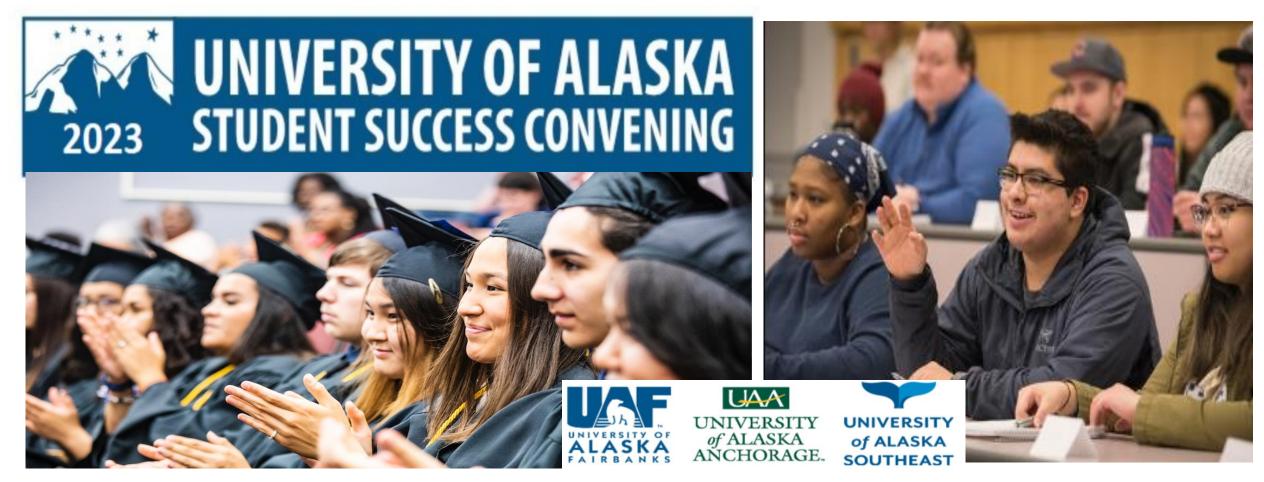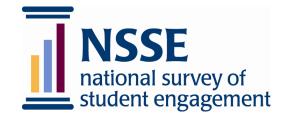# Student Engagement for Student Success
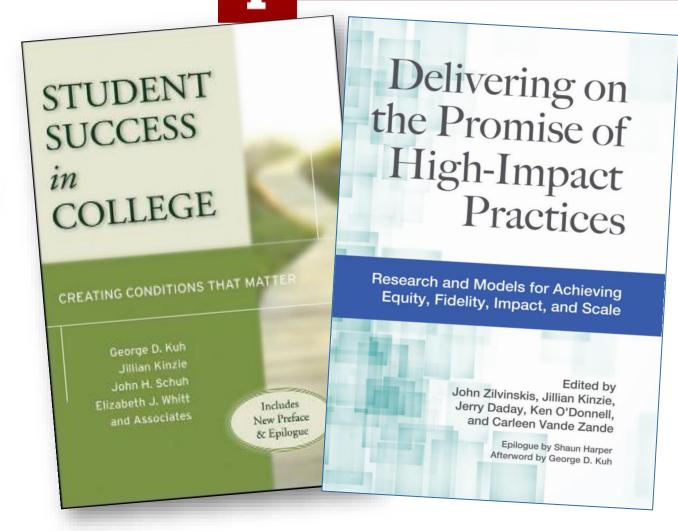
Jillian Kinzie
Interim Co-Director, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Indiana University Bloomington

My points of view: Higher education scholar of student development & success, assessment practice, quality improvement, and teaching & learning

INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON

NSSE
national survey of student engagement

20 Year Survey Project

6.4 million students @ 1,700 4 yr. institutions

STUDENT SUCCESS in COLLEGE

CREATING CONDITIONS THAT MATTER

George D. Kuh
Jillian Kinzie
John H. Schuh
Elizabeth J. Whitt
and Associates

Includes New Preface & Epilogue

Delivering on the Promise of High-Impact Practices

Research and Models for Achieving Equity, Fidelity, Impact, and Scale

Edited by
John Zilvinskis, Jillian Kinzie,
Jerry Daday, Ken O'Donnell,
and Carleen Vande Zande

Epilogue by Shaun Harper
Afterword by George D. Kuh

Everyone is responsible for student success

Equity-Centered Student Success

Campus leaders increasingly recognize the economic and social imperatives to permanently close achievement gaps for low socioeconomic (SES) and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students.

