

Western Montana College Advisor's Guide

Philosophy

Academic advising at Western Montana College of The University of Montana is an integral part of our mission to educate students for life. While formal course work allows for the synthesis of a variety of academic materials, the advising relationship serves to fuse the students' personal goals with the appropriate program choices, and strengthen the role of education in their lives. The advisor articulates the purpose of the institution and explains the assumptions which guide its curricula. It is assumed that the advising process is developmental. It is the responsibility of the advisee to progress toward self-directed behavior during the process. A constructive advisory relationship will significantly influence students' educational and personal growth as they seek to accommodate themselves to the college community and to society as a whole.

Advisor Responsibilities

Academic advising should assist students in recognizing the educational options and benefits available to them. To fully meet their responsibilities, faculty advisors should:

- Review new advisee folders, provided by Admissions, prior to first meetings with advisees.
- Meet with new advisees during the Orientation/Registration process.
- Be available during registration periods to both new and returning advisees. This requires posting and keeping regular office hours.
- Maintain a thorough understanding of the curriculum, institutional requirements, course sequences, and requirements for related majors and minors.
- Acquaint advisees with general and departmental education requirements, and with college regulations, services and opportunities.
- Help advisees understand their past educational achievements and how these are related to the students' current academic and career goals.
- Help advisees plan a four-year program goal and then each semester's program of courses to meet that goal. It is suggested that each advisee complete a Graduation Requirement Worksheet and that both advisee and advisor keep a copy. The advisor must sign the registration and pre-registration forms.
- Assist advisees when they are not meeting their goals and helping them plan activities to overcome their difficulties.
- Refer students with special needs to the appropriate people, offices, and services.
- Keep aware of each advisee's academic progress by maintaining contact and keeping accurate records.
- Meet with advisees at least twice a semester—once during the first three weeks of classes and again during pre-registration for the following semester.
- Be available to advisees at scheduled times or by appointment throughout the semester.
- Assist students in developing a positive attitude toward their learning experience at Western.

Good academic advising requires that the advisor help students to define and develop realistic goals; accurately perceive the needs of advisees; and successfully match these goals and needs with available institutional resources. At times it may be necessary to suggest a change of goals, institutions, type of higher education, vocational training or academic discipline, or even withdrawal from the college. This process should be carried out in the atmosphere of a positive, caring, and trusting relationship.

Advisee Responsibilities

Students have a large responsibility in the advising process and should take the initiative in seeking out and developing a close relationship with their advisors. Advising is not just a question of scheduling classes. For freshmen and sophomores especially, advising includes a much broader spectrum: academic and social issues, determining special needs, adjusting to the entire college experience, and career planning. In order to do all this effectively, students should:

- Learn the name of their academic advisor and the location of the advisor's office.
- Schedule appointments early in the advisement period and be prepared. This means that students should have copies of the Schedule of Courses and the Catalog, have some idea of the classes they plan to take, and be prepared to discuss their choices, interests and goals with the advisor.
- Become familiar with the general education requirements, program requirements, and graduation requirements as defined by the catalog governing their selected program.
- Consult with their advisor concerning changes in their approved schedule (i.e., after being closed out of courses, during the drop/add process, etc.).
- Consult with their advisor before changing majors, transferring to another college, or withdrawing from college.
- Consult with their advisor at least twice each semester, including once during the semester and again during pre-registration for the following semester.
- Keep meeting appointments with advisors to ensure timely and constructive advising occurs.

Advising Session

To make the advising process as helpful and productive as possible, good communications skills must be practiced by both parties. The following suggestions may help you make the most of your advising time:

- Provide a cordial greeting to each other at the start of the session. A friendly/casual session will produce greater results than a dry, businesslike one.
- Practice active listening skills. Do less talking and try to include what the other person has said in your response. Search your own understanding of the other person's comments and try to react in a positive manner.
- Accept the feelings and attitudes of each other in a non-judgmental way. If the other person thinks there is a problem, you should too. Do not increase anxiety and stress by stifling the other person's comments.
- Ask questions that require more than a yes/no or one word response. Phrasing questions that require introspection and reflection can assist in understanding underlying feelings and concerns.
- Set time limits on advising sessions. Understanding that the session will last for a certain time can help you focus on the issues and accommodate everyone's busy schedule.
- You don't always have to provide an answer. Admitting your limitations makes the session more personal and honest. Be willing to find the information and provide an answer at the next advising session.
- If you feel more in-depth attention to an issue needs to occur, it may require a referral to someone with expertise related to the problem.

