Building Academic Strengths: Using BCSSE to Identify and Support Students with Low Confidence

Presented by:

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National Survey of Student Engagement
Today we will cover:

- Brief description of the *Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement* (BCSSE)

- Connection between student success, self-efficacy, and academic confidence

- Overview of strength-based advising

- Ways to use BCSSE data as a tool to enhance first-year students’ academic confidence
Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement

Purpose of BCSSE is to measure entering first-year students’ pre-college academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations and attitudes for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.
Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement

High School experiences include:
- Writing and Reading
- Studying
- Learning Strategies
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Reflective Learning
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- Studying
- Learning Strategies
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Reflective Learning

First-Year Expectations include:
- Writing and Reading
- Studying
- Student-Faculty Interactions
- Discussion with Diverse Others
- Collaborative Learning
- Academic Perseverance
- Expected Academic Difficulty
- Perceived Academic Preparation
- Importance of Supportive Environment
Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement

Four reports are provided:

1. BCSSE Report (Summer/Fall)
2. BCSSE Advising (Summer/Fall)
3. Grand Frequencies and Means (Fall)
   a) Overall
   b) Institution types
4. BCSSE/NSSE report (following summer)
Predictors of Student Learning and Persistence

- Precollege characteristics
  - HS experiences, socio-demographics
- Organization factors
- Social and academic integration
- Academic performance and ability
- **Student dispositions**
  - Self-efficacy, academic goals & skills

What is Self-Efficacy?

- Beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action necessary to achieve a goal

- People make judgements about their ability to perform certain actions

- Based on judgment, they proceed or decide not engage in those actions

“People who have strong beliefs in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided. Such an affirmative orientation fosters interest and engrossing involvement in activities”

--Bandura, 1997, p. 39
Group Discussion

1. How do you identify students with low confidence?

2. What examples can you share when advising new student with low academic confidence?
   - Techniques/Strategies
   - Referrals/Campus resources
   - Other examples?
Building Academic Confidence

Keller’s (1987) strategies to strengthen confidence:

• Progressive disclosure

• Degree of control over their own learning

• Experience success at challenging tasks

• Apply successful experiences to future challenges

Basics of Strengths-Based Advising

Schreiner (2013):

- Deficit remediation vs. strengths development
- Focus on talents and personal assets
- Associated with engaged learning, higher grades, and overall satisfaction

Basics of Strengths-Based Advising

• Work with students to **develop** talents into strengths

• Nurture intrinsic motivation by helping students to identify ways **they** to enhance their strengths → **self-efficacy**

• Strength-development motivates students to persevere and overcome obstacles → **academic confidence**

Leveraging Strengths

Advisors should help students “leverage talents to address obstacles that may emerge in the future” (Schreiner, 2013).

1. Goal is to identify and reinforce academic strengths that are specific and meaningful for that student

2. Identify academic challenges that indicate low confidence

3. Leverage academic strengths when addressing low confidence
Confidence is best understood when contextualized or “situated”.

For instance, understanding confidence specific to a major or a course is much more informative when considering how to help.
In context of SBA and advising entering, first-year students:

- Strengths can be *general* (e.g. spent a lot of hours studying), or *specific* to the major (e.g., STEM major that successfully completed calculus in high school)
BCSSE and SBA

- Any questions so far?
- Any thoughts about SBA?
- How many of you use SBA?
Identifying Academic Strengths

The BCSE Advising Report from Engagement State University includes a section on identifying academic strengths. The report highlights the student's completion of AP courses, which indicates a challenging high school curriculum. It also notes the student's studying habits and academic preparation strategies.

### Student Background
- **Student Name**: IM Smart
- **Student ID**: 123456
- ### Completed Courses:
  - AP courses: 3-4
  - Calculus: Not completed
  - English Major: Undecided

### HS Behaviors and FY Expectations
- **Studying**: HS: 6-10, FY: 16-20
- **Working**: HS: 0-10, FY: 0-10
- **Socializing/Relaxing**: HS: 6-10, FY: 11-15
- **Assignments**: HS: 1-5, FY: 1-5

### Expected Transition Difficulty
- **Learning course material**: Not all difficult
- **Managing time**: 3
- **Paying for college expenses**: 3
- **Getting help with school work**: 4
- **Making friends**: 2
- **Interacting with faculty**: 5

