

Advising Partnership Plan

Synopsis: Grinnell College affords each student the opportunity to largely define their own educational experience. Advising plays a critical role in shaping that experience. This requires a *partnership* between you, the student, and me, the faculty member, for crafting an experience that prepares you for the challenges and joys of life *after* Grinnell College.

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Overview

Grinnell College offers you, as an individual, the opportunity to define the particulars of your educational experience. While each major course of study has set forth requirements that are viewed as essential for training in a particular mode of thought, an education in the liberal arts emphasizes several broad areas of study. Grinnell's open curriculum allows you to explore these areas of the liberal arts in ways that are suited to your intellectual development and educational objectives. The possibilities and choices are many. The goal of our advising partnership is to help you ask the questions of yourself that will allow you to create a truly liberal curriculum that maximizes the benefit and satisfaction of your Grinnell education.

Below are some questions you might want to ask of any potential adviser. This document contains my answers.

“What’s the point of all this?”

The Office of Institutional Research reports that students' satisfaction, with their course of study is highly linked to the quality of their advising, even a decade after graduation.¹ This partnership plan outlines goals, procedures, and responsibilities that will enhance the quality of advice and mentoring you can receive.

Our major objectives for the advising relationship include:

- Understanding the elements of a liberal education and how your curricular choices reflect them
- Exploring, developing, and progressing in personal, educational, and career goals
- Defining an academic experience that enables post-graduation plans
- Graduating in a timely and efficient manner

While the college's open curriculum does not specify any *particular* requirements, the ideals of a liberal education are part of the college's core values that I will work to uphold in our partnership.

¹Scott Baumler (2009). Grinnell College Office of Institutional Research, Personal communication.

“So, what is advising?”

Merriam-Webster has a rather dry definition of advising, including works like “counsel,” “caution,” “recommend,” and “inform.” While all of these are true, they hide the fact that effective advising requires contextual knowledge. Thus, my primary role in advising is to enable you to receive *useful* counseling, cautions, recommendations, and information. I do that by asking you questions that will challenge you to clarify your ideas, assumptions, and choices. If you reflect on these matters, then I can provide you more appropriate opportunities that will help you architect a more satisfying course of study.

Advising is an important extension of teaching that just happens to occur outside the classroom. Because there is no set syllabus beyond the goals outlined above, it is up to the student to define their specific learning goals and enable the adviser to suggest appropriate paths.

“What are my advisor’s duties?”

It is not my role to provide answers to the questions you will face. For instance, I know something about a few general career paths, but I do not know everything, and I certainly cannot say what is right for you. In some cases, I can advise you on the general realities of particular paths (e.g., long workdays but rewarding outcomes versus banker’s hours with trivial tasks, or job security versus a position subject to economic vagaries). However, I cannot tell you which matches your particular goals and values. In some cases, I may know very little, in which case I will happily refer you to a party who can provide more direct assistance (e.g., another department’s chair or the Career Development office).

As you are discovering, developing, and refining your aspirations, I will listen carefully and constructively to you so that I may appropriately counsel, caution, recommend, and inform—in a word, teach.

“What are my duties as an advisee?”

At various stages in our partnership, you will be asked to reflect critically on your choices, values, and goals. This will include some writing to both process and communicate these important structural factors undergirding your educational choices. To paraphrase comic book author Stan Lee, the college gives you tremendous freedom and power to create your individualized curriculum, and with this comes an equal amount of responsibility for taking ownership of your education. You will therefore be expected to use the resources listed in this plan and any others mentioned in our meetings. You should bring a notebook to every meeting so that you may record any information, referrals, or questions that arise in the course of our discussion. This will make it much easier for you to follow up and gain the greatest benefit from our time.

Since advising is an extension of teaching, it is also necessarily a learning relationship. It is my hope that in this partnership, you will learn *about* learning, particularly in what your academic choices say about your values and how your choices reflect a liberal education. Learning does not come without effort, though, so you should be prepared to work toward gaining and communicating this understanding. In particular, the total amount of work you will do in this partnership over the course of four to eight semesters will likely equal that of a single, typical four-credit course. This will include reading materials like the course catalog and syllabi, actively seeking information from places like the CDO, reflecting critically on the information gathered, participating in a dialogue with me that challenges or sharpens your views, and writing to explicitly communicate your rationales. All of these are hallmarks of courses in the liberal arts and are necessary as well for the meta-learning goals of our advising partnership.

