



Academic Advising Tip Sheet

Compiled by Academic Advising subcommittee from Undergraduate Coordinator's Committee

Good advising can help to improve retention, an important issue at Detroit Mercy. One of the biggest ways advisors can adversely affect retention is to just sign off on a schedule of classes without ever having a conversation with the student. While it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to select their courses, part of advising is giving good advice. The only way to do that is to get to know your advisees. Make sure the courses fit into the career plans of the students, and don't just fulfill requirements for a major or the core. Make sure the student has the necessary pre-requisites and co-requisites for courses selected before the student leaves the appointment. The placement of a course within the curriculum can be very important for students considering professional school and taking entrance exams. Encourage students to challenge themselves and make sure they realize that just completing the "minimum requirements" might not get them very far in real life.

Preparing for the Advising Appointment

To prepare for an advising appointment, both the student and the advisor should:

- 1. Review placement scores, mid-term grades, and transfer credits (including AP/IB/Dual Enrollment).**
 - (Student Profile>View Grades)
 - (Transfer/AP/IB credits may be viewed: Student Profile>Academic Transcript)
- 2. Generate a new degree evaluation.**
 - (Student Profile>Degree Evaluation>Generate New Evaluation)
- 3. Come up with a tentative schedule based on upcoming scheduled offerings.**
 - (Student Profile>Registration and Planning>Plan Ahead)
- 4. Review holds displayed in upper right corner of Student Profile that could prevent registration.**

During the Advising Appointment:

5. Discuss mid-term grades with student:

Start by asking how the student thinks they are doing in their courses. Celebrate successful grades, but if mid-term grades are poor, engage the student in a conversation. Discuss the reasons for poor performance and possible solutions to problem areas. For a list of resources see University Resources link below. If a student believes they will not be successful in a course and chooses to drop, they should consult their Financial Aid Counselor to discuss impact specifically if they will drop below full-time status.

6. Run a degree evaluation:

Review the student's degree evaluation. Keep in mind that they might need to drop an in-progress course. Encourage students to run degree evaluations right after registration and again at the end of the semester to make sure courses populate as expected.

7. Review holds that could prevent registration and remove Advising Hold:

Remove the advising hold (if one exists for your student's program). Let the student know if there are other holds that will prevent registration so they can work to resolve with the relevant office (e.g. balance >\$1500).

8. Create registration schedule/plan with student:

Before registration opens, registration **Plans** can be created on the Student's Profile by the advisor and/or student. If advising during open registration – the student can register for courses in their portal account. When courses are added to the schedule summary, be sure to click "Submit" to complete registration.

9. Enter Advising Note to document every meeting or interaction with your advisee:

Caution: do not enter a Note in the Hold Release box when removing Advising Hold – no one else can view this.

In order to add an Advising Note, go to the Student's Profile page and click NOTES to the right of the profile picture. Document your discussion with *specific* recommended courses and any advice that was given such as where to get help for tutoring, summer class approval process for taking elsewhere, forms signed, etc. When you add a new Note, click the checkbox next to "Student" to allow them to see the Note.

10. Provide the student with information on services available to them at Detroit Mercy:

A list of University Resources is available on the Faculty Advising webpage: <https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/academic-affairs/advising/index.php>. Also here: <https://cetl.udmercy.edu/knowledge/syllabus-guidelines/student-support-services>

After the Advising Appointment:

11. Follow up with the student:

Suggesting that a student get a tutor or go to the Student Success Center does not always result in the student actually doing so. Follow up with students experiencing difficulties. Let the students know you are there to help them. Contact the student in one or two weeks to discuss what changes they have made to affect improvement. It shows you care -- and often that will be the difference between retaining and losing the student



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The Advising Appointment

Though the variety of topics covered in an advising appointment depends upon the purpose of the appointment, a certain structure or process is common to all. Following is an overview of some techniques that can be used in an advising session.

1. Opening -- Greet the student by name and in a relaxed manner. The student may be nervous so a warm welcome and a low-key question such as "What can I help you with today?" can be reassuring while it gets the session started.

2. Talking with the Student -- The student may find it difficult to express their feelings. Resist the temptation to "help" by putting words in the student's mouth, finishing the sentence yourself or otherwise taking over the conversation. Careful phrasing of your questions and indicating that you are receptive to the responses should facilitate good communication.

3. Silences in the Conversation -- Silences do not necessarily mean a breakdown in communication or a lack of activity. The student (or the advisor) may be searching for words or reflecting upon something that has already been said.

4. Admitting your Ignorance -- If the student asks a question regarding factual information to which you do not know the answer, admit it. Get the information immediately, if possible, or email/call the student back. While one person cannot be expected to know everything, it is reasonable to expect the advisor to get the information in question. Students have greater respect for the advisor who does not hesitate to admit their ignorance.

5. Avoiding the Personal Pronoun -- Using the word "I" turns the focus of the advising session away from the advisee, toward the advisor. Expressions like "if I were you, I would" and "I think" express the advisor's opinion or experiences and are inappropriate unless they are explicitly requested. Most of the time, the advisor's role is not to express their point of view, but rather, to help the student to formulate their own opinion.

6. Bad News -- When the advisor must give the student bad news, it is not helpful to minimize the gravity of the situation or to be unrealistically optimistic about what the student can do to handle it. However, it is very important that the advisor continue to express an attitude that is receptive and non-judgmental. They can demonstrate support of the student by helping to put the issue into proper perspective and focusing attention on the positive actions that can be taken to resolve the problem. This may require additional appointments.

7. Additional Problems -- Sometimes the student will have unexpressed questions or problems beyond the one that appears to be the reason for the appointment. The advisor can give the student an opening by asking, "Is there something else you would like to ask about?" or "Do you have something else on your mind?"

8. The Frequent Visitor -- One of the most difficult advisees to work with will meet frequently with their advisor. This student appears to be receptive to the advisor's suggestions and will often say "I feel so much better after talking to you," but, in fact, never follows up on the information and strategies discussed during the appointment. This student seems to continue to hope that talking about something will make it happen. Other frequent visitors are sympathy seekers, complainers and the overly dependent. While it is true that their willingness to keep appointments indicates some success on the part of the advisor, they take up time that could be available to other students.

9. Setting Limits on the Appointment -- The appointment is normally a fixed length of time. It is better if the advisor and advisee realize this from the beginning. Follow-up appointments can be made, if necessary. However, there are times when an advisor sees a student in crisis and time constraints need to be set aside.

10. Ending the Appointment -- When the advising session is finished, it is easy to get overly involved in casual conversation. This can extend the appointment far beyond the allotted time. A phrase such as, "Do you think we have done all we can for today?" or "Let's make another appointment to get into this further" effectively maintains a friendly yet professional tone.

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