

Rensselaer Academic Advising Manual



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Rensselaer Academic Advising Manual

V. 1.0

This manual combines information specific to Rensselaer with reprints of articles relevant to academic advising. Please note that

- *Additional materials may be distributed during the school year*
- *Sections are developed in modules, with an expectation that materials may occasionally be copied. Page breaks have been adjusted to keep tables and related information together.*
- *Pages are numbered only for longer subsections*

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1. *Advisor Responsibilities*

Welcome to academic advising at Rensselaer! Your dedication to advising will help Rensselaer students find a path through the transitions from high school through college to career.

The narrowest view of advising is that you review and approve an advisee's course schedule each semester. While that is a critical component, it is a minimal concept of advising. Consider one example of how a student's academic success may be linked to factors other than course selection. Nearly two-thirds of undergraduate students entering Rensselaer in Fall 2004 placed in the top 10% of their high school class. Yet by the end of the year, fifty percent of students will be in the bottom half of the class. For some, this may be the first time they do not excel in school. That transition alone can be a difficult challenge to an advisee's self-identity and academic motivation.

The role of academic advisor is thus much broader than helping with course selection. It also includes:

- Assisting students in understanding their strengths, interests, and values
- Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives
- Assisting students in developing their decision making skills
- Providing and explaining general educational requirements
- Monitoring and discussing issues of concern regarding student's academic progress
- Following through on "Early Warning System" (EWS) alerts regarding an advisee
- Recommending opportunities for personal growth and academic development
- Referring students to specific campus or community resources that can help with unique needs such as career information, study skills, time management, or financial resources
- Providing accurate information about institutional policies, regulations, procedures and resources
- Providing students with information about educational and career paths related to their major

The information supplied here, and other materials available through the Advising and Learning Assistance Center (ALAC), will help you develop skills and knowledge for each of these tasks. The list may suggest that you need to be super-human. Not really: you aren't expected to be psychologist, parent, coddler, and omniscient presence. But throughout your advising work, you do need to remain *human* in your dealings with students and others. When in doubt, think about "how would I want to be treated in this situation?" Better yet, consider

My child/nephew/niece

"How would I want [^] to be treated in this situation?"

Developmental academic advising

This brief introduction to the topic is based on Gary L. Kramer's "Advising Students at Different Educational Levels," in Gordon et al.'s (2000) Academic Advising: a Comprehensive Handbook. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. The book is available in the ALAC office.

As emphasized throughout this manual, effective academic advising involves far more than helping students select their courses. In the past two decades, the field has shifted to a model of "developmental academic advising" based on a premise of student growth and success. According to Gary L. Kramer:

Students are developmentally advised when advisors focus on growth that instills the following in students:

- Awareness of the relationship between education and life
- The ability to set realistic academic and career goals as well as a program to achieve them
- Awareness of life extending beyond the college years

Thus advising includes helping students adjust to college, succeed in college, and prepare for life after college. Along the way students face many tasks, including:

- Developing accurate expectations
- Becoming familiar with college requirements
- Integrating into campus culture
- Navigating through the financial issues
- Setting appropriate goals
- Identifying responsibilities and making commitments
- Identifying and using resources effectively
- Reflecting on their learning and experiences
- Connecting academic plans with career goals
- Preparing for the transition to graduate school or job

A student's ability to meet these challenges depends on his/her learning style, academic preparation, problem-solving skills, family/community responsibilities, and motivation. And, in part, on the assistance received from an academic advisor.

Advising at Rensselaer

Rensselaer departments use three different models for coordinating student advising:

- The decentralized approach has faculty members advise students in addition to their teaching and research duties, with a single advisor working with each advisee. This model is used by the schools of Engineering, Architecture, Sciences (except for Information Technology), and the Cognitive Sciences and Economics departments in Humanities and Social Sciences.
- The centralized approach has a person(s) assigned full-time to advising duties, with no official participation from teaching faculty. This model is used in all other H&SS programs.
- The shared approach recently introduced by Information Technology and the School of Management, assigns each student two advisors: one responsible for helping students with academic guidance, plus a faculty member assigned as a career mentor.

Academic advisors, under any of these models, have access to numerous services and supports at Rensselaer to help you assist your advisees. The next table outlines a few of the basic roles played by advisors and other persons or offices at Rensselaer.

The table below briefly highlights the roles of advisors and some of the related Rensselaer offices.

Office/Role	Description
Academic Advisor	The Academic Advisor is the school's first-line contact with students. The advisor helps a student plan course schedules, monitors the student's progress, encourages career exploration, and offers referrals to additional resources as needed. The advisor identifies student concerns regarding course transfers, exemptions, or substitutions, and advocates for resolution.
Degree Clearance Officer (DCO)	A DCO is the person assigned to review a student's record to determine that it meets all program requirements. A Program's DCO may confirm waivers or substitutions for department-specific requirements. The DCO also can determine when waivers/substitutions for core courses must be reviewed/approved by the Baccalaureate Committee to avoid potential accreditation issues, and will provide the committee with recommendations.
Mentor	<p>Mentors provide support, advocacy, and individual guidance for students. The term is applied to a variety of situations.</p> <p>A faculty mentor in the School of Management is responsible for guiding the student in their career development, discussing options and possible paths.</p> <p>A faculty mentor in the "Faculty Intervention Program" (FIP) is assigned to a first-year student who is on academic probation because of low grades in the first term. FIP mentors meet once a week with their student to provide support and monitor academic progress.</p> <p>A student mentor is an upper-class student assigned to first-year students to help them with the transition from high school to college. Such programs are sponsored by Information Technology, Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA), and a program for female students through the School of Engineering.</p> <p>These formal roles are complemented by informal mentoring by faculty, staff, or students who encourage promising students by sharing their expertise. All academic advising includes mentoring in this larger sense.</p>
Course instructor	The instructor determines course content, syllabus, and grading. For grade challenges, a student starts by discussing the matter with the course instructor. If that discussion does not resolve concerns, the student's next step is to talk with the department chair. (See the "Student Handbook" for more about appeals.)
Department Chair	Among their other duties, department chairs also are involved in resolving requests for waivers or substitutions for program requirements and other matters. Chairs are the second level of grade appeals.
Advising & Learning Assistance Center (ALAC)	ALAC provides support services to help students succeed, such as tutoring or assistance with time management and study skills. The Center coordinates an Early Warning System to identify and reach out to students having trouble in courses. ALAC also coordinates review of student records for determining matters such as academic probation or dismissal. ALAC provides support, training, and consultation for academic advisors.
Office of First Year Experience (FYE)	FYE coordinates programs, information, and other services to create a positive experience for students new to Rensselaer, whether first-year or transfer. FYE sponsors orientation programs, family weekends, and more.
Dean of Students Office (DOSO)	DOSO coordinates and provides a range of services to improve the overall development of students, including programs for international, minority, and disabled students, fraternities, and others. DOSO has responsibility for all student judicial affairs, and decisions regarding leaves, absences, and withdrawals.
Student Records and Financial Services (SR&FS)	SRFS implements academic and financial policies, maintains student academic and financial records, and preserves the confidentiality, security and ethical handling of those records. SR&FS includes offices of the Bursar, the Registrar, and Financial Aid.

Early Warning System (EWS)

Rensselaer's Early Warning System (EWS) is a new initiative of the Advising and Learning Assistance Center. EWS is an electronic alert system to enable instructors to notify ALAC of students who they feel are experiencing difficulty in class. An instructor can post an alert about a student (usually through the class SIS page) regarding academic performance or other concerns.

Academic concerns

Common academic concerns to be reported to EWS include:

- Irregular attendance
- Very late or missing assignments
- Poor performance on quizzes, tests, or projects
- Very weak skills in prerequisites such as writing or math

In these cases, a message is sent to the student, their academic advisor, ALAC, and (in the case of first-year students) the Office of First-Year Experience. The note includes the instructor's name, date, class, and nature of concern. The advisor (and, if appropriate, FYE) should then follow up with the student. Often an email to the student, and their reply, is sufficient. Depending on the situation, an advisor may refer the student for services. In either case, monitoring the student's progress is essential.

Other concerns

Sometimes instructors may be concerned about a student's behaviors or emotional status. In these cases, a message is sent to the advisor, ALAC, and FYE (if first-year student), but the student does not receive the original message. In these cases, ALAC coordinates a response, possibly consulting with the instructor and/or advisor prior to contacting the student.

Advisor participation

As an advisor, you will be an important contact for a student who receives early warning. What will you be expected to do if you receive an alert about one of your students?

- Contact the student (by email or phone) and invite him/her to discuss the situation with you. In some cases, an advisee's email reply may be sufficient. Depending on the level of concern or the response, you may want to ask the advisee to stop by during office hours to talk more.
- Provide a safe space for discussion, and try to understand the student's perspective. As an advisor you should be willing and able to explore concerns that may underlie academic performance, such as family or development issues, anxiety, depression, or other concerns.
- Be familiar with Rensselaer resources, so that you can provide referrals to appropriate support services. The final section of this manual describes various campus services. Common referrals are to ALAC for tutoring or help with study skills; the Counseling Center, the Dean of Students Office for support tailored to minority, international, or disabled students; or Student Records and Financial Services for financial or record-related matters.
- Contact ALAC if you have any hesitations or concerns about the matter.

Diversity considerations

When advising students, remember that you will be working with a variety of differences. For one thing, students are younger, with less life experience. Your advisees may be at different stages of development (see separate section on developmental issues). You will be working with students at different levels of intelligence, maturity, and wealth. Perhaps some will have a learning disability, or be of a different race, religion, or gender. Some tips to keep in mind:

- Refrain from stereotyping or generalizing groups of people.
- Try to emphasize your similarities, perhaps by discussing your own experiences in college.
- Respect the right of students to have their own opinions, even as you may work to help them develop their understanding and improve their decision-making skills.
- Be open-minded.
- Be patient.
- If you do get frustrated, stop to consider “how would I want my child/niece/nephew to be treated if they had this concern?”

Rensselaer has numerous resources on campus to help minority students, and to help faculty in working with students from various backgrounds. See this manual’s referral section for more information.

Confidentiality

For advising to be successful, students must be able to trust that the information they share with you about their academic concerns or personal situations will be kept confidential. This right to confidentiality is covered by federal law in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as Amended (commonly known as FERPA, the Privacy Act or the Buckley Amendment). It is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. In short, student information should not be accessed or discussed with others unnecessarily.

Information can be shared internally without violating confidentiality, however, in cases of “legitimate educational interest” -- any authorized interest or activity undertaken in the name of the University for which access to an educational record is necessary or appropriate to the proper performance of the undertaking.

How to Thrive, Not Just Survive, as a New Advisor

Source: Miller, M. A. (2002, December). How to Thrive, Not Just Survive, As a New Advisor. The Academic Advising News, 25(4). As retrieved 8/11/04 from the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/newadvisor.htm>.

Whether you come to advising as a new hire or as a veteran faculty member, the first few weeks advising students can be overwhelming. It can be a challenge to organize the various demands so that you will not only survive advising, but thrive doing it. Since students' academic futures depend upon your advice, you need to understand what students expect from you.

A look at advisor evaluation tools shows that students expect you to be proficient in three critical areas: they expect you to know the college; they expect you to be able to help them solve problems; and they expect you to be able to communicate effectively.

One of the first things any new advisor should do is become familiar with the campus culture. Who are your students? What needs do they have? Ask advisors working in your specific field or at the same level (freshmen, graduate students, etc.) what issues students typically bring to advisors. Then connect these issues to the applicable campus services. Walk around campus and meet the people in each service area. Write down names, office locations and contact phone numbers.

Advisees expect you to know your institution's academic programs, policies and procedures, i.e., how to read placement scores, who helps students explore different majors, how a student drops or adds a course. Read the catalog. Talk to faculty and staff members. Target topics germane to your situation and have the director of advising or an experienced advisor walk through the advising folders of students who have been successfully helped with issues in each area.

Advisees also expect you to help them solve a wide variety of problems, i.e., how to balance their course loads with life responsibilities, what courses should or should not be taken simultaneously, etc. Listen. Then provide perspective and options. Know where to find answers. Talk to course instructors and other advisors. Seek out the perspective of students who have successfully completed courses frequently taken by your advisees.

Finally, advisees expect you to know how to communicate effectively. This is much easier if you are already familiar with a student's advising folder. Take some time before the student arrives to review the folder. Be friendly and focus on the student, minimizing distractions such as phone calls. Use the student's name. Learn to say: "I don't know but let's find out." Don't send the student on a scavenger hunt for a nameless, faceless office; pick up the phone and call your campus contact. Helping the student make a referral appointment will increase the likelihood of follow-through.

Remember that many students come to an advising session on one pretext when the real issue is something completely different. Learn to hear the real reason for the visit. Help the student identify the problem and brainstorm potential solutions. Don't dictate. Instead, empower the student by letting the student decide which course of action is best.

At the end of a session, ask "what question haven't we answered today?" Leave time to deal with these issues and, if needed, schedule a follow-up session to evaluate the outcome of any planned actions.

While the first few weeks of advising are filled with challenges, taking time to address these vital areas can establish you as an effective and trusted advisor.

NACADA Core Values of Academic Advising

This section highlights the contribution of advisors to their students, schools, and profession. Background information on NACADA, and the development of the statement precedes a list of values important for successful academic advising. Source: NACADA. (1994). NACADA Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising. Retrieved 8/11/04 from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources, <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Research_Related/corevalues.htm>. Emphasis added.

Background information

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is an organization of professional advisors, faculty, administrators, students and others from a variety of settings who do academic advising or otherwise work to promote quality academic advising on college and university campuses. As members of this organization or of the profession of academic advising, or as others who advise or provide related programs and services to students, we must recognize our responsibility not only to students and the institutions in which our advising is done, but to society, to colleagues, and to ourselves.

While not all those who do academic advising are professional advisors, anyone carrying out advising functions should be expected to perform in a professional manner. The Core Values identified and discussed here provide a framework against which those who advise can measure their own performance.

In no way does this Core Values statement try to dictate that all academic advising needs to be done in precisely the same way by everyone, or that there is one particular advising philosophy or model. Instead, these are reference points for professionals to use. Furthermore, the Core Values do not carry equal weight. Advisors will find some Core Values more important than others, depending on their own philosophies and those of their colleges or universities.

The Power of Academic Advising

Few experiences in students' postsecondary career have as much potential for influencing their development as does academic advising. Through regular contact with students--whether face-to-face, through the mail, on the telephone, or through computer mediated systems--advisors gain meaningful insights into student's academic, social, and personal experiences and needs. Advisors use these insights to help students feel a part of the academic community, develop sound academic and career goals, and ultimately be successful learners.

Because of the nature of academic advising, advisors often develop a broad vision of the institution. Advisors can therefore play an important interpretive role with administrators, faculty, and staff, helping them further understand students' academic and personal development needs. Advisors can teach others to identify students who, with additional attention from academic support staff, may achieve their goals to succeed academically and personally.

Students place a great deal of trust in their advisors. That trust warrants quality programs and services. It is through our Core Values that students' expectations of academic advising are honored.

