Online Academic Advising

Transitioning to online advising may be a little uncomfortable for some, but I assure you does not change the nature of conversations, only our approach to the way we meet. Please review some of the information, suggested tips, and guidelines below that I hope will help you maintain your advising connection to your students and give you some ease as we move to online learning and instruction over the new few weeks. Please know that the Academic Advising Resource Center is available to assist with any challenges or questions that may arise. Thank you for all that you do and do not hesitate to reach out.

Next Steps:

- Email all of your advisees confirming that all advising appointments will be conducted online (If you have not already done so).
- Remind them of important dates and that they should seek to set up an appointment with you virtually.
- Make sure to review the temporary academic policy changes that are in effect for the remainder of the spring and summer.

As you know, many of our students may have access to resources which would allow them to maintain an advising appointment remotely, not all will/do, so keep that in mind when choosing remote options. When possible, allow students to choose the method they would prefer. Something that could help with this is setting up your “You Can Book Me” schedule system.

This is a free online line schedule application that allows you to set up options for how students want to meet for an advising appointment and automatically links to your outlook calendar. Click the highlighted link for more information on You Can Book Me. You can also view the link in my signature line as well for an example of how the application looks.

Important Academic Advising Deadlines (click link):

- Tuesday, March, 24th-Summer School Registration Begins
- Wednesday, March 25th-Class look-up for Fall 2020 Opens
- Monday, April 6th-Registration Advising Week Begins.
- Monday, April 13th-Fall 2020 Class Registration Begins. Please review Registration Rotation on the registrar’s website

Phone appointments:

Many advisors schedule phone appointments with students throughout the year and for a variety of reasons. During a time of campus disruption, phone appointments may be the easiest way to connect with students.

Considerations for Phone Appointments:

- Make sure to remind students to verify that they have provided a phone number (either in the appointment system or via email) that they will have access to during the time of their appointment.
- Be sure to communicate whether you (advisor) will be calling at the scheduled appointment time, or whether it is the student’s responsibility to call (this is an important step in the phone appointment process, as I have seen many appointments missed because of this step).
o Make sure that the **student is aware of the time (and time zone)** that the appointment will be held -- sometimes disruption from normal routine makes us forget to convert time zones, if necessary.

o Recognize that a **student may or may not have control over the external environment** they are in at the time of the appointment. If they are home, there may be other people/siblings/pets and/or external noises which they cannot control. You can **communicate expectations** that you would like for them to have access to such as a phone/computer in a quiet space during the appointment, **but be understanding if that is not possible**.

o **After the appointment, consider sending a follow-up email with a recap of what was discussed, any website links that the student should look at, and any additional information that the student should know at that time.** Since you won’t be able to read the student’s non-verbals over the phone, a follow-up email keeps the line of communication open and allows for confirmation that both you and the student are on the same page about the appointment. **I would also recommend cc’ing yourself on the email for record keeping.**

o Record advising notes, even for phone appointments. In case the student ends up talking with a different advisor in the future, it is useful for everyone to know what the content of the appointment was. **I highly encourage this for record keeping.**

**Phone Tip:** If you are not comfortable giving out your personal cell/home number, consider signing up for a google voice number, its free and you can turn it on or off as you have need. Click on the highlighted link for more information: [Google Voice](#)

**Video-conferencing appointments**

Using a video-conferencing platform is a great way to stay connected to student and make a meeting feel personal. Video-conference platforms like Zoom, which you may be using for your online classroom instruction allow you to share your screen and do chat boxes during meetings. **Zoom is the platform of choice for UR during this time, but you could consider any of these options (not an exhaustive list):**

- **Skype**
- **Google Hangouts**
- **Facebook Messenger Video**
- **FaceTime (iOS only)**
- **Google DUO**
- **WebEx**
- **Whereby**

*Please note that there are pros/cons to each of these platforms for advising.* If you are making a decision on what to use, consider your overall needs, the length of time you would anticipate needing to use this solution, the learning curve, the available tools (screen share, audio/video options, etc.), the ease of sharing link or appointment invitation, etc.

