Fantasy vs Reality: 5 Simple Ways to Help Liberal Arts Students Formulate a Future

Aurora Alexander, Academic Advisor I
Kristi Kamis, GA for Advising and Undergraduate Initiatives
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Background

- Department of Psychological Sciences Undergraduate Advising Office
- Advise 925+ Kent Campus psychology majors
- Newer office
- Specialize in psychology – But this advice can be used with any liberal arts students!
TO-DO LIST:
1. Everything
2. 
3. 

[Image of a whiteboard with a drawing of a sad face and a squiggle line]
Liberal Arts Degree: Myths

No Skills

Narrow Path
5 Ways to Help Liberal Arts Students Formulate a Future
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>[Redacted]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor Name:</td>
<td>Kristina Kamis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment Time:</td>
<td>Monday, 04/02/2018, 11:15 AM - 12:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment Location:</td>
<td>Kent Hall 144 (Main Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Notes:</td>
<td>Added by: (Kristina Kamis) on 03/20/2018: next 60 units schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contact Type**: Select one

**Note Category**: Career/Graduate School Advising

**Required Advising**: 201880

**Note or Special Note is required**

**Note**:  

**Special Note**:  

[Save]
Go “Beyond” the Reason for the Appointment

- NEVER start an appointment by talking about courses for next semester
- Ask questions that initiate a career conversation and make students think about their future
Go “Beyond” the Reason for the Appointment

- **Key conversation starters:** “How is your semester going? Are you struggling with any classes? Which courses do you enjoy the most? The least?”
  - Leads to “branch questions” that initiate the career conversation
    - E.g. “I see that you are taking a criminology class...How do you enjoy it? Is this something you are considering as a future career?”
    - E.g. “You mentioned that you love your abnormal psychology class...What do you love most about it? Do you see yourself working with mental health in the future?”
    - E.g. “So you want to work in a medical setting, but you don’t like your chemistry and biology classes? Are you sure this is the right path for you?”
Extract the Reality from the Job Title

- Ask students, “WHY?”
- Try to separate fact from fiction
  - E.g. “I want to be a psychiatrist because I want to help people.”
    - Leads to “branch questions”
      - E.g. “Do you know what the average work-day looks like for a psychiatrist?”
- Introduce possible career options/alternatives
  - E.g. “You don’t have to go to medical school to help people.”
    - Helping careers
      - Case manager
      - Behavior analyst
      - Clinical mental health counselor
      - Intervention/prevention specialist
      - Marriage and family therapist
      - Substance abuse counselor
      - Social worker
      - Vocational rehabilitation counselor
Begin Planting the Seed of Professionalism

● Professional vs. Unprofessional
  ○ Expectations
    ■ Address individuals by their appropriately earned title
    ■ Emails should consist of a salutation, a body and a subscription
    ■ Send thank you emails within 24 hrs of experience

● Academic advisors are “Cultural Sherpas”
Connections Happen Early and Often

Liberal Arts Undergraduate

- Potential Professional Connections
  - Connecting with faculty/faculty advising
  - Informational Interviews
  - Applying and interviewing for part-time/on-campus employment
  - Interacting with an instructor in or out of class
  - Graduation school coordinators/applications
  - Career Fairs
Teach Student to Take Small Steps Toward Achieving Their Long-Term Goals

- End an appointment by breaking down what you discussed into **SMALLER STEPS**
  - Ex. A student wants to get his master’s in school counseling
    - Bigger picture – Graduate school
    - Actions Steps for **NOW**
      - Start researching graduate programs
      - Register for related elective courses (e.g. Child Development, Child Psychology, Children in Society, Educational Psychology, etc.)
      - Look for related internship/volunteer experiences

- Next appointment – Follow up and discuss next steps
- Take detailed notes
Teach Student to Take Small Steps Toward Achieving Their Long-Term Goals
Follow Up with Resources

- As humans, we are forgetful!
- **DO NOT** expect a student to remember everything that you and he or she discuss
- Follow-up emails are imperative
  - Attach relevant links and make bullet point notes
Hi [Name],

It was a pleasure meeting with you today! Please see below and attached for the resources we discussed during your appointment:

- Visit this page to review the process for requesting a faculty advisor: [https://www.kent.edu/psychology/facultyadvising](https://www.kent.edu/psychology/facultyadvising)
- Visit this page to review the process for finding and applying for an internship, and to view several lists of sites in Kent and the surrounding areas where psychology students in our department have previously successfully interned: [https://www.kent.edu/psychology/internships-and-volunteer-opportunities](https://www.kent.edu/psychology/internships-and-volunteer-opportunities)
- Please see attached for a 74-page psychology career exploration guide.

Additionally, please remember that the deadline to apply for Summer 2018 graduation is **THIS Thursday, March 15!**

Let me know if you have any questions. Have a great semester!

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Post Advising: Key Results

- Results show **93%–95% positive results** from 670+ respondents
  - Key takeaways from students:
    - “When I tell her (Kristina) my interests and thoughts about my future career, she shows me how to get there and how to set myself up for success.”
    - “Answered all of my questions and helped me realize some personal goals.”
    - “Kristina was EXTREMELY helpful with graduate school prep and applications. I feel so much better and more prepared to apply now! Her information was invaluable!”
    - “The advisors are knowledgeable and definitely opened up my eyes and mind to things that could prove valuable to me. I hope students treat these appointments as opportunities and not just another requirement.”

- Success stories
  - “Jamie”
Activity Time!
Student says, “I want to be a criminal profiler for the FBI.”
Student says, “My uncle told me that I shouldn’t major in XYZ because I will end up unemployed.”
Baby Steps to Better Advising

Utilize Time Wisely

- Create handouts/materials that address common questions from students
  - How-To Guides
    - Craft a professional email
  - GRE
  - Medical School
  - Clinical Psychology vs. Counseling
  - Graduate Programs
    - Sports Psychology
    - Forensic Psychology
    - I/O Psychology
    - PsyD
Questions?
References

