I. Introduction: The Role of the Advisor

The Dean of New Students assigns all students to a faculty advisor, called their College Advisor, upon entrance to the College. For the first two years, or until students declare their majors, their College Advisor helps them choose their courses and gives them more general guidance about the academic life of the College and the best ways for them to find their way through the curriculum and develop their intellectual capacities to the fullest. Once the students have declared their major—which generally takes place at the end of the sophomore year, but can occur earlier if they wish—they are assigned a Major Advisor by the chair of that department. The Major Advisor guides them through the major and ensures that they complete the major in a timely and productive way; he or she is also available to speak with them about the long-term implications of majoring in that particular discipline: what kinds of career paths the major can lead to, and what sorts of graduate study might be appropriate for students who major in that discipline. Quite a few students choose to major in more than one discipline, in which case they have multiple major advisors, one from each department. In such instances, each Major Advisor must sign off on the student’s academic program each semester.

All tenured and tenure-track faculty members, as well as some lecturers and resident artists, are assigned both College and major advisees. New faculty members aren’t given advisees until their second year at the College, in order to give them time to gain some familiarity with the curriculum. When a faculty member goes on leave for all or part of an academic year, all of his or her advisees are normally reassigned to other faculty members. Faculty members who wish to keep their College Advisees while on leave, however, should notify the Dean of Students Office.

The role of the faculty advisor is especially important at Amherst because of our open curriculum, which is discussed in the next section. Students have a great deal of freedom to design their own program, but the expectation is that they will receive careful and considered advice from one or more faculty members in doing so. Students come to Amherst with a range of expectations about faculty advising: some are simply looking for advice on particular courses to take, while others hope for a more parental (or, at a minimum, avuncular) figure who will provide some guidance on personal or larger life issues. The degree to which you accommodate the latter wish will, of course, be a function of your comfort level in doing so (as well as, perhaps, your own stage in life or your career). A number of other resources are available to give students advice and support for these larger questions, and you should not hesitate to refer students to these resources—which are described in a later section of this manual—whenever it seems appropriate to do so. In particular, since no individual faculty member can ever be as familiar with other departments’ offerings as she is with her own, it is always helpful to consult with members of other departments when questions arise about courses or requirements in those departments. Chairs or directors of studies of those departments are often the most appropriate people to consult when such questions are raised.

II. The Curriculum

One of the advisor’s biggest challenges is persuading a student to take advantage of the riches of the open curriculum, which has been in effect at Amherst since the 1970’s. To qualify for a degree, Amherst students must complete 32 full courses and eight semesters of residence at Amherst. (Transfer students must complete a minimum of 16 full courses and four semesters of residence at Amherst.) Approved study abroad programs are considered semesters in residence. Students must take one First-Year Seminar in the fall semester of their freshman year and must complete the requirements of a
major, including satisfactory performance on a comprehensive evaluation set by the major department. Students who come to Amherst directly from high school do not receive credit for Advanced Placement courses or other college-level courses taken previous to enrollment; no student can shorten the length of time it takes to graduate by virtue of advanced standing.

Amherst’s liberal studies curriculum is based on a concept of education as a process or activity rather than a form of production. The curriculum provides a structure within which each student may confront the meaning of his or her education, and does it without imposing a particular course or subject on all students. Students are encouraged to continue to seek diversity and attempt integration through their course selection and to discuss this with their advisors. As student and advisor together plan a student’s program, they should discuss whether the student has selected courses that:

- develop fundamental capabilities such as critical reading, written and oral expression, quantitative reasoning, and proficiency in using information resources; and

- achieve breadth of understanding through study in a range of disciplines and modes of inquiry.

One of the principal roles of the advisor is to make students aware of these expectations and to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that they fulfill them. First-Year Seminars “are planned and taught by one or more members of the faculty as a way to introduce students to liberal studies through a range of innovative and often interdisciplinary approaches.” They are typically taught in sections of 15 or fewer students. The instructors of First-Year Seminars are expected to be especially attentive to their students’ writing, close reading of written text, and development of analysis of argument in speech and writing, and instructors have been asked to identify those students whose performance indicates that they could especially benefit from the services of the Writing Center or a second-semester writing-intensive course. Transfer students are not required to take a First-Year Seminar.

