

# Advising Partnership Plan

**Synopsis:** Grinnell College affords each student the opportunity to largely define their own educational experience. Advising plays a critical role in shaping that experience. This requires a *partnership* between you, the student, and me, the faculty member, for crafting an experience that prepares you for the challenges and joys of life *after* Grinnell College.

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## Overview

Grinnell College offers you, as an individual, the opportunity to define the particulars of your educational experience. While each major course of study has set forth requirements that are viewed as essential for training in a particular mode of thought, an education in the liberal arts emphasizes several broad areas of study. Grinnell's open curriculum allows you to explore these areas of the liberal arts in ways that are suited to your intellectual development and educational objectives. The possibilities and choices are many. The goal of our advising partnership is to help you ask the questions of yourself that will allow you to create a truly liberal curriculum that maximizes the benefit and satisfaction of your Grinnell education.

Below are some questions you might want to ask of any potential adviser. This document contains my answers.

### “What’s the point of all this?”

The Office of Institutional Research reports that students' satisfaction, with their course of study is highly linked to the quality of their advising, even a decade after graduation.<sup>1</sup> This partnership plan outlines goals, procedures, and responsibilities that will enhance the quality of advice and mentoring you can receive.

Our major objectives for the advising relationship include:

- Understanding the practices and elements of a liberal education and how your curricular choices reflect them
- Exploring, developing, and progressing in personal, educational, and career goals
- Defining an academic experience that enables post-graduation plans
- Graduating in a timely and efficient manner

While the college's curriculum specifies few *particular* requirements, the ideals of a liberal education are part of the college's core values that I will work to uphold in our partnership.

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<sup>1</sup>Scott Baumler (2009). Grinnell College Office of Institutional Research, Personal communication.

## **“So, what is advising?”**

Merriam-Webster has a rather dry definition of advising, including works like “counsel,” “caution,” “recommend,” and “inform.” While all of these are true, they hide the fact that effective advising requires contextual knowledge. Thus, my primary role in advising is to enable you to receive *useful* counseling, cautions, recommendations, and information. I do that by asking you questions that will challenge you to clarify your ideas, assumptions, and choices. If you reflect on these matters, then I can provide you more appropriate opportunities that will help you architect a more satisfying course of study.

Advising is an important extension of teaching that just happens to occur outside the classroom. Because there is no set syllabus beyond the goals outlined above, it is up to the student to define their specific learning goals and enable the adviser to suggest appropriate paths using the six elements of a liberal education as a roadmap.

## **“What are my advisor’s duties?”**

It is not usually my role to provide answers to the questions you will face. For instance, I know something about a few general career paths, but I do not know everything, and I certainly cannot say what is right for you. In some cases, I can advise you on the general realities of particular paths (e.g., long workdays but rewarding outcomes versus banker’s hours with trivial tasks, or job security versus a position subject to economic vagaries). However, I cannot tell you which matches your particular goals and values. In some cases, I may know very little, in which case I will happily refer you to a party who can provide more direct assistance (e.g., another department’s chair or the office of Careers, Life, and Service).

As you are discovering, developing, and refining your aspirations, I will listen carefully and constructively to you so that I may appropriately counsel, caution, recommend, and inform—in a word, teach.

## **“What are my duties as an advisee?”**

At various stages in our partnership, you will be asked to reflect critically on your choices, values, and goals. This will include some writing to both process and communicate these important structural factors undergirding your educational choices. To paraphrase comic book author Stan Lee, the college gives you tremendous freedom and power to create your individualized curriculum, and with this comes an equal amount of responsibility for taking ownership of your education. You will therefore be expected to use the resources listed in this plan and any others mentioned in our meetings. You should bring a notebook to every meeting so that you may record any information, referrals, or questions that arise in the course of our discussion. This will make it much easier for you to follow up and gain the greatest benefit from our time.

Since advising is an extension of teaching, it is also necessarily a learning relationship. It is my hope that in this partnership, you will learn *about* learning, particularly in what your academic choices say about your values and how your choices reflect a liberal education. Learning does not come without effort, though, so you should be prepared to work toward gaining and communicating this understanding. In particular, the total amount of work you will do in this partnership over the course of four to eight semesters will likely exceed that of a half-credit course. This will

include reading materials like the course catalog and syllabi, actively seeking information from places like the CLS, reflecting critically on the information gathered, participating in a dialogue with me that challenges or sharpens your views, and writing to explicitly communicate your rationales. All of these are hallmarks of courses in the liberal arts and are necessary as well for the meta-learning goals of our advising partnership.

