EQUITY ACCELERATOR

Enhancing Community College Student Success & Sense of Belonging Through an Early Social Belonging Program

Introductory Webinar - Sept 8, 2023

Equity Accelerator: Who We Are

- Equity Accelerator (EA) is the first focused research organization (FRO) to harness research, practice, and policy to create **more equitable learning and working environments**.

- We work with culture creators to reshape institutions of higher education into true **cultures of growth**, where the norms, policies, and practices of the environment effectively support the success of all students– particularly those from structurally-disadvantaged and historically-excluded backgrounds.

- Our unique framework is grounded in **robust empirical evidence** from the fields of education, organizational behavior, and the social sciences.

- We work with both community colleges and universities to create, implement, and evaluate **evidence-based tools and resources** for faculty, administrators, and staff that consistently improve students' experiences and outcomes.

EA

Personal Mindsets

- People's personal beliefs about the malleability of human characteristics

  - **Fixed Mindset:** Intelligence, athletic ability, and personality are fixed traits that can't be changed– either you have it or you don't.
    - *"I'm just not a math person."*
  - **Growth Mindset:** Intelligence, athletic ability, and personality are malleable qualities that can be developed and improved by effort, applying the right strategies, and seeking help.
    - *"I just haven't mastered math yet."*
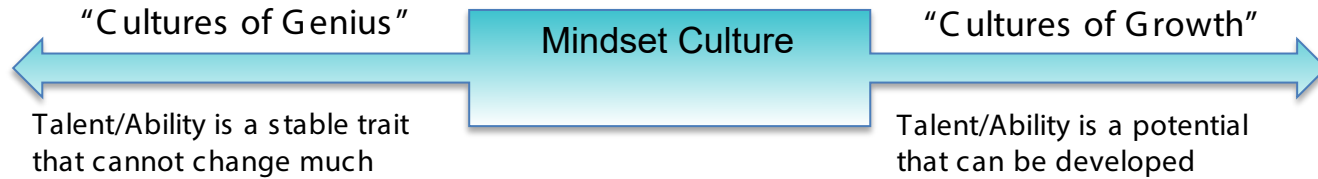
Carol Dweck

The Limits of Personal Mindsets

- Decades of research has demonstrated that students' mindsets can affect their **motivation, persistence, engagement, and performance.**
- Yet, conceptualizing and studying mindsets as being "in the heads" of students **puts the onus on students** to foster a growth mindset to improve their own outcomes.
- **Some educational environments undermine students' growth mindset beliefs**– they provide limited opportunities to improve with effort, little guidance in strategies they might apply, and minimal encouragement when seeking help.

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New Definition: Mindset Cultures

- Beliefs of **powerful people** in a setting—like teachers, professors, counselors, supervisors, or bosses—about people's talents and abilities.

"Cultures of Genius"   Mindset Culture   "Cultures of Growth"

Talent/Ability is a stable trait that cannot change much   Talent/Ability is a potential that can be developed

- **Mindset culture** is expressed through what powerful people say and do, including norms, policies, practices, and interactions with students.
- What faculty **say and do** (e.g., the mindset culture they create) predicts how students perceive faculty's mindsets and the classroom's culture.

