

# Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy Guide Fall 2025

**by Amy Martin, Ph.D**

Associate Dean, Student Success Strategic Initiatives, Undergraduate Education

**Julia Barnes**

Master's Degree Student, Student Affairs Administration, MSU College of Education



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## **Authors/Editors:**

Julia Barnes

(she/her, they/them)

Master's Degree Student, Student Affairs Administration,  
MSU College of Education

Amy Martin

(she/her/ella)

Associate Dean, Student Success Strategic Initiatives, Undergraduate Education

## **Contributors:**

Special thanks to Lola Banks for her contributions and assistance with focus groups, Wasek Sazzad and Mariam Turkey for editing to update the guide in Summer 2025, and to Liz Fuller for making this resource look professional and easier to navigate.

All the educators, staff, and students who provided us with feedback, resources, and ideas to our collective work for undergraduate student success at MSU.

This is a snapshot of our work over the course of five months and is not inclusive of all the research available. We look forward to adapting this document as groups meet to enact this work and provide further insight into best practices and research for undergraduate student success.

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## Descriptions, Purpose, and Goals Spartan Undergrad Experience Strategy

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*"I am perhaps most enthusiastic about our blunt reframing of student success away from being a moral claim about an individual student's supposed willingness or ability to learn, thrive, and graduate to focusing on meeting students' needs by reforming our university."*

*-Mark Largent, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education*

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In a decentralized and diffuse institution, significant numbers of MSU students do not engage in impactful programs, services, and experiences that can support their holistic student success.

The Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy will provide support for changing the institution in a way that shifts the burden from students needing inherent skills at help-seeking to an intentional institutional effort that provides clearer pathways for students increasing engagement, sense of belonging, connection to support, and participation in high-impact curricular and co-curricular programs. The project should result in a transparent guide for students, and their families and supporters to understand and articulate the alignment of:

- student success strategic planning,
- undergraduate learning goals,
- Spartan Experience Record learning outcomes,
- Student Life and Engagement learning outcomes,
- general education reform,
- accreditation efforts and the quality initiative "closing the gap",
- student communications

### Fall 2023 Research Project

- Build out the theoretical and practical grounding of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience, providing a proposed framework/curricular map based on a comprehensive review of research and best practices that can direct the formation of the project going forward.
- Create a strategy guide of key research and practices that support student success.
- Draft a curricular map that documents how every part of institution influences the Spartan Experience.
- Begin a repository of existing programs, experiences, opportunities to identify gaps and opportunities.
- Propose a project plan for implementation by 2025.



## Purpose of the strategy guide:

- Situate our approach to MSU student success within the higher education context.
- Ground our work to cohesively articulate the Spartan Undergraduate Experience at MSU in literature from different disciplines and perspectives
- Create a shared, fluid, and measurable definition of Student Success at MSU that promotes collaboration, discussion, and innovation across the campus
- Document the resources, theories, frameworks, research that influence our definition(s)
- Identify potential metrics for measuring our ability to live out our definition
- Ensure academic and personal success through inclusive support services
- Acknowledge contributions of the campus community to developing the definitions and bibliography.
- Archiving our work and sharing our resources publicly with others through Zotero and other types of publication (web, social, print media) to promote both institutional and national discussions about undergraduate student success as research and practice continues to inform the work we engage in.

## Authors/editors positionality

The authors/editors share an interest in studying and understanding higher education from both a theoretical and practical perspective. We have daily lived experiences on campus through our research, coursework, and positions.

### **Amy Martin, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, Student Success Strategic Initiatives**

Amy Martin (she/her) serves as Associate Dean for Student Success Strategic Initiatives at Michigan State University. Dr. Martin recently celebrated her 9th year at MSU working with colleagues across the campus to support student success in addition to faculty, educators, and staff success. Her lived experience in higher education spans 37 years beginning as a first-generation college student from a rural community in southern Michigan who attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor as a psychology major. Unlike some students' experiences, Amy's family was always supportive of her pursuing postsecondary education, she was able to work and pay for her a good portion of her education with the help of family. Outside failing a statistics course in her first year and struggling in her junior year with her choice of major, Amy generally had a positive collegiate experience. It was during her roles as dining hall student worker and resident assistant that Amy became aware that not all students had similar experiences, or the ability to fund their educations, and that marginalized students experienced significant barriers to their success. Desiring to have influence on changing the environment and supporting future students, Amy pursued a master's degree in college student counseling from Eastern Michigan University while working full time as a hall director at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), and then eventually pursued a doctoral degree in higher education policy and leadership from the University of Maryland (College Park) while serving in student affairs leadership roles at that institution. Amy continues to self-reflect on how her experiences shape her standpoint on the world. She values and advocates for the inclusion of many voices and



perspectives in any work the institution engages in around undergraduate student success and saw this project as an opportunity to bring forward the important research and work of colleagues across the campus.

### **Julia Barnes, Master's Degree Student, Student Affairs Administration, MSU College of Education**

Julia Barnes (she/they) is a second year MA student studying Student Affairs Administration at Michigan State University. They have worked with several offices during their time at MSU including the Writing Center, Residence Education and Housing Services, and TRIO Student Support Services. Julia first became interested in higher education during their undergraduate pursuits at Michigan Technological University. During this time, they experienced multiple traumas and barriers that impacted their studies. These experiences eventually led them to pursue a degree in student affairs to learn more about student mental health, trauma, access, and systemic issues in higher education. Having to navigate institutions as a multiracial, disabled, and queer student, Julia has deeply personal reasons to support other's higher education journeys; furthermore, these reasons have influenced the way that Julia approached this project. Julia also acknowledges that their economic and educational privileges have given them opportunities to help navigate and fund their higher education pursuits. Recognizing the importance of how identities, experiences, and barriers intersect, Julia advocates for institutional support that considers these complex dynamics.

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*"Thriving was developed in an effort to more holistically examine student success (Schreiner, 2010a). The concept argues that while grades and graduation are important, they are insufficient measures of a truly successful experience. Thriving students experience optimal functioning in three areas that contribute to success and persistence: (a) academic engagement and performance, (b) interpersonal relationships, and (c) intrapersonal wellbeing. In other words, students who thrive are fully engaged in the college endeavor—intellectually, socially, and emotionally (Schreiner et al., 2009)."*

*-Ryan W Erck & Rishi Sriram (2023) Thriving Through Interactions: Investigating How Distinct Relationships Influence College Student Success, Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 60:5, 608-624, DOI: 10.1080/19496591.2023.2173605*

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### **Indicate contributions to changes – here or at the end**

Mariam Turkey, Wasek Sazzad, Maria O'Connell, Jamie Hutchinson, Laura Belisle, Courtney Placinta, 2024-25 Five Areas of Success Learning Community members



## Context: Student Success in Higher Ed

### The Value of Higher Education

The definitions and literature reviewed related to undergraduate student success at Michigan State University are situated in the national context of higher education and the [value proposition of attending college](#). [Significant financial barriers](#) exist for most students to attend college and combined with [selective access](#) to internationally and nationally renowned research institutions, like MSU, leaves students and their families seeking alternatives to attending four-year residential institutions. And yet, from this review of the literature, we know that the [benefits of obtaining a postsecondary degree](#) include: increased career opportunities, personal growth and development, building connections, living values and passions, developing expertise, life-long learning, and healthier, empowered communities.

The benefits of a higher education degree are so compelling that our state's effort "[Growing Michigan Together](#)" includes a higher education workgroup that is charged with proposing "long-term, sustainable, and equitable funding solutions" for higher education, increasing access and success, and providing training to meet the needs of the state's economy. The Growing Michigan HE group will explicitly support the work of the [Sixty by 30 proposition](#) with the goal of getting "60% of Michigan's workforce to attain learning beyond high school by 2030," anticipating that "seventy percent of Michigan jobs will require at least some postsecondary education".

### Multi-institutional efforts

Over the last two decades, leaders of Michigan State University have pursued the idea that our university could be known as an accessible institution that supports all students' success with high retention and graduation rates. We have been a member of what is now known as the Association for [Undergraduate Education at Research Universities \(UERU\)](#) since the first [Boyer Report \(1998\)](#) outlined recommendations for "reinvigorating" undergraduate education. UERU is a consortium of undergraduate vice presidents and provosts who work together to advance university-wide innovation for undergraduate education. Together, they updated the 1998 report with an equity/excellence imperative that aligns with the definitions, commitments, and metrics we have outlined in this strategy guide (Boyer 2030 Commission, 2022).

As the Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative pushed our institution to better serve our students at MSU, we were recognized for those efforts and asked to join the [University Innovation Alliance](#) in 2014, "a leading national coalition of public research universities committed to increasing the number and diversity of college graduates in the United States". We partner with the other 17 institutions in the UIA to innovate undergraduate education efforts together, setting ambitious goals, sharing our data, and progressive knowledge with each other in order to accelerate change.

### Trends and Promising Practices

Both the Boyer 2030 Report and the work of the University Innovation Alliance give us insight into trends and promising practices across institutions similar to MSU. The Boyer report helps address concepts that we found challenging in our focus groups such as "Equity as a necessary





and pre-defining condition of excellence (Boyer Commission 2030, 2022, pg. 3) and provides tangible guidance and examples of success for each of these areas:

1. Work Readiness for All - Education for Life, Work, and Citizenship
  - a. World Readiness
  - b. Freedom of Speech and Expression in Supportive Campus Cultures
2. Equity/Excellence in Teaching and Learning
  - a. Access to Excellence
  - b. Teaching
  - c. Advising
  - d. Faculty Rewards and Structure
3. Facilitating Success and Eliminating Barriers
  - a. Access and Affordability
  - b. Degree Pathways
  - c. Digital Technology
4. Fostering Belonging and Equitable Campus Culture
  - a. Nurturing Mental Health and Wellbeing
5. Leading Change
  - a. Assessment and Accountability

The University Innovation Alliance has also experimented with several cross institutional efforts that have produced promising outcomes and recommendations for advising, completion grants, process mapping, and college to career efforts. Current efforts include the Learning Innovations Faculty Focus Groups and Listening Lab Phase 2, led by Maria O'Connell, MSU's UIA Fellow. The Faculty Focus Groups aim to identify effective learning innovations that enhance student success in gateway STEM courses, examine barriers and supports for implementation, and surface insights on faculty experiences with technology-based approaches. This work complements the broader Learning Innovations Project. Listening Lab Phase 2 centers on developing a scalable, systematic, and empathy-centered approach to elevating the student voice to drive campus change. Listening Lab phase 2 will focus on first-generation college students and inform the creation of a First-Generation Student Center.

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*Higher education scholars Adrianna Kezar and Peter Eckel argue that institutional transformation: (a) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products, (b) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution, (c) is intentional, and (d) occurs over time.*

<https://frontierset.theuia.org>

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Our membership with these two organizations means that as we continue to develop a university-wide Spartan Undergraduate Student Experience across all parts of the student life cycle, we have many colleagues and a plethora of resources to assist us with transforming our

institution, so ALL our students learn, thrive, and graduate. For this project, we partnered with two universities regarding similar efforts to transform their institutions.

First, Rutgers University is in their first year of an enterprise level project for student success, [Discovery Advantage](#) giving us an example of how to organize our efforts and structures to support those efforts. [Kathy Scott](#), the lead for the Rutgers' effort, recommended that we begin with identifying resources, literature, and best practices which led to the development of this strategy guide.

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*From the student perspective, issues of social and psychological adjustment with peers, financial capacity to make tuition payments over four or more years, success in courses, and overall academic progress and area of focus are but one interwoven topic. (p.18) The student experience is the sum of all encounters (academic, operational, and student services). (p. 10)*

*Administratively Adrift: Overcoming Institutional Barriers for College Student Success, Scott A. Bass, 2022*

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In addition, American University took on the effort to change their approach to undergraduate education through the [RiSE project](#). [Scott A. Bass](#), former Provost at American University, and [Jessica Waters](#), former Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost for Academic Student Services, have been serving as consultants as we develop this work. They met with the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy executive sponsors in November 2023 to answer their questions about organizing this effort at MSU. Our goal is to move beyond being a student interested institution to become a truly student-centered institution.

### **Context: disciplinary approaches and perspectives**

As we begin to outline our current and proposed definitions, commitments, and metrics for undergraduate student success at MSU we wanted to point to several important factors and strategies. First, we have tried to approach this effort using an interdisciplinary framework that acknowledges the range of experiences of our students at MSU and the commitments we have for supporting ALL students' success while utilizing more targeted approaches to support students whose retention and graduation may be at risk (e.g. first-gen, lower income students). We underscore the need for our work to connect with and mutually support both the MSU AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) [Strategic Plan](#) (see table 1) and the [MSU plan for Faculty and Staff Success](#).

The objectives and goals for both plans are deeply entwined with what we hope to achieve for undergraduate students at MSU. Also, we think it is critical to continue learning about our undergraduate students at MSU and their needs, goals, and dreams. University Communications gathered input from students several years ago and created some profiles of students that



began to provide insight. In addition, the student profiles from Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice. (Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016) and New York University's Empathy-Based Marketing Project presented at the American Marketing Association Symposium for Higher Education in 2023 offer further insight into college student experiences. Our focus groups recommended working with this information as a starting point for creating updated student profiles and ensuring that we are addressing the needs of the students living the opportunity gaps we see in our data.



Table 1 - Alignment of AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) pillar strategic objectives with AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) strategic plan goal.