Following the general timeline and partnering with me in the activities outlined below will allow you to get the most from what I have to offer and maximize the chances of your satisfaction with *your* curriculum (not to mention getting your \$367,000 worth<sup>2</sup>).

## Contacting Me

We will have several scheduled appointments during the course of your Grinnell career. However, I welcome unscheduled visits as well. In general, please come by during my office hours to discuss academic or career concerns, get any extra assistance, or just talk about how your courses are going. If you cannot attend a scheduled office hour, you may also email me to schedule an appointment; please include 3-4 possible meeting times so that I can pick one that works for me.

I truly enjoy getting to know my students, but I prefer to reserve office hours for academic matters. If you would like to have a more informal conversation, I would be delighted to accept an invitation to lunch.

Email is also a reliable way to contact me, but please allow 24 hours for a response (except on weekends, when I do not regularly read email). You may also call me in my office (x9812).

## Resources

There are many people in offices across campus who can help you find what you need. Below are several you may be referred to or you may wish to explore yourself.

### Essential Resources

**College Catalog** <http://catalog.grinnell.edu/>

**Mission Statement** <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/si/mission>

**Elements of a Liberal Education** [http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5178#Elements\\_of\\_](http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5178#Elements_of_)

**Core Values** [http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5180#Core\\_Values](http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5180#Core_Values)

**A Grinnell Education** [http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5183#A\\_Grinnell\\_Education](http://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=5183#A_Grinnell_Education)

**Phi Beta Kappa** <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/phi-beta-kappa>

**Student Affairs** <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/student-affairs>

**Student Handbook** <http://catalog.grinnell.edu/index.php?catoid=10>

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<sup>2</sup>Grinnell College. "Cost and Net Price," <https://www.grinnell.edu/admission/financial-aid/affording-grinnell/cost> (Accessed 30 January 2025).

## Other Resources

**Careers Life, and Service Office** <http://www.grinnell.edu/cls>

**Off Campus Study** <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices-services/ocs>

**Academic Advising** <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices-services/academic-advising>

**Chaplain's Office** <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices-services/crssj/chaplain>

**Counseling Services** <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/office-services/student-health/services>

## Timeline

The following is an approximate timeline of things for you to consider as milestones in our advising partnership.<sup>3</sup>

### First Year

#### First Registration

- Know how to read and use the *Academic Catalog* and online *Schedule of Courses*
- Register for courses that provide a solid liberal arts foundation
- Know the basic requirements for graduation
- Identify one or two places to engage on campus outside the classroom

#### Fall Semester

- Know the course add/drop deadlines and how to add or drop a course
- Become familiar with your Academic Evaluation (accessible via SelfService)
- Plan a schedule of courses for one or perhaps two majors
- Reflect on interests and skills you want to develop (see the CLS's FOCUS Career Assessment)
- Consider off-campus study as a part of your plan
- Articulate possibilities and goals for the coming summer

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<sup>3</sup>Some bullets adapted from "Four-Year Career Development Plan", (2012) Grinnell College Career Development Office.

## Spring Semester

- Consider areas to explore that will help you solidify a major choice
- Develop a complete four year plan (required for pre-registration with me)
- Practice good study habits as academic rigor increases
- Attend GRINNELLINK receptions to meet alumni in various fields
- Explore and apply for summer opportunities

## Summer

- Begin applying for internships for the next year (internship applications for *next* year can open as early as July the year before)

## Second Year

### Fall Semester

- Further consider areas to explore that will help you solidify a major choice
  - Visit the CLS (especially your CLS advisor and career community advisor)
  - Talk to upper-class students
  - Contact alumni or other professionals
- If interested, plan for off-campus study
  - Attend an informational meeting and research programs
  - Meet faculty from intended major in advance
  - Apply by December deadline
- Visit with CLS and/or potential major department faculty to plan and prepare for summer opportunities

