



CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR NUDGING STUDENTS TOWARD SUCCESS

Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference

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Jeannie Brown Leonard, Dean – Student Academic Affairs

She/Her/Hers



RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

Cohort	Retention	4-year Graduation	6-year Graduation
2017	86.7		
2014	87.2	48.2	
2012	87.3	47.3	69.9
irr2.gmu.edu			

2024 Strategic Goals

Retention Rate 90%

6-year Graduation Rate 78%

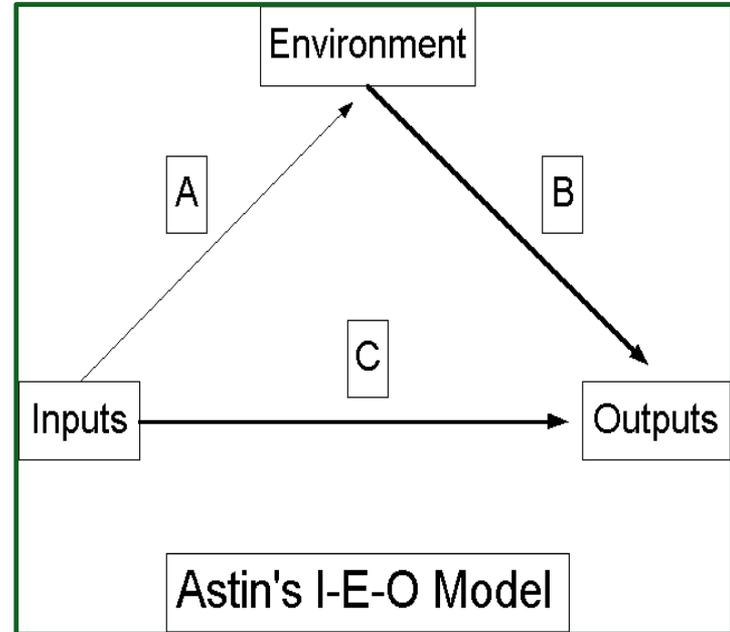
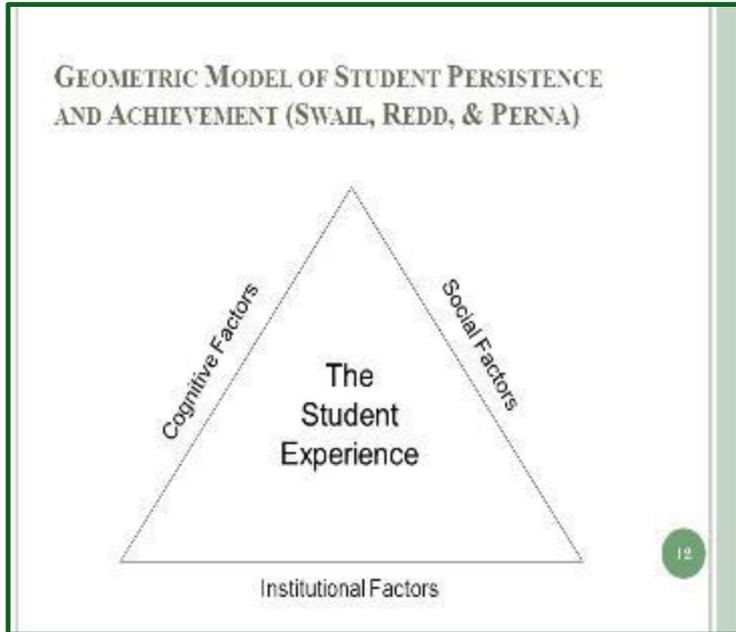
DIVS2	Course	GENEDCODE	GENEDDESC	sects	Enrolled	numDFW	%
COS	MATH 105			5	230	112	49%
VSE	IT 106			11	289	128	44%
BUS	ACCT 331			6	221	97	44%
COS	PHYS 260	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	3	177	76	43%
BUS	ACCT 203			5	359	137	38%
VSE	IT 206			9	254	92	36%
BUS	ACCT 330			4	160	57	36%
COS	CHEM 313			2	164	57	35%
COS	MATH 114			8	474	164	35%
COS	BIOL 310			2	195	65	33%
CHSS	ECON 103	USBS	Social/Behavioral Sciences	6	756	249	33%
VSE	CS 211			8	316	94	30%
COS	CHEM 211	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	3	354	104	29%
COS	MATH 125	UQR	Quantitative Reasoning	5	296	80	27%
VSE	CS 112	UITT	Info Tech (without Ethics)	6	485	129	27%
VSE	IT 102			11	349	92	26%
VSE	CS 310			4	229	60	26%
COS	PHYS 160	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	4	303	78	26%
COS	CHEM 314			2	238	60	25%
VSE	STAT 250	UQR	Quantitative Reasoning	12	804	201	25%
VSE	STAT 344			4	214	53	25%
COS	MATH 113	UQR	Quantitative Reasoning	11	469	116	25%
COS	BIOL 311			4	371	90	24%
COS	MATH 214			4	244	59	24%
COS	MATH 108	UQR	Quantitative Reasoning	8	431	102	24%
BUS	ACCT 301			6	406	96	24%
BUS	FNAN 301			5	390	92	24%
COS	BIOL 214			4	291	67	23%
COS	CHEM 212	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	6	539	113	21%
BUS	BULE 303			14	334	67	20%
COS	MATH 213			5	339	63	19%
BUS	BULE 302			14	315	58	18%
COS	BIOL 103	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	3	283	51	18%
CHSS	ECON 104	USBS	Social/Behavioral Sciences	3	441	79	18%
COS	BIOL 213	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	4	412	71	17%
CHSS	ENGH 101	UWCL	Written Communication (lower)	37	682	114	17%
COS	GEOG 101	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	3	350	57	16%
COS	MATH 106	UQR	Quantitative Reasoning	19	451	70	16%
CHSS	HIST 100	UWC	Western Civilization	20	1093	165	15%
COS	MATH 203			6	395	51	13%
CHSS	COMM 100	UOC	Oral Communication	46	983	123	13%
VSE	IT 104	UITC	Info Tech (complete)	13	836	103	12%
COS	ASTR 113	UNSL	Natural Science with Lab	4	514	60	12%
CHSS	ENGH 302	UWCU	Written Communication (upper)	131	2723	302	11%
CHSS	ENGH 201	ULIT	Literature	30	739	73	10%
CHSS	PSYC 100	USBS	Social/Behavioral Sciences	4	621	60	10%

