

## Slide 1

Hello! And thank you for clicking on my session today. The session title is PIVOT: transitioning liberal arts students to graduate business programs. I hope the session proves useful for you. Let's go!

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First, I would like to acknowledge that this presentation was constructed on Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, and Shawnee occupied lands.

I also offer this labor acknowledgement, from Dr. TJ Stewart at Iowa State University. We must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today.

*~moment of silence~*

I have hyperlinked my sources on this slide. For more information, please click on the respective image or text.

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Thank you.

Here is what we'll cover in our time together today. First, we'll talk about how liberal arts and sciences plus business education can be a very powerful combination in academic and career pursuits. We'll also

look at the PIVOT in a student's plan and how, as advisors, we can help students manage and get through a pivot point. Finally, we'll see some example pathways and outcomes for students who have gone through a pivot.

What I hope you'll be able to do after this session is to:

1. Identify the skills and value that a liberal arts and sciences student brings to a business environment, be it academic or career.
2. How you can approach the pivot with your students.

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Ok, so who am I and why am I talking about this with you? My name is Emily Liverman, and I'm the associate director of the +Kelley program at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. As you can see on the slide, my own academic background is firmly rooted in the liberal arts arena.

The objective of +Kelley is help students from non-business backgrounds learn about and access specialized master's programs at the Kelley school. Specialized master's programs are condensed academic plans that dive deeply into their subject matter. More depth than breadth.

How does +Kelley endeavor to meet this objective? By reaching out to non-business students across the country, as well as their advisors, to let them know about these opportunities.

In addition, +Kelley is here to help the students understand the programs, and throughout the application process.

Liberal arts and sciences students bring a lot to the table.

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If you're here, I'm guessing that you have some interest and belief in the power of an education rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. Whether it is your own background, like my own, or you are advising these students, you've undoubtedly been asked about the value of the liberal arts and sciences.

Liberal arts and sciences students gain a broad set of skills throughout their education, in addition to the expertise in their major area. Sometimes, these can be called soft skills. The kind of skills that are incredibly important for working with others, collaborating on projects, leading and managing projects, analyzing problems, and so on, but can be hard to quantify on a resume.

Here, I've outlined some of the skills that liberal arts and sciences students have.

In 2019, Ravi Kumar, president of Infosys, said While digital skills like coding and data science are important, it's the soft skills – a strong work ethic; self-motivation; social, emotional, and leadership skills; and holistic skills (like problem solving) that are truly the key components for success in the modern economy.

Also, in a 2017 TED Talk at IBM, Eric Berridge said "While the sciences teach us how to build things, it's the humanities that teach us what to build and why to build them."

To me, this reiterates the value of a liberal arts and sciences education. This education gives students perspective and the ability to interrogate information. Without these skills and this expertise, we get Skynet. Or the Daleks.

And please, if you have more current references, let me know!

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Let's look at a few example students who are liberal arts and sciences undergraduate students, with a variety of disciplinary and university backgrounds. We'll examine their paths, pivot points, and outcomes.

Quinn is a student athlete at a small private liberal arts school, studying economics. Even though her schedule is tight, she's held at least one internship.

Irene is studying neuroscience at a big 10 university, with the goal of going to med school. She's had a lot of experience in the lab.

John is also studying economics and is also at a large university. He's involved in intramural sports.

Aaron is a philosophy major at a small liberal arts school and in the honors program there.

Emmaline transferred to a land-grant university as a contemporary dance major. She's also in the honors program.

Tonya is a Spanish major at a large public university who is excited for a 1-year EFL teaching experience in Spain.

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We've met some students and seen how they each have their own reasons for pursuing graduate education. There isn't one magic question or technique that will help students as they consider shifting academic and career focus.

One tool in your arsenal is the coaching conversation, typified by open-ended, probing questions that try to get at the why behind a decision. Why does Irene want to go to med school? Why did Aaron major in

philosophy? What does Tonya want to do after graduation? Get a job, make decent money, put my language skills to use, use my brain....these are just some possible answers.

Once the student has a better understanding of their motivation, searching out paths that fulfill this motivation becomes, well, a touch easier. (Did an adult in their life push med school to ensure career and financial stability and/or career prestige? Let's think of some other paths that meet this goal) If the student's motivation has been mainly external, like from the adults in their life, coaching conversations can help the student begin to move from external to internal motivation. (So, stability and prestige are important to your adults. What is important to you? If you had a billion dollars, how would you spend your days? Those sorts of questions. )

If you have any alumni stories in your back pocket, this could be a time to use them. Showing students a pre-cut path makes it less scary, seem more possible, and just more realistic. No longer is it this random theoretical possibility that their advisor, who they may see as having no skin in the game, telling them something. Now it is a legitimate pathway someone with something in common with them has accomplished. This helps the student see themselves in the possibility.

Things we need to keep in mind is that all experience is education (Jarvis) in some form. We and our students are learning through our meetings. Helping them learn what they don't want and where the motivation is coming from is as important as figuring out what they do want!

If we are taking a holistic advising approach, it is also worth keeping the Theory of Margin into account, namely that all of our students have other things going on, other demands on their time. Their ratio of available time and motivation will factor highly into their ability to meet goals. Helping students find their internal motivation can help increase this ability.

