

# TEXAS 30 YEARS JOURNAL

2023



*CELEBRATING 30 YEARS*

**TEXAAN CONFERENCE 2023**



***30 AND THRIVING:  
ADVISOR ADVOCACY***

Texas A&M University Hotel  
and Conference Center  
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## Letter from the Editor and Vice President of Publications

Another year has come and gone and with it the TEXAAN Journal is back! As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of TEXAAN we'd like to welcome you to the 2nd issue of the annual TEXAAN Journal. We strive to have this publication be a reflection of our members and their experiences.



In this issue, we invite you to gain information and inspiration from articles by Chris Hubbard, Aaron J. Petuch, Joshua Urie, and Jana McCarthy. We thank them for their dedication and contribution. We also invite you to join us in congratulating this year's award winners and scholarship recipients for their outstanding work and achievements. As you read this issue, we invite our members to get inspired and consider contributing to our publication in the future.

Priscilla Niño  
Editor & Vice President of Publications

TEXAAN is an association of professional advisors, counselors, faculty, administrators, and students working to enhance the educational development of students.

The Texas Academic Advising Network (TEXAAN) serves as a professional representation of academic advising excellence in Texas by providing professional development, networking, recognition, and dissemination of information. TEXAAN was founded in 1992 and is now comprised of advisors from private, public, two-year, and four-year institutions across the state. TEXAAN functions with volunteer leadership. Members have full voting rights and elect the Executive board as well as other leadership positions within the state. TEXAAN is designated by the IRS as a 501(c) 3 non-profit educational association incorporated in Texas.

INTRODUCTION



# Two Sides of the Same Coin: Views of Intercultural Advising from an Advisor of Color

Chris Hubbard

Academic advising in higher education is crucial to a student's overall academic progression. Advising interactions often extend beyond general discussions of course planning and major declaration to in-depth conversations about the challenges a student faces during a semester, whether the circumstance is within or beyond a student's control. Even more so, these challenges become amplified for students of diverse backgrounds who are learning to adjust to a social climate that is much different from what they are accustomed to or find it challenging to identify with the institution's culture.

To prepare for these interactions, academic advisors employ a variety of advising techniques that center on active listening, the use of inclusive language in communication exchanges, and a continual examination of their cultural competence to identify and address any areas that need improvement. However, these actions alone do not eliminate the biases and misconceptions that can still arise in an advising interaction, especially those brought forth by students themselves. To find an effective solution, intercultural advising practices must be examined more intimately.

# Intercultural Competence, Communication Barriers, and Cultural Biases

Intercultural competence is a concept that focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes an individual possesses that enable them to communicate effectively with people of diverse cultures. It also measures “one’s effectiveness when engaging in intercultural interactions” (SHRM, 2019) and how personal perceptions influence the acceptance of and respect for diverse cultures and the people who represent them. This is a critical factor that allows individuals to effectively navigate a culturally ambiguous world and position themselves to be a part of the positive change initiatives regarding improving cross-cultural relationships. Furthermore, taking the time to develop one’s intercultural competence is of absolute necessity.

Some questions that many advisors, including myself, often ruminate on when discussing intercultural advising affairs are what communication barriers are present and how our own biases undergird those barriers. Initially, my sentiments toward communication barriers and personal biases were as follows: I was a self-proclaimed effective communicator who did not allow biases to affect the interactions I had with others. It was not until I completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) that I found myself to have overestimated my perceived competence. The results of the IDI for my institution were even more eye-opening.

Biases often manifest in the following two forms: conscious bias and unconscious bias. Conscious (or explicit) bias is defined as the direct views or remarks an individual expresses about the attributes of a select group of people based on their race, sex, or religious affiliations. Conversely, unconscious (or implicit) bias involves the innate prejudices that an individual holds but is not aware that they have (Bellack, 2015). The challenge with addressing biases is not so much concerned with conscious bias but unconscious bias. Since this type of bias operates under the radar, it is hard to acknowledge and even more challenging to assess its influence on one’s personal beliefs and behaviors. From an advisor’s perspective, this can translate into disruptions in communication with advisees from diverse backgrounds and adversely impact student groups that may fall into a marginalized category.

