

# Purdue University Calumet

Academic Advisor Training



Welcome to Purdue University Calumet advisor training.



# First Generation College Students

Part III

In this presentation, we will cover the topic of First Generation College students. This is the final session.

# Let's Review



- Part I
  - Who are first-generation college students?
  - Preconceived perceptions
  - Time management & Financial literacy
  - *Discussion*
- Part II
  - Being a self-advocate
  - Student referrals
  - Campus Network and Resources for Students
  - *Activity*

Let's take a moment a review what we have learned so far from our previous sessions.

In Part I:

- We defined who first-generation (first-generation) college students are.
- We learned that there are often preconceived perceptions of how college is from the student and their parents.
- We spoke about the important topics of Time Management and Financial Literacy.
- We finished with a discussion about first-generation students.

In Part II:

- We spoke about self-advocacy and how the advisor can encourage this with a first-generation student.
- We then covered the topics of student referrals and campus network/resources for the students.
- We finished with a quick activity involving three student scenarios.

## Topics covered

- Having difficult conversations
- Being a coach/mentor
- Advisor Resources
- *Discussion*
- Wrap Up

A word cloud graphic on a black background. The words are arranged in a cluster and vary in size and color. The words include: Mentor (vertical, red), Students (vertical, white), College (top, yellow-green), Academic (middle, green), Learning (vertical, white), Success (top right, yellow), Difficult (middle right, red), First-Generation (middle, orange), Coach (middle right, orange), and Conversations (bottom, yellow).

What will we cover in this final session?

- We will begin by talking about having difficult conversations with first-generation students, particularly related to academic performance and changing a degree.
- Then, we will cover some tips and tricks on being a good mentor to first-generation students.
- Thereafter, we covered a few resources for an advisor and wrap up this seminar.

We finished this session with a quick discussion and the made some closing remarks.

## Having difficult conversations



- Having a conversation with a student who is having an academic block
  - Identify the problem
  - Suggest career counseling, supplemental instruction, or other resources
  - Reinforce the degree requirements
    - Are they able to fulfill these requirements?
  - “Plan B” option?

Let’s take a moment to talk about a touchy, yet important subject. This involves having difficult conversations with your students.

In particular, we will talk about two important items:

- Having a conversation with a student who is having an academic block
- Convincing a student to change their degree due to academic performance

First, let’s talk about the conversation in reference to an academic block.

Advisor Barb Osmon stated one thing you will always want to do is talk to the student, or in otherwise, find out what is going on. Is it a problem that you can rectify?

Sue Finke noted if you cannot rectify the problem, or feel you (or the student) needs additional assistance, do not hesitate to offer assistance via career counseling, supplemental instruction, the counseling center, or other resources. Those departments/areas are here to help.

Janet Navarro suggests asking the student if they are fully aware of the degree requirements and be sure to reinforce them. Be sure to check if they are confident they are

able to fulfill these requirements. Offer additional support as needed.

Bill Baginski also stated to ask them if they have a plan "B" in mind. This can simply be moving to another specialty track within their degree field or department.

## Having difficult conversations

- Convincing a student to change their degree due to academic performance
  - Best thing (if possible): Be Honest.
  - Have a “real” talk (if that is okay with the student)
  - Show them the “real picture”
  - Use yourself as an example
  - Introduce a “Plan B”



Now, let's cover the conversation that can be a little tough: Talking to a student about changing their degree due to academic performance.

For the students who need a little more tough love, it is best to be honest, if at all possible. Anna Kent noted to ask the student if you can have a “real” talk with them. Most students appreciate honest versus items being sugarcoated. Remember, know if this will be a good outcome for the student (e.g. you know they will not have a breakdown after you deliver the bad news).

Kathleen Galovic recommends to support your conversation by showing them the “real picture.” This can be by showing data of success and failure rates for that particular degree. Susan Van Til reminds you to be sure to use yourself as an example. Tell them of your success and failure during school, if desired. This can help them know they are not alone and that we all have triumphs and challenges.

After delivering the news, ask them if they have thought about an alternate degree and listen to their thoughts. Lisa Dittrich reminds you to always have a “Plan B” ready to introduce to them.

## Being a coach/mentor



*Coaching students to reach out to instructors for assistance:*

- Help them overcome their intimidation of their professors
  - Give them confidence and a “back bone”
  - Work on their communication skills
  - Encourage them to take advantage of the communication mediums offered
- Teach them to ask a question and not be offensive when asking for help
  - Show respect towards their peers and their professor
  - Let them know the professors are there to help

A rewarding takeaway as an advisor is to make a positive difference in the student’s life. Serving as a coach or mentor can help you make that positive difference.

In the previous we discussion, we just asked about how you would handle a situation where a student was reluctant to reach out to an instructor for help.

Let’s cover some pointers:

First, help the student overcome their intimidation of their professors

- Give them confidence and a “back bone” to work with. You can do this by work on their communication skills. Advisor Amber Schuler states that role-play scenarios can be extremely helpful with this tactic. In addition, encourage them to take advantage of the communication mediums offered by the instructor, such as open office hours, phone, email, etc.

Second, teach them to ask a question and not be offensive when asking for help, as noted by Samantha Horn.



- Anna Kent reminds you to ensure they show respect towards their peers and their professor. This can go a long way.
- Most importantly, let them know the professors are there to help. They will not know you are struggling unless you talk to them.