### Spring Semester

- If interested in Grinnell-in-London, apply by February deadline
- Discuss how to find a new advisor in your major
- Declare a major in consultation with a major advisor
  - Draft written rationale
  - Update four-year plan
- Select coherent courses for third year
- Update and revise your résumé
- Explore and apply for summer opportunities

## Summer

- Begin applying for internships for the next year (internship applications for *next* year can open as early as July the year before)

## Third Year

### Fall Semester

- Refine four year plan
- Consider/apply for off-campus study, if interested (last chance!)
- Partner with the CLS staff
  - Update and revise your résumé
  - Continue to network
  - Develop a plan for an internship or other work experience
- Research potential employers/career paths (e.g., via CLS resources, the web, alums on the CLS network)
- If considering graduate school, prepare for the GRE, LSAT, or MCAT

### Spring Semester

- Select coherent courses for fourth year
- Ensure you are on track for graduation
- If considering graduate school, register to take the GRE, LSAT, or MCAT
- If interested in Grinnell in London, apply by February deadline
- Explore/apply for summer opportunities

## Fourth Year

### Fall Semester

- (Re)imagine your life after Grinnell
- Talk with other mentors about your transition
- Consider/apply for post-graduation plans
- Identify recommendation letter writers
- Schedule GRE, LSAT, or MCAT test if necessary

## Spring Semester

- Graduate and embrace the world!

## Activities

### Drafting a Four-Year Plan

As a tutorial advisee, you will draft a four-year plan in your second semester. This helps us meet several objectives:

- Learning how to plan for a major (even if you change it)
- Making sure you can meet pre-requisites for upper-level courses you are interested in
- Keeping slots for introductory courses outside your major interest areas early

Toward this end, you will not only complete a course plan but will also reflect on how your plan meets the elements of a liberal education.

### Four-Year Plan

Extend your four-year plan with one major in mind. While this plan is not a commitment, it is very important that you consider some of your larger goals (such as your "spikes and bumps") and plan carefully to achieve them. Allot at least 2-3 hours for a combination of reflection, exploring the catalog, and using it to make sure you've gotten all the pre-requisites and semesters correct. You may even need to contact faculty members to determine when courses that are not offered every year may be offered next.

This is an important exercise that can have real consequences for your satisfaction with your education. Make sure you give it adequate attention.

You will use your Wiki in our Advising group to document your plan. Please include for each course:

- The three-letter department abbreviation
- The course number
- The full course name

In addition, you will notice that at the bottom of your four-year plan table, there are four columns for you to tabulate how many credits and courses you are taking in each division. Note that some courses and concentration listings are non-divisional (e.g., GWSS, GDS, NRS, TUT, etc.). Please list only the course department and number here, along with the credits. This portion will help us both ensure you have a good representation of studies across the curriculum.

If you are planning to study abroad, you can include that semester in your plan (typically during third year).

While planning, you may want to consider your eligibility for Phi Beta Kappa. You may find the [requirements](#) in the College catalog.

### **Essay on the Elements of the Liberal Arts**

Once you have completed your four year plan, please write a short essay where you tell your reader (e.g., yourself, me, your future adviser) what your spikes and bumps are and how your courses connect to them. In addition, tell your reader how you've incorporated each of the six elements of a liberal education listed in the catalog. Note that you will want to be thinking about these even as you are planning. When you are finished, post (copy and paste) your essay to your curricular journal.

### **Completion and Feedback**

Although the PioneerWeb software will e-mail me when you've made updates to your wiki and journal, you may be working incrementally, so I would appreciate if you would send me an e-mail when you feel your work is "complete." I will then review them and make comments for you.

If you are not already, you should subscribe to both your Wiki and Journal, so that you too get e-mails when I make comments. You can do this by clicking the "Subscribe" link at the top of each.

### **Declaring a Major**

Declaring a major at Grinnell is an important milestone. While courses from a single department may only account for about one-third of your total courses, they often form an important foundation that you can build the rest of your education around. At this critical point in your career, the college and I ask you to evaluate your progress toward a liberal education and describe your goals for remaining semesters.

Your first task will be to complete your **four-year plan**. I expect most plans to have meaningful engagement with the six Elements of a Liberal Education, as outlined in the college catalog.

