



# What Matters to Student Success: Lessons from High Performing Colleges

*George D. Kuh*

**5TH SYMPOSIUM OF THE CARREFOUR  
DE LA RÉUSSITE AU COLLÉGIAL**



INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
Center for Postsecondary Research

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***Javier***



***Sarah***



***Nicole***





**We all want the same thing—an undergraduate experience that results in high levels of learning and personal development for all students.**

# Overview



- **What the world needs now**
- **Why engagement matters**
- **Lessons from high-performing institutions**
- **Implications**

# Advance Organizers

- ❖ **To what extent do your students engage in productive learning activities, inside *and* outside the classroom?**
- ❖ **How do you know?**
- ❖ **What could we do differently -- or better -- to enhance student success?**

# ***Student Success in College***

***Academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance***



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# College Learning *for the* *New Global Century*

A REPORT FROM  
THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL FOR

Liberal Education & America's Promise



*Association of American Colleges and Universities*

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## *Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes*



- ★ ***Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World***
- ★ ***Intellectual and Practical Skills***
- ★ ***Personal and Social Responsibility***
- ★ ***“Deep” Integrative Learning***



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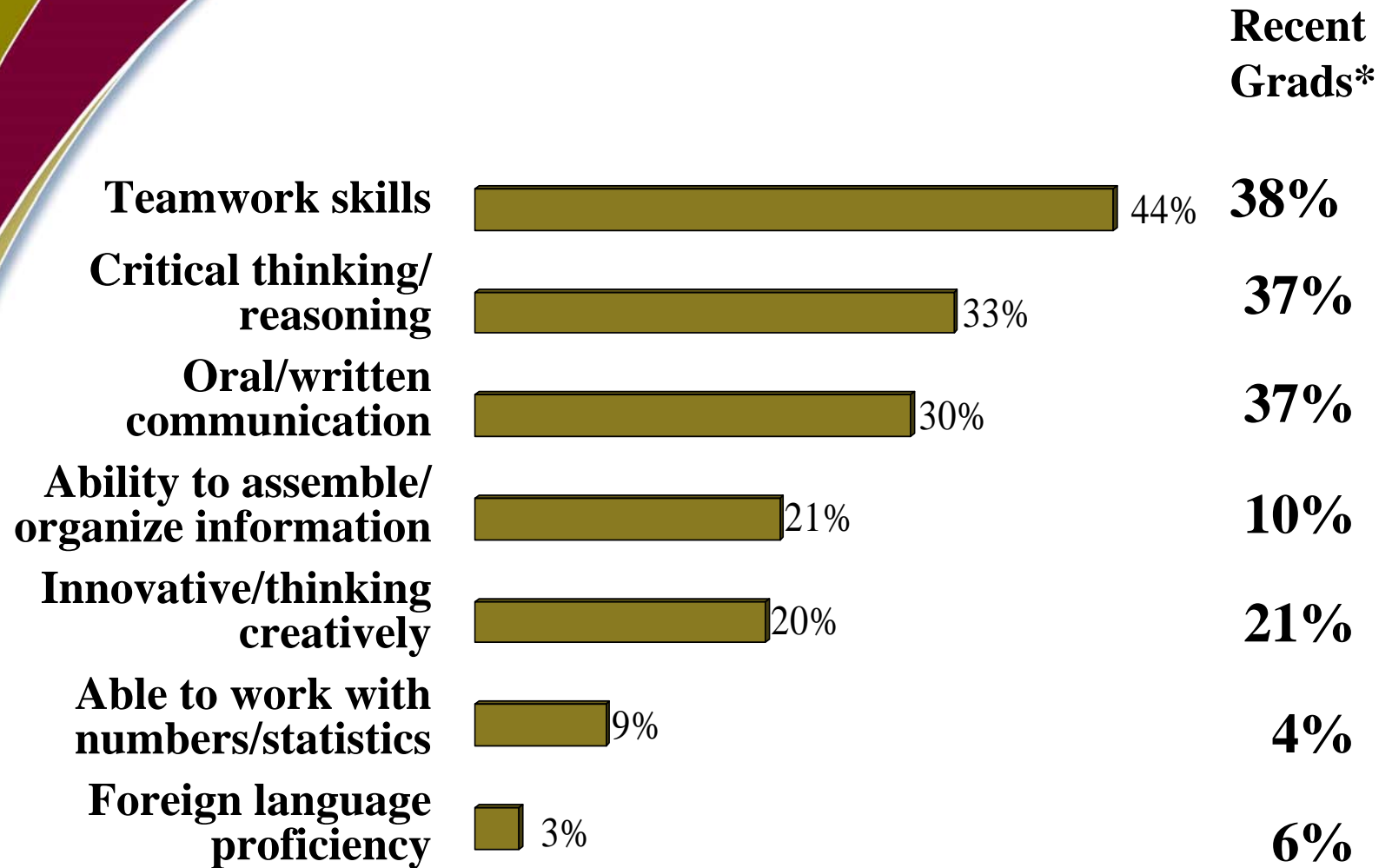


## ***Deep, Integrative Learning***

- **Attend to the underlying meaning of information as well as content**
- **Integrate and synthesize different ideas, sources of information**
- **Discern patterns in evidence or phenomena**
- **Apply knowledge in different situations**
- **View issues from multiple perspectives**



## Most Important Skills Employers Look For In New Hires



\* Skills/abilities recent graduates think are the two most important to employers

## **Factors That Threaten Persistence and Graduation from College**

- ❖ **academically underprepared for college-level work**
- ❖ **first-generation college student**
- ❖ **gap between high school and college**
- ❖ **30+ hours working per week**
- ❖ **part-time enrollment**
- ❖ **single parent**
- ❖ **financially independent**
- ❖ **children at home**

# **Pre-college Characteristics Associated with Student Success**

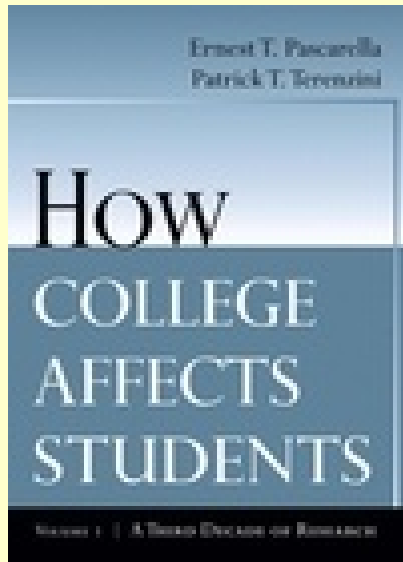
- ✓ **Academic preparation**
- ✓ **Ability and college-level skills**
- ✓ **Family education and support**
- ✓ **Financial wherewithal**



# **Early College Indicators of Persistence and Success**

- ✓ **Goal realization**
- ✓ **Psycho-social fit**
- ✓ **Credit hours completed**
- ✓ **Academic and social support**
- ✓ **Involvement in the “right” kinds of activities**

# What *Really* Matters in College: **Student Engagement**



***Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage **student engagement**.***

**Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602**

# Foundations of Student Engagement

Time on task (Tyler, 1930s)

Quality of effort (Pace, 1960-70s)

Student involvement (Astin, 1984)

Social, academic integration (Tinto, 1987, 1993)

Good practices in undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

College impact (Pascarella, 1985)

Student engagement (Kuh, 1991, 2005)



