

Where **Guidance** Ends and **Pressure** Begins

Student Fit Over Sales

GUIDANCE

PRESSURE

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25 **C>ONSTRUCTOR**
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WE ALL WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR STUDENTS

AND WE ALL HAVE OBJECTIVES



NONE OF THESE OBJECTIVES IS INHERENTLY
WRONG.



A STUDENT. FIVE VOICES. ONE DECISION



UNHEALTHY PRESSURE SOMETIMES BEGINS WHEN TOO MANY GOOD INTENTIONS COMPETE TO OWN THE SAME DECISION.

Framework informed by International ACAC Guiding Principles & NACAC Guide to Ethical Practice



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WHEN DOES GUIDANCE BECOMES PRESSURE?



NOT EVERY HESITATION IS AN OBJECTION TO OVERCOME

Sometimes the student simply doesn't have enough information yet.



1. *“Sofia, your scholarship acceptance deadline is Friday at 17:00. Here are the conditions. If anything is unclear before you decide, I'm happy to help.”*

2. *“You told me research opportunities, an international environment and small classes matter to you. Those are areas where I genuinely believe our university aligns strongly with what you're looking for. What questions would you still need answered before deciding?”*

3. *“You've already applied and received a scholarship, so you've clearly shown that you want this. If you're serious about studying with us, I recommend securing your place today.”*

4. ***“There are very few scholarships left, and I can't guarantee yours if you wait.”***

“Sofia, I completely understand that you're waiting for your other decisions. I also want you to know that we can only hold this scholarship until February 15. After that, your admission may remain valid, but this particular funding cannot be guaranteed. I want you to have that information while you decide.”



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Ethical recruitment is not only an individual behavior. It is also an institutional environment.

If Sofia applies early, say, in November, and receives admission relatively quickly, but her preferred universities will not respond until March or April, then that is not an objection for the recruiter to overcome. It is an information gap created by asynchronous admission calendars.

...Sometimes the university genuinely cannot wait.

Transparency becomes the solution to fair partnership.

Reveal the conditions of the admission/enrollment benefits:

“Your admission remains valid until X.”

“Housing availability is not guaranteed after Z.”



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Decision-Readiness Model

Applied → Admitted → Exploring → Decision-ready → Commit



Recruiters: shift the objective from securing the deposit to earning *the right to remain in the student's final consideration set*.

Counselor, please help establish whether the student is genuinely considering the university or merely keeping an option alive. Help them articulate the barriers they might have.

Student: Be transparent about where they are in the decision process and reveal the barriers that might be keeping them from moving forward.



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WHAT IS ACTUALLY PREVENTING THE DECISION?

Pressure from Above → Understand the barrier → Respond to the barrier

What we hear	What may actually be happening	Appropriate response
"I'm not ready."	Missing information about our university	Clarify
"My parents aren't convinced."	Family needs information/context	Include & explain
"I'm unsure whether I can afford it."	Financial uncertainty	Make the full cost visible
"I'm waiting for other decisions."	Comparison set is incomplete	Stay useful while they wait



Decision-Readiness Model

Applied → Admitted → Exploring → Decision-ready → Commit



UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE

Don't disappear. Don't manufacture urgency. Earn consideration.

COUNSELOR

Provide context, not a verdict.

STUDENT

Communicate readiness honestly.

INSTITUTION / LEADERSHIP

Forecast readiness, not just deposits.

CRM or pipeline review could distinguish:

Decision-ready / Waiting for other university decisions /

Financial question unresolved / University question unresolved / Low engagement



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INFLUENCE IS INEVITABLE. MANIPULATION ISN'T.



THE QUESTION ISN'T WHETHER WE
It's what our influence does to the student's ability to choose.



TRUTH
Is what I'm saying accurate and complete enough to support the decision?



TRANSPARENCY
Does the student understand my role and whose interests are present in the conversation?



AGENCY
After hearing me, can the student still meaningfully choose differently?



CAN THE STUDENT STILL MEANINGFULLY SAY NO?



Example 1

The Recruiter version

1. *“You told me that undergraduate research and close faculty interaction are important to you. Let me show you specifically how those opportunities work at our university, because I think they align strongly with what you're looking for.”*
2. *“Students who are really serious about their future usually recognize an opportunity like this quickly. I'd be concerned about losing your place if you continue waiting.”*

Persuasion gives the student reasons to consider. Manipulation gives the student reasons to fear choosing differently. Communication creates emotion. Are we using emotion to illuminate the opportunity—or to overpower the decision?