The college's major declaration form also asks you to provide a **written rationale** for your proposed course of study in the liberal arts. In your statement, I expect you to place your transcript and any unmet academic goals in the context of the elements of a liberal education. You should discuss your major field and/or career goals and how your four-year plan serves these.

I cannot overemphasize the need to plan ahead. Deadlines approach quickly, and many other students will also be engaged in similar activities. Also note that the department chair's signature is required; you must leave time for scheduling a meeting with chair, perhaps allowing additional time for taking any feedback into account that may warrant further revisions.

As a practical matter, we will work on your four-year plan first. Once we have agreed upon it, *then* you may begin to contextualize it in your written rationale.

## Details: Four-Year Plan

As mentioned above, your first task will be to construct a complete four-year plan.

Allot at least 2–3 hours for a combination of reflection, exploring the catalog, and using it to make sure you've gotten all the pre-requisites and semesters correct. You may even need to contact faculty members to determine when courses that are not offered every year may be offered next.

While planning, you may also want to consider your eligibility for Phi Beta Kappa. You may find the [requirements](#) in the College catalog.

This is an important exercise that can have real consequences for your satisfaction with your education. Make sure you give it adequate attention.

**After** our initial meeting to establish our advising relationship (i.e., why do you want to major in CS? what's important for me to know to be a good adviser for you?), these are the next steps for getting your information into our advising system and proceeding toward the major declaration.

1. Log in to <https://advising.weinman.cs.grinnell.edu> with your Grinnell College username and Grinnell College (ITS) password
2. Click “New **Page**” (near the top)—note, make sure you do **NOT CLICK “NEW POST”**. Then choose “Insert Template” and select the Four-Year Plan template. Fill in your four-year plan semester-by-semester.

- In the table, please list both course prefix and numbers as well as the title. (i.e., MAT-131 Calculus I)
- For courses you plan to take in the future, please pay attention to what the catalog says about not only pre-requisites, but also in which semester the course is regularly scheduled. (“Fall *and* Spring” means both are fine in your plan; “Fall *or* Spring” is useless for you—consult the relevant department for likely offerings).
- At the bottom, fill in and do the tabulations by division, listing only each course prefix and number (i.e., MAT-131) as well as the number of credits for the course, in the appropriate column:

**Humanities:** ALS, ARB, ARH, ART, CHI, CLS, ENG, FRN, GLS, GRM, HUM, JPN, MUS, PHI, REL, RUS, SPN, THD

**Science:** BCM, BIO, CHM, CSC, MAT, PHY, PSY, SCI, SLC, STA

**Social Studies:** ANT, ECN, EDU, HIS, PHE, POL, RED, SOC, SST, WIL

**Non-Divisional:** AMS, DGS, EAS, ENV, EUR, FMS, GDS, GWS, LAS, LIN, NRS, PCS, PST, RES, SAM, SMS, STA

When you have all of them listed, please tally the total credits in each division/column.

3. When you're finished, click **Publish** on this (it only goes to me, no other members of the site), and I'll get an email to take a look. Make sure to leave the visibility setting as Private.

Sometimes the email notifications fail, so it helps if you create a redundant system by also *emailing* me your URL when you're done and wish for me to review your plan.

I'll then leave comments about your four-year plan; you can add comments yourself and make changes or chat synchronously about them during my office hours. You should expect me to

make suggestions, proposals, or otherwise constructively challenge your plans in ways that will likely require you to make some revisions.

If you're really not sure what you might want to take to round out your Grinnell career, leave blanks and put in the comments that you'll be coming to office hours. (Then do so ASAP.)

Once we agree on your plan (but not before), you can proceed to the next step: the Written Rationale.

### **Details: Written Rationale**

Your writing task here is a significant one involving a great degree of synthesis and brevity. Because this is a key milestone for planning your individual course of study, do not be surprised to receive constructive feedback that necessitates rewriting or revising your four year plan.

- Do not worry about the word count listed in the form; you can attach your roughly one page statement to the submitted paperwork if it does not fit.
- Most importantly, I expect you to summarize how your four-year plan engages each of the six elements of a liberal education.

