



Finding the Keys to Student Success in Higher Education

Frank Fuller, PhD

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Montclair State University Montclair, NJ, United States.

Article Details

Article Type: Research Article

Received date: 14th May, 2025

Accepted date: 30th June, 2025

Published date: 02nd July, 2025

***Corresponding Author:** Frank Fuller, PhD, Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Montclair State University Montclair, NJ, United States.

Citation: Fuller, F., (2025). Finding the Keys to Student Success in Higher Education. *J Comp Soc Sci Res*, 3(1): 110. doi: <https://doi.org/10.33790/jcssr1100110>.

Copyright: ©2025, This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

Student Success in the social sciences within the US is an essential part of helping students to survive in today's higher education environment. It is important for universities and colleges to recognize which tools will help pupils to survive the transition to higher education in general. This also involves finding the right support system, as well as strategies to help motivate and uplift students who have varying levels of personal, physical, or psychological barriers to success. Various tools are outlined and discussed in this paper, which will assist multiple levels of personnel and the general higher education community to gain an understanding of the right formula for student success. By exploring such factors and discovering new areas for research, we can fully get an idea of what keys to success exist, whether they are through a mentoring process, early alert systems, means of preparation to connect college students with the right atmosphere or technology tools, to developing a relationship with one's peers, coaches, faculty members, etc. We will also begin to appreciate how higher education can acknowledge greater challenges in today's learning environment within the university setting and help students at every level, especially those at risk, who carry learning disabilities, or who need a support system in general, can discover how to utilize these tools to complete their education.

Key words: Student Success, Learning Disabilities, Higher Education, Technology tools for Learning, Alert Systems, Social Sciences.

Introduction

Student Success in the social sciences within American educational institutions involves a range of ideas designed to help students with numerous resources and support systems, especially in higher education. Some aspects of these include areas or key anchors to achieve and push forward consistently based on their sheer determination, persistence, and patience. Students who are most vulnerable are often those within their first year of college, when they are still getting adjusted to the routine and the pace of the college experience, along with all of the other distractions, such as getting acquainted with new friends, finding time to engage in their passions, and budgeting their time wisely overall to figure out a routine to get their classwork done. A major part of uplifting students is by

providing these support systems and warning systems in place so that when they fall, they can get themselves back up and succeed. By finding the keys to student success, institutions can rest assured that they can motivate and inspire learners of all backgrounds to light the fire of determination within them.

Literature Review

Part of what might be missing in higher education for the social sciences today is finding that balance between a good support system and a positive environment for students to feel welcome, as if they are part of a large family. The idea is to help inspire students to better themselves, but at the same time, give them the chance to be independent thinkers and instill a natural curiosity within them about learning. The successful model of working with students involves having various anchors of support around them as part of a total package, such as success coaches, mentors, tutors, and advisors or counselors to help guide them along the way. The environment and positive faculty input can also be effective, as McCallen and Johnson have indicated in their research. Qualitative findings show college faculty as sources of support in students' success. Similarly, in our quantitative analyses, we found consistent outcomes and variables indicative of faculty influence on students' college success, including the influence of peers [1]. In addition, having the appropriate warning systems or indicators can allow them to feel like someone actually cares.

Some crucial areas of support include giving them the opportunity to discover innovative ideas and interests within themselves as part of the overall higher education experience. Students are also more likely to perform better when they are assigned personnel (such as coach, advisor, or faculty mentor) to contact them so that they feel that someone is concerned about their welfare. Various challenges exist today that pull students away from learning effectively, such as personal difficulties or family issues, work obligations, or even learning how to cope with stress from taking classes at once with all the study obligations involved. Learning to manage their time effectively is one aspect of being a college student that takes an adjustment period immediately after high school, for which not all students are prepared. Not surprisingly, students who are more organized with their time do better in school than those who have poor time management skills [2-4]. Being more organized also brings

results, since those budgeting their time show better outcomes compared to those lacking this training [4-6]". Greater time management equates with higher overall performance to complete their work. They also need motivation; more time studying means better grades, but it is also about the quality of their time studying. If they are less engaged while preparing for exams, this will impact their marks [4].

One important strategy pertaining to student success within the social science fields involves having a mentor to help guide a pupil along the way. Finding a mentor that matches up with the student's major and career goals to help support students is a vital component of this process. Whatever status the mentor is might involve regular check-ins for students and to also follow up to make sure that they are making progress in their classes. This includes various peer mentoring programs, as well as potential faculty mentors, as stated by Dixon et al. [7]. The first semester is one of the most critical parts of this journey. Ideally a strategic approach is to ensure that the student is in the right comfort zone and finds a routine that works for that person. No one student is the same, yet success might involve a bit of determination and confidence building to see students along the way so that they know that other people are backing them. Having a realistic assessment of where a student stands and getting started early is better than waiting too late when someone is behind in coursework in general.