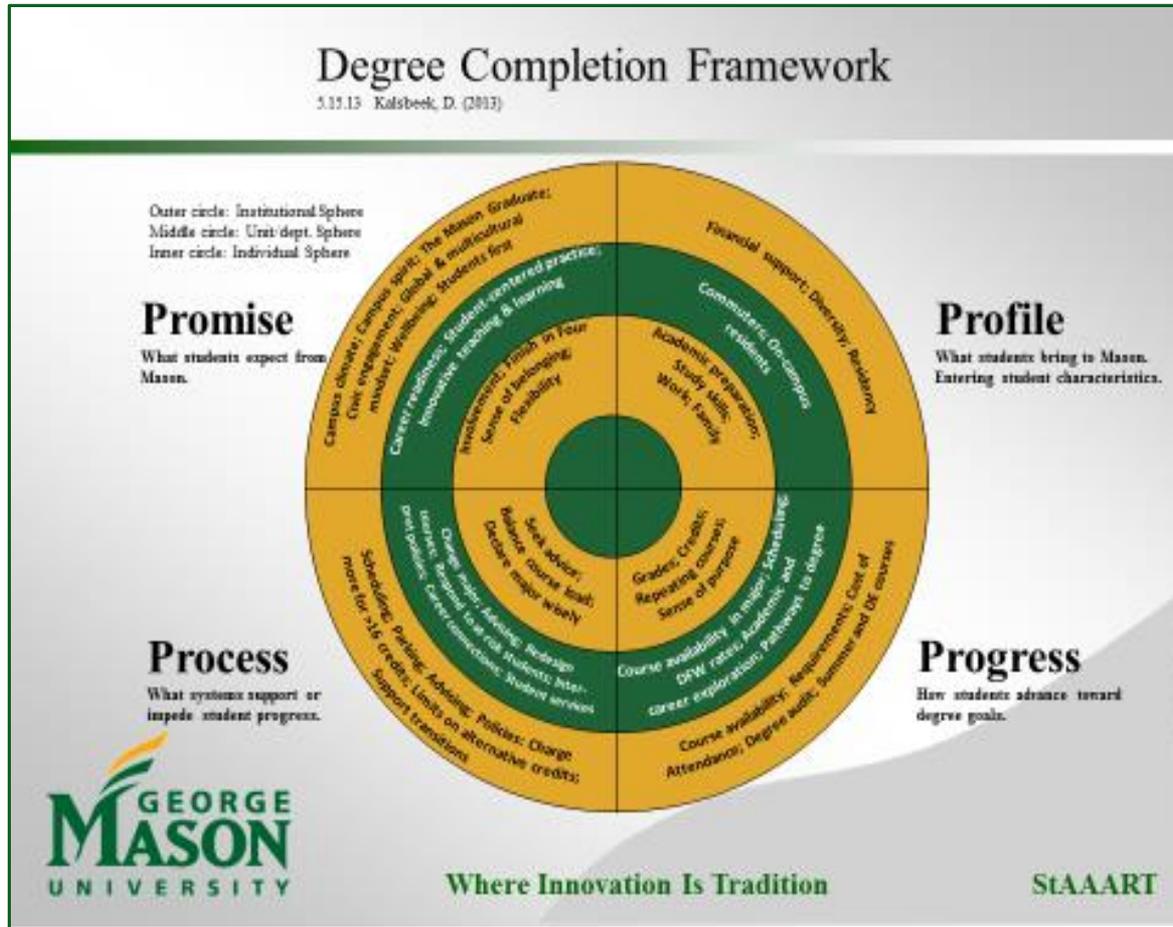
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BUS	ACCT 203		5	359	137	38%
CHSS	ECON 103	Social/Behavioral Sciences	6	756	249	33%

