

**(Sample) Advising Syllabus
Grinnell College**

Faculty Name
Department
Office Location
Phone & Email

Advising Philosophy

Grinnell's approach to advising relies on strong mentoring relationships between faculty members and students initiated during the tutorial, developed further when students declare a major and begin working with their major advisors, and deepened in upper-level research and coursework, where students often find new mentors among their professors. Because the College articulates a set of *ideals* rather than *requirements* that characterize liberal arts education, the advising relationship is crucial in shaping the academic plans and aspirations of Grinnell students.

You and I will collaborate to develop a program of study recognizably liberal in both breadth and depth and adapted to your particular interests and long-term goals. I expect that you'll use as a starting point for our conversations about curricular planning the assertions developed in "The Elements of a Liberal Education" of the *Grinnell College Academic Catalog*. That, along with your ideas of who you are and who you are becoming will shape the academic plan we develop for you.

My responsibilities as your adviser are:

1. to help you plan your program of study;
2. to provide a sympathetic hearing and, as needed, advice or referral on academic and career concerns;
3. to be readily available to you, giving you an opportunity to know a faculty member well and a sense that someone is personally interested in your welfare; and
4. to help you develop in the areas of making informed decisions, negotiating difficulties, and taking responsibility for and learning from the consequences of your actions and choices.

Your responsibilities as the student/advisee are:

1. to be an active participant in your educational planning, goal setting and execution;
2. to develop an program plan with characteristic liberal arts breadth and depth, that changes over your four years as you build new skills and discover new interests and passions, and that allows you to graduate in four years;
3. to seek out advice or referral on academic and career concerns, both from me and from other sources on and off campus;
4. to develop resourcefulness – that is the ability to identify and appropriately use college resources, beyond your adviser, for guidance;

5. to enhance your ability to make fully-informed choices and take responsibility for your decisions.

Schedule (Times We Must Meet)

- 👉 Sunday, August 22 – First Meeting with Tutorial, 1 pm
- 👉 Mon/Tues, Aug 23-24 – Individual Advising appointment (to be scheduled)
- 👉 Mon, Nov 1 – Thurs, Nov 11 – Pre-registration for Spring 2010 semester
- 👉 Mon, Apr 18 – Thurs, Apr 28 – Pre-registration for Fall 2010 semester

Important! Check “Dates to Remember” 2010-2011” for deadlines -

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

Appointments and Office Hours

Our communication need not – in fact, should not – be limited to the times listed above. I hope that you will consult with me at other moments of academic concern.

- Office Hours – Please meet with me during office hours, or by making an appointment. I have both posted on my office door – both “open” times and times when you can schedule a set appointment. While there are other times I may be in my office, I am likely to be preparing for classes, doing my research or fulfilling committee expectations. So if you just drop by and I say I am not able to talk with you, it’s not personal. I’m just getting other things done. I will respect your time, and I expect you will mine also. That said, sometimes I can talk when you drop by, and I know that ‘easy’ questions are often best resolved quickly.
- Email – Grinnell expects that you will use your *grinnell.edu* email account on a regular basis for all official communication. I expect this too. While I check my email a few times a day during the week, and sometimes on the weekend, I expect that you will check your email and respond in a reasonable time frame, at least once daily. Other faculty and offices on campus will expect you to do this also.

Preparing for Appointments

Anytime we meet, come prepared. This is, after all, *your* education, and being in college is not a spectator sport. I may be a ‘coach’ of sorts, but you’re in the game. When you come to my office come with an agenda – such as a set of courses that interest you and you want to discuss, or a specific question – bring a notebook to take notes. I expect that you will write things down when we have substantive conversations, just like I’ll take notes in your advising file. Also, anytime you seek advice it’s also good to have thought through possible solutions before you bring it to your adviser, mentor (or work supervisor). So bring those, too – be prepared to articulate your concern and defend your position, but be open to me providing other possible options.

