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# *Planning for academic success: Creating a relationship with academic advisors*

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“Who is your academic advisor?” If that question brings a blank stare or shrugged shoulders chances are your family member is not taking advantage of one of the best resources they have in planning for academic success. The most successful students I had as an academic advisor knew me by name and could recognize me in a crowd. The point is the advising relationship can make a difference and students who understand this make the efforts to create that relationship. So, here are some strategies to enhance that relationship: 1) set academic appointments early and regularly; 2) arrive at appointments prepared and with a list of questions; and 3) share your goals.

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## **Set academic advising appointments early and regularly**

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Setting early planning session for advising during non-peak times (September-October, February-March) and avoiding the walk-in appointments available during peak registration periods can make all the difference in the experience of advising. Think about the difference in experience between a scheduled appointment with your doctor and a visit to the emergency room. Early appointments allow the space for follow up. This is particularly important in the first semester where a student can utilize the early appointment to discuss their progress, academic plan, and personal goals. Then when it comes time for actual registration they can follow up with more specific questions regarding course selection and any holds they may need to rectify. This pattern can continue throughout their college career to get the most out of the advising relationship.

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## **Arrive at appointments prepared and with a list of questions**

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A good academic advising experience requires both the advisor and the student to be prepared for the appointment. A good tip is when setting an appointment utilize the opportunity to put in comments regarding the purpose of the appointment. This allows the advisor to research and perhaps even send information in advance so that the appointment addresses the student’s issue(s).

From the student’s perspective they can make sure they have all their information together and have reviewed their Degree Works audit. I always recommend students start a list of advising questions and keep it handy (electronically is now more common, but some students like hard copy agenda notes). Forgetting or not having questions at the appointment leads to reduced satisfaction in the overall experience and can lead to not making the best choices for academic success.

*Note about appointments: Students can be serial appointment skippers, which can strain the advising relationship when advisor’s time is limited and in high demand. Advisors appreciate when*

*students at least offer the courtesy of an email or phone call to cancel. Creating adult expectations for students goes a long way in creating habits of a lifetime.*

## **Share your goals**

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The decision making support an advisor provides is highly dependent on the student revealing their short and long term goals. For instance, if at midterm a student is struggling with a course, but doesn't want to drop, the typical advise would be they can retake for grade forgiveness (students at USF have 3 opportunities to apply grade forgiveness). However, if they do not mention their long term goal of honors at graduation or application to certain postgraduate study that calculate all attempts, the advisor may not flag to discuss the long term implications of the decision.

Sharing goals is an important way students can ensure they get the best out of advising. Keep in mind advisors assist students in making realistic and specific goals. For instance, in discussion with a young man on academic probation he stated his goals for the upcoming semester were to get all As in his classes – simple! At first he was offended when his advisor asked how and pushed for more detail about the specific behaviors he would employ to reach his goals. However, by seeing the advisor not as cheerleader but as coach he understood the importance of being required to more realistically reflect on his goals.

The relationship a student builds with their academic advisors is paramount to the student's success. Please encourage your family member to seek out those relationships!

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