Goal	Be a national leader in promoting access, opportunity and excellence, and address barriers to success for all on our campus and beyond	Alignment with AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Report and Plan Strategic Goals
Objective 1	Recruit and support the success of a broad range of students: Recruit, retain, nurture and graduate students, reducing barriers and promoting success for all	<p>Expand precollege and pathway programs</p> <p>Create early-start programs</p> <p>Create specialized academic support services, one-credit courses and learning communities</p> <p>Expand student support and retention efforts to address the needs of students at high risk of attrition and reach out to students who have stopped progress toward their degrees (particularly those with low numbers of courses necessary to complete their degrees)</p> <p>Expand the number of graduate student fellowships</p>
Objective 2	Recruit and retain a broad range of MSU faculty able to make significant contributions toward creating solutions for the most difficult human and societal challenges facing the nation and world, addressing pressing needs in Michigan communities and helping Michigan's economy grow	<p>Develop and implement an initiative to hire MSU tenure-system faculty whose focus is in areas of institutional priority and aligns with pressing needs of Michigan communities, the nation and the world</p> <p>Pursue thematic hires in colleges and departments to enhance innovation in teaching, learning, research and service and improve the overall satisfaction and experience of students and faculty</p> <p>Continue to incorporate equal employment opportunity best practices into all college and department recruitment and retention processes</p> <p>Create college-level programs to help support and prepare postdoctoral research associates for tenure-system positions</p> <p>Develop mentorship and early-career support programs to improve retention and advancement of faculty</p>
Objective 3	Recruit, retain and expand career development for all staff while building a welcoming and inclusive community	Continue to incorporate equal-opportunity education and training for human resources professionals, unit



Goal	Be a national leader in promoting access, opportunity and excellence, and address barriers to success for all on our campus and beyond	Alignment with AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Report and Plan Strategic Goals
		<p>supervisors and managers with hiring authority</p> <p>Develop a staff professional development and educational program to nurture and broaden leadership throughout campus at all levels of employment and foster an inclusive work environment with a welcoming climate for all</p> <p>Monitor efforts, assess progress and communicate results regularly in an accessible format</p>
Objective 4	Provide a world-class academic environment for all through inclusive teaching and learning, collaborative research and service	<p>Establish a teaching and learning center that specializes in and deepens understanding of inclusion in teaching, learning and outreach, creating opportunities for all university stakeholders and delivering programs that enhance the ability of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members to engage more effectively</p> <p>Update curricula and expand sources of information throughout degree programs, minor programs and general education courses</p> <p>Offer seed grants and strategic investment funding for research promoting inclusive excellence</p> <p>Recognize faculty accomplishments in promoting inclusive excellence in research, teaching and service</p>
Objective 5	Increase proactive engagement with communities based on partnerships informed by shared goals and mutual learning	<p>Increase services and programs provided through MSU Extension and University Outreach and Engagement</p> <p>Encourage colleges with existing outreach and engagement activities to build or deepen partnerships with communities based on mutual commitment to shared goals</p> <p>Increase participation of undergraduate students in community-engaged learning experiences</p>



Goal	Be a national leader in promoting access, opportunity and excellence, and address barriers to success for all on our campus and beyond	Alignment with AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Report and Plan Strategic Goals
		Provide annual reports to campus on connections with communities and programs dedicated to engaging with them and responding to the concerns they express



## MSU Student Success Definition & Strategic Plan

*"We believe every student we admit has the ability to learn, thrive, and graduate." The [MSU Strategic plan](#) has 6 pillars, one of which is student success.*

### Current Definition

At Michigan State, we believe every student we admit can thrive and graduate. We feel a sense of urgency to improve graduation rates, because a college degree is the best route to individual opportunity, and an educated workforce strengthens Michigan and the nation. By 2030, we will increase the six-year graduation rate to 86%.

Student success is the measure of an institution's ability to provide a relevant curriculum and empathetic environment that supports all students' psychological, social, emotional, physical, cultural and financial well-being to enable all students to learn, thrive, graduate and succeed after graduation.

Understood this way, student success is not solely a measure of the academic achievement of individual students or students collectively; rather, measures like academic standing, persistence, graduation, sense of belonging, time to degree and placement rate indicate how well an institution supports its students.

MSU has been a leader in student success initiatives for over a decade. Through national partnerships including the University Innovation Alliance and our own research, we have identified five critical areas to help students thrive in their Spartan experience: self-discovery of purpose, educational success, a sense of belonging, contributing to an empowered community and developing well-being.

Faculty, staff and students are working together to align and connect curricular, cocurricular and extracurricular programs as we ensure access that leads to opportunity. Another way we're expanding access and growing the pipeline that produces talent for Michigan is with enhanced support for transfer students and expanding relationships with community colleges. We're also working with business leaders to ensure our programs and curricula meet the needs of students and their future employers as work changes.

### Current Goal:

Provide an exceptional experience for all students that prepares them for postgraduate success, achieving high graduation rates with reduced opportunity gaps

### Objectives:

1. Strengthen MSU's ability to attract and meet the curricular and cocurricular educational needs, goals and aspirations of all undergraduate students
2. Increase access to and successful completion of highly ranked graduate and professional education
3. Advance an online learning strategy that expands access and increases the breadth of learners served through development and delivery of targeted, high-impact programs



4. Strengthen each student's educational experience to support success through graduation and beyond
5. Provide a supportive climate and holistic support throughout the student experience, understanding that high-quality curricular and cocurricular experiences are essential to student success

### Resources: implementing an enterprise level project

1. Bass, S. A. (2022). *Administratively adrift: Overcoming institutional barriers for college student success*. Cambridge University Press.
  - a. *Administratively Adrift* was recommended by Dr. Kristen A. Renn in Summer of 2023 as part of our continued work to create an institution that supports our students' ability to learn, thrive, and graduate. Dr. Scott A. Bass served as Provost at American University (AU) for 10 years and provides a historical primer on the various organizational structures that are found at most four-year, residentially based, research institutions. He describes in detail how multiple, isolated organizations within one institution inhibit our ability to shape the student experience. Dr. Bass and a large team of faculty, staff, and students at American University spent several years working through an initiative called "RiSE" (Reinventing the Student Experience) originally funded in 2015 with a \$150,000 grant from the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#). The initiatives, programs, and activities described in the book took place over the past 7 years and Bass acknowledges the historic changes in the student experience as the result of the pandemic, economic struggles, political polarization, and racial reckoning of the last several years. Jessica Waters and Scott A. Bass are serving as consultants for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy at MSU and met with the executive sponsors in October, 2023.
2. Bowman, N. A., Mohebbi, M., & Jarratt, L. (2022). *An interdisciplinary theory of college student success*. In *How College Students Succeed* (pp. 238-272). Routledge
  - a. In summary of the disciplinary specific chapters in the book, recommended by Assistant Provost Renata Opoczynski, Bowman, Mohebbi, and Jarratt propose a graphic depiction of the interplay between the institution and the student as the student pursues their goal of a postsecondary degree or certificate. They also acknowledge the sociohistorical contexts that influence who attends college. Importantly, they consider the student's personal construal of their experience and that there isn't really one experience for all students but individual sets of "experiences" that are created by the type, tenor, and time students engage in them. This is one of the primary models used to influence the work of this project, through student/institutional chart created from this strategy guide, and is inclusive of previous theories of student success outlined in the book.
3. Boyer 2030 Commission. (2022). *The equity/excellence imperative: A 2030 blueprint for undergraduate education at research universities*. University Press of Colorado.  
<https://ueru.org/boyer2030>
  - a. Michigan State participated in the work of this commission through our membership in Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU) and





the participation of Professor Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Digital Humanities at MSU, on the commission. The report provides recommendations and guidance for all five areas of MSU Student Success, highlighting evidence-based and promising practices for advising, teaching, degree pathways, mental health and wellbeing, digital technology, accessibility and affordability, and equitable campus cultures.

4. Discovery Advantage: A Revolution in Student Success – Rutgers University  
<https://discoverynb.rutgers.edu/>
  - a. Professor Kathy Scott is the lead of Discovery Advantage program at Rutgers University which is their version of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy. This website outlines the purpose, goals, and committee structure and provides an example of a framework we could use for our on-going initiative at MSU. The team recommended beginning with a literature review and benchmarking which prompted the development of this strategy guide.
5. Hrabowski III, F. A. (2019). *The empowered university: Shared leadership, culture change, and academic success*. JHU Press.
  - a. Highlighted in our February 2023 Dr. William G. Anderson Lecture Series, *Slavery to Freedom*, in this book, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski III, former President of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County tells the story of student success efforts at the institution and their work to close opportunity gaps for racially minoritized students. Together with Philip J. Rouse and Peter H. Henderson, Hrabowski describes the process of culture change at UMBC, and of note for our project, focuses on strength-based and holistic efforts to support students. The initiatives described fall into all five areas of student success that we are using for this initiative, some of them successful, others offering lessons for us as we consider the work ahead.
6. Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., Brown, A. E., & Mazzariello, A. (2019). *Redesigning Your College through Guided Pathways: Lessons on Managing Whole-College Reform from the AACC Pathways Project*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
  - a. In this report, Jenkins et al (2019) discuss the process of redesigning an institution for student success. They highlight change reforms at 8 community colleges across the nation that include reforms such as meta-majors and program maps, career exploration, new models of advising, enhanced transfer information and progress monitoring, all areas that MSU has focus on for our holistic reform efforts. They suggest several strategies for changing the culture at an institution (identifying barriers, inclusive leadership structure, strengthening leaders, fostering individual accountability, encouraging creativity and experimentation, providing time for collaborative planning) that we will incorporate in our Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
7. Kania, John & Kramer, Mark. *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Winter 2011 Collaboration for Impact. The Collective Impact Framework.



[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)

- a. The Collective Impact approach to change efforts was recommended to us through a survey conducted at the MSU Student Success Launch in September 2023. This framework will inform the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy and includes creating an agreed upon common agenda, developing a shared measurement system, engaging in mutually reinforcing activities, maintaining open and continuous communication, and creating a centralized infrastructure to serve as the backbone for delivering outcomes related to the project.
8. Kerr, K.G., Edwards, K.E., Tweedy, J.F., Lichterman, H., & Knerr, A.R. (2020). *The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs: A Revolutionary Shift for Learning Beyond the Classroom* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447740>
  - a. This book was recommended by Heather Shea from Student Life and Engagement in our early development of this project and strategy guide. It offers strategies for creating learning outcomes for all programs, activities and initiatives on campus both inside and outside the classroom. We used the Learning Aims and Educational Plans framework to map out various efforts across the campus (see figure at right). Sarah Schultz, Director of the Spartan Experience Record (our co-curricular record at MSU) has been working with a set of 29 learning outcomes identified in a 2017 student success project. Our accreditation efforts also call for us to identify learning outcomes for our courses and activities on campus. Based on conversations in focus groups and with our partners across campus, we recommend that renewed focus and work on learning outcomes across SLE, the Provost's office and the MSU colleges to be one of the primary initiatives for academic success in Fall 2024.



9. McNair, T. B., Albertine, S., McDonald, N., Major Jr, T., & Cooper, M. A. (2022). *Becoming a student-ready college: A new culture of leadership for student success*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://www.aacu.org/publication/becoming-a-student-ready-college-a-new-culture-of-leadership-for-student-success>
  - a. In this book, the authors profile twenty-first century students and the value of performing as a student ready institution. They cover leadership and culture change, intentional designs that include centering equity, diversity and inclusion, leveraging the ecosystem of success on campus and tending to the whole student through whole-person leadership and learning. The work aligns with our desire to be an anti-deficit organization that believes in the capacity of students to learn. We recommend that committee members read this book as a part of kicking off the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
10. Taylor Jr, L. (2022). Critical considerations for enacting student success. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2022(197), 11-22.
  - a. Recommended by ShirDonna Lawrence, Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at MSU, and utilized in our work with the University Innovation Alliance, this article offers suggestions for how to bridge the theory to practice gap to enact student success on campus. Taylor invites us to consider the role of informal as well as formal theories of practice and focusing on reflection and enactment within the complicated contexts of our society and our institutions. He invites us to complicate what we know about student success with new information and ideas, think about what we could stop doing or do differently, broadening who is involved with student success to be inclusive of all parts of the campus



community, and positioning students as actors for student success. These recommendations will be used to shape the structure and processes of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.

11. Student Experience Strategy: <https://studentexperienceproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Increasing-Equity-in-Student-Experience-Findings-from-a-National-Collaborative.pdf>
  - a. The Student Experience Strategy is a collaboration of 15 universities who are trying to influence the student experience through evidenced based practices that create equitable learning environments. This document highlights findings and recommendations from their work and points to the [website](#) for references and details about that project. Overall recommendations include centering the perspectives of students, using real time data to shape efforts, engaging faculty as key change agents for student success, and finding ways for every part of the institution to be accountable to the student experience. Overall, this work provides insights about how we can engage and support faculty and instructors, and other institutional agents in the work to improve MSU student retention and learning.

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*In order to create substantial, lasting changes, collaboration across institutional departments and divisions is crucial. Research clearly demonstrates that the most effective student supports occur within an intentional structure program that combines support services and often involves one or more high impact practices which will require working across organizational units.*

*Mayhew et al., 2016; Tsui, 2007; Wurtz, 2014*

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## Student development theories

1. Bowman, N. A., & Garvey, J. C. (2022). Theories, findings, and implications from higher education research on student success. In N. A. Bowman (Ed.), *How college students succeed: Making meaning across disciplinary perspectives* (1st edition, pp. 28–50). Stylus Publishing, LLC. <https://catalog.lib.msu.edu/Record/folio.in00000104066>
  - a. This article provides a comprehensive overview of various student development models from different theoretical perspectives. Together, the theories from the models were used to design a set of questions that MSU students should ask themselves in order to successfully navigate and persist in college and a set of questions MSU should ask from an institutional perspective to ensure we are supporting their success.
2. Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley III, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2013). *Rethinking college student retention*. John Wiley & Sons.



