

## ADVISING CENTER: *New Model Emphasizes Student-Advisor Relationship*

In a strategic move to enhance the student experience and to ensure that students reach their fullest academic and personal potential, the School of Arts and Sciences Advising Center comprehensively reviewed its current practices. After extensive research, analysis, and many thoughtful meetings with an outside consulting firm, the Advising Center has realigned its advising structure. It has moved away from a traditional advising model that focuses more on course selection to a developmental advising strategy that provides a student-centered approach, creates a shared responsibility between advisor and student, and helps students to draw a connection between their academic goals and career paths.



Unveiled in spring 2010, the developmental advising model calls for students to be active participants in the advising process, to define their career goals, and to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students. With the implementation of developmental advising, all Arts and Sciences advisors actively engage with students to determine academic plans, connect them with institutional resources, encourage student involvement with cocurricular programs, and help to prevent academic difficulties.

“While the Advising Center had the core of this developmental model already in place, the implementation of self-service enrollment in fall 2009 really paved the way for us to move completely to a developmental advising structure,” explains Mary Beth Favorite, director of the Advising Center. “Advisors now can spend more time building relationships with students and developing meaningful conversations about career goals and graduate school opportunities.”

In September 2008, the Advising Center contracted with Noel-Levitz, Inc., a higher education consulting firm, to evaluate the entire advising structure and make recommendations for a plan of action. Over a two-year period, Jim Hundrieser, associate vice president at Noel-Levitz, met with a wide variety of campus entities, including senior administrators in the School of Arts and Sciences undergraduate studies office, to review current practices and evaluate every facet of the advising program. Throughout this process, Hundrieser worked with the Advising Center staff to identify priorities and pinpoint steps to be taken to improve the student experience.

To better facilitate the developmental advising model, the Advising Center restructured and redefined its organizational team. The new staffing model consists of a director who will reach outward to build relationships across campus, an assistant director who will manage the day-to-day advising functions, three team leaders who will guide teams of advisors and work in specialized interest areas, and administrative and advising staff.

The review process identified numerous successful practices that will continue in the new advising structure. One particular system is the strong two-tiered advising model. One tier consists of 5,000 Arts and Sciences students who have yet to declare a major and students preparing for admission to preprofessional programs. First-year

students will continue to meet individually with their advisors during their PittStart Session, twice during their first term, and once after that until they declare a major. All other students will meet with their advisor at least once per term until a major is declared. The second tier of students consists of those who have officially declared a major. These students will transition to their respective academic departments for advising.

