their political views; more self-identify as liberals
- Parents are much more involved in their children's education, from course selection and registration as freshmen through graduation
- Mental health issues among students have escalated, and advisors must be prepared for an increase in the number of students coming to them with personal problems
- There has been a sharp increase in the number of students guilty of cheating and/or plagiarism
- Along with the rise in the cost of a college education, the number of students taking out student loans has increased, as has the financial debt students – and/or their parents – assume; this impacts who pursues a college degree and what majors they select (or, in many cases, what majors their parents select for them)

For an advising program to succeed, certain strategies must be in place, and in his article entitled "Outstanding Faculty Advising Programs," Franklin Wilbur provides a useful checklist to assist in assessing the effectiveness and problem areas of an institution's present advising system; this, he argues, is the place to start. Next, Wilbur recommends that key administrators and diverse faculty collaboratively "develop a unique-to-your-university, campus-wide statement on academic advising's purposes and various actors' responsibilities in the process." The administration is responsible for providing recognition, support, money, reward, resources, policies, procedures, and ongoing training for effective advising, ideally in accordance with the university's advising mission statement. The author warns that, in the absence of these critical components, any efforts to improve advising will likely fail.

For example, some colleges and universities have an advising center with its own office and staff – or, in some cases, veteran faculty members with a course reduction, each staffing it

part-time – assigned solely to support the advising process and bear total responsibility for the delivery of advising services. One key issue in all of this, at least from Wilbur’s perspective, is how the actual amount and effectiveness of advising done by each faculty member will be recognized, weighted, and assessed in individual course loads and promotion and tenure evaluations. Above all, the author argues that faculty members should not view advising as a duty they are contractually-bound to perform as teachers but, rather, as a responsibility and privilege that is integral to their teaching – academic advising approached as a teaching process rather than simply a bureaucratic matter. Moreover, when advising students, faculty members should “share their enthusiasm of scholarship within their disciplines,” and educate their students on how the overall curriculum and degree plan fits together in a broad sense as well as to prepare students for their careers. (Wilbur 2003)

Those who share the responsibility of organizing advising services have a number of models from which to choose and on which to base their institution’s program, though Margaret King suggests three are especially relevant: (1) decentralized, (2) centralized, and (3) shared. In a *decentralized* model, faculty and staff provide advising in their academic department. In a *centralized* model, one unit is responsible for advising; its staff would most likely consist of professional advisors, counselors, and faculty members. In the third model, advising is *shared* between a central administrative unit and various faculty and staff members in academic departments. King proposes that, of the many factors that play a role in determining which model is most appropriate for a particular institution, four are crucial: (1) institutional mission, (2) student population, (3) role of the faculty, and (4) the institution’s budget, facilities, and unit responsible for advising. Above all, the author is convinced that academic advising is the “hub of the wheel” for student success, with connections to all other campus services. (King 2008)

Fortunately, institutions like CBU are not bereft of quality resources when it comes to developing an advising program tailor-made for our students. In addition to the National

Academic Advising Association (NACADA) – certainly the key resource which, in addition to its various publications and on-line clearinghouse replete with articles and links to other institutions that have developed successful advising programs, also sponsors national, regional, and state conferences, institutes, meetings, and webinars – other national educational groups like the American Association for Higher Education, the American College Personnel Association, the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administration, while not focused entirely on advising like NACADA, also provide assistance and resources for institutions trying to develop or improve academic advising programs. In addition, college and university personnel charged with developing advising programs should not overlook career and life-planning resources since, quite obviously, students expect to go to college in order to get a job, and national associations like the National Career Development Association (NCDA) and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) offer training and resources for this purpose.

Whether the advising process is formal or informal, centralized, decentralized, or shared, faculty advising is critical to supporting the primary educational goals of the institution which, for most colleges and universities, include student satisfaction, student engagement in learning, and retention. However, if academic advising is so central to the mission of most institutions of higher education, why are commitment, support, and guidance for faculty advising lacking on many campuses? The answer, according to Martha Hemwall, is that commitment requires a comprehensive plan that addresses all levels of support, and such a plan requires implementing the following steps: (1) Change the framework used to talk about academic advising by aligning it more closely with the institution's academic mission and developing a model of advising based on increasing student engagement in learning; (2) change the large-scale support of faculty advisors by means of evaluation, recognition, and reward; and (3) change the small-scale support of faculty advisors by instituting a well-defined structure that includes, at the very least,

providing faculty members with an advisor handbook and advising syllabus and creating contexts that are conducive to the open exchange of ideas and experiences related to advising. (Hemwell 2008)

### **Advising as Teaching**

In his article entitled “Advising as Teaching and Learning,” Drew Appleby describes the move from prescriptive advising to developmental advising, noting that it reflects the current shift in higher education from an instructional to a learning paradigm. Rather than simply assisting students with course selection and registration – which is the standard definition of the prescriptive model – advisors operating within a developmental model help advisees to understand their educational experience as an integrated whole and, gradually, to take responsibility for that experience. According to Appleby, developmental advising promotes active learning by: (1) helping advisees understand the goals of education, (2) clarifying the expectations of advisors and advisees, (3) helping students embrace and evaluate their educational choices, and (4) creating rapport between advisors and advisees. (He also points out that faculty often perceive their roles as academic advisors negatively, believing that their advising is unappreciated and inadequately rewarded.) (Appleby 2008)

Of those who have influenced and informed the particular approach to advising to which CBU aspires, Marc Lowenstein’s work in the area of “advising as teaching” – more specifically, the “learning-centered” paradigm – stands at the fore. In his article entitled “If Advising is Teaching, What Do Advisors Teach?” Lowenstein attempts to disabuse his readers of what he sees as a false choice for approaches to advising: namely, prescriptive or developmental. Although he believes there is an appropriate place for elements of both prescriptive and developmental approaches to advising students, the author is convinced – given the distinctly academic context within which advisors operate – that much more needs to be said in regard to

*how*, exactly, advising is like teaching. In Lowenstein's words: "For advising to be perceived as similar to teaching in a significant way it needs to be perceived differently than proponents of the developmental paradigm see it." Most unfortunately, for all that Burns Crookston contributed to the need to conceive of advising more broadly than course selection and registration, he did not go far enough and, in Lowenstein's opinion, reduced advising to "counseling." And although the author admits that truly excellent teachers sometimes attend to their students' personal development – and, indeed, that there are times when this is entirely appropriate and even "desirable" – he firmly believes it is not the advisor's primary responsibility.

