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PASS

Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Issue #1 — November 2023



Message from Dr. Zoë Corwin PASS (Phase II) Principal Investigator

Greetings and welcome to the inaugural issue of the [Promoting At-promise Student Success \(PASS\)](#) newsletter!

You received this email because you are a leader within the University of Nebraska system, a key stakeholder in Nebraska, a higher education expert, have an affiliation with PASS research activities — or you might have simply signed up to receive updates on our research during a conference presentation. We will be sending out two newsletters a year. Each newsletter will:

1. Share emerging research findings deriving from the PASS project, and
2. Highlight promising practices to support at-promise students occurring at University of Nebraska campuses

While we hope you'll enjoy the updates, if you prefer not to receive subsequent newsletters, please unsubscribe below.

The PASS research team is indebted to the students, practitioners, faculty and administrators at the [University of Nebraska](#) for partnering with us on research activities. We have learned a tremendous amount through our interactions with a wide range of stakeholders and are excited to have this mechanism to share research findings broadly.

Below please find a list of academic articles published in the past year and two new practitioner briefs — one focused on professionalism, the other on guiding principles for comprehensive college support programs. Prior publications (plus a variety of other resources including practice briefs and animated videos) can be found on the project website.

This largescale and innovative research project would not have been possible without the vision and funding of the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation. Their investment in complex, rigorous and longitudinal inquiry that seeks to understand the nuances of student experiences and interactions among academic and psychosocial outcomes — as well as how institutional culture can evolve to better support at-promise students — is unique in the field of higher education. Below, Jeffrey Gold, University of Nebraska Chancellor, and Kellie Pickett, Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation Vice President of College Access and Success, join me in welcoming you to this newsletter.



PASS Project Video

This **3-minute animated video** provides an overview of the Promoting At-promise Student Success (PASS) project, a multi-year mixed-methods research study designed to deepen understandings of student success in postsecondary institutions.

Message from Dr. Kellie Pickett Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation Vice President of College Access and Success

Greetings and thank you for your interest in the PASS project. We are extremely grateful for the many people and partners who have helped us learn so much about supporting at-promise students in higher education. We began this work and inquiry almost eight years ago to learn more about promising practices within our scholarship learning communities. The work has evolved into thinking about facilitating culture change and capacity building from within institutions.

Thoughtfully gathering and analyzing data and sharing the findings and narratives from this inquiry are critical to our work. As a result of the PASS project, we have learned a lot about how



to best support students on our University of Nebraska campuses. Not only is this learning important to us here in Nebraska, we see value in sharing findings with diverse audiences within higher education.

This project is truly a reflection of how philanthropy, a research entity, and institutions can work together toward a common goal and inform current practice. Such a complex and rigorous study requires sincere and engaged commitment from all who are involved.

We are sincerely appreciative of everyone who has committed to this important inquiry into at-promise student experiences and institutional culture change.

A special thank you to the students, faculty and staff members across the University of Nebraska campuses who have so selflessly shared their time, talent, and knowledge with us. We are also grateful to the University of Nebraska for their partnership in this comprehensive research and for their commitment to the evolving process. Finally, we want to thank our research partners at the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education for leading this comprehensive research study with students positioned intentionally at the center of the work and for always listening and being responsive to the many stakeholders in this study.

We hope you enjoy the PASS newsletter!

-Kellie Pickett


Message from University of Nebraska Chancellor, Dr. Jeffrey Gold




Recent PASS Publications

Direct links are provided to each publication. If your institution is unable to access these publications please contact Christine (rochac@usc.edu) for a pdf copy.

