

## **Making the Most of Your Academic Advisor**

You have been assigned an academic advisor based in part on your statement of interest about studies in Environmental Sciences, and in part on the availability of faculty. You can make the most of your relationship with your advisor by considering a few tips:

**Contact your advisor throughout the year**, not just at course enrollment times. Let your advisor know if something particularly interesting or exciting has happened in your life, or if you have questions or concerns your advisor may be able to help with. Let your advisor know what you do outside of your classes -- advisors receive grade reports, but they have no way to learn about any other aspect of who you are unless you share that with them.

**Ask your advisor what would be the best way to contact him or her.** Many faculty check their e-mail several times a day; others prefer a phone call, an appointment, or for you to drop in.

For meetings, **ask your advisor if he or she designates certain office hours** each week for drop-in visits, uses an open-door policy, or prefers that you call ahead to make an appointment. Ask how far in advance you should call to set an appointment.

**Always come prepared** to meetings with your advisor. If the agenda includes discussing course enrollment for the next semester, bring a completed copy of the SNES curriculum requirements worksheet indicating which requirements you have already met, and bring a tentative plan for courses for the next semester. It's okay to include a list of several courses that you're thinking of selecting from; you and your advisor can pare down the list together.

**The 4-year plan...**with your advisor, **plan with the “whole picture” in mind** -- consider how courses and activities (e.g., internships, travel abroad) might line up over your entire time at Cornell, not just one semester at a time. Some courses are offered in alternate years; some programs have specific application deadlines. Planning ahead, with your advisor, will help ensure you minimize any unforeseen problems you could encounter.

**Submit forms requiring your advisor's signature well ahead of the due date.** Don't leave things until the last minute; your advisor may be busy teaching, doing research in the field, or traveling to a conference.

**Use your advisor's knowledge** about environmental science professions to help you think more about your career options. Don't limit your advising meetings to talking about course enrollment. Share your career aspirations with your advisor, and ask for suggestions.

If you learn that your career interests are somewhat different from your advisor's, you can still remain with that advisor for general advice in the major. Other faculty in SNES are usually willing to meet occasionally with students who are not their advisees to offer advice in specific areas of expertise. For a change of major, please see a counselor in the Counseling & Advising Office in 140 Roberts Hall.

**In some cases it may be best to change your advisor.** You can identify a potential new advisor by speaking with other students to learn more about other faculty, meeting with faculty you know to learn more about their interests and their ability to take on a new advisee, or by asking for suggestions from the Advising Coordinator (Prof. Fahey) or the Undergraduate Program Assistant (Suzanne Wapner). **It's easy to change advisors, so please don't hesitate to ask if you would feel more comfortable with a different advisor; if you speak with another faculty member and he/she agrees to be your new advisor**, simply let Suzanne (Room 8 Fernow) know. OR we can assign you an advisor upon request, and based on availability. It is courteous to discuss the change with your current advisor, but don't feel you have to explain all of your reasons if doing so would make you uncomfortable.

**Your advisor is here to help -- take advantage of that resource!**