

# Relationships Matter

## A Resource Guide

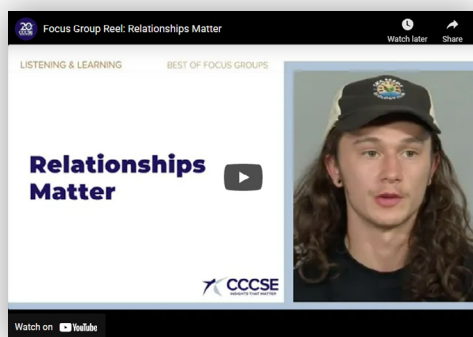


Relationships are vital for community college students. When students participating in CCCSE focus groups are asked if they have ever considered dropping out of college, many say they have. And when they are asked what helped them stay, students' answers, almost without exception, are about relationships.

*The purpose of this tool is to support your conversations about the importance of relationships and a sense of belonging for students through the use of several CCCSE resources, which are listed below.*

### VIDEO CONTENT: Fostering Connections With and Among Students

The "Relationships Matter" video reel below highlights clips of students, faculty, and staff discussing the impact of cultivating relationships. Additionally, two leaders stress the significance of actively listening to students as contributing members of the college community.



**Sunita V. Cooke**  
President  
MiraCosta College

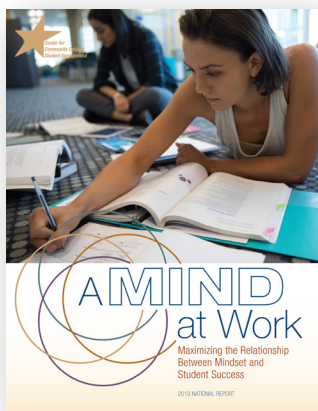


**Phillip W. Neal**  
President/CEO  
Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College

- » Which video clip stood out to you the most? Why?
- » Did one of the college presidents say something that you found impactful? Why?
- » What actions can you take to learn more about and improve the relationships students have with others at your college?

### SENSE OF BELONGING: A Component of Academic Mindset

[A Mind at Work: Maximizing the Relationship Between Mindset and Student Success](#) analyzes four components of academic mindset, including the importance of colleges' promoting a sense of belonging for students. *Sense of belonging* includes students' perceptions of whether they are accepted members of their college community. Being part of an academic community gives students an identity as a learner. Then, if they face setbacks, which most students do, they interpret the setbacks as part of the learning process rather than as a signal that they do not belong.



- [Connecting Data to Academic Mindset](#)

CCCSE's core surveys (*CCSSE*, *CCFSSE*, and *SENSE*) provide a range of data that colleges can connect to mindset work, including fostering a sense of belonging. This tool, which was released as a supplementary tool with the report, shows items from the three surveys that colleges can use to support campus conversations about each of the four components of academic mindset.

- [How Colleges Can Foster Students' Sense of Belonging](#)

Page 14 of the report takes a closer look at this particular facet of mindset and offers guidance backed by years of focus group findings.

See more resources on Page 2

## ADDITIONAL READINGS: Featured Articles

The three publications featured on this page focus on the power of connections—and how those connections have perhaps become even more important in a COVID-19 world.

# 1

### [“The Importance of Fostering a Sense of Belonging in Attracting and Retaining Community College Students”](#)

by Linda L. Garcia and Courtney Adkins in *Perspectives: Community College Leadership for the 21st Century*, April 2021

Fostering a sense of belonging also means helping students succeed academically. This includes intentionally asking students about challenges that may impact their academic progress and connecting them to specific resources to help them overcome those barriers. For instance, Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College has students complete an onboarding survey, which asks the following questions:

- » *What subjects are the most difficult for you?*
- » *How many hours per week do you plan to commit to your coursework?*
- » *If employed, how many hours do you work in a typical week?*
- » *Do you need any special services or accommodations in order for you to be successful?*
- » *How will you primarily access online courses?*



# 2

### [“In Challenging Times, Relationships Keep Students Engaged in College Learning”](#)

by Linda L. Garcia and Courtney Adkins

This op-ed piece originally appeared on *EdSurge* on December 24, 2020

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*If you've fallen down, everyone helps pick you back up. There are so many safety nets and contingency safety nets. The support system is really great here.*

# 3

### [“Deepening Connections with Students in a COVID-19 World”](#)

by Linda L. Garcia, Courtney Adkins, and Mike Bohlig in *Association of American Colleges & Universities: Liberal Education Blog*, September 11, 2020

*The other day, I missed a class because of something that came up, and I sent a text to my instructor. For one reason or another, the text didn't go through. He sent an email. 'Where you at? I missed you today. That's not like you.'*

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