



JOHNS HOPKINS  
UNIVERSITY

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Department of  
Mechanical  
Engineering

# Undergraduate Mentoring Tutorial and Tips

*Updated September 12, 2024*

# Undergraduate Mentoring – Tutorial and Tips

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## BACKGROUND

The University's Academic Council expects that faculty members will participate in not only research and teaching activities but also undergraduate academic mentoring duties. Faculty members will mentor both graduate and undergraduate students, and participate in a larger community of mentor that include the Whiting School of Engineering (WSE) professional academic advisors.

Mentoring provides the potential to develop a meaningful relationship as you will help students navigate personal challenges and determine career paths.

The [Mechanical Engineering “Academic Advising for Faculty” page](#) offers extensive resources.

## UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING

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### 1. MAJORS

Our two majors, Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Mechanics, have a base of mechanical engineering instruction but are otherwise distinct. Both majors have similar credit requirements for science, math, humanities, and senior design courses.

- **Mechanical Engineering** has 50 “Required Engineering” credits with specific mechanical engineering courses, plus 9 “Mechanical Engineering” elective credits, plus 9 “technical elective” credits in “STEM” type courses (science, technology, engineering, and math).
- **Engineering Mechanics** has 27 “Required Engineering” credits with specific mechanical engineering courses, plus 15 “Engineering Mechanics and Engineering Science” elective credits, plus 18 “Technical Elective” credits in “STEM” type courses.

### 2. ADVISING MANUAL

Take about an hour to read the Academic Advising manuals located on the [MechE Undergraduate Academic Advising webpage](#). It has a wealth of important information on degree requirements, course electives, policies, and resources to help both students and advisors.

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### 3. ADVISING TIMELINE

Faculty advisors have to a mentoring role for all students in Fall 2024 and all academic advising have shifted to the Whiting School professional academic advisors.

The actions occur in roughly this order:

#### Summer

- Incoming freshmen work with the Whiting School Academic Advising office, in consultation with the department's Academic Program staff to select courses and answer policy questions.
- The Whiting School Academic Advising staff will assign Faculty Advisors from the department for incoming freshmen.
- Students transferring from other Universities will work with the Whiting School Academic Advising office and the department's Academic Program staff or Director of Undergraduate Studies to determine what courses will be accepted from the previous university. The department will determine which of those courses will be accepted in the degree program.
- Current students may occasionally ask for help via e-mail or a visit.

#### Early Fall

- Freshman Orientation occurs a few days before the start of the Fall semester. Faculty Mentors will meet with freshmen for the first time. The Whiting School Lead Advisor for the department, Emily Hinton, will stand in for advisors who will not be on campus that day, as well as be available for questions from freshmen and advisors.
- Freshmen will work with the Whiting School professional academic advisors to create a four-year plan.
- Upperclassmen may ask the Whiting School professional academic advisors for a four-year plan checkup and otherwise ask academic policy questions.
- At any time, any student may contact the Whiting School professional academic advisors to ask policy and academic questions.
- Faculty mentors will be expected to offer career and internship advice and to discuss any other non-academic questions or concerns.

#### Fall Semester

- Some students will switch majors from or to Mechanical Engineering or Engineering Mechanics. The Whiting School professional academic advisors will help freshmen create their four-year plans.
- Optional, but recommended check-in with students on their progress.
- Late-October or early-November - Advising Week - all undergraduate students will meet their Whiting School professional academic advisors and their faculty mentors in separate meetings. Both the advisor and mentor will release separate holds in SIS to allow the student to register for courses.

#### Intersession

- Some students will switch majors from or to Mechanical Engineering or Engineering Mechanics.
- Students may occasionally ask for mentoring help via e-mail or a visit.

## Spring Semester

- The Whiting School professional advisors will certify degree eligibility for seniors intending to graduate.
- Late-March or early-April - Advising Week – all freshman, sophomore, and junior students will meet their Whiting School professional academic advisors and their faculty mentors in separate meetings. Both the advisor and mentor will release separate holds in SIS to allow the student to register for courses.
- At any time, any student may contact the Whiting School professional academic advisors to ask policy and academic questions.
- Faculty mentors will be expected to offer career and internship advice and to discuss any other non-academic questions or concerns.

