OSU program helps undecided students

By Traci Miller
Lantern staff writer

Searching for a major can be difficult, but the Alternatives Advisement Program makes it easier, said an OSU adviser.

George Steele, alternatives adviser, said the program helps students find their own skills and interests. Students participating in this program receive advice about different college majors from professionals.

He said the program is for students with advanced credit hours who need help deciding what field of study to pursue.

These students have been denied admission to a certain college because of a low grade point average, lack of progress in their present majors or are still undecided about their majors, Steele said.

Tod Linton, a junior from Salem majoring in sociology, said he took a class that was part of the Alternatives Advisement Program, and it helped him match up careers with some of his interests.

“It helped me assess different things that would be important in a job such as security, money and travel,” he said.

Linton said he did not have a major before the class, but it helped him decide to go into sociology.

Virginia Gordon, coordinator for academic advising, said not all students need advising on a major, but it can be difficult for an insecure student who does not know where to go.

“It’s estimated nationally that between 60 and 90 percent of students change their major,” said Gordon.

She said some students become disenchanted with their majors for one reason or another, get closed out of a program or simply are unsure about what they want to do in school.

Students who get closed out of their perspective majors can have difficulty finding a new field of study.

Some students try other majors, seek counseling, go to other schools or continue to try to get into the major they want, she said.

Gordon said, “There are national trends and there is no question that the number of students who are trying to get into oversubscribed programs has increased dramatically.”

She said, at Ohio State some colleges are forced to change the criteria to get into certain majors.

In the past eight years, a few of these overcrowded situations have been in the College of Business, College of Engineering and in the School of Journalism, said Joan Leitzel, OSU associate provost for curriculum and instruction.

She said the Council on Academic Affairs works on enrollment management programs for all majors where the demand of students exceeds the space and faculty limitations.

The Council on Academic Affairs cannot recommend to build larger buildings or enlarge the faculty too much because the enrollment in a certain college might decrease, Leitzel said.

“We see shifts from generation to generation on what majors students are interested in,” she said.

When the faculty in a certain college does not meet the needs of the large number of students, people from the profession are hired on temporary contracts, she said.

John Yutzey, director of the undergraduate program in the College of Business, said, an enrollment limitation plan had to be used in the College of Business to limit incoming students to 1300 per year.

Students need to complete a set of courses satisfactory to the major and need to have a high enough grade point average before they can get into the College of Business, Yutzey said.

Since 1980, the business school has had to use three enrollment management plans to control the number of students entering the school, he said.

He said the college had to limit the number of students wanting to enter the business school because of the limited faculty.

It is difficult for a student who decides he is going to be something for the rest of his life and suddenly gets rejected by that program, Lietzel said.

“A student’s self-concept suffers and there are some adjustments to be made,” she said.

Each student’s case is unique, and we have to handle each on an individual basis, she said.

Lietzel added, “The Alternatives Advisement Program has been designed to accommodate the students in the throws of change when trying to find a new major.”
Students must vie for advisers’ attention at many OSU colleges

By Stephanie Warsmith
Lantern staff writer

Finding an adviser to answer all those important questions can be difficult, especially if you are one of 10,000 undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences and are seeking the attention of one of its 16 advisers.

“We’re concerned about the waiting time,” James R. Tootle, assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said. “We don’t like to tell students they have to wait two weeks to see someone.”

Tootle was referring to the two-week waiting period students usually have when they make an appointment with a counselor.

Tootle said that because of budget restraints, he does not think the university will hire any more academic counselors for the college, but he wishes that they could.

Students can help reduce their wait by planning ahead and by not coming in during the busiest time of the quarter, which is the first week, or during the busiest time of the day, which is noon, he said.

Jane N. Pletcher, who has been an academic counselor in the College of Arts and Sciences for 24 years, said that she and the other counselors “get to know certain students very well and serve (other students) in a mediocre manner.”

The College of Arts and Sciences is not the only school with this problem. Students in the College of Engineering also have problems getting in to see their advisers.

The college has one part-time graduate student adviser who counsels about 400 students pre-majoring in mechanical engineering.

“They should expand the number of counselors or at least set up an advisory room where they just answer questions about the major,” said Greg Poynter, a sophomore pre-majoring in mechanical engineering.

“There’s never enough counselors in there to handle the people coming in,” Poynter said.

Jon Monahan, an engineering adviser, said that he thinks the situation could be improved with the help of undergraduate students in the college. He said they could help advise the pre-majors on the courses they need to take.

Judith McDonald, who is in charge of the academic advisers in the College of Engineering and director of the Women in Engineering program, said professionals, rather than graduate students such as Monahan, would be better advisers for the 1,696 pre-engineering majors.

“It would be nice if we were able to have full-time professional advisers rather than half-time graduate students,” McDonald said.

Some of the smaller colleges have a faculty advising system instead of an academic advising structure used by the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering.

Jill Pliester, assistant director for academic affairs and college secretary for the College of Agriculture, said the school has one college counselor and 120 faculty advisers for its 1,200 students.

They have one college counselor and each student is assigned to a faculty adviser.

She said the system works well for the school and those students who have a problem with it and want an adviser on demand are not being realistic, she said.

The College of Arts uses the same faculty adviser system as agriculture for its 650 students, Dennis Thompson, the academic counselor of the College of the Arts, said.

“We’re fairly unique here because we are small enough that we can get by with one adviser along with the faculty advisers,” he said.

There’s never enough counselors in there to handle the people coming in.”

—Greg Poynter