Similarly, students’ lack of intercultural competence can give them a misguided view of the expectations of an academic advisor and cause them to undervalue the expertise of those seeking to help them succeed academically, especially advisors of color. These gaps in communication between advisors and advisees severely inhibit effective advising interactions from taking place and damage the morale of both parties. As such, the challenge for advisors is to mitigate these issues in a way that validates the needs of the diverse students they serve while also allowing their professional prowess not to become dismissed or undervalued.

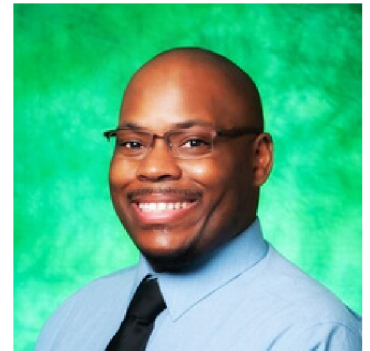
## Current Research and Implications for Consideration

Current research on intercultural competence in higher education highlights several key factors found to be significantly relevant to the current state of advising affairs. For example, Gierke et al. (2018) examined intercultural competence from the student's perspective and presented many of the characteristics students attributed to a culturally competent person, using questionnaires formatted in an open-ended style to challenge students to define intercultural competence from their perspective. The results of the study found that many students sampled associated the following characteristics with an interculturally competent person: non-judgmental, adaptable, respectful, open-minded, patient, tolerant, including, empathetic, compassionate, curious, and observant (p. 8). This implies that for effective intercultural communication practices to take place, one must first have a firm understanding of intercultural competence and possess the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence needed to facilitate these types of interactions efficiently. However, it would be worthy to venture beyond the theoretical confines of advising practice to address a question that is an oversight in the current literature: are student and advisor perceptions of cross-cultural advising interactions influenced based on the use or lack of intercultural competence and other pragmatic communication skills. Although this is a complex question, efforts to address it effectively do not fall in uncharted territory.

For example, Dumas (2014) conducted a study that examined the level of multicultural competence among advising professionals and how factors such as background characteristics, training, and exposure to intercultural literature contribute to an advisor's ability to develop strong multicultural competence. Upon completion of the study, results indicated that race and ethnicity were strongly associated with the level of multicultural competence a participant possessed, suggesting that one's cultural background plays a significant role in their ability or willingness to exercise strong multicultural competence skills. Similarly, Zhang (2015) presented a study that examined intercultural communication competence within a community college setting. Results from the study highlighted several key themes based on the academic advisors' responses: "awareness of cultural differences, attitudes towards learning other cultures, challenges in advising international students, and the strategies employed in advising international students" (Zhang, 2015, p. 51). The implications of these studies are even more profound.

First, for current advisors, developing practices to help eliminate the biases and misconceptions surrounding intercultural advising and providing an outlet for active engagement between them and their students is of immediate necessity. Next, institutions should seek diverse talent that possesses the knowledge, expertise, and ability to demonstrate strong intercultural competence skills. This also means divorcing hiring practices that recruit diverse talent only to have them serve as placeholders whose skills are underutilized. Contemporary advising literature has failed to provide adequate insight from advisors of color who feel underrepresented and may experience the same biases and misconceptions levied at students from diverse cultural backgrounds. By being intentional in taking diverse perspectives into account, the advising community benefits from the opportunity to better understand the experiences of one another, identify areas where any knowledge and skill gaps may lie, and can support each other in the acquisition of stronger intercultural competence to improve the relationships we have with advisees and colleagues who are different from us.

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# Changing Majors Late in the Game: A Recipe for Success?

Aaron J. Petuch

It goes without saying that the earlier students change majors, the better, but what if students have a change of heart late in the game or are forced to consider other options due to not making progress on their current academic paths? When students who have accrued numerous hours change majors, a myriad of consequences are possible, including the risk of previous coursework not counting toward new programs, financial ramifications, and programs having a cap on the number of hours to be considered, to name a few. While many students switch majors due to a change of heart, some are required to do so due to not making progress on their current academic paths, and these situations can be especially challenging for academic advisors. The question is then, “given the potential ramifications of changing majors late in the game as defined by senior status (i.e., having accrued more than 90 credits at a four-year institution), is this a recipe for success or potential failure?” As an academic advisor in the Office for Student Success (OSS) at Texas A&M University, I sought to investigate this question by analyzing the data of dismissed seniors who had to either find new majors or leave the university.



