

Achieving Academic Success

Academic Advising

Academic advising is an educational relationship in which students and advisors are partners in planning academic, personal, and career goals. It fosters intellectual and personal development that leads to academic success and self-directed life-long learning.

The Center for Advising and Career Development (CACD) at Washington State University (WSU) assists students in creating short and long-term plans in building the foundation to their education and future career. All students are required to meet with an academic advisor each semester to discuss their academic and career direction. The CACD offers students a variety of services, programs, and resources to aid them in completing their academic courses, cultivating skill sets, and gaining experience to become marketable to future employers.

The CACD academic advisors along with career counselors engage students in critical thinking about their career development and the required components to obtain a degree at WSU. The CACD recommends that students also gain experiential learning, which is learning by doing. Students can participate in an internship, summer position, volunteering/community service, and/or study abroad. This equates to structuring a strong professional background that will enable students to move beyond WSU and toward a career with confidence in their ability to function in a complex, global, and diverse world of work.

WSU academic advisor responsibilities:

- Be accessible, knowledgeable, informed and demonstrate care and respect.
- Guide students as they define and develop realistic goals.
- Teach students decision-making skills and to assume responsibility to explore their educational plans, options, and achievements.
- Understand and effectively communicate the curriculum, graduation requirements, and university and college policies and procedures.
- Teach and support students with information about and strategies for utilizing the available resources and services on campus and in the community.
- Teach students to understand the purposes and goals of higher education and its effects on their lives and personal goals.

WSU student responsibilities:

- Schedule regular appointments with your advisor (minimum one per semester).
- Clarify your personal values and goals and provide your advisor with accurate and truthful information regarding your interests and abilities.
- Gather all relevant decision-making information and necessary materials (Degree Audit Report -DARS, tentative course selections, forms, etc.) to aid in decision making and to build a schedule free of conflicts.
- Prepare a list of questions or concerns before meeting with your advisor. Continue to ask questions until you understand.
- Discuss any problems that effect academic performance, for example: study skills, difficulties in your course work, personal concerns.
- Find out where help is available.
- Know where to access accurate information about educational options, requirements, policies, and procedures.
- Discuss why and how to add or drop courses or to take a course pass-fail or audit.
- Discuss career considerations, changing directions/major/interests.
- Keep a personal record of your progress toward your academic goals. Be proactive in checking the electronic resources (DARS) to keep track of your academic progress.
- Accept responsibility for your decisions and your actions that affect your educational progress and goals.

You are encouraged to take advantage of the skill and knowledge of the advising professionals available to you. The responsibility of making decisions about personal goals and educational plans ultimately rests with you.

Choosing a Major

Washington State University has ten colleges that grant degrees. The colleges are divided into various departments that offer majors. A major is a set of courses that introduces you to an academic area of study in depth.

Choosing a major is one of the most important things you do at college. In general, it is best to major in an area that you like, and where you have the ability to do well. If you major in a subject that you like, you will feel more

motivated to study. The more you enjoy studying, the better your grades are likely to be, especially if you have some ability in the subject as well. These days, many employers look carefully at grades when they recruit on college campuses, so the higher your grades, the more competitive you may be in the job market. If you plan to pursue a graduate degree, you will want your undergraduate grades to represent the best work you are capable of doing.

The CACD is here to assist all students with choosing a major, either through individual counseling, through courses such as College Majors and Career Choice (Univ 100/101), or through the resources at the center.

University Certification Requirements

Entering students may identify an area of interest. You will be assigned an advisor in your major interest area by the Student Advising and Learning Center. This advisor can be changed if your original interest should change. If you choose not to specify a major interest area, you will be assigned to a general advisor.

An undergraduate may certify an academic major upon completion of 24 semester hours with a 2.0 or better cumulative GPA, with the approval of the department chair and notification to the Student Advising and Learning Center. Please note that some departments have additional certification requirements and may require a higher minimum cumulative GPA than 2.0 and require specific courses. Consult the departmental section of the catalog for specific departmental requirements. Also note that admission to Washington State University does not ensure acceptance into any department or program.

Some students choose to complete a minor or second major to enhance their degree program. Formal certification of a minor or second major is completed after you have finished 60 semester hours. Approved minors are identified in the departmental section of this catalog. Consult with your advisor or the department concerned.

How is a major related to a career?

Today's workplace is changing rapidly. Twenty years from now, you may find yourself working in a field that has not yet been invented! In fact, most adults change careers several times over the course of their working lives. A well-chosen major will prepare you to do well in many occupations, because it will give you the problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills you will need to succeed. Some jobs require specific college majors; others do not.

Nevertheless, the courses you will complete for your degree will give you skills and knowledge to last a lifetime, no matter how much the workplace may change. As you complete the General Education Requirements and major courses, you will learn skills that apply to any career:

- Communication skills: how to read, write, speak, and listen effectively.
- Analytical reasoning skills: how to break problems down into their component parts and find solutions.
- Cross-cultural skills: how to assess information about other cultures from a critical and comparative perspective.
- Research skills: how to use the scientific method to explore change and development in the natural world.
- Ethical skills: how to discuss questions of value.
- Aesthetic understanding: how to appreciate works of art.

Your academic advisor will work with you to construct an academic program tailored to your needs and interests.

Take a good look at what's out there

The Career Development Program in Career Services has many resources and programs to teach students the life-long skills of career planning. A staff of experienced counselors is available to help with academic major and career decisions. They can help you to examine values, interests, and abilities, locate current career information, and identify the various influences that affect decision making. Vocational testing can also be arranged. The center also provides information about internships and student employment opportunities which will enhance your academic major.

Use this catalog and other resources to identify departments that offer courses that sound interesting to you. Select your GER courses based on an informed decision. Consult with various departments regarding what they have to offer you to meet your interests and abilities. You may also access departmental information through the WSU homepage at www.wsu.edu. Finally, work carefully with your advisor as you select courses each semester to measure your progress toward the degree you plan to earn. Use the resources available to you.