

# Creating Spaces that Help Build Relationships

Elizabeth Kerr

Academic Coach, Student Success Coordinator

Villa Maria College

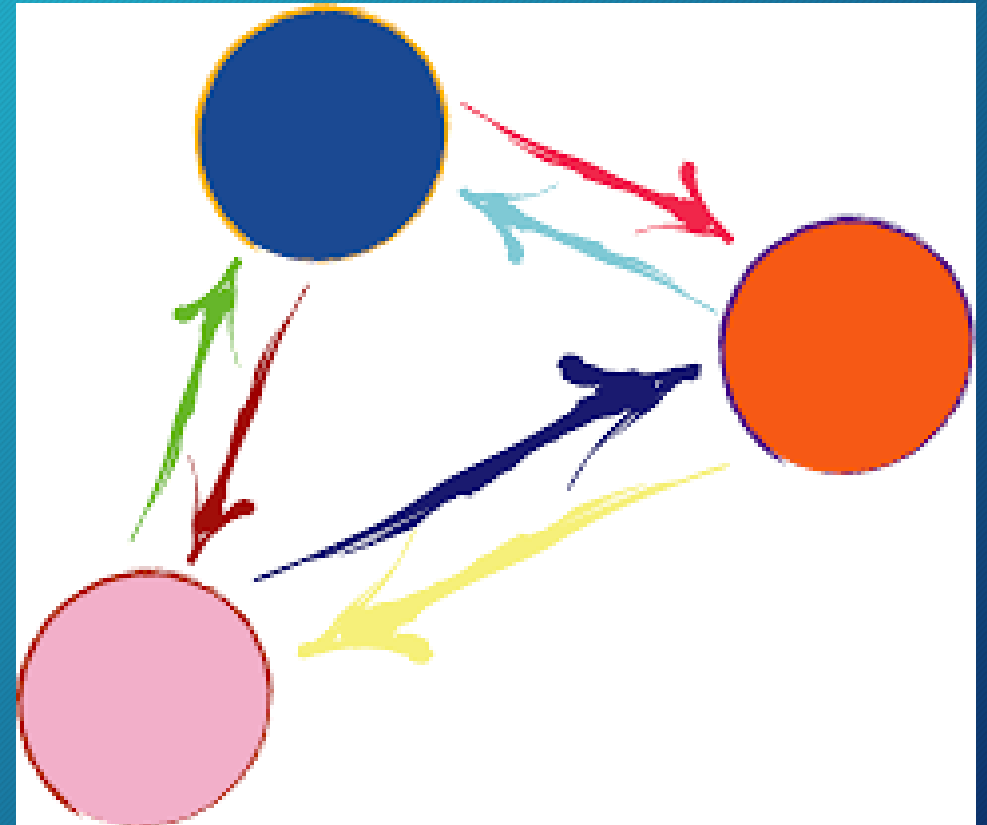
# Presentation Objectives

- Participants will be informed of the impact of positive relationships on campus
- Participants will learn strategies of how to engineer relationship building in their own role on campus



# Why are relationships important?

Interactions with faculty, interpersonal relationships, and advisement on campus are three of the environmental variables that support student persistence (Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot, 2005)



# Why are relationships important?

Personal connections are often the *central mechanism* and *daily motivator* of the student experience (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014).



# Why are relationships important?

Successful students have 1-2 staff/faculty and 3-4 close friends in college (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014).





# Why are relationships important?

“The people (friends, acquaintances, teachers, staff) whom a student encounters matters more than the programs because the people are alive-- or more precisely, because they can instantaneously adjust to the shifting needs and interests of their fellow creatures, the students” (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014).

# Where I come from...

- Academic Coach, Student Success Coordinator at Villa Maria College
- Caseload of 45-90 students (depending on the year)
- Villa Maria College, small liberal arts college located on Buffalo, Cheektowaga border. Recently rated 6<sup>th</sup> College in Upstate New York for diversity
- First year advisement- focus on transition from high school or workplace to college



# Self Determination Theory

- Relatedness
  - relatedness is associated with a student feeling that the teacher respects and values the student. Also, students who feel respected, valued, and connected, experience a sense of belonging
- Competence
  - need for competence focuses on feeling competent to meet the challenge of the activity and the experience of effectively enacted behavior
- Autonomy
  - refers to person's experience of choice and behavior as volitional and self-endorsed (not just perception)





# Reflection Point

- What is your role on campus?
- How important are relationships to your role?
- What length of time does your relationship *need* to last for with students?
- What length of time do you *want* your relationship to last for?