- Bettencourt, G. M., Irwin, I., Todorova, R., Hallett, R. E. & Corwin, Z. B. (2023). **The possibilities and precautions of using the designation “at-promise” in higher education**. *Journal of Postsecondary Student Success*, 2(2), 15-27.
- Bettencourt, G. M., Perez, R. J., Hallett, R. E. & Corwin, Z. B. (2023). **Maintaining validation through empathy: Exploring how higher education practitioners support at-promise students during COVID-19**. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 60(1), 3-16.
- Hallett, R. E., Bettencourt, G. M., Corwin, Z. B., Harvey, J., Kitchen, J. A., Hypolite, L. & Perez, R. J. (2023). **Exploring professionalism with at-promise college students [Brief]**. USC Pullias Center for Higher Education.
- Hallett, R. E., Kezar, A., Kitchen, J. A. & Perez, R. J. (2023). **Creating a campus-wide culture of student success: An evidence based approach to supporting low-income, racially minoritized, and first-generation college students**. Routledge.
- Hallett, R. E., Kitchen, J., Perez, R., Reason, R., Bettencourt, G. M., Corwin, Z. B., & Kitchen, J. A. (2023). **Guiding principles for comprehensive college support programs [Brief]**. USC Pullias Center for Higher Education.
- Hypolite, L., Kitchen, J. & Kezar, A. (2022). **Developing major and career self-efficacy among at-promise students: The role of a college comprehensive college transition program**. *Journal of College Student Retention*. online first.
- Kezar, A., Corwin, Z. B., Hallett, R. E., Hypolite, L. & Nagbe, M. (2022). **Creating systemic culture change and solving vexing problems on campus: The promise of professional learning communities in higher education**. *Academic Leader*.
- Kezar, A., Perez, R. J. & Swanson, E. (2022). **The potential of and mechanisms for a hub of innovation on campus to support changes for low-income, first-generation, and racially minoritized college students**. *Research in Higher Education*, 63, 1237-1260.
- Kitchen, J. (2023). **Developing low-income college students' sense of belonging: The role of validation**. *Journal of College Student Development*, 64(2), 231-238.
- Kitchen, J., Corwin, Z., Perez, R., Hallett, R., Kezar, A., & Reason, R. (2023). **Ecological validation model of student success [Video]**. YouTube
- Perez, R. J., Acuña, A. & Wheaton, M. M. (2023). **Examining undergraduate college students' experiences participating in longitudinal qualitative research**. *The Qualitative Report*, 28(1), 340-359.
- Perez, R. J., Bettencourt, G. M. (2023). **Exploring compassion fatigue and community care in student affairs**. *Journal of Student Affairs and Practice*.



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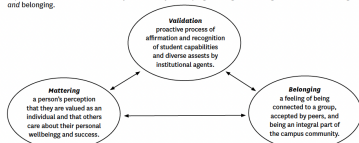
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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

TOPIC

Comprehensive college support programs are created by postsecondary institutions to assist at-promise college students (e.g., students who are low-income, racially minoritized, and/or first in their family to attend college) in successfully transitioning to and completing college. These programs generally offer an array of programming which may include first-year seminars, peer mentoring, shared classes, and social, academic, and/or career preparation events. In addition to providing resources related to academic success, these programs help at-promise students experience belonging, mentoring, and validation within a postsecondary context that historically was not designed with their goals, experiences, and needs in mind.

In this brief, we draw from a five-year longitudinal mixed methods study of the Thompson Scholars Learning Community (TSLC) to provide research-based recommendations related to designing and implementing comprehensive college support programs. We suggest that educators can positively influence student experiences and outcomes when they intentionally create programming that leverages validation, mentoring and belonging.



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graph TD
    Validation([Validation  
proactive process of  
affirmation and recognition  
of student capabilities  
and diverse assets by  
institutional agents])
    Mentoring([Mentoring  
a person's perception  
that they are valued as an  
individual and that others  
care about their personal  
wellbeing and success])
    Belonging([Belonging  
a feeling of being  
connected to a group,  
accepted by peers, and  
being an integral part of  
the campus community])
    Validation --> Mentoring
    Validation --> Belonging
    Mentoring <--> Belonging
        