Example 2

The Counselor version

A student says: *"I really want University X."*

1. Counselor A:

"Tell me what attracts you to it. Let's test those reasons against what you say matters to you."

2. Counselor B:

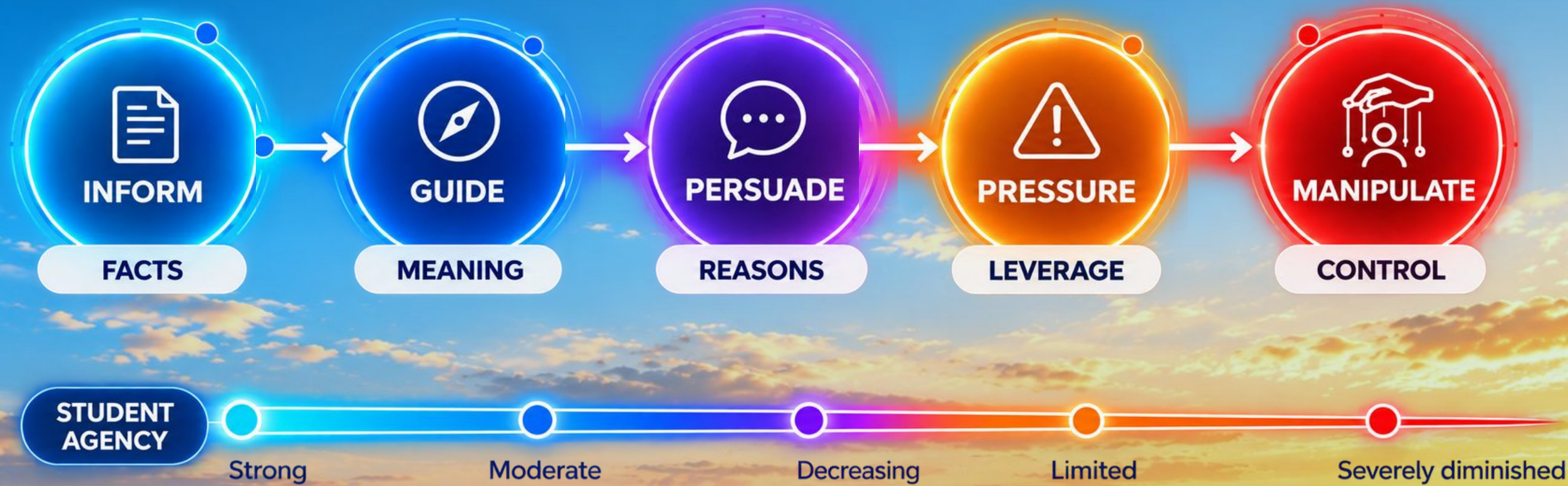
"Students from our school usually do better than University X. You should be aiming higher."

Prestige pressure doesn't become more ethical simply because it came from the counselor's side of the desk, or better say the edge of the roundtable.



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AM I STRENGTHENING THE STUDENT'S
or increasingly substituting my desired outcome for it?



CAN THE STUDENT STILL MEANINGFULLY SAY NO?



OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IS NOT TO CHOOSE FOR THE

It is to make an informed choice possible.



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Our shared responsibility...

UNIVERSITY / RECRUITER

Make the strongest truthful case.

Provide accurate program information, total-cost information, scholarship conditions, deadlines, housing/visa realities, student connections and relevant evidence.

COUNSELOR

Give us the context that makes our support useful and help us stop sending the wrong message and start providing the right support.

