**Rx-For Retention**

*Freshman Advising Team*
*The Hospitality College*
*Johnson & Wales University*

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**Introduction and Background**

The Hospitality College’s Freshman Advising Program’s primary purpose is to ease the transition from high school to college by providing advising services by faculty members to students entering their freshman year of college. In this regard, the Hospitality College’s Freshman Advising Team offers students a broad, but comprehensive array of services aimed at aiding the student’s acclimation to college. The advising team was not formed in a void but instead to support and tie in with the University’s mission: “To empower its diverse student body to succeed in today’s world by integrating general education, professional skills, and career focused education”.

Accordingly, the academic advising program is based on a developmental approach that promotes both the human and intellectual growth of students. The advisee and faculty advisor, as partners, work together to: define and assess academic and career goals; select appropriate courses for meeting the student’s academic goals; gain a clear understanding of institutional policies, procedures and resources; and assist the student in becoming self-directed. Such actions ultimately culminate in an increase in first year student retention.

In keeping with the University’s philosophy of providing the best possible product and to provide the needed support to help students achieve their potential, the Hospitality College Advising Team was originally proposed by Richard Brush, Dean of the Hospitality College and created in 2001. The initial advising team was formed by Dr. Karen Silva and comprised of one faculty member from each department in the Hospitality College. The
primary criterion in selecting the team’s members was faculty members who were student centered.

In summation, the goal of The Hospitality College’s Freshman Advising Team is to facilitate students’ adjustment to the University environment to ensure a smooth transition and successful college experience. The role of the freshman faculty advisor is to provide timely information and support that enable students to make the best possible decisions as they pertain to their education and career.

Role of Faculty Advisor

Each freshman entering the Hospitality College is assigned an advisor. The advisor teaches the student in an Introduction to Hospitality Course during the first term. Oftentimes, the faculty advisor teaches other introductory classes to the advisees during the freshman year. In addition to teaching, the faculty advisor provides the student with a variety of services such as:

- Academic advising and counsel
- Information on majors, concentrations, and degree programs
- Career counseling
- Course selection and registration
- Other support services

Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor each term. Some of the topics discussed may be: academic progress, adjustment to college, resume building, scheduling and strategies for success. The academic advisor typically spends approximately five hours per week in the role of advisor and is usually responsible for approximately eighty students. The advising team meets once or twice per week to discuss strategies etc. for approximately forty-five minutes per session.
Highlights of Program

- Ten Percent Freshman Retention for 2002-2003 as calculated by registrar’s office.

- Faculty Advisors Teaching Students in Introductory Hospitality Courses During the First Term of Freshman Year-provides a personal connection between faculty and students.

- Dedicated Hospitality College Advising Suite-provides an intimate and familiar setting for the student and an opportunity for members of the advising team to exchange ideas.

- “Tuesday’s With…” Advisory Meetings-members of the advising team meet weekly to discuss issues, programs, updates and strategies.

- “Wednesdays With …” Luncheon Meetings-members of departments that affect the student’s college experience meet to discuss issues, programs and updates. Some of the departments represented are: Student Financial Services, Residential Life, Student Success, Student Conduct, Freshman Studies and The Parent Relations Office.

- Freshman Focus Newsletter-providing timely information to freshman regarding registration and success skills.

- Freshman Orientation Activities-Meet the Advisors, Pictures With the Dean Key Chains, tours of Providence, Students presented with Hospitality College pineapple pins (a symbol of hospitality) to feel connected to the Hospitality College and the industry.

- Donuts With the Dean- Dean Richard Brush and Dr. Karen Silva, Director of The Freshman Advising Team, visit the residence halls throughout the year for informal meetings with students.
- **Peer Mentor Program** - matching first-year students with a student leader as a mentor to activate a support network for academic and personal needs.

- **Special Workshops Offered by The Office of Student Success to Hospitality Students** - topics range from test taking strategies to dealing with stress.

- **Creating Various Social Opportunities During the Term to Meet Other Students** - Ex. Skating parties, excursions to Newport or nearby hospitality-related businesses.

- **Postcards from Advising Team** - during holiday and summer vacations.

- **Bi-Weekly Questionnaires Regarding Student’s First-Year Experience** - provide an opportunity for the advisor to become proactive in solving a problem or to provide advice.

- **Extensive Record Keeping** - input from all University departments.

- **Industry Speakers For Freshmen Only** - providing opportunities for networking, internships, and part-time positions in the industry

- **Creation of Data Bases** - comparison of data to evaluate what worked, what didn’t and what needs to be changed.

- **Commuter Club** - opportunity for commuter students to get connected to the University

- **A Column in “The Parent Connection Newsletter”** - to keep parents updated on essential information.

- **The Team** - “Without a doubt, the most critical element of our success is the dedicated, caring and committed individuals on the team. They represent not only the breadth of the industry, but also the best members of our faculty in terms of teaching and mentoring skills. Without them, our program could have all of the above elements and still not be successful. They are truly the glue that holds these innovations together.”