

2024/25

Handbook for Pre-Major Advisors

Vassar College
Office of the Dean of First-Year Students

Academic Orientation Calendar

Monday, August 26, 2024

- 8:00 am - 1:00 pm: New Students move in; **Residential Houses**
- 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm: Meeting for first-time advisors; **Bridge for Laboratory Science 238**

Tuesday, August 27

- 9:30 am - 10:30 am: General advising meeting for students (optional for advisors); **Chapel**
- 11:00 am - 12:15 pm: Meeting for all pre-major advisors; **Rocky 300**
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm: Group meetings with advisees; **Advisor's office**

Wednesday, August 28

- 9:00 am - 12:00 pm: Faculty Research Presentations; **Various locations***

Thursday, August 29

- 9:00 am - 12:30 pm: Advising Information Sessions; **Various locations***
- 9:00 am - 12:00 pm: Departmental Drop-In Advising and Placement; **Various locations***
- 12:30 pm - 3:00 pm: Individual meetings with pre-major advisees; **Advisor's office**

Friday, August 30

- 8:00 am - 4:00 pm: Registration; **College Center MPR**
- Matriculation Book Signing; **President's house**

Tuesday, September 3

- Classes begin
- Various times: Language proficiency exams; **Various locations***

Monday-Friday, September 30-October 4

- Various times: Individual Follow-up Meetings with Advisees; **Advisor's office**

* Please see the [online Orientation schedule](#) for detailed information.

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Developmental Advising

Developmental advising focuses on helping students identify life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and helping them become successful students in a way that is uniquely theirs. Ender, Winston and Miller (1982) have proposed seven conditions that are essential to developmental advising:

1. Academic advising is a continuous process with an accumulation of personal contacts between advisor and student – these contacts have both direction and purpose.
2. Advising must concern itself with quality-of-life issues, and the advisor has a responsibility to attend to the quality of the student's experience in college.
3. Advising is goal-related; the goals should be established and owned by the student and should encompass academic, career, and personal development areas.
4. Advising requires the establishment of a caring human relationship - one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility for its initial development.
5. Advisors should be models for students to emulate, specifically demonstrating behaviors that lead to self-responsibility and self-directedness.
6. Advisors should seek to integrate the services and expertise of both academic and student affairs professionals.
7. Advisors should seek to utilize as many campus and community resources as possible.

Prescriptive vs developmental advising

PRESCRIPTIVE	DEVELOPMENTAL
Advisor tells student what he/she needs to know about programs and courses	Advisor helps student learn about courses and programs for self
Advisor knows college policies and tells student what to do	Advisor tells student where to learn about policies and helps in understanding how they apply to the student
Advisor tells student what schedule is best	Advisor teaches student how to register self
Advisor informs about deadlines and follows up behind student	Advisor informs about deadlines then lets student follow up
Advisor tells student which classes to take	Advisor presents class options; student makes own selections

PREScriptive	DEVELOPMENTAL
Advisor takes responsibility for keeping advising file updated	Advisor and student share responsibility for file
Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through files and records	Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through records and talking to student about academic experiences
Advisor tells student what to do in order to get advised	Advisor and student reach agreement about nature of advising relationship
Advisor uses grades and test results to determine courses most appropriate for student	Advisor and student use grades, test results, and self-determined interests and abilities to determine most appropriate courses.
Advisor specifies alternatives and indicates best choice when student faces difficult decision.	Advisor assists student in identifying alternatives and weighing consequences when facing difficult decision.
Advisor takes care of academic problems.	Advisor teaches student problem-solving techniques.
Advisor does not deal with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.	Advisor deals with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.
Advisor suggests what student should major in.	Advisor suggests steps student can take to help decide on a major.
Advisor identifies realistic academic goals based on grades and test results.	Advisor assists student in identifying realistic academic goals based on grades, test results, and self-understanding.
Advisor is not knowledgeable about help available with non-academic concerns.	Advisor is knowledgeable about available help for non-academic concerns.
Advisor does not encourage discussion of personal problems.	Advisor encourages discussion of personal problems.
Advisor is concerned mainly about academic life of student.	Advisor is concerned about personal, social, and academic life of student.
Advisor unaware of student's outside-the- classroom life.	Advisor shows interest in student's out-of-class life. Advisor discusses academic and other-than- academic interests and plans.
Advisor provides information mainly about courses and class schedules.	Advisor provides information about workshops and seminars in areas such as career planning and study skills, and courses and class schedules.
Advisor does not spend much time discussing time management and study techniques.	Advisor spends time discussing time management and effective study techniques.

Taken from The University of Texas at Dallas Office for Undergraduate Education web page:
<http://www.utdallas.edu/dept/ugraddean/devadvis.html>

General Education Student Learning Goals

The faculty of Vassar College endorsed General Education Student Learning Goals, which are listed below, to provide a touchstone for ongoing conversations on campus among students, faculty, and the college community about the meaning and goals of a liberal arts education at Vassar.

No one course, department, or division will address all of the goals, but they are achieved through the totality of a student's education at Vassar. They should be interpreted broadly to acknowledge the different approaches of our myriad disciplines and the self-direction and empowerment of Vassar students to make independent choices in conversation with faculty advisors and mentors. We envisage that throughout their career at Vassar, students will aspire to achieve significantly in these four areas, although we recognize that students will not reach all of these goals in the same way and to the same extent. These learning goals serve as resources for pre-major advising conversations and support student planning for a comprehensive liberal arts education.

(adopted 2/3/2021)

Independent Thinking, Creativity and Curiosity: Students will

- Conduct original independent research using appropriate sources.
- Identify problems or issues for which there are complex, ambiguous, or contradictory answers that lead to creative outcomes or innovative solutions.

Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning: Students will

- Construct, analyze, interpret, and evaluate subject matter using quantitative techniques.
- Discern the kinds of questions that can be effectively addressed through quantitative methods.
- Demonstrate scientific reasoning by applying inductive and/or deductive analysis to evaluate a hypothesis.

Written Communication: Students will

- Construct a clear, persuasive written argument.
- Use appropriate conventions for different audiences.

Intercultural Competency and Language Proficiency: Students will

- Demonstrate intercultural competency.
- Demonstrate proficiency in communication skills in a language other than English.

Diverse Ideas and Perspectives: Students will

- Demonstrate the ability to explain and reflect on important issues within one's own social and cultural context and those of others.
- Engage with ideas, beliefs, behaviors, values, or views that differ from one's own.
- Function effectively and work collaboratively in diverse groups.

Orientation and Registration

Orientation Overview

General Advising Meeting

Tuesday, August 27, 9:30 am-10:30 pm, Chapel

At this meeting, the Dean of First-Year Students and the Registrar will review essential information for all students to complete the registration process. They will also offer strategies for creating a course schedule aligned with the goals of a liberal arts college. The meeting will include basic registration information and procedures, as well as an overview of academic policies and practices. Advisors are welcome to attend.

Meeting for Pre-Major Advisors

Tuesday, August 27, 11:00 am-12:15 pm, Rocky 300

At this meeting, pre-major advisors will receive current information on important topics such as registration (open course lists) and academic policies. We will also discuss how you can support student success in collaboration with class advisors and other campus offices. Even if you have advised before, you should plan to attend this meeting.