Gordon (2006) classified major changers in one of six categories due to situational factors that contribute to the need to consider alternate options. A particular category, coined experts, refers to students who continue to pursue majors despite lackluster academic performance. The author added that students in this category continue down the same path due to thinking that their current pursuits are the best fit for them and that they have already explored alternatives. This pattern could be especially detrimental due to the investment of time and resources without significant academic progress. Students who fit this mold were common visitors to our advising office during fall 2021 and had the added stress of being at senior status and having to leave their original pursuits behind in search of a new venture. I would argue for advisors in general that there is an innate passion for working with these students and helping them find second chances to pursue their degrees and ultimately graduate.

Fifteen dismissed students were assisted by one of three academic advisors with finding a new program on campus, and their grades were analyzed following the spring 2022 semester. Consistent with Crookston's (1994) view of developmental academic advising, OSS advisors went beyond assisting with vocational decisions and sought to make them active participants in the investigative and, ultimately, decision-making process with the intention of fostering an intrinsic interest in their new paths. A similar initiative was instituted by Musgrove, Lincoln, and Johnson (2019) at the University of Nevada, Reno with students facing scholastic probation and dismissal, and it was concluded that a three-phase approach consisting of personalization, integration, and collaboration contributed to successful future semesters for students. Specific to collaboration, students were encouraged to be active participants in the advising process and take full responsibility for decisions. In this analysis, academic progress was evident if at least a 2.0 semester GPA was achieved, which indicated good academic standing. Even though some students could not be considered in good academic standing overall due to their cumulative GPA, achieving a semester 2.0 GPA was a huge step in the right direction. To further support evidence of academic progress, their fall 2021 semester GPAs were included as comparisons. Results indicated that 13 out of 15 students either met or exceeded a 2.0 semester GPA. Also, all 15 students achieved a higher GPA during the spring 2022 semester, supporting that academic progress was apparent. Table 1 below summarizes this information.



This analysis sought to answer the original question that students needing to consider alternate major pathways late in the game can be a recipe for success, and that making them active participants in the new venture can help facilitate the advising process. Specifically, the data indicated that plentiful numbers of seniors are willing to make the necessary changes to commit and dedicate themselves to striving towards academic progress. While evidence of academic progress is comforting to see, the following limitations exist: First, while achieving a semester 2.0 GPA or above is a milestone for these students, many programs have stricter GPA guidelines that need to be met. For a few students, even though they performed better than in the recent past, their progress was not enough to continue in the major without receiving an academic warning, scholastic probation, etc. Second, even though academic progress was made, unfavorable events could still be possible down the road. For example, if a student earns a 2.0 in major entry-level business courses and is expected to take more difficult business courses the following semester, there is a chance that they will find the upper-level courses too rigorous and end up in a dismissal situation again. Finally, the sample size in this analysis was small, and a larger group will need to be analyzed for additional support.

While the sample size was small, this analysis supports the idea that success with changing majors is possible for students at senior status, even late in the game. Amazingly, all 15 students earned higher GPAs than in the preceding semester, thus displaying some level of academic progression. While these results are compelling, limitations exist.

Table 1: *Past GPA Comparison to Support Academic Progress*

Student #	Fall 2021 GPA	Spring 2022 GPA	Difference	Good Semester Academic Standing?
1	2.8	4.0	+1.2	Yes
2	1.15	2.0	+0.85	Yes
3	2.2	2.8	+0.6	Yes
4	1.46	2.0	+0.54	Yes
5	0.66	1.15	+0.49	No
6	2.6	3.5	+0.9	Yes
7	2.42	3.77	+1.35	Yes
8	2.56	2.69	+0.13	Yes
9	0.88	1.27	+0.39	No
10	1.0	2.5	+1.5	Yes
11	1.75	3.0	+1.25	Yes
12	1.12	2.25	+1.13	Yes
13	1.0	2.67	+1.67	Yes
14	1.75	2.68	+0.93	Yes
15	2.36	2.6	+0.24	Yes

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# Advising for Hope

Joshua Urie

How do we advise students to success right now? Honestly, so much has been said about the pandemic and its ripple effects that saying more seems like shouting repetitions into the void. We're all tired. We're all stressed. We're all a little angry and afraid. My eye has been twitching for months, and I can't figure out why.