## 4. ROLE OF WSE ACADEMIC ADVISING

The Whiting School of Engineering's Office of Engineering Advising office oversees school-wide and university-wide activities and policy. Among their many duties, the Whiting School's academic advisors assist incoming freshmen with course selection, degree planning, recording external credit, and approve requests to take courses at other universities. They also will work with departments to help students in academic or personal distress. [Visit the Whiting School Academic Advising page](#) for additional information.

## 5. FRESHMAN ORIENTATION

New freshmen will gather just before the start of the Fall semester at our Mechanical Engineering Freshman Orientation, then meet with their advisors for the first time. Faculty Advisors will be asked to review their course selections to confirm that they meet their degree's first semester requirements. The Whiting School Academic Advising office will have already reviewed the proposed selections to confirm this, but will ask the advisors to reconfirm and address any unusual situations or course exception requests.

Freshmen will also meet with their faculty mentors to discuss plans, questions, and ideas.

## 6. DEGREE PLANS / CHECKOUT SHEETS

Undergraduate students will complete a "degree plan," also known as a "four-year plan," or a "checkout sheet" that will track the student's progress in completing the degree.

All undergraduate students will work with their Whiting School professional academic advisor or designee to create a four-year plan or ask policy or requirement questions.

Checkout sheets for the two department majors are available on the Mechanical Engineering website's ["Academic Advising – Undergraduate" page](#).

## 7. TRANSFER STUDENTS

Each year, some students will transfer to Johns Hopkins University from elsewhere to continue their degree programs. The Whiting School of Engineering's Office of Engineering Advising creates credit evaluations to determine which courses will count as either an exact course transfer or as an equivalent course. They also help determine if writing courses meet the University's writing intensive standard. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will review course syllabi and recommend an exact course transfer or credit.

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Next, the Whiting School professional academic advisors will create a course plan to determine which exact course transfers and equivalent courses will count toward the intended major's degree requirements. Once determined, the student's "yearly standing," e.g. freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior is determined based on how much of the degree requirements are met.

The student is then assigned as a mentee to a faculty member who is mentoring students of their "yearly standing." The Director of Undergraduate Studies is always available to answer questions.

### 8. ADVISING WEEKS

While students are encouraged to visit their Whiting School professional academic advisors often, they are required to visit their advisors and their faculty mentors at least once during each of the Fall and Spring semesters. The University has set Advising Week to take place the week before course registration begins for the next semester.

Students will meet with their Whiting School professional academic advisors during Advising Week but can meet faculty mentors anytime each semester.

For faculty mentors who will be on sabbatical or otherwise unavailable during Advising Week, the Director of Undergraduate Studies will act as mentor on the faculty mentor's behalf.

### 9. COURSE EXCEPTION WAIVERS

Students will occasionally request an exception to various degree requirements. Requests that are granted are recorded on a Course Substitution Exception Waiver (SEW) form, which is available on the [Mechanical Engineering "Undergraduate Academic Advising" page](#).

The Whiting School professional academic advisors will consider exception requests and may consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies to make determinations. If a faculty mentor receives a request for an exception, students should be referred to their Whiting School professional academic advisors.

### 10. RELEASING ADVISOR HOLDS

There is a wealth of important information on the Advisor Screen of SIS. You will use this to release a student's Mentor Hold and access other information:

1. Go to <https://sis.jhu.edu>
2. Enter your JHED ID and password.
3. Click on Advisor at the top of the screen.
4. Click on Advisees → Advisee List to view your current advisees.
  - To release a hold on the advising page, click Release Hold.
  - To put the hold back on, click Apply Hold.
5. You can click on the following links for additional student information:
  - Enrollments (add/drop activity)
  - Grades
  - Schedule
  - Degree Audit
  - Alerts/Holds

## 11. CAREER ADVISING

Students often ask faculty mentors for advice about jobs, internships, graduate school, and connecting with industry contacts. Some students will want to pursue a mechanical engineering career and others will diversify their career choices in other engineering fields, consulting, finance, law, and medical professions.

Currently, we depend on alumni, industry partners, and the Whiting School of Engineering to provide and distribute information about internship and job opportunities.

Faculty mentors are encouraged to share their personal experiences of working as a professional, and otherwise can offer a variety of resources.

