INSPIRING Student Success

You Make the Difference
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead
Making a Difference

As California Community College instructors, we serve a diverse mix of students with dramatically varying goals and levels of academic preparation. Many are first-generation college students who have never been to a college campus, while others are returning from the workplace to upgrade their skills. They are a multicultural and multigenerational mix. Most of them are juggling personal, academic, and financial challenges. They enter our campuses intent on succeeding, yet many fail to do so.

It is critical that we find ways to help students during the first few weeks of the semester to bolster their attendance and ultimately their graduation, because students don’t succeed if they don’t come back. In this booklet, you will find powerful, positive, and purposeful activities to get your students off to a great start. These five student success exercises will help you get to know your students, establish a positive classroom environment, build campus, student, and course connections, and extend classroom learning to the workplace.

This booklet is arranged with information and directions for instructors on the left-hand page. On the right-hand page you will find a ready-to-use student activity sheet to copy, scan, or download from www.cccfcs.com. In addition, each of the five lessons include:

- **Spotlight** — “Why” the activity relates to student success.
- **Highlight** — A quotation and questions for reflection and discussion to encourage critical thinking.
- **Green Light** — Suggestions on how to extend and apply the lesson in the world at large.

While these assignments include instructions on how to do the activity and a reason to do it, the power of each exercise rests in how you present the information. Your unique insights and experiences make these lessons come to life. You make the difference—you are the reason they keep coming back!

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**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Instructors</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pages 4–5</td>
<td><strong>Bright Beginnings</strong> ........................................... 12 Tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages 6–7</td>
<td><strong>Light the Way</strong> .............................................. <strong>Campus Services Investigation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages 8–9</td>
<td><strong>Be Positive</strong> ................................................. <strong>Are You Positive You’re Not Negative?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages 10–11</td>
<td><strong>Make Connections</strong> ........................................... <strong>Take Your Skills to Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages 12–13</td>
<td><strong>Generate Opportunities</strong> ....................................... <strong>Map It Out</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

California Community College Chancellor’s Office Family and Consumer Sciences Collaborative Grant #09-0160

www.cccfcs.com
The more you know about your students, the more you will be able to help them make the right connections. One of the best ways to get to know them is to ask them questions about what they need and want. When you understand and appreciate your learners’ needs, you can create better teaching and learning environments for them. This activity will give you an opportunity to gather information about students’ learning preferences and styles, relevant experiences, and course expectations. It is important not only to ask the questions but to listen and respond to their concerns.

Here’s how…

- Discuss the advantages of getting to know one another.
- Distribute 12 Tweets activity and review the instructions.
- Share some of your tweets and ask volunteers to share theirs.
- Collect the tweets and provide feedback and ideas to address students’ concerns.

“Never miss an opportunity to be fabulous.”
— Tina Seelig, Director of the Stanford Technology Ventures Program

Put the Highlight on the board and ask these questions:

- What do you think it takes to be a fabulous teacher?
- What do you think it takes to be a fabulous student?
- How do you plan to be fabulous in this class?

To begin building a community of learners in your class, ask students to sign up for Twitter and follow you and other students as you tweet to meet during the first month of the semester. Tweeting can lead to stimulating discussions, new resources, and an ongoing supportive network.
Help me get to know you and how we can best work together. You don't have to write much; in fact, I want your responses in 140 characters or less. See how well you can communicate clearly and concisely with just a tweet.

1. Describe the most unusual or least fun job you ever held.
2. What is the longest time you've spent on Facebook?
3. Why are you taking this class?
4. What is your dream career?
5. Can you give me tips on how you learn best?
6. What would you like to know about me?
7. What talents/skills are you excited to use?
8. What do you love to do?
9. What would you like me to know about you?
10. What do you dread doing?
11. What can I teach you?
12. What can you teach me?
To keep students coming back, we must encourage them to take advantage of the student support services available to them. Whether they need academic counseling, tutoring, financial aid, childcare, or a job, many students don’t realize these key support services are available right on campus. If you take a few minutes of class time to introduce students to these resources, you’ll increase student success and your course retention rate.