Lowenstein is critical even of many who espouse an advising as teaching paradigm, primarily because of their failure to spell out in clear terms the relationship between teaching and learning. The "excellent teacher," according to Lowenstein, "focuses on the academic material in a way that promotes active learning." More specifically, she: (1) organizes and sequences the material to facilitate the students' learning; (2) focuses on various modes of thinking; (3) models for the student how one might interact with the material; (4) helps to put course material in perspective with other information students have acquired; (5) brings out interrelationships of ideas; (6) sometimes puts the course as a whole into perspective by relating it to other courses students have taken or to the entire curriculum; and (7) helps students to synthesize an overview of the material. Lowenstein believes the connection between teaching (and learning) and academic advising is clear:

Learning transpires when a student makes sense of his or her overall curriculum just as it does when a person understands an individual course, and the former is every bit as important as the latter. In fact, learning in each individual course is enhanced by the learning of the curriculum, and thus may continue long after the course has been completed. Finally, whereas the individual course is the domain of the professor, the overall curriculum is most often the domain of the academic advisor, and the excellent advisor coaches the student through the process of learning the curriculum.

In response to his own question – “What Do Advisors Teach?” – Lowenstein proposes that effective academic advisors teach their advisees: (1) how to find/create the logic of one’s education; (2) how to view the seemingly disconnected pieces of the curriculum as parts of a whole that makes sense to the learner so that she or he learns more from them; (3) how to base educational choices on a developing sense of the overall edifice being built by the student; and (4) how to continually enhance learning experiences by relating them to knowledge that has been previously learned.

Finally, Lowenstein summarizes what he calls a “learning-centered” paradigm for academic advising by arguing that, “At its core, advising enhances student learning, and advisors’ primary objective is to coach advisees into an understanding of the overall structure and logic of their curriculum.” Adopting this paradigm will obviously – or, at least, presumably – have a significant impact on the various components of an institution’s advising program, not the least of which are the ways its members go about defining advising and assessing the desirable student learning outcomes associated with advising, and also the methods and criteria used to train and certify its advisors. (Lowenstein 2005)

### **Advisor Training**

In “Critical Concepts in Advisor Training and Development,” Thomas Brown describes the essential components of an effective advising program, including conceptual, relational, and informational issues. *Conceptual* issues relate to what advisors need to know about students as well as the overall purpose and goals of advising. Advisors need to understand that advising involves far more than getting students into the right classes, and that it is a teaching role that can guide students toward success in their careers and life after college. *Relational* issues are concerned with an advisor’s ability to create effective relationships with students – their advisees – in order to assist them with goal-setting and developing realistic plans for the future.

Brown asserts that the quality of the relationship that develops between students and their advisors is much more important than the sheer amount of information advisors have at their disposal. *Informational* issues have to do with the various pieces of data advisors need to possess regarding advising procedures and policies, and to insure that this information is up-to-date, lest a student be advised incorrectly.

In developing a new advising program, Brown recommends that institutions begin by assessing the training of current advisors, and share with the stakeholders how valuable faculty development and advisor training is in increasing the quality of student engagement in learning, persistence, and retention. He then proposes that the following steps be taken as part of the overall process of program development: (1) form groups to discuss ideas and questions about advising; (2) share information about academic advising with the academic community; (3) review available assessment data; (4) obtain assistance from administrators; (5) publicize the advising program across the campus; (6) acknowledge and reward the contributions of the participants; and (7) assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the program on a regular basis. (Brown 2008)

Paul Gore and A. J. Metz, in “Advising for Career and Life Planning,” are convinced that academic advisors are better able to advise students if, as part of advisor training, they have been introduced to career theory, models of advising, various resources available to advisors, and stay current with developments in career and academic advising. The authors believe advisors can best assist students by guiding them to set achievable educational and career goals, and discuss a particular model of career advising, V. N. Gordon’s “3-I Model” – Inquire, Inform, and Integrate – as one that encourages a process which helps advisors assist their advisees with decisions about their academics and future. In this model: (1) students are assisted with questions regarding their coursework and career choices, (2) they are given

assistance in discovering their personal and professional interests as well as relevant information that might help them with career and life planning, and (3) advisors and advisees take the information they have gained from this process to create a plan for the student's future. (Gore and Metz 2008)

In a chapter entitled "Expectations and Training of Faculty Advising," Faye Vowell and Phillip Farren provide a detailed overview of some of the basic concepts related to the development of successful advising programs, particularly those issues related to the expectations that stakeholders have of the program and the training necessary to implement the program. (When speaking of stakeholders, the authors have in mind not only advisors and advisees, but also parents, administrators, teaching faculty, governing boards, and accrediting agencies, all of whom have certain expectations.) Areas of expectation include advisor training, advisor and program evaluation, advising outcomes, rewards for effective advising, and strength of support for the advising program. (Vowell and Farren 2003)

### **Advising Evaluation**

The literature on evaluating the effectiveness of an institution's advising program is clear: the greatest value of assessment – which must be systematic and ongoing – comes from ascertaining whether the mission, goals, and objectives of the program are being met, and then using the results to improve the program; assessment plans, if they are to receive broad-based support, must be faculty, staff, program, and campus-driven.

