
**Reframing Struggle:
Advising First-Year Students through a
College-Readiness Approach**

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Agenda:

- First-Year Challenges
- College and Career Readiness
- Ways to Respond
- Practice

First-Year Challenges



What gets in the way of student success in the first year?



Executive Function Challenges that Impact Transition

High School	College
Parental support	Freedom
Explicit assignments and consequences	Student self-schedules
Smaller assignments	Larger, less clearly defined projects
Daily reminders	Syllabus
Frequent contact with teachers	Faculty office hours
Rules	Choices

Academics and...

- Waking up
- Getting along with roommates
- Making friends
- Balancing romantic relationships
- Managing stress
- Financial management
- Going to bed
- Eating well
- Medication needs
- Laundry
- Work schedules
- Cleaning

The impromptu frisbee game.....on the way to class.

College and Career Readiness

Career and College Readiness

A career- and college-ready student possesses the content knowledge, strategies, skills, and techniques necessary to be successful in the post-secondary setting.

KEY COGNITIVE STRATEGIES	KEY CONTENT KNOWLEDGE	KEY LEARNING SKILLS & TECHNIQUES	KEY TRANSITION KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS
Think	Know	Act	Go
Problem Formulation Hypothesize Strategize Research Identify Collect Interpretation Analyze Evaluate Communication Organize Construct Precision & Accuracy Monitor Confirm	Structure of Knowledge Key Terms and Terminology Factual Information Linking Ideas Organizing Concepts Attitudes Toward Learning Content Challenge Level Value Attribution Effort Technical Knowledge & Skills Specific College and Career Readiness Standards	Ownership of Learning Goal Setting Persistence Self-awareness Motivation Help-seeking Progress Monitoring Self-efficacy Learning Techniques Time Management Test Taking Skills Note Taking Skills Memorization/recall Strategic Reading Collaborative Learning Technology	Contextual Aspirations Norms/Culture Procedural Institution Choice Admission Process Financial Titition Financial Aid Cultural Postsecondary Norms Personal Self-advocacy and Institutional Context

Conley, 2011

Metacognitive Skills

All learning processes and behaviors involving any degree of reflection, learning strategy selection, and intentional mental processing that can result in a student's improved ability to learn.

Adaptability	Learning Techniques
Career Awareness	Problem Solving
Collaboration	Resource Utilization
Communication	Self-Awareness
Critical Thinking	Self-Care
Goal Setting	Self-Control
Initiative	Self-Efficacy
Involvement	Social and Personal Responsibility
Intellectual Curiosity	Study Skills
Leadership	Time Management

"By elevating non-cognitive information to an equal position relative to content knowledge, we may find the missing link to the achievement gap more rapidly and effectively for students who possess the cognitive ability to improve their capacity to learn, but are limited by a lack of effective learning strategies and the appropriate mindset."

- Dr. David Conley, Rethinking the Notion of Non-Cognitive

What could a student say that might signal a challenge in these metacognitive skill areas?

- Time management or goal setting
- Involvement on campus
- Self-care
- Resource utilization

Ways to Respond

Name Transitional Challenges

Students might not realize that certain challenges are temporary and commonly experienced when transitioning to college. Without that context, they might interpret challenges as permanent, personal, and indicating lack of belonging.

How you can help:

- Be knowledgeable about common experiences within college transition
- Point out when challenges may be related to college transition
- Encourage patience and recognition of growth and learning

Examples of Naming Transitional Challenges

- "A lot of students find the first six weeks of the semester especially hard."
- "It can be easy to forget that you're not just new to college classes but also to a whole set of life skills that can affect everything."
- "Don't worry about not recognizing that term; colleges are famous for their use of jargon, and it can take time to learn it."



Encourage Growth Mindset

Struggles can come from fear that current challenges cannot be overcome since they are caused by unchangeable limitations of the student's capabilities; i.e., fixed mindset.

How you can help:

- Remind students that they are here because they believe they can learn
- Educate students about fixed and growth mindsets, neuroplasticity
- Ask leading questions to encourage growth mindset thinking



Examples of Encouraging Growth Mindset

- "What's something you can do now that took a lot of work to learn?"
- "I know it can be discouraging when something feels so hard at first. Sometimes learning requires a lot of effort and practice, but those are things that are in your control."
- "What have you tried that hasn't helped? What might you try next?"
- "If your classes feel too easy, maybe extra challenges could help you get to the next level. Have you talked with your professor about...?"




Normalize Help-Seeking Behavior

Some students resist campus support resources that could be useful. They may think their problems are not serious enough, that needing support reveals deficiency, or they may fear vulnerability and judgment.

How you can help:

- Avoid correlating use of services with personal value, identity, or potential
- Describe use of resources as smart, common sense, and conscientious
- Note how widespread and helpful resource use truly is



Examples of Normalizing Help-Seeking Behavior

- "A lot of my students have found that tutoring helped them better understand that subject."
- "You're here to gain knowledge, so take every opportunity to learn as fully as you can. It's always possible to improve."
- "Don't feel like you have to wait for things to get bad before seeking help; sometimes making small adjustments early can help avoid problems altogether."



Quick Summary

When we notice academic struggle in areas such as time management, goal setting, involvement on campus, self-care, or resource utilization, let's consider that these struggles might be symptoms of a larger transitional challenge.

We can help students reframe their struggle and regain control and confidence through...

- Naming transitional challenges
- Encouraging growth mindset
- Normalizing help-seeking behavior

Let's Practice



In small groups, practice responding to the challenge signals we generated earlier with these reframing techniques:

- Name transitional challenges
- Encourage growth mindset
- Normalize help-seeking behavior

Using developmental advising to address student transitional challenges

- What are the challenges?
- Discuss goals, options, and opportunities
- Lead with strengths
- Consider limiting beliefs
- Create an action plan for change
- Implement a system for accountability

Q&A

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