

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY


M E M O R A N D U M

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION BELOW

DATE: December 7, 1971

FROM: T. L. Spence, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on
Counseling, appointed December 1, 1971

SUBJECT: Report # 1



Our Ad Hoc Committee was charged with the responsibility of developing a paper on counseling needs which will serve as a guideline for determining staffing needs as our counseling structure evolves through this planning year.

The group met on December 3rd, and agreed upon a model set forth in the paragraphs below and graphically on the attached page. A brief description of each counseling unit and function follows.

I Academic Counseling: a) Some thrust of academic advice in many areas will be performed by an agreed upon "program of studies" to pre-register our students. Informal and formal communications between the student, the Registrar's Office, and the academic divisions in which the student is enrolled will accomplish this type of advising which is an extension of Miami-Dade Junior College's "self-advising."

b) In addition, each academic unit of the university will develop its own academic advisement approach; some will set up certain faculty members or academic deans to advise and others will use all or selected faculty members.

II Central Information Office, a term borrowed from The Study of Education at Stanford University, could be a primary answer to student responsiveness. The office would be staffed with 4-5 paraprofessional "service agents", also a term in the Stanford report, who could be working on Master's degrees or PhD's in counseling or related areas and be readily available in a central location or in some decentralized locations as the university grows. The primary function of these agents would be "to know as much as possible about the university and its personnel, to be available, responsive referral agents to direct students to whatever help they need. Their secondary function would be to facilitate the students in planning, implimenting, and participating in the wide variety of student activities. In effect, this combines the usually "trusted" area of student activities with the often "mistrusted" area of student advisement.

A conscious effort should be made to hire a wide variety of "service agents", including differing ages, ethnic and racial backgrounds. The office should be staffed 12-16 hours per day in order to serve not only the currently enrolled students but

(Inter-office Communication)

any campus visitors. As our College and School Relations office and the Division of University Relations tend to represent the university to the public off the campus, the Central Information Office should initially represent the university when persons arrive on the campus.

Some areas of responsibility which would be a function of the office in addition to those general functions noted above are: student orientation, referral of students to the Counseling Center for professional counseling, and to community agencies for various assistance.

These agents are meant to be information specialists; they interpret the university to the student and the student to the university. They would be catalysts to induce student involvement and student-faculty interaction. They need to be flexible, sensitive people with group and leadership experience and have mature judgment and preferably, but not necessarily, with a background in the behavioral sciences.

III Counseling Center The university counseling should be a completely professional organization composed of a PhD director, two counselors with at least a Master's degree, and a psychologist. The center should function in the traditional role of personal, professional counseling with referral to other professional help in the community.

IV External Professional Help The importance of external referral cannot be over emphasized. It minimizes the on-campus stigma of professional counseling, brings the most competent community resources to bear on any personal problem of our students, is more economical, and appropriately orients the student to help himself with resources available in his community rather than become dependent upon any campus unit, a unit which he would soon leave as he accepts job placement.

V Referral to Other University Personnel In an upper-division urban university, we anticipate a large amount of student counseling and advisement needs can be alleviated by the "service agents" and other university personnel referring the student to the specific administrative or academic professional who can help.

Ideally, if all employees of the university had or would take the time to counsel and advise students, much less demands would be placed upon counseling centers and information specialists. Experience and research has shown, however, that only a sizeable number and wide variety of specialists whose job is responsiveness can meet the needs of the large number of differing students expected at Florida International. With administrative support and proper funding, we feel this model can meet those needs.

The ensuing charts graphically describe the function and structure of the proposed model. It is worthy to note that our goal in proposing this model is to set forth within the university community a variety of contact points at different levels of student advisor function all the way from general information to crisis

professional counseling. We feel that no single counseling approach will work with the number and diversity of students who will enroll in this urban state university. Therefore, we agree with the Stanford report in terms of identifying at least several levels of availability and expertise in the formation of a Central Information Center as well as a traditional Counseling Center. A linking of the service agents function in the Central Information Office with the Student Activities function is a very natural one and should assist in the justification for postions for that center. Further, since the Central Information Office could and should also perform the function of on-campus visitor information, it would minimize the need for continued expansion of specialist information units of the institution such as the Office of College and School Relations and similar groups of personnel.

I have attached several source documents for referral and look forward to a response to the model at your earliest convenience.