Students are required to take four courses per semester, and are allowed to drop below that number only for medical reasons or because of family or other personal emergencies. Such course reductions require the approval of the student’s class dean as well as the advisor. Typically, a student who fails to complete four courses in any given semester must make up the credit by taking a course the following summer at another accredited college or university. The course must be approved in advance by the registrar, and the student must earn a grade of “C” or better in it in order to receive credit. The maximum number of courses a student may take in any given semester without special permission is four and a half. (Half courses are most often music performance classes.) Taking five or more courses requires the approval of both the student’s class dean and advisor. Such approval is generally granted if the student has demonstrated a reasonable level of success (loosely defined as grades of B or better across the board) in his or her previous coursework.

First-year students and first semester transfer students may petition the Dean of New Students to drop one course without penalty. If a student’s petition is granted, the student will receive the grade of ‘W’ (“withdrawn”) for the course, does not have to make up the credit, and can graduate with 31 course credits instead of 32. Students are allowed to exercise this option only when they have demonstrated conclusively that they are putting their best effort into the course and yet are still struggling in it through no fault of their own. The withdrawal must be approved by the Dean of New Students, who will consult with the instructor of the course, as well as with the student’s advisor. This permission is normally granted only during the sixth, seventh, and eighth weeks of the semester.
III. Course Registration Procedures and the Drop/Add Period

Except for entering first-years, all students pre-register for courses in the middle of the previous semester—typically in November for their spring courses and in April for their fall courses. They are required to receive their advisor’s approval for the program before they pre-register. The advisor will convey approval of the student’s course choices by checking a box in the Advising section online. The student’s program will not be accepted until the advisor has checked off this box. The online registration system will also provide each advisor with a variety of new tools, which are described in the next section of this manual.

Entering first-year students choose only one course, their First-Year Seminar, in the summer before they enter. A student submits a ranked list of seven First-Year Seminars online in mid-June, and the Registrar, working with the Dean of New Students, sorts the students into these seminars in such a way as to honor the students’ preferences as much as possible while balancing seminars to keep enrollments equal. It is not possible for students to change their First-Year Seminar. In order for them to receive faculty advice before they register for their remaining courses, they are assigned an Orientation Advisor who meets with them early in the first-year orientation period to welcome new students, help with introducing them to the open curriculum, and discuss their potential course choices. These advisors are faculty members who agree to return to campus for this purpose before the semester starts. Some number of these students will retain their Orientation Advisor as their regular College Advisor once the semester starts, but others will be reassigned to other faculty members. The Dean of New Students typically makes these new assignments within the first month of the semester. It is helpful to new students if the Orientation Advisor explains that she or he might be a temporary advisor, but is open to discuss any issues of concern after the reassignment if the students wish. Such a conversation can help make the transition less awkward.

Orientation Advisors are also responsible for explaining departmental placement recommendations and for ensuring that students sign up for the appropriate course when they begin studying particular disciplines. The Math and Chemistry departments recommend placements for students over the summer and record this information online in AC Data. Any student wishing to elect a course other than the recommended placement must speak with the designated faculty in those departments. Foreign language departments each use a somewhat different method to determine the appropriate placement for students, so students should be told to consult directly with department representatives before signing up for their first course in the language.

The first week and a half of each semester is considered the “drop/add period,” during which students may change their programs as often as they wish. Each change requires the advisor’s approval, which will be granted online by checking a box. Exceptions to the drop/add deadline require the approval of the instructors of the courses the student is planning to add or drop, as well as the student’s class dean and advisor. A fine may be imposed upon the student who is late.

This period can be difficult for many students, especially first-years, who may well be dropped from courses a couple of days after their Orientation meeting and don’t know where to turn. Orientation Advisors should explain that instructors are not obligated to accept pre-registered students into limited enrollment classes and students are not obligated to take courses for which they have pre-registered. For this reason, students might consider second and third choices and attend those classes and complete the assignments for those classes in case they are dropped from others. Students should be encouraged to speak to the professors after class and express their wish to join, but they should have this conversation only when they are certain that they will take that particular class. Each time a student is dropped from a class, the advisor has another opportunity to urge the student to consider taking a class outside his or her comfort zone, in order to encounter a discipline or way of thinking the student hasn’t been exposed to before. It is also important for students to use pre-registration as a time to plan
for future semesters. Advisors can assist students in identifying whether the courses the student plans to take will be offered according to the schedule the student envisions.