**Here’s how…**

- Share a positive story about how a student benefitted from a campus support service.
- Distribute CSI activity and briefly introduce the various support services.
- Review the assignment and assign each student 3 support services to investigate.
- At the next class meeting, call on students to share their “little known” facts.
- Provide specific contact information for different support services.

Based on the feedback you receive about campus support services, focus on the support services that interest your students. If students want more information about financial aid, invite the financial aid counselor to class to review the FAFSA process, or if students are looking for career direction, take your class to the career center to complete a career assessment.

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**Light the Way**

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**Spotlight**

Six in ten students who entered the California Community College System as freshmen dropped out or lowered their academic sights after just one semester because they failed to get the help they needed.

— Policy Analysis for California Education

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**Highlight**

“You create your opportunities by asking for them.”

— Shakti Gawain

Share this quote and ask some questions:

- What opportunities have you created for yourself by asking for them?
- Why is it easy/difficult for you to ask for help?
- Complete this statement: I could do better in class if I only had…

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**Green Light**
Often the help we need is right in front of us, but because we are busy or distracted, we fail to notice. On your college campus, there are many services available to help students succeed. Choose 3 services you selected. Be ready to share!

Financial Aid Office
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Academic Counselors’ Office
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Tutoring Center
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

College Transfer Center
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

College Job Board
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Campus Library
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Campus Career Center
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Student Health Center
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Childcare Center
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…

Disabled Student Program and Services Office
Brief description of services offered:
Interesting fact…
Be Positive

Because our words shape how students think and act and, ultimately, how they learn, one of the best ways to encourage students is to use positive language. When our words and tone are positive and convey confidence in their ability to succeed, students are more likely to live up to our expectations of them. Consider the words you use. You may want to change problems to opportunities; disasters to learning experiences; or stupid to unwise. Try opening each class on an upbeat note, with a student success story, uplifting experience, or an inspiring quotation. You’ll see positive results in your attitude, and your students’ as you focus on the power of positive.

Here’s how...

- Write this sentence on the board: Our positive and negative moods are contagious.
  - How do you catch someone’s positive or negative mood?
  - How are you affected by other people’s moods at work, at home, or at school?
- Distribute Are You Positive You’re Not Negative? activity and review the directions.
- Have students share some of their responses.
- List students’ suggestions for behaviors that build a positive classroom environment.

“Once you replace negative words with positive words, you’ll start having positive results.”

— Willie Nelson, Country Music Artist

Share this quote and ask some questions:
- What evidence could you give to support this quote?
- What could you do to be more supportive of other students?
- How could I offer you more support?

Dr. Martin Seligman, at the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Institute, is doing extensive research to help people live more productive and fulfilling lives by focusing on and building positive attitudes and behaviors. This week ask your students to participate in one of his experiments. Ask students to keep a daily list of three good things that happened to them during the day. At the end of a week, have them share several things from their lists, as well as what they learned, and how they felt after this experiment.
Are You Positive
You’re Not Negative?

Did you know that what you say to yourself or others can boost your productivity, confidence, and relieve stress? When you replace negative phrases with more positive ones, you can change your outlook and your outcomes. Here are three suggestions on how to change negative to positive.

1. **Use Milder Wording:** Turn powerful negative words to more neutral ones. This change in words helps calm emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Statement</th>
<th>Positive Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made a stupid mistake.</td>
<td>I made an unwise decision...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate math.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am furious about my grade.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am terrified to make my presentation.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Change Negative to Positive:** The next time you find yourself stressing about something or deciding you’re not up to a challenge, stop and rethink, and see if you can come up with a neutral or positive response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Statement</th>
<th>Positive Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can’t pass the test.</td>
<td>If I get help and study, I can pass that test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never have enough time to study.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s impossible to finish my assignments.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always fail essay tests.</td>
<td>Change to:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Change Limiting Statements to Questions:** When we see things as impossible or too difficult it increases stress and stops us from searching for solutions. But if you change those limiting statements into questions, it opens your imagination to the new possibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Statement</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can’t handle this.</td>
<td>How can I handle this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is impossible.</td>
<td>Make a question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s no way our team can get this done.</td>
<td>Make a question:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one on our team is participating.</td>
<td>Make a question:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make Connections

According to the 2010 National Association of Colleges and Educators Report, the top five skills/qualities employers seek in their new hires include communication, analytical, teamwork, technical, and work ethic. You undoubtedly address each of these skills in your course, yet students are often unable to identify and make the connection between what they do in the classroom and how it applies to the workplace. Taking time to show students how their classroom lessons transfer to workplace success will make learning more meaningful and relevant.

