

First Year Advising Syllabus

Center for Student Success

2025 - 2026

Welcome to the first year of your college career! This syllabus serves as a guide for what you can expect during your first year of advising within the Center for Student Success at The College of New Jersey. We hope you will find this information helpful as you build your academic framework from now until graduation and beyond!

Academic Advising

At TCNJ, you have a lot of people here to support you, and we want to make sure you hit the ground running as you transition to college. Your advisor is a great resource for questions/concerns. They may not be able to answer all of your questions, but they can help point you in the right direction. Read on to learn more about how advising works at The College of New Jersey...

Your Advisor

You have been/will be assigned an academic advisor to support you throughout your time in college. Your academic advisor “serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary.” (Definition from: Davis S. Crockett in “Models for Designing and Implementing a Successful Program”) Think of your advisor as the GPS to your car. They’re there to support you, but ultimately, you’re the one responsible for driving. You’ll be able to view your assigned advisor on the right side of your Student Center in PAWS.

Depending on your major/program, your advisor will either be a faculty advisor or a professional advisor. While some cohorts will begin their college career being advised by a professional advisor, all students will complete their degree program with a faculty advisor. If you are Undeclared in a school, your advisor will be a professional staff member within your school (an assistant dean or advising coordinator). If you are in the Undeclared General program, your advisor will be one of the team members from the Center for Student Success. For students in our Pathway Program (provisionally-accepted students), your advisor will be a team member in the Center for Student Success. Students in the following majors will also be advised by a professional advisor in the Center for Student Success during their first year of college: Accounting, Criminology, Finance, Management, and Marketing.

You may have a secondary advisor if you are a double/dual major and/or if you are in a specific support program on campus. All Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) students are assigned a professional EOF advisor in addition to their primary advisor. Student athletes are also assigned

a secondary advisor within Athletics. Bonner/Cooperman students may also have a secondary advisor. If you have questions about who to go to for what, feel free to connect with your advisor for clarification.

TCNJ's Academic Advising Agreement

You'll quickly learn that advising is a two-way dynamic relationship that requires an active interest and investment from both parties. Now that you're in college, you'll be responsible for being proactive about any questions/concerns. You will be encouraged (and supported) to take ownership of your academic planning. Here's a breakdown of student/advisor responsibilities (as detailed in [TCNJ's Academic Advising Agreement for Undergraduate Students](#)):

Student Responsibilities	Advisor Responsibilities
Be knowledgeable about degree requirements and campus resources	Help students plan their programs of study, professional development and post-graduate plans.
Schedule an appointment to see your advisor prior to the registration period. You are required to meet with your advisor(s) at least once a semester.	Listen to students' academic concerns and needs.
Be available to meet with your advisor during the times set aside for advising.	Be available to students and take an active interest in their welfare.
Consult your advisor(s) before making major changes in your academic career (but understand that you are ultimately responsible for degree completion.	Be knowledgeable about degree and College Core requirements.
Be prepared for your advising appointment.	Be knowledgeable about resources and be able to make referrals—Center for Student Success, Counseling and Psychological Services, Career Center, Accessibility Resource Center, Tutoring Center, Center for Global Engagement, Bonner Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (e.g., CEL requirements), and Office of Records and Registration.
Consult PAWS and your TCNJ email account for important information from the College and your advisor(s). Review College policies, deadlines, and procedures and how to complete appropriate forms.	Consult PAWS and current College policies and procedures that affect advisees and be able to communicate the information to students (e.g., repeating a course, dropping or withdrawing from a class, etc.).
Visit the Career Center to explore career possibilities and goals.	Keep accurate records and maintain confidentiality.

First Year Advising: Learning Goals/Outcomes

For those of us who advise, one of *our* main goals is to make sure we're doing everything we can to empower *you* to be successful throughout your time in college and beyond. With that in mind, and with input from your Student Government representatives, we have outlined the below learning goals to help you get the ball rolling during your first year. In higher education, we often refer to the below items as part of a "hidden curriculum" that students learn how to navigate throughout their time in college. We hope that by outlining some of these items, we'll be able to bring that "hidden curriculum" to light for you so that you'll feel better prepared moving forward.

