

Initiatives Advising Workshop Guidelines

Semester 3: Practice

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

In preparation for this workshop, students will have responded 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

A liberal arts education at Beloit College develops strong intellectual and practical skills, the capacity to engage with complex and diverse communities, breadth of knowledge, and an interdisciplinary flexibility of mind—and above all, the ability to put these skills and perspectives into practice in a variety of different circumstances. Practicing the liberal arts entails being able to draw connections between different kinds of knowledge and experience, to transfer skills, abilities, theories, and methodologies from one setting to another, and to reflect on and assess your own assumptions, experiences, and behaviors.

A. Please respond to at least one of the following two prompts:

1. Describe a particular situation in which you have been able to adapt a skill/ability/theory or methodology learned in the classroom to better understand a problem or issue outside of the classroom.
2. Describe a particular situation in which your knowledge and/or experience gained outside of the classroom has helped to illuminate a theory/concept/problem that has been explored in your coursework over the past semester.

B. Please respond to at least two of the following three prompts:

3. Describe one or two hypothetical—but, in your view, likely—scenarios in your life about five years from now, about which you might think or say, “This is my liberal arts education in practice!” Consider professional, social, intellectual, political, or personal elements in your life.
4. What sorts of learning experiences, relationships, abilities, would you like to cultivate over your remaining college years? How can existing campus structures and opportunities contribute to fulfilling your vision?
5. How have your habits of mind and body—the ways in which you learn and exercise self-discipline—changed since your arrival at Beloit College? How do your plans for your remaining college years take into account your strengths and weaknesses, and what are the contextual factors that may affect them?

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 B. below).

A. Enable students to reacclimate to the group while fostering reflection on what it means to practice the liberal arts (15 minutes)

Your FYI students may not have talked together as a group for quite a while. In the full group, ask them to discuss their responses to prompts I. 1 and/or II. A. 1 and 2, and specifically to reflect on how their classroom and out-of-classroom (broadly defined) experiences have informed and enriched one another. Depending on your group, be sure either to limit the time devoted to each student's response to a minute or so, or to solicit responses from a strategically chosen sub-group of students. (Remember, you will have read their responses in advance.)

B. Extend consideration of the liberal arts in practice into the short- and long-term future (15 minutes)

Place students in groups of three (or groups of two, as necessary to accommodate all students). Based upon each student's (self-reported) responses to prompts I. 2 and II. B. 3, 4, and 5, ask each group to spend five minutes discussing each student's short-term and long-term goals, and the choices s/he needs to consider now in order to get the most out of the semester and years to come. These choices should definitely include desired and required varieties of coursework (even if students haven't yet looked at available courses), as well as extra-classroom opportunities of many kinds. The student in question should take notes during this discussion. 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 (15 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)

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 meeting with him or her (e.g., by composing/revising his or her 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 (optional for students who have already declared, but encourage those students whom you think would benefit from a follow-up conversation).

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.