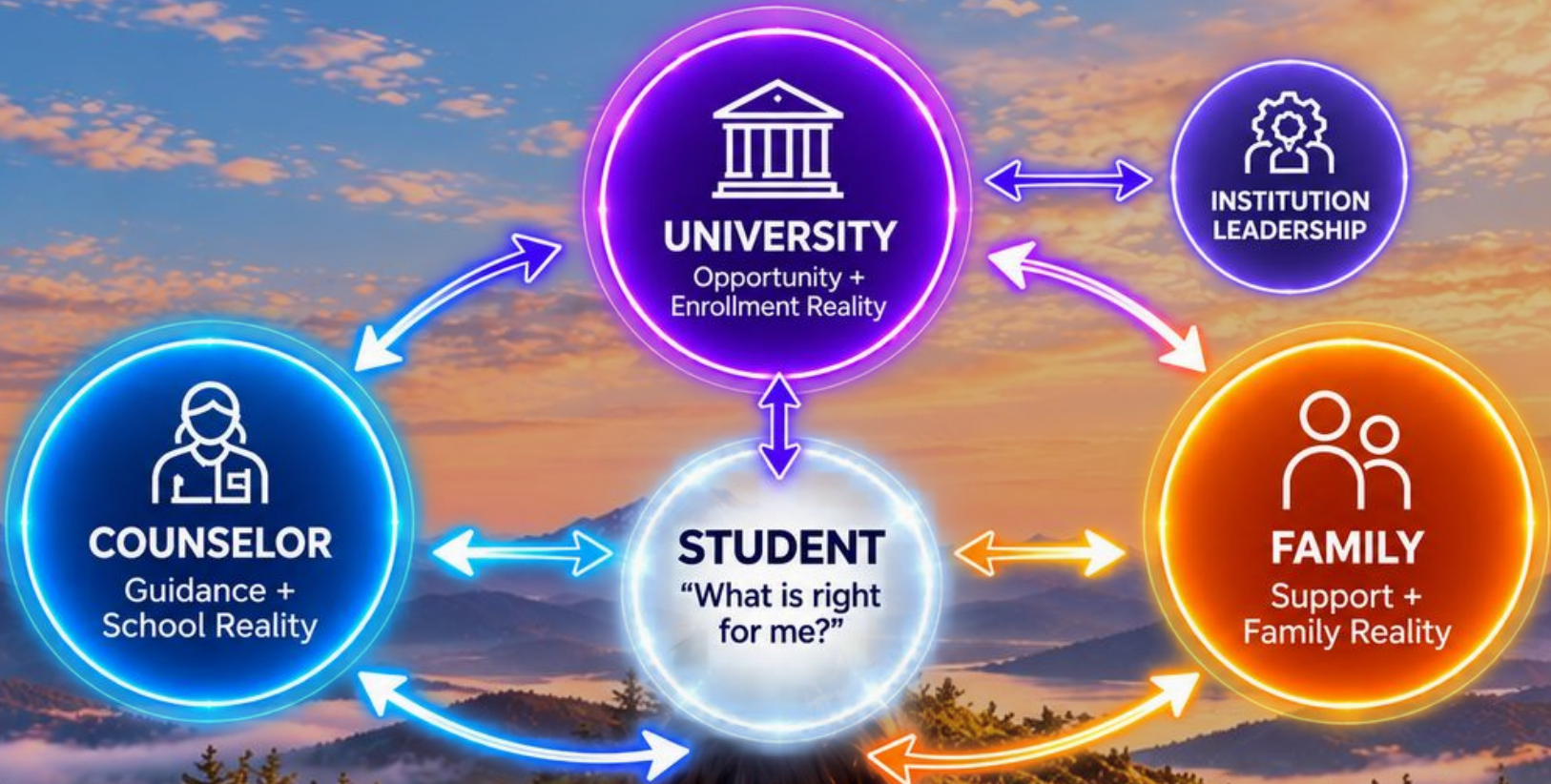
A strong partnership has to survive the permission to tell us when our university/student isn't the right fit.