### Academic Perseverance
- **How certain are you that you will**: Study when there are other interesting things to do?
  - HS: 3, FY: 5
- **Additional information for assignments when you don’t understand the material**: 2
- **Participate regularly in course discussions, even when you don’t feel like it**: 4
- **Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments**: 2
- **Finish something you have started when you encounter challenges**: 3
- **Stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test or assignment**: 2

### Academic Preparation
- **Write clearly and effectively**: 3
- **Speak clearly and effectively**: 3
- **Think critically and analytically**: 3
- **Analyze math or quantitative problems**: 2
- **Use computing and information technology**: 4
- **Work effectively with others**: 5
- **Learn effectively on your own**: 3

### First-Year Expectations for Effective Educational Practice
- **Student-Faculty Interaction (Discusses career plans and academic performance)**: 20
- **Interaction with Diverse Others (Discussions with people of different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds)**: 40
- **Peer Collaboration (Work with other students on course projects; Prepare for exams by discussing material with other students)**: 50

### Importance of Campus Support
- **A challenging academic experience**: 4
- **Support to help you succeed academically**: 3
- **Opportunities to interact with students from different economic, social, racial/ethnic backgrounds**: 5
- **Assistance coping with non-academic responsibilities**: 4
- **Support to help you thrive socially**: 3
- **Learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)**: 4

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Complete AP courses! Great. Indicates this student completed a challenging high school curriculum.

Studied a fair amount in HS, but really expects to increase studying in FY.

Student was using effective learning strategies. Very important for continued FY success.
Identifying Academic Strengths

Making new friends

Making friends (aka, “social integration”) is critical for a successful FY.

Work effectively with others

Group study, group projects, and other forms of peer collaboration are all part of good learning habits.

Support to help you succeed academically

This student also realizes that it is important that the institution provide support. Students that realize this will often be the ones to seek help when needed.
### Identifying Academic Strengths

**Student expects learning to be difficult.**

Remind student that she has successfully completed difficult courses in the past (e.g., AP courses).

**Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments.**

This person is confident interacting with peers, but lacks confidence to ask for help from faculty. Develop plan for seeking help that builds on strengths.

**Think critically and analytically.**

This student may be better prepared than she realizes. Help her connect with academic work in high school where these skills were needed.

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### BCSSE Advising Report

**Engagement State University**

#### The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) Advising Report

**Student ID**

**Expected Major**

*Undecided*

*First choice*

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#### HS Behaviors and FY Expectations

<table>
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<th>FY Expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Qualitative Reasoning</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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#### Expected Transition Difficulty

**Learning course material**

5

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#### Academic Perseverance

**How certain are you that you will**

1- Very certain

2- Somewhat certain

3- Not at all or Very uncertain

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Business Major and SBA

On your campus, the business program is writing intensive. What strengths is this studying entering with and what challenges can be anticipated?

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Identifying Academic Strengths

This student has completed several AP courses, including two that were writing intensive.

This student was challenged and successful. Knowing how to manage challenge is a definite strength.
This student does not feel very confident about his writing. Ask him to describe the successful writing strategies he used in high school that were successful.

First-year students are often intimidated by faculty. “Teach” him how to approach and communicate with faculty. Ask him to consider how he approached high school teachers. Is it really that different?
Fostering Confidence

Positive Feedback

- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful
- Positive reinforcement
Fostering Confidence

Positive Feedback
- Emphasize to students the ability to be successful; positive reinforcement

Encourage Mastery
- Challenging activities promote cognitive development
- Success takes effort
Fostering Confidence

**Positive Feedback**
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**Define Success in Terms of Improvement**
- Discourage comparing performance to others
- Do point out “good habits” of those that are successful
Fostering Confidence

Positive Feedback
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- Challenging activities promote cognitive development; success takes effort

Define Success in Terms of Improvement
- Discourage comparing performance to others; do point out “good habits” of those that are successful

Keep Challenges in Perspective
- Help students recognize when they are successful
- **Point out previous successes**
- Discuss reasons for past “failures”

Adapted from *Educational Psychology: Developing Learners* (Ormrod, 2013)
Confidence

Students don’t need to feel like they are going it alone.
Advisors, faculty, and staff play a key role in helping students to gain the confidence to say, “I can do that”.
Confidence

Questions?

Comments?
Thank you!

Copy of this and past presentations can be found at:

http://nsse.iub.edu/html/pubs.cfm

Additional BCSSE information can be found at:
http://bcsse.iub.edu/

Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding BCSSE.

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