Fostering Equity & Student Success in the Classroom

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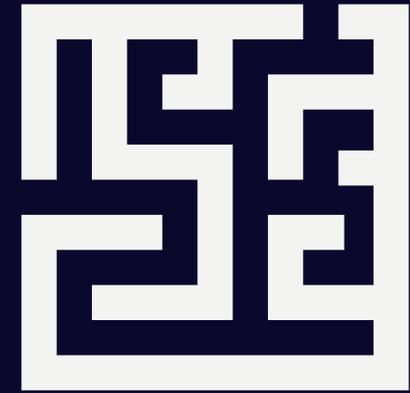Teaching Assistant Workshop

August 26, 2021

1. **What are you most looking forward to about your teaching work this fall?**

2. **What concerns you the most about that work?**

REFLECTION OPPORTUNITY

Please Enter in Chat, for example:
1: First time teaching a class
2: First time teaching a class!

> "EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD."
> -NELSON MANDELA

Student Success (def.)

Equity (def.)

Key Constructs for Supporting Equity-Focused Student Success

- Belonging
- Growth Mindset
- Self Efficacy
- Social Connectedness

Overview of Basic Teaching Tips

FRAMING QUESTIONS

Who are our students? What outcomes are we currently achieving?

How can a student-centered approach to learning improve the success of all students in our courses?

How do we translate a commitment to student-centeredness into classroom practices that disrupt inequity and advance student success?

KEY COMMITMENTS OF STUDENT-CENTERED UNIVERSITIES:

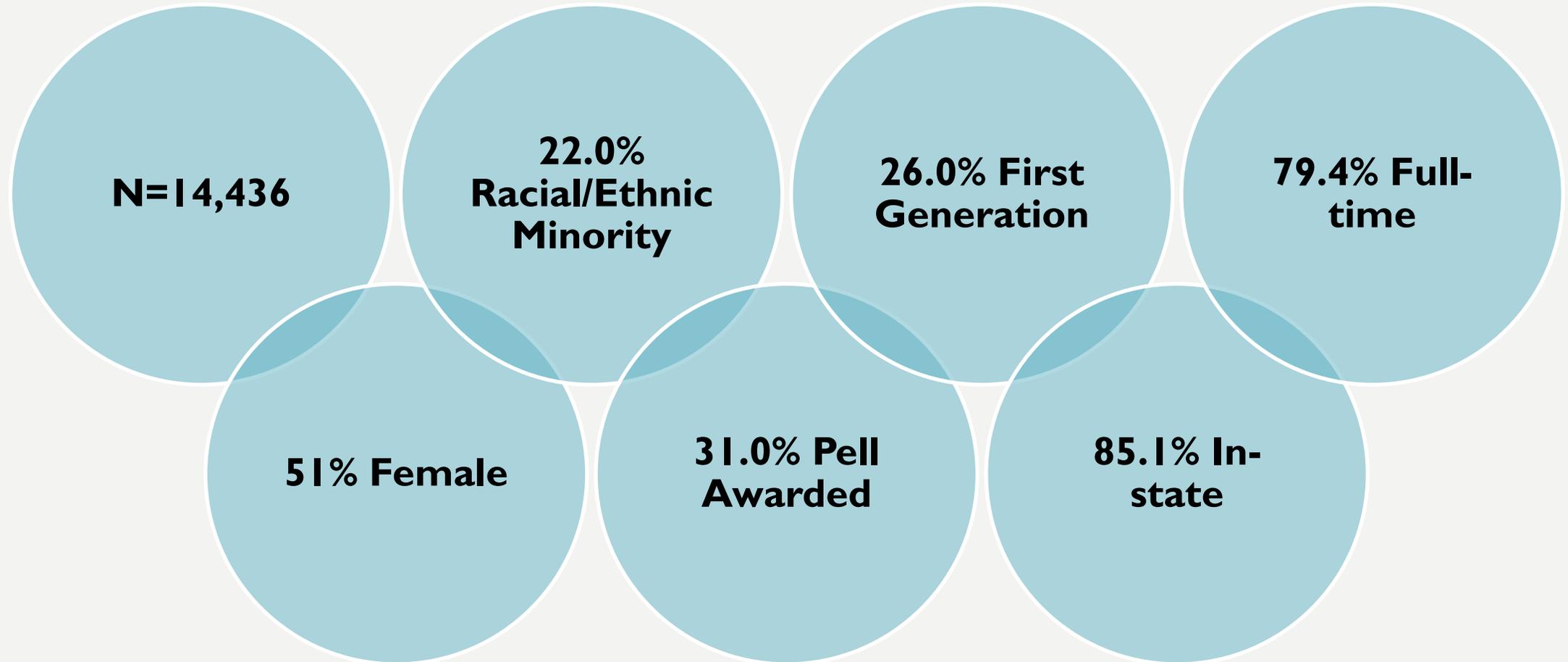| See	Believe	Help	Foster	Maintain
See student success as everyone's business • Understand that all who work on campus have a responsibility to promote student success and develop structures, policies and practices to support that work	**Believe every student can succeed** • Value the assets students bring to campus, have a growth mindset about their capacities, and understand that our job is to support student learning	**Help students navigate college** • Make transparent our expectations of students, provide support for the whole student, and promote conscious understanding of how students learn	**Foster students' well-being and sense of belonging** • Understand the critical connection between well-being, sense of belonging, and retention and student, and work to promote a sense of belonging and well-being for all students	**Maintain an unshakeable focus on equity** • Understand the deep and persistent inequities in education and work tirelessly, at every level of the university, to ensure that all students have an equal chance at success

