



## Academic Advising

**Introduction.** The advisor-advisee relationship is the heart of the system of student academic services at the Union. This relationship is reciprocal in which both the faculty advisor and the student advisee come to discover what is best for the student's education. Academic advising enables the student to gain knowledge of him/herself in the educational process and empowers the student to make decisions that will best facilitate the achievement of his or her educational goals.

**Assignment of Faculty Advisors.** An advisor is generally a member of the regular faculty and has precise knowledge of the academic programs at the Union. The assignment of faculty as advisors is the responsibility of the Academic Dean's office. The following principles are considered in making such assignments:

- Ordinarily, students will be assigned according to their interests and the degree program in which they are enrolled.
- Where possible, special attention will be given to matching a student with a faculty advisor of the same religious congregation.
- The same faculty advisor will be assigned to all the students of a religious congregation that has no faculty representative.
- While it is expected that a student will retain his/her advisor throughout enrollment, both the student and the advisor have the right at any time to request the Academic Dean for a change.
- The Academic Dean's Office will consult with an advisor who is going on sabbatical leave regarding coverage of assigned students during the advisor's sabbatical absence.

### Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor

- To the student remain focused on his/her educational and/or ministerial goals and to retain ownership and control of his/her educational process. To accomplish this, the advisor discusses with the student the work of the previous semester, keeping long-term goals and agreed-upon growth in focus during the advising sessions. Further, the advisor helps the student choose electives appropriate to his/her degree program and educational goals, taking advantage of the best available opportunities that will serve the student's pursuit of those goals. The advisor should discuss the following, applicable:
  - For the MDIV student, selecting the required course "in another religious tradition" in view of his/her overall goals.
  - For the MA student, completing the language exam early in the program; clarifying the nature of the MA thesis; assisting in selection of a thesis director; assists in drawing up the required bibliography for the general comprehensive examination.
  - For MAPS candidates, selecting a field of study, clarifying the nature of the integrating paper and guiding the student in identifying the most helpful readers for the final project.
  - For MTS students, selecting the appropriate distribution of elective and selecting the appropriate method of evaluation (paper or examination).
  - For the Certificate student, selecting the desired field of study.
- To ascertain whether there are areas in which the student should "round out" his/her required course program. For example, if a student did poorly in a required Scripture course, it may be to his/her advantage to take an elective in Scripture to compensate for the poor performance. Or a student may be able to take extra courses to fill in lacunae in his/her background or to help with his/her thesis.

- To target and help to resolve problem areas that a student may be having with studying, learning, specific courses, testing methods and integrating study with personal life.
- To maintain student records and pertinent documentation, such as copies of transcripts, pertinent degree flow chart, approved transfer of credits, copies of early warning notices among others. Records privacy is to be maintained according to federal and other governmental regulations.

#### **Responsibilities of the Student Advisee**

- To claim ownership of and responsibility for his/her own program at the Union. The quality of the advising relationship depends most basically on the student's cooperation in the process by meeting regularly with his/her advisor and by preparing for each meeting with a review of long-term goals and particular needs.
- **To maintain a written summary of his/her goals and plans; to provide the advisor with a copy.**
- To be aware of the program requirements pertinent to his/her academic program and to be cognizant of his/her progress toward their completion.
- To follow up on suggestions, recommendations and referrals made by the advisor.
- **To make an appointment with the advisor in advance of the early registration for the next semester in order to discuss course registration.** The advisee should be aware of the advisor's process for setting up such a meeting. Many advisors post a sign-up sheet at their office door indicating times they are available for appointments. If a student is not able to meet at the offered times, the student must contact the advisor to schedule an alternative time. Students who know they have very little flexibility in their daily schedules should begin early to arrange a meeting with their advisor. The registration form should be brought to this meeting for review, discussion and signature by the advisor. **The registration form will not be processed without the advisor's signature.**
- To evaluate the advising system and one's experience of advising, principally by completing the annual evaluation form at the end of each academic year.

**Initial Meeting.** Newly enrolled students will be assigned an advisor preceding their first registration. **Students must contact the assigned advisor to schedule an initial meeting that ordinarily takes place on the scheduled Orientation Day immediately before the beginning of the first semester.** This meeting will concentrate on:

- Reviewing the student's previous academic work and ascertaining the particular strengths and weaknesses that the student brings to the study of theology.
- Discussing the student's long-term educational and/or ministerial goals

To ensure accountability in the advising process, the student will write a brief summary statement after the initial meeting for the advisor that specifies the student's educational goal and/or ministerial goals as well as any area of needed growth that may be apparent at this point.

**Regular Meetings.** Students will meet at least two times in an academic year with the assigned advisor, once each semester. The meeting is preparation for the semester registration and will evaluate the student's progress toward the educational and/or ministerial goals, discussing whatever academic difficulties may arise.