Group Meetings with Advisees

Tuesday, August 27, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm, advisor's office or alternate location

Each student will have pre-registered for up to 3 units of credit before arriving on campus; generally, a First-Year Writing Seminar and two other courses. During this meeting, advisors will discuss the goals of a liberal arts education and answer questions about academic advising and the registration process. Students will need guidance in choosing the remaining courses to complete their schedules. It's important to remind your advisees to attend the Faculty Research Presentations, the relevant Advising Information Sessions, and Departmental Drop-In Advising and Placement. Ensure students receive their preliminary fall schedule (the pink sheet) *at the end of this meeting*. Students should prepare a list of at least 10 course choices for your next meeting on Thursday. You can find a suggested agenda for the group meeting below.

Individual Meetings with Pre-Major Advisors

Thursday, August 29, 12:30–3:00 pm, advisor's office or alternate location

All first-year students must secure their advisor's approval (i.e., signature) before they can participate in registration. You should expect your advisees at your office in alphabetical order every half hour beginning at 12:30 pm. In addition to discussing registration, advisors should start to get to know their advisees and talk about their goals, interests, potential involvement in campus activities and

organizations, and other time commitments such as work-study jobs. This information will help you guide students toward an appropriate course load for their first semester.

It is important to discuss various course options with your advisees and to list many (at least 10!) alternative course selections on the pink registration form. Ensure the student lists the complete course ID, including the section (e.g., ANTH 101-01). Students may register for a maximum of 4.5 units. Check for the student's registration appointment time on the bottom right corner of the pink sheet and advise them to monitor AskBanner throughout registration day for open spaces, especially if their appointment is in the afternoon on Friday. It's best to schedule your follow-up meeting for the week of September 30 with your advisee now.

Before each student leaves your office, you must sign the student's registration form.

Registration and Matriculation Book Signing

Friday, August 30, 8:00 am–4:00 pm, CCMPR; book signing at President's House

First-year students register according to how many credits they were pre-registered for during the summer: students with 0 units go first, 0.5 units go second, and so forth. Within each group, students will be ordered by their draw numbers, which were randomly assigned after the initial pre-registration round. There is no correlation between a student's draw number and the courses they got into. Students will sign the matriculation book at the President's House after registering.

It's important to note that students who do not present an approved registration form in the College Center MPR will have their course registration canceled and will need to register via add/drop forms after classes begin. Please explain to your advisees that they MUST register on Friday to finalize their schedules!

Individual Follow-up Meetings with Advisees

Monday-Friday, September 30-October 4, various times, advisor's office

This meeting allows first-year students to discuss their academic progress with their advisor. It is important to review each student's schedule on AskBanner, as some students may not be registered for the courses they are attending and may not have dropped courses they no longer attend. You should also discuss their workload and study habits, as it helps identify students who may need additional support and guidance. Review resources for academic support available on campus, remind students of the upcoming drop/NRO deadlines, and assess if your advisees are academically and socially engaged and connected.

Group Meeting with Advisees

When you first meet with your advisees, they will have been at Vassar for about 36 hours and likely will have been up most of the night before. This is not the time to go into detail about rules and regulations or about academic issues that will not become real to students until they start attending classes and discover what college-level work is like. But your advisees are both excited and anxious about making the transition from high school to college. As their first academic contact at Vassar, you can address their concerns by talking about what they can expect from their professors and what their professors will expect from them.

Each advisor will have their own sense of what to say, but probably all entering students would benefit from this advice: “Don’t wait for professors to tell you what to do - speak up and take the initiative whenever you have questions or concerns.” Many first-year students are not used to thinking of their teachers as people they can approach outside of class, as both authorities and resources. At the same time, aspects of academic life that are self-evident to faculty - the construction and uses of a syllabus, the ratio of class time to study time, the purpose of office hours, the conventions for citing sources - can be new and strange to first-year students. You can’t possibly anticipate all the challenges that your advisees will face, but you can remind them that many things about college are going to be different and that it is their responsibility to ask questions and to seek help when they need it. And, you can point them in the direction of that help, whether to sources of information such as the [First-Year Handbook](#), the [Vassar College Catalogue](#), and [Going to the Source: A Guide to Academic Integrity and Attribution at Vassar College](#), or to resources such as the Dean of First-Year Students Office, the Learning, Teaching and Research Center, Counseling Service, the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, etc. Descriptions of these resources are in the First-Year Handbook; a list of useful telephone numbers is included later in this handbook.

Suggested group meeting agenda

Introductions: a liberal arts education

Many first-year students may not be completely familiar with the concept of a liberal arts education. You can use your introduction to explain the values and goals of the education we provide at Vassar and set the expectation that the first year at college is a time for discovering new interests and exploring the breadth of a liberal arts education. Encourage your advisees to share why they chose Vassar and how they intend to explore the curriculum.

Orientation week advising

Incoming first-year students have already registered for up to 3 courses online. They were directed to a special online "Schedule of Classes" that listed open introductory (100-level) courses and certain 200-level courses (in languages, mathematics, and physical education) where they could place themselves based on previous experience or training. For any other classes, first-year students must attend academic advising on Thursday morning, August 29, from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. Please refer to the [Schedule of Academic Advising](#) and point out the different types of advising events:

Advising Information Sessions are lecture-style events that provide an overview for students with specific interests (study abroad/language study, pre-health, pre-law, pre-engineering, choral/voice lessons, art, dance, English).

Departmental Drop-In Advising and Placement allows students to meet individually with the appropriate department to discuss course placement and any questions they have. Note that some departments offer placement exams in various forms (e.g., Physics, Music, and most languages).

The Orientation folder and the [Orientation website](#) contain all advising information and a list of departments and their advising locations.

AskBanner and Degree Works

Most students will not be familiar with [AskBanner](#) yet, so it is important to show your advisees how to find the [Schedule of Classes](#). Show them how to search for courses by Department, Course Type, Units, etc., and how to read the course listings (e.g., yellow = seats available, R = Thursday). Students should also use [Degree Works](#) to create a Plan A (their first-choice schedule for the fall semester) and a Plan B (a list of at least 10 alternative course choices).

A balanced academic schedule

Students are more likely to succeed academically and enjoy their studies when their schedule covers a wide range of subjects, approaches, and learning methods. It is important to encourage a mix of lectures, labs, and discussion-based courses, which will involve different kinds of study materials, workloads, and assignments. Emphasize that each course will require a significant amount of work outside of class time, and students should schedule time for this work into their weekly routine. First-year students are encouraged to elect 4 - 4.5 units in their first semester; the minimum course load is 3.5, and the maximum is 4.5.

Calendars, emails, office hours

Time management is among the most challenging aspects of college life for first-year students. Ask your advisees what kind of calendar they use and advise them to mark down all important dates throughout the semester. This includes their individual appointment with you on Thursday, which students will find in their Orientation folder.

Email may seem like ancient technology to our new students, but they must make it a habit to check their email regularly. You can discuss email etiquette and share your communication preferences with your students.

First-year students are often unsure when and how to use office hours. Please tell them how to schedule office hours with you and encourage them to attend their professors' office hours.