1. Learn/implement self-management strategies that support overall wellness and academic success.

Transitioning to college life is a bit of a challenge for many students. You'll be tackling a completely new schedule with differing demands and due dates. You may also have other commitments and responsibilities to balance. You may also be in a new living situation and/or dealing with a new commute. It's crucial that you begin with self-care and wellness as your anchor for everything else. This often entails some 'trial-and-error' when it comes to testing out new strategies. We strongly encourage adapting a growth mindset as you move through these new challenges. Gaining a sense of resilience will also support you through this time.

2. Navigate/utilize campus resources and start building your "support" network on campus.

TCNJ offers a wide variety of resources to support students academically, personally, and professionally. Within your first few weeks, we want you to become familiar with these. If you're not sure where to turn, your advisor is a great starting point.

3. Have a clear understanding of your major and College Core requirements. Create a tentative plan for degree completion.

This means understanding PAWS and how to view your Academic Requirements/What If Report. We have a lot of great tutorials to help you learn the ropes! This will allow you to have an academic roadmap and know where you have room for other academic courses or experiences (such as studying abroad, completing an internship, engaging in research, etc.).

4. Understand academic policies and procedures.

In addition to the Undergraduate Advising policy, there are many other policies and procedures that will be important throughout your time at TCNJ. The most updated ["Academic Rules and Procedures"](#) can be found in the online Bulletin. Your academic school/department may have their own procedures for specific academic processes, such as applying for a change of major, adding a minor,

submitting a credit overload request, applying for a credit-bearing internship, and/or enrolling in an independent study/research course. Be sure to connect with your major department for additional information!

5. Learn about academic and co-curricular opportunities that will support your personal, academic, and professional development.

Your coursework is an obviously important part of your college experience, but getting involved, taking on leadership roles, and partaking in other personal and professional development opportunities are incredibly important as well. You'll also make friends, hone your "soft" skills, and build upon your connections.

6. Begin your professional preparation and development.

- a. Understand potential career and/or post undergraduate opportunities for your major.

A great starting point is the ["What Can I Do With My Major"](#) website. Also, this is a great topic to explore with your academic advisor!

- b. Create a professional resume.

We strongly recommend that you create a resume so that you can simply update/revise as you gain additional experience throughout your time in college. Please avoid downloading online templates, as they often include tables and unprofessional formatting. The [Career Center](#) provides guidance on their webpage and within their handbook.

- c. Write an "elevator pitch" that includes a bit about you, your experience, and your interests.

Your pitch will evolve, but we want you to be confident in the 'now!' Even if you aren't sure about your major and future interests, that's okay (and totally normal/honest)! Practicing your pitch will help you network with faculty, staff, and alumni. You never know where the next opportunity awaits!

Getting Started

First, it's important that you learn about TCNJ's [Undergraduate Advising Policies and Practices](#) and the [Academic Advising Agreement](#). These will help you better understand the nuts and bolts of advising on campus. You'll also want to become familiar with the [Academic Calendar](#). This is where you can find important dates and deadlines. Though your advisor or staff member in your school/program may send reminders about important dates/deadlines, please know that it is *your* responsibility to become informed about these. We recommend subscribing to the Academic Calendar so that you'll have quick access!

(Speaking of policies, TCNJ has a lot of them! You can look up any policy in the online [Policy Manual](#). They're put in place to provide institutional guidance on how to navigate different procedures/situations that may arise. TCNJ has a shared governance structure in which faculty, staff, AND students all provide feedback on new and existing policies through Faculty Senate,

Staff Senate, and Student Government. Here at TCNJ, we are very proud of our shared governance model, which does not always exist at other institutions.)

Advising Tools & Resources

Navigating PAWS (Primary Academic Web Services): Learning how to use PAWS is going to be a critical part of your advising and registration process. Think of PAWS as your academic record home and tool for enrolling in courses. It may seem confusing at first, but you'll get the hang of it quickly, the more you use it. We also have a ton of support and resources to help you learn the ropes!

Registration 101

Registration is the process to officially sign up for next semester's classes. The Registration Window takes place in early-mid November for spring/summer registration and in early-mid April for fall/winter registration. This is the time frame in which students select and enroll in their courses for the next semester. The course schedule will be posted about a month before each registration window. This allows ample time for you to begin preparing for your Enrollment Appointment Time. Also, at the same time the schedule is posted, you'll be able to view your Enrollment Appointment Time and begin building your Shopping Cart in PAWS.

