

**Connecting the Dots:
New Evidence About Why and How
Student Engagement Matters**

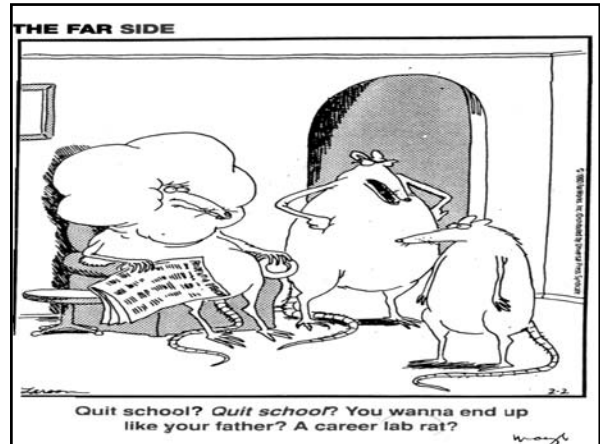
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LEAP

College Learning
*for the
New Global Century*

A REPORT FROM
THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL FOR
Liberal Education & America's Promise

Association of American Colleges and Universities

LEAP

*Narrow Learning is Not Enough—
The Essential Learning Outcomes*

- ★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World
- ★ Intellectual and Practical Skills
- ★ Personal and Social Responsibility
- ★ Integrative Learning

AA
C&U Association of American Colleges and Universities

Overview

- The student success challenge
- The “Dots” study: Student engagement, grades, and persistence
- Promising practices
- Discussion

Student Success in College

Academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance

http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh_Team_Report.pdf

Student Success Quiz

What percent of first-year high school students complete college six years after high school graduation?

(a) 18% (b) 27% (c) 40% (d) 68%
(e) none of the above

a. **18%** ("participation rate")
or e. – **none of the above**

Student Success Quiz

What percent of high school seniors have college-level reading skills?

(a) 51% (b) 59% (c) 68% (d) 77%
(e) none of the above

e. **51%** (ACT, 2006)

Student Success Quiz

True or false:

26% of first-year first-time frosh take one or more remedial courses in college.

False. 40%



Student Success Quiz

What percent of students who take at least one remedial course in **reading** do not earn a certificate or degree within 8 years of first enrollment?

(a) 18% (b) 33% (c) 43%
(d) 61% (e) 70%

e. **70%**



Student Success Quiz

True or false:

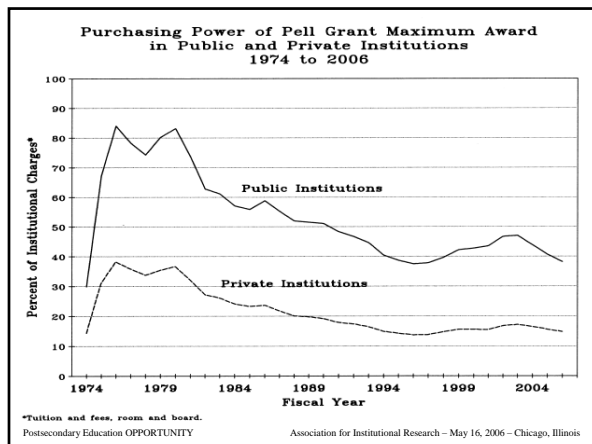
About \$300 million is spent annually on postsecondary remediation coursework.

False. \$1-2 billion



The primary weakness [is our] inability to help poor kids escape from the impoverished conditions in which they grow up... The vast majority of poor young people can't even imagine going to college. By the time many poor kids are sixteen or seventeen years old, either they have already dropped out of school or they lag well behind their peers educationally.

Levine & Nidiffer, 1996



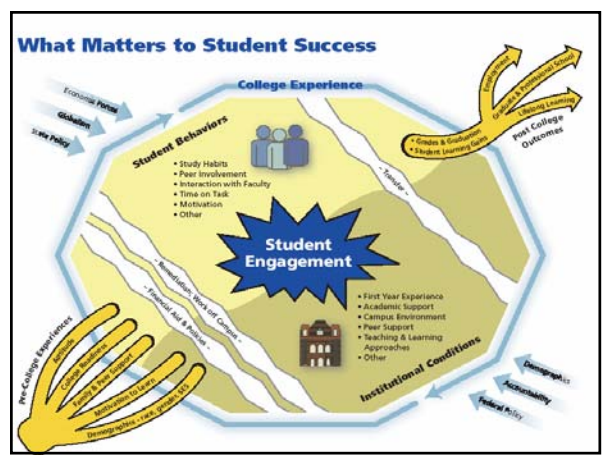
Student Success Quiz

About what percent of community college students return for the second year?
 (a) 29% (b) 33% (c) 50%
 (d) 61% (e) 77%

