Academic Advising: Information for Students

Introduction

Academic Advising is a resource that will help students navigate through the liberal education curriculum and chosen program(s) at Colby-Sawyer College. The student and his or her academic advisor will become a team that works to enhance the college experience and plan the career path. The following pages will offer some basic information about how to benefit most from the relationship with the academic advisor and some specific information about what is needed, and when, to complete the desired curriculum and attain associated academic success.

Incoming and transfer students

Coming to college for the first time, or changing colleges can be a stressful experience. Having a partnership with an academic advisor from the first day on campus will provide a reference for all kinds of resources: academic, social, residential, community, and career. The academic advisor can indicate the right direction for help with classes, roommate conflicts, or inquiries into study abroad options.

Returning students

Most returning students feel a degree of comfort here now. A major may have already been chosen – or a decision on this is close. Relationships with academic advisors and many professors and staff have been established. There are many resources at Colby-Sawyer can be utilized. The relationship with the current advisor is very important and students benefit from help in making varied choices about classes such as scheduling, study abroad, internship opportunities, career planning, tutoring, and co-curricular options.

Definition: Academic Advising

The goal of academic advising is to offer students and advisors time to explore academic and career goals. Academic advising serves several functions, but the main goal is to facilitate each student’s progress in meeting academic requirements and developing and working toward career goals.

Students are at the center of Colby-Sawyer College’s strategic plan; all of the college’s efforts are focused on supporting the student in achieving success as defined in the college outcome statements. Advising is part of this focus on the student. Students must drive the achievement of their own outcomes; achievement may be driven by the student, but it is not done without the support of faculty, staff, and of course, academic advisors.

Students are ultimately responsible for their own academic decisions, but the advisor is a supportive resource, to give helpful information and assistance in selecting courses and to help consider academic and career options and goals.

A Developmental View of the College Years

The college career is a period of development. Students come to Colby-Sawyer uncertain of what they will find or who they will become. Over time a greater self-awareness, certainty about who the student is, and who and what they want to become is developed. Therefore, advising expectations grow over time. The student will likely receive more structured support from the academic advisor initially than in later years. The expectation is that the student will learn to manage his or her own
schedule, appropriately choose classes, and discuss more ideas with the advisor over time. At first though, the student will receive a good deal of direction and strong suggestion. Some of the things that may be experienced over the years in the student’s college education and advising experience include:

First Year:
- Adjusting to college and introduction to the community;
- Developing college-level study habits and time management skills;
- Self-assessment and skill development;
  - How confident is the student about the selected major?
  - Can the student develop the skills to be successful in the major?
- Developing a plan for meeting liberal education requirements;
- Beginning documentation of learning through the liberal education learning portfolio;
- Adjusting to the social aspects of college life – finding a sense of community and where the student fits in.

Second Year:
- Further self-assessment and goal setting, with particular reference to major selection;
  - Consideration given to major acceptance or changing majors;
  - Self-evaluation of suitability for major;
  - Additional knowledge, skill development, and application of knowledge;
- Developing major acceptance portfolio elements;
- Deepening of campus and community involvement;
- Introduction to different career and training options;
- Greater integration into college life and relationships and greater autonomy from parents.

Third Year:
- Continued educational, professional, and life self-assessment and planning, including substantial internship planning;
- Preparing for the “next step” – graduate school and career options;
- Planning for and assuming roles in mentoring “younger” students and in leadership on the campus and in the wider community;
- Developing junior year portfolio elements;
- Finding a social comfort zone – expanded and fortified sense of identity.

Fourth Year:
- Achieving the outcomes of the major and of the total educational experience;
- Developing the capstone experience and final portfolio;
- Planning for “transitioning out” and self-assessment;
  - Refining job search skills and resume development;
  - Informational interviewing;
  - Career and/or graduate school search continues;
- Leadership and mentoring – “giving back” to the college and community;
- Becoming a responsible young adult – moving on from college and to the next stage of life.

Expectations of Advisors

At Colby-Sawyer, faculty and staff advise students. Each advisor has a different style. The advisor originally assigned is sometimes a perfect match; however, it is absolutely fine to determine that a different advisor would be a better match. Advisors can be switched.
Advisors role
- Help students register for the classes; an advisor’s signature is required.
- Make connections for the student with faculty or academic staff from the department of choice.
- Support academic and professional planning;
- Help assess student skills and abilities realistically;
- Advocate as needed (recommendation letters, with a faculty member etc.)
- Clarify college policies and procedures;
- Facilitate adjustment to the community;
- Refer to the appropriate campus resources and opportunities;
- Support and encourage students’ autonomy, responsibility, accountable, and problem solving skills.