# Student Engagement Trifecta

- What students **do** -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions **do** -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward ***the right activities***



# ***Good Practices in Undergraduate Education***

**(Chickering & Gamson, 1987;  
Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)**

- ✓ **Student-faculty contact**
- ✓ **Active learning**
- ✓ **Prompt feedback**
- ✓ **Time on task**
- ✓ **High expectations**
- ✓ **Respect for diverse learning styles**
- ✓ **Cooperation among students**

***National Survey of  
Student Engagement  
(pronounced “nessie”)***



***Community College  
Survey of Student  
Engagement  
(pronounced “cessie”)***



**College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development**

# NSSE Project Scope

**Since 2000:**

- ✓ **2,000,000+ students from 1,334 different schools**
- ✓ **80+% of 4-yr U.S. undergraduate FTE**
- ✓ **50 states, Puerto Rico**
- ✓ **59 Canadian IHEs**
- ✓ **100+ consortia**



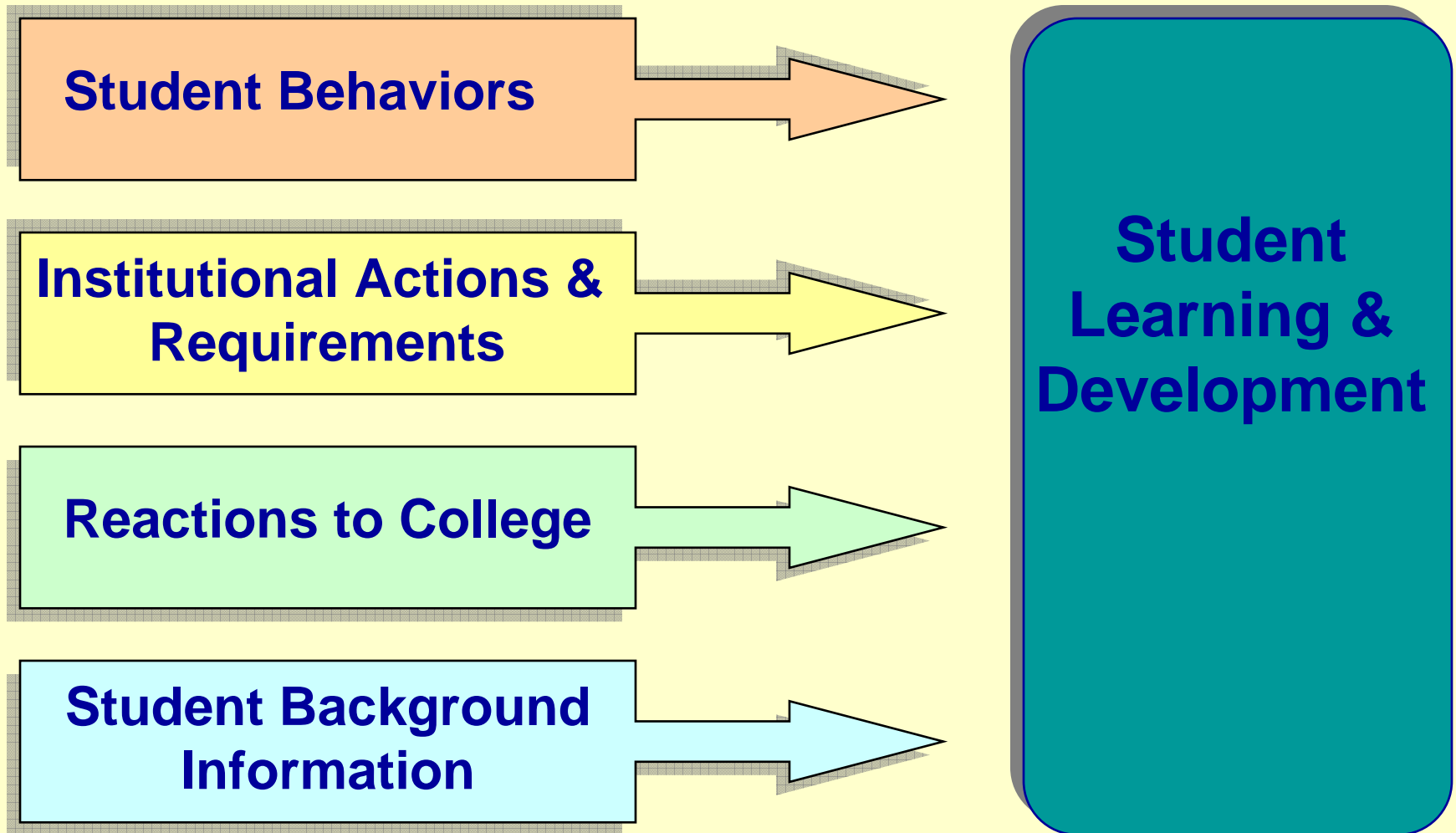
# CCSSE Project Scope

**Since 2003:**

- ✓ **Almost 1,000,000 students from 717 different schools**
- ✓ **67+% of credit students**
- ✓ **49 states, Marshall Islands**



