

Paradise Valley Community College

Factors Contributing to Student Success

All the research advocates six factors central to persistence and success. Being an active engaged learner is the single biggest indicator of student success, with the other five additional factors supporting this outcome. Below are the six indicators with specific supporting activities.

Students will learn more and persist if they:

1. Are **active learners**;

- ❖ Invest time early in the semester helping learners develop the context of your course. “Helping learners ‘make meaning’ of their learning is the singular most important contribution a faculty member can make to student learning.” (Pat Cross)
 - Make connections between learning outcomes and life experiences.
- ❖ Start each class by telling students exactly what they will learn that day.
- ❖ Encourage students to make mistakes.
- ❖ Provide small-group projects in problem solving and critical thinking.
- ❖ Have students develop a portfolio of their work in the course
- ❖ Provide feedback about learner performance very early during the course experience. PVCC Noel-Levitz survey: Learners attach high importance to being notified early about their academic performance.
 - Have students keep track of their own grades (could be done with a computerized program or by hand).
- ❖ Redo your syllabus to make learning outcomes more explicit in plain language.
- ❖ Use a rubric for grading essay papers.
- ❖ Encourage students to challenge everything the instructor asserts!
- ❖ Assign real-life assignments: e.g., developmental writing students write real complaint or inquiry letters.
- ❖ First day: have students make the class rules to which all will be held accountable.

2. Establish meaningful **relationships** with other students, faculty, and staff;

- ❖ Develop and use a system for getting to know students. "The most important influencer of student learning is the prior experiences the learner brings to the classroom setting." (Thomas Angelo)
- ❖ Take a proactive stance regarding faculty office hours. Try scheduling brief meetings early in the semester to develop your understanding of each learner’s background and experiences.
- ❖ Meet with students in informal settings.
- ❖ Encourage students to e-mail you.
- ❖ Set up an e-mail discussion group using a free web-based e-mail.
- ❖ Encourage the formation of study groups.
- ❖ Millennial students welcome group projects and group assignments.

3. Create a **sense of belonging** so students feel connected to the college in some way;

- ❖ Do icebreaker and get-acquainted activities the first day.
- ❖ Invite Student Life staff into your class to promote co-curricular student involvement such as Emerging Leaders, student clubs, Service learning, PEAK Leadership.
- ❖ Encourage students to use academic and student support service programs (i.e., computer commons, learning support center, etc.)

4. Make a connection between why they are here and where they plan to be in the future (**goal setting**);

- ❖ Have students set personal goals within the context of your course.
- ❖ Make iGoal a part of the PVCC student experience.
- ❖ Confer individually with each student one or more times during the course regarding his/her course goals.
- ❖ At the beginning of each course ask each student to provide you in writing the reason why they are enrolled in the course, personal or career goal for being at PVCC, and how the course will assist them in achieving their goals.

5. **Navigate** through our systems, processes, and procedures (know the rules and jargon); and

- ❖ Early in the semester, suggest intervention strategies that learners can connect to easily ... then follow up.
 - Learning Support Center, tutors, counseling services, etc.
 - If possible, help facilitate the connection via personal introduction to a student support provider. Invite counselors to your classes early on to discuss counseling and personal development programs. Provide assignments that require students to utilize different campus resources.
 - If you can, walk with a student to the office or area to which you have directed them.
 - Identify a person that they can see in another area rather than just sending them to an office.

6. Get **involved** on campus.

- ❖ Provide strong encouragement to learners to connect with college activities.
 - Learners who engage in college activities and community service demonstrate higher levels of deep learning and much higher persistence rates.” (John Gardner)
 - Incorporate Service Learning activities in your courses.
 - Promote/encourage students to attend specific campus events, especially those that build connections between students and students and students and faculty—offer extra credit for attending and reporting.
 - Invite Student Life staff into your class to promote co-curricular student involvement such as Emerging Leaders, student clubs, Service learning.

Sources

Fifty PVCC Faculty Ideas for Creating More Learning Centered Courses
Seven Practical Strategies for Creating a More Learning Centered Classroom