

NISTS 2023

BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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The following presentation was given at the 21st Annual Conference for the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Please cite responsibly and direct questions to the original presenter(s).

Educational Session

2792 - Beyond Belonging: Creating Spaces for First-Generation Transfer Students to Flourish

Special Populations, Diversity and Inclusion

This session will focus on strategies and approaches that can be used to go beyond belonging to create inclusive academic experiences for transfer students who identify as first-generation. Participants will leave the session with ideas they can incorporate immediately into their own courses, and resources for continuous course improvement.

Stephanie Foote, *Vice President for Teaching, Learning, and Evidence-Based Practices*

John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education



Beyond Belonging

Creating Spaces for First-Generation Transfer Students to Flourish

NISTS 2023 Annual Conference

Stephanie M. Foote, Ph.D.

Image from Canva

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe characteristics of first-generation transfer students and common influences on their transition and success.
- Articulate several pedagogical approaches that are responsive to first-generation transfer students
- Identify ways in which they can adapt and apply the pedagogical approaches for use in their own course(s)

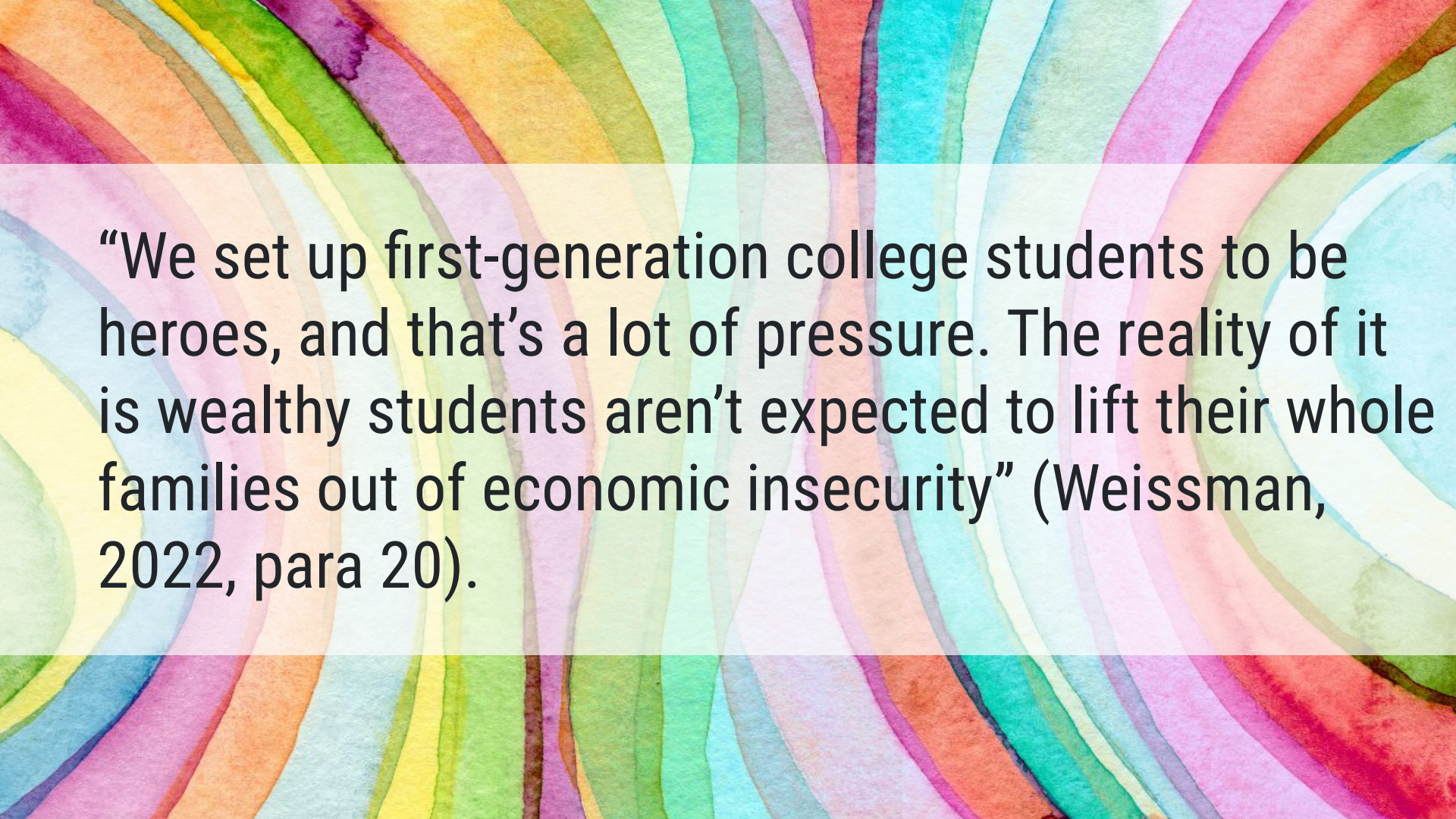


Important Points in Our Journey Together



First-Generation Students





“We set up first-generation college students to be heroes, and that’s a lot of pressure. The reality of it is wealthy students aren’t expected to lift their whole families out of economic insecurity” (Weissman, 2022, para 20).

Levels of First-Generationness



Level 1

Parents or guardians attended some college (but did not complete).



Level 2

Siblings attended or completed college; parents did not attend.



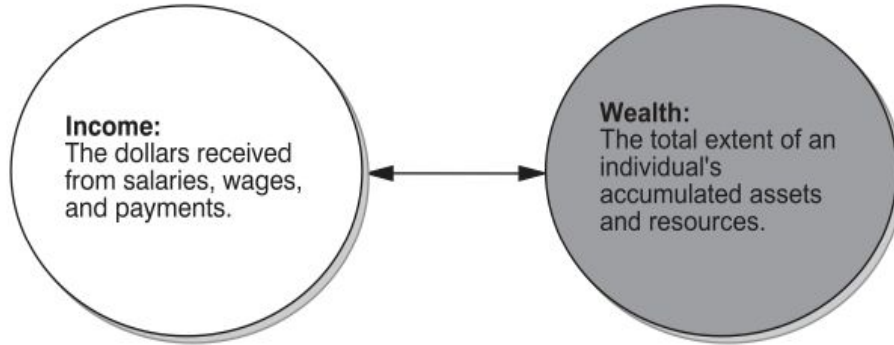
Level 3

Extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins) attended or completed college; parents or siblings did not.

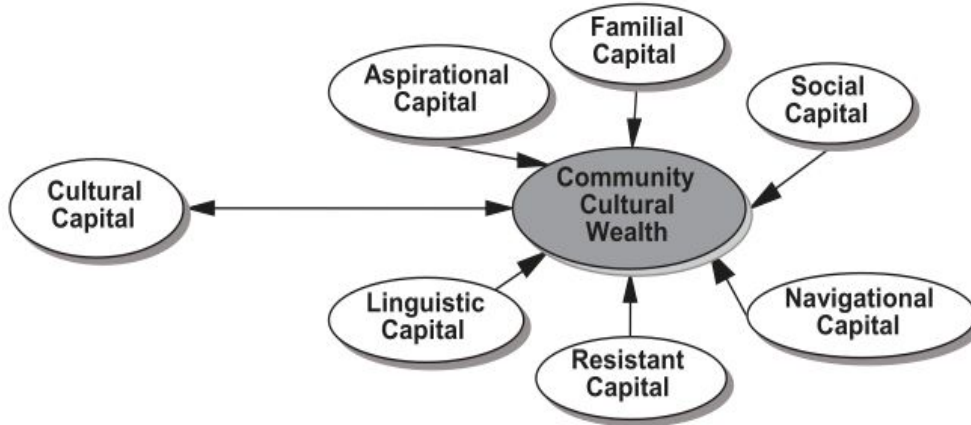


Level 4

No one in immediate or extended family attended or completed college.



Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model



- Aspirational Capital
- Linguistic Capital
- Familial Capital
- Social Capital
- Navigational Capital
- Resistant Capital

Figure 2. A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995

“Gateway courses, once termed *barrier courses*, are, by definition, often foundational (lower-division or developmental courses that serve as a pathway to credit-bearing courses); high risk (courses that yield higher rates of D, F, W, or Incomplete grades); and have high enrollments within, as well as across, sections (as defined by the institution) (Koch, 2017). Success in gateway courses is important because students who fail these courses frequently do not persist in higher education, and it is often the most vulnerable students (those who identify as first generation, low income, or are from underrepresented minority populations) that disproportionately earn DFWI grades in gateway courses (Adelman, 1999; Koch, 2017; Koch & Drake, 2021)” (Foote, 2021, p. 235-236).

CENTER FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS

AN INITIATIVE OF NASPA AND THE SUDER FOUNDATION



AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: RESEARCH FROM 2008–2019


by Amy Baldwin, EdD, La'Tonya Rease Miles, PhD,
Whitnee D. Boyd, EdD, Dawn L. Bruner, EdD,
Stephanie M. Foote, PhD, and Mike Gutierrez, MEd

 **NASPA.**
Student Affairs Administrators
in Higher Education

Pause and Reflect



What do you know about the first-generation students you teach and/or work with?



Pedagogies and Practices

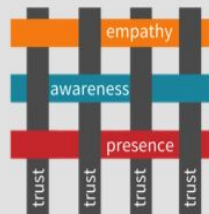


Humanizing Our Pedagogy

“...a pedagogical strategy that seeks to improve equity gaps by acknowledging the fact that learning environments are not neutral; rather, they often operate to reinforce a worldview that minoritizes some students”
(Pacansky-Brock, Smedshammer, & Vincent-Layton, 2020, p. 2)



The Principles



Humanized online teaching is supported by four interwoven principles:

- **Trust:** As an instructor, it is your responsibility to intentionally cultivate student trust, and one way to do it is by practicing “selective vulnerability” (Hammond, 2014) in the online community you build with your learners. Choose to share aspects of your life that portray you as a real person – tell a story about a personal struggle you worked through or record a video while cooking dinner or walking your dog.
- **Presence** involves intentional efforts to construct your authentic self through brief, imperfect videos to ensure your students know you are in this journey with them (Costa, 2020). Verbal and nonverbal cues add context to your communications, which is important to support culturally diverse students.
- **Awareness** is achieved by learning about who your students are and how you can support them.
- **Empathy** requires you to slow down, see things through your students' eyes without judgment, be flexible, and support them towards their goals.

MICHELLE PACANSKY-BROCK

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Humanizing Visual Guide – full version

Condensed version

Text version

How & Why to HUMANIZE YOUR ONLINE CLASS

#HumanizeOL

version 2.0

What is humanizing?

Humanizing leverages learning science and culturally responsive teaching to create an inclusive, equitable online class climate for today's diverse students. When you teach online, it is easy to relate to your students simply as names on a screen. But your students are much more than that. They are capable, resilient humans who bring an array of perspectives and knowledge to your class. They also bring life experiences shaped by racism, poverty, and social marginalization. In humanized online courses, positive instructor-student relationships are prioritized and serve "as the connective tissue between students, engagement, and rigor" (Pacansky-Brock et al. 2020, p. 2). In any learning modality, human connection is the antidote for the emotional disruption that prevents many students from performing to their full potential and in online courses, creating that connection is even more important.



Communicating Belonging

Statement of Inclusion

In our class discussions, we will have many opportunities to explore aspects of our own identities, as well as the students with whom we work (currently or in the future) through a range of theories of student development. Our personal reflection and the resulting discussion may not always be easy; we sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking (writing) and in our listening (reading/interpreting); sometimes we will need patience or even courage to engage with each other through thoughtful discussion of the nexus between the theories, development, and professional practice. Always we will need respect for others and their nuanced experiences. Thus, an additional aim for this course will be for us to increase our facility with the sometimes difficult conversations that arise as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives, whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or positions.

Teaching and Learning During a Pandemic

I am committed to doing all that I can to support all students as we navigate life and learning amid a pandemic, and above all, it is important to prioritize humanity, physical and mental health, and well-being. Throughout this semester, I will strive to do this while providing an environment that fosters academic engagement and social connections.



Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Provide multiple means of **Engagement** →

Affective Networks
The "WHY" of learning



Provide multiple means of **Representation** →

Recognition Networks
The "WHAT" of learning



Provide multiple means of **Action & Expression** →

Strategic Networks
The "HOW" of learning



Access

Provide options for **Recruiting Interest** (7) →

- Optimize individual choice and autonomy (7.1) >
- Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity (7.2) >
- Minimize threats and distractions (7.3) >

Provide options for **Perception** (1) →

- Offer ways of customizing the display of information (1.1) >
- Offer alternatives for auditory information (1.2) >
- Offer alternatives for visual information (1.3) >

Provide options for **Physical Action** (4) →

- Vary the methods for response and navigation (4.1) >
- Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies (4.2) >

Build

Provide options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence** (8) →

- Heighten salience of goals and objectives (8.1) >
- Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge (8.2) >
- Foster collaboration and community (8.3) >
- Increase mastery-oriented feedback (8.4) >

Provide options for **Language & Symbols** (2) →

- Clarify vocabulary and symbols (2.1) >
- Clarify syntax and structure (2.2) >
- Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols (2.3) >
- Promote understanding across languages (2.4) >
- Illustrate through multiple media (2.5) >

Provide options for **Expression & Communication** (5) →

- Use multiple media for communication (5.1) >
- Use multiple tools for construction and composition (5.2) >
- Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance (5.3) >

Se

Provide options for **Self Regulation** (9) →

- Promote expectations and beliefs that

Provide options for **Comprehension** (3) →

- Activate or supply background knowledge (3.1)

Provide options for **Executive Functions** (6) →

- Guide appropriate goal-setting (6.1) >

First-Day Info Sheets: A Tool to Prompt Semester-Long Inclusive Teaching

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What faculty do and say on the first day of class is crucial to establishing and maintaining an inclusive learning environment for the duration of the semester. First-day information sheets (“info sheets”) are commonly used by instructors. By making simple modifications to this tool, we can gather more information about the goals and experiences of our students, the lives of our students outside of our classroom, and how our students’ lives may impact their engagement with the course material and course structure. We can also use this information to actively highlight to students that their full selves (names, pronouns, background) belong in our biology classroom. We provide a set of prompts and suggested steps, rooted in the scholarly literature, to encourage and facilitate faculty use of info-sheets as a valuable tool to inform semester-long inclusive teaching efforts.

INTRODUCTION

The first day of class sets the tone for the semester. Research shows that instructor actions and their interactions with students on the first day of class can have a lasting influence on student attitudes about the course and the instructor (1, 2) and about their sense of belonging. First-day information sheets (“info sheets”) are commonly used by instructors to take inventory of their students’ names, majors, and previous course preparation at the start of the semester. We believe that by modifying the info-sheet prompts (Fig. 1) we can turn this document into a valuable tool for semester-long inclusive teaching by gathering information about the needs and emotions that students bring to the course, setting and communicating the climate for the classroom, and stimulating instructors to make equitable course-design decisions and build relationships with students.

The info-sheet prompts and suggested actions are informed by the recently-published cyclical “Deep Teaching” model for the college STEM classroom (3). Deep Teaching proposes that instructors must first increase their own self-awareness of how their experiences and social positioning influence their teaching and their interactions with

students. This increased self-awareness is the launch point for getting to know our students in a more holistic way and for cultivating greater empathy for students. We instructors subsequently use this increased self-awareness and empathy to implement varied pedagogy, develop a trusting class climate, and effectively leverage and connect students with on-campus networks (3).

The tool described below is not a silver bullet or magical solution to creating an inclusive classroom, nor is any tool for that matter. Simply gathering the student responses is just the start; it’s in the next steps that we take with the information—by repeatedly referring back to the sheets throughout the semester and using the information to reflect upon and change our pedagogy, make one-on-one connections with students, and build community—that the inclusive teaching practice occurs. Below, five themed info-sheet sections are outlined and some suggestions for action steps to take using the student responses are provided.

