

International Student Advising Guide



Capstone International Center
International Student & Scholar Services



Welcome to The University of Alabama!

You are here to do great things, and there is a rich history of academic excellence here that YOU are now a part of. This guide will help you understand the unique culture at The University of Alabama and provide you with important information as you adjust to life at UA.

This guide has several sections. You may not need to use every section right away. We have a list of the topics covered below so that you can easily find what you are looking for.

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This page gives general tips for how advising at The University of Alabama works and explains the best way to work with your advisers.

Polite Behavior on Page Four

This page explains what is considered polite behavior in the U.S.

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This page explains how to get help with your immigration records.

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This page explains how advising at the College of Engineering is done.



How to Have Successful Advising

International students often find university culture and academics in the United States very different from what they are used to. There are a few important things to understand that makes working with your advisers much easier.



Use Your Campus Resources

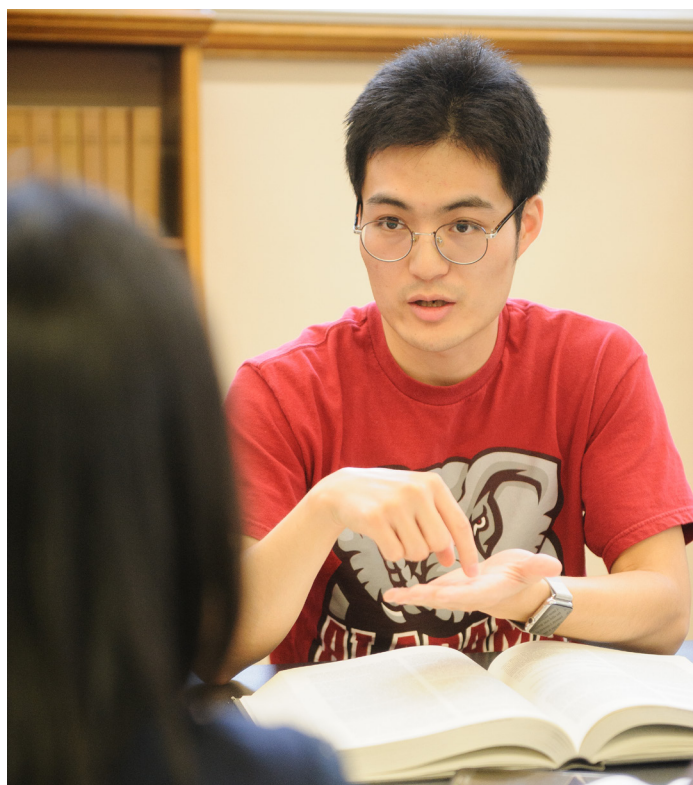
In the U.S. students are expected to use campus systems to do many things for themselves. Make sure that you visit ua.edu/students and familiarize yourself with [myBama](#), Blackboard Learn, DegreeWorks, and Crimson Mail. Your advisers will expect you to use these programs on your own.

Understand Who Can Help You

Each department at UA focuses on very specific tasks. To complete some tasks, you may have to meet with several people in different departments. For example, your academic adviser cannot fix your immunization hold, and Student Account Services cannot help you with immigration problems. The website ua.edu/students has an organized list of the non-academic departments at UA with information on how they can help you.

Plan Ahead

It is important that you make a plan for every semester. During the busiest times, some departments have long waits to see an adviser, and it can take several days to process documents during these times. Plan ahead and make sure that you have things done before the very last day. You can find the important dates for a semester at registrar.ua.edu/academiccalendar/.




Email Your Advisers

The best way to communicate with your advisers is often through email. Make sure that you are using your Crimson email address. In your email, make sure that you include your name, CWID, and a brief description of your question. It may take advisers a day or two to email you back, but this can be the best way to get an answer during very busy times.

Know When to Make Appointments

Most departments have open advising hours when you can walk in and see an adviser. Check on the department's website to see when those hours are available. Remember, walk in hours may have longer waits. You can also meet with an adviser by scheduling an appointment. This is the best way to make sure that you can see the person you need to without waiting. Many undergraduate advising offices have online appointment systems available through their website, but for those that don't, you can schedule an appointment by emailing the adviser and setting a time to meet.



When communicating with people in the U.S., there are several things to remember about what is considered polite. Your advisers are here to help you. Impolite behavior makes it harder for them to fix problems. Here are some important things to remember about polite behavior in the U.S.

Polite Behavior

Be On Time

Time is important in U.S. culture. Don't be late to your appointment. If you are going to miss your appointment or be late, call ahead and let the office know.

Be Prepared

Make sure you know what you want to ask and that you are prepared. It is fine to bring a friend with you if you need help explaining your problem.

Don't Yell or Use Swear Words

Even though you might see this in some American movies, using swear words is very rude. If you are not sure if a word is impolite don't use it and look it up later or ask an American friend. Raising your voice or yelling is considered rude and aggressive. If you yell or swear at an adviser, you will be asked to leave. This kind of behavior can even cause you to have disciplinary actions taken against you.