A. Five College Registration Rules

After the first semester, students are entitled to enroll in up to two liberal arts courses each semester at the four other colleges, without additional cost apart from fees for course materials. Each Amherst College class is equivalent to four semester hours of credit as are most of the courses at Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke and Smith colleges. (Although the majority of classes at UMass are equivalent to three credits, Amherst awards full course credit for these classes. Courses which award 1.5 credits at UMass or 2 credits at the other colleges are considered "half" classes and designated by Amherst with an "H" on the transcript.) It is important to note that not all courses offered at the other colleges and university will be accepted for credit at Amherst. Amherst students cannot receive credit for online courses; courses which offer fewer than two credits; or courses that are considered pre-professional—for example, business or engineering classes. Advisors should encourage their advisees to check with the Registrar if there is any question about credits before requesting enrollment at one of the other colleges or at the university.

It is especially important for Advisors to understand that Amherst students who participate in the interchange must adhere to Amherst College policies and timelines pertaining to Pass/Fail, grade extensions, withdrawal from courses and course credit. Students cannot opt for Pass/Fail without having obtained prior approval from their class dean. Similarly, a student who is contemplating ending the term with an incomplete in a Five College course must obtain prior approval from the class dean about any extension. Amherst students must also abide by the Amherst College rules and timeline for adding and dropping courses at the beginning of each term.

B. Procedures for Five College Course Enrollments

If a student plans to register for an interchange course, the advisor should remind the student to submit an online course request. If the instructor’s permission is required, students may also need to submit the Five College Permission Form to the Registrar. Advisors should be aware, however, that students who have received permission from an instructor are not guaranteed admission to the course during pre-registration. Students should be encouraged to have a contingency plan in case they are denied admission to a Five College course. During the pre-registration periods in April and November, instructor permission is necessary only for those courses that state that requirement in the course description. All courses added during the Add-Drop period require both the instructor’s consent and the advisor’s consent. Students can find the Five College Permission Form on the Registrar’s web site (Five College Catalog, Policies & Procedures/Five College Permission Form) and should be advised to take their completed forms to the Registrar’s Office. If email permission is granted, students are permitted to print the email, attach it to the form, and bring both to the Registrar’s Office at 101 Converse Hall.

IV. Online Tools for Advising

Many new advising tools, developed under faculty guidance, are now available through AC Data on the Faculty Menu. Although these tools allow advisors to view and approve students’ course selections remotely, they are intended to be employed as a supplement to thoughtful, personal conversations between the advisor and advisee and to enhance those conversations by providing additional background information. To maximize use of these tools, faculty advisors should instruct their advisees, prior to Advising Week, to create a list of courses and to copy this list onto the Preferred Courses page. Once the courses have been placed there, the advisor and student can easily access and
modify the list. This should allow both the student and advisor to focus the advising meeting on the student’s educational goals.

A. My Advisees

Under My Advisees faculty will find the Course Scheduler, their primary Advising page, a link to their current advisees’ unofficial transcripts, a link to the entire Catalog of courses offered, and a registration anomaly report. The information on these pages will serve various purposes, but for advising, the Advising link will be the most useful.

The Course Scheduler allows searches for courses by term, subject, keyword, course title, course number, faculty name, day, and/or time. It also provides course descriptions and instructor contact information. The keyword categories, designed by the Committee on Educational Policy to assist faculty with advising, may be useful for encouraging advisees to improve a particular skill area: quantitative reasoning, speaking, artistic practice, and writing (please note that “writing attentive” identifies courses across a range of disciplines that will provide attention to a student’s writing skills; “writing intensive” will identify the far more limited listing of small dedicated writing courses for students who have significant writing problems). Keywords also identify science, math, and fine arts courses for non-majors; lab science courses; courses with a community-based learning component; and courses that teach foreign language and culture.

The Advising screen lists an advisor’s current advisees, and provides the student’s photograph, class year, major(s), leave status, a hotlink to the student’s email account, a listing of the student’s course selection, and a list of registered courses. On the left side of this page is a drop-down menu under ACTIONS which provides access to each advisee’s Preferred Courses; Advising Comments; Portfolio, a compendium of background information, including admission materials; Academic Record; Test and Placement information; Course Schedule (displaying the actual schedules for previous terms as well as the proposed schedule for the next term); and the Keyword Matrix.

