PASS

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Student Nears Graduation Without Clear Career Path

Purpose: This vignette highlights the challenges of a student nearing graduation without a clear direction for securing a job and beginning a career.

Student Vignette: Jahmon is a 23-year-old student who is beginning his fifth year of college and will graduate in May with a degree in psychology. He does not plan to become a psychologist; he chose the degree because he found the content interesting while completing his general education requirements during his first year of college. He heard that psychology degrees could be used in many different fields. As a student, he worked off-campus in a warehouse to pay rent. He likes sorting and organizing but does not want to do physical labor for much longer. He did not receive scholarships and relied on student loans to cover the cost of tuition. You meet with him early in the fall semester. He shares, "College has been great, but I don't know what to do next. I just want a basic job that will pay my bills and let me spend time with my family." You ask about his career exploration. He has not done an internship, but has attended an event where a panel shared about their work as psychologists and psychiatrists. He said he does not want to do that. He went to a career fair his second year but was unsure what to do and left after a few minutes. Most of his career exploration over the past month has been on social media. He recounts how several people posted videos about spending a ton of money on college and getting loans and then could not find a job. He worries that will be his story.

Guiding Questions:

1. Have you encountered a similar situation? If so, briefly reflect on those experiences. How did you support the student? What approaches were beneficial? What approaches were less successful?

2. What might be next steps for Jahmon? What resources exist on campus that may be helpful? What strengths does Jahmon have that can be leveraged?

3. Given your role (e.g., academic advisor, program director, faculty, etc.), what might you do to support Jahmon? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting his needs? What resources or opportunities can you connect Jahmon with on and off-campus?

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 Jahmon?

5. What policies and practices could be shifted to support students in a similar situation? What would need to happen to initiate change? Who would be involved in this process?