Murphy & Dweck, 2010; Emerson & Murphy, 2015; Canning, Murphy et al., 2020

Students' Learning Environments Raise Questions

When starting in college, students have **questions…**
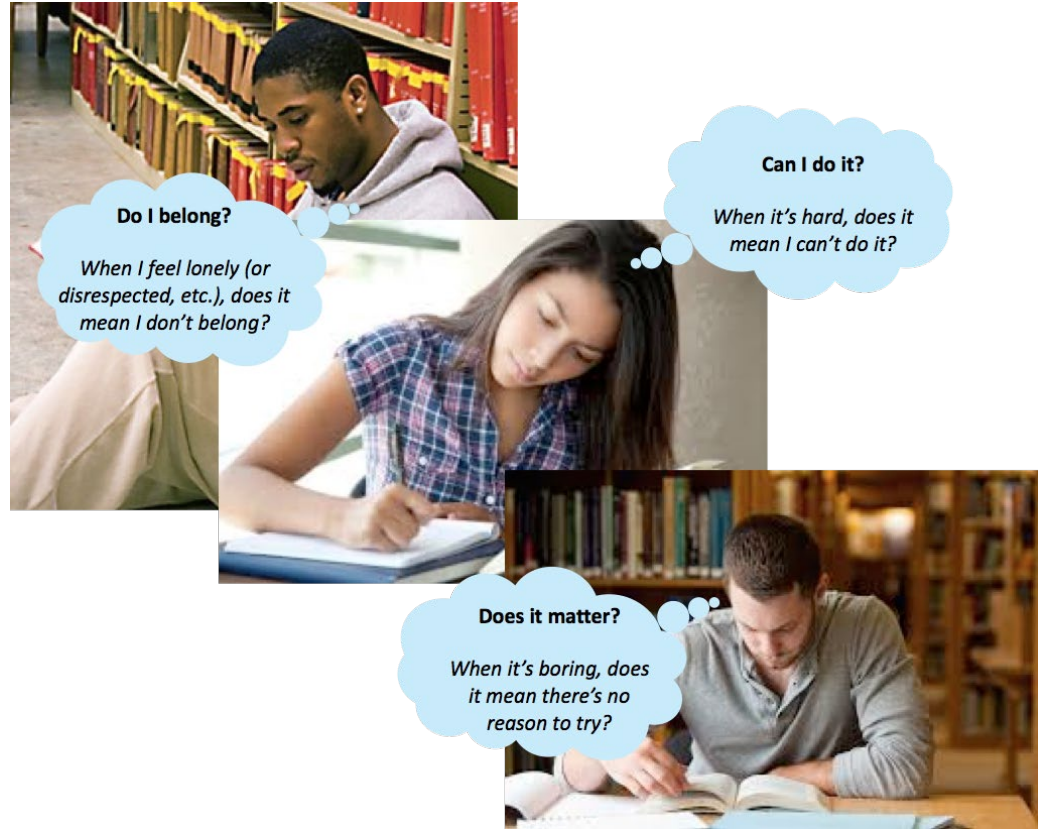
Students' Learning Environments Raise Questions

[*At Princeton, I felt like*] *a visitor landing in an alien land…I have spent my years since Princeton, while at law school, and in my various professional jobs, not feeling completely a part of the worlds I inhabit.*

- Sonia Sotomayor (memoir)

Race matters, because of the slights, the snickers, the silent judgments that reinforce that most crippling of thoughts: **'I do not belong here.'**

- Sonia Sotomayor (in dissent)

Mindset Cultures Signal Answers to Those Questions

When I first arrived at school as a first-generation college student, I didn't know anyone on campus except my brother. I didn't know how to pick the right classes or find the right buildings. I didn't even bring the right size sheets for my dorm room bed. I didn't realize those beds were so long. ***So I was a little overwhelmed and a little isolated.***
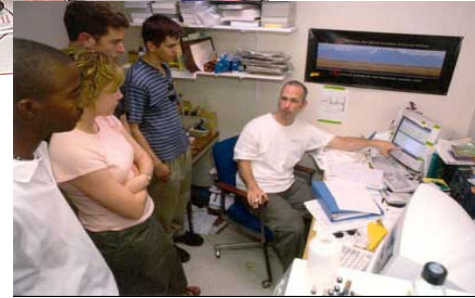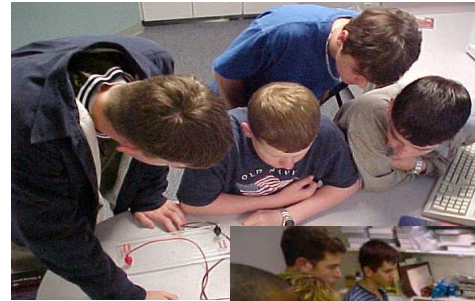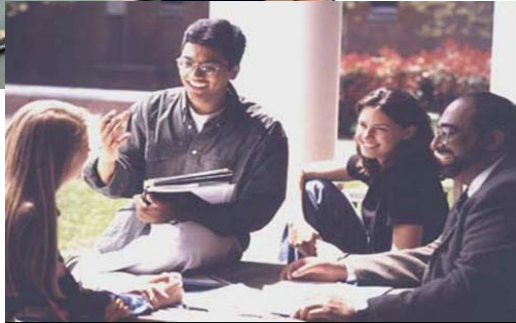
- Michelle Obama (2014)