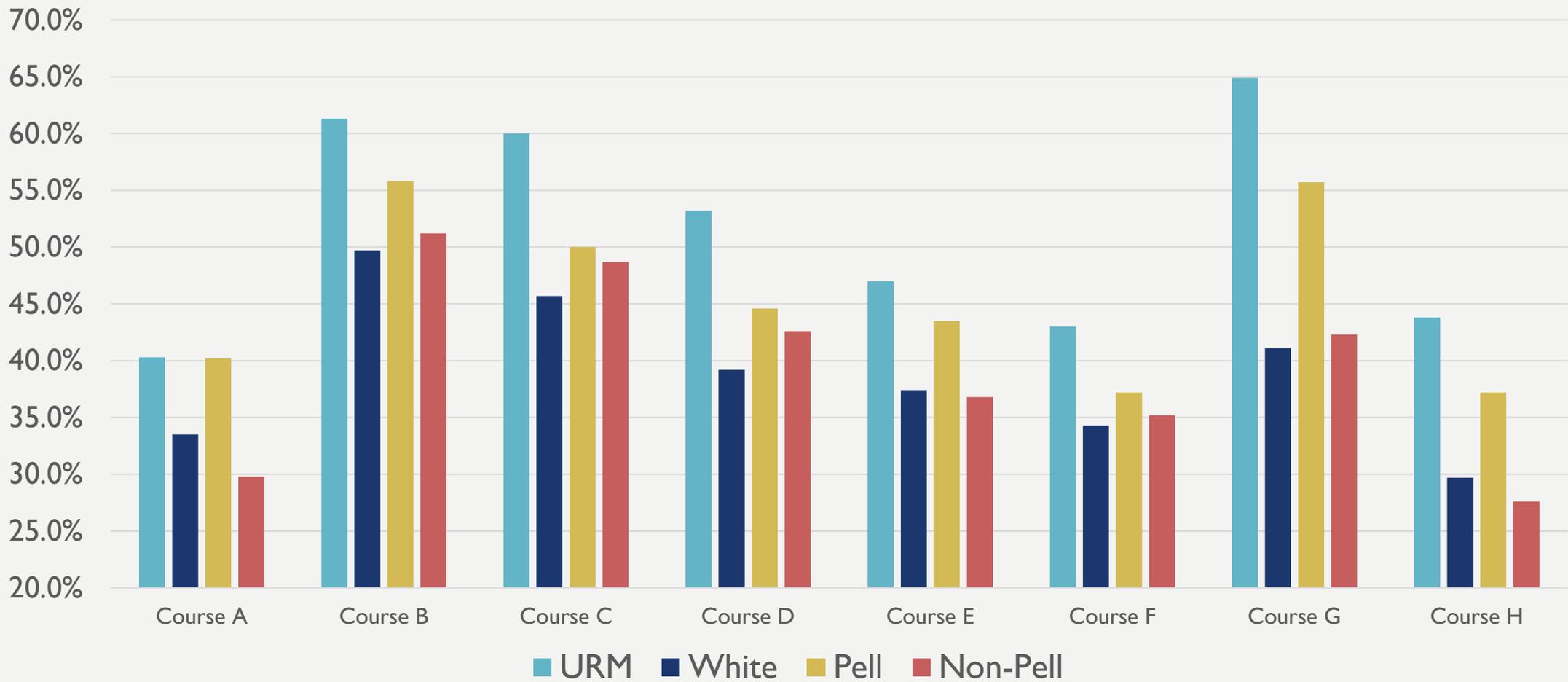# WHY FOCUS ON EQUITY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS?

