

What Matters to Student Success: Lessons for *UH*



George D. Kuh

Student Affairs Staff

University of Houston

June 2, 2011





We all want the same thing—an undergraduate experience that results in high levels of learning and personal development for all students.



**“It’s the Learning,
Stupid”**



The Major Tasks

Teach students to:

- **Reflect** – on their experiences inside and outside the classroom
- **Integrate** – see the connections between different courses, out-of-class experiences, and life beyond the institution
- **Apply** – use what one has learned in different settings presenting novel challenges and opportunities (e.g., writing across the curriculum)?

What If...

- ❖ We imagined what our work would be like using what we know about how students learn and develop...?
- ❖ And we created optimum learning conditions for all our students...?
- Then, how would we re-design **UH**?
- What kinds of programs and services would we provide?
- *For what shall **UH** be known?*

Overview

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

- **What the world needs now**
- **Students today**
- **Why engagement matters**
- **High-impact practices**
- **A 7-step agenda**



Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes



- ★ ***Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World***
- ★ ***Intellectual and Practical Skills***
- ★ ***Personal and Social Responsibility***
- ★ ***“Deep” Integrative Learning***



Deep, Integrative Learning

- **Attend to the underlying meaning of information as well as content**
- **Integrate and synthesize different ideas, sources of information**
- **Discern patterns in evidence or phenomena**
- **Apply knowledge in different situations**
- **View issues from multiple perspectives**

Raising The Bar

Employers' Views On College Learning In The Wake Of The Economic Downturn

Key findings from survey among 302 employers
Conducted October 27 – November 17, 2009
for



Association of American Colleges and Universities

Employer expectations of employees have increased

% who agree with each statement

Our company is asking employees to **take on more responsibilities** and to **use a broader set of skills** than in the past



Employees are expected to **work harder to coordinate with other departments** than in the past



The **challenges** employees face within our company are **more complex today** than they were in the past

