

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Supporting a Student Struggling with Food Choices in the Dining Hall (Food Allergies Example)

Purpose: This student vignette highlights a student looking for support in navigating dining options that would not put her health at risk.

Student Vignette:

Cheryl picked at the grilled cheese that sat on her plate, the same one she had picked up in the school cafeteria two weeks in a row. There was nothing else that was safe for her to eat in the cafeteria. The dining hall staff is helpful, but they did not always have ingredient lists available, and she always worried about cross-contamination, given her severe nut allergy. Her roommate noticed her eating Cheez-Its for dinner and asked if there was anything she could do to help her find more nutritious food options on campus. She was grateful for her roommate's support as her energy was noticeably depleting, and she couldn't focus in class. Cheryl decided to reach out to you to ask what resources the university offers that she could get to improve her health.

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 Cheryl is navigating. What are the key issues that need to be addressed to support Cheryl 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 Cheryl? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting Cheryl'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 that frame student interactions (holistic, proactive, strengths-oriented, and developmental) and educators' work (collaborative and reflective) be leveraged to support Cheryl?
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?