



# Faculty Mindset Impact on Student Academic Success

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*2025 Student Success Summit  
Kentucky Postsecondary Student Success Collaborative*



Associate Director for  
the Kentucky Student  
Success Collaborative

# About me



Central  
College  
1853



Indianola  
High School



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA



UNIVERSITY  
of VIRGINIA



Motivate Lab

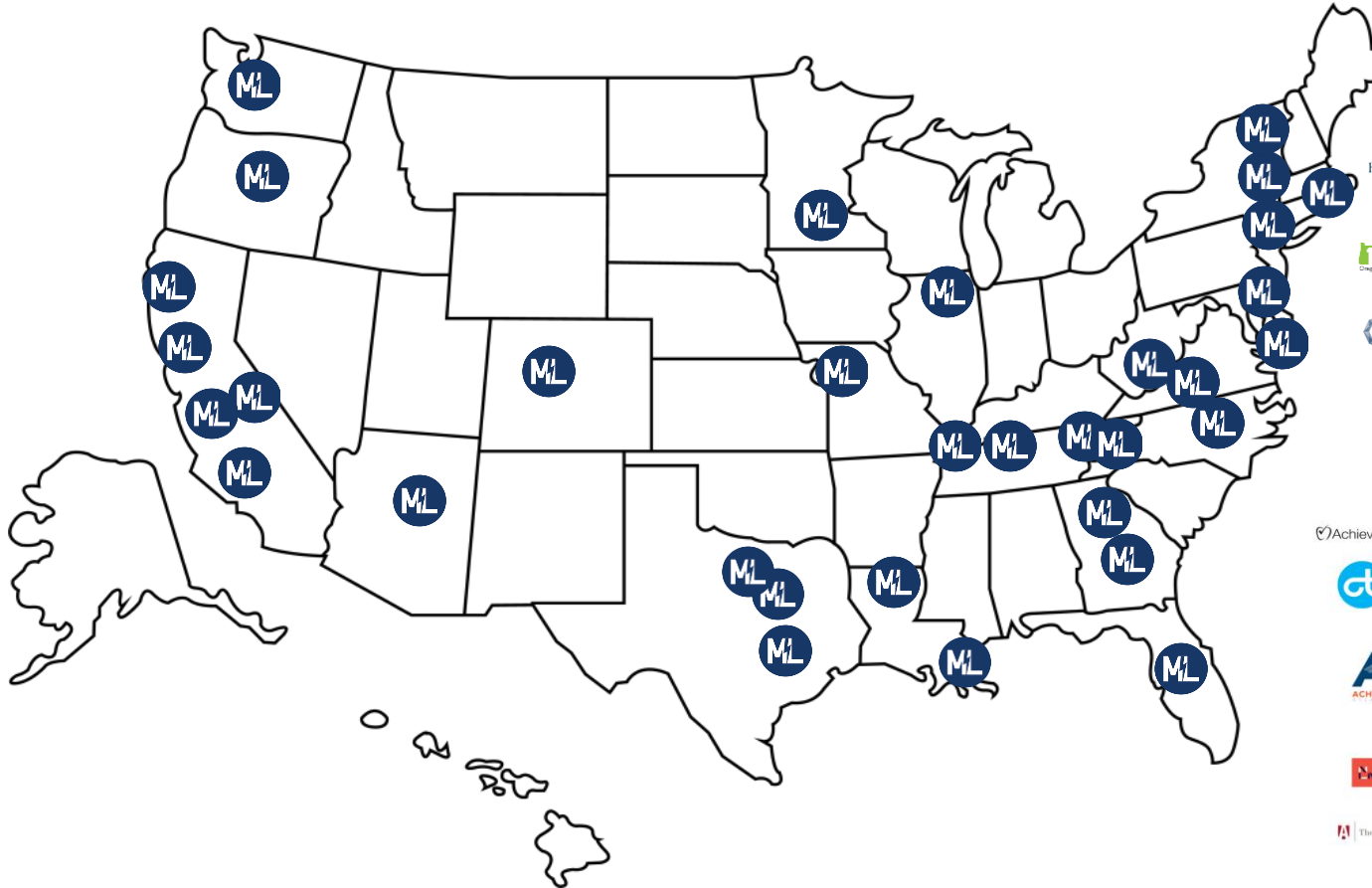


# Motivate Lab's Mission

To **reduce systemic inequity** through rigorous motivation research



# Motivate Lab Partners: 123 and Counting!



# How many years have you worked in education?





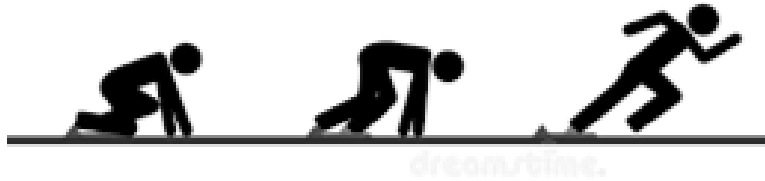
Get Right Then Do Right

# The Psychology of System Change

# Think of a time when you were:



*Motivated!*



*NOT motivated*



*What was the difference in those situations?*

# Motivational Challenges

When we encounter one barrier after another, with each accumulating more stress on top of the previous one, we can experience a downward spiral of motivation and confidence, causing us to worry about our situation and question our ability, purpose, and belonging.





# The Psychology of System Change

## Challenges



- Having things forced on you can undermine motivation
- Motivation isn't only a student and/or faculty challenge, it's a system change challenge
- Students, faculty, and admin are experiencing system change being done to them
- System change is slow

# The Psychology of System Change

It can be done!

Beyond resources, there are ***learning-mindset***  
