

College Survival E-Newsletter

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National Student Success Conference Wrap-Up

College Survival's National Student Success Conference, "Structures for Success", was held at the "W" Chicago City Center hotel on July 9-11. Amidst beautiful downtown Chicago, with its storied and impressive architecture, the conference theme blended the metaphors of construction with student success (laying the foundation, constructing the scaffolding, and designing the blueprint).

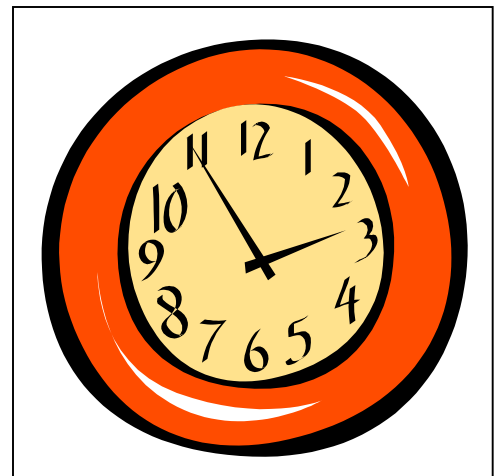


The conference was highly interactive and thought provoking, with conference attendees sharing, creating, and adopting new methods of promoting student success. Presentation topics at the various sessions included: teaching a student success course for the first time, analyzing learning styles, using case studies to maximize study strategies, online course development, selecting the proper textbook for a student success course, promoting student self-esteem, teaching strategies for adult learners, student retention techniques, interactive learning practices, and

much more. The keynote address on integrating workplace competencies with academic skills, was given by Carol Kanar, educator and author of "The Confident Student". The entire College Survival team would like to thank the attendees and presenters for making the 2003 national student success conference a complete success!

How Do I Manage My Time?

Karen Fenske of Kiswaukee College, Malta, Illinois, helps her students quantify their concept of time by asking them to generate a list of things they do every day. She passes around a calculator for students to share so they can calculate how much time per week they spend on each activity (on average). That number is subtracted from 168 (24 hours x 7 days). Soon students are left with the dilemma of negative time, which can lead to a discussion of setting priorities and being flexible in following a time schedule.



Ask the Experts...

In this section, we asked a series of student success-related questions to Mona Casady (author of “Getting the College Edge”) and Dean Mancina (Faculty Advisor for “Becoming a Master Student”).

Q: What is the single most important idea that students should learn in a student success course?

Casady: Students’ actions and choices determine their success in college. A college survival or student success course will give students the information and tools to function as mature adults. The class will help them to communicate effectively with others, to function efficiently, and to use campus resources. The results will include meeting their goals and enjoying the experience of higher education. The instructor of a student success class is like a buffer (between having family at hand to offer guidance and being alone to face challenges) and a temporary trainer (helping students get off to the right start). The students in the class become friends and a unique support group, which evolves from class discussions and small group work. In short, the student success class coaches students to choose appropriate actions and to make sound decisions that will enhance their college success.

Mancina: Students should approach student success courses with an open mind. Many of the skills required in student success courses are just new ways of doing things students have been doing throughout their educational experience. It is hard to break habits. Additionally, some students are required to take a student success course because they are on academic probation and are resistant to learning. The Power Process ‘Ideas are Tools’ in “Becoming a Master Student” suggests that students adopt an accepting attitude to the strategies in the book, even the ones that sound corny. I think it is an essential concept for student success courses, and many of my students say an accepting attitude is the most important skill they learn.

Q: What trends in higher education do you think will be important over the next few years?

Casady: From the last five years of working with first-year students, I see the following trends: 1) with the decline of the economy and the rise in the cost of higher education, students are having to work more in order to pay their expenses; 2) students want “quick fixes”, many are not willing to devote the time and energy for academic rigor (textbook reading, writing assignments, and class attendance); 3) Many students have unrealistic expectations about college – being a successful full-time student requires a heavy time commitment, which includes attending classes and studying at least two hours outside of class for every hour in class; 4) grade inflation has led to graduates with high GPAs who cannot perform on the job. We have a tremendous responsibility to help first-year students accept responsibility for their actions and choices. In guiding them to success, we can respond to these trends by: 1) exploring various part-time employment and financial aid options; 2) enhancing oral and written communication skills; 3) using role playing that applies critical thinking to goal setting; 4) having students solve case studies that connect time management to priorities; 5) leading class discussions on a question such as, “Is a grade of “A” really outstanding?”

Mancina: First, as the cost of a college education continues to rise, students question the viability of taking on huge student loans to get a degree. Educational institutions will need to convince students that a degree is worth the cost. Second, with an increase in alternative delivery methods, we need to ask about the parameters of sound instructional delivery. Can we teach all of a course’s core concepts in four Saturdays? Can students learn effectively while sitting at home in front of their computer? Third, with an increasingly aging faculty nationwide, we need to build incentives that will appeal to today’s top college students so that they will want to pursue a teaching career. Finally, faculty view tenure as a basic right in the U.S. educational system, but the concept of tenure is under rigorous and increasing scrutiny.

