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 three primary components to academic advising at Albright: advising during Sneak Peek, advising during Orientation, and advising during the academic school year.

**A. Sneak Peak Advising**

During Sneak Peek (in July), first-year students register for their first semester of college courses after consultation with a member of the major department or an Alpha (undecided) advisor. (In August, at Orientation, they will be assigned a “permanent” advisor, which may very well be the faculty member they meet with at Sneak Peek.) If you advise at Sneak Peek:

1. Preview the students’ records, provided by the Registrar Office, if possible.
2. Introduce yourself and identify your role on campus. Provide the advisee with your business card and your office hours and office location.
3. Discuss honors programs, test scores, placement, etc., if appropriate.
4. Schedule the first semester of classes. Typically, the incoming student will choose a first-year seminar, foreign language, an English composition, and either an introductory course in their intended area of concentration or a general studies course. Education students and students who intend to co-concentrate should be strongly advised to seek course planning assistance from both you and a faculty member from the other co-concentration. Note that some students will take FYS in the spring instead. The Registrar’s forms will ask for a number of contingency courses to help
that office finalize the student’s schedule – the student should understand that he or she is not walking away with a finalized schedule.

5. Make sure the student understands basic general education requirements, including foreign language.

6. If necessary, make referrals to the appropriate campus service to assist with questions or concerns (e.g., student accounts, housing, the Academic Learning Center for disability questions).

7. Encourage continued contact and ask if the student has any questions

B. Orientation Advising

Orientation advising occurs during Orientation (August), and students may be advised as a group (in the case departments with a large number of students) or individually, or both. 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, your contact information, office hours, name of building secretary and location of building secretary’s office.

2. Specific requirements for the students’ intended concentration or co-concentration or Alpha, and basic general education requirements, including foreign language.

3. Resources that may aid students in that concentration or co-concentration or Alpha

4. Experience credit requirements, deadline, and penalty (Answer: 16 experience credits by the end of the sophomore year; after the sophomore year an “I” on grade sheet; after junior year an “F” on the grade sheet until completed then an “F/Q”; will not graduate until completed)

5. Clubs and organizations that can augment the students’ experience in that concentration or co-concentration 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.

C. 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 IQWeb. For information for logging on, go to http://iqweb.albright.edu/.

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. If it is time to register, check to see if the student has a ‘hold’ on his/her account. To do that:
   a. Go to ‘authorize registration’ under ‘students’.
   b. Select the appropriate semester and year
   c. Select 01 Session
   d. Click on the ‘submit’ button
   e. A list of your advisees should come up. 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. If you click on the stop sign, an abbreviated code will appear. That code indicates the reason for the hold. A “key” to the codes, and the place to go to have that hold removed, is linked to IQWeb on the left hand side under “SCT PowerCampus Holds”. 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.

6. Discuss the proposed course schedule and the reasons for the particular schedule. Be sure to factor in co-concentrations.

7. When an appropriate course schedule is agreed upon, you need to authorize the registration. It is a good idea to inform the other advisor, if any, of what is approved. To authorize:
   a. Go to ‘authorize registration’ under ‘students’.
   b. Select the appropriate semester and year
   c. Select 01 Session
   d. Click on the ‘submit’ button
e. A list of your advisees should come up. Find the student’s name and check the box to authorize his/her registration.

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

9. Caution students to retain hard copies of drop/add slips, Q/NQ forms, and other official communications concerning course changes and grades. Be aware of deadline dates for registration and other changes.

10. 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.