What Do Mindset Cultures *Look* Like?

Physical and Virtual Environments

Cundiff, Matsick, & Vescio (2011); Lewis & Sekaquaptewa, (in prep)

What Do Mindset Cultures *Look* Like?

Who Teaches & Who Learns

Murphy, Steele, & Gross (2007)

What Do Mindset Cultures *Sound* Like?

What Powerful People Say and Do

The Achievement College class of 2024 is one of the most impressive in the college's history. As a class, you have an average GPA of 4.2. Many of you have already achieved great things. One student holds a patent for technology in bioengineering. Another speaks five languages. A third is a US Presidential Scholar. I look forward to seeing what you accomplish here at AC.

The Development College class of 2024 is one of the most exciting in the college's history. As a class, you each bring unique lived experiences, perspectives, and skills to our campus that make our community stronger. Your passion for learning, curiosity, and hard work will serve as an excellent foundation for this new and exciting chapter of learning and growth, and I can't wait to see what you accomplish at DC.

EA

Signaling a Culture of Growth to Increase Student Belonging

- Environments can signal their Culture of Growth through a variety of cues, including:
  - Their physical & virtual environments
  - Who teaches and who learns
  - What powerful people say and do

- Explicit messages about belonging can:
  - **Normalize concerns** about belonging during the transition into college
  - **Offer assurance** that these concerns will diminish with time and effort
  - **Illustrate examples** of how students can engage with their academic and social environments in ways that will increase their feelings of belonging

EA's Social Belonging Program

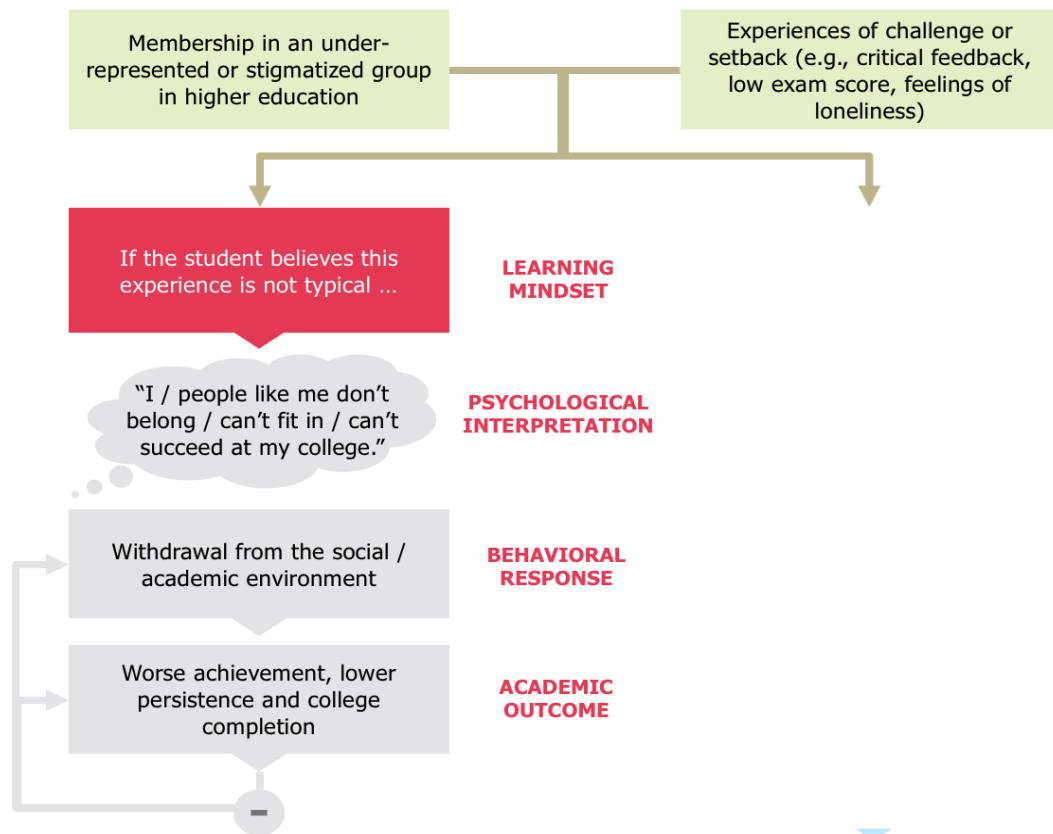## Student Stories Normalize Belonging Concerns

Current Students Survey: Representative Stories

When I first got to college, I worried that I was different from the other students. Everyone else seemed so certain it was the right place for them and were so happy here. But I wasn't sure I fit in – if I would make friends, if people would respect me, if it was the right school for me. With time I came to realize that almost everyone comes to college and feels uncertain at first about whether they fit in. It's just something everyone goes through. Now it seems ironic – everybody feels different first year, but really we're all going through the same thing.
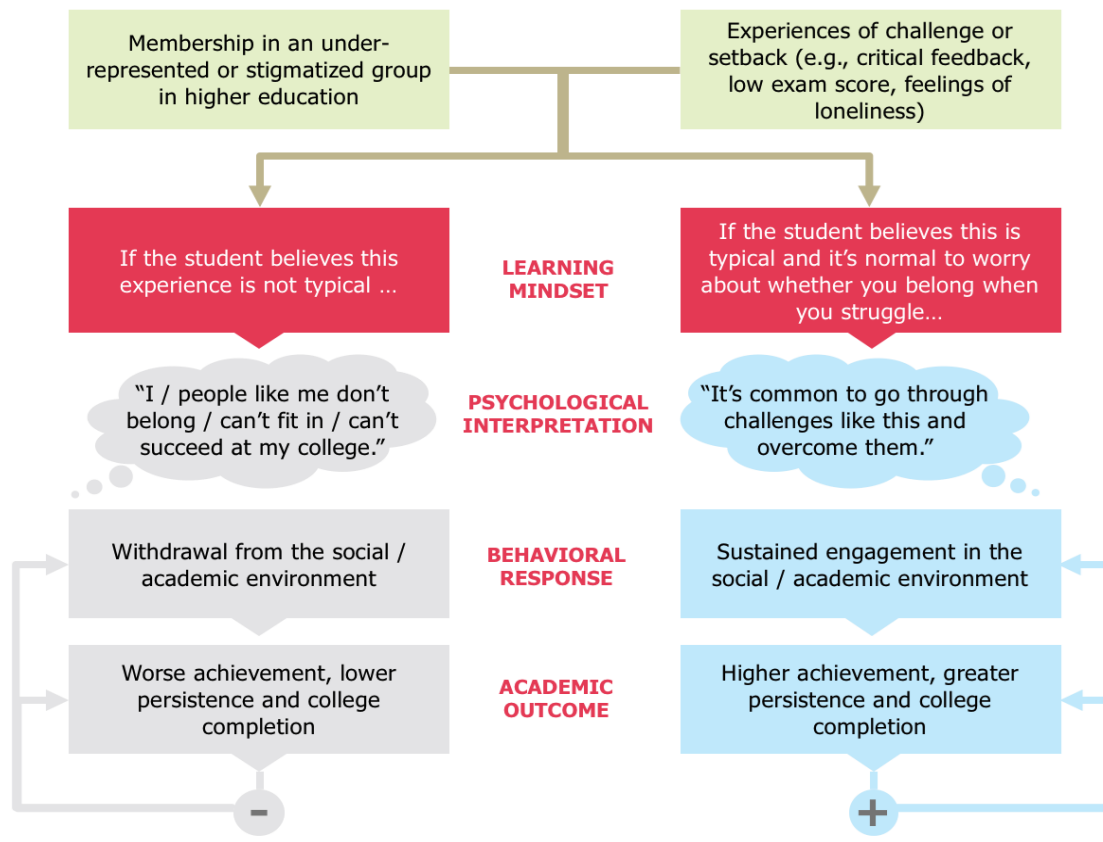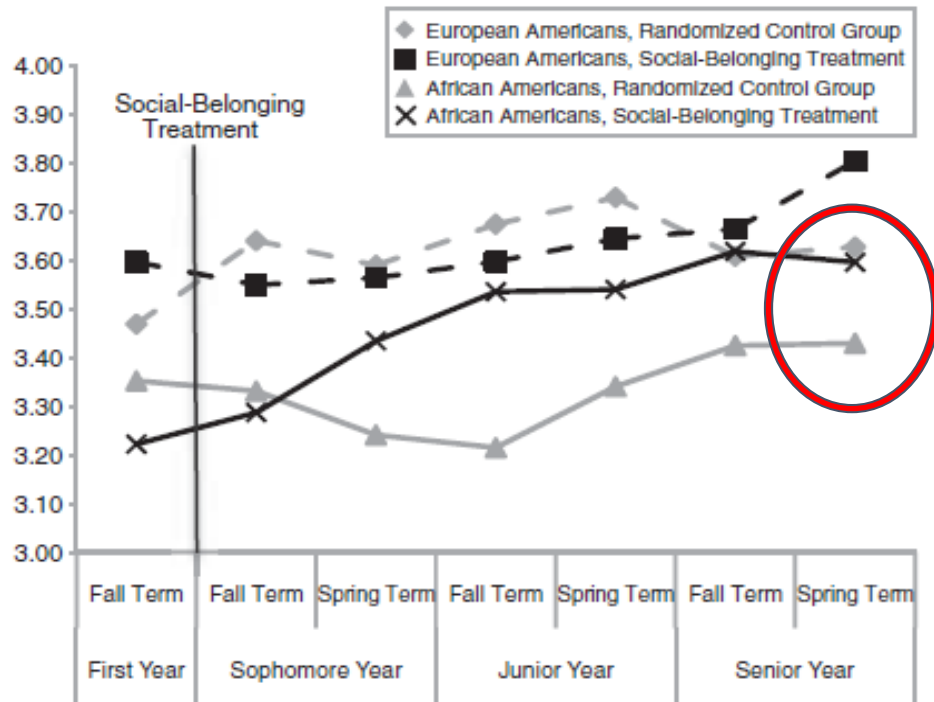
- Junior, African American Male

EA's Social Belonging Program: How it Works

# EA's Social Belonging Program: How it Works

EA's Social Belonging Program: The Evidence

European Americans, Randomized Control Group
European Americans, Social-Belonging Treatment
African Americans, Randomized Control Group
African Americans, Social-Belonging Treatment

Social Belonging Program:
Stories that normalize students' struggles and challenges are beneficial to everyone, but particularly to students from groups who have been underrepresented or discriminated in higher education contexts.

