Captivating Campuses

Proven Practices that Promote College Student Persistence, Engagement, and Success

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Preface

Captivating Campuses: Proven Practices that Promote College Student Persistence, Engagement, and Success is written for higher education administrators and faculty, student services personnel, and graduate students studying higher education leadership. Mainly, however, this is a book for those who are committed to seeing all college students succeed through being actively engaged in their own education. While this book largely focuses on understanding the role that student engagement plays in educational achievement on the post-secondary campus, it approaches that broad topic with a clear understanding that there are countless factors that affect each student's ability and motivation to engage with the full college experience, both in and outside of the classroom.

The word "captivating" means capable of attracting and holding one's interest (Merriam-Webster, 2018). That is precisely the state of being necessary for contemporary college students to navigate the often turbulent waters of obtaining their degree. Students need to be captivated by at least some element of their college experience—classroom, dorm, athletic, leadership, extracurricular, service activities, to name a few—in order to form a bond with their institution and feel motivated and attached enough to put in the hard work over two, four or more years until graduation.

A great deal has been written about the relationship between student engagement with and feelings of connectedness to their college campus and persistence to graduation. Historically, and still today, there are particular groups of students who regularly take advantage of engagement activities; however, on the margins of any learning community, are tens of thousands of students who cannot or choose not to fully engage.

Post-secondary institutions must make a concerted effort to listen to the needs and experiences of such students in order to program effectively for maximal involvement. For those who are part-time, commuters, non-traditional or members of marginalized groups, full engagement can be hampered by myriad variables to include social discomfort, transportation, finances, the need for childcare, poor academic preparation, disabilities, or other conditions that the students themselves experience as alienating.

Campuses that captivate their students' interests and passions and provide spaces for them to exhibit leadership, socialize with diverse others, form meaningful relationships with their faculty, and matter to peers and personnel have a far greater chance of both retaining their students to graduation and helping them develop as whole human beings who will contribute fully to their communities and society at large.

The motivation for writing this book comes from several concerns:

- *Our recognition that student engagement is the key to positive outcomes during the college years;*
- *Our concern that while access to post-secondary education has increased, graduation rates, especially for historically underserved groups, have not;*
- *Our awareness that student engagement is multifaceted, involving cognitive, social, emotional, and psychological domains;*
- *Our belief that both higher education institutions and college students share equal responsibility for offering and participating in academic and social experiences that enrich classroom learning;*
- *Our knowledge that there is leadership potential inherent in all students and that a campus that builds and nurtures inclusive student leadership helps students thrive;*
- *Our understanding that all meaningful learning is inter-dependent and relational and that there are particular strategies that increase engagement of learners, including opportunities for collaborative work, reflection, writing, problem-solving and global applications of knowledge;*
- *Our awareness that involvement in even one extracurricular activity, club, team, or community project increases student engagement and commitment to the institution;*
- *Our study of the most effective engagement practices over years of experience in higher education and the recognition that there are proven approaches to building connections that keep students on campus.*

The book includes chapters on the many facets of student engagement. It attempts to define student engagement, differentiating it from involvement, and covers seminal theories of college student engagement. As the second chapter indicates, the actual preparation for and transition to college is critical for positive academic and social success—both of which are linked to engagement with the life of the campus. Chapters also

discuss the powerful role that relationships play in helping students identify their interests and talents and find venues for their exploration and expression during the college experience. The connections formed with peers, college personnel, advisors/mentors, and faculty all influence a student's sense that s/he matters on campus, is valued as a unique individual, and would be missed if s/he departed.

Other chapters include discussions and examples of best practice when it comes to creating engaging classroom experiences. National research on college student engagement, conducted over many years, consistently highlights effective practices. Among these are service learning, collaborative projects with peers, research with faculty, study abroad, study as part of a living/learning community, inquiry-based learning, the use of technology, and learning that is situated in real-life problems that are of importance to the student.

Faculty and advisors, as well as coaches, residence life and other student services personnel, as well as mentors may be the key to whether students are retained or lost. This book reviews some of the latest thinking on academic advising and its expanded role in college student development. Given that faculty and advisors face an ever-expanding population of learners, issues of educational equity, culturally-competent practice, and diversity in learning and cultural styles also populate the chapters. While once these learners might have been termed "marginalized," "at-risk," or historically "underserved," theorists and researchers presented in this tome advocate for college personnel to consider that all students arrive "at promise" and that it is the institution's responsibility to use proven, assets-based approaches to promoting success.