Maintaining Advising Records

Complete and accurate records are a prerequisite for insuring the success of the advising process. Advisors should be diligent in making sure they have the information necessary to help students make the proper choices regarding their academic careers. Toward that end, it is recommended that for each advisee, faculty advisors maintain and regularly update an individual file containing the following items:

- Complete and up-to-date transcripts, including transfer transcripts.
- Copies of signed approvals for applicable course substitutions.
- Math Placement Test results.
- Transfer credit evaluation, indicating which courses satisfy Western requirements.
- An advisee profile, including current address, phone number, catalog under which the student is operating, career goals, etc.
- Degree requirements checklist.
- Copy of current schedule.
- Meeting records, including date, topic of discussion, etc.

Special Cases

Each student is unique, and deserving of specific attention to his or her individual circumstances. But there are also some categories of students for whom special considerations, official or unofficial, may apply. These categories include the following:

- **New Freshman:**

Many new freshmen are living away from home for the first time and are dealing with freedoms to which they are not yet accustomed. To give the student the opportunity to adjust to this new lifestyle, the beginning freshman should be encouraged not to take on a heavy credit load in their chosen area of specialization. This student should be strongly encouraged to enroll in the recommended mathematics course as determined by their placement examination. They might also be encouraged to enroll in the Freshman Orientation-Cornerstone course, which is geared toward helping them adjust to college life.

Those unique individuals who are entering college with high academic credentials should be encouraged to enroll in HON 101: Freshman Honors Seminar.
- **Students With Special Needs (Students With Disabilities):**

Following the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines, Western is committed to ensuring full and equal participation of persons who are physically challenged or learning disabled. Western will eliminate physical barriers and make appropriate accommodations that allow persons with disabilities equal opportunity in all aspects of Western's mission.

Students who request special accommodations or who have special needs must provide documentation to be filed with the Associate Dean of Students. The Associate Dean of Students will act as liaison between the student and professors. Students should also inform their advisors of special needs or accommodations.
- **The Student in Academic Difficulty:**

To be in good academic standing, students at Western must maintain a minimum cumulative 2.00 GPA and be making progress toward completion of a degree or program of study by completing required courses. Once a student's cumulative GPA falls below 2.00, the student is placed on academic probation. Many students who experience academic difficulty return to good standing through the intervention of their advisors. For academic assistance, the advisor should acquaint the student with the services provided by the Learning Center and the Math/Science Student Center. For other counseling needs which the advisor is not prepared to handle, students may be referred to Campus Counseling Services.

- **The Student Athlete:**

Advisors need to be aware of the academic requirements placed upon student athletes by Western, the Frontier Conference, and NAIA regulations. There are three primary rules affecting student athletes: course load, credits earned, and percentage of degree program.

Student athletes must be registered for at least 12 credit hours (full-time status) during the season of competition. Credits for courses being repeated in which the student athlete earned a D or higher grade cannot count toward this 12 credit minimum. The student athlete loses eligibility at the time his or her credit load drops below 12 credits. Encouraging student athletes to register for at least 15 credit hours is strongly recommended since this provides them the option of dropping a three credit course while maintaining full-time status. First year athletes should enroll in HPE 134: Introduction to Varsity Athletics during their semester of competition and should enroll in HPE 129: Introduction to Athletic Weight Training during the off-season semester. In subsequent semesters, the student athlete should enroll in HPE 135: Varsity Athletics during the season semester and HPE 130: Weight Training for Athletes during the off-season semester.

Student athletes must earn at least 24 credit hours in the fall, spring and summer semesters combined. Of those 24 credits, at least 18 must have been passed during the fall and spring semesters combined. The student athlete must maintain a 2.0 GPA to remain eligible.

Student athletes entering their third year (or fifth semester) must have declared an academic major. Student athletes with initial collegiate enrollment in 1995-1996 must have completed 75% of the course requirements for their specific degree program; those with initial enrollment in 1996-1997 must have completed 50%; and those with initial enrollment in 1997-1998 must have completed 25%.

Advisors with questions regarding student athletes should contact Jason Karch, Registrar.

- **The Transfer Student:**

Any student who last registered for twelve or more credits at another college or university (even if a former Western student) is considered a transfer student. If the student has not interrupted his or her attendance at any college or university for two or more consecutive semesters, the student may pursue completion of requirements listed in the catalog in effect at the time they enrolled at the initial college or university. Otherwise, the student must use the catalog requirements in effect at the time they are readmitted to Western.

Transfer credits should be evaluated prior to registering for classes at Western. Credits submitted for transfer that are more than five years old may be considered "outdated" and therefore unacceptable. Transfer students wishing to use a Western course as a repeat of a course attempted elsewhere need to check the conditions necessary to do so as outlined on page 44 of the current catalog.