- b. This book provides a retention framework which is a revision of Tinto's 1975 Interactionist Theory of Student Departure and delineates between residential experiences and commuter experiences. Their findings from two empirical studies point to organizational culture (commitment to student welfare and institutional integrity), faculty members' genuine interest in students' academic and intellectual development and good teaching skills (instructional clarity, course organization, and preparation) as contributing indirectly to student persistence. This is an important foundational theory for our work and offers examples of empirical research regarding student persistence and success along with recommendations for policy and practice at the state and university level.
3. Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. (2017). Reframing Student Success in College: Advancing Know-What and Know-How. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49(3), 19–27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2017.1321429>
  - c. Funded by the Lumina Foundation, this article summarizes the major historical theories of student development and success, outlining key drivers and then specific actions that can be taken for each of those drivers of success. The primary drivers of student success are in alignment with our approach including: 1) taking a comprehensive, integrated approach to the work, 2) using literature and research to inform our approach to MSU Student Success, 3) attending to organizational culture at the institution, 4) proving clearer pathways for students, and 5) enactment of an asset-based mindset to student success.
4. Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice. John Wiley & Sons.
  - d. This book provides an overview of student development theory and serves as a comprehensive resource for our work at MSU. This edition is inclusive of social identity models that explore multiple identities and intersectionality, important concepts raised by our Fall 2023 focus groups in discussions about the five areas of student success.
5. Rankin, S., & Reason, R. (2008). Transformational Tapestry Model: A comprehensive approach to transforming campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 262.
  - e. The Transformational Tapestry Model was mentioned in Chapter 2 of How Students Succeed and informed the student and institutional chart (curricular map of the student experience) particularly as it relates to concepts of campus climate and the role it plays in student success. This model also offers a strategic model for assessment and planning of our interventions around institutional climate and therefore this article is included in our strategy guide.

## Overall Outcome Measures

- Six-year graduation rate for first-time undergraduates to increase by 5% to 86%
- Time-to-degree, cost-of-degree, and value-of-degree measures — undergraduate and graduate
- Placement rates — undergraduate and graduate (increase)
- Probation rates (decrease and close gaps) -



- Sense-of-belonging measures and climate assessments (improve)
- Number of online courses, certificates and degrees (increase)
- International opportunities for students (increase)
- Number of high-impact opportunities offered; student participation in opportunities (increase)
- Use of student support services (increase)
- Student debt upon graduation (decrease)

### **Recommendations for changes to metrics:**

1. Six-year graduation rate for first-time undergraduates to increase by 5% to 86%
  - a. Ensure we are reviewing metrics for students such as transfer, international, first-gen, and lower socioeconomic status students.
2. Time-to-degree, cost-of-degree (define what is and isn't included in this measure), and value-of-degree measures — undergraduate and graduate
3. Placement rates — undergraduate and graduate (increase)
  - a. NACE First Destination Survey used by the Career Services Network includes employment as well as continuing education, volunteer service, and military service.
  - b. These should be disaggregated by college/major as well as demographic groups.
4. Probation rates (decrease and close gaps) -
  - a. Measure who leaves probation status in addition to who goes on probation, and explain why we measure these
  - b. One of the challenges with probation rates is they use cumulative GPA but not term GPA so we tend to end up with a disproportionate number of lower level students but few upper level students because even if they have multiple term GPAs below a 2.0 if they initially have a high cumulative GPA their recent struggles do not land them on probation. It might be worth considering including students who had a term GPA below a 2.0 but were not on probation because of a high cumulative GPA
5. Sense-of-belonging measures and climate assessments (improve)
  - a. We need to make sure these are measuring what we outline in the community and sense of belonging metrics
  - b. Pamela Peters and Rebecca Dean are both working on efforts to measure this construct.
6. Number of online courses, certificates and degrees (increase) - suggest we used more nuanced language that is more about SCND student or lifelong students seeking these opportunities or growing online programs at MSU. Suggest the educational success workstream explore what we are measuring and how to measure it.



7. International opportunities for students (increase) - include this in high impact opportunities
8. How do we measure engagement?
  - a. Number of high-impact opportunities (education abroad or away, service learning, undergraduate research, undergraduate seminars, writing courses, internships offered; student participation in those opportunities and effectiveness of those opportunities (increase).
  - b. Use of student support services (increase) - needs to be more nuanced. Perhaps increase student knowledge of campus resources, use could decrease if our courses are designed for learning and success
  - c. Who is not engaged in HIPs?
  - d. Consider campus employment as a high impact practice
9. Student debt upon graduation (decrease) -
  - a. Add debt management and financial literacy if possible
  - b. Disaggregate by college, major, student demographics such as transfer, international, first-gen, and lower socioeconomic status students.
10. Add wellbeing metrics when the University Wellbeing Strategic plan is finalized.
11. Other metrics to consider, develop, or include:
  - a. Curriculum related – learning outcomes like those used in academic program reviews
  - b. Teaching related goals
  - c. Sustainability goals

Table 2 - Workstreams: Map, assess, track efforts at every stage of the student experience and identify barriers, duplication and effectiveness of efforts

<b>Access:</b> Pre-College/Diverse applicant population	<b>Entry Point:</b> Transition to College/to MSU	<b>Retention:</b> Year to Year transitions and persistence	<b>Completion:</b> Graduation, Career Attainment, Civic Contribution, Graduate School
Identify effective practices backed by research/assessment and innovative ideas with promising results	Identify effective practices backed by research/assessment and innovative ideas with promising results	Identify effective practices backed by research/assessment and innovative ideas with promising results	Identify effective practices backed by research/assessment and innovative ideas with promising results
Learning Outcomes	Learning Outcomes	Learning Outcomes	Learning Outcomes
Curricular Activities	Curricular Activities	Curricular Activities	Curricular Activities
Co-curricular Activities	Co-curricular Activities	Co-curricular Activities	Co-curricular Activities
What exists? What are the gaps? Where are we duplicating efforts? What could we re-purpose to something more impactful?	What exists? What are the gaps? Where are we duplicating efforts? What could we re-purpose to something more impactful?	What exists? What are the gaps? Where are we duplicating efforts? What could we re-purpose to something more impactful?	What exists? What are the gaps? Where are we duplicating efforts? What could we re-purpose to something more impactful?







## Five Areas of Student Success at MSU

The five areas of student success are derived from twelve years of student success efforts and conversations at Michigan State University. Initially derived from the Five Neighborhood Pillars established by the (Provost, Vice President for Auxiliary Services, and VP Student Affairs in 2011) they influenced the development of a model created by the Neighborhood Directors in 2015, which shaped what we called Spartan Pathways in 2019. These efforts were informed and implemented through collaborative teams from across the campus and led to development of learning outcomes related to each of these five areas:

- Purpose (why am I here?)
- Academic (what's my passion?)
- Intercultural (who am I?)
- Community (where do I belong?)
- Wellness (how should I live?)

In 2021, as campus life returned following ( the Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide reaction to race-based violence in 2020" of 2020, a group of over 36 educators/staff formed a coalition to support students' transition from an entirely virtual experience to in-person experience at MSU and organized our efforts around five areas (academics, purpose, wellbeing, sense of belonging and community). These areas eventually served as the framework for a student communications project that attempted to streamline communications from Student Life and Engagement (SLE), Undergrad Ed, Enrollment Services and the Colleges.

- Take care of yourself and others
- Engage in your academic experience
- Find your way and make connections
- Get involved outside the classroom
- Connect with important resources

Based on research and a literature review conducted by Julia Barnes and Amy Martin along with feedback from the Student Success Launch 2023 and over 90 educators, staff, and students from focus groups conducted in 2023, we recommend that an enterprise-level project for student success at MSU start with these revised definitions, commitments, citations, and metrics for student success to organize our efforts and continuing shifting to a student-centric culture to meet our 2030 goals. We have adjusted the language to try and better represent what the literature, research, focus group members and students suggested was more transparent and accurate. The new titles for the five areas are:

- Self-Discovery of Purpose
- Educational Success
- Contributing to an Empowered Community
- Developing Sense of Belonging
- Developing Wellbeing

This framework is intended to be applied to the various stages of the undergraduate student experience at MSU. To simplify the stages, we applied Arroyo and Gasman's (2014) model (see appendices) of Black student success to our current life cycle of the student experience. We suggest that the ongoing initiative apply this formula to tracking the theories, frameworks and practices associated with the five areas of success.



## Self-Discovery of Purpose

### Definition

Overall self-discovery of purpose is the lifelong process of students identifying their core values, academic aspirations, and meaningful, personal, culturally, and socially valuable goals. It involves understanding and articulating why they are attending college, attending MSU specifically, and what academic major and set of activities inside and outside the classroom will help them achieve their post-graduation goals (career, continuing education, civic contributions). Developing meaningful goals contributes to motivation and wellbeing, assisting students with their transition to college, transitions year to year throughout their college experience, and to life after college.

MSU Undergraduate students bring to the educational experience their identities, backgrounds, personal knowledge and ways of knowing, and individual academic interests. During their time at MSU, students have the chance for self-discovery, reflection, exploration, and growth, all contributing to their sense of purpose and making meaning of their experiences. This process will be unique for each student and shaped by their individual backgrounds and identities as well as the systems/culture at a large, accessible, land-grant research institution which are influenced by a history embedded in larger social contexts.

### Commitments

MSU will support students' self-discovery of purpose by:

- Providing scaffolded opportunities in courses, advising and other activities for students to explore and begin developing the lifelong process of discovering their values and purpose.
- Connecting students with outside the classroom activities during college that support development of their values, aspirations, and goals including community engaged learning, undergraduate research, undergraduate seminars, education away and abroad, internships, on-campus employment, and other experiential learning activities.
- Ensure academic and personal success through inclusive support services.
- Attending to students' essential life needs (shelter, nutrition, affordability of college) through our wellbeing efforts so that they have the capacity for self-discovery of their purpose.
- Providing educator and staff training around empathy and supporting the various international, national, and local cultural influences on students' self-discovery of purpose.

### Citations

1. Clydesdale, T. (2015). *The purposeful graduate: Why colleges must talk to students about vocation*. University of Chicago Press.
  - a. An empirical study started by the Lilly Endowment Inc.—of an initiative implemented in eighty- eight colleges and universities that invited students, faculty, staff, and administrators to incorporate questions of meaning and



purpose into the undergraduate experience. The prerequisites for meaningful purpose exploration are (1) being settled into one's college student status, but (2) less so into one's program of study or post college plans, which is most prevalent among college sophomores and juniors. One of the key accomplishments of exploration programs was fostering deeper conversations. Pullman concentrated program efforts toward three goals: (1) fostering campus-wide involvement in undergraduate mentoring, (2) expanding off-campus contexts in which students "could experience and express their vocation," and (3) enlarging academic programs and curricula so students could consider the "important spiritual, moral, and political commitments that may necessarily accompany one's vocation." The result was dozens of new courses, revised academic programs, innovative service-learning projects, multiple symposia, partnerships with external constituents, and exploration-linked scholarly projects. Richboro located its exploration program in residential life, CDD chose the chapel, Phi Beta opted for academic affairs, Pullman scattered components across the campus, and IU created a freestanding center that reported to the vice president for mission.

2. Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2009). Calling and vocation at work: Definitions and prospects for research and practice. *The counseling psychologist*, 37(3), 424-450.
  - a. This article provides a framework for career counseling and vocational guidance to help individuals seek meaning in their work role by using concepts of calling and vocation. Calling and vocation are referred to as a sense of purpose as they relate to engagement within work roles. These callings can concern different faiths and beliefs, personal passions, or talents; in sum, a calling is a motivation to approach roles beyond the self with meaning. The article also emphasizes that culture, tradition, family, and other factors influence how individuals make meaning and find a sense of purpose. Once a broad idea of a sense of purpose is established, connecting individuals to find ways that their purpose is aligned with work-related pursuits can help overall motivation. This article was referenced when building the definition of "Sense of Purpose" for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy because it emphasizes the importance of motivation, the wide variety of purposes, and the cultural considerations of purpose.
3. High-Impact Practices. (2023, September 19). AAC&U. <https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact>
  - a. This website provides the most recent list of researched best practices and advises how to best institute them. We refer to this list when talking about the most important practices students can engage in outside of the classroom at MSU for learning and success. Many of these practices are documented through the co-curricular record at MSU, known as the Spartan Experience Record.
4. Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., & Bronk, K. C. (2016). Persevering with positivity and purpose: An examination of purpose commitment and positive affect as predictors of grit. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 257-269.



