

Advising Themes

Sem	Goals	Advising Theme
All	Learning to Learn	Intentional Learners
1	Liberal arts	Exploration
2	Developing self-authorship	Agency
3	Intellectual & practical skills	Practice
4	Electing a major	Intellectual community
5	Professional skills	Disciplinary knowledge, skills & dispositions
6	Capstone Research	Application & integration
7	Preparing to Graduate	Vocation & Next Steps

The Intentional Learner

An important goal of a college education is to develop as an intentional learner, defined as a learner who is motivated by intentions and is goal directed. Intentional learners also develop a self-awareness about the reason for study, the learning process itself, and how education is used."

Identify one specific learning experience from the current semester that was especially meaningful and memorable—something that you think will have lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it will affect your life in the future.

Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead at Macalester, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of you (and others) to do so. You might begin your response with a summary of your goals for the current semester, and the progress you have made toward them.

What general skills (e.g., quantitative, writing, critical thinking, speaking) would you like to improve? Identify one interesting course that would further your efforts in this area.

What aspects of learning (e.g., asking questions in class; arranging meetings with professors; deeper reading; deeper study strategies; turning in assignments on time) would you like to work on during the next semester? Describe a strategy for doing this next semester.

At this time, what constitutes the "good life" for you? What will need to be an integral part of your life for you consider it fulfilling and meaningful? There is no correct answer to this question, and your response might come from a wide range of possible choices (e.g., family, living in a certain geographic location, a particular lifestyle, a hobby or activity, a special person, career, etc.).

Semester I: Exploration

Practicing the liberal arts involves the cultivation and realization of particular values, skills, opportunities, experiences, obligations, and consequences. The following prompts are designed to help you make sense of your experiences, to help you consider their significance to your education thus far, and to identify new opportunities for exploration."

Describe the aspects of your college experience that have brought you the most joy or satisfaction. Why do you think this is the case?

One of the key outcomes of the liberal arts in practice is the ability to draw meaningful connections between knowledge and experiences outside the classroom and the subjects and issues explored inside it. Identify and explore some connections you have noticed between your knowledge and/or experience gained outside of the classroom and topics covered in your courses over the past semester.

Describe one way in which you are now different from the person who first arrived this fall? Do you have new knowledge that gives you a different understanding of the world around you, new conceptual frameworks, new skills, new dispositions, different beliefs or values, or new goals/interests?

Describe a challenge that you have faced over the past semester, and the context in which it arose. How do you plan to address this challenge in the semester and years ahead?

Identify at least one (kind of) course to take that will involve exploration of the unknown and/or risk-taking. Explain your choice.

Identify at least one curricular or co-curricular opportunity to explore. Explain your choice.

Have your long-term career or educational interests or goals changed? If so, how are they different? If not, what experiences helped to solidify these interests and goals?

Semester II: Agency

Believe it or not, an important goal of higher education is to help you find your own voice. As a vital part of the journey into adulthood, becoming “self-authored” means developing the capacity to “internally generate beliefs, values, identity, and social relations.” This transformation not only involves intellectual development, but also new understandings of the nature of knowledge, views of self and social relations, and meaning-making. Developing this kind of agency will empower you to new levels of independent thinking, identifying goals, making choices, and accomplishing dreams throughout college and the rest of your life.”

In what specific situations over the past year have you felt the greatest sense of investment in and ownership of your educational process? Why did you feel that way? Can you think of ways to actively cultivate that feeling more often?

What ideas or activities have most excited your curiosity and interest over the past semester, such that you have been motivated to pursue them independently—beyond formal (classroom, club, or team) expectations? How might you put those ideas or activities into practice in one or more of the senses you outlined above? How might those ideas or activities shape your educational and life trajectory?

Thinking about a recently completed or current course that satisfies a general education requirement (e.g., writing, quantitative thinking, internationalism, US identities and differences), describe how you anticipate transferring/already have transferred (i.e., used) recently

learned knowledge or skills to a new context (e.g., another course, a co-curricular activity, or life).

As you imagine the next three years of your academic and personal journey, what worries you? What excites you most?

How would you describe the habits of thought, belief, feeling, or action that characterize your experience of work, play, and life thus far at Macalester College? Which habits would you like to cultivate further between now and graduation, and which would you like to change? Explain why you want to cultivate or change these habits, and how you might go about doing so.

Have your long-term career or educational interests or goals changed? If so, how are they different? If not, what experiences helped to solidify these interests and goals?

In light of your responses above, what two or three choices might you consider now in order to get the most out of the semester and years to come? These choices could include desired and required varieties of coursework and co-curricular opportunities, as well as choices regarding lifestyle or social interaction.

What is the most important thing you have learned about yourself this past year?

How might a semester abroad or an internship help you draw meaningful connections between your learning in the classroom and the liberal arts?

Semester III: Practice

A liberal arts education at Macalester College develops strong intellectual and practical skills, the capacity to engage with complex and diverse communities, breadth of knowledge, and an interdisciplinary flexibility of mind—and above all, the ability to put these skills and perspectives into practice in a variety of different circumstances. Practicing the liberal arts entails being able to draw connections between different kinds of knowledge and experience, to transfer skills, abilities, theories, and methodologies from one setting to another, and to reflect on and assess your own assumptions, experiences, and behaviors."

Describe one or two hypothetical—but, in your view, likely—scenarios in your life about five years from now, about which you might think or say,

“This is my liberal arts education in practice!” Consider professional, social, intellectual, political, or personal elements in your life.

What sorts of learning experiences, relationships, abilities, would you like to cultivate? How can existing campus structures and opportunities contribute to fulfilling your vision?