Disparities in educational outcomes between different groups of students are not "equity gaps" – rather, they are "institutional/program performance gaps."

Bensimon & Spiva (2022) The End of "Equity Gaps" in Higher Education? Diverse Higher Education magazine
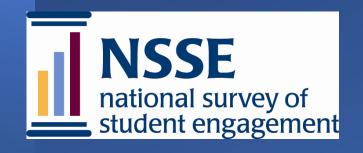
Why Are Students So Disengaged?

By Johanna Alonso · Published February 13, 2023

BCSSE
beginning college survey of student engagement

Engagement Findings for a Generation Defining Event

NSSE
national survey of student engagement

Annual Results 2022 Topics

Latest findings from NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE in 2022.

Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education

Photo courtesy of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Rebounding Engagement: Has Higher Education Returned to "Normal"?

COVID-19 brought about some noticeable shifts in student engagement in 2020 and 2021. We explore patterns of engagement and student time allocations, focusing on trends from 2019 to 2022. We also use data from the Experiences in Online Learning Topical Module to look at perceptions of effective course structure.

Read story 1

Mental Health Emerged as a Major Concern

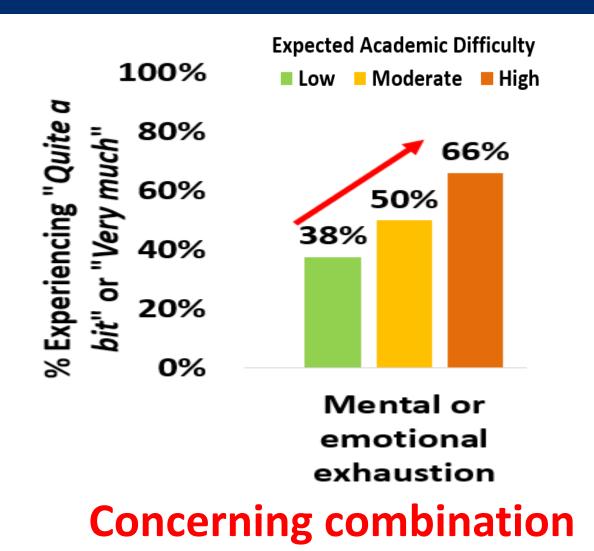**How has the pandemic impacted students mental and emotional health?**

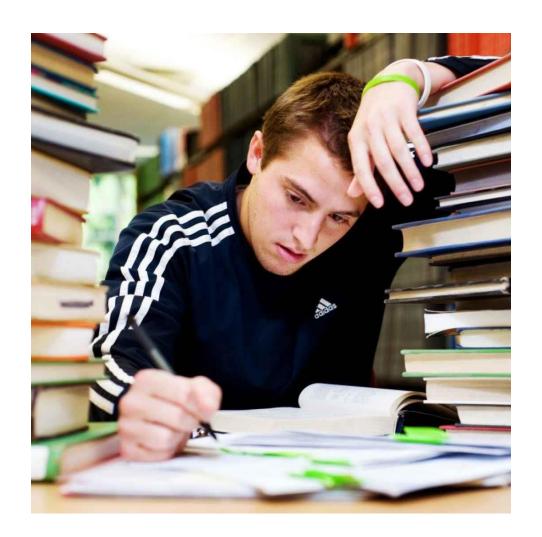*NSSE 2022 Engagement Insights - Mental Health: A Concern Beyond COVID-19*

53%

substantial* increases in levels of depression, hopelessness, and loneliness due to COVID pandemic

(substantial = "very much" or "quite a bit")

Mental Health Challenges & High Expected Academic Difficulty

Expected Academic Difficulty
- Low
- Moderate
- High

% Experiencing "Quite a bit" or "Very much"

38%
50%
66%

Mental or emotional exhaustion

Concerning combination

Interference with Experiential Learning, Depressed Involvement

- **Interference with High-Impact Practices (HIPs), experiential learning**
- **Lower involvement in events & activities**
- **Students bemoaned limited opportunities for social connection & meaningful involvement in organizations**

Some Rebound: Sense of Support for Involvement, Well-Being & Success

- **Sense of support for attending campus activities, events and interaction with diverse others <u>almost</u> on par with pre-pandemic**

