Reframing At-Risk to High Potential:
A Focus on Students Who Are
First-Generation/Low SES, Multicultural
and/or Underprepared

Tom Brown
Foothill College
October 22, 2015

tom@tbrownassociates.com
www.tbrownassociates.com

Foothill College
Upgrade. Advance.

Foothill College
Upgrade. Advance.

Vision

Foothill College educates students from diverse backgrounds that represent the demographics of the Bay Area, with particular attention to underserved and underrepresented populations….

🌳 **FOOTHILL COLLEGE**

There are within each of us the seeds of who we might become.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate "apparently ordinary" people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not identifying winners: it is making winners out of ordinary people.

K. Patricia Cross,
Professor of Higher Education Emerita
University of California, Berkeley

Professional development is key

Faculty and staff significantly influence students decision to persist or drop out and colleges must teach faculty and staff how to improve the quality of their interactions with students.

Patricia Farrell, University of Michigan, 2009

A process not an event

Redefining Excellence:
Talent Development

Community colleges care less about who we enroll and more about what happens to students as a result of their having been with us….

Dr. Patricia Stanley
Past Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Community Colleges
January 4, 2010

Defining Student Success

➢Academic achievement…equitable outcomes
➢Engagement in educationally purposeful activities
➢Student satisfaction
➢Acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies
➢Persistence
➢Attainment of educational objectives
➢Post-college performance

George Kuh & Associates, 2007

Foothill College Goals

Create a culture of equity that promotes student success and strong support for underserved students.

Foothill College Educational Master Plan
Draft September 9, 2015

Key questions

• What are some characteristics of students at-risk?
• What challenges do they confront in pursuit of their goals?
• What strengths do they bring that could increase their opportunities for success?
• What can you do to support students who are at-risk?

Usual Theories of Student Departure

Psychological: It's something about them.

Environmental: It's about social, economic, and other forces, (e.g., race, SES, opportunity structures).

Organizational: What about us?!
                What about me?

Organizational Culture Matters

Organizational environment and structure, particularly climate and culture, have a strong correlation to students success, retention, and shaping of students' attitudes.

Berger, 2002; Clark & Springer, 2010

Fulfilling the Promise of the Community College

Co-editors
• Thomas Brown
• Margaret C. King
• Patricia Stanley
Co-sponsored by

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Chapter 4:

Reframing At-Risk to High Potential: Supporting the Achievement and Success of Underprepared Students

Mario Rivas
Tom Brown

A Key Concept

What happens to students after they enroll frequently has a more powerful impact on whether they stay and achieve their goals or leave.

Tinto, 1987, 1993

Students want to know

- I matter
- Somebody cares about me
- I am a capable learner
- I can be a valuable member of this college community
- What I bring to the college classroom is as valuable as what others think and know (student voice)
- The curriculum reflects who I am (inclusive curriculum)
- What it takes to get into and complete college—a clear pathway toward goal achievement

Laura Rendon, 2012

Treating everyone the same may be equal treatment,

but it is not equitable treatment.

Human beings seek to economize on the energy required to make distinctions.

Most houseplants die because we treat them all the same.

Retention practices with greatest impact

1. First-year programs
2. Academic advising, including interventions for specific student populations
3. Learning support

Habley & McClanahan, WWISR 2004, 2010;
Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012

Some at-risk groups in education

- First-generation/Low SES students
- Adult and re-entry students
- Student with disabilities
- Student-Athletes
- First-year students
- Undecided students
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer students
- Students of Color/Multicultural
- Underprepared students
- Distance Learners
- Veterans
- Foster youth
- Undocumented students
- Rural students
- Homeless students

Our Focus Today

- First-generation/Low SES students
- Multicultural Students
- Underprepared students

Multiple issues

- First-generation/Low SES AND Also…
- Adult and re-entry
- Student with disabilities
- Student-Athlete
- First-year
- Undecided
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,Queer
- Student of Color/Multicultural
- Underprepared
- Veteran
- Foster youth
- Undocumented
- Rural
- Homeless

Multiple issues: Intersectionality

We often talk about student at-risk as though the factors that impede their progress are stand alone issues.

Experiences of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. intersect to produce a social location that is equal to more than just the sum of its parts.

First-generation-Low SES Students

Some Americans Are Much Less Likely to Graduate From College:
Bachelor's degree earned by age 24

Young People From High SES Families	**75%**
Young People From Low SES Families	**9%**

SES is a weighted variable developed by NCES, which includes parental education levels and occupations and family income. "High" and "low" refer to the highest and lowest quartiles of SES.