Transfer students who have not completed an acceptable course equivalent of a required mathematics course are encouraged to take the mathematics placement examination. To earn a baccalaureate degree from Western, a transfer student must satisfactorily complete all courses required for a degree and must complete the equivalent of one academic year of full time resident credit.

- **The Nontraditional Student:**

A nontraditional student is defined as a student who has been out of high school at least three years or is 21 years of age or older when first enrolling in college. Nontraditional students are admitted to Western upon proof of high school graduation or presentation of a GED. Since academic backgrounds of these students are varied, it is imperative that these students take the placement examinations in English and Mathematics in order to be properly advised as to the courses they should take. In addition, advisors should be sensitive to the unique family and employment circumstances of nontraditional students, which may bear more heavily on their scheduling needs than in the case of traditional students.

- **The Post-Baccalaureate Student:**

An advisor may occasionally be assigned a student who has already earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution who is pursuing a second baccalaureate degree or a teaching endorsement in one or more fields. Candidates for a second bachelor's degree must complete a minimum of 30 credits and two semesters in residence, as well as the courses to satisfy the requirements of the second degree. If the first degree was earned at Western, a minimum of 15 credits toward the second degree must be taken in residence. Candidates seeking a teaching endorsement in one or more fields should consult with the education office.

Students enrolling at Western who have already earned a baccalaureate degree from Western or another Montana state-supported college are exempt from the credit limit provisions applied to undergraduates. However, these individuals will be charged tuition rates equivalent to graduate fees (approximately 120% of undergraduate rates) regardless of the level of the courses in which they enroll.

- **The Undecided Student:**

Advisors will be assigned students who do not know exactly what degree options they should pursue. Since continued participation in athletic and financial aid programs requires that a student maintain satisfactory progress towards a degree objective, the undecided student must declare a major within the first two semesters of college. The advisor must help the undecided student analyze his or her situation, aid them in organizing a plan for exploring options and integrating the information collected, support the student in making their decision and finally help the student implement his or her plan.

Once the student has selected a degree objective, the current advisor has to determine if the student's needs might be better served with a change of advisor. If such a change is deemed necessary, the current advisor should assist the student in making the change by ensuring that all necessary paperwork is completed.

Honors Program

The Honors Program at Western Montana College offers a special opportunity for students to explore a range of topics that expand on the normal course and program offerings. Advisors should be aware that enrollment in the Honors program is not restricted to students who have achieved a lofty GPA or to those pursuing a particular degree. Instead it is open to any student who exhibits an unquenchable curiosity and drive to learn more about the world around them. Advisors are often in the best position to identify such students, and should encourage them to apply for admission to the Honors program. Further details about the program can be found in the Western Montana College catalog; applications for admission can be obtained from Dr. Jane Maddock or the Vice Chancellor's office.

Diversity

At Western Montana College, the college community is mindful of the increasing need to recognize the contributions of members of diverse backgrounds who constitute an ever-emerging pluralistic society. Consequently, Western Montana College recognizes the importance of a building a curriculum, and community, that fosters and promotes the membership of individuals from multi-cultural backgrounds. In addition, Western Montana College is committed to extending the opportunities for participation in campus academic and social affairs through the use of innovative computer and telecommunications technologies that may further expand on the constituencies we serve. Advisors can play an integral part in the success of these efforts by exhibiting and conveying to students the importance placed on diversity by the institution, and emphasizing the positive effect that recognition of this fact will have on individual students' academic and professional careers.

Mathematics Placement Examination

Proper course placement in mathematics is essential to a student's successful educational experience. Because students enrolling at Western Montana College have varied academic skills in this subject, the Mathematics Department offers a variety of entry level courses to ensure that students achieve success in required courses. In addition, the department offers a placement examination so that each student will be advised into the proper courses.

To satisfy the mathematics general education requirement at western, students must complete a three (or more) credit math class with a course number of 104 or higher (some degrees dictate exactly what this class should be). These courses all have second-year high school algebra (or its equivalent) as a prerequisite. For those students who are lacking or weak in some of these prerequisite skills, the mathematics department offers three courses designed to help students master these skills: MATH 001 Fundamentals of Mathematics; MATH 003 Beginning Algebra; and MATH 100 Intermediate Algebra.

To determine a student's level of mathematical skills, the math faculty administer the Mathematics Placement Examination. Based upon the student's score and intended degree, a recommendation is given to the student as to the first mathematics course in which they should enroll. The test is administered during the summer and final orientations prior to the start of Fall semester and in the mathematics department during the academic year. Students should be strongly encouraged to enroll in the recommended math course; however, placement is not mandatory. If a student chooses to take a math course at a higher level than is indicated by the placement exam, the advisor should encourage the student to drop back to a lower level if faced with difficulty in the class within the first two or three weeks of the term.

