

Helping Student Clarify their Dreams: Advising the Foreclosed Student

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In a 2001 NACADA Journal article, "It's What I have Always Wanted To Do." *Advising the Foreclosure Student*, Shaffer & Zalewski noted that current literature in education and psychology uses the term **foreclosure** to refer to students "with unexplored yet confident and committed future plans" (p.62). In their 2015 contribution to the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources, [Courageous Conversations: Advising the Foreclosed Student](#), **Kyle Ross** and **Olga Salinas** explained that "foreclosed students are identified as such because they have bound themselves to a single choice with very limited research into their interests, strengths, and abilities or of program and career options." At the 2015 NACADA Annual Conference in Las Vegas, **Kyle Ross** and **Anna Brown** drew a large audience and received outstanding evaluations for their presentation, *I Just Want to Help People: Advising the Foreclosed Student*, and were encouraged by participants to continue the conversation on this topic.

Kyle, Olga, and Anna, joined by colleague **Jose Ramos**, will now bring the conversation to the Webinar venue. As they will explain, a student's major is a significant part of their identity. When students are not succeeding in their major, advisors often have the responsibility of talking with them about changing. Foreclosed students, who are deeply invested in their program of study but chose that major without exploring other options, will likely be resistant and defensive when told they are not succeeding. How do advisors have this conversation without killing the dream?

Kyle, Olga, Anna, and Jose will address how to recognize the "foreclosed" student and how to have the difficult conversation of redefining their academic path so that they can still achieve "dream" career goals, such as "helping others" and "saving the world." They will focus on two different points in a student's academic career: (1) in the first year, when there are signs of initial academic difficulty and (2) in the third year or beyond, when they are not accepted into their desired program. They will discuss how to recognize when a student is foreclosed on a major and/or career choice based on subtle cues or statements behind why they are pursuing that major/career. They will share practical tools and techniques that are grounded in student identity theory, motivational interviewing, and career development theory.

Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Read *Courageous Conversations: Advising the Foreclosed Student*

(<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Courageous-Conversations-Advising-the-Foreclosed-Student.aspx>), and discuss the following questions as a group:

1. Describe characteristics you see of students you have worked with that you think are "foreclosed" on a major/career. What kinds of questions do you ask to assess if they are indeed "foreclosed"?

2. *At what point in a student's career do you have the conversation of alternate majors/career paths? Do you have that conversation once they are denied admission into a program, or do you facilitate it as soon as a student demonstrates signs of struggle on that path? Why?*

Reflect on the following prompt and, if possible, discuss in pairs or share as a group:

Have you ever been told "No" about a path you wanted to pursue? What was that experience like? How did you feel? What was your immediate reaction? What would have happened if that person told you "No" and then immediately referred you to someone else to help you?

Post-Webinar Activity Suggestions

In pairs, role-play through the following scenario using the practices shared in the webinar. Share what went well and not so well as a group.

You are the student.

Anna Beth is a first-year student in her third quarter majoring in Elementary Education because she wants to become a first-grade teacher, as she absolutely loves little kids. She is an only child and has no prior experience babysitting or a job working with kids. She is also working part-time as an administrative assistant on campus and spends most of her 20 hours filing paperwork, compiling reports, answering a lot of e-mails, and attending staff meetings. She thinks her job is incredibly boring, and the worst part is when she has to speak to angry parents over the phone. She does love her experience in college so far, but is struggling a little bit with her required Math and Science courses for her major. However, she feels confident that her other classes will bring her GPA high enough to get into the program. She and her faculty advisor Professor I. M. Awesome (Dr. Awesome) have a meeting to discuss course scheduling for next year.

You are the advisor.

Professor I. M. Awesome is a faculty advisor for Elementary Education majors. The major is very competitive, generally admitting students with a minimum 3.2 GPA and with strong interviewing skills. The faculty members especially assess in the interview how interested students are in the job aspects that are not always including teaching little kids directly (working with parents, lesson planning, etc.). Dr. Awesome is meeting with Anna Beth to discuss course scheduling next year, but, when preparing for the meeting, notices that Anna Beth has a 2.7 GPA due to her low grades in Math and Science. However, she does have A's in her Psychology, Child Development, and Sociology of the Family courses. Dr. Awesome plans to talk to Anna Beth about her grades, but also to see what originally made her decide on this major, and maybe other programs that might be a better fit.

Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. *What are two things you can take away from this webinar and adapt immediately into your practice?*
2. *Share with each other tools and techniques you utilize in your practice to work with "foreclosed" students that we did not discuss in the webinar.*

Additional Information

Examples of Probing Questions

- "Can you imagine any circumstance where you would change your mind if another, better career came along?"
- "How did you decide that you want to be a -----?"
- "What other careers have you considered?"
- "How did you discover what being a ----- is like?"
- "How do you know that you will like being a -----?"

Marcia Scale Questionnaire

Response legend:

1 = Diffusion

2 = Moratorium

3 = Foreclosure

4 = Identify Achievement

MARCIA SCALE

Name: _____ Date: _____

Advisor: _____

Please check the one description below that you feel best represents your Career plans at this time.

1. _____ I have not made a career choice at this time and do not feel particularly concerned or worried about it.
2. _____ I have not made a career decision and I am concerned about it. I would like to make a decision soon and I need (check all that apply):
 - a. _____ a better understanding of how to go about making career decisions.
 - b. _____ more information about myself (values, interests, aptitudes) and how this might relate to my choice of work.
 - c. _____ to learn how to find and use information about careers in general.
 - d. _____ information about the following occupation _____.
3. _____ I have chosen a career and although I have not investigated it or other career alternatives thoroughly I think I would like it.
 - a. Would you be willing to change your career goal if something better (in your estimation) came along?
_____ YES _____ NO
4. _____ I have investigated a number of careers and have selected one. I know quite a lot about this career including the kinds of training or education required and the outlook for jobs in the future.
 - a. Would you be willing to change your career goal if something better (in your estimation) came along?
_____ YES _____ NO

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Objectives

1. Overview of Marcia's Identity Status Theory
2. Recognizing the "foreclosed" student
3. Advising "foreclosed" students
 - Early: Motivational Interviewing
 - Junior/Senior Year: REACH Model

Defining Foreclosure

Marcia's Identity Status Theory

Each status of identity development involves two processes:

- **Exploration**—Level of understanding the different options available within that identity factor
- **Commitment**—Selection and assumption of an identity factor into the self

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status.
Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence.



Defining Foreclosure Identity Statuses

	<i>High Exploration</i>	<i>Low Exploration</i>
<i>High Commitment</i>	Identity Achievement	Identity Foreclosure
<i>Low Commitment</i>	Identity Moratorium	Identity Diffusion

Berk, L. E. (2006). *Child Development*.

Understanding Foreclosure

- Why do we commit without exploring options?
 - **Pressure from family and society.**
 - Go for the job that pays well.
 - **A few options are more visible than others.**
 - When we hear "health field," we hear nurses, doctors, and dentists.
 - But what about healthcare administrators and medical technologists?

Berk, L. E. (2006). *Child Development*.

How to recognize foreclosed students and identify them through the Marcia Scale

		Exploration	
		Low High	
Commitment	High	Forclosure: "I've made a choice without thinking"	Identity Achievement: "I thought about it and I now know what I should do with my life."
	Low	Identity Diffusion: "I don't know and I don't care what I'm supposed to do with my life."	Moratorium: "I'm thinking about what I should do"

Graphic courtesy of Shannon Barry (<http://socioemotional.weebly.com/james-marcia.html>)

Where do advisors usually find Foreclosed Students?



<https://www.unigo.com/in-college/college-experience/help-i-need-to-choose-a-college-major>

Big 5 Personality Traits

- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Emotional stability
- Openness to Experience

Lounsbury, J. W., Levy, F. T., Leong, & Gibson, L. W. (2007). Identity and personality: the big five and narrow personality traits in relation to sense of identity.