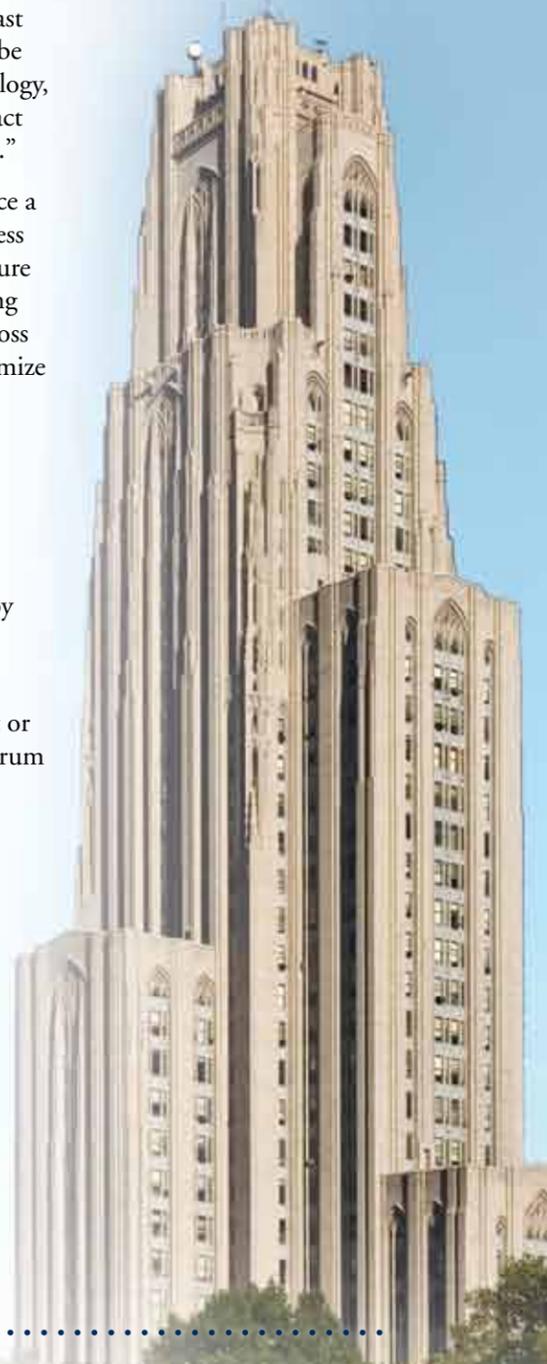
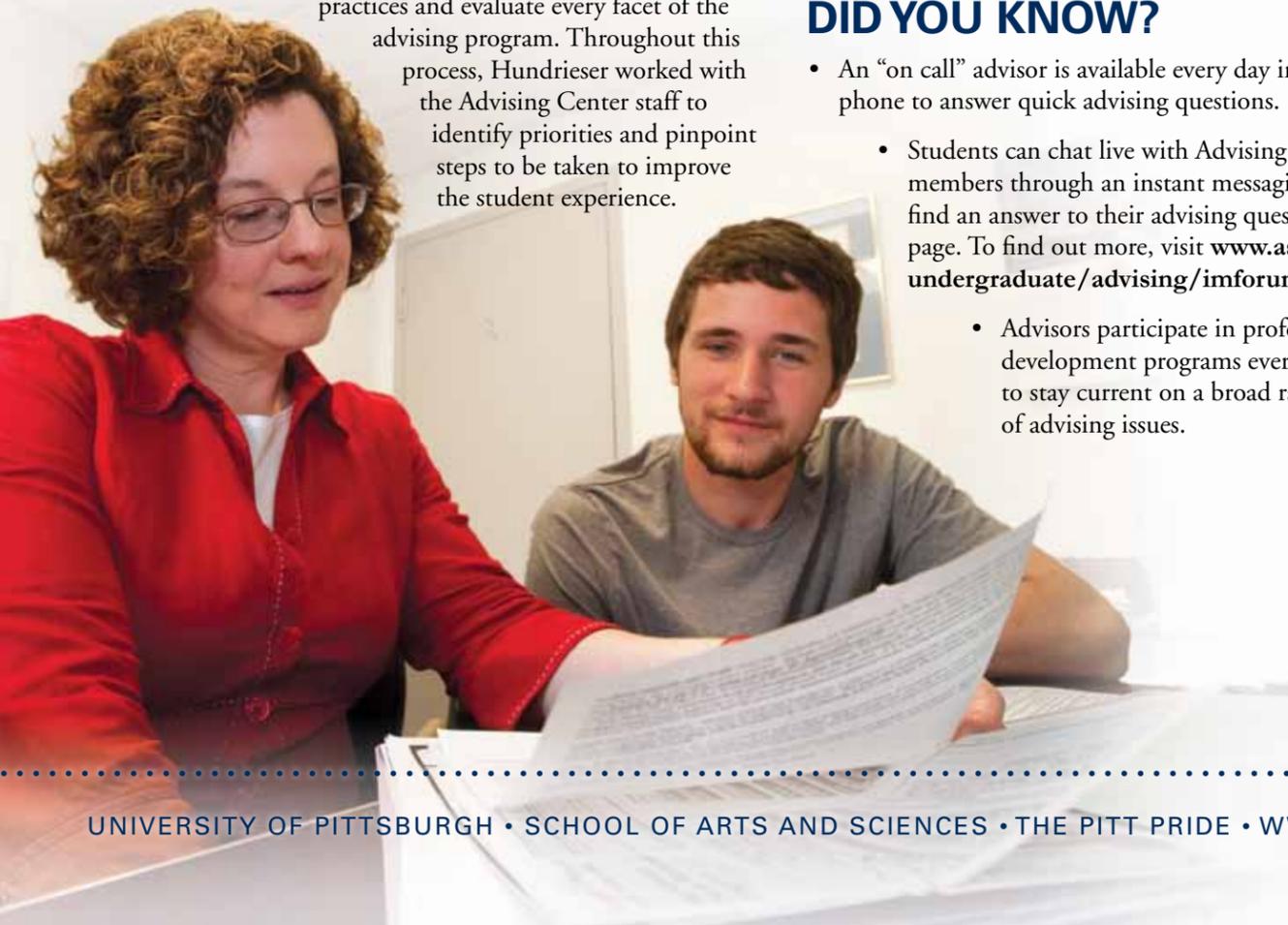
“The Advising Center should be applauded for its intentional efforts to require all students to meet with the advisor at least once per term. This is a hallmark of the center and should be continued,” says Hundrieser. “With the addition of technology, particularly the use of CourseWeb, advisors can be in contact with and checking in on their advisees on an ongoing basis.”

