ACADEMIC ADVISING AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

http://www.clemson.edu/academics/advising

PURPOSE AND MISSION

The purpose and mission of academic advising are noted under the Advising Policy section in the Undergraduate Announcements:

Academic advising is an on-going educational process that connects the student to the University. Academic advising supports the University’s mission of preparing the student for learning beyond the confines of the academic. Academic advisors represent and interpret University policies and procedures to the student and help the student navigate the academic and organizational paths of the institution.

To ensure that student receive both personal and professional assistance in navigating through curricular and University requirements toward degree completion and graduation, each student is assigned to an academic advisor (either professional or faculty advisor). Advisors are available to assist students with issues related to degree planning, course selection, withdrawals, degree requirements, academic policies, academic difficulty, campus resources, internships/practicum opportunities, and career/graduate school planning. Students are responsible for adhering to academic policies, preparing for advising meetings and taking ownership for the educational experience. Student receive academic advising materials from their advisors during pre-registration advising meetings. Students uncertain of the assigned advisor are encouraged to seek advising from the departmental office/advising center for their major.

ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide assistance to students wishing to declare/change their major.
- Assist students in exploring career and educational opportunities.
- Become familiar with university academic policies and answer any questions students may have regarding these policies, regulations, programs, and procedures. Stay alert to any changes to better inform students.
- Inform students of available administrative, academic, and personal services and resources.
- Maintain regular office hours in order to meet with students.
- Approve all designated educational transactions (e.g., schedule, change of major, waivers, graduation requirements)
- Clear students for registration once they have met and discussed scheduling for the following semester.
- Monitor progress toward educational and career goals and help select courses at each registration period based on curriculum and University requirements.
- Refer students when academic or personal problems require intervention by other professionals. For non-emergency reports of student issues, visit the CARE network: http://www.clemson.edu/studentaffairs/dean/care-network.html
- Make available times to meet with your advisees before registration.
- Maintain an advising file on each advisee.

Modified from NACADA Advising Guidelines
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Seek assistance from his/her advisor if the student wishes to change/declare his/her major.
- Seek guidance from his/her advisor for curriculum and career planning.
- Make an appointment with the assigned advisor prior to registration.
- Come to the advising session well-prepared and bring appropriate resources or materials.
- Engage in an active dialogue with the advisor.
- Follow through on next steps identified during each advising session.
- Be aware of his/her academic standing at all times.
- Accept final responsibility for all decisions.
- Knowledge of important dates and deadlines on the academic calendar so such as drop/add days.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Advising procedures and policies vary college-by-college and department-by-department. This page is an attempt to provide general information for faculty and professional advisors in order to improve the registration process. For more specific information, check the departmental web pages or the Registration portal at http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/portal/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When should I meet with my advisees?</td>
<td>Advisors are expected to meet with their advisees prior to the opening of registration.</td>
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<td>2. How many advisees will I have and how will I know who they are?</td>
<td>Go to iROAR &gt; Faculty Services &gt; Student Information Menu &gt; Advisee Listing.</td>
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<td>3. How can I get information about a student’s progress?</td>
<td>Individual student degree audits are available online in iROAR. Advisors should log into iROAR (iroar.clemson.edu), and click on the following: “Faculty Services” &gt; “Student Information Menu” &gt; “Degree Works”. Please see this link for help in accessing the degree audits. <a href="http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/html/trainingAdvisor.htm">http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/html/trainingAdvisor.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Why does a student need to be cleared by his/her designated advisor in order to register?</td>
<td>Clearing a student to register ensures you have given your students the opportunity to be advised. Self-advised students make mistakes. Many errors that can impede graduation are detected or prevented during registration advising. Certain classes that a student may want to take may not be available. Major and minor requirements need to be approved. Changes in the curriculum occur. This is an opportunity to help your advisee really consider his or her career path or academic progress. Advisors should not clear their advisees to register without meeting with him/her each semester.</td>
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<td>5. Can I leave the degree audits from Degree Works outside my office and just let students pick them up?</td>
<td>This is illegal, therefore face-to-face meetings with students are necessary. (See Question #4) Advising is teaching. Having an opportunity for your students to ask questions creates students who can interpret the degree audit for themselves, read and understand the catalog, and make better academic advising decisions for themselves as they move forward in their academic career.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What is the credit limit at registration?</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>What if the student wants to register for more credits than the limit?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>How do I raise a student’s credit limit?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What if a student wishes to take a course somewhere other than Clemson?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>How do I know if a course completed at another institution is equivalent to a Clemson course?</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>What if a course or institution is not on the Transfer Course Equivalency List (TCEL)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>What if a student wishes to change his/her major?</td>
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should be turned into Enrolled Student Services, 104 Sikes Hall. The form must be approved and signed by both the current and new academic departments. Students wishing to change academic programs should talk with an advisor in both departments. *Students should gain the acceptance of the new academic program prior to disengaging from the current one.* Many academic departments have established one or more conditions, such as a minimum GPA, an application process, etc. that must be satisfied before approving a student’s request to change academic program. Students are usually assigned the curriculum year in effect at the time of the academic program change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13. What if a student wants to declare a minor?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Undergraduate Announcements lists all available minors. A “what if” degree audit in iROAR may be run to determine courses needed and how courses already completed may count towards a minor.</td>
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To run a “what if” degree audit:

- a. Log into iROAR (iroar.clemson.edu)
- b. Click on “Student Information Services” > “Degree Works”
- c. Choose the student using their CU ID number or do a search
- d. Once the student is identified, click on the “What If” link on the far left column. Input data for curriculum year, major, concentration (if applicable), and minor. The curriculum year for major and minor has to match.

Prerequisites: Students may not be aware that some courses listed for their minor can have prerequisites that are not shown in the minor list itself. Once an advisee selects a minor, encourage the student to cross-reference course options or requirements in the minor with the prerequisites listed in the courses of instruction found in the Undergraduate Announcements.

**THIS WORKFLOW FOR THIS PROCESS IS SLATED TO CHANGE IN SEPTEMBER 2017. REGISTRAR’S OFFICE STAFF WILL COMMUNICATE THE CHANGES TO THE ADVISING COMMUNITY**

Declaring the minor: Once a student has identified the minor they wish to pursue, students should complete a **Change of Academic Program form** to include the minor. The form can be accessed at [https://www.registrar.clemson.edu/pdf/changeOfProgram.pdf](https://www.registrar.clemson.edu/pdf/changeOfProgram.pdf) The student’s assigned advisor, or designee, needs to sign the form. Instructions are on the back of the form. Minor code abbreviations for the Change of Academic Program form can be found at [http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/pdf/minors2014.pdf](http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/pdf/minors2014.pdf)
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<td>14. Can registration affect financial aid?</td>
<td>Yes, it can. However, there are too many types of financial aid to become an expert on all of them. The best strategy is to refer a student directly to the Financial Aid office in G-01 Sikes Hall. The staff can check on the student’s aid package and advise them accordingly. Students and advisors can access financial aid information online at <a href="http://www.clemson.edu/financial-aid/">http://www.clemson.edu/financial-aid/</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. What do I tell a student who says that there are no available sections of a course he/she wants?</td>
<td>The student may add him/herself to the waitlist for the course if there is a waitlist and space is available. If a seat becomes available in the course, the student will receive an e-mail indicating that s/he has 24 hours to add the class. Some departments choose not to use waitlists. In this case, the student may contact the departmental registration coordinator for advice. A list of registration coordinators can be found on IV-11.</td>
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<td>16. What other things should I discuss with my advisees?</td>
<td>Advising sessions are a good time to not only assist students with registration but also to question students about their academic progress, career options, and activities outside the classroom. Many times problems are revealed and can be resolved before they become impossible to fix. Students can be informed about co-op or internships, directed to the Michelin Career Center if unsure of a major, or reminded of critical policies such as filling out the form for graduation.</td>
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BEST PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING

http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/

BEST PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS
The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is the leading organization for academic advisors, both faculty and professional advisors. NACADA goes beyond the traditional course registration and scheduling advising approaches and offers a broader vision for academic advising. NACADA has developed a set of goals that serve as best practices for academic advisors. They include:

1. Assist students in self-understanding and self-acceptance (values clarification, understanding abilities, aptitudes, interests, and limitations).
2. Assist students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education.
3. Assist students in developing an educational plan consistent with life goals and objectives (alternative courses of action, alternate career consideration, and selection of courses).
4. Assist students in developing decision-making skills.
5. Provide accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs.
6. Refer students to other institutional or community support services.
7. Assist students in evaluating or reevaluating progress toward established goals and educational plans.
8. Provide information about students to the institution, college, academic departments, or some combination thereof.

(Gordon & Habley, 2000)

ACADEMIC ADVISOR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Keeping in mind that good academic advising is a two-part responsibility between the academic advisor and the student, NACADA provides general responsibilities for both academic advisors and students to achieve the best advising results. The responsibilities for advisors include:

- Help students define and develop realistic educational career plans.
- Assist students in planning a program consistent with their abilities and interests.
- Monitor progress toward educational/career goals.
- Discuss and reinforce linkages and relationships between instructional program and occupation/career.
- Interpret and provide rationale for instructional policies, procedures, and requirements.
• Approve all designated educational transactions (e.g., schedule, drops and adds, withdrawals, change of major, waivers, course substitutions, and graduation requirements).

• Maintain an advising file on each advisee.

• Refer students when academic, attitudinal, attendance, or other personal problems require intervention by other professionals.

• Inform students of the nature of the advisor/advisee relationship.