# NSSE & CCSSE Questionnaires



# ***Effective Educational Practices***

**Level of  
Academic  
Challenge**

**Active &  
Collaborative  
Learning**

**Student-  
Faculty  
Interaction**

**Enriching  
Educational  
Experiences**

**Supportive  
Campus  
Environment**



## Key findings



***Grades, persistence, student satisfaction, and engagement go hand in hand***

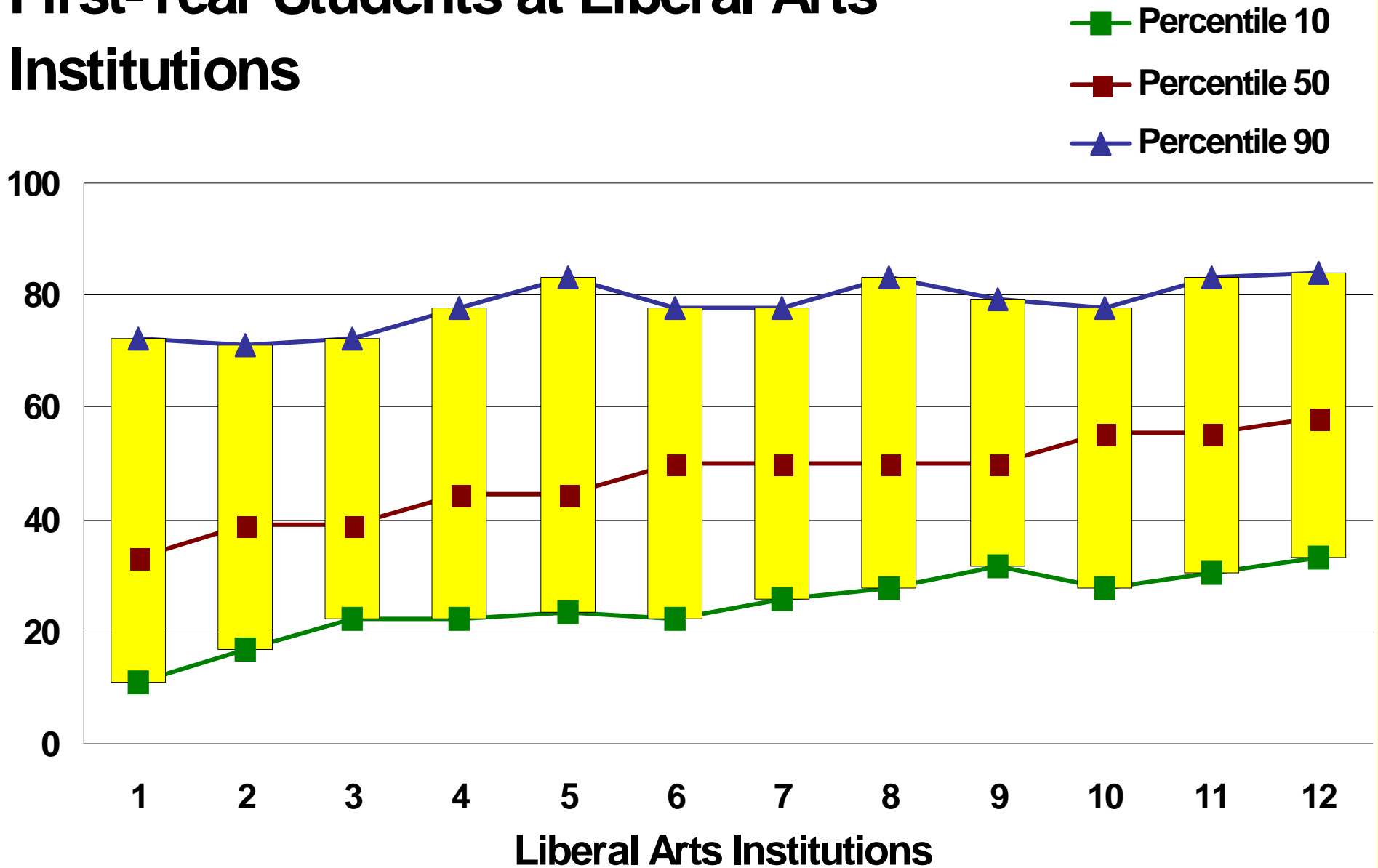




Student engagement varies more *within* than between institutions.



# Student-Faculty Interaction: First-Year Students at Liberal Arts Institutions





## Worth Pondering



**How do we reach  
our least engaged  
students?**

# It's more complicated than this...

- *Many of the effects of college are “conditional”*
- *Some are compensatory*



## ***NSSE: Who's more engaged?***

- **Women**
- **Full-time students**
- **Students who live on campus**
- **Students with diversity experiences**
- **Students who start and stay at the same school**

# CCSSE: Who Is More Engaged?

## More Engaged

## Less Engaged

Full-time students

Part-time students

Nontraditional-age students (those over age 24)

Traditional-age students (those 24 and younger)

Students seeking credentials

Students not seeking credentials

Students who have completed 30 or more credits

Students who have not completed 30 or more credits

Female students

Male students

Black students

Students who are not black

International students

U.S. students

Students who work fewer than 30 hours per week

Students who work more than 30 hours per week

Students who have taken developmental courses

Students who have not taken developmental courses

Students who have taken study skill courses

Students who have not taken study skill courses

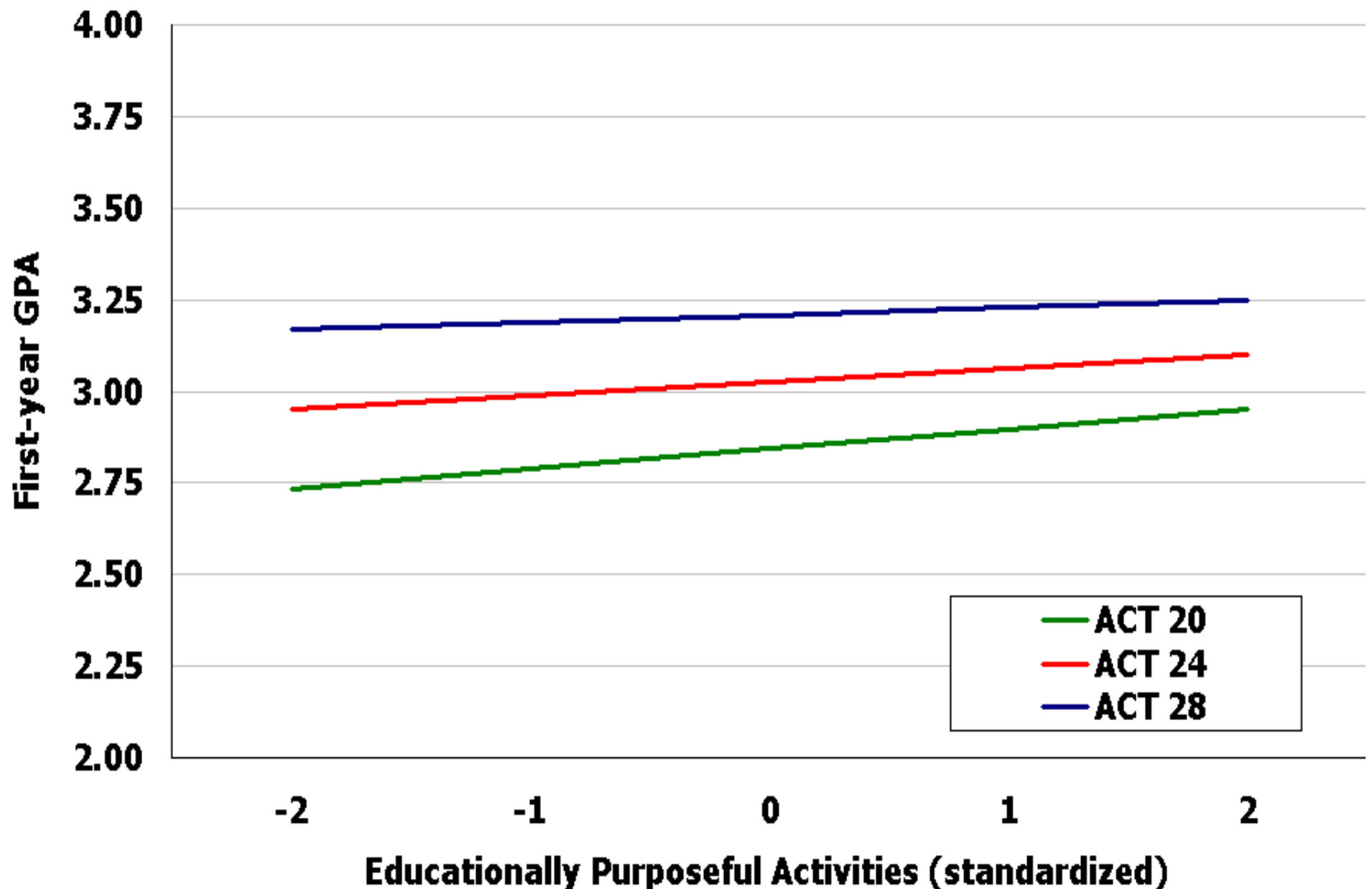
Students who have participated in orientation