e. 50%

15% do not complete one academic term

- ### Factors That Threaten Persistence and Graduation from College
- ❖ academically underprepared for college-level work
 - ❖ first-generation college student
 - ❖ gap between high school and college
 - ❖ 30+ hours working per week
 - ❖ part-time enrollment
 - ❖ single parent
 - ❖ financially independent
 - ❖ children at home



What Really Matters in College: Student Engagement

Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage **student engagement**.

Pascarella & Terenzini, *How College Affects Students*, 2005, p. 602

- ### Student Engagement Trinity
- What students **do** -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
 - What institutions **do** -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
 - Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward **the right activities**

Good Practices in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

- ✓ Student-faculty contact
- ✓ Active learning
- ✓ Prompt feedback
- ✓ Time on task
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Respect for diverse learning styles
- ✓ Cooperation among students



National Survey of Student Engagement (pronounced "nessie")

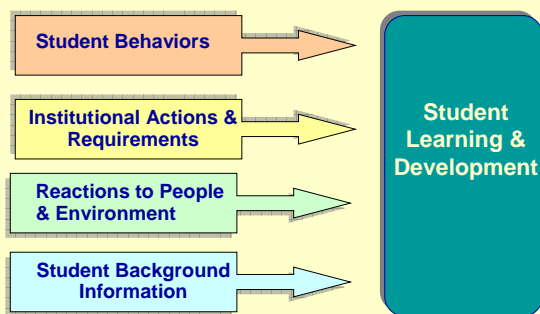


Community College Survey of Student Engagement (pronounced "cessie")



College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

NSSE Survey



■ In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

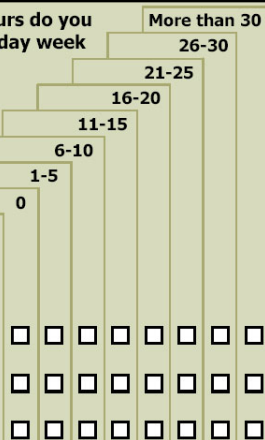
| | Very often | Often | Some-times | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Made a class presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9 About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

of hours per week

- a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

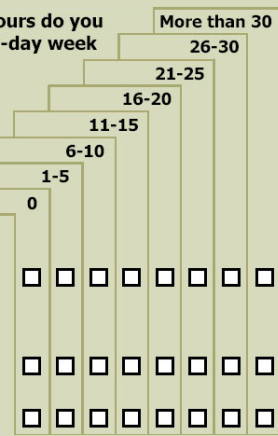
- b. Working for pay **on campus**
- c. Working for pay **off campus**



9 About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

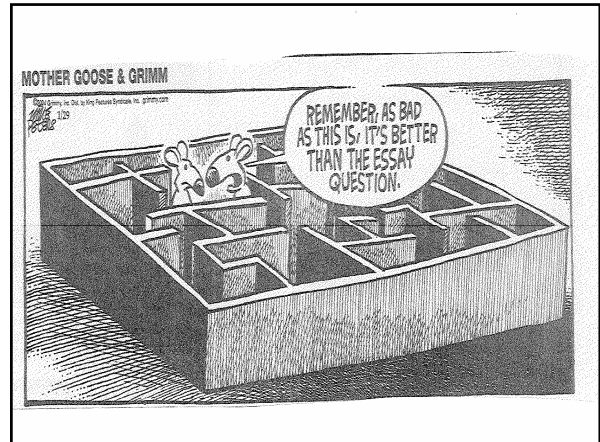
of hours per week

- e. Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, etc.)
- f. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)
- g. Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)



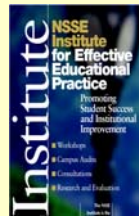
11 To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

| | Very much | Quite a bit | Some | Very little |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Acquiring a broad general education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Writing clearly and effectively | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Connecting the Dots Study

To examine the relationships between student engagement, pre-college experiences, college grades, and persistence for students from different racial and ethnic groups attending different types of institutions.



http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Connecting_the_Dots_Report.pdf

Inquiring Minds Want to Know

- Does engagement affect first-year GPA and chances of returning the next year, net of student background, pre-college experiences, prior academic achievement, and other first-year experiences?
- Does engagement during the senior year affect senior-year GPA, net of student background, prior academic achievement, and other senior-year experiences?
- Are the effects of engagement general or conditional? That is, does engagement have differential effects on GPA and persistence for students of color?

