DEPARTMENTALLY CONTROLLED ADVISEE REGISTRATION AND ENTRY

by

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In many liberal arts colleges where early declaration of intended subject matter major is not required and may be postponed until the senior year, it is difficult identifying students considering biology as a major and providing them with appropriate academic advisement. This problem is even more prevalent in colleges where college-wide advisement offices tend to promote their generalized services.

Students who have declared biology as a major as well as those who have not formally registered as biology students often fail to see a departmental advisor and are, therefore, unable to receive needed course and program information, to communicate their academic needs and desires, to obtain adequate career counseling, and to avail themselves of the benefits of social and special academic interactions. Early and accurate identification of student majors results in increased use of academic departmental advisors and consequently forestalls criticism of the department advising process by default. In a time of numerical accountability when financial support depends heavily on numbers of students served, an up-to-date account of students served is also advantageous.

In an attempt to identify potential biology majors and encourage major students to regularly see a biology departmental advisor, the Controlled Advisee Registration and Entry (BIO-CARE) program has been established. The BIO-CARE program centers around a special computer card that is added to the multitude of other course and data cards that the student is compelled to haul around during the registration period. The computer card identifies the possessor as a biology major or a probable major.

The computer card is typical in size and shape but is of an easily identified color. The card can be printed in a questionnaire format to request general information such as name, address, and accumulated credits as well as solicit specific information regarding the academic program, career interests, etc. The card can accommodate eighteen typed lines per side. If computer tallying is essential the cards can be custom printed to be read by an optical scanner. Mimeograph printing is, of course, less expensive and more flexible but requires hand tabulation.

The BIO-CARE card is not distributed to the students at the time they receive the regular registration packet from the registrar. Students must obtain the required card from their designated faculty advisor (see Figure 1). By contacting their advisor, the
students place themselves in a consulting situation, give a biology faculty advisor the opportunity to review their academic program, discuss career plans, talk about departmental programs, and point out changes in course offerings. When the needed advising has been accomplished the advisor gives the students a BIO-CARE card, and if it is utilizing a questionnaire format, requests that the student supply the desired information. The student then takes the completed BIO-CARE card along with the other materials on to registration. During registration the BIO-CARE cards are easily identified and collected by administrative personnel. Students who attempt to register as biology majors or express interest in a biology major but do not have a BIO-CARE card are referred back to the biology department and their advisor. If the cards are used by other departments and punched to indicate discipline, the registrar can easily obtain an accurate computerized count of majors as they process other registration materials. The cards are then sent back to the department for tabulation.

In many schools the student must obtain the signature of an advisor before registration packets are accepted by the registrar. Students often sign each others registration cards, sign their cards themselves or get them signed by a disinterested faculty member. This procedure is illuminated when BIO-CARE cards are used because the student must see their academic advisor to obtain the card. The assigned academic advisor is the only source of these uniquely printed cards but not necessarily of a signature.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the alternative paths a student might take to register for courses. Use of the BIO-CARE procedure helps to insure at least some contact with an appropriate subject matter advisor and help to identify the undeclared biology major.
Figure 1  Scheme of Student Registration Alternatives