Common Scenarios

This resource includes scenarios related to finishing coursework, addressing basic needs and engaging on campus that can present barriers for students to complete a degree or certificate. The suggested guidance on how to move forward in these types of scenarios were developed by staff from colleges and community-based organizations.

While some of these scenarios can be prevented through campus programs and campaigns, others may best be addressed through personalized coaching with students.



**Finishing Coursework**

**My student wants to finish their transfer Associate’s degree. However, they need additional classes to earn their Associate’s degree and want to transfer to a university as soon as possible. What are their options?**

**We recommend that there are two options to explore:**

Option 1: If they are interested in transferring immediately, but are still in process of finishing their degree requirements, they can complete a “reverse transfer.” This means that they take whatever missing requirements from their degree and any additional classes required for their major at their transfer university. After taking their required classes at their transfer university, they would send their university transcript to the community college previously attended and follow their graduation and credit evaluation process. We recommend that the community college keeping a list of “reverse transfer” students and contacting them annually to see if they have finished the requirements for their Associate’s degree.

Option 2: If the student wants to transfer immediately to a university, they can dual-enroll at both the university and community college. This means that they would take classes at both colleges at the same time. They may want to do this if the class they need is offered at a community college during a time that fits their schedule or is cheaper. If they are on financial aid, they will likely need to work with that office for consortium agreement paperwork to get funding for both sets of college classes.

**My student’s last required course(s) to meet graduation requirements are not offered at this institution:**

When a class is not offered and a student is near completion, you should present in a calm and reassuring demeanor as a student may be experiencing high stress levels, anxiety, pressure and uncertainty. Although final course requirement(s) may not be currently offered at the students’ college, you have the ability to assist the student in identifying an acceptable course to fulfill the requirement from another institution. This process has a few moving parts but can be done by reviewing the eligible course(s) to meet the completion requirement, reviewing location options and assisting with financial aid. **We recommend taking the following three steps with student.**

1. Identify what requirements are missing for the student and if this course is available at any nearby campuses.
2. Identify the most convenient campus for the student to take the course either in person or online. It is worthwhile to discuss whether a student has taken online course in the past, and what support (if any) they needed to be successful in the course. Once a preferred location is selected, it is important to check in with the credential evaluation team at the student’s current college to ensure the course will successfully transfer over and fulfill the program requirements.
3. Support the student to ensure their financial aid and/or tuition can transfer over to the campus they’ve selected to take the course. In some situations, a consortium agreement may allow for a student’s funding to transfer from one institution to the other. This is not always the case and requires more time. In the event the two colleges do not having a consortium agreement, an advisor or financial aid staff member can assist the student in updating their FAFSA/WASFA. Once the FAFSA/WASFA is updated to include the second campus, you can encourage the student to contact the second campus’ financial aid department to ensure that the paperwork is in order.

**My students have finished all of their degree requirements except math. They placed into pre-college math and have several courses to complete before they are eligible for college math.**

Despite most colleges’ best efforts to encourage early completion of math requirements, many students choose to delay this requirement until the end. Students choose to defer enrolling into math for a variety of reasons, but often as a result of anxiety or a desire to place into a higher level course.

**We recommend exploring whether the campus has resources so that a student receives support so they may place into college math.**

Students who choose to independently review math content to seek higher placement often lack the resources, structure and support (as well as the previous math history) to successfully reassess into a higher level. Students with math anxiety either aren’t aware or lack the tools to overcome this barrier. First, inform the student of placement options, including any assessment test requirements. Then explore on campus and online resources. To that end, it is worthwhile to learn whether the college offers the following options:

* Multiple placement options in pre-college math courses with tools available for students to review placement assessments.
* Math review courses to provide students with structured time/resources to properly review the math content before reassessment or enrollment in a math class.
* A math faculty member who serves as an institutional math advisor to help students navigate assessment review tools, placement options and sources/solutions of math anxiety.
* A campus counseling department that leads math anxiety/test anxiety workshops for students
* Alternative class formats to give students the ability to complete math in a manner that is congruent with their learning style and math goals. Some campuses provide self-paced, computer-mediated math lab courses can give students the option to accelerate or decelerate course content at a pace that works for them.

College advising departments can proactively help students by identifying degree-seeking students who have not completed math within their first year; outreach campaigns can include personal phone calls and connection to the math advisor for assistance. We also recommend that you track how often this issue occurs and share this information with academic deans, department chairs, and other instructional leadership.

**Addressing basic needs**

**My student is experiencing food insecurity.**

According to the [Beyond Financial Aid](https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/beyond-financial-aid-2018-03.pdf) toolkit, close to half of college students (48%) reported experiencing food insecurity in the past month. The toolkit cites research conducted by the [National Student Campaign against Hunger and Homelessness](https://studentsagainsthunger.org/) that students of color and those who are in the first generation in their family to go to college are more likely to have spells of hunger.

