



GETTING STARTED: CONNECTING COLLEGE, ADVISING, AND CAREER

As you begin your career in the College of Arts and Sciences, the academic deans take this occasion not only to welcome you but also to assist you in planning your time in the College and beyond. The first step involves seeking out advising and collecting advisors. But what, exactly, is advising and how does it work?

Academic advising in the College happens in multiple ways. We assign students advisors based roughly on their area of interest and assign them an [Association \(academic\) Dean](#) based on first-year housing assignments or their status as a transfer student, Echols Scholar, or student athlete. The deans operate in Monroe Hall, providing daily walk-in and appointment advising. We also maintain an informative website with the College's policies, forms, and contact information: <http://college.as.virginia.edu/>.

The deans work actively with students to assist them in charting an academic itinerary that is responsive to their ambitions, supportive of their efforts, and respectful of their right to make the choices that matter. Advising is an interactive process, one that begins at orientation and continues through the declaration of a major and beyond to completion of the degree.

Academic advisors and deans expect students to know how to navigate the Student Information System (SIS) so they can monitor their own academic progress. Happily, the College provides a year-by-year student guide: <http://college.as.virginia.edu/student-guide>.

Students, in conversation with advisors, deans, family, and the [University Career Center](#) will develop and refine ideas about what they want to achieve through their education and where they see themselves headed after graduation.

Advisers advise—they provide information and also wise counsel, but it remains the student's responsibility to make choices. The College provides an abundance of FACTS on its website, such as minimum course loads, degree requirements, and specifics about dozens of majors. Part of the educational experience, most valuable for students' success here and after graduation, lies in honing the skill of seeking out and evaluating advice as it best pertains to their particular situations and goals. Students need to become active participants in their own education here at the University of Virginia. A wise first semester step in that process is to enroll in a [College Advising Seminar](#), a COLA class, on a topic of interest. The course instructor serves as your faculty advisor, so you will be taking charge of your advising experience on the first day of classes. You should also meet with your association dean, who will provide great guidance and help you utilize the many advising resources available here.

A recent study by the University Career Center indicated that a large majority of students graduating from the College were heading for work in the areas of law, medicine and health-related careers, business, public service, and teaching. Some of our graduates frequently continue their educations directly after graduation in masters' and doctoral programs; others seek immediate employment; others consider the Peace Corps, Teach For America, or internships of one kind or another. For more information see the [First Destination Report](#).

Below, we offer some friendly guidance about connecting your College academic experience to careers in each of the areas detailed in the First Destinations Report found at the link above.

Medicine and Health Professions

There is no set path to medical school or to future study/employment in the health-related sciences. Medical colleges now seek strong students with a broad-based liberal arts education. Nonetheless, there are requirements—one year each of biology (with labs), general chemistry (with labs), organic chemistry (with labs), and physics (with labs). Some schools additionally require a semester or two of college-level math or calculus, statistics, English, behavioral science, computer science, and the humanities. Most students will complete those classes over the entire span of their four years at the University. That will prepare them to take the MCAT either in the fourth year or after graduation. Unless students plan to major in a science, the deans generally do not recommend taking two laboratory sciences in a single semester in the first year.

Students intending to major in a science on their way to the health professions are encouraged to consult with those departments by exploring departmental websites and meeting with individual [Directors of Undergraduate Programs](#).

Students should consult with Health Professions Advisors at the [University Career Center](#).

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) also has wonderful [resources for prospective students](#). In spring 2015, the AAMC introduced a new MCAT—one centered more on assessing an applicant's basic competencies. The exam now has four sections: chemical and physical foundations of living systems, critical analysis and reasoning, biology and biochemical foundations of living systems, and psychological, social, and biological foundations of behavior.

For another lively and informed perspective on the new MCAT and advice for students planning courses, see <https://www.yahoo.com/news/choose-premed-courses-prepare-2015-mcat-140000195.html?ref=gs>.

Legal Professions

Law schools seek well-educated students whose academic interests evince depth and breadth in the liberal arts and sciences. According to the American Bar Association, law schools seek students with demonstrable skills in problem solving, critical reading, writing, editing, oral communication, research, organization and management, public service, collaboration, and exposure to the law (see http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html).

Students develop those skills by taking classes in disciplines including history, political science, mathematics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Students also do this through every major in the College. Their academic plan should also include: completion of a broad array of classes in the liberal arts, participation in study abroad, completion of internships, and leadership in student organizations.