Results: Narrows racialized outcome gap (GPA); effects continue throughout students' post-college careers

Brady et al., (2020); Walton & Cohen (2011)

EA's Social Belonging Program: The Evidence
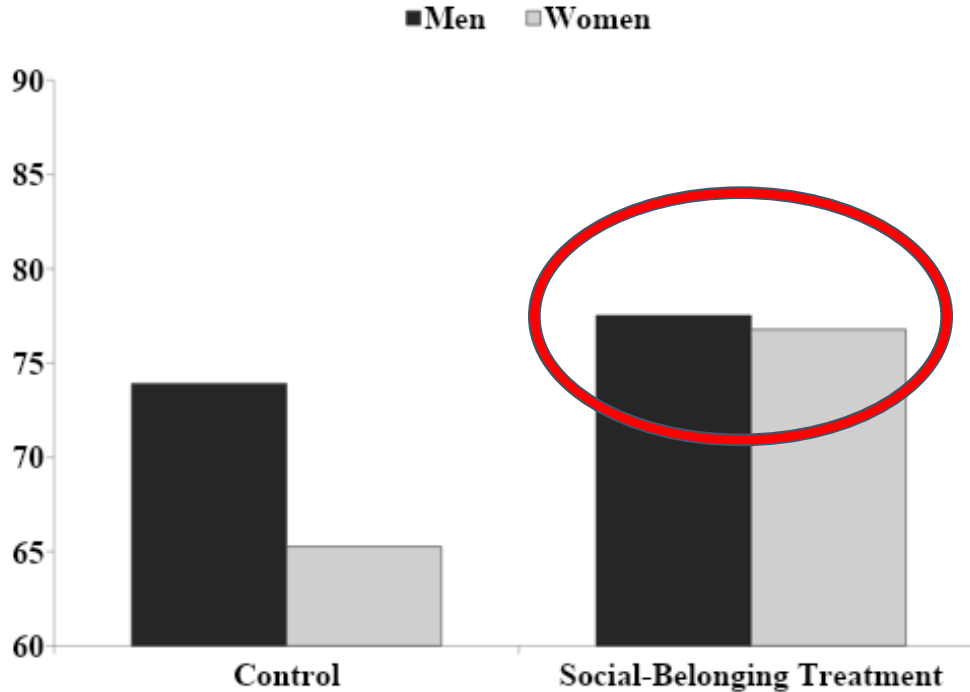
Social belonging program (vs. control program) was provided to students in male-dominated engineering programs at a highly selective university.

Results: Closed gender academic outcome disparities (GPA); effects continue throughout their time in college

Walton, Logel, Peach, Spencer, & Zanna (2015)