***supportive*** strategies we can do on campus to embed  
system change efforts and not undermine motivation

# Agenda

1. Introductions 
2. The Psychology of System Change 
3. Some *Motivation* Science
4. You Try It!
5. Not By Chance, By Design
6. Q&A



Some Motivation Science

# Learning Mindsets and Mindset GPS

# Learning Mindsets and Mindset GPS

Students' beliefs about themselves as learners and their learning environment.



**G**

## **Growth Mindset**

Belief that abilities can be developed through effort, the use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed.

**P**

## **Purpose and Relevance**

Belief that one's schoolwork is valuable because it is connected to a larger purpose and/or relevant to one's life.

**S**

## **Sense of Belonging**

Belief that one is connected to and respected by peers, cared for by teachers and mentors, and fits in with the culture.

# Do you know these students?



Which Learning Mindset would you use to help each of the following students?



Grace

I can read and write! Why am I in this class?



Carlos

My high school didn't have advanced math. Will I fit in with this class?



Mia

I'm not good at math and I never will be.



# Why Focus on Learning Mindsets?

## 4Ms

### Meaningful

Related to academic success and students' well-being

### Measurable

Can be assessed and tracked

### Malleable

Can be altered through targeted activities and changes in the educational context

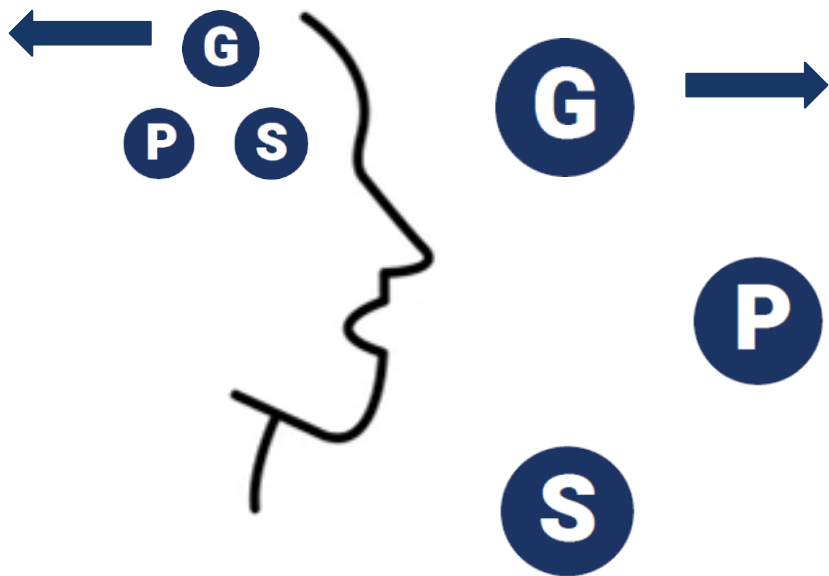
### More Effective

Learning mindset interventions can be particularly powerful and improve outcomes for students from traditionally marginalized groups (e.g., Black, Latine, Indigenous, 1<sup>st</sup> generation)

