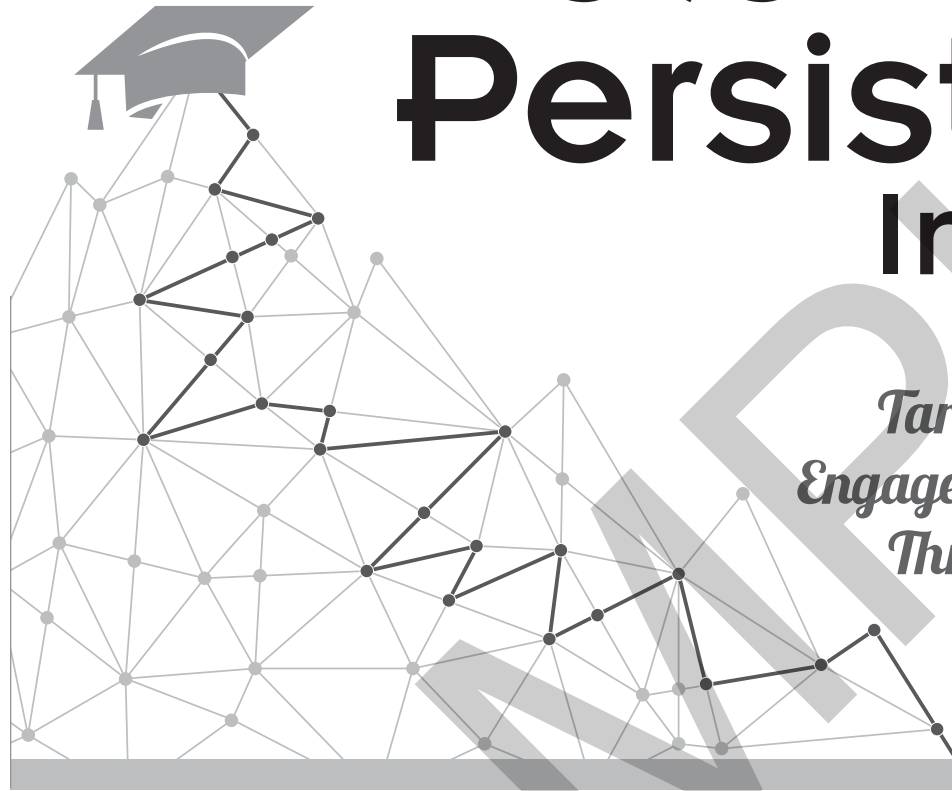




Campus Retention & Persistence Initiatives



*Targeted Strategies to
Engage & Empower Students
Through Graduation*

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Topics Covered Include...

1. Addressing Basic Needs Insecurity
2. Using Success Coaches
3. “Nudging” Students
4. Providing Housing Assistance
5. Supporting Adult Student Learners
6. Supporting First-Generation Students
7. Supporting Foster Youth
8. Supporting Student Veterans
9. Supporting Student Parents
10. Supporting Low-Income Students
11. Engaging Distance and Online Learners
12. Building a Campus-Wide Support System
13. Offering Completion Grants
14. Providing Other Types of Grants & Scholarships
15. Tapping Into Alumni
16. Encouraging Peer-Led Initiatives
17. Engaging Parents and Family Members
18. Providing Mental and Emotional Health Support
19. Creating Retention-Specific Professional Positions
20. Offering Learning Support
21. Fostering Grit and Resilience
22. Encouraging Stop-Outs Not to Become Dropouts
23. Providing Retention-Related Co-Curricular Activities
24. Fostering a Sense of Belonging
25. Focusing on Purpose

Fostering Grit & Resilience



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Initiative Overview

Much has been written about the perceived lack of grit and resilience among today's students and how it impacts their academics, relationships, finances, health, careers and connections. One way that grit and resilience *can* have a positive impact is when it comes to retention, since it involves goal setting, perseverance, handling mistakes and more. And some institutions are tapping into this realization with related programs.

Grit is that stick-with-it-ness that helps students hold steadfast to their long-term goals, according to well-known grit researcher Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth, author of *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. Gritty students keep on going, despite setbacks, mistakes and slow progress, because their goals help organize and give meaning to their efforts. Grit also infuses a sense of optimism and purpose due to its can-do, will-do mindset. "Grit predicts achievement in really challenging and personally meaningful contexts," Duckworth wrote. "Graduating from high school or college rather than dropping out is one example."

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from failures and hard times. According to The Academic Resilience Consortium, resilience can be broadly understood as "capacities for persistence, creativity, emotional intelligence, grit, cognitive flexibility, risk-taking, agency, adapting to change, delaying gratification, learning from failure and success, and overcoming adversities."

If a student lacks resilience, he may feel victimized, stuck, overwhelmed or turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms when something goes wrong. A student who is resilient, on the other hand, will be better able to work through a problem, handle stress in healthy ways and find enjoyment in life.

Both grit and resilience are key tools for students to learn and put into practice if they're going to succeed — and *stay* — on campus.

Sources: AngelaDuckworth.com; "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance" TED Talk; AcademicResilience.org

"Grit is one of the best predictors of success, even more than IQ, social intelligence, good looks, or physical health."

