

School of Arts and Letters: Academic Mindset Plan

I. FRESHMEN ORIENTATION IN SOAL (YEAR 1)

Freshmen Orientation in SOAL will be conducted online in D2L/ Brightspace, and students will move through several modules of information. Professional Advisors and Faculty Mentors will encourage students to complete the orientation, and electronic reminders will be sent regularly until completion is verified. Modules are listed below:

A. Academic Programs and Overview of SOAL

In this module, students will be introduced to the organization and structure of the School of Arts & Letters. SOAL will understand the structure of the School of Arts & Letters, the programs offered, and co-curricular activities. Within the School are three departments: English, History, and Media, Culture & the Arts. The information in this module gives information about the organization of the school, the academic programs offered, and various opportunities to explore specific interests further. Students are encouraged to attend at least two SOAL events during their first year at MGA.

- Dean's Welcome
- Introduction to Departments and Administrators
- Introduction to Faculty
- Introduction to Academic Programs
- Explanation of Course Delivery Modes (f2f, hybrid, online, eCore)
- Co-curricular Opportunities
- SOAL Events Calendar

B. Ethics and Professionalism

In this module, students will be introduced to ethical and behavioral standards of the School of Arts and Letters. One of the hallmarks of a successful student in the School of Arts & Letters is the demonstration of professional and ethical professional behavior. SOAL Students will be encouraged to value the importance of being a part of a community of learners and to exhibit a professional demeanor in discussing and debating ideas within that community, as they adhere to ethical standards of academic and behavioral conduct.

C. Academic Mindset

In this module, students will be introduced to the concept of “academic mindset” or “growth mindset.” SOAL students are encouraged to embrace an important state of mind as they prepare for their learning experiences: an academic mindset that incorporates the following beliefs:

- I belong in this learning community.
- I can change my abilities through effort (a growth mindset).
- I can succeed.
- This work has value and purpose for me.

(<https://www.mindsetworks.com/go/academic-mindsets/>)

SOAL Students are encouraged to understand that failure is not the end of achieving; from failure can come significant success. Students are encouraged to persevere through difficult challenges and to seek assistance from a variety of people and resources (contact lists are provided).

D. Advising & Mentoring (Advising with Professional Advisor for first 45 semester hours)

In this module, students will be provided with a variety of information, especially in terms of contact with Professional Advisors and Faculty Mentors. Students will have convenient access to and explanation of important policies in the Student Handbook and the Academic Catalog. Students will be introduced to the Academic Calendar, the Schedule of Classes, and College Scheduler. Professional Advisors will work with students to develop a degree completion plan in My Degree.

- Professional Advising & Faculty Mentoring
- Faculty Mentors & Faculty Advisors
- Student Handbook and Policies
 - Academic Honesty
 - Student Conduct
- Academic Catalog Requirements
 - Attendance
 - Withdrawal Policy
- Academic Calendar
- Schedule of Classes
- Registration (College Scheduler)
- Developing Degree Completion Plan in My Degree

E. Resources

In this module, students will be introduced to various campus resources for assistance with academic and personal issues.

- Writing Center
- MARC
- Student Success Centers
- Library
- Accessibility Services
- Counseling Services
- Other Student Services (Veteran & Military Services and Campus Police (Knight Alert))

F. Financial Aid and Academic Progression

In this module, students will be given contact information for Financial Aid, and they will be linked to ways in which they can apply for scholarships. They will be given information about SAP, withdrawals and consequences, midterm grades, and early alert advising. “Growth Mindset” will be reinforced in this module so that students understand their capacity for getting back on track after drawbacks.

- Understanding SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress)
- Financial Aid Contact Information
- Midterm Grades and Early Alert Advising
- Scholarship Information
- Withdrawals and Consequences

G. Graduation

- Timeline for applying for graduation
- Information about Commencement Ceremony
- Information about Career Services

II. INSTRUCTION (YEARS 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Students in the SOAL take courses in their major from the freshman to senior year. Professional Advisors are trained to follow Momentum Approach practices so that students take 9 hours in their major during freshman year.

In all SOAL classes, students will receive “Growth Mindset” reinforcement, as professors review the syllabi and explain ways in which students can recover academically after an initial failure (how the “weighted” and “point system” grade calculation works and how students can understand the difference between “low stakes” assignments and “high stakes” assignments in forming an academic recovery plan). Faculty will be encouraged to give low stakes assignments early in the courses and to post students’ individual grades and a running course average in D2L/ Brightspace for students to monitor their academic progress. Retention and Progression “best practices” are embedded in the SOAL definition of excellence in teaching, and faculty are assessed on their adherence to these practices.