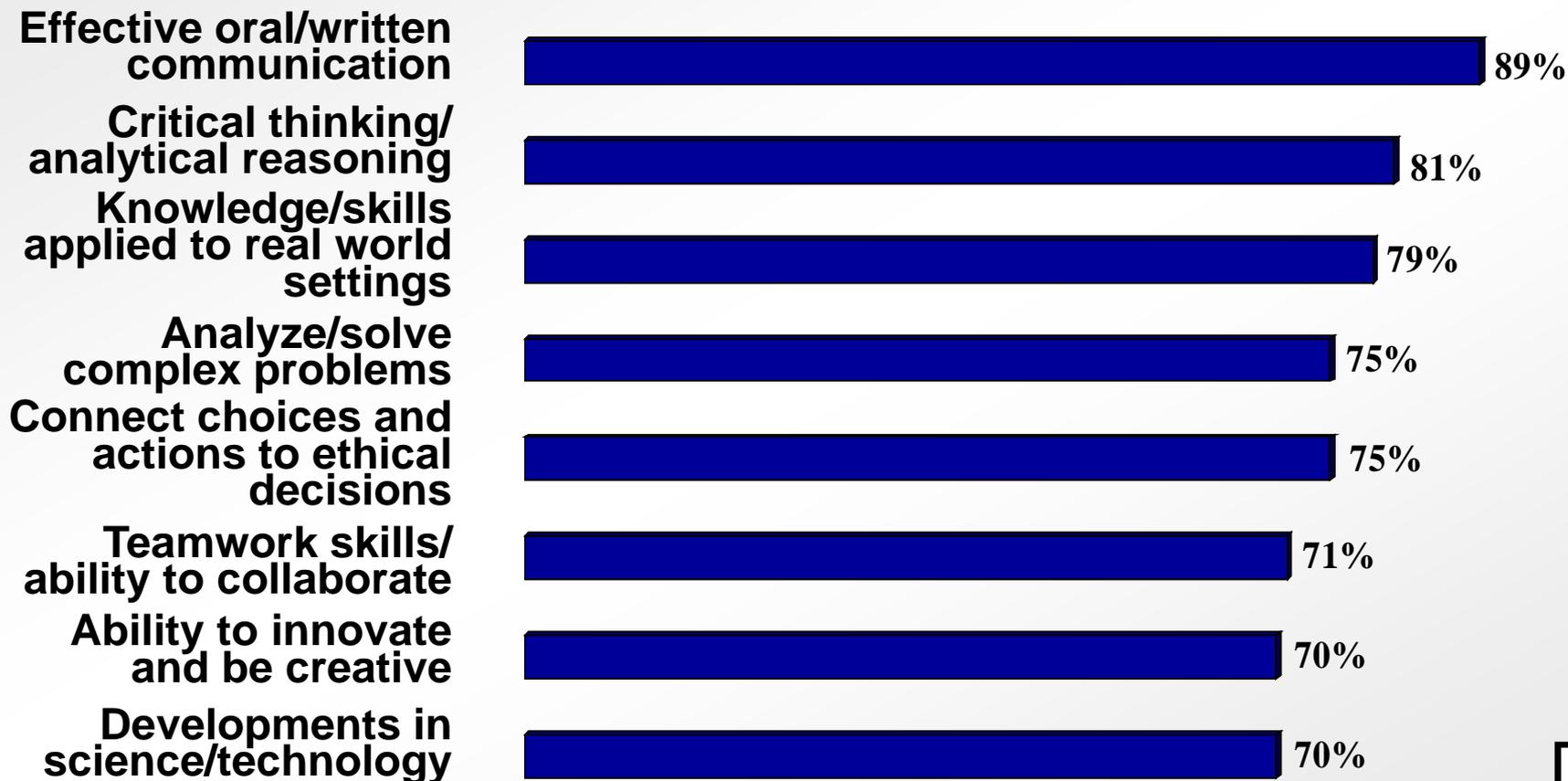


To succeed in our company, employees need **higher levels of learning and knowledge** today than they did in the past



Employers' Top Priorities for Student Learning In College

% saying two- and four-year colleges should place MORE emphasis on helping students develop these skills, qualities, capabilities, knowledge

