

Reframing Struggle: Advising First-Year Students Through a College-Readiness Approach

Christina Fabrey and Amber Zoe Smith
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College Readiness Challenge Area: Time Management and Goal-Setting	
<i>Challenge in this area might sound like...</i>	<i>Ways to Respond</i>
“I just can’t stop procrastinating.”	“I know it might feel that way, but you can change that behavior if you can understand why it's happening. Do you find yourself procrastinating more when you don't understand what to do next, or when you know what to do but don't want to do it?” (encouraging growth mindset)
“I’m so excited for all the opportunities here, so I keep saying yes, but then I realize there's not enough time.”	“That's so easy to do with so many student organizations available. What are your priorities?” (naming transitional challenges)
“I slept in the library last night because I had to study all day for my midterm.”	“Lots of students believe that studying is a matter of quantity rather than quality, but the Student Success Center helps many students learn how to use their study time more effectively. Have you gone to an SSC seminar on study strategies?” (normalizing help-seeking behavior)
College Readiness Challenge Area: Self-Care	
<i>Challenge in this area might sound like...</i>	<i>Ways to Respond</i>
“In college, you can only pick two: school, friends, or sleep. I picked school and friends.”	“Balancing your schedule is one of the big things many new students need to learn how to do--your days are structured very differently than they were in high school. How are you feeling about your time management skills?” (naming transitional challenges)
“I gained the Freshman 15 and it's so annoying--I'll never lose it.”	“Losing weight can be hard and takes a lot of effort, just like changing any habit. How have you changed a habit in the past?” (encouraging growth mindset)
“I know I should go to class, but I just can't get out of bed in the morning--I'm really struggling with my mental health.”	“That's really hard, and it sounds like it's affecting your life significantly. Many students find that seeing a counselor can make a big difference in developing new coping strategies. Have you tried visiting Cook Counseling?” (normalizing help-seeking behavior)

College Readiness Challenge Area: Resource Utilization

<i>Challenge in this area might sound like...</i>	<i>Ways to Respond</i>
“None of my faculty know who I am; I wouldn't know how to even start a conversation with them.”	“A lot of students feel intimidated about initiating conversation with faculty, but it's an important skill to have, and many students find it easier once they have a strategy. What might be a good starting point for you--office hours, hanging back after class, sending an email...?” (naming transitional challenges)
“My laptop died, so my teacher thinks I'm not attending class, but I can't afford to replace it.”	“Technology problems can be beyond your control. I'm so glad you mentioned this to me--did you know Virginia Tech provides financial support for students in situations like this? You can fill out the Dean of Students form for emergency financial assistance or look into library equipment loans, for example.” (normalizing help-seeking behavior)
“I wanted to be in this major, but I'm just not a math person.”	“Math can be really hard, but it's a skill that you can improve just like any other skill. Have you ever tried tutoring? Sometimes it can help to hear from another student who has overcome struggles with math.” (encouraging growth mindset)

College Readiness Challenge Area: Resource Utilization

<i>Challenge in this area might sound like...</i>	<i>Ways to Respond</i>
“With all the Covid restrictions, I can't make friends here.”	“I know it can feel that way when you can't rely on your normal ways of meeting people. It's different than what you're used to, but there are many Covid-friendly ways to get involved here. What kinds of activities would you enjoy?” (encouraging growth mindset)
“I don't know anyone else in my major.”	“Sometimes it can be hard to meet people in class, so going to out-of-class events might be easier. Some departments have events and student organizations connected to different majors. Have you checked to see what your department offers?” (normalizing help-seeking behavior)
“I just don't know if I belong here.”	“It can take time to feel connected to a new community. What have you tried so far? What would you like to try that you haven't?” (naming transitional challenges)