# Studying Learning Mindsets

## Two Approaches

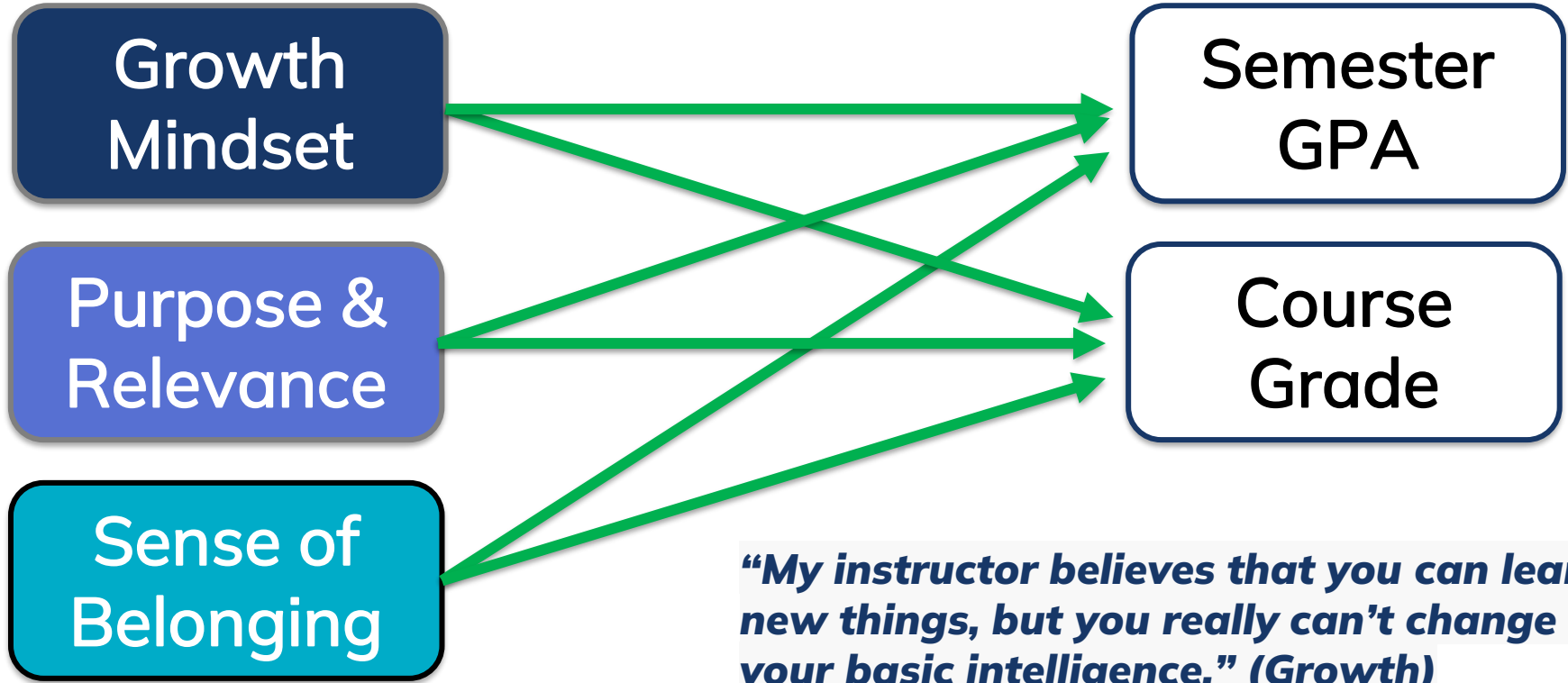
*I can learn new things, but I can't really change my basic intelligence.*