• Request re-assignment of advisee to another advisor, if necessary.

• Assist advisees in identifying career opportunities.

• Develop a caring relationship with advisees.

• Inform students of special services available to them for remediation, academic assistance, and other needs.

(Gordon & Habley, 2000)

**ADVISEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

The responsibilities for students to achieve the best advising results include:

• Clarify their personal values, abilities, interests, and goals.

• Contact and make appointment with the advisor when required or when in need of assistance. If the student finds it impossible to keep the appointment, the student will notify the advisor.

• Become knowledgeable and adhere to institutional policies, procedures, and requirements.

• Prepare for advising sessions and bring appropriate resources or materials.

• Follow through on actions identified during each advising session.

• Evaluate the advising system, when requested, in order to strengthen the advising process.

• Request re-assignment of a different advisor if necessary.

• Accept final responsibility for all decisions.

(Gordon & Habley, 2000)
TAKING A PROACTIVE AND POSITIVE APPROACH TO ACADEMIC ADVISING

There are several ways for an academic advisor to positively approach their responsibilities. While some of these approaches may seem like common sense, doing these things can enhance the advising relationship and the advising process.

1. Get to know your advisees’ names and use them.
2. Post your office hours and keep advising appointments.
3. Prior to an advising appointment, review your notes from previous advising appointment or look up the student’s information electronically.
4. During advising meetings, show students you are listening carefully by taking notes, asking clarifying questions and maintaining eye contact.
5. Anticipate student needs and be prepared to address them. Remember that students often don’t know what they don’t know.
6. Refer students to the appropriate campus resources and follow up on the recommendations and referrals.
7. Prior to the student leaving your office, ask them “Is there anything else that I could do to assist you? Have I answered all of your questions?”

(Noel/Levitz, 1997)
CONDUCTING THE ACADEMIC ADVISING SESSION

There is no one right way to conduct an academic advising session; it often depends upon the reason for the meeting (i.e. registration advising, class concerns, deciding upon a major). The scenario below offers general guidelines and suggestions for conducting a productive advising session.

1. **Opening.** Greet students by name, be relaxed and warm. Open with a question e.g., “How are things going?” or “How can I help?”

2. **Ask open-ended questions.** Conversational flow will be cut off if questions are asked so that a “yes” or “no” reply is required. A good question might be, “What have you thought about taking next semester?” or “What are some things that have made you think about a business as a career?”

3. **Avoid out-talking the student.** Good advising is effective listening. Listening is more than the absence of talking. Identify the fine shades of feelings behind the words.

4. **Accept the student’s attitudes and feelings.** A student may fear that the advisor won’t approve of what he/she says. Advisors must convey their acceptance of these feelings and attitudes in a non-judgmental way. Cardinal principle: If the student thinks it is a problem, the advisor does too.

5. **Avoid cross-examinations.** Do not fire questions at the student or put the student on the defensive.

6. **Silence in the session is OK.** Most people are embarrassed if no conversation is taking place. The student may be groping for words or ideas so let them have some time to think about what they want to say.

7. **Reflect the student’s feelings.** Try to understand what the student is saying. For example, it is better to say “You feel that professor is unfair to you.” Rather than “Sometimes everyone has trouble getting along with professors.”

8. **Admit what you don’t know.** If a student asks a question regarding facts and you do not have the facts, admit it. Either acquire the information during the advising session or call/e-mail the student back with the information.

9. **Communicate time limit to the student.** It is better if the student realizes from the beginning that you have a fixed length of time for the session.

10. **End the session on a professional note.** Once limits have been set, it is best to end the interview at the agreed time. A comfortable phrase might be, “Do you think we have done all we can for today?” or “Let’s make another appointment so that we can go into this further.”

(Crockett, 2001)
HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN ADVISING SESSION

Depending on the purpose of your advising meeting, listed below are some questions that might be helpful in building rapport and getting to know your advisee. An advisor likely would not ask all of these questions; rather, he or she would pick and choose the most appropriate or helpful questions. Behind every question is a basic reason for asking it. By making your reason clear in the framing of a question, you are much more apt to get helpful or insightful responses from the student.

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<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Goal of Question</th>
<th>Positioning of Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factual</td>
<td>To get information.</td>
<td>Question beginning with “what, where, when, why, who and how.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>To get additional information or to broaden discussion.</td>
<td>“How would that help?” “How would you go about doing that?” “What other things should be considered?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justifying</td>
<td>To get proof—to challenge old ideas and to get new ones.</td>
<td>“How do you know?” “What makes you say that?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>To introduce a thought of your own.</td>
<td>“Would this be a possible solution?” “What do you think of this plan?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypothetical</td>
<td>To use assumptions of suppositions.</td>
<td>“What would happen if we did it this way?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>To get a decision or agreement.</td>
<td>“Which of these plans do you think is best?” “Is one or two o’clock best for you?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinative</td>
<td>To develop common agreement. To take action.</td>
<td>“Do we agree that this is our next step?”</td>
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(Crockett, 2001)