“The Arts and Sciences Advising Center already had in place a dedicated team of professionals committed to student success that served as a strong foundation upon which to build future improvements,” says Hundrieser. “I encountered an amazing spirit of collaboration between advisors and other units across the campus and an eagerness to focus on strategies to maximize the University experience for students.”

For more information on the School of Arts and Sciences Advising Center, visit [www.as.pitt.edu/advising](http://www.as.pitt.edu/advising).

### DID YOU KNOW?

- An “on call” advisor is available every day in person or by phone to answer quick advising questions.
- Students can chat live with Advising Center staff members through an instant messaging Web chat or find an answer to their advising questions on a forum page. To find out more, visit [www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/advising/imforum](http://www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/advising/imforum).
- Advisors participate in professional development programs every month to stay current on a broad range of advising issues.



## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

### A Time of Reflection

As associate dean for undergraduate studies, I have been committed to moving forward Pitt's mission of providing undergraduate students with a strong curriculum, excellent instruction, and cutting-edge programs to ensure that our students can compete at the highest levels in graduate and professional schools and in the workplace. With a team of dedicated senior administrators, faculty, and staff who share my passion for undergraduate success, we have worked toward these goals since I came on board in 2007. As I leave this position and move into my new role as vice provost for undergraduate studies, I would like to reflect on some of the accomplishments achieved by this office over the past three years.

The primary focus for undergraduate studies has been improving and supporting students' academic experiences. While I was chair of the Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Council, council members and I worked diligently on an assessment process to analyze extensively all undergraduate majors and certificate programs to evaluate student learning outcomes. The results have been used to capitalize more fully on the expertise of our distinguished faculty and to strengthen the undergraduate curriculum by refining and modifying majors and programs, including those in psychology, political science, and history.

To help students reach their highest academic and personal potential, the Arts and Sciences Advising Center realigned its advising structure to be more student centered. Recognizing that individualized advising is the hallmark of student success and retention, the new advising model creates a shared responsibility between advisor and student, engaging students more actively in the advising process. With the integration of self-service enrollment and state-of-the-art technology, advisors now have the time to develop meaningful conversations with students and align their interests to the many resources available.

During my tenure, the undergraduate studies office has worked extensively to promote and expand undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative endeavors to move beyond the classroom experience. Research is an integral part of the undergraduate experience, and opportunities exist as early as the second term of a student's freshman year to participate in faculty-mentored research projects. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a common reading program that was introduced two years ago by the Office of Freshman Programs. Seventy percent of incoming freshmen have participated each year, creating a vast community of scholars sharing a common intellectual experience.

I move into my new role as vice provost confident that there is a solid foundation firmly in place for my successor to continue to grow our programs and support our students while maintaining the University's legacy of excellence in undergraduate education. You will meet the new associate dean for undergraduate studies in a future issue of *Pitt Pride*.

May you have a wonderful academic year,

**Juan J. Manfredi**

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies



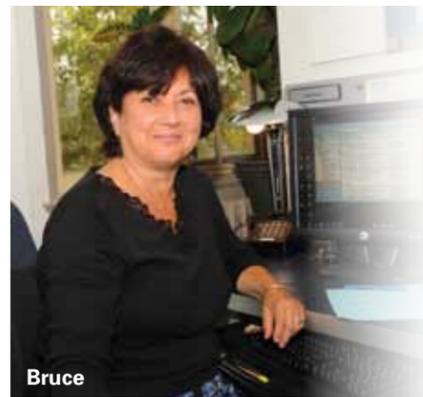
## Advisors Are Passionate about Making a Difference

Advisors in the School of Arts and Sciences Advising Center have a wealth of knowledge and educational experiences with a wide cross section of backgrounds and interests. While they have traveled many roads to get to the University of Pittsburgh there is one common thread that uniquely connects them: Academic advisors all share the same passion, drive, and desire to help students succeed.

