# Student Success:

## How Can We *Define* It, *Measure* It, & *Promote* It?

Public Lecture with Sally Kift

### Victoria University
Melbourne, Australia
*July 13th, 2011*

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Abstract
   Perceptions of "quality" in higher education have been preoccupied with, and compromised by, an overemphasis on student selectivity and research productivity rather than by careful assessment of what campuses actually do with and for the undergraduates they admit. Alternative indicators of college quality will be identified along with high-impact practices that promote student success.
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# Defining Student "Success" & University "Quality":

Premises:

1. Student success and college quality are inextricably interrelated: Undergraduate success depends on both _student_ effort and _institutional_ effort, i.e., it involves a reciprocal relationship between what the university *does for* its students and what students do *for themselves*.


2. Quality undergraduate education *should* be defined in terms of:
   (a) what the university actually does *with and for* the undergraduates it enrolls—i.e., effective educational _processes/practices/policies_), and


   (b) the type of undergraduate students it turns out (*positive student outcomes*) relative to the type of students it lets in—i.e., "talent development" or "value-added" assessment.


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## <u>Talent Development</u>, a.k.a., <u>Value-Added</u> Assessment Model of Defining Student Success & University Quality (Astin, 1991):

## The I-E-O Model

### INPUT
Students' Initial Characteristics at University *Entry*
(e.g., admissions test scores and income level)

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### ENVIRONMENT
Students' *Experiences* at the University
(inside and outside the classroom)

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### *OUTPUT*
Student *Outcomes*:
Student characteristics at university exit (graduation) relative to their characteristics at university entry (matriculation)

# *Measuring* Student Success and University Quality:
## Key Outcomes & Indicators

**1. Student _Retention_ (*Persistence*):** Entering students *remain, re-enroll,* and *continue* to make progress toward degree completion.

**2. Educational _Attainment_:** Students *persist to completion* of their degree, program, or educational goal.

**3. _Academic Achievement_:** The degree or amount of student *learning* and *cognitive development* that takes place during the college experience—particularly deep, durable learning and higher-level thinking.

**4. _Personal_ Development**: The extent of *holistic* (whole-person) development/learning that occurs during the college experience—e.g., identity formation, character development, social and emotional intelligence, diversity tolerance/appreciation, civic responsibility, and leadership development.

**5. Student _Advancement_:** The degree to which students *aspire* to, *proceed* to, and *succeed* at *subsequent* educational or vocational endeavors that follow their college experience.

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# Research-Based Student *Experiences* Strongly Associated with Learning, Motivation, & Retention

## 1. *PERSONAL VALIDATION*
Student success is fostered when students feel personally *significant*—i.e., when they feel recognized as *individuals*, that they *matter* to the institution, and that the institution *cares* about them as whole persons (Rendón, 1994; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; Terenzini, et al., 1996).

Leading Practices:
* Creating a *Welcoming* (& Validating) *First Impression*

* *Knowing* Our Students:
  a) Their names (knowing <u>who</u> they are)

  b) Their personal talents, interests, aspirations, etc. (knowing <u>about</u> them)

 * Treating the Student as a *"Whole Person"*
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## 2. *SELF-EFFICACY*
Students are more likely to strive for and achieve success when they believe that their *personal effort* matters—when they think they can exert significant influence or control over the outcomes of their life and their future success (Bandura, 1997; Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Elias, & Loomis, 2002; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Solberg, et al., 1993).

Leading Practices:
* Balancing *Challenge & Support*: "Scaffolding"

* Providing Positive, Performance-Enhancing *Feedback*

* Exposing Students to *Successful Role Models* (With Whom They Can Identify)
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## 3. *PERSONAL MEANING*
Success is more likely to take place when students find *meaning or purpose* in their college experience—i.e., when they perceive *relevant connections* between what they're learning in college, their current life, and their future goals (Ausubel, 1978; Fink, 2002; Mezirow, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wlodkowski, 1998).

Leading Practices:
* Finding Meaning, Purpose, & Value of *Academic* Learning

* Making *Connections:*
  a) Between *Courses and Disciplines* in the Curriculum
  b) Between *Academic* Learning (Curriculum) and *Experiential* Learning (Co-Curriculum)
  c) Between the *College Experience* and their *Current & Future Life*
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4. *ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT*
   Success increases commensurately with the degree or depth of student *engagement* in the learning process—i.e., the amount of *time* and *energy* that students invest in the college experience—both *inside* and *outside* the classroom (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2001; Kuh, et al., 2005; McKeachie et al., 1986; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

Leading Practices:
* *Engaging Pedagogy* <u>Inside</u> the Classroom

* Engaged Learning <u>Outside</u> the Classroom

   a) *Course Assignments that Promote Active Learning*

   b) Active Involvement in *Campus Life* (Student Support/Development Programs)
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5. *SOCIAL INTEGRATION*
   Student success is promoted by *human interaction, collaboration,* and the formation of *interpersonal relationships* between the student and other members of the college community—peers, faculty, staff, and administrators (Astin, 1993; Bruffee, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998; Slavin, 1996; Tinto, 1993).

