

Mindset, Right to Fail, and Persistence: Academic Advising in Support of Student Success

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Overview

Research suggests that many students are entering college environments lacking skill sets that are predictive of college persistence and success. In addition, today's students often have misleading perceptions regarding their abilities and the effort required to succeed in college. There are those who feel they lack the 'natural' acumen to do well in a course, and others who believe they have innate ability that transcends the need to study. When these students encounter academic difficulties, many feel lost and lack the skills needed to manage these difficulties and "bounce back."

How do these attitudes impact students' lives and chances of academic success, and how can they be changed? This webinar will explore how advisors can help these students to cope, navigate, and thrive.

Our presenters, whose 2015 NACADA Annual Conference presentations on this topic drew high attendance and received outstanding participant evaluations, will discuss:

- the idea of mindsets, as defined in the research by Stanford Professor Carol Dweck, which provides increased understanding of how an individual can be successful, regardless of their natural skillset.
- the concept of "right to fail," how it is relevant to student success, and how it can be applicable in a wide variety of institutional settings.
- how advisors can help students define (and sometimes redefine) their notions of "success."
- practical application intervention strategies that can increase student motivation, encourage exploration of major and career options, support students experiencing academic difficulties, and encourage academic engagement and re-engagement.

Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Start thinking about failure and what it means.

Change your definition of failure: <http://lifehacker.com/reframe-how-you-think-about-failure-by-changing-its-def-596193760>

Test your mindset at <http://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>

View videos on Malleability of the Brain:

- The Learning Pod. (2010, April 6). *The Learning Brain*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgLYkV689s4>.
- Khan Academy. (2014, August 19). *Growing your mind*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtKJrB5rOKs>

Post-Webinar Discussion / Activity Suggestions

- What is your definition of success? Failure?
- How do you think your definitions differ from the populations you work with?
- Do you need to adjust your definitions to fit better with those populations? If so, what would your new definitions look like?
- How can redefining your definition of success and failure help you to increase student success?
- What are some ways you can help the students to define and/or redefine success and failure?

Readings designed to help you evaluate the way you view failure.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susantardanico/2012/09/27/five-ways-to-make-peace-with-failure/#7536c7e9376c>
<https://soapboxhq.com/blog/changing-how-we-view-failure-failure-as-an-essential-part-of-growth>

J.K. Rowling's speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvCl6POLZhs>

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Objectives

- Introduce growth and fixed mindsets
- Discuss potential impacts of mindset
- Share ways to encourage a growth mindset

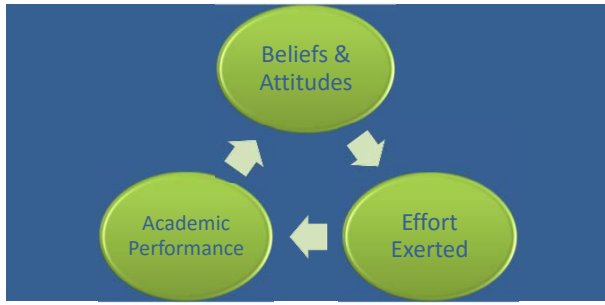


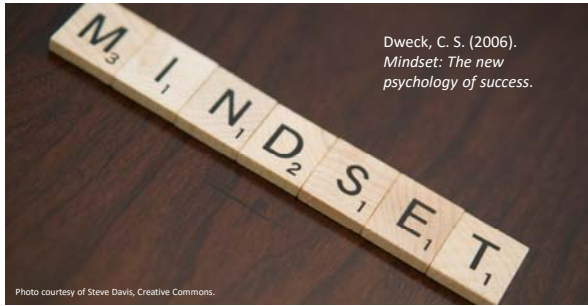
Why Does Mindset Matter?



Photo courtesy of Susan Ruggles, Creative Commons.

Why Does Mindset Matter?





Where Does Mindset Fit In?

