

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Unpacking Academic Preparation Gaps and Performance Concerns for Students

Purpose: This student vignette illustrates how students may struggle because of academic preparation gaps prior to attending college, highlighting the importance of acknowledging these gaps and providing proactive interventions.

Student Vignette:

Amaya couldn't understand why all of her peers were breezing through the introductory statistics course, while she felt like she was falling more and more behind each week. She started to make friends in the course, trying to form a study group before the midterm. In doing so, she learned that many of her classmates had taken an advanced statistics course during high school. However, this type of course was not offered at her high school. She had only been able to take basic algebra classes. Amaya continued to try to form study groups, but also wanted to reach out to her professors for more support. She comes to you, explains how she has been feeling behind in the course, and asks what other resources may help her improve her performance.

Guiding Questions:

1. Have you encountered a situation like this? If so, briefly reflect on those experiences. How did you support the student? What approaches were beneficial? What approaches were less successful?
2. Describe the challenges Amaya is navigating. What are the key issues that need to be addressed to support Amaya before the semester ends? What resources exist on campus that may be helpful? What are her strengths that can be leveraged in this situation?
3. Given your role (e.g., academic advisor, program director, faculty, etc.), what might you do to support Amaya? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting Amaya's needs? What resources or opportunities can you connect her 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 Amaya?
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??