

Are You Ready for Your Faculty Advising Appointment?

How to Prepare for a Successful Session

Students should consult their faculty academic advisor to assist them with selecting and changing majors, program planning, transfer of credit, withdrawals, reviewing degree requirements, course substitutions and waivers, and requests for course study elsewhere. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make appropriate academic choices. (Advisors are also available to discuss non-academic issues and may refer the student to other university student support services for learning services, financial assistance, or personal counseling.)

When you meet with your faculty academic advisor each semester to prepare for the next semester's courses, you need to be prepared so that your meeting will go well. Being prepared for each advising session will ensure that your choices are wise. The more prepared you are, the more you will accomplish during your advising session. Here are some tips to help you make your advising session productive:

Be early and be thoughtful. Download the Academic Calendar to find out registration priority dates. Avoid the rush and set up an advising appointment well before your scheduled date to register. If possible, have a rough schedule worked out with the courses you think will fulfill your requirements. Make sure you arrive for your appointment on time. Notify your advisor in advance if you have to cancel the appointment. Turn off your cell phone or place it on silent during your appointment. Thank your advisor for spending time with you.

Be prepared. Review the GCU catalog for program requirements, prerequisites, and General Education requirement courses. Print out a copy of your unofficial student transcript from Self-Service and your program (major) progress chart. Look over any materials your advisor has previously given you regarding your major and degree and **bring them with you** to every appointment. Check your program (major) progress chart so that you are prepared to ask about anything that is unclear to you. Come prepared with a list of questions and any concerns that you would like to discuss. Create an advising folder to keep all of your advising notes in while at GCU. Inform your advisor of any changes in your plans since the last time you met. For example, let your advisor know if you have decided to add a minor or a second major, or if you are planning to go to graduate or professional school after graduation.

Be informed. Know important deadlines and dates. The Academic Calendar lists important semester dates and deadlines: first and last day of classes, last day to drop or add a class, last day to request a selective withdrawal (undergraduates only), holiday breaks, study dates, and the semester exam period. If you are a transfer student, use your (major) progress chart to note any substitutions made and approved by your advisor (transfer courses used for a GCU requirement). Make sure all transfer credits appear on your transcript from all colleges and universities attended.

What to take to your advising session. Take a list of concerns, such as problems affecting your academic performance or career considerations. Your advisor can supply you with contact information for sources of help on campus, including tutoring or personal or career counseling. Having a list of concerns will ensure that you do not forget to discuss them. Take a pencil copy of a preliminary (course selection) schedule. Ask your advisor for alternate courses that you can take in the event some courses are closed or do not fit your schedule. Bring all previous advising notes and program progress charts for review.

Semester Planning: The Basics

1. **Get a time management system.** Managing your time may be your biggest challenge in college. Find something that works for you and use it from day one. (Not sure where to start? Learn [8 tips for managing your time](#) in college.)
2. **Take a reasonable course load.** Taking 20 units (or more!) this semester may sound great in theory, but it most likely will come back to haunt you in the long run. The lower grades you might get because your course load is too heavy is a sure way to bring your GPA *down*, not up. However, if you absolutely must carry a heavy course load for some reason, make sure that you've cut down on your other commitments so that you don't put too many unreasonable expectations on yourself.
3. **Have your books purchased—or at least on their way.** Not having your books the first week of class can put you behind everyone else from the beginning. Even if you have to go to the library for the first week or two to get the reading done, make sure you're doing what you can to stay on top of your homework until your books arrive.
4. **Have some—but not too much—co-curricular involvement.** You don't want to be so over-involved that you barely have time to eat and sleep, but you most likely do need to be involved in something other than your classes all day long. Join a club, get an [on-campus job](#), [volunteer somewhere](#), [play on an intramural team](#)—just do something to keep your brain (and personal life) balanced.
5. **Get your finances in order.** You may be rocking your classes, but if your financial situation is a mess, you won't be able to finish the semester. Make sure your finances are in order when you start a new semester *and* that they'll still be that way as you head toward finals week.
6. **Have your “life” logistics worked out.** These are different for every college student, but having the basics—like your [housing/roommate situation](#), your [food/dining options](#), and your transportation—worked out in advance is critical to making it through the semester in a stress-free way.
7. **Set up healthy outlets for fun and to relieve stress.** You don't need to have a Ph.D. to know that college is stressful. Have things already in place—like good groups of friends, [exercise plans](#), hobbies, and smart ways to avoid pitfalls (like [knowing how to avoid test anxiety](#))—that will allow you to mentally check out and relax when things get intense.
8. **Get information on where to go for help—you know, just in case.** If you find yourself juggling more than you can handle, trying to find help while under that kind of stress is nearly impossible. Learn where to go for help before the semester begins so that your small speed bump doesn't turn into a major disaster zone.