Preferred Courses: From the Preferred Courses page, advisors will find a list of the student’s course preferences; a grid of the course selections across the days and times of the week, highlighting any conflicts; and also the keyword matrix. During Advising Week, advisors will use this page to remove or add courses and to grant permission to the student to register for the selected courses. Advisors should inform students that they will be expected to copy their preferred course selections onto this page prior to the advising meeting. The courses will then appear in the upper box in a format which allows the advisor to delete and add courses. Any changes will be reflected in the graphic display below that box immediately after selection. In some cases—for example, to provide flexibility to a student who must obtain instructor permission for a limited enrollment course—an advisor may wish to approve more than four courses. The student will still be limited to four courses when registering, but will have the option to select those four at the time of registration. Advisors may wish to note any agreements regarding the excess approvals in the Advisor Comments for later reference. Once the advisor and student have agreed on the course selection, clicking on the Advisor Registration Approval link will both grant registration approval (changing the courses from red to black in the display) and also feed the courses in the approved roster directly into the Advisor Comments section (see below) for a permanent record; approved courses will also display next to the student’s name on the main Advising page in black print. (As in other places, prior to approval the courses will appear in red.)

The student’s actual course registration will appear in the adjacent column. Although it would be a violation of the honor code and highly ill-advised for a student to register for courses that have not been approved by the advisor, it is in fact possible for students to do so. In all cases where there is a discrepancy between the list of approved courses and the actual registrations, the advisor will receive notification (and the problem will appear in the registration anomalies report), and in particularly egregious cases the advisor can rescind approval by contacting the Registrar.
Advising Comments: Advisors can now record comments about a student’s advising session, the student’s plans for the immediate term, and the student’s long term plans across multiple years. These comments will remain visible unless deleted and may be used to record information for use after the student has graduated.

To enter a comment, advisors must indicate whether the comment should remain private or be shared. A private comment remains visible only to the author of the comment. A shared comment may be viewed by the student and will also be visible to all past or future advisors, the Academic Deans, and the Registrar. (To view comments which have been submitted, the advisor will have to return to the Advising Comments screen. The comments will appear in a table at the bottom of the screen.) Comments can be deleted by the comments’ author (using the Delete Comment box), but only one comment can be deleted at a time.

Portfolio: The Portfolio contains confidential background information about each advisee. This will include the student’s secondary school transcript, admission application essays, admission application, and Advising Portfolio Questionnaire. The Portfolio also provides all of the student’s major declarations, registration “holds,” advisor changes, study abroad status, and leave status.

View Academic Record: This allows the advisor to view the grades the advisee has received in previous courses.

Tests and Placement: This screen contains advisees’ standardized test results from tests taken prior to enrollment, including SAT I, SAT II, ACT, TOEFL, and AP scores. The notation “HIGHEST” on this page denotes the highest score this student has received on this particular test across multiple test dates. In the past, students have had to report all test scores, including some quite dated test results, but beginning with the class of 2014 students will have the option of limiting the list to their best scores. This screen also contains the chemistry and math placement recommendations, including recommendations for the intensive sections. Placement information is particularly important during pre-major advising and may require considerable tact on the part of the advisor. If an advisor is uncertain how to interpret a student’s readiness for a particular course, department chairs can provide additional guidance. Additional information about placement in chemistry, economics, French, math, and music courses, as well as advice about preparing for a career in medicine or the health professions, may also be found online at the orientation advisors’ web site.

Student Schedule: This page provides a graphic view of an advisee’s class schedule, organized by term, and displays the schedule in a grid with each course listed by title, instructor, date and time. The drop down menu at the bottom of the page allows the advisor to view the student’s schedule from past terms.

Keyword Matrix: This screen displays graphically the extent to which students have availed themselves of courses identified by the keywords. The matrix includes all courses already completed (unless the course was taken prior to 2007), courses currently underway, and courses on the proposed list of preferred courses. It is important to remember that individual instructors apply the keywords to their courses. As a result, not all courses have an associated keyword; some courses may have more than one keyword; and some courses may address needed skills without the associated tag.

Current Advisee Unofficial Transcripts: This screen provides access to advisees’ unofficial transcripts. Although the keyword matrix appears on the Advisor's copy, neither the student’s copy nor the official transcript ordered through the Registrar’s office will contain the matrix.

Courses Offered: This links to the full Catalog of courses.