– Dr. Sherry Woosley, resiliency and grit researcher

Is Someone Gritty?

- Do they know there are multiple pathways to success?
- Do they keep working hard even after experiencing failure or wanting to quit?
- Are they committed to staying passionate about their purpose, even when it's difficult and challenging?
- Do they know when and how to ask for help?

Source: Baylor University Parents Network, www.baylor.edu/alumni/parentsnetwork/

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Best Practices

Here are some grit and resilience initiatives from various institutions...

#BGritty at Bowling Green State

Bowling Green State University's (OH) Counseling Center held a #BGritty Challenge that provided students with a series of monthly challenges to increase their grit factor. These included being encouraged to do something that scares them, share something that motivates them, identify a gritty hero and more. The challenges were presented in one-minute PowToon videos. Check them out at: <https://bit.ly/32YKo4H>.

And check out their "Get Roaring, Real, Resilient, Recharged and Rolling in Ten" handout at: <https://bit.ly/31JwZNF>.

Harvard's Success-Failure Project

"The mission of The Success-Failure Project is to create opportunities for discussion, reflection, understanding, and creative engagement regarding issues of success, failure, and resilience," their website says.

Members of the university community are encouraged to grapple with questions such as...

- What makes me feel fulfilled and what do I define as a success?
- What does it mean to be responsible for, to learn from or just to suffer both my successes and my failures?
- What does it mean to be a good, successful, even excellent student and human being?

Project initiatives include...

- **Alumni Interview Project.** Alums reflect on the meaning of "success" and "failure" in their work and lives as they listen to audio of their younger selves.
- **Beyond the Success Paradigm.** Stories about alums' experiences that have influenced their sense of self, their expectations and their definitions of success and failure.
- **First-Gen Voices.** Audio of first-generation students at Harvard speaking with someone who matters to them, in collaboration with StoryCorps.
- **Reflections on Rejections.** Harvard faculty, deans, staff and alums reflect on their experiences with rejection.

"You are not born with a fixed amount of resilience. Like a muscle, you can build it up, draw on it when you need it. In that process you will figure out who you really are — and you just might become the very best version of yourself."

– From Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's 2016 UC Berkeley commencement address

Learn more about the Success-Failure Project at: <https://bsc.harvard.edu/success-failure-project>.

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Best Practices *(continued)*

Stanford University's Resilience Project

At Stanford University (CA), the Resilience Project “combines personal storytelling, events, programs, and academic skills coaching to motivate and support you as you experience the setbacks that are a normal part of a rigorous education. We help you learn from failure and hope to instill a sense of belonging and bravery. Our goal is to help change the perception of failure from something to be avoided at all costs, to something that has meaning, purpose, and value,” according to their website.

Programs include...

- **“Stanford, I Screwed Up!”** This annual event encourages students to celebrate their “epic failures” through storytelling, songs and other creative means.
- **Resilience Project Stories.** These videos share students’ real-life stories.
- **Six-Word Stories.** Students were encouraged to submit their failure narratives using just six words and the results are fascinating!

This project is a collaborative effort among offices such as Undergraduate Advising and Research, the Office of Judicial Affairs, the Career Development center, the Overseas Studies Program, Residential Education and the Stanford Alumni Association.

Learn more about The Resilience Project at: <https://learningconnection.stanford.edu/resilience-project>.

Fall Forward Hosted by the U. of Washington Campus Resilience Lab

At the University of Washington (UW), the campus Resilience Lab hosts an annual event where UW faculty, coaches, administrators and community members share their personal stories of failure and setbacks they have faced. The idea is to share experiences that have shaped them both personally and professionally.

This type of event could be adapted to students, encouraging them to share their mistakes and missteps to see how these events helped them develop grit and resilience. Did they fall apart? Or did they move ahead and embrace a mistake as a learning opportunity?

“We rarely share our authentic and vulnerable stories. Often, we curate how the world sees us through social media posts filtered to perfection. When we get honest about our hardships, failures, and setbacks, we start to normalize them as part of the human experience as opposed to something that is just happening to us. That understanding that we all go through hard times and that we are all suffering with something is part of what brings us into community through events like Fail Forward.”

– From the Resilience Lab at the University of Washington

Learn more about Fall Forward and the University of Washington Resilience Lab at: <https://wellbeing.uw.edu/resilience-lab/fail-forward/>.

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Tools to Use

Self-Reflection

Before informed discussions about grit and resilience can truly take place, it's important to help those involved with retention efforts get to know what the two terms really mean. Applying them in an individual context of self-reflection is a start. This level of self-awareness can make everyone more effective.

One way to get the ball rolling is asking all involved to answer the 10-question Grit Scale from grit researcher Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth. Individual scores will reflect how passionate and persevering people view themselves to be. You can find this scale at: <http://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>.

Book Club

To further participants' understanding of what grit and resilience are, and how these characteristics may tie into retention and persistence efforts, consider a book club. Have everyone read the same resource and discuss it as a way of enhancing understanding.

Some good options include...