As we approach pre-registration, there are specifics to consider. Once registration materials are available in your mailboxes and/or online, read them carefully and schedule an appointment for us to meet. When you come to talk, I expect you to have four top choices, and at least two alternatives, and to have reconsidered your 4-year plan in light of the choices you plan to make in future semesters. Do not write your courses on your registration card. Instead, prior to our first conversation, I want you to write one paragraph about what you hope to accomplish next semester. Then, next to each of the 6 courses you are considering, write 1-2 sentences explaining how that course will fit into that short-term plan, and your long-term plan for pursuing a well-rounded education and preparing for your future (or at least the future as much as you can envision at this point in time). Also, please write down questions you have so we can make sure you find out what you need to know.

Resources – Print/Electronic and Human

1. *Academic Planning for First-Year Students* - <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/publications/acadplan>
 2. *Grinnell College Academic Catalog* - <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/>
especially the section called “Courses of Study”
<http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/courses/>
 3. Online Schedule of Courses – pioneerweb.grinnell.edu and click on the ‘Services’ tab
 4. Grinnell College Mission Statement & Core Values
<http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement/>
<http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/president/missionstatement/core/>
 5. “Elements of a Liberal Education”
www.grinnell.edu/academic/catalog/education/elem/
 6. “Academic Policies” section of the *Student Handbook* – (not yet updated for ‘10-’11)
<http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/shb/>
- Academic Advising Office, x3702,
www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/
 - Registrar’s Office, x3450, www.grinnell.edu/offices/registrar
 - Career Development Office (CDO), x4940, www.grinnell.edu/offices/cdo
 - Off-Campus Study (OCS), x4850, www.grinnell.edu/offices/ocs/

Milestones in the First Year

By the first registration in August ...

- Know how to read and use the *Academic Catalog* and the online *Schedule of Courses*
- Register for a good liberal arts program
- Register for courses in a manner that keeps open several different possible majors
- Know the drop/add dates and how to drop or add a course
- Know the basic requirements for graduation
- Identify one or two places to engage on campus outside the classroom

By pre-registration in November for Spring semester ...

- Be a more sophisticated user of the *Catalog* and the online *Schedule of Courses*.
- Be familiar with the location and layout of your Academic Evaluation, accessible through Pioneerweb
- Consider courses that will constitute a good liberal arts program that keeps open several different possible majors
- Consider what skills you want to further develop while at Grinnell and work those into your next set of courses
- Write a (very tentative!) four-year plan, so you are aware of how a choice of major impacts other course choices and how a Grinnell major maps out over eight semesters.
- Consider a semester of off-campus study as part of your plan and determine how you might fit that into your four-year plan
- Be able to articulate what your next summer could look like. What experiences do you want to have? Do you want to do an internship? If you can't afford an unpaid internship, what can you do to gain experience that builds on your interests?
- Know how to look up your grades online, accessible through Pioneerweb.

By pre-registration in April for Fall of second year ...

- Each semester get to know at least one faculty or staff member well. You should cultivate these relationships. You'll learn a lot from them, and they may eventually serve as references for you.
- Consider areas to explore that will help you continue to solidify a choice of major.
- Consider what skills you want to further develop while at Grinnell and work those into your next set of classes.
- Re-write your four-year plan using the "Elements of a Liberal Arts Education."
- Consider a semester of off-campus study as part of your plan and determine how you might fit that into your four-year plan.
- Realize that things will change during your sophomore year; academics, social life, extracurricular involvements can be very different. Students often don't realize how fast and profoundly things will change. For example, academic rigor will ramp up, so get a firm grasp now of good study habits. Significant decisions will soon be upon you, too: choosing a major, forming an academic plan, study abroad, internships; all of these take a significant amount of time.
- Begin earnest conversations about choosing a major (and other "big" questions). Students frequently make the leap from a particular major choice to "What will I do for

the rest of my life?", but may not share that fear openly. Any choice of major allows plenty of opportunities upon graduation, but you should explore those by talking with me, with other faculty, and getting assistance at the CDO, which can include talking with alumni also.