TLS:jw

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CHART I

INTERACTION OF COMPONENTS

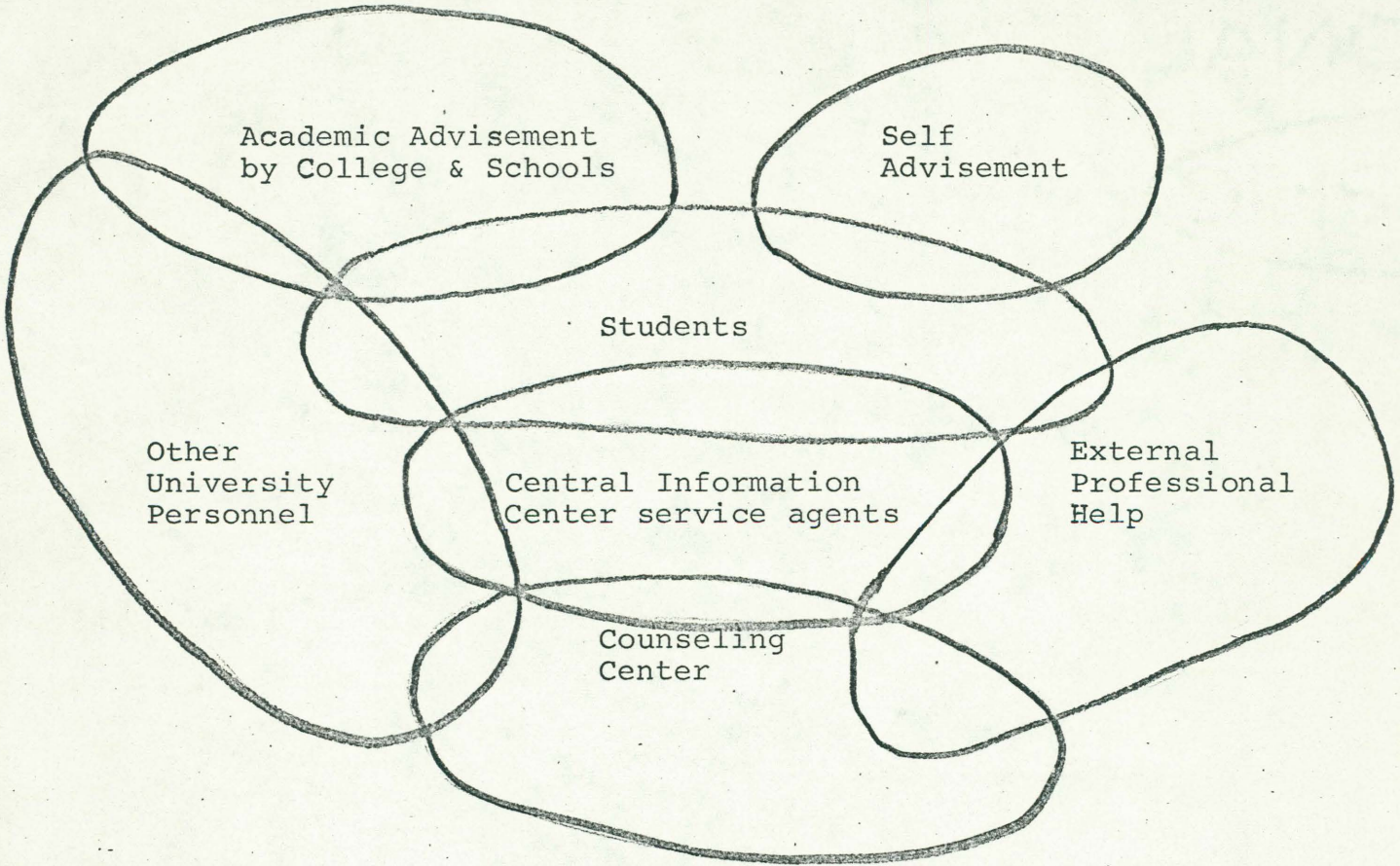


CHART II

NORMAL FREQUENCY OF STUDENT CONTACT

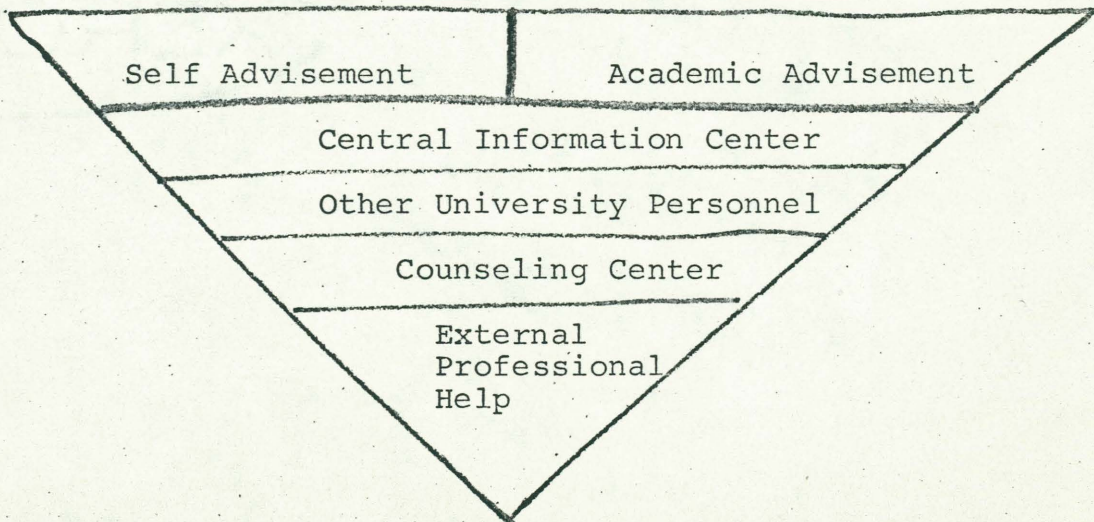


CHART III

STRUCTURE