Identifying Areas of Interest and Preparation

1. What are the three courses (high school or college) you have most enjoyed?
2. In which academic areas do you feel you are most thoroughly prepared?
3. In which courses are you likely to earn your highest grades because of what you already know or have experienced?
4. Which of your academic skills are your strongest?
5. What do you look forward to in college?
6. What do you consider the two most interesting books you have ever read?
7. What academic/school project has given you the greatest pride?
8. What aspect of the world around you would you most like to better understand?
### Identifying Student Strengths and Talents

1. What do you feel your academic and personal strengths are?
2. What do you do well enough that you could teach someone else?
3. What kind of things make you feel most fulfilled?
4. When you are not in school or working, how do you like to spend your time?
5. What part of your educational plan do you feel best about?
6. What part of your educational plan do you feel most concerned about?
7. Upon graduation from college, what will make you feel most satisfied?
8. Ten years after college, what will make you feel fulfilled and successful?

### Identifying Time Commitments

1. If you plan to work this term, how many hours per week do you plan to work?
2. In what school activities do you wish to be involved? How many hours per week?
3. In what non-school activities do you wish to be involved? How many hours per week?
4. What family and/or child care commitments will you have this term?
5. Will you have any other scheduled commitments of your time this term?

### Identifying Career Interests and Goals for Life After College

1. What academic areas are you currently considering? What do you like about these areas?
2. What occupations are you considering? What about these attract you?
3. How do your strengths/skills fit the tasks necessary to succeed in these areas?
4. Will these occupations provide the rewards and satisfactions you want for your life? Why?
5. What are the differences among the majors/occupations you are considering? The similarities?
6. Who has influenced your ideas about these alternatives?
7. In what kind of work environment do you picture yourself five years after you have finished school?
| **Follow-Up Visit Questions for New Students** | **1.** How are your parents doing without you?  
2. What has been your most surprising experience here so far?  
3. What do you like best and least about being here?  
4. Are you doing as well academically as you thought you would in your first semester?  
5. How is the school different from what you thought it would be?  
6. What are you spending more time on than you thought you would?  
7. What are some of the feelings you’ve experienced about being in college?  
8. If you were starting a journal about new things you are learning about yourself, what are some things you would list?  
9. What advice would you give a brand-new student, based on what you’ve learned so far?  |

(Noel/Levitz, 1997)
WHEN AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR SHOULD BE CONCERNED

The following behaviors and attitudes may indicate that a student could benefit from additional assistance. If you are not professionally qualified to address these issues, please refer the student to the CARE network at http://www.clemson.edu/studentaffairs/dean/care-network.html

Unusual Behavior
- Withdrawal from usual social interaction.
- Marked seclusion and unwillingness to communicate.
- Persistent antisocial behavior such as lying, stealing, or other deviant acts.
- Lack of social skills or deteriorating personal hygiene.
- Inability to sleep or excessive sleeping.
- Loss of appetite or excessive appetite (starving or binging behavior).
- Unexplained crying or outburst of anger.
- Acutely increased activity (i.e., ceaseless talking or extreme restlessness).
- Repeated absence from classes.
- Unusual irritability.
- Thought disorder (i.e., the student’s conversation does not make sense).
- Suspiciousness, irrational feeling of persecution.

Traumatic Changes in Personal Relationships
- Death of a family member or a close friend.
- Difficulties in marriage or family relationships.
- Dating and courtship difficulties.
- Sexual abuse (i.e., rape, incest, harassment).
- Terminal/chronic illness of a family member.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Indications of excessive drinking or drug abuse (i.e., binges, neglects eating or physical appearance, impaired thinking).
- Severe drug reaction (i.e., bizarre behavior, unexplained “blackouts” of memory).
- Being a child of an alcoholic or drug dependent parent.

Academic Problems
- Dramatic drop in grade point average.
- Poor study habits.
- Incapacitating test anxiety.
- Sudden changes in academic performance.
- Lack of class attendance.

Career Choice Problems
- Dissatisfaction with academic major.
- Unrealistic career aspirations.
- Confusion with regard to interests, abilities, or values.
- Chronic indecisiveness or choice conflict.
- Uncertainty of career alternatives.

(Crockett, 2001)
TOP TEN TIPS FOR
WORKING WITH FRESHMAN STUDENTS

“Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.” Richard Light, 2001

“Academic advising should be woven into the fabric of the freshman year in ways that promote student development and that provide clear, consistent, and accurate information that is easily accessible to students. It should reflect the best professional knowledge of the day. Quite simply, good advising should not be left to chance.” Vincent Tinto, 1999

Benefits of Good Advising (NACADA, 2000)
- Appropriate course selection and referrals
- Increased academic performance (GPA)
- Increased satisfaction with faculty and in general
- Reduced courses failed and drop-add transactions
- Increased persistence rates
- Increased graduation rates
- Reduced time to graduate
- Increased graduate/pre-professional school admission rates

TOP TEN TIPS

10: Get to know your students.
Ask them a few quick “get to know you” questions (and keep notes on their responses):
- Where are you from?
- What brought you to Clemson?
- What were your favorite classes in high school? Why?
- What is something you can do for hours or have a passion for?

