

DEBBY is a 21-year-old female, first generation, commuter student who is from Cypress, California. Debby recently transferred to University of Southern California (USC) and is now attending USC's Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism, majoring in public relations and currently holds junior standing. She is commuting from Orange County to Los Angeles twice a week to attend her classes. Debby also holds a part-time job as a server in a restaurant near her home to continue to support her family.

You are Debby's academic advisor and have talked with her on two accounts thus far. Your first meeting with Debby was a typical advising session where you helped her pick classes for her major and helped answer any questions she may have. During your conversation with Debby, she seemed very happy and excited for the start of the semester. Three weeks into the semester, you reached out to Debby to see how she is transitioning to USC. Debby tells you she loved the classes she is attending, but has been so focused on her academics that she has not had the time to really get to know her classmates.

Three weeks after, you get an email from Debby saying that she would like to meet for an advising session. Upon meeting her, she discloses that her transition to USC has proven to be difficult given that she doesn't feel like she belongs to the campus culture. As someone going into Public Relations, she is constantly scrutinizing her own body and is always comparing her self-image to her classmates. She feels out of place because her classmates are well-dressed every day, and she wishes she could dress the same if it weren't for her financial setbacks. This only makes her feel less authentic and therefore adds stress to her transition to USC, as looking nice is part of the campus culture. Additionally, Debby has a difficult time getting to know her classmates outside of the classroom because she is only on campus twice a week for school. Having to commute from Orange County to Los Angeles has taken a toll on Debby, and she finds herself more removed from her academic and social life.

When she met with you she discloses to you that the only thing she feels in control over is her eating habits, which includes skipping meals, binge eating, and vomiting -- none of which has happened to her since high school. At Cypress College, she was surrounded by supportive students who would encourage her to exercise, eat healthy, and get proper sleep - which in turn improved her academic and social life. Now at USC, Debby feels as though she has reverted back to her high school habits. You, as her academic advisor since the start of her journey at USC, have noticed a disconnect when she nonchalantly mentions her eating habits.

1. Given the facts of this case, what are some points you feel you could assist Debby in?
2. What are some questions you would ask her?
3. What campus resources would you recommend to her?
4. In what ways can you make Debby feel empowered to seek these resources?
5. After speaking with Debby, what are your next steps in advising Debby for the remainder of the semester?