

Sustaining college students' persistence and achievement through exemplary instructional strategies

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ABSTRACT

A “take it or leave it” attitude has no place in higher education. Society needs an educated citizenry to sustain and advance its technological and global mission. Too few students are entering college and even fewer than might reasonably be expected are graduating. Retention and graduation rates serve as key indicators of performance for institutions of higher education (Titus, 2004). This study examined the literature to present an update on student persistence and related areas of concern, and ascertained instructional strategies of high promise for sustaining persistence and enhancing achievement of college students. Special attention was given to strategies thought to be effective for minority students attending historically black colleges and universities. The study further informed the profession with development of a practical list of things that faculty and students might do to improve students' persistence and increase their academic achievement. While governmental agencies and other stakeholders have significant roles to play in the retention and education of college students, faculty and students must make sure that the classroom experience is as efficient and effective as possible in leading to program completion.

Keywords: college persistence, graduation rates, responsive teaching, student achievement, student motivation

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INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities are being held accountable for retention and graduation rates by state and federal policy makers. States use the data as performance indicators and the federal government is considering linking them to eligibility for federal student financial aid programs (Titus, 2004). In such a position, institutions of higher learning need to know about conditions that influence student retention and achievement. The “take it or leave it” attitude is not sufficient. Dropping out of school or college has negative consequences for the individual student and impedes economic prosperity (Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011).

Access to higher education for American students has improved in recent years, but student persistence in 4-year institutions remains a concern (Chen, 2012). Student success and student learning outcomes from college are two very visible issues that attract attention from policy makers, institutional administrators, and researchers. The historically low rate of college completion has made student success a longstanding interest of educational researchers (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012; Wang, 2009).

Some authors posit that few areas in the field of higher education have attracted as much attention as student persistence (Hu & Ma, 2010; Tinto, 1975); however, Orfield (2006) stated that too little energy has been put into addressing the problem and producing accurate statistics. One of the best known models on college student persistence is the integration model proposed by Tinto (1975). In the Tinto model, academic integration and social integration are the two key constructs to conceptualize student attrition. The academic system focuses on academic affairs of the college; and the social system component focuses on the daily lives and personal needs of the various members of the institution. The extent to which students integrate into both systems of the college is important for them to persist and succeed at the college (Hu & Ma, 2010). From Tinto’s model, dropout is viewed as the result of two major failures: lack of integration into the social life of the institution and/or insufficient compatibility with the academic demands. Thus, dropout is more likely to occur among students who fail to establish membership in the college’s social community or who fall short with the prevailing values and intellectual norms of the college (Lee & Choi, 2011; Tinto, 1975).

Further elaborating on Tinto’s model and other frameworks for studying student persistence, Hu, McCormick, and Gonyea (2012) stated that such models help to enrich the understanding of student persistence in college and shed light upon institutional policies and practices. Titus (2004) posited that such models recognize the influence of student peer group climate on individual outcomes. Chen (2012) indicated that the models provide an inclusive view of the student dropout process by integrating psychological, social, and organizational perspectives and emphasize the impact of dynamic, reciprocal interaction between the environment and individuals. The author’s main point was that experiences promoting students’ social and intellectual integration into college communities will probably strengthen their commitment and reduce dropout risk. Boyraz, Horne, Owens and Armstrong (2013) concluded from study of the models that student departure suggests that student persistence and retention are greatly determined by students’ precollege characteristics (e.g., family background, academic preparedness, and prior skills and abilities).

Hartley (2011) concluded from the study of Tinto’s theory of student departure that academic persistence is an interplay between the student and his/her ability to integrate academically (referring to the student’s motivation to attend class and study) and socially

(referring to the student's subjective sense of fitting into the university). The author observed that there was clear evidence that academic and social integration shape college retention. Hu and Ma (2010) also found that social integration into the academic and social communities of the college was positively related to the likelihood of persistence and that faculty academic advising of students can contribute to academic integration into the college system. The authors further observed that faculty mentoring can contribute to alleviating the sense of alienation and isolation and meet the need for adjustment and support for underrepresented and at-risk students. Titus (2004) studied the research on college persistence and gathered that it often explored the predictors of persistence but not the relationship between the institutional context and persistence, ignoring the effect of student variables operating within institutions on institutional persistence rates.