9: Treat students like they matter.
- Be on time for advising appointments.
- Call students by name.
- Take notes during appointment and keep them for later reference.
- Provide students with accurate information.

8: Avoid distractions.
- Be fully present and maintain eye contact while talking with student.
- Do not answer the telephone or e-mail during advising visit.
- Do not check your watch every few minutes.
7: Listen more than you talk.
   - Ask open-ended questions.
   - Allow students to share their stories with you, so that you can personalize the advising process for them.

6: Offer both challenge and support to the student.
   - Help students reach beyond their comfort zone while providing them with support or scaffolding. (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004)

5: Encourage the student to take responsibility for their educational experience.
   - Explain the notion of shared responsibility.
   - Empower students to make informed decisions that move them closer to their academic and personal goals. (Frost, 1991)

4: Involvement matters.
   - Encourage students to get involved in one academic and one social club/organization. (Astin, 1993)

3: Check on your advisees a couple of times during the semester.
   - Connect with your advisees throughout the semester, not just at registration or crunch time.
   - Depending on the need of the student and availability of time, choose between e-mail or face-to-face contact.

2: Be authentic and genuine with students.
   - Students value and appreciate when an advisor is genuine and authentic with them. When advisors self-disclose, students feel like they are being treated as an individual, not as a number. (Schreiner, Noel & Anderson, 2005)

1: Ask yourself “what would I do if I really cared about this student?” Let your answer be your guide. (Chip Anderson, 2005)
The Power of Good Advice for Students

Richard J. Light, Harvard University

... good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.

Some years ago I attended a gathering of faculty and senior administrators from more than 50 colleges and universities. Each was invited to present a view from his or her campus about the responsibilities of faculty, deans, and advisers for shaping students' overall experience at college.

The first person to speak was a senior dean from a distinguished university. He announced proudly that he and his colleagues admit good students and then make a special effort to “get out of their way.” Students learn mostly from one another, he argued. “We shouldn't muck up that process.”

I was dismayed. I was hearing a senior official from a major university describe an astonishing strategy: Find good students and then neglect them. It got me to think hard about what decisions administrators and faculty members, as well as new students, can make to facilitate the best possible undergraduate experience.

Since that meeting I have participated in 10 years of systematic research to explore that question. My colleagues and I have interviewed 1,600 Harvard undergraduate students; I myself have interviewed 400 students. I have also visited almost 100 institutions of higher education. Some are highly selective; others are open admissions; most are in between. They include private and public institutions, large and small, in all areas of the country.

And, of all the challenges that both faculty and students choose to mention, providing or obtaining good academic advising ranks number one. In fact, good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.

Although agreement is widespread that academic advising is important, different campuses have widely different resources for advising. A small, private liberal-arts college with 2,000 students almost always will design a different advising system than a large, public state university with 20,000, simply because of different financial constraints.

Yet despite those differences, several recommendations about good advising have emerged from my own experience and student interviews – findings that may be helpful to advisers on many campuses. Those recommendations don't cost a lot, and are relatively easy for advisers to share with students and for students to carry out.

For example, one remarkably simple suggestion builds on the obvious idea that part of a great college education depends upon human relationships. Each year I meet, one-on-one, with several new students to discuss each student's goals at college, his or her background, and a “study plan” – what courses the student will take in this first year, and how those may lead to future courses. Then we come to the part of our conversation that I look forward to most.

I ask, “So, now that we have had this conversation, what do you see as your job for this term?” Just about all students answer that their job is to work hard and to do well in college. I ask what else they might set as a goal. Their responses often emphasize participating in campus activities. Again, I press them to say more about their goal for the semester.

By now, most students look puzzled; they wonder what I am getting at. And then I share with them the single most important bit of advice I can possibly give to new advisees: “Your job is to get to know one faculty member reasonably well this semester, and also to have that faculty member get to know you reasonably well.”
I point out that achieving that goal may require some effort and planning. Yet think of the benefits, I remind each new student. Even if you only succeed half the time that means in your eight semesters in college you will get to know four professors. And they will get to know you. I tell each student that I am convinced that they will be far better off, and will have a far richer experience, if they follow that advice.

As my first-year advisees approach graduation, many tell me that this advice was the single most helpful suggestion they got in their freshman year. According to them, as well as many other undergraduates, certain professors exert a profound impact, influencing their development as young scholars, as good citizens, as human beings.