So, coaching conversations and alumni stories are example tools we have to advise the pivot. Once students have dug in and found the why behind their choices, it becomes possible to help them find

alternate ways to fulfill the why, the goal. This transition can also help them move towards internal motivation for the goal, instead of relying solely or mostly on external motivation.

I find that uncovering the why and motivation can be key in helping students disengage from an original goal, especially a long-held one. Instead of feeling like they've failed on the original goal, the why and motivation frame the new goal as simply a new way to meet the same underlying reasons of the original goal.

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If we revisit our students, we can look at their profile and their reason to pivot.

Quinn loves playing golf at her school. But professional golfer is not a realistic career path for her. Plus, an injury her senior year means she cannot play competitively anymore. Quinn has been proactive in finding internships but keeps hitting a wall there. She hasn't been able to convert an internship into a job offer.

Irene is still set on med school. The years in school and specialization and the cost haven't deterred her. But she wants to keep her options open and be able to move up into more administrative roles. She wants to future proof her education and career prospects. She wants to take a gap year so she can really differentiate her med school application.

John has also had some great internships, but hasn't been able to get a job offer, either. He's also been frustrated by his lack of traction at career fairs. He's looking for a way to differentiate himself and strengthen his resume.

Aaron loves studying philosophy, and picking apart problems, examining them from all sides. He'd really like to find a career that allows him to do this regularly. But he doesn't want to pursue a PhD in philosophy or work in academia. He's looking for a career path that will utilize his skills.

Emmaline enjoys dance. But she is not looking forward to pursuing a career in dance. She wants to keep dance as an enjoyable activity, not a grind. She's looking for other professional opportunities where she can use her creativity.

Tonya took a Spanish linguistics class her senior year, and wished she'd taken it earlier! There's just a lot to investigate! She's an active Spanish user who is excited for her 1 year experience as an EFL teacher in Spain. She's really looking forward to living abroad and strengthening her language ability. Looking to her future, she knows that she doesn't want to teach for the entirety of her career but she does want to be able to fully utilize her language in her professional life moving forward.

All of these students have different backgrounds and different paths ahead of them. What they have in common is a recognition that something in their immediate future has to change, deviate from the plan, so they can find their own definition of success.

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Perhaps you are already forming conversations and questions you'd ask these students. Perhaps not.

And perhaps you've had these conversations on an individual basis, but know that there are a number of students who are confronting these issues but who are not coming to you to talk. How can we impact our students, as individuals and as groups?

One main takeaway here is to lean on your alumni, esp. alumni who followed nontraditional paths and those who, in one way or another, followed a path similar to the student in front of you. Whatever the pivot point, a student, seeing an alum who did it before makes it more real. More accessible. Less scary.

So, if you are trying to reach multiple advisees, you can do things like hosting alumni panels or highlight alumni stories on a variety of platforms, like social media or e-newsletters. Try to meet the students where they are. Regularly holding information sessions can help. Regularly promote career fairs and other opportunities by your career services folks. Anecdotally, I know that these resources can be underutilized. The student who doesn't know about an opportunity can't pursue it. If they hear about it from you, an already trusted source, then it becomes something they are more likely to do. And if they are nervous or scared, maybe they'll reach out to you for an appointment.

Once you are in that meeting or have the 1:1 rapport, you can do things like have the coaching conversations with the students. You can ask the questions. You can make the personal invitation to a career fair and help them prep for it. You can share tailored alumni stories and even get the student in touch with alumni. You can be that encouraging force in their search.

And one more time, because I think it is important: lean on your alumni stories. They are real. They are authentic. They are meaningful.

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As you may have guessed, these personas were based on real students who have gone through a Kelley specialized master program. Of course, names have been changed, but basic details like major and school type are real. Here are what the students are doing now.

Quinn, our student athlete studying econ, graduated from the MS in Information Systems (MSIS) program and is currently a consulting analyst at a fortune global 500 company

Irene graduated from the MSIS program and got into her med school of choice where she is rocking it! A side note here is that I do regularly see folks who have decided med school is not for them, but are still

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looking for a way to positively impact healthcare. Since I represent a portfolio of programs, I'm usually able to help them find something that matches their interest and ability.

John went to the MS in Finance program, and is now a financial analyst at a regional airline.

Aaron pursued the MSIS degree and is working as a management consultant for a professional services company. (vague, I know, but the company name is rather recognizable)

Emmaline also pursued the MSF, did very well. And has already made it to the director level of a startup accelerator.

Tonya completed the MSIS program and after a few years doing software implementation, she has moved on to be a Senior at a highly specialized professional services company. Both opportunities have recognized, valued, paid, and used her language skills.

So, we've got a few different paths here. These aren't exactly straight forward or predicted paths. While this may not be the path they thought they'd take, all the students have found success by finding new and differing ways to put their skills to work and fulfill underlying goals.

## Slide 11

Alright, today we covered how the liberal arts and sciences plus business education can be a very powerful combination that propels career success and fulfillment. How advisors can approach and help students through their own pivot points. What some potential outcomes are.

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I'm happy to engage with you via email, which will be on the next slide.

I invite you to consider these questions:

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How can you help your students who are currently at or approaching a PIVOT point?

In what ways do you already help with a PIVOT?

What impact can you see these activities having on your students, on an individual level or as a group?

What theories or practices do you think would work well, or even better, here?

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Thank you again for spending this time with me. My contact information is on this slide, as well as the handout.