Advice for the disappointed, consolation for the distressed

Now, it is time to hand out the pink registration sheets. While most incoming students have successfully pre-registered for at least 3 courses, these may not have been their first choices. Some students will be disappointed to find that a course they wanted is now closed. In such cases, the advisor can provide reassurance and solutions. It is important to encourage all advisees, even those who secured their

desired courses, to use the time before registration on Friday to reflect on their choices and consider alternatives. Emphasize the importance of intellectual curiosity and exploration as the foundation of a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Suggested assignments for your advisees

- On Wednesday: Attend three Research Presentations (ideally, at least one in a discipline they have never studied before).
- On Thursday: Attend Advising Info Sessions (if relevant) and Departmental Drop-In Advising. Students should bring their pink registration form to Drop-In Advising.
- Reread the First-Year Handbook and the online Catalog to explore more courses.
- Create a Plan A (ideal schedule) and a Plan B (at least 10 alternative courses) in Degree Works.
- Bring a list of all pre-matriculation courses (AP/IB/A-levels, college courses) to your Thursday meeting.

General Advising Guidelines

The role of the pre-major advisor is important. During orientation, faculty advisors are the students' initial connection to academic life at Vassar, and they can play a crucial role in helping their advisees make a successful transition to college. Effective advising goes beyond just approving a set of courses. Vassar follows a developmental model of academic advising, which involves various activities such as:

- 1) Assessing a student's life and career goals.
- 2) Connecting goals to academic courses and departments.
- 3) Encouraging exploration of educational and career options inside and outside the classroom.
- 4) Assisting students in creating a plan to achieve their goals.

Developmental academic advising recognizes that students learn both inside and outside of the classroom and that academic work, community-engaged learning, study away, and involvement in student organizations all contribute to a liberal arts education. The following guidelines are designed to aid advisors as they help students develop their educational plan for their time at Vassar.

Number of Courses

First-year students are encouraged to enroll in 4 to 4.5 units in their first semester. The minimum course load is 3.5, and the maximum is 4.5 units. The Committee on Leaves and Privileges will not approve a first-semester first-year student's request to take more than 4.5 units. Students who aspire to take five courses should consider that four well-chosen courses and a possible extra half-unit of physical education or music lessons can provide more than enough challenge in the first semester, especially in light of the numerous challenges and adjustments that every first-year student encounters. Conversely, students who intend to start with only 3.5 units might be encouraged to sign up for one more course to see how it goes, but there are valid reasons to maintain a 3.5-unit course load.

In the fall semester, there are few half-unit courses available aside from physical education and individual music lessons. First-semester first-year students are not allowed to take independent study courses. In special circumstances, faculty legislation permits first-year students to drop to 3.0 units in their first

semester upon approval of the Dean of First-Year Students. However, this permission is granted only when a student is experiencing greater than usual difficulty adjusting to college. The Dean of First-Year Students will not authorize late drops or reduced course loads simply because a student doesn't like a course. Please encourage your advisees to start with 4 to 4.5 units, if possible, so that they have the option of dropping a course later if needed. If an advisee seeks to drop to 3.5 units, find out the reason behind it. Depending on the nature of the problem, dropping may not be the only or the best solution. A discussion with the professor, a meeting with the Dean of First-Year Students, or a consultation at the Learning, Teaching, and Research Center might help resolve any confusion, alleviate the fear of failure, or reduce stress, allowing the student to complete the course successfully.

After the first semester, students are encouraged to take 4 units each semester to stay on track for graduation in four years. For the first year, however, "progress toward the degree" is a relative term. Since students are at the very beginning of their college careers, concerns about credit units have to be weighed against concerns for their academic and personal well-being. Sometimes, taking a slightly reduced course load can make the difference between a successful first semester and a very unhappy one. There will be plenty of opportunities to make up for any shortfall later, either at Vassar or through summer work elsewhere. Additionally, many students will have AP and other pre-matriculation credits.

Advanced course placement and AP credit

New students are often confused about the difference between "advanced course placement" (i.e., permission to enroll in intermediate-level courses) and "advanced placement credit." If a student scores 4 or 5 on an AP exam, they will automatically receive up to 2 units of college credit once we receive official notification of their scores. Students don't need to make special requests for these credits. However, it's important to note that AP credit is NOT the same as advanced course placement. Each department and program has its own policies for advanced course placement. If your advisees have questions, they should consult the appropriate department on Thursday morning. Some advisees may also have questions about credit and/or placement for the International Baccalaureate (IB), A-levels, or other examinations. Information about this can be found in the First-Year Handbook. AP and IB credits count toward the maximum 6 units of pre-matriculation credits allowed.

Note: Some AP credit reports have been received and evaluated, and as a result, some online student transcripts will show AP credit. However, many AP credit reports are still outstanding. During the group meeting with advisees, please ask all your advisees to come prepared to the individual meeting with a list of all their possible pre-matriculation credits (AP/IB/A-levels, college courses) for you to review together.

Pre-matriculation credit

Students who have taken college-level courses while in high school can receive up to 6 units of pre-matriculation credit for these courses, provided that: 1. The courses were taken in-person on a college or university campus with other undergraduate students and taught by a qualified college teacher. 2. The courses were not used to fulfill high school graduation requirements and do not appear on the high school transcript. 3. The student earned a grade of C or better. If your advisees ask about receiving credit for courses taken in high school, please refer them to Casey Trocino in the Dean of Studies Office (x5255;

ctrocino@vassar.edu). They will need to provide a copy of the course description or syllabus, as well as an official transcript. Pre-matriculation credits count toward the maximum 9 units of transfer credits allowed.

Note: A total of 6.0 units of pre-matriculation credit of any type can be awarded. This can consist of 6.0 units of transfer credit from college courses taken prior to matriculation or some combination of transfer credits and exam-based credits. However, no more than 2.0 units of exam-based credit can count towards the total of 6.0 units.

Transfer credits

Students may transfer a maximum of 9 units of credit of any kind (transfer students may transfer up to 16 units). This includes pre-matriculation credits such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and A-level credits, as well as study abroad credits earned from a non-Vassar-sponsored program.

Graduation Requirements

The First-Year Writing Seminar requirement

Every first-year student must complete a First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS) before becoming a sophomore. You can assure your advisees that **students who are not enrolled in an FWS in the fall will be given priority in pre-registering for the spring term FWS courses**. Each student may only elect to take a maximum of two FWS, one per semester, and English 101 can only be taken once.

Please check your advisees' registration forms to see if they are registered for a First-Year Writing Seminar. If they could not enroll in their desired First-Year Writing Seminar, encourage them to consider other exciting courses. You can find available FWS on the Ask Banner Schedule of Classes by clicking 'Select a Course Type'. Some students may overlook seminars offered by the language departments, assuming they are "foreign language courses" when, in fact, they are literature courses taught in English. A wide variety of courses are offered across various departments and programs, all emphasizing discussion, critical reading, and writing. Students should be encouraged to explore the entire range of course options available.

The Quantitative Analysis requirement

All Vassar students are required before their third year to complete at least one unit of coursework that shall develop or extend the student's facility in quantitative reasoning. Courses that satisfy the Quantitative Analysis requirement are designated "QA" in the Schedule of Classes. Your advisees should be encouraged to fulfill this requirement early on, although it's important to note that signing up for a QA course solely because it fulfills the requirement may be detrimental. If any of your advisees struggle with quantitative skills, it may be best for them to postpone taking a QA course until the second semester or later. If any of your advisees need extra assistance with their QA courses, please advise them to attend Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions or visit the Q-Center (Library, Room 122). For any further questions, please contact the director of the Quantitative Reasoning Center.