Beliefs about students

Like other educators, academic advisors work to strengthen the importance, dignity, potential, and unique nature of each individual served within the academic setting. Our work as advisors is guided by our beliefs that:

- students can be responsible for their own behavior;
- students can be successful as a result of their individual goals and efforts;

- students have a desire to learn;
- learning needs vary according to individual skills, goals and experiences; and
- students hold their own beliefs and opinions.

Why our Core Values are important

Out of these beliefs grow our Core Values. Regardless of our professional preparation and experience, each of us in the field of academic advising is ultimately guided in our work by what we perceive as important, what we value, and what we believe about those we serve--primarily students, but also others in the institutions within which we work, and even the institutions themselves.

We recognize the complex nature of academic advising, the wide variety of settings and tasks for which academic advisors are responsible, and the diverse backgrounds and experiences of academic advisors. Yet, while values and beliefs are by their very nature individual, there are many that are subscribed to by those who advise students. Through this statement of Core Values we communicate to others what they can expect from us. These Core Values may be used to validate our conduct in our diverse roles and our relationships within the academic community.

The Core Values

Students deserve dependable, accurate, respectful, honest, friendly, and professional service. In order to serve students well, academic advisors understand that they are responsible to many constituents who comprise our academic communities. This is the foundation on which the following Core Values rest.

Advisors are responsible to the students and individuals they serve.

The cooperative efforts of all who advise help to deliver quality programs and services to students. These include, but are not limited to, giving accurate and timely information, maintaining regular office hours, and keeping appointments.

Advisors help students develop a perception of themselves and their relationship to the future. Advisors introduce students in a nurturing way to the world they are entering--teaching them to value the learning process, put the college experience into perspective, become more responsible, set priorities and evaluate sequences of events, and be honest with themselves.

Advisors encourage self-reliance by helping students make informed and responsible decisions, set realistic goals, and develop thinking, learning, and life management skills to meet present and future needs. Advisors work with students to help them accomplish the goals and objectives they have established for themselves. Advisors encourage students to be responsible for their own success and progress. They respect students' rights to their individual beliefs and opinions but are not dictated to by them.

Advisors work to modify barriers to student progress; identify burdensome, ineffective, and inefficient policies and procedures; and work to effect change. When the needs of students and the institution are in conflict, advisors seek a resolution that is in the best interest of both parties. Advisors inform students about appropriate grievance procedures in cases where students find the resolution unsatisfactory.

Advisors recognize the changing nature of the college and university environment and student body. They support students in appropriate ways (e.g., advocate at the administrative level for recognition of these changes; offer varied office hours; and acknowledge the special needs of all students and the pressures on them to juggle study with work, family, and other interpersonal demands).

Advisors are knowledgeable about and sensitive to federal, state, and their own institution's policies and procedures, especially those governing such matters as sexual harassment, personal relationships with students, privacy of student information, equal treatment, equal access, and equal opportunity.

Advisors respect the rights of students to have information about themselves kept confidential. Advisors share information with others about students and their programs only when both advisor and student believe that information is relevant and will result in increased information or assistance, assessment, and provision of appropriate services to the student.

Advisors gain access to and use computerized information about students only when that information is relevant to the advising they are doing with that particular student. Advisors enter or change information on students' records only when legitimately authorized to do so.

Advisors need to document advising contacts adequately to aid subsequent advising interactions.

Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.

Effective advising requires a broad-based, or holistic, approach to working with students. Academic advisors develop crucial ties with others who assist students in diverse areas, such as admissions, orientation, financial aid, housing, health services, athletics, course selection and satisfaction of academic requirements, special physical and educational needs (e.g., disabilities, study skills, psychological counseling), foreign study, career development, co-curricular programs, and graduation clearance.

Advisors are facilitators and mediators. Responsible academic advisors recognize their limitations and use their specialized knowledge effectively.

To make connections between academic advising and other aspects of students' lives, **advisors seek out resources provided by others.** Referrals to these resources provide students with further assessments of their needs and access to appropriate programs and services. With others, advisors are responsible for helping students integrate the information they are confronted with and for helping students make well-informed academic decisions.

If peer advisors are used, the supervising advisor will closely monitor the peer advisor regarding adherence to appropriate policies and practices.

Advisors are responsible to the college or university in which they work.

Advisors respect the opinions of their colleagues; remain neutral when students present them with comments, questions, or opinions about other faculty or staff; and are non-judgmental about academic programs.

Advisors increase their collective professional strength by sharing their philosophies and techniques with colleagues.

Advisors keep administrators who are not involved directly in the advising process informed and aware of the importance of academic advising in students' lives, and of the need for administrative support of advising and related activities.

Advisors abide by the specific policies, procedures and values of the department and institution for which they work. Where injustices occur and might interfere with students' learning, advisors advocate for change on behalf of students with the institution's administration, faculty, and staff.

Advisors are responsible to higher education generally.

Academic advisors honor (and are protected by) the concept of academic freedom as practiced on our campuses. In this spirit, advisors hold a variety of points of view. Academic advisors are free to base their work with students on the most appropriate and optimum theories of college student development and models of delivery for academic advising programs and services.

Advisors accept that one of the goals of education is to introduce students to the world of ideas. One goal of academic advising is to establish a partnership between student and advisor to guide students through their academic programs so they may attain the knowledge gained and offered by faculty.

Academic advisors believe that it is ultimately the responsibility of students to apply what they learn to everyday situations. Advisors help students in understanding this process.

Advisors advocate for students' educational achievement at the highest attainable standard and support student goals, as well as the educational mission of the institution.

Advisors advocate the creation or strengthening of programs and services that are compatible with students' academic needs.

Advisors are responsible to the community (including the local community, state, and region in which the institution is located).

Academic advisors interpret the institution's mission, standards, goals, and values to its community, including public and private schools from which the college or university draws its student body. Likewise, advisors understand their student body and regularly inform the schools from which their students come about appropriate preparation so that students may perform successfully in higher education.

Advisors are sensitive to the values and mores of the surrounding community, sharing these with and interpreting them to students. Advisors are aware of community programs and services and may become models for students by participating in community activities themselves.

Advisors are responsible to their professional role as advisors and to themselves personally.

To keep advising skills honed and interest high, advisors are encouraged to seek opportunities for professional development through classes, workshops, conferences, reading, consultation with others, and interaction in formal groups with other advisors (e.g., professional organizations like NACADA).

Advisors understand the demands on themselves that emerge from the service nature of the work they do. Advisors develop skills for taking care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They learn how to detach themselves from students' problems while maintaining a keen listening ear and providing sensitive responses. They establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. They need to be nurtured by others within the profession and they need to nurture their colleagues. They seek support for themselves within and outside the institution.

Academic advising lends itself well to research. Advisors may engage in research related to advising, and are encouraged to engage in research related to their own particular training and disciplinary backgrounds. Each research agenda must honor the institution's safeguards for privacy and humane treatment of subjects.

2. **Student Responsibilities**

Sometimes advisors are concerned that they are expected to “coddle” students or make decisions best left to the students. But neither idea is true. Good advising should nurture each student’s decision-making skill, explain options, and explore student concerns. Students, however, are responsible for their actions and choices. Often students, especially first-year or sophomores, may need help from the advisor in handling these responsibilities, and even in understanding them. General responsibilities include:

- To complete and review a plan of study
- To monitor progress towards their degree
- To come to advising sessions prepared with questions regarding curriculum, course selections, career options, or other concerns to discuss with their advisor
- To know their advisor’s office hours and meet with him/her at least once a semester
- To understand that the advisor’s role is to give information and options to help the student make an informed decision, but not to make the decisions.
- To understand that it is up to the student to fulfill all requirements necessary to graduate.

Suggested Student Tasks by Class Year

Students may need your guidance to understand how to meet their responsibilities. Ken Connor in ECSE and David Nichols, an advisor in ECSE and STS, have outlined important tasks they “assign” to their students, by year, with tips on how advisors can help advisees. The modified information below may give you ideas for “tasks” to assign to your advisees to help them succeed.

First Year Tasks

- **Select a major**
Students usually know what they want as a major before they are assigned as your advisee. If so ask them to explore dual major and minor options, and related requirements. If they do not know or have two majors in mind, ask them to read the requirements and the course descriptions. Beyond the catalog there are other resources to be used, especially the Career Development Center (CDC) and faculty. The specific “homework assignment” is based upon concerns identified or suggested in your initial student interview.
- **Develop or begin to develop a plan of study**
Study plans, a complete outline of courses to be taken each semester, are a tool for planning how program requirements will be met. The requirements, and thus the plan, depend upon the student’s major(s) and minor(s). Many programs offer sample plans in the Course Catalog. For ECSE majors there are checklists or templates available for each major and dual major within the department and two interdepartmental dual majors, ApplPhy & EE and CSE & CS. However, they do need to plan their H&SS core and plan it quickly because the core is usually completed at the end of the third year. So, ask them to read the catalog and work out a plan of courses that will satisfy the requirements and engage their interest.
- **Get to know a faculty member or two**
Students often are reluctant to talk to faculty outside of class. Encourage your advisees to introduce themselves to a faculty member, ask them how they got into their field, and find out what their current research interests are. Explain office hours, and suggest students talk with their course professors. A short role-play may help advisees become more comfortable with meeting faculty. You may need to assure them that teachers are also fellow humans: they were once college students, and may even share some of the student’s interests.

- **Consider joining a club, sport, or organization.**
The transition from high school to college may be difficult for some students. Help students understand that activities outside the classroom can give them a chance to connect with others as well as explore interests.

Second Year Tasks

- **Learn about Co-op, Undergraduate Research (URP), Study Abroad, and Internships.**
For most engineering or science students, the choice is usually Co-op, URP or neither. H&SS majors may find Internships and Study Abroad more appealing. So, give your advisee the task of visiting the CDC, and reviewing the websites for URP and Study Abroad. You may explain to them that it is easier to find a URP in person and recommend that they visit faculty during their office hours. You can also send advisees emails with announcements about Summer URP's that are available at other universities and national laboratories
- **Get to know another faculty member or two.**
Ask about your advisee's progress in getting to know faculty. At this point they can begin to understand that knowing the research interest of the faculty is helpful in selecting courses and locating a URP.

Third Year Tasks

- **Pick a concentration and select other electives**
Now that your students have taken a variety of courses and met a number of faculty members, they should be starting to focus on specific interests. They may, however, need help in understanding how courses in other programs may complement their main program.
- **Consider the next step: graduate school or work?**
If they know that grad school is their next step, ask them to plan a process for selecting the schools to which they apply. This requires them to identify their specific interests and to visit faculty whose research is in the same field as their interest. The purpose of the visits is to determine which schools are doing the research of interest to them. I also ask them to determine the dates of the GRE exams and the time line for applications and admission to the schools of interest. For students who are interested in the world of work, insist that they visit and register with the CDC. This is the one assignment that is always completed!
- **Talk with still more faculty**
Often students can choose several electives during the senior year. Encourage advisees to meet with faculty who teach courses related to the student's interests. Encourage students to consider which faculty to develop as references and mentors. You may want to make this an assignment, and monitor how they are doing with the assignment.

Fourth Year Task

- **Explore carefully: will you be able to graduate on time?**
Ask the advisee to use a program checklist or description to determine if they will clear for graduation. Then meet with the student to go over their CAPP report to confirm that everything is in order. The CAPP Report shows requirements only for the primary major, so if the student has a dual/double major or minor, also review those requirements. They can then be assured that there are no impediments to graduation as long as they pass all courses.

Student handouts

Students often need help in developing skills in managing time, studying effectively, and making decisions. The following handouts from the Advising and Learning Assistance Center may be helpful for your advisees. These and other materials are available through the ALAC office, or on the website at <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/advising/>.

The Seven Characteristics of Effective Planners

1. **They break projects into realistic tasks with manageable deadlines.** They establish steps that will lead them toward the completion of complicated projects, generate realistic deadlines for the completion of these steps, and work to meet these deadlines. They give themselves "false due dates" to keep themselves accountable for progression towards the completion of a project. They write their tasks down and cross off activities once they are finished to give themselves a sense of continual accomplishment.
2. They operate in two time horizons. **They utilize an assortment of short term and long term planning aids.** They use both calendars and action lists to plot out activities according to due dates. They have daily objectives to move them toward the completion of multiple tasks and they continually review long-term goals so they don't "lose sight of the forest for the trees."
3. They begin projects early. **They give themselves the time and freedom to brainstorm about the best alternatives to accomplish their objectives.** Starting early on an assignment gives people the opportunity to gather information, ruminate over the matter, collaborate with others for assistance, and modify plans for convenience or effectiveness. They are honest with themselves about how their plans are going and they are willing to modify plans for better results.
4. **They seek advice from others.** They eagerly accept input from anyone in a position to assist them or offer them information. They will review other's materials, converse and correspond with expert sources, and consider other's ideas as they chart out a course of action.
5. They delegate whenever possible. Even the most energetic people can't do everything themselves. **Effective planners delegate tasks to those they can trust to get things done, and they monitor the activity without micro management.** If you're going to waste time micro managing, you may as perform the activity yourself and not insult a colleague or subordinate. Effective planners also inform people involved as much in advance as possible about any role they may have in the activity to allow them time to plan ahead as well.
6. **They remain flexible and persistent.** They have a plan "B." They anticipate obstacles. They are proactive rather than reactive, and thus **can shift to other plans to ensure that the overall goal is accomplished.** They remain persistent in the face of adversity by considering other avenues of approach when encountering barriers. They "Never say Die."
7. **They realize that "No" is sometimes the appropriate response to a request.** An effective planner has the ability to say, "I will get back to you on that, let me think about it overnight" or "No, I cannot do that" if there is uncertainty about whether or not the request can be fulfilled. When unable to carry out a request, a professional can still be of assistance by providing direction or offering alternatives to the person seeking help.

Top Ten Study Tips

1. Study difficult (or boring) subjects first.

If your chemistry problems put you to sleep, get to them first, while you are fresh. Save the subjects you enjoy for later - you'll be more motivated to do those later on. With that chore out of the way, the rest of the day can be a breeze.

2. Find your best time to study.

Many successful people begin their day around 5 a.m. The day is quiet and peaceful. Other people come awake and alive after dark, and do their best work during the night hours. Find out which time is most productive for you and schedule your day around making that time available to study.

3. Use time between classes and activities.

Using small bits of time to review information can later save you hours. Be prepared to review notes, or have formulas or definitions on index cards ready to go over. That hour between lunch and your next class is a great time to start a reading assignment.

4. Find a regular study area.

By using a particular area to study, you train your mind and body to expect to study when you arrive at your study place. Try to avoid doing other things at your study place (playing games, eating, goofing off) so that your mind does not get mixed messages about what you are supposed to do at your study place.

5. Study where you will be alert.

In bed your body gets the signal "time to sleep" rather than "study time". For that reason, don't study where you sleep! Just as you train your body to be alert at your desk, you train your body to slow down near your bed. The library is a great place for learning. The lighting is perfect. The noise level is low. Materials are available. Most people can get more done in a shorter time at the library.

6. Learn to say no.

This is a time saver and a valuable life skill for everyone. Many people feel it is rude to refuse a request, but saying no can be done effectively and courteously. Others want you to succeed as a student. When you tell them that you can't do what they ask because you are busy educating yourself, most people will understand.