Trust-Building 101: Establishing Connections with your Students

Submitted by: Stacy O'Mara – email:somara@fullsail.com

Instructor at Full Sail Real World Education

Trust is an essential basis for any relationship. Knowing the importance of trust in building relationships, how can an educator facilitate trust in the classroom? The following is a practical approach for helping students learn to trust themselves and experience trust with another. After some rapport has been established with the class, try this exercise.

First, have the class stand and line the perimeter of the room, facing the center. Facing the center, tell them they can't speak until you tell them otherwise. Next, instruct them to look around the room at their fellow students. This is not a casual everyday gaze. It is a time to take in each person as they scan the room, allowing their eyes to spend 3 or 4 seconds on each.

Once that is done, have them pick out three people they do not know, but would like to meet. As they finish this task, they are ready to enter into the Trust Experience. Tell them they must go to one of the three people they just chose. Remind them that they cannot speak. Thus, as they navigate their way around the room, they must rely on their non-verbal skills to negotiate, agree and eventually find a place to sit with the person they chose in a pair.

If a student does not have anyone to pair up with, the professor can do one of the following: 1) the professor can offer herself as a participant; 2) if a student chooses to sit alone, you might want to check-in and perhaps discuss the importance of life skills, or assign them a reflective writing essay.

Once coupled and seated, give them one minute each to express what it was that drew them to the person they are sitting with. Each person is to take turns speaking. This is not a conversation. It is an impartial sharing of ideas. Neither person can comment or ask questions of the other. It is important to keep this time brief and focused.

The final part of the experience requires a prepared packet of questions. These should not be "yes" and "no" questions, but ones which go below the surface, such as, who has been influential in your life and why? What is your dream? What have you been successful in? Make them as deep or as light as you like.

Each pair will be given a packet and instructed to spend some time engaged in thoughtful Q&A with their partner. To ensure that the trust-building exercise is successful, each conversation should be at least 15 minutes long, after which you may regroup and discuss, assign a reflective writing assignment or simply leave it open allowing the conversation to continue.

This exercise is intended to help students learn to trust themselves and others by calling on, and quickly synthesizing, several facets in the relationship building process: 1) Willingness – standing, engaging and agreeing to the rules; 2) Honesty – internally acknowledging the people you would like to meet; 3) Vulnerability – externally acknowledging the desire to know someone; 4) Respect – realizing we share certain common goals and values and have similar experiences.

The exercise is especially effective due to the level playing field. The students agree to engage primarily out of regard for the educational setting. Because their silence has been required, there is no opportunity for them to voice their dissension. Thus, everyone is in the same predicament when more advanced requests come. As a result of the seeming anonymity held in silence, students learn to open to their feelings of connection. Trust is established as a result of the communication that ensues from the exercise.



**Fall “Energizer” Conference
On Student Success
San Antonio, Texas
October 24 & 25, 2003**

The Westin Riverwalk, just minutes away from the Alamo, La Villita, and Market Square, will be our backdrop for our Fall “Energizer” on October 24-25, 2003.

This special student success conference will feature the most popular presentations given at our conferences during the last few years, as well as exciting new sessions that will equip and “energize” you for the challenges you face as a student success educator. You’ll walk away from this conference with a thorough understanding of the latest trends in this discipline, and you’ll be armed with strategies you can use to increase student motivation and effectiveness the very next time you teach.

For more information or to register contact College Survival at 800-528-8323 or visit our website at:
<http://college.hmco.com/collegesurvival/resources/instructors/conferences.html>

Consultant's Corner

Tip of the Day: Lessons in Money Management

College students often need to do some serious monthly budgeting. Even with the best planning, money might become a problem before the end of the semester or term. By addressing the basic concepts of financial planning in a student success class, students can establish awareness for how to make smart choices about money and credit throughout life. Ask students to write about their goals. How can they live within their means? Spend wisely? Save? Invest regularly? Furthermore, invite a local bank executive or a financial planner to speak to your class on a variety of money management issues. Topics could include: 1) What is a good credit rating? 2) What can you do if your credit rating is poor? 3) What happens when someone writes a bad check? 4) How can I cut credit card costs? 5) If I can’t afford the minimum payment required on my statement, can I pay less? Lastly, ask students to form groups of three to develop strategies to avoid debt and to repay debts. Also, ask them to generate creative ways for eliminating debt. Students’ answers can lead to a class discussion and potential solutions for creating awareness of financial stability. Submit the final list of their ideas to be printed in the college newspaper.

LOOKING AHEAD...

In the next issue:

- **San Antonio Conference Wrap-Up**
- **Ask the Experts**
- **Tips for Online Teaching and Learning**
- **And much more!**