FACULTY ADVISING AT ALBRIGHT

I. Responsibilities of the Academic Advisor

As an academic advisor, you play a vital role at Albright. Many – in fact most – schools do not have a faculty-only advising system, and this is one thing that sets us apart. The emphasis on individual attention remains a major attraction for incoming students, and it is an important asset that needs to be preserved.

Advising has been more and more a topic for research and study among academic and professional groups. Effective academic advising has been linked to student persistence in college, improved GPA, positive influence on career choices and educational goals, and satisfaction with the college experience (Brown and Sanstead, 1999). It is also related to student achievement and retention (Kramer, 2003). You as an advisor are a crucial link between the student and the college – you may be what decides a student for or against staying here, or even for or against getting a college degree.

The academic advisor does not simply register students for courses. He or she is responsible for planning, reviewing, and discussing all aspects of each student's academic and career program. The advisor should be knowledgeable about registration procedures, academic policies of the college, career options, and the various resources for assisting a student when problems occur. According to Gordon and Hadley (2000), academic advising should be proactive, structured, and responsive to the unique and developmental needs of individual students. The advisor should:

1. Help the advisee understand the academic and administrative processes of the university and the nature of its academic programs while seeking to understand particular concerns affecting academic progress.
2. Help the advisee understand the expected standards of achievement and likelihood of success in certain areas of study.
3. Discuss the educational and career objectives suited to the advisee’s demonstrated abilities and expressed interests and understand the relationships among the courses, programs, research opportunities, internships, study abroad programs, and other academic experiences provided by the college.
4. Help the advisee plan a course of study and give advice about courses, the adjustment of course loads, and prerequisites for subsequent courses in the program.
5. Refer advisees to other campus resources when appropriate.
6. Participate in advising development activities as offered to keep informed and current.

One distinction often made is between prescriptive advising and developmental advising. Prescriptive refers generally to advising that is mostly one-way communication from the faculty, who tells the student “what’s what.” Typically this means limiting advising to course selection, where the advisor simply tells the student what to take and limits conversation to this purpose. Developmental advising differs from this paradigm in a number of ways – it is more transactional, less passive on the student’s part, and more
explicitly takes into account the individual student’s needs. Advising should be approached more developmentally than not, although there are times when being prescriptive is clearly appropriate.

You could think of your activity as an advisor from 3 angles: informational, conceptual, and relational.

- **Informationally**, you should be a good resource on degree requirements, policies, and college resources. Become thoroughly familiar with the Catalog. You can’t and won’t know everything, of course, so be ready to ask other campus offices about things you don’t know and to refer students to other specialized service offices like the Counseling Center and Financial Aid.
- **Conceptually**, you should also be able to work with the student to understand the bigger picture of their education and their goals, and help them be a more intentional and responsible learner that will benefit from an Albright liberal arts education.
- **Relationally**, you should have the personal skills to establish effective human contact with each student in his or her particular situation.

The Faculty Handbook treats advising under the rubric of service, which is misleading. It is to a great extent a form or extension of teaching. That is how you can make a difference to students, teaching them what your field is about, teaching what general education is meant to do, or teaching how a liberal arts education is a transformative experience that equips them for life in a certain way.

**II. Advising Activities at Albright**

There are at least two key advising situations in which advisors have contact with advisees, thought these should not be the only times: for incoming students, in August just prior to classes; and advising during the academic school year, prior to the registration period for the next semester.

**A. August Advising**

Augusts advising occurs during the orientation Welcome Week just prior to classes, and students are often advised both as a group (in the case departments with a large number of students) and individually. The content of your orientation advising session will vary depending on your department structure, number of students, and amount of time allocated. In general, it is suggested that you, as the advisor, relay to the students:

1. Your name, location of your office, contact information, office hours, name of building secretary and location of building secretary’s office.
2. Specific requirements for the students’ intended major or co-major or Alpha, and basic general education requirements, including foreign language.
3. Resources that may aid students in that major or co-major or Alpha.
4. Experience credit graduation requirements (Answer: 16 experience credits by the end of the sophomore year, 8 for sophomore transfers, 0 for junior transfers).
5. Clubs and organizations that can augment the students’ experience in that major or co-major or Alpha.
6. Specific department issues that may affect the students’ course of study.
7. Names of any teaching assistants, additional staff, etc., that may help the students.

Finally, it is recommended you take a few moments at the end of the orientation advising session to address any concerns and questions about scheduling, location of buildings, orientation agenda, conflicts, the first day of classes, etc. For Education students or co-concentrators, it is important to encourage students to take time to meet and consult with the other advisor as well.

B. Advising During the Academic School Year

One of the biggest factors affecting student retention is personal contact – a “sense of community.” For that reason, we encourage advisors to contact their advisees the first week of classes. Contacting the students does two things: confirms that you have the correct contact information for your advisees and opens up a line of communication between your advisees and yourself. Here are some suggestions for advisee/advisor interaction.

Week 1 – Make contact with the student to confirm contact information; answer questions, offer resources, etc.; encourage co-concentrators to make contact with a member of their “other” department

Subsequent advising (Note: Record when you meet a student for advising. You may need this information later!)

1. Ensure students’ access to Self Service. For information about Self Service use the “Quick Links” drop-down menu at the top of the college home page. The Faculty Documentation available from the Self Service home page will walk you through its various functions. The Advising tab will be most relevant to you as an advisor.

2. Ensure you have your current advisee contact information.

3. Inquire how the student is doing academically, socially, etc. Provide counsel as appropriate or refer the student to the appropriate office or person, including making calls and appointments to assist the student.

4. Discuss educational and career goals of the student. If you feel that a student should consult with another faculty person or department, assist in making arrangements to do so. If a student is unsure of his/her goals, you may want to direct him/her to the resources in the Career Development Center.

5. Ensure that the student understands “academic standing” policies – grades, progress, probation, and scholarship standing.
6. Review Experience requirements, the number of events completed, the number of events still required, and the consequences for failing to complete 16 Experience events by the end of the sophomore year.

If it is time to register:

7. Check to see if the student has a ‘stop’ or ‘hold’ on his/her account in Self Service; a stop sign will appear next to the names of those advisees with a ‘hold’ on their account. A hold will prevent the student from registering for classes. An explanation is provided in Self Service, and a student with a hold on his/her account must see the appropriate office (i.e., student accounts, student affairs, registrar’s office, etc.) and have that hold removed. You can still authorize a student who has a hold and we recommend you do so. This will allow the student to register for classes after resolving the hold without having to come back to you to be authorized.

8. Discuss the proposed course schedule and the reasons for the particular schedule. Be sure to factor in co-majors and general education requirements. Insist that the student consult with any other advisors they may have.

9. When an appropriate course schedule is agreed upon, you need to authorize the registration by checking the box next to the student’s name under session 01 (for the traditional day program). Don’t use the “Select All” box! That will authorize all of your advisees, whether or not you approved their courses.

10. Remind students of the designated date and procedure for their online course registration.

11. Caution students to retain hard copies of drop/add slips, Q/NQ forms, and other official communications concerning course changes and grades. They should be aware of deadline dates for registration and other course changes, such as withdrawing from a course.