

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the UC Riverside family! At the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (CNAS) we recognize that families are the most important part of our students' support network and are the foundation for their academic success. The information below is offered to inform and guide you, as you partner with your students as they work to reach their academic and career goals.

Sincerely,

Michael A. McKibben, Associate Dean
CNAS Student Advising

Academic Advising and Faculty Mentoring

Navigating a four-year degree at a Tier 1 research institution with over 20,000 students like UC Riverside is not easy. There is a lot of important information and it isn't always as easy to access or understand as we would like. Most students need a "guide" to assist them in understanding their rights and responsibilities as a university student. In CNAS we provide two types of guidance, Professional Academic Advising and Faculty Mentoring.

But even the best advising and mentoring services aren't very effective without student participation. Your students have the responsibility to engage their advisors/mentors on a regular basis, track their communications, and follow their instructions. In addition, successful students learn to use the UCR Catalog, the CNAS Undergraduate Academic Advising Center web site, and other on-line resources to independently research the answers to their questions.

Professional Academic Advising

Serving as campus experts in student development theory and undergraduate degree requirements, Professional Academic Advisors in the CNAS Undergraduate Academic Advising Center are similar to high school guidance counselors and work with students according to an assigned caseload. These caseloads are assigned by major and alphabetically by the students' last names. Our Professional Academic Advisors provide students with the guidance they need to navigate their degree path as well as the university as a whole.

Professional Academic Advisors help students to understand their degree requirements and review students' grades and degree progress at the end of each term. Many majors in CNAS require their students to participate in mandatory advising sessions either in person or electronically before each registration period to ensure the student is making good progress toward their degree objective. Professional Academic Advisors also serve as the "voice" of the students. They are often the first university personnel to spot a trend that is impacting students and they regularly advocate on behalf of their students, bringing the student needs to the attention of campus upper administration. Our advisors are also here to direct students to the proper on-campus and off-campus resources to assist students in the quest for their degree.

Faculty Mentors

Serving as experts in academic disciplines, classroom expectations, and the career development of our future graduates, Faculty Mentors in CNAS work with students based on shared disciplines and interests. Our Faculty Mentors provide students with the guidance they need to choose specializations within

their major, upper-division, elective coursework, and appropriate educational enhancement opportunities that promote career development. Successful CNAS undergraduates work in faculty laboratories with their mentors, doing hands-on research projects and creating new knowledge that is used to make our world better.

Academic Expectations

Majors in CNAS are difficult and time-intensive. We expect our students to take 3 or 4 academic courses each term (typically 4 units each), many of which require a lot of time outside the classroom to master the material taught in lecture. Students must take a minimum of 12 units each term to be considered "full-time" students. Students who earn "A" grades in CNAS majors typically spend three hours outside class for every one hour inside class which often means students are spending a minimum of 48 hours per week working on their school work. This is often many more hours per week than your student may have studied in high school and for many of us who work a typical 40 hour work week, that's more than a full-time job. When students have a part-time job on top of their academics, have a long commute, or must meet extensive family responsibilities, it may be difficult for them to earn the grades they need for graduate school or highly competitive careers such as the health professions.

Academic Standing

In order to maintain academic "good standing", CNAS students are required to:

- Earn a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) each term. At UC Riverside a "C" average is equal to 2.0 GPA.
- Earn a minimum of a 2.0 GPA cumulatively. The cumulative GPA includes all grades earned at UC Riverside as well as grades earned through enrollment at any UC Summer Session.
- Meet minimum progress standards for the major they have declared. All students must declare a major to graduate from UC Riverside. Students are expected to take the appropriate classes and earn sufficient grades to meet graduation requirements in four years or by a maximum of 216 earned units.

While the vast majority of our students maintain academic good standing, students who do not meet the criteria above may be discontinued from their majors into undeclared status, or may be dismissed from the university. CNAS students must be in a declared major by the time they complete 75 earned units (Junior standing).

Access to Student Information

Before your student began attending UC Riverside, you as the parent, were the guardian of their entire academic record. You had complete access to that record and no one outside the school could get access to that information unless you released it to them. According to federal law, once students enter college regardless of their age or their tax status, the complete rights to their educational records transfer from the parent to the student.

Students can give their parents access to their Growl accounts. In this way parents may electronically access their student's billing information, grades, and other pertinent information. However even if your student has given you access to their Growl account, advising staff and faculty at UC Riverside

cannot discuss your student's educational record with you, without additional, explicit permission from your student. In order to ensure a student's confidentiality we require parents and their students to meet with us in person and we require the student to sign a waiver of their access rights before we can talk to you about your student's record. Please see the following web site for more information on how the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act is interpreted at UC Riverside:

<http://registrar.ucr.edu/QuickLinks/FERPA+Parents.htm>

Changing Majors

It can be difficult for freshman to choose an appropriate major upon admission to UC Riverside, typically at the age of 17 or 18. Although most CNAS freshman have taken high school classes in Biology, Chemistry, Math and Physics, there are many majors in CNAS that students may not have any first-hand experience with prior to entering college. In addition, entering freshman may not have had the opportunity to review the required curriculum for their intended major, may have untested abilities, or may be unclear on how their intended major is tied to career opportunities. As a result, many of our students change their major after admission.

Our job is to help students by facilitating appropriate major changes. In order to qualify for such major changes students have to be in good academic standing and may have to complete certain courses with certain grades to ensure success and a commitment to the new major. Students who are Undeclared have not been accepted into a major. Although students may enter CNAS as Undeclared or become Undeclared after discontinuation from a previous major, they must declare a major by the time they earn 75 units. If Undeclared students do not qualify for a change of major by the time they earn 75 units, they may be required to take additional coursework through UCR Extension in order to meet change of major criteria.

Time to Degree

Many parents are rightfully concerned about rising tuition costs and are strongly encouraging their students to complete their education in a few quarters as possible. However, in the end what is most important is that your student completes their undergraduate degree with good grades. College isn't a race. Remember, graduating with good grades will be more important to your students' long term success than graduating quickly.