Advising Tip Sheet

What follows are some basic steps and advice for approaching undergraduate advising as well as suggestions that will hopefully be helpful as you advise students. This is not comprehensive but does provide a list of elements to think about. You are not expected to know everything; always feel free to ask others for help or advice regarding any of your students.

I. Prior to Advising

1. Work up each of your advisees prior to your meeting – using DegreeWorks (the web based degree audit application and academic advisement tool available on the advising tab in My Charleston), note where the courses they have already completed fit into their program of study and where any courses might count in different categories (ie. courses that count for major and double-counts for a minor). Take note in particular of the following:
   - How many hours remaining for degree and how does that align with number of semesters of work left/students intended graduation date (ex. Student needing 31 hours is probably looking at two semesters of work left; student with 38 hours left could be looking at two semesters and some summer work or thinking they will do it in two semesters – the latter case in particular is cause for a conversation);
   - Where are they with their GPAs – both overall and in their major field of study. They must have at least a 2.0 cumulatively AND in their major to graduate – students struggling academically often need more guidance as to what courses to take and when they should take them to get their GPAs in shape.
   - How much Gen-Ed left to do (and when it make sense for them to complete requirements) – students often look to delay or abandon language study for a period in ways that can be detrimental; they can similarly be slow to complete science or math requirements without your help;
   - Where are they in progressing through the POLI major – in particular, when to start them taking POLI 150 and 205 (and get them to complete them – some students look to delay 205); when would they appear to need a capstone (when will they have nine or fewer hours remaining in major – very important for departmental planning;
   - Where are they relative to second majors and/or minors and how will these requirements be met in conjunction with completing remaining Gen-Ed and POLI major requirements;
     *Note: sometimes minors are not picked up by degree audits and sometimes students think they have declared them when they have not – when working up students and noticing clusters of like classes, classes that fit into inter-disciplinary categories, it is useful to ask them about what’s going on and do they plan on pursuing a minor);
   - What kinds of performance successes/struggles do they appear to be having – if really successful, get them thinking about Bachelor’s Essays, Departmental Honors, scholarships; if struggling, where and what might be up (language/math difficulties, have they been tested for learning challenges?).
2. **Consider planning some course options, semester to semester plans for them — inside and outside the major**

   Ex. “You’ve done SPAN 190 so SPAN 200 is next”
   “Finish your GEOL sequence with GEOL 105 and lab”

   For major: “You’ve done POLI 150 so POLI 205 and one or two subfield courses are next”

   Often students won’t be very prepared for sessions so if you chart out some ideas for an advisee in advance it can keep the session moving and not waste your time. You can use the “Advising Planner” in Degree Works so you and your student can refer to it during advising and after.

3. **Post your advisee sign-up sheets in a visible place and consider providing guidance on your door letting them know to email you if the times listed don’t work for their schedule and / or how they should prepare for the meeting.**

4. **Consider sending an email to your own advisees (in conjunction with publishing the POLS Advising Newsletter) letting them know it is time to sign up and specifically encourage all seniors who may need to take a Capstone in the upcoming semester to get advised in the first week of departmental advising so they have a choice of seminars.**

II. **When Students Show Up for Advising**

1. **Initial Questions to Pose**
   - How the semester is going?
   - What classes do they particularly like and why?
   - Are they have difficulties in any of their courses and why?
   - Have their plans changed or evolved since we last met?
   - Any new minors, second majors (or plans for them)?
   - When are you looking to graduate?
   - Do you have ideas for studying abroad, internships, independent study?
   - **What do you think you need to do next? What is your sense of where you are and what you need to do next, need to do to finish?**

2. **Other specific elements to watch for include:**
   - if a student has completed their language requirement early on, inquire about their interest in going beyond, building the skill;
   - if students want to study abroad, try to put that experience (semester, summer etc.) in a longer term plan – seek to have them complete all requirements around their semester abroad so they have maximum flexibility when they study elsewhere (not always possible).

