ADVISORY

1. The Advising of Majors

The DUS establishes and oversees the department’s advisory system. This is one of your most important and demanding jobs, and the more majors a department has, the more assistance you will need from colleagues. An advisory system should have the following three goals:

1. that students in the major and students contemplating the major receive full information about the department’s offerings;
2. that they receive advice that takes into account their special interests and individual abilities; and
3. that they meet with their advisers frequently enough to accomplish the first two objectives.

A good advising system may be easier to establish in a smaller department than in a larger one, but one arrangement that many large departments have found extremely successful is that of appointing departmental representatives in the residential colleges. By this scheme, you designate as your representative in each of the fourteen residential colleges a member of the fellowship who is also a departmental colleague. This departmental representative advises undergraduate majors in the college and approves their course schedules at the beginning of each term. If a college does not have in its fellowship a member of the departmental faculty who is available for advising, you should not hesitate to recommend to the head of the college the name of a colleague who would be a good adviser. A new member of the full-time faculty is eligible to be elected to a college fellowship after one term of teaching at Yale.

If you delegate to departmental advisers the responsibility of approving course schedules, you should keep in mind that you have made them partners in the job of enforcing the requirements of the major. Make certain that they are thoroughly conversant with these requirements and keep them informed of changes in the undergraduate curriculum.

If only certain faculty signatures are valid on students’ course schedules, the University Registrar’s Office and the residential college deans should be so informed.

Your Department Student Advisory Committee might also play a role, as peer liaisons, in advising majors. Such peer liaisons often prove to be most useful for giving fellow students a sense of the experience of majoring in your field and practical advice on navigating the requirements and electives in your department or program. In no case may peer liaisons review course schedules for the term, authorize waivers or other exceptions, or officially assess progress towards completion of the major. In addition, they are unpaid. Peer liaisons may make themselves available through email, informal meetings, or drop-in hours in a departmental lounge or other suitable space. The Dean of Undergraduate Education can provide you with a template for establishing a peer liaison system.

2. The Advising of Non-Majors

The DUS and the departmental advisers have the important and substantial task of advising interested non-majors, especially first-year students and sophomores, about the department’s courses and programs. Many departments have developed systematic methods for such advising, such as holding a meeting at the beginning of the fall or spring term for students tentatively interested in entering the major; in others, the DUS and departmental representatives respond to the initiative of individual students who make inquiries. All DUSes are encouraged to participate in the Academic Fair, run by the Office of Academic Affairs and held annually on the Tuesday before the first day of fall classes. First-year and other incoming students, such as transfer students and Eli Whitney (non-traditional) students, are directed by their residential college deans to attend the Academic Fair to learn about Yale’s subject offerings and seek answers to questions about placement, preregistration, and major requirements.

First-year students are advised by college advisers (faculty and staff) drawn from the fellowships of their residential colleges. These advisers are assigned by the dean of the residential college and are charged with holistic advising. It is expected that specific course– and major–related advising will come from the departments themselves, often from the DUSes. Thus you may expect questions at the beginning of the fall and spring terms from college advisers and from first-year or other incoming students themselves; their questions about the department’s course offerings will frequently concern matters of placement. First-year and other incoming students are also encouraged to consult departmental advisers, if your program has them, about any matter connected with the department’s courses or programs. You should make certain, therefore, that all departmental advisers are thoroughly conversant with your department’s curriculum.

A good resource for non-majors and majors alike is the 2015 Yale College Dean’s Office report, “Goals for All Yale College Majors.” The goals listed for your department may help you present your department’s curriculum and objectives to potential interested students. Many departments have created “roadmaps,” or visual representations indicating how students go through those majors, as well as a typical course sequence in some cases. Many majors offer multiple paths, and the maps are designed to facilitate comparison. The roadmaps and typical course sequences are visually uniform so that students may easily compare one major with another at a glance. If your department has not prepared a roadmap but seeks to do so, contact Pamela Schirmeister (pamela.schirmeister@yale.edu), Senior Associate Dean and Dean of Undergraduate Education.

For the most part, the college advising systems does not require much initiative from you as DUS, though you and your departmental advisers should plan on responding to a number of inquiries from, or on behalf of, first-year students, incoming transfer and Eli Whitney
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students, and sophomores, particularly at the beginning of a term and at the time when those students begin to select a major. It is often helpful to offer expanded office hours during this time.

Questions about college advising should be directed to Risa Sodi (risa.sodi@yale.edu), Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Director of Advising and Special Programs in Yale College.