Preparing for Your Advising Appointment(s)

You may hear from your advisor early in the semester, but if not, please know that you can reach out to them as well! If you have a faculty advisor, please note that faculty members are typically on a 10 month contract and therefore aren't always accessible during the summer months. Feel free to reach out to your major department chair with any questions. You can find their contact on the department websites. Also, Academic Affairs keeps a [Department Chairs webpage](#). Your department chair is available year-round! Also, you can reach out to the Center for Student Success with any supplemental advising questions. Depending on your needs, we'll likely ask that you follow up with your department, but we're happy to be of support and/or to point you in the right direction.

Center for Student Success Advising Resources

- [Academic Advising at The College of New Jersey](#): This page provides a general overview of advising at TCNJ and includes a list of useful resources.
- [Change of Major Advising](#): Check out this page to view change of major requirements, processes, departmental contacts, and general advising information for each major.
- [Peer Academic Coaches \(PACs\)](#): Our PACs help students learn how to navigate PAWS, prepare for advising appointments, and utilize campus resources. They meet with students on a drop-in basis. Swing by anytime during their drop-in hours!

- [Academic Success Workshops](#): CSS offers workshops throughout the fall semester to support students as they get acclimated to campus, learn about advising, and prepare for course registration.

Email Communication with TCNJ Faculty/Staff

Your TCNJ email account is your official means of communication across campus. Be sure to check your email regularly, and use your TCNJ account when emailing faculty and staff. Emails from other accounts may be sent directly to spam. If you aren't quite sure how to go about emailing someone, the below sample email provides guidance on how to write a professional email:

- Include greeting: "Dear Professor —"
- The body of your email should be concise but informative.
- Always use a gracious tone in your emails. A positive attitude might seem minor, but it can make a world of difference in how your email is written and received.
- Be sure to sign off your email with your full name and PAWS ID (for TCNJ communication).
- Example:

Dear Dr. Gazley,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. I've decided that I would like to apply to change my major to Sociology. I have completed the change of major form (attached). Can you please advise on what my next steps should be?

Thank you,
Student Name
PAWS ID: 555555

Your First Year Orientation Seminar

All new students are enrolled in an orientation seminar during their first semester. Your course may be coded as 95, 96, 98, or 99. These courses are meant to help you transition to college life - and more specifically, to TCNJ. You'll learn about campus resources, success strategies, and advising/registration processes. Though your course may be pass/unsatisfactory (ungraded), a passing grade is required for your degree.

College Organizational Structure

TCNJ is organized into different divisions that focus on providing specialized services/functions. Though you will interact and rely on some more than others, this list will help you better understand the nuts and bolts of our institution:

- **President:** The President oversees the entire institution. To learn more about our current president Dr. Michael Bernstein, [visit this webpage](#).
- **Cabinet:** TCNJ's Cabinet is made up of senior leaders for all of its divisions. To learn more about the members of the cabinet, [visit this webpage](#).
- **[Enrollment Management:](#)** The Division of Enrollment Management includes: Admissions; Records & Registration; Student Accounts; Student Financial Assistance; and Student Success & Retention.
 - **[Records & Registration \(R&R\):](#)** Records & Registration houses course scheduling/registration, degree program audits, transfer evaluations, graduation certifications, and more. They also help departments/offices with necessary reports to inform college policy/practices. R&R is often referred to as the registrar's office at other institutions.
- **[Academic Affairs:](#)** Academic Affairs serves as the home for all eight academic schools. More info on Academic Affairs below!
- **[Student Affairs:](#)** Student Affairs includes the Dean of Students/Health & Wellness; Student Development; and Athletics. There are many offices that work within these offices (including Residential Education & Housing, Student Life, and Dining Services, to name a few).
- **[Inclusive Excellence:](#)** The Division of Inclusive Excellence houses the Accessibility Resource Center; the Intercultural Center; and TCNJ's affinity groups that provide connection and support for students, faculty, and staff across campus.
- **[Operations:](#)** This division includes: Campus Police; Facilities; Human Resources; Information Technology; and Institutional Research & Analytics.
- **[College Advancement:](#)** This division includes: Advancement Services; Alumni Engagement; Communications, Marketing, & Brand Management; Development; and Government & Community Relations.

Now that we've outlined some of the divisions that make up TCNJ, we're going to drill down a bit more within Academic Affairs so that you can learn about how the schools are structured.