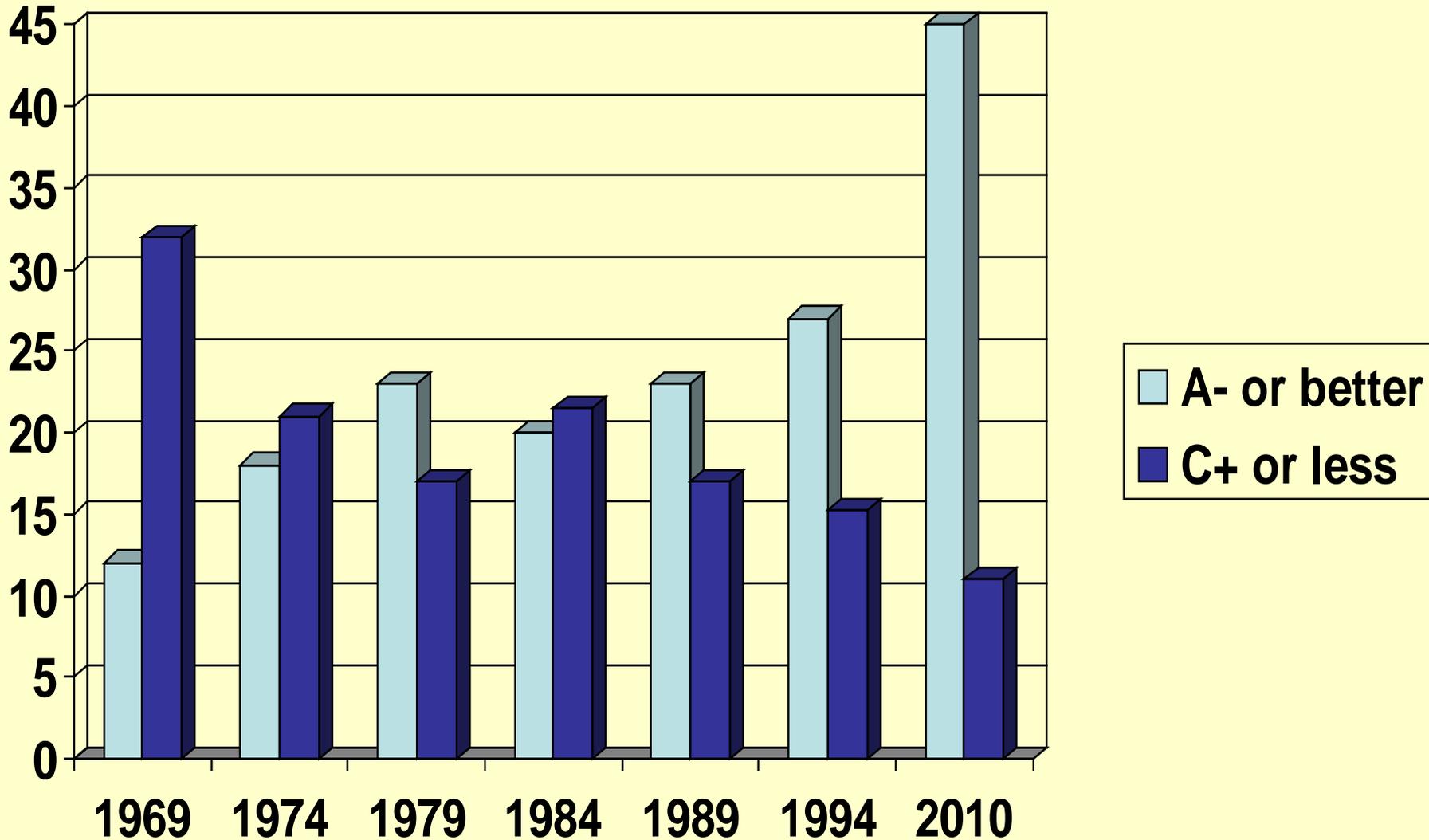


Students Today

- **An entitlement mentality**



Trends in High School Grades



Students Today

- An entitlement mentality
- **Cumulative deficit re: attitudes, study habits, academic skills**



Students Today

- An entitlement mentality
- Cumulative deficit re: attitudes, study habits, academic skills
- **Dualistic**



Students Today



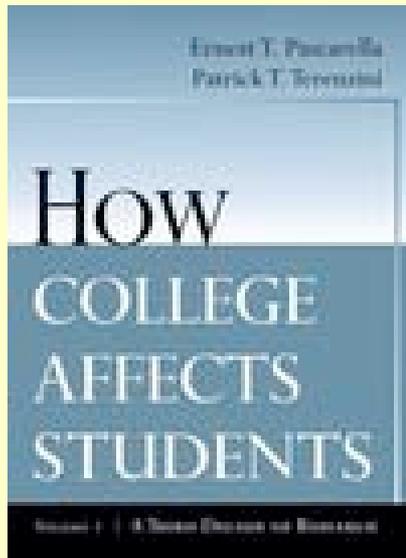
- **More diverse than previous cohorts**
- **Techno-savvy “NetGens”**
- **Connected to family**

Early College Indicators of Persistence and Success

- ✓ **Goal realization**
- ✓ **Psycho-social fit**
- ✓ **Credit hours completed**
- ✓ **Academic and social support**
- ✓ **Involvement in the “right” kinds of activities**



What *Really* Matters in College: **Student Engagement**



Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage **student engagement**.