I have identified several other equally simple and effective recommendations about good advising:

Require students to keep time logs. I ask each student to record exactly how his or her time is spent, half hour by half hour, for several weeks. Then I sit and debrief each student, one-to-one, about what their time log shows. A crucial focus in the debriefing should be on how time in between scheduled obligations is used. For example, a student with a class from 9 to 10 a.m., and then another class from noon to 1 p.m., has two hours of in-between time.

How should the student use this time? He or she may choose to chat with friends or go back to the room to study. He or she may want to do a few errands or do some physical exercise. There is no single correct thing to do. Rather, whatever he or she chooses, the key point is that it should be done with some thought.

Finally, I follow up a few weeks after the debriefing, to see if each student is actually putting into place whatever insights and suggestions emerged from going over the time logs. A single follow-up call, with encouragement to persist in efforts to make changes, has made a measurable difference in the lives of some of our students.

It is critical to stress that encouraging students to track their time systematically is just the first step. The debriefing, and encouraging students to implement whatever changes they want to make, is what leads to the payoff.

Consider what the debriefing session accomplishes. For a student, the entire process is a rare chance to reflect together with an adult about how he or she is now allocating time and energy. Meanwhile, the adviser gets a running start in helping a student. It is hard to imagine a better way for an adviser to get to know a student than by sitting with that student and discussing how he or she spends precious time, hour by hour, day by day.

The debriefing offers each adviser an opportunity to get to know his or her advisees at as personal a level as each advisee chooses and feels comfortable with. It is a great chance for an adviser to genuinely advise.

Encourage collegial work. When I arrived at Harvard as a Ph.D. student in statistics, I felt young and nervous. I learned an important lesson my first week, entirely outside of class, that taught me about the meaning of collegiality.

I checked in at the statistics department a few days before classes began to make an appointment with the man who the admissions letter said would advise me. His name was Frederick Mosteller. To my surprise he was immediately available in his office and invited me in. After some pleasantries, we set a time for later that week to discuss my course selection.

Just as I was getting up to leave, Mosteller asked me to wait a moment. He picked up a small bundle of paper, put a paper clip on it, and handed it to me. When I glanced down, I saw that its title was “Non-sampling Errors in Statistical Surveys: A Chapter for the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.”

“Richard,” asked Mosteller, “could you please mark up this draft for us to go over when we get together later this week? I'd love to get your comments on this.”

I was panicked. I hadn't even started my first course, and already my adviser was asking for comments on his work.

The next two days were difficult. I read the chapter 10 times. Finally I felt I understood it pretty well. When I returned for our advising session, I handed him back his draft, told him I had learned an enormous amount, and thanked him for giving it to me. I told him I thought it was superb, and that other readers would learn a lot too.
Mosteller smiled and told me kindly, but directly, that he had hoped for something different: “I treated you like a colleague, and you didn't do that for me.” He explained that by sharing his first, rough draft, complete with occasional typos and grammatical errors and imperfect organization, he was assuming I would help him, as his professional colleague, to improve it. So now, as a colleague, it was my job to dig in and to make specific suggestions.

Mark it up with red ink, he told me – the more, the better. He wouldn't promise to take all my suggestions, but that wasn't the important part. The important part, he said, was that going through the process together was a key aspect of becoming a professional.

I took Mosteller's admonition very seriously. I returned a few days later carrying a document covered with red ink. I even included suggestions about writing style, choice of tense, choice of subheadings, and many other details. The payoff came when we had our next session a week later. He put my marked-up version on the desk between us, and, starting on the first page, we went over every suggestion I had made. As promised, he rejected many of my changes. But he took a few. And we had good discussions about many others. Mostly, it was he who did the explaining.

Finally I understood. I realized that what had at first seemed like his request for my help was actually Mosteller's giving me his help. He was doing his job. He was advising me. Brilliantly. He modeled, with his own behavior, how working and debating with another person about a work in process is a way to pay them a great compliment.

For years I have asked my own new advisees to do exactly the same thing. I stay in touch with many of my own former students from the past 30 years. And that one act – sharing a rough draft of a document and asking my new, young advisee to mark it up so we can sit together and discuss it – is what they remember and mention more than any other. They describe it as the single best moment of advising they got. They say it shaped their attitude toward writing and their view of themselves as young professionals.

_Urge students to get involved in group activities._ For other students, the single biggest contribution an adviser can make is not about academics. It is to encourage them to join a campus organization or group that will give them social and personal support.

In interviews, some students from minority groups stress this point. So do students who are the first in their families to go to college. And so do students who are leaving behind crucial support networks they had in high school – with parents, supportive high-school teachers or advisers, religious counselors, athletic coaches.

Such students may not integrate quickly or easily into their new community. For many, their academic work as well as their social life and sense of being grounded will suffer. When this happens, it illustrates how strong the connections are between academic performance and extracurricular activities.