UNDERGRADUATE FACTS AT A GLANCE

2020 Cohort

N=14,436

22.0% Racial/Ethnic Minority

26.0% First Generation

79.4% Full-time

51% Female

31.0% Pell Awarded

85.1% In-state
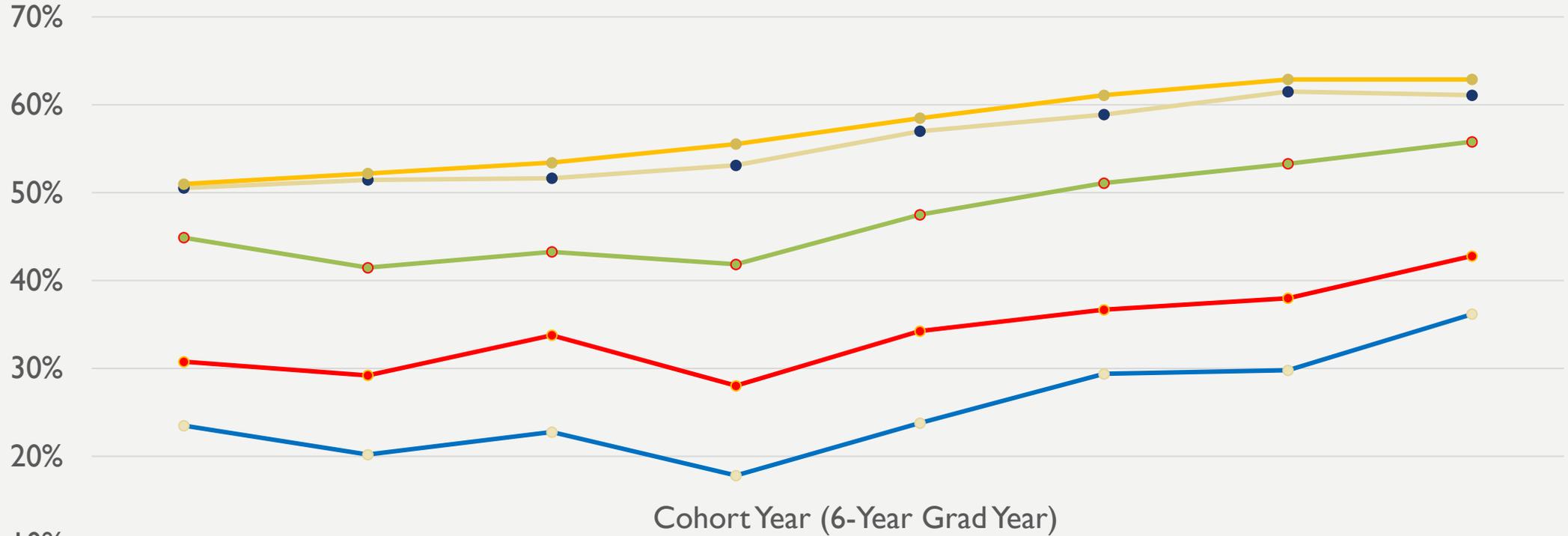
Source: UToledo Office of Institutional Research
Facts At a Glance Dashboard

DISAGGREGATED DFW RATES FOR GATEWAY/INTRO COURSES

UT Six-Year Graduation 2008-2015 Cohorts

Cohort Year (6-Year Grad Year)

|	2008 (2014)	2009 (2015)	2010 (2016)	2011 (2017)	2012 (2018)	2013 (2019)	2014 (2020)	2015 (2021)
URM	23.50%	20.21%	22.77%	17.83%	23.80%	29.40%	29.80%	36.20%
White	50.55%	51.46%	51.65%	53.12%	57.00%	58.90%	61.50%	61.10%
Overall	44.90%	41.48%	43.27%	41.86%	47.50%	51.10%	53.30%	55.80%
Pell	30.77%	29.22%	33.79%	28.04%	34.26%	36.70%	38.00%	42.80%
Non-Pell	50.99%	52.20%	53.42%	55.55%	58.49%	61.10%	62.90%	62.90%

EQUITY (DEF.)

Dismantling the structures, practices and policies that create barriers for some students and privilege others.

Equal access to and opportunity to succeed in, college.

Ensuring that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience.
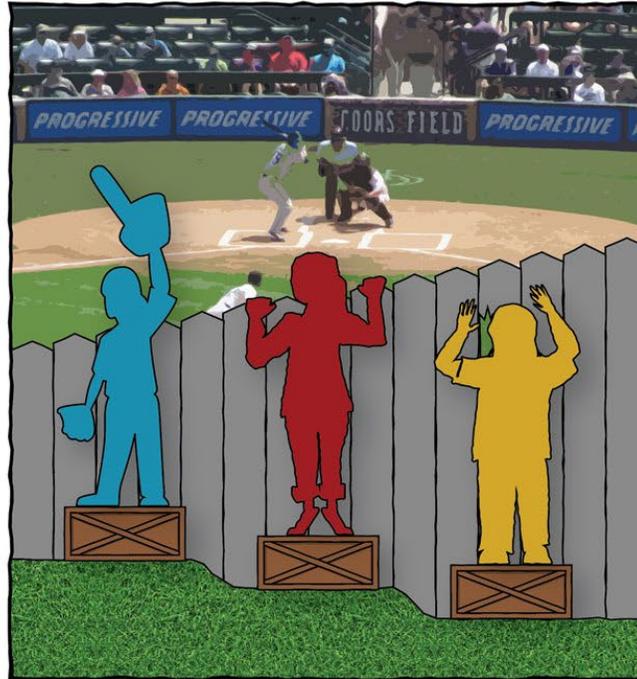

EQUALITY
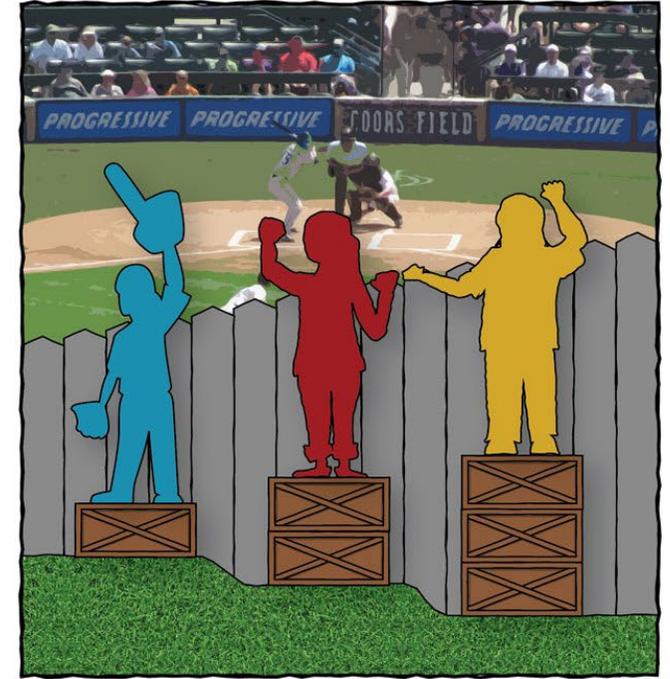
EQUITY

Source: Culturalorganizing.org

➤ *Who, by race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, first-generation status, ability, etc. will benefit most from this policy or practice?*

➤ *In what ways could this policy or practice disadvantage historically underserved students?*

1. Instructor Q is concerned that students aren't reading the required materials for class. To help ensure they do so, she asks students to line up and show their textbooks to her at the end of class.