Students who have not participated in orientation

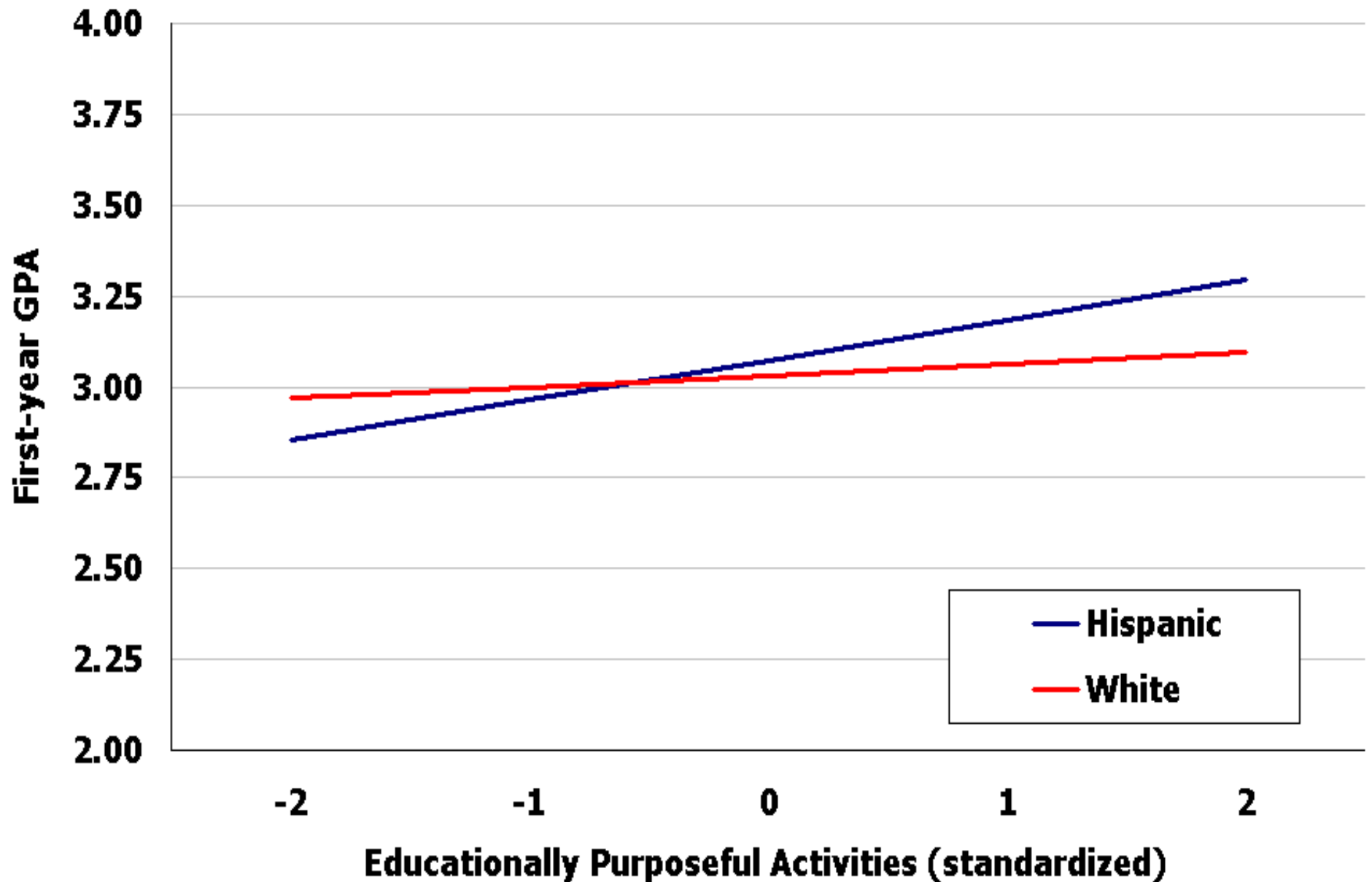
Students who have participated in learning communities

Students who have not participated in learning communities

## Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Pre-College Achievement Level

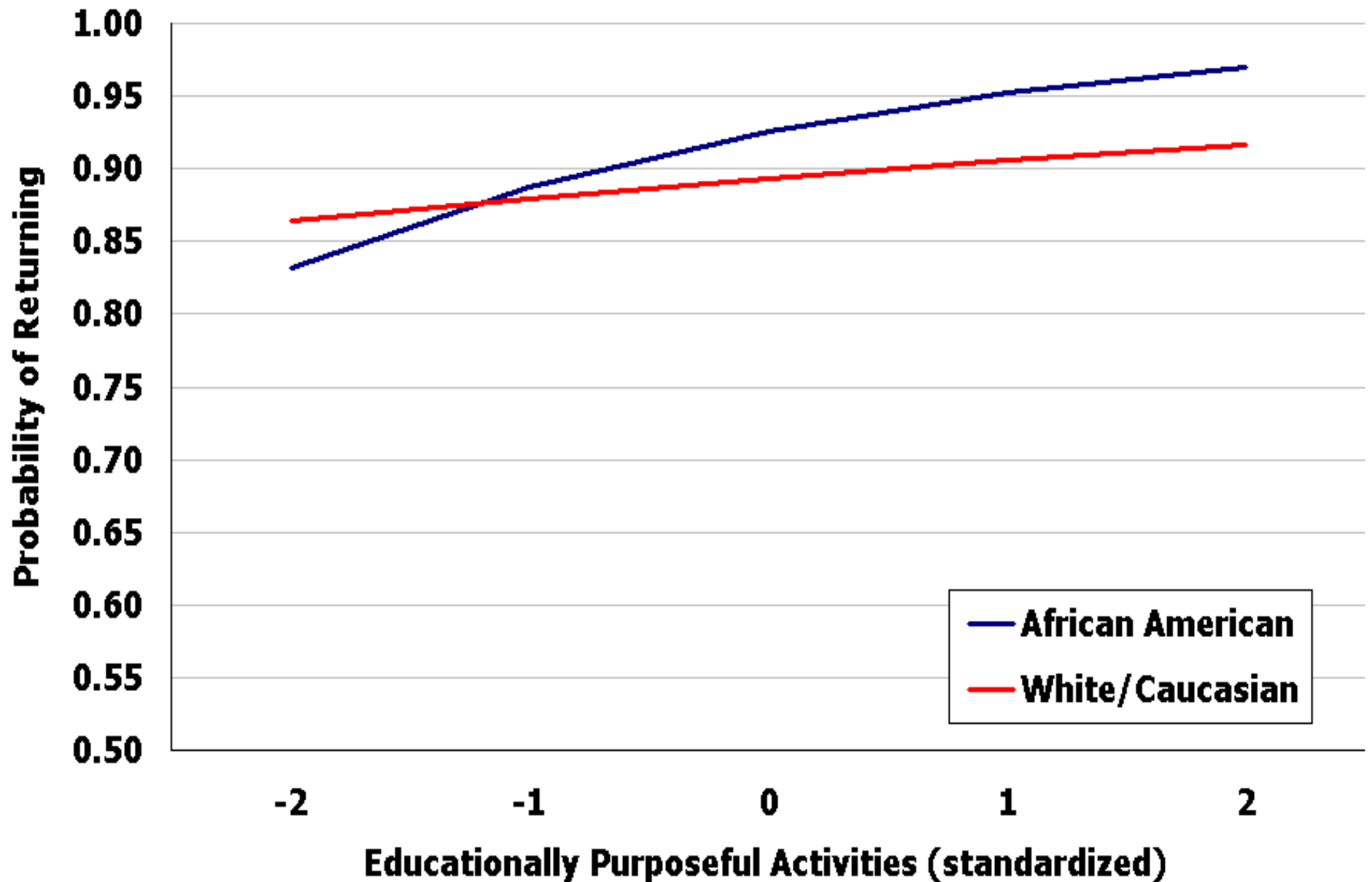


### Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Race/Ethnicity





### Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on the Probability of Returning for the Second Year of College by Race