When a student shares that they are experiencing food insecurity, it is an opportunity to partner with the student in identifying campus and community resources that are available. Exploration of resources on campus can begin with determining if a food pantry is available. The search then extends to off campus resources. It is important to remember the search should reflect a location that is the most convenient for the student, not necessarily the closest to the college.

If a food pantry is available on campus, it is important to share the location of the pantry, identify key personnel of the pantry and offer to make a connection between the student and the pantry. Making connections with off campus resources and leveraging community based organizations through making referrals is an important piece of student completion support. If WorkSource Connection Sites, Workforce departments, Educational Opportunity Centers, United Way of King County Benefits Hubs, or other embedded community based organizations are on the campus, they is a great beginning point.

Students experiencing food insecurity are often impacted by housing insecurity, such as paying rent, mortgage or utility bills. As noted above, every campus has unique community resources. Calling 2-1-1 can be a starting point for student who is seeking housing.

[Beyond Financial Aid](https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/beyond-financial-aid-2018-03.pdf) includes exemplars of programs that address the needs of low-income students beginning on page

**My student is in their last quarter of classes and has exhausted their financial aid. What options do they have for covering tuition, fees and books?**

It’s not uncommon for students to exhaust their nine full-time quarters of financial aid eligibility before they complete. Students may experience barriers throughout their academic journey that impact their academic performance like switching degree paths, repeating courses, providing financial support to family members or choosing courses without an academic plan. Factors like these and many more can result in a student running out of financial aid.

**We recommend that campus departments explore whether emergency (also called triage) funding is available to students.**

Funding triage programs are created by building on the collective expertise of staff from different campus departments, including Financial Aid, Workforce Education, campus Foundation (fund raising) offices, community-based organizations and campus emergency funds to efficiently identify alternative funding sources. On certain campuses, simple intake forms can serve as the tool for faculty and staff to refer students to these cross-functional triage teams. If your campus, does not have a form, process or committee, we highly recommend creating one or more to address this systemic issue in a meaningful way for students.

**We recommend that campuses proactively assist students before they lose their financial aid**.

Either financial aid, advising or other departments may run quarterly reports and conduct outreach campaigns for students who are identified through the following:

* Reviewing records to determine who is close to hitting timeframe (at 7th or 8th quarter) and have not completed a degree or certificate.
* Students who are enrolled in classes but have not paid their tuition by the deadline.

Campaigns can be conducted in a progressive format, starting as a robocall or text message, followed by an email and ending with a personal phone call. Students are not often aware of the ramifications of the scenarios listed above and would benefit from receiving assistance with navigating through these difficult institutional processes.

**Engaging on Campus**

**My student does not feel connected to campus:**

According to research by [Dr. Terrell Strayhorn](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=Ak6T9kw0H28), students who have a sense of belonging on their college campus are more likely to complete their degree, do better in their classes, and have an overall more satisfying college experience. When a student does not feel connected to campus, an opportunity arises to assist them in identifying interesting clubs, organizations, events and volunteer opportunities. **We recommend that you begin this conversation by learning what the student is hoping to experience.** There are several ways for students to contribute and be connected to the campus community. Student life, TRiO, tutoring services, mentoring, Work-Study and volunteer opportunities on campus are all great ways to become more involved. If none of these are seem enticing to the student, you can always ask the students what is missing on campus that they would like to see incorporated. Supporting and encouraging a student to take initiative, seek new experiences and invest time in the campus community is a rewarding opportunity for staff.

**My students has not attended college in ten years and wants to get started and complete their degree. How can I best assist them?**

In general, after ten years, students may feel a bit nervous about coming back. They often require additional connection to the campus and more academic support services such as tutoring until they build up their confidence. **We recommend that you get them connected to support services across your campus such as Advising, TRiO, Counseling and Retention and Completion to help them readjust to college life**. As far as degree completion, your student may not need to start completely over because credits usually don’t expire. The best place to start is by running a degree audit to check for earned and missing credits.

**As policies have changed over the past decade on your campus, we recommend that you raise awareness about three issues:**

* Pay special attention to courses that may have changed names over time and therefore won’t pull into the degree audit correctly (i.e. ENG 101 changing to the common course numbering today: ENGL&101).
* Then, be on the lookout for classes students might have to retake for specific reasons. Common situations include pre-nursing pre-requisites that nursing programs won’t take after five to seven years or developmental math classes in which most math departments have a time requirement in order for a student to progress to the next level.
* If the student is pursuing a career training program that is no longer offered, you will likely need to check your college’s policy in these situations. Also, students pursuing transfer degrees will want to also talk with their potential transfer universities to ensure a smooth transfer of credits.