Another factor, particularly for social science majors, that helps the student success component to work might be the fact that students must accept that it is okay to incorporate various accommodations within one's program of study to lock support systems in place sooner than later before they are in crisis mode. Blasey et al. [8] have noted that a study by Hudson (2018) showed that students with disabilities who registered for special accommodations as college freshman usually graduated within 6 years (85%) compared to those who registered after Year 1 (48%) [8]. A particular office of disabilities extending an olive branch might be a reasonable means to ensure that students have been made aware of the right outreach efforts backed by an institution. Peer mentors can also talk with the students, who might feel the need to update any accommodations that were previously undisclosed from high school experiences.

Aims and Objectives

One way to guarantee success, especially within the first year of university or college, is a practical approach that some institutions have made, which is mandatory tutoring for majors or classes. For example, Wood, Harris, and White [9] found that "required tutoring sessions [similar to a group intervention model] may be beneficial for various groups" such as "for men of color in community colleges. Mandatory tutoring sessions provided academic support, and helped participants to develop a sense of belonging, build relationships with peers, and allowed students to see the campus as a safe place" [10]. In addition, "While these strategies may benefit all students, men of color may particularly benefit as they face increased societal pressures, external life challenges, racial-gender stereotypes, and alienating campus climates" [10]. This is particularly noteworthy within first year courses that might require a specific level of math or science background to help everyone get adjusted to what lies ahead within that major. By working with the tutoring center or writing center as well as with writing courses and requiring frequent, weekly sessions for people enrolled in specific classes, one has no choice but to face a regimented and constant reinforcement of basic principles within a certain major. Some majors, like math and science at some institutions, have also added components like having group study sessions or tutoring sessions so that students feel like they can learn together, as well as get to know one another.

Another useful area to guarantee an additional key to success, especially within the social sciences, involves having a frequent

gathering of academic-minded students to get together and socialize while preparing for a test. This can help a great deal within the first year of college by treating a gathering to catch up for the test coming up or a group assignment. One can get used to working in teams to prepare students for a career later when they must collaborate on team projects. Generally, Sokolove and Marbach-Ad have proven that exam scores were better for students studying in groups versus those studying alone, despite different teaching philosophies, and those attending an active-learning class were more inclined towards group studying compared to those in ordinary classes [11]. In addition, Michaelsen et al. explain that students tend to commit at a higher level and are able to solve problems together as a team much better than if they are solitary; learning teams can overcome challenges above what highly competent people can do by themselves [12]. If students do not form groups early on, it might be strategic to get them assigned to people, regardless of whether they have taken this step within a course. Someone in a group should also sign up to do regular check-ins to see if every student is showing up to the sessions so that the burden does not fall unjustly on one person or so that a student does not feel isolated or fall behind. Feeling part of the group is a natural human behavior, and especially within the first year of college, students want to feel valued—like they matter and have something to contribute.

Analysis

Disappearing and being withdrawn is one of the hardest and most challenging situations to deal with; it is essential to get a hold of students when they have fallen off the face of the Earth and need some guidance, especially social science majors. Having a classroom coach assigned to specific courses might be a useful step in this area. One of the duties in this role might be to work with the class well in session but also to check in on those who have not made regular appearances lately. When permissible, one can connect to the student's advisor or friends within a particular organization on campus to try to get a hold of them and see if they are making appearances in other courses at the same time. Valentine and Price have shown that success coaching improves retention over a longer period, especially if collaborating with the same personnel and in conjunction with multiple layers of support [13].

Not only are mentors important and classroom coaches essential to success but having a good advisor might be something that helps the student feel inspired so that they can do something with their life. There are many students today who have part of the burden of their family to work while in school or face other responsibilities to take care of family members. They might need a support system that guarantees their success in multiple ways. For example, Hoyt states the following about the importance of the early intervention process for higher education. Mayhew et al. [14] claim that good interventions combine various support services (p. 389). Some learning communities have more impact, with the best being implementing numerous student services (p. 401). Chaney [15] says that TRIO Student Support Services help with retention for those active in student affairs and support services all around. The Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) in New York and the California College Promise Project [16] are good examples of solid anchors for student engagement, with summer bridge programs, close advising, financial assistance and free books, free transportation, and counseling for future jobs [17]. Input from an advisor that a student trusts, especially a faculty advisor, might be able to break through and get the student inspired to do better and find purpose within themselves. This is a crucial step in helping students to find the connection between all their learning experiences on campus and ensuring that they can survive the first year of college particularly.