Be Ready to Accept "No" as an Answer

Sometimes an adviser cannot fix a problem you have. This might be because you need to speak with a different department, or it might be because there is a policy or law that prevents the adviser from taking this action. The advising staff at The University of Alabama is very experienced, and they care about your success as a student. An adviser might tell you no because they know that it is better for you to do something a certain way. If an adviser tells you no, remember there are still several things you can do. First, don't get angry. Second, if this is your mistake, be ready to accept responsibility and learn from it. Third, if you disagree with an adviser, you can always ask to speak to the person overseeing the department. You may still get "no" for an answer, but it is fine to ask.

Leave in a Friendly Way

If you are working on a difficult problem, always remember to ask for an adviser's business card. You may need to know who you talked to later, and it is helpful to have your adviser's business card if you need to email the adviser. Make sure and be polite to your adviser. You will likely be working with this adviser again in the future, and it is important to build a good relationship. Remember, yelling, using swear words, slamming doors, and throwing things are all considered very aggressive in U.S. culture. These behaviors will not help you be successful at The University of Alabama and may lead to disciplinary action.

International Student and Scholar Services



International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) helps students keep legal immigration status while studying at The University of Alabama. ISSS works with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to issue the documents and update the records you need to stay in the U.S.

Open Advising

Walk in advising is available Monday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This is best used for quick questions or a simple update to your immigration record. Remember, there may be a longer wait to see an adviser during open advising.

Scheduling an Appointment

If you have a more complicated problem or need to make a major change to your immigration status, it is best to schedule an appointment. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the office at (205)348-5402 or emailing international@ua.edu.

How to Prepare for Advising

To prepare for an immigration advising appointment, there are a few important things to remember. First, if we are updating your immigration record, bring your passport, visa, and form I-20 or DS-2019 to your appointment. Second, remember that we cannot talk to you about a friend's immigration record without permission. If you are trying to help a friend, bring your friend with you or have them email us stating it is fine to talk to you about their record. Three, make a list of the things you need to do after the advising appointment. There are many things that require you to take action. During the advising session write down what you need to do after the meeting.

What Can ISSS Help You With?

ISSS can help you with your immigration record and with getting adjusted to campus life at The University of Alabama. The most common things we can help you with are:

- Getting a new I-20 or DS-2019
- Updating or extending your I-20 or DS-2019
- Getting a travel signature to re-enter the U.S.
- Getting approval to drop a class
- Getting permission to do internships using Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Getting permission to do Optional Practical Training (OPT) after graduation
- Getting a letter for a Driver's License
- Transferring your immigration record to a new university or institution

Important Things to Remember

ISSS can help you with many things relating to your immigration record, but the advisers are not lawyers. In the U.S., it is against the law to give legal advice if you are not a certified lawyer. Because of this, you may be told that you need to hire a lawyer to help you with some types of immigration problems.

College of Engineering Advising

The College of Engineering Academic Advising Center helps students with academic advising by empowering students to take ownership of their educational experiences.

Mandatory Advising Policy

Advising in the College of Engineering is mandatory. Students must meet with or communicate with their assigned adviser at least once each semester in order to have their schedule approved for registration and advising pin removed. Students are encouraged to check their Crimson email account regularly since advisers will contact students via their Crimson e-mail to provide notifications regarding their advising options, important dates and other pertinent information.

What Can Your Adviser Help You With?

Your adviser can help you with issues relating to your academic experience at UA. This includes the following:

- Degree and general education requirements
- Study plans and course planning (appointments required)
- Transfer Credit
- Petitions which can take a minimum of 8 weeks to process
- Changing your major
- Academic policies and regulations
- Advising holds that prevent registration

Remember, your adviser can not help you with immunization holds, immigration holds, billing issues, and disciplinary holds.

Emailing Your Adviser

Email is one of the best ways to ask your adviser questions. When you email your adviser, there are a few things to remember:

- Always use your Crimson email account
- Always include your CWID
- Don't send screenshots of documents for signature
- Make sure you clearly state your request

Remember, emails take 3-5 business days for a response, so make sure you plan ahead.

Letter Requests

If you need a letter from your academic adviser, you must request this via email. Submit these requests as soon as possible since it will take several days for your adviser to complete. When you make a letter request, make sure to have the following in your email:

- Full Name
- CWID
- Expected Graduation Date
- All of the online courses you have taken including the term (UA and other schools)
- Any additional information your embassy needs including total credits completed, credits remaining, and transfer credits accepted.
- Embassy adviser's name and email address. All documentation will be sent directly to the embassy adviser.

How to Schedule an Appointment

You will receive emails from your adviser with instructions on how to schedule your advising appointments. You can visit in-person to schedule an appointment at 2087 H.M. Comer Hall, [schedule an appointment online](#), or by calling (205)348-0750.



