

## Promoting At-Promise Student Success

### High-Performing Student Struggling to Adjust to College Life

**Purpose:** This vignette highlights challenges that students may face in navigating and adjusting to an unfamiliar college environment, and provides insight into how to guide students towards resilience and success.

**Student Vignette:**

Layla is a first-generation college student, who is just starting her second semester of her freshman year. She is taking an introductory psychology course and regularly attends class lectures. As you are about to enter the fourth week of the semester, you notice that Layla has failed to turn in any of her assignments. As a first-generation college student, Layla is still struggling to understand what the assignments are asking for and how to submit the assignments, so she seems to be neglecting them altogether. Additionally, Layla is trying to maintain relationships with her friends and family back home while integrating into this unfamiliar environment and keeping track of assignment deadlines simultaneously. She prioritizes her social life and personal relationships over her coursework. Layla's own personal experiences and her desire to help others led her to pursue a degree in social work, so she really wants to do well in her courses. She attends your office hours seeking more support and guidance on how to find balance and better adjust.

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