7. Pay attention to your attention, don't lose focus.

Breaks in concentration are often caused by internal interruptions. Stay on task. If you notice you are thinking of the TV show you just watched instead of the IEA problems in front of you, take a minute to reestablish your concentration.

8. Avoid noise distractions.

Avoid studying in front of the television and turn off the stereo to keep your attention on your work. Many students insist that they study better with background noise, and that may be true, but in most cases quiet is best. Schedule your study times when your living quarters are usually quiet. Quiet hours are a great time to get work done and that is why we have them. Of course, there are always earplugs!

9. Am I being too hard on myself?

Take a minute and listen to the messages that you are giving yourself. Are you scolding yourself too harshly? Lighten up. Allow yourself to feel foolish and get on with the task at hand.

10. Can I do anything today that I would have to do tomorrow?

Ask yourself this question at the end of a long day. Almost always you will have enough energy to do just one more short task. If you get in the habit of working until you are done and then doing one more thing, those end-of-the-day tasks will soon add up. The overall increase in your productivity might surprise you.

25 Tips to Make Better Use of Your Time

When to Study

1. Study difficult (or boring) subjects first.

If your chemistry problems put you to sleep, get to them first, while you are fresh. We tend to study what we like first, yet the courses we find most difficult often require the most creative energy. Save the subjects you enjoy for later. If you find yourself avoiding a particular subject, get up an hour early to study it before breakfast. With that chore out of the way, the rest of the day can be a breeze.

Continually avoiding a subject might indicate a trouble area. Sometimes we find subjects to be boring when we're overwhelmed or under-prepared. Finding a study group or tutor could turn the situation around. Consistently avoiding study tasks can also be a signal to reexamine your major or course program.

2. Be aware of your best time of day.

Many successful people begin their day around 5 a.m. The day is quiet and peaceful. Other people come awake and alive after dark, and do their best work after midnight. Find out which time is most productive for you.

3. Use waiting time.

Using small bits of time to review information can save you hours later. Be prepared to review notes, or have formulas or definitions on index cards ready to go over. By using 5 minutes here and 15 minutes there, you will retain information and keep out of the trap of not studying anything unless you have at least a solid hour to study.

Where to study

4. Use a regular study area.

By using a particular area to study, you train your mind and body to expect to study when you arrive at your study place. Try to avoid doing other things at your study place (like playing games, eating, goofing off), so that your mind does not get mixed messages about what you are suppose to be doing.

5. Study where you will be alert.

In bed your body gets a signal. For most students, it's more likely to be "Time to sleep" than "Time to study". For that reason don't sleep where you study! Just as you train your body to be alert at your desk, you train your body to slow down near your bed.

6. Use a Library.

Libraries are designed for learning. The lighting is perfect. The noise level is low. Materials are available. Entering a library is a signal to quiet the mind and get to work. Most people can get more done in a shorter time at the library. Experiment for yourself.

How to handle the rest of the world.

7. Pay attention to your attention.

Breaks in concentration are often caused by internal interruptions. Your own thoughts jump in to tell you another story about the world. When that happens, notice the thoughts and let them go.

Perhaps the thought of getting something else done is distracting you. One option is to handle the task now and study later. Or write yourself a note about it, or schedule a specific time to do it.

8. Agree with living mates about study time.

This includes roommates, parents, spouses, and kids. Make the rules clear and be sure to follow them yourself. Explicit agreements - - even written contracts - - work well. One student always wears a colorful hat when she wants to study. When living mates see the hat, they respect her wish to be left alone.

9. Get off the phone.

The telephone is the ultimate interrupter. People who wouldn't think of distracting you might call at the worst times because they can't see that you are studying. It can be easy for you to rationalize interrupting your study for a phone call. After all, it wasn't your fault the phone rang, and besides, you don't want to be rude.

You don't have to be a telephone victim. If a simple "I can't talk, I'm studying" doesn't work, use dead silence. It's a conversation killer. Or short-circuit the whole problem. Unplug the phone. Get an answering machine or study at the library.

10. Learn to say no.

This is a time saver and a valuable life skill for everyone. Many people feel it is rude to refuse a request, but saying no can be done effectively and courteously. Others want you to succeed as a student. When you tell them that you can't do what they ask because you are busy educating yourself, most people will understand.

11. Hang a "DO NOT DISTURB" sign on your door.

Many hotels give you one free, just for the advertising. Or you can make a creative one. They work. Using signs can relieve you of making a decision about cutting off each interruption - - a timesaver in itself.

12. Get ready the night before.

Completing a few simple tasks just before you go to bed can help you get in gear faster the next day. If you need to make some phone calls first thing in the morning, look up those numbers, write them on a 3x5 card, and set them next to the telephone. If you must drive somewhere new, put the address with your car keys, if you are heading out to write a paper, attend class, see a tutor, work with a group, get all your materials together in your backpack so that all you have to do is grab it and head out the door.

13. Call ahead.

The telephone, besides being a prime time waster, can also be used as a time saver. If you have to drive to a specific store to get a badly needed part for a project, call first to make sure the store has the part in stock. They might even have it packaged and waiting for you at the cash register, so you don't use extra time looking for it. Get directions if you are driving some place new. A few seconds on the phone can save you hours in wasted trips and wrong turns.

14. Avoid noise distractions.

To promote concentration, avoid studying in front of the television and turn off the stereo. Many students insist that they study better with background noise, and that may be true. Some students report good results with carefully selected and controlled music. The overwhelming majority of research indicates that silence is the best form of music for study.

At times, noise may be out of your control. A neighbor or roommate decides to find out how far he can turn up the stereo before the walls crumble. Meanwhile your concentration on your studies goes down the tube.

To get past this, schedule your study times when your living quarters are usually quiet. If the noise is during the "Quiet Hours" of your hall, insist that the RA enforce the QUIET portion. Or you can go to one of those quiet places you have discovered.

Some people become extremely good at filtering out all distractions by training themselves to focus attention on their studies and ignore the auditory input. Others buy ear plugs from the hardware store, those made for working with chain saws.

15. Notice how others misuse your time.

Beware of repeat offenders. Ask yourself if there are certain friends or relatives who consistently interrupt your study time. If avoiding the interrupter is impractical, send a clear message. Sometimes others don't realize they are breaking your concentration. You can give them a gentle yet firm reminder.

Things you can ask yourself when you get stuck.

16. Ask: What is one task I can accomplish towards my goal?

This is a useful technique to use on big imposing jobs. Pick out one small accomplishment, preferably one that can be completed in five minutes, then do it. The satisfaction of getting one thing done often spurs you on to get one more thing done. Meanwhile, the job gets smaller.

17. Ask: Am I being too hard on myself?

Take a minute and listen to the messages that you are giving yourself. Are you scolding yourself too harshly? Lighten up. Allow yourself to feel foolish and get on with the task at hand.

Are you worrying about the future? (How will I get this done? If I can't do this problem, how will I pass next week's exam?) Such thoughts do not promote learning, but increase anxiety. They are often based on unrealistic expectations and seldom serve you well.

Generalizing problems also lead to dead ends. Instead of saying, "I'm no good at IEA", be specific and say "I have difficulty with 3 dimensional graphing and labeling of vectors." The second statement gives a specific area that needs attention, such as working with a tutor, working in a study group, seeing the professor, or the teaching assistant.

18. Ask: Is this a piano?

Carpenters who build rough frames for buildings have a saying they use when they bend a nail or hack a chunk out of a two-by-four: "Well this isn't a piano." It means that perfection is not necessary.

Ask yourself if what you are doing needs to be perfect. You don't have to apply the same standard of grammar to review notes that you apply to a term paper. If you can complete a job 95 percent perfect in 2 hours and 100 percent perfect in 4 hours, ask whether the additional 5 percent improvement is worth doubling the amount of time you spend.

Sometimes it is a piano. A tiny mistake can ruin a lab experiment. Data, with a small error, run on a computer can be rapidly compounded in to a monstrous error. Accept lower standards only when they are appropriate.

A related suggestion is to weed out low-priority tasks. The to-do list for a large project can include dozens of items. Not all of them are equally important. Some can be done later on, and others could be skipped all together if time is short. You can manage time more powerfully if you know what the low-priority items are and choose whether or not to do them.

Apply this when you study. In a long reading assignment, preview before lecture, then read the material after the lecture, concentrating on the sections that the professor emphasized in lecture. When you review your notes, predict test questions the professor could ask over the material and study those areas. If you are doing well in a subject and another one is struggling, let the good subject slide for a day and concentrate on the more difficult subject.

19. Ask: Would I pay myself for what I'm doing right now?

If you were employed as a student, would you be earning your wages? Ask yourself this question when you notice that you've taken your third email or computer game or snack break in 30 minutes. Most students are, in fact, employed as students. They are investing their own productivity and paying a big price for the privilege of being a student. Sometimes they don't realize what a mediocre job may cost them.

20. Ask: Can I do just one more thing?

Ask yourself this question at the end of a long day. Almost always you will have enough energy to do just one more short task. If you get in the habit of working until you are done and then doing one more thing, those end-of-the-day tasks will soon add up. The overall increase in your productivity might surprise you.

21 Ask: Am I making time for things that are important but not urgent?

It's easy to let crises and last-minute emergencies eat up our time. There are assignments to complete, papers to write, phone calls to return, letters to answer, and errands to run. Most of them seem so urgent that we dare not let them go.

Yet if we spend all our time "putting out fires," we may feel drained and frustrated. This happens when we forget to take time for things that are truly important, but not urgent. Examples are regular exercise, reading for enjoyment, prayer or meditation, quality time with friends or family, solitude, hobbies, eating nutritious meals in a leisurely fashion. When schedules get tight, these important activities seem to be the first to go until we have more time.

You'll never have more time. Knowing this, monitor your time. Can an urgent task be delegated or eliminated all together? Schedule time for the important tasks. That way they won't get lost in the shuffle.

22 Ask: Can I delegate this?

Instead of slogging through complicated tasks alone, you can draw on the talent and energy of others. Use a study group to discuss the reading you are assigned, or to work on review problems together. If 5 people do five different problems and then discuss how they did them and why they choose the method they used, you learn more, and develop different ways to tackle your problems when you work by yourself. Use a study group to do peer review and editing of papers that you have to write, brainstorm topics, or develop lists of sources.

If you miss a class, find a class mate to go over the material that was covered that you missed (lecture, discussions, assignments given in class) You avoid missing something important and the person who briefs you gets to repeat the material, helping in his/her review and learning.

23. Ask: How did I just waste time?

Notice when time passes and you haven't accomplished what you planned. Take a minute to review your actions and note the specific ways you wasted time. We operate by habit and tend to waste time in the same ways over and over again. When you are aware of things you do that kill your time, you are more likely to catch yourself in the act next time. Observing one small quirk may save you hours. One reminder: Noting how you waste time in not the same as feeling guilty about it. The point is not to blame yourself but to increase your skill. That means getting specific information about how you use time.

24. Ask: Could I find the time if I really wanted to?

Often the way people speak rules out the option of finding more time. An alternative is to speak about time with more possibility. The next time you are tempted to say, “I don’t have time,” pause for a minute. Question the truth of the statement. Could you find 4 more hours this week for studying? Suppose that someone offered to pay you \$10,000 to find those four hours. Suppose, too, that you will get paid only if you don’t lose sleep, call in sick for work, or sacrifice anything important to you. Could you find the time if vast sums of money were involved?

Remember that when it comes to school, vast sums of money are involved.

25. Ask: Am I willing to promise it?

The point of making a promise is not to chain ourselves to rigid schedules or impossible expectations. We can also promise to reach goals without unbearable stress. We can keep our schedules flexible and carry out our plans with ease, joy and satisfaction.

At times we go too far. Some promises are truly beyond us and we may break them. However failing to keep a promise is just that - - failing to keep a promise. A broken promise is not the worst thing in the world.

Promises can work magic. When our word is on the line, it’s possible to discover reserves of time and energy we didn’t know existed. Promises can push us to a breakthrough.

3. Advising Cycles

Semester Advising Cycles

Fall semester

Pre-semester	Some advisors may participate in first-year/transfer Student Orientation (SO) during the summer or immediately before the start of the school year. This can be a good way to orient yourself to first-year students and their concerns.
Week 2	Add deadline: students may have questions about courses and program requirements. Returning students may also have registration concerns. Meet-Your-Advisor-Day (MYAD) lunch: school-specific training to prepare for MYAD. Concerns for returning students: an advisee might have been placed, or continued, on academic probation because of poor grades. Such students may be concerned about their course load or ability to pull up their grades.
Week 3	Meet Your Advisor Day: an hour is set aside when all advisors serving first-year students meet their advisees in a group session.
Week 4 (and continuing)	Early Warning System (EWS) alerts: instructors may start sending notes about students who seem to have academic, emotional, or other problems.
Week 8	Drop deadline: Students may be concerned about academic performance, or have questions about how dropping a course may affect their progress towards degree completion.
Week 10	Consultation week: students may seek help for deciding which courses to take for the next semester.
Week 12	Pass/No Credit deadline: students may want to discuss the impact of requesting P/NC status for a course.
Post-semester	Grade concerns: students may contact you if they are concerned about low grades, or may want to appeal a course grade.

Spring semester

Pre-semester	Academic probation: advisees who earned low grades in the preceding semester may be on academic probation. First-year students on probation will be assigned a mentor through the Faculty Intervention Program (FIP). The students may be strongly concerned about their course load or ability to pull up their grades.
Week 2	Add deadline: students may have questions about courses and program requirements. They may also have registration concerns.
Week 4 (and continuing)	Early Warning System (EWS) alerts: instructors may start sending notes about students who seem to have academic, emotional, or other problems. Transfer/change majors: Students may be rethinking their choice of major or their choice of Rensselaer.
Week 8	Drop deadline: Students may be worried about academic performance, or have questions about how dropping a course may affect their plan of study.
Week 10	Consultation week: students may seek help for deciding which courses to take for the next semester. References: students may be requesting a job/school reference, or needing help in selecting appropriate references.
Week 12	Pass/No Credit deadline: students may want to discuss the impact of requesting P/NC status for a course.

Common student issues by month

This list of issues, compiled from a Housing/DISCUSS listserv, might be helpful to you as a reminder of the academic, developmental, and emotional concerns students may face during the school year. Not all students will experience all these issues, and concerns won't always surface during the month indicated. However, experience suggests that these issues often do occur during the months identified.

