

# ADVISING

## Introduction

Academic advising is critical to student success at University of Montana (UM). All undergraduate students are required to meet with their advisor at least once each semester to review educational progress, discuss future plans, and secure schedule approval prior to registration. Additional meetings are recommended for information and guidance on dropping and/or adding courses, changing/declaring majors, exploring available resources, and ensuring that graduation requirements are met.

The UM catalog is the official source of information on the UM General Education Requirements, requirements of individual academic programs, and graduation-related policies. The Advising Manual is a comprehensive policy and procedural guide for faculty and staff advisors at UM.

Faculty and professional advisors, as well as peer advising assistants, facilitate positive academic advising experiences by:

- helping students to develop mentoring relationships with faculty and professionally trained staff
- encouraging students to fulfill their obligation to plan in advance for advising sessions
- educating students to understand and accept their responsibilities in the advising process and for advising decisions, and
- promoting open and productive dialogue about the student's academic, personal, and career goals.

## Advising Best Practices

No two advising sessions are ever the same. There are guidelines and best practices, however, that apply to most interactions between an advisor and advisee. These include:

- First, do no harm. Ask questions, double check information, and always document your interactions.
- Always reference a student's current academic record during an advising session. If you do not have access to printable student transcripts, access student records in Banner, Cyberbear, or Degree Works.
- Always maintain confidentiality. The student's academic record and all discussions (face-to-face, by phone or via email) between you and an advisee cannot be discussed with a third party unless you have the advisee's authorization. See the FERPA website maintained by the Registrar's Office – link included in the Resources section of this document – for detailed information on student confidentiality.
- Go beyond approving a class schedule and discuss the student's major choice, career or professional objectives, co-curricular opportunities and university resources. Help students make the most of their undergraduate experience at UM by connecting them with relevant resources and opportunities rather than simply making referrals.
- Advisors help students find the information they need to make good decisions and effectively advocate for themselves; advisors do not make decisions for the advisee.
- Use the available tools and resources to maximize the effectiveness of individual advising sessions with students. There are numerous technological and other tools available to advisors. Familiarize yourself with available tools by attending relevant training's.

## Minimum Expectations for the Advising Appointment

Advising numbers are distributed to academic departments 3-4 weeks prior to the Priority Registration period. Advising procedures and distribution of advising numbers vary widely among academic departments. At a minimum, the advising session should cover the following:

- Ask the student how they are doing and how their semester is going. Are they enjoying and performing well in their current courses? Are there additional support services they might benefit from? Based on student's responses and subsequent needs, provide student with available campus resources, encourage the student to utilize them, and, when possible, follow-up with the student to ensure that they have taken advantage of relevant resources. *Distributing the advising number shouldn't be the goal of advising.* Sometimes students are looking for the opportunity to discuss an issue but don't know how to start the conversation.
- Is the student's major a good fit and might a minor or second major be appropriate?
- Using Degree Works, conduct a comprehensive degree evaluation to inform student of progress towards degree completion (major requirements, GERs, Upper Division credits and general electives to meet the 120 credit requirement). Educate students on how they can access Degree Works to self-serve.
- Check to see if a student has registration-preventing and/or other holds, release advising pin, and notify student of when they can register for upcoming semester classes based on the priority registration timetable.
- Discuss the student's plans following graduation and encourage the student to take advantage of co-curricular or academic enrichment opportunities such as internships, service learning, undergraduate research, education abroad, etc. Also encourage the student to investigate federal student aid, scholarships and other higher education funding opportunities.
- At the end of the advising session with each student, summarize the main issues that surfaced in your advising interaction with the student, and ask them what their next steps are with respect to completing tasks and addressing issues pertaining to their academic progress.

