

Student Name:

Why Have an Academic Plan?

When you head off to college almost everyone asks you what you are going to major in and what your career goal is. The truth is that most students really do not know and if they say they do, they will likely change their minds. So, how can you plan when you are unsure about so many things? But that is exactly why a plan is so important. A plan allows for constant goal setting, evaluation, and renewal of the plan. An academic plan allows a student to map out short, medium, and long term components designed to meet an academic goal. And even a choice of a major does not dictate your life's work. So, the planning is continuous and life-long. The best thing you can do for yourself is to learn to set goals (maybe just for the first term or the first year) and then to be able to evaluate your outcomes - did you meet your goal, were you satisfied - why or why not? As you develop more experience your questions and goals will become more complex. Now that I have completed a series of courses in one area, can I make connections between the formal education and real life experiences (through a job, internship, shadow experience)? And do I like the result? If not, what have I learned about myself and what changes should I make in my plan?

Ask lots of questions—of your advisers, your teachers, your teaching assistants (TA's), and your fellow students. Not only will you learn more, but they can serve as good sounding boards for your ideas. They will probably mention a number of opportunities that your university makes available. Should you do an internship, undertake research with a faculty member, study abroad, complete a leadership training program, do an academic minor, or run for student government? Ultimately you will make decisions that are right for you. You can do that if you are inquisitive, collect accurate information, engage in self-assessment, **and plan thoroughly**. (<http://advising.buffalo.edu/succeed/academicplanning.php>)

The Assignment: Developing an Academic Plan

Our aim in requiring this Checkpoint each year, is to help you maximize your undergraduate education. As you work with your advisor to build the plan, learn to think beyond the minimum degree requirements. Think about the degree requirements you need to complete each term AND one or two topics to expand your reach—for example: how to get started on research as an undergraduate, should I study abroad later on, should I try to accelerate my studies by completing a combined degree? Here are the steps you must complete:

1. Set up a meeting with your academic advisor.
2. Complete or revise your plan, filling in the courses taken in the previous term(s) and those you plan to take until graduation. Make sure you fit in all GE and major requirements, noting if certain classes are only offered during a particular term. This can help you save time when registration rolls around even though some things may change.
3. Return your Academic Planning Worksheet, complete with your advisor's signature and email address, to your College Sponsorship Counselor by the deadline.

Adviser Signature:

Adviser Email:

