

Expectations Don't Always Meet Reality

A Resource Guide



Most community college students believe they are prepared academically to succeed in college. In fact 82% of *SENSE* 2021 Cohort respondents agree or strongly agree that is the case. However, only 42% of students starting at a community college complete their degree within six years.¹

There are tools for keeping students engaged and on track to completing their goals, however. One of those tools is a focus on mindset. Past CCCSE research has shown that when students have a productive mindset, they are more likely to be highly engaged, and, thus, more successful.² In short, when students have a productive mindset, they believe they can change their intelligence, they are confident they can be successful in their coursework, they see the relevance of their academic experiences, and they feel like they are accepted members of the college community.

The purpose of this tool is to enrich your conversations about the actions you can take to help students have more productive mindsets so that their realities meet their initial expectations.

VIDEO CONTENT: Expectations Don't Always Meet Reality



In the following video clip—which is less than a minute long—we witness a student named James move from excitement to boredom to a sense of resignation that school is just not for him.

- » *What is your main takeaway from this video clip?*
- » *Do you think there are students like James at your college?*
- » *What actions can your college take to reach students before they stop out or drop out?*

“I started out really stressed because college is much more difficult than high school, and it requires a lot more out of you. Once . . . we talked about different ways to change your mindset, I feel like I really do have a better outlook on the amount that's required of me here.”

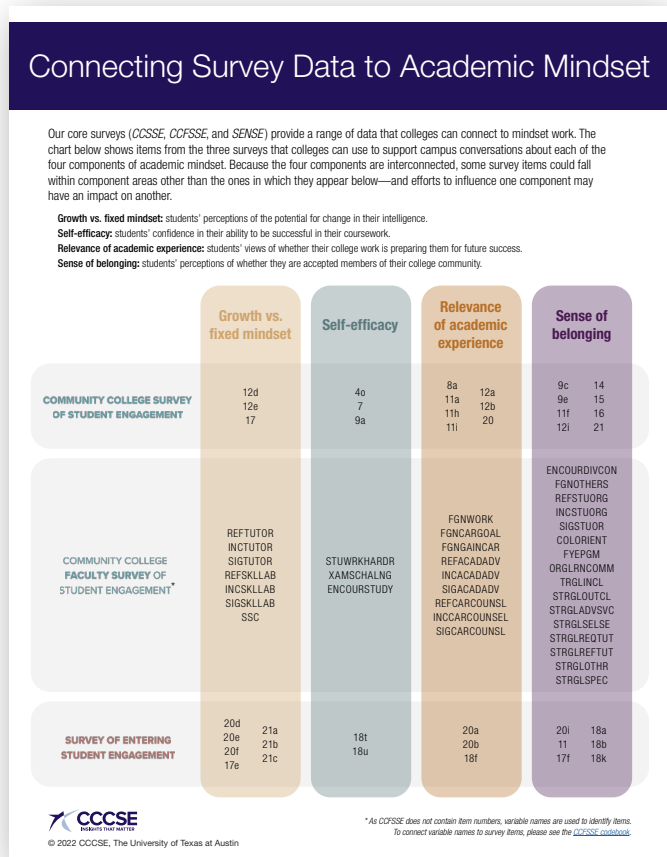
— STUDENT

¹ Causey, J., Pevitz, A., Ryu, M., Scheetz, A., & Shapiro, D. (Feb 2022). *Completing college: National and state report on six year completion rates for fall 2015 beginning cohort* (Signature Report 20). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Completions_Report_2021.pdf

² CCCSE. (2019). *A mind at work: Maximizing the relationship between mindset and student success*. <https://cccse.org/sites/default/files/Mindset.pdf>

DATA ABOUT ACADEMIC MINDSET

CCCSE's core surveys provide a range of data that colleges can connect to mindset work. [This tool](#) shows the survey items that colleges can use to support campus conversations about academic mindset.



In my experience, the biggest contributor to students staying in school and succeeding is feeling a sense of belonging on campus, feeling like they have a place here, that our school wants them here, that they can find their people on this campus.

— FACULTY MEMBER

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- › How do you talk to students about success and failure? How do you teach students to process failure and move toward success?
- › Where could you incorporate mindset work at your college? Orientation? Student success courses? Gateway courses? Classes that have high failure and withdrawal rates?
- › Having a productive academic mindset is correlated with use of academic advising. Where else can you introduce supports that might also lead to more productive mindsets? For example, how can you bring such supports into the classroom?
- › Do faculty members set clear expectations for their coursework? Do they tell students that the work may be challenging but they are confident that the students can learn it?
- › What kind of professional development can you provide for faculty members so they can help students around their fears of failure with new and intimidating content?
- › What percentage of your incoming students are required to complete career exploration that includes interacting with people who work in their field of interest?
- › What percentage of your students are required to complete internships or other applied learning experiences?
- › How can the college ensure that faculty and staff other than advisors are talking with students about their futures and careers?
- › How do faculty and staff members build relationships with students so that students feel a sense of belonging? Are they required to meet with each of their students at least once a semester?
- › Does the college culture engender a sense of welcoming and respect? How does the college encourage students to build relationships among one another?

