

# Facilitation Guide for Faculty and Staff

Twenty Plus Minutes of  
Experiencing Confidence and Enjoyment of Learning



**Video Link:** [ow.ly/rTTsg](https://ow.ly/rTTsg)

**Mark Stevens, Ph.D.**  
[mark.stevens@csun.edu](mailto:mark.stevens@csun.edu)



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES

## BACKGROUND

There are many explanations why students do not succeed in college. Most of those reasons have very little to do with their intelligence and more to do with their ability to manage and overcome a variety of environmental challenges such as: poor college preparation, financial demands, family pressures, and health concerns of self and others, as well as psychological-social challenges such as: low academic confidence and self-efficacy, poor help seeking behaviors and restrictive attitudes about learning. The ExCEL program, introduced to the CSUN community in 2006, provides resources to make students aware of some of the psychological-social challenges that may be interfering with their academic success. The goal is to help students address and hopefully overcome these challenges.

ExCEL programs have been presented in a variety of venues at CSUN such as: U100, Developmental Math and Residential Life. In 2010, a one unit class called *RAISE your GPA* incorporating the ExCEL program was offered to students as an experimental topics course. In fall 2013, the course will have 3 sections offered through the College of Education.

ExCEL is a piece of the solution puzzle which aims to increase retention rates for those who come to CSUN with a dream and desire to graduate.

## ABOUT THE VIDEO

The video is a condensed version of a 60-75 minute ExCEL workshop offered live to students. Produced by the Pathways Project at the CSUN Career Center in conjunction with University Counseling Services, the 28 minute video provides the viewer **Seven Steps** with examples of how to increase their chances for succeeding academically (and in life). Based on psychological principles of learning and motivation, the steps are presented in simple, yet thought provoking ways. The video encourages reflection and ideally provides hope for students who are struggling with their academic confidence and perhaps not feeling they belong or deserve to be at college.

## OPTIONS FOR USING THE VIDEO AND THE GUIDEBOOK

The video can be shown all at once. The video can also be broken down into smaller sections and shown over a period of time. There are reflection and action exercises associated with each step. The exercises can be done in class or as a homework assignment. How you facilitate discussion of the video and exercises is up to you. ***Many of the exercises are personal in nature and you may consider having the students complete the exercise on their own and then share their answers with another student, before the discussion is opened up to the entire class.***

Here are some facilitation guidelines

- Respect students who do not want to talk in front of the whole group
- You may want to consider some calculated self-disclosure as a way of enhancing sharing.
- Reinforce sharing and self-disclosure.
- Find common themes being shared by students.
- You can choose the exercise you think will work well or.....
- Ask the students to choose the exercise they want to do.
- Be flexible, perhaps there is another reflection/action exercise not listed
- Where appropriate and doable, have student choose an “accountability partner.” Someone they can share their action plan with and check in with about their progress.
- Ask for volunteers to share; reinforce their courage to volunteer
- Be clear about the purpose of the exercise.
- Create conversation.
- Have fun.

## GOALS FOR THE EXERCISES

1. Chance to reflect and gain insight about their academic identity
2. Encourage empowering help-seeking behaviors
3. Dialogue with other students
4. Reduce shame
5. Feel more hopeful and motivated
6. Create some specific plans towards academic success
7. Better understand the process of learning

## **INTRODUCTION SECTION:** **DREAM MAKERS AND DREAM NAVIGATORS**

### ***Exercise 1***

Please identify who are your Dream Navigators at CSUN. Name them. How can they or do they help you navigate your dreams? Are there any other potential dream navigators on campus who you would like to establish a relationship with, but do not feel very confident doing so?

### ***Exercise 2***

“You are ultimately the Dream Maker of your college experience.” What does that phrase mean to you?

### ***Exercise 3***

You have been a Dream Maker your whole life. Identify some dreams you have made come true. What were the key ingredients of making those dreams come true? Which of those ingredients will be useful in making your college dreams come true?

### ***Exercise 4***

You also have Dream Navigators outside of CSUN. Name them. How do they help you stay focused on your dreams and provide guidance and direction?

