PASS

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Working Student Taking Mostly Online Classes Requires Advice

Purpose: This vignette highlights how a student who works full time attempts to manage their course load while taking mostly online classes.

Student Vignette: James (a 20 year old man who is a first-generation college student) is in his second year of college and has thus far only taken two in person classes during his college career. He lives at home with his single mother and two younger siblings, who he sometimes drops off or picks up at school. James also works 45 hours per week at Taco Bell. He has created his work schedule so that he works on the weekends, but he still has three full work days during the week. Therefore, his schedule consists of mostly online classes and he only comes to campus on Mondays for one in person course, assuming his familial obligations allow him to that day. James often feels overwhelmed with the amount of responsibilities he is juggling and finds that skipping online synchronous sessions or submitting assignments late are often the only strategies he has to attempt to reduce his load. He still has not declared a major and feels uncertain about the direction in which his college career is headed. James has not been able to attend any of his professors' office hours, nor does he feel comfortable reaching out to them since they have such limited interaction online. He does not feel that he has made any connections with peers either, since the online context does not really allow for community building and for students to get to know one another.

Guiding Questions:

1. Have you seen similar situations? If so, briefly reflect on those experiences. How did you support the student? What was successful? What was not successful?

2. What is the key issue(s) that needs to be addressed to support the student before the semester ends? What resources exist on campus that might be helpful to the student? What are the student's strengths that can be leveraged?

3. Consider your professional role (e.g., academic advisor, program director, faculty, registrar, etc.) and who you know, who might best serve James in this situation? How could you support the student? How could you connect the student to different people and resources on campus? What would you say to the student?

4. Reflect the concept of ecological validation. How could the norms framing student interactions (holistic, proactive, strengths-oriented, and development) and the work of educators (collaborative and reflective) be leveraged to support this student?

5. What policies and practices across campus could be adjusted to support students in similar situations? What would be the process of making those adjustments? Who would need to be involved? What are the next steps?