As before, you can follow these steps:

1. Log in to <https://advising.weinman.cs.grinnell.edu> with your Grinnell College username and Grinnell College (ITS) password
2. Click "New **Page**" [*not post*], near the top and use it for your Written Rationale.
3. When you're finished, likewise click **Publish**. (Please also send me an email with your URL in case the notification fails).

I will then post comments asking you to revise. You should plan to make at least one, and probably two revisions. (Writing is a process.)

When these are done, you will need to transfer them to your major declaration form, which I will then sign; you must also seek the department chair's signature as well. Because time is of the essence, you need not get the signatures in this order; simply make sure you relay to the department chair that I have approved your plan and that we simply are working to synchronize schedules to get a signature.

Shortly hereafter, we will probably work on registration for the coming semester.

### **Curricular Journal**

A major instrument of our advising partnership will be your curricular journal. This will allow you to keep track of your learning goals in a way that informs me and reminds you. As you make course selections, this will be a venue for you to justify your curriculum in the context of liberal education elements and practices. You may also wish to reflect on other goals or questions. It could additionally be an instrument for recording (and perhaps digesting) information gathered

from external sources, such as the CLS or OCS. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it will be the medium for our pre-registration advising meeting agenda(s).

In addition to this, I will ask you to keep your four-year plan updated in a wiki format. This will ensure it is always accessible to both of us, while also allowing us to keep track of the changes that may occur as your goals develop. Any changes you make should be explained, in one way or another, on your journal.

To access your journal, you may directly visit the URL <http://advising.weinman.cs.grinnell.edu>. I will add you to this organization when you become an advisee.

I am subscribed to your journal so that I will know if you post something that I may need to see in order to help me advise you. By default, access to these electronic resources is restricted to only you and me.

## Registration

Each semester, registration is an important catalyst that helps to drive your exploration. At this *very* busy time, you will be responsible for defining the agenda of our registration meetings. Here is how we will proceed.

## Background Work

Review your four-year plan and reconsider it in light of your experiences this semester and last. You should also review our [advising timeline](#) for extra-curricular, co-curricular, and post-grad or career considerations. Take into account any unforeseen conflicts or new interests. Examine the course lists for available possibilities; remember to look at the special topics courses.

## Preparation Content

You will post at least 7 course selections (4 top choices and 3 alternatives) to your journal. Please include the course number, full name, and scheduled meeting time(s). For each course, you will write one or two sentences explaining how the course

- fits your goals for the semester (e.g., what new skills or knowledge you will obtain; do *not* write that it fulfills some major/concentration requirement),
- relates to the College catalog's "elements of a liberal education" (cf. [Resources](#)), and
- provides preparation for life after Grinnell (be specific).

(Note that amounts to three items for seven courses, a total of twenty-one things.)

Next, synthesize these choices by writing a few sentences about any other thematic goals and/or co-curricular activities contributing to them.

If you make any changes to [your four-year plan](#), review your previous written rationale or journal posts and then explain these changes. In particular, you must highlight how your new course selections continue to relate to and cover all elements of a liberal education.

You may also wish to post any outstanding questions you have. It is conceivable that you may have more questions than declarations (i.e., course selections)—this is OK. If that is the case, you must still reflect on these and put them in writing as helpful preparation for our meeting.

## How-To Post

You will complete a template in [your online journal](#) using the following steps.

1. Create a new **post**: at the top of the page, mouse over “New” and then click “**Post**” (at the top)
2. Insert the registration template: above the text box, click “Insert Template”
3. Select the “Registration for {Fall | Spring} ...” option at the top and click “Insert Template” from beneath the preview.
4. Change the title to “Registration for Fall 2046” (or whatever the next semester is)
5. Replace “*Your answer*” in the subsequent comments using your preparation from above.
6. Click “Save Draft” at any time to save your work and return to it later.

**Important:** When you compose a new post, be sure to click the “Save Draft” button before leaving the editing area. This will mark your page or post as “privately published,” and it will be visible only to you and to me. If you do not, the post will show you as currently editing, and it may be visible to other student advisees (due to a software flaw).

7. Check the “Registration” category.
8. When you are finished, click “Publish”.

Publishing your post will make the result visible only to me but will trigger an email I will use as a cue to review your posting. I also welcome a secondary email with a link directly from you informing me you have indeed completed your planning and wish for a review.