## Expectations of Students: How to Prepare for the Advising Appointment

**Although academic advising is a relationship of shared responsibility between the advisor and the student, it is important for students to realize that the ultimate responsibility for meeting all graduation requirements is their own.** Students improve their academic planning and success by learning about the academic requirements of their academic program(s), UM policies on registration and graduation, and by fully using available advising services. In order to prepare for a productive advising appointment, students should:

- Develop a plan of courses for upcoming semester registration and be prepared to discuss your long-term academic, personal, and professional goals.
- Login to the Cyberbear Student Profile to check for registration-preventing holds. If holds are present, try to clear them before the advising appointment.

- Research academic enrichment and other beyond-the-classroom opportunities of interest to discuss during the advising appointment.
- Be honest with your advisor about issues impacting your ability to be successful. Advisors can only help with issues or situations they are aware of. This requires open and effective communication with your advisor.

## Mountain Campus Students

When students indicate a major on their application form, it becomes their initial declared major.

Advisor information and assignment is done through the student's major department. If the student is undeclared, Pre-Medical Sciences, Pre-Nursing, Pre-Physical Therapy, freshman Media Arts, or an undergraduate Non-degree student, he/she is assigned to a professional advisor at the Undergraduate Advising Center (<http://www.umt.edu/undergrad-advising-center>) ([www.umt.edu/uac](http://www.umt.edu/uac) (<http://www.umt.edu/undergrad-advising-center>)).

To change a major, a student must submit an official Change of Major form to the Registrar's Office located in the Lommasson building room 201. Once the new major is formally declared, the student should seek advising from the department.

Students with academic advising questions or concerns may contact the

Undergraduate Advising Center  
Lommasson Suite 269  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812  
[www.umt.edu/uac](http://www.umt.edu/uac) (<http://www.umt.edu/undergrad-advising-center>), or by phone at (406) 243-2835.

## Missoula College Students

Students are assigned an academic advisor in their major (program) upon acceptance to the Missoula College.

Academic programs are identified by the major the student declared on his/her Admissions application, or by an official change of major form filed by the student.

For questions regarding assigned advisors, or to change advisors, students can contact Student Services at 243-7882 or in the Missoula College Administration building.

For other questions or concerns about advising, students may contact their Department offices, Student Services (243-7882) or the Retention Coordinator (243-7878).

## Academic Support Services

Several tutoring programs are available to all students through the Office for Student Success ([http://www.umt.edu/oss/for\\_students/tutoring.php](http://www.umt.edu/oss/for_students/tutoring.php)). STUDY JAM provides early evening group study tables in the UC Commons for selected courses (e.g., Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Spanish, Economics, and Statistics). The Writing and Public Speaking Center (<http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter>) supports students in becoming more effective writers and provides tutoring at several locations across campus; 406-243-2266). The Math Learning Center provides tutoring in all developmental and 100-level math courses. Missoula College students may receive tutoring in math, writing and a variety of other subjects through the Academic Support Center. The Curry

Health Center Counseling Center offers workshops on a variety of topics designed to enhance student academic performance.

## TRiO Student Support Services

For students who qualify, TRiO Student Support Services is a federally funded program offering academic support services, including one-on-one academic advising, career search and counseling (using a national career database), mentoring for Native American students, a two-credit study skills class, and tutoring at no cost. To qualify, a student must meet one of the following criteria:

- first-generation (neither parent has completed a four-year college degree),
- financial need based on family income (usually met if receiving a Pell grant), or
- a documented disability.

For more information, visit TRiO at Lommasson Center 154, call 406-243-5032, or the TRiO website (<http://www.umt.edu/trioss>).

## Academic Support Center (ASC)

The Academic Support Center (ASC) on the Missoula College campus offers a variety of services to support and enhance students' academic success. Students can receive tutoring in math, writing and numerous other areas. Skills assessments, accommodated test services and make-up testing are also offered at the ASC. Working with the Retention Coordinator students can develop study skills, participate in academic coaching and other student support activities, as well as complete the reinstatement process activities if necessary. For information related to these services, contact the ASC at 243-7826 or the Retention Coordinator at 243-7878.