# Comparison of Distance Education and Campus-Based Learners

## Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

First-Year Senior

Level of academic challenge

+

+

Active & collaborative learning

-

-

Student-faculty interaction

+

=

Enriching educational experiences

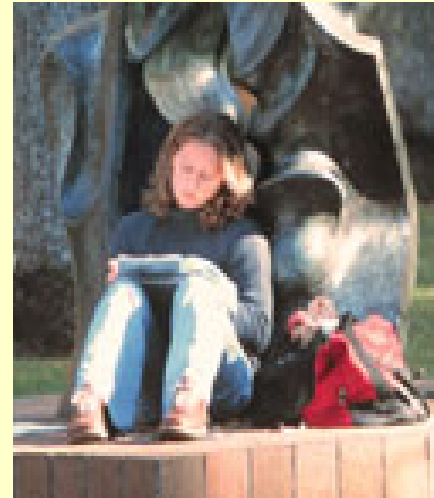
+

=

Supportive campus environment

=

+

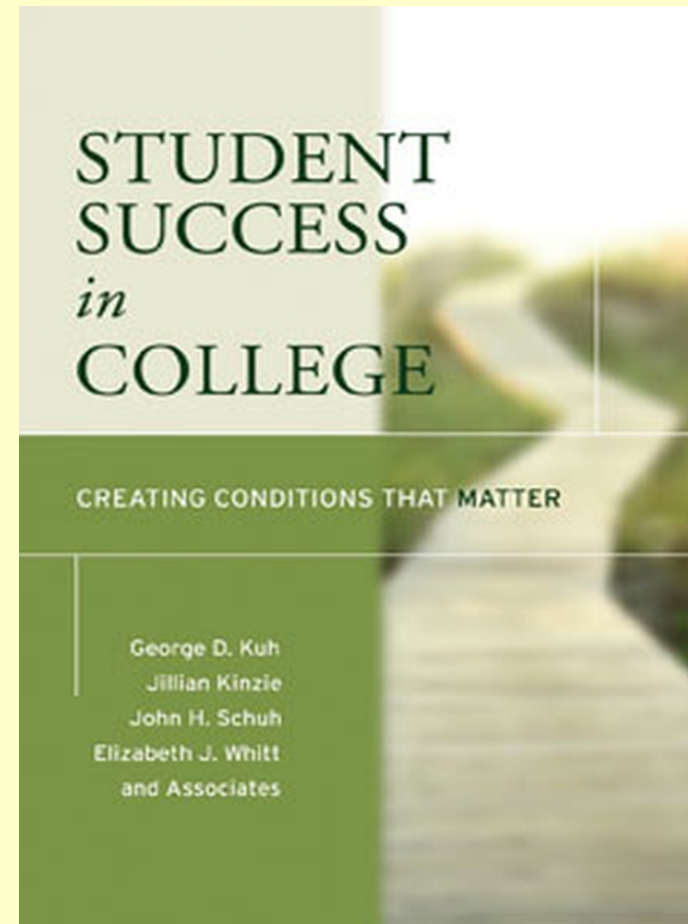


**What does an  
educationally effective  
college look like?**



# Project DEEP

**To discover,  
document, and  
describe what high  
performing  
institutions do to  
achieve their  
notable level of  
effectiveness.**



# DEEP Schools\*

\* Higher-than  
predicted NSSE  
scores and  
graduation rates

## Doctoral Extensives

University of Kansas

University of Michigan

## Doctoral Intensives

George Mason University

Miami University (Ohio)

University of Texas El Paso

## Master's Granting

Fayetteville State University

Gonzaga University

Longwood University

## Liberal Arts

California State, Monterey Bay

Macalester College

Sweet Briar College

The Evergreen State College

Sewanee: University of the South

Ursinus College

Wabash College

Wheaton College (MA)

Wofford College

## Baccalaureate General

Alverno College

University of Maine at Farmington

Winston-Salem State University

# Research Approach

## Case study method

- ✓ Team of 24 researchers review institutional documents and conduct multiple-day site visits
- ✓ Observe individuals, classes, group meetings, activities, events
  - 2,700+ people, 60 classes, 30 events
- ✓ Discover and describe effective practices and programs, campus culture

# Worth Noting

**Many roads to an engaging institution**

- ✓ **No one best model**
- ✓ **Different combinations of complementary, interactive, synergistic conditions**
- ✓ ***Anything worth doing is worth doing well at scale***

## **Six Shared Conditions**

- ❖ **“Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy**
- ❖ **Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning**
- ❖ **Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment**
- ❖ ***Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success***
- ❖ ***Improvement-Oriented Ethos***
- ❖ ***Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality***

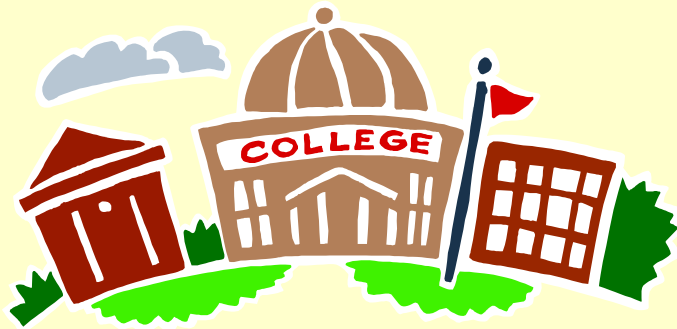


## Ponder This

- 1. Which of these areas needs attention right now at your institution?**
- 2. What might you do about it?**

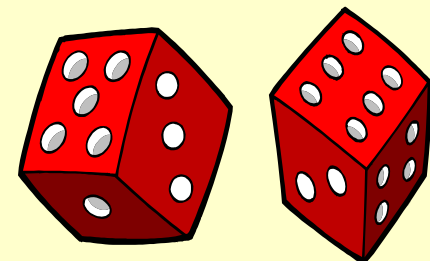


# Creating Conditions That Matter to Student Success



*DEEP Lessons*

*We can't leave  
serendipity to chance*



# **1. Lay out the path to student success**

***a. Intentionality matters***

***b. Engagement early is critical***

***c. Front load resources to smooth transitions***

***d. Teach newcomers about academic culture & expectations***

***d. Focus on underengaged students***

***e. If something works, maybe require it?***

# **Lessons from National Center for Academic Transformation**

- ✓ ***If doing something is important, require it (first-year students don't do 'optional')***
- ✓ ***Assign course points to the activity***
- ✓ ***Monitor and intervene when necessary***

**<http://www.thencat.org/Newsletters/Apr06.htm#1>**

***“Meet students where they are”***

## **Fayetteville State**

- ❖ Faculty members “teach the students they have, not those they wish they had”
- ❖ Center for Teaching and Learning sponsors development activities on diverse learning needs

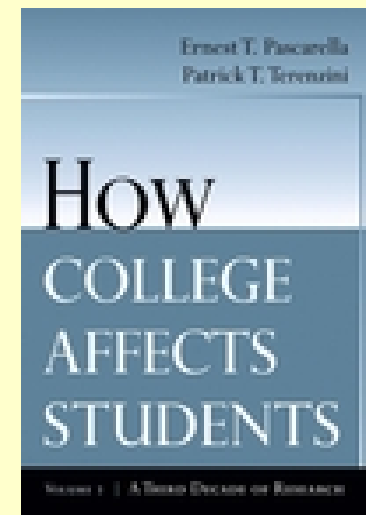
## **Cal State Monterey Bay**

- ❖ “Assets” philosophy acknowledges students’ prior knowledge

# Something Else That *Really Matters* in College

The greatest impact appears to stem from students' *total level* of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are *mutually reinforcing*...