The Foreign Language Proficiency requirement

Please determine whether each of your advisees has or has not completed this requirement, which operates according to the following guidelines:

- International students whose first language is not English must have completed formal academic study of their home language at the high school level or above to meet this requirement. For details about exemptions, students should contact the Assistant Dean of Studies (Casey Trocino: xtrocino@vassar.edu).
- For first-year students whose first language is English, proficiency achieved prior to Vassar can be demonstrated by a test score of 4 or 5 on an AP exam in a foreign language. The Registrar automatically records the completion of the requirement for those students who have presented the necessary scores; no further action on the part of the student is required.
- Any advisee not in the two categories above must complete the requirement before the start of their final year - preferably during their first two years. Any advisee who has completed at least three years of a foreign language in high school may take the appropriate departmental proficiency examination. Exam times and locations are listed in the Orientation Schedule; test results will be sent to the Registrar.
- Students who elect an elementary language course must successfully complete the full year; students who are placed in an intermediate- or advanced-level course need to complete only one semester to demonstrate proficiency. Students can also satisfy the language requirement by taking English 235 and 236 (Old English and Beowulf).

Assuming past patterns hold true, almost two-thirds of the Class of 2028 will need to study a foreign language. Please encourage students who have not fulfilled the requirement to do so as soon as possible. **As of the 2024-25 academic year, the language requirement must be fulfilled prior to the start of their final year.** It is important to remind students that certain study abroad programs may require specific proficiency levels. Additionally, students are advised against enrolling in courses below their previous training level. (e.g., a student who has completed three years of French in high school should not elect French 105-106). Any questions about placement should be directed to the appropriate department. Remind students to attend the Study Abroad/Language Learning advising info session and to visit language department offices on Thursday morning for placement advising.

Work Across the Divisions

When choosing their courses, students should aim to maintain balance across the four curricular divisions. Out of the 32 credits needed for the bachelor's degree, no more than 16 credits (or half) can be in a single field of concentration. At least 8 of the 32 units must be from divisions of the curriculum outside the student's concentration. This minimum may include interdepartmental courses or courses offered by multidisciplinary programs. Additionally, no more than 2 credits out of the 32 may be in physical education. Although not mandatory, first-year students are strongly encouraged to take courses in all four curricular divisions and at least one course in a multidisciplinary program. The four curricular divisions of the college are:

Arts	Foreign Languages and Literatures	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences
Art Dance Drama English Film Music Physical Education	Arabic Chinese French and Francophone Studies German Studies Greek and Roman Studies Hebrew Hispanic Studies Italian Japanese Russian Studies	Anthropology Economics Education Geography History Philosophy Political Science Religion Sociology	Astronomy Biology Chemistry Cognitive Science Computer Science Earth Science Mathematics/Statistics Physics Psychological Science

Interdepartmental Programs:

Biochemistry; Earth Science and Society; and Geography-Anthropology.

Multidisciplinary Programs:

Africana Studies; American Studies; Asian Studies; Environmental Studies; Global Nineteenth-Century Studies; International Studies; Jewish Studies; Latin American and Latino/a Studies; Media Studies; Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Neuroscience and Behavior; Science, Technology, and Society; Urban Studies; and Women, Feminist, and Queer Studies Program.

If an advisee's schedule seems too focused on one division or if they have only selected courses in subjects they already studied in high school, try to convince them to include at least one course in an unfamiliar area or discipline in their first semester. There are compelling arguments for this beyond meeting graduation requirements. It goes without saying that a liberal arts college offers students the opportunity to explore new fields of study and discover new interests. The first year in college should be a time of experimentation as well as laying the foundations for advanced study in one or more areas. Many first-year students are overwhelmed by the diversity of the Vassar curriculum, especially when there are few requirements to guide their choices. A common reaction to this anxiety is to cling to what is familiar academically and personally ("I'm good at English, so I'll major in English"). Another response is to choose courses "to get the requirements out of the way." It's important to encourage these students to relax and have faith in the education they have just begun (which may be difficult in the first weeks on campus, but still worth suggesting). There are always many paths to reach a goal—and also new goals to discover.

More Information about Courses

Intensives

"Intensives" offer a wide range of learning experiences that extend beyond regular classroom teaching. The goal of intensives is to promote deeper learning, facilitate more meaningful interactions between

students and faculty, and provide space for innovative explorations of a liberal arts education. Intensives include many offerings already present in Vassar's curriculum—senior theses, mentored laboratory experiences, independent studies, community-engaged learning, pop-up courses— as well as other non-traditional instructional formats. Because intensives are tailored to instructors' expertise and student interests, these offerings have no fixed set of criteria.

Intensive courses may be worth either 0.5 or 1 unit of credit and have the proportional workload requirements that apply to regular courses. You can recognize intensive courses in the online course listing by looking for "INT" as the course format. Intensives may be letter-graded or ungraded (SA/UN); the grading format for each intensive will be indicated in the online Schedule of Classes.

Year-long courses

Most courses open to first-year students are semester-long classes. Almost all elementary language courses, however, are year-long. Another year-long course open to first-year students is Art 102-103. Year-long courses are listed in the catalog with a "hyphen" (for example, French 105-106) and designated in the online Schedule of Classes with the notation "YL."

Most year-long courses give one credit per semester, but certain language courses, such as Elementary Chinese and Japanese, give 1.5 units of credit per semester. In all year-long courses, students must successfully complete the second semester to receive credit for the first. Occasionally, students decide not to continue a year-long course after one semester. Students may drop the second semester of a year-long course, but they should know they will lose the credit for the first semester, even if they received a passing grade. If they complete the course later, the "lost" credit will be restored. The advantages and disadvantages of doing this should be weighed carefully before making a final decision. If a student is convinced that it is better to lose the credit than to continue in the course, then they should submit a drop form as usual, as all students in year-long courses are automatically enrolled in the second semester by the Registrar.

"Slash" courses are also year-long sequences, but students do not need to take the second semester in order to receive credit for the first (though they typically must complete the first semester before enrolling in the second). Music 105/106 is an example of a "slash" course. Students who fail the first semester of a "slash" course may not enroll in the second semester without permission from the department chair.

Provisional grading

Some year-long courses are "provisionally graded." This means that the grade received at the end of the year automatically becomes the grade that will be recorded on the student's transcript for both the first and the second semester. For example, if a student receives a C in the first semester and an A in the second semester, two credits of A will appear on the student's transcript at the end of the academic year. Provisionally graded courses are identified as "PR" in the online Schedule of Classes. If a provisionally graded course is offered NRO and a student wants to choose this option, both semesters must be taken NRO.

The Non-Recorded Option (NRO)

Faculty legislation strictly limits the total number of NRO elections to no more than 4 units during a student's four years here. Therefore, first-year students should carefully consider when to exercise this option. It may be helpful for advisors to point out that the initial motivation for offering the NRO option was not to help protect a student's transcript but to encourage students to explore areas of the curriculum they might not have considered otherwise. For more information, please see the section titled 'To NRO or not to NRO' in this handbook.