September

- Homesickness – especially for first-year students.
- Roommate conflicts caused by personality differences, lack of understanding and unwillingness to compromise or the new experience of having to live with someone.
- Initial adjustment to academic environment – feelings of inadequacy and inferiority develop because of the discrepancy between high school status and grades and initial college performance.
- Class size, especially in mass lecture halls, lack of personal interest by professors and performance expectations are also major factors.
- Values exploration – students are confronted with questions of conscience over conflict areas of race and alcohol experimentation, morality, religion and social expectations.
- New social life adjustments – including new freedom of not having to check with parents about what time to be in, having the opportunity to experience new areas, making your own decisions on when to conduct social activities and establishing your self in a peer group.
- Initial social rejections – create a feeling of inadequacy when not immediately accepted in a peer group, or into a social sorority or fraternity.
- “En-loco parentis” problems – students feel depressed because of real or perceived restrictive policies and regulations of the college.
- Campus familiarization – includes becoming familiar with campus, classrooms, buildings and meeting places.
- “Long distance relationship” – torn between being loyal to your significant other from home and going out with new people. Can the expectations of both people be adequately met?
- Financial adjustment – involves adjusting to a somewhat tighter budget now that they are in schools opposed to when they were living at home. Students who are supporting themselves also have to adjust to budgeting their money.
- International student adjustment – experience a sense of confusion, vulnerability and a lack of any advocate in higher positions while trying to make a successful cultural and academic transition.
- Family problems seem amplified because the student may either be caught in the middle, relied on for the answer or because they are far away, feeling helpless in helping to reach a solution.
- Adjusting to “Administrative Red Tape” with students soon realizing that it is usually a long and frustrating process when trying to find an answer to what seems to be a simple question, or trying to work something through the administrative process.

October

- Academic stress from midterms builds with the great demand for studying and preparation. For some students this may be their first exam of the semester. For many, the midterm workload pressures are followed by feelings of failures and loss of self-esteem.
- Roommate problems continue, but they are smaller in scope than in previous months.
- Values exploration continues, especially in the area of sexuality.
- Dating/non-dating/friendship anxieties extremely high. Non-dating students feel a sense of loss of esteem because so much value is placed upon dating. For women who do date, the pressure to perform sexually increases and consequently increases feelings of rejection, loneliness and guilt, and in some instances, leads to unwanted pregnancies.
- Homesickness may still be felt by a number of students.
- Job panic for mid-year graduates starts with the onset of resume preparation and interviewing.
- Students decide to withdraw from school because they realize that college is not the place for them; they return home for personal reasons; or they transfer to another school
- Grief from not being part of a group develops because of inadequate skills for finding a group, or from not being selected by one.
- Financial strain sets in from lack of budgeting experience.
- Homecoming blues develop because of no date for social affairs, and/or the lack of ability or opportunity to participate in activities.
- Graduate school syndrome starts to emerge from graduating seniors. Signing up for graduate school exams, wondering if you will be accepted, wondering which school to apply to and questioning whether graduate school is the right thing to do.
- Time conflicts between academic and social expectation emerges.
- Signing up for classes involves starting think about the following semester.
- Adjusting to new study habits includes not just being able to study the way they did in high school. More time and greater workload needs to be incorporated into their schedule for studying.
- Disenchantment with school – low reward level because student begins to realize that life at college is not as perfect as they led to believe by parents, teachers and counselors. Old problems seem to continue and new ones are added. An external reality they put their hopes in has failed them.

November

- Increasing thoughts/deliberations about suicide occur from inability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.
- Academic pressure begins to mount because of procrastination, difficulty of work assigned and lack of ability. Pre-finals stress starts to emerge as preparation begins for taking the exams.
- Time management conflicts continue.
- Social apathy causes frustration because of academic pressures.
- Depression and anxiety increase because of feelings that one should have adjusted to the college environment.
- Economic anxieties increase because funds from parents and summer earnings begin to run out; loans become due.

- Problems develop due to increased alcohol consumption because students see this as an easy and acceptable way to relieve stress and from not knowing how to handle alcohol responsibility.
- Roommate problems may start to emerge again. This is mostly due to the pressure of school; tempers become short, and people are less tolerant of others.
- Deteriorating health starts to affect performance. Reasons include the changing weather and either lack of food quality or negative feelings about institutional foods. Students tend to eat more ice cream and salads because they don't find as much red meat, yogurt, etc. on the line or the lack of new items forces them to eat at other places. Health is also affected by the perceived inadequacies of the student health center.
- Students have given up making attempts to establish new friendships beyond two or three parasitic relationships.
- Living unit dissension causes uncomfortable feelings with residents. This dissension results from apathy, academic pressures, or a need for vacation from school.

December

- Increasing thoughts or deliberation about suicide occur from the inability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.
- Final exam pressures including anxiety, fear and guilt increase as exams approach and papers become due. Increased use of alcohol and drugs is related.
- Extracurricular time strains – seasonal parties, concerts, social service projects and religious activities drain student energies.
- Financial worries occur with the concerns of Christmas gifts and travel costs.
- Pre-holiday blues emerges, especially for those who have concerns for family – those who have no home because of family conflicts.
- Pressure increases to perform sexually because of the approach of vacation and the extended separation.

January

- Anxiety about second semester performance begins because they did not do as well as expected during the previous semester. They also have the added pressure of doing well to be able to stay in school or to keep grades competitive with their peers.
- Over the break, some students lose a loved one, a friend or a significant other by death, and they find it hard to share the happiness and joy others experienced during vacation.
- Moving to a new environment causes feelings of intrusion because students move onto a unit where most of the friendships have been established, priorities have set, and expectations understood. Unfamiliarity with campus also creates some anxiety.
- Money problems begin because students were unable to find jobs over the holiday break.
- Post-holiday depression occurs at the beginning because students are away from the security and positive strokes.
- Some students experience unwanted weight gains over the break from the holiday foods and home cooking.
- Reincorporating social and academic life is difficult at first with not having to worry about school for an extended period.

February

- Academic pressures increase with the approach of mid-term exams.
- Depending upon the weather, some people experience cabin fever if the weather forces them to stay inside for a lengthy period of time. With the lack of organize activities to compensate for this, anti-social behavior sometimes occurs, such as excessive property damage.
- Vocational choice anxieties set in with the onset of job interviews.
- Worry of looking for a summer job begins. This is especially high for students who were unable to find work during the holiday break.
- Relationship anxieties increase as couples begin to strengthen their ties (engagement) or couples begin experiencing weakening relationships.
- Fall housing planning begins with trying to tentatively decide about living arrangements. . . Should I move out? Live in the same building? Stay with the same roommate? Will a friend be left out of the plan?
- Increasing thoughts and deliberations about suicide occur from an inability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.
- With the pressure of the end of the semester approaching, many students start to increase their use of alcohol and drugs. This can cause them many problems, both biologically and behaviorally.
- Existential crisis for seniors – Must I leave school? Is my education worth anything? Was my major a mistake? Why go on?
- Summer job hunting will be heavy over spring break. Worries about finding a job or not finding a job will cause severe anxiety.
- Trying to find money to use for spring break is a problem, especially when your peers are going to a place other than home, and you are not able to join them.

April

- Increasing thoughts and deliberations about suicide occur from an ability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.
- Academic pressures increase with the end of the semester approaching. Papers, projects, and hourly exams approach.
- With nicer weather, women fear the threat of sexual assault.
- Summer job pressures and senior job recruitment panic continues.
- Financial strain from spring break affects social life.
- Many students are forced to select a major and are not sure what field they would like to enter. Social life pressures increase during this time period – formal dances, parties, concerts.
- With spring arriving, everyone wants to fall in love. Many students go through rejection or the fear of rejection, or envy towards their friends who have successfully found a significant other.
- Frustrations arise from being ill because of dramatic weather changes. These weather changes cause colds, lethargic feelings, and limit the students' social commitments.
- As the pressures build, students tend to become disenchanted with many normal services and food service is the prime target. They tend to get tired of eating “the same old” institutional food.

May/June

- Increasing thoughts and deliberations about suicide occur from an inability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.
- Anxiety develops because of the realization that the year is ending and a deficiency in a number of academic areas still exists.
- Finals pressures are at a critical level with papers, take-home exams and studying. Some of the major effects of the pressure include: increased use of coffee, No-Doz, Vivarin, and amphetamines; and an increase or decrease in food consumption. Other effects include less sleep, and a lower tolerance level with friends and peers.
- Senior job panic about employment (or lack of) increases. Trying to determine how to finance oneself until the first paycheck arrives is another concern.
- Summer job pressures increase for those who have not yet found a job.
- Couples who will be separated for summer have increased anxiety. Another fear is that their significant other will find someone else while they are apart.
- Depression occurs over having to leave the friends and people that the students have grown close to during the school year.
- There is also anxiety over having to go home after having been independent for the past year, especially if they are having conflicts with their parents.

4. **Developmental Considerations**

Learning styles

Source: Church, Sarah. As retrieved 8/28/04 from < <http://www.teresadybvig.com/learnsty.htm>>.

What is learning style? It is the way a person processes, internalizes, and studies new and challenging material. The cornerstone of this theory is that most people can learn and individuals each have their own unique ways of mastering new and difficult subject matter (Dunn, 2000). For young children, a big challenge is learning to read and, for some of them, that challenge is a grueling ordeal if the way they are taught does not match the way they learn.

The Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model

The Dunns' Learning-Style Model is complex and encompasses 5 strands of 21 elements that affect each individual's learning. Some of these elements are biological and others are developmental. Style changes over time. A summary of these elements is provided below (Dunn, 2000).

- 1. Environmental.** The environmental strand refers to these elements: lighting, sound, temperature, and seating arrangement. For example, some people need to study in a cool and quiet room, and others cannot focus unless they have music playing and it is warm (sound and temperature elements).
- 2. Emotionality.** This strand includes the following elements: motivation, persistence, responsibility, and structure. For example, some people must complete a project before they start a new one, and others work best on multiple tasks at the same time (persistence element).
- 3. Sociological.** The sociological strand represents elements related to how individuals learn in association with other people: (a) alone or with peers, (b) an authoritative adult or with a collegial colleague, and (c) learning in a variety of ways or routine patterns. For example, a number of people need to work alone when tackling a new and difficult subject, while others learn best when working with colleagues (learning alone or with peers element).
- 4. Physiological.** The elements in this strand are: perceptual (auditory, visual, tactual and kinesthetic), time-of-day energy levels, intake (eating or not while studying) and mobility (sitting still or moving around). For example, many people refer to themselves as night owls and early birds because they function best at night or in the morning (time-of-day element).
- 5. Psychological.** The elements in this strand correspond to the following types of psychological processing: hemispheric, impulsive or reflective, and global versus analytic. The hemispheric element refers to left and right brain processing modes; the impulsive versus reflective style describes how some people leap before thinking and others scrutinize the situation before moving an inch. Global and analytic elements are unique in comparison to other elements because these two elements are made up of distinct clusters of elements found in the other four strands. The elements that determine global and analytic processing styles are: sound, light, seating arrangement, persistence, sociological preference, and intake. Global and analytic processing styles will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Differences Among Students' Learning Styles

Do learning styles vary in predictable ways? There are four factors that significantly differ between groups and among individuals: global versus analytic processing styles, age, gender, and high- versus low-academic achievement (Dunn & Griggs, 1998). The educational implications of these four variables are important to fully comprehend and employ because they provide direction and structure for effective teaching strategies, especially for low-achieving children.

6. **Global and analytic.** When learning new and challenging topics, people tend to have one of two processing styles-global or analytic. Certain learning-style elements cluster to form these two processing styles in the following ways. Global learners prefer to work in an environment with soft lighting and informal seating. People with this processing style need breaks, snacking, mobility, and sound. Analytic learners prefer to work in an environment with bright light and formal seating. They work best with few or no interruptions, in a quiet environment, and little or no snacking. The majority of young children are global processors.
7. **Age.** Learning styles change with age. Some learning styles are developmental and many people's styles alter, as they grow older. These style elements are: sociological, motivation, responsibility, and internal vs. external structure. Children tend to prefer to work with peers instead of alone and have an authoritative versus a collegial teacher. For many people auditory and visual perceptual elements strengthen with age.
8. **Gender.** Boys and girls, and men and women tend to learn differently from each other. The perceptual strengths of males are often visual, tactual, and kinesthetic. They tend to need more mobility than females, and function better in an informal environment. Frequently, males are peer-motivated and nonconforming. On the other hand, females tend to be more auditory, need quiet while studying, work best in a formal setting, and need less mobility. Often they are more conforming, authority-oriented, and parent- and self-motivated than males.
9. **High- versus low-academic achievement.** High and low achieving students learn in statistically different ways from one another. In other words, the teaching strategies that are successful for one group will not produce similar outcomes in the other group.

References

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- Dunn, R., & Griggs, S. (1998). Learning styles: Link between teaching and learning. In Dunn, R. & Griggs, S. (Eds.), *Learning styles and the nursing profession* (pp. 11-23). New York: NLN Press.

Learning Styles Chart

Source: As retrieved 8/28/04 from <<http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm>>. Adapted from Colin Rose(1987). Accelerated Learning. This chart helps you determine your learning style; read the word in the left column and then answer the questions in the successive three columns to see how you respond to each situation. Your answers may fall into all three columns, but one column will likely contain the most answers. The dominant column indicates your primary learning style.

When you...	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic & Tactile
Spell	Do you try to see the word?	Do you sound out the word or use a phonetic approach?	Do you write the word down to find if it feels right?
Talk	Do you sparingly but dislike listening for too long? Do you favor words such as <i>see</i> , <i>picture</i> , and <i>imagine</i> ?	Do you enjoy listening but are impatient to talk? Do you use words such as <i>hear</i> , <i>tune</i> , and <i>think</i> ?	Do you gesture and use expressive movements? Do you use words such as <i>feel</i> , <i>touch</i> , and <i>hold</i> ?
Concentrate	Do you become distracted by untidiness or movement?	Do you become distracted by sounds or noises?	Do you become distracted by activity around you?
Meet someone again	Do you forget names but remember faces or remember where you met?	Do you forget faces but remember names or remember what you talked about?	Do you remember best what you did together?
Contact people on business	Do you prefer direct, face-to-face, personal meetings?	Do you prefer the telephone?	Do you talk with them while walking or participating in an activity?
Read	Do you like descriptive scenes or pause to imagine the actions?	Do you enjoy dialog and conversation or hear the characters talk?	Do you prefer action stories or are not a keen reader?
Do something new at work	Do you like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, or posters?	Do you prefer verbal instructions or talking about it with someone else?	Do you prefer to jump right in and try it?
Put something together	Do you look at the directions and the picture?		Do you ignore the directions and figure it out as you go along?
Need help with a computer application	Do you seek out pictures or diagrams?	Do you call the help desk, ask a neighbor, or growl at the computer?	Do you keep trying to do it or try it on another computer?

Reaching beyond academics in academic advising

This article is a good reminder of the challenges students face as they move from high school to college. Source: Cornelius K. Gilbert and Earlise C. Ward, University of Wisconsin. As retrieved 8/11/04 from the Pennsylvania State University Web site: < <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/031219cg.htm>>.

Whether it is one mile away or a thousand miles away, going to college, particularly at a four-year institution, can be a very exciting yet anxious time, especially for first-year students. Unfortunately, experience has taught us that many first-year students, particularly within the first semester, do not realize that going away to college requires a shedding of skin or a transformation from their previous high school mentality and lifestyle.

The situations and decision-making that students experience in college, whether academic or personal, are often radically different than the circumstances they experienced in high school—making it safe to conclude that a first-year student, especially during the first semester, is still in the mindset of a high school student.

Many of these students simply do not realize that the college experience is radically different than high school. Therefore, when first-semester students step onto their respective college campuses, they have not made the necessary adjustments from their previous high school habits, lifestyles, and mentalities. However, when they eventually do make these personal adjustments from high school to college, very often they experience confusion and stress.

