

*“America believes in education: the average professor earns more money in a year than a professional athlete earns in a whole week.”*

Evan Esar (1899-1995)

Here we are on the down side of another semester and enrolling for the subsequent ones. Activity has picked up in the Center as new and returning students come in eager to get set up with the “ideal” schedule.

The most disconcerting thing for us in this process is working with returning students who have never met with their faculty advisor (or with anyone resembling a professor for that matter). When asked about meeting with a faculty advisor, students often look at us as though we (or they) are from a different dimension and that such a question is impossible for them to interpret. That’s unfortunate because every student should have a faculty advisor. We in Student Development are great generic resources. We hope that students and faculty think of us whenever they have one of those “Hmm, what now?” moments. We can usually point people in the right direction even if we’re not the right people to ask. And, students needing initial advisement, those working toward admission to an application program, those needing a signature because of academic probation or the desire for a course overload, those in crisis, etc., can come to our office to receive these kinds of services and more. However, we can’t take the place of faculty, each of whom has expertise in a particular discipline.

So, what’s the big deal about having a faculty advisor? For starters, these are the people who really, really know their programs well. They can tell you in detail about the major courses because they teach them. In some cases, they may have helped create them.

These people also know people at other institutions. Knowing someone who knows someone could be important if there were, say, transfer scholarships at stake, or selectivity in being admitted to a program. Having a professor who knows you and who is still willing to say nice things about you to another professor can be advantageous. Such a phenomenon may be even more advantageous when that professor is talking to a prospective employer. Suddenly, you’re not just another applicant. You’re a major contender for a job or you’re the newest employee.

If you’re still not convinced, consider that in addition to the monetary wealth these folks take home each year to work in this profession (wink, wink) that they also have a wealth of knowledge and interesting anecdotes about life. They all have interests outside of their respective disciplines, and you may connect with them on that level. They have traveled to different places, and some are from different places. Many have worked in other occupations. Far from being the simple, one-dimensional characters at the front of the classroom or on the other side of the computer screen, faculty are complex, multifaceted individuals who care about their students and who want their students to successfully transfer or move into the world of work.

For more information about how you can get a faculty advisor of your own, call the Center for Student Development at 682-7535.