This study was concerned with the impact of the relationship between the student and the professor on persistence rates. Principal tenets from Tinto's theory and other frameworks were used to make the case of faculty and students working together to enhance persistence and achievement. Tinto (1975) indicated that research on dropout has been marked by inadequate conceptualization of the dropout process; and thus, formulated a model to explain the process of interaction between the student and the institution that lead to dropout.

School dropout is a major challenge for American schools and its effects are devastating to the victims, their families, and to society. There is a need to gain a clear understanding of the problem and to initiate promising strategies and plans for its resolution. The problem can be better understood by investigating researched reasons for school dropout, the magnitude of the problem, key demographics of the picture, and the impact of the problem on the individual, family, and society. Attention should also be given to efforts that are in place to reduce school dropout and identifying strategies and procedures that are most effective in resolving the problem. These concerns are the focus of this study.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this manuscript was to document the magnitude of students discontinuing college and the various demographics associated with it; and to analyze noted persistence plans, programs, and strategies to extrapolate what faculty and students might best do to minimize the probability of students leaving college before graduation. Emphasis was placed on strategies that can be implemented and made part of normal school functioning. It was felt that when school efforts are added to greater society's commitment to education and improvement in socio-economic conditions, college dropout may be drastically reduced. This manuscript endeavored to provide faculty and students the tools with which to work in accomplishing the task.

The major question for this study was: What can faculty and students do to enhance persistence and achievement in college? Many studies have examined broad perspectives of persistence such as financial aid policies (Chen & St. John, 2011; Mckinney & Novak, 2013); need-based grants (Alon, 2011); choice of college major (Allen & Robbins, 2008); assignment of college mentors (Hu & Ma, 2010); supplemental instruction (Oja, 2012); community college transfer (Wang, 2009); high school affluence and persistence (Niu & Tienda, 2012); and minorities and persistence (Boyras et al., 2013). A few studies have examined the relationship between student learning and persistence (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012); student engagement and persistence (Hu, 2011); and resilience and persistence (Hartley, (2011).

However, more information is needed on exactly what faculty and students can do to facilitate persistence and achievement. Two of Tinto's (1975) suggestions for future research were to explore the question of student and faculty subcultures and persistence and gather information regarding the relationship between race and dropout.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The opportunity to attend college is an important objective for students and an added value for society. While beginning college is usually a positive development in students' lives, the transition to college does not come without challenges and many students fail to complete their program of study (Boyras et al., 2013). This review of literature explored the magnitude and impact of students not completing college and problems and issues associated with completing college.

Magnitude and Impact for Discontinuing College

Most students enter college expecting to graduate in 4 years, but national data showed that approximately one fifth to one quarter of college students drop out at the end of their freshmen year and only 53.4% earn a bachelor's degree within 5 years (Chen, 2012). Another study reported that only 51 percent of incoming students at four-year institutions complete a bachelor's degree within six years (Allen & Robbins, 2008). College graduation rate has hovered around 50% for decades (Hu, 2011). Young adults from poor families are at increased risk of dropping out of school/college in such countries as Pakistan, for economic reasons. Some students also face difficult problems due to lack of education, gender inequality and cultural constraints, such as problems in discussing personal matters with their parents (Farid-ul-Hasnain & Krantz, 2011). Evidence suggests that stress interferes with the academic performance of about one third of the college population and since it is difficult to eliminate all college stressors, it is important to examine how students cope (Hartley, (2011). Regardless to the reason, dropping out of school may lead to inappropriate life styles which result in behavior problems, conduct disorders, or illicit drug use.

The imperative to improve college persistence and degree completion is compelling from the standpoint of individual students, institutions, states, and society as a whole. Years of college attended and degree completion are associated with increased individual and societal benefits, both economic and non-economic (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012). In the United States there is a stark inequality in the attainment of a bachelor's degree. Students from the top of the family income distribution are substantially more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than students from the bottom. Low-income students are not only less likely to enroll in college than economically privileged students, but they are also less likely to attain a bachelor's degree, even after successfully navigating most of the postsecondary pipeline. A report on the study of students, who began college in 1992 showed that only 40 percent of those in the bottom income quartile graduated, compared to 72 percent of those in the top quartile (Alon, 2011).