One of the more comprehensive considerations of advisor and advising program effectiveness has been proffered by Joe Cuseo, who discusses several key components needed for developing a successful assessment program. However, before the actual assessment process begins, Cuseo states that, for assessment to be worthwhile, a clearly defined purpose for academic advising at one's institution should be discussed and transmitted

to participants, carefully conceived and planned advisor training should be delivered, and those advisors who have proven to be especially skilled in delivering advising services should be recognized.

The author then identifies six key factors necessary to develop an effective tool for student assessment of advising: (1) determine the content of the assessment instrument; (2) create the structure of the assessment instrument; (3) develop the process of delivering the assessment tool to assessors; (4) analyze and summarize the assessment results; (5) report results; and (6) use the results to improve academic advising on campus. Advisors should know that the primary purpose of assessment results is to improve the advising program as well as provide advisors with feedback to assist them in becoming better, more effective advisors. Moreover, advisors should be encouraged to share best practices with each other, and to provide input into the effectiveness – or lack thereof – of the assessment process. If it is done well, systematic and consistent assessment of an institution's advising program will improve the overall quality of the advising that students receive. (Cuseo 2000)

In an especially poignant and helpful piece, Victoria McGillin states that, while many faculty members are attracted to a meaningful and purposeful advising process that includes establishing strong relationships with students, few faculty members actually seek out opportunities to improve their advising skills, because nearly two-thirds of American faculty advisors receive no significant recognition, evaluation, or reward for advising from their institutions. Moreover, since many faculty members view advising as a personal matter and relationship, they tend to resist changing their advising practices or having their effectiveness as advisors evaluated by others.

In fact, recent studies suggest that evaluation plays a very important role in the early stages of an individual faculty member improving her or his advising skills, while recognition and

reward support changes that have already been made and promote continuing growth as faculty advisors. McGillin emphasizes that multiple methods of data collection should be used in assessing and rewarding individual faculty advisors and in improving the overall advising system at one's institution. Among the more common types of advising rewards, the author mentions the following: (1) merit, promotion, and tenure; (2) pay and stipend; (3) decreased workload and release time; and (4) recognition or reward programs.

Above all, McGillin argues that an institution's overall mission statement and strategic goals must provide the framework for improving, assessing, and rewarding effective advising. And although the overall impetus and necessary resources for improving the quality of advising should come from the administration, any specific recommendations for advising program changes should come from those primarily responsible for advising students: the faculty. (McGillin 2003)

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## VI. Actions to be Implemented

On the basis of close examination and consideration of the relevant literature and best practices associated with academic advising, it is now necessary to provide “evidence of careful analysis of institutional context in designing actions capable of generating the desired student learning outcomes (*providing support for compliance with CS 2.3.2 “institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP”*)." The specific actions we have designed are organized according to three initiatives: (1) Advising Processes, (2) Advisor Training, and (3) Advising Center and Staff.

### Advising Processes

**Summer advising and registration:** Developed by CBU’s Dean of Academic Services in 2009-2010 and delivered in June, July, and August of 2010, the goal of summer advising and registration is to acculturate students into the CBU community early in their academic careers, connecting them with the administration, faculty, staff, and student services in a very active, hands-on way. Assisting the Dean were a handful of part-time student assistants, 15 student leaders, approximately 25 faculty members, and various CBU staff members. (See Appendices for complete agenda) All students were provided with a handsomely-designed *CBU 101 Textbook*, which included everything from the 2010-2011 academic calendar to undergraduate expenses by semester to key University policies and procedures to FAQs.

**Incorporate an academic element into ORIN 100:** There is widespread agreement among CBU students, faculty, staff, and administrators that, for all of its value for incoming students, the required freshman orientation course needs to be examined, evaluated, and enhanced. As an important initiative in our QEP, efforts will be made to unify the orientation program, Orientation 100, and summer advising and registration, as well as adding a summer reading program to the orientation process, which extends into the fall term. Above all, by bringing these components together under common leadership, ORIN 100 will incorporate a

strong academic element – including, but not limited to academic integrity and etiquette, time management, and study skills – and a keen sense of CBU’s Lasallian heritage, identity, and mission into a unified orientation program.

**Develop an advising syllabus:** Given the advising-as-teaching approach CBU will adopt and implement, developing a syllabus for advising will serve a number of purposes, not the least of which is adding a degree of credibility and legitimacy to academic advising as a key educational process that serves both to support and advance the University’s vision and mission. In addition to the definition of advising and the advising program’s mission statement, among the items to be included in the syllabus are important contact information, advising resources, student learning outcomes for advising, and a clear delineation of the respective expectations and responsibilities of advisors and advisees.

