

## Advising++

**Educator:** Agnieszka Miguel, Professor & Chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering

**Context:** Out-of-class; advising

**Keywords:** Advising, engineering communities, mentoring

**Student Activity Time:** 30 minutes

*Students consider their academic plan, professional goals, and personal well-being in an advising meeting.*

### Introducing the Reflection Activity

Faculty advising is an important tool for ensuring that students are on track academically, but advising meetings can also support student well-being and create a platform for community building within the department. All students in the electrical and computer engineering department are assigned an academic advisor with whom they must meet with on a quarterly basis. The purpose of the advising meeting is to connect students with faculty members, assist students in academic and career planning, and support students' personal and professional well-being as engineers.

Students in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department are required to meet with their assigned faculty advisor in order to register for the upcoming term. This faculty member sent an email reminder to students about the meeting requirement and included a list of questions for students to reflect on before arriving at the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, the advisor introduced the purpose of the meeting, which was to review progress to date, to consider course planning for the upcoming term, and to discuss how the students are doing in order to point them toward the best resources for them. First, the advisor asked students about the past academic term, how they did, and if they are satisfied with their academic performance. Students also discussed study habits, their participation in study groups and tutoring, or visiting faculty office hours. The educator entered school-life balance into the conversation to discuss all of the students' responsibilities outside of classes.

The educator also asked about the student's participation in the departmental community, social events, and professional organizations. When necessary, the educator facilitated an introduction for the student with other students in the department. The educator also asked students about their professional goals, and as needed, offered suggestions about opportunities like industry internships or research experiences. To conclude the meeting, the educator updated the student's academic record and invited the student to return for future questions and the next advising meeting.

The outcomes of this reflective advising meeting are broad and are likely to vary for each student. This educator indicated that students experienced outcomes related to increased engagement in the department, the gain of relevant connections for

professional development experiences, and an increased sense of ownership of their academic plan.

### Recreating the Reflection Activity

	Description
1	Remind students via email to schedule an advising appointment and include the list of advising questions to reflect on the list of questions before the meeting.
2	Introduce the purpose of the meeting, which is to check in on their well-being, future plans, and what is happening in their lives currently.
3	Discuss academic related questions with the student, such as their satisfaction with their grades in the last term, study habits, and current course progress.
4	Begin drafting a two-year academic plan with the student based on their progress.
5	Discuss personal well-being and life balance as a tool to support academic success.
6	Check-in with the student about their involvement in the departmental community, professional organizations, and offer to connect them with students with similar interests.
7	Engage the student in conversation about their planned professional experiences, such as internship or research experiences. Offer and identify strategies, connections, or ideas that may be helpful based on the student's professional goals.
8	Close out the meeting with the student and update their electronic record with any necessary information.

### In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration

*Adjust the questions for each term.* Just keep in mind that the things you're talking about need to be timely. If I ask, "What are your professional plans for the summer?" in the fall, the question takes on a different meaning. If the student is a senior and its spring quarter, we have to go into emergency mode if they haven't found anything yet. In the fall, talking about clubs makes sense because they have the whole year to work on it and participate. Asking about their well-being is a better question to ask in the spring quarter because they have had some time in classes and a little of the excitement from the fall is gone.

*Prepare the students and pay attention to their reactions.* Definitely send the questions to students in advance and maybe send them again as a reminder, but tell them they don't have to write it down. That way, advising appointments don't become more work for the students, and they are more willing to sit down and just read the questions. While you're in the meeting, observe their reactions. If a student seems to get uncomfortable, think why, and maybe change the direction of the conversation. If there is a red flag, respond to that thoughtfully. Also, have a list of resources that are available and be sure to know of any mental health or learning strategies that will help them. If a student says they have a fear of finals, being able to give them a handout or link to a webpage makes the meeting helpful. Also, I always have a list of career fairs, professional development seminars, or resume nights that are happening. Be ready to learn a lot about your students—you may learn some things that you did not expect because they really open up. It's not just the student being uncomfortable, it may be the faculty member being

uncomfortable too, but that's okay. This is the kind of mentoring relationship that you're developing with each student at a time.

*What was the inspiration for the reflection activity?* At Seattle U, all of the faculty members are assigned as advisors for specific students. We traditionally meet with them for about 20 minutes every quarter so that they can have a registration hold removed. One term I had a higher than normal advising load, and it was a perfect opportunity to expand the activity. I had done it before, but it wasn't as structured as it is now. I wanted to talk about different aspects of their well-being, their future plans, and get them to reflect on what's going on in their life right now. I came up with a list of questions and sent it to the students in an email to remind them of their advising appointment.

I have always enjoyed it, and viewed it as a chance to learn more about the students and to connect them to resources that are available at the university. A lot of times, they need to personally hear from a faculty member that they should apply for an internship or become an officer in a professional society. That part is really meaningful and I wanted the extra time to bring in this mentoring part to advising. It's easy to make sure that the prerequisites are satisfied, sign them up for classes and move on. I really want more than that for them, and it's amazing what you can learn about the students, and how much you can help them out. Being a student is stressful sometimes, and if you don't pull that out from them and talk about it, they may not come to you on their own, so this is an opportunity for them to open up.