Registration
- Advisors and advisees meet at least once each term to select courses for the next.
- Advisors vary in their preferences for scheduling meetings. In the first meeting he or she should explain what to expect around registration time.
- When registration time is approaching, an email is sent from the registrar indicating that the schedule of available classes has been posted on the registrar’s web site.
- Before meeting with the advisor:
  - Use IQ Web to review courses already taken and which remain.
  - Use the college catalog to determine what courses come next in a specific major, minor, honors, or certificate program, as well as to find all pre-requisites for needed classes and whether they are offered in a particular semester.
  - Review of the course schedule will determine when courses will be offered. IQ Web’s “Academic Plan” section can help plan a weekly schedule that incorporates sports, co-curricular activities, work, or internship time with classes.
  - The schedule, with a few alternative classes, should be brought to the advising appointment.
  - The signed and completed registration card is dropped off in the registrar’s office on the assigned day.
- Appointments with advisors should be made in a timely fashion using the method she or he requests (email, signup sheet etc.). Signing up at the last minute leaves the student at risk for not getting registered on time; that will result in not getting into desired classes.

Advice about career and professional goals
- Advisors generally have industry knowledge for career areas and are happy to discuss career goals and options, as well as making referrals. Internship possibilities or study abroad options that may help better prepare you for certain career paths can also be investigated with the advisor.

Midterm grades
- First year students and those with lower than a C- in each class, will receive mid-term grades from faculty. If more than two C- midterm grades are received in a single semester, a letter will be sent to the students’ parent(s) or guardian(s) with this information, which can be accessed on IQ Web.
- Advisors have access to all their advisees’ midterm grades.
- Midterm grades are available the week before the withdrawal deadline. Advisors can help reflect on the likelihood of improvement in a given class and the merits of withdrawing from it. The professor of the class should be consulted first to get an idea of his or her sense of the student’s ability to improve the grade.

Academic difficulty
Students having difficulty or experiencing a lot of stress or personal issues should contact the academic advisor, who can discuss the issue and refer the student to specific services.
Advisors’ expectations of students

- Students are responsible for holding up their side of the relationship:
  - Appointments should be arranged in advance;
  - Student should respond to the advisor when he or she attempts contact. Students and advisors should communicate via campus email or campus voice mail, not by personal cell phone;
  - Students should reflect on and define their own educational and personal goals;
  - Meaningful connections should be made and maintained with others in the community (faculty, staff, students) and community obligations should be honored;
  - Student should assess their own skills and abilities realistically and accept feedback about them;
  - Students must make appropriate use of campus resources, activities, and opportunities;
  - Student should be active participants in academic and professional planning;
  - Students should learn and follow college policies and procedures and curriculum requirements;
  - Students should assume autonomy and responsibility for academic decision-making and communicate those decisions to faculty, staff, and family (if applicable);
  - Students are expected to become contributing members of the college community.

### Timeline of Academic Advising

| SEPTEMBER |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Saturday before classes begin** | **Meeting with advisors** |
| - Students should be open with advisors to get the most out of this resource, as the relationship with this person that may go on for four years or more. Following are topics for that meeting: | - Students should be open with advisor to get the most out of this resource, as the relationship with this person that may go on for four years or more. Following are topics for that meeting: |
| - Class schedule, academic worries, and strengths | - Class schedule, academic worries, and strengths |
| - Any learning disabilities | - Any learning disabilities |
| - Concerns about playing a sport or how many hours to work | - Concerns about playing a sport or how many hours to work |
| - Study expectations | - Study expectations |
| - Some simple things to consider: | - Some simple things to consider: |
| - what to call professors and advisor; | - what to call professors and advisor; |
| - what are the advisor’s office hours and how does the advisor prefer to be contacted; | - what are the advisor’s office hours and how does the advisor prefer to be contacted; |
| - how often will meetings occur? | - how often will meetings occur? |
| There are no bad questions, but unasked questions never give necessary information. Expectations should be shared by both the student and the advisor. | There are no bad questions, but unasked questions never give necessary information. Expectations should be shared by both the student and the advisor. |

