

To: College of Arts and Sciences chairs and program directors

From: Kathryn Stuart

Dear Friends,

Based on review of feedback from last year and the recommendation of the Advising Committee, we will hold a majors fair on October 28, 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the Science Center (Bent Corridor and Commons). In response to your suggestions last fall, we propose that each department/program send just one representative—a faculty member experienced in advising majors or an upper-division student who serves on a majors committee (or as an academic ambassador). We will arrange tables as we have done for new student orientation open houses, but using only the commons area and corridor because there would be many fewer people.

Here is more background. The decision to hold a majors fair last year was based on two main factors: first, the increasing number of students who arrive with a large number of AP and other credits earned in high school, causing students to think about declaring a major sooner; and second, the results of a survey indicate that second-semester students need help in choosing a major.

Last fall, we organized departments in six classrooms in King, Peters lobby, Rice faculty lounge, and three locations in the Science Center. We clustered departments/programs in a way that we hoped would foster interdisciplinary conversations and help students think about their overall learning goals. While the student turnout was good, faculty members who attended the event and responded to our request for feedback indicated that the concept of interdisciplinary clusters was not successful.

This year, we will do our best to organize departments and programs logically and provide good signage. Also, we will solicit feedback from students this year, both about the effectiveness of the fair and student perspective on their advising needs. If students are not positive about the fall majors fair, we will certainly not continue it after this year. We will again schedule and publicize departmental major meetings in April 2010 for departments and programs who wish to hold them.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to send a representative from your department to the majors fair and thank you also for letting us know who will attend. We would be pleased to hear back from you as soon as possible.