Registration Anomaly Report: The report explains any disparities between the approved course selections and the student’s actual registration for courses.

B. My Former Advisees
**Former Advisee Unofficial Transcripts**: This screen provides access to the unofficial transcripts of all the professor’s advisees since the advisor arrived at the College.

**Former Advisee Comments**: This screen allows the advisor to view comments about all former advisees after they have moved on to other advisors or graduated; to share information with a subsequent advisor; and to view all subsequent advisors’ comments that have not been designated as “private.”

**C. My Information**: Faculty members will quickly become adept at using My Information because it provides access to their class lists, class schedules, grading, courses offered and permission requests. Information here can be downloaded to a PDF, an excel file, or printed.

**Permission Requests**: During Advising Week and pre-registration, instructors who have indicated “instructor permission required” will receive a daily email notifying them of new requests. This screen will display all pending requests, along with the section number, the students’ names, photographs, class years, email addresses, and any special remarks the students have added. Professors will need to use this screen to indicate whether the request has been approved or denied.

**V. Advising Pre-Professional Students**

Many students come to Amherst with specific pre-professional aspirations, which may or may not change over the course of their time here. The Career Center has staff members dedicated to pre-professional advising: in particular, one staff member serves as the health professions advisor, while another serves as pre-law advisor. The health professions advisor works closely with a committee of faculty members from the sciences. Staff members of the Career Center can also provide advice to students interested in business, journalism, non-profit work and a variety of other occupations, though no specific staff member specializes in those professions.

Pre-medical and pre-law students often rely first on their faculty advisors for information on what courses to take to prepare for entrance into medical or law school. While they should always be referred to the designated pre-med and pre-law advisors for more specific questions, here is a thumbnail sketch of useful information for the College Advisor to provide first-year or sophomore students:

**A. Pre-medical studies**

Students can major in any field offered by the College and still go on to medical (or dental, or veterinary) school. While academic requirements vary somewhat, most American medical schools now require eight core laboratory science courses: two semesters of biology, four semesters of chemistry (two of freshman chemistry and two of organic chemistry), and two semesters of physics. Pre-medical students take the same sequence of biology and chemistry courses as do prospective biology and chemistry majors, but the physics department offers two separate tracks, with most pre-medical students who don’t plan to major in physics taking Physics 16 and 17 instead of Physics 23 and 24. Many medical schools also require one semester of calculus and either one or two semesters of English. An increasing number of medical schools now also require one semester of biochemistry, either with or without a lab.

Relatively few students enter medical school immediately upon graduation from college; the average age for entrants to medical school is now approximately 25. As a result, it is possible—and often desirable—for students to spread their pre-med requirements through all four years of their undergraduate education, and not to apply for entrance to medical school until after they have graduated. This approach also enables them to spend the year after graduation—or more, if they wish—
gaining experience in a medically-related field; such experience is looked on with great favor by medical school admission committees. Certainly any student who seems somewhat weaker in mathematical or scientific areas than our average entering student—a student, say, with a math SAT or science subject test score below 700—should be encouraged to spread the pre-med requirements over four years instead of rushing to complete them by the end of the junior year. Any pre-medical student whom the math department places into the Math 105 – Math 106 sequence, which covers the standard first-semester calculus curriculum over two semesters instead of one, should also be encouraged to take Biology/Chemistry 131 in their first semester in place of Chemistry 151, which they will take in the spring instead.

The mathematics and chemistry departments also offer intensive sections of their introductory courses for students who need some extra preparation to enable them to succeed in those courses. (The economics department does as well.) Students are placed in those sections by the relevant department, which should also notify the advisor of this placement. Other support services for students who need extra help in quantitative disciplines are described in the section on academic support below.

B. Pre-law studies

Students can major in any discipline and still go on to law school. Many students come to college with the preconception that majoring in political science, LJD, or another social science will help them in the law school admission process, but this preconception is false. Students from every discipline we offer have gained admission to first-rate law schools, and some of our most successful applicants have majored in fields such as physics, mathematics, religion, foreign languages, or the arts; doing so does, in fact, enable them to stand out from the hordes of applicants who major in the social sciences. All students should be encouraged to follow their academic passions and to do as well as possible in their courses, without worrying about how their particular major will look to law school admission committees.

