

# ADVISING SYLLABI

## Why Use An Advising Syllabus

### **An Advising Syllabus: A Tool to Increase Advising Effectiveness**

*Jessica N. McKamey, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis*

Many of us see students who come to our offices for an advising appointment having no real understanding of why they are there. This is really the extent of their knowledge of advising—they have nothing prepared for the meeting, but why would they? They do not know that they have any responsibility, and they may not understand the importance of their role in the advising relationship. The answer to this is to give our advisees a tool and a resource—an advising syllabus.

There has been quite a bit written about the need for and use of an advising syllabus. Trabant (2006) described an advising syllabus as a tool to outline the experience and relationship of advising for advisees as well as a way to bridge the gap between curricular and co-curricular activities that act as support for the student in their educational pursuit.

Syllabi are a staple among college courses. One would be hard-pressed to find a course that did not use some type of a syllabus; they are used in courses in the liberal arts, science, math, and languages, so why not in the advising process? An advising syllabus would help standardize advising to that of the classroom experience. An advising syllabus would in itself assist in students' initial transition to college. Additionally, its content would help students understand what to expect from advising, from their first day through the rest of their college career and graduation. Not all syllabi need to go that far, but can you imagine the power of students knowing in their first semester that someone will be looking for them and waiting for them down the road a year or two later and knowing ahead of time what to look forward to? They could know, for example, that in their first semester they do not have to ask questions about internships or careers—unless they really want to—because they will have plenty of time to do that later. The syllabus would tell them the appropriate time to talk about internships with an adviser, as well as when to get an audit of completed classes or plan for letters of recommendation.

Most students think advising is just the process of receiving a list of classes to take for the following semester that, as Appleby (2001) said, “will satisfy requirements and amass credit hours.” The advising syllabus is a good way to assist students in overcoming this view and participating in their education. They will not be able to act as full participants in the advising process if we have not prepared them to do so. By giving students a syllabus, we are preparing them, as well as inviting them, to join us in the process of their education and the decisions that go along with it. According to Appleby (2001), “An adviser is the only person in the position to help students gain a coherent overview of their curriculum, rather than seeing it as just a series of courses that can be listed on their transcripts.”

There are several components that an advising syllabus should include in order to be fully effective and more closely match course syllabi:

- equivalent in format/content to other campus syllabi to adhere to a uniform and consistent layout
- unambiguous contact information so that the student can contact the correct office or adviser
- sections for required materials and expectations for advisees so that they will know how to be prepared for their appointments, as well as expectations of the adviser so students will know what they can expect and to what extent services will be provided

- a concise definition or mission statement of advising, along with any additional learning outcomes promoted by the institution and supported through advising
- goals and/or objectives listed clearly so the students can plan ahead for appointments, understand the purpose for them, and clearly see how advising can help them succeed
- a schedule of important dates, milestones in the advisee's academic career, suggested times to see an adviser (if advising is not required each semester), and a listing of other resources
- assignments (could be appropriate in some cases)

### **References**

Trabant, T. M. (2006). *Advising syllabus 101*. Retrieved September 6, 2006, from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/syllabus101.htm>

Appleby, D. C. (2001, February 5). The teaching-advising connection: Part I. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 3(1). Retrieved October 11, 2006, from <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/>

McKamey, J. N., Lukenbill, K. L., Mandabach, D. R., Rewerts, J. R., & Sellers, T. M. (2006). [Assessment of the nineteen resources available from or associated with the Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis psychology department advising office]. Unpublished data.

### **About the Author**

*Jessica N. McKamey is an academic advisor at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis*

## Sample Advising Syllabi

### SAMPLE A: Academic Advising Syllabus Texas Lutheran University

**Advisor:**

**Office:**

**Phone:**

**E-Mail:**

**Advising Office Hours:** By appointment

**Text/Materials:** University Catalogue (Including IGGs & Mission)  
University Advising Web Resources

#### **Academic Advising Description/Definition**

Academic advising is an educational process that, by intention and design, facilitates students' understanding of the meaning and purpose of higher education and fosters their intellectual and personal development toward academic success and lifelong learning. (NACADA, 2007)

At Texas Lutheran University, academic advising provides students with the opportunity to build a relationship with their advisor for the purpose of gaining assistance in planning their educational career, in learning the skills needed for academic success, and in learning how to access the variety of resources and services available to them on the TLU campus.