What is the policy implication of this finding? That advisers should encourage students from their very first days on campus to find a group to join.

For example, one student arrived at Harvard from an island in the South Pacific. She came from a low-income family, and neither of her parents nor her older brother had attended college. She had been at the very top of her high-school class but, after her first few days at Harvard, she was on the verge of packing up and going home. She felt simply overwhelmed by everything: the activities, the pace, the course selection, the big city nearby, even the other students.

Her adviser, whom she first met a few days before classes began, quickly recognized that. And so he urged the student to find an extracurricular activity that she would enjoy, ideally one that would also help her get to know other students. He suggested writing for one of the campus newspapers. The student declined. How about joining the Glee Club? The student didn't think her voice was good enough. Did she play a musical instrument? No, she didn't.

The adviser took his job very seriously, however, and refused to give up. He listened to her responses, and then made another suggestion: He told her that when the Harvard Band held tryouts the next week, she should show up and try out. The student repeated to her adviser that she did not play any instrument. “No problem,” he replied, “just tell them you want to hold the drum.”
The adviser happened to know that one of the college band drums is so big that a second person often helps the drummer hold it. In fact the student did become a member of the Harvard Band, and that single event was critical for keeping her at Harvard. While her grades were good, the dramatic success was her extraordinarily happy overall experience.

In an interview, when we pressed her to analyze that success, she repeatedly mentioned the band. Because of the band, she said, she got to know many other students well. Also, becoming part of the band, with its performances at football games and other campus activities, gave her a wonderful feeling of belonging.

She told us that all of those good things had happened because of that conversation with her first-year adviser. The adviser's one insight fundamentally changed the quality and texture of her college experience, including her academic engagement as well as her personal happiness. Without that advice, she never would have thought of joining the band, and certainly not just to hold a drum.

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What is Ethical Behavior for an Academic Adviser?

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Editor's note: This is an excerpt from the second edition of The Penn State Adviser.

There is a moral contract that each of us subscribes to when we become academic advisers. We are in a position of responsibility to students and to the institution; therefore, we are obliged to behave morally. Moreover, there is no way we can ignore this responsibility, for there is no ethically neutral place from which to advise. So how do we fulfill the contract to which we have subscribed? There is no list of moral principles that can cover all situations in a foolproof way. Instead, we offer the following discussion of areas or of ideas where the issue of right conduct is especially crucial or pertinent.

Legal responsibilities/moral responsibilities

When you started as an academic adviser, you took on certain legal obligations. You became part of a larger legal entity: you are the University, and your actions are the University's actions. On a day-to-day basis, the legal obligations that pertain to the advising process are actually few. It is hard to get yourself or the University sued if you act in good faith and with students' interests at heart. But it can happen.

The relationship between students and the University is contractual. This circumstance means that you as a spokesperson of the University must be careful about making any claims that you can't back up, such as regards fulfillment of degree requirements, guaranteeing employment in a certain field, and so on. Even spoken statements, like “I'm sure that the College of Science will allow you to graduate without this course,” or “Major in food science and you'll get a good job in the field,” whether true or not, are potentially dangerous because their utterance changes the terms of the contract between the student and the University. Only write or speak claims of which you have certain knowledge or that you have the power to bring about. If a student can prove that the adviser made a claim and that claim is not being fulfilled, the adviser/University might be asked to deliver on a promise or be sued.

Be careful, too, about defamation. “Defamation is a false statement made by one person to another about a third person that damages the reputation of the third person. For example, an adviser who mentions to another faculty member that one of his advisees cheated his way into medical school could be liable for slander (spoken defamation). If the communication were put into writing, it is called libel (written defamation).” (Donald D. Gehring, “The Legal Limitations on Statements Made by Advisers,” NACADA journal, Vol. 7, No. 2 [Fall 1987], p. 64). We advisers like to talk about our students with each other. This is good. But magnifying problems to make the narrative more interesting is not. Be careful lest exaggeration lead to defamation.

No one would question that we need to take pains to provide the best advice we can to each student we meet. No one would question that we should take students' best interests to heart. But there are a thousand ways to do these things. Some obvious ways to fulfill moral obligations are to present students with all options, not just those you want them to follow; to get your students to take responsibility in advising and curricular matters; and not to cast aspersions on a colleague, class, or student. Don't recommend or not recommend a course or colleague based on hearsay alone.

