It Starts With Us: Building a Relationship Rich Environment

Based on the book: Felton, P & Lambert, L.M. (2020). *Relationship rich education: How human connections drive success in college.* John Hopkins University Press

Jonell Hinsey, Assistant Professor, University Studies

Dianna Rust, Professor, University Studies

Middle Tennessee State University

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Relationship-Rich Universities

- "Peer to peer, student-faculty, and student-staff relationships are the foundation of learning, belonging and achieving in college."
- These student interactions influence retention and graduation rates and as researchers Kezar and Maxey state these effects are "particularly strong" for "students of color and first-generation college students."
- "Students need to interact regularly with peers, faculty and staff who ask them "How are you?" And genuinely listen and care about their answers."
- "A more resilient web of student-student, student-faculty and student-staff relationships creates a more resilient resource for a student to draw upon when the going gets tough."

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Relationship-Rich Classrooms

- "The classroom, whether physical or virtual, is the primary point of contact between institutions and undergraduates, so it is the single most important site for students to experience welcome and care, to be inspired to learn, to build webs of relationships, and to ask questions of meaning and purpose."

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Break out groups

- Share one relationship you had in your undergraduate experience that impacted your success (staff, administrator, advisor or faculty).
  - What was it that made a difference?
- How can you (how do you) create that in your class(es)?
- How can you (how do you) create relationships with students?
- Be prepared to share ideas with the larger group.

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Key concepts

"Every student must experience genuine welcome and deep care"

"Every student must be inspired to learn"

"Every student must develop a web of significant relationships"

"Every student must explore questions of meaning and purpose"

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Actionable Ideas from the book

- Introductions like a "This I believe" statement
- Learn and use student names.
- Return an assignment to each student with feedback **early** in the term.
- Articulate high academic standards...but also a clear message that students who struggle are not doomed.
- Meet one on one with each student for a 10 to 15 minute conversation.
- Quality verses quantity interactions.

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Actionable Ideas from the book

- Begin class by sending students a email with your background, articulating your expectations, and affirming their ability to succeed in the course.
- Encourage students to ask for assistance.
- Allowing retakes or rewrites.
- "Personalized feedback and encouragement to the students who need it most."

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Actionable Ideas from the book

- Sending 2 or more personalized emails during the semester such as midterm.
- Send encouraging messages to students who missed an assignment/appointment or didn't do well on an assignment.
- Use peer to peer discussions.
- Use active learning in the classroom.

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Reflection

- How do you build trust in connections with your students?

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Reflection

What are your traditions of welcome?

• Before the semester

• First day of class

• First week of class

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Some ideas we use to show students genuine welcome and care

• Respond to every introduction discussion

• Incorporate their personal information in later communication

• Share personal experience-be transparent

• Ask them to reflect on their current struggle and discuss how they can get help

• Self-care day

• Write a letter describing a moment they overcame something

• Have a moment of sharing at start of class

• Ask students to post a Who are you without words or Three Things I Love

• Share resources as an asset, not deficit

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The Power of Mentoring Conversations

Examples of mentoring "on the run"

• Mentoring in the moment

• Just-in-time mentoring

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