Listening Is Not Enough: Sustaining a Culture of Belonging
Counting Vowels in 45 seconds

How accurate are you?

Count all the vowels in the words on the next slide.
Dollar Bill, Dice, Tricycle, Four-leaf Clover, Hand, Six-Pack, Seven-Up, Octopus, Cat Lives, Bowling Pins, Football Team, Dozen Eggs, Unlucky Friday, Valentine’s Day, Quarter Hour.
How many words or phrases do you remember?
Let’s look at the words again...

What are they arranged according to?
Dollar Bill
Dice
Tricycle
Four-leaf Clover
Hand
Six-Pack
Seven-Up
Octopus
Cat Lives
Bowling Pins
Football Team
Dozen Eggs
Unlucky Friday
Valentine’s Day
Quarter Hour
1 Dollar Bill
2 Dice
3 Tricycle
4 Four-leaf Clover
5 Hand
6 Six-Pack
7 Seven-Up
8 Octopus
9 Cat Lives
10 Bowling Pins
11 Football Team
12 Dozen Eggs
13 Unlucky Friday
14 Valentine’s Day
15 Quarter Hour
NOW, how many words or phrases do you remember?
How do our students know they are welcome?
How do our students know they belong here?
“College Customs”

What’s a “Registrar?”

Do I have to ask to go to the bathroom?

Wait...we buy our books?

Why do I have an “advisor?”

What is this “Blackboard” thing my profs keep talking about?

What are “office hours?” Do you go when you’re in trouble?

I can drop a class if I’m failing?

How many classes should I take?
“Belonging Uncertainty”  
(Walton and Cohen, 2007)

Students frame the hypothesis: “People like me do not belong here.” Then they look for evidence to support that hypothesis.

They usually find it.
“In fact, Walton and Cohen found that even a single instance of isolation or rejection can undermine sense of belonging.”

Strayhorn, 2019
The Hidden Curriculum: “those unstated norms, values, and beliefs transmitted to students through the underlying structure...those norms and values usually not talked about in teachers' statements of objectives or goals, even though such norms and values are implicitly and effectively taught in their classrooms.”

(Giroux, 1978)
College-Ready Student

Student-Ready College
“What does it mean to be a student-ready college? Being a student-ready college requires more than a mission or diversity statement that touts philosophical ideals of inclusiveness...[it] means more than expressed commitments to inclusion and student-centeredness. A student-ready college is one that strategically and holistically advances student success, and works tirelessly to educate all students...”

(McNair, et al., 2016)
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(McNair, et al., 2016)
“At student-ready colleges, all services and activities—from admissions, to the business office, to the classroom, and even campus security—are intentionally designed to facilitate students’ progressive advancement toward college completion and positive post-college outcomes. Student-ready colleges are committed not only to student achievement, but also to organizational learning and institutional improvement.”

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We listen, but do we hear?
“You told us you were always available to us when we needed help, but every time I tried to schedule a time to meet, you would come up with an excuse.”
“Man, my professor didn’t grade my first paper that I turned in three months ago.”
“My stats prof can’t pronounce my name, so she never calls on me.”
“I may have laughed at your sexual jokes relating to the curriculum, but it’s only because it made me uncomfortable and I didn’t know how else to respond.”
“I am like the rock star of my family, so I feel a lot of pressure to do well in school.”
“When profs do not learn a Black student’s name because it’s ‘too hard’ but they can learn scientific names for plants and animals.”
What does it feel like to be excluded?

What are the consequences of exclusion?
“Bandwidth refers to our cognitive capacity and our ability to pay attention, make good decisions, stick with our plans and resist temptations.”

Mullainathan and Shafir, 2014
“When students have been raised in conditions of economic insecurity and/or are members of a nonmajority group, and have lived with discrimination and exclusion for their entire life, they are most likely functioning with limited cognitive resources for learning and success in college.”

(Verschelden, 2017, p. 2)
How many of our students are paying “bandwidth taxes?”

And how often are they paying them?
What steals our students’ bandwidth?

- **Physical and Mental Health: racial and socioeconomic disparities**
  - “John Henryism” and “Skin-Deep resiliency”

- **Scarcity and Persistent Anxiety**
  - “Imagine sitting in a college classroom with one ear and one eye closed and music playing so loudly that it is hard to hear the professor. No matter how hard you try, you miss out on too much and your concentration is shot.” [Verschelden, 29]

- **“Underminers”**
  - “relentless wearyana drone of negativity from which there is no escape.” [Thompson, 2008]

- **A Scarcity of Respect and Belonging: a hostile racial climate**
  - Microaggressions and “subtle racism”
  - people “waste a great deal of energy trying to understand what is happening...energy on all levels, emotional, physical, and spiritual, is wasted in such unclear situations. And people in such circumstances become unable to use their full potential.” [Luczaj, 2008]
Bandwidth depletion affects two key cognitive areas:

**Cognitive Capacity**
(think clearly, take in and process new ideas and information)

**Executive Function**
(focus, prioritization, impulse control)
“When we apply interventions to help students, we’re not adding anything to their intelligence or giving them some kind of advantage; rather, we are trying to draw out what is already inside them that has been inhibited by exposure to psychosocial underminers.”

Verschelden (2017), 60.
Welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome. And re-welcome.
People who have a trusting relationship with a teacher or mentor are better able to take advantage of critical feedback and other opportunities to learn.

Walton and Cohen (2007)
“There’s only one rule that I know of, babies—God damn it, you’ve got to be kind.”