Our moral obligations as advisers should correspond in every way with our legal responsibilities. To what extent are we responsible to students? To what extent are they really responsible for their own progress toward graduation? Penn State's faculty senate policy says that students are responsible for such decisions. Indeed students can take action contrary to what we urge them to do. But legally and morally we owe them those recommendations and admonitions. We owe them our counsel and the moral responsibility of standing by our counsel. Although we are legally not required to do so, when we are wrong, we need to make things right.
Bias and harassment behavior

Bias and harassment include but are not limited to harassment along any of the following lines: gender, race, culture, age, sexual orientation, disability, and intellectual abilities. We humans are forced to see the world from a particular, limited point of view. We cannot see things or people as they really are; we are forced to make judgments about them according to our own lights. This viewpoint means that we are biased by our very nature. It is natural to group things and people together according to the ways in which they are similar. It is, furthermore, quite natural to respond to things and people based on this perceived similarity. But in the advising relationship, we must strive to fight against our natures and respond to people as individuals, suspending judgments that force themselves into our minds, judgments that are based on a perceived similarity between the person before us and a category of persons with which we are already familiar. In fact, we are arguing here against categorization, even though we realize that it is literally impossible to do away with categories.

Though it is impossible to resist categorization, you can still behave as though you were not categorizing people and judging them on their similarity to others. You certainly have the freedom of your thoughts. But you cannot let categorization govern the ways in which you listen to the student you are with. Similarly, you cannot let yourself exhibit any behavior – regardless of your inner thoughts – that could be considered harassment, because you need to relate to the student as a student and not as an object, a category, or a thing to be dominated. Your student needs to see you as a human being, not as a power broker.

In fact, all forms of harassment get back to an issue of power. We have earlier advocated that you regard your advisee as an equal who is entitled to your respect. This attitude demands that any power not being used for the greater benefit of the student should be relinquished or eschewed. Even pity at a physical or a learning disability is a form of exercising power (to feel pity is to engage in a power relationship: one is up and superior, one is down and inferior). Charity is not a virtue when it allows one to feel superior.

A good way to become aware of (and hence to cut down on) your own biases is to monitor closely how you refer to students in the third person when discussing cases with other advisers. If you find yourself saying things like “This student, a girl in engineering ...” instead of “This engineering student ...” when engineering is the only relevant factor, then you have two strikes against you already. You may be basing other judgments on extraneous factors as well.

Conflict of interest

Sometimes your role as a private individual comes into conflict with your role as an adviser. Sometimes the multiple roles that are part of the moral contract of being an adviser come into conflict with each other: for example, your legal versus your moral obligations; or your role as student advocate versus your role as institutional representative. Sometimes what the student wants very much conflicts with what you want for the student. But there is no rule for dealing with conflict of interest; you, yourself, must decide which role should gain ascendency.

If things reach a point where you are exerting undue and untoward pressure on the student or yourself, the only thing to do is to withdraw from the situation. Refer the student to a higher authority, or ask another adviser to take over the situation for you. At the very least, consult with a colleague to find out what that person might have done in a similar situation.

Three dialectical tensions

There are at least three continua along which moral behavior must be located for each new adviser. That is, new advisers must decide where they are comfortable on each of three sliding scales. Each veteran adviser needs to keep revisiting these dialectical tensions so as not to get stale.

The first is neutral vs. prescriptive. To occupy a position on the neutral side of this scale is to be reluctant to tell students what to do, preferring to let students discover the appropriate action with a little guidance. A neutral adviser will patiently provide information to help students decide on a course or a major, but will draw the line at making a recommendation. A prescriptive adviser doesn't hesitate to render an opinion, sometimes using the authority of the position of adviser to make the recommendation stick. Both positions, if taken to the extreme, can be dangerous to students.
The second is encouraging vs. discouraging, or always being optimistic vs. being cruel to be kind. On the one extreme are advisers who only look for ways to give positive messages to students. Such advisers, if they exist at all, would never criticize students for, say, bad grades, lest they become discouraged and go from bad to worse. On the other extreme are advisers who might relish every opportunity to chastise or look for negative consequences. These advisers are the sort who seem to lay every mishap that befalls a student on that student's doorstep. Neither extreme is likely to be right. Where you decide to place yourself on this continuum probably depends on what you believe would be right for the individual student before you.

Last, there is judgmental vs. nonjudgmental. This tension only exists within the adviser, not in the interaction with students. It is a basic attitude that you hold, a stance that you take, a way of looking at the world. You can either form judgments or not, or be somewhere in between. To be nonjudgmental is to accept without criticism what students say; to be judgmental is to not accept anything without subjecting it to scrutiny. Neither position is right or wrong. Both positions, if taken to the extreme, can affect students adversely. You need to locate yourself along this continuum in order to assess the moral position you hold vis-a-vis your interlocutors.

Summary

1. In talking with students, make no claims based on uncertain knowledge. Avoid hearsay.
2. An adviser must be a custodian of the student's good reputation.
3. Present students with all the options open to them, not just the ones you favor.
4. An adviser who misadvises a student has the moral obligation to make things right.
5. Acknowledge one's biases and respond to students as unique individuals and not as members of a group or category.
6. Advisers advise; students decide.

Seek the elusive middle ground.

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http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/ - National Academic Advising Association


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