Wayfinders: Advising Experts Will Help Students Find Their Academic Home

Office of Strategic Initiatives
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Of the nearly 10,000 new students who will begin classes this month, some will find their academic home right away. From day one, they will be off and running in the program from which they will eventually graduate.

But that's not the case for everyone.

It's not uncommon for students to change their major at least once in college, says Roxie Catts, director of the Advising Resource Center. Some have more than one passion and are indecisive about their career path, while others discover over time that the program they originally picked just doesn't feel right.

"With 15 colleges and numerous majors to choose from, it can be challenging for students to navigate a vast ocean of options and find their academic home," she said.

Helping students find their 'Wildcat way'

To help new students navigate the academic landscape of the UA, the Advising Resource Center is introducing a new initiative called Wayfinders. It's a network of academic advisers who, in addition to their regular positions in their respective colleges, will serve as campuswide advising experts for first-year students. They will work as a team to guide new students as they explore academic offerings and walk them through the steps when they are considering changing their major or adding one, Catts said. Wayfinders, she explained, are "ambassadors to the advising community," connecting students with the different colleges and the campus community.

"This idea came from the strategic planning process, where we identified a need to strengthen our support for new students who may get lost during their journey of discovering the right academic fit and becoming part of a community," Catts said. "It's all about helping students get a good beginning to what we call their Wildcat way."

Leticia Soto-Delgadillo, executive director of the Colleges of Letters, Arts and Science Advising Center, is managing the Wayfinders team. CLAS is a collaborative effort involving the
College of Fine Arts, the College of Humanities, the College of Science and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences - offers specialized services for students who are exploring potential majors.

"This is a great complement to our existing advising services," Soto-Delgadillo said. "This university is a big place, but it doesn't need to be overwhelming when students make choices. Our goal is to help students see the big picture, find answers to their questions, and make connections."

**Meeting students where they are**

To create awareness about the program, the Wayfinders will engage with students in various ways throughout the academic year. They will kick things off at UA Clicks, a mandatory session for new undergraduates, and continue throughout Wildcat Welcome, a series of social and informational events for new students and their parents. Working in partnership with Faculty Fellows, the dorms and key student service programs, the Wayfinders will also hold office hours and host pop-up advising events across campus.

"At the University of Arizona, we believe there is an academic home for every student," Catts said. "It's all about finding the intersection where one's passion meets an academic program. The sooner you find your place and feel connected to our campus, the more likely you are to graduate."

There will be an active social media presence to share opportunities and events spotlighting faculty, academic programs, and more. Follow @UAadvising and #advisingnow to stay up to date. Questions about Wayfinders? Email wayfinders@email.arizona.edu.

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