Key statistics on college attendance and its impact showed that in 2012, employment rates were higher for adults with a bachelor's degree than for those without a bachelor's degree. Some 33 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds had completed a bachelor's degree or higher credential, with female attainment rates higher than male attainment rates. In 2011, adults with a bachelor's

degree earned twice as much as those without a high school diploma or its equivalent and approximately 21 percent of school-age children in the United States were in families living in poverty, with the percentage having increased. After an increase in the recent decade, in 2011 some 18.1 million undergraduate students were enrolled, there was a decrease of less than 1 percent from 2010. It was reported that about 59 percent of full-time, first-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2005 completed that degree within 6 years, 61 percent females, 56 percent males (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zhang, 2013).

Postsecondary education has long been considered one of the surest ways to overcome underprivileged social conditions. Individuals with at least a bachelor's degree consistently have much higher median earnings than those with less education. The outcome of higher education not only shapes economic returns, but also determines the quality of life (Wang, 2009).

Problems and Issues in Completing College

There is an array of problems and issues associated with students' persistence and achievement in college. Titus (2004) studied student persistence and concluded: (1) persistence is positively influenced by student academic background, college academic performance, involvement, and institutional commitment; (2) differences exist between colleges in persistence even after controlling for student-level predictors; and (3) selectivity has a contextual positive effect on college student persistence. The author also found that college student persistence is influenced by both student- and institution-level variables.

One study examined variation in college persistence according to economic composition of their high schools. Students who graduated from affluent high schools had the highest persistence rates and those who attended poor high schools had the lowest rates. High school college orientation, family background and pre-college academic preparation largely explain why graduates from affluent high schools who first enroll in 2-year colleges have higher transfer rates to 4-year institutions (Niu & Tienda, 2012).

One study focused on institutional characteristics that contribute to conditions that reduce student dropout risks. It was found that institutional expenditure on student services was negatively associated with student dropout behavior (Chen, 2012). In light of organizational theory relationships can be examined between institutional characteristics and student dropout decisions. For example, the percentage of minority students in an institution is positively associated with dropout; size and selectivity are both negatively related to student dropout; in terms of institutional control, higher retention rates exist in private institutions; the percentage of courses taught by part-time faculty is negatively related to retention rates; schools with higher student-teacher ratio tend to have higher dropout rates; but it is not clear how expenditure on instruction is related to student persistence/dropout (Chen, 2012).

Allen and Robbins (2008) hypothesized that college major persistence would be predicted by first-year academic performance and an interest-major composite score. They found academic performance and interest-major fit to be key constructs for understanding major persistence behavior. Students who choose a major congruent with their skills and interests are more likely to succeed and persist in that major and in college. Another long-standing issue in U.S. higher education is the quality of undergraduate education. In one study, at least 40% of the

students showed little if any gains on broad assessment student learning outcomes (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012).

Higher education's mission is to prepare students to participate as global citizens. Thus, there is a need for educators to promote civic engagement. An emphasis on action helps to bridge students' academic and personal lives, which is key in deep learning (Allen, 2011). One study examined the relationships between student learning outcomes, e.g., college grades, and student persistence and found that students' GPA had the largest explanatory power in student persistence, followed by self-reported gains (Hu, McCormick, & Gonyea, 2012).

The ways in which financial aid influences persistence in state systems has become an issue of increasing importance. Traditionally, state funds for higher education were mostly allocated to public institutions to maintain low tuition for students and promote equal access. States are now shifting from a low-tuition policy to one based on the notion of cost-sharing between the states and students and their families, using need-based aid to equalize opportunity (Chen & St. John, (2011).

In terms of need-based grants, it is only the persistence of students from the bottom half of the income distribution that is sensitive to aid amounts. For a redistribution of funds to boost degree attainment and achieve equality of educational opportunity it must be based on stricter mean-tested allocations of nonfederal funds as they are the main source of need-based aid. Family financial resources are critical to the year-to-year persistence and degree attainment of economically disadvantaged students. Policy that adequately addresses economic inequality among students is imperative. Since the late 1970s, not only have wage and wealth inequality risen, but tuition levels have also soared (Alon, 2011).

One study examined the relationship between Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filing status and persistence. Filing a FAFSA was associated with higher odds of persistence among students. The underutilization of financial aid has been identified as a formidable barrier to access, persistence, and degree attainment among community college students. Some 42% of community college students who were eligible to receive federal Pell-grant funding did not file a FAFSA (McKinney & Novak, 2013).