Foundations of Student Engagement

Time on task (Tyler, 1930s)

Quality of effort (Pace, 1960-70s)

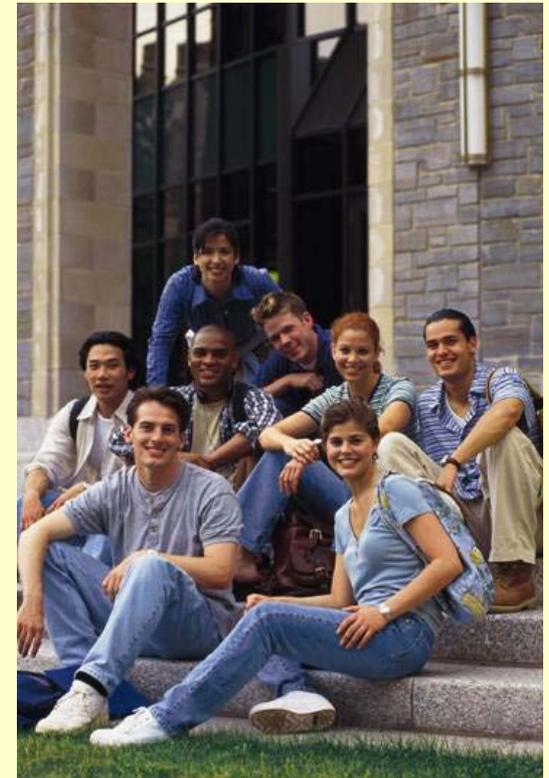
Student involvement (Astin, 1984)

Social, academic integration (Tinto, 1987, 1993)

Good practices in undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

College impact (Pascarella, 1985)

Student engagement (Kuh, 1991, 2005, 2007)



Student Engagement Trifecta

- What students **do** -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions **do** -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward ***the right activities***

Good Practices in Undergraduate Education

**(Chickering & Gamson, 1987;
Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)**

- ✓ **Student-faculty contact**
- ✓ **Active learning**
- ✓ **Prompt feedback**
- ✓ **Time on task**
- ✓ **High expectations**
- ✓ **Respect for diverse learning styles**
- ✓ **Cooperation among students**



***National Survey of
Student Engagement
(pronounced “nessie”)***



***Community College
Survey of Student
Engagement
(pronounced “cessie”)***



College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

Effective Educational Practices

**Level of
Academic
Challenge**

**Active &
Collaborative
Learning**

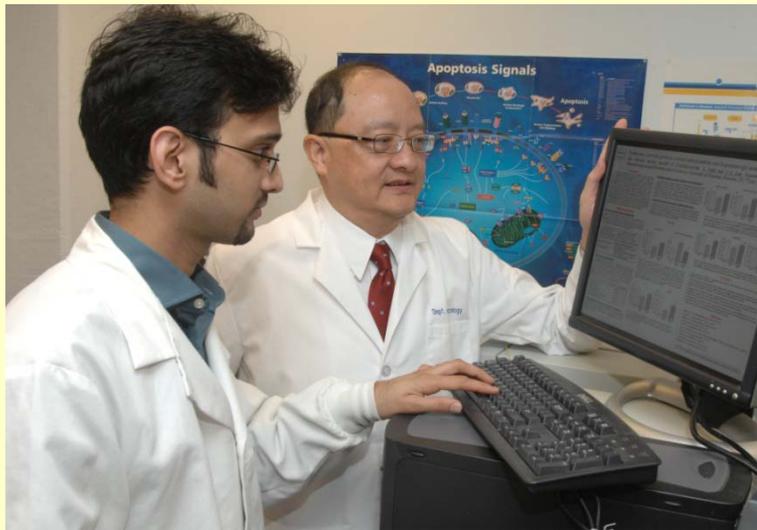
**Student-
Faculty
Interaction**

**Enriching
Educational
Experiences**

**Supportive
Campus
Environment**



Key findings



Grades, persistence, student satisfaction, gains across a range of desired outcomes, and engagement go hand in hand



It's more complicated than this...

