

Academic Decision Points: The Sophomore Year

The dreaded 'sophomore slump'—myths & realities, tips & advice

At Dickinson, most sophomores don't experience an academic slump. Instead, the vast majority of students tend to earn higher grades as they advance towards graduation. This is good news! If you invest a consistent level of effort and seek a high degree of engagement, your academic performance will improve as you gain experience.

Of course, some students may find themselves drifting or even struggling. If you find this happening, we are ready to help.

- **Talk to your advisor or your class dean as soon as possible!** You have already proven that you have the tools to succeed. Most often, sophomore success depends on interest and engagement. Speak with us so we can help you connect to the right resources around campus. College is demanding, but you should always be able to find the *fun* in your "serious fun."
- **Now is the time to ask big questions!** Sometimes, sophomores report that they feel overwhelmed either because the novelty of the college experience has worn off or because the gravity of future decisions (life after college!) has grown distracting. Your sophomore year is exactly the right time to confront such issues. In fact—even if you find your second year to be challenging—you will quite likely look back on it as a period of personal growth and achievement.
- **You don't have to answer big questions by yourself!** Talk to friends and upperclass students. Reach out to a trusted professor. Visit the Career Center. Sit down with an RCD. One way people succeed in overcoming obstacles is by gathering a variety of outside opinions. *Doing so will help you define your own sense of purpose.*

Most students at Dickinson earn higher grades as they progress towards graduation.

Finally....get to know your new advisor!

At Dickinson, your First-Year advisor gets to know you quite well; this is one reason our First-Year Seminar program is so successful. The working relationship that you develop with your major advisor is just as important! Because you may not have a course with your new advisor every semester, you should take extra initiative to meet with your advisor on a regular basis.

Of course you need to focus on your academic progress. In addition, however, you should share important news and developments. Did you discover a new favorite course or area of inquiry? Did you have a life-changing internship or service-trip? These things matter! The clearer you can be about your interests and aspirations, the better your advisor will be able to offer guidance.

Everyone at Dickinson wants you to succeed—but only you can define what success means to you.