"I love the curious nature of my students; they are so excited about their education and eager to learn new ideas. They keep me on my toes," says Gregory Allen, who has been at Pitt for 12 years, six of which have been as an advisor in the Advising Center. A graduate of Hampton University with a bachelor's degree in psychology, he specialized in drug and alcohol counseling for five years prior to coming to Pitt. "I really try to engage students to talk about their interests, their passions, and what motivates them. It helps me to be a better advisor and to be able to guide them on a career path that is unique to them." Allen encourages students to open their minds and discover the many majors, minors, and certificate programs available to them. "The wonderful part of the liberal arts experience is that there are so many options for students to explore. It's an amazing time for students."



Allen



Bruce

Playing a positive role in her advisees' academic lives is Katie Bruce's top priority when advising students. "When I was attending college, I had such great advisors who were a wonderful sounding board for me. I would like to emulate them and challenge my students to learn more about themselves, to expand their world view, and to engage in what the University has to offer." With a master's degree in counseling psychology from Pitt, Bruce has been an advisor for 11 years. "It is thrilling to get to know my students and help them achieve their dreams. They are all such unique, interesting people with an amazing set of skills. I love when they are open to exploring all of the possibilities that a liberal arts education offers." For Bruce, the most

satisfying aspect of being an advisor is seeing the proverbial lightbulb go off in a student's head when it all finally clicks and makes sense, particularly when his or her career interests align with his or her major.

With more than 18 years of advising experience at Pitt, Stephanie Whatule finds helping students to navigate a system that can be complex and bewildering the most satisfying aspect of her job.

"Because there are so many options, particularly for students who are undecided about a major and career path, it can be very perplexing for students to determine which course of action to take," says Whatule. With a master's degree in English from Pitt, Whatule's initial goal was to conduct research and to teach as a full-time faculty member. "I thrive in an academic environment. However, the more I worked with students in the group setting of a classroom, the more I realized that I wanted to instruct them in a different way. I like the personalized approach of individual advising appointments. I enjoy getting students acclimated to Pitt's unique environment as well as preparing students to think independently, ask questions, and take full advantage of the wonderful resources available at Pitt."



Whatule

## News & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### • *Dean's Stars*

Academic achievement brings many rewards, including a \$50 award. Students who end the fall term with a 4.0 GPA and complete a minimum of 12 credits of letter grade will see a \$50 award posted to their PeopleSoft accounts. If your son or daughter qualifies for this award but does not receive the \$50 by the end of January 2011, please contact us at [pittpride@as.pitt.edu](mailto:pittpride@as.pitt.edu).

### • *December Graduation*

The School of Arts and Sciences will host a graduation reception and recognition ceremony for the Class of December 2010 on Saturday, December 18. An invitation will be mailed in mid-November to those Arts and Sciences undergraduates who have applied for December graduation. For more information, contact the Office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies at 412-624-6480.

### • *Homecoming Festivities*

Mark your calendars for Homecoming Weekend 2010, October 28-31. The activities planned provide you with a chance to visit with your son or daughter and enjoy the University of Pittsburgh campus community. For details, including hotel and football game ticket information, visit [www.alumni.pitt.edu/homecoming](http://www.alumni.pitt.edu/homecoming).

### • *April Graduation Notice*

Students planning to graduate in April 2011 need to apply for graduation by November 12. Application forms will be available at the Office of Student Records in 140 Thackeray Hall beginning October 28.

# Arts and Sciences Appoints New Advising Center Director



The School of Arts and Sciences recently announced the appointment of Mary Beth Favorite as the new director of the Arts and Sciences Advising Center. In leading the Advising Center, Favorite draws on 20 years of advising experience at the University of Pittsburgh.

Since coming to Pitt as an academic advisor in 1990, Favorite has acquired an impressive administrative background. As a senior advisor, she coordinated the peer advisor program and facilitated the development of the Advising Center's online orientation for incoming freshmen. Most recently, as acting director, she was instrumental in leading the Advising Center through a two-year assessment process.

Favorite's primary goal this academic year is to complete the implementation of the developmental advising model unveiled in spring 2010. In doing so, she will continue to build on the historical strengths of the Advising Center, which focuses on individual advising. "With the integration of self-service enrollment, advisors now have more time to spend building relationships with students and actively engaging students in the process of exploring their academic interests, goals, options, and resources," says Favorite. Another important initiative is to develop further the liaisons with departmental advisors and advisors in other schools across the University in order to ensure a smooth transition as students declare their majors or transfer to professional programs.

"The work of the Advising Center is a group effort in which the sum effect is much stronger than any one individual," says Favorite. "Each day, I am enriched by the interaction with both students and staff. I work with a wonderful group of committed, intelligent, interesting people, and it is a great privilege to play even a small role in the lives of our students."