Building students' sense of academic efficacy and the personal belief that they have the skills to work through developmental issues and personal challenges on the college campus are a part of the job description of everyone on a captivating campus. Creating a strong cadre of students who can persist to successful college graduation requires the commitment of all offices, all personnel and, of course, the students themselves. Many students matriculate with a sense of academic frailty or impostership while others face social doubts as to whether they will fit in, find others with similar affinities, or blend into the culture of the college. Campuses that captivate students assure these diverse learners that they belong.

The topics noted previously are the focal points of the chapters of this book. The authors strive to balance theory, research, and data-driven best practices in the discussion of how we can make the growing numbers of students able to access higher education successful graduates of their

colleges and universities. While it is exciting that expanded populations of students who once were on the fringes of college recruitment now are matriculating at our campuses, there is an ethical responsibility to provide the framework for their success. Created thoughtfully, this framework reflects individualized student engagement plans that meet the need of each unique campus.

Captivating Campuses: Proven Practices that Promote College Student Persistence, Engagement, and Success was written by an experienced team of higher education professionals. This text aims to add to the growing body of literature on college student engagement by recognizing the growing diversity on our campuses and the challenges and opportunities diverse students bring to the classroom and campus. It is our hope that those who currently practice within the realm of higher education, and those who are hoping to join the ranks, will feel an increased sense of mission to explore new aspects of creating student engagement on campus after reading this book.

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Nicholas D. Young, PhD, EdD

Dr. Nicholas D. Young has worked in diverse educational roles for more than 30 years, serving as a principal, special education director, graduate professor, graduate program director, graduate dean, and longtime superintendent of schools. He was named the Massachusetts Superintendent of the Year; and he completed a distinguished Fulbright program focused on the Japanese educational system through the collegiate level. Dr. Young is the recipient of numerous other honors and recognitions including the General Douglas MacArthur Award for distinguished civilian and military leadership and the Vice Admiral John T. Hayward Award for exemplary scholarship. He holds several graduate degrees including a PhD in educational administration and an EdD in educational psychology.

Dr. Young has served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserves combined for over 34 years; and he graduated with distinction from the U.S. Air War College, the U.S. Army War College, and the U.S. Navy War College. After completing a series of senior leadership assignments in the U.S. Army Reserves as the commanding officer of the 287th Medical Company (DS), the 405th Area Support Company (DS), the 405th Combat Support Hospital, and the 399th Combat Support Hospital, he transitioned to his current military position as a faculty instructor at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA. He currently holds the rank of Colonel.

Dr. Young is also a regular presenter at state, national, and international conferences; and he has written many books, book chapters, and/or articles on various topics in education, counseling, and psychology. Some of his most recent books include *Educating the Experienced: Challenges and Best Practices in Adult Learning* (2019); *Securing the Schoolyard: Protocols that Promote Safety and Positive Student Behaviors* (2019); *Sounding the Alarm in the Schoolhouse: Safety, Security and Student Well-Being* (2019); *The Soul of the Schoolhouse: Cultivating Student Engagement* (2019); *Embracing and Educating the Autistic Child: Valuing Those Who Color Outside the Lines* (2019); *From Cradle to Classroom: A Guide to Special Education for Young Children* (2019); *Captivating Classrooms: Educational*