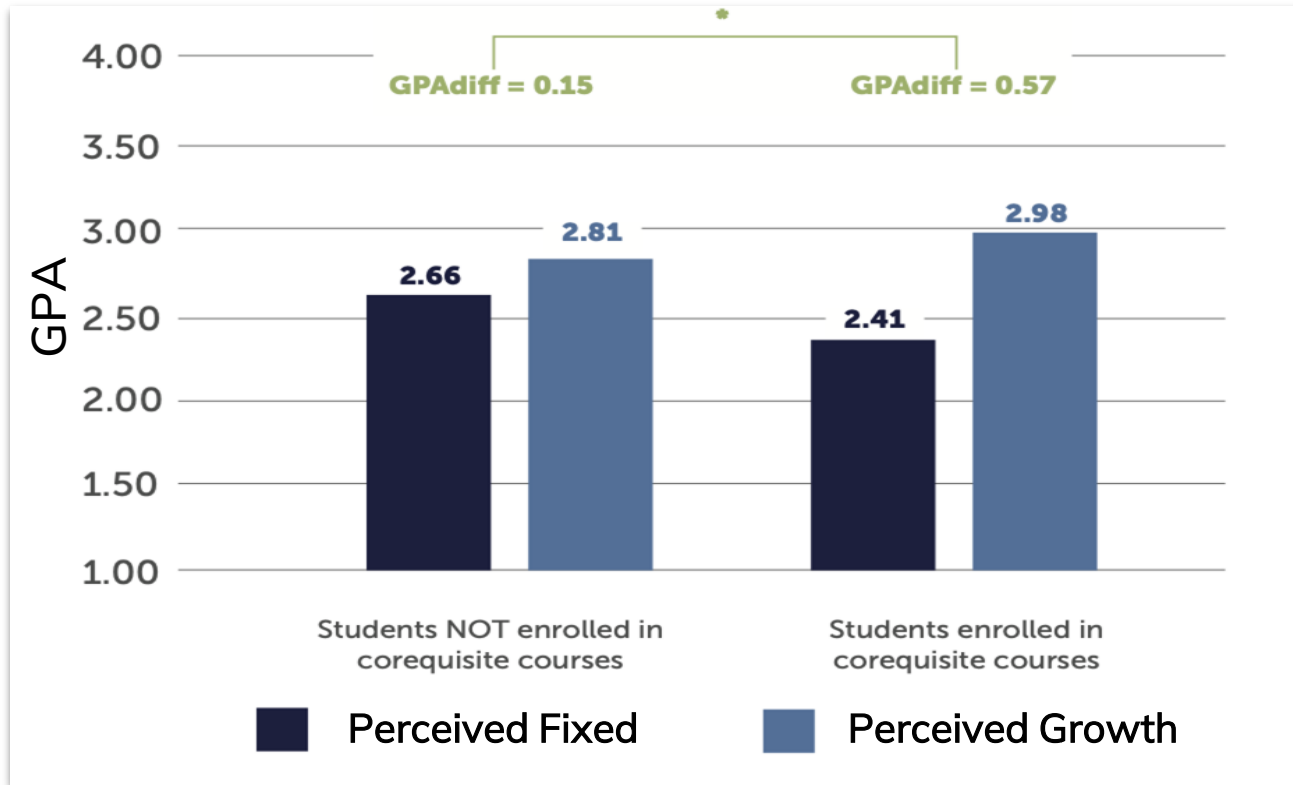
**My instructor believes** that you can learn new things, but you really can't change your basic intelligence.