We are trying to lift ourselves up by our bootstraps, but after two years we're not even sure we want to wear these boots anymore. Our students are in similar situations. They have entered or ended their formative young adult years in a world vastly different than any of us did. Traditionally aged students ended high school, began college, or became legal adults in a world on hold, quarantined in rooms filled with screens that radiated anger, hate, and insecurity as we all doom scrolled.

If our students were mostly born in the early 2000s, then that means they grew up in a post-9/11 society where fear was on the rise. Then there was the Great Recession. Then the 2016 election revealed and exacerbated the great split in our American life, just as they were starting to feel like adults, the idea of truth and facts went out the window. Then came the pandemic: one word that sums up so much, with no set answer on if it's over or not. And now, even as the US got itself out of its longest war, the threat of war looms larger than ever as Russia invades Ukraine.

Students and staff need spaces to feel our fear, our pain, and our anxiety. We thought things would be better when mask mandates were lifted, when places reopened, and everything returned to 'normal', but like a sleep debt, our uncertainty tagged along. We need rest and we need hope. Even before the pandemic, higher education was under the microscope because of our rising costs, sexual assault scandals, and the cost/benefit analysis when entering the workforce. We need standards of hope to light the way for our students into the future, to engender bravery in them. Frankly, we as staff members need them, too.

This entire multi-year communal experience exemplified in the pandemic is a cultural shipwreck. It may seem like we're clinging to boards, but we are surviving. It reminds me of Sharon Daloz Parks' metaphor in *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. Akin to young adults setting off on their own for the first time, all our understood meaning, set purpose, and deep faith have been tested - sometimes violently so. We feel shipwrecked, lost at sea in the midst of chaotic storms. Yet, somehow, we are surviving. Our misguided, outdated, our flat-out wrong ideals should be allowed to wash away. What remains will be the hope we build upon when we touch shore.

As we've hunkered down and stayed alive these last few years, what has been most important? What has been most missed? Let's develop strategies that will allow us to thrive now, not in 2015 or 2007, or 1989. Ideally, one thing we learned is that there is not a clear-cut, one size fits all answer. Strategies and theories that work in Austin will be different than those in Waco or El Paso or Brownsville, let alone Burlington, Vermont; Portland, Oregon; or Helena, Montana. I do believe that an undergirding principle of all our theories should be hope. Every generation could say their time was just one damn thing after another, but it really feels like this past decade - formative for our students - has been exactly that.

We all need a hope to orient on, a horizon to strive toward, and better circumstances to build together. The good news is that in our best moments, this is what higher education has always been about. We may have lost sight of that in the day to day of surviving, but we now have multitudinous opportunities. May we seize them quickly, for all our sakes'.

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# Honors and Advising: The Differing Guidance Needs of High-Achieving Students in Higher Education

Jana McCarthy

Honors students, by definition, are students with high GPAs, who are eligible for an honors-level academic program. These students are often overlooked in strategic planning; yet, they have success needs that reach well-outside academic support and are unique to their population, regardless of other factors. These include mental health topics such as stress-management, self-esteem, and pressure to achieve, as well as career attainment decisions involving personal fulfillment, community building, and research. They need less prescriptive advising, but experience the same needs as their non-honors peers in terms of culture, identity, gender, social development, and socio-economic concerns. While the limited available research has shown that these differences and similarities exist, much more is needed on the best practices, specific resources, and overall support provided by institutions for high-achieving students. There is a clear research gap in regards to the overall needs and support systems for these students (Hause, 2017, Johnson, et. al., 2018, Kool, et al., 2016, Scager, et al., 2012). This article will focus on the research available for the advising needs of high-achieving, honors-level students.