### ***Exercise 5***

You may have some Dream Distractors. These are people who, for a variety of reasons emotionally and time-wise, pull you away from your dreams. Name them. How do they distract you? Come up with a game plan to lessen their distraction power.

## **STEP ONE: REMEMBER YOUR PURPOSE FOR GOING TO COLLEGE**

### ***Exercise 1***

Please list at least 5 reasons why you are going to college. Think deeply using your heart and your brains. Next to each reason place a number from 1-5. You can repeat numbers.

*1 = low motivator to succeed and graduate                      5 = strong motivator to succeed and graduate*

After each answer explain why you selected that number.

### ***Exercise 2***

List at least three ways you are going to remind yourself of your purpose for going to college. Be creative and make them doable.

### ***Exercise 3***

How will remembering your real purpose for going to college be useful to you?

### ***Exercise 4***

Identify specific times during your college career that remembering and feeling your purpose will be useful in terms keeping you on track rather than getting side tracked. Write down what you can say to yourself (psychologists call this positive self-talk) in terms of your PURPOSE which can help you stay on track.

### ***Exercise 5***

Most likely you have already in your lifetime been motivated by a strong sense of **Purpose**. Remember and write down a time in your life where **Purpose** served as the wind in your sails. It allowed you to make sacrifices, gave you energy and a strong desire to accomplish a task or goal. Share this with someone in your class.

## **STEP TWO:** **KNOW YOUR TRUE ACADEMIC WORTH**

### ***Exercise 1***

How have you been crumpled? Share with a fellow student an academic area or task in which you experience low academic confidence. What story or stories contributed to your low academic confidence?

### ***Exercise 2***

What does the following statement mean? *Intelligence is not fixed.* How does this statement relate to exercise #1?

### ***Exercise 3***

All of us have experienced “academic mini traumas.” These events happen when we are young and as we get older. They could come from a parent, teacher, friend, sibling or stranger. How do you think those experiences have impacted your sense of academic self-worth? What might you be able to say to yourself that will free you from believing what you heard?

### ***Exercise 4***

As a college student, you get to define and re-shape your definition of your academic identity. Please complete the following statement: I would like to improve how I view myself as a student in the following specific ways:

## **STEP THREE:** **ASK FOR HELP**

### ***Exercise 1***

Most people have difficulty asking for help. The reasons may be different for each individual. Identify at least 2 reasons why it may be difficult for you to ask for help. Share those reasons with another student.

### ***Exercise 2***

How do you understand the following quote? “As a college student you deserve to ask for help and you have the right to be helped.”

### ***Exercise 3***

Please recall a time in your academic life when you were reluctant to ask for help. How did you overcome your reluctance? What did you say to yourself to overcome your reluctance?

### ***Exercise 4***

Name all of the places on campus where you can seek help. Be specific with location.

### ***Exercise 5***

What does the following saying mean? “As a college student it *is normative* to ask for help and it is abnormal *to not ask* for help.”

### ***Exercise 6***

Recall a time when you gave someone the “glazed eye” nod. Recall and list what was going on for you emotionally that may have led to the “glazed eye” nod.

### ***Exercise 7***

When you ask for help, list at least three things you can say to your “helper” which would help him/her be in a position to better provide you with what you need.

### ***Exercise 8***

What does the phrase *empowered help-seeking behavior* mean? Share an example of what empowered help-seeking behavior would look like. Perhaps Role Play.

### ***Exercise 9***

In what current class or assignment might you be most reluctant to ask for help, even though you will most likely need some help? Propose a game plan to overcome your reluctance and share it with an “accountability” partner.

## **STEP FOUR: UPLIFT YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT LEARNING**

### ***Exercise 1***

Write down an internal message (negative attitude) you tell your brain that will **decrease** your readiness to learn in the following contexts: a) before you start a homework assignment b) before you enter the classroom c) before you take a test. Be specific.

### ***Exercise 2***

If you were to take a “road trip” with an assignment what would that look like? What would it feel like? Be specific.

### ***Exercise 3***

What type of academic assignments do you typically treat as a chore? Why do you believe you treat those assignments as a chore?