Personality

BIG FIVE TRAITS	WHY IS IT RELEVANT?	WHAT DOES IT AFFECT?
EMOTIONAL STABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LESS NEGATIVE THINKING AND FEWER NEGATIVE EMOTIONS •LESS HYPER-VIGILANT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •HIGHER JOB AND LIFE SATISFACTION •LOWER STRESS LEVELS
EXTRAVERSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •BETTER INTERPERSONAL SKILLS •GREATER SOCIAL DOMINANCE •MORE EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •HIGHER PERFORMANCE •ENHANCED LEADERSHIP •HIGHER JOB AND LIFE SATISFACTION
OPENNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •INCREASED LEARNING •MORE CREATIVE •MORE FLEXIBLE AND AUTONOMOUS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ENHANCED LEADERSHIP •MORE ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE
AGREEABLENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •BETTER LIVED •MORE COMPLIANT AND CONFORMING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •HIGHER PERFORMANCE •LOWER LEVELS OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •GREATER EFFORT AND PERSISTENCE •MORE DRIVE AND DISCIPLINE •BETTER ORGANISED AND PLANNING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •HIGHER PERFORMANCE •ENHANCED LEADERSHIP •GREATER LONGEVITY

Wikispaces.psu.edu

Behavioral Cues

- Defensive
- "I'll be fine" or "I'm not worried" attitude
- Unwilling to recognize externally they are not succeeding
 - Picture perfect relationships with their parents
- Closed-minded when a new path is suggested
- Tend to follow family, groups, trends, and societal standards

Kroger, J. (2000) Ego identity status research in the new millennium.
 Marcia, J. E. (1966) Development and validation of ego identity status.

Probes



"Because the signature of identity foreclosure is commitment without crisis advisors should be prepared to examine the depth of students' commitment by probing for student's conscious memories of crisis and of deliberate exploration of possible alternatives"

Shaffer, L. S., & Zalewski, J., M. (2011). "It's What I have Always Wanted to Do." Advising the Foreclosure Student.

Probing Questions

- "Can you imagine any circumstance where you would change your mind if another, better career came along?"
- "How did you decide that you want to be a -----?"
- "What other careers have you considered?"
- "How did you discover what being a ----- is like?"
- "How do you know that you will like being a -----?"



Motivational Interviewing & the Foreclosed Student

A Technique for Initiating Change and Supporting the Journey


Motivational Interviewing

Definition – *collaborative conversation style*

Characteristics


- Goal-oriented
- Focus on language of change
- Atmosphere of acceptance and compassion

Historically



Guiding Principles

- Discrepancy
 - *What are the consequences of staying the same? What are the benefits of exploring new avenues?*
- Empathy
 - *I understand the pressure to be a nurse is tremendous; I respect how difficult it must be to explore other Avenues.*



Miller, W.R., and Rollnick, S. (1991). Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People To Change Addictive Behavior.

Guiding Principles

- Amplify Ambivalence
 - I know you are unsure about your future career, and you are worried. This is normal.
- Rolling with Resistance
 - Don't forget about all the benefits that come with this change, the benefits you identified earlier.
- Support Self-Efficacy
 - I decide my success. I am ready for this change, and I have the resources I need for such change.

MI & The Foreclosed Student

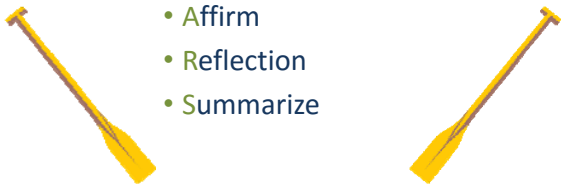
Why does it work?

...the advisor [is] leading the session in a way that is subtle, gentle, responsive, and imaginative, as opposed to prescribing a solution to solve a problem.

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Petray, R.F. (2009). Motivational Interviewing in Advising: Working with Students to Change.

Entering into Change Conversations

- Open-Ended Questions
- Affirm
- Reflection
- Summarize



Miller, W.R., and Rollnick, S. (1991). Motivational Interviewing: Preparing people to change addictive behavior.

OARS

- Open-Ended Questions

Student: I would be less stressed if I could feel smart in one of my classes.

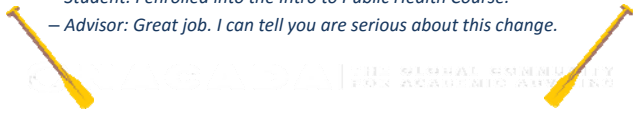
Advisor: Tell me about a time when you felt smart.

In what ways do you think you will be less stressed?

- Affirm

– Student: I enrolled into the Intro to Public Health Course.

– Advisor: Great job. I can tell you are serious about this change.



OARS

- Reflection

– Advisor: What kind of problems has constant stress caused you?

– Student: I can't eat or sleep, so I am sick. But it is only 2 more years of study.