Stressors can include but certainly are not limited to their new living arrangements/environments and, perhaps most notably, the pressure they can face from family and peers concerning their academics—primarily, feeling pressure to decide upon a major course of study. Pressure can become a student's reality when he or she is habitually encountered with ordinary questions that are benign in intent. For example, queries such as “What is your major?” or “What do you plan to study?” can be internalized by students, especially when they accept the erroneous notion that a major equals a career or one's life goals.

These students fail to realize that the stress they are experiencing is transitional. Academic advisers should assist in this transitional period. Advisers should know and share with their students, in required first-year individual and group advising sessions, that this type of stress is positive.

Positive stress (eustress) is described as the kind of stress that motivates and satisfies our need for stimulation and challenge. Positive stress promotes personal and professional growth and general self-improvement (Corey & Corey, 2002). If students are able to identify their stress as positive, then their level of anxiety and confusion is reduced, and they can proceed in a healthy adjustment to college life.

Within these initial advising sessions, advisers should give attention to the challenges students face during the transition from high school to college. Wichita State University conducted a survey of the top ten issues students had in adjusting to college life (“Top Ten Issues”). They are adapted here, in order of importance:

1. Personal Responsibility

Be careful not to abuse the freedom that comes with being a college student. As a student, you carry 98 percent of the responsibility and control.

2. Class Attendance

You have the freedom to decide if your presence will be made in the classroom.

3. Teacher Attitudes

Professors and teaching assistants will not hound you to do your work. It is entirely up to you. Get to know the professors and teaching assistants, and seek help if you experience trouble.

4. Types of Assignments

Professors give large task assignments to be completed at a certain time. Do assignments daily; don't wait until the last minute.

5. Importance of Performance

College transcripts are important, especially if you get the desire to go on to graduate school.

6. Time Management

Although you may have more free time than you did in high school, make sure that you have a weekly study schedule. Otherwise time slips away.

7. Amount of Study Time

In college, you have to study harder! Even if you were an all-star student in high school, now everyone is an all-star, and competition can be fierce.

8. Size of Institution/Classes

Lecture classes are much larger than high school classes and can be intimidating.

9. Difficulty of College Work

College will be tougher than high school. Don't let that stop you!

10. Social Life

It may seem as though it is harder to make friends because of your new surroundings. Check out a variety of organizations and activities. Get involved to meet people!

Within these sessions, advisers should also explain the emphasis that is placed upon the college grade-point average (GPA) and why it is critical to have as clear of a mind as possible for studying. This part of the transition to college is one way in which the “the institution of higher education can be intimidating” (Bickham, 2003).

While elucidating on the GPA, advisers should introduce the concept that Bickham asserts in *Why Seniors Wish They Were Freshmen: The Impact of First Year Grade Point Average*. In his presentation, Bickham emphasizes how important it is to establish a strong and desirable GPA within the first semester. He points out that students who start with a strong or desirable GPA have a higher likelihood of graduating with a strong or desirable GPA, even if they encounter some academic difficulty between the first semester and the last. This information is important to share with incoming students because, as Bickham states, “After speaking to students and professionals in higher education I've learned that educating students on [the impact and the importance of their first-semester GPA] is almost non-existent” (Bickham, 2003).

With all of the stress that students can experience in coming to college, the transition from high school to college and the overall college experience provides a forum for young adults to develop their identities. Hence, questions of academics do not solely comprise the first-year experience. Students will be confronted with both academic and personal adversities that will challenge them. When faced with adversity, these first-semester college students will, no doubt, discover more about themselves because part of the college experience is about self-exploration and self-realization.

However, during this development, it is not only the collective self that is developed. During this stage, college students very often incorporate into their personal sense of self other identities, such as a cultural

identity, a social identity, or even a career identity. When the student is able to incorporate these identities into one, it then becomes a central self-identity or an integrated personal identity. The sense of self that one develops should represent his or her uniqueness or individuality and should be incorporated in the process of deciding on a major.

Oftentimes college students focus so much on academics that they neglect other psychosocial aspects of their lives. These aspects include social relationships (significant others, parents, and friends), environment (students are not conscious that they need time to adapt to a new environment), physical health (students often do not exercise or practice relaxation to help relieve their academic stress and frustrations), and religion and spirituality (students may not focus on gaining support from their pastor, minister, or place of worship). If students are able to also focus on these areas, they will find that they are able to manage their academic responsibilities more effectively.

Though the “current buzzwords in academic advising include developmental advising and developing the whole person” (Bates, 2003, para. 1), academic advisers must assist students with the details of being in college. More often than not, assisting with the details means fulfilling an ethical requirement of responsibility to do no harm to students who trust academic advisers for accurate information regarding their academics and graduation (Bates, 2003; Frank, 2000). However, assisting with the details must also include the crucial task of helping students to address the psychosocial issues that they encounter.

In summary, this paper highlights the importance of integrating transitional issues, which typically relate to social and personal concerns and pressures, into academic advising. This integration is necessary because, even though the area of academic advising is limited to academics, it is important for advisers to attend to psychosocial issues that may affect students' academic performance and to educate students about these issues. Once students are informed, they have a better understanding of how to improve their academic performance, especially if it means benefiting from personal counseling at the college's counseling center. They are then better able to make informed choices.

References

- Bates, S. D. (2003, August 1). Don't forget the details: A call for balance in academic advising. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 6(1). Retrieved October 3, 2003, from <<http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor>>.
- Bickham, C. T. (2003). *www.grade-pointaverage.com*. Retrieved October 13, 2003, from <<http://www.grade-pointaverage.com>>.
- Corey, G., & Corey, M. S. (2002). *I never knew I had a choice: Explorations in personal growth*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Frank, K. S. (2000). Ethical consideration and obligations. In V. Gordon & W. Habley (Eds.), *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* (pp.44–57). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Top ten issues identified by students. Retrieved September 27, 2003, from Wichita State University, Letters and Sciences Academic Adviser's Handbook Web site: <<http://advising.wichita.edu/lasac/pubs/aah/trans.htm>>.

Additional Resources

Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. *Annual Review of Psychology: Self and Social Identity*. Retrieved October 9, 2003, from
<http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0961/2002_Annual/83789644/print.jhtml>.

Guanipa-Ho, C., & Guanipa, J. A. Ethnic identity and adolescence. Retrieved September 27, 2003, from
<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/ethnic.htm>.

5. *Tips for Success*

Keeping notes from your advising sessions

A critical source of information about your advisees will be written records you keep of your discussions through the semesters. These notes will remind you of student concerns, and help you remember personal information about students beyond the official school records. Reviewing your notes prior to meeting with an advisee will remind you of topics to follow up on.

Advisors use a variety of approaches to keeping their notes, as described below. Whatever the approach, files usually include background information for each student. This information, and more, is available from the SIS website:

- Name
- Phone number
- Email address
- Class year

The following information is then noted for each contact:

- Student's name (to be sure that the information doesn't get misfiled)
- Date of contact
- Form of contact (email, phone call, in-office meeting, other)
- Topic(s) of discussion
- Decision(s) reached, whether courses to be taken, next steps of exploration
- Referral(s) to services: be sure to track referrals
- Printouts or copies of special requests and/or agreements, such as requirement waivers or course substitutions

Hard-copy files could be kept in separate folders, in alphabetical order by name. Some advisors keep a single file with papers collected in alphabetical order by name, and create separate student files only when the volume of papers for a student gets high. Some advisors prefer to group or color-code files by school year, while others just use a single alphabetical listing.

Some advisors find it easier to annotate records electronically rather than in hard-copy. In this case, session notes could be maintained in a single document for each student, in an "advising" directory. The papers needed in hard copy could then be gathered in a single folder, organized by name.

The Advising Appointment

Source: Adapted from Darley's Interview Techniques. Prepared by the University of Delaware College of Arts and Science Advising Center. As retrieved 8/11/04 from the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/newadvisor.htm>.

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 at the same time that it gets the session started.

2. Talking with the Student -- The student may find it difficult to express himself. 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 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 his 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 his point of view, but rather, to help the student to formulate his 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. She can demonstrate her 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, which 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 his 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 one all we can for today?" or "Let's make another appointment to get into this further, "effectively maintains a friendly yet professional tone.

A Caring Attitude

Source: Jerry L. Ford, J & S Enterprises, Houston, TX 77036-4941, <jerryford@yahoo.com>. As retrieved 8/11/04 from the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Caring-Attitude.htm>>. The article first appeared in August 1991 in the Academic Advising News Vol. 13 (3).

The finest possible educational environment includes the availability of outstanding academic advising and a genuine caring attitude toward the student – inseparable partners in higher education. Some simple suggestions for demonstrating a genuine caring attitude by all advising personnel include:

1. Greeting advisees with a smile.

Care enough to greet advisees with a warm welcome and a million-dollar smile to help ease student anxiety. Your smile costs nothing, yet it means everything!

2. Radiating a friendly attitude

Be sure that a friendly attitude radiates from your office setting. Try to make advisees feel that in your office they can expect concern, compassion, friendliness, encouragement, trust, and confidence. Anyone with advising responsibilities (including the office secretary or receptionist) must never react to a student as though the student is an interruption of work. The student, after all is the office work!

3. Having an interesting office

Strive to have a physically attractive and interesting office – perhaps with live plants, paintings or pictures on the walls, and soft background music. The office might be decorated in a specific theme such as the school mascot or a particular kind of plant or color scheme. The office should be a haven of enjoyment and conversation for advisees who enter.

4. Knowing the names of advisees

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the names of advisees. Call the students by their first names so that they will feel at ease during advising sessions.

5. Avoiding threatening actions

Care enough to avoid threatening body language. When possible, sit on the same side of your desk with your advisees. You should not let the desk of authority separate you from your advisees and thus cause you to lose some of your advising effectiveness. Also, you should face the advisee squarely. This posture transmits the message that you are available to the student, that you care about the student, and that you want to assist the student.

6. Maximizing efficiency

Demonstrate your caring attitude by maximizing efficiency and minimizing mistakes when dealing with advisees. Have enough pride in advising activities so that your work is as error free as possible. University life and academic programs are too complicated for guess work. Accurate information, appropriate forms, and other advising responsibilities should be correct the first time to reduce advising hassles for both the student and the advisor. And, if mistakes are made, admit them.

7. Letting the “Shuttle Stop with You”

When an advisee has a question or needs help, let the “Shuttle Stop with You.” No student should leave your office without getting assistance. If you don’t know the answer or you can’t solve the problem, take time to identify the problem solver, locate the problem solver, and involve the problem solver in assisting the student.

8. Seeing advisees frequently

Show advisees that you care about them by seeing them frequently and on an informal basis. Visit with them in the cafeteria and the student center, in corridors between classes, and at various campus functions. Be approachable, flexible, and accessible, and by all means share your phone number, office location, and office hours with your advisees.

9. Being a good example

Exemplifying a caring, helpful attitude in deeds and actions can make or break your advising reputation. The word can spread almost instantly about the type of person and advisor you are and about the type of office you operate. Is a red carpet rolled out, or is a thorn bush posted?

10. Practicing empathy

You should put yourself in the shoes of your advisees. To paraphrase the golden rule, “Do unto your advisees as you would have had your advisor do unto you.”

Outstanding academic advising and a genuine caring attitude – combine them, practice them, and share them; then reap the benefits!

The First Ten Questions to Ask an Advisee

Source: adapted from Athleen Stere, Altoona College, as retrieved August 11, 2004 from Pennsylvania State University website <<http://www.psu.edu/dus/cfe/tenquest.htm>>.

1. **What do you hope eventually to do with your life?**
2. **Why did you choose to come to Rensselaer?**
3. **What major or majors are you considering?**
4. **Why are you considering those majors?**
 - Are you preparing for a career?
 - Do you really like that area of study?
 - Do you think it will lead to a high paying job/prestigious job?
5. **Are there any special situations that we need to consider in planning your educational program?** For example, do you have a job? Are you responsible for your family? Do you have a disability? Do you have military obligations?
6. **What questions do you have about:**
 - Rensselaer
 - your major
 - requirements
 - course scheduling?
7. **Where will you be living?** What kinds of outside activities do you like? (sports, music, theater, student government, literary)
8. **Are you aware of the resources available to you?** (tutoring, counseling, career planning, study abroad, honors)
9. **What, if anything, worries you about your college career?** Do you have concerns about adjusting to the university?
10. **How can I as your adviser help you most?**
 - Rensselaer policies
 - scheduling
 - career guidance
 - problems -- personal, academic
 - information

Additional Resources

The Advising and Learning Assistance Center maintains a library of resources on academic advising, some of which are listed below. You are invited to call ALAC at ext.6269 to arrange to borrow these or other items.

Evans, Nancy J., Forney, Deanna S., and Guido-DiBrito, Florence. (1998). *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Describes a variety of models for understanding psychosocial, identity, cognitive-structural development, as well as typological theories.

Gordon, Virginia N, Habley, Wesley R., and associates. (2000). *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*. A Publication of NACADA. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
This handbook “shares the latest research, sound advice, and practical suggestions for approaching on-campus advising and its many tasks, obligations, and roles.”

NACADA. (2003). *Advisor Training: Practices in the Development of Advisor Skills*. Monograph Series #9. Manhattan, KS: NACADA.

Upcraft, M. Lee, and Kramer, Gary L., Eds. (1995). *First-Year Academic Advising: Patterns in the Present, Pathways to the Future*. Monograph Series #18. National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, U South Carolina.
In addition to articles on understanding and advising first-year students, includes sections on advising diverse populations, including undecided, underprepared, or older students, and students of color. Extensive bibliography.

The annotated bibliography below is all excerpted from Miller, M. A. (2002, December). *How to Thrive, Not Just Survive, As a New Advisor*. *The Academic Advising News*, 25(4).
Retrieved 8/11/04 from the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/newadvisor.htm>>. Accessing the article online will give you links to most of the materials mentioned.

Getting Started:

Ford, Jerry (1991) *A Caring Attitude*. *Academic Advising News*, Volume 13(3).
Great advice for making students feel comfortable.

Haydon, Lisa (2004) "If I were to write a book about advising for new advisors..." NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources.
Inspirational article by an advisor considering what makes advising an enjoyable and deeply meaningful occupation.

Kramer, Gary L. (2000) *Advising Students at Different Educational Levels*. In Gordon, V. & Habley, W. (Eds.). *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*. (pp. 84-104) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, Marsha A. (2002). "How to Thrive, Not Just Survive, As a New Advisor." *The Academic Advising News*, 25(4).

Morano, Matthew. (1999) *Challenges Encountered by New Advisers: Honest Answers, Practical Solutions*. *The Mentor*, electronic publication about academic advising in higher education. Volume 1, number 1. Retrieved at <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/>
Practical solutions to three challenges facing new advisors.

Referral Information:

Making Effective Referrals. Center for Excellence in Academic Advising web site, Penn State University. [included in this manual.]

National Academic Advising Association (2002), Career Advising Links.
Links to a career related web sites including "What Can I Do with a Major in..." and a variety of resources to help advise undecided students.