# Spaces of Transaction

- Dewey and Bently (1949) developed idea of transactional spaces
  - Reality is formed through series of transactions that happen where all parties are agents of input and change.





# Spaces of Transaction

## Daily

- Office
- Tutoring Center
- Email
- Hallways
- Dining Hall

## Cycled

- Orientation/Accepted Student Day
- Summer Bridge Program, Roundtable Series
- Phone
- Classroom presentations

Reflection: What are your daily transactional spaces? What are your cycled transactional spaces?

# Cycle of relationship building





# Cycle of Transaction- Academic Coach

Before the semester	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester
Accepted Student Day or Initial Meeting	Freshman Seminar Class Presentation	Quarter Term Meeting
Summer Roundtable Series	Quarter Term Meeting	Midterm Meeting
Orientation	Midterm Meeting	Transition to Program Advisor
	Registration	
	Freshman Seminar Class Presentation (x2)	

# Initial Meeting



# Initial Meeting- Elevator Talk

- Educate on campus policies, academic program, and technology (college vocabulary)
- Help set and check in on academic goals
- Meet three times a semester (or more if requested). Will work with feedback from professors, understanding the academic program, time management, connecting with campus services, and registering for classes.

# Initial Meeting – Questions\*

- Our primary way of reaching out to you will be via email. In the case of emergency, what's the best way to contact you?
- Why did you select your major?
- Why did you select Villa?
- What are your strengths and talents outside of school?
- Think about your last educational experience (in high school or at a previous college). What did you enjoy? What frustrated you?
- Did you have an IEP or 504 plan in high school?
- What demands on your time do you have besides school?
- Are you participating in Villa athletics?
- How do you plan on getting to school? (Car, bus, walk, CV shuttle, ride from someone else)
- Who in your household has gone to college before?
- Who in your life supports you being a college student?
- What do you want to accomplish during your first year?

\*Developed with Michael McDowell, former SSC Academic Coach



# Initial Meeting- Program Planner and Schedule

# Reflection Point 3

- What are the questions you ask to get to know students?
- What are questions you will start asking of students?
- What spaces will you ask these questions?





# Establish Credibility

- Use resources to back up what you are saying.
- Have students watch you use the resources.
- Develop relationships with your colleagues .
- “Check in” with colleagues about how students are doing.
- Use former students.
- If you don’t have an answer, it’s okay.
- Don’t just tell students about offices. Take them there.

# Connect

- Share your own journey- or the journey of people that you are close with. Share successes and barriers.
- Find shared areas of interest in places, food, activities, family. Have artifacts in your office that support these interests.
- Don't assume the path that you took to overcome a barrier will work the same for a student. Tell them this.
- When you see the student again, remember something about your last conversation (name, part-time job, schedule, family, etc.)



# Set Goals

- What do you want to have done by the end of this meeting?
- What are you doing for the rest of the day?
- What's going on this weekend? How does your school work fit into your plan?
- What do you want to have accomplished by the next time I see you?
- What do you want to do by the end of the semester?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?

# Proactively use your spaces

- Periodic emails
- Stop students in the hallways
- Invite to campus events
- Eat lunch where students eat lunch (take a 'real' lunch later)
- Conducting a workshop? Make it useful, fun and connective.
- Only stand behind a table when you need to



# Reflection Point Four

- What strategies are you currently using to connect with students?
- What strategies will you start using to connect with students?

# Limitations of Building Relationships

- Time
- Energy
- Differences in personality



“Education is a social process.  
Education is growth. Education is  
not a preparation for life; education  
is life itself”.

- John Dewey

# Resources

Chambliss, D. F., & Takacs, C. G. (2014). *How college works*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Dewey, J., & Bentley, A. F. (1949). *Knowing and the known*.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., & Schuh, J. H. (2010). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. John Wiley & Sons.