

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Average Student Makes Mistake That Could Impact Career

Purpose: This vignette provides the opportunity to consider how to support a student who may have been flying under the radar because they are neither high achieving or experiencing academic challenges, but then has a situation later in their academic career that warrants support.

Student Vignette: Matt (21-year-old man who is an elementary education major) grew up in a suburban area. His parents were both public school teachers and he had known since he was in 4th grade that he wanted to follow in their footsteps. He has no backup plan—he plans to teach for a while and then hopefully pursue an administrative credential in order to become a principal. During his first two years of college he received average grades and joined a few clubs where he developed friends. He received a 3.1 GPA and seemed to be doing fine. During the spring semester, he was doing a field placement at an elementary school and his supervising teacher gave him positive feedback. However, Matt stops by your office one day and looks distraught. You ask if he is ok. He explains that he got a ticket for contributing to the delinquency of a minor while on spring break. He has not told his parents, advisor or supervising teacher. “I just feel like there is no point in even trying now, my life is over. I’ll never be a teacher. My parents are going to freak,” he paused, “what’s the point of continuing?” He mentions that he plans to skip class and just go back to his studio apartment next to campus.

Guiding Questions:

1. What are the immediate issues that need to be addressed? What might be the next steps for supporting this student?
2. What services or supports exist on campus or in the community that could be leveraged to support this student? How could you help to coordinate support for the student?
3. Have you seen similar situations happen with other students? What systems are in place to identify when an “average” student experiences a challenge that could derail their academic pursuits or personal life?
4. Reflect on the concept of ecological validation. How could the norms framing student interactions (holistic, proactive, strengths-oriented, and developmental) and the work of educators (collaborative and reflective) be leveraged to support Matt?
5. Based on your responses to question 4, are there ways to adjust the current supports and resources available for students? Who would need to be involved in that process? What are the next steps?