Likewise, part of the experience and succeeding in college is having a good counselor that a student can confide in and feel like they are alive and have something that makes them inspired. Students need something to feel a positive sense of self-worth and a particular challenge that gives them motivation to better themselves, to perform above and beyond the call of duty. Counselors, especially for first generation college students and others who are facing various personal and financial barriers to their education, might be an especially important part of and possibly the only key to a student feeling like they have a profound sense of self-help and confidence within themselves. With focused support services, First Generation College Students can beat the odds and obtain their degree. Counselors and advisors at institutions should extend a helping hand by contacting students before they reach campus, introduce themselves, and establish a pipeline for pupils to reach out anytime [18].

Discussion

With the way the internet is today and the smartphone era that we live in, we can only embrace the fact that students, including social science majors, have shorter attention spans and use smartphones more than anything else. It is quite possible that they rely more on technology than on their physical reading and writing skills or face-to-face encounters with people to communicate. Therefore, embracing such technology might be better by having alert systems that cater to phone apps, which one can communicate with, through text messages and phone calls rather than just simply email. I would also agree that being positive is an important part of that as well. For example, greater use of phone apps by student successes or tutors helps empower students and shows promising results. Having specific phone apps for how people are feeling might help to gauge how students are doing throughout the year. People might share amongst each other on social media and might help to get informed more easily with automatic updates, as well as upcoming events, and so on with emojis, etc. Notations regarding learning strategies, time management, and motivation are quite helpful [19]. In contrast, the old harsh way of trying to weed out students and being negative and discouraging to them will not win any favors when they already have a great deal of stress in today's world, especially when moving on to college in a brand new environment by themselves. We must continue to be positive and give them a chance to feel like they can succeed, letting them know that we are there for them. Getting the extra support seemed to bring positive results. Besides some time-management and study skills questions, managing the workload between high school and college is doable. Getting things in on time and budgeting one's time are common concerns for many incoming first-year students [20]. Not obtaining good study skills impacts grade point average, claim Gormley et al. (2018), but did not affect academic performance. FGCS [First Generation College Students] still have families who have family education and though lacking in the general knowledge of what higher education entails, they still helped inspire their offspring. The family support helps overall [21] and improves success rates, according to Sommerfeld and Bowen [22]. When parents and students share similar goals, pupils are more successful [21]. A study conducted by Gist-Mackey et al. [23] showed that students sought support from academic advisors on various issues, like financial aid. Helping first generation students transition to college matters, including with academic/faculty mentors, according to Demetriou et al. (2017) and Frazier [24]; mentoring relationships from classes might extend beyond the college years [18].

Another key to student success might involve having a positive outlook on things. If one is motivated and self-driven, one will be more likely to succeed. Students struggling to succeed should be getting frequent check-ins with career services, who can help guide them or give them a chance to match up their interests with some internships that get them on the right path. Visualizing their goals in mind ahead of time will help them stay focused, and career training

and student services can work within such activities. Finding ways to stay inspired in a positive way brings results, since positive engagement helps students become more alert, get more into a topic and to work towards a solution, while negativity leads to becoming disinterested and wanting to avoid the topic, as well as being withdrawn. Being positive is crucial to academic success overall [25].

In addition, learning the art of persistence to stay on task will help students succeed a great deal. Students must develop the ability to endure the tough times, despite the distractions around them. A support system is part of this component. Along with friends to study with, having a person they trust tell them that they believe in their potential is particularly important. They will need good recommendations for internships, jobs, or graduate school later. Not all students are equipped and ready to go immediately and have the resources to be prepared for school overnight. Research has shown that, especially for students with disabilities, blending students into existing academic support programs equates to better outcomes. Getting additional support, such as tutoring or writing help, heightens success for special needs students [26]. Therefore, additional career services, such as lining up internships and training for job interviews, should be emphasized as to having them better prepared to learn how to adjust balancing a class schedule and a possible student job or other source of income, if needed. Notably, when someone shows interest, students are also likely to want to be more engaged. Students like professors to refer them to counseling services. Pupils usually connect with professors who are more amicable. Overall, many students see professors as invaluable to their learning, especially if they have little family support. Being available to talk outside of class also helps, as well as being friendly, which all helps students feel valued, able to succeed, and enjoy learning [27].