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<th>1st week of classes</th>
<th>Students check in with advisors. Concerns about a class, or changing a class should be addressed now. Check the “open course” list on the registrar’s web site. Do not drop a class before adding a class, many classes are full. Being proactive in selecting classes results in more choice.</th>
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<td><strong>Reminder:</strong> falling below 12 credits in a semester means the student is no longer full-time, but is now part time. That may have a negative impact on permission to live on-campus, financial aid, and athletic participation. Students should check with those offices before dropping below 12 credits!! In addition, it takes 15 credits per semester to graduate in four years. It is ok to take fewer than five courses, but this must be discussed with the advisor.</td>
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**End of September**

Maintaining contact with advisors, who can make referrals for other issues. Consulting the advisor concerning any academic difficulty.

Begin thinking about the spring by reading the catalog and learning about the requirements for the desired programs.

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**Student IQ Web**

IQ Web is an aide in organizing schedules, printing a schedule grid, reviewing grades and classes already completed. IQ Web can help in staying organized and directing discussions about coursework and registration with the advisor.

**Accessing IQ Web**

- Log on to the [CSC website](#) (or click the link in the previous paragraph);
- Click on the IQ Web link on the main page
- Click on Log In
- Enter the CSC network ID and password and click on Sign In
- Clicking on the appropriate menu selection on the left of the page will access course schedule, grades, and unofficial transcript;
- For adequate protection of personal information please log off when finished by clicking on the Log Off icon in the menu and exiting the browser.
- Don’t give out a password! Passwords protect educational records.

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**FERPA: access to college records**

FERPA stands for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. It is a Federal law that guarantees students (over the age of 18) access to their own academic records and outlines who is legally able to request access to information contained in a student’s records.

- **How does FERPA impact the student, advisor, and professors?**
  - Students arriving at the college complete a FERPA form. This is how permission is given to discuss academic records with those designated (e.g., parents, guardians). If an advisor is to be able to talk with parents about a student’s academic record, then the student needs to complete a FERPA form making this designation. If the student does not want us to talk to the parents about the academic record, then the parents should not be listed on the FERPA form. Students have the right to designate who can talk to us.
  - College faculty and staff always prefer to speak with the student first, and sometimes only the student, about academic and social behavior and progress.
  - If the student is in academic difficulty or on academic probation, the college will send grade reports to designated parents or guardians.
  - Students are strongly advised to communicate directly with parents over such issues.
  - At the initial meeting with the advisor any concerns about professors or advisors speaking with parents should be discussed.
- **Questions about talking with parent(s), or if questions about FERPA, can be directed to the Parent and Family Relations Office.**
Resources for help

- Advisors

- Professors
  - Colby-Sawyer College maintains small class sizes so that students can better connect with their professors. The professors have guidelines and deadlines, but they are understanding people who will want to help if they can.
  - Behavior is crucial in building credibility with faculty:
    - Be on time
    - Hand in quality work when due
    - Attend and participate in classes
    - Read and follow the syllabus
      - Faculty members are very happy to find ways to work with the students. Students who have not made the acquaintance of their professors will have a more difficult time getting extensions or exceptions. This is the way of the world. Behavior sends a message, both positive and negative. Credibility in classes, with an advisor, roommates, friends, and eventually with bosses and coworkers is very important!

- The Registrar
  - Forms, information, and assistance are available concerning transcripts, course schedules, GPA etc. Forms are also available online at the Registrar’s webpage.

- Academic Development Center
  - Writing help, tutoring in content areas, help with study skills, time management, and other academic assistance is available in the Academic Development Center. Specialists located in the Academic Development Center are available to help with learning disabilities, and to see that students receive appropriate accommodation and tutoring designed to help them succeed.

- Harrington Center for Career Development & Community Service
  - Help with resumes and cover letters, interviewing assistance, internship information, career advice, and industry and community contacts is available in the Harrington Center. Software and other resources at Harrington are designed to help determine a major, career path, or type of internship for which a student is best suited.

- Baird Health & Counseling Center
  - Appointments can be made at Baird Health & Counseling to see a nurse or meet with a counselor. All information is confidential.

- Student Development – Resident Assistants, Resident Directors, and Orientation Leaders
  - RAs and RDs are in residence all year round to help address any concern. Administrators who work with residential education and citizenship education are located in the student development offices upstairs in the Ware Center.

