

Initiatives Advising Workshop Guidelines

Semester 1: Exploration

Faculty: Please feel free to adjust this format to suit your advisees and teaching style, but please do integrate into the workshop students' responses to the prompts given below.

The Initiatives advising workshop will be held from 9:00 - 10:20 a.m. on the Advising Practicum. You will meet your students in the same room that you used during New Student Days.

In preparation for this workshop, students will respond to the prompts that follow. On Wednesday, October 26, they will be sent an email with a link to an online submission form. Their responses are due by midnight on October 30. On Thursday, October 27, please remind them to complete the essays, and explain to them the value of doing so. You will have access to their responses online; please read them in preparation for the workshop. Note that in each of their first three semesters, students must complete these writing assignments and attend the workshop in order to receive credit for the Initiatives advising workshop and apply for Venture Grants. Please ensure that students are aware of these stipulations.

Students should plan to spend at least an hour responding to the following prompts:

Part I

1. Identify one specific learning experience from the current semester that was especially meaningful and memorable—something that you think will have lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.
2. Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead at Beloit College, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others to do so.

Part II

1. Practicing the liberal arts involves the cultivation and realization of particular values, skills, opportunities, experiences, obligations, and consequences. Identify one of each of the following, and explore in writing its significance in your own education thus far:
 - One value or commitment of a liberally educated student.
 - One skill of a liberally educated student.
 - One opportunity or experience of a liberally educated student.
 - One reason that—or way in which—any of the above are desirable to or valuable for anybody.
2. One of the key outcomes of the liberal arts in practice is the ability to draw meaningful connections between knowledge and experiences outside the classroom and the subjects and issues explored inside it. Identify and explore some connections you have noticed between your knowledge and/or experience gained outside of the classroom and topics covered in your courses over the past semester.
3. Describe a challenge that you have faced over the past semester, and the context in which it arose. How do you plan to address this challenge in the semester and years ahead?
4. As you imagine the next three-and-a-half years of your academic and personal journey, what worries you? What excites you most?

Guidelines for the workshop

The workshop should enable students to explore collaboratively the implications of their responses to these prompts for the decisions that they must make in the week and months ahead, and thus to participate in the remaining portions of the Advising Practicum and in individual advising meetings with a sense of purpose and a specific set of questions or goals. What follows is one model for structuring such a workshop; feel free to deviate from it as you think best, but please do engage students' responses to the prompts.

You might also consider asking students to come to the workshop with a list of 6-10 courses in which they have an interest (see especially C. below).

A. Explore different facets of practicing the liberal arts (20 minutes)

In the full group, ask your students to explore what it means to practice the liberal arts, drawing upon their responses to prompts I. 1 and II. 1 and 2 in doing so. Since you will have read their responses in advance, you might want to guide the conversation by soliciting comments from particular students. Track the discussion and conclude this section of the workshop by offering a summary of the important points raised (ideally, in writing); these will form the basis for the next activity.

B. Relate the discussion of the liberal arts in practice to the notion of exploration and risk-taking (5-10 minutes)

Ask students to identify some ways in which the aspects of practicing the liberal arts you have discussed necessitate or would be greatly enhanced by a willingness to explore unfamiliar territory and take risks.

C. Reflect on short- and long-term interests, goals, concerns, and challenges in light of the preceding discussions (20 minutes)

Place students in groups of three (or groups of two, as necessary to accommodate all students). In light of each student's (self-reported) responses to prompts I. 2 and II. 3 and 4, ask each group to discuss how furthering each student's interests and goals, and addressing his or her concerns and challenges might involve different forms of "practice" and a willingness to explore and take risks. Based on this discussion, have each student identify and write down:

- at least one (kind of) course to take that will involve exploration of the unknown and/or risk-taking;
- at least one curricular or co-curricular opportunity to investigate;
- at least one course, practice, or activity that will enable the student to explore more deeply an area of particular interest or excitement; and
- at least one course, practice, or activity to try that might help to address the student's concerns and challenges.

Remind students to divide time equally among the students in the group. Make yourself explicitly available to all groups if they have questions about opportunities, resources, deadlines, etc.

C. Report on goals and means to get there (20 minutes)

After ensuring that students who might be confused, uncertain, or overwhelmed feel supported in saying so (e.g., by stating explicitly that it's perfectly okay at this stage to be uncertain about your long-term goals and how to get there), have each student report briefly on the most important immediate steps s/he should take to make progress toward his or her goals. If the workshop atmosphere is conducive to it, you and the other students can make suggestions and ask questions of each student.

D. Formulate a course of action for the Advising Practicum and Advising Week (remaining time)

In light of the foregoing discussion, have each student write down the sessions s/he wants to attend for the remainder of the day. Make specific recommendations to students based on their writing and the workshop discussions. Give all students instructions on how to prepare for your individual advising meetings with them (e.g., by composing/revising an academic plan for the years ahead, choosing 6-10 attractive courses, writing down questions or concerns in advance, etc.). Have students sign up for individual advising appointments.

Note: The workshop format focuses on using group discussion of written responses to formulate goals and questions for the remainder of the Advising Practicum and advising week as a whole. Note, however, that you will also be able to read students' responses in advance. Please consider how best to advise them in light of those responses, including making specific recommendations to or asking pertinent questions of particular students in order to help them get the most out of the Practicum and make informed and satisfying choices for the semester ahead.