

## **Advising Information**

### **Who is my advisor?**

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Please feel free to talk to me as often as you like to discuss your academic plans, or if you have any questions related to your studies at Furman. I will be your advisor until you declare a major, at which time you may choose a faculty member in that department.

### **Essential Information**

1. Degree requirements checklist (see page 2) : lists your general education requirements
2. The Furman catalog ( <https://catalog.furman.edu> ) shows all of Furman's academic opportunities and regulations.

Occasionally, you may need to fill out a form for the Registrar, such as changing your class schedule or declaring a major. These forms can be found at their office on the first floor of the administration building, or online:

<https://www.furman.edu/enrollment-services/forms-worksheets>

### **Orientation Schedule**

- Friday 8/20: Getting-acquainted meeting.
- Monday 8/23: Individual meetings in my office.

### **What is learning?**

To be blunt: the purpose of college is for you to ace the job interview and to have a fulfilling life. The learning process doesn't happen overnight, but everyone can do it!

This is a journey of discovery: the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. Then, apply and communicate what you know. You really have tremendous potential to learn a lot. And yet as you learn, deep inside you are still the same person, just becoming a little wiser. Soon, people will rely on your knowledge and start asking you for help.

### **What is college like?**

- More freedom to manage your time. Making every day count. Doing today's work as best you can.
- Questions that take longer to work out (hours or days)
- Opportunities to explore new subjects that interest you. Each academic subject has its own orientation: its philosophy, fundamental lessons, scope and skills. There is a richness in taking a wide range of subjects.
- Not just learning new facts, but also how to ascertain, evaluate, organize and use information.
- Seeing that information sometimes contains uncertainty or bias.
- Create new information: research and synthesis.
- Critical thinking and analysis

In a nutshell, you will learn how to communicate various ideas and solve complex problems, evaluate and create new information. Compared to high school, you will also notice:

- Less time in class, but more preparation required
- Class attendance is critically important, even if roll is not taken
- Fewer tests and homework assignments, but they cover more material

You're a full-time student, but in a typical day you'll be in class just 3 hours. This means you need to schedule up to 5 hours during the day to study. You have the freedom to determine how to organize your schedule. Some things to note:

- There is *not* enough class time to go over all the information you need to know. When you go to class it may be a few days since the last meeting, and it's not good to walk in cold. Spend *several minutes before each class* reviewing your notes. In addition, your instructor can help you during office hours, tutorials, labs, review sessions, etc. Don't pass up these opportunities!
- The total amount of time you study is not as important as doing it consistently. Successful students take the initiative and commit to a study habit from the first day of class. If you study a little bit each day, you'll never need to "cram" for an exam.

### The one word to remember: choices

What is your goal at Furman? Your success or failure will largely depend on some of the choices you make on a daily basis, such as spending time on things that will accomplish your long-term goals, as opposed to seeking short-term pleasures. College is what you make of it. Pick 1 or 2 extracurricular activities you really care about.

When choosing classes, give yourself a reasonable challenge. In college, you have the chance to get a good education, or to avoid one! So, don't rest on your laurels. Taking only classes that are easy for you is a waste of your time.

### Basic Rules

Generally, to earn a degree at Furman, you must:

- Take 32 classes, scheduled 4 per semester (fall and spring), or in other words 8 per year. These 32 classes include all your general education, major subject, and electives.
- Achieve at least a C average overall in your coursework. A grade of C means that you achieved the basic goals and expectations of the course. A, B, and C are good. D and F mean trouble. D is a passing grade, but don't get too many D's.
- Attend 32 events in the Cultural Life Program (CLP). It's best to finish this as soon as you can. Believe it or not, about 0.4% of students miss graduating on time because of this simple requirement.

### General education checklist

Among your 32 courses, you need to take the following.

<i>Writing:</i>	1 Freshman seminar and 1 Writing/Research									
<i>Core:</i>	1 health	1 religion	1 literature	1-3 foreign lang	1-2 math/ CS	2 science	2 social science	1 fine arts	1 history	
<i>Global awareness:</i>	1 world cultures and 1 environment									

To make the requirements easier to satisfy, you may choose a course that fulfills both a core and a global awareness requirement. Also, a Writing/Research course may satisfy a core and/or global awareness requirement.