Today, we still see many students struggling with discipline and various other temptations in higher education. It is essential for them to get someone to help them prioritize their tasks and learn organizational skills. Often, the office of disabilities at many colleges will support students with their own staff and give them a structure in place to build these study skills and work with other programs to boost the chances of a positive outcome. In general, colleges need to outline areas for students to improve their study habits and develop such initiatives to build best practices, as outlined by Clarke et al. [28]. Their study finds a college environment is good for encouraging learning, great study habits and a positive atmosphere. They examined ways to help students at risk for not being fully prepared or those who had mental health barriers and areas that gave them inspiration to study on their own. This gave direction on how to better help struggling students, like modeling good study habits, library access, and counseling/therapy services. While the pandemic changed the game a bit to keep things balanced in terms of accommodating students' basic needs while also keeping persons safe physically, with online courses helping reach more students, distance learning still needs work in terms of getting the same level of support as physical classes provide, including building good study habits [29]. Formal support services should be advertised and provided for frequently to help students overall [30]. Colleges need to evolve and find ways to connect with pupils through onsite or remote mechanisms, which will encourage a welcoming atmosphere and help students find others to work with and adapt more easily to different educational delivery models [30]. New creative approaches may need to be developed, whereby educators need to be more innovative with student learning and check into remote learning strategies with various classroom delivery models, mentoring, connecting socially with students, and address mental and physical well-being [28].

Technology support is also important. Schools should recommend and help students qualify for a smartphone or will often loan students a computer to use throughout their higher education journey. They

might also need specific training in some of the software if they are not familiar with these tools as well. There is evidence to support the value of using chatbots or other interactive technology to aid in student success, as Chen et al. explain how chatbots can be budget friendly, simple to use, and help students be more animated in classes [31]. This can give instructors more time to focus on classroom engagement and apply the chatbots for a variety of courses towards answering student questions or other concerns, etc. The chatbots might help with better comprehension of course expectations or demands, which can better improve student success overall with increased capacity for aptitude and connecting the dots on material across disciplines while also encouraging a positive student atmosphere full of interactivity, alone or otherwise, and with enough time to answer questions. Because chatbots can be used anytime, they can always give an answer and satisfy pupil concerns (and social interaction needs) of all types by applying artificial intelligence in a positive way, including subjects ranging from course concerns, career advice, and personal issues while not disclosing one's identity [31].

There are also plenty of workshops to teach students how to be proficient with the necessary skills to succeed in higher education if they look carefully. A peer tutor or coach can collaborate with them to get them acquainted with such tools, including technological ones.

Overall, utilizing such resources will guarantee a higher chance of students surviving their first year of college.

Conclusion

We have given a general idea of what keys to success students within the social sciences need for higher education. By becoming familiar with these tools and maximizing the use of them, scholars will achieve their fullest potential. It is important that we allow pupils the opportunity to explore their interests and find the passion within themselves to succeed. Utilizing these tools at hand, such as a support team that includes tutors, a faculty mentor, success coach, counselor, and advisor ensures that students can realize their goals. Students need to know that they also have a person or academic support group that they can trust (and that meets consistently). In addition, working with various support services at a college, along with technological devices that help those in need feel that they have a chance to better themselves, means that they will be able to find their way. The ultimate goal is to ensure that they have a method to overcome barriers within their longer journey towards graduation and later, success in their careers.

Competing Interest: The authors of this research declare no competing interest regarding this study.