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 647



# ***It Takes a Whole Campus to Educate a Student***



## **2. Recruit, socialize and reward competent people**

- a. Recruit faculty and staff committed to student learning***
- b. Emphasize a relentless focus on student learning in faculty and staff orientation***
- c. Reward and support competent staff to insure high quality student support services***



# **Mentoring**

**U of Michigan Mentorship Program matches groups of four first-year students with an older student and a faculty or staff member who share similar academic interests. The goal is to provide students with mentoring relationships, networking opportunities, yearlong guidance and support, and in general to help ease the transition to college.**

## **“Difference Makers”**

**Student success is the product of thousands of small gestures extended on a daily basis by caring, supportive educators sprinkled throughout the institution who enact a talent development philosophy.**

***“Miss Rita”***

### **3. Promote and reward collaboration**

***a. Tighten the philosophical and operational linkages between academic and student affairs***

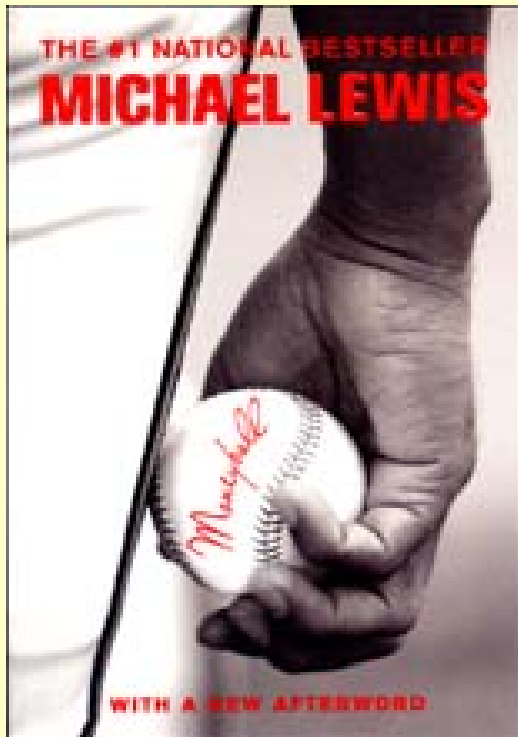
***– Peer tutoring and mentoring***

***– First year seminars***

***– Learning communities***

***b. Make governance a shared responsibility***

## 4. Put money where it will make a difference to student success



***“...in professional baseball it still matters less how much you have than how well you spend it”***

## **4. Put money where it will make a difference to student success**

- a. Align resources and reward system with institutional mission, values, and priorities***
- b. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs***
- c. Invest in “high-impact” activities that contribute to student success***



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# High-Impact Educational Practices



WHAT THEY ARE,  
WHO HAS ACCESS TO THEM,  
AND WHY THEY MATTER

BY GEORGE D. KUH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER  
AND FINDINGS ON STUDENT SUCCESS FROM AAC&U'S  
LEAP INITIATIVE



[www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org)

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## *Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes*



- ★ ***Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World***
- ★ ***Intellectual and Practical Skills***
- ★ ***Personal and Social Responsibility***
- ★ ***“Deep” Integrative Learning***



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## *High Impact Activities*



- ★ **First-Year Seminars and Experiences**
- ★ **Common Intellectual Experiences**
- ★ **Learning Communities**
- ★ **Writing-Intensive Courses**
- ★ **Collaborative Assignments and Projects**
- ★ **“Science as Science Is Done”;  
Undergraduate Research**
- ★ **Diversity/Global Learning**
- ★ **Service Learning, Community-Based  
Learning**
- ★ **Internships**
- ★ **Capstone Courses and Projects**



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## *Essential Learning Outcome:*

# **NSSE Deep/Integrative Learning**

- ◆ Integrating ideas or information from various sources
- ◆ Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/writing
- ◆ Put together ideas from different courses
- ◆ Discussed ideas with faculty members outside of class
- ◆ Discussed ideas with others outside of class
- ◆ Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- ◆ Synthesizing & organizing ideas, info., or experiences
- ◆ Making judgments about the value of information
- ◆ Applying theories to practical problems or in new situations
- ◆ Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views
- ◆ Tried to better understand someone else's views
- ◆ Learned something that changed how you understand an issue

# *Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Deep/Integrative Learning and Gains*

	Deep Learning	Gains General	Gains Personal	Gains Practical
<b>First-Year</b>				
Learning Communities	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++
<b>Senior</b>				
Study Abroad	++	+	++	
Student-Faculty Research	+++	++	++	++
Internship	++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++
Culminating Experience	++	++	++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

# *Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Student Engagement*

	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collab. Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Supportive Campus Env.
<b>First-Year</b>				
<b>Learning Communities</b>	++	+++	+++	++
<b>Service Learning</b>	++	+++	+++	++
<b>Senior</b>				
<b>Study Abroad</b>	++	++	++	+
<b>Student-Faculty Research</b>	+++	+++	+++	++
<b>Internship</b>	++	+++	+++	++
<b>Service Learning</b>	++	+++	+++	++
<b>Culminating Experience</b>	++	++	+++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

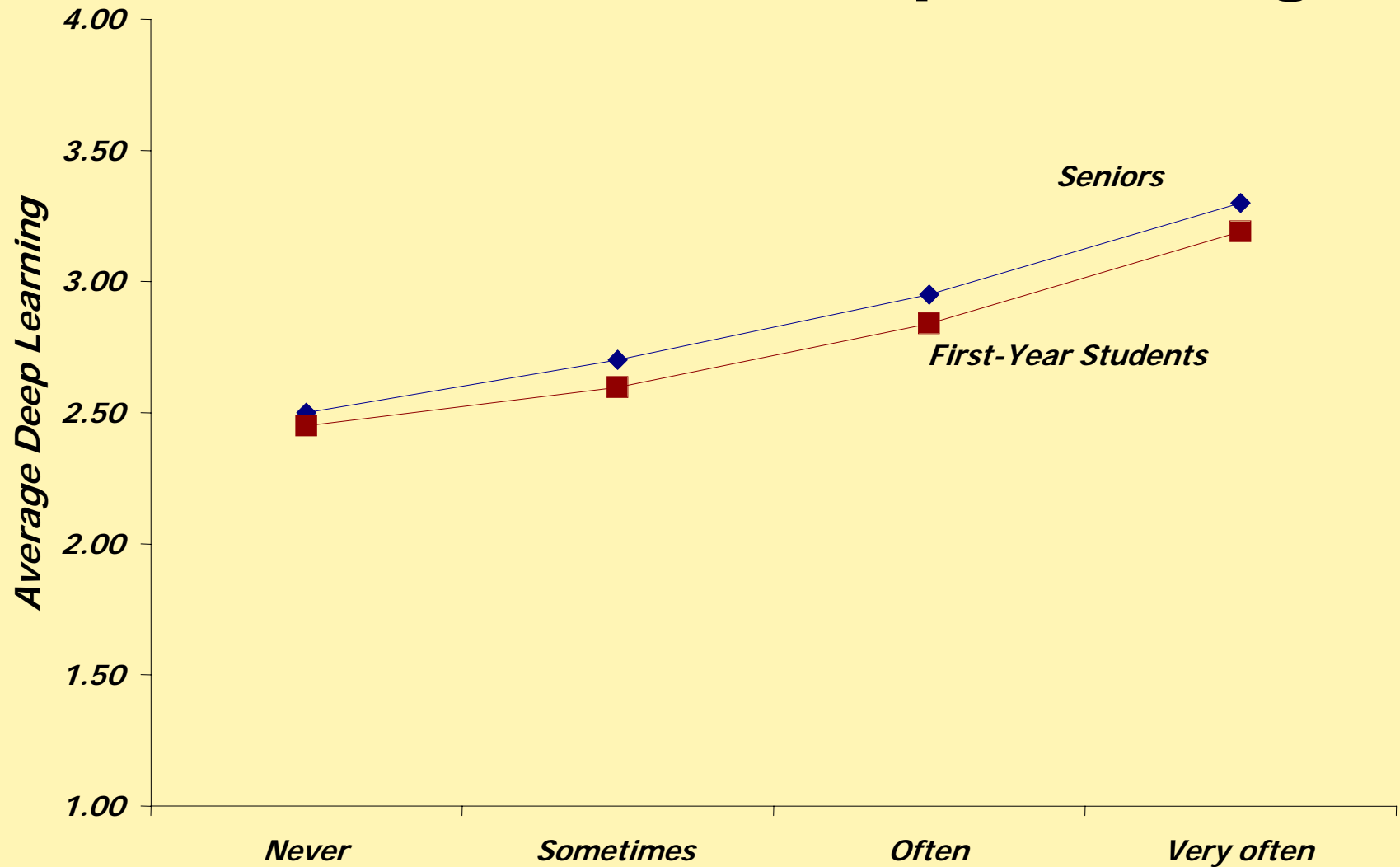
## ***High Impact Activities*** **Increase Odds Students Will:**