**Develop an advising handbook:** In addition to and in tandem with the advising syllabus, the Academic Advising Committee (whose membership has already been determined), under the leadership of the Dean of Academic Services, will develop an advising handbook. And whereas the advising syllabus is primarily for the students’ benefit, the handbook will be expressly designed to improve the overall quality of academic advising, to lend cohesion and consistency to advising across the campus, to educate advisors and keep them updated on policy and/or procedural changes related to advising, provide key resource materials and information, highlight expectations and responsibilities of advisors, communicate the CBU advising program’s definition and mission statement, provide information on various ethical and legal aspects of advising, and, perhaps above all, serve as an important resource for new and seasoned advisors alike. Indeed, we have already identified a set of **advisor responsibilities:**

- Advisors will be available and accessible to advisees
- Advisors will respond to student correspondence in a timely manner

- Advisors will interact with students in ways that foster mutual respect
- Advisors will provide accurate information regarding the curriculum, including the general education core, major requirements, course co- and prerequisites, and course sequencing
- Advisors will help students create and revise an educational plan
- Advisors will monitor student progress
- Advisors will use placement scores appropriately
- Advisors will refer students to academic resources and student services, when appropriate
- Advisors will help students identify opportunities for academic, career, and personal development
- Advisors will help advisees achieve the student learning outcomes for academic advising

**Advising component in living and learning communities:** CBU's first living and learning community – for Engineering and Science majors – opens this fall (2010), and will include freshmen and upperclassmen in one of the University's premier residence halls. The hall will be modeled on a learning community concept, where students may participate in tutor-facilitated study sessions for pre-calculus, calculus, and beginning physics courses. Such a community is clearly an opportunity to bring academic advising directly to the students. The Director of the Community, Father Paul Watkins (Visiting Assistant Professor of Marketing at CBU) will obviously be involved in the development of this component of our QEP.

**Unit for advising “undecided students:** As the number of “undeclared” incoming students continues to rise – indeed, to the point where they are said to comprise the largest “major” on campus – the need to provide training for those advising “undecided” students becomes increasingly important and essential to CBU's retention efforts. An ever-increasing body of literature supports this commitment and proposes that “more than just those first-year students who have declared themselves as decided could

benefit from learning and using techniques to assist them with active educational and vocational decision-making or exploration.” (Steele and McDonald 2008)

**System for student evaluation of advisors:** Essential to the success of CBU’s advising program is the affirmation of those for whom the University in general and the program in particular exists: our students. Therefore, a system for evaluating the effectiveness of academic advising in advancing the mission of the program and, more specifically, successfully addressing and meeting its student learning outcomes is not only desirable but absolutely essential.

**Display, review, and revise advising program mission statement:** In an effort both to promote and achieve campus-wide support for the mission of academic advising at CBU, the advising program’s mission statement will be prominently displayed as well as regularly reviewed and, when and where appropriate, revised to reflect the dynamic character of both the statement and the program.

### **Advisor Training**

**Develop advisor training program:** There is currently no training for academic advisors, nor is there any orientation for new faculty members. As evidence of CBU’s commitment to improve academic advising as a way of enhancing the learning culture and improving student learning, a relevant and rewarding advisor training program will be developed and launched at the beginning of our five-year implementation period. The first two training sessions will be facilitated by members of the NACADA faculty, with subsequent training being faculty- and/or staff-led. Of course, if we are to know whether we have succeeded in what we set out to accomplish, we must have a set of **desired program outcomes**, and they are as follows:

- Advisors will participate in faculty development and training opportunities

- Advisors will learn about institutional advising policies, practices, and procedures in the context of national norms
- Advisors will have access to current research on advising and will acquire resources for updating their knowledge
- Advisors will understand culture and gender differences that may affect communication with advisees
- Advisors will understand ethical and legal aspects of advising
- Advisors will have access to current information about curriculum requirements, including general education core, major requirements, and course sequencing
- Advisors will receive training in the use of technologies needed for advising
- Advisors will learn about academic resources and student services available to students
- Advisors will have access to information about student opportunities for academic, career, and personal development

**Institutional membership in NACADA:** To demonstrate her commitment to improving student learning by improving academic advising, CBU will apply for and maintain active membership in the National Academic Advising Association, an organization comprised of professional advisors, counselors, faculty members, administrators, and students committed to enhancing student development and learning. Membership provides institutions and individual members with access to advising resources and publications, notification of professional development opportunities, scholarships, research grants, and announcements regarding national, regional, and state conferences, institutes, and seminars.

**Two representatives from each school will attend national or regional NACADA conference:** On the recommendation of the Deans of the Schools of Arts, Sciences, Engineering, and Business, two faculty representatives will attend a NACADA-sponsored conference, institute, or seminar; registration includes membership in the Association.

**Designate one advising coordinator per school:** The primary role of the advising coordinator is to assist faculty advisors within one's own School and the Dean of Academic

Services with the implementation of specific components of the advising program and the delivery of its various services, and also to serve as an additional contact person for students for advising purposes. Each of the four Schools as well as General Studies will have an advising coordinator; the designation of coordinators will be made jointly by the Academic Vice President and Dean of Academic Services. (Of course, this may require the revision of a faculty member's job description, to include advising and retraining of current qualified faculty and/or staff members interested in academic advising.)

**Move advising from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook:** This particular action item not only provides one of the clearest indications of CBU's commitment to enhancing its learning environment by improving student advising, but will also involve a rather significant cultural, philosophical, procedural, and evaluative shift among the faculty, those primarily responsible for the actual delivery of academic advising. As such, those charged with overseeing the implementation of the QEP will be deliberate, sensitive, systematic, inclusive, and very patient in developing the necessary proposal and assessment instrument(s) to make moving academic advising from the area of “service” to “teaching” one that will be supported by those most directly affected: again, the faculty. (The next section of our QEP – development of a timeline for implementing the action items – provides evidence of the kind of care and attention to important details needed to gain broad-based involvement and support.)

**Develop Moodle courses on academic advising:** Several Moodle courses – consisting of modules both for advisors and students – on topics such as the content, purpose, and value of CBU's general education core, interpersonal skills, subject area content, and “undecided” students – will be developed by a subcommittee, consisting of qualified and interested faculty members. Given the investment of time required to select and develop the actual content for each course, faculty members will receive stipends for their work and may receive assistance from the ITS staff. In addition, successful completion and demonstrated

mastery of course content will be factored into a faculty member's annual review, and advisors will monitor completion of student modules for their advisees.