The probability of community college transfer students attaining a bachelor's degree is significantly associated with gender, SES, high school curriculum, educational expectation upon entering college, GPA earned from community colleges, college involvement, and math remediation. Perceived locus of control and community college GPA are significant predictors of persistence. However, literature points to the negative effect of ever attending community colleges on bachelor's degree attainment, compared with similar students entering a four-year college or university (Wang, 2009).

Online learning is expanding in availability and popularity, but there are high dropout rates that present a challenging problem. One study identified 69 factors that influence students' decisions to dropout and classified them into three main categories: (a) Student factors, (b) Course/Program factors, and (c) Environmental factors. It then examined the strategies proposed to overcome those dropout factors: (a) understanding each student's challenges and potential, (b) providing quality course activities and well-structured supports, and (c) handling environmental issues and emotional challenges. Online courses have significantly higher student dropout rates than conventional courses. Failure to complete their first online course may lead to lowering students' self-confidence or self-esteem and discourage them from registering for other online courses (Lee & Choi, 2011).

One study examined the relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and college persistence in African Americans. Higher levels of PTSD increased the likelihood of leaving college prior to the end of the second year of college. Being a student at a predominantly White institution and entering college with low high school GPA were identified as risk factors for low academic achievement and college dropout; involvement in on-campus activities and higher levels of perceived academic integration in the first semester were associated with higher first-year GPA (Boyras et al., 2013).

College dropout is a problem for many in America. It was reported that only 60 percent of college students are obtaining their degrees; or a mere 38 percent of African Americans are graduating from college. Some of the reasons for low graduation rates included lack of academic preparedness, poor economic preparedness, and certain psychosocial variables. Transitioning to college from high school can be anxiety provoking. The psychosocial variables include such factors as separation from familiar environments, lack of primary support network, and limited areas of expertise. These factors can create a significant disruption in the lives of new college students. Intervention aimed at ameliorating psychosocial distresses would especially be beneficial in assisting African American college students to succeed academically. What happens to students after they arrive on campus has a greater influence on academic and social self-concepts than does the kind of institution students attend (Henderson & Kritsonis, 2007). It was observed that older students and students who delay entry into higher education were more likely to drop out before graduating. These matters as well as other family characteristics are particularly significant factors in explaining student drop out in college (Lassibille & Gomez, 2008).

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES TO SUSTAIN STUDENT PERSISTENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Because dropping out is influenced by both individual and institutional factors, intervention strategies can focus on either or both sets of factors. In essence, strategies may address the individual's values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with dropping out; or they may focus on altering the characteristics of families, schools, and communities that contribute to dropping out of school. Common features among effective programs are (1) nonthreatening environment for learning, (2) caring and committed staff who accept a personal responsibility for student success, (3) school culture that encourages staff risk-taking, self-governance, and professional collegiality, and (4) school structure that provides for a low student-teacher ratio and a small class size to promote student engagement (Rumberger, 2006).

Few studies have focused on what colleges can do to create conditions that foster student persistence. However, what colleges can do to reduce student dropout risk is a pressing issue in higher education. There is a need for greater understanding about how the college environment affects students (Chen, 2012). For example, one study found that when students are actively involved in classroom discussions, this positively enhances graduation and retention rates (AlKandari, 2012).

College students' learning can be significantly increased through effective classroom communication. This is best achieved through activities that involve students academically and socially with both faculty and peers. The activities may include discussion, dialogue, debate, group work, and presentations (AlKandari, 2012). AlKandari (2012) reported that a comfortable

classroom atmosphere begins with the faculty being open and friendly and interested in students' success; and most students perceived that their professors do have concern in terms of listening to students' responses, dialogue, and experiences.

According to Haydon and Hunter (2011), effective instruction reduces negative student behaviors (i.e., calling out, interrupting instruction, off-task) and increases student academic outcomes (i.e., correct responses, active student responses, quiz scores). Allen (2011) reported that optimism and wisdom are the primary traits that need to be nurtured for individuals to feel empowered to act in positive ways. The author further stated that other traits equally important are curiosity, initiative, persistence, and resilience. It is important to nurture the emotional-motivational-personal core of the individual to achieve success. Experiences that build upon students' strengths and provide a sense of purpose, may help support undergraduates students as they face the open-endedness of entering the "real world."

One study found that having an assigned college mentor was positively related to the probability of persisting in college. Also, for those who had an assigned college mentor, the probability of persisting was positively associated with the extent to which the recipients turned to mentors for support and encouragement and with their perceived importance of experiences with mentors (Hu & Ma, 2010).