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PRESSURE DOESN'T BELONG TO ONE SIDE OF THE DESK

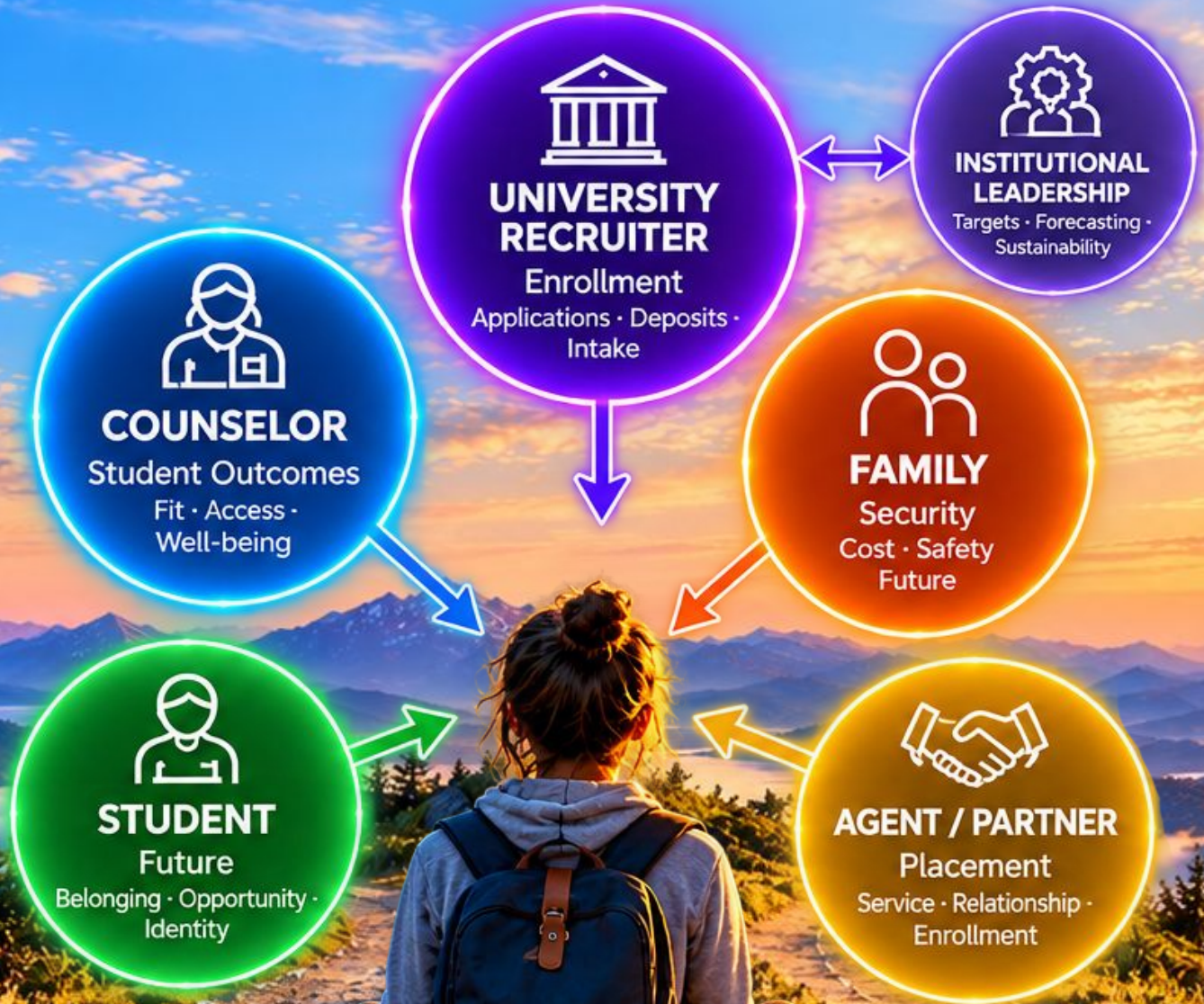


PRESSURE CAN ENTER THE PROCESS FROM ANY

So can support.



FOLLOW THE INCENTIVE



INCENTIVES AREN'T THE PROBLEM

Unexamined incentives can become pressure



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WHAT EACH SIDE CAN SEE — AND WHAT WE CAN MISS