Academic advising is a collaborative educational process whereby students and their advisors are partners in meeting the essential learning outcomes, ensuring student academic success, and outlining the steps for achievement of the students' personal, academic, and career goals. This advisor/student partnership requires participation and involvement of both the advisor and the student as it is built over the student's entire educational experience at the university. Both the student and the advisor have clear responsibilities for ensuring the advising partnership is successful.

#### **Advisor Responsibilities – What You Can Expect**

You can expect me as your advisor to:

- Understand and effectively communicate the curriculum, graduation requirements, and university and college policies and procedures
- Encourage and guide students as they define and develop realistic goals
- Encourage and support students as they gain the skills to develop clear and attainable educational plans
- Provide students with information about and strategies for utilizing the available resources and services on campus
- Assist students in understanding the purposes and goals of higher education and its effects on their lives and personal goals
- Monitor and accurately document students' progress toward meeting their goals.
- Be accessible for meeting with advisees via office hours for advising, telephone, e-mail, or web access.
- Assist students in gaining decision making skills and skills in assuming responsibility for their educational plans and achievements.
- Maintain confidentiality
- Assist students in working closely with their professors.

### **Advisee Responsibilities – What You Are Expected To Do**

As an advisee, you have clear responsibilities in the advising partnership:

- Schedule regular appointments or make regular contacts during each semester
- Come prepared to each appointment with questions or material for discussion
- Be an active learner by participating fully in the advising experience.
- Ask questions if you do not understand an issue or have a specific concern
- Keep a personal record of your progress toward meeting your goals.
- Organize school paperwork in a way that you can access them when needed.
- Complete all assignments or recommendations from your advisor
- Gather all relevant decision-making information
- Clarify personal values and goals and provide advisor with accurate information regarding your interests and abilities.
- Become knowledgeable about college programs, policies, and procedures
- Accept responsibility for decisions

### **Expected Student Learning Outcomes for the Academic Advising Experience**

Through the academic advising experiences at Texas Lutheran University, students will

- Demonstrate the ability to make decisions concerning their degree/career goals.
- Develop an educational plan for successfully achieving their goals and select courses each semester to progress toward fulfilling that educational plan.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the value of the general education requirements.
- Utilize the resources and services on campus to assist them in achieving their academic, personal, and career goals.
- Make use of referrals to campus resources as needed.
- Be able to accurately read and effectively utilize a degree audit in their educational planning.
- Graduate in a timely manner based on their educational plan.

### **Demonstrating Your Achievement of Learning Outcomes**

In order for you and your advisor to accurately measure and document that you have achieved the learning outcomes for academic advising, the two of you will develop an on-going portfolio of your advising work. This portfolio will consist of a variety of documents including your educational plan, your semester schedules, collaborative work done due to various referrals on campus, and a variety of documents that you and your advisor will develop together to demonstrate your achievement of these outcomes.

### **Assistance with Issues Involving Disabilities**

Texas Lutheran University offers a variety of accommodations to students with disabilities based on appropriate documentation, nature of disability and academic need. In order to initiate services, students should meet with the A.D.A. coordinator (Alumni Student Center) at the start of the semester to discuss reasonable accommodation. If a student does not request accommodation or provide documentation, the faculty member is under no obligation to provide accommodations. You may contact the A.D.A. Director at ext. 8009. If you require modifications, it will be your responsibility to ask for them as needed.

**SAMPLE B: ACADEMIC ADVISING SYLLABUS**  
**Texas Lutheran University**

**Advisor Staff:**

**Office:**

**Phone:**

**General Email:**

**Office Hours:**

**Mission:** Academic advising at Texas Lutheran University promotes learning and successful transitions of students through engaging them in mentoring relationships focused on building an awareness of skills and competencies associated with academic success, providing meaningful self-reflection, and building sound decision making skills.

