

Advising as Teaching

The central idea of “Advising as Teaching” is to frame advising with goals very analogous to those that enable and propel good teaching. Some examples of such goals are:

- Help students learn how to frame good questions and to articulate a process for answering them.
- Help students develop new skills for researching their questions and analyzing what they learn. In the context of academic advising, this means helping the student develop skills in navigating the curriculum and in making thoughtful and well-informed academic decisions and plans.
- Help students to reflect on and analyze new information in the context of their own experiences and expectations.

In many respects, the model of advising as teaching frames a “good” advising session very much like a “good” classroom discussion.

- Students are expected to prepare for the session by reading relevant materials and reflecting on some questions in advance.
- At the session, students reflect on the material they’ve prepared, figure out what additional/new questions they may have, put together a strategy for getting additional information, and draw some conclusions.
- The teacher/advisor leads by asking questions, helping the student reflect/analyze more thoroughly, drawing out discussion, pointing the student to good resources, etc.

The overarching goal is for the student to synthesize a full and thoughtful analysis of their own previous experiences, goals and wishes with the set of academic/curricular goals and requirements of the college, to come up with a plan (at least a short term one).

Williams students and faculty have often mentioned some challenges of the advising relationship, particularly that first year students have a tendency to see the first meeting as pressured and performative (let me prove to you that I am fine and smart and all is well!) rather than as genuinely exploratory.

Here are some examples of the kinds of questions suggested in the literature that may help students analyze where they are coming from intellectually, and at the same time normalize the idea of having questions, uncertainties, etc.

- What have you most enjoyed academically? What has interested you most?
- What do you consider to be your greatest academic strengths?
- College is all about developing new skills and strengths – what are the academic areas in which you feel less confident/want to strengthen your own skills?
- What sorts of classroom experiences have you particularly enjoyed? Disliked?

- What subject that you studied in high school are you LEAST likely to continue here? Why?
- What are your goals for this term, academically? (To continue to explore something that's already a passion? To build skills? To explore broadly and find a subject you love?)
- Do you have a sense of long-term goals for yourself? (Some may, some may not!)
- Do you have particular majors in mind?
- Williams has these distribution requirements across sciences, humanities, social sciences. Do you have any thoughts yet about how you might make the most out of those? (A chance to talk about why they exist, the liberal arts, etc.)

For each of these questions, one can help the student think about strategies in academic planning that respond to them. "How do the courses you've selected help build that skill? Are there other academic resources beyond the classroom that could support that as well?" Or "How will the courses you've selected help you answer the question of whether you really want to become a physician?"

This sort of exploration also provides an opportunity to point the student to other resources (academic resources, fellowships, talking with other professors, etc.) that may help them address their questions or build skills or knowledge toward their goals.

If you'd like to learn more, here are a few resources from which this guide is drawn. I have copies of all of these and am happy to share them if that would be helpful.

Ryan, Carol C., *Advising as Teaching*, *NACADA Journal*, Volume 12 (1) 1992.

Magolda, Marcia and King, Patricia, *Toward Reflective Conversations; An Advising Approach that Promotes Self Authorship*, *Peer Review*, 10(1), pp. 8-11 Winter 2008

<http://www.dickinson.edu/academics/resources/advising/content/Advising-as-Teaching/>