Students considering law school are well advised that beginning in their first year, they should explore subjects across the Arts & Sciences curriculum and also meet with law professions advisors to explore careers in the law through the [University Career Center](#).

Government and Public Service

For students who plan on working in government, in public service, or for non-governmental organizations (NGO) after graduation, every major in the College has the potential to lead to a public sector career. The focus should remain insistently on: developing statistical, analytical, and computer skills; honing of research

skills; practicing leadership, strengthening oral and written communication skills, developing strong intercultural understanding, and perhaps even mastering one or more foreign languages.

Students interested in this career path should seek multiple volunteer experiences through [Madison House](#) during their time in the College and develop a clearer picture of the type of public service work they are most interested in. Students, in conversation with advisors, association deans, family, and friends, will chart an academic path best suited to public sector work in a specific field.

Many College students additionally prepare for public sector work by seeking out internship opportunities through the [University Internship Program](#) or the [University Career Center](#).

Anyone planning on a long career in these fields should also consider earning a graduate degree for improved job opportunities and career advancement after college.

The Business World

According to a survey of employers conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the business world also seeks well-educated students whose academic interests evince depth and breadth in the liberal arts and sciences. Many College students work in business using their liberal arts and sciences background.

Employers value oral and written communication skills, analytic research skills, and collaborative teamwork skills—skills obtained in all of our 60+ majors. Additionally, the Association of American Colleges and Universities reports that 93% of employers want students who can “think critically, communicate clearly, solve complex problems, demonstrate ethical judgment, possess intercultural skills, and have a capacity for continued new learning” (see <http://www.aacu.org/leap/presidentstrust/compact/2013SurveySummary>).

Those employers see those skills as best achieved through acquisition of broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences. Students should develop statistical and computer skills through academics and extra-curricular experience. Many College students additionally prepare for post-graduate work in the business world by seeking out internship opportunities through the [University Internship Program](#) or the [University Career Center](#).

Teaching Professions

College students interested in earning licensure to teach can complete a five-year curriculum leading to the simultaneous awarding of a bachelor’s and master’s degree. This program is a joint initiative of the College and the Curry School of Education. It provides an extensive liberal arts foundation, content area preparation, and professional study in education. College students apply by February 15 of their second year of study to join one of these programs: <http://curry.virginia.edu/teacher-education>.

Other students in their fourth year apply for [Teach for America](#). Teach for America annually recruits a diverse group of graduating students with records of achievement. While with Teach for America, they start by teaching for two years in a low-income community. Successful applicants to this program have demonstrated leadership ability, strong achievement in academic, professional, extracurricular, and/or volunteer settings, excellent critical thinking skills, strong organizational ability, intercultural skills, and ethical judgment.

Undecided

You are definitely in the right place! College should be a time to explore and to grow. More than at any other time in your life, you will be meeting new people, hearing new ideas, taking courses in new material, and doing new things, all the time wondering: To what purpose? Where might all this be heading? How can I possibly make any decisions, let alone good ones?

Slow down, take a breath, and take a stroll around Grounds. Being undecided about what you will major in and what kind of post-graduate career you want represents a wonderful opportunity to explore, to grow, and ultimately, to learn.

Let's start with the selection of courses. Take a diverse set of courses in your first semester—courses that sound interesting and represent multiple disciplines. Review College competency and area requirements choosing courses that address such areas as writing, foreign language, humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences/mathematics. Get underway and begin to feel comfortable with exploration, evaluation, and recalibration.

For now, put off the question of life after college, knowing you will find your way as you keep up with your advisors, parents, and friends. Very important, add a visit to your [Association Dean](#) in Monroe Hall. These faculty members have not only “walked this walk of discovery” themselves, they also stand ready to accompany you and advise you on your own odyssey through the College of Arts & Sciences. Your academic explorations and those conversations with advisors and deans will lead you toward both a major and a career. Students should also visit the University Career Center.

Not sure how you will make sense of all this? Sign up for one of the 80+ [COLA seminars](#) offered this fall. Pick one in an area of interest or just pick one that looks fascinating. You can't go wrong. This will help you take charge of your advising experience, as the COLA instructor is your advisor. Along the way, you will meet other first-year students who enroll along with you!