Southeastern Louisiana University (2002) Career and Academic Planning Center.
A number of career links available by pressing "Career Planning" on toolbar on the right side of the web page.

University of Alaska Anchorage (2002), Advising Issues: How and When to Refer.
Good tips for knowing when and how to refer students. Although specific referral contacts are for UAA, advisors can easily utilize the information to figure out the title of their institution's corresponding office.

The advising session:

Brown, Thomas, Mason-Browne, Patricia and Grites, Thomas. (1997) "Communication and Relational Skills." In Hovland, Michael, Anderson, Edward, McGuire, William G., Crockett, David, Kaufman, Juliett and Woodward, David (Eds), Academic Advising for Student Success and Retention: Participant Book/Resource Guide. (pp45-88) Iowa City, IA, USA Group Noel-Levitz. This book can not be bought separately from Noel-Levitz. Instead, it is part of a Noel-Levitz workshop packet that participants receive along with videos. Check with colleagues as many institutions have sent representatives to attend Noel-Levitz sessions. Or, try half.com, used book distributor, as this book occasionally will turn up there.

Burton, John and Wellington, Kathy. (1998) "The O'Banion Model of Academic Advising: An Integrative Approach". NACADA Journal 18(2):13–20.
To find this, or any other issue of the Journal, new advisors should check with other NACADA members or in their institution's library. Journal issues may also be purchased by using the NACADA Journal order form.

Darley. (1990) "Advising Reminders: The Advising Appointment." In the Academic Advising News, 12(3). Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Advising-Appointment.htm>.
Practical tips for conducting an advising session.

Mavrovouniotis, Michael. (1997) Academic Advising Tips for New Educators. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Society of Engineering Educators, Session 1275.

Practical tips for conducting an advising session:

NACADA (Producer) (1996) Faculty Advising Training Video and manual. (Available from NACADA Executive office nacada@ksu.edu)
Ten vignettes showing "do's and don'ts" of advising in a variety of real-life situations. Easy to watch with discussion from experienced advisors. Many campus advising offices [including Rensselaer's Advising & Learning Assistance Center] own this video.

University of Texas at Arlington Advisor Handbook (2002), "Strategies of Advisement."
Basic advising strategies that will aid in the development of both the advisor and students.

6. Academic Requirements

An advisor's primary responsibility is to help students devise schedules that meet all degree requirements effectively and efficiently. Course requirements, however, vary by program. You are expected to understand requirements for the programs in your discipline. If a student is considering changing majors, you should encourage them to talk with an advisor in the prospective major to see how their courses may meet the different set of requirements.

Degree requirements are specified at three different levels: Institute-wide, School-specific, and degree-specific. As outlined below, the nature of the requirement affects whether and how waivers or substitutions are possible. Thus the student's selection of major(s) determines the courses and credits required for completion. Majors are discussed after types of requirements.

Excerpts from some of ALAC's online academic advising materials are included at the end of this section to explain Institute-level requirements. This information is current as of Summer 2004.

Catalogs as "contracts"

Because programs and program requirements may change from year to year, the best source of information on academic requirements is the Rensselaer catalog. The catalog issue in effect at the time a student first registers may be considered a contract for determining which set of specifications the student must meet. Therefore, you should maintain a set of catalogues to have details available on degree requirements.

Levels of degree requirements

Institute requirement	Rensselaer requires every student to meet certain requirements for any Institute degree. For example, the Institute specifies a writing requirement and total number of course credits. These requirements are incorporated into the Institute's accreditation standards. Any request for a waiver or substitution beyond those specified by the Institute must be approved by the Baccalaureate Committee after recommendation by the appropriate Degree Clearance Officer.
School requirement	Each academic school sets requirements for all students in any of its curricula. For example, Humanities and Social Sciences requires 24 H&SS credits for any program in the school, while Math and Sciences requires specific core courses for all students in its majors. Any waiver or substitution for a school requirement must be approved by the appropriate Degree Clearance Officer, with notification sent in writing to the Registrar's Office.
Program requirement	Each major program specifies a curriculum of specific courses and course distribution. Any waiver or substitution for a program requirement must be approved by the appropriate Degree Clearance Officer, with notification sent in writing to the Registrar's Office.
Elective	<p>An elective is a course that is chosen by the student that is not specifically required by a program, but does count towards earned credits. There are two types of elective: restrictive and free. A "restrictive elective" is chosen from a set of specified options. A "free elective" is a course selected by interest that does not meet a specific degree requirement.</p> <p>Note that a course taken as an elective in one major may become a required course if the major changes; likewise, courses required for the initial major may become elective credits once a major changes.</p>

Types of majors

A student's required courses are determined by his/her selected program(s).

Major	An academic program a student wishes to pursue. Each major has course requirements determined during the program's accreditation. Majors may also have additional department-specific requirements. Students may pursue one major for a single degree, or two majors for a dual degree or double degree (see below).
Primary Major	For students who are pursuing more than one major, the first program listed is considered the "primary" major. This selection determines which set of requirements will be tracked on the student's CAPP report. Also, a student with more than one major will be assigned an advisor for each program; the one for the primary major will be considered "primary advisor."
Minor	A specified area of academic concentration that requires fewer courses than a major.
Dual degree	A dual degree is a single diploma listing two different majors. Students who complete degree requirements for two curricula may receive a "dual" degree. (Examples of common dual degrees include computer systems engineering with computer science, mechanical engineering with aeronautical engineering, or the "Product Design Innovation" program combining Science and Technology Studies with mechanical engineering, building science, or information technology.) With effective scheduling, dual degrees might be accomplished within the minimum hours required for a bachelor's degree. See "Academic Information and Regulations" in the Rensselaer Catalog for more information. Note that currently student CAPP Reports track requirements only for the first-listed ("primary") program.
Double degrees	Two separate diplomas for two different curricula. Students who complete degree requirements for two curricula and have earned the necessary additional credits beyond requirements for a single degree may be candidates for a second bachelor's degree. See "Academic Information and Regulations" in the Rensselaer Catalog for more information. Note that currently the CAPP Report shows requirements only for the first-listed ("primary") program.
Multidisciplinary degree	This option, available only at the graduate level, allows students to participate in interdisciplinary research programs. See "Interdisciplinary Programs and Research" in the Rensselaer Catalog for more information.

Impact of changing one's major

The status of "required course" varies depending upon the student's selected major. Thus when a student considers changing his or her major, the CAPP report may no longer be valid. For example, a course that a student took as a requirement for one program may become elective credits for another. If a student is considering a change in major, he or she should meet with an advisor in the prospective major to evaluate how the change may affect progress towards degree completion.

Institute Requirements

Information on Institute-wide academic requirements is available online via ALAC's website. You can reach that in various ways. Two easy ways:

- Using the specific URL: <<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/advising/academic.html>>; OR
- From <www.sis.rpi.edu>, under the "references" section, click "Academic Advising" then on the ALAC screen, click the "Academic Information" link; OR

The following excerpts from ALAC's online materials are included to help you answer questions from your students about Institute requirements:

- Academic load
- Academic probation
- Academic dismissal/suspension
- Dropping/adding courses
- Dual majors
- Graduation honors
- Leave of absence
- Minors
- Pass/No credit
- Residency requirement
- Repeat grade policy
- Science core requirement
- Senior F exams
- Transfer credit
- Undergraduate taking graduate class
- Writing requirement

7. Student-specific Information

Advising students requires familiarity with various materials. The table below describes the most common reports on a student's academic progress and standing. Remember that student information, whether in hard copy or electronic files, should be kept confidential at all times.

Sources of information

<p>Student Information System (SIS or "Banner")</p>	<p>This system, available at <http://sis.rpi.edu>, provides a central location for accessing and updating student information. Students use it for class registration and other activities. Instructors use it to confirm class lists, send "Early Warning System" alerts, access student contact information, and post grades. Advisors use it for viewing additional information on student status, such as CAPP Reports or transcripts. Advisors can now send emails to all their advisees through links in SIS. The main screen also has links to helpful resources, including the school catalog, class schedule, ALAC's academic advising materials, and others.</p>
<p>CAPP Report</p>	<p>The Curriculum, Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) Report shows a student's current progress towards meeting requirements for the specified major. Advisors can access their advisees' CAPP reports through the SIS system.</p> <p>The report shows each category of requirement, describes which course(s) meet the requirement, and lists the student's status in each area. Considerations when reviewing a CAPP report:</p> <p>The report currently is specific to the student's "primary" major. Requirements for dual or double majors, or for minors, are not reflected. If you are advising a student for a "secondary" program, you will need to confirm whether and how the student meets requirements.</p> <p>Approved course waivers, substitutions, transfer credits, and/or Advanced Placement (AP) credits will be reflected only after the Registrar has been notified of them in writing. Note that waivers and substitutions must be approved by the department's Degree Clearance Officer (DCO).</p> <p>The CAPP report is updated within 24 hours of updates in the registrar's records. If an adjustment is not shown in this report, the registrar's records do not have the information.</p> <p>The report reflects only current progress towards requirements. No sample schedules are provided to show how to meet the requirements in the remaining semesters.</p> <p>As of Fall 2004, CAPP reports are not available for transfer students. Those students chart progress on a hard-copy "Plan of Study."</p>
<p>Plan of Study</p>	<p>The hard-copy Plan of Study is a semester-by-semester worksheet to show which courses the student needs to complete the degree(s). This form is currently the only record for transfer students until CAPP reports are available for that group.</p> <p>Considerations when reviewing a plan of study:</p> <p>Because this is a hard-copy report, it may not reflect changes in degree requirements.</p> <p>The report may also reflect expected waivers or course substitutions which have not been formally submitted to the registrar's office.</p>
<p>Program schedules</p>	<p>Sample semester-by-semester or year-by-year schedules are shown in program descriptions in the Rensselaer Catalog. Currently, however, no sample schedules are available to guide students who have taken alternative courses or changed programs.</p>

Transcript	<p>A student's transcript shows all courses the student is enrolled in or has taken, by semester. The transcript indicates the grade for courses in previous semesters, plus the student's current hours completed, cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA), and class rank. Transcripts are now available for your advisees through the SIS "Instructors & Advisors Menu" screen. Considerations when viewing a transcript:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The transcript provides a chronological record of courses, so may help identify academic trends such as a difficult semester or steadily improving/declining grades. ➤ The transcript shows only the courses taken, with no indication of courses still needed for degree completion.
Student meetings and advisor notes	<p>A valuable source of student information is your discussions in meetings or email. Remember to review information with the student to hear his/her perspective, identify possible errors, discuss areas of concern, and follow up on previous discussions and referrals. For instance, the student may believe that a higher-level course could automatically be substituted for a basic requirement. Such substitutions may be possible, but need to be confirmed in a written note to the Registrar's office by the appropriate authorized individual (usually the Degree Clearance Officer). See the "Tips" section for suggestions on maintaining files on advisees.</p>

Sample CAPP Report

[*add sample from separate file]

CAPP User's Manual

[*add manual from separate file]

8. ***Common Requests and Concerns***

As an academic advisor, you may be consulted by your students for help with a variety of concerns. The tables in this section identify five types of concerns:

- Registration
- Grading-related issues
- Credits from other sources
- Curriculum-related issues (majors, minors, and requirements)
- Student status (full/part time, leave of absence)

Your role is not to make decisions for the advisee, but to assist them in identifying and considering issues related to each concern. For each action listed below, questions suggest related points for students to consider. This list is by no means comprehensive, but will provide you and students with starting points for discussion.

Most actions related to course registration, grading status, and student status are processed by the Registrar's office and/or the Advising & Learning Assistance Center. To track changes effectively, most requests require specific forms. The tables identify the necessary form(s), and provide related notes.

Registrar forms can be reached online in a number of ways:

- Using the specific URL for the forms screen: < <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/forms.html> >
- From <www.sis.rpi.edu>, under the "references" section, click "Student Records and Financial Services" then on the SRFS screen, click the "forms" tab
- From <www.rpi.edu>, click the "Search" button. In the index, choose "Registrar (Troy)" from the list.

While Registrar forms are identified below by number, the website lists them in alphabetical order by title.

Registration issues

Registration issue	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Add/drop a course before the related deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to add/drop this course? ➤ How will taking/dropping this course affect your other courses this semester? (If adding, will you be able to handle the additional work? If dropping, will you devote more time to other courses?) ➤ How will adding/dropping this course affect your schedule in the future? (example: affects course sequence or prerequisites for another course) ➤ Is this a required course? ➤ If you want to drop, will you still have sufficient credits for full-time status? For financial aid? 	n/a	In most cases, a student can do this on-line via SIS, with no instructor approval required. In some instances (see situations below) approvals may be needed to override closed enrollment, prerequisites, a schedule conflict, or other situations. Also, adding or dropping a course must be done in person at the Registrar's Office if a student has a "hold" on his/her student account for reasons such as outstanding account balance, incomplete student loan form, or incomplete health records.
Add/drop a course after the related deadline	<p>Same questions as above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If you want to drop because you are doing poorly in the course, what are your grades so far in the course? Have you explored other options, such as talking with the instructor or TA, or getting tutoring help? ➤ If you want to add, have you been attending the course already? Will you need to catch up on missed assignments? 	ALAC Petition AND #3: "Late Add/Drop Form"	All late add/drop requests must be approved by ALAC. Late add requires instructor's signature.
Audit a course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to audit the course? ➤ Why not register for the course? ➤ How will auditing this course affect your other courses this semester? 	#12 "Full Time Rensselaer Student Audit Registration Form"	Signature of instructor is needed. Instructor determines requirements for successful completion of the audit.
Register for a closed course	Same questions as for adding a class.	#1: "Authorization Form"	Signature of instructor is needed. Student must file form with the Registrar's Office by the Add deadline.

Registration issue	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Add a course without meeting a stated prerequisite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you feel you are ready to take the course without having the prerequisite? ➤ Have you spoken with the instructor to be sure you have the necessary skills and knowledge to handle the course work? ➤ Do you have plans for filling in gaps that may come up, such as self-study or getting tutoring? 	#1: "Authorization Form"	Signature of instructor is needed. Student must file form with the Registrar's Office by the Add deadline.
Override a schedule conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How much do the two courses overlap? ➤ How much additional time is needed to get from one classroom to the other? ➤ How do you intend to handle the conflict? (getting notes from other students; watching class videos; attending office hours; other) ➤ Have you spoken with both instructors to confirm that they approve of early departure/late arrival? 	#1: "Authorization Form"	Signatures of both instructors are needed. Student then files form with Registrar's Office before the Add deadline.
Register for independent study or Undergraduate Research Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If independent study, how will you structure the work so that you complete it with minimal supervision? ➤ Have you found a faculty member willing to work with you? ➤ Are you hoping to substitute this for another course, or program requirement? If so, why do you think this would be a better approach to the subject matter? 	#4 "Independent Study/Undergraduate Research Project Registration Form" If after deadline, must be submitted to ALAC, with an accompanying "Petition" form, for approval.	Instructor's signature is required. Student then files form with Registrar's Office before the Add deadline.

