

CRAFTING QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Facilitating Students' Exploration of their Goals, Careers, Courses, Transfer, and Beyond! Facilitating Students' Self-Awareness, Wayfinding Skills, and Independence!

THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF FINDING A DIRECTION AND SEEKING A PATHWAY. The Faculty Advising website is a great starting place for faculty and students to begin exploring. Finding the roadmaps is one thing; figuring out the destination is another thing entirely.

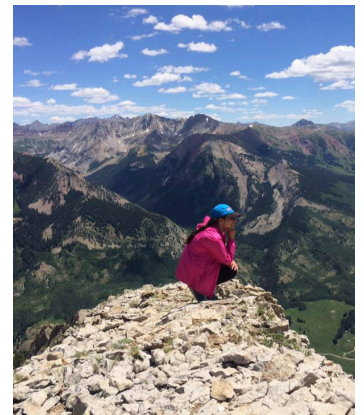
Strategies to uncover clues about students' career preferences

Mine your knowledge and experience about careers in your field. Consider common interests and habits of mind that folks in those careers tend to have. Brainstorm simple questions for students to help them—and you—get a sense of which aspects of your field may be directions of attraction vs repulsion for them.

- ✦ What kinds of activities does the student enjoy, and why?
- ✦ What kinds of efforts does the student enjoy, and why?
- ✦ What kinds of work environments does the student enjoy, and why?
- ✦ What kind of lifestyle does the student want to have?

For example, a student interested in the life sciences might productively explore this inquiry:

- ✦ *Do you like being indoors, outdoors, or both?*
- ✦ *Do you like physical activities, like gardening, hiking, and camping; or not so much?*
- ✦ *Do you mind being indoors all day?*
- ✦ *Do you mind being in the heat, the cold, or the rain?*
- ✦ *Do you like working with your hands? What kinds of projects?*
- ✦ *Do you like working with/on big things or little things, or both?*
- ✦ *Do you like plants (and other organisms that don't move quickly) or animals?*
- ✦ *Do you like working with computers?*
- ✦ *Are you interested in the physical sciences, as well as the life sciences?*



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Strategies to uncover clues about transfer schools that might fit students' preferences well

Knowledge about transfer schools/programs in your field will be based upon experience, ongoing networking, and continuous research and exploration (e.g., through visiting program websites). Mine that knowledge to discern common interests and habits of mind that folks who enjoy those schools/programs tend to have. Brainstorm simple questions for students to help them—and you—get a sense of which aspects of your field may be directions of attraction vs repulsion for them.

- ✦ What kinds of school and study environments does the student enjoy, and why?
- ✦ What kinds of weather does the student enjoy—and tolerate?
- ✦ What kind of financial support/needs does the student have?

Tip for professors: Students usually do not realize the difference between graduate and professional programs, and undergraduate programs. So, they usually mistake the prestige of graduate and professional programs for that of undergraduate programs. The Gallup-Purdue study demonstrated that it doesn't matter *where* students go to college; it matters *how* they go to college. Fit and finances are key, not prestige.

For example, a student might productively explore this inquiry:

- ✦ *Do you enjoy being in urban or rural environments; both; or something in between?*
- ✦ *Do you enjoy being in big classes, or smaller ones?*
- ✦ *Are you energized by being around a lot of people all the time?*
- ✦ *Do you mind if it's hot, rainy, foggy, or windy for days at a time?*
- ✦ *Do the university programs you are exploring offer/support rich undergraduate research experiences?*
- ✦ *Will attending the schools you are considering require that you take out loans? If so, how large?*

THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION OF FINDING A DIRECTION AND SEEKING A PATHWAY. Finding the roadmaps is one thing; figuring out the destination is another thing entirely. Finding the stamina and will to persist in the face of obstacles is the affective dimension of the mind at work. Faculty can cultivate students' growing mastery, independence, and resilience; not with statements, but with questions. Examples of the kinds of questions that cultivate robust habits of mind in students are given below. Brainstorm some of your own!

- What goals have you been successful at reaching in the past?
- What obstacles did you have to overcome to reach those goals?
- How did you overcome those obstacles?
- Do you think that your past successes can help you in the future? How so?
- Can you identify a goal that you reached because of what you learned from a failure?
- Do you think that your past failures can help you in the future? How so?
- What are your current academic goals?
- What are some things you can do today to make progress toward reaching those goals?
- What questions do you have, and which would you like to address first?
- Who are some people in the college, in the community, or in a university, that you can contact to learn more about the next steps in your exploration?
- What tools and strategies can you use to continue exploring on your own?
- How can you find other sources of information when your own tools and strategies lead you into a dead end?



Community College Students and Alumni (now Professor) at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, Gothic Colorado. All are from the Greater Los Angeles area. The middle students in both top and bottom rows are from Chaffey. 2017