### **Studying and Time Management**

- The first 3 weeks are a golden opportunity to get ahead in your classes. This is when academic and social demands are minimal. Also focus on the week after a test.
- More than 5 hours' studying a day is overkill... Significantly less than this will not develop your potential. Putting off daily studying gets in the way of leisure activities. You will not have more free time in the future. Be considerate to your future self.
- Aim to accomplish one significant task each day. When you study, you should have a tangible goal to achieve. Studying should produce something like notes or an outline. Pick a time and place when you can be most focused and least distracted. Take a short break after each hour so you don't get fatigued.
- If it's hard to get started, just give yourself a ten-minute challenge. Commit to an all-out, undistracted effort for 10 minutes. It's likely that after 10 minutes the momentum can carry you forward.
- Anticipate what the next class meeting is going to be about. Prepare as though you had to help give part of the lesson.
- Be methodical, be organized, and be curious. Learn by doing and creating. Compile your notes into a cumulative study outline that you can grow and revise each week.
- When assigned some reading material, read it twice: once for *general understanding* of the concepts, and once to get the *details* you might have missed the first time. Take notes as you read, and don't be afraid to mark up your textbook. Do practice problems to test your knowledge.
- An assignment may require you to break up your work into stages because it cannot be completed in one sitting. Let ideas stew in your mind before returning to work.
- Don't structure every hour. Leave enough time for weekends, exercise, relaxation and fun. Enjoy the city, as well as the natural landscape, lakes, rivers and mountains.
- Do one or two extra-curricular opportunities. It won't hurt you academically. After all, you'll have about 70 waking hours a week when you are not studying or in class.

### **General Thoughts**

- The most important subject that you will learn is one where you don't earn a grade, but it impacts every grade you receive. That subject is self-discipline. This includes:
  - Minimizing distraction
  - Doing important work first before easy stuff
  - Accepting responsibility for your successes and failures
  - Maintaining a positive attitude. Working because you want to, not because you have to.

- Grades only tell a small part about your success in college. Your greatest strength should not just be a number. Consider what you want written about you on a recommendation letter: e.g. leadership, maturity, initiative, time management, positive attitude, curiosity, creativity, challenging yourself, and how well you work with and communicate with other people.
- Set realistic goals. Allow extra time to get work done. Things don't always work out smoothly. Also: 90% of people think they will do better than average. Overconfidence leads us to procrastinate and do less than our best work.
- Good ideas and plans will do you no good unless you actually put them into action. Success requires real effort. Reward yourself when you get something finished.
- The road to success contains detours. Setbacks will happen. It has been said that you can't succeed if you haven't first tasted failure. Occasionally, you will make the wrong move. Learn from your mistakes. Don't give up. Ask how you can do better next time.
- From time to time, you may find the writings of Dale Carnegie helpful in your daily life.
  - *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*: This is good to read now as you start your college career.
  - *How to Win Friends and Influence People*: This book would be good before you take a job, internship or leadership position.
- You will have three summers during your college career. Many students find it essential to spend at least one summer working in an internship that introduces them to a possible future career or employer. Also, consider spending a summer at Furman working on a research project. Taking some classes during the summer is also an option, although for most students this is probably not necessary.
- Most classes are offered on either MWF for 50 minutes or TR for 75 minutes. Experiment with both types of schedules to see which you prefer. Be flexible in your schedule preferences, as not all classes can be at exactly the same time. ☺
- Choose classes that are meaningful to you, or would be hard to simply teach yourself.
- You will have social experiences in college: group projects, extra-curricular activities, or part-time jobs. You don't want people to say this about you:
  - My job is miserable because this lady I work with always \_\_\_\_\_.
  - He knows everything, but I can never count on him to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I had to quit my job because my boss was such a \_\_\_\_\_.
 Instead, how would you prefer to be remembered?

### Discussion Questions

1. What is a syllabus? What important information is on it?
2. In 2017 I graded a test in which the top four scores were 100, 99, 99 and 96. But someone else made 26. How do you think that could have happened?
3. It's after 5:00 p.m. and you suddenly realize that you are hungry. Would it be a good idea to wait a few days and hope the hunger goes away? This is what happens to people who begin to get lost in a class.

4. How would you respond if you received a C-minus on an exam?
5. The following three students recently graduated from Furman. What accounts for their post-graduation outcomes?
  - X had almost a perfect grade point average, and had a double major. Yet he was denied a job by a local firm.
  - Y finished in the top 10%, had a double major, and did summer research. But he was rejected from every graduate school he applied to.
  - Z barely graduated with a C average. He needed to take extra classes in the summer in order to graduate on time. Then, he immediately found a job a local firm with a starting salary of \$60,000.
6. Suppose you just had a test on Friday. What will you do before class on Monday?
7. Why is your roommate staying up all night to finish an assignment?