- The [Mechanical Engineering Careers and Life page](#)
- The [Johns Hopkins Life Design Lab](#), formerly the Career Center.
- The [Faculty Mentoring page](#)
- Fellow Mechanical Engineering faculty
- Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard – [me-academic@jhu.edu](mailto:me-academic@jhu.edu) or 410-516-7154

## 12. WHEN A STUDENT IS IN TROUBLE ACADEMICALLY OR PERSONALLY

If a student is having trouble in a class, the instructor is strongly encouraged to note this trouble in the Johns Hopkins “Starfish” system, which is included in the SIS system, the course assistance tool.

### ACADEMIC TROUBLES

Starfish should be used to record concerns and note patterns to alert the Whiting School Academic Advising office, where they can intervene and assist with resources to help the student. Academic advisors will be notified when this occurs. They may meet with students to discuss the situation and offer resources to address academic or personal problems.

### Canvas

- [Website](#)
- [Faculty Resources](#) – Access Support Services – [cldtsupport@jhu.edu](mailto:cldtsupport@jhu.edu)

### Starfish

- Access Starfish in SIS, which can be accessed in the Advisor role by selecting “Starfish” on the left menu bar.
- [Help and Instructions](#) - Emily Calderone at 410-516-9912 or [starfish@jhu.edu](mailto:starfish@jhu.edu).

### OPTIONAL, BUT RECOMMENDED CHECK-IN WITH ADVISEES

As time allows, you are encouraged to check in with your advisees during the semester to see how they are doing, usually sometime between the first few weeks of the semester. An example note that Prof. Louis Whitcomb uses is shown here. You can use this as a base to create your own check in note. This can be sent individually or as a group to your advisees.

Dear Advisees,

As we begin the third week of class I want to check in with each of you. If you have not done so already, please let me know how your semester is progressing, and if there are any issues that I can

help with.

The deadline to add courses has passed. The deadlines for dropping courses is October 10 for both undergrads and grads. The full schedule of course-registration-related deadlines is here...

- Undergraduate students: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/registrar/students/registration/>
- Graduate students: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/registrar/students/graduate-registration/>

Please always include the word ADVISING in the subject lines of all email to me - this helps me find your email in my email queue!

### PERSONAL TROUBLES

Occasionally, students may feel overwhelmed by the rigors of education, especially if coupled with outside stresses like health and family concerns. Johns Hopkins offers a host of resources where they can ask for and receive help.

If students need someone to listen, they are encouraged to talk to their Whiting School professional academic advisors or their faculty mentor. Sometimes, venting to someone may be all that is needed.

Sometimes, though, they may want or need to talk to someone who is trained to help people in distress. View these pages for information and hours:

- [Recognizing and Helping Distressed Students](#)
- [Office of Student Life](#) – for information on services, offices, events, and student groups
- [Office of Student Disability Services](#) – to get help with a physical or mental incapacitation, no matter how minor.
- [Counseling Center](#) – to get help with any emotional concerns, when feeling overwhelmed, and when needing mental health support in a caring environment.
- [Sexual Assault Response and Prevention](#)
- Emergencies – call the Security office at 410-516-7777 or the Baltimore City Emergency Line at 911.

### 13. FERPA

The University expects everyone to follow its policy based on the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974](#). This federal law restricts what information – particularly student grades – that can be released without a student’s written consent.

All new advisors must take a ten-minute tutorial before being assigned advisees. Visit My.JH.edu → “Education” icon → “myLearning” icon. Search for “FERPA Basics.”

### 14. OTHER RESOURCES

- The [Mechanical Engineering “Academic Advising for Faculty” page](#).
- The [Undergraduate Academic Advising page](#)
- [Faculty Mentors](#)
- [Advising Week page](#) – updated every semester
- The [Mechanical Engineering “Info for Faculty” page](#) – has info on advising and other items.

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- The [Johns Hopkins Catalog](#) and [Mechanical Engineering's section](#) of the catalog.
- Director of Undergraduate Studies Steven Marra – [marra@jhu.edu](mailto:marra@jhu.edu)
- Whiting School of Engineering Lead Academic Advisor Emily Hinton – [ehinton8@jhu.edu](mailto:ehinton8@jhu.edu)
- Senior faculty colleagues who have performed academic advising.
- Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard – [me-academic@jhu.edu](mailto:me-academic@jhu.edu)