## Meeting

I will signal approval of your preparation with an email about comments on your journal or else ask you to make enhancements. Once I have explicitly approved your preparation, you may sign-up for a registration advising meeting via the time slots on [my bookings page](#). **YOU MAY NOT SIGN UP FOR A MEETING UNTIL EXPLICITLY APPROVED.**

**Before our meeting**, print a hard copy of your

- current (or proposed) four year plan,
- course selections and the justifications/reflections (from your journal—you may omit the prompts for parsimony), and
- Academic Program Evaluation (the “My Progress” tab on WebAdvisor)  
to bring with you. (If you do not bring these, I **will** ask you to return with printed copies and you **will** lose meeting time. A laptop or other digital screen is not acceptable. We must be able to huddle over and write upon them.)

**During our meeting** you should take notes regarding your questions (i.e., answers or referrals).

**After our meeting**, you should post any information gathered or clarification received to your journal (particularly if another meeting is required).

If registration elements are not satisfied after our initial meeting, you should do whatever work is necessary and post relevant clarifications, reflections, etc., to your journal so that you may sign-up for another meeting.

The process above will allow us to have an expedient, productive discussion from which you can gain the greatest benefit. Time is valuable for both of us and I value your curricular choices. Thus, if you are not prepared for registration, I may not approve your online registration.

### **Finalizing Registration**

After our face-to-face meeting, where we will work to finalize approval of your plan, you should

1. Put your primary course choices (no backups) into the WebAdviser system.
2. Click “Request Review” (which notifies me that you have done so).
3. Within 24 hours I will approve your course choices (or only the CS options if you are a double-major).
4. When all your courses are thus approved, you must click “Register” to finalize the process. (Technically, you *can* register for only the ones you have approval for, if you are still waiting on a second adviser’s approval for some courses.)
5. Wait for the Registrar’s office to work out cuts and balances.
6. When your schedule is released, confirm the courses you are enrolled in. If you did not get into one or more your primary courses, add any of your necessary back-up courses to the WebAdviser system and “Request Review”. I will approve them promptly, but within 24 hours. You must subsequently register for the approved course. Follow any additional instructions from the Registrar’s office regarding waitlists, etc.

### **Registering S/D/F**

One of the most common reasons students wish to register for a class “S/D/F” is because they are concerned a course outside their primary interest (i.e., major) is too difficult or may detract from other courses they feel are more important.

Registering for a class on an S/D/F basis is usually not the right approach to this concern. Here’s why.

Taking challenging courses outside of your strengths or major is *normal*. In fact, a major advantage of the individually advised curriculum, and of a liberal education generally, is the opportunity to develop and exercise mental powers that are not tied to your major.

Long experience — indeed, longer experience than my own — suggests that registering S/D/F could be counterproductive. Students often get a false sense of comfort and drop or put off work. After all, they think they “only” need to get a C. However, it is easy to lose track of things, and the difference between a C and a D or F may not be all that much. This casual disregard commonly leads to academic trouble.

Moreover, many folks reading transcripts will read an S as a C, even if you did outstanding work. Thus for many observers (e.g., employers, graduate schools), an S, does not add strength to a transcript.

In the extreme, if you are not going to put the effort into a class, you may be unlikely to do enough work for a passing grade. In short, either you do enough work for the class, in which case you ought to aim for a real grade, or you don’t do enough work for the course, in which case perhaps you shouldn’t be there in the first place.

That said, there *are* cases when taking a course on an “S/D/F” basis could indeed be warranted and helpful. I welcome and invite you to discuss your concerns and considerations with me in office hours.

## Final Caution

You will have many choices to make during your career at Grinnell and beyond. Ultimately, it is your duty to make these decisions—I will not make them for you. While I will provide you with the information available to me, the responsibility for knowing opportunities and fulfilling requirements is yours.

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*With thanks to many who helped influence many parts of this document: Karla Erickson, Chris Hunter, Sam Rebelsky, Dan Reynolds, Laura Sinnett, Joyce Stern, John Stone, and Henry Walker.*

*The Two-Way Arrow Image is by Don Knuth: <http://www-cs-faculty.stanford.edu/~uno/diamondsigns/arrow>*

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