- **Provost:** The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs oversees all of TCNJ's academic schools and academic-related/affiliated offices. To learn more about our current Provost Dr. Margo Dellicarpini, [visit this webpage](#).
- **School:** There are 8 schools at TCNJ; 7 of these schools offer undergraduate degrees. These 7 schools are: School of the Arts & Communication, School of Business, School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, School of

Nursing & Health Sciences, and the School of Science. The 8th school is the School of Graduate, Global, & Online Education. This is where the [Arlotto Family Center for Global Engagement](#) is housed (study abroad).

- **Dean:** Each of TCNJ's 8 schools is led by a Dean. Deans are usually a former faculty member. They're passionate about their fields of study and help to keep their schools running smoothly.
- **Assistant/Associate Dean:** Each school has an Assistant or Associate Dean. The Assistant/Associate Deans carry various responsibilities, often including coordinating student advising (though the School of Business has a Coordinator who does this), support for course scheduling, addressing student concerns, etc.
- **Department Chair/Coordinator:** Each school is made up of several departments. There may be multiple majors/minors housed in a department. (Some majors, such as International Studies and Music Education, may have a program directors/coordinators.) The Department Chairs/Directors/Coordinators oversee their departments. They support faculty hiring, addressing student questions/concerns, advising, course/program reviews, assessment, etc.
- **Program Assistant:** Program Assistants (or sometimes, Program Coordinators) provide support for their department(s). They help with course scheduling, faculty contracts, event planning, addressing student/parent questions, etc.
- **Faculty:** Faculty = Professors. Your professors are your instructors (They're your teachers, but we use the terms faculty/professors/instructors in higher education). Some professors have master degrees while others have PhDs, EdDs, etc. If a professor has their doctoral degree (PhD, EdD, etc.), we refer to them as Dr. — . If they have their master degree, then you can refer to them as Professor —. Sometimes the culture of an institution determines the protocol for how we refer to faculty. If you're not sure of the degree, you can simply use "Professor —". However, keep in mind that some faculty may prefer that you call them "Dr. —" if they've earned their doctorate. This acknowledges their level of formal education (and the dedication/expertise it requires).

Campus Resources/Offices

TCNJ has MANY different offices/centers on campus that support students. We hope you'll quickly find that you have a lot of people rooting for you throughout your college career. These offices *want* you to reach out if you need additional support! Please utilize these resources early on in your academics.

[Accessibility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#)

[Anti-Violence Initiatives \(AVI\)](#)

[Bookstore](#)

[Campus Police](#)

[Career Center](#)

[Center for Student Success](#)

[Counseling and Prevention Services \(CAPS\)](#)

[Help Desk](#)

[Inclusive Excellence](#)

[Mentoring, Retention, and Success Programs](#)

[Records & Registration](#)

[Student Accounts](#)

[Student Conduct](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Life](#)

[Study Abroad \(Arlotta Family Center for Global Engagement\)](#)

[TCNJ Cares](#)

[The Office of Title IX and Sexual Misconduct](#)

[Tutoring Center](#)

TCNJ/College Lingo

Higher education has its own terminology, some you've probably never heard of until now. To help you navigate what's what, we've created this list of college lingo (some specific to TCNJ).

- **The Bulletin:** This is where you can find official degree requirements, academic policies and procedures, etc. The Bulletin gets updates on an annual basis. Your degree requirements are in place based on when you began your major. For example, if you entered TCNJ as a Finance major in Fall 2024 but then changed your major to

Communication Studies in Fall 2025, you must complete the requirements that are in place for the 2025 - 2026 academic year.