Source: "Family Income and Higher Education Opportunity 1970 to 2003," in *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, Number 156, June 2005.

The Inequality Gap in Higher Education

- Between 1970 and 2012, the proportion of American 24-year olds who came from wealthy families rose from 40% to 73%

- For low income students, the proportion rose from 6% to 8%

  "Reinventing Higher Education: Better Access. Better Results" *The Economist* May 5, 2015

A widening gap

No matter how bright, low-income students are increasingly unlikely to make it through college.

"What we're talking about is a threat to the American Dream…."

Sean Reardon, Stanford University

50 percent of the college population is made up of first-generation students

National Center for Education Statistics, 2010

Often, they are not as academically or socially prepared as others and are prone to drop out.
Watson Scott Swail, President
Educational Policy Institute
Chronicle of Higher Education, 1/19/04

First-Generation Facts

- More likely to be older, low income, married with dependents
- 57% are women with children
- More likely to be students of color
- 23% in lowest SES quartile
- More likely to be enrolled in two-year colleges
- More likely to delay postsecondary education
- More likely to be in certificate vs. Bachelor's programs.
- More likely to be part time
  Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Ward, Siegel, Davenport, 2012

First-Generation: Hiding in plain sight…

- They are a population whose identity is largely hidden

- Information on first generation students is not systematically gathered or disseminated

- They need to be more visible to educators, as they require a unique support system to prosper and succeed.

  First Generation College Students
  Lee Ward, Michael Siegel, & Zebulon Davenport, 2012

First-Generation Students' Strengths?

➢ Not easily discouraged
➢ Desire upward social mobility
➢ Expect high academic performance
➢ Reject negative cultural norms
➢ Aspire to pave the way for others
➢ Possess spiritual assurance
➢ Have a sense of responsibility
➢ Prefer self-reliance

Dr. Pamela A. Larde, Professor of Research, Mercer University

Challenges for First-Generation Students?

- Learning to negotiate a campus system;
- Adapting to a more competitive academic setting;
- Having family and friends who don't understand the demands of college and/or who may be unsupportive of students' decisions to attend;
- Feeling overwhelmed.

Texas Tech PEGASUS Program

Challenges for First-Generation Students

- Time management issues
- Lack of adequate academic preparation
- Need to connect academic programs and career goals

The Lack of "Cultural Capital"

Cultural capital is the key factor shaping the experience of first generation students.

Their parents/families do not possess
    information
    familiarity
    jargon
    cultural understanding
    experiences
    emotional bearings
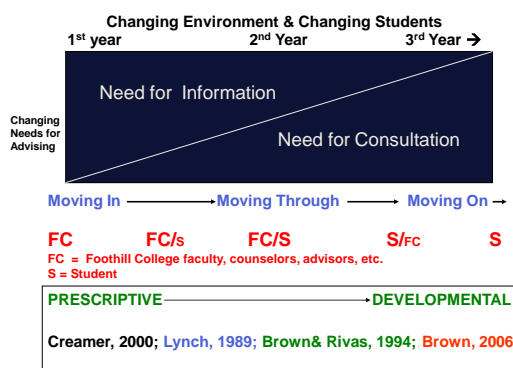students need to effectively tackle the challenges of college.

Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012

While students must accept responsibility for their own success or failure, institutional actors, particularly faculty members, also bear individual and collective responsibility for student outcomes.

Achieving Equitable Outcome for All Students
AAC&U, 2005

A Shared Responsibility: A Model

Changing Environment & Changing Students

	1st year	2nd Year	3rd Year →

Changing Needs for Advising

Need for Information

Need for Consultation

Moving In ————→ Moving Through ————→ Moving On →

FC   FC/s   FC/S   S/FC   S

FC = Foothill College faculty, counselors, advisors, etc.
S = Student

PRESCRIPTIVE ————————————→ DEVELOPMENTAL

Creamer, 2000; Lynch, 1989; Brown & Rivas, 1994; Brown, 2006

Promising Practices

- Summer Bridge, First Year Programs, FYE courses
- Continuous advisor/advisee contact throughout the first semester/year
- Designated faculty or staff to act as "first responders" to help students navigate campus systems
- Learning communities, linked courses
- Proactive referrals to sources of assistance and support (e.g., tutoring, instructional labs, counseling, career services)
- Outreach to help students feel comfortable on campus and to encourage involvement

Family support is key

An important factor in first-generation college students' success involves parents who are supportive and feel they are included in their sons' and daughters' education.