**Annual outstanding advisor awards:** On the recommendations of the Academic Vice President and Dean of Academic Services, CBU will recognize those faculty members who have proven to be especially effective and truly outstanding academic advisors at the annual Community Convocation in late August; they will be presented with a plaque and modest monetary award, and recognized in the University's on-line news source, the *CBU Connection*.

### **Advising Center and Staff**

**Create a centralized academic advising center:** As was previously stated, creating a centralized advising center is not a new initiative but, rather, an action item in the most recent iteration of CBU's strategic plan. The vision of the Dean of Academic Services is to bring Advising, Academic Services, the Career Center, and the Math and Writing Centers together under one academic division, establishing clear, systematic, working relationships between them, in order to serve our students in a better, more cohesive and collaborative manner. Doing so will also enhance advising by bringing the kinds of resources students most often need to the students. Each of the centers or offices will continue to be coordinated and staffed by their departments. However, by bringing them together under a single, unified division committed to student development and improving student learning, the individual centers will be able to work collaboratively and consolidate their resources on behalf of each and every CBU student. As evidence of our commitment to succeed in this area, our QEP includes a proposal to add two full-time staff members to Academic Services. Not only is there a precedent for this in several other Brother institutions – i.e. St. Mary's College (CA), St. Mary's University (CA), Manhattan College (NY), and La Salle University (PA) – but doing so will enable the Dean of Academic Services to develop retention programs for students admitted with marginal academic records,

those on academic probation, or, as is often the case, students who do not know how to study and/or manage their time.

## VII. Timeline

Having successfully identified the specific actions the CBU community will take to enhance the learning environment and improve student learning, we must next establish a reasonable timeline for the implementation of the action items. This critical task must be a result of a “thoughtful integration of the intrinsic logic driving the development of the activities needed to produce the anticipated student learning outcomes and the realities of the human and financial resources that will be available throughout the life of the project.” More specifically, the timeline is to be a “logical calendaring of all actions to be implemented (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP’*).”

In year one, commencing in the fall of 2011, some of the most notable action items include developing an advising syllabus and advisor handbook, designating one advising coordinator per school, and launching our advisor training program (which will be facilitated by a NACADA faculty member).

We will build on the momentum of the advisor training program in year two (2012-2013) with an additional training session led by another NACADA faculty member. In addition, two faculty representatives will participate in a NACADA conference or institute (with two additional faculty members designated to attend each year thereafter), and an assessment instrument for student evaluation of advisors will be developed and run, with the information from the results included in faculty self-assessments (under the category of “service”).

In year three (2013-2014), CBU faculty and staff members will facilitate training sessions for 1/3 of our advisors. In addition, we will pilot an advising component in CBU's first living and learning community, introduce advising and academic components into the freshman orientation program and ORIN 100 (the required course for all first year students), implement a unit for advising “undecided” students, develop a budget for our proposed centralized advising center,

and, if deemed appropriate by the CBU faculty, move advising from “service” to “teaching” in the Faculty Handbook. (This move has obvious implications for promotion, rank, and tenure evaluations and decisions. Hence, the process of changing the advising culture on campus will be a careful and deliberate one requiring prudence and the involvement of the entire faculty.) As will become immediately apparent by perusing the timelines themselves, overall assessment and revisions based on assessment results will be ongoing, from start to finish.

Most notable in year four (2014-2015) of the implementation of our QEP is the plan to open our centralized advising center. In addition to ongoing assessment, review, and revision of each and every action item, we will pilot one Moodle course in academic advising (with the specific topic and components of the course to be determined and developed in year three).

Year five (2015-2016) of our implementation effort will focus primarily on program assessment – which also assumes that appropriate revisions be recommended and made in light of assessment results – and the incorporation of an advising component in additional living and learning communities. The timelines, consisting of the individual action items, organized according to the three basic initiatives – Advising Processes, Advising Training, and Advising Center & Staff – and scheduled for implementation by academic term are included below.

| <b>Year One: 2011-2012</b> |  |   |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Initiative</b>          | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Time Frame</b>   |
| Advising Processes         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Refine summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Develop advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>• Appoint subcommittee to introduce advising component in living/learning communities (4)</li> <li>• Appoint subcommittee to study introducing advising and academic components into ORIN 100 (5)</li> <li>• Review and revise program mission statement (16)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <li>• Spring 2012</li> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <li>• Spring 2012</li> <br/> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <br/> <li>• Spring 2012</li> </ul>  |
| Advisor Training           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop advising handbook (3)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine annual outstanding advisor award (6)</li> <li>• Launch advisor training: designate and invite NACADA representative (7)</li> <li>• Establish institutional membership in NACADA (multiple representatives) (8)</li> <li>• Send four representatives from designated Schools to NACADA conference (9)</li> <li>• Faculty Policy Committee to develop proposal to assess advising standards and assessment instrument (10)</li> <li>• Initial pilot of advising assessment (10)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <li>• Spring 2012</li> <br/> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <br/> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <br/> <li>• Fall 2011</li> <br/> <li>• Spring 2012</li> <br/> <li>• Spring 2012</li> </ul> |
| Advising Center & Staff    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate one advising coordinator per school (14)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring 2012</li> </ul>   |

