

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS AND ADVISING AT COLGATE

A. What is a First-Year Seminar?

Each first-year student in the first semester at Colgate will take a first-year seminar (FSEM). The FSEM is just like your other courses in many ways. It is worth one course credit (you need a minimum of 32 course credits to graduate). You will receive a grade in the seminar, which counts fully in your GPA. The workload and expectations are determined by the instructor and will be similar to the workload in your other courses.

In addition, FSEMs emphasize writing proficiency, fundamental research skills, the utility of information technology, and academic honesty, while also making explicit the expectations for college-level work.

B. The Role of the Academic Adviser.

Your FSEM instructor is the first faculty member you will get to know upon arriving at Colgate. Your FSEM instructor will also serve as your academic advisor until you declare a major prior to registration in the spring semester of your second year. Please note that it is perfectly acceptable for incoming students to select FSEMs taught by instructors not affiliated with the department or program in your prospective major. For example, do not let your plans to be a theoretical cosmologist and physics major deter you from taking that interesting course in Global Cinema.

You will meet with your FSEM adviser and later with your major adviser regularly throughout your academic career at Colgate. Academic advisers will require that you meet with them prior to course registration. You also may need your adviser to sign forms for your course registration, course withdrawal, petitions to take leave of absence (on a non-Colgate study group, for example), etc. However, don't let these be the sole reasons for having conversations with your adviser. The opportunity to have a close relationship with an adviser is one of the greatest benefits of attending a small, liberal arts college like Colgate. Relish the opportunity!

Your academic adviser will:

- Provide guidance about choosing and registering for your courses each semester. Your adviser can help make sure you are making consistent progress toward fulfilling your graduation requirements and are choosing elective courses that match your interests and abilities.
- Help you to address academic problems you might have (e.g., time management).
- Help you choose a major. Your adviser can help you identify your strengths, areas that need improvement, and interests.
- Help you prepare for graduate school. If you think you may wish to pursue graduate study, it is a good idea to discuss your plans with your academic adviser. Your adviser can suggest courses to help with your applications and can recommend schools to consider.
- Help you explore and make career choices — though your academic adviser probably will not find you a summer internship or the job of your dreams. (You will need to see Career Services for that.)
- Write letters of recommendation for a study-abroad program, a Link application, a summer jobs/internships, research fellowships, or admission to graduate or professional school. Remember that the better a person knows you, the more substantial a letter he or she can write for you.

While it may be appropriate in some circumstances to discuss personal problems with your academic adviser (e.g., you have to leave campus because of illness or a family emergency), you should always contact your administrative dean if such needs arise.

C. The Role of the Administrative Dean

Your Dean can be an important “first stop” and a helpful resource whenever you have a question or concern about Colgate policies or procedures or when personal or “outside” influences interfere with your ability to attend classes or complete academic assignments.

You will be informed of your administrative dean assignment when you arrive on campus.

In addition to advising students, administrative deans have responsibilities for various Colgate programs, such as the Sophomore Year Experience and Center for Leadership and Student Involvement. Deans also issue “Deans’ Awards” to students who earn a minimum 3.3 GPA while taking at least four courses in a term.

For a full description of the role of the administrative deans, refer to “*Student Services*” in the Colgate Student Handbook (<http://www.colgate.edu/offices-and-services/deanofthecollege/universitystandardsandstudentconduct>.)

D. Planning Your Academic Program Year-by-Year

First Year

- Discuss your academic aspirations with your adviser; study the course catalogue; consider taking a range of elective courses that will fulfill graduation requirements, especially writing and foreign language requirements (if you have not yet met them), to enhance your liberal arts education.
- Claim Advanced Placement (AP) or other pre-matriculation credit through the Registrar.
- Note Phi Beta Kappa honor society requirements and consider plans to fulfill them.
- Explore possible majors and minors; explore graduate/professional programs to ascertain their requirements; complete (by October) the Academic Planning Worksheet for your first two years.
- Begin participating in colloquia, seminars, or clubs sponsored by your potential major(s).
- If you are interested in pursuing a career in the health sciences, you should seek out the advice of the Health Sciences Advisor.
- Declare major early, if desired.
- Visit Career Services to activate a dossier

Second Year

- Complete the four common CORE requirements (Legacies of the Ancient World, Challenges of Modernity, a Communities and Identities course, and a Scientific Perspectives course), P.E. requirements, and foreign language requirements.
- Continue taking electives that fulfill the six Areas of Inquiry requirements.
- Apply for junior-year off-campus study groups.
- Plan to complete the CORE Global Engagements (GE) requirement. This 5th CORE course can “double-count” for an Area of Inquiry requirement. Students interested in study abroad should check with the sponsoring department or program to find out if they can earn GE credit through the study group.
- Select a major and a new adviser; **declare a major before spring registration.**

Third Year

- Students who anticipate pursuing Distinction in the Liberal Arts CORE Curriculum must complete this requirement by the end of the third year.
- Participate in an off-campus study program or apply for a senior-year off-campus study group.
- Begin to prepare for the application process to health science professional schools. Seek out the advice of the Health Sciences Advisor early in your junior year. The advisor will help you develop a plan that includes the timing of the appropriate standardized test (i.e., MCAT, DAT, GRE, OAT, PCAT) and the appropriate timing of the activation of applications for health sciences professional schools.
- Explore opportunities for graduate fellowships (most application deadlines fall in September of the senior year).

Fourth Year

- Complete any remaining CORE Global Engagements, Area of Inquiry, major, and minor requirements.
- Pursue Honors work in a department or program. If appropriate, consider pursuing Distinction in the Liberal Arts CORE Curriculum.
- Apply for national and international graduate fellowships.
- Prepare for and take GRE, LSAT, or GMAT.
- Visit academic adviser(s) and professors (in your major, minor, and elective courses) to request letters of recommendation.