

Preparing Students to Succeed in College: Insights from Social Psychology

Christine Logel, PhD



Today's Talk

- Purpose: Share insights into challenges students face in the transition to college
- A tool in your toolkit
- Prepare students for challenges in transition to college

Today's Talk

- Half of this talk – Stories from students
- First, understand the challenges
- Then, work on preparing high school students for them

Today's Talk

- Students' and teachers names changed
- Photos are illustrations only

Today's Talk

- Unique stresses faced by lower SES students, 1st generation, students of color
- Affect concentration, motivation, test performance, well-being, mental and physical health
- Ultimately can lead to lowered grades and retention
- But they do not have to do so
- High school teachers can play an important role

Today's Talk

- Stories from the front lines
- What college students wish they had known
- What research says they need to know

= Give you tools to prepare your students for their college transition

Stories From the Front Lines

- Teams of researchers → 13 universities
 - Elite highly selective
 - Large public
 - Small liberal arts
 - Less selective
- Met with senior administrators, success coaches, admissions officers, and professors
- Sophomores, juniors, seniors
 - Survivors who can reflect
- Especially 1st generation students

Stories From the Front Lines

Financial Challenges and Income Inequality

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The Couch Problem

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Dinner in Town

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Monthly Allowance

Resilience Under Financial Pressure

- Drinks are on me
- Winter coat
- Job experience
- Finding out how to make it work
- Keeping perspective
- Eviction notice

Stories From the Front Lines

Making the Grades

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The Enemy of Academic Success

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Pressure

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Making the Grades

- Staying on campus during the day
- Always going to class
- Psychological counseling

Stories From the Front Lines

The Gulf Between College and Home

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Phone Calls with Mom

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Parents' Visit

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Narrowing the Gulf Between College and Home

- No easy solution
- Learning to be bicultural
- Connecting with other 1st gens

Stories From the Front Lines

Race and Culture

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Awareness of Race

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Social Media

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Overt Racism – Rare... But Not Nearly Rare Enough

Fighting Racism

- Colleges must take action
- College leadership taking it seriously
- Grandmother's words
- Connections in passing on campus
- Casual comparative cultures
- Student organizations

Stories From the Front Lines

- The struggles of college are the struggles of life
 - Financial struggles
 - Temptation to procrastinate
 - Pressure and stress
 - Changing relationships
 - Prejudice
- Preparing your students for college is also preparing them for life

What College Students Wish They Had Known

1. Professors do care about your success.

What College Students Wish They Had Known

2. You are supposed to ask for help.

What College Students Wish They Had Known

3. Some people will be jerks. Most are just ignorant.

What College Students Wish They Had Known

4. Some people will be
different from you.
Don't be a jerk.

What College Students Wish They Had Known

1. Go to professor's office hours.
2. You are supposed to ask for help.
3. Some people will be jerks. Most are just ignorant.
4. Some people will be different from you. Don't be a jerk.

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What Research Says College Students Need to Know

- **Established research on growth mindset** (e.g., Dweck, 1986; 1999; 2002; 2006; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Murphy & Dweck, 2010)
- **Our research on experiences of disadvantaged students** (e.g., Logel, Walton, Peach, Spencer, & Zanna, 2012; Silverman, Logel, & Cohen, 2013; Logel, Peach, & Spencer, 2011; Perry, Murphy, Dovidio & van Ryn, 2015)
- **Brand new research that has not yet been published** (e.g. Boucher, Rydell, & Murphy in press; Yeager et al., under review; Yeager, Henderson, et al., in press; Paunesku et al., unpublished data)

What Research Says College Students Need to Know

1. Everyone faces challenges in college.

What Research Says College Students Need to Know

2. Intelligence is not something you are born with.
Our brains get smarter with effort.

What Research Says College Students Need to Know

3. Duck syndrome.
4. Imposter syndrome.

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Recap

- What high school students appreciate from their teachers
- Stories from the front lines of college
- What college students wish they had known
- What research says they need to know

Take Home Messages

- The college transition brings significant challenges
- These challenges are not insurmountable
 - Being psychologically prepared
 - Going in with some knowledge
 - Seeking out social support
- High school teachers can – and do – help students succeed and thrive in college

Thank You

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