In addition to practices noted above, students are encouraged, as they progress through their program of study, to expand their academic horizons in order to give their work an even stronger sense of “purpose and value.” Teaching faculty regularly promote the following high impact practices in their classes, and they encourage participation in co-curricular activities, allowing students a richer, more robust immersion into their studies and into the application of knowledge. A sampling of enriching academic opportunities follows:

- (EL) Experiential Learning
- Community Engagement
- Leadership at MGA and in SOAL
- Internships
- Participating in the Undergraduate Conference
- Joining the Honors Program
- Engaging in Undergraduate Research/ Scholarship
- Joining Discipline Specific Honor Societies
- Participating in Study Abroad Opportunities

III. ADVISING AND MENTORING PROCESS (YEARS 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Professional Advisors advise students for the first 45 semester hours. Professional Advisors develop working relationships with students in terms of helping them navigate their freshman year (and one additional semester of their sophomore year). In addition to Midterm grade reporting by faculty, SOAL has instituted an Early Alert Advising process every fall and spring semester during Weeks 5 and 9 to alert our majors if their grades are falling below the equivalent of a 70 in specific classes. Professional Advisors offer assistance with information about resources to help students get back on track. Students with over 45 semester hours are encouraged to meet with their Faculty Mentor/Advisor (or they may choose to meet with a Professional Advisor). Through SOAL's Early Alert Advising system, students will be encouraged to embrace the concept that they can "change their abilities through effort" and persevere.

While students work with Professional Advisors for their first 45 semester hours, students are also assigned a Faculty Mentor in their respective majors. This Faculty Mentor is available to students to help guide and assist them through their first 45 semester hours and to then take over the student's advising after 45 semester hours, becoming both a "Faculty Advisor and Mentor." Professional Advisors work to provide a seamless "hand-off" to Faculty Advisors/ Mentors for students who have completed 45 semester hours.

Again, "Growth Mindset" is embedded in the Advising, Mentoring, and Early Alert Advising system, as Professional and Faculty Advisors are trained to help students understand the importance of persevering.

IV. CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (YEARS 1, 2, 3, and 4)

SOAL students are encouraged to take part in a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in order to develop a “sense of belonging” in the School of Arts & Letters and their respective learning communities. From student organizations (RSO’s) to musical and theatrical performance groups, students have the opportunity to get involved in a variety of student groups led by expert faculty members in the discipline, many of whom offer opportunities for undergraduate research and collaboration. SOAL also involves a series of enriching events every semester, and SOAL majors have the opportunity to attend or get involved as their interests dictate.

Student Organizations:

- Theatre (regular try-outs for performances)
- Music (Chamber Singers, Jazz Band, Orchestra, Marching Band)
- History Student Organization
- English Student Organization
- *Fall Line Review* (literary magazine)
- *The Statement* (newspaper)
- *KnighTVision* (video production and broadcasting)

Campus Events:

- Plays
- Film and Book discussions
- Writing (academic and creative) Workshops
- Musical Performances
- Art Exhibitions
- Student Media Presentations
- Faculty Lectures and Discussion
- Invited Artists and Lecturers

V. PREPARING FOR GRADUATION (Year 4)

Faculty Advisors/ Mentors continue to stress students' need to maintain momentum to complete senior year. Many programs in the School of Arts & Letters have final projects, presentations, portfolios, or performances to mark the end of the students' course of study. Often at this stage, students are asked to reflect on their journey and to note how far they have come so far. The last year reinforces the "I can succeed" belief inherent in the academic mindset framework. Students typically engage in courses or graduation year projects as follows:

- Senior Seminars
- Portfolios
- Presentations
- Final Projects
- Recitals; Juries
- Exhibitions

Faculty Advisors/ Mentors also work with students during advising to help them plan the next stage of their academic careers (graduate studies) or to refer them to Career Services to prepare for the joining the working world. Faculty Advisors/ Mentors are also active in reminding students about deadlines (applying for graduation) and preparing for commencement. Many of our majors are recognized at Honors Convocation and student leadership ceremonies, further reinforcing their academic success.