| <b>Year Two: 2012-2013</b> |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Initiative</b>          | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Time Frame</b>  |
| Advising Processes         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Refine summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Evaluate advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>• Revise advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>• Develop advising component in one living/learning community (4)</li> <li>• Develop plan for advising and academic components in ORIN 100 (5)</li> <li>• Appoint subcommittee to study unit for advising “undecided” students (13)</li> <li>• Appoint subcommittee to study system for student evaluation of advisors (15)</li> <li>• Develop instrument for student evaluation of advisors (15)</li> <li>• Review and revise program mission statement (16)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> </ul> |
| Advisor Training           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate/revise advising handbook (3)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine annual outstanding advisor award (6)</li> <li>• Advisor training continued: designate and invite NACADA representative (7)</li> <li>• Academic advising committee selects instructors for advisor training program (7)</li> <li>• Renew institutional membership in NACADA and add representatives (8)</li> <li>• Send four representatives from designated Schools to NACADA conference (9)</li> <li>• Run advising assessment instrument; include information from results in faculty self-assessment w/in “service” (10)</li> <li>• Revise assessment instrument (if necessary) and re-run; Deans and Dept. Chairs to include results in annual evaluations w/in “service” (10)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2012 /Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012 /Spring 2013</li> <li>• Summer 2012</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Fall 2012/Spring 2013</li> <li>• Fall 2012</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> </ul>         |
| Advising Center & Staff    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate / re-appoint school advising coordinators (14)</li> <li>• Designate four additional advising coordinators (14)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2012 /Spring 2013</li> <li>• Spring 2013</li> </ul>  |

| <b>Year Three: 2013-2014</b> |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Initiative</b>            | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Time Frame</b>  |
| Advising Processes           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate/refine summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>● Evaluate/revise advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>● Pilot advising component in one living/learning community (4)</li> <li>● Introduce advising and academic components into ORIN 100 (5)</li> <li>● Implement unit for advising “undecided” students (13)</li> <li>● Implement student evaluation of advisors (15)</li> <li>● Review and revise program mission statement (16)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fall 2013/Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013/Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> </ul>                    |
| Advisor Training             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate/revise advising handbook (3)</li> <li>● Evaluate/refine annual outstanding advisor award (6)</li> <li>● Launch faculty/staff-led advisor training program for 1/3 of advisors (7)</li> <li>● Renew institutional membership in NACADA and add representatives (8)</li> <li>● Send representative from designated School to NACADA conference (9)</li> <li>● Revise (if necessary) and re-run assessment instrument (10)</li> <li>● Move advising (if appropriate) from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook (10)</li> <li>● Appoint subcommittee to study development of Moodle courses in academic advising (11)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fall 2013/Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013/Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> <li>● Fall 2013</li> </ul> |
| Advising Center & Staff      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appoint subcommittee to determine support for centralized advising center (12)</li> <li>● Develop budget for centralized advising center (12)</li> <li>● Evaluate / re-appoint school advising coordinators (14)</li> <li>● Designate four additional advising coordinators (14)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fall 2013</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> <li>● Spring 2014</li> </ul>   |

| <b>Year Four: 2014-2015</b> |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Initiative</b>           | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Time Frame</b>   |
| Advising Processes          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate/refine summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Evaluate/revise advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>• Implement advising component in one living/learning community (4)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine advising and academic components in ORIN 100 (5)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine unit for advising “undecided” students (13)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine system for student evaluation of advisors (15)</li> <li>• Review and revise program mission statement (16)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Spring 2015</li> </ul>                               |
| Advisor Training            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate/revise advising handbook (3)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine annual outstanding advisor award (6)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine faculty/staff-led advisor training program (7)</li> <li>• Faculty/Staff-led advisor training for additional 1/3 of advisors (7)</li> <li>• Renew institutional membership in NACADA and add representatives (8)</li> <li>• Send representative from designated School to NACADA conference (9)</li> <li>• Revise (if necessary) and re-run assessment instrument (10)</li> <li>• Move advising (if appropriate) from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook (10)</li> <li>• Pilot one Moodle course in academic advising (11)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> <li>• Fall 2014/Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> <li>• Spring 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> </ul> |
| Advising Center & Staff     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open centralized advising center (12)</li> <li>• Introduce “master advisors” into advising center staff (12)</li> <li>• Evaluate and re-appoint school advising coordinators (14)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer 2014</li> <li>• Fall 2014</li> <li>• Spring 2015</li> </ul>   |

| <b>Year Five: 2015-2016</b> |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Initiative</b>           | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Time Frame</b>   |
| Advising Processes          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate/refine summer advising &amp; registration (1)</li> <li>• Evaluate/revise advising syllabus (2)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine advising component in one living/learning community (4)</li> <li>• Implement advising component in other living/learning communities (4)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine advising and academic components in ORIN 100 (5)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine unit for advising “undecided” students (13)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine system for student evaluation of advisors (15)</li> <li>• Review and revise program mission statement (16)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Spring 2016</li> </ul>                                |
| Advisor Training            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate/revise advising handbook (3)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine annual outstanding advisor award (6)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine faculty/staff-led advisor training program (7)</li> <li>• Faculty/Staff-led advisor training for remaining 1/3 of advisors (7)</li> <li>• Renew institutional membership in NACADA and add representatives (8)</li> <li>• Send representative from designated School to NACADA conference (9)</li> <li>• Revise (if necessary) and re-run assessment instrument (10)</li> <li>• Move advising (if appropriate) from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook (10)</li> <li>• Evaluate/refine Moodle course in academic advising and introduce additional course(s) (11)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> <li>• Fall 2015/Spring 2016</li> </ul> |

Advising Center & Staff

- Evaluate centralized advising center (12)
- Evaluate and re-appoint school advising coordinators (14)

- Summer 2015
- Spring 2016

### VIII. Organizational Structure

Needless to say, the success of CBU's Quality Enhancement Plan hinges on the commitment and involvement of all key university constituencies operating in a collaborative fashion within a clearly-defined organizational system or structure. Within this section of our QEP we will demonstrate that we have not only developed an appropriate, relevant, and reasonable plan for improving student learning, but also given careful thought and consideration to the precise manner in which it will be implemented and sustained throughout the formal implementation period. More specifically, we will document the "clear lines of responsibility for implementation and sustainability (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 'institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP'*)."