Supplemental instruction is a growing student support service used to offer students peer-guided activities to improve course learning or grades. One study showed that this instruction improved grades but not persistence; however, other studies showed that it yielded higher persistence rates. Prior GPA is one of the strongest predictors of student success; those who have been successful in the past tend to continue to be successful. GPA was the primary contributor to explaining continued student attendance in college (Oja, 2012).

One study investigated student engagement in college activities and student persistence in college. A higher level of social engagement was related to an increased probability of persisting, but a higher level of academic engagement was negatively related to such probability (Hu, 2011). Such reports indicate a need to look at in- and out-of-class activities that can contribute to student learning and personal development.

One college professor was endeavoring to make teaching and learning a true adventure for students. Numerous teaching strategies aimed at making learning authentic and relevant, establishing functional rapport, embedding essential competencies in instructional material, influencing self-determination to accentuate achievement, and employing methods of motivation were all brought together into a framework (Gentry, 2007). Notable results were observed in terms of class attendance, purchase and use of the textbook, completion of all course assignments, participation in field-based experiences, and overall grade achievement. Equally noticeable were the enhanced demeanor that the candidates had about the teaching profession and the feelings that they displayed as persons. The author reported that attending college had taken on new meaning when former students called his name so fondly while walking down the corridor, waved from the hallway while he was teaching in a classroom, or gave to him a shoutout from a distance on campus.

WHAT FACULTY AND STUDENTS CAN DO TO SUSTAIN PERSISTENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

To put researched evidence on school dropout in perspective, effort was advanced to develop a list of things that both faculty and students can do to reduce school dropout. The development of specific things that faculty can do are indicated in Table 1 (APPENDIX) and specific things that students can do are indicated in Table 2 (APPENDIX) to sustain student persistence and achievement in college.

In essence, it was established that faculty can facilitate student persistence and achievement by making course and content relevant; creating a safe classroom climate; appropriately interacting with students; understanding students' challenges and potentials; identifying and accommodating students at-risk; properly engaging students in the learning process; building upon students' strengths; energizing students' personal core; using suitable materials, teaching styles, and assessment tools; and engaging in professional development. It was established that students can facilitate their own persistence and achievement by taking full advantage of faculty instruction; attending class and completing assignments; developing good study habits; striving for high GPA; learning to cope with college demands; participating in group activities and organizations; self-monitoring progress; seeking faculty mentors; appropriately using technology; and striving even when times are difficult.

As reported earlier, Tinto (1975) did extensive work on college persistence, which is referenced in many studies on the matter. He formulated a theoretical model to explain the processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from institutions of higher education. His work is here referenced to validate a number of things identified in this study that faculty and students can do to sustain persistence and achievement. First, there is support for establishing factors or "things," as denoted in this manuscript, that faculty and students can do. Tinto suggested that a person may be able to achieve integration in one area (academic or social domain) without doing so in the other.

In reference to specific faculty factors, for guiding at-risk students, Tinto (1975) stated that family SES appears to be inversely related to dropout and thus, guidance may facilitate their persistence. For understanding students, Tinto advocated that attributes such as sex, race, and ability impact performance in college. For building on students' strengths and providing a sense of purpose, Tinto presumed that a person may withdraw from college if he or she thinks something else will yield greater benefits. For interaction with students, Tinto noted that it should increase the likelihood that the person will remain in college. For energizing the emotional core, Tinto advanced that dropouts tend to be more lacking in deep emotional commitment to education. For safe classroom climate, Tinto stated that much dropout appears to result from incongruence between the individual and the social climate of the institution. For engaging students, Tinto attributed much attrition to lower level motivation and academic ability. For engaging in professional development (and advanced preparation), Tinto presumed that a greater percentage of faculty with doctorates related to differential rates of dropout.

In reference to specific student factors, for high GPA and setting goals, Tinto (1975) suggested that goal commitment was most influential in determining college persistence. For coping with college demands and striving when times are difficult, Tinto associated failure to deal with changing circumstances as a characteristic of college dropouts. For participation in groups and organizations, Tinto noted that college dropouts perceive themselves as having less social interaction than do college persisters. For seeking faculty role models, Tinto noted that this may be even more important for students in their major area.

