

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Student Looking to Switch Majors and Maintain Financial Aid Package

Purpose: This vignette highlights the questions that may arise for students concerned about losing financial aid, as they attempt to choose or change their major.

Student Vignette:

Upon enrolling at the university, Joshua received a scholarship that covered 75% of his tuition, as a political science major. In his first year, he took his mandatory political science courses that offered him a foundation for his studies in future semesters. In the first semester of his second year, Joshua decided to take a business course as one of his electives. He quickly realized that he enjoys learning about economics and business analytics more than politics and public policy. Joshua comes in for advising, hoping to switch his major to business. However, he states that he is unsure whether or not switching majors will impact his scholarship. You provide Joshua with the necessary information regarding how his scholarship would be affected if he decides to officially switch majors. Joshua expresses his gratitude for your support and asks for additional scholarships that may be available to him based on his new major and existing background qualifications.

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 Joshua is navigating? What are the key issues that need to be addressed to support Joshua before he graduates? 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 Joshua? What are some limitations in your current knowledge and skills in meeting Joshua'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 Joshua?
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?