- **Support academic success and for using learning support services, <u>low, but closer to</u> on par**

- **Sense of support for well-being is significantly lower <u>(5.7%-pts less)</u> than AY 2018-19 or 2019-20 in areas like recreation, health care, and counseling.**

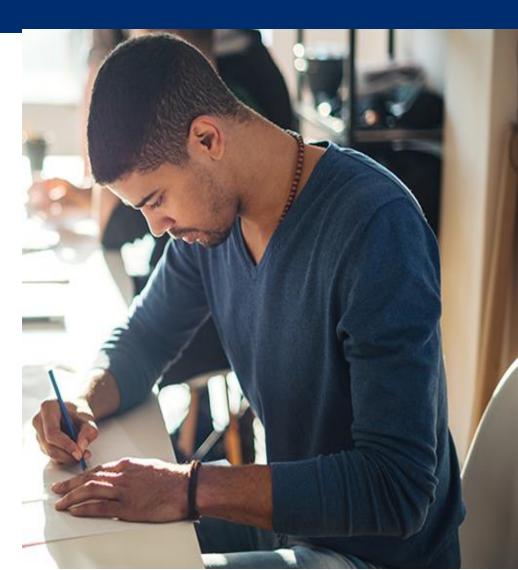# Modest Rebound: Opportunities for Learning Together

First-year student and seniors' engagement in collaborative learning—things like asking for or providing help to other students, working together on projects or to prepare for exams— improved since 2021, but it is still *less than before the pandemic*

New Concern: Career Relevance, and Worry about Preparation for Future

Students worry about how well their skills and experiences are preparing them for the world of work (Wiley, 2022)

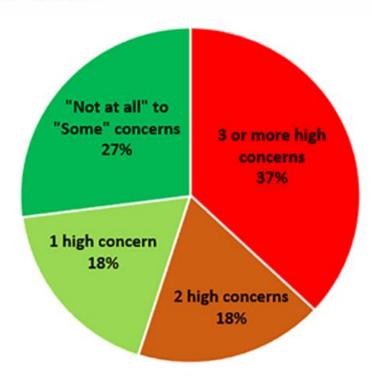*How do we help engage students more explicitly in life and career direction matters early?*

Incoming students 2023: Ongoing Mental Health & Well-Being Concerns

- 49% incoming students express "Very much" or "Quite a bit" concern about "avoiding mental and emotional exhaustion"

- Nearly half of are challenged by a complex combination of mental health & wellness issues (sleeping, loneliness, maintaining positive mental health etc.)

It's Midsemester. Time to check in on your students' mental health & wellness

Figure 2. Co-occurrence of high-level concerns for entering first-year students[a]

"Not at all" to "Some" concerns 27%

3 or more high concerns 37%

1 high concern 18%

2 high concerns 18%

[a] High-level concerns are those where the students expressed that they are "Very much" or "Quite a bit" concerned in one of the 5 mental health and wellness areas.

Now Normal Challenges Facing College & Universities

- Responding to the increased need for **more personalized support and touch points** during the student life cycle to cultivate learning, success and students' well-being, while expanding resources for issues such as mental health, hunger and homelessness
- Fostering the **rebound** of collaborative learning, student involvement, and involvement in high-impact practices
- Addressing the reality of the enrollment cliff and increased demand for practical credentials
- Enacting a student-centered, **holistic model** for student success
- Creating **more high-quality, equitable learning experiences**

Rebuilding Inclusive Campuses Where All Students Flourish

We can respond to the frame of *student disengagement* with annoyance, frustration, and blame, or learn from the pandemic and take steps to re-engage students in ways that support their path to success.

Reflection…

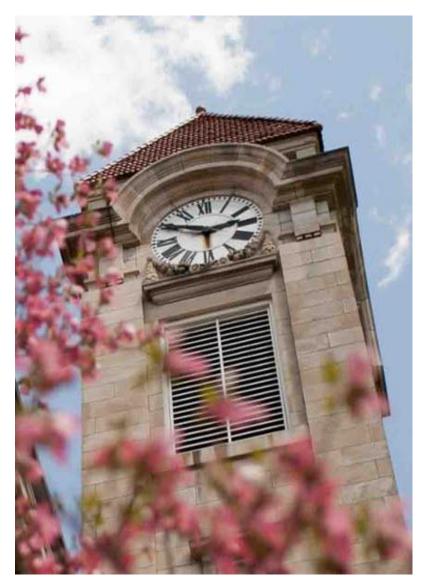What are you doing in this reset moment to support your students?