## Being a coach/mentor

- Maintain frequent contact with the student
  - Inform them of your “open office” policy
  - Make them feel comfortable giving you feedback whether it be in person, by phone or email, etc.
- Utilize your experience as an advisor
- Help the student become acclimated to the campus and educational environment
  - Provide them with information on campus resources during their first semester

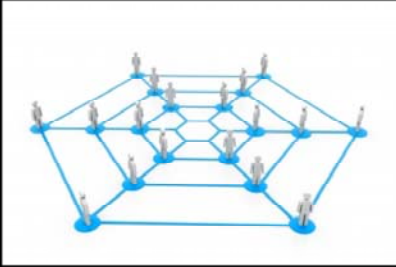


As a coach/mentor, it is imperative to maintain frequent contact with the student. Barb Osmon states to let them know you are always available to chat and that you have an “open office” policy and can talk with them about anything and direct them to additional resources if needed. Janet Navarro stated that it is also crucial to provide feedback to your student about their progress. You can do this by giving them feedback in person, by phone or email, etc. Make sure they feel the same way about providing a response back to you.

Bill Baginski reminds you to be sure to utilize your past experience as an advisor or a “people person.” This can often make the difference in how comfortable a student feels at the university.

Speaking of making them comfortable, it is extremely important to help your student become acclimated to the campus. You can do this by providing them with information on campus resources during their first semester.

# Resources and Tips for an Advisor



- Best resources:
  - Center for Learning and Academic Success
  - Supervisor
  - Peers and other advisors
  - Campus Departments
- Additional Tips:
  - Learn about the “little golden nuggets” of information (sources) to help students
  - Guest speakers share vital information during freshman seminars
  - Create a personal resource manual for yourself
  - Keep a checklist for each student
  - Accept the fact that you can’t do, nor know everything: Always learning/Always teaching

We’ve covered a lot of things about the students, but what about you? As noted earlier, we know that the Dean of Students office is often the best resource for the student, but let’s take a second and wonder: What are the best resources for an advisor?

Some of the best resources, as noted by the PUC advisors, include:

- The Center for Learning and Academic Success. This is your main information hub for “all the happenings.”
- Always feel free to reach out to your supervisor. Similar to the CLAS, they want what is best for you and what is best for the students.
- Your peers and other advisors can be considered your close friends. They were in your shoes once and are happy to help or answer any questions you may have.
- Campus Departments are another good resource to work with. Make an appointment with them to introduce yourself and understand “how the department works.” This can help you when you are scheduling classes and other activities.

The PUC advisors also provided these additional tips, which include:

- Learn about the “little golden nuggets” of information (sources) to help students
- Guest speakers share vital information during freshman seminars
- Create a personal resource manual for yourself. This should include items that you will

commonly do, such as student scheduling or DegreeWorks.

- Speaking of resources, be sure to create and maintain a checklist for each student. Some highlights include:
  - Check off items as they go (on their plan of study)
  - Give them a copy of DegreeWorks every time
  - Keep updates in their paper file
- Most importantly, don't stress yourself by trying to learn everything at once. This can be done over time. Following the motto of "Always Learning & Always Teaching" can be a great focus.

## *Discussion*

How would you handle a situation where a student is not performing well in their major related courses but has always wanted to be in that major/career and is adamant about continuing?



Let's pause for a moment for a quick discussion.

We just finished talking about having difficult students in reference to a student with an academic block or them needing to change their degree due to their progress.

You have a student in your office who is conversing with you about their recent grades, which are considered unsatisfactory. The student is currently majoring in Technology, but have excellent writing skills. You are considering asking the student to switch their major to English as you know they would excel in that program; however, you remember the student mentioning that both their parents are in the technology field. The student is adamant about staying in technology because "that's where the money is."

*How would you handle a situation where a student is not performing well in their major related courses but has always wanted to be in that major/career and is adamant about continuing?*

Take a moment to construct your answer. Feel free to continue on with the presentation after you have formulated your response.

\*\*\*The presentation continues when you advance to the next slide\*\*\*

## Review of Part III



- Having difficult conversations
- Being a coach/mentor
- Resources for Students
- *Discussion*

What did we cover in this final session?

- We began by speaking about having difficult conversations with first-generation students.
- We then covered some tips and tricks on being a good mentor to first-generation students.
- Finally, we provided some resources and tips for advisors and ended with a quick discussion.

# Wrap Up

## Part I

- Who are first-generation college students?
- Preconceived perceptions
- Time management
- Financial literacy

## Part II

- Being a self-advocate
- Student referrals
- Campus Network and Resources for Students

So, to sum it all up. What was covered in these sessions?

- In Part I, we defined who first-generation are. We also examined some of the preconceived perceptions from the perspective of the student and the parent. We talked about important topics, such as time management and financial literacy.
- In Part II, we covered the topics of self-advocacy, student referrals, and networking and resources for the student.



## Wrap Up

### Part III

- Having difficult conversations
- Being a coach/mentor
- Advisor Resources and Tips

Thank You!

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- In Part III, we spoke about having difficult conversations with the student in relation to their academic performance or changing a major. We continued with some tips and tricks about being a coach/mentor for the student. Finally, we talked about student referrals and our campus network/resources.
- We thank you for joining us today with this brief presentation about first-generation college students. If you have any questions, you can reach out to your peers, your supervisor, department, or the Center for Learning and Academic Success.

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