References

- McCallen, L. S., & Johnson, H. L. (2020). The role of institutional agents in promoting higher education success among first-generation college students at a public urban university. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 13(4), 320.
- Britton, B. K., & Tesser, A. (1991). Effects of time-management practices on college grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83(3), 405–410. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.83.3.405>
- Macan, T. H., Shahani, C., Dipboye, R. L., & Phillips, A. P. (1990). College students' time management: Correlations with academic performance and stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(4), 760–768. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.82.4.760>
- Wolters, C. A., & Brady, A. C. (2021). College students' time management: A self-regulated learning perspective. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33(4), 1319–1351.
- Claessens, L., et al. (2007) Modelling Landslide Hazard, Soil Redistribution and Sediment Yield of Landslides on the Ugandan Footslopes of Mount Elgon. *Geomorphology*, 90, 23–35.
- Woolfolk, A. E., & Woolfolk, R. L. (1986). Time management: An experimental investigation. *Journal of School Psychology*, 24(3), 267–275. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405\(86\)90059-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405(86)90059-2)
- Dixon, B. T., Agboola, O., Hauck, A., Argento, M., Miller, C., & Vaughan, A. L. (2023). Peer mentoring: Benefits to first-time college students and their peer mentors. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 23(2). Peer Mentoring: Benefits to First-Time College Students and Their Peer Mentors | Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice
- Blasey, J., Wang, C., & Blasey, R. (2023). Accommodation use and academic outcomes for college students with disabilities. *Psychological Reports*, 126(4), 1891–1909. Accommodation Use and Academic Outcomes for College Students with Disabilities - Julia Blasey, Cixin Wang, Ralph Blasey, 2023
- Wood, J. L. E., Harris, F., White, K. E., (2015). Teaching Men of Color in the Community College: A Guidebook. Montezuma Publishing
- Park-Gaghan, T. J., Mokher, C., Henning, H., Daniels, H., Fatima, A., Ibrayeva, D., ... & McCoy, K. (2023). Exploring Corequisite Developmental Education Models in the Lone Star State: A Second Report on Student Success and Corequisite Coursework. *Center for Postsecondary Success*.
- Sokolove, P. G., & Marbach-Ad, G. (1999). The benefits of out-of-class group study for improving student performance on exams: a comparison of outcomes in active-learning and traditional college biology classes. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 10(3), 49–67.
- Michaelsen, L. K., Knight, A. B., & Fink, L. D. (Eds.). (2023). *Team-based learning: A transformative use of small groups in college teaching*. Taylor & Francis.
- Valentine, J. L., & Price, D. V. (2023). Coaching to completion: Impacts of success coaching on community college student attainment in North Carolina. *The Review of Higher Education*, 46(3), 343–371.
- Mayhew, M. J., Rockenbach, A. B., Bowman, N. A., Seifert, T. A., & Wolniak, G. C. (2016). How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works. Jossey-Bass.
- Chaney, J. (2010) Combustion Characteristics of Biomass Briquettes. University of Nottingham, Nottingham.
- Rauner, D., Briefi, S., & Fantz, U., (2019). Influence of the excitation frequency on the RF power transfer efficiency of low pressure hydrogen ICPs. *Plasma Sources Science and Technology*. 28(9).DOI: 10.1088/1361-6595/ab3d6a
- Hoyt, J. E. (2023). Student connections: The critical role of student affairs and academic support services in retention efforts. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 25(3), 480–491.
- Ricks, J. R., & Warren, J. M. (2021). Transitioning to College: Experiences of Successful First- Generation College Students. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 11(1), 1–15.
- Paulo, N. P., & Barros, R. (2018). Supporting Students' Mental Health and Academic Success Through Mobile App and IoT.
- Garriott, P. O., & Nisle, S. (2018). Stress, coping, and perceived academic goal progress in first-generation college students: The role of institutional supports. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 11(4), 436–450. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000068>
- Kriegbaum, K., Jansen, M., & Spinath, B. (2015). Motivation: A predictor of PISA's mathematical competence beyond intelligence and prior test achievement. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 43, 140–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2015.08.026>

22. Bowen, H. R. (2013). *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. University of Iowa Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20q1w8f>
23. Gist-Mackey, A. N., Wiley, M. L., & Erba, J. (2018). "You're doing great. Keep doing what you're doing": Socially supportive communication during first-generation college students' socialization. *Communication Education*, 67(1), 52–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2017.1390590>
24. Frazier, S. (2020) The 2019 State of the Auth Report: Has 2FA Hit Mainstream Yet? <https://duo.com/blog/the-2019-state-of-the-auth-report-has-2fa-hit-mainstream-yet>
25. Bowden, J. L. H., Tickle, L., & Naumann, K. (2021). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: a holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(6), 1207-1224.
26. Newman, L. A., Madaus, J. W., Lalor, A. R., & Javitz, H. S. (2021). Effect of accessing supports on higher education persistence of students with disabilities. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 14(3), 353.
27. Guzzardo, M. T., Khosla, N., Adams, A. L., Bussmann, J. D., Engelman, A., Ingraham, N., ... & Taylor, S. (2021). "The ones that care make all the difference": Perspectives on student-faculty relationships. *Innovative Higher Education*, 46, 41-58.
28. Clarke, C., Mullin, M., McGrath, D., & Farrelly, N. (2024). University students and study habits. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 41(2), 179-188.
29. Bettinger, E. and Loeb, S. (2017) Promises and Pitfalls of Online Education. *Evidence Speaks Reports*, 2, 1-4.
30. Raaper, R., & Brown, C. (2020). The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Dissolution of the University Campus: Implications for Student Support Practice. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5, 343-349. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-06-2020-0032>
31. Chen, Y., Jensen, S., Albert, L. J., Gupta, S., & Lee, T. (2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) student assistants in the classroom: Designing chatbots to support student success. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 25(1), 161-182.