Scager et al. (2012), explain that “honors students are assumed to have the potential to excel in their future professional lives. It is, however, unclear whether and to what extent these honors students do indeed have this potential in comparison to non-honors students” (p. 20). Hause (2017) builds on this, explaining that most honors students have a clear career goal in mind, often bringing their detailed plans to advising sessions; but, they argue that “the thoughtful detail with which they present their plans offers the illusion that honors students do not need the level of guidance other students need, especially if advisors assume that their task is no more than getting students through a coherent college program that will allow them to embark on their chosen career” (p. 152).

In studying honors students’ potential for excellence, Scager et al. (2012) sought to understand if honors students differ in the soft-skill career strengths of “intelligence, creative thinking, openness to experience, desire to learn, drive to excel, and persistence” (p. 25), and which of those skills were notably higher than their peers. The results showed the biggest differences in the areas of desire to learn and desire to excel, with honors students scoring higher. The authors explain that the results “suggest that honors groups do have the characteristics needed for excellent performance in professional life, but we do not know whether they have these traits in sufficient measure and in successful combinations” (p. 35). This shows that honors students could benefit from advising support that nurtures these strengths as unique skill sets that set them apart.

Hause (2017) argues that “while attention and focus on vocation should inform all advisors’ work, aiding students to identify the coursework and extracurricular activities that will help them flourish, they are especially important features of honors advising” (p. 151). Honors students do well with having a “better understanding of their career goals and how they fit into the larger scheme of the students’ life goals”, and that “the advisor should not tell students how to conceptualize their lives but should instead cultivate their capacity to do it themselves” (p. 156). Hause (2017) also explains that a vocation-focused honors advising curriculum is ideal. “When advisors engage in the common practice of asking their advisees to envision a future life that will make them feel proud, they are asking these students to ponder many of the same considerations that enter into their discernment of their vocation” (p. 158). This strategy leads the student to have a more connected experience in their academic preparation for their career goals, because they have a vocation, rather than a job, in mind and can plan accordingly with extracurriculars, internships, and electives.

Kool et al. (2016), conducted research to determine if honors alumni could be seen differently in early career successes. They sought to compare the differences in salary, GPA, work hours, and work engagement, between honors and non-honors students after beginning their career. They found that “honors alumni did not differ from non-honors alumni on job background characteristics and job resources, such as salary or work hours” (p. 187). However, it did show that the level of work engagement was statistically higher for honors graduates. Honors advisors should foster this work engagement and assist students in seeing how it can make a difference in career choice.

Johnson et al. (2018), sought honors advisors’ perspectives on the work that they do with their students. The participants made clear to their students, early on, that “they were ‘not here just to give a list of classes’ and that they wanted to ‘get the class part done quickly’” (p. 111). The study participants described their work as more future-focused, helping students identify their career goals in order to shape their undergraduate experiences to suit occupational needs. “Participants asked many questions designed to help students clarify their goals and develop action plans to achieve them. Advisors discussed when and why students needed to take advantage of opportunities” (p. 114). They explained that it was their goal to help their students understand that GPA was not everything when it came to a fulfilling career experience and “advisors need to ‘always be mindful that these students are vulnerable to over-commitment’” (p. 115).

Advisors should be well-versed in multiple populations’ noncognitive needs because high-achieving students can come from most, if not all, other subgroups. However, there are some unique and specific noncognitive areas that can be addressed during meetings: academic self-concept or confidence (Clark et al., 2018; Van den Muijsenberg et al., 2021), study motivation (Van den Muijsenberg et al., 2021), and impact of perfectionism (Van den Muijsenberg et al., 2021). Clark et al. (2018) suggest that honors advisors work to develop more personal, partner-like, relationships. This allows for a deeper bond that creates frank and comfortable conversations about self-concept and other factors. In the study, students who were not receiving personalized honors advising support were not as successful overall. Advisors should also regularly address study motivation. Often, these students did not require as much study time during high school and struggle in college because they have not developed a strong study-ethic. Broaching this topic early on can allow advisors to identify resources, like academic coaching, to build these skills.