Students whose grades in their first couple of semesters at Amherst are somewhat weak should be encouraged to think about applying to law school after they have graduated, instead of during their senior year. This approach will enable them to have four full years of grades on their transcripts at the time they apply to law school. Since most students’ grades improve over the course of their four years in college, they will enhance their chances for admission this way.

VI. Study Abroad

In recent years, up to 45 percent of our students have decided to study abroad during their junior year, either for a semester or for a full year. While many continue to go to traditional destinations in Europe, an increasing number have chosen to study at universities in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America. A staff member of the Career Center serves as the College’s Director of International Experience, and advises students on study abroad options, as well as ways of obtaining internships or jobs overseas. She is supported by a faculty committee, which is charged with evaluating study abroad programs in order to determine which ones will be approved for Amherst College credit. Students contemplating study abroad should be encouraged to consult with her as early as their freshman year, but certainly no later than the fall of the sophomore year, so that they can begin planning the best way to complete their major requirements while incorporating study abroad into their programs. All students planning to study abroad must have declared a major before their study abroad plans can be approved, so that they are assigned a major advisor who can go over their program before they leave campus for overseas. Each department sets its own policy in regard to the award of credit towards the major for courses taken abroad. While it may be somewhat more difficult for students in highly-
structured majors such as mathematics or several of the sciences to study abroad for a full year, with
the proper advance planning, it is certainly possible for students majoring in any of those areas to spend
at least one semester abroad. Any Amherst student receiving financial aid from the College is eligible to
use that financial aid to pay for an approved study abroad program. Students who plan to spend four full
years at Amherst but nonetheless wish to gain some experience studying or living overseas should be
encouraged to consult the Director of International Experience about summer opportunities.

VII. Academic Support
Students who are having difficulty in a particular course or a particular discipline have access to
a variety of services, the most prominent of which are described below.

A. The Writing Center
Located in 101 Charles Pratt, the Writing Center is directed by two senior faculty members (one
from the English and WAGS Departments and the other from Philosophy) and staffed by a group of
professional writing instructors. It offers free tutoring in writing to students in any course or from any
discipline. It also offers workshops on various aspects of writing for students, as well as workshops for
faculty on ways of improving their instruction of writing. Students may make individual appointments
with one of the Writing Fellows online. The Writing Center makes clear to students that the Writing
Fellows are not there to edit the students’ work; instead, they serve as close and careful readers of
drafts of the work with the express purpose of teaching students how to edit and improve it themselves.

B. The Moss Quantitative Center
The Moss Quantitative Center (or ‘Q-Center,’ as it is commonly called) is located in 202 Merrill.
Its staff consists of a full-time director, who has a Ph.D. in chemistry, as well as a full-time Quantitative
Fellow, a half-time professional mathematics tutor, and several undergraduate tutors/teaching
assistants. It offers drop-in tutoring, individual appointments, and course-specific study sessions. The
disciplines it covers include mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics, economics, and psychology. Most
students consult the Q-Center for help with introductory quantitative courses, but the professional staff
is also available to tutor students in some of the more advanced-level courses, including especially in
chemistry and mathematics.

C. Tutoring in other disciplines
The Dean of Students Office (105 Converse) runs a tutoring program for students who are
having difficulty in courses not covered by the Writing and Quantitative Centers—courses such as
foreign languages or formal logic, for instance. The tutors are upper class students majoring in a
particular discipline who have been recommended for the position by their major departments.
Students who request tutoring in a particular course need the approval of the instructor of that course,
who is expected to confirm that the student is earning less than a ‘B’ or otherwise having some difficulty
in the course at the time. Most often, the tutoring takes place once a week, and can last for the duration
of the semester, if necessary. The salary of the tutor is paid by the Dean of Students Office, and there is
no charge to the student who is tutored.

VIII. Academic Standing
Despite all the support services available to them and the best efforts of their instructors,
advisors, and deans, some students do badly in one or more of their courses in any given semester and
jeopardize their academic standing as a result. Decisions about students’ academic standing are made
by the Committee on Academic Standing, chaired by the Dean of Students and consisting of the class deans, three faculty members, and several other administrators. The committee can place students on academic warning, academic probation, or academic dismissal. In general, students who fail more than one course in a given semester, or who fail one course and have an average below ‘C’ in their remaining three courses, or have an overall semester average below ‘C-’, are dismissed from the College for a full year and are only readmitted after they have successfully completed a full semester of courses at another college or university. (They can receive credit towards their Amherst degree for the courses they take during this semester, as long as the courses have been approved in advance by the registrar.) Students on academic probation who fail to meet the conditions of their probation—generally, passing all of their courses with no grades below ‘C-’—may also be academically dismissed. The class dean informs the student’s faculty advisor when the student receives an academic warning or when the student’s academic standing changes. In those instances, the student is encouraged to consult with the advisor regularly during the following semester for advice and support. The student is also required to meet regularly with his or her class dean.

