

CCRCWORKSHOPS

ASK & CONNECT in Practice

Activities Aim

These activities are meant to start discussions that you can take back to your college and continue engaging in after the workshop is complete. They are intended to help you start thinking about how you might be able to put the principles of the Ask-Connect-Inspire-Plan program onboarding framework into practice on your own campus by 1) reflecting on the story of an individual student and their advisor, and 2) imagining how the supports you might want to put into place for that student could be customized and expanded to ensure the needs of all students are being met.

Activity #1: Identifying Opportunities for Engaging Individual Students

Instructions: Please read the first two vignettes below. The first vignette describes an experience from the student's perspective and the second describes the same experience from an advisor's perspective. Afterward, discuss the prompts and take inventory of your questions, ideas, and concerns. The student vignette is based on the experience of an actual student and was adapted from qualitative research described by Xueli Wang in her book, *On My Own*¹.

Student Experience

A first-generation Black student who recently graduated from high school enrolls in the IT program at the community college with the idea of getting a short term credential to get a job in the field, so that they can earn money while they are pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science at a four-year university. The student is highly motivated, but receives little guidance about courses that may help them achieve these goals. Because of some bad experiences in high school with advising, they feel uncomfortable going to the advising center and asking for help. The student misses orientation and selects their courses to the best of their ability. Because they are one of the only students of color in this program, the student feels a little isolated, but after a year of course-taking, the student meets with an advisor about transferring to a four-year university. In the meeting, the advisor seems uncertain about which courses will transfer, and asks the student why they were in a certificate program if they wanted to transfer. The student didn't realize that the IT program was not preparing them to transfer in computer science. The advisor tells the student that it's likely that very few credits will actually transfer. Devastated that much of their time in the past year has been wasted and they weren't in the right program to pursue a four-year degree, the student decides to stop out and take a break from school to focus on working.

¹ Wang, X. (2021). *On my own: The challenge and promise of building equitable STEM transfer pathways*. Harvard Education Press.

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Advisor Perspective

The advisor was frustrated, as they had never seen the student before and felt that they would have been able to make a difference with the student had they met a little earlier in the student's academic career. When the advisor asked why the student didn't attend orientation or talk to anyone in advising, the student said that they didn't know orientation was important and that they didn't talk to an advisor because there was always a line and they had to go to work. The advisor is disappointed that the student is stopping out, as it appears they are very close to getting their IT credential, but the student is unable to see the value in the certificate anymore. The advisor feels discouraged in their position, as they had no idea the student's plan or their intentions, and is frustrated because they typically don't meet with new students unless the student seeks out advising. The high student-to-advisor ratio also makes it hard to get to know and stay in touch with students. The advisor is discouraged because they often feel like they are telling students bad news. The advisor feels that they need more support to do their job well.

Discussion Questions:

- What missed opportunities or areas of disconnect did you observe in the vignettes?
- How could *Ask* and *Connect* practices be used to create a different experience for the student?
 - What questions would you ask the student?
 - In what ways could the questions you ask the student be used to *connect* the student to resources and supports?
 - How would you know if the student was able to access and use the resources you recommended?
- What existing practices and resources at your college could you draw from to implement your ideas for *asking* and *connecting* the student?

Activity #2: Turning Individual Engagement into Universal Support

Instructions: Please read the "Alternative Experience" vignette to imagine how the principles of *Ask* and *Connect* could have been used to better support the student. Afterward discuss the prompts and take inventory of your questions, ideas, and concerns.

Alternative Experience

All advisors have a caseload of students within a broad field of study. The faculty and advisors in the Information Technology and Computer Science area meet regularly to discuss the students they have in common, to share what the students have said about their goals, and their perceived level of engagement in the course and the college. The advisors also help train faculty on basic advising information in return, so that they are better able to respond to student's questions should they come up. In the first semester, the instructor of the introductory IT course makes meeting with an

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advisor to develop an educational plan a mandatory assignment, and makes it their responsibility to have a one-on-one meeting with every student about the course and their lives and goals before the semester is up. Finally, the instructor dedicates a day in the course to talking about peer-supports, tutoring, and resources available to each student. Due to this system, the first generation college student is introduced to the support structure from the get go, and is introduced to multiple people that can help the student address their needs. The meeting with the advisor helps the student plan for transfer from the beginning, and presents accurate transfer information to the student on the programs at their local university. The student is also connected to a First-Generation Peer Student group, where first generation students can message the group about their questions without fear of judgment, and plan study and social meet ups. Through this, the student is connected to the institution and stays through to transfer with their associates to their local four-year institution.

Discussion Questions:

- Did the alternative scenario give you any additional ideas about *Ask* and *Connect* practices you might be able to implement at your college?
- How could you customize your ideas for *Ask* and *Connect* practices to meet the unique onboarding needs of different student populations?
- In what ways might you be able to integrate *Ask* and *Connect* practices to provide a coordinated support network, rather than sending students to a variety of isolated / stand-alone services? Are there ways that student support services and teaching faculty can collaborate to provide integrated support for all students?
- Are there any new resources or changes to policy and practice that would be needed to implement your ideas? Who else would you need to involve in conversations about *Ask* and *Connect* in order to move forward with implementing your ideas?