Dots Schools*

Doctoral

Brigham Young University
Ohio State University
Seton Hall University
University of Texas El Paso



Baccalaureate

Centre College
Depauw University
Spelman College
Susquehanna U
U of Puget Sound
Wabash College
Xavier University (LA)

Master's

Adams State College
Cal State-Dominguez Hills
Longwood University
Prairie View A&M
Southern Illinois-Edwardsville
Maryland-Eastern Shore
U of Wisconsin-LaCrosse

* **Selection criteria:** Participate in NSSE at least once between 2000 and 2003 and reasonable percentages of students of color among respondents.

Data Elements and Sample

- NSSE results
- ACT/SAT score report
- Financial aid
- Transcripts (gpa, persistence)

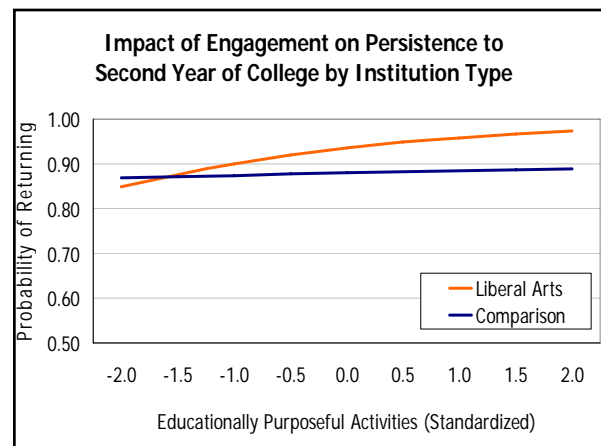
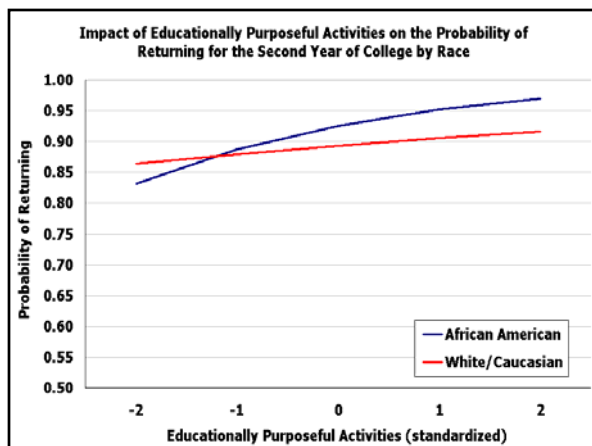
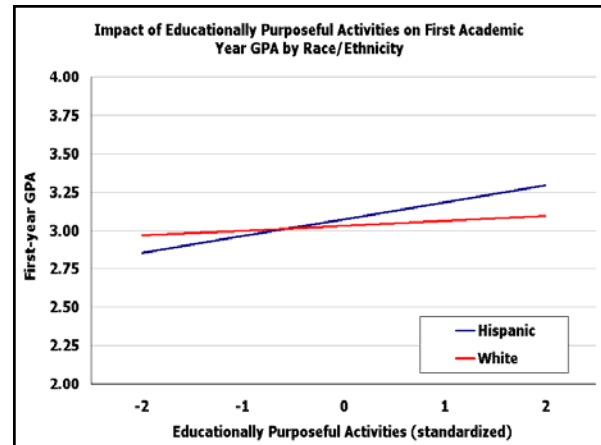
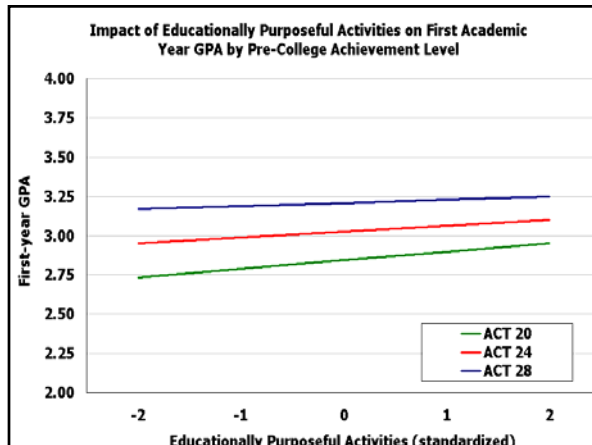
First-year students = **6,193**

