

### Student Struggles to Balance Family and College Expectations

**Purpose:** This vignette highlights the experiences of a student who is attempting to balance family priorities with college expectations.

**Student Vignette:** Brian is an 18-year-old business major who hopes to work in the local area. During the first few classes, you learn that Brian lives with his mother, two younger sisters, and grandmother. His mom works two jobs, so Brian helps his sisters get to school as well as care for his grandmother who has medical issues. When you meet with Brian on a Wednesday around midsemester, you find that he is contemplating leaving school. He often arrives to his 8:00am class 5-10 minutes late, “Sometimes it takes longer than I think to get from my sisters’ school to campus.” As a result of arriving late, Brian has lost half of his attendance points. He also needs to miss a lab next week because he is taking his grandmother to the doctor. Brian also plans to start working an overnight shift at a grocery store to help cover family expenses. Brian prides himself on being a good role model for his sisters, but he doesn’t know how to balance everything. Brian has not spoken with his professors. He had heard in high school that college faculty expect students to be independent and figure things out on their own. When you meet with him, Brian shares, “I think underestimated how hard balancing everything was going to be.”

#### 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 Brian? What resources exist on campus that may be helpful? What strengths does Brian have that can be leveraged?
3. Given your role, what might you do to support Brian? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting his needs? What resources or opportunities can you connect Brian 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 Brian?
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?