

# A Word to the Wise? Advising Freshmen

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Here are the profiles of four freshmen. They report many of the typical concerns of any first year student. Some will be familiar to you. These students are about to visit their advisors. As you read these profiles, please list what are the central issues that you think each student should bring to the attention of the advisor. Write down at least three questions that each of these students should ask. What advice might you expect the advisors will offer? Are there any important generalizations that you can make about these four students?

## Advising Case Study Profiles

### *Eric*

Eric has no idea what he wants to major in and he is sick of people asking him. He is interested in a lot of different subjects and sees no problem in exploring his options for a while. He understands his General Education requirements and already has some of them fulfilled through Advanced Placement credit he received in high school. He figures he can take a nice mix of Gen Eds. and exploratory courses for the first three to four semesters and then decide on a major. There are a few interdisciplinary majors that he would like to pursue, but it doesn't look like this school offers them. He already talked with an advisor over the summer when they registered him for his fall courses. Since nothing has changed since then, he doesn't see the need to rehash it all again. Plus, things are going great. He gets along with his roommate, likes all of his classes and professors, and has an on-campus job working 20 to 25 hours a week.

### *Carl*

Carl doesn't want to close any doors. He has always loved English but feels that Management will give him some tangible "hands on" skills that he could use once he graduates. He would prefer not have to choose one or the other. He really wants to see if it is possible to do both. He feels like he is wasting his time taking Gen Ed. requirements. He sees them as a big pain and doesn't like the feeling that he is taking courses he doesn't want or need. He is very happy that he doesn't have to take a foreign language (because he is in Management) but still thinks that there is a lot of other "junk" that he has to take. So to rectify this he has decided that he isn't going to take any Gen Eds. He is just going to take his English and Management courses, the courses he is "really here for" anyway. He is going to sign himself up for a bunch of upper-level English courses and try to weasel his way into a Finance course that he thinks looks interesting. Besides, one of Carl's brother's friends graduated from the same school and told Carl that Honors students who are double majors can petition to get out of some of their Gen Eds. Carl has decided that he will just nod his head and be complacent in his academic advising meeting, but after it's over will do his own thing anyway.

## ***Helen***

Helen has wanted to be a physician since she was five years old. She decided to major in Biology because other students and her parents told her it was the best major for getting into medical school and preparing for the MCATs. She and her parents know all about the Early Assurance Program with the university's medical school and Helen plans to have half her pre-med requirements completed by the end of the sophomore year so that she is on target for acceptance. She intends to spend all of her free time this semester studying so she can have the highest grade point average possible for her early assurance application. Since she feels she knows all about med school and what she needs to do to get there, she is not convinced that she will get much out of her advising session. However, Helen has been under a lot of stress lately for some reason. She has gotten into a few arguments with her parents already on how preparations for med school are going. Between commuting and studying she has had a hard time meeting other pre-med students. In the back of her mind she wonders if this doctor thing is really going to make her happy and what she would do if she didn't go to med school.

## ***Sabrina***

As a chemical engineering student, Sabrina thinks that maybe this whole advising thing is a bit of a joke. Her classes will be so regimented that there really isn't much need for any kind of discussion. Classes like Chemistry 101 are followed by Chem. 102, which is followed by Chem. 201 and so on. She's in the Honors Program, how stupid do they think she is? Rather than going to this wasteful advising session she could use that time to deal with a couple of other issues in her life. She was a little disappointed that her Physics class was not a little more challenging. She would really like to take something more demanding, but there doesn't seem to be any other option. The second issue in her life is her roommate, who is really starting to get on her nerves for various reasons. She doesn't hate her roommate, but she does think that she needs to figure out some way to initiate a serious discussion about their living arrangements. She has talked to her Resident Assistant who lives on her floor, but would like to get some other input before sticking her neck out on this! If only there was somebody she could talk to...

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