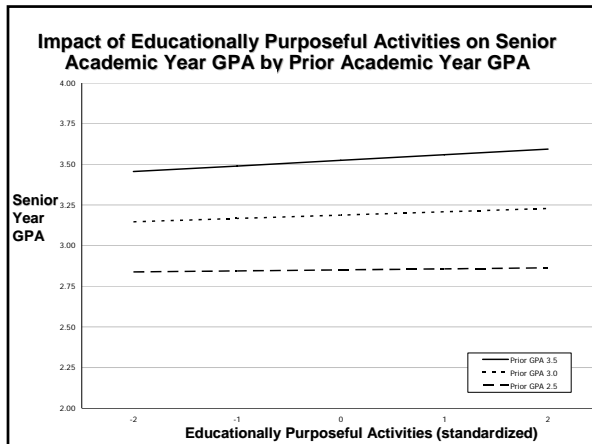
Seniors = **5,227**

*Grades, persistence,
student satisfaction,
and engagement go
hand in hand*



*Behold the compensatory
effects of engagement*



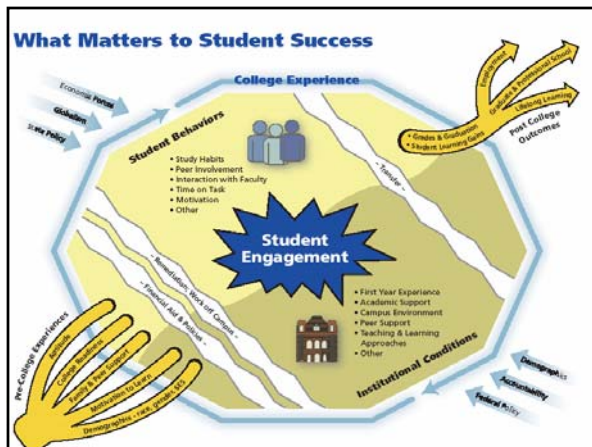
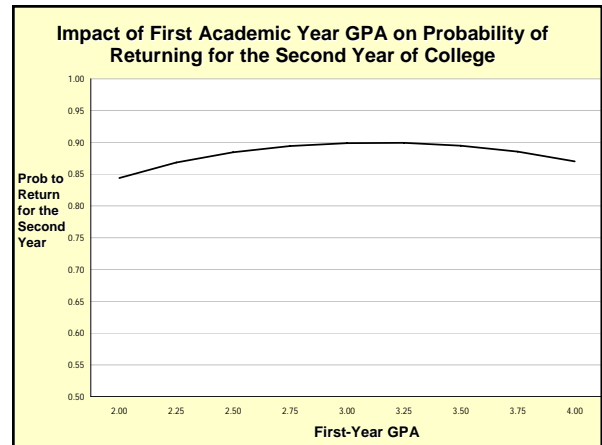
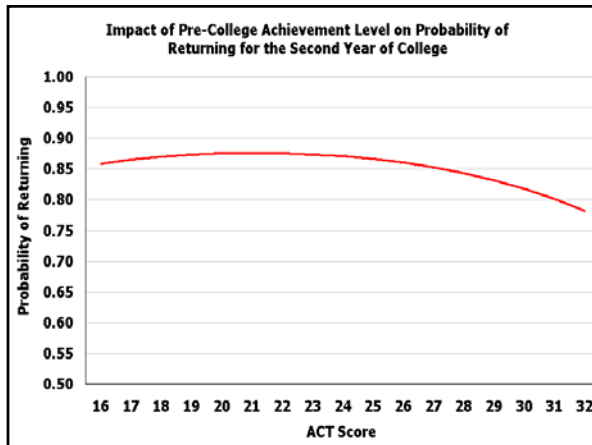


Student Success Quiz

What percent of 1999-2000 college graduates attended two or more institutions?