<b>Advisor Responsibilities</b> What you should expect from your advisor	<b>Student Responsibilities</b> What we expect of you
Assist you in exploring areas of study and corresponding career options to guide your understanding of how a course may relate to an interest or academic major.	Become familiar with academic policies, dates, deadlines, program requirements
Maintain confidentiality – we will not discuss your academic or personal issues with parents or non-university personnel without your written consent.	Get to know the staff in First Year Advising. Initiate contact and seek help on a regular basis via email, phone and/or 1:1 appointments.
Understand and effectively communicate academic policies and procedures including how to web register and complete advising related forms. Provide referrals to other campus staff and resources when required. Respond to your questions, emails and phone calls in a timely manner.	Ask for clarification if we fail to explain an issue or concern in a way that makes sense to you or use language or terms you do not understand. Learn how to activate and regularly check your TLU email account for communications from university faculty, staff, and administration.
Explain why you are required to complete courses in the General Education Curriculum in addition to courses within your declared major.	Take responsibility for the evaluation of your academic progress – be able to find and use a Major Track and the General Education Checklist to track requirements.
Guide you in developing better decision-making skills and assist you in creating good relationships with professors.	Accept responsibility for decisions and actions (or inactions) which affect your educational progress and goals.
Optimize our accessibility to students through advising outreach efforts.	Come to advising appointments prepared. Bring all advising related materials, completed forms, CRNs, etc...
Clarify course content and expectations. Discuss options and potential consequences of decision making.	Do not sign up for upper division 3000-4000 level courses without obtaining FYA advisor approval.
Provide you with advising assessment feedback opportunities	Learn how to search for classes, web register and check holds online and use the university directory.
Co-facilitate academic goal setting	Become familiar with campus resources

### Objectives and Expected Outcomes From the Students:

The following are things we expect you to learn during your first year:

- Explore your academic and career interests
- Choose your major based on work with advisors, career counselors and independent research
- Demonstrate an ability to make decisions concerning your academic and career goals
- Learn to successfully manage your time (including understanding sometimes you *can't* do it all)
- Carve out a place for yourself within the university by becoming involved
- Learn the art of interacting with faculty members and university administrators constructively
- Learn to ask for help rather than attempting to deal with overwhelming situations alone
- Discover your personal learning style and learn how you can use it to be a more successful student

### Demonstrating Your Achievement of Learning Outcomes

The following are ways for you to know if you have met/are meeting the objectives above:

- Are you successfully utilizing a planner to keep track of assignment due dates and exams?
- Are you earning grades commensurate with your work in your courses?
- Do you know when important dates are coming up – or where to find the academic calendar?
- Do you feel like a part of this campus community even if you are a commuter student?
- Have you had contact with at least one professor for help with an assignment or a test?
- Do you know where the Campus resources are located and what they can help you accomplish?
- Do you know how and when to check and resolve your holds?
- Are you familiar with when and how you transition to your college advisor?
- Do you know the difference between full and part time student status?
- Before dropping a course, have you evaluated the effect on other aspects of your education?

### Fall 2006

August 19th	Double- check course schedule/room assignments on IRISLink
August 20th	Fall classes begin August 24th - Last day to drop/add for fall. <i>Deadline – 5pm!!!</i>
September 15th	Login to IRISLink to check for transcript/test score holds
October 16th	Annual Majors Fair in Student Union Ballroom – 11-3pm
October 26th	Last day to withdraw from fall classes with no academic penalty. <i>Deadline – 5pm!!!</i>
November 1st	29 earned credit hours begins. Spring 2008 registration for students with 0
December 6-12th	Final Exams (check your syllabus and IRISLink for time and place of exams)
December 18th	Grades viewable in IRISLink

### SPRING 2007

January 7th	Spring classes begin
January 11th	Last day to drop/add for fall. <i>Deadline – 5pm!!!</i>
February 4th	Login to IRISLink to check for transition hold:
March 21st	Last day to withdraw from fall classes with no academic penalty. <i>Deadline – 5pm!!!</i>
April 3rd	Summer/Fall 2008 registration for students with 0-29 earned credit hours begins.
April 22-25th	Final Exams (check your syllabus and IRISLink for time and place of exams)
April 29th	Grades viewable in IRISLink
May 5th	May Term
June 13th	Summer I classes begin
June 16th	Summer 1 Classes end
July 11th	Summer 2 classes begin
July 25th	Summer 2 classes end