2. Instructor Y requires that students provide written documentation from a doctor to be able to make-up an exam.

3. Instructor A allows students to earn extra credit by visiting a local science museum outside of class time and writing up a summary of the exhibits they saw.

BREAKOUT SESSION!
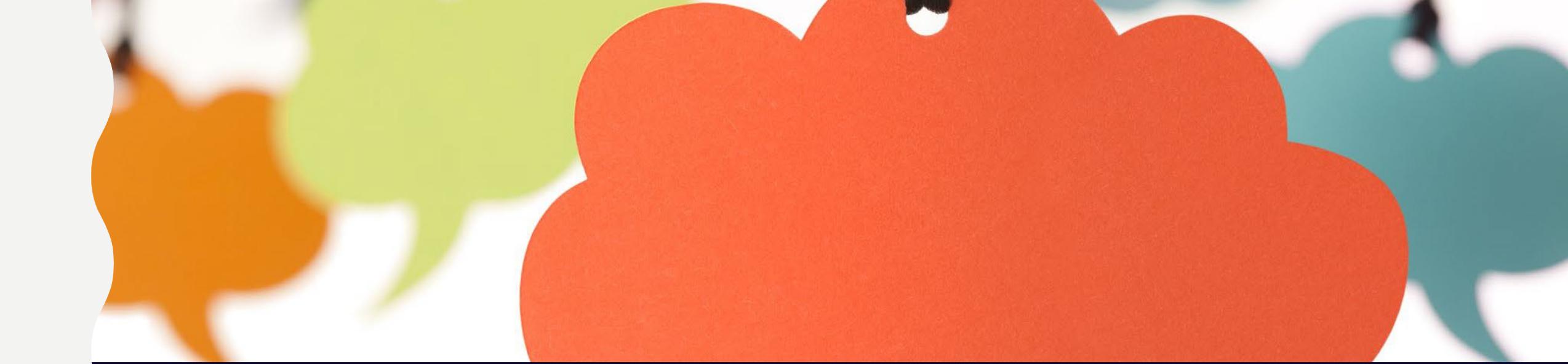
HOW DO WE CREATE LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS & REDUCE BARRIERS TO EQUITY?

KEY FACTORS FOR LEARNING

Source: The Student Experience Project Resource Library

Social Belonging

Sense that one belongs in the learning environment

Institutional Growth Mindset

Perception that instructor and institution believes students' abilities are malleable and can be improved with effort, feedback, and use of effective learning strategies

Self-Efficacy

Confidence in one's abilities to do well in the domains required by the learning environment

Social Connectedness

Feelings of connectedness to others (instructor, peers, TA's) in the learning environment