Call to create more inclusive, holistic, integrated learning environments
for equitable student learning and success

Student Success Practices

1. **Student Engagement – early connections**
2. **Quality Interactions -"Relationship-Rich"**
3. **Intentional First Year Experience**
4. **Sense of Belonging**
5. **Growth Mindset – norm learning support**
6. **Holistic, LRC Advising**
7. **Early Feedback & Intervention**
8. **High-Impact Practices**
9. **Career Purpose, Pathways & Maps**
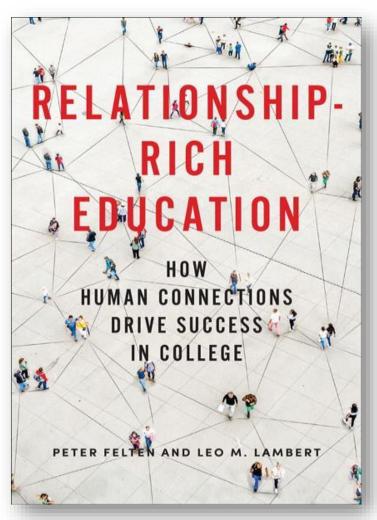10. **Holistic student supports (food pantries, wraparound services, financial assistance)**

1. Students need to be engaged in their learning...

- dedicating time & effort to educationally purposeful activities
- being active, collaborative learners
- interacting at substantive levels with peers & faculty
- participating in challenging experiential learning opportunities...undergraduate research, internships
- leading clubs & organizations
- developing rich relationships with peers, faculty & staff
- contributing to and benefiting from a supportive, inclusive environment

2. Quality of Interactions & Collaborative Learning

Relationships make higher education work.

At all institutions, the simple act of a professor asking a student how they are doing can have a tremendous impact on the student's success.

-- Felten & Lambert, 2020

2. Quality of Interactions and Collaborative Learning

Peers are a potent influence on student success

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following? (*Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never*)

a. Asked another student to help you understand course material
b. Explained course material to one or more students
c. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
d. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

When institutions create environments where peers help each other learn, students become legitimate resources for support & cognitive growth.

Space for Collaboration

Culture Centers: Welcoming Spaces That Engage & Unify Students

4. Sense of Belonging

Do I belong here? How can I fit?

Whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012)
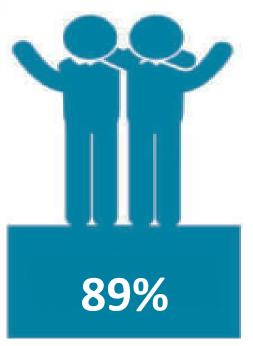
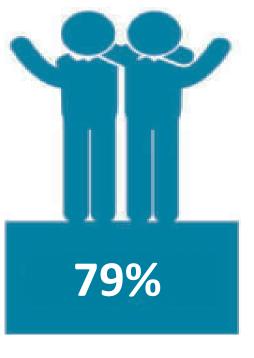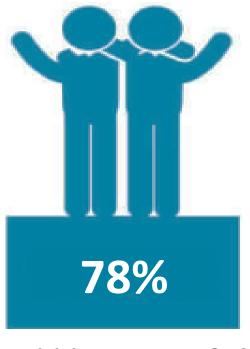**Interventions can improve students' sense of belonging**

