

Take Me to the River

**How to Advise Students Who
Seek the Path of Least
Resistance**

The Path of Least Resistance

- **The Indiana Sidewalk Experiment**
 - Question: Where should sidewalks be placed?
 - Solution: Plant grass, then see where it becomes worn by footsteps

“As a rule of nature... students, like rivers, seek an unimpeded path to their destination.”

Common Characteristics of the POLR

- Not here by choice
- Not ready to commit to higher education
- Wants easy schedule
- Seeks out easy instructors
- Rejects responsibility
- Relies on friends/family

“Education – one of the things a fellow is willing to pay for and not get”

- Leonard Levinson

Commonalities in the POLT

- **Shortsighted Decisions**
 - Decisions often made by what is easier, not what is better
- **Misguided Decisions**
 - Decisions are based on input of friends, family, but not professionals
- **Uneducated Decisions**
 - Decisions are based upon beliefs and biases

Advisor Role

- **Educational**
 - Embedded within curricula
 - Provides moments of teaching and student development
- **Informational**
 - Advisors should be experts
 - Must be able to communicate effectively
- **Relational**
 - The human aspect

Informational Issues

- **Correct Major**
- **Incongruence b/t abilities, interests, values and major choice**
- **Internal/External pressure on performance (grades)**

Informational Solutions

Spend time guiding student in the following:

- Academic Strengths**
- Academic Weaknesses**
- Academic Interests**
- Academic Disinterests**

Explain how each of these relates to the curricula that students are considering

Informational Solutions, cont.

Educational Outcomes

What you earned vs. what you learned

Educational Issues

- Time management
- Studying
- Organization
- Preparing for classes/exams

Educational Issues

- Generally arise after the first test
- Generally present themselves as “I need to drop/I want to drop my class”

Guiding Principle: If a student fails, but learns from their failure, then they have not failed. If a student fails, and fails to learn from their failure, then they have truly failed.

Advisor Role

- **Identifying Issues**
 - Why do you need to drop class?
 - Why are you struggling?
 - Why did you perform poorly on the test/
 - Tell me how you prepared?
 - Could you have prepared differently?

The endgame is to get the student to recognize where they went wrong

Educational Solutions

Spend time on the followings:

- Customizing time management and study skills to the student**
- Discuss different influences on student's time**
- Discuss reducing strains on time**
- Refer as needed (tutoring, career services, counseling, etc)**

Relational Situations

- **Confidence Issues**
- **Needing reassurance**
- **Confusion about experiences**
- **Difficulty making decisions**

Relational Situations

- Often difficult to recognize
- Presents as a hidden issue
- Comes to light as a result of noticing changes of behavior, poise, etc.
- Solution is not always clear

Advisor Role

Guiding Principle: Advisors can impact the personal development and growth of a student through guided discovery

Remember that you and the student may not come to the same conclusions

Relational Solutions

- **Encourage, encourage, encourage**
- **Don't be in a rush, reschedule with the student if necessary**
- **Remember the objective is for the student to come up with their solution, not your solution... they become autonomous this way**

Questions? Comments?