The Counselor's Lens ↔ The University's Lens

**COUNSELOR LENS**

 Student history

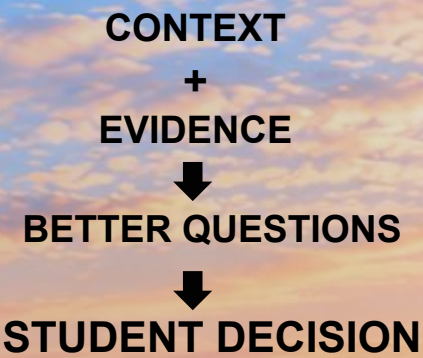
 Family context

 Academic profile

 Emotional readiness

 School environment

 Other options



**UNIVERSITY LENS**

 Program reality

 Campus experience

 Academic opportunities

 Scholarship rules

 Admissions process

 Student support

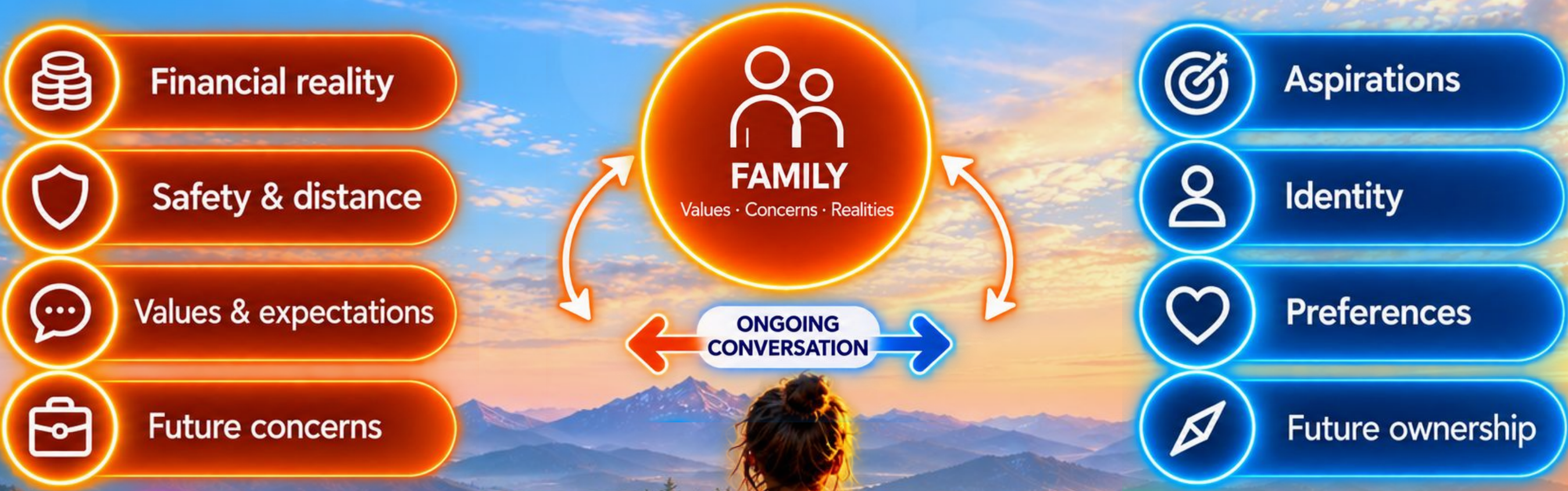
DON'T ANSWER FOR EACH OTHER

Ask each other. Neither side has the whole picture.



STUDENT-CENTERED ≠ STUDENT-ALONE

FAMILY REALITY CAN BE STUDENT FIT

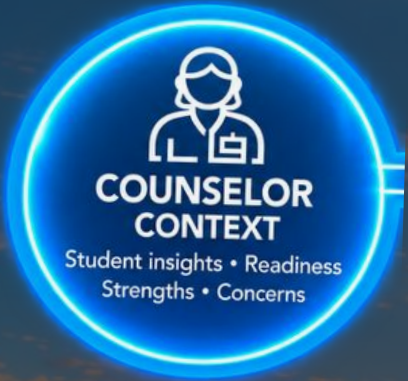


THE FAMILY MAY SHAPE THE
The student still has to live the decision



FIT IS NOT SOMETHING WE DECLARE.

IT'S SOMETHING WE INVESTIGATE



FIT FOR WHAT?

If the process can only produce “yes,” it
isn’t really an investigation



THE SIX-FACTOR FIT CHECK



****NOT A VERDICT.
A BETTER CONVERSATION.****



FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ≠ FINANCIAL JUDGMENT



 **€7,000**
SCHOLARSHIP

Can this family afford the university?

WHAT THE FAMILY ACTUALLY NEEDS TO SEE

-  Tuition after scholarship
-  Mandatory fees
-  Housing & living costs
-  Health insurance
-  Visa / proof-of-funds requirements
-  Travel & additional expenses
-  Scholarship conditions / renewal

