First meetings with Freshman Advisees

To prepare for your advising lunch at Annenberg (Thursday, August 27, 12:15 - 2:15pm):

- Read your advisees’ questionnaires in the my.harvard Advising Center.
- Stop by the Freshman Dean’s Office (FDO) to read their admissions folders (please read the document “Some Notes on Reading Folders” and “Reading the Housing Applications” beforehand). The FDO is located at 6 Prescott Street. The FDO is open for folder-reading on the following days and times:
  - Monday, 8/17 (9 am – 5 pm)
  - Tuesday, 8/18 (9 am - 8 pm)
  - Wednesday, 8/19 (11 am – 5 pm)
  - Thursday, 8/20 - Friday, 8/21 (9 am – 5 pm)
  - Saturday, 8/22 (12 noon - 5 pm)
  - Monday, 8/24 – Friday, 8/28 (9:30 am – 4:30 pm)
- Send an e-mail greeting to your advisees in advance.

Lunch at Annenberg Hall, Thursday, August 27, 12:15 – 2:15pm

Some advisers invite the Peer Advising Fellow(s) associated with their advisees to this lunch. You may find the contact information for the Peer Advising Fellow(s) of your advisees on the my.harvard Advising Center.

Before lunch, designate a spot for your advisees to meet you. Consider meeting in a specific location, such as in front of your advisees’ dorm or at your office, and then walk over to Annenberg together. (Popular locations such as the John Harvard statue or Widener steps could get crowded.) Bagged lunches are provided in Annenberg. The dining hall will be crowded, so many advisers will collect lunches with advisees and then eat in another location, such as the adviser’s office, the Greenhouse Café inside the Science Center, or on the Science Center Plaza.

Consider bringing your copy of the Calendar of Opening Days.

The purpose of this lunch is to allow you to introduce yourself to your advisees, explain your role as an academic adviser, and learn more about your advisees.

Suggested topics to cover:

- Ask your advisees about themselves (e.g., where they’re from, what their families are like, what they enjoyed studying in high school, what their hobbies are, what their hopes/fears about college may be, why they chose Harvard).
- Normalize feelings of anxiety or uncertainty. Consider offering an example from your own first year of college when you felt nervous or out of place. Ask advisees about something that excites them about starting college and something that makes them nervous.
- Ask them about their plans for Opening Days (which academic programs they plan to attend and why), and point them to programs they may not be aware of. Encourage them especially to go to the Pathways sessions (Friday, August 28 from 9 am - 10:50 am) and the Academic Fairs (Monday, August 31, 1 – 3 pm).
- Help them think about which questions/interests they might wish to explore during Opening Days, and how.
• Encourage them to think broadly about their academic choices, not simply to start checking off requirements on some predetermined path.
• Discuss your hopes and expectations for your relationship with them: that they be responsive and check in throughout the year, be proactive about seeking out advising when they need it, and prepare for meetings (think about course choices, questions, other questions or issues to discuss).
• Set expectations for releasing the advising hold on their study card (aka electronically signing the study card).
• Schedule your first one-on-one meetings with your advisees for before the first day of classes (Wednesday, September 2). Time is designated in the Calendar of Opening Days for advising meetings on Friday, August 28, 11am – 4pm and Monday, August 31, 10 am – 2 pm. Because different students will attend different programs during the Calendar of Opening Days, the designated times may work better for some than others.

First One-on-One Conversations with Advisees

• Ask about the Opening Days programming your advisees attended, what they learned, and what questions they have.
• Talk about their placement scores and course recommendations (which students view in the my.harvard Student Center, and advisers view in the my.harvard Advising Center). Encourage them to speak with the relevant departmental advisers as questions about placement and course recommendations arise.
• Make sure they know which term they were assigned to Expository Writing
• Talk generally about the courses they are considering checking out during course selection period (September 2-9), and those they are planning to take for sure. How do their plans align with their present interests and/or their longer term goals? Are they already considering certain concentrations? How do they plan to explore their interests at Harvard?
• Let your advisees know that they should pick up a syllabus for every course they check out, and that there are a variety of factors they might wish to consider (e.g., class size, relative work load, type of work in relation to other planned course work, fit within overall course schedule) in making final decisions about which courses to sign up for, especially electives.
• Remind your advisees that they are responsible for all course material starting with the first day of class.
• Remind them that they are required to enroll in four half-courses in the first term, at least three of which must be letter-graded (the exception is that first-term students may take CS50 Sat/Unsat and a freshman seminar). Students who wish to enroll in a fifth half-course must secure the permission of their Resident Dean. This permission is only granted in cases when the requested exception is for certain performance courses in the Music department. In 2015-16, these courses are Music 10hfr (dance), 12hfr (Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra), 180r, and 187r.
• Ask them what extracurricular opportunities they are interested in pursuing. Remind them about the Student Activities Fair (Friday, September 4, 4 – 7 pm, on the Radcliffe Quad and Student Organization Center at Hilles). Emphasize balance and the importance of not overcommitting. Many students are best served by approaching the Student Activities Fair with the plan to identify organizations to explore later, rather than signing up on the spot for many activities.
• As students head into Course Selection Week, help prepare them for the process of reviewing their course syllabi, and encourage them to gather the syllabus for each course they are considering. It may be helpful to view a syllabus online together before Course Selection Week.

**Ahead of Study Card Deadline (September 10, 11:59 pm)**

• Arrange to meet with each of your advisees in advance of Study Card day to discuss their final course selection.
• Encourage your advisees to bring their course syllabi, and review the syllabi with them. Be in touch as appropriate with other members of the advising network. In particular, if a concern arises, communicate with the Resident Dean of Freshmen (RDF), whose contact information is available on the my.harvard Advising Center. This may also be an appropriate time to communicate with the Proctor and Peer Advising Fellow.
• Talk about their first impressions of their classes: are they excited about them? Do they have sound reasons for taking them? Are they keeping up with their assignments?
• Encourage your advisees to meet with their instructors/TFs during office hours and to take advantage of resources offered by each class. Suggest that advisees actually input course office hours into their personal calendars.
• Develop a plan with them for staying in touch and let them know approximately when your next official meeting in fall term will take place.
• Let them know that they should contact you any time with academic concerns.
• If you are unable to sign their study cards electronically the Resident Dean of Freshmen (RDF) may sign on your behalf only if the RDF hears directly from you.
• Electronically sign Study Cards on the my.harvard Advising Center. Your electronic signature releases the advising hold so that students may enroll in courses.