Ungraded work

In the first semester, first-year students cannot take independent study courses. Therefore, the amount of ungraded work in the student's program is not usually an issue in the first year. However, it is important to remember that students are allowed to choose a maximum of 5 units of ungraded work throughout their four years at the university. This includes community-engaged learning (290), independent study (298), reading courses (297), senior independent work (399), and some department senior theses. (This limit does not apply to any work taken in excess of the 32 units required for graduation.)

Add/Drop Procedures

Please remind your advisees that they can revise their schedules after classes begin, during the add period. Emphasize that it is the student's responsibility to schedule any appointment to see you after Orientation. They will need your approval to make any change in their course selections (all adds and drops), to elect a course NRO, to submit requests to the Committee on Leaves and Privileges, or to register for summer courses. You should announce your fall-semester office hours and tell your advisees how you prefer to be contacted (via email, voicemail, or leaving a message at the department office).

Here are some important deadlines for the fall semester (see last page for more):

Last day to add: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Last day to drop: Friday, October 11, 2024

Last day for NRO/Student-Initiated Withdrawal: Friday, November 8, 2024

Please explain to your advisees that they must complete an electronic jotform for all schedule changes. If a student wants to add a course after classes begin, they will need approval from both the instructor and the advisor. However, only the advisor's approval is needed to drop a course.

Faculty members may inform students that they can join a closed course or have been added from the waitlist. On the other hand, faculty members may also inform students that they cannot join a course, possibly due to missing prerequisites or having two or more unexcused absences during the first week of classes. **It is the student's responsibility to submit the proper add/drop forms for these courses in all cases.**

Some students wait until the last moment to get their advisor's approval and are surprised when they cannot reach you late on the afternoon of a deadline. The Dean of First-Year Students will not approve any form on behalf of an advisor without the advisor's permission. If you know that you will be away from campus during deadline periods, please contact the Dean of Studies office.

Students are ultimately responsible for all course and NRO elections. The advisor's jotform approval signifies that the advisor and the student have discussed the student's choices, even if the student chooses not to follow the advisor's advice. If you believe that an advisee is making a serious mistake that could affect their progress toward graduation (such as electing all four courses from one curricular division), please notify the Dean of First-Year Students, who will be happy to assist or intervene.

Advising Students with Disabilities

Under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Vassar College is responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access and opportunity to participate fully in academic courses, programs, and services. When advising students with disabilities, remember to become familiar with their goals, academic strengths and weaknesses, and particular talents, skills, and interests.

Some first-year students have already self-identified to the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO) and have been working with that office this summer to arrange their accommodations. All students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity have been encouraged to inform their academic advisors of their disability and discuss how it may affect them academically. Students with disabilities, however, are not required to disclose to their advisor that they have a disability. Likewise, some students with disabilities may not have contacted the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity because they do not know about the resources available at Vassar or because they do not want to use or need accommodations or services.

Group advisee meeting

When discussing campus resources with all of your advisees during the group meeting, we recommend that you mention that the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity can assist students who need disability-related accommodations. Even if the students choose not to use accommodations immediately, it is advisable for them to register with the office and provide documentation of their disability. This will help the office put accommodations in place easily if they are needed.

Here are some additional recommendations for the individual meetings with your advisees on Thursday:

- If a student discloses that they have a disability, be sensitive to student concerns about course selection recommended to them based on the disability. For example, some students with chronic health impairments may need a class schedule allowing frequent breaks during the day. Students with learning differences or attention deficit disorder may be concerned about balancing intensive reading and writing courses with classes that offer more experiential opportunities.

- Talk with students about taking a balanced course load. Ask them to describe their strengths, weaknesses, and interests and to describe what types of courses are better suited to their strengths.
- Be sensitive to students' privacy concerning a disability or need for accommodations. Do not share information about your advisees with other students or faculty members without the student's explicit permission.
- Consider a team advising approach with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity.
- Encourage and guide your advisees to set realistic academic goals and help them monitor their progress toward meeting their goals.
- Do not advise a student to enter or dismiss a particular program of study or career because of a disability. As an advisor, it is appropriate to point out the necessary skills and abilities required for success.
- Encourage your advisees to build relationships with various campus resources, including the Learning, Teaching, and Research Center and the Center for Career Education.
- Be accessible for meetings with advisees during office hours, by telephone, email, or on Zoom. If your office is not accessible, arrange to meet students who have mobility impairments in a wheelchair-accessible location.
- Assist students in working closely with their professors and the Dean of Studies Office.
- Contact the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity if you have concerns about your advisees or if you suspect a student may have a disability.

Early registration for students with disabilities

Some students with disabilities are eligible for early registration, which occurs during the summer for first-year students. The Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity coordinates early registration in consultation with the Registrar's Office.

Reduced course loads

Students who need modifications to their course load may petition the Committee on Leaves and Privileges in consultation with the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, the class advisor in the Dean of Studies Office, and their academic advisor.

Foreign Language Proficiency and disability accommodations

Students with disabilities requiring exam accommodations for a foreign language proficiency exam should contact the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity at x7584 immediately. If a student with a documented disability has a history of struggling to learn a foreign language due to their disability, modifications to their academic program may be necessary. In rare cases where there is strong evidence that a disability prevents a student from achieving proficiency in a foreign language, the student can petition the Committee on Leaves and Privileges to substitute two units of study of foreign culture or other appropriate courses to fulfill the graduation requirement.

Advising for Pre-Health, Pre-law, and Teaching Certification

Again, this year, many new students have expressed their desire to pursue careers in medicine or law in their Statement of Academic Interests. Some students have also shown interest in obtaining education certification. The Dean of First-Year Students has assigned these students to advisors with expertise in their respective fields whenever possible.

General advice for pre-law and pre-health students can be found in the First-Year Handbook. If any of your advisees indicated an interest in pre-law or pre-med on their SAI forms, please direct them to the Advising Information Sessions that will be held on Thursday morning (see the online Orientation Schedule for details). Encourage students interested in pre-health to meet with Lisa Page, the pre-health advisor at the Center for Career Education (CCE) during their first year. Students considering law school should also schedule a meeting with CCE to discuss their plans and learn about the informational programs focusing on careers in law planned for the upcoming year.

Students interested in teaching certification should consult with advisors in their intended major and the chair of the Education Department, Chris Bjork (x7360; email: crbjork@vassar.edu), to discuss various teacher education options. For a full statement of the certification requirements and recommended sequence of study, please refer to the Education Department section of the 2024/25 catalog. Additionally, advice on preparation for teacher certification can be found in the First-Year Handbook.

Preparation for Study Abroad

Based on the Statement of Academic Interests forms, many first-year students are already thinking about studying abroad. These students need to consider their course selections for the first year carefully. If a student is considering studying in a non-English speaking country, it is crucial for them to study the language of that country. For example, a student who wants to study in Italy but has never studied Italian must take Italian 105-106 in their first year to reach the required level of language proficiency by the end of sophomore year. There will be an Advising Information Session at 9 am on Thursday, August 28, to discuss foreign language competency and international study abroad. Additionally, students need to demonstrate to the Committee on Leaves and Privileges that they have completed enough area studies coursework to support their academic proposals for international study abroad programs. Students applying to study abroad during their junior year must have declared their major at the time of application (December of their sophomore year), which means they need to define their academic direction earlier.

Further information on studying abroad can be found at the Office of International Programs, Main N-173, or by making an appointment with the director, Kerry Stamp. Students can also find information on the program's website, internationalprograms.vassar.edu.