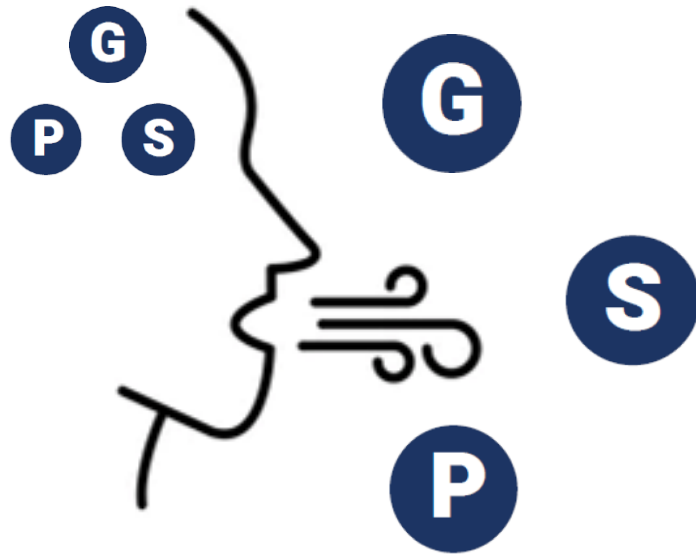
# Perceptions of Faculty Mindsets



# Perceptions of Faculty Mindsets



# Enhance the Quality of the Psychological Air

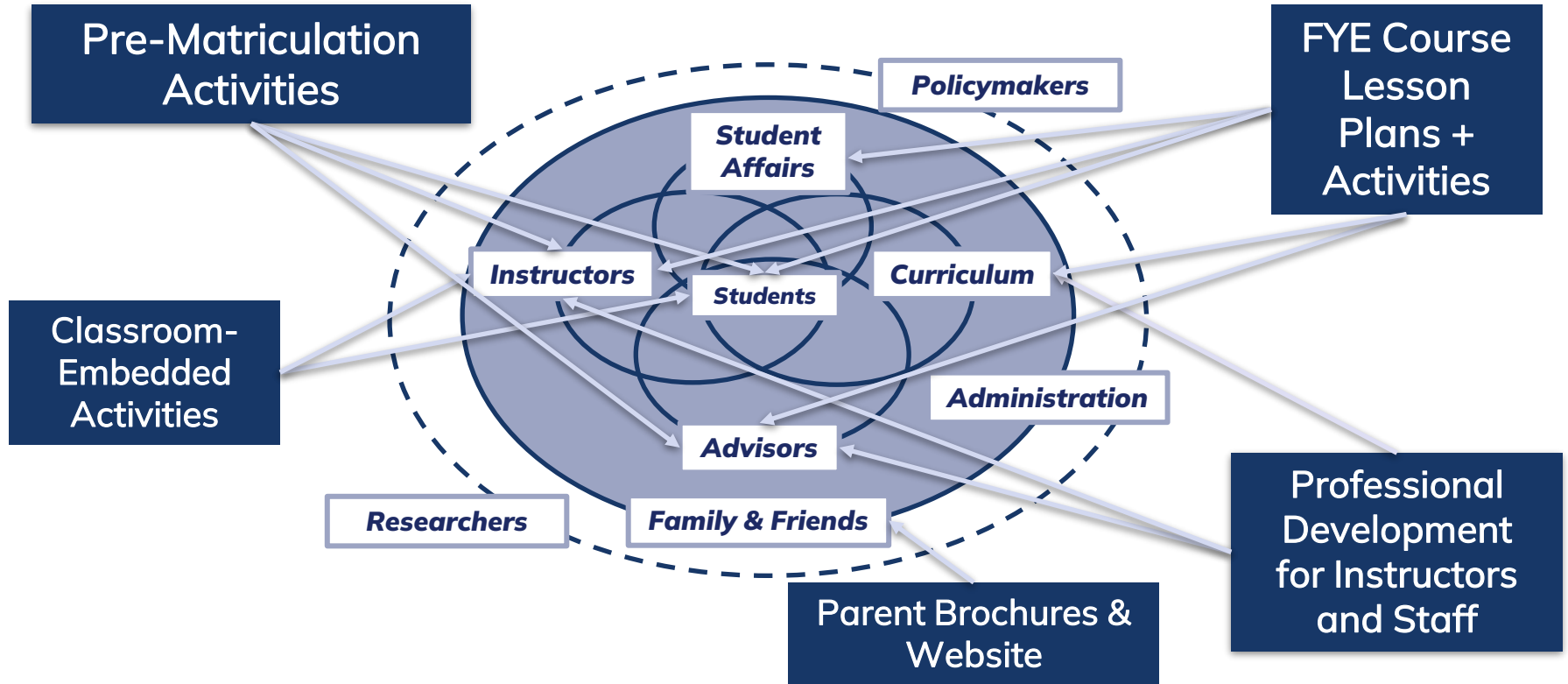


Structures

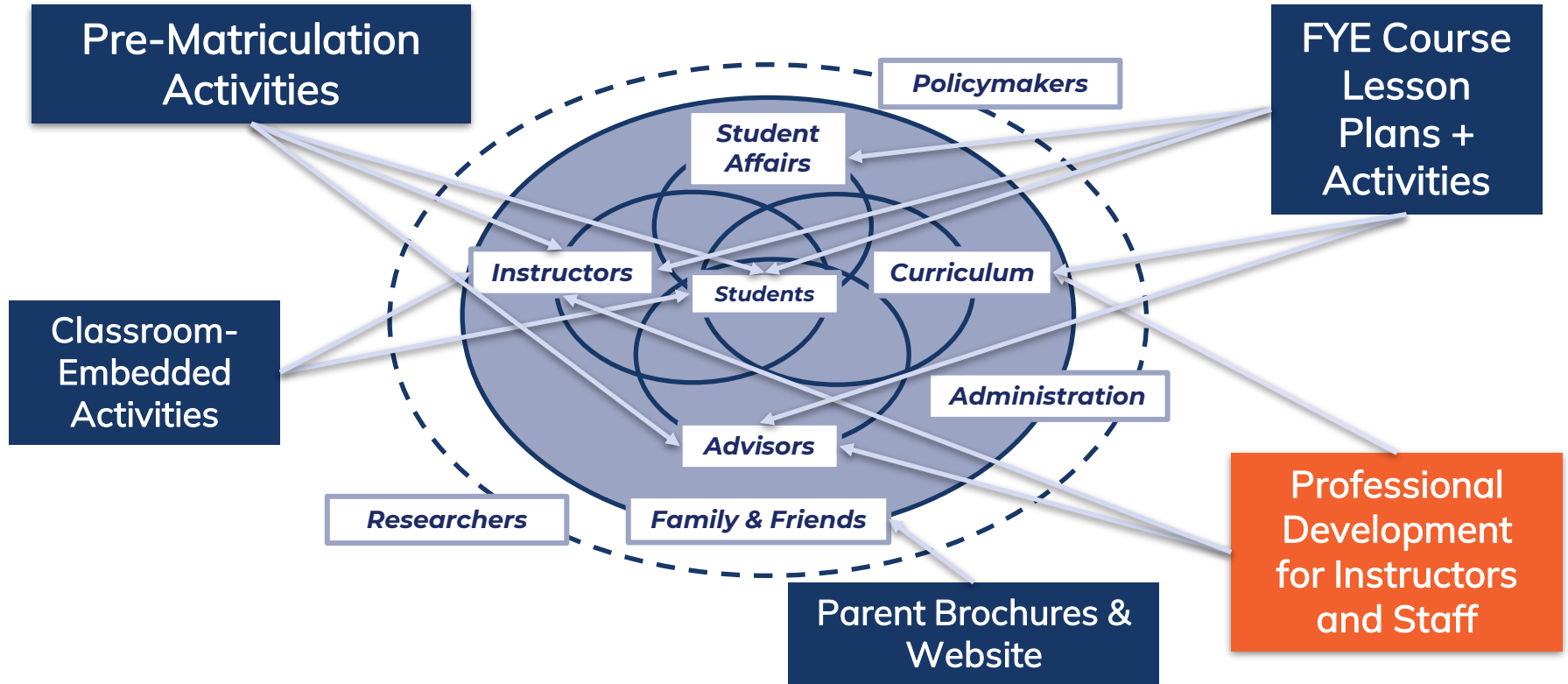
Policies

Practices

# Creating *Psychological Air*



# Creating *Psychological Air*





Identify Supportive and Unsupportive Messaging (Growth Mindset)

**You Try It!**

# Growth Mindset-Supportive Phrases

## Key Elements

*Communicate:*

1. Learning takes **sustained effort**
2. **Difficulty and failure** are a part of learning
3. Using **effective learning strategies and switching strategies** when encountering obstacles
4. **Seek help** when needed

# How is this message mindset-supportive?

## Example 1



Dear (student name),

I noticed you have not turned in the last two recitation assignments. As you know, in order to pass this course you need to earn credit for nine out of the twelve assignments, so you are still within the target range. However, I just want to check in and make sure you are doing alright and feel comfortable with the course material. The lessons in this course build on each other, so it is key to understand any material prior to moving on to the next lesson.