Favorite is a native of Pittsburgh and received a bachelor's degree in theology and elementary education from Carlow University. She also has completed some graduate course work in religious studies and communication. She has three grown children, two of whom earned degrees at Pitt and one who graduated from Le Cordon Bleu Institute of Culinary Arts in Pittsburgh. "Having my children graduate from Pitt has given me a unique perspective on the advising process and has helped me become a better advisor and administrator."

## Advisors and Students Connect Through Technology

Through the University of Pittsburgh's Web-based course management system, CourseWeb, students have access to a wealth of information from their instructors—including handouts, notes, sample exercises, and related readings—that augments the classroom experience. Beginning with the 2010 fall term, students advised in the Arts and Sciences Advising Center are now able to log in to CourseWeb, click on the Arts and Sciences Advising link, and have access to real-time postings and announcements from their academic advisors.

"The academic Advising Center continuously looks for ways to integrate technology into the advising experience, to use technology as a tool to enhance and personalize communications further with students," says Patrick Mullen, newly appointed assistant director of the Advising Center. "CourseWeb is an innovative way to communicate with students and provide one-stop-shop access for information that's relevant to them. Advisors use CourseWeb in conjunction with individual meetings with their students."

Successfully piloted in the 2010 spring term to a select group of advisors, CourseWeb now is available to all academic advisors in the Advising Center. "One of the advantages of using CourseWeb as part of our advising model," says Mullen, "is that it allows advisors to customize their own community page specifically for their advisees," says Mullen. "Advisors can post announcements as well as tutoring schedules, internship opportunities, and even personal information about themselves. In addition, with CourseWeb's advanced functionality, advisors have the capability to target announcements for particular community groups, including students interested in premed, prelaw, and prepharmacy."

CourseWeb is not a static communication tool. The interactive technology allows students to post comments and questions on electronic message boards and communicate actively with each other and their advisors. CourseWeb also provides detailed reports that allow advisors to see a more comprehensive picture of a student's particular interests. This function is very useful in developing meaningful conversations with students about their academic goals and career plans.

The next phase of CourseWeb will include integrating additional functionalities, such as uploading audio files, student testimonials, and a private electronic portfolio.



Mullen



## ACADEMIC SURVIVAL TOOLS

by Mary Koch Ruiz, University Counseling Center

As children, students learn when their interests are stimulated. Remembering or understanding something becomes effortless when their curiosity or imagination is captured. However, as students move through the formal education system, the amount of information they need to learn increases. Not only are they daunted by the sheer amount of information, but they have difficulty maintaining their attention and drive. When exam time arrives, it seems as though they will never be able to commit all that information to memory. They begin to feel pressured and, if they ever have previously failed a test, they already are emotionally conditioned to feel anxious or fearful when thinking about taking an exam.

**Learning to study successfully is essential to surviving college. The following study tips can help to promote students' success in school. Students should:**

- Get organized. Have a separate notebook for each class.
- Find one place to study in their room or apartment where they can feel undisturbed.
- Locate one place on campus to study during some of their free time (e.g., a quiet corner in the library).
- Manage their time wisely.
- Have a small notebook to document daily responsibilities. Prioritize tasks and check off what they have completed.
- Take effective notes. Review their notes for each class at the end of the day.
- Visit the Academic Resource Center on campus whenever they need help with any of their subjects.
- Attend free study skills workshops offered by the Academic Resource Center.
- Use the Writing Center for assistance with developing a well-written paper.

**Students should remember the following important suggestions to help them move forward on their academic path:**

- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Attend professors' office hours and mentoring sessions.
- Form study groups.
- Schedule adequate time for studying, sleeping, and relaxation.
- Maintain a nutritional pattern of eating.
- Focus on the reasons for coming to college and future goals when thoughts about quitting occur.