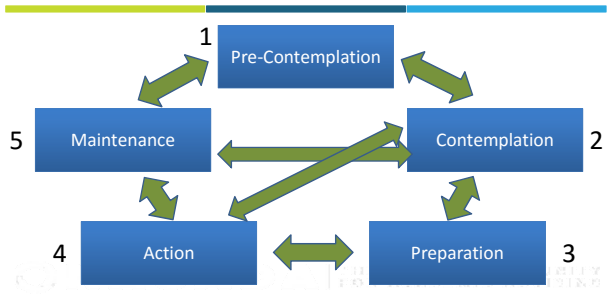
– Advisor: That sounds hard. What do you think about that?

– Student: I guess that is not so healthy for me.

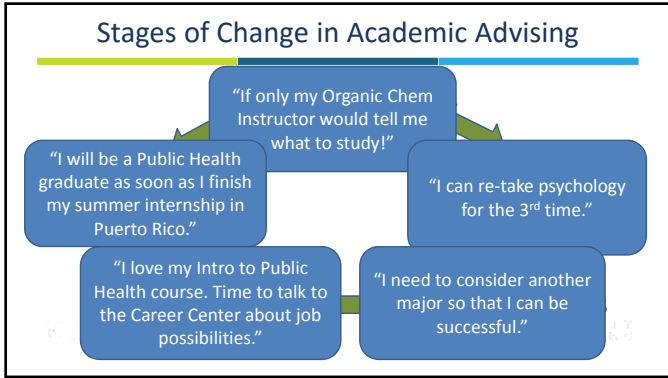
- Summarize



Stages of Behavioral Change



*Adapted from Prochaska, J., DiClemente, C., and Norcross (1992). Transtheoretical Model of Change.



Courageous Conversations and the REACH Model

A High Stakes Exchange

The Student Experience

- Likely to feel blind-sided
- Frustrated
- Betrayed
- Bewildered
- Frightened
- Angry
- Concerned about their future
- Embarrassed
- And more...

The Advisor Experience

Frontline Focus Divided

- Student Needs and Vision
- University Objective
- Tinto: 3 Contributors to Attrition
- Economic Loss: Ed Pol. Inst 2013



Immediate Answers

- Face of the "No" and "Yes"
- Excellent setting to introduce transitions

"When life gets harder, you must have just levelled up."
- Unknown

(Raisman, 2013; Tinto, 1973; Texas State Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2004)

Courageous Conversations

Challenges

- High stakes
- Opinions differ
- Emotional

Response

- Respectful environment
- Mutual purpose
- Contrasting statements

"The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud." - Coco Chanel

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2002).

REACH Model: An Approach

- Recognize and Reflect
- Eliminate the false constructs
- Ability to adapt
- Creativity and commitment
- Holistic help

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Recognize and Reflect

Recognition

- Realization of the situation
- Story provides a map



Reflection

- Reflect back some "need to knows"
- (flip the transcript)

For me, in songwriting, I have a route I can take. Maybe there's some forks, I can go this way, this way. But I know those roads. I still have the experience behind me. - Dave Matthews

Eliminate False Constructs

Continue to work with their stories to shine light on:

- Beliefs
- Motivations
- Inaccurate perceptions
- Access tools (O*NET, Occupational Handbook, other web sites) as inspiration

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Ability to Adapt: Already proven

- Identify previous successes
- Identify support network
- Identify Courageous Conversations to come
 - Practice
 - Flip roles



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Creativity and Commitment

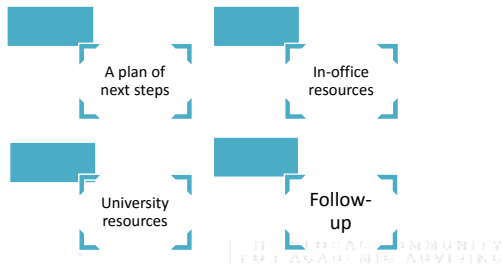
- Modified Motivations:

Existing Reasons
 + Incentives
 = Options

- Identify exploration
- Breadth and Depth
- Homework

“There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost.”
 — Martha Graham

Holistic Help: Moving Forward



Advising: A Synergistic Experience

- Cooperative
- Collaborative
- Concerted effort (arranged in parts for several voices or instruments)



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