Following the general timeline and partnering with me in the activities outlined below will allow you to get the most from what I have to offer and maximize the chances of your satisfaction with *your* curriculum (not to mention getting your \$200,000 worth²).

Contacting Me

We will have several scheduled appointments during the course of your Grinnell career. However, I welcome unscheduled visits as well. In general, please come by during my office hours to discuss academic or career concerns, get any extra assistance, or just talk about how your courses are going. If you cannot attend a scheduled office hour, you may also email me to schedule an appointment; please include 3-4 possible meeting times so that I can pick one that works for me.

I truly enjoy getting to know my students, but I prefer to reserve office hours for academic matters. If you would like to have a more informal conversation, I would be delighted to accept an invitation to lunch.

Email is also a reliable way to contact me, but please allow 24 hours for a response (except on weekends, when I do not regularly read email). You may also call me in my office (x9812).

Resources

There are many people in offices across campus who can help you find what you need. Below are several you may be referred to or you may wish to explore yourself.

Essential Resources

College Catalog <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog>

Mission Statement <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement>

Elements of a Liberal Education <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/education/elem>

Core Values <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement/core>

A Grinnell Education <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/institutionalplanning/links/grinnelleducation>

Phi Beta Kappa <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/academic-program/acadpol/pbk>

Student Affairs <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs>

Student Handbook <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/shb>

Other Resources

Career Development Office <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/cdo>

Off Campus Study <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/ocs>

Academic Advising <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising>

Chaplain's Office <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/chaplain>

Counseling Services <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/counselingservices>

²Grinnell College. "U.S. Students Tuition and Financial Aid," <http://www.grinnell.edu/admission/apply/tuition> (Accessed 23 June 2010).

Timeline

The following is an approximate timeline of things for you to consider as milestones in our advising partnership.

First Year

First Registration

- Know how to read and use the *Academic Catalog* and online *Schedule of Courses*
- Register for courses that provide a solid liberal arts foundation
- Know the basic requirements for graduation
- Identify one or two places to engage on campus outside the classroom

Fall Semester

- Know the course add/drop deadlines and how to add or drop a course
- Become familiar with your Academic Evaluation (accessible via PioneerWeb)
- Plan a schedule of courses for at least one or perhaps two majors
- Reflect on skills you want to develop
- Consider off-campus study as a part of your plan
- Articulate possibilities and goals for the coming summer

Spring Semester

- Consider areas to explore that will help you solidify a major choice
- Develop a complete four year plan (required for pre-registration with me)
- Practice good study habits as academic rigor increases
- Explore and apply for summer opportunities

Second Year

Fall Semester

- Attend the Second Year retreat
- Further consider areas to explore that will help you solidify a major choice
- If interested, plan for off-campus study

- Attend an informational meeting and research programs
 - Declare a major in advance
 - Apply by December deadline
- Visit with CDO and/or potential major department faculty to plan summer opportunities

Spring Semester

- Discuss how to find a new advisor in your major
- Declare a major in consultation with a major advisor
 - Write context statement
 - Update four-year plan
- Select coherent courses for third year
- Explore and apply for summer opportunities

Third Year

Fall Semester

- Refine four year plan
- Partner with the CDO staff
 - Create or revise your résumé
 - Learn to network
 - Develop a plan for an internship or other work experience

Spring Semester

- Consider/apply for off-campus study, if interested
- Select coherent courses for fourth year
- Ensure you are on track for graduation
- If considering graduate school, determine when you will take the GRE, LSAT, or MCAT
- Explore/apply for summer opportunities

Fourth Year

Fall Semester

- (Re)imagine your life after Grinnell
- Talk with other mentors about your transition
- Consider/apply for post-graduation plans
- Identify recommendation letter writers
- Schedule GRE, LSAT, or MCAT test if necessary

Spring Semester

- Graduate and embrace the world!