THE IMPACT OF BELONGING UNCERTAINTY
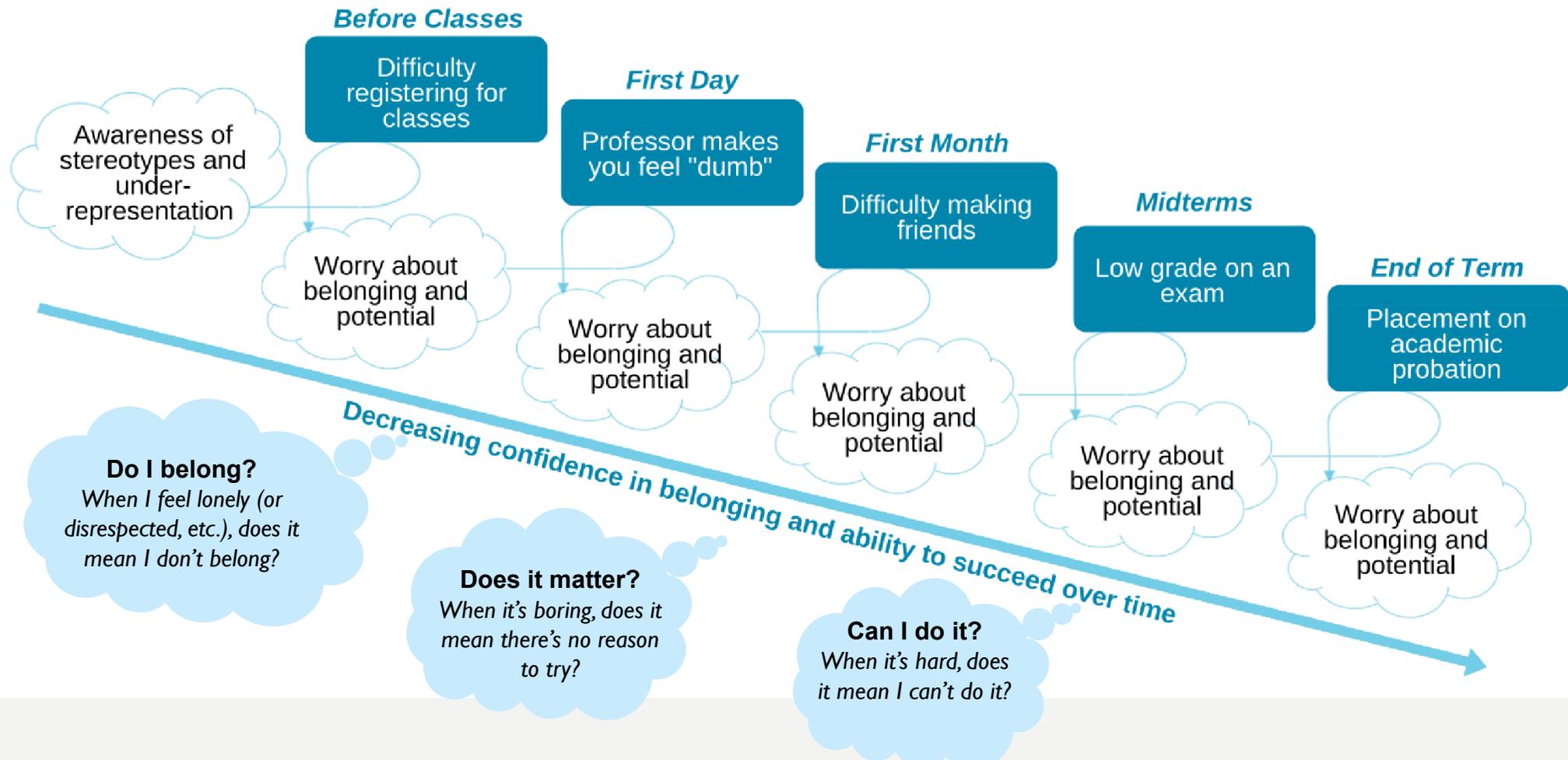
Source: Murphy, Yeager, Walton, & Logel. (2017). Mapping the Role of Psychological Friction on College Students' Worries About Belonging and Potential Throughout their Academic Trajectory.

SEND A WELCOME LETTER

5 Key Elements:

1. **Express your excitement** to begin working with your students in the class

2. **Share some personal information** about yourself

3. **Acknowledge any current circumstances** (i.e., the dual pandemics of COVID-19, the ongoing struggle for racial justice, other national and world crises) and the challenges facing many students right now

4. Emphasize the ways in which **you are working to design a course experience that will be high quality and engaging, but also flexible**, given the complicated and changing nature of the world we live in

5. Provide some **basic information about your course and expectations for engagement on the first day**
   - e.g., "Log in to Blackboard Collaborate Ultra at 9:30 on Tuesday for our first virtual class together";
   - "I'll see you all in UH 2250 on Tuesday at 9:30 for our first class

SEND A WELCOME LETTER

Bonus points!

- **Ask students to respond to the email answering 1-2 questions about themselves** (Important: You must respond to each response you receive, and in a timely manner. Otherwise, this strategy can backfire.)

  OR

- Create a **"Getting to Know Each Other" discussion board in Blackboard**, post a few questions there, and ask students to introduce themselves and respond to each other (and you respond to the posts too).

  - You can give students early access to your Blackboard page by following the instructions here: Scroll down to "Set course availability" and use the "Select Dates" option under "Set Course Duration" (https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Courses/Course_Customization/Course_Properties)

SHARE YOUR OWN STORIES ABOUT BELONGING

- Keys to an effective belonging message:

1. Assure students that academic challenges and concerns about belonging are **normative**, and do not signal a lack of fit or academic potential

2. Communicate that belonging **gets better over time**, with the use of agentic steps to build relationships and ties to the campus community

Source: The Student Experience Project Resource Library

OTHER TOOLS TO PROMOTE SENSE OF BELONGING

Learn and use students' names and have students learn each others' names

In discussions, ask students to reply to each other and to use each other's names

Ask students to post an avatar or photo to their BB profile, and you do so too

Keep a document with each student's name, what they shared from their welcome letter responses, and anything else of note that you learn about them during the semester.

Refer to these notes before you meet with the student and periodically over the course of the semester

Make frequent, strategic and highly visible appearances

Weekly front page messages to class – with announcements, tips for how to approach the next course section, words of encouragement, memes

Respond to a subset of discussion posts

Think of a time in school or work when you worried about whether you belonged. How did that affect your experience? Did anything help to improve your sense of belonging in that experience?

BREAKOUT SESSION!

BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND THE REASONS FOR THEM

Transparency → Navigational Capital → Self Efficacy

- Navigational Capital (def): The knowledge, skills and habits of mind required to effectively navigate the complex expectations and culture of college

- Students who do not have significant experience with the culture of college benefit from cultural navigators – faculty, staff and peers who serve as translators, allies and advocates

Transparency Promotes:
✓ Self Efficacy
✓ Institutional Growth Mindset
✓ Belonging

THE BASICS OF TRANSPARENCY

Purpose (Why?)

Winkelmes, 2017

- Skills practiced   } relevance to students
- Knowledge gained   connection to LOs

Task (What & How?)

- What to do

- How to do it

Criteria (How will you be evaluated?)