- a. The authors define “grit” as the combination of passion and perseverance that helps account for individuals’ success above and beyond cognitive functioning. This article describes grit to be associated with higher academic achievement, educational attainment, and success in scholastic competitions. Possessing grit can help individuals strive toward their life goals and build greater perseverance and passion for meaningful activities. This framework presented in the article was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Purpose” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
5. Hunsaker, M., Heeder, M., Melfi-Bozzo, D., Rivera, J., Fata-Hartley, C., Micomonaco, J., Imbrascio, N., Drake, S., & Miller, S. (2019). Developing 2020 vision: Engaging purpose to enhance student success & learning | MSU purpose pillar (2018-2019).
  - a. This document outlines the importance of purpose in Michigan State University’s work. To frame this work, the document provides a definition for purpose at MSU that “focuses on helping students to identify & articulate far-reaching goals that are personally meaningful & socially beneficial” (p. 16). Additionally, this document frames purpose positively overlapping with other areas of success including academic success, health and wellness, and career and personal development after college. The authors also provide a framework for purpose at MSU that has enduring commitments, beyond-the-self motives, is goal-focused, and is personally meaningful. This document provides an early definition and framework of purpose that has been incorporated throughout the current definition in the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
6. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
  - a. This text was recommended by Coree Newman Coronado, Senior Associate Director for Residence Education during our focus group discussions about purpose and the relationship between developing meaningful goals and motivation. The findings from this study led the authors to suggest that there are three psychological needs that may increase self-motivation and mental health: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This work also demonstrates the interconnectedness among the five areas of students’ success and the role of self-discovering purpose as a part of persistence and retention.
7. Sharma, G., & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M. (2018). The Relationship Between College Students’ Sense of Purpose and Degree Commitment. *Journal of College Student Development*, 59(4), 486–491.
  - a. This article investigates the relationship between college students’ sense of purpose and degree commitment, and how this relationship influences student persistence in college. The researchers utilize The Sense of Purpose Scale, developed in 2017, to measure the constructs of purpose: awareness of purpose, altruistic purpose, and awakening to purpose. This study shows that students with stronger sense of purpose and students with higher scores in altruistic purpose reported stronger degree commitment. There is a positive relationship between degree commitment and institutional commitment; if students are



more committed to earning a degree at their institution, those students are likely to persist. This article also offers multiple definitions of purpose, which all helped build the conceptual framework for “Sense of Purpose” in the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.

8. Schreiner, L. A., Louis, M. C., & Nelson, D. D. (Eds.). (2020). *Thriving in transitions: A research-based approach to college student success*. The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience
  - a. This is a book Coree Newman Coronado, Senior Associate Director for Residence Education recommended during our focus groups in Fall 2023. It is written for both academic and student affairs administrators who are trying to make changes on campus and provides research and examples to define what “thriving” means regarding student success. The authors cover transitions beyond the first year and discuss what thriving means for various groups of students including racially marginalized students, sophomores and transfers. Overall, it highlights the relationship between student engagement and thriving on campus and makes the connection between self-discovery, wellbeing, and connectedness.
9. Erck, R. W., & Sriram, R. (2023). *Thriving Through Interactions: Investigating How Distinct Relationships Influence College Student Success*. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 1-17.
  - a. Recommended by Senior Associate Director of Residence Education, Coree Newman Coronado, this article adds “deeper life” interactions to traditional paradigms of academic and social student success. They describe five factors that define what thriving conveys: engaged learning, academic determination, social connectedness, diverse citizenship, and positive perspective. This study included 977 students from 8 research universities (seven public, one private, all 5,000+ students) and utilized the Academic, Social and Deeper Life Interactions Instrument. In their discussion of findings, they emphasize the quality over quantity of interactions and the importance of interactions with peers, faculty, and staff in developing meaning, value, and purpose during the college experience.
10. Yeager, D. S., Henderson, M. D., Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., D’Mello, S., Spitzer, B. J., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). Boring but important: A self-transcendent purpose for learning fosters academic self-regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(4), 559–580. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037637>
  - a. This research explores how promoting purpose during the learning experience can improve academic self-regulation for tasks that are uninteresting and tedious. Multiple studies show that a brief, one-time intervention that connects academic work to a core value or meaning will improve grades in STEM-related courses, as well as some English grades. A purpose for learning is presented as personally meaningful, to themselves or beyond themselves in the world. Purpose empowers people to persist in the most difficult circumstances. This article was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Purpose” as this



idea of connecting meaning during their time at school is emphasized throughout the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.

11. Yeager, D. S., & Joseph, M. (2009). The role of purposeful work goals in promoting meaning in life and in schoolwork during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(4), 423–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409336749>
  - a. This study explores the relationship between work goals, purpose, and meaning in life and school during adolescence. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a sample of 148 6th-, 9th-, and 12th-grade adolescents to investigate which types of work goals provide them with the sense that schoolwork is important and that their lives are meaningful. The study found that purposeful work goals that involve making an impact on the world beyond oneself provide adolescents with a sense of meaning in their schoolwork and beyond. This article was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Purpose” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.

## Metrics

- Seventy-two percent of students who graduate from MSU changed their majors at least once (50% change it more than once!) Another 18% of students who start at MSU leave without graduating. That means that 90% of the students who checked the box of a given major on their application did not eventually graduate from MSU with that major.
  - We can measure how soon students “land” in their major and what that means for their time to degree
  - We can also measure time to degree once students have chosen a major
  - It may also be interesting to see how many majors students explore before choosing a major
  - For all of these, we want to explore if their difference between exploratory majors not in a college, exploratory students associated with a college, and students directly admitted to a college?
- Assess high impact practices – what students are or are not engaging in them, are they effective in influencing development of values, making meaning of experiences, or influencing motivation, persistence, retention
- Psychological growth associated with self- direction, life planning, and what individual students themselves are hoping to attain from their college experience. From UCI-MUST project – Life-course agency
- Values assessment – are students able to articulate their values? Look to MSU writing courses for what they are already doing and figure out how to fill the gaps for those students not in those courses
- Educator/staff understanding and application of support for self-discovery of purpose and values identification



- Utilize the Academic, Social and Deeper Life Interactions Instrument or the Thriving Quotient (Schreiner, 2010a) from Erck & Sriram (2023)
- [High-Impact Practices](#): The teaching and learning practices listed and described below are designated as “high-impact practices,” or HIPs, based on evidence of significant educational benefits for students who participate in them—including and especially those from demographic groups historically underserved by higher education. These practices take many different forms, depending on learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts.
  - Capstone Courses and Projects
  - Collaborative Assignments and Projects
  - Common Intellectual Experiences
  - Diversity/Global Learning
  - ePortfolios
  - First-Year Seminars and Experiences
  - Internships
  - Learning Communities
  - Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
  - Undergraduate Research
  - Writing-Intensive Courses

### Questions from student and institutional perspective

Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Self-discovery of Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why should I do it? Or “What is my intent for doing this?”</li><li>• What are my personal goals for getting a degree?</li><li>• What are my values?</li><li>• What are my dreams?</li><li>• What academic areas will help me live the life I want to live? And/or contribute to society in the ways I want to contribute?</li><li>• Am I engaged in personally meaningful activities?</li><li>• What keeps me at MSU?</li><li>• What motivates me to keep pursuing my degree?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are we cultivating students’ value development?</li><li>• Are we supporting the discovery of students’ interests and strengths?</li><li>• How are we helping students to articulate their values and goals?</li><li>• Are we providing engaging and holistic academic and career advising that accounts for students’ goals and aspirations?</li><li>• Are we connecting students’ choice of major with their post-graduation goals (career, continuing education, civic contributions)?</li><li>• Are we ensuring that all students have access to effective high impact practices?</li></ul>



Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are our high impact practices effective in developing students' self-discovery of purpose?</li><li>• Are our high impact practices producing the kind of learning outcomes articulated through the Student Experience Record?</li><li>• Are we meeting students' essential needs so they can fully explore their values and goals?</li></ul>





## Educational Success: Learning and Succeeding Academically

### Definition

Educational success means learning the concepts, ideas, and competencies associated with a course of study. It also means learning how to learn and apply theories and frameworks to everyday practice in a particular area of interest.

Being educationally successful at MSU means being able to acquire the intentionally designed educational outcomes created by the university's academic colleges, departments, and programs on campus. It also means knowing how to learn and study effectively, incorporating individual ways of knowing and learning, and that both students and instructors believe students can learn, grow, and develop new, critical ways of thinking. It includes having access to and utilizing academic support services (e.g. instructors, peer mentors, learning assistance) inside and outside the classroom; being able to enroll in courses a student needs in a sequential and timely manner; and being provided with culturally relevant learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Finally, it includes understanding, and being supported in navigating, academic policies and processes toward timely completion of a degree program.

### Commitments

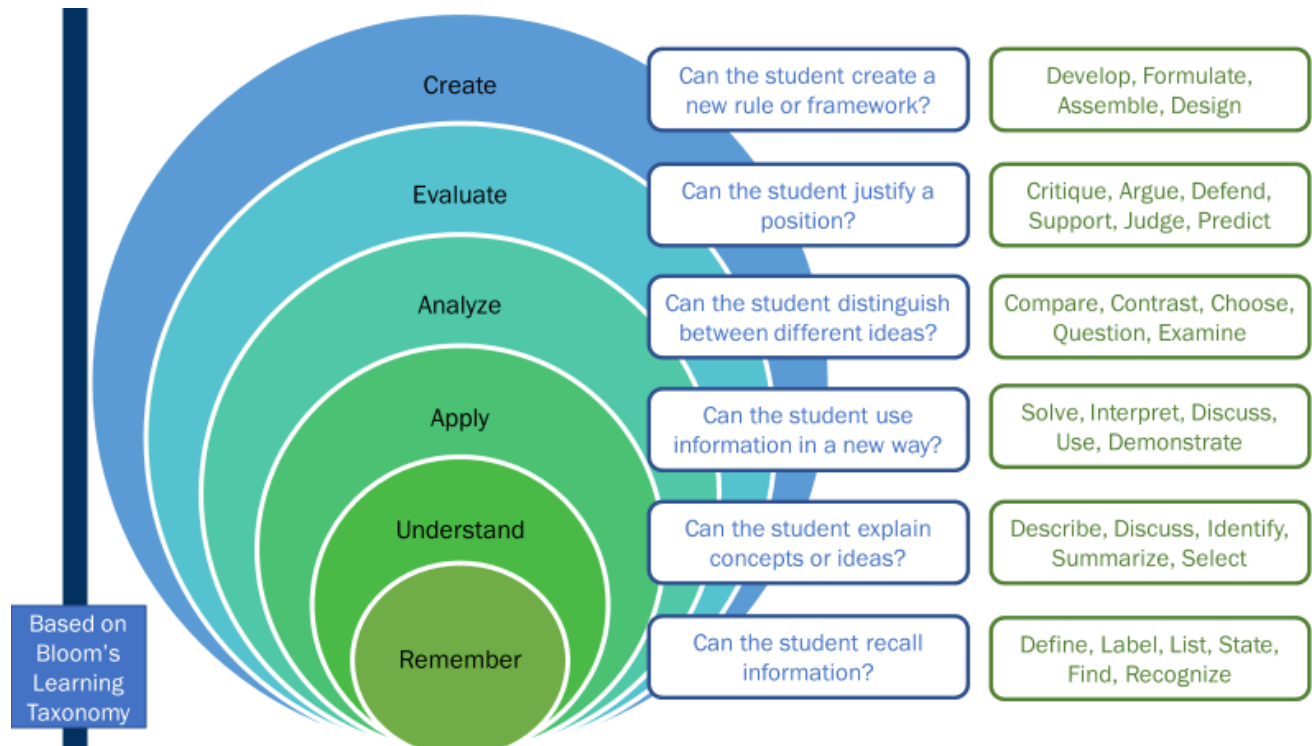
All educators (faculty, instructors, advisors, staff) at MSU play a pivotal role in fostering the educational success of MSU undergraduate students. They will support learning and academic success by:

- Revising, developing, and communicating to [students learning outcomes](#) for all educational experiences at MSU, inside and outside of the classroom
- Developing clear, transparent, coherent, and accessible program plans and pathways for students noting critical milestones
- Providing culturally relevant learning opportunities (aligns with Objective 4 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Creating inclusive, equitable and growth-oriented learning environments that support motivation and metacognition (aligns with Objective 4 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Providing well-designed high-impact practices (see [self-discovery of purpose](#)) that support and reinforce classroom learning and are accessible to all students (aligns with Objective 4 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Promoting and enforcing academic integrity
- Providing comprehensive academic support systems such as undergraduate learning assistants, supplemental instruction, instructor office hours, and accessibility tools (e.g. intentional testing environments, closed captioning, braille) that are timely and available to all students
- Monitoring students educational progress with early and frequent feedback and intervention by advisors, instructors, and other support services
- "Providing all the courses necessary to complete a program plan in a sequential, predictable and timely manner to all students." The MSU CTLI team suggested modifying



this to include providing seats, sections, and modalities (not only courses), since a course being offered does not mean there is enough room or opportunity to take the course.

- Engaging students as holistic individuals through support for their wellbeing, sense of belonging, and purpose and passion for their education (Bailey et al., 2015; Brown et al. 2014) (aligns with Objective 4 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)



Source: <https://prawfsblawg.blogs.com/prawfsblawg/2020/07/preparing-for-fall-teaching-identify-your-learning-objectives.html>

## Citations

1. Bailey, T. (2018, March 12). Equity and guided pathways: Which practices help, which hurt, and what we don't know. Community College Research Center.  
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/equity-guided-pathways-directors-column.html>
  - a. Thomas Bailey, founding director of the community college research center (CCRC), writes about the equity goals embedded in the guided pathways approach over 250 colleges are using to redesign the program pathways for community college students. He emphasizes the structural and cultural changes needed at the enterprise level to achieve the expressed outcomes for guided pathway programs. This article emphasizes the need for enterprise level reform that believes all students can succeed in institutional environment that supports their growth and learning.
2. Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). What we know about guided pathways. Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.