Tinto (1975) characterized dropout behavior into voluntary withdrawal and academic dismissal. He noted that voluntary withdrawal was most closely associated with lack of congruency between the individual and both the intellectual climate of the institution and the social system composed of his peers. Academic dismissal was most closely associated with grade performance. From what is reported in this study, it appears safe to infer that faculty and students have the potential to positively impact college students' persistence and achievement.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Student persistence in higher education has garnered extensive attention, yet much remains unknown about the nature of the dropout process (Tinto, 1975). To bring the matter more into perspective, researchers have developed persistence models that measure the effects of college experiences, including academic and social integration, on student persistence. Literature has indicated that what matters most in student learning is what students do in college both in and outside of class. The more students are involved the more they gain from college (Hu, 2011).

Most students who enroll in college do so expecting to graduate in 4 years, but for many, their enrollment exceeds eight semesters. Research delineates both individual and institutional factors that lead to school dropout. The individual perspective focuses on attributes of the students including their values, attitudes, and behaviors that contribute to their decisions to quit school. The institutional perspective focuses on the contextual factors found in students' families, schools, communities, and peers (Rumberger, 2006).

The transition to college is an important milestone for many young people. Though beginning college is often a positive development in students' lives, the transition to college does not come without its own stressors. Of incoming college students, 66% reported lifetime exposure to at least one Criterion A trauma (Boyras et al., 2013). Trauma exposure and PTSD have been found to play a role in whether students remain enrolled in college. African American college students report higher rates of trauma exposure and PTSD in comparison to other groups. They also report greater perceived racial hostility, faculty racism, unequal treatment by faculty and staff, and more pressure to conform to racial stereotypes than White and Latina/o students (Boyras et al., 2013).

This manuscript presented college persistence and achievement data and the particular impact that faculty and students can have on it when working together. Students often have the ability to succeed in school but may need to be convinced that they can be successful. Teachers need to be empowered to orchestrate classroom climates conducive to meeting the demands of the whole child. If students and teachers do not actively seek to reduce school dropout, they may unwittingly contribute to it.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

What faculty can do to facilitate persistence and achievement

Things professors can do to facilitate persistence and achievement

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- Make course/content relevant, interesting, and use activities to motivate students (AlKandari, 2012; Allen, 2011; Lee & Choi, 2011)
 - Create safe classroom climate that is warm, open, and organized for feeling of belonging (AlKandari, 2012)
 - Interact with students: learn first names, talk after class, smile, praise performance, actively respond for positive faculty-student relationships (AlKandari, 2012)
 - Strive to understand each student's challenges and potentials (Lee & Choi, 2011)
 - Identify at-risk students and provide appropriate training opportunities and guidance (Lee & Choi, 2011); Mentor/advise students to contribute to academic and social integration into the college system (Hu & Ma, 2010)
 - Provide concrete experiences, engage students to process deep learning (Allen, 2011)
 - Provide experiences that build upon students' strengths and provide a sense of purpose (Allen, 2011)
 - Energize the emotional-motivational-personal core of the student for cognitive development (Allen, 2011)
 - Ensure that students are comfortable with materials and teaching style (Lee & Choi, 2011)
 - Use a battery of assessment tools that can be scored immediately (Lee & Choi, 2011)
 - Engage in professional development for effective instruction, leadership, and scholarship (Gentry, 2007)
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Table 2

What students can do to facilitate persistence and achievement

Things students can do to facilitate persistence and achievement

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- Take advantage of faculty instruction, feedback and interaction (Lee & Choi, 2011); demonstrate commitment
 - Complete assignments, attend class, participate in discussion to make for an enriched environment (AlKandari, 2012)
 - Learn good study and test taking skills; study hard and smart; be an active learner (Gentry, 2007; Student Planner, 2007-2008)
 - Strive for high cumulative GPA (Hartley, (2011); decide on a certain grade and set out to earn it (Student Planner, 2007-2008)

- Learn/prepare to cope with the social and emotional demands of college; cultivate a sense of belonging (Hartley, (2011)
 - Socialize and participate in group activities and student organizations (Hartley, (2011); show enthusiasm, believe in yourself (Student Planner, 2007-2008)
 - Self-monitor involvement and progress in learning activities (Lee & Choi, 2011); Reward yourself for accomplishments
 - Seek faculty role models, mentors to facilitate academic and social integration into the college system (Hu & Ma, 2010)
 - Use technology to facilitate and promote peer interaction (Lee & Choi, 2011)
 - Learn to strive even when times are difficult (Hartley, (2011).
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