- Provide checklist or rubric in advance to help students self-evaluate

- Provide examples of good work (annotated essay examples, sample exams)

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPARENCY IN THE FIRST WEEKS

- On the first days, explain how the course will work – when and how students are expected to engage (face to face and online)
  - Make sure to explain **_why_** (e.g., participation during synchronous online classes)
- Walk students through any tech that you will require them to use
  - e.g., Collaborate Ultra; adaptive learning, google docs, Microsoft Teams
- Pay special attention to transparency in first year and gateway courses

GROWTH MINDSET

See: Student Experience Research Network

Fixed vs Growth Mindset

Fixed

Growth

Beliefs

People with fixed mindsets believe that:
- Skills, intelligence and talents are natural.
- Failure is shameful and should be avoided.
- Some people are naturally good at things while others are not.
- You are not in control of your abilities.

People with growth mindsets believe that:
- You have the capacity to learn and grow your skills.
- Failure is a valuable lesson.
- People who are good at something are good because they built that ability.
- You are in control of your abilities.

Effort

Not Necessary or Useful
See effort as a negative thing and something you do when you're not that good

Important Part of the Process
Focused on the process of getting better

Challenges

Avoid
Back down and avoid challenges

Embrace
More likely to embrace challenges and persevere

Mistakes

Avoid
Get discouraged when making mistakes and avoid them

Improve
See mistakes as learning opportunities and ways to improve

Feedback

Defensive
Get defensive, take it personally. Ignores useful criticism/feedback

Constructive
Appreciate feedback and use it. Learns from criticism

THE IMPACT OF INSTRUCTOR MINDSET

- When an instructor has a more fixed mindset about students' capacities to succeed:
  - Overall course grades are lower
  - Racial achievement gaps are <u>twice as high</u>
  - Students report more negative experiences in the class, and more negative impact of instructor on motivation to succeed

- Instructor mindset is a **stronger predictor of student achievement** than instructor: *level of teaching experience, tenure status, age, gender, race/ethnicity*

Canning, Muenks, Green & Murphy, 2019

ELEMENTS OF WISE FEEDBACK

1. *Feedback description:* Honest description of the student's performance.

2. *Statement of high standards and reasons for feedback:* Acknowledges that you have high standards for student work and that you are providing this feedback as a way to help students grow their abilities.

3. *Assurance of student ability:* Assures student that you are giving them this feedback because you believe student can achieve these high standards

4. *Specific suggestions for improvement*: Provide student with specific, actionable feedback (and resources) to grow their ability

Yeager, Purdie-Vaughns, Garcia, Apfel, Brzustoski, Master, Hessert & Williams, 2013

"I'm giving you these comments because I have high standards for the work in our course, and I know you can meet them. I note in my feedback several places that just missed the mark and offer suggestions on how you can improve for the next assignment."

"This course has some challenging concepts, so I am giving you the answers to the most missed questions on the exam so you can understand which questions you need to review. If you are concerned about your score, I want you to know I am confident you can improve by the end of term if you use the resources on the syllabus and come see me during my drop-in hours."

WHEN CAN I PROVIDE WISE FEEDBACK?

1) Multiple choice exams
2) Exams with computational answers
3) Technical papers like a lab report
4) Applied projects like a major coding assignment
5) Discussion board posts
6) Class activities
7) Essays, papers

- Individual Feedback
- Group-level Feedback
- Written Feedback
- Oral Feedback – you can record feedback in Blackboard!

OTHER WAYS TO MESSAGE GROWTH MINDSET ABOUT STUDENT CAPACITIES

1. Praise effort and process, not just results
2. Remind students that the brain, like a muscle, gets stronger with effort
   – Challenge fixed mindsets when you hear them
3. Model growth mindset – share your stories!
4. Encourage students to share advice
5. Frame mistakes/failure as part of the learning process

For ideas on messaging growth mindset, download this Motivate Labs resource

For resources to use in the classroom, download this free, growth mindset toolkit

SUPPORTING SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

- Belonging Stories and other tools work here!
  - Share info about you – so see you as real people with lives beyond the classroom
- Build peer relationships through group work
  - Icebreakers
  - Conduct discussions in stable small groups ("teams")
  - Build forums for groups to review for exams together
  - Ask students to refer to each other by name in discussions
  - Use think-pair-share
  - Or Discord Servers
- Work to overcome the "intimidation factor" of approaching you or your instructor
  - Transparency works here!
  - Call office hours "student drop-in hours"
  - Encourage questions - "There is no such thing as a dumb question. If you are wondering about something, it's likely your classmates are too. Asking your question will benefit everyone."
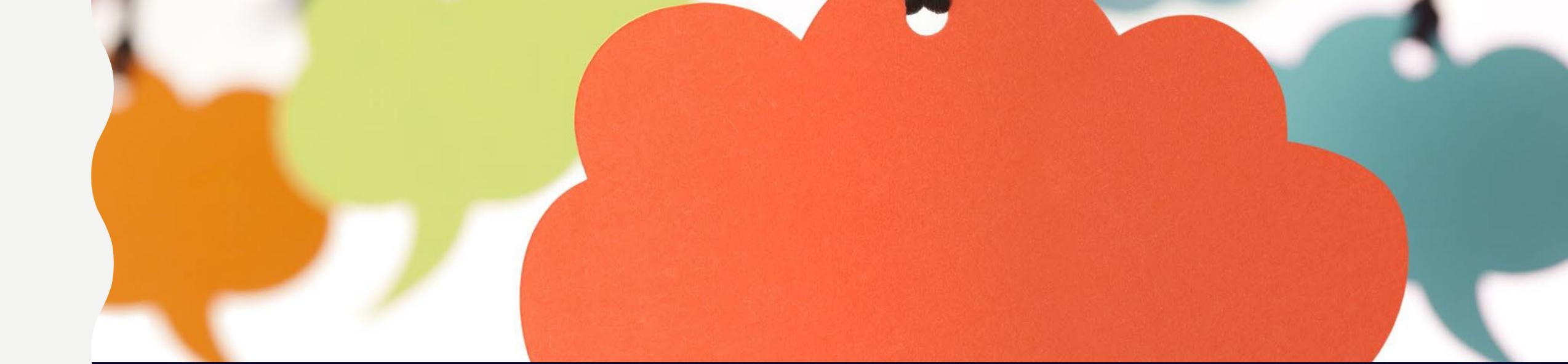
(Choose one and discuss)