Activities

Drafting a Four-Year Plan

As a tutorial advisee, you will draft a four-year plan in your second semester. This helps us meet several objectives:

- Learning how to plan for a major (even if you change it)
- Making sure you can meet pre-requisites for upper-level courses you are interested in
- Keeping slots for introductory courses outside your major interest areas early

Toward this end, you will not only complete a course plan but will also reflect on how your plan meets the elements of a liberal education.

Four-Year Plan

Extend your four-year plan with one major in mind. While this plan is not a commitment, it is very important that you consider some of your larger goals (such as your "spikes and bumps") and plan carefully to achieve them. Allot at least 2-3 hours for a combination of reflection, exploring the catalog, and using it to make sure you've gotten all the pre-requisites and semesters correct. You may even need to contact faculty members to determine when courses that are not offered every year may be offered next.

This is an important exercise that can have real consequences for your satisfaction with your education. Make sure you give it adequate attention.

You will use your Wiki in our Advising group to document your plan. Please include for each course:

- The three-letter department abbreviation
- The course number
- The full course name

In addition, you will notice that at the bottom of your four-year plan table, there are four columns for you to tabulate how many credits and courses you are taking in each division. Note that some courses and concentration listings are non-divisional (e.g., GWSS, GDS, NRS, TUT, etc.). Please list only the course department and number here, along with the credits. This portion will help us both ensure you have a good representation of studies across the curriculum.

If you are planning to study abroad, you can include that semester in your plan (typically during third year).

While planning, you may want to consider your eligibility for Phi Beta Kappa. You may find the [requirements](#) in the College catalog.

Essay on the Elements of the Liberal Arts

Once you have completed your four year plan, please write a short essay where you tell your reader (e.g., yourself, me, your future adviser) what your spikes and bumps are and how your courses connect to them. In addition, tell your reader how you've incorporated each of the six elements of a liberal education listed in the catalog. Note that you will want to be thinking about these even as you are planning. When you are finished, post (copy and paste) your essay to your curricular journal.

Completion and Feedback

Although the PioneerWeb software will e-mail me when you've made updates to your wiki and journal, you may be working incrementally, so I would appreciate if you would send me an e-mail when you feel your work is "complete." I will then review them and make comments for you.

If you are not already, you should subscribe to both your Wiki and Journal, so that you too get e-mails when I make comments. You can do this by clicking the "Subscribe" link at the top of each.

Declaring a Major

Declaring a major at Grinnell is an important milestone. While courses from a single department may only account for about one-third of your total courses, they often form an important foundation that you can build the rest of your education around. At this critical point in your career, the college and I ask you to evaluate your progress toward a liberal education and describe your goals for remaining semesters.

The college's major declaration form asks you to provide a written rationale for your proposed course of study in the liberal arts. In your statement, I expect you to place your transcript and any unmet academic goals in the context of the elements of a liberal education. You should discuss your major field and/or career goals and how your four-year plan serves these.

Your writing task is a significant one involving a great degree of synthesis and brevity. Because this is a key milestone for planning your individual course of study, do not be surprised to receive constructive feedback that necessitates rewriting or revising your four year plan

I cannot overemphasize the need to plan ahead. Deadlines approach quickly, and many other students will also be engaged in similar activities. Also note that the department chair's signature is required; you must leave time for scheduling a meeting with chair, perhaps allowing additional time for taking any feedback into account that may warrant further revisions.

Curricular Journal

A major instrument of our advising partnership will be your curricular journal. This will allow you to keep track of your learning goals in a way that informs me and reminds you. As you make course selections, this will be a venue for you to justify your curriculum in the context of liberal education elements. You may also wish to reflect on other goals or questions. It could additionally be an instrument for recording (and perhaps digesting) information gathered from external sources, such as the CDO or OCS. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it will be the medium for our pre-registration advising meeting agenda(s).

In addition to this, I will ask you to keep your four-year plan updated in a wiki format. This will ensure it is always accessible to both of us, while also allowing us to keep track of the changes that may occur as your goals develop. Any changes you make should be explained, in one way or another, on your journal.