### CAMPUS RESOURCES

Academic Resource Center  
G-1 Gardner Steel Conference Center  
[www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/offices/arc](http://www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/offices/arc)  
412-648-7920

Writing Center  
M-2 Thaw Hall  
[www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter)  
412-624-6556

Math Assistance Center  
Third Floor, Thackeray Hall  
[www.mathematics.pitt.edu/resources/mac-center.php](http://www.mathematics.pitt.edu/resources/mac-center.php)



# University of Pittsburgh

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## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

- Advising Center .....412-624-6444
- Academic Resource Center .....412-648-7920
- Office of the Associate Dean  
for Undergraduate Studies.....412-624-6480
- Office of Experiential Learning.....412-624-6828
- Office of Freshman Programs .....412-624-6828
- Office of Student Records .....412-624-6776

[www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate](http://www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate)

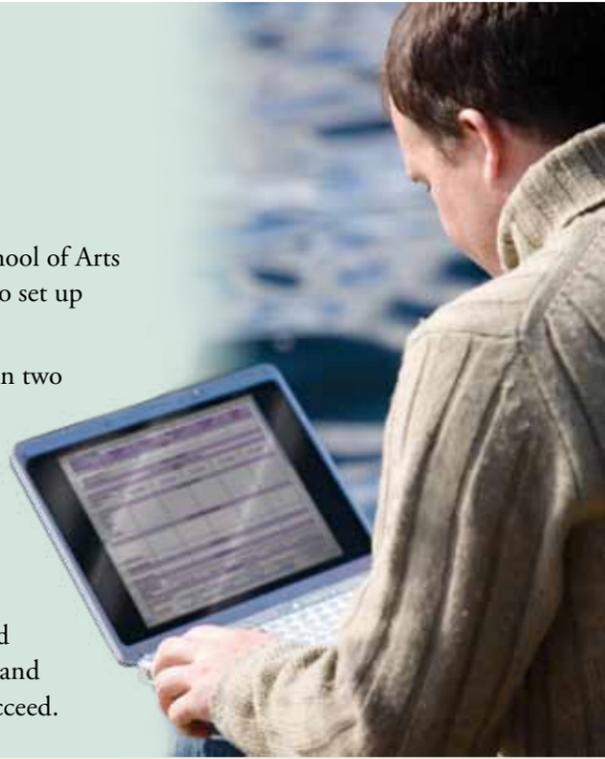
Questions or concerns? E-mail us at [pittpride@as.pitt.edu](mailto:pittpride@as.pitt.edu).

# Advising Center Launches New Scheduling Application

During the 2010–11 academic year, students will have access to a new tool for scheduling advising appointments. The School of Arts and Sciences Advising Center will pilot CourseWeb Advisor, a virtual online appointment calendar that enables students to set up advising meetings with their academic advisor 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The CourseWeb Advisor application, which works in conjunction with Blackboard’s CourseWeb system, is being piloted in two phases. The first phase allows students to view their advisor’s appointment calendar, see which advising appointments are available, and schedule a time that is convenient for them. An important feature of this application is the ability for students to explain the reason for the advising meeting. This feature helps advisors to prepare properly for each advising appointment and enables them to have a more productive, meaningful conversation with their students. For security and privacy reasons, students will not have access to their advisor’s personal calendar, nor will they see any other student name listed on the appointment calendar. An appointment time taken by another student will be listed as unavailable.

The second phase of CourseWeb Advisor, which will be piloted in 2011, is an early alert system that enables faculty and advisors to share information about students who may be having academic difficulty. Faculty members, staff members, and advisors will be able to work together more effectively to put early intervention practices into place to help students succeed.



The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University’s mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs and activities. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs and complaint/grievance procedures, please contact the University of Pittsburgh: Office of Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Inclusion; Carol W. Mohamed, Director (and Title IX, 504 and ADA Coordinator); 412 Bellefield Hall; 315 South Bellefield Avenue; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-648-7860.

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For the online academic calendar, go to [www.provost.pitt.edu/information-on/calendar.html](http://www.provost.pitt.edu/information-on/calendar.html).

October	November
28-31 Homecoming Weekend	12 Deadline to apply for April 2011 graduation
29 Fall term deadline for students to submit Monitored Withdrawal forms to the dean's office; last day to resign from all classes with the Student Appeals Office and receive a partial refund	24-28 Thanksgiving recess for students (no classes)
	25-26 Thanksgiving recess for faculty and staff (University closed)
6 Last day to withdraw from all classes in the dean's office	13-18 Final examination period for undergraduate day classes
10 Last day for undergraduate day classes; spring term deadline for continuing students to register without a penalty fee	18 Fall term ends; official date for degrees awarded in fall term
11 Reading day	19 Residence halls close
11-18 College of General Studies classes, all graduate classes, and evening classes will continue to meet during this period; final examinations should be held during the last scheduled class meeting	19-26 Thanksgiving recess for students (no classes)
23 Fall term grades available online	21 Fall term grades must be approved by instructors
24-January 3 Winter recess for faculty and staff	

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS