

Why should you read this?

- “I think this resource is amazing! I feel this resource will be a great success in assisting future students at Capital University.” Kyle Clifton, exercise science major, class of 2009
- “Overall this resource is really helpful, I learned a lot from reading it. I wish I would have had something like this when I was an incoming student.” Rachelle Paisley, psychology major, class of 2011.
- “Going into a session with your advisor and knowing what to expect is very important for beginning students.” Mackenzie Becker, communication major, class of 2010

ADVISING UNPLUGGED: A RESOURCE ABOUT ACADEMIC ADVISING FOR STUDENTS¹

How can you get the most out of your time at Capital University? Start by building relationships – relationships with your roommate (if you live on campus), with your classmates, with your professors, and with your *academic advisor*. This booklet is all about developing a relationship with your advisor (although toward the end you will also get a few tips about interacting with your professors). Your advisor can play a key role in your success in college and beyond; this booklet contains tips for getting the most from your relationship with your advisor.

What is Academic Advising? What is an Academic Advisor?

Academic advising is a continuous, developmental process, based on repeated collaboration between a student and faculty advisor for the purpose of achieving the student's academic, career, and personal goals.

What, exactly, does that mean? It means that you will be working with your advisor throughout your time at Capital. It also means that you and your advisor will work together to help you develop and achieve the academic, career, and personal goals that you have set for yourself.

Your advisor is a faculty member, usually within your major, who can help you navigate the complexities of academic life and prepare for a great career. And, if you haven't decided on a major, yet, not to worry, your advisor and the Career Development office will help you decide which major is right for you.

Your advisor can't do everything for you, the initiative needs to be taken by you. Your relationship with your advisor should be collaborative – the two of you working together.

Your advisor can help you the most if she knows you well, both as a student and as a person. In addition to everything you will read about below, many students also rely on their advisors to provide letters of recommendation for internships, scholarships, employment, research opportunities, and graduate schools. So, if your advisor has not already contacted you, then you should get in touch with him or her right away.

How can you find your Academic Advisor?

You can find out who your advisor is through *WebAdvisor* (the online program that allows you to look at your class schedule, register for classes, check grades, etc.). You can also go to the Registrar's Office in Yochum Hall (that is the office where you can schedule courses, drop and add courses, change your major or minor, and request transcripts to be sent out).

¹ Document History: Written by the A&S Faculty Development Committee: M. Barsnack, C. Boulant, J. Bussie, S. DeLucia, A. M. Karkowski, M. Torello, Feb. 2008; Reviewed by Students: Mar. 2008; Reviewed by A&S Faculty: Mar. 2008; Reviewed by CON, SOM, and SON Faculty: Apr. 2008; Updated Dec. 2011.

How can your academic advisor help across all four years of your college career?

Your advisor can help you:	First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Choose the right classes and the right number of credit hours each semester	X	X	X	X
Obtain an advising sheet (a list of required and recommended courses for your major and for general education) if you have declared a major	X			
Select a major, if you are not sure about what major you want	X	X		
Consider whether a second major or a minor will compliment your current major	X	X	X	
Explore courses beyond your major that might be interesting to you or that might be beneficial for what you want to do after you graduate from Capital	X	X	X	X
Encourage you to stretch yourself by taking challenging courses and courses that will help you develop beyond the confines of your major	X	X	X	X
Assist with long term planning and career guidance	X	X	X	X
Develop a four-year plan that allows you to graduate on time while also being able to do lots of cool activities like internships, study abroad, and independent research while at Capital	X			
Review and revise your four-year plan that allows you graduate on time while also being able to do lots of cool activities like internships, study abroad, and independent research while at Capital		X	X	X
Make changes to your schedule by adding and dropping courses	X	X	X	X
Register for classes (this usually happens after mid-semester)	X	X	X	X
Find tutoring if you discover your classes are more challenging than you expected	X	X	X	X
Locate the campus counseling services when you need a little extra help managing life stresses	X	X	X	X
Sign up for summer classes either at Capital or at a college near your home ² .	X	X	X	
Provide advice about summer internship or research opportunities		X	X	
Find internships or field experiences		X	X	X
Prepare for exams that are needed to enter graduate programs (LSAT for law school, GRE for graduate schools, MCAT for med. School, GMAT for bus. school)			X	X
Check your progress toward graduation – in addition to all of your required courses, you also need 124 credit hours to graduate and a GPA that is 2.0 or above			X	X
Complete your senior audit – in addition to all of your required courses, you also need to complete a required number of credit hours credit hours to graduate (check with the major that you are taking) and have a GPA that is 2.0 or above				X
Explore employment opportunities				X

But, what if you are a transfer or CLL student?

Your advisor will help you with all of the above AND will review with you how the courses that you took at other institutions transfer into Capital. First, the registrar's office will identify the how the courses that you took at other institutions will meet course requirements at Capital. Then, you and your academic advisor can meet to discuss any discrepancies. You will also develop a plan that will help ensure that you graduate from Capital in a timely manner.

² If you take classes at another institution, you must complete a *Transient Student* form before you take the classes in order for the credits to transfer back to Capital University. You can obtain the *Transient Student* form from the Registrar's Office or online.

How do you know which year you are (or, your class standing)?

- First year standing: 0 – 29.99 credit hours completed
- Sophomore standing: 30 – 59.99 credit hours completed
- Junior standing: 60 – 89.99 credit hours completed
- Senior standing: At least 90 credit hours completed

What happens at the first meeting with your academic advisor?

The first time you meet with your advisor may feel intimidating. Go in prepared and you will feel much more comfortable. Always remember that your advisor wants you to succeed.

During the first meeting with your advisor, give him or her your preferred contact information, including phone number and an email address that you check regularly (it is possible to have your Capital email account forwarded to the email account that you typically use). Your academic advisor will also want to get to know you and will probably ask questions about your interests and activities you enjoy doing, careers that you are considering, and how you got interested in those careers.

You should ask your advisor some questions, too, such as how she got interested in his or her field, how long she has been at Capital, and what she enjoys most about Capital.

How do you choose a major?

No doubt you've heard someone claim, "Whatever you major in locks you into a particular career path for the rest of your life," or "You need to decide on a major before you get to college." Would it surprise you to learn that both of these statements are untrue? According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average college graduate changes jobs once every three years and changes career fields two or three times. Moreover, national data indicate that about 70% of all undergraduates change their major over the course of their college career! Knowing the facts can help you choose a major in a manner that is realistic and rewarding, rather than stressful.

The most important thing to consider while choosing a major is *you* and your interests. Ask yourself: What major will I find enjoyable, challenging, and personally fulfilling? At Capital, we recommend choosing your major by the spring of your sophomore year. To choose a major, try taking the following steps.³

- Use the *Capital University Undergraduate Bulletin*. Take an afternoon and go through it page by page. Highlight any class that even remotely interests you. Notice any patterns? If you've marked two science classes and twenty English classes, well . . . your interests might be clearer than you think.
- Talk to your advisor! That's why your advisor is there. Schedule a block of time to meet with your advisor.
- Ask your professors and other adults that you know and respect why they have chosen the field they are in and whether they find their work satisfying.
- Look online to find class syllabi. See what the assignments are like, what books are required, what sorts of essays must be written. Can you imagine yourself sitting in that class and reading those texts? Does it sound interesting? Try to pinpoint why. If you're drawn to math problem sets over essay assignments, that's another clue to where you might be headed.
- Discuss majors with upper-class students you trust and admire, like your R.A. or Orientation Leader, especially if their interests and values are similar to yours. Are they happy with what they're studying? Are they inspired by the work they do? Do they look forward to class or dread it? Is the major what they'd thought it would be? Why or why not?
- Check out majors on Capital's Career Development web site, www.capital.edu/CareerDevelopment; it lists typical career paths from all of our majors. Make a list of some careers you might eventually like to pursue. Read about them on PrincetonReview.com and on Capital's "Vault" site link on the Career Development front page; they list majors that often lead to those careers.
- Talk to professionals in fields you find interesting. Ask them what their jobs entail, how the jobs do (or don't) relate to their college majors, and what those college majors were. Learning about the paths others took to get where they are is often valuable and enlightening, and even more often, surprising.
- Listen to your passions and pursue them! If you love the volunteer work you do at the soup kitchen, you might love a major in social work.
- Experiment. Take at least one class in your first two semesters that doesn't meet any requirements but sounds great. Take a course in theater, photography, or international business. Many have discovered hidden talents within themselves in such courses which ultimately led to a related major.

³ The list of "helpful steps" is adapted from The Princeton Review, *A Guide to College Majors*. <http://www.princetonreview.com/>

How do you change your major, minor, or advisor?

Once you have decided to change your major (or minor, or advisor), it is necessary to pick up the *Program/Major/Minor/Advisor Declaration Form* from the Registrar's Office or online and obtain the appropriate signatures. It is not required that your former advisor sign this form. Ask the department chair when she signs your form if you can select an advisor or if one will be assigned to you. If you can select an advisor then think back to a course you took in the major which you especially enjoyed. Approach that professor and ask if she would be willing to be your advisor. If you have not yet taken a course in that major, ask upper-class students who they recommend as an advisor, or ask the department chair for suggestions. Once you have an advisor within your major make an appointment, just to get to know him or her and orient yourself within the new major. Be sure to return the completed form to the Registrar's Office so that they can make the changes in *WebAdvisor*.

Even if you are not changing your major, you might decide to change your advisor – maybe there is another professor in your major whose interests or advising style better matches your own interests or needs. It is okay to switch advisors. Again, obtain the *Program/Major/Minor/Advisor Declaration Form* from the Registrar's Office or online. Complete the form and have your new advisor sign the form – it is not necessary to have your old advisor sign the form. Return the completed form to the Registrar's Office so that they can make the changes in *WebAdvisor*.

If there are problems that arise between you and your advisor, it is better to try to work out those problems (a great skill for students to develop in college) before changing your advisor. There are some steps that you can take to resolve issues that develop between you and your advisor: First, meet with your advisor and let him or her know that you believe there is a problem. Sometimes simple miscommunications between two people can masquerade as something more troubling. If the situation is not resolved after you and your advisor talk, then meet with the department chairperson or dean to discuss the issue. The department chairperson or dean can then help you understand your options for resolving the issue.

What happens when your academic advisor leaves Capital?

Sometimes faculty leave the university, either temporarily such as to take a sabbatical or permanently such as when they retire. If your advisor is gone from the university for a semester or more then you will be given a new advisor. The chair of your department will make the reassignment. Your new advisor should inform you of the change. Take time to get to know your new advisor in the same way that you did your original advisor.

How do you change your course schedule?

If, after the first week of classes, you wish to add or drop a course, then you must get an *Add/Drop Form* from the Registrar's Office or online, fill it out, get the appropriate signatures (instructor, advisor, dean), and return it to the Registrar's Office for processing.

What can you expect from your advisor?

Help from your advisor for academic issues: Your advisor will provide accurate information about course requirements, prerequisites, and electives. Sometimes, your advisor will not know all this information. However, your advisor should know where to find the information you need. The important thing is that you and your advisor get the correct information together.

Your advisor can assist with information about procedures for registration, adding/dropping courses, deadlines, academic regulations, and where to turn things in. Completing the required procedures for registration, adding/dropping courses is the only way the Registrar's Office knows what courses you are taking and have completed. The Registrar's Office keeps track of the number of credits you need to graduate so it is important to notify the Registrar whenever there is a change to your registration.

Your advisor can explain why required courses are important for your professional development and future plans. Sometimes, the advantages of taking a course are not readily apparent. For example, why are students required to take a Research Methods course if they are not bound to be researchers? Your advisor should offer an explanation of how this course can be helpful, perhaps essential, to developing your career.

Advisors are facilitators. Your advisor should find out about your abilities, talents, and interests and help you to identify courses and research opportunities that fit you and your goals. You can help by sharing your ideas about yourself. What courses do you find most interesting? And, don't forget about fun! Discovering hidden talents and interests can be exciting.

Your advisor can assist in developing a long-term education plan, making important educational decisions (selecting elective courses, exploring academic majors/minors, etc.), and career guidance. What is a long-term education plan? For most students, it is completing your undergraduate degree requirements here at Capital. Your advisor can help you to choose courses and research projects that complement your major and make you an interesting candidate for employment. Some students choose to continue their education in graduate or professional programs. Your advisor can help you to decide whether a graduate program is necessary or advisable to help you attain your career goals.

Your advisor can connect you with campus resources such as the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (for tutoring and writing workshops), counseling services, and the Career Services Office (for choosing and changing majors, resume development, internship and job search strategies, interviewing preparation, applying to graduate and professional schools, etc.). Capital may be a small campus but there are many available services whenever a problem arises. If you need help, do not suffer in silence. Your advisor can help you to find the help you need.

Help from your advisor for your personal development: Your advisor will encourage you to make your own informed and realistic decisions and help you integrate personal values, beliefs, ethics and life goals into the choices you make.

Your advisor will encourage you to seek help when necessary, including personal issues. The relationship between an advisor and student is collaborative in that both work toward a meaningful and successful college experience for the student. In addition to academia, however, the pressures of dorm life, schedules, finances and relationships can affect your success or feelings of assurance. Your advisor can refer you to professionals who can discuss with you the academic and life encounters that are part of your college experience.

A positive relationship with your advisor will include guidance, encouragement and challenge where challenge is needed. Schedule appointments with your advisor and keep the appointments that your advisor initiates. Be willing to talk to about what concerns you and be open to hearing about concerns that may be brought to your attention. A positive relationship with your advisor can help to develop your distinctive potential.

Your advisor will encourage you to examine consequences of your choices. Let's face it, sometimes you will need to make difficult and uncomfortable choices: Should you give up playing volleyball so that you can take the courses that you need for medical school? Should you take 18 credits this semester, even though you are on academic probation? Will you fall behind if you skip one stats class? Talking with your advisor before you make the choice will help you to better understand the consequences of your decision. If you don't talk with your advisor first and you make a choice that leads to a really bad result, then your advisor can help you understand where the logic of your decision was flawed and how to make the best of the bad situation.

If the issues you are facing require you to take time away from Capital (i.e., a leave of absence), be sure to let your advisor know and talk with the dean of students, the Registrar's Office, and the Finance Office to ensure that you have completed the necessary forms.

What professional expectations should you have for your academic advisor?

Your relationship with your advisor is a professional relationship, and thus you should expect professional behavior from your advisor, just as your advisor should expect professional behavior from you. Let's explore what we mean by professional behavior.

While your advisor is there to assist you, you need to keep in mind that she also has many other professional and personal responsibilities, so when you contact your advisor, either via email or voice mail, it might take a few business days for him or her to get back in touch with you. Find out when your advisor has office hours and stop by during those office hours if you need to see your advisor right away.

You should expect that your advisor will make appointments to meet with you in a timely manner – within a few days. To facilitate setting up appointments with your advisor, when you contact your advisor give him or her a list of times when you are available, then she will schedule a time that is convenient for both of you. You should expect that your advisor will keep appointments with you or will notify you if she cannot keep the appointment (emergencies happen to faculty members, too).

During the summer months, many faculty members are away from campus. If your academic advisor is not available during the summer, then contact the department chair or dean.

You should expect that your advisor will try to create a comfortable atmosphere for you and will treat you with respect. You can help your advisor do this by giving him or her the opportunity to get to know you and by letting him or her know what your needs are.

What are you, the student, responsible for?

The following list of student responsibilities is quoted from the *Capital University Undergraduate Bulletin*:

- Students are ultimately responsible for their academic decisions and actions.
- Students are responsible for planning their academic program of study, including scheduling and progress toward the degree.
- Students are responsible for their own academic standing.
- Students should be knowledgeable about the university catalogue/bulletin, *WebAdvisor*, and policies and procedures concerning university, school, or college academic regulations and degree requirements.

- Students are responsible for maintaining personal records of academic progress, work, and achievements.
- Students should be prepared for advisement and scheduling sessions with proper materials and information.
- Students are responsible in consulting with their advisor in a timely manner, including informing them of changes in their program of study.

Here are some of your other responsibilities as a student:

- Meet in person with your advisor as least once every semester. Call or email your advisor to set up an appointment and keep the appointment. If you must cancel, then call or email your advisor and inform him or her that you won't be able to make the appointment and reschedule.
- Keep your advisor informed about your academic progress and plans for the future, such as jobs and graduate school.
- Let your advisor know how much and what kind of advising is preferred.
- When you meet with your advisor to discuss the courses you wish to take for the next semester, you must be prepared. Bring with you to the meeting a list of courses that you wish to take and the times that the courses are offered. Have a copy of your *Program Evaluation* with you. Your *Program Evaluation* lists all of the courses that you need to take for General Education, your major(s) and minor(s). It also includes the courses that you have already taken and the requirements that these courses fulfill (if applicable). You can find and print your *Program Evaluation* from *WebAdvisor*.
- Keep your advisor informed about outside commitments, activities, personal catastrophes – again, your advisor cannot help you unless she knows about what is happening in your life.

What else should you know in order to make the most of your time at Capital?

Your advisor is just one of the people who you will go to for letters of recommendation when you are applying for internships, scholarships, summer research programs, employment, and graduate school. You will also ask the professors that you have for classes for letters of recommendation. Developing good relationships with your professors so that they can write great letters of recommendation begins with the first interaction that you have with your professors. That relationship builds with each interaction with your professors. How can you make the most of that relationship? Again, let your professors get to know you AND think about how you present yourself to your professors both during and outside of class. Internships, graduate programs, and employers want to know the following about you; carefully consider how your behavior will influence how your professors will respond to each item:

- Are you a dedicated and reliable student? Or, do you skip class, turn in assignments late, and do sloppy work?
- Do you work well with other students in group situations? Or, do you rely on the group to do the work and then take credit for what others have done?
- When are you a leader and when are you a follower?
- Do you contribute to class discussions by helping to clarify points, moving the conversation forward, or raising important questions? Or, do you repeat what everyone else has said, hog the conversation, or avoid speaking up in class?
- Are you respectful and welcoming of diversity? Or, do you put down people who are different from you or who have ideas, opinions, and experiences that are different from your own?
- Are you able to think critically, reason logically, and use quantitative information to make an argument? Or, do you examine and make arguments that are at a surface level only without any logic or support for the argument?
- Are you a skilled writer and speaker, using correct grammar, appropriate citations, and a logical flow of ideas? Or, are you a sloppy writer and speaker, paying little attention to how you present yourself or your work and stealing other's ideas without giving them credit for their ideas (that is, citing your sources)?
- Are you a creative thinker? Or, do you stick with what everyone else is doing?
- Do you take initiative and seek out information beyond what is required for a class? Or, do you do only what is required for class, and sometimes not even that?

Every Capital University faculty member wants to see you succeed in college and beyond – and we want to help you succeed. Your success is going to be based on the choices that you make. Your first choice should be to develop a relationship with your advisor so that she can help you make good choices. Take that first step by contacting your advisor today!