(a) 14% (b) 26% (c) 33%
(d) 42% (e) 59%

e. 59%



Propositions and Recommendations

1. **At-risk students require early interventions and sustained attention at various transition points**

➤ Clarify institutional values and expectations early and often to prospective and matriculating students.

What to Do?!?

Student success requires that professors explain more things to today's students that we once took for granted –

“You must buy the book, you must read it and come to class, you must observe deadlines or make special arrangements when you miss one”

Prof. Richard Turner (1998, p.4)

Propositions and Recommendations

1. ***At-risk students require early interventions and sustained attention at various transition points***
 - Clarify institutional values and expectations early and often to prospective and matriculating students.
 - Provide multiple learning support networks, early warning systems, and safety nets.
 - Ensure that all students have rigorous, intensive pre-college academic preparation.

Lessons from National Center for Academic Transformation

- ✓ ***If doing something is important, require it (first-year students don't do 'optional')***
- ✓ ***Assign course points to the activity***
- ✓ ***Monitor and intervene when necessary***

<http://www.thencat.org/Newsletters/Apr06.htm#1>

Propositions and Recommendations

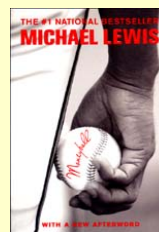
2. ***Students who connect with someone or something are more likely to persist.***
 - Make the classroom the locus of community.
 - Structure ways for more commuter students to spend time with classmates.
 - Involve every student in a meaningful way with some activity or some positive role model in the college environment.
 - Encourage students to live on campus at least for the first year at institutions that have housing available.

Propositions and Recommendations

3. ***Institutions that focus on student success are more likely to help their students succeed.***
- Invest in effective educational practices throughout the institution.



Put money where it will make a difference in student engagement



“...in professional baseball it still matters less how much you have than how well you spend it”

LEAP

Effective Educational Practices

- ★ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- ★ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ★ Learning Communities
- ★ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ★ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- ★ “Science as Science Is Done”;
Undergraduate Research
- ★ Diversity/Global Learning
- ★ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ★ Internships
- ★ Capstone Courses and Projects



Effective Educational Practices Increase Odds That Students Will:

- ✓ *Invest time and effort*
- ✓ *Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters*
- ✓ *Experience diversity*
- ✓ *Get more frequent feedback*
- ✓ *Discover relevance of their learning through real-world applications*





DEEP Practice Briefs
Available:
www.nsse.iub.edu

Propositions and Recommendations

3. Institutions that make student success a priority are more likely to help their students succeed.

- Use effective educational practices.
- Use technology in educationally effective ways.
- Conduct periodic examinations of the student experience, inside and outside the classroom.
- Focus assessment and accountability efforts on what matters to student success.
- Incentivize postsecondary institutions to ameliorate debilitating cultural properties.

Ultimately, it's all about the culture...

- a. Identify cultural properties that impede success**
- b. Expand the number of cultural practitioners on campus**
- c. Instill an ethic of positive restlessness**

Positive restlessness

- ✓ “We know who we are and what we aspire to.”
- ✓ Confident, responsive, but never quite satisfied...
- ✓ Self-correcting orientation
- ✓ Continually question, “are we performing as well as we can?”

4. Put someone in charge

When everyone is responsible for something, no one is accountable for it...

- a. Get senior leadership on board
- b. Some individual or group must coordinate and monitor status of initiatives
- c. Those 'in charge' not solely responsible for bringing about change
- d. Form high profile 'think force' or similar group

5. Stay the course

The good-to-great-transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough...

(Collins, 2001, p. 186)

Sustainability

Another Key to Student Success

The path to institutional improvement is littered with failed and faltering interventions, often because too little thought is given to where the resources or energy will come from to sustain the efforts beyond a first or second cycle.

Last Word

A college or university cannot change the lineage of its students. Campus cultures do not change easily or willingly. But we can do far more to shape the way students approach college and what they do after they arrive.

Do we have the **will** to more consistently use promising policies and practices to increase the odds that more students "get ready," "get in," and "get through?"



Conversation



http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/Connecting_the_Dots_Report.pdf

http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Kuh_Team_Report.pdf