IX. Other Resources

There are many other sources of support for students on campus besides the faculty advisor, and all advisors are encouraged to refer students to these sources—or to consult the sources themselves for advice—whenever it seems appropriate. When in doubt, the advisor should check first with the student’s class dean, who will be familiar with the full range of resources and can be helpful in nearly every situation an advisor may encounter. The primary services that students may be referred to include:

A. Class Deans

The Dean of New Students, who is always a tenured faculty member who occupies the position for a term of five years or more, is the class dean for each entering class. At the end of the first year at the College, each class is assigned to a different dean, who remains with the class until graduation. The class deans enforce the academic rules of the College, are able to make exceptions to certain of those rules, approve all extensions for submission of work past the end of the semester, and do short-term counseling, problem-solving, and referral for students in academic or personal difficulty. They are located in the Dean of Students Office, 105 Converse.

B. The Residential Life Department

The Residential Life Department, also located in 105 Converse, consists of a director, four area coordinators, and 58 resident counselors. The resident counselors (RC’s) are trained upper class students who live in the residence halls with the students, offer advice and support, and respond to any emergencies. In general, there is one RC per floor in the first-year dorms, and one or two RC’s per dorm in the upper class dorms. Students should be referred to a staff member of this department to solve any problems involving their living situation.

C. The Counseling Center

Located in Scott House, across the street from the gymnasium, the Counseling Center has a staff of clinical psychologists and consulting psychiatrists. The psychologists do short term psychotherapy; among them are therapists with specialties in areas such as eating disorders, time management, and drug and alcohol abuse. The psychiatrists are available for medication consults on the full range of psychiatric disorders. Students who wish to see one of the consulting psychiatrists must first be evaluated by one of the psychologists. The Counseling Center staff maintains a policy of strict confidentiality, and will not tell anyone whether a student has used their services without the permission of the student, except in instances when they believe the student is a threat to him- or
herself or others. Although the psychotherapy the Counseling Center offers is meant to be short-term, there is no formal limit to the number of sessions a student may have, and there is also no charge to the student for the use of the services. The Center may also refer students to outside providers if the student wishes or if the Center believes that the student would be better served by a more intensive kind of therapy than the Center typically offers.

D. The Health Service

The Health Service is housed in the Keefe Health Center, located on College Street next to Moore Dormitory; its staff consists of physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. The Health Service is open weekdays during normal business hours; during other times, students have access to the UMass Health Service, which is located on the UMass campus, less than two miles away. Students who need to be seen at the UMass Health Service are transported there and back by the Campus Police. Among the staff members at the Health Service is a sexual harassment/sexual assault specialist who is a certified rape crisis counselor and can be consulted on any issue involving sexual misconduct.

E. The Career Center

Besides offering pre-professional and study abroad advising, the Career Center prepares students for the job search in a number of different ways. It offers workshops on resume-writing and networking, and sponsors the on-campus recruiting program, which brings representatives of for-profit and non-profit organizations to campus to interview students for potential jobs. It also maintains access to a database of alumni whom students can consult for advice about particular careers or career issues in general. Students are eligible to begin using the Career Center as early as their freshman year. It is located in College Hall, on the first floor.

X. Hortatory Conclusion

As a small college, Amherst prides itself on the close pedagogical relationships that develop between students and faculty; that is a major reason that only faculty members serve as academic advisors. Guiding students through the curriculum, enabling them to refine and achieve their academic goals, observing them as they grow intellectually throughout their four years (and beyond), and helping in many instances to shape that growth in tangible ways are among the rewards of the task for the successful advisor. New faculty advisors should feel free to consult with more experienced colleagues from their own departments, as well as with any of the other resources mentioned above, when any questions arise. Doing so can help to transform what could otherwise be a rote task into a rewarding and productive experience for advisee and advisor alike.