

## Sample Questions for First Meeting

The first meeting with a student should focus on getting to know the student and discussing your role as an advisor. Some students will talk freely and readily provide the information when asked to tell a little about themselves. If the student appears shy or says very little, you can use some of the following questions to obtain information and build rapport with the student.

- What high school did you graduate from? Can you tell me how well you think your high school prepared you for what you're experiencing at UNC Asheville?
- Have you taken any courses within your major yet? How are they going?
- Is there a specific aspect of your major that particularly interests you?
- What led you to choose this major?
- Are you involved in any kind of extra-curricular activities, such as campus groups or part-time jobs?
- Have you received any scholarships? If so, what is required for you to keep those scholarships?
- What are your goals after graduation?
- What do you expect from me as your advisor?

You can use these questions as a guideline for initial sessions with students. You can also save the information from these questions in the student's folder.

## Sample Questions for Subsequent Meetings

Future meetings with advisees should attempt to make life at UNC Asheville as productive and trouble-free as possible. You should be ready to work with the student to help solve any problems that they encounter. These meetings are also a time to make certain that the academic choices that students make correspond with their career goals.

- How is each of your classes going? Do you know where to get help for these classes?
- In which ILS areas do you still need to take courses before graduation?
- In which student activities and professional organizations are you currently involved? Do you know where you can find out more about campus activities? [If the student is not involved in the department's professional organization, this is a good time to encourage involvement] It is also a good idea to ask students for a resume to keep on file once they have created one to stay informed about their career goals and progress.
- When do you plan to graduate? Are you planning to do a internship or shadow a professional to get any related professional experience before that time?

## Giving Good Advice

Giving good advice is what advising is all about! Academic advisors need to base their advice on students' career and life goals, interests, and ability to complete a proposed academic load.

- Ask students to come to their appointment with a list of classes they want to take in future semesters.
- Have students plan at least 6 terms in advance.
- Pay attention to courses which may be offered only in fall or only in spring semester, or only during alternate years.
- Use graduation checksheets and make sure student understands the details.
  - Review the sheet in each advising session
  - Highlight remaining requirements
- Encourage students to take a challenging, yet balanced, load.
  - Balance a term by using classes in the arts, natural and social sciences, etc.
  - Avoid combining extremely challenging courses or too many labs in same term.
  - Look for patterns. (Example - If a student has difficulty with engineering mechanics, the student may have difficulties with fluid mechanics, soil mechanics, etc.).

- Compare current course load to past performance.
  - Determine if the student has performed adequately in the past with the same number of credit hours.
  - Look at past performance in similar subject areas to see if any of the proposed courses are in areas of known difficulty for this student.
  - Decide if the student's expectations and aspirations are reasonable relative to the proposed load.
  - Suggest a different mix of courses, if necessary.
- Be aware of academic performance requirements for scholarships.
  - Ask students about scholarships they may have.
  - Adjust course load to an appropriate level if students are financially dependent on a scholarship to stay in school.
- Estimate Total Student Load.
  - Balance the academic load around all activities that students may be involved with including work study or other work commitments.
  - Help the student weigh overloading options with the possibility of taking a course near home or work during the summer.
- Be aware of student abilities, since, financially, overloading can be a good option for superior students. It is inexpensive and does not interfere with summer employment. For other students, stress taking classes over the summer, if financially feasible, because it does not increase the academic load during the school year.
- Be aware of rules about transferring courses to UNCA.
- Recognize that while UNCA has a very elite student body capable of a high level of achievement, students still need encouragement.
- It is often assumed that highly talented students choose a major early on and have well-defined plans for future lifestyle and careers; however, this is rarely the case. In fact, these students often struggle because they are able to consider a wide range of interests and abilities. They will need assistance in exploring their options and they will need encouragement and support from you.
- Remember that students who are pressured to declare a major too early often struggle more than students who wait to declare until they have done research and are sure of their majors.
  - Students who declare early can be more hurt and disappointed if their major/field/career goals turn out to be different than they thought they would be.
  - Students who declare too early often miss out of the benefits of experimenting in a liberal arts curriculum and can miss out on great opportunities.
- Students are very sensitive to comments from advisors about their academic ability.
- Be tactful when providing potentially negative information.
- Encourage students to reach their potential. Early in their experiences at UNCA, students may be looking for short cuts and the easy way -- try to help them focus on their long term goals. This is a good time to discuss the "easy course" pitfalls.