

## Promoting At-Promise Student Success

### Supporting a Student Experiencing the Loss of a Program or Department in Their Major

**Purpose:** This student vignette highlights how university policy changes and budget cuts may impact student decisions regarding major or career choice.

#### **Student Vignette:**

Andy received an email early Monday morning announcing that the Gender Studies program was being discontinued due to budget cuts and policy changes at the university. The email explained that the program would now be integrated into a larger and more general Humanities Department. He was already halfway through his major requirements and was uninterested in the Humanities Department's "alternative pathways" under this new transition. Andy wondered whether he should switch his major, change schools, or choose a new career path. He headed to the student center to meet his peer mentor, hoping she could help him decide the best path forward.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

1. As a peer mentor/student leader, 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 Andy is navigating. What are the key issues that need to be addressed to support Andy before the semester ends? What resources exist on campus that may be helpful? What are his 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 Andy? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting Andy's needs? What resources or opportunities can you connect him 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 Andy?
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?