

# Staying Where We Belong

Building resilience and sense of belonging by creating inclusive environments through informed advising



March 4, 2022  
Advising Matters Conference

# Goals

- Redefine resilience
- Become familiar with Strayhorn's model of sense of belonging
- Understand your agency in creating an inclusive environment
- Identify several practical ways to foster students' sense of belonging

# Important Statistics

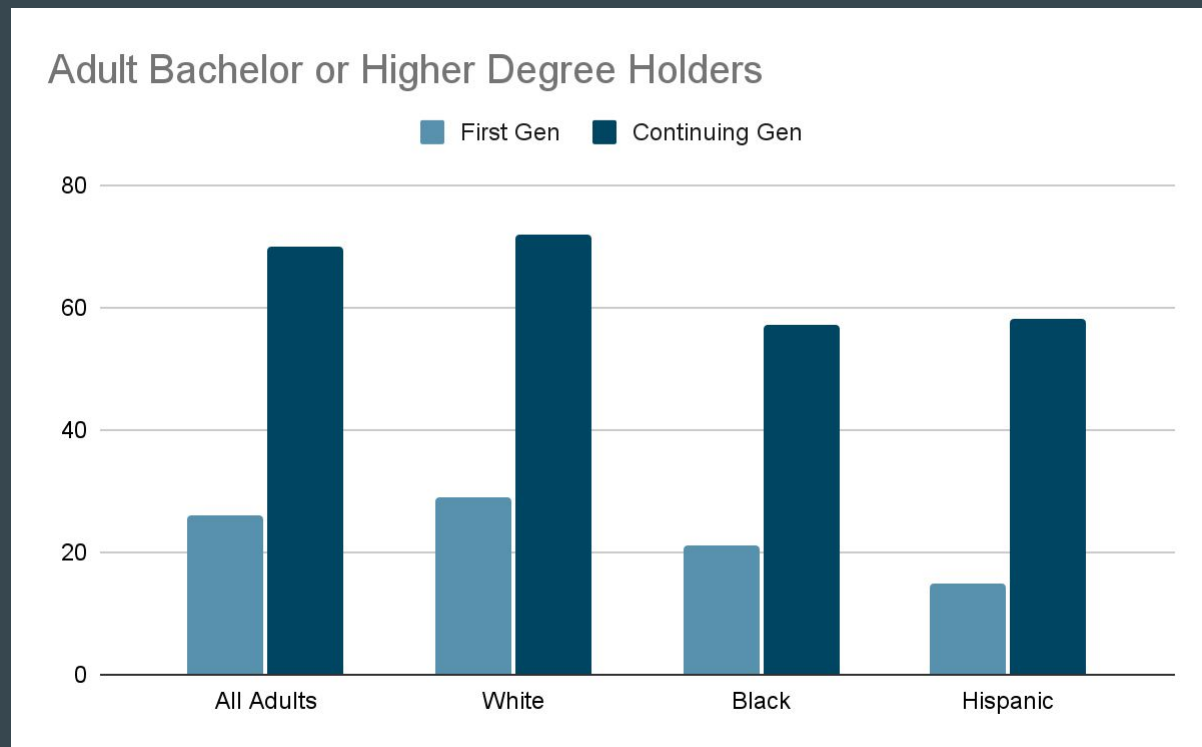
As of the 2015 - 2016 academic year, first generation college students made up **47%** of the undergraduate population at public four-year schools (RTI International, 2019).

Source, RTI International, 2019

## Important Statistics #2

Data showing the difference between continuing generation college students and first generation college students as related to obtaining a four year or higher degree.

Pew Research Center, 2021



# Important Statistics #3

Income Gap - 2019 Median household income for continuing generation college students was **\$100,900** and **\$65,200** for first generation college students.

Source: Pew Research Center, 2021

# Resilience

“Where it is an ongoing practice we engage in, with, and alongside each other.” (Nicolazzo and Carter, 2019, p. 78)

- Community based practice
- How are we practicing resilience?

# Intersectionality

- Examination of the relationship between identity and systems of oppression on how an individual makes sense of the world around them (Wijeyesinghe, 2019).
- Brings to light the intricate and tangled relationship between power and identity formation
- Multitude of identities