What could you do to incorporate into your TA work this semester?

1. *Belonging*
2. *Growth Mindset*
3. *Self Efficacy*
4. *Social Connectedness*

BREAKOUT SESSION!

BASIC TEACHING TIPS

TIPS FOR DELIVERING EFFECTIVE LESSONS

- Don't overload with content
- Include lots of active learning (don't just lecture!)
- Identify the objectives of each lesson (transparency!)
- ***Grab students' attention*** at the beginning
- Build in strategies to ***maintain students' attention***
  - Attention lapses after 5-7 minutes or less of passive listening. Mix things up by:
    - Providing a personal anecdote or story
    - Asking a question, or for comments or opinions
    - Break students into small groups for a brief activity (e.g., pair and share)
    - Have students briefly work individually on a question, activity
    - Use visuals (images, videos, etc.)
    - Changing your tone of voice or moving your position in the room

TIPS FOR DELIVERING EFFECTIVE LESSONS

- DON'T read off the slides
- Make eye contact with students
- Watch your speed
- Watch your audience
- Check regularly for students' understanding
  - DON'T ask "Do you understand?"
  - but DO something to gauge their understanding (e.g., ask students to provide an example of a concept you've just presented)
- Be enthusiastic!
- Keep track of time
  - practice, practice, practice (and time yourself)
- Have an explicit closing

TIPS FOR ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

- Ask one question at a time
- Avoid asking yes/no questions; ask questions that require students to demonstrate their understanding of the content.
  - *Don't ask*: "Do you understand mitosis?" *Do ask*: "What is the first stage of mitosis?"
  - *Don't ask*: "Do you have any questions about the peer review process?" *Do ask*: "Why does science rely on the peer review process?"
- Make eye contact with students when you pose questions, and when you're waiting for responses

TIPS FOR ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

- Give students time to respond
  - DO NOT answer your own question!
  - If you wait and students still don't respond, you can:
    - Re-phrase the question
    - Ask students to report what they know about the question
    - Ask students to pose the dumbest question they can think of on the topic of the question
      - Minimizes the fear of speaking up
    - Ask students to write for 15 seconds everything they remember about the concept, and then ask a few students to report
    - Have students pair up and discuss the question in small groups for 30 seconds and then call on groups to report

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

- Actively listen and try not to interrupt
  - Use nonverbal gestures to indicate attention - Maintain eye content, nod your head
- Probe student responses to draw out specifics, clarifications, elaborations
  - Probes help students explore and express what they know, even when they're unsure
- Restate the students' response, if appropriate, so that all students can hear it
  - Highlight the most important elements

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO STUDENTS

- Respond to incorrect answers directly, but encouragingly. You want students to know the correct answers. But make sure to find a way to affirm the student's effort.
  - E.g., "Thank you for volunteering that response. It was a tough question, because ___ [the concept] is tricky."
  - E.g., "It's correct that _____ is the case, however...."
  - E.g., "I can understand why you'd think that, given_____. Actually…"
  - E.g., "I'm glad you said that, because that's a common misperception about…"

# IDEAS FOR CREATING STUDY SESSION OR RECITATION SECTIONS

Note: you can ask students to do these activities with or without their notes or the text. Doing it without the notes/text is a good way for students to assess their current level of knowledge. Doing it with is a more a way to study the content.