<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/What-We-Know-Guided-Pathways.pdf>

- a. This is a summary of findings and a practical guide to implementing guided pathways for students at community colleges and four-year colleges. The idea is that each student has their own program map for what they hope to achieve during their academic journey. The program map is a coherent, structured, guide that is used by the student, with guidance and support from their faculty, and advisors/coaches. A well-designed chart summarizes the design principles behind guided pathways with evidence-based research in organizational, behavioral and cognitive science. Outcomes from several community colleges highlight the benefits of this approach. This article provides a framework from which we can assess the overall effectiveness of our student success efforts as we design a curricular map of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience.
3. Bransford, J., National Research Council (U.S.). Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning, & National Research Council (U.S.) Committee on Learning Research and Educational Practice. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school* (Expanded ed.). National Academy Press.  
<https://catalog.lib.msu.edu/Record/hlm.ebs311377e?sid=3271977#toc>
  - a. The primary tenets and cognitive science of student learning and teaching for learning are outlined in this study. While the material is somewhat dated, the advice is similar to more recent articles about learning. What happens in the classroom or outside the classroom, the learning environment, and mindset of instructors all matter when it comes to student learning, retention and success. There are specific exercises and examples that may be helpful as we engage faculty and instructors regarding their contributions to MSU Student Success.
4. Canning, E. A., Muenks, K., Green, D. J., & Murphy, M. C. (2019). STEM faculty who believe ability is fixed have larger racial achievement gaps and inspire less student motivation in their classes. *Science Advances*, 5(2), 1–7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4734>
  - a. A large study of over 600 STEM courses, over 15,000 students (~10% URM students) found that faculty mindset beliefs are one of the most important characteristics of effective teaching and learning, even more important than other faculty characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, teaching experience, and tenure status. The authors emphasize that growth mindset can be taught and that learning approaches related to growth mindset are as demanding of students' time and attention as more traditional approaches with instructors who have fixed mindsets. The research and practices outlined in this



article will be helpful for engaging faculty, instructors, and academic leaders on campus about the training and tools necessary to ensure MSU student learning and success.

5. Dweck, C. S., & Yeager, D. S. (2019). Mindsets: A view from two eras. *Perspectives on Psychological science*, 14(3), 481-496.
  - a. Jake Kasper, Assistant Director in the Office of Student Support and Accountability, recommended we include this updated article about growth mindset and added an additional commentary by Dweck to the Zotero reviewed documents for this project. This addresses some considerations Sheila Marquardt, Coordinator of Global Initiatives in Undergrad Ed, brought to our attention about the challenges with implementing growth mindset effectively and equitably. The authors address the concerns and discuss the development of growth mindset strategies and research over the last couple of decades. They also discuss interventions that can be replicated and scaled to enhance college student motivation and wellbeing. We can refer to this article for guidance and tools for measuring the effectiveness of growth minded interventions in MSU classrooms.
6. Ives, J., & Castillo-Montoya, M. (2020). First-generation college students as academic learners: A systematic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 90(2), 139–178.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319899707>
  - a. Ives and Castillo-Montoya provide a comprehensive review of the types of research and literature that include studies about first generation students. They point out that in this review of literature there are few studies that take a strengths-based or growth mindset approach to studying first generation students. Some of their recommendations include: broader definitions of family structures when identifying which students are first generation, attending to intersectionality when defining who is first generation, promoting first gen voices and ideas in creating research and assessment of the first gen student experience, and viewing first gen student as academic learners who can connect their lives and experiences with the subject matter being studied in the classroom. The authors suggest we take a multi-directional approach to creating learning experiences and that we consider the ways in which our institutional structures favor dominant student experiences as we change the institution to ensure all students are successful.
7. Kuh, G. D., O'Donnell, K., & Reed, S. D. (2013). Ensuring quality & taking high-impact practices to scale. AAC&U, Association of American Colleges and Universities.



<https://catalog.lib.msu.edu/Record/folio.in00005871744/Description?sid=3266338#tabnav>

- a. High impact practices and their efficacy are discussed in this article. Overall, the data provided indicates that they have the potential to be impactful but still need improvement in terms of being accessible to all students and in terms of the quality of the practices provided. The authors outline eight key elements that are necessary for practices that promote student engagement and success including high expectations; experiences with diversity; frequent, timely and constructive feedback; discovering the relevance of learning; significant investments with faculty and peers; demonstration of competence publicly, and student effort in general. MSU should consider these elements when designing and providing high impact practices for undergraduate students.
8. Kinzie, J., McCormick, A. C., Gonyea, R., Dugan, B., & Silberstein, S. (2020). Assessing quality and equity in high-impact practices: Comprehensive report. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
  - a. The initial report on findings from the Lumina Foundation supported examination of High-Impact Practice (HIP) quality and equity. This report summarizes the project purpose, research design and questions, development and testing a HIP quality instrument, and early findings about assessment feasibility, evidence of elements of HIP quality, measuring high-quality HIPs, and evidence of equity. The report also explores measures of students' satisfaction with their HIP experience, differences by racial identity, and evidence of high quality and equity by HIP.
9. McCallen, L. S., & Johnson, H. L. (2020). The role of institutional agents in promoting higher education success among first-generation college students at a public urban university. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 13(4), 320–332.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000143>

  - a. Conducted at the City University of New York (CUNY) this mixed method study sought to understand the influences of social and cultural capital on first generation student success. They found that faculty, acting as institutional agents, had positive impacts on first generation students' providing them with emotional support and the skills for navigation of the institution through discussions inside and outside the classroom, career idea generation, and high expectations. They also found that peers played a significant role in motivating first generation students, helping them study and offering strategies for navigating academics at the institution. These findings are in alignment with our



desire to engage faculty and students' peers as institutional agents that can support MSU students' learning and success.

10. McGuire, S.Y. (2015). *Teach Students How to Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate Into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447313>
  - a. McGuire describes teaching strategies for improvement to student learning and academic success directly to students as her audience. She talks about expectations for learning at different levels of education (primary, secondary, post-graduate) using accessible language and anecdotal profiles of actual students. McGuire discusses fixed and growth mindsets, the role of health and wellbeing, and differences between studying and learning. This is a useful, practical guide that many of our educators in our first-year undergraduate seminars are using to engage students about the art and science of learning.
11. Packard, B. W.-L., & Hirst, R. A. (2022). STEM student success: Strategic learning, mentored research, and structural change. In N. A. Bowman (Ed.), *How college students succeed: Making meaning across disciplinary perspectives* (1st edition., pp. 147–178). Stylus Publishing, LLC,.
  - a. In this book chapter, Packard and Hirst (2022) explore the theoretical concepts of metacognition, self-regulated learning, self-efficacy, STEM identity and sense of belonging, and lab teams as communities of practice that create cultural capital for students. They highlight advances in teaching and learning such as deliberate preparation and scaffolding, intentional metacognition training for students as a part of coursework, active learning with feedback in real time, supplemental peer instruction, personal response devices and embedding research in course work. They call for the type of systemic change that we are engaging in at MSU and provide detailed examples of the advances discussed in the chapter.
12. Prevatt, F., Huijun, L., Welles, T., Festa-Dreher, D., Yelland, S., & Lee, J. (2011). The academic success inventory for college students: Scale development and practical implications for use with students. *Journal of College Admission*.  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ926821.pdf>
  - a. This article describes an inventory that can be used to measuring the influences on students' academic success. Ten subscales measure 50 items related to general academic skills, internal motivation/confidence, perceived instructor efficacy, concentration, external motivation/future, socializing, career decidedness, lack of anxiety, personal adjustment, and external



motivation/current factors. This may be a useful tool for assessing our student educational success efforts at MSU.

13. Webb, D. J., & Paul, C. A. (2023). Attributing equity gaps to course structure in introductory physics. *American Physical Society*, 19(2), 1–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2302.03543>
  - a. Researchers in this study found that structural course changes closed equity gaps in physics courses without lowering courses standards and utilized achievement measures (grades) to assess outcomes. Two approaches, concepts first and assessment retake, reduced equity gaps for underrepresented minority students and female students, whereas controlling for individual student preparation did not reduce equity gaps. The outcomes from this research suggest we take a course deficit versus student deficit approach to closing equity gaps in the classroom as part of our educational success efforts.
14. Williams, H. E., & Murphy, M. C. (2022). Social psychological approaches to college student success. In N. A. Bowman (Ed.), *How college students succeed: Making meaning across disciplinary perspectives* (1st edition., pp. 116–146). Stylus Publishing, LLC.  
<https://catalog.lib.msu.edu/Record/folio.in00000104066>
  - a. Chapter 6 focuses on the relationship between the person and their environment and how that impacts self-efficacy and growth mindset in an academic setting. The utility of course content and how it can be used outside the classroom can be a significant motivating factor for students. In addition, authors suggest that the university should understand what environmental factors may lead students to have negative academic impressions of themselves and work to change those factors. This book chapter addresses the intersections of self-discovery of purpose, sense of belonging, and educational success as it relates to shaping the Spartan Experience at MSU.
15. Purdue Framework for Teaching Excellence: Created by the Associate Deans of Undergraduate Education at Purdue  
<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/documents/initiatives-excellence-roadmap-framework.pdf>
16. Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). *Culturally relevant pedagogy: Asking a different question*. Teachers College Press. <https://www.tcpress.com/culturally-relevant-pedagogy-9780807765913>
  - a. Ladson-Billings reframes culturally relevant pedagogy from a deficit-based view of students to an asset-based approach that affirms cultural identity, demands academic excellence, and develops critical consciousness. Across theory, subject-specific applications, and teacher education, she shows that centering students'





cultural strengths can close equity gaps without lowering standards, suggesting educators focus on course and context changes rather than perceived student deficits.

*Table 3 - Framework for Teaching Excellence*

*Excellent teachers create an environment and adopt pedagogies that allow students to meet learning outcomes and achieve their full potential as learners. All instructors strive for excellence as Exemplars, Enthusiasts, and Educators. Instructors whose research encompasses teaching and learning should additionally strive for excellence as Experimenters and Explorers.*

Explorer	Experimenter	Educator	Enthusiast	Exemplar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhances undergraduate educational experience</li> <li>Creates scholarly contributions to teaching and learning</li> <li>Shares teaching effectiveness</li> <li>Engages in professional development</li> <li>Initiates educational development opportunities</li> <li>Applies knowledge to societal challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuously improves course instruction and pedagogy</li> <li>Implements innovative instructional methods to improve the process of learning, e.g., to enhance instruction via instructional strategies, activities, use of technology, applying learning theories, interdisciplinary collaborations, assessment and collaborative learning</li> <li>Adapts to teaching emergencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates Learning goals</li> <li>Sets realistic expectations</li> <li>Applies inclusive, equity-minded pedagogy</li> <li>Connects to real world</li> <li>Engages and challenges learners</li> <li>Promotes creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving</li> <li>Uses evidence-based instructional strategies</li> <li>Relates theory to practice</li> <li>Provides constructive feedback</li> <li>Open to feedback</li> <li>Critically examines own positionality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject matter expert</li> <li>Passionate about subject and student learning</li> <li>Enjoys teaching</li> <li>Inspires life-long learning</li> <li>Provides career guidance</li> <li>Engages in trans-/interdisciplinary collaborations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caring</li> <li>Inclusive, equity-minded</li> <li>Approachable</li> <li>Personable</li> <li>Empathetic</li> <li>Motivator</li> <li>Mentor (personal)</li> <li>Listener</li> <li>Trustworthy</li> <li>Accessible</li> <li>Respectful of backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences</li> <li>Humorous</li> <li>Empowers students</li> <li>Academic honesty</li> <li>Integrity</li> </ul>
Teaching portfolios	Teaching portfolios and student ratings, peer observations, alumni reviews	Teaching portfolios and student ratings, peer observations, alumni reviews	Teaching portfolios and student ratings, peer observations, alumni reviews	Teaching portfolios and student ratings, peer observations, alumni reviews

17. Campbell, C. (2023). Great College Teaching: Where it Happens and how to Foster it Everywhere. Harvard Education Press.

- a. The author of this book spoke at the UERU meeting in Washington D.C. in January 2024. Her presentation highlighted the results from a multi-institutional observational study that covered more than 700 higher education courses in a





range of contexts including regional, flagship and research universities like MSU. The goal for the presentation was to engage academic leaders, administrators, and faculty developers to improve teaching across multiple disciplines and varied course settings. Campbell covers topics such as active learning, deep subject matter knowledge, culturally relevant teaching practices and developing positive classroom climates which are all of interest to our educators at MSU as we consider our efforts for undergraduate educational success.

## Metrics

- Learning outcomes assessment for all educational activities inside and outside the classroom, are students learning what we want them to learn?
- Educators' evaluations, promotions, and tenure are tied to effective, inclusive, equitable, culturally relevant, and growth minded pedagogy, teaching, and curriculum development.
- Monitoring time to degree, year to year retention, and academic progress measures (academic probation and standing, enrollment trends, grades) and closing opportunity gaps
- Evaluation of the utilization and effectiveness of support systems (ULAs, supplemental instruction, office hours).
- Monitoring the effectiveness of academic integrity awareness and accountability programs and any potential differential impacts on various groups of students.

## Questions from student and institutional perspective

Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Learning and Academic Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do I know how to learn and challenge myself to think differently?</li><li>• Do my instructors support my learning and/or learning to learn?</li><li>• Do I think it's possible to improve, learn, grow? (growth mindset)</li><li>• Do I understand what is expected of me?</li><li>• What will keep me at MSU, in college? (CAL)</li><li>• Do I intend to stay at MSU or stay in college? (ICI)</li><li>• Am I able to map potential pathways to my educational (post bachelors), career and/or civic goals?</li><li>• Can I get the courses I need when I need them?</li><li>• Do I have opportunities to learn from my peers?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are we supporting student learning effectively?</li><li>• Are we providing clear degree pathways? (*GP)</li><li>• Are we providing predictable course schedules? (*GP)</li><li>• Are critical courses and course sequences identified? (*GP)</li><li>• Are learning goals identified across academic programs and for every course? (*GP)</li><li>• Are we retaining students?</li><li>• Are we noticing when students are struggling? Are we intervening early?</li><li>• Do we engage students with a growth mindset? (Williams &amp; Murphy, 2022)</li><li>• Are we creating opportunities for collaborative peer learning and supplemental instruction?</li><li>• Are we taking a course-deficit approach to addressing opportunity gaps in introductory</li></ul>



Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do my instructors make themselves available by offering office hours?</li><li>• Do the office hours offered by instructors meet my needs (in terms of duration, frequency, and time of day)?</li><li>• Do I see myself and my social and individual identities in the course materials, programs and among the educators and staff around me?</li></ul>	<p>courses instead of a student-deficit approach? (Webb &amp; Paul, 2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How is the institution supporting instructors' ability to offer office hours?</li><li>• Do the instructor office hours offered meet students' needs in terms of duration, frequency and time of day?</li></ul>

## Establishing Connections and Relationships

Through creating connections and relationships across campus with each other for students, and for student success, we seek to develop an empowered community that creates a feeling of belonging among all educators, staff and students.



