How Your Faculty Advisor Can Help You?

By Janis Albright and Kim Charmatz, Professional Academic Advisors

Many times students ask, “Why do I need two advisors?” Professional academic advisors help students navigate through the university, explore majors, and develop an academic plan. While faculty advisors do this too, they can help you progress further, since they are experts in the field. We asked two professors to share why it is helpful to work closely with your faculty advisor. Here are their responses:

David Champlin, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biology

**Why visit your faculty advisor?**

Faculty advisors can help you make surprising connections to people and programs on campus. We can also help connect you to people and organizations in the community.

Faculty usually have been at USM for many years. In a sense, we are “standing still” while students flow through their programs. Because of this, faculty can help you make connections to other students and alumni on similar paths.

**What should students do to prepare for a meeting?**

Take handwritten or electronic notes to record suggestions during advising meetings. Treat learning about your career path with advisors like a course. Some things you learn may not be relevant for a few years, and notes can help you remember ideas about things like courses, community connections, and internships.

**Do you have any other thoughts?**

Student status is a key that opens a lot of doors. Expressing an interest in a particular area can lead to many new opportunities. Take advantage of your status as a student.

You can also contact any professor in the department for advising. Some students are shy in this setting, and we understand that. Please remember though, faculty are “regular” people and look forward to talking with you!

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Professor Dana McDaniel, Ph.D., Professor of Linguistics and Department Advisor and Chair

Why visit your faculty advisor?

The major is a student’s home. Our buildings are the students’ space too—a place to hang out and feel a sense of belonging. Our faculty want to get to know students in our major and want to advise them. We can share course content, class progression, license requirements, and career pathways. Faculty may be able to waive an introductory class, help you with an independent study or suggest work study options. In addition, faculty are happy to review a graduate school application essay.

We feel it is important to your education to experience outside related opportunities. Together, we can plan research projects, a senior thesis, observational internships, and independent studies.

What should students do to do to prepare for a meeting?

A student can review the department’s website ahead of time and think of questions. But in the beginning, faculty are there to give a lot of help, and it is okay if a student isn’t sure where to start or what to ask. In time, faculty hope you can be more self-directed, but if still unsure, please come see us anyway.

Do you have any other thoughts?

Faculty can be more helpful, if they know a little bit about the student. It is good to know if the student is facing some challenges. If faculty knows about the student, from the beginning, they can usually be creative and suggest options or additional support. Finally, any time a student is having difficulty with school, it is best to share rather than hide.

Conclusion

Hopefully these interviews will encourage you to meet your faculty advisor, if you haven’t already, or visit them more often. In summary, faculty want to support your academic progress and help you develop meaningful career goals in life, that will help you feel fulfilled.