Laura Smith
*The Mentor*, Penn State, 1/12/12

Multicultural Students

What about us? What about me?

We've been talking about educating students about [campus culture]…Maybe we need to understand our students better rather than putting the focus on students to understand our environment better.

Aspirations to Achievement
Men of Color and Community Colleges, 2014

Some Americans Are Much Less Likely to Graduate From College
We're not "there" yet!
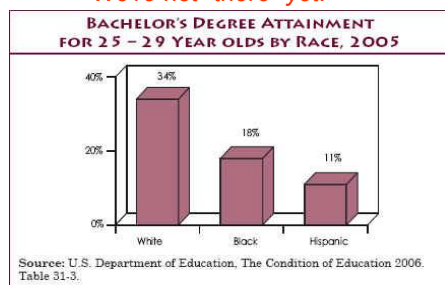
A Challenge for Foothill College:
Increasing Equitable Outcomes

Graduation Rates

- Asian   71%
- White   49%
- Hispanic/Latin@ 33%
- Black   29%

Source: *National Center for Education Statistics, 2015*

Multiple **issues**

- First-generation AND Multicultural
  - Latino and Hispanic   48.5%
  - Black/African American   45%
  - Native Americans   35%.
  - Asian   32%
  - Caucasian   28%
- 54% of student-athletes are first generation

Not a "zero sum" game,
with *winners* and *losers*….

COMPETE

Com = together
Petire = to seek

Creating *Unum* from the *Pluribus*

Increasing opportunities for multicultural students is not a "minority issue."
It's an American issue….

The Fiscal Benefits of Inclusion

If the US closes the gap between Black and Latino students and White students, the US economy would be 5.8%--or nearly $2.3 trillion—larger in 2050; an average of $551 billion per year.

The Economic Benefits of Closing Educational Achievement Gaps by Improving Outcomes for Student of Color, R.G. Lynch & P. Oakford, November 2014

A Challenge in Managing Diversity

Efforts to teach about diverse groups can lead to stereotyping.

People from the same group are often *diverse* based on SES, education, age, gender, individual experiences, etc.

Asian Pacific Americans

Asian   Indian   Chinese   Filipino   Guamanian
Hawaiian   Hmong   Japanese   Korean
Laotian   Pakistani   Samoan   Thai
Vietnamese

Philippines: 7000 islands
100+ languages

DIVERSITY IN DIVERSITY

The myth of the "model minority"

Teachers, counselors, and administrators are so deeply convinced that their "model minority" students will excel on their own that they simply do not recognize how Asian American and Pacific Islander students contend with the same issues other students of color face.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight, College Board, 2008

Diversity in Dropout Rates: Attended college but no degree

Southeast Asians
33.7 Vietnamese
42.9 Cambodians
46.5 Laotians
47.5 Hmong

Pacific Islanders
47% Guamanian
50% Native Hawaiians
54% Tongans
58% Samoans

Our nation will not become #1 again in college completion unless we commit ourselves to giving Latino students the support they need to achieve their full potential.
Gaston Caperton, President
College Board
September 2011

An Assault on Hispanic/Latin@ Identity

"They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. We have drug dealers coming across, we have rapists, we have killers, we have murderers.
Donald Trump, June 2015

President Obama's unlawful executive amnesty shielding millions of illegal aliens from deportation would "change who we are as a country…."
Senator Ted Cruz, August , 2015

Scott Walker wanted to end birthright citizenship, and he would not say whether he agreed with the 14th Amendment.

Hispanic/Latin@s in the US
The view from beyond our shores

- The rise of Latinos is a huge opportunity. The United States must not squander it.
- America has been granted an extraordinary stroke of luck: a big dose of youth and energy, just as global competitors are aging
- America needs its Latinos. To prosper, it must help them realise their potential.

The Economist, March 14, 2014

Experts on educating Latino/as generally agree that getting a larger proportion through college will require focusing on educational differences that the collective term "Hispanic" now masks….
Chronicle of Higher Education, 11/28/03

9

Dropout rates within Hispanic/Latino Groups

25.8%	Salvadorean
22.2	Mexican
14.8	Puerto Rican
13.0	Dominican
12.2	Other Latino
8.0	South American
6.0	Cuban

The Educational Experience of Men of Color
College Board, 2012

Why are students underprepared?