### **Critical Reading**

In many college classes, you will read a chapter or article, and then in class you will discuss it. To get you ready for this kind of discussion, it is a good idea to consider some critical questions as you read, such as the following. Note that only some questions will be necessary for a given reading assignment.

1. Succinctly describe the article's topic, scope, purpose, and major points.
2. What is the article's audience? In other words, for whom was it written?
3. Describe the article's tone. Is it scholarly, humorous, satirical, sensational, dogmatic, serious, informational, critical, etc.?
4. Does the work remind you of something else that you have read, seen, or heard about?
5. What does the author assume? Why? Are the assumptions explicit? Would the paper's argument and conclusion still be valid if an assumption turned out to be false?
6. Does the article point out nuances, uncertainties, or exceptions to the general message?
7. What does the author conclude? Why?
8. What does the author want the reader to understand or remember?
9. What seems to be the author's ultimate goal, lesson, motivation, or inspiration behind the work? (e.g. correcting a common misconception) What does the author want to see happen?
10. Does the article spell out a problem in need of solution? If so, what is it? What does the author say that ordinary people should do about the problem?
11. Why does the author believe that the subject of the article or the individual points discussed are significant? In other words, why should we care?

12. Who benefits from the author's information, conclusions, or recommendations? Is there a conflict of interest? If the article mentions a trend, you can consider who wants or who is supporting the change. Is there opposition?
13. What do we know about the author's background?
14. Does the author make a mistake, mislead the reader, omit anything important, or not consider an alternative interpretation?
15. If the article is about a two-sided issue, does it present both sides, or is it primarily one sided? If the article presents only one side, does the article present a balanced critique of it? What would alternative sources on this subject say?
16. How original is the article? Does it simply repeat or amplify what many others have said? Is the article meant to address a current issue or is it meant to be a classic, timeless article?
17. If the article presents an argument of the form "A implies B" or "A resulted in B", consider this: Has A caused other things besides B? Similarly, could other things have contributed to creating B?
18. Some details: What evidence does the author provide? What individual points does the author make? How else does the author make the case, such as writing style?
19. From what you can tell, how did the author ascertain the facts presented in the article? Are the sources reputable? For example, how did the scientific community come to realize or accept the facts? Are the facts controversial or in dispute?
20. If the article makes a dubious claim, ask yourself "How does the author know that this is true?" or "What if that were not the case?" or "Is it relevant?" Also consider if this claim is central to the article's thesis, or just a fact mentioned in passing.
21. Does the article rely on recently discovered information, or general information that has been known for a long time? How different would this article have sounded if it had been written years earlier?
22. Does the article itself take its evidence at face value, or does it take the opportunity to evaluate the evidence? Are you convinced that the evidence is correct, and that the article's conclusions are valid or reasonable or compelling? Why?
23. How do you think the author would respond if it turned out that the evidence was refuted or disproved?
24. Is the article written objectively? If there are value judgments (good, bad, success, failure) stated or implied in the article, are they incidental or central to the article? Is the author's judgement warranted, or is it exaggerated? Why might the author want to exaggerate? Could a reasonable reader take issue with something written in the article?
25. This may be unlikely, but – does the article sound pseudoscientific? In other words, be on the lookout for: claims that can't be verified, claims that are trivial or that cannot be refuted, hostility to being critiqued.

26. Does the article accomplish what it set out to explain? Or does it still leave the reader hanging and left with unresolved questions? For example, be on the lookout for assertions that are not explained or justified, where you might ask yourself "Why?"
27. Is the article straightforward to understand and pleasant to read? What would have made the article more comprehensible or enjoyable to the reader? (Don't just say you liked it or not.)
28. Is the article's something that you care about, or have thought a lot about, or has this been an eye-opener for you? It's okay to say "I don't care." After all, if you try to care about everything, you may eventually wind up caring about nothing in particular. But if you don't care about the article's message or subject, consider how to empathize with people for whom it is important.

### **Parting thoughts**

I hope you have a wonderful time at Furman! College is not as hard as you might think, but it does require considerable daily attention. Let me quote some words from Carl Sagan:

*We are, each of us, largely responsible for what gets put into our brains - for what, as adults, we wind up caring for and knowing about.... We can change ourselves. Think of the possibilities!*