```

Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data illustrated that validation was a key lever that educators used to build a sense of belonging and mentoring for at-promise students. As the students felt like they belonged and mentored, they also felt more validated.

Read this New Practitioner Brief: "Guiding Principles for Comprehensive College Support Programs"

Read this New Practitioner Brief: "Exploring Professionalism with At-Promise College Students"



Promoting At-Promise Student Success

Exploring Professionalism with At-Promise College Students

TOPIC

Postsecondary educators play an important role in preparing students for careers after graduation. Colleges and universities generally offer career preparation resources which can be particularly important for at promise students (e.g., low-income, racially minoritized and/or first-generation college students) who may be seeking opportunities for upward economic mobility with career trajectories that offer salaries and benefits as well as future pathways for meaningful career opportunities. Students often seek guidance from educators about how to access and succeed in these careers.

Many support programs for at promise college students include resources related to understanding the concept of professionalism and performing certain actions deemed as professional, including etiquette, dress, mock interviews, resume workshops, and guides for dress and interaction with future employers. The goal of developing resources related to professionalism is to provide at-promise students with the knowledge, skills, and practice needed to successfully transition to their career of choice. College support programs often incorporate a focus on professionalism in an effort to ensure at-promise students have equal access to hidden rules about dress, language, and behaviors that reinforce the inequalities that exist within society, a particularly important consideration for students who may not have the same familiarity with dominant/corporate workplace expectations.

While these resources and programming are often created by equity-minded educators who want to support at promise students, the design and implementation of professionalism supports can often center dominant ways of knowing and being in ways that may uphold white, middle-class and masculine perceptions of workplace contexts. In this brief, we draw from lessons learned through the Promoting At-Promise Student Success (PASS) Project to explore how to design and implement professionalism programming for at-promise students in ways that eliminate the hidden rules of workplace culture while affirming the assets of students and their communities in order to have a more holistic perspective of professional identity.



PASS Project Featured in New Book

New publication details findings from the Promoting At-promise Student Success project

Pullias Center director **Adrianna Kezar** is one of the authors of “Creating a Culture of Campus-wide Student Success,” a new book that highlights key findings from the **Promoting At-promise Student Success (PASS) project**. PASS project team members **Joseph Kitchen**, **Ronald E. Hallett** and **Rosemary J. Perez** join Kezar as authors of the new book, published by Taylor & Francis.

Offering a new approach to institutional practices, this book describes evidence-based strategies to create a campus culture conducive to truly supporting *all* students.

We are at a critical crossroads in higher education, where large numbers of low-income, racially minoritized, and first-generation college students – referred to in this book as “at-promise students” – are attending college in greater numbers than ever, yet access has not translated to significantly improved retention and graduation rates. This book, therefore, proposes a realignment of existing initiatives to create campus-wide support through a new model of coordination.



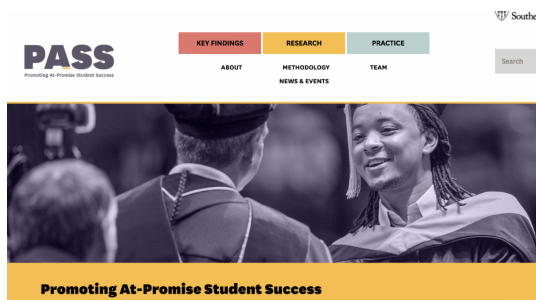
CREATING A CAMPUS-WIDE CULTURE OF STUDENT SUCCESS

AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING LOW-INCOME, RACIALLY MINORITIZED, AND FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

RONALD E. HALLETT, ADRIANNA KEZAR, JOSEPH A. KITCHEN, and ROSEMARY J. PEREZ



Buy the Book



PASS Website

Please visit our website for more information related to the PASS study.

Visit our Website



The Promoting At-promise Student Success (PASS) project is a partnership between the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education, the University of Nebraska and the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation.

USC | Pullias Center for Higher Education, 3470 Trousdale Parkway, Waite Phillips Hall 701,
Los Angeles, CA 90089

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