➢ Only about 50% of the teachers in schools with at least 90% minority enrollment meet their states' minimum requirements to teach.
➢ Only 20% of all black students and 16% of all Hispanic students leave high school college-ready.

"Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States"
Jay Greene & Greg Forster, 2003

The Inequality Trap

Because public education in the U.S. is unequally funded by a system of local property taxes, the masses of Black students reside in deprived settings [and] obtain fewer resources.

Darron Smith, Chronicle of Higher Education, May 5, 2014

Strengths of multicultural students?

➢Value education as the key to upward social mobility
➢Reject negative cultural norms
➢Aspire to pave the way for others
➢Possess spiritual assurance
➢Have a sense of responsibility to family and community
➢Resilience

Strengths of multicultural students

Students of color, especially, shared the ways in which the commitment and support from families back home pushed them through the challenges facing the at school…

Dissecting Diversity at HSU, 2008-2012

Challenges for Multicultural Students

• Difference between college and previous educational settings
• "Minority" for the first time
• Lack of mentors and role models
• Negative attitudes of faculty and peers
• Issues of identity development
• Low expectations of faculty

Brown & Rivas, 1997, 2004

Quality interaction with faculty is the single strongest predictor of success for at-risk minority students, who often base persistence decisions on their relationships with faculty.

Levin & Levin; Treisman; Cabrera, Terenzini, et. al.

African American students are more likely to find faculty members remote, discouraging, and unsympathetic.

Exploring Distinctions in Types of Faculty Interactions
Among Black, Latino/a, and White College Students.
Cole and Anaya, 2001.
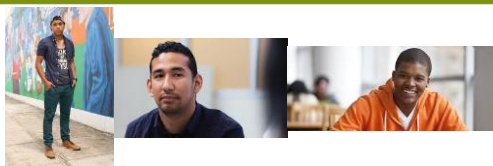
Many men of color report encountering low expectations and stereotypes based on their race or ethnicity during high school…

Terms of Engagement: Men of Color Discuss Their Experiences in Community College. MDRC, 2010

African American men report being stereotyped based on the styles they wear, such as baggy jeans, braided hairstyles, etc.

MDRC, 2010

[Successful students] did not allow these negative attitudes and racial stereotypes to hinder their pursuit of higher education and career goals.

Terms of Engagement: Men of Color Discuss Their Experiences in Community College. MDRC, 2010

Your opinion of me is none of my business….

The more positive their interactions with authority figures, the more the Black and Latino youth believed in themselves and understood themselves to have better futures.

Rios, 2011

11

Challenges for Multicultural Students

- Difference between college and previous educational settings
- "Minority" for the first time
- Lack of mentors and role models
- Negative attitudes of faculty and peers
- Issues of identity development
- Low expectations of faculty

Brown & Rivas, 1997, 2004

Many non-traditional students want their doubts [dudas] erased about their being capable of learning….

This is especially true for first generation students, Hispanic and African American students….

Laura Rendon 1994, 2001

My first day, I looked around this beautiful, lush, rich campus and thought, "*What the hell am I doing here*?" It's only a matter of time before they realize that I'm not one of them. I'm not rich. I don't have a loving family to go home to on holidays. [Only] foster parents who don't want me, a stepdad in prison, and a dead mother...

"And, I am not smart. I scored 580 on my SATs…."

"And, I am not smart. I scored 580 on my SATs…."

Professor Tammy Ramos
BA and BS, St. Mary's College of California
JD, Notre Dame Law School

What Works:
Transforming Students Through Validation

Success appears to be contingent on whether [faculty and staff] can validate students in an academic or interpersonal way.

Laura Rendon

You belong here. You can achieve your goals. I am/we are here to support you to succeed.

We must create "micro safe spaces" that become pockets of possibility for our students.

Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor
Social Psychology and Women's Studies and
Urban Education CUNY

Underprepared Students

The Challenge of Under-preparedness

The majority of new students entering America's community colleges are underprepared for college-level academics.

Students are not alone…
Most faculty have no particular training to teach underprepared students.

Strengthening Pre-Collegiate Education in Community Colleges, Carnegie Foundation 2008

Defining Academic
Under-preparedness: Skills

Inadequate background knowledge in specific subject areas, e.g., History, civics, literature, etc.