Why do students struggle in your classes?



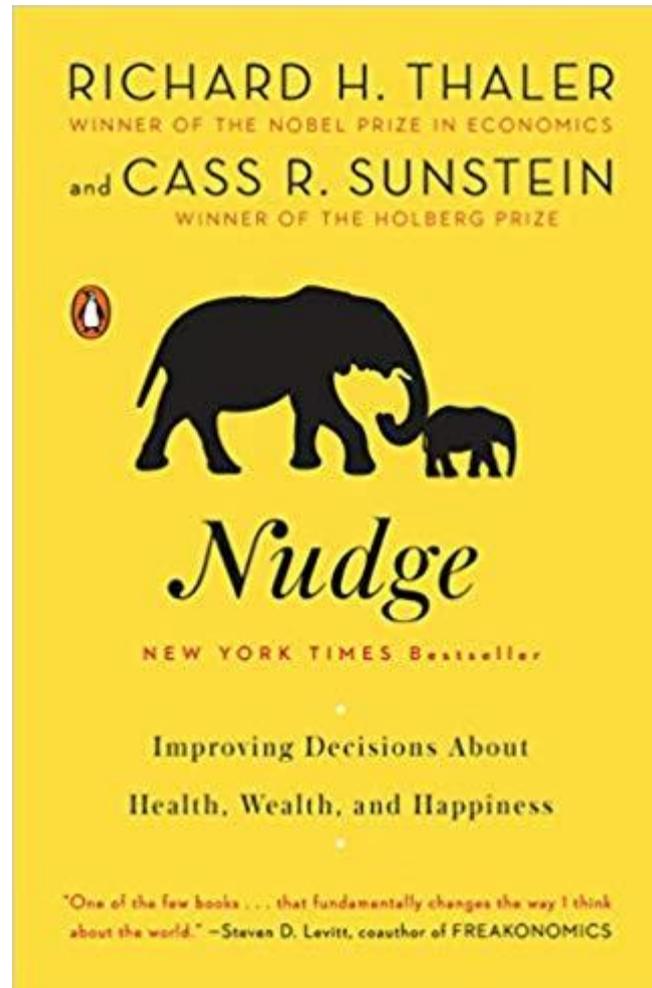
STUDENT SUCCESS MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS





RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Individual and Institutional factors affect student success (Astin; Kalsbeek; Swail)
- Engagement and time on task are positive predictors of success (Kuh; Pascarella & Terenzini)
- Sense of belonging and inclusion matter (Hurtado & Carter; Robbins et al.; Walton & Cohen)
- Students need someone on campus to know them and take an interest in them (Lambert)
- Behavioral economics (Thaler & Sunstein)



“Unlike the typical carrot or stick approach, nudges don’t use incentives or punishment to resolve choice dilemmas. Instead, nudges help decision-makers by making it easier to 1) process information and 2) perceive future consequences” (Yi, *The Power of the Nudge*, p. 5).

1. Choice Deferral

- Include a question about intentions and goals in a survey at the beginning of the course.

2. Planning Fallacy

- Help students break down long term projects into a manageable sequence of tasks.
- Ask students to make plans about typical challenges (e.g., missing class, earning lower grades than expected). Push them to consider what they would do if that plan does not lead to better performance (ideas42, pages 58, 59).

3. Social Norming

- Other students who have been successful in this class have visited the writing center two or more times, studied in groups, attended every class, etc.
- LMS engagement.
- Contextualize performance by giving a grade distribution on assignments.

4. Social Belonging

- Students need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- Use inclusive syllabus language to make students feel welcome: student-parents, gender pronouns, disability accommodations, etc.
- Testimonials and reflection to combat stereotype threat and promote sense of belonging (Yeager & Walton; Walton & Cohen).
- Rename Office Hours to Student Hours (*Chronicle*)

5. Default Rules

6. Loss Aversion

Imagine YOUR course has a high percentage of DFW grades.
Are there nudges you might use to improve student outcomes?

Practices may have unintended consequences

- A student who learns she studies more than her peers may opt to study less.
- Students need to learn to manage complex tasks; providing too much guidance may delay those lessons.
- Others?

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Gender Pronouns Statement for Syllabus – from Giovanna Chesler, FAVS, George Mason University

Film at Mason gender pronoun statement - to foster a program inclusive of all students, drafted with group members from T-Q Mason, the trans alliance. **Please add your pronouns and name wherever you see red font.** For example, *“Please let me know of your gender pronouns and how best to address you in class and via email. I use gender non binary (they / them) pronouns for myself and you may address me as “Giovanna” or “Professor Chesler” in email and verbally.”*

Tailor this to meet your profile and then copy/paste into syllabus:
*“Gender identity and pronoun use. Please let me know of your gender pronouns and how best to address you in class and via email. I use **<insert your specific pronouns here>** for myself and you may address me as **<YOUR NAME>**”, “Prof **<NAME>**” or **“Mr/Ms./Mx. <NAME>**” in email and verbally.”*

Parents and Primary Caregiver Accommodations:

Our institution values diversity and inclusion, and this includes supporting students who also have parenting and family caregiver responsibilities. Parents and primary caregivers often have additional complications that sometimes make it difficult to attend class, such as morning sickness or late school openings, childcare emergencies, etc. If one of these situations will make it impossible for you to attend class, please let your instructor know about the situation and provide documentation as soon as possible, and these situations will be treated as documented excused absences. If you have a childcare emergency and you think you and your child can manage it, you may bring your child to class; please sit near the door so you can easily step outside if your child needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, and return once your child's needs have been met. Students who are pregnant or parenting should consult this university resource for guidance: <https://masonfamily.gmu.edu/student-parents/>