- ✓ ***Invest time and effort***
- ✓ ***Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters***
- ✓ ***Experience diversity***
- ✓ ***Get more frequent feedback***





# Feedback and Deep Learning



*Frequency of Prompt Feedback from Faculty*

*National Survey of Student Engagement*

## ***High Impact Activities*** **Increase Odds Students Will:**

- ✓ *Invest time and effort*
- ✓ *Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters*
- ✓ *Experience diversity*
- ✓ *Get more frequent feedback*
- ✓ ***Reflect & integrate learning***
- ✓ ***Discover relevance of learning through real-world applications***

## **4. Put money where it will make a difference to student success**

- a. Align reward system with institutional mission, values, and priorities***
- b. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs***
- c. Invest in activities that contribute to student success***
- d. Scale up effective practices***

# High-Impact Practices and the Disparities Within...

## Frosh: Service Learning and LCs

- ✓ *Parity among racial/ethnic groups*
- ✓ *Fewer 1<sup>st</sup> gen students*
- ✓ *Fewer part-time students*
- ✓ *Fewer transfer students*
- ✓ *Fewer older students*



# High-Impact Practices and the Disparities Within...

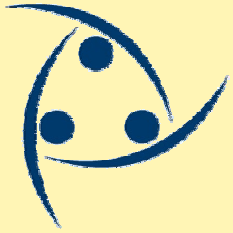
## Seniors in All HIPs

- ✓ *Fewer 1<sup>st</sup> gen students*
- ✓ *Fewer students of color*
- ✓ *Fewer transfer students*
- ✓ *Fewer part-time students*
- ✓ *Fewer older students*

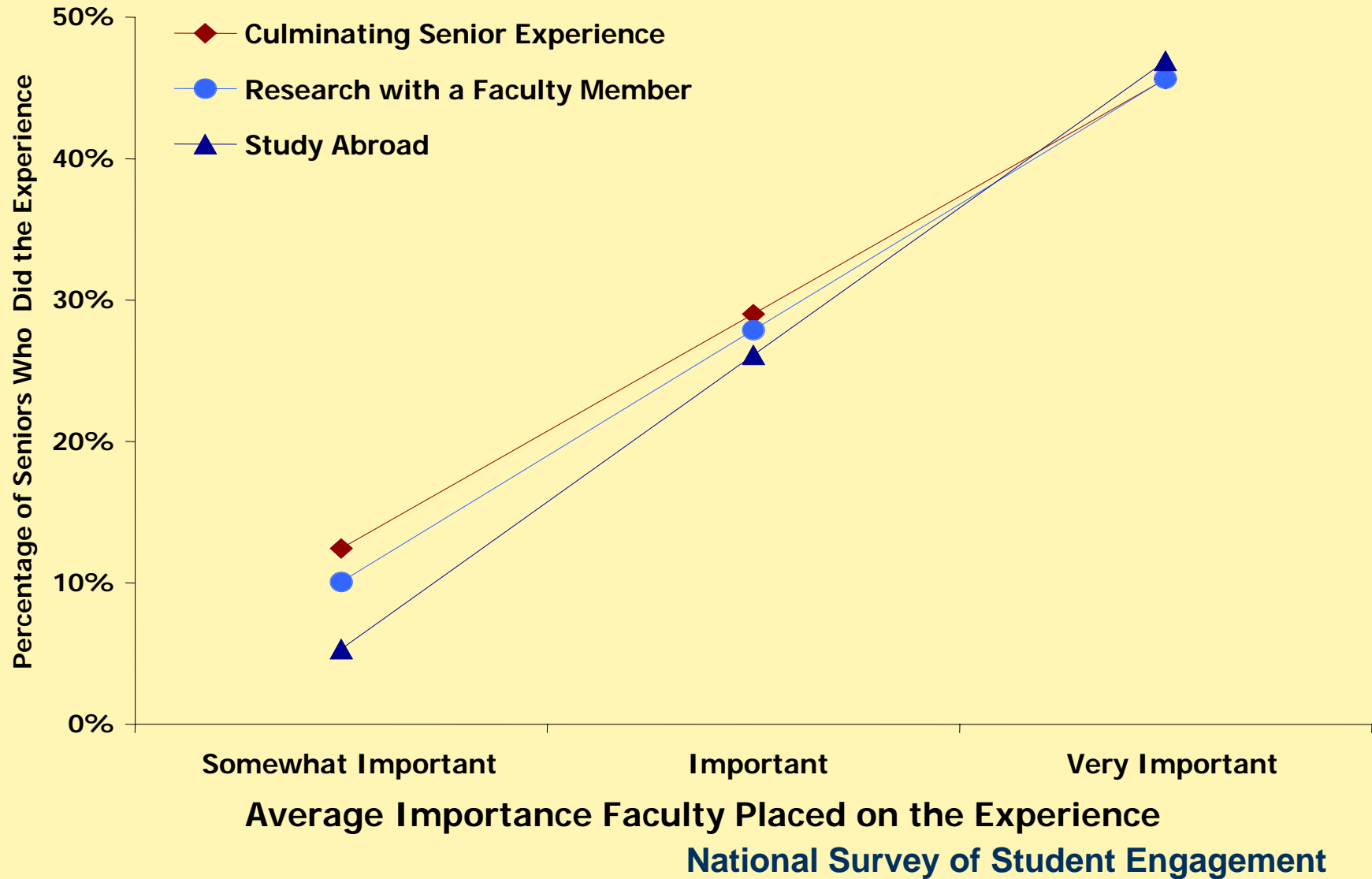
# Assessing Student Engagement in High-Impact Practices

