

One College: Connections to the Mission of the College
Academic Advising and Academic Skills
October 20, 2004

Academic Advising (AA) and the Academic Skills Office (ASO) share the responsibility of creating a supportive and effective educational community for students, faculty and staff. These programs are grounded in all four principles of Augsburg's Mission: the liberal arts, faith and reason, civic engagement and intentional diversity. We believe that in addition to our connections with these principles, we also play an important role in "nurturing future leaders (students, faculty, staff) by supporting all persons in the pursuit of high quality educational experiences" Our departments are making the educational experience more accessible and manageable.

The mission statements for our departments are as follows:

Academic Advising (AA): The mission of Academic Advising at Augsburg College is to educate students, faculty and staff on the Augsburg curriculum and college policies, and to support students in the achievement of their educational and vocational goals.

Academic Skills Office (ASO): The mission of the Academic Skills Office at Augsburg College is to empower students by providing the tools and support to achieve academic success.

Promoting the Liberal Arts

All undergraduate students interact with Academic Advising as they enter the college. The administration of Entry Level Skills Assessments ensures a good foundation in the basic skills to pursue their degree. We assist students with advising, registration and orientation at the start of their journey towards completing a baccalaureate degree. AA helps students to explore majors, minors, courses and even degree options to go along with the Core Curriculum experiences that fit with their personal goals. AA works with students struggling with the tension of interests vs. career paths. This often results in a discussion related to vocation and the pressures of supporting oneself and paying off college tuition once school is completed. We examine the tension of these issues and prepare students for the challenges of the *real* world.

Furthermore, AA provides advising and planning for WEC students which are often engaged in degree completion and frustrated with the additional courses required to complete the Core Curriculum. While some of these students started in our Day Program, most WEC students are working adults with careers and families. Advisors play an important role in helping students to understand how the liberal arts will contribute to successful learning experiences throughout ones life.

In ASO, we work with all incoming first year students through Orientation and the Augsburg Seminar program to assess and develop the skills necessary for succeeding in the liberal arts. We assess students using the Learning and Study Skills Inventory and then meet with individual Aug Sems to explain their results and provide an introduction to the resources, academic and other, available at Augsburg College. Special programs such as those in the Athletic Department and a program for Conditional Admits (serving under-prepared students) give at risks populations skills and support to build a strong foundation. Our Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction program also plays an important part in both the transition to college and getting over challenging hurdles leading to graduation. The ASO provides students with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to fully realize and make the most of a liberal arts education. ASO teaches and coaches students on skills and strategies that will be used the rest of their life.

Integrating deliberations of faith and values

In AA we strive to help students consider their vocation in the academic setting and how that can affect other aspects of their life. Issues of faith and spirituality often first occur when we talk with students about the Search for Meaning sequence (REL 100 & 200 or 300) and often when students are unsure of their academic direction or goals. While we are happy to address specific issues of faith, we also play an important role in referring students to the support offices that focus on this work such as Center for Service, Work and Learning, Campus Ministry, Counseling and Health Promotion, the Religion Department, faculty advisers and other departments that may be better able to engage and support students in their quest for answers to their important questions.

In ASO, students work on developmental challenges and study skills which helps them to more fully engage in the Core Curriculum and to tackle the tasks associated with identifying ones purpose/s in life.

Encouraging urban experiences and civic engagement

AA and ASO both orient and encourage all students to consider the city as a classroom. Students first learn many of the details related to Augsburg's commitment to engaging students in urban experiences through AA. We explain the intent of Engaging Minneapolis and the Augsburg Experience and how each experience fits into their degree. We assist students with the planning and administration of internships, volunteering and community service opportunities to strengthen and reinforce their classroom experiences. Discussing these experiences and reviewing their goals before, during and after helps students make the most of these experiences.

In ASO, we work with students to develop certain skills to make them more successful in the urban experiences mentioned above. For example, time management, motivation, dealing with anxiety/stress, etc. These skills foster confidence, courage which allow students to be more engaged in a variety of learning situations outside of the classroom.

Fostering and celebrating diversity?

Both ASO and AA support a diverse population of students through the mix of the Day and WEC student body. In ASO and AA we use terms like “cognitive diversity” to describe the range of students we work with on a daily basis. We explain the merits of institutional, community and global diversity and promote the College’s view that diversity is to be celebrated. We enjoy supporting and challenging ourselves and the Augsburg Community to embrace the range of students coming with different kinds of learning, psychological and physical abilities. We take pride in the different family situations, countries of origin, socio-economic levels, religions, sexual orientations, etc. Currently, we are implementing two programs which demonstrate our commitment to diversity both internally and externally of Augsburg. We work closely with one at Augsburg (conditional admits) and one at St Catherine’s (the Augsburg Advantage). Both programs support under-prepared and/or achieving students that require additional academic support.

At another level, we are committed to training faculty and staff to appreciate the range of environments our students represent, to develop new materials and information that will recognize and respect the needs of all students. Our work with faculty and staff lead to new insights into our systems and procedures which support a always increasing range of students and keeps our community evolving, vibrant and engaged in the conversations of diversity.

In conclusion, we believe that whether you are just beginning your degree, in the middle of or completing your second major, AA and ASO are guided by the mission of the college. The mission shapes our personal and team development, the interactions we have with students and the broader Augsburg Community.