Leading Practices:
* Promoting Student-*Faculty* Interaction

* Promoting Student-*Staff* Interaction

* Promoting Student-*Student* Interaction
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6*. PERSONAL REFLECTION*
   Success is more likely to be experienced by students who engage in reflective thinking about their learning experiences, *elaborate* on them and *transform* them into a form that connects with what they already know or have previously experienced (Bruner, 1990; Ewell, 1997; Flavell, 1985; Svinicki, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978).

Leading Practices:
* Reflection on *Academic* Learning: Periodic Pauses for Reflective Thinking

* Reflection on *Experiential* Learning:

   a) Reflection (Reaction) *Papers*

   b) Learning *Portfolio*
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## 7. *SELF-AWARENESS*

Success is more likely to be experienced if students become *aware* and remain *mindful* of their learning strategies, learning habits, and ways of thinking (Brooks, 2009; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Langer, 1989, 1997; Pintrich, 1995; Weinstein & Meyer, 1991; Weinstein & Underwood, 1985).

Leading Practices for Promoting Self-Awareness Encourage Students to Engage in:

* *Self-Monitoring*—periodically stopping to monitor whether you're truly understanding what you're attempting to learn—i.e., "deep learning" vs. "shallow learning" (surface memorization).

* *Meta-Cognition*—thinking about how you are thinking.

* *Self-Regulation*—adjusting or modifying your learning strategies to meet the distinctive demands of different academic disciplines, learning tasks, and testing formats.

* *Self-Assessment*—gaining awareness and self-insight into your learning styles, learning habits, personal interests, aptitudes (talents) and values; and using this self- knowledge to make meaningful, realistic life choices and decisions (e.g., decisions about educational and career goals).

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- Appendix -
# *Properties/Principles* of Effective Student-Support Programs, Practices, & Policies

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Effective student support programs, practices and policies are characterized by the following attributes.

**1. INTENTIONAL (PURPOSEFUL)**: They are *deliberately* designed and delivered with *research-based principles* of student success in mind, namely:
  * Personal Validation.
  * Self-Efficacy,
  * Active Involvement (Engagement),
  * Personal Meaning,
  * Social Integration,
  * Personal Reflection, and
  * Self-Awareness.

**2. STUDENT-CENTERED**: They are centered on and driven by the *educational needs and personal welfare of students,* rather than by institutional habit or convenience, or by the self-serving needs and preferences of faculty, administrators, or staff.

**3. MISSION-DRIVEN:** They are grounded in and guided by a well-articulated *program mission* that is consistent with the *college or university mission.*

**4. INTRUSIVE**: They are not offered passively on a come-find-and-use basis, i.e., waiting and hoping that students will discover and capitalize on them ("passive programming"); instead, supportive action is *initiated* by the institution by actively *reaching out* to students and bringing its services *to* them, thereby ensuring that support reaches students who are unlikely to seek it out on their own.

**5. PROACTIVE**: They take *early, preventative* action that address students' learning needs and developmental adjustments in an *anticipatory* fashion—*before* they eventuate in problems that require reactive (after-the-fact) intervention.

**6**. **DIVERSIFIED**: They are *tailored or customized* to meet the *distinctive* needs of different student *subpopulations* (first-year students, underrepresented students, transfer students, etc.)

**7. COMPREHENSIVE (HOLISTIC)**: They focus on the student as a "*whole person,"* addressing the multiple dimensions of self that affect student success (social, emotional, physical, etc.).

**8. DEVELOPMENTAL**: They are delivered in a *timely, stage-sensitive sequence* that helps students accommodate challenges as they emerge at successive phases or stages of their college experience, and in so doing, promote student growth by providing a "scaffold" that balances *challenge* with just-in-time *support.*

**9. COLLABORATIVE**: They involve cooperative *alliances or partnerships* between different organizational units of the college/university, which work together in a *complementary* and *interdependent* manner, harnessing their collective power to exert synergistic (multiplicative) effects on student success.

**10. SYSTEMIC**: They occupy a *central* (rather than a peripheral or marginal) place on campus, which positions them to produce a *pervasive* effect on the student body and the potential to exert *transformative* effects on the institution itself.

**11. DURABLE**: They are *institutionalized*—i.e., they're built or weaved into the fabric of the institution (e.g. its table of organization and annual budget process), thus ensuring the program's *longevity* and its capacity to exert *perennial* impact on successive cohorts of students across an extended period of time.

**12. EMPIRICAL (EVIDENTIARY)**: They are supported by *assessment data* (both quantitative and qualitative), which are used for *summative* evaluation —to "sum up" and *prove* the program's overall impact or value, and *formative* evaluation— to "shape up" and continually *improve* program quality.

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