# Sense of Belonging:

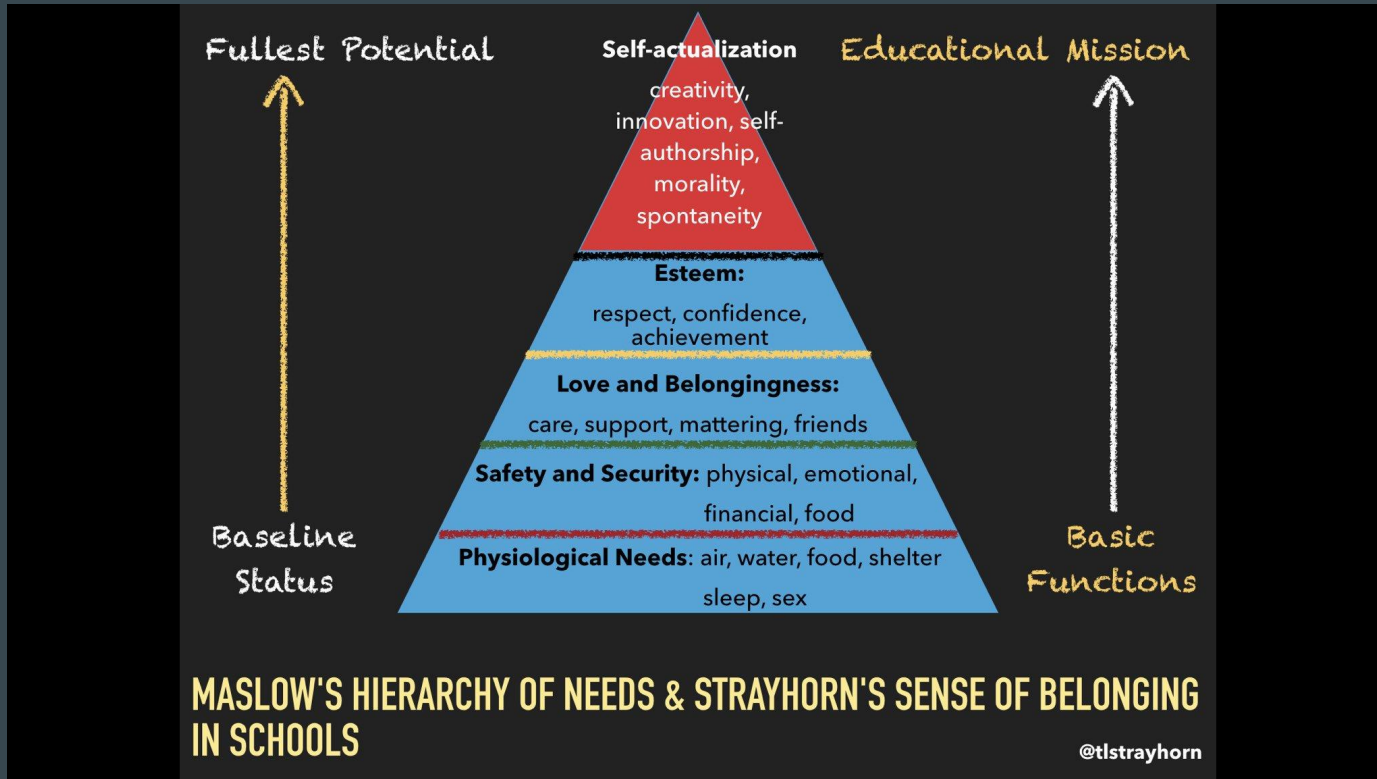
“perceived support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering, feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g. campus community) or others on campus (e.g.: faculty, peers)” (Strayhorn, 2019, pp 28-29).



# Sense of Belonging: Seven Core Elements

- Universal, basic human need
- Fundamental motivator for human behavior
- Importance is dependent on context, timing, and population
- Consequence of mattering
- Intersectionality affects sense of belonging
- Positive outcomes when sense of belonging is present
- Continuous process that must be fed and adjusted over time evolving circumstances and contexts

