Student Success and Retention can be enhanced by…

Creating a Sense of Belonging

If you are not already doing something along these lines, give the following **3 steps** a try.

- **Step 1**

- Acknowledge to your students that they may feel as if they don't 'belong'. Some of your students may feel isolated, alone, the "only one". They may be a first gen, a military vet, an older returning student. They may not have fared well in high school. They may have struggled with addiction, homelessness. Let them know that regardless of their circumstances, it is normal to question whether or not they 'belong', that it can be anxiety producing, and that we are here to help them work through the stress. This can be an 'Announcement' in Canvas or a verbal message. You might even share your own example of self-doubt.

- **Side note**: We have heard from our guest speakers during both Black History month and Latinx Heritage month presentations that merely acknowledging this anxiety and identifying it for what it was, was a HUGE first step in getting comfortable.

Step 2

Early in the semester, give your students an opportunity to engage with you and/or with each other. This may be something as simple as asking them to answer a few questions about themselves. Maybe even give them an opportunity to do this with their classmates. Things such as a hobby(s), potential career, or academic interests are easy enough. Have them submit this to you and perhaps use this information as an ice-breaker when you talk with them later.

Step 3

- At some point in the semester, engage all of your students, particularly those that have been historically marginalized, in meaningful discussion with your content. This is where the real change will take place!

- If a student is reluctant to engage, keep encouraging!! It may take multiple attempts.

Reminder:

- Chairs/Coordinators - Please forward this message to all of your faculty. I have this message (without photos) as a word document if you would like me to send it to you. Or I can send the power point.

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