## Contributing to an Empowered Community (*sociological*)

### Definition

Community is defined as a group of people who share an emotional connection, believe that members holistic needs matter to each other and can influence each other through trust, respect, and empathy.(hooks, 2003; McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

The MSU community consists of multiple environments that influence students emotional and social connection to the university (on-campus, off-campus; state, national, global, online communities; prospective students; current students, educators and staff; alumni) who learn, work and contribute to the institution. The university's organizations, services, and other resources work respectfully across differences to promote an interdependent learning culture characterized by hope and that supports individuals' holistic (intellectual, emotional, social, psychological, physical, cultural, spiritual and financial) wellbeing (hooks, 2003; Czachowski et al. 2019).

### Commitments

MSU will work to promote a strong sense of community at each stage of the student's engagement with the institution and within the broader environment of MSU. Specifically, within each of these environments, MSU educators and staff will prioritize:

- Creating classroom communities that are inclusive and transformative, recognizing and valuing the diversity of students' backgrounds, identities, viewpoints, and experiences (hooks, 2003) (aligns with Objective 4 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Sharing with students how they can navigate the institution academically and socially (Pendakur, 2016)
- Supporting students' comprehension of institutional policies and processes (Pendakur, 2016)
- Establishing community norms in living and organizational spaces encouraging students' individual responsibility to connect within these communities,
- Ensuring students have accessible opportunities to work collaboratively with faculty/instructors, and peers (Czachowski et al. 2019)
- Increasing collaboration between institutional silos to create an aggregated experience for students that is transparent and easier to navigate (Czachowski et al. 2019)
- Solving community-based problems together with students through approaches such as restorative justice and intergroup dialogues (aligns with Objective 4 and Objective 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Establishing and enacting community expectations for academic integrity and civic responsibility (aligns with Objective 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)

### Citations

1. Czachowski, A., Entsuah, P. R., Matson, E., Menefee, S. E. I., Nevers, J. M., & Wilcox, D. (2019). Standards of Practice for Health Promotion in Higher Education. ACHA, Fourth Edition, 1–8.



- a. This document serves as a guide for professionals involved in health promotion on college campuses. Beyond sending out crucial information and materials, health promotion is more about being proactive with social and environmental interventions that address the root cause of health conditions. This document also provides definitions for campus community, consisting of the students, staff, faculty, and others who learn, work, and contribute to the institution. Additionally, community assets are defined to be the existing strengths of a community, including individuals within and outside the campus, the built environment, organizations and services, and other resources. This document was referenced when building the definition of “Empowered Community/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy, as it specifically talks about community health and intervention strategies.
2. bell hooks. (2003). *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (1st edition). Routledge.
  - a. This book offers an inspiring vision for inclusive and transformative education that explores how educators, students, and communities can work together to create a culture of hope and social justice. For hooks, creating a classroom community that is inclusive and transformative requires recognizing and valuing the diversity of students’ backgrounds, identities, and experiences. In the book, she emphasizes that educators must listen to and learn from their students to create a space that is welcoming and empowering for all. Additionally, hooks advocates for a holistic and multidimensional approach to teaching that includes intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth that is based on trust, mutual respect, and empathy. This idea of valuing the multiple aspects of students was referenced when building the definition of “Empowered Community/Connectedness.”
3. Brown, S. K., & Burdsal, C. A. (2012). An Exploration of Sense of Community and Student Success Using the National Survey of Student Engagement. *The Journal of General Education*, 61(4), 433–460.
  - a. The researchers conducting this study wanted to find a way to examine the influence of community on student success. Using portions of the National Student on Student Engagement with 3,839 first year and senior students at Wichita State University they found correlations between the section of the NSSE about relationships with others on campus and students’ GPA. They also found that institutional involvement had positive correlations with students’ degree completion. The areas of the NSSE they utilized included: perception of similarity to others, acknowledged interdependence with others, willingness to maintain



interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them. The feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure. This study could provide an example of how we could measure the impact of community on student success at MSU.

4. Castillo-Montoya, M., & Ives, J. (2021). Transformative practices to support first-generation college students as academic learners: Findings from a systematic literature review. *Journal of First-Generation Student Success*, 1(1), 20-31.
  - a. This article organizes the recommendations from 53 different articles about supporting first-generation college students as learners. The three transformative practices found are: (a) promoting an institutional interdependent learning culture, (b) providing explicit support for academic learning, and (c) creating learning experiences that center communal goals. Additionally, this article provides multiple implications for practice that may be helpful for educators who are brainstorming ideas. To promote an interdependent learning culture at an institution, scholars recommend letting students work collaboratively with faculty and peers and increasing collaboration between academic silos. The last theme from the article synthesis focused on creating learning experiences that center on communal goals, where building an internal community and connecting to the external community are emphasized. Building the institutional community with first-generation students mainly focuses on the student-faculty relationship and the need for faculty to increase positive interactions with students. By building the internal community and cultivating care in the classroom, students have an increased sense of belonging and persistence. Connecting with the external community was another recommendation that frequently came up in the article synthesis because first-generation students are often motivated by giving back to their communities. When minoritized students feel a connection between their personal values and their academics, it can increase their motivation to pursue a degree in that field.
5. Harris, E. (2023). Surgeon General Offers Strategy to Tackle Epidemic of Loneliness. *JAMA*, 329(21), 1818-1818.
  - a. During our focus groups Jake Kasper, Assistant Director, Office of student Support & Accountability, and Alexis Travis, Assistant Provost and Executive Director for University Health and Wellbeing mentioned this report in reference connectedness and community. The document recommends a national strategy to promote social connections including infrastructure, public policies, reforming digital environments, and cultivating a culture of connection. The benefits outlined include better health, hazard preparation and resilience, safety,



prosperity, and civic engagement. This report can provide us with valuable insights for developing connectedness and community at MSU.

6. McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6–23.  
[https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1520-6629\(198601\)14:1%3C6::AID-JCOP2290140103%3E3.0.CO;2-I](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:1%3C6::AID-JCOP2290140103%3E3.0.CO;2-I)
  - a. The article defines sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 14). This definition consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Sense of community also involves a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together. Additionally, the article suggests that people enjoy helping others just as they enjoy being helped, and the most successful communities include associations that are mutually rewarding for everyone. This definition of community was referenced when building the definition of “Empowered Community/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
7. Mishra, S. (2020). Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on ‘underrepresented’ students. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100307
  - a. Mishra’s work provides comprehensive information about the research regarding the role of social networks, social capital and social support in underrepresented students’ experiences at college. The recommendations include bringing discussions of segregation and discrimination to the forefront of our work and providing more services (counseling, tutoring, mentorship) and access to instructors/professors. While limited to the residential and in-person experience, there are many insights from this research that can inform the work of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
8. Quaye, S. J., Harper, S. R., & Pendakur, S. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. Routledge.
  - a. The editors of this book highlight the various authors research around engagement for minoritized groups of students on campus, a population that has not been effectively represented in many models of student engagement and success. They attempt to answer four major questions: “Who are the students?”



- 2) In what are they engaging? 3) Where is the engagement occurring and 4) With whom are they engaging? (foreword by Lori D. Patton). The work also highlights structural deficits rather than student deficits, in alignment with the work of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy. This is an important resource for the community, connectedness, and sense of belonging work at MSU.
9. Sumun L. Pendakur. (2016). Empowerment agents: Developing staff and faculty to support students at the margins. In *Closing the Opportunity Gap: Identity-Conscious Strategies for Retention and Student Success* (pp. 109–125). Stylus Publishing, LLC. <https://catalog.lib.msu.edu/Record/folio.in00005592720>
- a. Pendakur (2016) emphasizes that the higher education system is inequitable because institutions tend to blame and expect transformation from students rather than addressing institutional issues. The majority of student affairs educators have not received training in how to confront inequitable practices or empower marginalized students. This book chapter provides a best practices roadmap for educators to become transformational agents in higher education. First, educators must critically examine their own identities and relationships to power, as well as understand how to navigate and be critical of institutional barriers and status quos in higher education. Educators must also prioritize extending support to marginalized students. An example of this is intentionally building the confidence of students where their value is not always acknowledged. Next, educators must decode and challenge the system to help students navigate barriers and demands. Examples of this are explaining the hidden curriculum, helping students comprehend institutional politics, and capitalizing on community-oriented feelings that help students understand success beyond individual achievement (Pendakur, 2016). Finally, the author recommends practicing self-assessment to help educators increase their awareness in the process of becoming an empowerment agent. This article was referenced when building the definition of “Empowered Community/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy because it places ownership of student success onto the institution and all of its educators. In this project, we hope to provide a roadmap for faculty and staff in how to show up for their students as empowered agents in the Spartan community.
10. Karp, D. R. (2019). *The little book of restorative justice for colleges and universities: Repairing harm and rebuilding trust in response to student misconduct*. Simon and Schuster.



- a. Karp is a professor of leadership studies at the University of San Diego and this book captures the enactment and assessment of restorative just practices. The content includes guides and facilitation tips, including how this practice influences campus climate by addressing bias and social justice. MSU's Rick Shafer, Assistant Director in the Office of Student Support and Accountability is acknowledged in this book and has helped us use these approaches. This warrants further attention and study as we bring to life our definitions of student success community and connectedness.
11. Gregory, A., & Evans, K. R. (2020). *The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go from Here?*. National Education Policy Center.
  - a. In this policy brief, Gregory and Evans (2020) explore restorative justice research and discuss the origins of this concept. Restorative justice education focuses on areas of holistic student success that we discuss throughout this bibliography: relational pedagogy, equity, resilience and growth mindset, and overall individual and community wellbeing through empowered problem solving. The authors outline both effective and ineffective implementation of restorative justice approaches. Assessment of our restorative justice practices at MSU can help us understand if and how they are supporting student success in terms of empowering our community and creating a sense of connectedness and belonging among educators, staff, and students.
12. Frantell, K. A., Miles, J. R., & Ruwe, A. M. (2019). *Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of Recent Empirical Research and Its Implications for Research and Practice*. *Small Group Research*, 50(5), 654-695. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496419835923>
  - a. The authors reviewed 43 peer-reviewed sources, books, or book chapters that utilized the 4-stage model of intergroup dialogue which had been found in previous studies to be the most effective model in terms of desired process, facilitation, and outcomes (e.g. reduce prejudice, increase critical consciousness development, skill development, action preparedness). They make recommendations for process, facilitation training and support and attention to potential negative contacts that can occur in the process. Overall, this resource provides MSU with potential assessment and research tools for understanding how intergroup dialogue influences student success.

## Metrics

- Utilize sense of community scale from Brown and Burdsal (2012) to understand our students' sense of community at MSU through the National Study on Student Engagement – create a baseline





- Understand what tools we may already be using to assess community and if they are effective measures for our definition and commitments.
- From McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986) find a way to measure these four elements of community - membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection
- Highlight MSU instructors who are utilizing holistic and multidimensional approach to teaching that includes intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth that is based on trust, mutual respect, and empathy and assess the impacts of this approach on student success.
- Use Spartan Voice surveys to understand if students are collaborating with faculty/instructors and/or peers and what they see as the benefits of those interactions.
- Use network analysis to understand how the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy impacts the connections and collaborations across campus and how students view the institution.
- From Quaye, S. J., Harper, S. R., & Pendakur, S. L. (Eds.). (2019) foreword by Lori D. Patton understand “Who are the students?” 2) In what are they engaging? 3) Where is the engagement occurring and 4) With whom are they engaging? (foreword).
- Assessment of our restorative justice practices and their influence on student success and the campus community
- Assessment of our intergroup dialogue programs and their influence on student success and the campus community

### Questions from student and institutional perspective

Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Connections and Relationships: Contributing to an Empowered Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do I have the social and academic connections and networks that I need to be successful at MSU and after I graduate? (instructors, peers, others?). How do I know?</li><li>• What communities do I find most helpful (before college, during college)? (ICI)</li><li>• How am I learning about other communities and cultures on campus? (ICI council)</li><li>• How do I help empower other communities (ICI Council)</li><li>• Am I respectful to others? (ICI council)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are our faculty and staff serving as empowering agents who support students’ navigation of the university /MSU? (Pendakur, 2016)</li><li>• Are faculty and advisors working together to monitor student progress? (*GP)</li><li>• Are we connected to our student community and each other?</li><li>• Are we encouraging students to be connected socially and academically?</li><li>• Are we taking steps to connect students with each other, faculty, staff, resources?</li></ul>



Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Am I willing to consider others' points of view? (ICI Council)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are we promoting concepts of restorative justice within our community?</li><li>• How many of our students are engaged in intergroup dialogue? What are opportunities to expand this effort effectively?</li></ul>



## Developing Sense of Belonging (*psychological*)

### Definition

Sense of belonging is a feeling of connectedness to the campus community including feeling safe, respected, accepted, validated, and valued. Students who feel like they belong on campus tend to be more satisfied, stay engaged, develop meaningful relationships, and perform well academically and socially. (Hurtado et al, 2015; Slaten et al, 2018; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016)

Sense of belonging at MSU means students feel connected to and valued by the university through involvement with meaningful online and in-person interactions with peers, faculty, instructors, staff, alumni and family. Students' sense of belonging is an evolving process influenced by a student's social and personal identities, interactions within the community, and the way courses and activities are structured, especially when they emphasize the student experience as adaptable and manageable and address bias and inequities. (Freeman et al., 2007; Hausman et al., 2009; Hoffman et al., 2002; Hurtado et al, 2015; Murphy et al., 2020; Museus et al., 2017; Slaten et al, 2018; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016; Williams and Murphy, 2022)

### Commitments

In order to positively influence students' sense of belonging inside and outside of the classroom, MSU administrators, educators and staff will:

- Resource educators and all staff and empower them to create a welcoming environment (aligns with Objective 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Learn about and consider our own biases and perspectives and how they contribute to or create barriers to students' sense of belonging in and outside of the classroom (aligns with Objective 4 and 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Learn how to cultivate a psychologically safe learning environment in the classroom (Liu & Renn, 2024) (aligns with Objective 4 and 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Share responsibility, across all colleges and operational units, to inquire about and address barriers to students' sense of belonging in their academic and social communities (aligns with Objective 4 and 5 AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) Strategic Initiatives)
- Support students' involvement in and development of groups that connect them to each other, to educators and staff, and to the university

### Citations

1. Bentrim, E.M. & Henning, G. W. (Eds.). (2022). The impact of a sense of belonging in college: Implications for student persistence, retention, and success. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
  - a. With foreword written by Dr. Kristen R. Renn, Professor and Mildred B. Erickson Distinguished Chair of Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education and Senior Advisor to



the Dean of Undergraduate Education at MSU, the authors of this book offer a review of theories of sense of belonging, examine sense of belonging across multiple student populations, and offer examples of practice in both teaching and student services that reduce barriers and measure sense of belonging on campus. Their work can guide our understanding of the relationship between sense of belonging, engagement, connectedness and community for student success at MSU.

2. Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(3), 203–220.
  - a. In this study, the connections between sense of belonging and academic motivation of undergraduate students was examined in a first-year classroom setting. The results from the article suggest that specific instructor characteristics are associated with student sense of belonging in the classroom, like encouragement of participation, instructor warmth, and organization. Additionally, the researchers found that class-level sense of belonging did not influence the sense of belonging at a campus-level which has since been studied with different outcomes in Hurtado et al (2015). This article was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Belonging/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy, where belonging is stated to be a process that is influenced by multiple factors like identity, interactions, and structure. The findings from this specific article suggest that a combination of academic and interpersonal factors promote sense of belonging.
3. Hausmann, L. R. M., Ye, F., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2009). Sense of belonging and persistence in White and African American first-year students. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(7), 649–669. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9137-8>
  - a. This article examines the relationship between student sense of belonging and persistence. To influence sense of belonging, the researchers utilized a simple intervention of sending correspondence and paraphernalia to students that emphasize their valued membership in the community. The intervention had the intended effect on white students, but African American students were unaffected by the intervention. The article concludes by saying that interventions can enhance student sense of belonging and persistence, but it is important to consider other factors when designing interventions to improve student outcomes. The study also found that sense of belonging directly affects institutional commitment and indirectly affects intentions to persist and actual persistence. This article was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Belonging/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy, specifically when identifying the different factors that influence belonging and the student experience.
4. Hoffman, M., Richmond, J., Morrow, J., & Salomone, K. (2003). Investigating “sense of belonging” in first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 4(3), 227.
  - a. This article discusses how to empirically measure sense of belonging, a subjective sense of affiliation and identification. This study reviewed student/peer and



student/faculty relationships; first-year students were found to be the most overwhelmed by the academic expectations, including time management. Developing “interpersonal ties” on academic matters where students could rely on someone for feedback and guidance helped students cope with academic stress. Students who had interpersonal ties also were found to be more resilient and comfortable in the university environment. This article proposes several important themes relating to sense of belonging that helped craft this definition. One of these ideas is that the greater a student’s sense of belonging, the greater student satisfaction and retention. Additionally, this article drew connections between sense of belonging and social support, friendships, and interpersonal relatedness.

5. Hurtado, S., Alvarado, A. R., & Guillermo-Wann, C. (2015). Creating Inclusive Environments: The Mediating Effect of Faculty and Staff Validation on the Relationship of Discrimination/Bias to Students’ Sense of Belonging. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity (JCSCORE)*, 1(1), 60–81.  
<https://www.istor.org/stable/48644851>
  - a. Review forthcoming
6. Murphy, M. C., Emerson, K. T. U., Gopalan, M., Carter, E. R., Bottoms, B. L., & Walton, G. M. (2020). A customized belonging intervention improves retention of socially disadvantaged students at a broad-access university. *Science Advances*, 6(29), 1–7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aba4677>
  - a. This article evaluated whether feelings of non-belonging play a role in the retention of socially disadvantaged students at broad-access institutions. The study implemented a brief intervention designed to bolster feelings of belonging through customized reading and writing exercises in all first-year writing classes. The intervention increased the likelihood that racial-ethnic minority and first-generation students maintained continuous enrollment; therefore, this intervention suggests that institutions can improve academic outcomes for historically disadvantaged students by using similar interventions. This intervention was referenced when building the definition of “Sense of Belonging” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy as it illustrates how courses and student experiences can be structured to increase feelings of belonging.
7. Museus, S. D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2017). The impact of culturally engaging campus environments on sense of belonging. *Review of Higher Education*, 40(2), 187–215.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2017.0001>
  - a. The authors of this article ~~article~~ argue that students’ sense of belonging, or connection to their campus community, is dependent on the student’s background and experiences. Students from various backgrounds will experience campus differently, and therefore students will interact with their environments in different ways. This study also found that negative aspects like discrimination, marginalization, and stereotypes negatively influence the student experience. The idea of a sense of belonging impacting the student experience, as well as the idea of interacting with environments different based on background, was



referenced when building the definition of Sense of Belonging/Connectedness” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.

8. Slaten, C. D., Elison, Z. M., Deemer, E. D., Hughes, H. A., & Shemwell, D. A. (2018). The development and validation of the university belonging questionnaire. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 86(4), 633–651.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2017.1339009>
  - a. This article discusses the development and validation of the University Belonging Questionnaire (UBQ), a tool designed to measure university belonging. The UBQ was developed based on college students’ conceptualizations of belonging. This article also offers a conceptual model of university belonging on campus, which has four contributing factors: valued group involvement, intrapersonal factors, meaningful personal relationships, and environmental factors. Students who were able to feel connected and valued to groups on campus while developing meaningful relationships with others found the most important parts of belonging satisfied. Environmental factors and aspects of students’ personalities also impacted their sense of belonging on campus. The UBQ could potentially help measure belonging at Michigan State University, and the conceptual model helps to visualize and articulate the factors that influence sense of belonging; all of which have been considered for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
9. Vaccaro, A., & Newman, B. M. (2016). Development of a sense of belonging for privileged and minoritized students: An emergent model. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(8), 925–942. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0091>
  - a. The article explores first-year student perceptions and definitions of sense of belonging and analyzed how those definitions developed throughout the year. Students defined belonging in drastically different ways depending on if they were from privileged and minoritized social identity groups. The article proposes a model to describe the differences between privileged and minoritized definitions of sense of belonging utilizing the three themes from student responses: environmental perceptions, involvement, and relationships. Both student groups found agreement that sense of belonging means to be comfortable and to fit in, but minoritized students also required safety and respect in their definitions. These student responses surrounding sense of belonging were referenced when building this definition for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy.
10. Royal, G. L., Banks, O., Jenkins, D. W., Reeves, K., & Secrist, S. (2022). From theory to practice: Leveraging identity-conscious student success strategies to close opportunity gaps for Black undergraduate students. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 40(2), 100-114.
  - a. The authors of this article were or currently are leaders in the MSU Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative, including Dr. Genyne Royal, Assistant Vice President in SLE and Assistant Dean for Student Success Initiatives in Undergraduate Education. This article provides the theoretical grounding and related outcomes for identity conscious efforts at MSU which now include Latine, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, Veteran, First Generation, and Native



American/Indigenous communities with plans for LGBT, Persons with Disabilities, International and Rural student success communities as well. This work provides insight into how we might approach this effort for multiple groups of marginalized students on campus to increase sense of belonging and connectedness.

11. Liu, C., & Renn, K.A. (2024, in publishing). Culturally responsive advising for international students In D. L. Roberts & R. Ammigan (Eds.), *Supporting International Students in US Higher Education: A Theory-Based Approach*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-46395-2\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-46395-2_7)
  - a. This chapter shares the importance of cultivating culturally responsive advising to validate students' intersecting identities. The authors focus on how educators in higher education, such as academic advisors, are frequently the first to know of a personal crisis a student is experiencing, comfort a student in need, and alert campus emergency response teams or wellness centers if a student needs more systemic support. Considering this first-to-know element of advising, this chapter describes how academic advisors can take a more culturally responsive approach to academic advising that considers students' backgrounds, family structures, communication styles, and other "deep culture" aspects that might shape the advisor–advisee relationship.
12. Delgado, V. (2025). Rejecting assimilation? How immigrant-origin young adults redefine belonging in the United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–19.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2464104#abstract>
  - a. Researchers investigated how Latino/a immigrant-origin young adults - particularly those from Central America with tenuous legal statuses - construct their sense of belonging while navigating pressures to assimilate in the U.S.
  - b. Two approaches emerged: on one hand, they resist assimilation by maintaining ties to their heritage, and on the other, they negotiate belonging through strategic adaptation to U.S. cultural norms. The study suggests that belonging is not a simple outcome of assimilation but a dynamic process shaped by both cultural preservation and contextual adaptation - pointing to the importance of questioning assimilationist expectations when examining immigrant youth identity formation.

## Metrics

- Utilizing the University Belonging Questionnaire (UBQ), a tool designed to measure university belonging
  - first year student survey sponsored by SLE uses these metrics:
    - University Affiliation
    - University Support and Acceptance
    - Faculty and Staff Relations
  - Pamela Peters, Data Resource Analyst in Undergrad Ed is testing it for measurement invariance to see how it functions with different groups of



students. Depending on the outcome of her work, we may adjust the survey for MSU students.

- Assess if students are developing meaningful relationships and sustained peer networks
- Monitor climate survey outcomes as conducted through the AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) plan
- Support the hiring, development, and promotion of educators/instructors who meet our goals for AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) on campus.
- Support objectives, efforts and metrics in the AOE (ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE) and Faculty and Staff strategic plan.

### Questions from student and institutional perspective

Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Connections and Relationships: Developing Sense of Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do I feel like I belong here?</li><li>• Am I safe (physically, psychologically) here?</li><li>• Am I respected here?</li><li>• Can I be my authentic self here?</li><li>• Do I feel validated – like I matter?</li><li>• Am I developing meaningful relationships with other students? International students? Instructors? Staff? Alumni?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are we building relationships with students?</li><li>• Are we culturally responsive to all our students? (Museus, 2014)</li><li>• Are we cultivating identity development of our students and of ourselves as educators and staff? (Arroyo &amp; Gasman, 2014)</li><li>• Are we considering our own biases and perspectives as faculty and staff and how they contribute or create barriers to building relationships with students? (Pendakur, 2016)</li><li>• Are we encouraging students to build communities that may not already exist? (ICI)</li><li>•</li></ul>





## Developing Wellbeing

### Overall Definition

To guide our work, we have adopted the Inter-Association Definition of Wellbeing, which defines wellbeing as “an optimal and dynamic state that allows people to achieve their full potential”. We also adopted a more inclusive definition of health from the Disability and Health Journal: “Health is the dynamic balance of physical, mental, social, and existential wellbeing in adapting to conditions of life and the environment. Health is dynamic, continuous, multi-dimensional, distinct from function, and determined by balance and adaptation.”

<https://nirsa.net/wp-content/uploads/inter-association-well-being-definition-2011b.pdf>

### What does it mean for MSU?

A collective approach is required to implement this plan across the University, and leaders within the MSU community will contribute to this progress through participation in the Spartan Wellbeing Collective Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, Wellbeing Networks, and work teams.

This plan sets the basis for the Spartan Wellbeing Collective to improve health and wellbeing moving forward. Recommended strategies and measures of success will be adapted and updated as work teams are engaged, implementation progresses, partners learn along the way, and actions are refined to achieve the stated goals. Each priority area will have a dedicated work group comprised of stakeholders from across MSU and led by co-chairs. Work groups will determine the final strategies building on recommendations included for each priority. (Source: <https://uhw.msu.edu/data-and-resources/spartan-wellbeing-collective>)

### Commitments

- Collectively, MSU desires to advance wellbeing as part of supporting the creation of an active, resilient, transformative, and sustainable campus community.
- The top barriers to academic success are often health-related. That’s why University Health and Wellbeing offers a variety of services and resources year-round to
  - help students achieve their health goals,
  - get immediate support after a crisis, and
  - seek health-related accommodations
  - supporting student basic needs

### Priorities and Goals

**Priority 1:** Supports for mental health, physical health, and basic needs

- **Goal:** Expand mental and physical health and wellbeing supports to address the needs of the university.

**Priority 2:** Health promoting work and learning culture



- **Goal:** Establish a culture of caring that supports health and wellbeing and promotes equitable and inclusive working and learning environments.

**Priority 3:** Service access & accessibility

- **Goal:** Enhance service access and consistent integration of accessibility standards.

**Priority 4:** Belonging and connection

- **Goal:** Create environments that foster connectedness and belonging to strengthen social health and wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff.