EA's Social Belonging Program: The Evidence
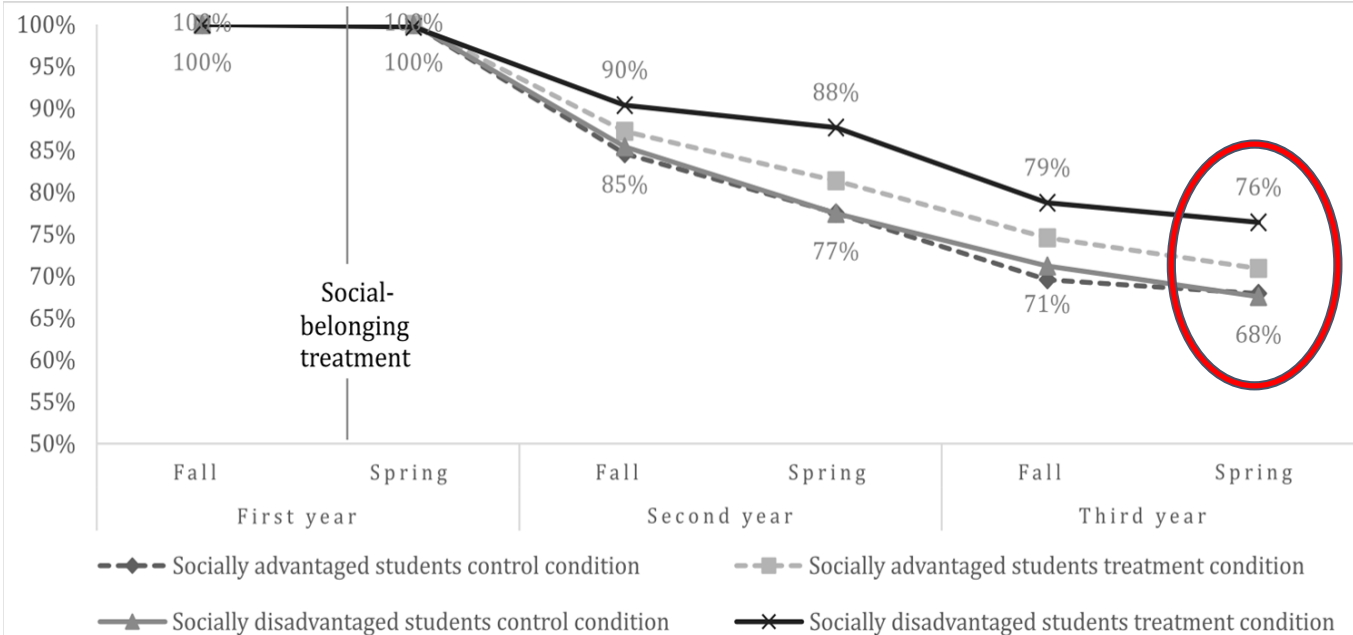
(Adapted) program was provided to students in a broad access 4-year state university in a large urban city

"Disadvantaged:" racial/ethnic minority & first-generation students

Results: Narrowed outcome gap (continuous enrollment)

Murphy, Gopalan, Carter, Emerson, Bottoms, & Walton (2020)

EA's Social Belonging Program: The Evidence

🔒 | **RESEARCH ARTICLE** | SOCIAL BELONGING   f 🐦 in 👽 💬 ✉

Where and with whom does a brief social-belonging intervention promote progress in college?

GREGORY M. WALTON (iD), MARY C. MURPHY (iD), CHRISTINE LOGEL (iD), DAVID S. YEAGER (iD), J. PARKER GOYER (iD), SHANNON T. BRADY (iD), KATHERINE T. U. EMERSON (iD), DAVID PAUNESKU (iD), OMID FOTUHI (iD), [...], AND NATASHA KROL   +27 authors   Authors Info & Affiliations

Randomized controlled trial of social belonging program (vs. control) across 22 US colleges

Results: Narrowed outcome gap (Year 1 completion rates) between demographic groups who historically have higher vs. lower completion rates within each college; particularly effective in schools that provided many opportunities to belong (i.e., Cultures of Growth)

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Bringing EA's Social Belonging Program to Your College

- EA is interested in bringing this **evidenced-based social belonging program** to your students to improve their experiences and academic success.
    - **We will talk to your students** to learn more about the specific concerns and experiences of community college students.
    - **We will adapt our social belonging program** to acknowledge and normalize their specific concerns and experiences.
    - **We will measure our impact** by conducting follow-up surveys with students and measuring the impact of our program on student performance outcomes.

Bringing EA's Social Belonging Program to Your College

- **Fall 2023 - Spring 2024:** We will collaborate to recruit students for initial surveys and/or focus groups to learn about their belonging concerns.

- **Summer 2024 - Fall 2024:** We will collaborate to facilitate the delivery of program materials and an end-of-term survey to matriculating students.

- **Spring 2025:** Your college will provide requested administrative student-level data on course enrollment and performance.

Thank You and Next Steps

To apply to be a part of this opportunity, please complete our application
(to be provided by the Chancellor's Office).

Questions? Contact Katie Mathias at **katie@accelerateequity.org**

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