 **TOTAL REALISTIC COMMITMENT**

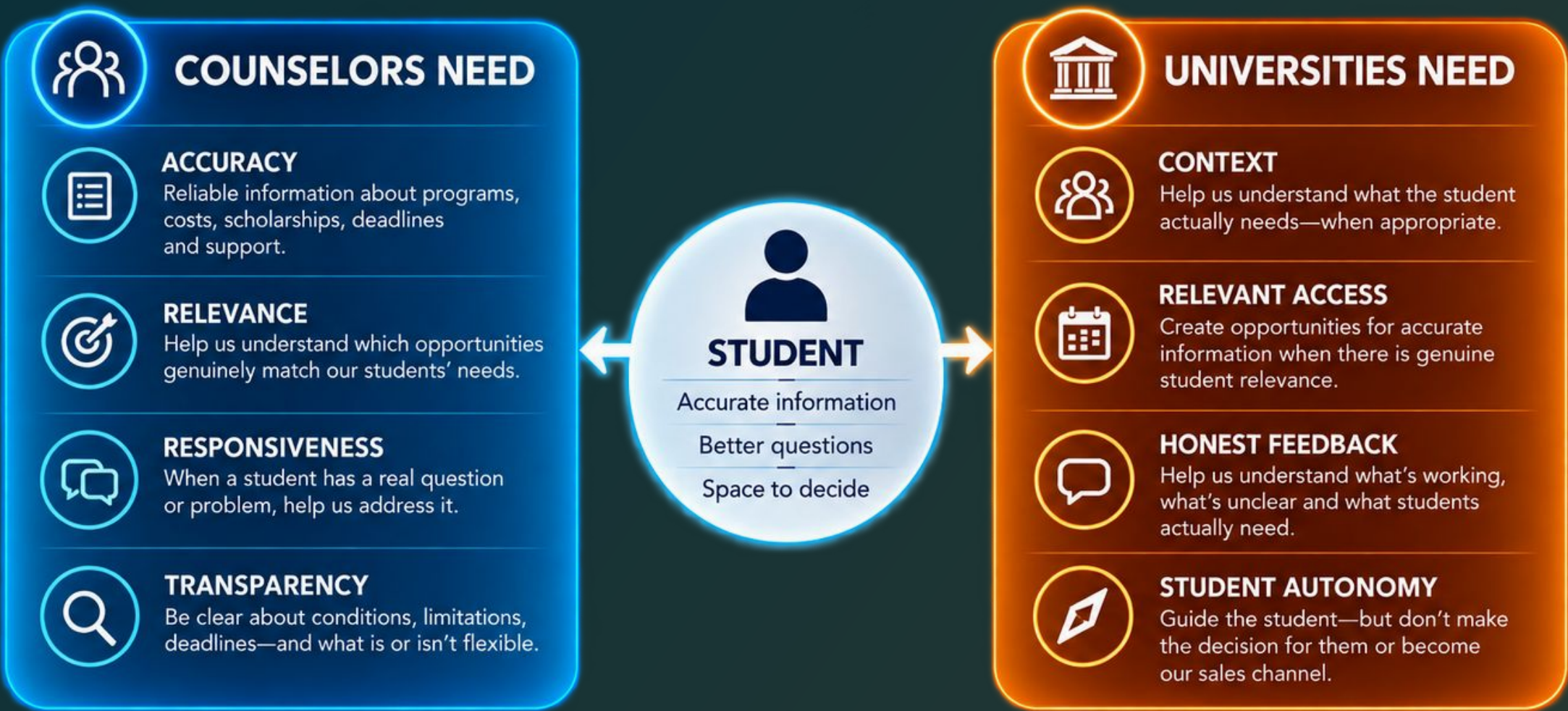
MAKE THE COST VISIBLE.

LET THE FAMILY DEFINE AFFORDABILITY.



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THE PARTNERSHIP COMPACT



**COUNSELORS AREN'T SALES CHANNELS.
UNIVERSITY REPS AREN'T BROCHURE DISTRIBUTORS.**
We each hold information the other side needs.



**BEFORE CONTACTING THE OTHER SIDE, ASK:
"What do I need from them that I cannot reliably provide myself?"**



WHAT CHANGES MONDAY MORNING?

