

## **Advising Syllabus**

### **Contact Information**

My office: Science 1610  
My phone: 641-269-3168  
My email: gibsonj@grinnell.edu  
My Web page: <http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/gibsonj/>  
My office hours: posted weekly on my office door (I prefer that you sign up on the sheet rather than asking for a time over email unless no posted time is open for you.)

### **Advising Philosophy**

I see advising as teaching. Together you and I choose to be active participants in your educational planning, goal-setting, and achievements. I see my job as to help you form and reach goals for a college education at Grinnell. I recognize that every student is different in how they plan their undergraduate careers, as well as different in what their goals and the paths needed to travel to reach those goals. My job is to encourage you to be mindful in your choices and plans and to offer specific or general advice based on my 21 years teaching at Grinnell. As adviser, I guide your academic choices, working under the framework of "The Elements of a Liberal Education" of the *Grinnell College Academic Catalog*.

Each semester we meet to discuss your mastery of reading, writing, thinking, and reading skills. We discuss strategies to help you succeed in your courses, achieve depth and breadth in academic inquiry, and address how your course selections and extracurricular activities address the big questions you seek to answer. We plan for your future at Grinnell and after graduation. Through all of our meetings, my job is to help you be mindful of the adult choices that you make, the balance that you strive to achieve, and your ability to be a leader, contributor, and asset to the diverse community that you live in. In your senior year especially, we talk of your application of your education to planning for a future so that you leave Grinnell prepared to make a difference to yourself and to others.

I also participate in celebratory high fives when you reach your goals. Our relationship is one of the valuable assets of our Grinnell experience. Together, we work to optimize the Grinnell College liberal arts educational opportunities.

### **What I expect from my advisees:**

- to be an active, responsible participant in your educational planning, goal setting, and working towards meeting goals.
- to develop a program plan with breadth and depth across the liberal arts.
- to be open to change, take risks in exploring the curriculum, and learn from failures.
- to reflect on the periods of self-discovery and come to know your passions.
- to be proactive in our decision making, by seeking out advice or referrals from me and other sources on and off campus. To develop your toolbox of problem-solving resources.
- to allow me to challenge you to think about what you want and what you can do as a student in the psychology major, a student on campus, and, one day soon, an alumnus.

### **Advisee Checklists**

Advisees are asked to review periodically how well they have addressed issues for their standing:

#### **Second year students**

- Work on interpersonal skills (e.g., email etiquette, talking to profs, respect for peers).
- Develop coping skills, time management skills, achieving balance in life demands.
- Clarify progress in dealing with issues from living in a diverse community.
- Clarify progress in developing confidence in leadership skills.
- Plan a major that may include off-campus study.
- Plan for potential major honors, phi beta kappa, etc.
- Identify strengths (passions) and weaknesses (skills to be worked on) for planning future.
- Reflect on our advising relationship.

#### **Third year students**

- Identify/monitor progress towards goals for completing the major.
- Consider internship, service, or extracurricular activities to complement education.
- Work on a personal statement that you will use for future jobs and applications.
- Work on coping skills, time management skills, achieving balance in life demands.
- Monitor progress in dealing with issues from in living in a diverse community.
- Monitor progress in developing confidence in leadership skills.
- Identify strengths (passions) and weaknesses (skills to be worked on) for planning future.
- Reflect on our advising relationship.

#### **Fourth year students**

- Reflect on how you have changed since coming to Grinnell.
- Work on integrating and applying what you have learned to what you would like to accomplish in the future.
- Share your knowledge or mentor younger students to help them reach their goals.
- Reflect on connections across the disciplines to see how information learned in one context is related to information learned in a completely different context.
- Look at earlier goals and evaluate them; make new goals for your remaining time at Grinnell.
- Continue working on your personal statement.
- Look to the future and identify the issues and options you face.
- Reflect on our advising relationship.

### **Supporting Personal Challenges**

Life is difficult and full of unexpected happenings and challenges. Whether you are a student with a disability, have a health condition, a difficult family situation, someone who must work a lot of hours in order to support yourself, or are facing an unexpected stressful situation, you may have particular challenges that you need to negotiate at Grinnell in addition to your classes. Become familiar with the Academic Advising Office (JRC 3<sup>rd</sup> floor), the Health Center (Forum lower level), mental health services, disability resources, your RLC, and the Chaplains at the Center for Religion, Spirituality, and Social Justice. Please talk with me if you want to better understand the advantages of using these resources and services.

## Dates and deadlines important for 2010-2011

<http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/registrar/courseinfo/2010-2011/datestoremember/>

## Advising Resources

- Academic Advising Office, x3702, [www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/)
- Registrar's Office, x3450, [www.grinnell.edu/offices/registrar](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/registrar)
- Career Development Office (CDO), x4940, [www.grinnell.edu/offices/cdo](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/cdo)
- Office of Off-Campus Study (OCS), x4850, [www.grinnell.edu/offices/ocs/](http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/ocs/)
- *Academic Planning for First-Year Students* - <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/publications/acadplan>
- *Grinnell College Academic Catalog* - <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/>
- "Courses of Study" <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/courses/>
- Online Schedule of Courses – [pioneerweb.grinnell.edu](http://pioneerweb.grinnell.edu) and click on the 'Services' tab
- Grinnell College Mission Statement & Core Values <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement/>
- <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement/core/>
- "Elements of a Liberal Education" [www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/education/elem/](http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/education/elem/)
- Academic Policies, *Student Handbook* <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/shb/section3/>

## Department Resources

The Department Web page (<http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/psychology/>) provides information about research opportunities, the psi chi honor society, and activities such as journal club. Our majors should be familiar with the mission statement and learning goals of the department.

**Transfer of courses and Petitions to the major for transfer credit:** See the department page and look under the major link (<http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/psychology/major>). Students work with the adviser to develop the petition document prior to submitting it to the department chair.

## Requesting Letters of Recommendation from Me

It is best to never assume that a teacher or adviser will write you a strong recommendation just because you ask for one. If a recommender will not give you a strong recommendation, he or she will tell you, but in order to make that decision, most recommenders will need to know details of the opportunity or job that you are applying for.

Writing letters of recommendation for students is one of the tasks I enjoy, so please ask me if you need a letter no matter how busy you think I am. To ask me for a letter of recommendation, make an appointment on my office door to see me as well before the deadline as you can, and bring (or email prior to the meeting) the needed materials with you (description of the opportunity, list of addresses, deadlines, your personal statement, etc.). At the end of the meeting, I can tell you whether I have any reservations, and, if so you can decide whether to request my letter of recommendation be sent or withdraw your request.

More organizations and schools are using electronic recommendations, so your materials need to specify the paper address for paper letters, their email address or fax number if I am to send it without a prompt, or state that I will receive an email request. Some schools ask that you send your application materials all at once and will want my letter of recommendation be sent directly to you with my signature written over the sealed envelope flap. You should provide directions to me as to whether you want me to mail it to your campus box or whether you will pick it up. Also, I encourage students to save on stamps for paper mail going off campus; if I use a college envelope, the college will stamp the envelope and save you 44 cents (or whatever postage is that day).

Sometimes a student may be applying at the same time for 10 graduate schools or 3 different types of opportunities (e.g., summer camp, summer research position, summer grant). Once I have a written draft of a letter, I can usually modify it in little time so that I don't need more time just because you need more than 1 letter. It helps me if you are organized and provide me with information so that I can customize each letter for each position to give you the strongest recommendation. You don't need to apologize to me for the volume, and do what you can to get me the information in advance of the deadline.