To access your journal and wiki, log in to PioneerWeb and go to the organization "Jerod Weinman's Advisees." This can be found under the *Community* tab, in the center list "Organizations in which you are participating. Alternatively, you may directly visit the URL <https://pioneerweb.grinnell.edu/webapps/blackboard/execution> (you may need to log in to PioneerWeb first, if you are not already). I will add you to this organization when you become an advisee.

I am subscribed to your journal so that I will know if you post something that I may need to see in order to help me advise you. By default, access to these electronic resources is restricted to only you and me.

Pre-Registration

Pre-registration is an important catalyst that helps to drive your exploration. At this *very* busy time, you will be responsible for defining the agenda of our pre-registration meetings.

Prior to meeting, you should post at least 6 course selections (4 top choices and 2 alternatives) to [your journal](#). Please include the course number, full name, and schedule meeting time(s). For each course, write one or two sentences explaining how the course

- fits your goals for the semester (e.g., what new skills or knowledge you will obtain)
- relates to the elements of a liberal education
- provides preparation for life after Grinnell

Next, you should synthesize this by writing a few sentences about any other thematic goals and/or co-curricular activities contributing to them. If there are any changes to your four-year plan, review your previous written rationale or journal posts and comment on these changes. In particular, you should highlight how your new course selections continue to relate to elements of the liberal arts.

You may also wish to post any outstanding questions you have. It is conceivable that you may have more questions than declarations (i.e., course selections)—this is OK. If that is the case, you must still reflect on these and put them in writing as helpful preparation for our meeting.

If you are uncertain about my expectations, you may want to read [example pre-registration posts](#) of both major and tutorial advisees from previous semesters.

Once I have approved your preparation, you may sign-up for a pre-registration meeting via the time slots on the [advising Wiki](#). I will signal approval with a comment on your journal or else ask you to make enhancements to your preparation.

Before our meeting, print a hard copy of your current (or proposed) four year plan, your course selections and the justifications/reflections (from your journal) to bring with you. If we've agreed on your course selections, bring a completed pre-registration form for me to sign.

During our meeting you should take notes regarding your questions (i.e., answers or referrals).

After our meeting, you should post any information gathered or clarification received to your journal (particularly if another meeting is required).

If pre-registration elements are not satisfied after our initial meeting, you should do whatever work is necessary and post relevant clarifications, reflections, etc., to your journal so that you may sign-up for another meeting.

The process above will allow us to have an expedient, productive discussion from which you can gain the greatest benefit. Time is valuable for both of us and I value your curricular choices. Thus, if you are not prepared for pre-registration, I may not sign your pre-registration card.

Curricular Journal Examples

Tutorial Advisees

Example 1 Jeremy Sanchez '14 I might decide to major in history, French, biochemistry, or a combination of two of them. Four Courses for Next Year:

- FRN-221: Intermediate French I
- CHM-210: Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry
- MAT-133: Calculus II
- HIS-239: The Collapse of the Eurocentric World Order

Alternative Courses:

- ENG-120: Literary Analysis
- POL-101: Introduction to Political Science
- REL-115: Major Western Religions

Why these courses?

French I will further my knowledge of a foreign language, become immersed in language while learning about French culture, and speak with other native speakers should it become helpful in travel or a career.

Chemistry I will learn about the dynamics of the chemical world in which we live. I am partaking in a science, which will help me understand more about the medicine I take, the new chemicals that are being produced, and what to recommend to others as effective medications, etc.

Calculus I will learn about the way physics is explained mathematically. A mathematics course expands my liberal arts education into areas that are more concrete with less room for interpretation. I might be able to help others, including my descendants, on math if they need it.

History I will learn about how European influences collapsed during the 20th century, and how to analyze documents from the past. Taking a social science helps one understand our species, definitely a part of a liberal arts education. I can view the world in a more tolerant way if I understand differing points of view; I will also be able to write more effectively and teach others to do similarly.

English I will learn about the ways to interpret literature as well as dive into some of the literature itself. An English class helps one understand this nation's language as well as appreciate some of the classic ideas others have written in books, plays, etc. Similar to history, I will learn about different points of view and communicate much more effectively.