**Considerations for video-conferencing appointments:**

- Think about what the background behind you looks like on camera. You don’t necessarily need it to be an exact replica of your office, but you probably don’t want a pile of laundry in the shot, either. Some platforms have an option to blur your background which could be beneficial.
- Some students may not feel comfortable using their camera during a video conference appointment, and that is okay. Keep your camera on if that works for both of you, or just switch to audio only using the platform.
- Consider using screen share so that both you and the student are viewing the same item at the same time. This will reduce confusion and also ensure that the student doesn’t get lost in verbal navigation.
As with phone appointments, it is helpful to send a follow-up email with a recap of what was discussed, any website links that the student should look at, and any additional information that the student should know at that time. A follow-up email keeps the line of communication open and allows for confirmation that both you and the student are on the same page about the appointment. I would also recommend cc’ing yourself on the email for record keeping.

Record advising notes, even for video conference appointments. In case the student ends up talking with a different advisor in the future, it is useful for everyone to know what the content of the appointment was. I highly encourage this for record keeping.

**Video Conferencing Tip:** Do a trial run prior to each meeting (1 day before or a couple of hours prior to the meeting) to be sure technology is working. Encourage your students to do this so that if for some reason there are glitches, you are or your advisee can call or email for an alternative method of meeting.

**Email appointments**

While perhaps not the most effective use of time, you might consider offering an email appointment if the student is concerned about access to phone or wifi for a 30-minute appointment. If you and the student opt for an email appointment, you can instruct the student to jot down all of the questions they were hoping to address during the appointment in one email message. The more specific the question, the better. (Questions such as, “What should I take next semester?” may or may not be answerable, unless you have confirmation that they are still following the same track as discussed during a previous appointment.) Because students are probably used to emailing you with questions, there would be no learning curve for this option.

**Email Tip:** If using email, perhaps consider sharing any documents or resources prior to the meeting and requesting the student to read them in preparation for the meeting. I encourage you to save all emails from email appointments for record keeping.

**Helpful Tips to Engage Students:**

Some questions you might ask students:

- How are you doing? Are there anyways that I can support you better during this transition to online?
- Do you have any concerns about accessing academic materials (textbooks, notes, etc.) that may be on campus?
- Will you have reliable internet access during this timeframe? Do you anticipate any challenges completing your coursework online?
- How were your courses progressing prior to Spring Break? Were you at all considering dropping a course prior to the deadline?
- What are your plans for the summer?
- Encourage students to maintain their routines and study habits that helped them be successful prior to going on-line.

**Additional questions for Advisees (broken down by student need):** This is not an exhaustive list, however given the current transition should get you started in ensuring your advisee’s needs are met and that they make a successful transition.

**Basic Needs**

- Are you in a safe place?
- Do you have food and other basic needs met?
- How are you feeling? Are you stressed?
- Are you in a situation where you are able to learn?

**Class Needs**

- Do you have all of your course texts with you? If not, what are you missing?
- Are there any items that you are missing that you need in order to learn effectively? If yes, what do you need?
Technology Access
- Do you have / have access to a computer sufficient for writing papers?
- Do you have sufficient Internet access to participate in a synchronous class session?
- Do you have sufficient Internet access to use the course learning management system?
- Do you have sufficient Internet access to watch videos?
- Do you have / have access to email on a regular basis?
- Do you have access to a telephone?

Technology Skills and Comfort
- Do you know how to access online materials via the university library?
- Are you comfortable using the course learning management system?
- Are you comfortable participating in a synchronous class session?
- What technology skills are you worried about, if any, right now?
- Do you have a preference for learning online synchronously or asynchronously? Using video or text-based communication?

Time
- What time zone are you currently in?
- Are you able to meet online during the regular class time? If not, are there other times that would work for you?
- Do you have any demands on your time that would make it difficult for you to complete the work for this class? If so, what are your constraints or concerns related to time?

Other
- What are your biggest concerns related to this class right now?
- How can I help you succeed in this class for the remainder of this term?
- Do you have any concerns related to school right now? Are these things I can help you with?

Other Resources:
- Working Remotely Checklist
- Information Services Help Desk
- Accessibility in Online Courses: This resource is more about courses, but can be applicable to advising
- Teaching in times of Disruption: Resource shared via NACADA, again focused on teaching but may also be applicable to advising

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