Higher education struggles to provide adequate support and scaffolding for underserved populations to thrive. For learners holding minoritized identities, succeeding in higher education can be elusive, due to not only a lack of access to flexible and inclusive programs, but also to a lack of evidence-based support on the path to degree attainment. We highlight noncognitive skills as a foundation for resilience and reveal comparison data that clearly demonstrates the efficacy of this approach as a means to improve retention and boost ROI.

Chelsea Barnett, *Director Product and Program Innovation*
Reshma Gouravajhala, *Research Scientist*

Western Governors University
Equitable Program Design as a Catalyst for Retention

Dr. Reshma Gouravajhala, WGU Academy
Chelsea Barnett, M.Ed., M.S., WGU Academy
WGU Academy's Organizational Biases

• We believe:
  • In the fulfillment our promise of equitable attainment through shaping **holistic readiness** across knowledge, skills, behaviors, and mindsets
  • "Talent is universal; **opportunity is not.**" (Rye Barcott)
  • Learners' **sense of belonging** is cultivated through representation, intentional design, and inside-out learning experiences
Holistic Readiness

*We believe in the fulfillment our promise of equitable attainment through shaping **holistic readiness** across knowledge, skills, behaviors, and mindsets*
Setting Goals
Self-Regulation
Study Strategies
Planning/Time Management

Cognitive
Pedagogy
Learning Science
Peer-Oriented Group Learning

Metacognitive
Setting Goals
Self-Regulation
Cognitive
Pedagogy
Learning Science
Peer-Oriented Group Learning

WGUAcademy
Non-Cognitive Emphasis

Motivation
Sense of Belonging
Mindset
Mindfulness/Awareness
Empathy
EQ
Sociocultural Learning Environment

"Talent is universal; opportunity is not" (Rye Barcott)
Historically under-represented

Under-served

Minoritized

Under-resourced

Nontraditional

What privileged identities do you hold?

How does/did your privilege benefit your educational experience?

How does a lack of privilege affect your/someone's educational experience?
Mindfulness

Communication

Empathy towards self and others
Cultivating Belonging

We believe that learners' sense of belonging is cultivated through representation, intentional design, and inside-out learning experiences.
Learning is Social
Belonging and Identity
Bringing it all together: Student Experience
PACA allowed me to examine my biases and reflect on stereotypes by staying mindful and understanding of others and their situations. I thought discussing our Socio-Cultural Environments was great because I realised how important it is to have an environment that is supportive and being able to reflect on my own environment growing, and how I had a good start which makes me the person I am today.

Learning about bias' and how we all have them opened my eyes. Bias does not have to be bad. I have learned that I have bias and that just leads me to look at them and change how I view others.
Underserved Academy grads are thriving

+6.0%  Graduates of Color
+6.2%  First-Generation
+7.0%  Low Income
For more information about WGU Academy, please contact Anna Frachou at anna.frachou@wgu.edu