## Suggested Citations

1. Flaherty, C. (2023). Physical Health and Wellness Linked to Student Success. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellness/2023/05/31/how-college-students-rate-campus-health-and>
  - a. This news article highlights findings from the Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse student voice survey (April—May 2023). Two prominent findings emphasize the importance of wellness to student success. First, of 3,000 two- and four-year students, half of those students stated that their physical health and wellbeing had adverse effects on their academic success. Secondly, of the respondents with disabilities or chronic illnesses (n=421), three out of four students reported that their physical health and wellness negatively impact their ability to focus, learn, and do well in class “a great deal” or “somewhat.” This article was referenced when building the definition of “Wellbeing” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy because it highlights the urgency of supporting student health during college. This article also connects wellbeing to academics, which demonstrates how the five areas of success are intertwined.
2. The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs. (2025, February). 2023–2024 student basic needs survey report. Temple University, from <https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey/2023-2024-student-basic-needs-survey-report>

This report reveals that among 74,350 college students surveyed across 91 institutions from Spring 2023 to Summer 2024, 59% experienced insecurity related to food or housing—41% faced food insecurity, 48% housing insecurity, and 14% homelessness. When including other essential needs like mental health, childcare, transportation, and internet access, that number rises to 73%. Alarming, awareness and utilization of supports remain low: nearly two-thirds of students did not know about available resources, 51% did not access public benefits, and 48% did not use any campus supports. This evidence was referenced when building the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy’s definition of “wellbeing” because it underscores how foundational basic needs security is to student success, persistence, and overall functioning across multiple domains.
3. Krahn, G. L., Robinson, A., Murray, A. J., Havercamp, S. M., Havercamp, S., Andridge, R., Arnold, L. E., Barnhill, J., Bodle, S., Boerner, E., Bonardi, A., Bourne, M. L., Brown, C.,



Buck, A., Burkett, S., Chapman, R., Cobbranchi, C., Cole, C., Davies, D., . . . Witwer, A. (2021). It's time to reconsider how we define health: Perspective from disability and chronic condition. *Disability and Health Journal*, 14(4), [101129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2021.101129](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2021.101129)

- a. Krahn et al. (2021) contend that health should be redefined as “the dynamic balance of physical, mental, social, and existential well-being in adapting to conditions of life and the environment.” This framing emphasizes adaptation and balance rather than a static state of “complete well-being,” highlighting that health is multidimensional and fluid. The article was used to inform the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy by reinforcing that wellbeing extends beyond the absence of illness to include ongoing adjustment across multiple domains.
4. Norvilitis, J. M., & Linn, B. K. (2021). The Role of Student Debt and Debt Anxiety in College Student Financial Wellbeing. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, 50(3).
  - a. This article describes how financial wellbeing impacts student's anxiety. Financial wellbeing is influenced by many factors, including debt levels, the student's perception of debt, and the student's personality. The article also discusses how credit card debt negatively impacted student dropout rates in the early 2000s, but today, there are more concerns associated with student loan debt. The study found that college graduates with more loans and lower financial assets report lower levels of financial wellbeing. This article was referenced when building the definition of “Wellbeing” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy because it emphasizes how financial wellbeing can influence the student's entire wellbeing, including their anxiety and levels of optimism.
5. Munin, A., & Enos, M. (2016). Food, shelter, and success: Mitigating risk for low-income college students. In *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (pp. 126-144). Routledge.
  - a. In this book chapter, Munin & Enos (2016) explore tangible ways to assist students experiencing economic instability, debt, homelessness, and food insecurity. Additionally, understanding that low-income students have nuanced experiences where substantive interventions are beyond financial aid. The first success strategy is to develop an economic distress task force to provide services to students experiencing financial instability and stress. The second strategy is providing and promoting emergency funding to students. The third strategy is creating an accessible student food pantry to address food insecurity. They suggest that when implementing any of these initiatives, higher education institutions should avoid assessing the value of these services based solely upon retention percentages. The retention percentages only show if students survived, it does not determine anything about the quality of the student's experience. Munin & Enos (2016) also state that while retention numbers can benefit the institution, there may be other options that are more beneficial to the student like transferring or taking time off. Finally, continuous evaluation of the services that assist low-income students that benefit students in real time is crucial. This book chapter was referenced when creating the definition of “Wellbeing” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy because financial insecurity is a crisis



for students in higher education. Retaining students is more than percentages, it is also about ensuring that students' basic needs are met.

6. Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges <https://www.healthpromotingcampuses.org/okanagan-charter>
  - a. The Okanagan Charter calls on higher education institutions to embed health into all aspects of their work and to lead health promotion action in their communities. Higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to provide “transformative education, engage the student voice, develop new knowledge and understanding, lead by example and advocate to decision-makers for the benefit of society” (p. 5). In this scope, the charter calls on higher education institutions to include health and principles into the school’s mission, vision, and strategic plans. The charter also has multiple calls to action for higher education institutions to pursue the aforementioned call to action. Multiple recommendations are considered in the development of the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy, including developing comprehensive campus-wide strategies that engage multiple voices.
7. Health Promotion in Higher Education:  
[https://portal.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA\\_Standards\\_of\\_Practice\\_for\\_Health\\_Promotion\\_in\\_Higher\\_Education\\_October2019.pdf](https://portal.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA_Standards_of_Practice_for_Health_Promotion_in_Higher_Education_October2019.pdf)
8. Issel, L. M., & Wells, R. (2018). Health program planning and evaluation: A practical, systematic approach for community health (4th ed.). Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning. Center for Community Health & Development. (n.d.). Community Tool Box, Section 8. Identifying community assets and resources. Retrieved October 14, 2019.
  - a. This website describes how to improve communities by promoting awareness to the assets and strengths. Community assets are anything that can be used to improve the quality of life in the community, and they can be a person, place, service, or business. Everyone has the power to improve their communities, and everyone has the power to identify different resources. Compiling a list of resources, mapping them to the community, and promoting the results can expand the awareness of resources to others. This is a fluid project that will change with time and the website further encourages that the list be reviewed regularly.
9. NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation, NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education & ACHA - American College Health Association (November 2020). Inter-association definition of well-being. Retrieved from [www.nirsa.org/hands-in](http://www.nirsa.org/hands-in)
10. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMSA) provides resources for colleges student populations that will be utilized as we build out the UHW strategic plan. <https://www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week/voices-of-youth/substance-use-prevention-resources-youth-college-students>
11. Towards developing WHO’s agenda on wellbeing. (2021). Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240039384>
  - a. This document from the World Health Organization (WHO) outlines different strategies for engaging, accelerating, aligning, and accounting for wellbeing. The authors identified multiple definitions of wellbeing as the interpretation of



wellbeing as a concept varies. The selected definitions by WHO for individual wellbeing include aspects of happiness levels, engagement with communities and resources, acting with purpose, and ability to cope with challenges. The WHO definition was referenced when building the definition of “Wellbeing” for the Spartan Undergraduate Experience Strategy as their definition emphasizes how wellbeing cannot be easily defined broadly and includes ways that wellbeing intersects with other areas of success (i.e., community engagement and sense of purpose).

Metrics suggestions (TBD in collaboration with UHW) From UCI – Self-Regulation Skills

Attitudes, dispositions, and skills related to setting goals, planning, organizing, and monitoring one’s own behavior From UCI – Psychological Flourishing and Mental Health

Students’ mental health and individual flourishing provide opportunities for students to find meaning and purpose in their lives.

Use of student support services (increase)

Student debt upon graduation (decrease) Improving equity, mental and physical wellbeing, social justice, respect for diversity, sustainability and food security. [Okanagan Charter](#)

Coping with challenges effectively, university commitment, student support, academic success. ([The State of Spartan Health 2024](#))

## Questions from student and institutional perspective

Area of Success	Student Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Developing Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can I afford MSU?</li><li>• Are all my basic needs for food, shelter, safety, clothing, water, physical health, mental health, social connections met?</li><li>• Can I identify areas of strength and growth in my own health and wellbeing ?</li><li>• Do I understand my finances and how to manage them?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are we committed to the safety and welfare of students?</li><li>• Are we connecting students to resources to meet their basic needs for food, water, shelter, clothing, finances, physical, social and mental health?</li><li>• Are we empowering students to engage and support their families?</li><li>• Is attending MSU affordable?</li><li>• How are we supporting students’ sense of belonging as a part of health and wellbeing?</li><li>• How do we create a culture of care for the faculty and staff who support our students?</li><li>• How do we ensure students’ access and accessibility to learning and support services?</li></ul>



## Curricular Map of Student Success

As part of this project a [Student/Institutional Chart](#) was developed as the foundation for a curricular map of student success at MSU from the student perspective and the institutional perspective. The ICI Advisory student council found the student questions thoughtful and dynamic providing feedback that has been incorporated as of December 2023. Continued student input into this map and the project will be gathered through Spartan Voice Surveys and the development of a course where undergraduate students will work with MSU to develop and implement these plans.

These questions should be asked at every phase of the student experience and utilized to communicate the MSU Undergraduate Spartan Experience to students, families/supporters, donors, and others both for informational purposes but also as a tool to support students navigation of the institution and focus institutional efforts to support student success.

Access	Entry Point	Retention	Completion
Pre-College/Diverse applicant population	Transition to College/to MSU	Year to Year transitions and persistence	Graduation, Career Attainment, Civic Contribution, Graduate School



## Considerations

As working groups are organized to address the five areas of success, we want to echo the voices of focus group members that we attend to how much these five areas of success overlap and interact with each other. Highlighting these areas is important because it helps us understand, define, and assess student success, and we must also realize in our analysis how much they influence each other. We also need to attend to the varying reasons students have for attending college/MSU, the multiple and intersecting identities that shape their experience, and the complexity of their needs and dreams.

During the campus focus groups in Fall of 2023 we identified several potential areas of dissent, confusion, and/or dissonance that should be addressed as part of the project including:

- Multiple definitions of student success exist across campus which may create confusion as we work to implement them if they are not aligned with the plan
- The students' role in success cannot be passive even if the focus is on institutional efforts
- Some focus groups members thought we needed to call out and name the opportunity gaps – we may need to be strategic about this depending on audience (e.g. external to MSU, internal to MSU)
- Some individuals felt it would be impossible to close the gaps, and suggested we may want to be more realistic and say we want to minimize them.
- Online learning -more clarity about this effort is needed by the campus community.
- We need to find balance between developing community and the safety of individuals in the community.

In addition, student, educator and staff focus groups of Fall 2023 identified barriers and gaps that need to be addressed. As the project moves forward, we should work with students to surface similar nuanced experiences that impact student retention and persistence:

- Academic production/performance - this may look different for students of varying abilities
- Student notification of changes in curriculum needs improvement
- Students in some majors/colleges desire more time with their major advisor and general advisors
- Aligning incentive and promotion structures with these goals outcomes
- Developing community in online courses and programs
- Addressing the accessibility and quality of our high impact practices
- Improving students' ability to navigate the institution, the system is too complex for most students to navigate
- Addressing what feels like competition among students some have access, others not enough
- Faculty/instructors' ability to see the entire student experience and course load
- Improving "institutional design" of MSU. Some students do not know about possible accommodations or other resources. How do we increase accessibility institutionally to avoid students in crisis?
- Student do not have enough access to courses in the sequence and timing needed

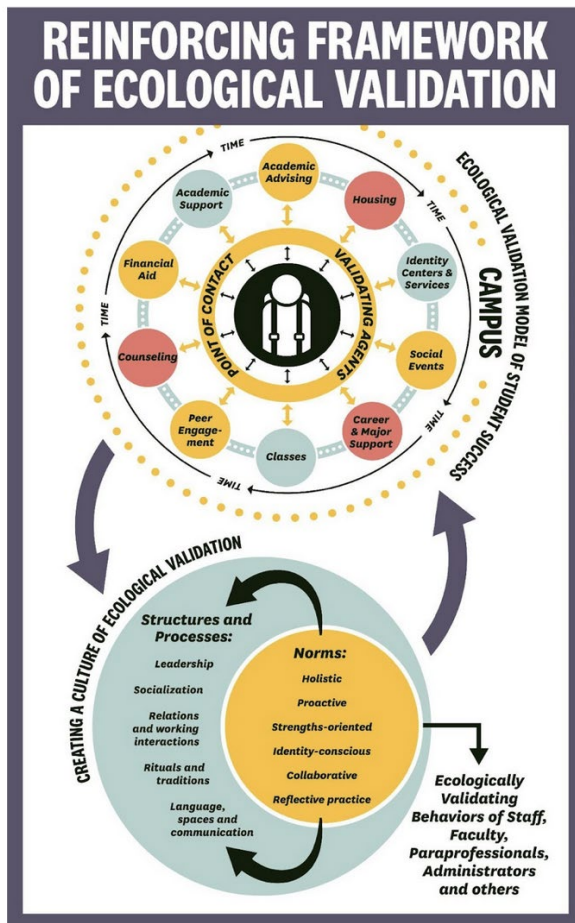




- Size and scale of MSU as a barrier to participation (online orientation, connecting people to personable resources, etc.) and takes a long time to be connected to something manageable
- Addressing the lack of accessible modalities for students

## Closing

In closing, we want to express how grateful we are for all the input, time, and energy provided by our colleagues and students. We hope this is the first edition of an annually updated strategy guide for student success at MSU. This product is part of developing and supporting an empowered campus community with a passion for creating high quality and responsive undergraduate student experiences that support students' ability to learn, thrive, and graduate.



*Reinforcing Framework of Ecological Validation image source: Hallett, R., Bettencourt, G.M., Kezar, A., Kitchen, J.A., Perez, R., & Reason, R. (2021). Re-envisioning campuses to holistically support students: The ecological validation model of student success[Brief]. USC Pullias Center for Higher Education.*