Political Science I will understand the inner governmental workings of this country as well as the ways I can participate in this representative democracy. Another social science, it adds to the liberal arts experience by allowing an individual to understand how and why the world's governments act as they do. I may be able to make better decisions if I know how the nation works.

Major Western Religions I hope to understand the doctrines behind some of the sects of other Christian faiths beyond my own. Understanding customs is an important part of a liberal arts education, as religion is omnipresent, whether one is religious or not. I hope to know how I may further tolerate and empathize with other religions even if I disagree.

Overall, I want to know more about people out there in the world, what they do, what they believe. My changes to my original plan include taking out Chinese (though that's not completely out of the question) and taking more history courses than I once thought.

Major Advisees

Example 1: Charles Frantz '11

MAT-218-01 Combinatorics I of course need this to complete my major, but the subject seems to keep popping up in areas of special interest to me. For instance, combinatorial explosion has been problematic in attempts to model complex systems like the mind (Daniel Dennett's "True Believers").

CSC-207-01 Algorithms and Object-Oriented Design Completion of this course is required for my major. It introduces object-oriented programming, the biggest gap in my basic programming arsenal (and a useful and marketable one, I am told).

CSC-295-01 Special Topic: Computer Vision This class works brilliantly with my interests in both computer science and neuroscience (i.e., computer modeling and emulation of neural systems). The timing is also right, since I will be taking my neuroscience seminar in the fall, where I will be able to further explore a topic of special interest that I discover in Computer Vision. The course will also introduce concepts that may well be relevant to my post-Grinnell pursuits, which may involve some yet-to-be-determined confluence of computer science and neuroscience.

PHE-100-17 Advanced Racquetball I have never really tried to develop skills or strategies for a competitive game. I think this class would be a good opportunity to do that. It would also give me regular playing time, so I wouldn't have to depend on my one friend to stay active.

THE-111-01 Intro to Performance Studies Something lacking in my academic life at Grinnell so far is the study of creative expression. Since I have always engaged in and been drawn to performance in many forms, I hope for this course to enhance my understanding of where the drive to perform comes from (why it is so prevalent, including cross-culturally), and to broaden my concept of what it can and has been used to achieve.

HIS-276-01 Chinese History II I have also not taken a history class while at Grinnell, and I have been seeking to cleanse my palette of the roteness of what is called Social Studies in high school. I have also been trying to be a better citizen by increasing my awareness of current events, so I think this particular course would be good for me since it covers the history of China (a major global force, I'm told) into the present.

As far as the elements of a liberal education, my courses for my major and concentration are sure to develop my quantitative reasoning, and in Computer Vision I will be introduced to abstract models, specifically of the human visual system, an important component of an education in the natural sciences. My "free" course is meant to continue to develop my skills of reading, analyzing, and writing. Taking Computer Vision is one of the critical steps in my 4-year plan toward preparing me for possible high level neuroscience/computer science research work after Grinnell. Intro to Performance Studies is highly complementary to activities I am involved in on-campus, including Grinnell Singers, improv, and open mic stand-up. Furthermore, it may give me helpful perspective as I contemplate a more concerted exploration of stand-up this summer and possibly after graduating.

That said: It might be a good time to use some of the credit-cushion I came to Grinnell with to just take the first four classes listed, even though one of them is worth 1-credit. Since I consider the first three courses listed to be "core" to my specific interests and major/concentration, I want to be able to concentrate on them and to avoid some of the compromises I find myself making this semester in classes of greater interest in order to keep my grades afloat in classes of lesser interest. I'd be open to enrolling in a fifth course with the intention of testing how demanding it will be and keeping dropping or auditing as a possible (even likely) outcome.

Final Caution

You will have many choices to make during your career at Grinnell and beyond. Ultimately, it is your duty to make these decisions—I will not make them for you. While I will provide you with the information available to me, the responsibility for knowing opportunities and fulfilling requirements is yours.

With thanks to many who helped influence parts of this document: Karla Erickson, Chris Hunter, Dan Reynolds, Laura Sinnett, and Joyce Stern.