*To what extent does your institution provide these experiences?  
[√ = have on campus; √ = required; estimate the % of various student populations in these activities]*

	Learning Community	First Year Seminars	Research w/ Faculty
<b>On Our Campus</b>			
<b>Required for all</b>			
<b>% Students involved</b>			
<b>% First Generation</b>			
<b>% Transfer Students</b>			
<b>% African American</b>			
<b>% Latino Students</b>			
<b>% Asian American</b>			
<b>% other</b>			
<b>% Adult Students</b>			



# Senior Participation in High Impact Activities



# Faculty Priorities and Student Engagement

## AVG STUDENT

<b>AVG FACULTY</b>	<b>Academic challenge</b>	<b>Active-collab</b>	<b>Diversity experiences</b>	<b>Student - faculty</b>
<b>Academic challenge emphasis</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Active-collab practices</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Emphasis on diversity experiences</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Emphasis on higher order thinking</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Importance enriching educ experiences</b>	✓	✓		✓

## 5. Focus on culture sooner than later

*Ultimately, it's all about the culture...*

- a. Expand the number of cultural practitioners on campus*
- b. Instill an ethic of positive restlessness*



# Positive Restlessness

- **Confident, responsive, but never quite satisfied...**
- **“We know who we are and what we aspire to.”**
- **Self-correcting orientation**
- **Continually question, “are we performing as well as we can?”**

## 5. Focus on culture sooner than later

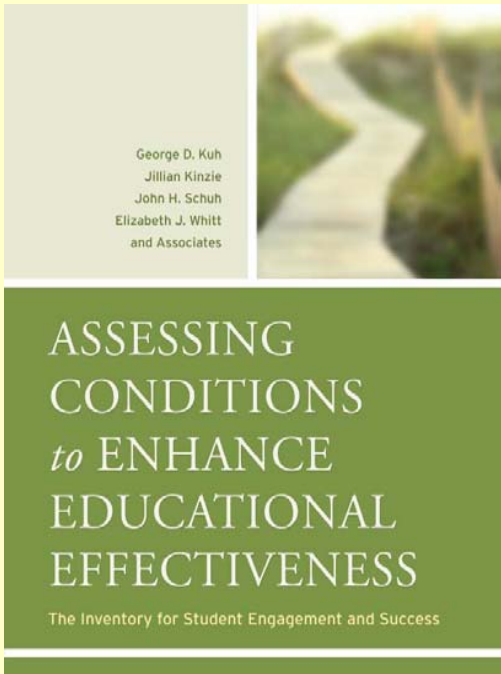
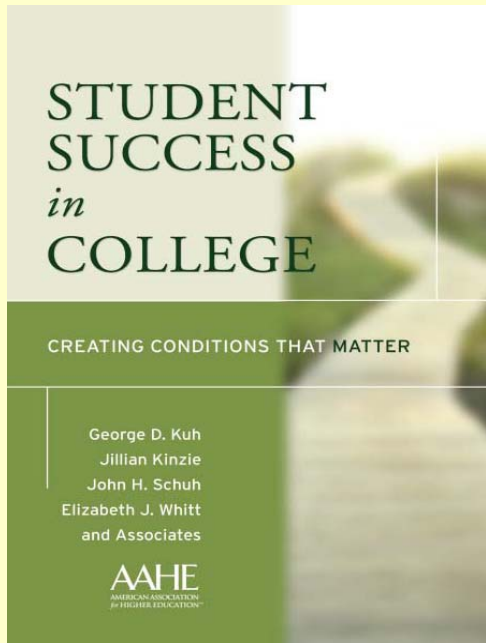
***Ultimately, it's all about the culture...***

- a. Expand the number of cultural practitioners on campus***
- b. Instill an ethic of positive restlessness***
- c. Identify and address cultural properties that impede success***

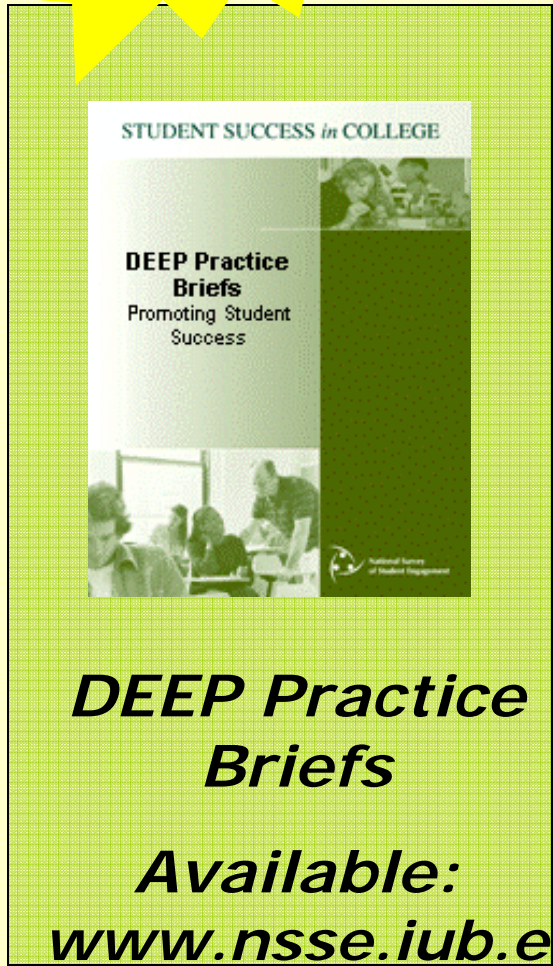
## **“Checking the Truth”**

- ✓ **What is distinctive about your school? To students? To faculty/staff?**
- ✓ **How do these distinctive aspects affect the learning environment? Student success?**
- ✓ **In what ways do the campus culture and subcultures promote, or inhibit, student learning and success?**





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## 6. Put someone in charge

*When everyone is responsible for something, no one is accountable for it...*

- a. Senior leadership is key*
- b. Some individual or group (high profile 'think force') must **coordinate, monitor and report** the status of initiatives*
- c. Those 'in charge' not solely responsible for bringing about change*

## 7. Stay the course

***The good-to-great-transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough...***

*(Collins, 2001, p. 186)*

## 7. Stay the course

- **Academic leadership**
- **Intentionality**
- **If it works, consider requiring it**
- **Beware the implementation dip**



# If We Could Do Four Things...

- 1. Make the classroom the locus for community building**
- 2. Use engaging pedagogies campus-wide**



# Classroom Engaging Pedagogies

- 1. One minute papers (variations)***
- 2. Case studies***
- 3. Debates***
- 4. Small group problem sets...***
- 5. Others***



## If We Could Do Four Things...

1. Make the classroom the locus for community building
2. Use engaging pedagogies campus-wide
3. **Make excellence inclusive – have *every student* do at least one “high-impact” activity in the first year and another later**
4. **Ensure programs are high quality.**

# Institutional Reflection

Areas of  
Effective  
Educational  
Practice

Areas of  
Question or  
Improvement





## ***Last Word***

- ❖ **We cannot change the lineage of our students.**
- ❖ **Campus cultures do not change easily or willingly.**
- ❖ **But we can counter both by using promising policies and practices more consistently throughout the institution to increase the odds that students will succeed.**
- ❖ **Do we have the *will* to do so?**

# Questions & Discussion

