



SCHOOL *of* PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY ★ WASHINGTON, D.C.

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO ACADEMIC SERVICES AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Welcome to American University and to the School of Public Affairs. We hope your time here will be as exciting and enriching for you as they will be for your student. We acknowledge that going from high school to college is a big step for both you and your student, and we want to make the transition as smooth as possible. During orientation (Eagle Summit), your student will be receiving information about all of the academic services available to them here at American University, but we also want to provide this information to you so that you are aware of the resources available to your student.

Sincerely,

The School of Public Affairs Undergraduate Academic Counseling Team

**School of Public Affairs
Undergraduate Academic Counseling
Office**

**Ward 230
202-885-6200**

**spa_undergradadvising@american.edu
Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm**

DID YOU KNOW...?

- The School of Public Affairs academic counselors initiate meetings with all students during the first year; however, if students are having any problems or concerns, academic or otherwise, they should make an appointment with their counselor.
- Students are welcome to come to our offices without an appointment if they need to see an academic counselor immediately. For long range academic planning and more detailed discussions, students are encouraged to make an appointment.
- Academic counselors are resources for information about offices and services on-campus (see page 4 for examples) and are good points of contact when questions or problems arise.
- Students are encouraged to make contact with an academic counselor whenever they encounter difficulties meeting course expectations or encounter personal issues which interrupt their usual routine.
- Students must meet with their academic counselor **every** semester to discuss course registration.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR STUDENTS

The first year of college is a huge transition for students. New school, new friends, and of course, new academic standards to live up to. When trying to support your student, it is helpful to remember these three main points:

1. “High school and college are like checkers and chess. The board looks the same, but the games are different.” (David Johns, University of Delaware)

Students sometimes don’t understand how different college is from high school, and can become overwhelmed in their first year. These differences can lead to academic difficulty, so it is important students know that:

- Attending class is critical even if the professor does not take attendance.
- Completing all assignments is important even if a professor does not collect homework or give “pop” quizzes.
- Contacting the professor immediately is essential if a student misses a class, test, or deadline.
- Studying the material after each class is more powerful than only studying hours or even days before an exam.
- Working with faculty and counselors should become as routine as speaking with friends or family.
- Checking their AU email account regularly makes a student aware of messages from the University, faculty, and counselors.

2. “Hoping is not a strategy.” (Faye Ross, Director, Learning and Advising Center, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Philadelphia University)

The professional academic counselors in the School of Public Affairs wear many different hats, but our primary function is to help your student learn how to make good academic decisions in order to be successful. “I will do better next time” is not a strategic plan for success. Encourage your student to work with us so we can help them with the concrete steps necessary to improve.

3. “Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” (Albert Einstein)

Change is always difficult and students may need your encouragement to figure out what is and isn’t working for them. Try asking focused, non-threatening questions such as:

- What kind of requirements are there in course X?
- How did you do on that first quiz (or project) in course Y?
- What kind of criteria do faculty use for evaluating projects?
- What are turning out to be your best places/times to study?
- What are turning out to be your academic interests?
- What’s different from what you expected in (course, major)?

Much of the information and wording on this page is taken with permission from Faye Ross, Director, Learning and Advising Center, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Philadelphia University

OTHER INFORMATION PARENTS SHOULD KNOW...

- Federal law (FERPA) prevents University faculty and staff from sharing specific information about students, even with a parent. Help your student figure out what, how, and whom to ask if questions or issues arise.
- Students should consult the academic calendar so they know dates for dropping and adding courses, withdrawing from courses, and planning for midterm and final exams. Parents should also become familiar with the academic calendar to avoid making travel arrangements during midterm and final exam dates.
- Students receive a syllabus in each course which spells out information such as course requirements, major due dates, the professor's office hours and contact information. Ask about your student's professors and courses.
- Many faculty send "early warning" notices early in the semester to alert students and academic counselors to potential problems, and academic counselors follow up via email, letter, and/or phone calls.
- It is important for students to meet with their academic counselor:
 - During Eagle Summit
 - Whenever an academic counselor has initiated contact (by letter, phone, or email)
 - Prior to advance registration in November for the spring semester and April for the summer and fall semesters
 - Whenever questions about academic policies, requirements, majors, or minors arise
 - Whenever they encounter a problem or issue that may be new for them
- Students' academic interests frequently change as they discover new classes, skills, talents, and disciplines they had not known about before. They will look for your support as they change and grow in ways they – and you – had not anticipated. This can be an unsettling process for both students and those close to them, but we enjoy working with students as they discover new interests and we can be helpful resources along the way.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Academic Support & Access Center

Phone: 202-885-3360

<http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/>

Location: Mary Graydon Center 243

The ASAC offers instruction on topics such as time management, reading and writing skills, exam skills, and note-taking via individual appointments, the Writing Lab, study skill workshops, tutor referrals, and group tutoring in Supplemental Instruction sessions. The Center also assists students with learning disabilities. Student-athletes are served through the Academic Support Program for Student-Athletes.

Career Center

Phone: 202-885-1804

<http://www.american.edu/careercenter/index.cfm>

Location: 5th floor of Butler Pavilion

A career advisor is assigned to each of the schools/colleges and is knowledgeable about the substantive areas of their school/college. Students can meet with the career advisor as early as their first semester. The Career Center services include: self-assessment instruments to further understanding of skills and interests; videotaped mock interviews; information about graduate school options; internship opportunities; nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships; and provides resources such as a career library, alumni network, and access to online job banks.

Math & Statistics Tutoring Lab

Phone: 202-885-3120

<http://www.american.edu/cas/mathstat/tutoring.cfm>

Location: Gray Hall 110

The Math & Stats Tutoring Lab provides free tutoring to students in the following courses: Finite Math, Pre-Calculus, Applied Calculus, Calculus, Basic Statistics, and Basic Statistics with Calculus. Students can get help with statistical software in **The Statistical Consulting Center**, in the Research Commons Area of the Library, on Fridays, 2pm to 4pm. Appointments outside of these hours may be scheduled via email: statisticalcounseling@american.edu.

Writing Center

Phone: 202-885-2991

<http://www.american.edu/cas/writing/>

Location: Bender Library, 1st Floor Commons

In free, 45-minute sessions, the staff of the Writing Center works with students on issues such as interpreting a writing assignment, generating ideas, locating and sharpening a thesis statement, organizing ideas and research, developing logical arguments, polishing prose, finding strategies for revising, and identifying recurrent errors. The Center also provides a selection of useful handouts on writing topics and common problems, from writing an effective introduction to citing sources correctly.

Center for Language, Exploration, Acquisition & Research (CLEAR)

Phone: 202-885-2357

<http://www.american.edu/cas/clear/>

Location: Asbury Building North, Lower Level B36

Services provided include: foreign language broadcasts, interactive laser discs, interactive software, and one-on-one tutoring. CLEAR also strives to make available the current texts that most first-, second-, and third-year courses are using.

Academic Counselors can point your student to other resources and services on-campus, as well.