Beyond Orientation

By the end of the add period, which is Tuesday, September 10, your advisees should have finalized their schedules and begin settling into the rhythm of their first semester. However, some problems that first-year students typically encounter may not surface until later in the term. These may include difficulties in time management, keeping up with reading assignments, finding a suitable study environment, managing extracurricular and social activities, and dealing with challenges such as homesickness, loneliness, or sleep deprivation. As exams and papers approach, stress levels may rise, potentially leading to panic attacks. Emotional crises, as well as issues related to alcohol and drugs, may also impact students' well-being and interfere with academic work.

We require all first-year students to have a **“follow-up” meeting with their advisor during the week of September 30 to October 4**. This will allow advisors to discuss each student's experience, identify areas of concern, and offer suggestions for resolving any problems. It is also a good moment to remind students of the upcoming drop and NRO deadlines and discuss the NRO option with them if they are considering it.

To NRO or not to NRO?

Each department and program specifies which courses are eligible for the NRO, and sets any relevant restrictions. For instance, an NRO may only be available to non-majors or exclusively to juniors and seniors. Specific departmental restrictions are described in the Catalog. Courses that may be taken NRO are marked with “NR” in the Schedule of Classes. The general rules governing NRO elections can be found under the [Schedule of Classes Information Pages link](#) on the [online Schedule of Classes](#). If one of your advisees comes to you asking to NRO a course, check to see that it's possible before proceeding.

To elect a course NRO, the student must submit an NRO jotform no later than **Friday, November 8**. On the form, the student must indicate the lowest letter grade they wish to have recorded on the transcript. If the final grade assigned by the instructor matches or exceeds that grade, it will appear on the transcript. If the student receives a lower grade but still passes the course, a grade of PA will be entered. If the student fails the course, a grade of F will be recorded.

Advisors need to ask whether a student is choosing the NRO option for valid academic and intellectual reasons. It's important to ensure that the student understands the potential consequences of taking a course NRO. The NRO option was originally designed to encourage students to take intellectual risks, such as exploring new fields or pursuing more advanced courses. However, some students may see it as a way to protect their GPA or as an excuse to put minimal effort into a course. Some students may mistakenly believe that taking a course NRO will reduce their anxiety or make the course easier. Additionally, some students may wrongly assume that selecting NRO will protect them from receiving an F grade. This is not the case.

Before approving the NRO form, pre-major advisors should discuss their reasons for choosing the NRO option with the student. The goal is not to dissuade the student from choosing NRO, but rather to understand their decision and to point out any potential issues if the student's decision seems illogical. Important: The Dean of Studies Office does not permit late NROs for equity reasons. Advise your

students to make a decision and submit their form on time. Deans and class advisors will not approve forms without the advisor's permission.

Dropping a course

If students begin the semester with 4 - 4.5 units, they can drop a course with their advisor's approval before the **October 11 deadline**. A student must have a minimum of 3.5 units to be considered a full-time student, and dropping below this number is not permitted. It's important to discuss with your advisee why they want to drop a course, as this conversation may provide valuable insights into their study habits, course choices, extracurricular activities, personal life, and more. First-year students sometimes delay their decision to drop a course, either because they are unaware of the deadline or because they only consider dropping the course when it becomes particularly challenging, typically around October Break. This is why it's a good idea to have your follow-up meeting during the week of September 30 - October 4, as it provides an opportunity to remind students that late drops require permission from the Dean of First-Year Students and that such permission is only granted for compelling reasons. Reasons such as "I received a C-" on my midterm, "I only took the course to fulfill the QA requirement, but now I don't like it," or "I was too busy to submit my drop form" are not considered compelling. Occasionally, however, a student may have a genuine and valid reason for requesting a late drop.

Withdrawing from a course

Students are allowed to withdraw from a class until the 9th week of the semester, as long as they do not fall below 3.5 units. That deadline this fall is **Friday, November 8**. If a student chooses to withdraw, the course will be marked with WD on the transcript. This is different from dropping a course, as dropped courses do not appear on the transcript. To withdraw from a course, a student needs approval from their advisor and the Dean of First-Year Students. Please discuss with your advisee why they want to withdraw from a course and help them determine whether it is the right choice. Make sure to direct them to the Dean of First-Year Students. In special cases for first-semester first-year students dealing with serious adjustment issues and academic challenges, reducing a course load to 3 units after mid-semester might be necessary. In these cases, the student, the advisor, and the Dean of First-Year Students should all be involved in the decision.

Emergencies

Every year, some first-year students face unexpected personal challenges, such as accidents, illnesses, family emergencies, or major emotional setbacks. Your advisees may consult you in such situations and ask for advice: My mother was hospitalized last night—should I go home? I spent last night in the ER with my roommate and didn't finish my paper—what should I do? In such situations, please urge the student to contact the Dean of First-Year Students right away. If the student is unable to meet with the dean immediately or speak with them directly, they can leave a message or send an email. The most important thing is that we are aware of the student's whereabouts and what is happening so that we can provide the best support, keep professors informed, and arrange academic relief if necessary. First-year students should also be reassured that faculty and deans can offer help during difficult times.

When a student goes to Baldwin and is placed on a health advisory for more than one day, the Dean of Studies Office will inform professors and advisors by email. We also notify professors and advisors at the student's request if they have to leave campus for one or more days due to a personal or family emergency or if they are dealing with an ongoing personal crisis that affects their ability to attend classes and keep up with work. In all cases, students are told that it is their responsibility to speak with their professors about missed work. At the same time, we encourage professors to allow the students an appropriate amount of time to make up work. If there are any questions, please consult the Dean of First-Year Students and urge your advisees to meet with the Dean as soon as possible when serious difficulties arise. The Dean of Studies Office can also connect students with other support resources as needed.

Student Support Network (SSN)

The Student Support Network is focused on addressing worrisome behavior, not academic underachievement. Concerns or behaviors that can be referred to SSN include but are not limited to, missing extended periods of class, erratic or disruptive behavior, behavior indicating depression or severe anxiety, worrisome substance use or abuse, threatening or violent behavior, medical problems, family problems, and behavior indicating self-destructive intent.

In case of an emergency, contact Safety and Security at the CRC by calling 845-437-7333. Please also report any concerns to a member of the SSN team. When a report is received, the core group is promptly notified, and the level of risk is evaluated based on established criteria. If necessary, a member of the SSN team will take immediate action and then discuss the situation at the next meeting to plan a thoughtful and coordinated response to address the needs of the student or students.

If you are worried about a student, you can submit an [SSN Form](#), which can be found on the [Dean of Studies website](#), or you can call or email any member of the core group:

Luis Inoa, Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness:
(845 437-5860) inoa@vassar.edu

Tom Porcello, Dean of Studies:
(845 437-5255) thporcello@vassar.edu

Wendy Freedman, Director of Counseling Center:
(845 437-5700) wefreedman@vassar.edu

Health Services:
(845 437-5800) health@vassar.edu

Lioba Gerhardi, Dean of First-Year Students:
(845 437-5258) ligerhardi@vassar.edu

Andrea Pesavento, Director of Health Promotion and Education:
(845 437-7769) apesavento@vassar.edu

MaryJo Cavanaugh, Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity:
(845 437-7584) macavanaugh@vassar.edu

Leaves of absence

In certain situations, when a student is facing a severe or prolonged crisis, it may be advisable for them to take a break from full-time studies. When this happens, the Dean of First-Year Students can suggest that the student take a personal or medical leave of absence for the rest of the semester or the academic year. Personal and medical leaves result in the cancellation of registration and housing for the current semester and can be requested at any time until the last day of classes by submitting a written request to the Dean of Studies Office. While the college makes it easy for students to take a leave, the decision to do so is often a difficult one. Advisors, professors, and class advisors can help students to understand their options and decide what's best for them.