- Visit the CDO a few times. This can include learning about shadowing opportunities, volunteer experiences, jobs and/or internships next summer. Write or update your resume, and learn how to research opportunities. Then apply!

Milestones in the Second Year

- Attend the Second-Year Retreat.
- Consider areas of study to explore that will help you to solidify a choice of major.
- Consider what skills you want to further develop while at Grinnell and work those into your next set of classes.
- Plan for off-campus study, if this interests you. Attend an informational meeting and research specific programs; apply by the mid-year deadline. The application process is involved and requires that you plan for a major in advance, so allow enough time.
- Discuss how to find a new adviser in your major.
- Re-write your four-year plan while consulting with both me and your major department; this is a required element of the major declaration form.
- Think about the particular elements that you might want to include in a four-year plan, such as increasingly advanced work in an area that may lead to a MAP.
- Work with the staff at the CDO and/or faculty in your potential major department to plan for an internship or research experience this summer.

Milestones in the Third Year

- Examine the coherence of your studies (both with and without your major courses) and make adjustments that will both challenge you and help you meet your goals.
- Create a partnership with a staff member at the CDO. Revise your resume, learn to network
- Pursue next steps in your career exploration such as an internship or focused work experience.
- Determine when you will take the GRE, LSAT or MCAT if you think you may be headed to graduate school.

Milestones in the Fourth Year

- (Re)imagine your life after Grinnell. Explore who you can talk with, besides your adviser, to help you to plan concretely for this transition.
- Enhance your partnership with the staff at the CDO to specifically revise your resume, network, and pursue next steps.
- Schedule to take the GRE, LSAT or MCAT if you are headed to graduate/prof school.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

You may eventually ask me to support you with a letter of recommendation for a job, internship, or off-campus study. I will gladly do this for you, when appropriate, and when you follow the guidelines below. Please know that I may not always be the best person to recommend you, and I will be truthful with you when you ask about this.

I need several things in order to write a good recommendation letter:

1. Time before the deadline – While I recognize that sometimes opportunities present themselves and you have little time to respond, it's best to give me several weeks' lead time. A month is a common courtesy. And I need the deadline by which the letter needs to be mailed or the online form submitted.
2. Description of the internship or other opportunity you are applying for – either send by email or come to my office with printed information about the opportunity and explain it to me face to face.
3. A copy of all relevant documents you are sending with your application such as a resume and a statement. Provide me a copy of anything specific you will be including in your application that I could make reference to in my letter. I like to shape my letters to reinforce what you say on your application.
4. A copy of the directions for the recommendation letter. Do they ask for a generic "letter of support" or do they direct the letter writer to focus on anything in particular?
5. The name of the person I should be writing the letter to and an address, and, in many cases, an addressed (does not have to be stamped) envelope. Any time the person who will be deciding on you is named, I should personalize the letters.

Supporting Personal Challenges

Whether you are a student with a disability, a health condition, a difficult family situation, or someone who must work a lot of hours in order to support yourself, you may have particular challenges you need to negotiate at Grinnell in addition to your classes. I will work with you to determine which offices on campus can best support you. You should become familiar with the Academic Advising Office, Student Health and Counseling 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.

Sources – Ideas for this syllabus, developed by Joyce Stern, Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, are drawn heavily from the following sources:

Appleby, D.C. (2008). Advising as Teaching and Learning. In V.N. Gordon, W.R. Habley and T.J. Grites (Eds.) *Academic Advising: a comprehensive handbook* (pp. 85-102). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Advising Resources for Faculty – A Toolbox:

www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/facultyresources/

Discussion at the Summer Workshop for Faculty on Advising and Mentoring, Grinnell College, May 19-22, 2009 – with specific input from Dan Reynolds, Vance Byrd, Charles Cunningham, Karla Erickson, Brad Graham, Chris Hunter, Joan Mohan, Tammy Nyden, Damani Phillips, Laura Sinnett, Elizabeth Trimmer, Jerod Weinman.