Student Support (Re)defined

theRPgroup [SM]

Equitable
Integrated
Cost Effective

Tutors are supportive as role models.

-Focus Group Participant

10 Ways Tutors Can Support Student Success

Students participating in the Student Support (Re)defined study told us that everyone on a college campus can play a role in their achievement—including tutors. Tutors are uniquely positioned to help students experience the six success factors identified by this research (see sidebar, Six Success Factors Defined). Whether "drop-in" or embedded in a course, tutoring strengthens student relationships and belonging on campus. Moreover, student tutors participating in the study shared that tutoring others made them feel valued and connected.

The RP Group developed these suggestions for tutors and all peer educators in partnership with Dr. Vandana Gavaskar, Director of Learning Support Services at Santa Barbara City College and President of the Association of Colleges for Tutoring and Learning Assistance (ACTLA).*

1 Ask students about their academic and career goals, personal and family history, and culture *(directed, valued, connected, nurtured)*

Talk to students about their major, the classes they like most, their personal histories, and life experiences to demonstrate caring and interest in their future success. Many participants in Student Support (Re)defined—specifically African-American/Black, Latina/o/x, and first-generation students—indicated that being asked to share their backgrounds and cultures increased their sense of belonging and value to the college community.

2 Share your own educational path *(directed, nurtured, connected, valued)*

Describe why you chose to go to college and pursue a specific major, and how you are making decisions about your education and career. Ask about their academic and career choices. Sharing educational journeys past and present can help students understand the benefits of college, learn the processes for clarifying and setting goals, and relate their choices to yours.

3 Get to know your students as learners *(nurtured, engaged)*

Ask students how they view their own abilities, interests, and educational experiences to support them as unique learners in a specific course and discipline. Mentor students to minimize the negative affective domains of learning that can cause extreme stress and hamper learning. Help them identify times they have been successful as a student and connect those examples to their current work.

4 Demonstrate how to be a successful college student *(focused, nurtured, engaged)*

Describe to students the importance of taking ownership over their own learning. Talk about specific ways you tackled obstacles during your community college journey and changes you made to become more successful. For example, offer ways you learned to take and organize notes for different disciplines and for varying purposes, the value of faculty office hours, and the importance of seeing a counselor regularly to stay on path. Discuss how you balance school with life, work, and family responsibilities; how to ask for help; how to prioritize the workload of multiple courses; and how to manage stress related to finances and/or relationships.

*This resource uses the term "tutor" to refer to all peer educators serving our students, including supplemental instruction (SI) leaders and other learning assistance professionals.

5 **Provide regular and meaningful tutoring activities that support students' performance and progress** *(focused, engaged)*

Expose students to a variety of approaches to learning and make learning strategies visible. For example, use collaborative learning strategies to help students gain a different perspective on course content, materials, and assignments and build their confidence in their own abilities. Employ and call out activities designed to foster both habits of mind and a growth mindset, building their capacity to tackle future academic challenges. Help students develop metacognition about their own learning beyond a single assignment or a single course.

6 **Regularly check with students about their understanding of the course material and informally assess their learning** *(nurtured, engaged, valued)*

Since course delivery, lecture methods, group work, and reading and writing assignments can vary from course to course, gathering student perspectives on disciplinary differences and teaching practices can inform your own tutoring approach. Take the pulse of their understanding to inform which specific strategies you help them use to tackle reading, writing, and comprehension tasks for specific disciplines and individual courses.

7 **Demonstrate the value of collaborative learning and developing peer support networks** *(nurtured, engaged, connected, valued)*

Support learning outside the classroom by helping students create peer networks and experience the shared aspects of learning in a college environment. Demonstrate the value of learning networks and provide additional resources for academic support on campus. Engage students in collaborative learning approaches and activities in each session, demonstrating that learning is contextual and social. Ask students how they will access collaborative learning and establish peer networks in the future when they need academic support again.

8 **Connect students with available resources and help them understand how to proactively navigate the college** *(directed, engaged, connected)*

Share your wisdom about campus resources and facilitate student connections with supports such as counseling, disability programs and services, health services, equity cohort programs, and student activities. Demystify policies and practices that can overwhelm students transitioning to college life and impact their progress toward their goals.

9 **Actively recognize students' potential for learning** *(nurtured, valued)*

Ask students to share how they are experiencing course activities, how they are approaching a particular problem and assignment, and what strategies they find helpful in each tutoring and learning activity. Use tutoring activities in different modalities (e.g., visual, audio, kinesthetic) to enhance students' understanding of what they are learning. Invite students to share their learning strategies as a way to empower independence and to help build awareness and confidence in their learning abilities.

10 **Ask students for feedback about their tutoring experience** *(engaged, valued)*

To ensure students get the maximum benefit from tutoring, provide them real-time and formal and informal ways to share what works, what needs improvement, and what may be missing. Provide directed learning activities (DLAs) that help students reflect on what they learned through their tutoring experience and what their next steps are. Use feedback to improve learning and addressing concerns.

Note to Tutor Coordinators

10 Ways Tutors Can Support Student Success reflects the innovative training, supervision, and assessment that tutor coordinators develop and lead in order for students at colleges to experience the six success factors. Please refer to the companion piece *Tutor Coordinator Context for 10 Ways Tutors Can Support Student Success* for more information found on the *Student Support (Re)defined Resources* page under "Tools and Guides."