College policies regarding leaves of absence are summarized in the [Degrees and Courses of Study](#) section of the 2024/25 catalog. Any first-year student who feels unable to continue their semester should contact the Dean of First-Year Students as soon as possible.

Incompletes, missed finals, and other end-of-term crises

During the last few weeks of the semester, many first-year students experience exhaustion, stress, and even panic. This can lead to bigger problems because they don't yet know how the system works—for example, that they must notify the Dean of Studies Office immediately if they miss a final examination for any reason; that only the Dean of Studies Office can give permission to reschedule a final; or that they will need to ask for an "incomplete" if they cannot finish their work by the end of the semester due to illness or emergency. If any of your students or advisees encounter end-of-semester difficulties, please inform the Dean of First-Year Students immediately and advise the student to schedule an appointment with her.

Transfer

By the end of the first semester, some first-year students suspect that Vassar is not the right fit for them and are considering applying for transfer to another college or university. If one of your advisees expresses a desire to transfer, please tell them to make an appointment with the Dean of First-Year Students. While it's not mandatory for students to meet with their deans or advisors or to disclose their reasons for wanting to transfer, it can often be beneficial for both the student and the advisor to discuss the student's specific situation. Often, the desire to transfer during the first semester of the first year is a response to common challenges experienced in the transition to college life rather than issues specific to Vassar. An advisor or dean may be able to assist a student in finding ways to overcome these challenges and address any feelings of isolation and dislocation. The main role of the Dean of First-Year Students is to support the student's transfer application by completing the necessary form that confirms the student's academic and disciplinary standing. If your advisee requests this form to be completed, please direct them to the Dean of Studies Office.

The pre-registration meeting for spring term classes

It is extremely important for your advisees to have an in-person meeting with you to assess the current semester and discuss their course choices for the upcoming semester. Inform your advisees about your availability during the two-week pre-registration period from **November 11-22, 2024**, and encourage them to schedule a meeting with you as early as possible during that time. Please refrain from just emailing your advisees their registration PINs, as this undermines the entire advising system at Vassar.

Academic Standards (and the consequences of failing to meet them)

At Vassar College, satisfactory work is defined as earning a grade of C or better. Instructors are requested to inform the Dean of Studies Office if a student's work falls below this level and to submit academic reports (via email) for any student who receives a final grade of C- or lower in a course. To be in good academic standing, a student must maintain a term and cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 (C) or above.

According to the Faculty Handbook, "Each instructor is responsible in early November for warning freshmen whose work promises to be below a grade of C and for reporting to the dean of first-year students any student who is failing or negligent in their course work. This warning should be given by a specific grade, not by comments alone. Faculty are urged to take this responsibility seriously in order to help first-year students avoid academic difficulty." Advisors can use the mid-November pre-registration meetings as an opportunity to assess their advisees' progress and recommend any necessary changes in direction or attitude. It's important to note that November is quite late in the semester and well past the drop deadline. Hopefully, your advisees will discuss these issues with you earlier in the term.

Academic Probation and the Committee on Student Records

At the end of each semester, the Committee on Student Records, chaired by the Dean of Studies and consisting of four faculty members, reviews the status of all students with unsatisfactory records. The Dean of First-Year Students and class advisors also attend these meetings to present their students' cases. Any student who fails a course, earns two Ds, or has a GPA below 2.0 in a semester is automatically placed on academic probation for the following semester. This means the student's class advisor in the dean's office will closely follow their academic progress, and instructors will be asked to submit mid-semester academic progress reports. At the end of the following semester, the Committee on Student Records will review the student's record again. The committee may also, at its discretion, recommend or require that the student take a leave of absence for a semester or an academic year, or withdraw from the college. According to faculty legislation, first-year students who, at the end of the year, have a grade point average of 1.5 or below, usually may not return for the following year.

While academic probation does not affect a student's financial aid or eligibility for varsity sports, it is nonetheless a serious matter. The student needs to understand the reasons for their poor academic performance and take steps to improve in the future. If one of your advisees is placed on academic probation or is required to take a leave of absence or withdraw, you'll receive a copy of the letter sent to the student. The student will need to meet with the class dean or advisor, and it's a good idea for you to

also discuss their academic progress in your next meeting. It's essential to carefully review the student's schedule for the upcoming semester and their plans for balancing academic work and other commitments.

A Note from the Dean of First-Year Students

The first year of college is a period of significant adjustment, often including periods of serious difficulty. One of the most important lessons for us in the Dean of Studies Office has been never to underestimate the issues our first-year students face, both inside and outside the classroom. The earlier we become aware that a student is struggling, the better chance we have of making a positive intervention. We depend on instructors and advisors to keep us updated on a student's progress and to get in touch as soon as there are any signs of trouble. We would rather hear from you than not, so don't worry about being seen as overly concerned. On our part, we in the Dean of Studies Office strive to keep advisors informed when difficulties arise and to consult with them whenever it seems appropriate.

The relationships between students and their pre-major advisors vary widely from perfunctory to profound. Some advisees seek out their advisors often, others not at all. Some want their advisors to be friends, while others only want their approval on forms. Some expect their advisors to have all the answers, while others prefer to find the answers for themselves. Regardless of how the relationship develops, pre-major advisors do important work, especially in the crucial first months of their advisees' college careers. As the Dean of First-Year Students, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the time, effort, and care you provide in pre-major advising. Thank you.

Lioba Gerhardi
August 2024

I also want to thank Jennifer Herrera, Denise Walen, Susan Zlotnick, Ben Lotto, Joanne Long, Steve Sadowsky, Leslie Dunn, Pat Kenworthy, Donald Williams, and Brian Mann, who prepared earlier versions of this handbook.

Resource Directory

The following offices and individuals may provide valuable assistance to the students you advise or teach at different stages of their college careers. They can also serve as resources for you if you have concerns about a student or need to refer your advisees for information and support. The responsibilities of each office are outlined in detail in the [First-Year Handbook](#).

