

What Students Don't Tell Professors:

**A Presentation on Boosting
Student Success**

Introductions

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What Students Tell Us...

- **Students come to University Counseling Services with a variety of concerns...some of them very serious...**
- **But they almost always talk about their academic experiences...AND, their professors!**
- **Afraid to tell professors because they know you evaluate them!**

Warm-Up Activity

- **Reflect on someone who had a positive impact – maybe a tremendous impact on your academic achievement.**
- **Turn to a neighbor and share that reflection briefly**

Positive Comments We Hear from Students

- **1. When professors ask us to make name plates so they can see who we are and get to know us faster**
- **2. When professors in small- or medium-sized classes take the time to learn our names**
- **3. When professors talk about their own struggles when they were younger or when they were in our shoes**

More Positive Comments...

- **4. When professors use their sense of humor**
- **5. When professors look happy to see us when we darken their doorways during their office hours**
- **6. When professors can tell something is wrong and they ask us what's going on. Maybe I won't want to talk about it, but it lets me know they care.**

Yet More Positive Comments...

- **7. When professors break up the class and do several things during one class – a little lecture, a short video, some small group work**
- **8. When professors are patient and explain things to us, one on one, after class or during office hours**
- **9. When professors remember they are teaching us – people, real people. It's not just about the subject matter.**

And Two Final Positive Comments

- **10. When professors are kind, respectful, and approachable.**
- **11. When professors remember and treat us like we are adults.**

Research Findings

- **Sense of belonging: students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers (Strayhorn, 2018).**
- **The quality of faculty-student interaction and the student's integration into the school are central factors in student attrition (Tinto, 1987).**
- **Students' subjective sense of belonging is related to positive educational outcomes such as GPA, satisfaction, commitment and persistence (Hausssmen et al., 2009).**
- **Academic help-seeking is one positive outcome of student's sense of belonging (Won et al., 2019).**

The Obstacles They Tell Us About (And They Are Really Afraid to Tell Us!)

- **1. When professors say one thing in the syllabus but then there are new requirements we never heard of!**
- **2. Understanding the syllabus should not be a guessing game.**
- **3. When the syllabus says, “No late papers will be accepted,” or “There will be no exceptions,” think about the anxiety that creates within me. I don’t feel like I can talk to my professor.”**

More Obstacles...

- **4. We are clearly aware of differential treatment in the classroom. When a professor calls on the same students over and over, we see it.**
- **5. If a professor ignores a student or makes harsh comments, we see that too!**
- **6. When professors are not there during their office hours.**

Yet More Obstacles...

- **7. Some professors don't understand that there are some circumstances that are beyond our control. I can't control it when there are accidents on the freeway. If I help support my family and a family member gets sick – I can't control that either. I have to take care of my family. I'm not just slacking off.**

Next-to-Last Slide on Obstacles...

- **8. When a professor is lecturing and is clearly not aware of the audience. If they pause and take a look at the students in front of them and the students are all checked out, something is wrong!**
- **9. They (professors) tell us what is going to be on the test – and then the test has something completely unexpected.**

Last Slide on Obstacles...

- **10. Some of us have social anxiety...or we get panic attacks...or we have depression...We have experienced trauma...We have thoughts of killing ourselves or have already tried...We're doing the best we can...And sometimes we are scared to tell you.**

Small, Do-Able Steps...

Based on research and CSUN student feedback, here is a list of small steps instructors can take to create a safe environment and sense of belonging

- **Make Eye Contact**
- **Call student by their name**
 - Use name tents or hang folders over desk with names in large print
 - Ask for a phonetic spelling or a recording
- **Send a note congratulating students who were successful on an early exam or paper or who substantially improved**
- **Reach out to those who didn't do so well and express your willingness to help them**
- **When you talk content, and only content, you run the risk of losing a human connection with them. It's ok to share a photo of a pet or offer personal insight that is relevant to the topic**
- **Students devour anything we share about our home lives, favorite TV-show binges, and the like. Share some of who you are as a person.**
- **Check in with students who have missed a class**

(Sathy & Hogan, 2019)

Small, Do-Able Steps Activity

- **What small steps do you currently take that invite students into a place of safety, learning, and even excitement?**
- **Turn to a neighbor at your table and share those steps briefly.**

THANK YOU!

- **We know you are here because you care!**
- **Thank you for listening to our students!**
- **Remember how much they appreciate it when you recognize them and validate them for who they are.**
- **Thank you!**
 - **---Elizabeth, Dan, Pat, and Abram**

References

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