# Sense of Belonging and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Sense of Belonging and Retention

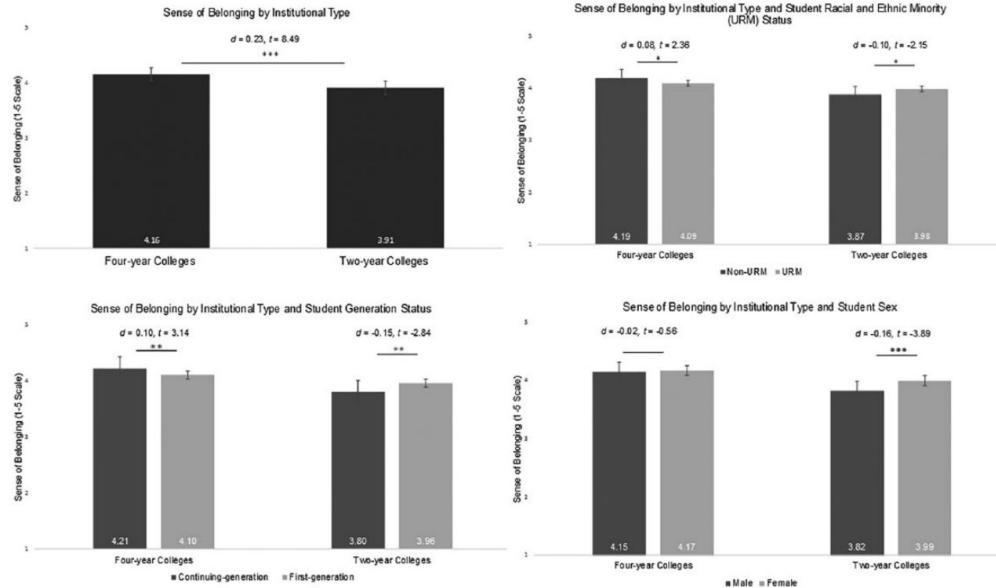


FIGURE 1. *Students' sense of belonging by key institutional and student characteristics.*

*Note.* Institutional characteristics include 4-year versus 2-year colleges. Student characteristics include (in order) underrepresented racial-ethnic minority (URM) status, generation status, and sex. Error bars represent standard errors. All estimates are weighted to adjust for the BPS: 12/14 complex survey design: Analysis weight (WTA000) and bootstrap variance estimation using replicate weights (WTA001-WTA200) to adjust for poststratification weight adjustment.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Source: Gopalan and Brady, 2020

# Inclusive Environments

**“The vast majority of students do not lack the intelligence or resilience to succeed in college, but they often lack an environment or ecosystem that is sensitive to the factors in their life impeding their success”**

**(Akins, Wright-Mair, & Stevenson, 2019, p. 73)**

# Inclusive Environment - CECE Model

Cultural Engaging Campus Environment Model (Museus, 2014)

Nine indicators of Culturally Engaging Campus Environment:

Cultural Relevance:

1. Cultural familiarity
2. Culturally relevant knowledge
3. Cultural community service
4. Meaningful cross-cultural engagement
5. Cultural validations

# Inclusive Environment - CECE Model

Cultural Engaging Campus Environment Model (Museus, 2014)

Nine indicators of Culturally Engaging Campus Environment:

## **Cultural Responsiveness:**

- 1. Collectivist cultural orientations**
- 2. Humanized educational environments**
- 3. Proactive philosophies**
- 4. Holistic support**

# Informed Advising Through Practice Pointers



# High Impact Educational Opportunities

- Study Abroad
- Undergraduate Research
- Service Learning Opportunities (e.g.: VT Engage)



# Co-Curricular Involvement

- Peer Mentoring
- FYE Courses
- Collaborating with affinity student organizations (Black Cultural Center, Black Student Assn., Black Male Excellence Network, Asian American Student Union-Korean American Student Assn., Latin Link, El Centro, LGBTQ+Resource Center, etc.)
- Living Learning Communities (Gen1, Galileo, Hypatia, Innovate, Thrive, Ujima, Lavender House, etc.)

# Financial Support

- Scholarships
  - Finding opportunities
  - Seminars on how to apply to scholarships/writing effective letters

# Family Outreach

Why is this important?

- Students are reliant on family (genetic or chosen) to provide a support network.
- Family = first support network
- Feeling caught between two worlds

Practice Ideas:

- Newsletter
- Family website

# Advising

Why?

- Important relationship for students
- Good advising translates into a 13% increase in retention

# Advising - Practice Pointers

- First year meetings
- Continuous improvement through professional development
- Creating safe spaces
- Facilitating Faculty Mentors

# Advising - Practice Pointers

- Unconventional office hours
- Get to know your populations
- Career Advising - negotiations, knowing worth, self-advocacy, alumni mentors
- Positivity through self care

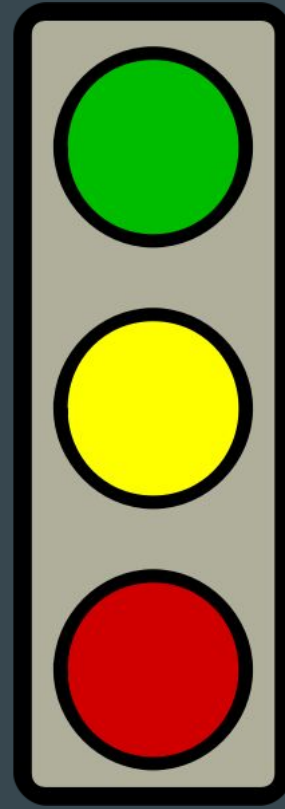
# Activity

Think of 2-3 things that you currently do or learned from this presentation that you will:

Green = Start Doing

Yellow = Continue Doing

Red = Stop Doing





Questions?

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