The following table is used to determine a student's recommended course:

<u>Math Placement Score (0-25)</u>	<u>Recommended Course</u>
Score 0-4	MATH 001 Fundamentals of Mathematics
Score 5-10	MATH 003 Beginning Algebra
Score 11-17	MATH 100 Intermediate Algebra
Score 18-25	Math 115 or 116 (Elementary Education majors only)
Score 18-25	Math 104 or 110

ACT Math scores can also be used as a guide to course placement:

<u>ACT Math Score</u>	<u>Recommended Course</u>
12 or less	MATH 100 Fundamentals of Mathematics
13-15	MATH 003 Beginning Algebra
16-19	MATH 100 Intermediate Algebra
20 or more	MATH 104, 110, 115, or 116

Contact Otis Thompson of the Mathematics Department (683-7272) with questions regarding mathematics placement.

Scholarships

In order to recognize and reward superior achievement by our students, Western Montana College administers a wide variety of scholarships that provide financial assistance to deserving students. These awards are sponsored by various individuals and groups who are committed to helping Western attract and retain the highest caliber students. Advisors should familiarize themselves with the following list, which breaks the awards down by category, and direct their advisees to apply for appropriate grants. Full criteria, size of awards, and applications can be obtained from the Financial Aid Office. Deadline for applications is generally January 31.

Scholarships (continued)

Awards are listed under their main category, though some may involve additional criteria than indicated. Refer to Financial Aid Office and academic departments for more details and possible additions to the list.

Art Scholarships

Hancock-Emerick Art
Roy Evenson Photography
Carol Jean Schafer Award
Mary Baker Emerick

Scholarships for Athletics/Physical Education

Patty Bennett Memorial
William C. Bierrum
Davis Memorial
Lee and Evelyn Kendall Memorial
Jay LaLonde Memorial
Mair Miller Memorial
Sneed Memorial
Cashell/LaPlaze Memorial

Business Scholarships

Judy Focher Memorial
Norwest Bank

Education Scholarships

Donna Allen Memorial
Viola Anderson Memorial
Crouse/Sisterson Memorial
Kristen Dunfee Memorial
Clyde Eccleston Memorial
Ralph Kneeland Scholarship
Kleis Larsen Scholarship
Joseph E. McCarvel
Margaret Orr Memorial
Wallace & Ersel Webb Sharples
James & Dorothy Short Scholarship

English/Drama Scholarships

Ed Cebull Alumni Memorial
Robert English Memorial
Helm Memorial
Ruby MacLean Borgen Memorial
Jane Buttrey Memorial
Ryburn Memorial Scholarship

Financial Need Scholarships

Pendergast Scholarship
Dennis Washington Scholarship
Cora Benson Scholarship
Erb Family Endowment

General Scholarships

Lula May Clay
Faculty Association
Cobb Foundation
Haynes Foundation
Montana Power
L.S. Osborne Memorial
Rotary Scholarship
Roy Evenson Alumni Leadership Award
Western Foundation Academic
Western Foundation General Academic
Alumni Scholarship
William S. Bender Memorial
Freshman Honor
L.S. Osborne Memorial

History/Social Science Scholarship

Jane Buttrey Memorial
Dale Tash Memorial
Washburn History Award

Industrial Arts Scholarships

Roy Evenson Alumni Service Award
Jim Spehar Memorial
Greg Stewart Memorial

Math/Physical Science Scholarships

Howard Smith Memorial
Western Mathematics

Scholarships for Nontraditional Students

Chance
Morningstar Nontraditional

Regional Scholarships

Morningstar Traditional
James & Dorothy Short Scholarship
Steele-Reese Memorial
Sampson Rural
Hans & Georgiana Andersen Memorial
Flanagan Memorial

Scholarship for Women

American Assoc. of University Women

Others

Ambassador-Leadership Award
Heisy Foundation
IVCF-Bridenstine
Irene Carver Memorial
Staff Association Scholarship
Roy Evenson Chinook
Girls' State
Boys' State

Advising Center

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Advising Committee will be working with the administration and other campus entities to create a centralized Advising Center to enhance the efficient and effective advising services we already provide for our students. The primary function of the Center will involve working with new students and those with undeclared majors, though other responsibilities will likely be added as planning progresses. We invite all interested faculty to contribute ideas and information over the coming year, so that we can insure that the Center will be a success, offering valuable assistance not only to our students, but to faculty and staff as well.