3. Be attentive to possible anomalies in a major’s degree audits with the shift from POLS to POLI. All degree audits for all majors should show the new POLI distribution in the audit, but it is possible that a student will still have an audit showing
POLS as opposed to POLI and this situation will need to be corrected with the Registrar’s office. All Political Science majors (regardless of date of declaration) will now be expected to successfully complete one course in each of our three new subfields for graduation – but majors who came in as POLS majors (and therefore with the requirement to complete a course in four out of the five old subfields) may not see their completed courses automatically fit into the new subfield categories (Ex. A student took POLS 379: Sustainability but it does not show up under Politics of Ideas subfield, but should, or a student completed courses in comparative and international as two of their four subfields that now have become one subfield and thus lacks a course in one of the remaining subfield -- that they were originally not going to fulfill). These instances will be rare but will be handled on an individual basis in consultation with the chair.

4. When recommending courses:
   - Typically try to have students do no more than three POLI in a semester unless there is a compelling reason for more – this can be especially important when advising athletes, SNAP students, students who have had academic difficulties or been on academic probation;
   - Seek to mix up classes and create some variety of emphases, work in a student’s semester schedule – encourage students to consider taking a little ECON (ex. Micro and Micro), especially if thinking about grad school;
   - Look for classes that can make good fifth course options for students who have space between fulfilling major, minor requirements. Consider suggesting courses that can build important skills (Public Speaking – COMM 104, a computer science class – on the other end of the spectrum, interesting music or art classes);
   - Discuss and seek to incorporate these experiences into the student’s program of study as appropriate: internships, study abroad, special learning opportunities such as Model OAS, Model AU, Mock trial, and independent studies.
   - Check on their summer plans – both for courses and for internships or other opportunities – direct them to Career Services for use of their resources – students can profitably use summers for their school or post-grad plans if they are encouraged to think about doing so;
   - When students express an interest in doing course Y, check for prerequisites they might need to fulfill first and put those in the plan so a student can take course Y when they want;
   - If a major is eligible for the Capstone, encourage them to fill out paperwork as soon as they leave your office – many remain under the misimpression that they can register themselves for the Capstone or otherwise misunderstand the process so push them to get the paperwork completed immediately.

5. Keep notes of your conversation with an advisee as you conduct your session – you will quickly forget what they are doing, what you have suggested – keeping intelligible notes (that you should embellish as needed as soon as they leave) will help you bring their lives back to you when you encounter them again.
6. Before an advisee leaves, remove their registration hold (on My Charleston) and look for other registration holds that you can alert a student that they need to take care of – if you wait until after a session, you may forget to lift a hold and a student will have to come back to you before they can register.

III. Miscellaneous items

- The Department recommends MATH 103 and MATH 104 to complete our majors MATH Gen-Ed requirement (but if you are advising HONS students, they should NOT take these courses as they will not fulfill the HONS math requirements – calculus plus a 200 MATH course).

- Twelve hours is full time; more than eighteen hours requires overload forms to be filed and approved.

- All study abroad/courses taken elsewhere credits must be pre-approved by departments teaching the courses – encourage students to pursue paperwork early. In our department, Dr. Guoli Liu Associate Chair reviews these requests.

- There is a limit of eight PEHD hours that can count toward a student’s degree.

- Encourage double majors to meet with their other advisor for their other major (not all students will automatically do this) – you do not have to be an authority on other degree programs (although often students will assume, sometimes expect you to be).

- Keep a hard copy of the most recent Undergraduate College Catalog around to refer to when answering student questions.

- Transfer Credits (many students earn hours outside the College – it is important to keep a vigilant watch on what requirements they may be meeting elsewhere)
  - Key designations for courses awarded credit not in the curriculum:
    - POLI 1MM or 3MM (major, minor credit)
    - POLI 1GG, 2GG etc. (credit for general education only)
    - POLI 1EE, 2EE etc. (credit for elective hours only – no major or Gen Ed)

- Honor’s College (additional student requirements, including an independent study and Bachelor’s Essay to graduate)

- Teacher Certification (lots of requirements – work with Education faculty to help students navigate these programs)

- SNAP Students (Center for Disability Services) – students who take language or MATH alternatives – courses do not double count for other credits)

- GPA – students must earn a 2.0 overall and in their major to be eligible to graduate); GPA calculators are available on your Advising Tab in My Charleston.
• last year in school (technically, a student must earn 30 of their last 37 hours here at the College – to do more credit away from the College at the end of their program of study requires a waiver)