Section I prompts: Name and identity

Rationale for prompts. Our names are integral and fundamental components for our identities. As instructors, we hold significant power in our classrooms, and the care we take to affirm our students’ intersectional and multifaceted identities communicates our respect for the individuals in our community. College classrooms are increasingly diverse and intersectional and it is critical that faculty use students’ preferred names and pronounce student names correctly.

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[Course Name and Semester]

I Full Name: _____
 My preferred First Name: _____
 First name pronunciation (if desired): _____
 The pronoun(s) I go by (if any): _____

II My career goals are: _____
 Place(s) I grew up: _____
 Something that I am good at or that makes me feel proud of myself: _____

III I live (circle): **On campus / Off Campus** (How do you get to campus?): _____
 I work outside of school (circle): **No / Yes** (How many hours per week?): _____
 I have reliable access to the Internet and Canvas (circle): **No / Yes**

IV A word that describes how I feel about this class at the moment: _____
 Study strategies that I use to prepare for exams: _____
 Number of hours per week I believe I will be spending to study for this course: _____
 I appreciate when my instructors _____
 I dislike when my instructors _____
 One current question I have about this class is: _____

V *Please use this space to privately share anything you would like your professor to know (Perhaps something that could impact or help your learning/experience/effort in class)*

FIGURE 1. First-day “Info Sheet.”

Critical Compassionate Pedagogy



Critical compassionate pedagogy encourages faculty to be critical of “...institutional and classroom practices that ideologically place underserved students at disadvantaged positions, while at the same time be self-reflexive of their actions through compassion as a daily commitment” (Hao, 2011, p. 92).

The concept is rooted in compassionate communication (Rosenberg, 2003), which has four foundational components:

- Observation (observe without judging)
- Feeling (identify and express feelings)
- Need (connects needs to feelings)
- Request (open channels for communication)

TILT

TRANSPARENCY IN LEARNING AND TEACHING



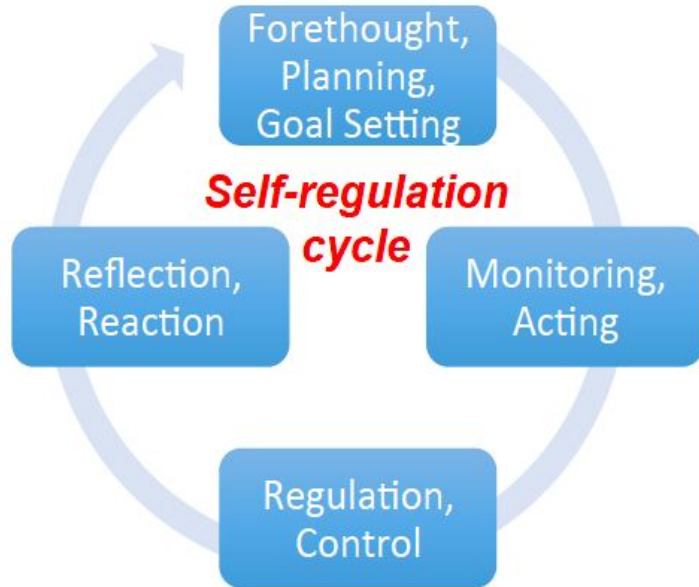
TILT OBJECTIVES

1. Promoting students' conscious understanding of how they learn
2. Enabling faculty to gather, share and promptly benefit from current data about students' learning by coordinating their efforts across disciplines, institutions and countries

- ✓ *Purpose*
- ✓ *Task*
- ✓ *Criteria*

<https://tilthighered.com>

Self-Regulated Learning



Zimmerman, B. J. (2001)

“Research shows that when first-generation STEM students are trained in ‘learning how to learn,’ their course performance improves significantly” (Bernacki, Vosicka, & Utz, 2016; Vosicka & Utz, 2017, as cited in Horowitz, 2019, p. 25).

Adapting and Applying



 Stephanie Foote • 1m

Beyond Belonging Creating Spaces for First-Generation Students to Flourish

What are some takeaways or learnings from this presentation? Are there strategies and approaches you might adapt and use?



Questions and Discussion



Thank you!

Questions?

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