Advisors should also encourage open conversation about the pressures of perfectionism and being labeled as high-achieving. These pressures come from external sources; but, for most honors students, the toughest pressure comes from within themselves. Advisors should work with counseling centers on their campuses to learn the signs of perfectionism, or fear of failure. There should be easily accessible mental health support available for students who may be dealing with these struggles (Van den Muijsenberg et al., 2021).

Because many differing student populations coexist in higher education, there are specific needs that can be fulfilled by advising, career support, and other resources. Honors students tend to be left out of planning processes because of their high success rate. They are presumed to need less structure in their long-term guidance. This assumption leads to a lack of support at all levels of education. Further, programming for honors students is often academically based, without consideration of their non-academic needs. There is a considerable lack of research on the comparative needs of these students, and this has resulted in a massive gap of support in their ability to adapt and succeed long-term, in comparison with their peers. The coping abilities of high-achieving students can be deceiving to the support staff that serve them. It is important to understand the unique differences in their needs and to foster an environment that will allow them to seek passionate and satisfying vocations. They need guidance to highlight their skill sets and abilities in order to thrive under pressure and provide quality work. Being academically successful does not translate into job satisfaction, but it does seem to create a more engaging work experience. High-achieving students need advisors who will take the time and research needed to support them in reaching their future goals after graduation.

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### **Academic Advising Administrator Award**

Jennifer Janes

The University of Texas at Arlington  
Professional Development Coordinator  
in Academic Advising

### **Faculty Advisor Recognition Award**

Gail Dorn

Del Mar College  
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Texas State University  
Assistant Director of Success Coaching

### **Scholarship Recipients**

Jessica Anderson

Texas Lutheran University  
Director of Advising Support

Alexz Martinez

Temple College  
Academic Advisor





## TEXAAN Vision

Texas Academic Advising Network (TEXAAN) views sound academic advising as a critical component in higher education and instrumental to student success. TEXAAN encourages academic advisors to create a supportive environment in which they may challenge students to take responsibility for making appropriate academic and career decisions.

## Member Benefits

- A variety of volunteer opportunities, from conference committee to Executive Board
- Free webinars on current and relevant topics
- Opportunity to submit program proposals for conferences and webinars
- Access to online job postings
- Recognition opportunities
- Access to mentorship
- Network with colleagues from across the state in a variety of leadership positions

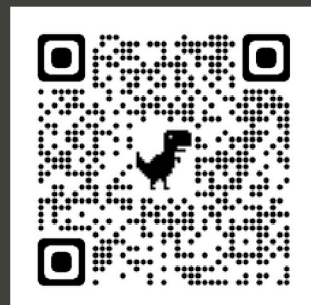
## TEXAAN Mission

To serve as a professional representation of academic advising in Texas by providing professional development, networking, recognition and information.

## Involvement Opportunities

- Regional Drive-Ins
- Webinars
- Fellowship Program
- Mentoring
- Writing for the TEXAAN Journal
- Conference Committee

CHECK US OUT!



# Become a Member!

Becoming a TEXAAN member means that you become part of the Texas academic advising community that include professional advisors, counselors, faculty, administrators, and students that seek the success of students in Texas. Being a member is easy and affordable. A yearly TEXAAN membership is \$30.

## MEMBER TESTIMONIES

"My experience with TEXAAN as a whole has been nothing but wonderful. Whether they are small webinars or grand events such as conferences. I was nervous attending my first event, even being virtual, because I didn't know what to expect. It definitely exceeded my expectations! The layout and formatting was easy to follow and navigate, the sessions were beneficial and focused on different hard hitting topics and trends, and not to mention the personalities and speaker list was phenomenal. I highly recommend anyone to join and be involved with TEXAAN!"

-Cindy Englehart, Texas Woman's University Advisor

"The TEXAAN 2021 conference was amazing! This was my first TEXAAN, and it for sure won't be my last. They made the event so much fun and inviting! Even being virtual, I connected and engaged with so many different people across the state and learned so much about other schools, their advising techniques, and their overall approach to helping students succeed in college. It was great to see everyone come together and share their passion for higher education! "

-Jennifer Browning, Austin Community College Advisor

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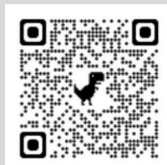
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