Here’s how...

- Ask students a few questions:
  - What skills do you think employers want in new hires?
  - What skills are you learning in this class that will help you get a job?
- Distribute *Take Your Skills to Work* activity and review the directions.
- Discuss how students could use their class experiences to help them in a job interview.

“No matter how smart you are, or how many degrees you earn, you need a solid set of soft skills to be successful.”

— Peggy Klaus, *The Hard Truth About Soft Skills*

Share this quote and ask some questions:

- What are soft skills?
- Why are soft skills so important in the workplace?
- What are your best soft skills?

Students’ parents and other relatives have had many jobs and have good insights into workplace success. Have your students prepare three questions to ask a relative about his/her workplace experience. Questions might include: What do you consider the most important skills in your workplace? What qualities would you look for if you were hiring a person to work on your team? What advice or guidance would you give me about being successful at work? Give students a few days to complete the assignment and then share what they learned from their interviews.
Take Your Skills to Work

As a job candidate, you should be prepared to answer questions and give examples to show you have the skills and attributes employers seek. Listed below are five questions an employer might ask in a job interview. Work with another student and write responses using experiences you have had in your classes.

**Work Ethic**

able and willing to work hard

*What do you do that shows me you have a strong work ethic?*

I take a full load, 15 units, in college every semester and work part-time. I attend every class meeting and have a 3.5 GPA. In addition, I have a perfect attendance record at work.

**Communication**

able to effectively listen and convey information verbally and in writing

*Why do you think you are a good communicator?*

**Teamwork**

able to work with others in a professional manner to achieve a common goal

*Describe a successful team project you worked on. What was your role?*

**Problem Solving**

able to assess a situation, gather information, and identify solutions

*Can you give me an example of what you do when faced with an obstacle?*

**Technical**

able to effectively use new technologies

*How do you use technology to help you work smarter and faster?*
Generate Opportunities

The more active learning experiences you can include in your course, the more you will engage your students, and the more they will learn and remember. By adding real-world experiences to your course agenda, your students will have more direct and purposeful learning opportunities. You may want to include guest speakers or do a class informational interview. In addition, a workplace tour will give your students information and insight into the world of work and a better idea of how jobs are interconnected.

Here’s how…

- Call on students to list the names of businesses in your community.
- Ask some questions:
  - What businesses are growing in our community?
  - What businesses offer opportunities for good jobs?
  - What businesses would you like to learn more about?
- Distribute Map It Out activity and review directions.
- Share group’s workplace tour information and encourage them.

Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.

— Chinese Proverb

Share this quote and ask some questions:

- Explain this quote to your neighbor.
- When you have to teach someone a new skill, how do you proceed?
- After you hear a lecture, what do you do to apply what you learned?

Have each group choose one of the experiences they mapped out and do it. Then have students post a two-minute video on YouTube to explain and share the outcome of their experience. Finally, have students send the link to their video via Twitter.
Your Destination
What business would your team like to tour?

How would a tour benefit you?

How would a tour benefit the company?

What will each person on your team do to make your tour a reality?

What are 3 ways to connect with the company to inquire about a tour?
1.
2.
3.

What are 5 questions you would like to ask at the company?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Map It Out
Work with 3 or 4 other students and choose a business in your community that your team would like to visit. Then map out the steps you would take to make your tour a reality.
Believe they can...

Confidence is contagious.

— Vince Lombardi

Listen to them...

The road to the heart is the ear.

— Voltaire

Show them how...

What I do, I understand.

— Chinese Proverb