First-Year Student Sense of Belonging 2023

NSSE

89%

I feel **comfortable being myself** at this institution

79%

I feel **valued** by this institution

78%

I feel like **part of the community** at this institution

Strong sense of belonging, but varies by social identities
What do you know about your students' sense of belonging?
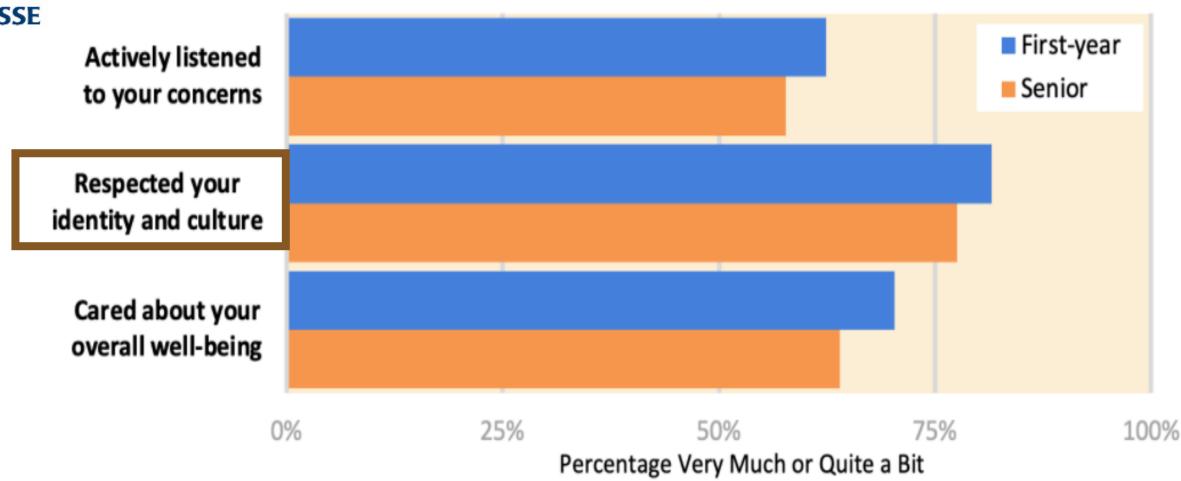
6. Importance of Advising

- Through **relationship building and advocacy**, academic advisors help students feel welcomed and supported as they transition to college and progress toward graduation

- Traits possessed by advisors who develop positive relationships with students are: **active listening, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.**

NSSE's Listening, Respecting, Caring (LRC) Scale

Most students feel listened to, respected, and care about . . .

Implications of LRC & Advising

- **Structured prompts to inquire about students' goals, opportunities**
- **Longer appointment to allow discussion**
- **Sensitivity to student identity, inclusive approaches**
- **Comprehensive adviser assignments – professional academic advisor, a faculty mentor, and career coach**
- **Dedicated Student Success Centers housing advisors and learning support and enrichment services**

8. High-Impact Practices

Widespread emphasis on expanding HIP opportunities

HIP participation positively related to:

+ **Engagement Indicators**

+ **Perceived gains in learning and development**

+ **Satisfaction**

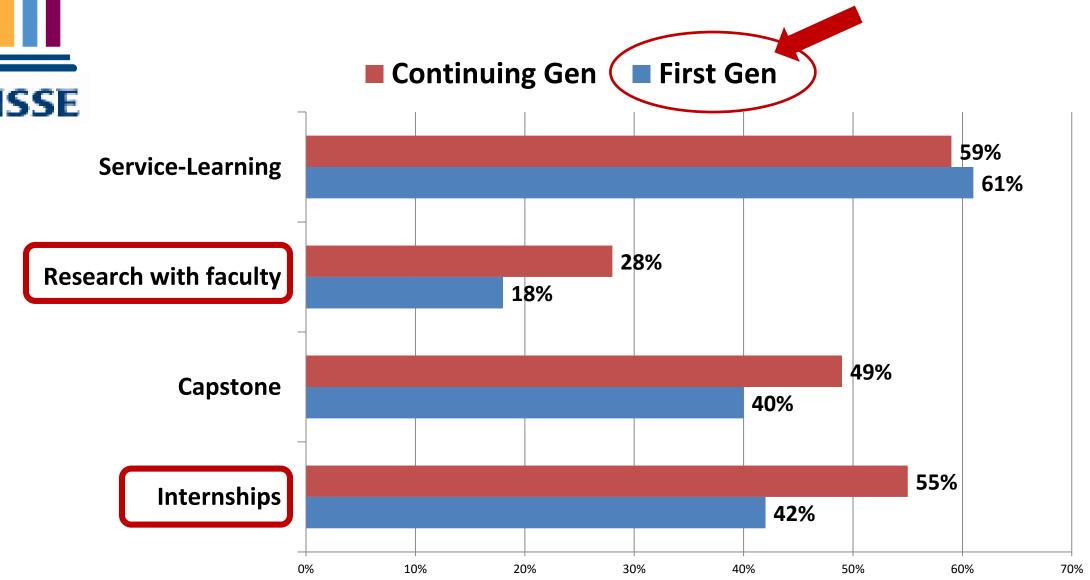*How do we help more students participate in a HIP?*

Calling Attention to Equity

Inequities in HIPs:
Access and Participation

- **Participation inequities - % by student populations**

- **Access inequities, for example, involvement in service-learning** *"necessitates a level of leisure time, money, and an ability to access local organizations; luxuries many multiply marginalized students do not always have."* **(Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018)**