How have your habits of mind and body—the ways in which you learn and exercise self-discipline—changed since your arrival at Macalester College? How do your plans for your remaining college years take into account your strengths and weaknesses, and what are the contextual factors that may affect them?

Describe a particular situation in which you have been able to adapt a skill/ability/theory or methodology learning in the classroom to better understand a problem or issue outside of the classroom.

Describe a particular situation in which your knowledge and/or experience gained outside of the classroom has helped to illuminate a theory/concept/problem that has been explore in your coursework over the past semester.

Practicing the liberal arts involves the cultivation and realization of particular values, skills, opportunities, experiences, obligations, and consequences. Identify one of each of the following, and explore in writing its significance in your own education thus far: (1) One value or commitment of a liberally educated student, (2) One skill of a liberally educated student, (3) One opportunity or experience of a liberally educated student, and (4) One reason that—or way in which—any of the above are desirable to or valuable for anybody.

What are your short-term and long-term goals, and the choices you need to consider now in order to get the most out of the semester and years to come? These choices should definitely include desired and required varieties of coursework, as well as extra-classroom opportunities of many kinds.

What is your mission? How will the world be different as a result of your life in it? Note, this question is not about your disciplinary pursuit (e.g., “what is your major”) or your career trajectory (e.g., “what do you want to be”), but the reasons behind those other choices.

Semester IV: Intellectual Community

A liberal education includes both intellectual depth and breadth. Whereas the breadth comes from the general education program, intellectual depth is developed through a major in one or more fields of study. Through focused study you will not only develop the specific understandings, skills, and habits of mind needed for that discipline, but also for more generally analyzing issues, making decisions, and solving problems in other realms of life."

Describe the aspects of your college experience that have brought you the most joy or satisfaction. What are the common threads of these courses or experiences?

Why are you involved in your extracurricular activities? What are you hoping to gain and learn from them?

How have you grown as a learner? What have you learned that has helped you grow as an "expert learner" (one who takes the initiative to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes")?

In what ways do you see yourself as the same as when you began college? In what ways are you different?

What aspects of the discipline of your intended major are most attractive to you?

What aspects of the discipline of your intended major are most challenging or stressful to you? What are some ways that you might address these in the semesters ahead?

As you think about the next few years of your academic and personal journey, what excites you? What concerns you most?

At this time, what is your educational plan while at Macalester and what are the most important choices you need to consider for the semesters ahead? Your answer to this question might also include sketching out a "two-year" plan for the courses you will take each semester. Bring this plan to your advising meeting with you.

Semester V: Professional Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions

Now that you've gained some depth within a field of study, this is a good time to think about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that define that intellectual community. Given the many options for different courses and professional opportunities, how do you decide which ones to pursue further?"

Which courses or experiences in the major have given you the most joy or satisfaction? What are the common threads of these courses or experiences?

Do any particular specialties or sub-disciplines within your major area of study interest you more? What are the opportunities for further exploration of these? What about supporting courses outside the major?

What kinds of internship or research opportunities interest you? How would you go about exploring these further?

What additional knowledge, skills, and dispositions do you need to support your academic and career goals? What is your plan and time-frame for accomplishing these?

By now you are probably realizing that life offers many opportunities, but that each comes with a cost. Describe a recent choice that you have had to make, and how you made it. How do you define or recognize "a better option" among several choices?

What are your goals for the next few semesters, and what are the most important immediate steps you should take to make progress toward your goals?

Semester VI: Application and Integration

One way to demonstrate intellectual depth is through a culminating experience that provides an opportunity to apply and integrate professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions for exploration of a question or creative expression. The reflective prompts below are designed to help ensure that this culminating experience is a meaningful and successful one."

Within the discipline of your major, what types of questions or problems do you most enjoy thinking/learning about? Why do you think these appeal to you?

What kinds of approaches (e.g., observation, experimentation, modeling, archival research) do you most enjoy using to explore questions within your discipline? Why does this particular approach appeal to you?

What kinds of questions and approaches are you likely to explore in your capstone project? What is your plan to begin this work?

What additional knowledge or skills might you need to have a successful capstone project? How will you learn these?

How do you think you will motivate yourself to persist in your capstone project when things don't go the way you planned, or while completing repetitive tasks?

What are the important understandings, skills and dispositions that you hope to gain from your capstone experience?

For you, what constitutes "the good life"? Is it where you live, how you live, whom you live with, or relationships with family or friends? Is it what you do for a living, the lifestyle your job permits, the impacts you make, or something entirely different? What essential elements **MUST** be present in your life for you to feel that you are living the good life?

Semester VII: Vocation

Deciding on next steps can seem like a daunting task, especially given the fullness of the academic year. But, you don't want to leave such important decisions to chance. The following reflection prompts are designed to help you uncover and explore those things that are important to you, and how these might inform future decisions."

How has your understanding and identity as a scholar in your major discipline shaped who you are?

As you think about life after college, what is important to you, and how will these things inform future decisions?

What are your goals during this final semester as an undergraduate student?

What are your longer-term educational goals? What is your timeframe for implementing these goals? How will you make them happen? What resources/support do you need? If you don't have educational goals yet, what are your plans for clarifying these?

As you currently understand them, what are your longer term career goals? What is your timeframe for implementing these goals? How will you make them happen? What resources/support do you need? If you don't have career goals yet, what are your plans for clarifying these?

List several career options that you would consider. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? What do you need to figure out in order to select from among them, or other options?

Map out three different plans for your next five years. What are the plusses and minuses of each?

