Your Student’s Faculty Advisor: Why They’re Important

“As a faculty advisor, my short-term goal is to help a student successfully navigate through the trials and tribulations of academic life, but the long term goal is guiding a student toward a successful life.”

Every Cal U student who has declared an academic major has been assigned a faculty advisor. Students can locate advisor information under the Academic Info tab in the student Vulcan Information Portal (VIP) or by visiting their academic department office. The advisor-advisee relationship may be one of the most important and potentially rewarding relationships that your student will develop during college. You may be asking, “What does a faculty advisor actually do and how can my student benefit?”

Faculty members advise and mentor students as an important component of their teaching. By serving as academic advisors and mentors, they provide guidance so students can maximize their educational opportunities and make critical decisions regarding education, career, and life goals. Faculty advisors are experts in their academic disciplines and are knowledgeable about specific courses in their divisions, and in educational and career opportunities in their fields.

In addition to helping students with course scheduling decisions and offering guidance about an overall academic program, advisors suggest ways to enrich a student’s college experience through related extracurricular activities, research, internship opportunities, and professional networking. Dr. Michael Slavin, Department of Theater and Dance, says “I consider my advisory role as one of (if not the) most important duties I have as a faculty member. Far beyond the once a semester meeting to assist students in the scheduling process, advisement is a daily part of the job. It happens in the classroom, the hallways and in the office. Anytime I have a chance to speak with students, I am in the position of advisor.”

At its best, the advising process is a collaborative relationship between student and advisor in which a student feels a sense of connection, support, and
guidance. Advising encourages students to think critically, seek out resources, and develop and execute their academic plans. It provides students with the information and encouragement necessary for taking personal responsibility when exploring options and making decisions.

Ultimately, quality advising allows a student to achieve a meaningful and successful educational experience. Professor Barbara Hess, Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Information Systems offers “giving advice on campus services, career opportunities, and at times even life choices is a huge responsibility, but immensely rewarding, particularly when I see my students flourish, enjoy college life, and move on to become successful in their careers.”

As with any meaningful relationship, good advisor-advisee rapport requires a level of commitment. Dr. Slavin adds, “It takes time, an open door and a sense of humor, but the results are well worth the effort. Nothing is more rewarding than hearing from one of my former students about the success they are having years after graduation.”

Faculty members maintain regular weekly office hours for student consultations. However, they cannot insist that students visit. Rather, it is a student’s responsibility to make appointments and communicate regularly. Encourage your student to do so this semester.