HIPs & First-Generation Student Status

Data source: NSSE 2020

HIP Quality

Just naming something a HIP does not make it high-impact

9. Career Purpose, Pathways

Integrated Career Experiences

Addressing the Purpose & Career Education Gap

Provide students more opportunity to discuss, reflect on purpose, and career interests early, and more _course-based and co-curricular opportunities_ with a career emphasis

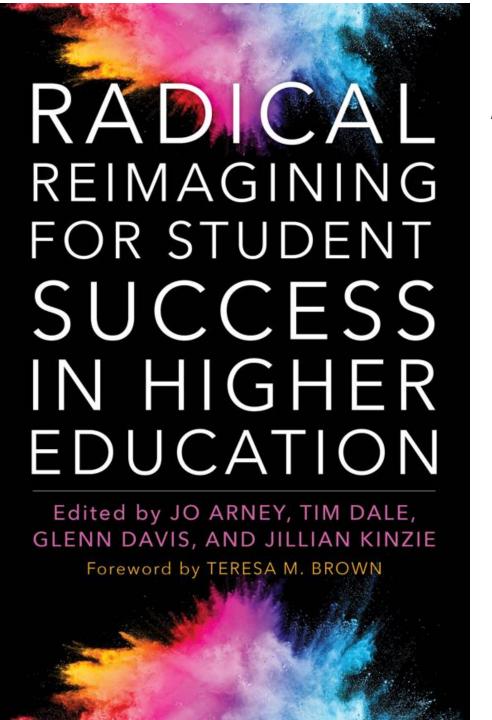| FY Career exploration course; Assignment to interview employer; apply course concept to career interest; co-curricular applied career exp. Reflection. | Project working with community client; Simulations; Team-design challenge competitions; career club | Case studies; Capstone project with real-world problem, real client |

Practically relevant, and intentionally sequenced course-based and co-curricular experiences can provide rich, purposeful student learning.

Reminder: Student Success Practices

What are your strengths?
What needs attention?

1. **Student Engagement – early connections**
2. **Quality Interactions -"Relationship-Rich"**
3. **Intentional First Year Experience**
4. **Sense of Belonging**
5. **Growth Mindset – norm learning support**
6. **Holistic, LRC Advising**
7. **Early Feedback & intervention**
8. **High-Impact Practices**
9. **Career Purpose, Pathways & Maps**
10. **Holistic student supports (food pantries, wraparound services, financial assistance)**

RADICAL REIMAGINING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Edited by JO ARNEY, TIM DALE, GLENN DAVIS, AND JILLIAN KINZIE
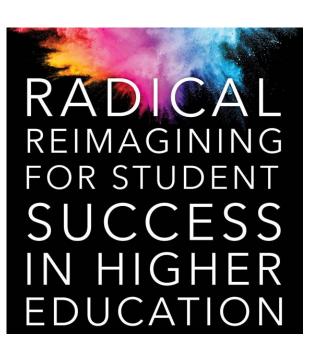
Foreword by TERESA M. BROWN

The student success movement needs bolder, more radical action.

A compound formula for action:
1. Design for a radical vision of student success;
2. Attend to inequities in student success outcomes;
3. Apply root-cause analysis to understand problems;
4. Let go of old mindsets and boldly revise inequitable policies that do not support student success;
5. Commit to enhancing pedagogy;
6. Implement a variety of proven support programs;
7. Guide with data-informed decision-making;
8. Support collaborative teams to explore and address student success needs;
9. Frame hiring and retention decisions on student success.

Cultural Transformation to Reimagine Student Success

Insist on a "student-first culture" -- addressing students' experiences with more dedicated purpose, and searching for and changing what gets in the way of student success, assuring that *all* students, and particularly historically marginalized students, have what they need to learn and thrive.

Also, *Are we willing to admit that we may not have the proper programs and services in place for underrepresented students to thrive? After acknowledging these shortcomings, can we embrace efforts to promote equity and inclusion*?

Transformation for student success is not about pursuing the latest solutions and implementing numerous initiatives. Rather, it demands a radical reimagining of a culture for student success.

We owe it to our students...to believe in their talent, implement proven educational strategies, and ensure innovations intended to enhance their success are implemented equitably and with fidelity so students realize the promised benefits.