If you want to talk, please let me know. We can meet to come up with a study plan together or go over whatever topics you might feel unsure about.

My office hours are \_\_\_\_, but we can always meet at a different time if those do not work for you.

I hope you have a great day,

**05:00**





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**Growth Mindset**



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Growth Mindset

False Mindset

# Growth Mindset

## Takeaway

**Messages:** Communicate your belief in students' ability to improve through effort and strategies.

**Instruction:** Focus on improvement and developing new skills in your instruction.

**Supports:** Provide supports, particularly when they struggle.

# Learning Mindset Starter Kit

We know you're eager to learn more about motivation and to start prototyping and testing practices at your institution. To help you begin, we've put together several evidence-based, researcher-designed activities to support student motivation that can be adapted and customized for your campus.

*As with any practice, these activities are meant to serve as a starting point. We encourage you to think carefully about what will work in your context and what may need to be altered.*

## BUILD CONNECTIONS

*Targeted learning mindset:* Purpose and Relevance

An activity for students to make connections between what they are learning in school and their interests outside of the classroom. In this activity, students generate a list of personal interests and topics they have learned, then identify potential connections between their interests and course topics. By prompting students to reflect on the relation between coursework and personal interests, this activity highlights the relevance of school for students.



TRY IT

## EVERYDAY GROWTH MINDSET PHRASES

*Targeted learning mindset:* Growth Mindset

Infusing growth mindset practices into your classroom takes more than just saying the right words. However, using well-crafted growth mindset phrases on a regular basis is the first step to communicate to students that they have unknown and unlimited potential. This activity provides guidelines to make sure your language emphasizes: learning takes sustained effort, effective use of learning strategies is important, challenge and failure are opportunities to grow, and students should seek help when needed.



TRY IT

## WISE FRAMING FOR FEEDBACK

*Targeted learning mindsets:* Growth Mindset, Sense of Belonging

A framework for instructors to provide feedback on student work. In this activity, instructors (or anyone who works directly with students) learn best practices around how to construct motivationally-supportive written or verbal feedback on student work. Framing comments using wise feedback communicates not only that the instructor has a high standard for student work, but also that the instructor believes all students are capable of succeeding.



TRY IT



SCAN ME



Faculty and Instructor Professional Development

# Not By Chance, By Design

# Motivating Learners Course

An online & asynchronous learning experience



To empower faculty with **motivationally-supportive language** and **instructional practices** to help students develop adaptive beliefs about learning and school

**2 weeks**  
**~15 hours**

# Course Projects

Types of strategies to support what faculty already do



Send Learning Mindset Messages

Leverage learning mindset supportive messaging in student-facing materials



Cultivate Initial Behaviors

Reinforce learning mindsets by planning opportunities to incorporate Mindset GPS



Create Environments

Embed Mindset GPS into already existing routines, such as assigning work, reviewing exams, or engaging students

# Example Course Projects

Motivational  
Planning

Introducing  
Learning Mindsets

Messaging  
Routines

Active Learning  
Routines

Assignment  
Routines

Exam  
Routines



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Motivational  
Planning

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Active Learning  
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Assignment  
Routines

Exam  
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# Project Team: Cal Poly Pomona



