

The Importance of Academic Advisors

Your advisor is so much more than just the person to remove your academic hold!

“An excellent advisor does the same for the student’s entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course.” - Marc Lowenstein

The advisor’s main objective is to help a student to identify their goals and to help them succeed. They help students synthesize & contextualize their educational experience within the framework of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries & timeframes.

The focus of academic advising is to help in a student’s academic and personal growth in their undergraduate experience

For example, advisors help students develop and maintain a semester -by - semester plan that will meet requirements and personal abilities. They are trained professionals responsible for providing educational guidance and assistance by helping students by planning schedules, recommending courses and determining appropriate education solutions.

Advisors can also help students figure out which careers can be suitable for them by having conversations and using assessment tools that help students determine what job factors are important to them as well as analyze their personal characteristics to find a good match.

It is recommended that you visit your academic advisor about 2 times per semester, this is meant to keep you on track.

There are many functions to an advisor, but some of them are

- they serve as someone on campus that can inform and explain the school's policies in a clear and understandable way. *For example*, if a student is unaware of all of their options under the slue of University Policies, whether related to course performance, medical needs, financial hardship, etc., their advisor can help bring these to their attention.
- they serve as a connection between students and other resources. *For example*, they inform students of other opportunities such as internship opportunities, scholarship information, employment information, department events and updates, etc. They provide contact information and guide students to school resources regarding residential life, student affairs, financial aid, or mental health counseling. Advisors have many connections all over the campus so students can view them as a resource to use when trying to figure out solutions to a variety of problems.

Academic advising is a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor. There are a variety of approaches to the advisor-student interaction, and are usually related to the goal you are working on.

- **Prescriptive advising** is focused mainly on providing student with information directly related to their academic program & progress. Sometimes seen as doctor-patient relationship. *For example*, academic policies, major/program requirements & course selection. The advising is initiated by the student as the goal to address immediate questions and is not meant to deal with long term goals.
- **Intrusive advising** is usually initiated by the advisor and not the student. The advisor will usually contact the student reminding them to make an appointment to come in. Some advisors will ask students to track their own grades and assignments and bring the results in. It is usually initiated at critical times throughout the students' academic career, like advancing from pre-major into a full major. This is for all students, including those at-risk and high-achievement.
- **Developmental advising** is ideal for students who need an advisor to help guide them to that goal, or want help defining academic, career and life goals. There is an open discussion about pathways & develop problem-solving & decision-making skills through collaborative & process-oriented advising. This method also helps students develop their problem-solving skills. Fostering a relationship between student and advisor is important in this method. This is the most time and resource intensive of the advisement forms, but can also be the most rewarding.

Within advising, there are some common stages. As students progress with their goals, they can regularly assess what is effective and what is not. This opens up a dialog for feedback. From that feedback, the student can adjust and plan for the next phase. Then they implement their plan and evaluate if it is working for them. And finally, follow up with their advisor with their thoughts.

Academic advisement serves the development of the 4 main aspects of success:

1) Personal development, 2) Academic development, 3) Social development, and 4) Career development. Within this, there are 4 principles or benefits to taking advantage of learning centered advising. The first, it helps students create not just goals, but clear, reasonable, and positive goals. This sets a great foundation moving forward. Next is the more actively the student is involved in their learning, the higher the benefit, and one aspect of this is advising. This can be from their advisor, a professor, or somebody else they trust. Third, being active with their advisor helps keep them motivated, and motivated students learn more effectively. And finally, it helps get regular feedback, which can be used to develop learning.

Other benefits from advising are that it can result in self-awareness, improved confidence on many levels, better academic performance, and, improve self-actualization

No matter what your approach to advising, remember you can't do it alone, advisors are here to help you, and, your conversation with your advisor is confidential.