Registration issue	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Register for senior-year Thesis/Project/Research credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have you found a faculty member who will work with you on this project? <p>Note: requirements for these credits vary by program. Ask your DCO for more information.</p>	<p>If before Add deadline, registration can be done online, with no form needed.</p> <p>If after Add deadline, two forms must be submitted to ALAC for approval: #7 "Thesis / Project / Research Registration Form"</p> <p>And an accompanying ALAC "Petition" form.</p>	<p>Registration for these credits can be done online before the Add deadline. Student chooses thesis/ project/ research advisor and enters number of credits. If after Add deadline, signature of thesis/project/research advisor is needed on the #7 form, and add must be approved by ALAC.</p>
Request credit overload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to take the extra credits? (If financial, suggest meeting with a financial aid officer; if to make up for courses dropped or failed, explore the other questions carefully.) ➤ This is a heavy course load. How will you handle the extra work? ➤ How good are you with time management? Do you think you can be diligent enough to complete all the course work? 	<p>#1: "Authorization Form"</p>	<p>Signature of advisor is needed. Student then files form with Registrar's Office.</p>
Register for a graduate course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are your grades in undergraduate courses in this area? ➤ Why do you want to take the graduate course? ➤ How do you plan to handle the additional commitment of time and energy that a graduate course requires? 	<p>#[n/a]: "Approval Form for an Undergraduate to Take a Graduate Course." (form available on line and at the Office of Graduate Education)</p>	<p>Requires signatures from advisor, instructor, and Office of Graduate Education. See form for more details.</p>

Grade-related issues

Grade-related issue	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Take a course pass/no credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to take the course pass/no credit? ➤ Is this a required course for your degree? (if so, usually cannot take it P/NC) ➤ Is this course going to be used to meet your writing requirement? (if so, cannot take it P/NC) ➤ Are you thinking of changing majors? If so, could this course be required for that major? ➤ How many other courses have you taken P/NC? (confirm school limitations and distribution limitations on number of credits allowable as P/NC) 	<p>#5 "Pass/No Credit Request"</p> <p>If after deadline, must be submitted to ALAC, with an accompanying "Petition" form, for approval.</p>	<p>The Institute has limitations on which, and how many, courses can be taken P/NC. Review guidelines on the form carefully. Note that a course intended to meet the writing requirement cannot be taken P/NC.</p>
Remove a pass/no credit designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why did you originally want to take this course P/NC? ➤ What has changed that has you wanting to take this course for a grade? ➤ Have you been keeping up on all the coursework? What have been your grades in the course assignments so far? 	<p>#6 "Remove Pass/No Credit Designation"</p> <p>If after deadline, must be submitted to ALAC, with an accompanying "Petition" form, for approval.</p>	<p>Student files the form with Registrar's Office or, if after deadline, with ALAC. The request can be made "by Friday of the 13th week of the semester for a Fall or Spring term, or the end of the third week of a summer session."</p>
Request a grade of Incomplete in a course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why are you thinking of taking an Incomplete on the course? ➤ Have you talked with the instructor about your concerns? ➤ How will you make up the work? ➤ Will you be able to complete course projects on your own? 	<p>Instructor gets form from the department or the Registrar's Office</p>	<p>The decision of whether or not to grant an Incomplete grade is at the discretion of the course instructor. Any request for an Incomplete must specify work to be completed and date of completion, with signatures of the instructor and the student.</p> <p>The Registrar's Office requests that the form not be given to students, so no sample is included here.</p>

Grade-related issue	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Appeal a course grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have you discussed your concerns with the instructor? If so, what did he/she say? ➤ Why do you feel your course grade is incorrect? ➤ What have your grades been on course assignments? ➤ What does the syllabus say about grading policies? ➤ What documentation do you have available (such as graded tests, returned projects) to show that you have earned a higher grade? 	n/a	<p>The “Student Handbook” outlines a grade petition process. Student must first discuss his/her concerns with the instructor, and then appeals, in turn, to the Department Chair, School Dean, or DOSO.</p> <p>Any change of course grade must be requested by the instructor or petitioned authority. The Registrar’s Office requests that the Change of Grade form not be given to students, so no sample is included here.</p>

Credits from other sources

Credits from other sources	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Requesting credits for Advanced Placement (AP) courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How much do you feel you learned in the course? ➤ How well did you understand the course material? 	No RPI form needed, but see note.	Students must request the College Board Advanced Placement Program to send their AP scores to RPI. The Registrar’s Office then evaluates the course description and scores to decide whether or not to approve credits.
Requesting credits for college courses taken during high school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Which course in our catalog best matches the description for this course? ➤ Do you feel prepared to take a more advanced course in this area? ➤ The Institute has limits on the number of transfer credits allowed. Do you plan to take any other courses at other schools? 	<p>#[n/a]: “Incoming Freshmen Transfer Credit Procedure” (listed as “High School Certification Form” on Registrar’s website)</p> <p>AND</p> <p>#8 “Transfer Credit Approval”</p>	Review “Incoming” form for time limit, credit limit, minimum grade, and other considerations. A course description and high school signatures are required, plus an official, sealed transcript needs to be sent to the Registrar’s Office. The “Transfer Credit Approval” form requires signatures and other info from the appropriate RPI department.

Credits from other sources	Some considerations to discuss	Required form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Transferring credits from another college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Did you have this course approved in advance for transfer credit? ➤ Have you reviewed the transfer credit approval form? ➤ Do you understand that the grade for a transferred course will not show up on your transcript, and will not be calculated into your QPA? ➤ Is this course part of your final 30 credits for a Bachelor's degree? (if so, see forms) 	<p>#8 "Transfer Credit Approval"</p> <p>If the credits will be part of the student's final 30 credits for a Bachelor's degree, the request must be processed through ALAC, with an accompanying "Petition" form.</p>	<p>The Registrar's Office strongly recommends that the student receives approval to transfer courses before enrolling in another school. Transferring credits requires approval from the advisor, and from the corresponding RPI department. No grade is shown on the RPI transcript, and the course grade is not included in QPA calculation. If approved, the transferred credits are counted towards total earned hours. See form for more details. An official, sealed transcript needs to be sent to the Registrar's Office.</p>
Cross-registering for a course at a regional school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to take this course at another school? ➤ How do you hope to use this towards your degree requirements? (If the goal is to substitute it for a required course, see questions on requirements) 	<p>Hudson-Mohawk Association of Colleges & Universities' "Cross-registration Form for Undergraduate Courses"</p> <p>(The four--part form is available at ALAC and at the Registrar's Office).</p>	<p>Signature of advisor and Registrar's Office are required before student goes to host institution. Signature of host institution's Registrar's Office is also required. After approved, copies are filed with Host Registrar, RPI Registrar, and HMA&U office, as described on form.</p>

Curriculum-related (majors, minors, requirements)

Curriculum-related issue	Some considerations to discuss	Form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Substitute a different class for a required course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you feel that this course should be allowed as a substitution for the required course? ➤ Please describe the course for me, and explain why you think it gives you the same preparation in skills and knowledge as the required course. 	n/a: email or letter from DCO to Registrar	Substitutions must be approved by the program's Degree Clearance Officer, with written notification sent to the Registrar's Office. For degree-specific requirements, you may want to talk with the DCO to determine which substitutions are most commonly approved.
Waive a program requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you feel that this requirement should be waived? ➤ What other course(s) or experience do you have that you feel gives you the same preparation in skills and knowledge? ➤ Note: Institute-level requirements are difficult to waive because of accreditation issues. Program-specific requirements may have more leeway. 	n/a: email or letter from DCO or Dean of the School to Registrar's Office	Waivers must be approved by the program's Degree Clearance Officer, with written notification sent to the Registrar's Office. An advisor can recommend that a requirement be waived, but such action may not be possible if accreditation issues are involved.
Declare an initial major	In most cases a student will already have selected a major before being assigned to you for advisement. Engineering students, however, officially declare their major in the fall of their second year. See next section on "Change Major" for questions to discuss.	See notes	<p>In most cases, incoming first-year students specify their major during the admission process. Two exceptions:</p> <p>First-year students in the School of Engineering initially specify their area of interest, and then officially declare their major in sophomore year by completing a form in the Core of Engineering Office.</p> <p>Students may be admitted for "undeclared general studies." An undeclared student is assigned an advisor in ALAC, and has three semesters to declare a major via the "change major" process.</p>

Curriculum-related issue	Some considerations to discuss	Form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Change major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why are you considering changing your major? ➤ Which courses have you most enjoyed so far? What do you think your strengths are? ➤ What types of careers are you considering? ➤ What challenges do you think you may face? ➤ Have you talked with an advisor in your prospective program to explore the requirements for the other major? Will those requirements involve additional courses or credit hours? 	#9 "Undergraduate Change of Major/Change of Status"	<p>Review form carefully. Signatures are required from advisor and/or Curriculum Coordinator. Additional limitations and alerts are listed on the form.</p> <p>Note that any change in major will affect course requirements. Also, currently the CAPP Report tracks required courses only for the "primary" (first-listed) major.</p>
Add/drop dual major (one Bachelor's with two majors listed) OR Add double major (two separate Bachelor degrees, requiring additional credits) OR Adding a concentration (Information Technology Majors only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why are you considering changing your major? ➤ How will the addition of a dual/double major affect your course load or time in school? ➤ Have you talked with an advisor in the other program to explore the requirements for the other major? (Note that the CAPP report does not currently reflect requirements for more than one major.) ➤ How do you plan to meet the requirements for the other major? 	#9 "Undergraduate Change of Major/Change of Status"	<p>Review form carefully. Signatures are required from advisor and/or Curriculum Coordinator. Additional limitations and alerts are listed on the form.</p> <p>Note that any change in major will affect course requirements. Also, currently the CAPP Report tracks required courses only for the "primary" (first-listed) major.</p>
Specify a degree minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to add this minor? ➤ Have you explored the requirements for a minor? Will those requirements require additional courses or credit hours? 	#20 "Undergraduate Minor Approval Form"	Signatures are required from the advisor and from the department chair of the minor area.

Student status

Student status issue	Some considerations to discuss	Form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Change from full-time to part-time status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to change to part-time status? (Situations such as family, health, or financial issues should be explored, with possible referrals to other resources for assistance. If the concern is grades in a course, review considerations listed for dropping a course. Also explore referral for time management help or tutoring services.) ➤ Which course(s) do you plan to keep? Which will you drop? ➤ Will dropping the course(s) affect sequence requirements or prerequisites that may complicate future schedules? 	ALAC “Petition” Note: this form must be submitted <i>each semester</i> a student wishes part-time status.	Student completes form and submits it to ALAC each semester. No additional signatures are required. Part-time status is unusual, and must be requested each semester with an explanation of why a reduced course load is necessary. The most common reason is because a student is within one or two courses of completing their degree requirements. Other possibilities may include family, financial, health, or other personal concerns.
Change from part-time to full-time status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How has your situation changed? ➤ Do you foresee any changes during the semester that may require returning to part-time status? 	n/a	A part-time student resumes full-time status simply by registering for a full course load.
Request leave of absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Why do you want to take a leave of absence? ➤ Have you discussed this with your parent(s)? What concerns might your family have? ➤ Situations such as family, health, or financial issues should be explored, with possible referrals to other resources for assistance. ➤ If the concern is grades in a course, review considerations listed for dropping a course. Also explore referral for time management help or tutoring services. 	n/a	A student may wish to take a leave from school for personal, family, health or financial reasons. In this situation, the student should contact Dean of Student’s Office to arrange the change in status. (Graduate students would contact the School of Graduate Education.) In some cases, students may need to be evaluated by the Infirmary or Counseling Center to determine the need for a leave or return from leave. In rare instances, a medical leave may be mandated by the Institute.

Student status issue	Some considerations to discuss	Form(s)	Notes (for undergraduates; may vary for graduate students)
Return from leave of absence	<p>As an advisor, you will probably not be consulted about the decision to return to school. Here are some items to discuss in your first session after the leave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Welcome back! What did you do during your leave? ➤ Which courses are you thinking of taking this semester? ➤ Do you feel you're ready to handle that course load? 	Readmission form from Dean of Students Office.	A student on leave must contact the Dean of Students Office to resume
Apply for degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have you met the requirements for your major? (Information for the primary major will be shown in the CAPP report.) ➤ If you are pursuing a dual or double major, or a minor, have you talked with your advisor in the other program to be sure you meet those requirements? (Currently the CAPP report does not track requirements for anything other than the primary major.) ➤ What are you thinking of doing after graduation? (If you have not yet discussed graduate school vs. job, this is a good time to do so.) 	#[n/a]: "Degree Application"	<p>Student files this with the Registrar's Office in the semester they intend to graduate, before the deadline. Advisor signature is not needed. For students seeking double degrees, a separate form must be filed for each degree.</p> <p>Note that degree candidates must be registered during the semester in which they will graduate.</p>

Sample forms

The Registrar forms listed above, and others, are available online in pdf versions at <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/forms.html>. For ease of reference, samples are included here for the following forms:

- Advising & Learning Assistance Center Petition
- Advising & Learning Assistance Center Part Time Status Petition
- #1 Authorization Form
- #3 Late Add/Drop Form
- #4 Independent Study/Undergraduate Research Project Registration Form
- #5 Pass/No Credit Request
- #6 Remove Pass/No Credit Designation
- #7 Thesis/Project/Research Registration Form
- #8 Transfer Credit Approval
- #9 Undergraduate Change of Major/Change of Status
- #12 Full Time Rensselaer Student Audit Registration Form
- #20 Undergraduate Minor Approval Form
- Approval Form for an Undergraduate to Take a Graduate Course
- Degree Application
- Incoming Freshmen Transfer Credit Procedure
- Hudson Mohawk Association Cross-Registration Form for Undergraduate Courses

9. Beyond the Classroom

A student's college experience includes far more than one's academic courses. Often learning and personal development depends far more on the student's activities outside the classroom. Extra-curricular activities can provide a bounty of benefits:

- A sense of personal connection (especially important for first-year students)
- Social contact with other students
- Development of team skills
- Multi-cultural exposure
- Improved resourcefulness
- Community involvement
- Career exploration
- Resume material!

Rensselaer offers a rich variety of options for activities beyond the classroom. The table below outlines a few of the many possibilities that may interest your advisees.

Type of activity	Contact(s)	Description
Student clubs and organizations	Rensselaer Union Ext. 6505 Info also available at the annual Fall "Student Activity Fair" and in an annual Fall <i>Polytechnic</i> insert	The Rensselaer Union supports dozens of organizations. Whether the student's interest is in religion, multi-cultural affairs, publications, art, sports, environmental issues, or extra-curricular career exploration, a club probably already exists of students with similar interests. If an organization doesn't yet exist, the Union offers a way for students to start another activity.
Student government	Rensselaer Union Ext. 6513	Rensselaer's student government welcomes students to participate in the Undergraduate, Graduate, and "Independent" (non-Greek) Councils, the Student Senate, the Judicial Board, and the Executive Board.
Community service	Office of First Year Experience (FYE) Ext. 6864 http://www.rpi.edu/fye/	FYE coordinates a calendar showing the variety of community service, volunteerism and service learning opportunities at Rensselaer. The mission of FYE's Community Service Committee is to work cooperatively with service organizations and the Troy community to instill a sense of neighborhood. Programs sponsored or publicized by FYE include blood drives, public service internships, community-based work-study opportunities, and more.
Community service	Office of First Year Experience (FYE) Ext. 6864 http://www.rpi.edu/fye/	FYE coordinates a calendar showing the variety of community service, volunteerism and service learning opportunities at Rensselaer. The mission of FYE's Community Service Committee is to work cooperatively with service organizations and the Troy community to instill a sense of neighborhood. Programs sponsored or publicized by FYE include blood drives, public service internships, community-based work-study opportunities, and more.