- Traditionally
 - Talent
 - Ability
 - Intelligence
- Shift Towards
 - Resilience
 - Grit
 - Mindset



Photo courtesy of Alan Wat, Creative Commons
Smith, T. (2014). Does teaching kids to get gritty help them to get ahead?

Fixed Mindset

- Intelligence and abilities fixed
- Effort has little impact
- Threatened by success of others
- Avoid challenges
- Resist feedback
- Give up easily

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Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.



Just One of those Days



Photo courtesy of Raysonho, Creative Commons

“On your way to work, you hit a pothole and get a flat tire...”

THE GREAT COMMONS FOR ACADemics



The Fixed-Minded Response

- **Reaction:** What would you think?
 - “I’m not smart enough for this job.”
 - “The whole department is against me.”
 - “I’ll never be able to succeed. Why do I even try?”
 - “No one really likes me.”
- **Action:** How would you cope?
 - Less time and effort
 - Become discouraged

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Neuroplasticity

- Reorganize pathways
- Create connections
- Form new neurons

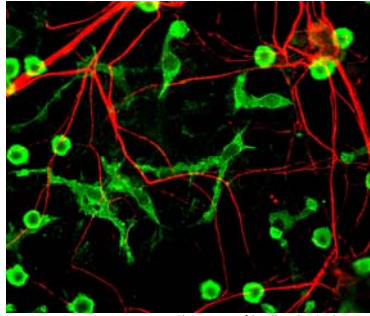


Photo courtesy of Gery Shaw, Creative Commons

Posit Science. (2015). What is Brain Plasticity?

Growth Mindset

- Intelligence is malleable
 - Focus on development and learning
 - Qualities can be cultivated
- Effort required to learn and improve
- Welcome challenges
- Persist through obstacles
- Learns from feedback
- Inspired by success of others

Dweck, C. (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.





Image courtesy of Jessica Ottewell, Creative Commons

The Growth-Minded Response

- **Reaction:** What would you think?
 - “I received a lot of useful feedback.”
 - “I need to be alert while careful driving.”
 - “I wonder if my spouse is having a bad day.”
- **Action:** How would you respond?
 - Work on strengthening proposal
 - Pay more attention driving
 - Speak with spouse



Photo courtesy of Susan Ruggles, Creative Commons.

Perils of Praise & Labels

- **Praise & Labels for Ability...**
 - Overinflated or deflated view
 - Performance reflects character
 - Reluctance to take on challenges
 - Self-doubt when faced with difficulties



Mueller, C. and Dweck, C. (1998). Intelligence praise can undermine motivation and performance.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Praise for effort – Accept responsibility – Constructive feedback – Role of failure – Neuroplasticity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice the growth mindset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conscious of yourself – Take growth actions |
|---|--|

Dweck, C. (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.

Our Topics

- Differences in community college and university students
- The new generation of students
- The 'right to fail' and intrusive advising
 - Our method of combining them
- Definitions of failure and success

Community College and University Students

- There is a difference
 - Community Colleges:
low SES outrank high SES 2:1
 - Elite colleges:
high SES outrank low SES 14:1



Photo courtesy of Chris Marona / Photo Researchers / Universal Images Group

Dunn, H. (2016). 10 Interesting facts comparing community colleges and 4-year institutions.

Why Students Attend Community College

THE DECISION IS YOURS!



Image courtesy of emaze

Bynon, E. (2015). 3 Reasons why students actually choose community colleges.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) Students

- NOVA: 6 campuses and online
- Fall 2015 26,668 students
 - White: 37.8%
 - Black: 17.5%
 - Asian: 16.8%
 - Native Am/Alaska Native: .28%
 - Pacific Islander: .57%
 - Other (includes Hispanic, other and unknown): 27.1%



Photo courtesy of Jeff Greenberg / Omni-Photo Communications, Inc. / Universal Images Group

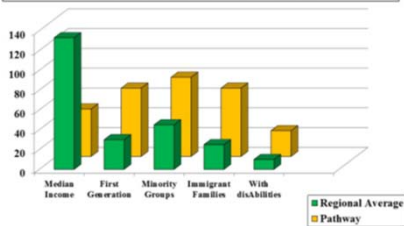
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Pathway Students