Strategies to Enhance Student Engagement (2019); *Potency of the Principalship: Action-Oriented Leadership at the Heart of School Improvement* (2018); *Soothing the Soul: Pursuing a Life of Abundance Through a Practice of Gratitude* (2018); *Dog Tags to Diploma: Understanding and Addressing the Educational Needs of Veterans, Servicemembers, and their Families* (2018); *Turbulent Times: Confronting Challenges in Emerging Adulthood* (2018); *Guardians of the Next Generation: Igniting the Passion for Quality Teaching* (2018); *Achieving Results: Maximizing Success in the Schoolhouse* (2018); *From Head to Heart: High Quality Teaching Practices in the Spotlight* (2018); *Stars in the Schoolhouse: Teaching Practices and Approaches that Make a Difference* (2018); *Making the Grade: Promoting Positive Outcomes for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2018); *Paving the Pathway for Educational Success: Effective Classroom Interventions for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2018); *Wrestling with Writing: Effective Strategies for Struggling Students* (2018); *Floundering to Fluent: Reaching and Teaching the Struggling Student* (2018); *Emotions and Education: Promoting Positive Mental Health in Students with Learning* (2018); *From Lecture Hall to Laptop: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Continuing Evolution of Virtual Learning in Higher Education* (2017); *The Power of the Professoriate: Demands, Challenges, and Opportunities in 21st Century Higher Education* (2017); *To Campus with Confidence: Supporting a Successful Transition to College for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2017); *Educational Entrepreneurship: Promoting Public-Private Partnerships for the 21st Century* (2015); *Beyond the Bedtime Story: Promoting Reading Development during the Middle School Years* (2015); *Betwixt and Between: Understanding and Meeting the Social and Emotional Developmental Needs of Students During the Middle School Transition Years* (2014); *Learning Style Perspectives: Impact Upon the Classroom* (3rd ed., 2014); and *Collapsing Educational Boundaries from Preschool to PhD: Building Bridges Across the Educational Spectrum* (2013); *Transforming Special Education Practices: A Primer for School Administrators and Policy Makers* (2012); and *Powerful Partners in Student Success: Schools, Families and Communities* (2012). He also co-authored several children's books to include the popular series *I am Full of Possibilities.* Dr. Young may be contacted directly at nyoung1191@aol.com.

Christine N. Michael, PhD

Dr. Christine N. Michael is a more than 40-year educational veteran with a variety of professional experiences. She holds degrees from Brown University, Rhode Island College, Union Institute and University, and the

University of Connecticut, where she earned a PhD in education, human development, and family relations. Her previous work has included middle and high school teaching, higher education administration, college teaching, and educational consulting. She has also been involved with Head Start, Upward Bound, national non-profits Foundation for Excellent Schools and College for Every Student, and the federal Trio programs. She is currently the Program Director of Low Residency Programs at American International College.

Dr. Michael has published widely on topics in education and psychology. Her most recent works included serving as a primary author on the book *Securing the Schoolyard: Protocols that Promote Safety and Positive Student Behaviors* (2019); *Sounding the Alarm in the Schoolhouse: Safety, Security and Student Well-Being* (2019); *The Soul of the Schoolhouse: Cultivating Student Engagement* (2019); *Captivating Classrooms: Educational Strategies to Enhance Student Engagement* (2019); *Turbulent Times: Confronting Challenges in Emerging Adulthood* (2018); *To Campus with Confidence: Supporting a Successful Transition to College for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2017), *Beyond the Bedtime Story: Promoting Reading Development during the Middle School Years* (2015), *Betwixt and Between: Understanding and Meeting the Social and Emotional Development Needs of Students During the Middle School Transition Years* (2014), and *Powerful Partners in Student Success: Schools, Families and Communities* (2012). Dr. Michael may be contacted at cnevadam@gmail.com.

Jennifer A. Smolinski, J.D.

Attorney Jennifer Smolinski has worked in education for more than three years. Her role within higher education includes the creation of, and coordinator for, the Center for Accessibility Services and Academic Accommodations at American International College located in Springfield, Massachusetts. She has also taught criminal justice and legal research and writing classes within the field of higher education. Prior to her work at the collegiate level, Attorney Smolinski worked as a solo-practitioner conducting education and disability advocacy.

Attorney Smolinski received a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Connecticut, a Master in Psychology and Counseling as well as a Master of Higher Education Student Affairs from Salem State University and her law degree from Massachusetts School of Law. She is currently an EdD in Educational Leadership and Supervision candidate at American International College, where she is focusing her research on special education and laws to protect students with disabilities in the classroom.

Attorney Smolinski has become a regular presenter educating the faculty, staff and students at institutes of higher education on disabilities and accommodations at the collegiate level and has presented to local high school special education departments on the transition to college under the Americans with Disabilities Act. She has co-authored *Securing the Schoolyard: Protocols that Promote Safety and Positive Student Behaviors* (2019); *Sounding the Alarm in the Schoolhouse: Safety, Security and Student Well-Being* (2019); *Captivating Classrooms: Educational Strategies to Enhance Student Engagement* (2019); *Guardian of the Next Generation: Igniting the Passion for Quality Teaching* (2018); and *Making the Grade: Promoting Positive Outcomes for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2018). She can be reached at Jennifer.Smolinski@aic.edu.