Study Plans

You will need to schedule an appointment to create a study plan with your adviser. Before you come to your appointment, there are a few things you need to do:

- Use your flowchart and Degree Works to create your own draft study plan
- Check the prerequisites and co-requisites to make sure that you take classes in the correct order
- Type up a draft study plan and bring it to your advising appointment

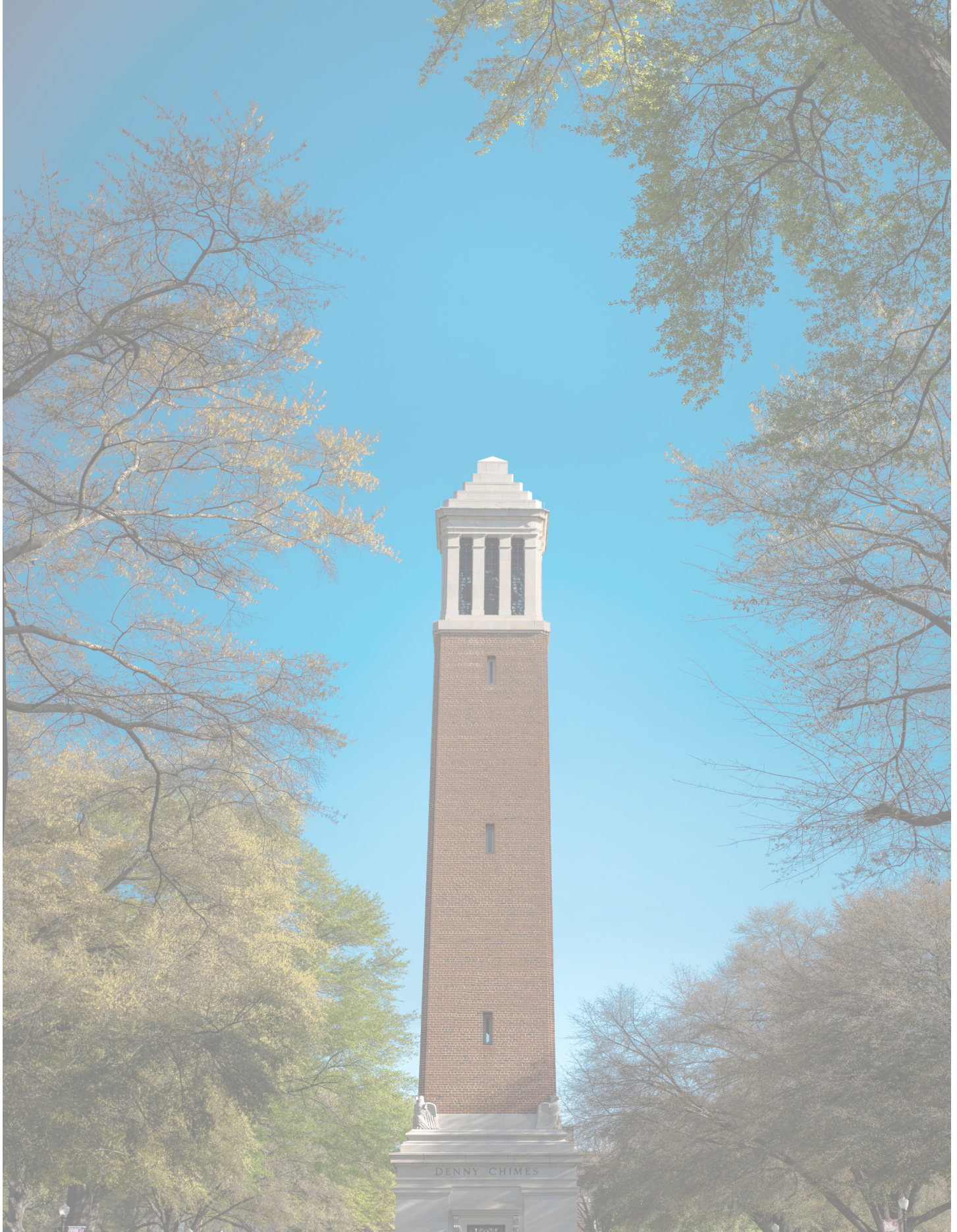
Remember, your study plan must be completely accurate before your adviser will sign it.

Verification of Enrollment Forms

Verification of enrollment is completed by the Office of the University Registrar. This office is located at 206 Student Services Center. You can also reach them by phone at (205)348-2020 or email at registrar@ua.edu.

Academic Integrity

All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. This means that you are expected to be completely honest and open about the details of any situation. Not telling the complete truth is considered the same as lying to your adviser. Trying to mislead or hide information from your adviser is breaking the Code of Academic Conduct and can cause you to be subject to disciplinary action.



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