- 2016-2017 data sheet
 - Latina/o: 35%
 - Caucasian/Middle Eastern: 20%
 - Asian/Asian American: 18%
 - African/African American: 17%
 - Multiracial/other: 10%

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REGIONAL vs. PATHWAY DEMOGRAPHICS



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New Generation

- What the research says
 - Want to think critically
 - but only about things they care about
 - Low risk taking behavior
 - In college to get good paying job



Photo courtesy of Jose Luis Pelaez Inc / Blend / Learning Pictures / Universal Images Group

2015. Getting to know Gen Z: Exploring a new generation's expectations for higher education.

New Generation

- What we see
 - Do not do well in classes they see as "pointless"
 - Not too interested in the journey of college
 - Want to get to end
 - Put pressure on self to know what career they are working towards



Photo courtesy of STOCK4B / Blend / Learning Pictures / Universal Images Group

THE GREAT FIRST SEMESTER

Right to Fail Journey

J.K. Rowling – Harvard Commencement 2008

- SDV 100 course
- Significance of failure
- How do we apply this to our students?



Photo courtesy of Emicrofono / Shutterstock / Universal Images Group

THE GREAT FIRST SEMESTER

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvC6P0LZh8>

Right to Fail Journey

- Failure isn't fatal - Zinsser (n.d.)
- Right to Fail essence of creativity - Sullivan (1963)




Photo courtesy of Chris Potter, Creative Commons

Right to Fail and Higher Education

- '60s and '70s saw increase in community college enrollment
 - Colleges didn't provide necessary support
 - Predominant philosophy was right to fail
- During '80s, educational leaders and other stakeholders took notice of reduced persistence rates
 - Measures put into place to increase student success

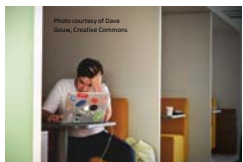


Photo courtesy of Dave Glose, Creative Commons

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Right to Fail and Higher Education

Examples of right to fail policies

- Not required to be advised to register
- Very few courses have pre-reqs or minimum placement scores
- Academic intervention once GPA falls below certain level
- Students who are motivated, most prepared benefit from this




Photo courtesy of Dave Glose, Creative Commons

McGrail, A. (2009). A New Direction: From "Freedom to Fail" to "Right to Succeed."

Pathway Overview

- Combination of intrusive advising and the right to fail
 - Intrusive advising (Varney, 2007; Earl, 1988)
 - Require one meeting with advisor each semester
 - Mid Semester Progress Report (MSPR) and meetings every semester
 - Addressing fear of engagement

Varney, J. (2007, September). Intrusive advising. *Academic Advising Today* Earl, W.R. (1988). Intrusive advising of freshman in academic difficulty. *NACADA Journal*

Probation

- Probation students
 - Outreach
 - MSPR
 - Self-Assessment on Blackboard
 - Registration
 - Used to have hold that blocked registration
 - Now add credit limit to system and student registers self




Photo courtesy of Brian Summers / First Light / Universal Images Group

What Failure Looks Like

- Drop out as measure of failure
 - Due to lack of integration into academic and social system of college
 - High commitment to college completion, with low academic/social integration, may prevent drop out
- Other measures of failure

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research. *Review of Educational Research*

What Failure Looks Like

- Community college students – unique challenges
- Failure can look different for community college students
 - Not receiving degree not necessarily a failure

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What Failure Looks Like

- Our definition
- Student definition
 - Not applying myself and not embracing the experience

Photo courtesy of Johanna Hardell, Creative Commons




What Success Looks Like

- Degree attainment is most common measure of student success (National Symposium on Student Success, 2006)
- Challenges of defining success in community college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010)
 - Diversity of student pop = difficult to define and measure success
 - Look at milestones instead of degree/certificate completion

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What Success Looks Like

- Our definition



- Student definition
 - Being successful both academically and socially, growing and maturing as a human being and finding my path

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