Type of activity	Contact(s)	Description
Study Abroad	Various. See contact list at http://www.rpi.edu/academics/resources/exchange.html Rensselaer's international exchange programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undergraduate ➤ Management ➤ Architecture ➤ Global engineering ➤ Swiss ➤ French ➤ University of Amsterdam 	Rensselaer offers a wide variety of exchange and/or study-abroad programs to undergraduate students. Most exchange programs are intended for students in their junior year. Students apply to participate in these programs during the second semester of their sophomore year. Serious consideration for these programs generally requires that students achieve and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better.
Learning Assistant	Advising and Learning Assistance Center (ALAC) Ext. 6269	The Learning Assistance Program is a collaborative effort between the Residence Life Office in the Division of Student Affairs and the Advising and Learning Assistance Center in the Academic Affairs area. The goal of the program is to have peers, who have successfully completed at least a year at Rensselaer, assist first year students in making the transition from high school to college. The Learning Assistants live alongside of the first year students and help them with academic matters through workshops and one-on-one contact.
Peer tutoring	Advising and Learning Assistance Center (ALAC) Ext. 6269	Teaching a subject is a great way to check just how well you understand it! ALAC's tutoring program uses undergraduate and graduate students to offer course-specific tutoring to all registered undergraduate students at Rensselaer. Tutors work with students through drop-in group tutoring or "supplemental instruction" (SI) for specific core courses. SI Leaders attend all class sessions, take notes, read all assigned material, and conduct two SI sessions each week during the term.
Leadership training	Archer Center Ext. 2119	The Archer Center for Student Leadership Development team provides skill-based, interactive leadership education for the Rensselaer students and community that complements the Institute's educational mission. Activities include leadership courses, an annual student leadership conference, and two conferences per year offering informal discussions with corporate executives

Listing of Clubs and Organizations

Your advisees, especially first-year students, may not be aware of the variety of activities available at Rensselaer. The following list shows each of the clubs and organizations listed on the Rensselaer Union's website in August 2004. As you talk with students and identify interests, you may want to help them find a group that seems relevant, or show them the whole list. More information about each group is available at the Rensselaer Union website.

Aeronautical Federation (RAF)	Dance Dance Revolution
African & Caribbean Students Association (ACSA)	Ecologic
Aikido)	Electronics
Alianza Latina)	Entrepreneurship
Alpha Gamma Delta	Equestrian Club
Alpha Phi	Executive Board
Alpha Phi Omega (APO)	Fencing
Aquarium Club	Figure Skating
Archery Club	Film Club
Arnold Air Society	Gaming Club
Association for Computing Machinery	GM Week
Association for India's Development (AID)	Graduate Council
Astrophysical Society	Gymnastics
Athletic Board	Habitat for Humanity
Autoshop	Hellenic Students Association
Badminton	Hillel
Ballroom Dance	Hong Kong Students Association
BDSM	Independent Council
Big Red Freakout	Indian Students Association
Biology Graduate Student Association	Interfraternity Council (IFC)
Black Students Alliance	Iranian Students Association (IRANSA)
Brothers and Sisters in Christ (BASE)	Isshrinyu Karate
Business Investments	Japanese Students Association (JSA)
Campus Serenaders	Jazz Ensemble
Cheerleading	Judicial Board
Chess Club	Judo Club
Chinese American Students Association	Juggling & Unicycling
Chinese Students Association	Kendo
Circle K	Korean Christian Fellowship
Class of 2004 Council	Korean Students Association
Class of 2007 Council	Mac User Group (MUG)
College Democrats	Malaysian Students Association
College Republicans	Married Students Organization
Community Service	Meditation Club
Concert Choir	Model Railroad
Creative Problem Solving	Muslim Students Association (MSA)
Crew	Muslim Womens Association
Cricket	National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
Culinary Club	Newman Catholic Fellowship
Cycling	Nickle Club
Dance Club	Objectivist Club
	Outing Club

Pagan Association
Paintball
Pakistan Students Association (PAKSA)
Panhellenic Council
Partial Credit
Pep Band
Percussion Ensemble
Phalanx Honorary Society
Philippine American League
Photo Club
Pi Beta Phi
Pi Lambda Phi
Players
Polytechnic
Pride Alliance
Pro Wrestling
Racquetball
Rally RPI
Red & White
Rensselaer Christian Association
Rensselaer Music Association
Rensselyrics
Rifle Club
RPI Ambulance
RPI TV
Rugby
Rules & Elections
Rusty Pipes
Sailing
Science Fiction Society
SCUBA
Sheer Idiocy
Sigma Delta
Ski and Snowboard Club
Ski Team

Society for Creative Anachronism
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)
Society of Women Engineers (SWE)
Space Society
Sports Car Association
Squash
Statler & Waldorf
Student Organized Leaders of Innovative Design (SOLID)
Student Senate
Symphonic Band
Symphony Orchestra
Table Tennis
Tae Kwon Do
Taiwanese Students Association
Tau Beta Pi
Tennis Club
Transit Yearbook
Turkish Students Association (TURKSA)
Ultimate Frisbee
Undergraduate Council
UPAC Cinema
UPAC Comedy
UPAC Concerts
UPAC Lights
UPAC Mothers
UPAC Sound
V-Day
Volleyball
W2SZ HAM Radio
Water Polo
White Key
Wrestling
WRPI

10. Campus Resources

Making Effective Referrals

Source: Roundy, Jack. "Tips on Making Effective Referrals In Academic Advising." Academic Advising News, Vol. XIV, No. 2, April 1992, 2, 10. Retrieved 8/11/04 from the Pennsylvania State University website, <<http://www.psu.edu/dus/cfe/referral.htm>>.

In academic advising we depend a great deal on faculty and staff in other departments to help us serve our advisees. But we also know the frustration of trying to help students make effective contacts in other departments and seeing our attempts fail. Here is a set of tips on making effective referrals, tips that can result in a higher success rate in this area:

- Inform yourself of campus resources thoroughly, paying particular attention to the names of contact people and the chain of command in various offices.
- Keep a list of names, offices, and telephone numbers at hand for quick reference.
- When talking with students, pay particular attention to their expressed and implied needs. Often students won't ask to be referred for help, but they very much need referral.
- Students are often uneasy about following through with a referral. Try to make them comfortable with the idea, pointing out the friendliness, accessibility, and helpfulness of the people you are sending them to. This task can be crucial in the case of faculty and upper-level administrator referees, since students often find these people intimidating.
- Try to keep the chain of referrals as simple as possible. Often students will have to visit several offices to complete referral procedures. Help students reduce the "runaround" by finding ways to eliminate steps. Also, work out with students a proper sequence of steps, so that they don't have to backtrack to accomplish their ends.
- Help students draw up agendas for referrals. Have them jot down crucial questions and procedures for getting the most of their visits with the people to whom you send them.
- Facilitate referrals by telephoning the parties to whom you are sending students while those students are with you. Telephoning can be helpful in two ways: it can help you to be sure that you are sending students to the right people for help, and it can give you the opportunity to make an appointment for the students on the spot, which will dramatically improve the contact rate for referrals. In fact, a good strategy for referrals is to make telephone calls and then hand the receiver to your students, encouraging them to set up appointments themselves.
- When you make referrals, jot down notes in your advising files that will remind you to ask students on their next visit about the results of their contacts. If students report that they haven't followed through, find out why not, and discuss the reasons. See if you should make a different referral, or if you need to become more involved in ensuring contact. Don't take the process over from your students, however, since it is their responsibility to see that their needs are met.
- Check your records every so often to get a sense of the referrals you have made. Student development is an ongoing process, and patterns of need and growth can be observed in the sequence of referrals you have made. Need for further direction can often be discovered in the referrals you have already made

Rensselaer Resources and Referrals

Office Name/Location	Types of service	Description	Contacts and Numbers
<p>Advising and Learning Assistance Center Sage 2106 Hours: 8:30-5:00pm, M-F</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academic support services ➤ Advisor support services ➤ Early Warning System ➤ Academic probation ➤ Late drop/adds ➤ Tutoring, Learning Assistants, learning skills (see separate entries) ➤ English classes for the international community 	<p>Provides academic support services to help students maximize their academic performance. Services include: Tutoring; Supplemental Instruction; Learning Assistants; Study Skills & Time Management; Eight-Week 1st Year Student Seminar for Undecided Students; Learning Skills Specialist to assist learning disabled students; overall advising consultation regarding Institute policies and regulations; Early Warning System; and monitoring of students who are on probation. Offers English classes for international teaching assistants and others.</p>	<p>Jeannie Steigler, Interim Director Ext. 6269 <steigj2@rpi.edu></p>
<p>Archer Center, Rensselaer Union 3702 Hours: 8:30-5:30pm M-F</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Leadership training 	<p>Provides skill-based, interactive leadership education for Rensselaer students and community that complements the Institute's educational mission. Promotes leadership practices that foster teamwork and integrity in professional and personal development.</p>	<p>Linda Tietelman-McCloskey, Director Ext. 2119 <teitel@rpi.edu></p>
<p>Career Development Center (CDC) DCC 209 Hours: Please call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Job search workshops and materials ➤ Internships, coops ➤ Permanent placement 	<p>Helps students identify, plan for, and achieve career goals. They do this by offering information, advice, training, and resources specifically selected and tailored to help the student succeed.</p>	<p>Tom Tarantelli, Director Ext. 6234 <cdc@rpi.edu></p>
<p>Counseling Center within the Health Center, Academy Hall Hours: 8:30am-5pm, M-F</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal and group counseling ➤ Workshops ➤ Some screening for learning disability (also see entry for Learning Skills Specialist) 	<p>The goal is to help students maximize their sense of well being as well as their academic, personal and social growth. Services offered include: Individual/group counseling; relaxation training; biofeedback training; study skills/time management; Reducing test anxiety; Limited screening for learning disability; vocational interest testing; computerized stress testing; Group workshops scheduled upon request.</p>	<p>Joe Albert, Director Ext. 6479</p>

Office Name/Location	Types of service	Description	Contacts and Numbers
Dean of Students Office (DOSO) Academy Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Services for international, disabled, and minority students (see entries) ➤ Judicial issues 	Focuses on the overall development of students. Programs include: Absence and withdrawal; International Student Services; Minority Student Affairs; Disabled Student Services; Greek Life.	Mark Smith, Dean Ext. 6266 <doso@rpi.edu>
Disabled Student Services (through DOSO) Academy Hall Hours: M/T/W 1pm-5 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support and services for students with identified physical, learning, or emotional disabilities 	Assists Rensselaer students with disabilities in achieving full access both to the academic programs and extracurricular activities offered on campus. Disabilities may be physical, psychological, emotional, or learning-related, such as dyslexia or attention deficit. Disabled Student Services offers information, needs assessment, and individual assistance.	Debra Hamilton, Assistant Dean Ext. 2746 <hamild@rpi.edu>
Health Center Academy Hall Hours: M-F 8am-6pm Sat/Sun 1pm-5pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outpatient medical care ➤ Medical referrals ➤ Health education ➤ Counseling Center (see separate entry) 	A comprehensive accredited physician-directed program featuring an outpatient medical clinic; specialist, hospital and pharmacy services; laboratory services; gynecological and allergy clinics; Counseling Center; and health education and wellness programs, including the Wellness Library.	Katrin Wesner, Manager Ext. 6287 <healthcenter@rpi.edu>
International Services for Students & Scholars (ISSS) DOSO, Academy Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Immigration and visa documentation ➤ Orientation to American culture and customs 	ISSS offers a variety of programs and services to Rensselaer's international community. The office assists with questions or concerns. Their homepage has information on many aspects of life at RPI, in Troy, and in the U.S.	Jane Havis, ISSS Director and Assistant Dean Ext. 6561
Learning Assistants (through ALAC and Residence Life) Sage 2106 Hours: 8:30am-5:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Residential peer support for first-year students 	The goal of the LA program is to have peers, who have successfully completed at least a year at Rensselaer, assist first year students in making the transition from high school to college. The Learning Assistants act as the outreach arm of Advising and Learning Assistance Center by living alongside of the first year students and helping them with academic matters through workshops and one-on-one contact.	Nan Williams-Leighton, Learning Skills Specialist/Assistant Director Ext. 6269 <willin2@rpi.edu>

Office Name/Location	Types of service	Description	Contacts and Numbers
Learning Skills Specialist ALAC, Sage 2106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academic counseling ➤ Training on study skills and time management ➤ Initial assessment for learning disabilities 	The Learning Skills Specialist provides academic counseling services to students experiencing academic or transitional difficulties. One-on-one sessions generally focus on study strategies through a diagnostic/prescriptive approach. Also coordinates services with other campus resources.	Nan Williams-Leighton, Learning Skills Specialist/Assistant Director Ext. 6269 <willin2@rpi.edu>
Office of the First-Year Experience (FYE) 4100 Academy Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Student orientation ➤ Family programs ➤ Community service activities ➤ Support for first-year students 	FYE offers comprehensive programs and initiatives for both students and their primary support persons that begin before students arrive on campus and continue well beyond their first year. FYE sponsors the Navigating Rensselaer orientation program, Family Programs, Community Service, and the Information and Personal Assistance Center, along with many other programming initiatives.	Lisa Trahan, Dean Ext. 6864 <trahanl@rpi.edu>
Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) DOSO, Academy Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Short-term residential programs to prepare students for college ➤ Minority fellowship and aid programs ➤ Support services 	OMSA provides support services - academic, personal, financial, and career - to underrepresented groups in the sciences, technology, and engineering professions. Underrepresented groups, as defined by Rensselaer, include African American, Latino, Native American, and HEOP students.	Karen Ferrer-Muniz, Director and Interim Associate Dean Ext. 6272 <omsa@rpi.edu>
Residence Life West Commons Dining Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meal plans ➤ Residence maintenance ➤ On-campus roommate concerns 	Services: Meal plans; Student IDs/Card Access to Halls; Parking Info; Telephone and TV service; Maintenance/Housekeeping; Laundry Room Service.	Pete Snyder, Director Ext. 6284 <res_life@rpi.edu>
Tutoring & Supplemental Instruction ALAC, Sage 2106 Hours: 8:30-5:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual and group tutoring 	The tutoring program provides course-specific tutoring to all registered undergraduate students at Rensselaer, subject only to availability of tutors.	Sharon McGrath, Assistant Director Ext. 6269 mcgras@rpi.edu
Writing Center Sage 4508 Hours: Vary; see website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual consultation for class and non-class writing ➤ Handouts & reference materials 	The Writing Center provides one-on-one consultation to students, faculty, and staff in preparing written, oral, and electronic communication projects. Consultations are available in person or online.	Judy Tarbox, Director Ext. 8983 <writingcenter@rpi.edu>