Inability to read, write, compute at a college level (in English)

Lacking computer skills and other technology competencies

Inadequate study skills and self-management skills
Sally Rings, 2001

Defining Academic
Under-preparedness: Attitudes & Behaviors

Beliefs and expectations that do not support motivation and persistence in college

Lack of understanding about behavioral skills needed to succeed

Unwilling to take instructors' advice re: how to improve

Do not understand that learning is an active, shared responsibility with faculty

Rings, 2001

Students may be underprepared in one or more areas and competent in others.

Finding the match between background, strengths, limitations and goals is critical.

Examining & Challenging Beliefs:
Why are students academically under-prepared for college?
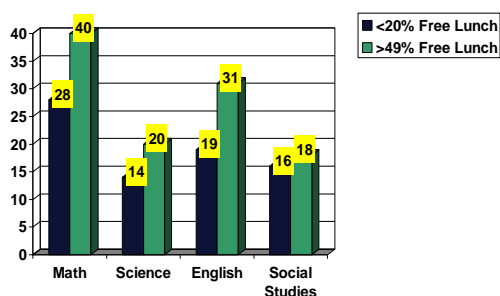

Beliefs→Feelings→Behavior

Why are students underprepared?

Minority students concentrated in under-funded and segregated schools districts have a higher likelihood of being underprepared for college, and achievement gaps may persist regardless of academic preparation.

AAC&U, 2005

Percentage of Teachers
Without a Major/Minor in Their Field

Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral Barriers

- Undermining attributions: Beliefs
- Ego Involvement
- Reluctance to seek assistance

Rivas & Brown, 2007, 2011

Attributions are beliefs that…

Explain successes or failures;

Influence direction, strength, and persistence of behavior toward a goal.

Brown & Rivas, 1997, 2004, 2011

Ability Attributions…

By high school, students generally believe that ability is a relatively fixed, unchangeable capacity.

British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 1983

Attributions and Emotions

	Ability	Task Difficulty	Goal Expectancy
Belief	Low	High	Low
Emotion	Shame/Doubt	Helpless/ Hopeless	Non-engagement; Giving up

Weiner's Theory of Achievement & Emotion

Shift attributions from ability to background and preparation

Students' attributions and those of faculty and staff.

"*Those students* can't do Calculus…."

$$\int_a^b f(x)dx$$

"*I* can't do Calculus…."

$$\int_a^b f(x)dx$$

Shift attributions from ability to background and preparation

Students' attributions and those of faculty and staff.

What *background* is required for success in Calculus?
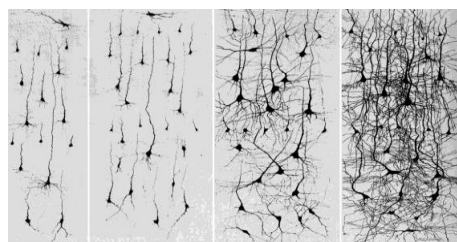
- Pre-Calculus
- Algebra/Trig
- Algebra
- Basic Math

What Background is required for success in

• Reading
• Writing
• Accounting
• Biology, Chemistry, etc.
• Other developmental or Gateway courses

It's not enough to change what we do;
we must also change what we believe.

Change meaning of ability/intelligence from fixed to EXPANDABLE

Emphasize Neuro-plasticity of Human Brain.

The Power of Validation

Next time you tell Tammy's story, tell mine:

I scored 700 on my SATs and I have a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of California….

Dr. Robert Urtecho
College of the Sequoias (CA)

Validating students

Whenever possible, affirm students as being capable of college-level work.

Rendon, 2012

You belong here, you are a capable learner, and I am going to support you to succeed….

What Works

✓ Establish trust through demanding and supportive relationships;
✓ Foster hopeful narratives and feelings of belonging in the setting;
✓ Represent critical thinking and other skills as learnable;
✓ Focus on background and preparation vs. ability.

Whistling Vivaldi, Claude Steele

Active Outreach

Does not mean "hand holding" or parenting. Rather, it does mean active concern and a willingness to assist students to explore programs and services to improve their skills and motivate them to persist toward their goals.

It's a relationship

Active Outreach

- Taking a personal interest in students and approaching them with an open caring attitude.
- A *personal relationship* with a concerned member of the campus community can reduce the psychological distance that hinders academic integration.

I care about you….

There are within each of us the seeds of who we might become.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Success =

Commitment
+
Determination
+
HARD WORK
Time

Adapted from Jaime Escalante