**Paul Beardsley, PhD**  
Professor and Director CEMaST



**Laurie Starkey, Ph. D.**  
Professor, Chemistry and Biology



**Sanaa Saykaliah, Ph.D.**  
Senior Lecturer



**Arlo Caine, Ph.D.**  
Professor and Associate Chair for  
Instruction



**Berit Givens, Ph. D.**  
Professor, Chair of Mathematics and  
Statistics

# Supporting Instructors

## Mindset GPS

### Share-a-thons

3 meetings

Hyflex format

Food

Lightning talks



### Motivation-buddy program

5 meetings

Groups of 2-3

Share ideas and data



# Overall MLC Results

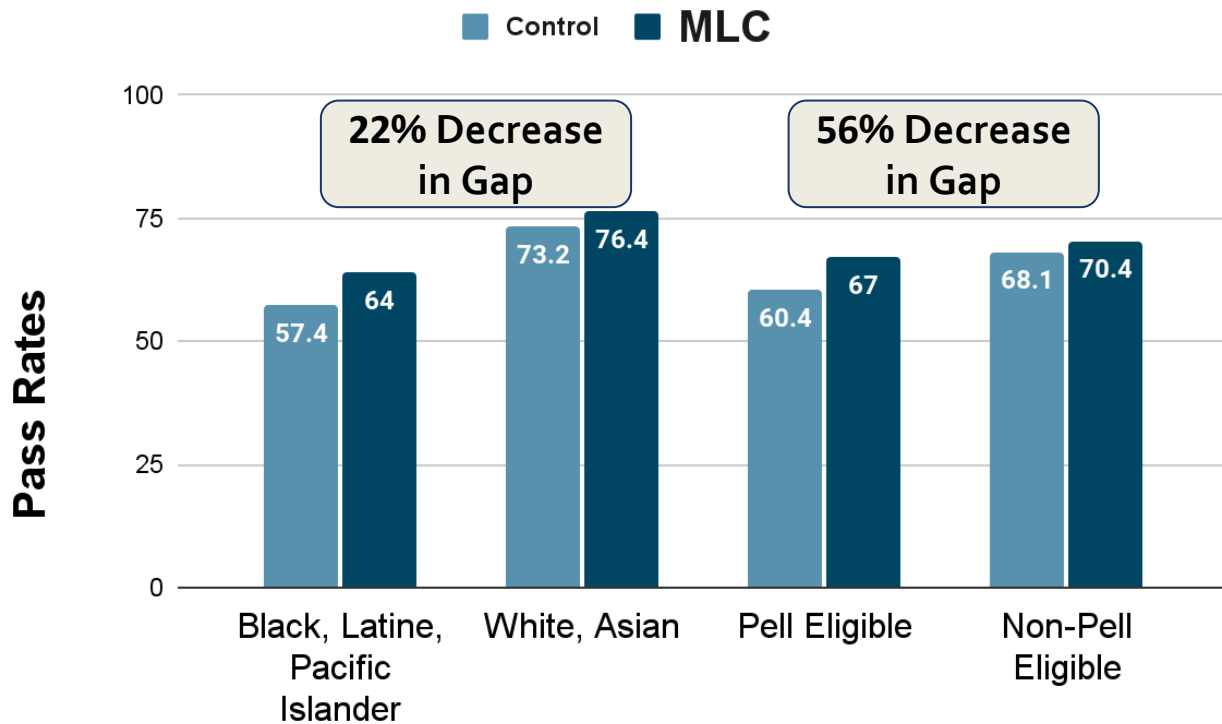
Students taught by MLC instructors earned significantly **higher grades** ( $M = 2.33$ ) than students taught by control group instructors ( $M = 2.19$ ).

Students with MLC instructors had a **higher pass rate** (68.9%) than control group instructors (64.9%).

Students from underrepresented minority (URM) backgrounds and who were Pell grant recipients tended to benefit the most.

# Creating Adaptive Psychological Air

## *The Motivating Learners Course*



01:00

# Minute Paper

What is one question or wondering you have right now?

# Q&A



# Can You Spot the GPS Today?

Introductions and Surveys

S

P

Psychology of System  
Change

G

S

You Try It!

G

P

Minute Paper

G

P



# Meet Chris

[chris@motivatelab.org](mailto:chris@motivatelab.org)



## **CHRIS HULLEMAN**

Founder & CEO  
*Motivate Lab*  
Professor of Education and  
Public Policy  
*University of Virginia*

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Chris S. Hulleman is a professor of education and public policy at the University of Virginia. He is also the founder and director of the Motivate Lab, which collaborates with educational practitioners to help ameliorate systemic racism and inequality. **With over 30 years of experience in K-12 and higher education**, he leads his team to develop and test changes in educational practice that support the motivation of students from historically marginalized backgrounds in education. He received his BA from Central College (Iowa) in 1993 and his PhD in social and personality psychology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2007. Prior to his career in psychology, he spent six years as a teacher, coach, and social worker. Chris is a second generation educator whose grandparents were tenant farmers in Iowa and Nebraska. He tries to emulate their hard work and persistence in the pursuit of social justice. One of his favorite childhood memories is eating his paternal grandmother's homemade fruit pies with plenty of ice cream.

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