

Thriving as a Faculty Advisor Mastering the Basics

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Faculty advisors who identify the basic information most important for their students set themselves up to thrive. Through talking to their students and other advisors, faculty advisors can identify the questions most often asked. Popular student queries often begin with these key phrases: "What are the requirements for . . . ?" "How do I . . . ?" "Where do I go to . . . ?" "What is the deadline for . . . ?" "What do I do about . . . ?" "Can I . . . ?" Of course, the answers advisors give must relate to the contexts, assisting students to effectively function within their institutions and achieve their educational goals.

Applying Internal Information

All Faculty advisors should acquire a basic understanding of McNeese's environment, including the role of academic advising, the responsibilities for the faculty advisor, and students in their advising group. The following checklist provides the general information areas for which advisors will need and McNeese has compiled many of these in this knowledgebase [Advisor Resources](#) article:

- Institutional policies, regulations, procedures, and deadlines that students must know;
- Campus resources that provide assistance to students, such as disability offices, tutorial or learning labs, student organizations, career development programs, student health centers, and services for specific student populations;
- The advising delivery model including features such as advising personnel, process for advising assignments, and advisor and advisee responsibilities;
- Available advising resources and relevant advising technologies, such as institutional web sites, online degree audits, and communication networks, as well as institutional student information, course registration, early warning, and appointment scheduling systems.

In addition to learning the sources of information, faculty advisors must create a method for easy, convenient access to it. We recommend that you bookmark this knowledgebase as well as obtain hard copies of available informational publications, such as advising and program student handbooks, and the McNeese catalog.

Assisting With Student Educational Goals

The types of information that advisors need to assist students are linked to three basic components of student success:

- Navigating McNeese's departments and business processes,
- Making appropriate academic decisions,
- Maximizing use of available resources at McNeese.

Navigating McNeese's Departments and Business Processes.

To make it through the graduation pipeline, college students need to know the language of higher education and the processes for undertaking tasks on campus. Therefore, faculty advisors should be able to explain the institutional policies, procedures, dates, and deadlines that are most important, utilized, and likely to affect students' academic progress. This set of knowledge includes policies that determine a student's academic standing and progress, such as those that relate to academic probation, dismissal, and readmission; requirements to maintain financial aid and NCAA eligibility; the procedure for declaring or changing a major or minor; student

course registration; and the acceptance of transfer credits.

Advisors also must learn appropriate referral resources for specialized expertise, such as maintaining financial aid eligibility. Because complex institutional, state, and federal policies make up the full scope of many referral sources, a faculty advisor should not be expected to grasp the details of all of the programs and regulations; therefore, to ensure that students receive the correct information, advisors must be ready to refer them to the appropriate campus and community sources. Use the [Advisor Resources](#) to guide you in advising sessions with students.

Helping With Academic Decisions.

To succeed in college, students must design realistic academic goals and develop the decision-making skills that enable them to achieve those goals. To assist students in making informed decisions, learning objectives for faculty advisors should include:

- Ability to identify available programs and provide an overview of the requirements (with the aid of an advising handbook and other available resources) for the academic programs of study, majors, minors, and areas of concentration. Faculty advisors must articulate basic information about programs outside of their own department such as requirements to be accepted into a major. They also must know the critical points of contact for the student to receive more information. Faculty advisors should admit shortcomings and offer referrals accordingly; “I can’t help you because that is not my department” is never an appropriate response.
- Familiarity with the institution’s policy on minors. Are students required to declare a minor? If so, what minors are available? What is the procedure to declare one? This may vary by department at McNeese, so contact the appropriate department for the most current information.
- Competency in helping students with post-baccalaureate goals, such as medical or law school. To assist these students, faculty advisors need to know the most appropriate programs to prepare the student to pursue such post-undergraduate goals and to assist the student’s explorations for advanced studies, using appropriate referrals as necessary.
- Proficiency in employing resources to find course descriptions and information on course sequences with increasing commitment of this information to memory.
- Facility in explaining McNeese’s general education program and outlining the various categories and options of appropriate general education courses.
- Aptitude for placing students in specific courses, such as those restricted to certain majors, appropriate for honors students, and that satisfy developmental-level placements.

Encouraging Student Use of Resources.

Effective advisors understand the value gained by college students who avail themselves of appropriate resources. To advance this self-help behavior in students as they strive to achieve their personal, educational, and career goals, advisors need familiarity with often-used internal and external resources. They must demonstrate knowledge of services for academic assistance (e.g., tutoring or student-athlete assistance programs), ability assistance (e.g., Office of Disability Services), and career development (e.g., part-time job fairs and internships). Advisors must also know how to link students with appropriate campus student organizations and programs to advance their engagement with the institution and local volunteer opportunities and events that encourage students to connect with their new community.

In addition to knowing the services and points of contact for resources available on and off campus, advisors also must learn:

- the symptoms indicating that a student may benefit from special services. Advisors can refer to the students’ academic records, feedback from course instructors, students’ self-reports, and consultation with the institutional offices that serve students with special needs. Faculty academic advisors without counseling backgrounds should seek training on assessing student needs through the institution’s counseling, health,

career development, or learning centers and new faculty development programs.

- the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) policies that ensure the student's right to confidentiality.
- the relational skills to encourage resistant students to seek needed services.

Next Steps? > Continue by reading the next article in this toolkit - [Faculty Advisors Mastering and Managing Information](#). Or go back and review the previous article [Components of Quality Academic Advising](#).