- **Course Unit:** At TCNJ, 1 course unit = 4 credits. The unit total is how much you earn for each course. Keep in mind that you need to earn a minimum number of units to graduate. Most degree programs require 30 units (or 32 units, for students who entered their major prior to Fall 2025), but some require more (Engineering majors, for example). To view your required total, see your Academic Requirements in PAWS or view your major requirements in the Bulletin.
 - Additive Credit: Developmental coursework, such as MAT 95: Intermediate Algebra is worth *additive* credit. This means that the credit is applied towards your academic load for the semester you're enrolled, but it is *not* applied towards your graduation total.
- **Semester:** At TCNJ, courses are primarily offered on a semester basis, with a fall semester and a spring semester, and courses lasting throughout the semester. However, TCNJ also offers summer and winter sessions, for those who wish to take courses at that time.
- **Quarter:** Some courses are offered for a half semester, or on a quarterly basis. These courses are indicated as 1st Quarter or 2nd Quarter and easily identified in the Course Search on PAWS. You can view the corresponding dates for these (and all) courses in the Course Search. If you're taking a Quarter course, be aware of which Quarter the course is being offered. If you're taking TWO Quarter courses, we recommend taking one in the 1st Quarter and one in the 2nd Quarter to balance your workload.
- **Add/Drop:** Add/Drop refers to the period in which students can make changes to their schedule. The Add/Drop period for each semester is listed on the Academic Calendar. While students have more time to *withdraw* from a course, dropping from a course during the Add/Drop period is done without any financial implications. Also, if you drop a course during the Add/Drop period, it does not appear on your schedule/transcript. If you withdraw from a course beyond the Add/Drop period, you will receive a "W" for that course on your transcript. For more info on course withdrawals, check out the "Course Withdrawal" definition below.
- **Course Withdrawal:** Beyond the Add/Drop period, students may opt to withdraw from a course if they are struggling academically. A course withdrawal is defined as "an official separation from a given course initiated by the student any time after the Add/Drop deadline and before the course withdrawal deadline." Deadlines for course withdrawals are strictly adhered to. Specific dates are posted on the Academic Calendar. Students withdrawing from courses within the withdrawal period will automatically receive a grade of "W". The "W" has no effect on the student's grade point average. (There is no refund for a course withdrawal.) Withdrawing from a course may have implications for: financial aid eligibility, progress towards

graduation, NCAA eligibility, housing status, involvement in campus activities, etc. It is recommended that you consult with the course instructor, your advisor, Student Financial Services and/or any other relevant faculty/staff before officially withdrawing from a course.

- **College Core:** College Core is officially defined as “a shared undergraduate academic experience designed to ensure that all TCNJ graduates have the essential skills, knowledge, and values needed to be successful and fulfilled in their personal, professional, intellectual, and civic lives.” Often referred to as “general education,” your College Core requirements complement your major requirements and ensure you’re gaining a breadth of knowledge throughout your academics.
- **PAWS:** PAWS stands for “Primary Academic Web Services.” This is your online hub for tracking degree requirements, enrolling in courses, understanding your financial aid, etc. By the time you’re reading this, you’ve probably already logged into PAWS multiple times. If you need help navigating PAWS, check out the Center for Student Success PAWS tutorials, visit Records & Registration PAWS Help, and/or meet with one of our Peer Academic Coaches (PACs) during their drop-in hours.
- **Canvas:** Canvas is the course management system that TCNJ uses. Your professors will regularly use Canvas to post important information (the syllabus, assignments, important dates, etc.).
- **Policy:** Policies are the rules that provide the framework for various processes across campus. TCNJ has a unique shared governance model in which students, faculty, and staff are included in policy creation and revisions. If you’d like to get involved in our shared governance, consider getting involved in [Student Government!](#)
- **Major:** Your major refers to your primary academic area of study. Sometimes, you’ll hear majors referred to as programs, but program is an umbrella term used for minors, certificate programs, etc. as well.
- **Minor:** Minors are typically made up of 5 course units (though some may require more units or have prerequisite courses).
- **Certificate:** TCNJ offers both undergraduate and certificate programs. Certificates typically have fewer required courses than minors. For undergraduate certificate programs, see [here](#).
- **Registration:** Registration refers to the process in which you enroll in your courses.
- **Withdrawal from the College/Leave of Absence:** Sometimes students face unexpected circumstances that prevent them from performing their best in their courses. If you find that you’re struggling to complete your coursework due to extenuating

circumstances, please reach out to your advisor to discuss the possibility of taking a Leave of Absence. Students will be required to reapply to TCNJ if they don't enroll in courses for two consecutive semesters. More info about taking a Leave of Absence or withdrawing from the college can be found [here](#). Please be aware that there are deadlines for withdrawing from all courses.

You got this!

We hope you've found the information in this syllabus helpful! For students in the Center for Student Success First Year Advising Program, you'll find that you'll be encouraged and supported in progressing through the Learning Goals/Outcomes found in this syllabus. Remember to take advantage of campus resources as you work through these Learning Outcomes. You have a lot of people/resources here to support you. Also, keep in mind that your advisor is here for support, but ultimately, it's your responsibility to take ownership of your academic success.

You got this! We're rooting for you!