

Who inspired you to become a counselor?

I was inspired to become a counselor by a counselor at El Camino College. After moving to California from New York and having worked as a dental assistant, office coordinator, and accounting clerk, I knew that I had to further my education so that I could do something about which I could be passionate. I always knew that I wanted to help people, and when I met my counselor at El Camino College, I remember thinking: “This is it; this is what I want to do.”

My counselor took the time to get to know me and to help me explore my options. He encouraged me to think about the opportunities available to me, which was something I had never thought of before. I had always thought that college was out of reach, yet here a counselor was telling me that it was within reach and, further, that I could actually succeed.

How do you guide students through the process of choosing a major? It's such an important decision!

Choosing a major doesn't have to be as daunting as it sounds. When working with students who are undecided, I first like to address their decision-making process. It's important to recognize factors that may inhibit their ability to make a decision, as well as their natural decision-making style. We talk about what a major is and how choosing a major allows students to set a path for themselves, even though they might not know what occupation they would like to pursue.

It's important for students to understand that all majors provide the opportunity to learn the transferable skills that employers seek, such as communication, team-work, problem-solving, research, planning, following through, etc.

With this in mind, I encourage students to think about their interests, what they would enjoy studying, and what would give them the employment options they would like to have after graduation.

How do you inspire students to persist, especially when they have work and/or family responsibilities?

I inspire students to persist by revisiting their motivation for attending college in the first place. By having students identify their extrinsic—but most importantly, their intrinsic—motivators, I am able to remind students of what drives them. Once they have identified their motivation, we can talk about their responsibilities and/or challenges and develop a plan using concrete tools (like goal setting) for being able to manage challenges along with the appropriate course load they plan to take.

How often should students visit a counselor?

Students should visit a counselor at least once a semester. Life happens, so it's important for students to check in with a counselor so that we can assess how their classes are going, identify any obstacles that need to be addressed, and determine whether they need additional resources or support. Additionally, counselors will have the most up-to-date information on transfer, new courses, programs, and resources that can be relayed during an appointment.

What kinds of professional development activities interest you? If you could attend a workshop tomorrow, what would it be?

I am very interested in e-learning, adult learners, at-risk students, and classroom motivation. If I could attend a workshop tomorrow, it would probably be on ways to design and implement effective instruction for online learning, something I think would be useful, particularly with Coastline switching to the Canvas LMS.

What do you like to do in your free time?

In addition to activities with my family, I like to hike, go to the beach, take day-trips to explore nearby towns and cities, and read both fiction and non-fiction. □