## **SAMPLE C: ACADEMIC ADVISING SYLLABUS**

### **Texas Lutheran University**

**Office:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

**Office Hours:**

**Mission:** Academic advising at Texas Lutheran University promotes learning and successful transitions of students through engaging them in mentoring relationships focused on building an awareness of skills and competencies associated with academic success, providing meaningful self-reflection, and building sound decision making skills.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Bring advising guide, list of current classes, and questions to each meeting.
- Know the general education requirements and appreciate value of a liberal arts education.
- Develop an educational plan for successfully achieving goals
- Select courses each term to progress toward completing that educational plan.
- Demonstrate decision making skills by using information, assessing alternatives and consequences.
- Develop problem-solving skills
- Create and document short-term and long-term goals
- Understand the relationship between your classroom and co-curricular experiences
- Create and maintain personal academic file to be used during advising sessions.

#### **Advisor Responsibilities:**

- Create an environment where respect and trust allows students to define and develop realistic goals.
- Assist students in gaining decision making skills and in assuming responsibility for their education.
- Assist in understanding the purpose of a Liberal Arts education and becoming an educated person.
- Understand and effectively communicate the TLU curriculum and graduation requirements.
- Guide students in identifying and pursuing campus resources.
- Maintain confidentiality following FERPA regulations.

#### **Advisee Responsibilities:**

- Be actively involved in the advising process, be prepared to discuss plans, and bring materials.
- Review your CEP each term and track your progress toward completing all graduation requirements.
- Take primary and increasing responsibility for your educational plans and achievements.
- Be open and willing to consider recommendations from faculty, advisors, and other mentors.
- Schedule and attend appointments with your advisor each term.

#### **Ultimately the college experience you build is your responsibility.**

Your advisor will assist you by providing information and resources, but you are responsible for planning your individual program and for meeting academic requirements and deadlines.

---

Student's signature

---

Date

**Sample D: Academic Advising Syllabus  
Texas Lutheran University  
2006-2007**

**Advisor:**

**Contact Info:**

**Location:**

**Office Hours:**

**Required Materials:**

- Comprehensive Education Plan
- Course Catalog
- University ID Number
- Schedule of Classes Each Semester
- Degree Plan/Check-sheet for your major area

**Expectations of Advisor:**

- Help formulate & realize goals
- Provide information on degree programs
- Assist with course selection & load
- Guide student success
- Guide to appropriate resources
- Assist Advisee with understanding policies and procedures

**Expectations of Advisee:**

- Plan ahead
- Actively participate
- Ask questions
- Discuss your goals and options
- Stay current on majors, courses, schedules, application procedures
- Check your TLU email! (This is the University's Official way to communicate with you.)

**Mission of Advising**

Academic advising at Texas Lutheran University is focused on promoting learning and successful transitions of students. Through the advising relationship, the Advisor attempts to inspire in students an awareness of skills and competencies associated with academic success, the ability for meaningful self-reflection, and the use of sound decision-making skills. Academic advising facilitates this learning by engaging students in an advising dialogue that promotes the expression and justification of individual goals and objectives and where the Advisor guides the learner through the decision-making process.

**Institutional Goals for Graduates**

**KNOWING:** TLU graduates should have achieved

- a breadth of knowledge in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.
- a depth of knowledge in a single discipline sufficient to understand its methods, language, content, history, and value.
- an understanding of the Christian faith and traditions
- an awareness of and respect for diverse religions, cultures, and viewpoints.

**DOING:** TLU graduates should be able to

- write clearly and coherently, read with comprehension, speak effectively, and listen with care
- use basic mathematical skills and know the appropriateness of quantitative methods.
- use appropriate tools as tools for problem solving and for finding, analyzing, and communicating information.
- think critically and reflectively and draw reasonable, supportable conclusions both individually and in groups.

**BECOMING:** TLU encourages and assists its students in developing

- a commitment to active community service.
- an integrated ethical perspective and a sense of moral purpose.
- a desire to cultivate physical and psychological health and well-being.
- a will to pursue continued cultural, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

**Advising Calendar and Objectives**

First-Year Semester 1			First-Year Semester 2		
When	What	Objective	When	What	Objective
Second-Year Semester 1			Second-Year Semester 2		
When	What	Objective	When	What	Objective
Third-Year Semester 1			Third-Year Semester 2		
When	What	Objective	When	What	Objective
Fourth-Year Semester 1			Fourth-Year Semester 2		
When	What	Objective	When	What	Objective