- *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth
- *Mindset* by Carol Dweck
- *Grit Breakthrough: 18 Ways Successful People Develop Grit and Unshakable Personal Power* by Josh Garner

The Retention Tie-in

Once your group has a good grasp of what grit and resilience are, they can work to apply these concepts to campus retention and persistence efforts.

As Part One, you can...

- Give everyone a few index cards and a pen.
- Ask them to jot down roadblocks — one per card — that students may encounter that could impact their retention/persistence. These could include anything from a parent losing their job so finances become tenuous to a commuter's car breaking down to struggling with an anxiety disorder.
- Gather all the cards and mix them together.
- Break participants into trios.
- Give each trio a few cards so they can discuss each scenario. Ask them to use the lens of how an enhanced sense of grit and resilience might help a student in each individual situation.
- Bring the large group together and ask willing groups to discuss a few situations.

At this point, participants will be better able to see how grit and resilience can play an important role in campus retention and persistence efforts.

Grit is Not...

- Talent
- Luck
- How intensely, in the moment, you want something
- Present in every aspect of your life

Source: AngelaDuckworth.com/qa/

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Tools to Use *(continued)*

As Part Two, you can...

- Break into pairs to discuss grit and resilience initiatives that exist on your campus.
- Then, talk about what other efforts could help students' retention and persistence to graduation.
- In the larger group, identify four to five initiatives that you'd like to implement on campus and some action steps for doing so.

At this point, you may want to create working groups to implement the grit and resilience efforts on campus, setting check-in dates to gauge progress.

A Grit and Resilience Checklist

What does it look like to be gritty and resilient? People with these characteristics often tend to do the following. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 as never do and 10 as always do) to see how you're doing in each category.

- ___ Not let adversity flatten you
- ___ Have personal and classroom/workplace success
- ___ Connect with others
- ___ Engage in your community
- ___ Not buy in to drama
- ___ Realize that grief is a process — and so is joy
- ___ Seek help when struggling
- ___ Realize you don't have to do it all on your own
- ___ Be self-aware
- ___ Feel empowered
- ___ Take care of your personal needs
- ___ Not judge yourself too harshly
- ___ Engage in mindfulness and self-reflection
- ___ Accept what happens with flexibility instead of rigidity
- ___ Choose your responses intentionally, rather than always just reacting
- ___ Know that there's a difference between who you are and what's causing you trouble at the moment
- ___ Consider various possibilities about what is permanent and what can change
- ___ Reframe from a "glass is half empty" perspective to a "glass is half full" one

Discussion Questions

- What is currently being done on campus to embrace mistakes and missteps as learning opportunities?
- What more can we be doing?
- How can embracing failure lead to retention and persistence to graduation?
- How can we help campus community members better understand what grit and resilience are really all about?

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Five Takeaways

Here are five takeaways to consider when putting grit and resilience initiatives in practice...

1. Work to educate yourselves and the campus community about what grit and resilience truly mean, beyond the “buzz words.”
2. Be able to articulate ways that enhancing students’ levels of grit and resilience can impact their persistence to graduation.
3. Get familiar with grit and resilience efforts at other colleges and universities to determine what might fit best at your institution.
4. Recognize how important it is to create an environment where mistakes and failures are celebrated and learned from rather than hidden.
5. Consider how different departments can be part of the effort to spread messages of grit and resilience, so the efforts don’t just reside in one area.

“Resilient people do not let adversity define them. They find resilience by moving towards a goal beyond themselves, transcending pain and grief by perceiving bad times as a temporary state of affairs... It’s possible to strengthen your inner self and your belief in yourself, to define yourself as capable and competent. It’s possible to fortify your psyche. It’s possible to develop a sense of mastery.”

– “The Art of Resilience” by Hara Estroff Marano, *Psychology Today*

Additional Resources

Here are some resources to help learn more about grit and resilience...

- The Academic Resilience Consortium, <https://academicresilience.org>
- *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Dr. Angela Duckworth
- “Navigating College with Resilience” at Smith College, <https://bit.ly/2yDMelq>
- *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* TED Talk with Dr. Angela Duckworth
- “Phoenix Flops” 14-Minute Documentary About Overcoming Failure and Becoming Resilient, <https://bit.ly/2M08MyB>
- “Student Resilience and Healthy Coping Are Key to Student Well-Being” by Delvina Miremadi, PhD, NASPA Blog, <https://bit.ly/2pBHogb>
- Resilience Pyramid from Cornell Health, <https://bit.ly/2GWaGMz>
- “How a Flashlight Changed My Life: Engineering Mindfulness” by Joseph Holtgreive, TEDx Northwestern U, <https://bit.ly/2uhEz3S>
- The Story of Failure: Shifting Mindsets, Cultivating Resilience at Tulane University, <https://success.tulane.edu/coaching/story-failure>
- Strengths-Based Resilience from the University of Toronto, Scarborough, www.strengthsbasedresilience.com
- “How People Learn to Become Resilient” by Maria Konnikova, *The New Yorker*
- “Resources on Developing Resilience, Grit, and Growth Mindset,” Edutopia, <https://www.edutopia.org/resilience-grit-resources>