Dietrich College
FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

In Dietrich College (DC), we seek to facilitate and inspire the success of our undergraduate students during their first year of college. DC students receive tools and opportunities to set personal, academic and professional goals while also exploring the richness of the diverse CMU community in order to establish a connection and affinity with campus life.

Examples of these strategies include:
- summer virtual advising and acclimation using web-based and social media technologies
- orientation dinner at the Carnegie Music Hall grand foyer
- first-year student involvement in the college advisory board (Dietrich College Connect)
- Dietrich College Freshman Seminar Program
- student success workshop series
- academic support program
- Spring academic advising “Major Info Expo”
- one-on-one academic advising
- starting a “skills and competencies portfolio” with the Career and Professional Development Center
- research training courses and other opportunities for undergraduate research
- advising and planning for study abroad
- advising and planning for fellowship, scholarship and leadership development opportunities

THE "FRESHMAN FIVE"
1. Statistical Reasoning (Fall or Spring semester)
2. Interpretation & Argument (Fall or Spring semester)
3. Global Histories (Fall or Spring semester)
4. DC Freshman Seminar (Fall or Spring semester)
5. Computing@Carnegie Mellon (Fall semester)

A normal course load for DC students is 5 courses per semester. In addition to the "Freshman Five," DC first-year students work with their academic advisors to select additional courses for their first-year schedules. These choices typically follow other general education requirements*, areas of interest that a student wants to explore and one or more major options that recommend or require certain courses in the first year (e.g., calculus (which is required by several DC majors)). Thus, each DC student’s first-year course schedule is a customized plan designed to optimize the curricular opportunities of the first year to explore what the college has to offer, and to affirm or discover anew each student’s interests and strengths.

MAJOR DECLARATION
DC students can declare their majors as early as the second semester of the first year, or as late as the second semester of the sophomore year.

* To learn more about the DC general education program, see:  www.hss.cmu.edu/geded/

Dietrich College
OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
Joseph Devine D.A., Associate Dean
Gloria Hill Ph.D, Assistant Dean

Website for Parents
www.cmu.edu/hss/advisory-center/families/index.html

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FERPA FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS & PRIVACY ACT

The college experience is in many ways a family experience, in that the relationships between parents and their sons and daughters who are beginning college enter a new and different phase. This arises in many contexts, not least being in the context of students’ academic records. And this leads us to want to acquaint you – parents and students – with FERPA.

The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law that protects students’ privacy concerning educational records while in college. According to FERPA, students who are either 18 years old or enrolled in a postsecondary institution become the sole owners of their educational records. Therefore, any correspondence pertaining to financial aid, student accounts, grades or disciplinary action is sent directly to the student.

While we understand the natural desire of parents to want to receive information about student performance, we are at the same time obligated to follow the law established by FERPA. We ask that you – again, parents and student – view this as an opportunity for students to take responsibility for their affairs and to openly engage parents with information about their college experience. This is an important step toward self-sufficiency and adulthood which is less measurable but still a very important outcome of college experience. This is an important step toward self-sufficiency and adulthood which is less measurable but still a very important outcome of the college experience.

For further information about Carnegie Mellon’s policies regarding student privacy, please visit:

www.cmu.edu/hub2/privacy.html

TOP 10 QUESTIONS FOR A DC FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

1. Do you know who your academic advisor is? The DC first-year advisors are Gloria Hill, Debby Gerhardt, Gary DiCesio and Shauna Struck in the DC Academic Advisory Center, Carol Young for DC students in the Information Systems Program, and William Alba for first-year Science and Humanities Scholar students. You may be wondering: What do academic advisors do? If you find yourself pondering questions like: Is study abroad right for me? Why can’t I decide on a major? Who can I talk to about doing research? What do I do about a health issue that might affect my grades?, your academic advisor is always a good place to start! Your advisor can help you find the answers to those questions and many others, including questions and options that you may not have even considered.

2. Are you going to class and arriving on time? Skipping or going late to class is one of the main reasons why students have difficulties in college. While some would quibble with his percentages, Woody Allen probably had a point when he said, “80% of life is just showing up.”

3. Are you studying at least 25 hours per week? Think of college as a full-time job. You should be attending class, studying and doing homework for at least 40 hours per week.

4. Are you regularly reviewing class material? Due to the rigors of CMU, it is particularly important to keep up with reading and homework in courses, along with weekly reviews.

5. Could you use some help? Whether you are acing every course or feeling like you’re struggling here and there, resources abound on campus to enhance your successes or help you perform more successfully. For example, faculty and TAs want to assist students in their courses. All have assigned office hours and welcome student visits. Academic advisors can also be a great help, as can the university’s Academic Development Office (located in Cyert Hall Suite 85) which offers supplemental instruction (SI) for several courses, peer and small group tutoring, individual academic counseling, academic group workshops and a first-year success series.

6. Are old study habits that worked well in high school not working so well in college? Try new things, like study groups. CMU attracts a diverse array of bright and talented students who learn a great deal from each other, as well as from faculty. Students have great success with forming study groups to prepare for classes, study for tests and complete homework (within parameters set by faculty regarding collaboration).

7. Are you getting out of your dorm to meet new friends? First-year students sometimes stay in their rooms because they know few of their classmates well enough to feel comfortable interacting with them. All first-year students are in this same situation to one degree or another. So get out there, even if just to make conversation with other students in your residence hall.

8. What are you doing for fun? CMU has over 263 recognized student organizations that are supported by the Student Activities Office. These include social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual, athletic, leadership, recreational, artistic, political and service opportunities and events.

9. How are you feeling? Being away from home for an extended period – especially if it’s for the first time – can be difficult. Sometimes first-year students do not sleep or eat properly, or have difficulty regulating their daily schedule in a setting where this is left to them far more than it was before college. CMU has two services that are particularly good at helping in such situations. Health Services offers help to a student who is ill, and Counseling and Psychological Services can aid in the transition from home and high school to college by discussing personal or academic concerns in a confidential setting. Both are located in Morewood Gardens E-Tower.

10. Are you taking time to reflect? Experts agree that total immersion in a hectic day-to-day schedule, without reflection, hinders the ability to see the big picture, and understand and appreciate the larger significance and meaning of this incredible experience of college. Don’t let that happen to you! Find time, a place, an activity – like a jogging trail in Schenley Park, a bike ride to the Point downtown, an exploration of Pittsburgh neighborhoods on foot, a weekend afternoon at the Carnegie Museum – to step out of your busy daily routine and … pause and reflect. It’s a great life-long habit!