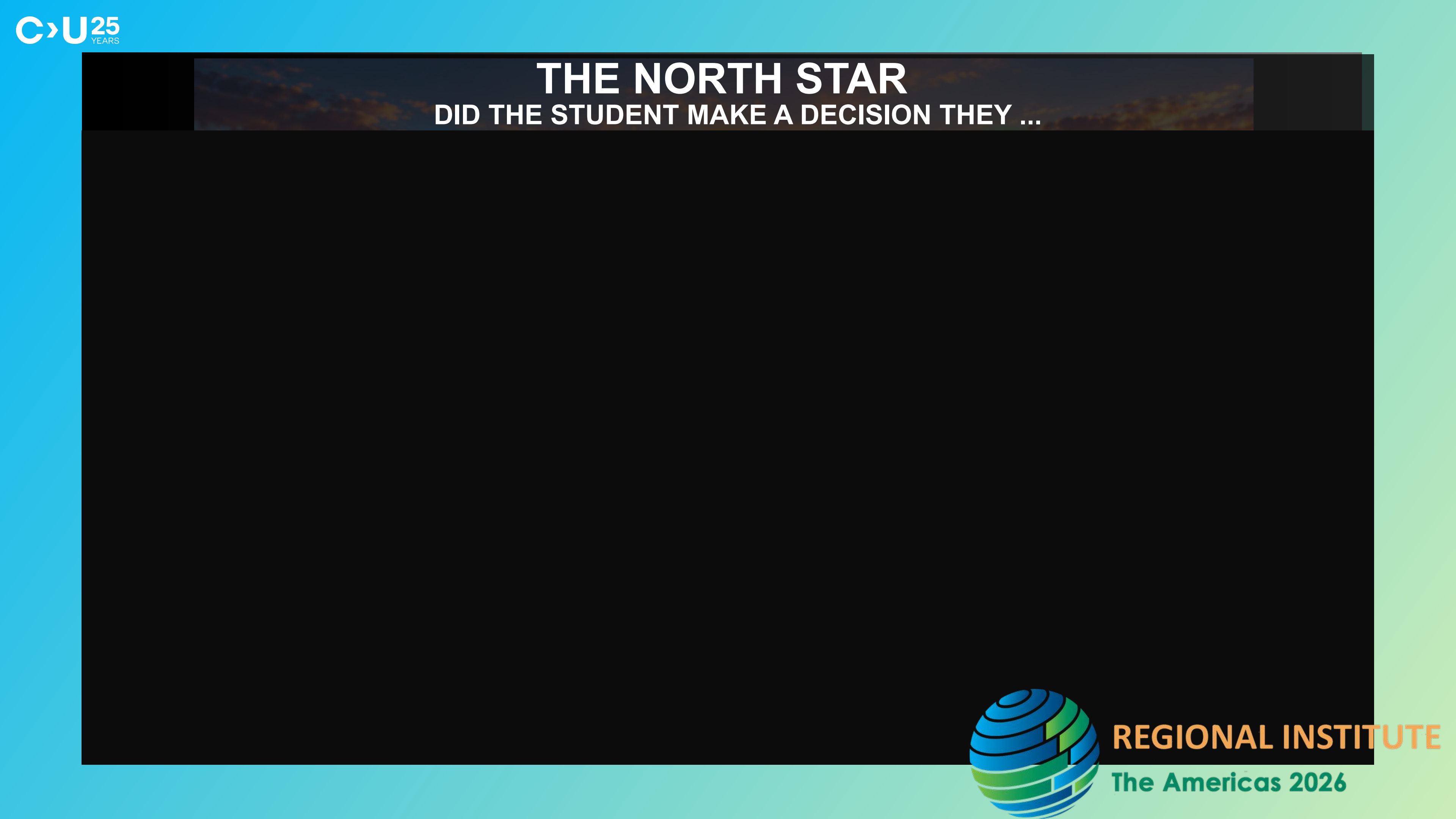
Small changes in our questions
can change the quality of the decision.

COUNSELORS	UNIVERSITY REPS	TOGETHER
NAME THE UNRESOLVED QUESTION	DIAGNOSE BEFORE FOLLOWING UP	SHARE WHAT THE OTHER SIDE NEEDS
What does the student still need to understand?	Find the real unresolved question.	Context ↔ Evidence
CONNECT WHEN RELEVANT	ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE	MAKE TRADE-OFFS VISIBLE
Help students reach accurate information.	Match priorities with verifiable reality.	Good decisions don't require perfect options.
TEST THE REASONING	CONVERT URGENCY INTO SERVICE	PRESERVE OWNERSHIP
Help students examine why an option feels right.	Improve support—not student pressure.	The student ultimately owns the decision.

DON'T ASK ONLY
“HOW DO WE GET TO A DECISION?”

WHAT DOES THIS STUDENT STILL NEED
TO MAKE ONE?





THE NORTH STAR

DID THE STUDENT MAKE A DECISION THEY ...





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