Office of the Dean of Studies: Main North 128, x5255 (dos@vassar.edu)

Tom Porcello, Dean of Studies (thporcello@vassar.edu)

Casey Trocino, Assistant Dean of Studies (ctrocino@vassar.edu)

Mary Ellen Czesak, Advisor to the Class of 2025 (maczesak@vassar.edu)

Sophia Harvey, Advisor to the Class of 2026 (soharvey@vassar.edu)

Rachel Friedman, Advisor to the Class of 2027 (rafriedman@vassar.edu)

Office of the Dean of First-Year Students: Main North 128, x5258 (deanoffirstyear@vassar.edu)

Lioba Gerhardi, Dean of First-Year Students (ligerhardi@vassar.edu)

Office of the Registrar: Main North 118, x5270 (registrar@vassar.edu)

Angela Anderson, Registrar (angelaanderson@vassar.edu)

Kathleen Giblin, Associate Registrar (kagiblin@vassar.edu)

Office of International Programs: Main North 173, x5260

Kerry Stamp, Director (kstamp@vassar.edu)

Center for Career Education and Fellowships: Main South 170, x5285

Stacy Bingham, Director (stbingham@vassar.edu)

Pre-Health Advising: Main South 170, x5285

Lisa Pace Stephens (prehealth@vassar.edu)

Learning, Teaching and Research Center

Alexia Ferracuti, Director of Inclusive Pedagogy (aferracuti@vassar.edu)

Hudson Gould, Director of Quantitative Reasoning Center (hgould@vassar.edu; x5789)

Matt Schultz, Director of the Writing Center (maschultz@vassar.edu; x7683)

Office of Student Living and Wellness: Main 121, x5860

Luis Inoa, Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness (inoa@vassar.edu)

Office of Student Growth and Engagement: Main C110, x5953

Wendy Maragh Taylor, Associate Dean of the College for Student Growth and Engagement (wmaraghtaylor@vassar.edu)

Office of Residential Life: Main 120, x5860

Rich Horowitz, Assistant Dean and Director of Student Conduct and Housing (rihorowitz@vassar.edu)

Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity: Old Laundry Building 125, x7584

MaryJo Cavanaugh, Director (macavanaugh@vassar.edu)

Counseling Service: Metcalf, x5700

Wendy Freedman, Director of Psychological Services (wefreedman@vassar.edu)

Health Service: Baldwin, x5800

Margot Schinella, FNP-C, Director (mschinella@vassar.edu)

Office of International Services: Main 120, x5831

Andrew Meade, Director (anmeade@vassar.edu)

Office of Community-Engaged Learning: Main North 165, x5282

Elizabeth Cannon, Director (ecannon@vassar.edu)

Pre-Major Advisor Directory 2024/25

First Name	Last Name	Dept./Program	Office	Ext.	Email
Colin Echeverría	Aitken	Biology	Olmsted Hall A55	7430	caitken@vassar.edu
Tagreed	Al Haddad	Africana Studies	Chicago Hall 103A	5626	tahaddad@vassar.edu
Mark	Amodio	English	Sanders Classroom 015	5644	amodio@vassar.edu
Jan	Andrews	Cognitive Science	New England Building 305	7369	andrewsj@vassar.edu
Emily	Antenucci	Italian	Chicago Hall 125	5617	eantenucci@vassar.edu
Jennifer	Appawu	Chemistry	Bridge for Laboratory Sciences 234	7794	jappawu@vassar.edu
Tobias	Armborst	Art	Taylor Hall 222	7030	toarmborst@vassar.edu
Charles	Arndt	Russian Studies	Chicago Hall 117A	5616	charndtiii@vassar.edu
Michael	Aronna	Hispanic Studies; LALS	Chicago Hall 117	7680	miaronna@vassar.edu
Andrew	Ashton	Library	Thompson Library 142	5787	anashton@vassar.edu
Abigail	Baird	Psychological Science	New England Building 203	7723	abbaird@vassar.edu
Pinar	Batur	Sociology; Environmental Studies	Blodgett Hall 222	7783	pibatur@vassar.edu
Leah	Bendavid	Chemistry	Bridge for Laboratory Sciences 228	5993	lebendavid@vassar.edu
Nancy	Bisaha	History	Swift Hall 306	5678	nabisaha@vassar.edu
Chris	Bjork	Education	Old Observatory 103A	7341	chbjork@vassar.edu
Simona	Bondavalli	Italian	Chicago Hall 128	5827	sibondavalli@vassar.edu
Richard	Born	Political Science	Rockefeller 105	5568	born@vassar.edu
Lukacher	Brian	Art	Taylor Hall 3rd floor	5226	brlukacher@vassar.edu
Robert	Brigham	History; International Studies	Swift Hall 308	7189	robrigham@vassar.edu
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The Fall 2024 Semester, Viewed by the Dean of First-Year Students

Wk #	Date	Important dates	Academic issues	Other issues
2	9/9	Add deadline (9/10)	Registration, possible adds/drops, initial impression of classes	Homesickness, adjustment to new physical campus, academic and social environment
4	9/23		Study habits, first papers/exams (library research assistance, LTRC, SI, office hours, etc),	Roommate/fellow group/value conflicts about alcohol, drugs, sex, race, class, morality, religion, social experiences/expectation, feelings of inadequacy due to discrepancy between high school status/grades and initial college status/grades
5 & 6	9/30 & 10/7	Drop deadline (10/11)	Planning/preparing/executing midterms, possible drop, need to add a 0.5 unit class to remain full-time	Time management and test anxiety, increased alcohol use as stress relief
7 & 8	10/21 & 10/28		Results of midterms, follow-ups (library research assistance, LTRC, SI, office hours, etc), general thoughts about spring classes	Homesickness on return from break, realization that college isn't "perfect" as painted by self, parents, teachers, counselors, old problems continue/resurface and new ones arise
9	11/4	Student initiated withdrawal/NRO deadline (11/8) Pre-registration for spring (11/11–22)	Detailed pre-registration planning	Academic pressure mounts because of increased intensity and difficulty in coursework, procrastination, and perceived lack of ability
13	12/2	End of classes (12/11) Final exams (12/16–20)	Planning/preparing/executing final exams and papers	Increase in anxiety/fear/guilt about finals/overdue work, extracurricular time strains come to a head, family/financial/travel anxieties for break

Advising Calendar, Fall 2024

August	26	Monday	New students arrive; Orientation begins
	27	Tuesday	General Advising Meeting, 9:30 am–10:30 am PMA Meeting, 11:00 am –12:15 pm Group meetings with advisees, 2:00 pm–3:00 pm
	28	Wednesday	Faculty research presentations, 9:00 am –12:00 pm
	29	Thursday	Advising Info Sessions; Departmental Drop-In Advising and Placement, 9:00 am–12 pm Individual meetings with advisees, 12:30–3:00 pm
	30	Friday	Registration and matriculation, 8:00 am–4:00 pm
September	3	Tuesday	Classes begin
	4	Wednesday	Fall Convocation at 3:30 pm
	11	Tuesday	Last day to add courses, including 1st 6-week courses
	20	Friday	Last day to drop/NRO 1st 6-week courses
	27	Friday	Last day for student-initiated course withdrawal/NRO 1st 6-week courses
	27-29	Fri-Sun	All Families Weekend
Sept. 30-Oct. 4		Mon-Fri	Follow-up Meeting with advisees
October	11	Friday	Last day to drop full semester classes October break begins at 5:30 pm
	20	Sunday	October break ends at midnight
	21	Monday	2nd 6-week courses begin
	28	Monday	Last day to add 2nd 6-week courses
November	8	Friday	Last day for student-initiated course withdrawal /NRO full semester classes Last day to drop 2nd 6-week courses
	11-22	Mon-Fri	Pre-registration for spring 2024 semester
	15	Friday	Last day for student-initiated course withdrawal/NRO 2nd 6-week courses
Nov. 27-Dec. 1		Wed-Sun	Thanksgiving recess begins at 5:30 pm (Wed)
December	11	Wednesday	Fall classes end; last day to WD from all fall classes
	12-15	Thurs-Sun	Study period
	16-20	Mon–Fri	Final examination period