What follows are the "actions to be implemented" and the specific offices, positions, and/or university constituencies charged with overseeing their actual implementation, ongoing assessment, and recommended changes to said implementation (when and where appropriate). However, we begin with the identification of those charged with oversight of the overall implementation process, the **QEP Leadership Team**, whose membership will include: (1) representative from the President's Office, (2) Vice President of Academic Affairs, (3) Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, (4) Dean of Academic Services, (5) Vice President of Enrollment Management, (6) Office of Communications and Marketing, (7) Office of Advancement, (8) QEP chair, (9) faculty representative(s), (10) staff representative(s), and (11) student representative(s). The organizational structure for specific action items will be as follows:

**Summer advising and registration:** Dean of Academic Services

**Advising syllabus:** Dean of Academic Services, Academic Advising Committee members

**Advising handbook:** Ad hoc committee including Dean of Academic Services, Academic Advising Committee members, Registrar's office representative

**Advising component in living and learning communities:** Director of living and learning communities

**Strengthen academic elements of ORIN 100:** Ad hoc committee led by Dean of Academic Services and Director of Counseling

**Annual outstanding academic advisor award(s):** Offices of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Vice President of Enrollment Management

**Mandatory academic advisor training:** Ad hoc committee including Academic Advising Committee representative, QEP chair, ITS, and Offices of the Registrar and Financial Aid

**Institutional membership in NACADA (National Academic Advising Association):** Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Representatives from the four Schools (and General Studies) will attend national or regional NACADA conference or institute:** Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Move advising from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook:** Faculty Assembly Policy Committee with support from Academic Advising Committee

**Develop Moodle courses on academic advising for faculty advisors and students:** Ad hoc committee including representative from Academic Advising Committee, ITS, faculty members, student representatives (for student advisee courses)

**Create a centralized advising center:** Office of the President

**Develop unit for advising “undecided” students:** Ad hoc committee including Academic Advising Committee representative, ITS, faculty members, student representatives

**Designate one advising coordinator for each school:** Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Develop a system for student evaluation of advisors:** Faculty Assembly Policy Committee with support from Academic Advising Committee

**Display, review, and revise advising program mission statement:** Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Academic Advising Committee

**IX. Resources**

Successful completion of our QEP assumes a reasonable, responsible, sufficiently detailed estimation of those resources needed to implement and sustain the plan throughout the five-year implementation period and beyond. More specifically, this portion of our document will provide clear evidence of a “realistic allocation of sufficient human, financial, and physical resources (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP’*).” What follows is a summary of the specific strategies we will employ and the estimated dollar amounts needed annually – unless indicated otherwise – (of varying duration, as indicated on the budget chart) for our QEP.

## **X. Assessment**

In this final section of the narrative, we will address the importance of evaluating the success of our QEP and the specific means and measurements by which we will assess its impact on the quality of student learning at CBU. With the assistance of our Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs – whose primary area of responsibility is institutional effectiveness – we considered multiple assessment strategies, including a variety of quantitative and qualitative as well as internal and external instruments that will enable us to demonstrate the positive effect our QEP has had on CBU’s learning climate and culture. In short, this section will show that we have developed “a comprehensive evaluation plan (*providing support for compliance with CS 3.3.2 ‘a plan to assess their achievement’*).”

As a first step, we will continue to work closely with Institutional Effectiveness in order to gather as much baseline data as is currently available and that pertains to student perceptions of advising at CBU. This proved extremely helpful in determining the focus of our QEP, and will assist both in establishing a point of reference from which to begin and in setting goals that can be easily measured. This data will most likely be tied to results from the College Outcomes and Student Opinion Surveys. As indicated already, a number of sub-committees will be charged with developing surveys designed to measure student and faculty advisor perceptions of and satisfaction with the various aspects of CBU’s advising program. Other constituencies will be responsible for establishing an assessment schedule for collecting and interpreting the data as well as making specific recommendations based on the results; all surveys will be given annually, and will be administered by and housed in the Offices of Academic Services and Institutional Effectiveness. These internally-generated surveys will themselves be evaluated and modified on an annual basis to reflect the unique character of each component of the advising process, with a view to improving the overall effectiveness of our advising program.

The appointing of these sub-committees, while necessary for developing the surveys, also creates opportunities for greater faculty, staff, and student involvement and, with this, broad-based support and institutional buy-in. Essential to the implementation process is the recognition that our Quality Enhancement Plan is a living document wherein a commitment to continuous improvement is paramount, with the best interests of our students always in mind.

CBU will utilize *Degree Works* – our new degree audit program – to our advantage, including its ability to generate a variety of reports that will prove helpful and instructive in assessing various components of our advising program. Based on the results of the internal and external assessment instruments, we will be in a position to establish specific goals and standards for improvement which, in turn, will assist in evaluating the overall effectiveness of academic advising and its relation to improving the learning environment at CBU.

In addition to continued use of the College Outcomes and Student Opinion Surveys, internally-generated student and faculty advisor surveys, and inventories currently used by Career Services such as Myers-Briggs, the QEP leadership team will develop a more comprehensive advising program survey that will incorporate questions drawn from three nationally-normed assessment instruments: (1) Academic Advising Program Assessment, (2) Academic Advising Inventory, and (3) ACT Interest Inventory.

