

Pre-registration advising guidance and rationale for timing

Dear faculty,

Pre-registration (open registration) begins next week, April 13-23. We acknowledge that with the evolution of the pandemic, our work at the college feels like it's in a continuous state of flux. Still, we need to continue having conversations with our students about their futures. After consultation with the Academic Continuity team, the Registrar's Office, Curriculum Committee and CAS, our operating principle is to maintain the regular dates for pre-reg for its clarity and predictability, while building in more accommodations and extensions as needed. Degree continuity is one of our top priorities and thus, we ask that you help your advisees register for a fall semester under regular (in residence) conditions using your typical strategies (e.g., reviewing the degree audit "Program" tab in self-service, the [6-Elements matrix, etc.](#)).

But, so much is up in the air right now! How do I plan for fall with my advisees?

We recognize that you might wonder about a number of things, and that all institutions of higher education are operating within a number of contingencies (which could affect your advising):

- On-line vs. on-campus classes has not been determined; this decision could impact enrollments. Students might select different courses if they think the College will be teaching on-line vs. on-campus.
- Numbers of students participating in fall OCS is uncertain; more could be on campus than usual.
- Will international students be able to return to campus? Other students may/may not return in the fall.
- Course enrollments (and thus the sections of classes we might/might not offer) are very uncertain: for example, will we need 3, 4, or 5 BIO-150s? It is likely that sections will close, creating new challenges for scheduling.
- We don't know how many students might withdraw or struggle with grades this spring, which would impact course selection for the fall.
- Some students might be behind on credits after this semester or after their plans for the summer are disrupted. This might especially impact students who took a reduced course load as the result of disability (or any other reason) and had been planning to take courses this summer to transfer in.
- There were already delays in major declaration; some 2nd-year students don't have 4-year plans, yet.

We acknowledge that these myriad uncertainties create concerns about the conversations you will have. The Academic Continuity team, Curriculum Committee, and Committee on Academic Standing are closely monitoring issues related to enrollments, academic progress, and degree completion, and we will send updates as we develop recommendations and policies in response to the current situation. The challenge before us is to provide educational continuity to our students, while recognizing the contingencies within which we are all operating.

Why pre-registration now? Can't it wait?

A decision has been made that we'll continue with pre-registration (open registration) as scheduled for a number of reasons. Pre-registration provides helpful information about our student body for the fall. The Registrar's Office has a number of processes that follow from registration that must happen, such as balancing courses. Course registration is tied to financial aid. Some students may need summer credit, so this is an opportunity to talk with them about earning transfer credits. The timing may be better now than later in terms of public health: The coronavirus continues to move throughout the country but its peak has not happened yet. Finally, to not offer pre-registration at the typical time could send an unintended signal to our continuing students that we are uncertain about our future. And our admitted, but not deposited, students may think that we don't intend to be here in the fall for them. As a College we can ill afford this kind of tumult.

A few tips for your advising

Over 500 students have already put courses into Student Planning for fall 2020, so we have reason to feel that students are ready to make plans with you.

If you're so inclined, you might consider making a contingency plan with your advisee – posing the “what if we are still learning virtually in the fall...” scenario and having them create a second plan (if needed). Then, after a decision about fall has been made, you can invite your students to check back in with you if they feel the need to adjust any part of the registration that they made.

In that advising is a part of teaching at Grinnell College, we recommend that we take the same approach to advising that we have had to teaching during this pandemic in giving ourselves grace and seeking out relief in achieving the teaching/advising goal in the most direct way possible for all involved.

- Normally advising conversations should happen during pre-registration – advising should be *relational*, not *transactional*. In Joyce Stern's most [recent email about advising](#) you were advised to set up Webex meetings with each of your advisees. Although face-to-face or phone conversations are ideal, at this time we endorse minimal conversation, or simply email, if you are feeling overwhelmed with your advising load.
- If a student has more than one adviser, any one of the advisers can approve the student's registration. Encourage your advisee to speak with just one of their advisers, then the other advisers can just take a quick look at the schedule to make sure it's okay. This would avoid multiple conversations.

If you have any advisees who are scheduled to study off campus in the fall 2020 semester, these students are allowed the following two contingency options:

- Students are allowed – and encouraged - to concurrently register for fall semester classes here on campus along with their OCS program. (Typically students with OCS

plans are not allowed to select courses on campus for the semester(s) during which they intend to study off campus.)

- Students who will be 3rd years in 2020-21 are allowed to switch their OCS registration to Spring 2021 (or Fall 2021, if that will be the fall of their 4th year) if they choose, without reapplying. For this option, students are strongly advised to review a revised 4-year plan with you before finalizing a decision. Then, if you agree that it's fine to defer, the student will ask you to sign a deferral form including the student's new OCS proposed course plan. Students who will be 4th years in 2020-21 and are interested in deferring OCS to their final semester at Grinnell would need to petition the Committee on Academic Standing. If the student has already been admitted to their OCS program, the student should contact the program to find out what the provider requires in order to defer.

We are a community that supports each other. The Curriculum Committee, Tutorial and Advising Committee, Committee on Academic Standing, and the Office of Accessibility and Disability Resources, along with Executive Council and the Academic Continuity group are continually reviewing processes and deadlines to try to help students, faculty, and staff during these times of great uncertainty. If you have any questions, please contact any of the undersigned or your representatives on these committees.

Thank you for your patience, perseverance, and dedication to our students.

Joyce Stern, dean for student success and academic advising

Tim Arner, associate dean of the college; chair of Curriculum Committee and of Tutorial and Advising Committee

Mark Levandoski, associate dean of the college; chair of Committee on Academic Standing

Jason Maher, registrar

Alicia Stanley, director of off-campus study

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Todd Armstrong, professor of Russian; chair of the faculty