Student Advising in the Undergraduate Biochemistry Program

The Undergraduate Biochemistry program enrolls students from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Although the core courses required for the major are identical independent of which college a student is enrolled in, the different colleges have different distribution requirements. To insure students receive the best advising possible, only a faculty member from a student's chosen college will serve as the student's academic advisor.

The Biochemistry Undergraduate Program strives to make academic advising readily available to our Majors from day one. In fact, first-year undergraduates are assigned faculty advisors before they arrive on campus, and students who change their major to biochemistry are assigned a biochemistry advisor immediately. The program directors then provide each student with complete contact information about their advisors, and the advisors send them a greeting directly. In addition, the core courses of the curriculum are taught by faculty from CAS, CALS and COM and many biochemistry majors undertake undergraduate research with faculty members from these colleges. The fact that students and faculty from different colleges interact is a strength of our program as it provides additional opportunities for students to receive informal career advising from a broad pool of faculty with expertise in diverse areas.

Navigating college curriculum should not be a challenge. With that in mind we offer several different ways for our students to receive academic advising. These include:

1. **One-on-one interactions with a faculty advisor.** Academic advisors for CAS students are primarily Chemistry Faculty, while academic advisors for CALS students are primarily MMG Faculty. In some instances, College of Medicine faculty may also serve as a student's primary advisor. Students typically remain with the same faculty advisor for their entire academic career unless the student themselves request a re-assignment. If a faculty member is on sabbatical, a temporary adviser will be assigned and the student will be notified by email of this change. Advisors usually send an e-mail reminder to their entire academic advising list close to the registration period with information about office hours and how to set up an appointment for one-on-one advising. In addition, students frequently receive academic advising from other sources, for example from their research advisor (who is usually different from their academic advisor), from their instructors, and from their peers.

2. **In-class advising.** If you take CHEM 35/36 (General Chemistry for Majors) or CHEM 143/144 (Organic Chemistry for Majors), the professor teaching the course will take course time just before registration begins each semester to talk about what courses you should be taking next and to answer any questions. But in any Chemistry course, the professor should be able to answer your question or to point you toward someone who can.

3. **Additional academic advising office hours by a designated faculty member.** Each semester, one professor holds extra office hours during the week before registration, specifically to talk about academic advising. These are drop-in hours—no appointment necessary. More information is available in the Chemistry Department office

4. **Informal mentoring through research.** Most Biochemistry majors work in a research laboratory, whether for research or College Honors credit, as paid research fellowships over the summer, or both. In this environment, undergraduates work directly with graduate students, post-doctoral associates, and
technicians. In a sense, this is some of the best career advising that can take place; that is, undergraduates can observe the roles played in the laboratory by others. They participate in research group meetings, and they ask their lab-mates what they think of their jobs. As part of a research team, undergraduates are supported in their scientific career choices, and become more at home within the department.