*(Note: The QEP leadership team is in the process of developing a table – along the lines of what ABET requires of CBU's School of Engineering – for possible inclusion at the end of this portion of our Plan that would demonstrate how the various evaluative strategies will function in relation to our overall assessment plan. In a manner analogous to establishing the relationship of program outcomes to program educational objectives that ABET requires, we would demonstrate how the desired student learning outcomes relate directly to achievement of the specific indicators we have designated for each of the four outcomes. To this end, we would*

*identify the particular activities, programs, and/or contexts within which a given learning outcome is most likely to be addressed and accomplished. Obviously, the more educational opportunities there are for students and their advisors to address each of the outcomes, the better the prospects for being able to provide evidence – by way of specific indicators – of having met each and all of the outcomes. The QEP chair anticipates approximately two additional meetings to complete this portion of our QEP, at which time we will determine whether or not to include it.)*

The three tables below – Student Learning Outcomes, Action Items to be Implemented, and Advisor Training Program Outcome – provide details in relation to the specific desired outcomes, indicators of successful achievement, and assessment instruments and/or methods.

| <b>QEP Assessment – Student Learning Outcomes</b>   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>  | <b>Specific Indicators</b>   | <b>Assessment Instruments</b>  |
| Students will craft educational plans based on assessment of abilities, goals, interests, and values  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will engage in realistic self-appraisal</li> <li>• Students will identify the goals of academic advising</li> <li>• Students will understand the respective roles and responsibilities of advisor and advisee</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers-Briggs test<br/>ACT Interest Inventory</li> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>Advising survey<br/>College Outcomes Survey<br/>Student Opinion Survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>Advising survey<br/>Retention rates<br/>Graduation rates</li> </ul> |
| Students will implement educational plans tailored to attain their educational and professional goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will articulate the connection between their major field of study and desired career path</li> <li>• Students will incorporate curricular and extra-curricular elements – and will consider including service on campus and in the community – into their educational plans</li> <li>• Students will access appropriate support services to address their particular needs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>Advising survey</li> <li>• Data from Student Life<br/>Data from LLC</li> <li>• Data from Writing, Math, Career Centers &amp; Library</li> </ul>   |
| Students will assume responsibility for meeting academic program requirements                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will use appropriate resources to observe educational requirements, policies, procedures, and opportunities in their educational plans</li> <li>• Students will use appropriate planning guides to prepare a preliminary course schedule prior to consulting with their academic advisors</li> <li>• Students will identify the four major learning goals of the general education program as well as the student learning outcomes associated with each goal</li> <li>• Students will regularly review and adjust their academic plans in consultation with their advisors</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from ORIN 100<br/>Data from DegreeWorks</li> <li>• Data on Moodle usage<br/>Data from DegreeWorks</li> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>Advising survey</li> <li>• Data from DegreeWorks<br/>Advising survey</li> </ul>                             |
| Students will develop a sense of social responsibility  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will explain Lasallian educational principles of faith, community, and service</li> <li>• Students will learn and practice academic behaviors conducive to student success and to respectful interactions with faculty, staff, and other students</li> <li>• Students will identify several key components of professional ethics related to career choices</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>ORIN 100 survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz<br/>Advisor survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz</li> </ul>   |

| <b>QEP Assessment – Action Items to be Implemented</b> |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Initiative</b>                                      | <b>Action Items</b>  | <b>Assessment Instruments</b>  |
| Advising Processes                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer advising and registration program</li> <li>• Incorporate advising and academic components into ORIN 100</li> <li>• Develop an advising syllabus</li> <li>• Implement an advising component in living and learning communities</li> <li>• Develop a unit for advising “undecided” students</li> <li>• Develop a system for student evaluation of academic advisors</li> <li>• Display, review, and revise program mission statement</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table of completed dates</li> </ul>           |
| Advisor Training                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an advisor training program</li> <li>• Develop an advisor handbook</li> <li>• Establish and maintain institutional membership in NACADA and add faculty representatives</li> <li>• Two representatives from each school will attend national or regional NACADA conference or institute</li> <li>• Move advising from “service” to “teaching” in Faculty Handbook</li> <li>• Develop Moodle courses in academic advising for advisors and students</li> <li>• Recognize outstanding advising with annual academic advisor awards</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table of completed dates</li> <li>• Faculty Assembly vote</li> <li>• Table of completed dates</li> <li>• Report from Dean of Academic Services</li> </ul> |
| Advising Center & Staff                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create centralized academic advising center</li> <li>• Designate one academic advising coordinator per school</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table of completed dates</li> <li>• Table of completed dates</li> </ul>   |

| <b>QEP Assessment – Advisor Training Program Outcome</b>                                     |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Advisor Training Program Outcome</b>  | <b>Specific Indicators</b>   | <b>Assessment Instruments</b>  |
| Advisors will participate in ongoing advisor training through CBU's advisor training program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisors will participate in faculty development and training opportunities</li> <li>• Advisors will learn about institutional advising policies, practices, and procedures in the context of national norms</li> <li>• Advisors will become acquainted with current research on advising and will acquire resources for updating their knowledge</li> <li>• Advisors will understand culture and gender differences that may affect communication with advisees</li> <li>• Advisors will understand ethical and legal aspects of advising</li> <li>• Advisors will acquire current information about curriculum requirements, including general education core, major requirements, and course sequencing</li> <li>• Advisors will receive training in the use of technologies needed for advising</li> <li>• Advisors will learn about academic resources and student services available to students</li> <li>• Advisors will acquire information about student opportunities for academic, career, and personal development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Advising center survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Advising center survey</li> <li>• Moodle usage Advising center survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Workshop attendance data Student Opinion Survey College Outcomes Survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Workshop attendance data</li> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Student Opinion Survey College Outcomes Survey</li> <li>• Workshop attendance data Advising center survey</li> <li>• Workshop attendance data Student Opinion Survey College Outcomes Survey</li> <li>• Moodle quiz, pre and post Student Opinion Survey College Outcomes Survey</li> </ul> |