1. Diagramming (e.g., parts of the cell)
2. Practice multiple choice quizzes
3. Brief (2-3 minute maximum) You tube videos with questions
4. Filling in tables that you create for them
5. Ask students to generate examples of concepts
6. Summarizing or outlining a process
7. Comparing and contrasting processes or concepts (i.e., how are they similar? different?)
8. Ask students to create their own exam questions
9. Give students a problem and ask them to solve it using the course content (this is typically a more complex problem, not a simple question)
10. Write down everything you remember about a concept (then discuss as a class, working together to construct the entire body of info you want students to know)
11. Concept mapping
12. Create mnemonic or other memory devices to remember lists, facts (e.g., ROY G. BIV)
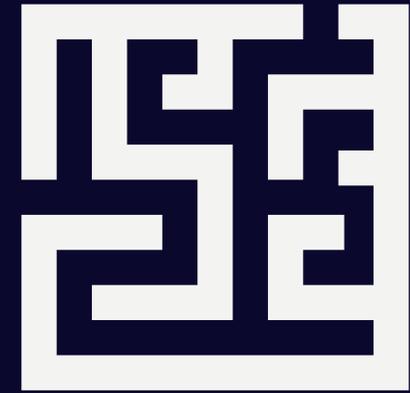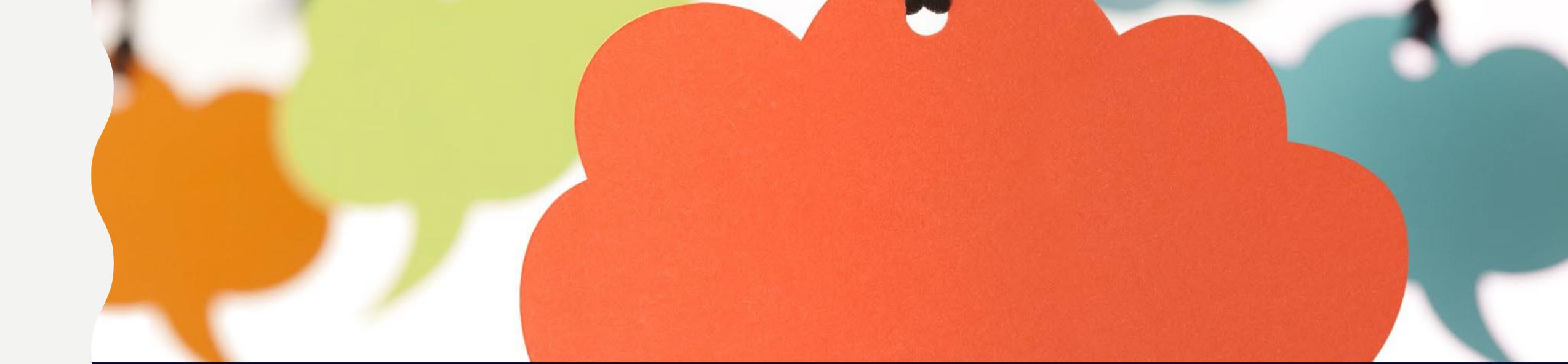
KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

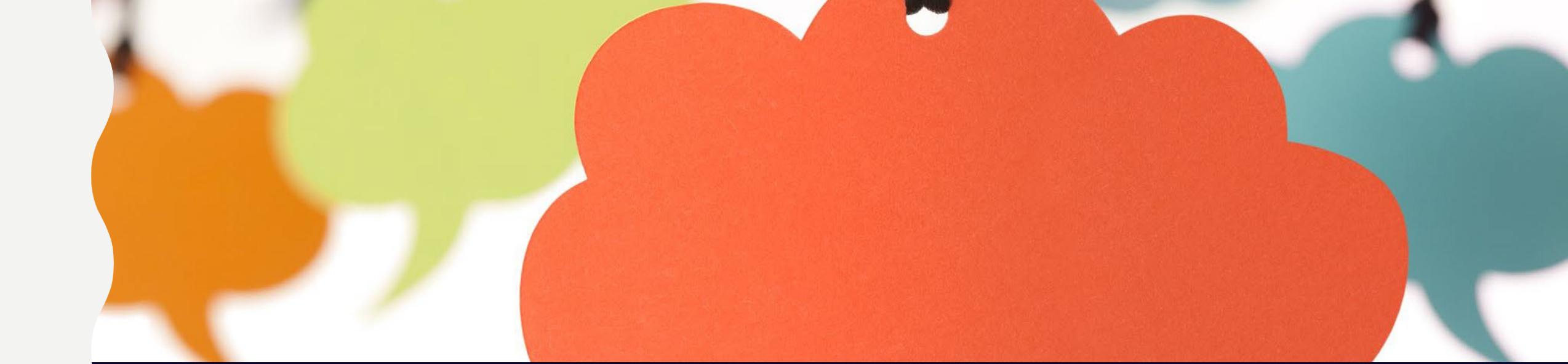|		
Center for Success Coaching	Learning Enhancement Center	Rocket Solution Central - one-stop service location for assistance with financial aid, student account and registration questions
Food Pantries	Rocket Emergency Aid	Rocket Care Report – to report concerns about a student's safety or well-being
Student Disability Services	Student "How-To" Page - https://www.utoledo.edu/success/how-to/	UT Online – resources on Blackboard, Echo 360, etc.

EARLY ALERT TOOLS

Attendance Tracking

- Completed by Census date
- Must respond for each student, or will be recorded as not-attending
- For more info: https://www.utoledo.edu/offices/provost/docs/FAQs-Particpation_Attendnace-Tracker_FINAL_18May2021.pdf

Starfish Early Alert

- Report on high academic course concerns or outstanding performance kudos in early weeks of term
- Can raise Flags or Referrals at any point in the term
- For more info: https://www.utoledo.edu/offices/provost/starfish/faculty.html

Midterm Grade Reports

- Completed between weeks 6 and 8 of term, in Banner (same process as recording final grades)

1. What one idea will you try in your fall TA work and why?

2. What questions has this workshop raised for you? What will you next do to learn more?

FINAL REFLECTION OPPORTUNITY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional resources in support of your teaching, visit the [Teaching Center website](#)

To read more about the topics covered in this workshop, view this [Resource List](#)

Our Contact Info

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To view more workshops on the basics of effective teaching, go to the New Faculty and TA Resources section of the [Teaching Center website](#).