

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Burnt-Out Student Who Has Taken on Too Many Responsibilities

Purpose: This student vignette highlights the various responsibilities that students may hold both on and off campus, and how that may impact their ability to succeed in the classroom.

Student Vignette:

Mimi has been rushing across campus all week—between her work-study shift at the admissions office, evening classes, and campus organization events, Mimi was beginning to feel overwhelmed and burnt out. As Vice President of the Student Council Committee, she has been spending a lot of time coordinating on-campus events for Parents Weekend next week. Her inbox was flooded with class reminders, vendor information for upcoming campus events, and student questions from the course for which she serves as a teaching assistant. On top of her leadership positions in on-campus organizations and work-study responsibilities, Mimi has a full course schedule with a challenging curriculum. She also volunteered every Thursday evening at an after-school program in her neighborhood.

As she looked ahead to plan for the upcoming week, she noticed that she had a huge paper due that she had yet to start. She thinks to herself that she can just pull another all-nighter to get this done after she volunteers on Thursday. She told herself she could handle all her obligations because they were all very important to her. However, she knew that she was letting people down by not being fully present in any one place at a time, or giving her full attention to the most important things. She needed to find a way to prevent herself from burning out and cut back on her responsibilities wherever possible. Mimi reaches out to you for support.

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