- Director of Academic Affairs
  - This individual can be very helpful in the absence of an advisor. The director of Academic Affairs can also help when a problem intensifies, or stretches beyond a single issue or individual. The director can help mediate academic, residential, even parental disagreements over college and life choices.
- **Academic Dean**
  The Academic Dean can help appeal a grade given in a class, or seek reversal of a professor’s allegation of an academic honesty violation, and can provide due process and another objective avenue for addressing concerns in the classroom.

- **College Catalog, Student Handbook, College website, Syllabi**
  All these resources spell out rights and obligations in the student’s role as a member of the Colby-Sawyer campus.

### General information for students

**The college catalog**
- The catalog received by the student on his or her first day as a Colby-Sawyer student is the catalog to use to follow that student’s liberal education program. Occasionally stepping stones or exploration areas will change; and the student will be notified if that is the case.
- The catalog for the current year is the one to use when selecting courses to fulfill exploration areas during the semester registration periods.
- The catalog received at the time of major acceptance is used for all major curriculum requirements. The catalog that is current at the time a minor is declared is the one to dictate those requirements.

**The ePortfolio**
- Each student must prepare a liberal education learning portfolio, submitted electronically as an “ePortfolio” as a graduation requirement. These ePortfolios vary based on the particular major. The required elements are in the initial advising folder received in the student’s first year. Professors and advisor will periodically remind students to work with the ePortfolio.
- The portfolio is designed to illustrate achievement of the following Colby-Sawyer College Learning Student Learning Outcomes
  - Learn and use a broad body of knowledge with depth in the major field;
  - Enrich and deepen self-knowledge;
  - Think creatively and critically;
  - Communicate and interact effectively;
  - Act ethically and professionally;
  - Understand and employ multiple perspectives.
- These are the things we believe are important college students to have gained while at Colby-Sawyer. The ePortfolio is designed to show the achievement of those learning outcomes in a variety of ways. In addition, students may keep the ePortfolio and utilize it in future endeavors such as application for graduate school or as a writing sample for a job application.
- Students should also feel free to utilize their ePortfolios to document all effort and development at Colby-Sawyer and beyond, not just the required documentation.

### Adding or dropping classes; and the impact upon grades
- **Adding or Dropping a Class; will not show up on the transcript**
  - Adding a class can only be done in the first week of the semester. “Add slips” are found in the registrar’s office. The form must be completed be signed by the professor and advisor. After the student signs the form it is submitted to the registrar. The student is not officially ‘in’ that class until it is received by the registrar. It is up to the faculty member who teaches the class whether or not a student can be added to an already enrolled class.
  - Dropping a class must also be done within the first week of class. The consequences of dropping below 15 credits may be that it will be hard to graduate in 4 years, and more particularly the consequences of dropping below 12 credits, making the student part time, may impact housing, financial aid, sports eligibility, etc.
- **Withdraw from a class; a “W” will show on the transcript**
  - A mid-term grade will be posted in IQ Web for most classes before the withdrawal deadline, especially if there are academic difficulties.
  - The possibilities for improvement should be discussed with the professor.
  - The advisor can help to decide whether or not the student should withdraw from the class due to poor performance; and discuss the consequences of doing so.

- **Declaring or changing a major or minor**
  Students will be notified by the registrar and possibly their department when it is time to matriculate into the major.

  Students are not ‘in’ a major when intent is declared to major in a particular program. The student must meet the criteria and follow the procedures for that program’s major acceptance process to be admitted to a major. Those criteria and processes can be found in the college catalog in the particular academic program.

  Major acceptance is entered only after earning 54 credits, but prior to earning 86 credits. The process for major acceptance differs according to each major; and the particular major’s requirements in the college catalog should be discussed with the advisor.

- **Changing Advisors**
  An assigned advisor may be changed at any time. The new advisor should be consulted to determine if he or she can take on a new advisee. The new advisor should sign a change of advisor form that can be found online or in the registrar’s office. The previous advisor’s signature is not necessary, but it is good practice for the student to let the previous advisor know that the change is being effected. The registrar’s office will send an email notifying all three parties of the change and asking the previous advisor to send the student’s file to the new advisor.

  If an advisor is leaving the college, the students who were that person’s advisees will be reassigned, and the students will be notified. Students who have preferences may choose new advisors.

  If the advisor is leaving the college on a temporary basis, for example for a leave of absence or sabbatical, students will be reassigned and, again, students who prefer may choose their own temporary advisors. The change can be made temporarily, just during the original advisor’s absence or it can be made permanent, but the student must notify the registrar’s office.