### ***Exercise 4***

Remember a time (be specific) when learning was really fun. Why do you think it was so much fun? How might you bring more enjoyment into the learning process? List at least 3 ways.

### ***Exercise 5***

Please comment on/analyze why this statement is true: “Learning becomes easier and performance goes up when you enjoy the learning process.”

### ***Exercise 6***

What class are you taking now that could use an uplifting of attitude?

## **STEP FIVE:** **PURPOSEFUL EFFORT – EFFORT PAYS OFF**

### ***Exercise 1***

What does this statement mean to you? “Effort usually pays off in the short run, and always pays off in the long run.”

### ***Exercise 2***

Remember a time in your academic life when effort paid off. Be specific in recalling what your effort looked like. What seemed to motivate your effort and drive?

### ***Exercise 3***

Effort has paid off for you outside of the classroom. Please recall a time where effort paid off for you in a task that did not involve academics. How might you use that experience to motivate purposeful effort on the academic field?

### ***Exercise 4***

Who are your personal role models when it comes to seeing how effort pays off? Why did you choose these particular individuals?

### ***Exercise 5***

How do you know when you are putting purposeful effort into your learning experience? What does it feel like and what does it look like? Be specific.

### ***Exercise 6***

What current class and/or upcoming assignment could use more purposeful effort? Write down a promise to yourself of a game plan to do some “academic weight lifting” and share your plan with an “accountability” partner.

## **STEP SIX:** **PUT ASIDE YOUR DISTRACTION MAGNETS**

### ***Exercise 1***

What are your favorite learning distraction magnets? List them in order of usage. When and where do you use them?

### ***Exercise 2***

Please list **all** the personal reasons you find it necessary to have distraction magnets around when you are studying. Be specific and think “deeply” about these reasons. Often the reasons are psychological in nature for example: feeling lonely and/or bored, wanting connection, wanting to be distracted, relaxing, avoiding unpleasant feeling or anxiety, or liking to be noticed.

### ***Exercise 3***

Imagine a learning environment where you will have no distraction magnets. Be specific. Share your picture of this distraction free learning environment with an “accountability partner.” Create a specific game plan for experimenting with this environment. Report your findings of what it was like for you.

### ***Exercise 4***

What does this statement mean to you? “Distraction magnets are cholesterol to the learning process.”

## **STEP SEVEN: REMEMBER YOUR PROUD LEARNING MOMENTS (PLM)**

### ***Exercise 1***

Recall (share on paper or with another person) a proud learning moment. A proud learning moment is a task/assignment/ skill you had doubts you would be able to accomplish or successfully complete. Share your story with detail. What kind of doubts did you have? How did you decide not to let those doubts stop you from “going for it?” Share your journey. Who and when did you ask for help? What kind of sacrifices did you make? What did your effort look like? What examples of persistence are part of this proud learning moment story? How did your attitude (your internal messages) play into the proud learning moment? As you write your story or share your story, *take your time, feel it fully and remember the details*. Embrace your story and own your story. It is yours forever.

### ***Exercise 2***

Write down how you plan on using the above Proud Learning Moment story as a pathway or road map to tackle perceived difficulties or obstacles in your academic and personal lives. Share your plan.

### ***Exercise 3***

Is there something going on currently in your academic life that could use an infusion of recalling a proud learning moment? Be specific. What course/task/test/assignment could benefit from utilizing the recipe of a proud learning moment? What do you need to say to yourself now? What sacrifices do you need to make? Who might you ask for help? Share your plan with your “accountability partner.”

### ***Exercise 4***

You have family and friends and teachers whose proud learning moments you have witnessed or heard about. Recall and perhaps share their proud learning moment story. How has their story impacted you? What parts of their story can you use as inspiration? Be specific. Have you ever shared with them how inspirational their story has been for you? Might you want to tell them now, either in person or in a letter?

### ***Exercise 5***

Who do you think you have inspired by your proud learning moments?

### ***Exercise 6***

What can you do to allow and encourage CSUN to be an environment where you will have many proud learning moments?