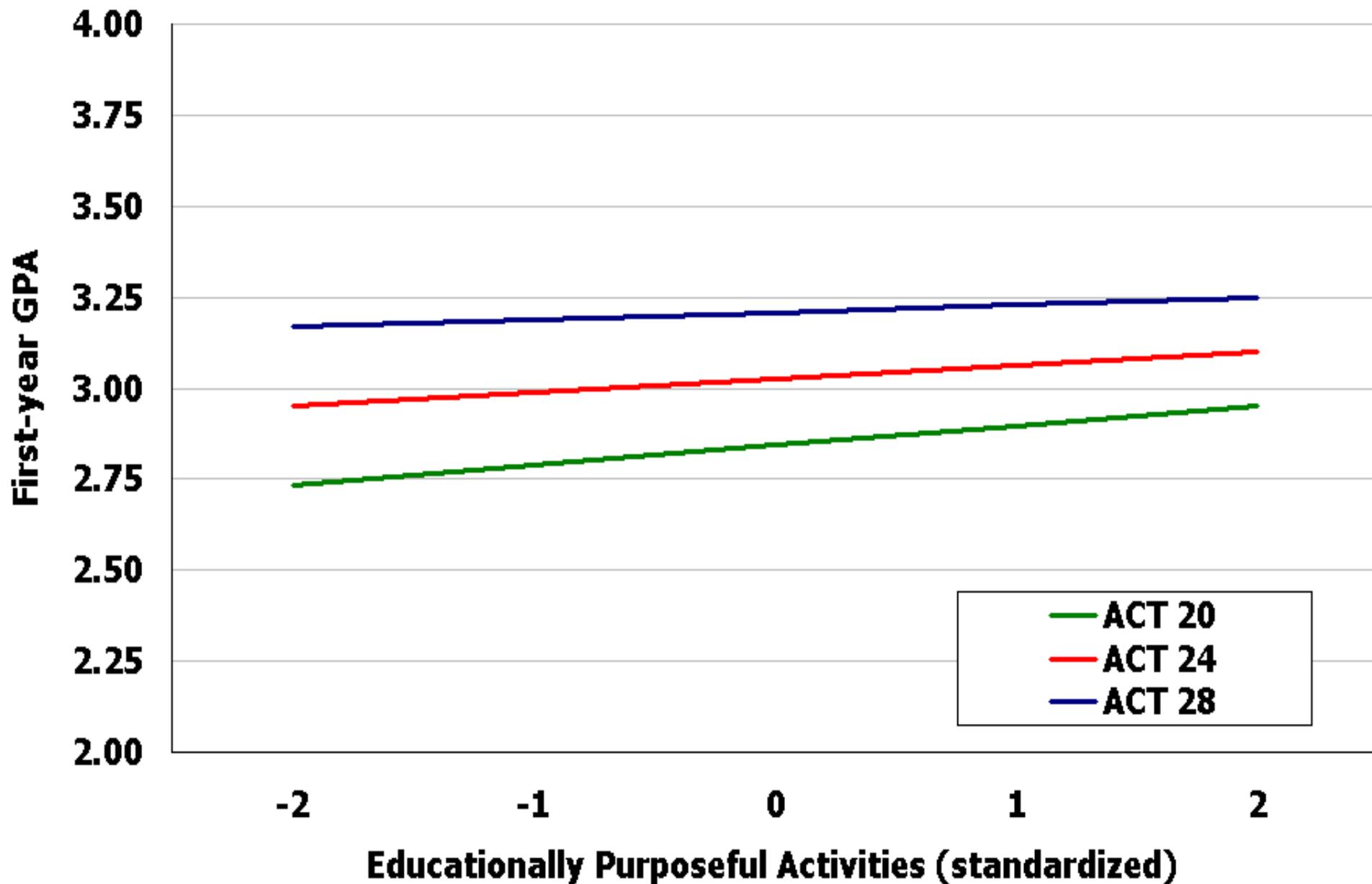
- *Many of the effects of college are “conditional”*
- *Some are compensatory*
- *Some have unusually positive effects*



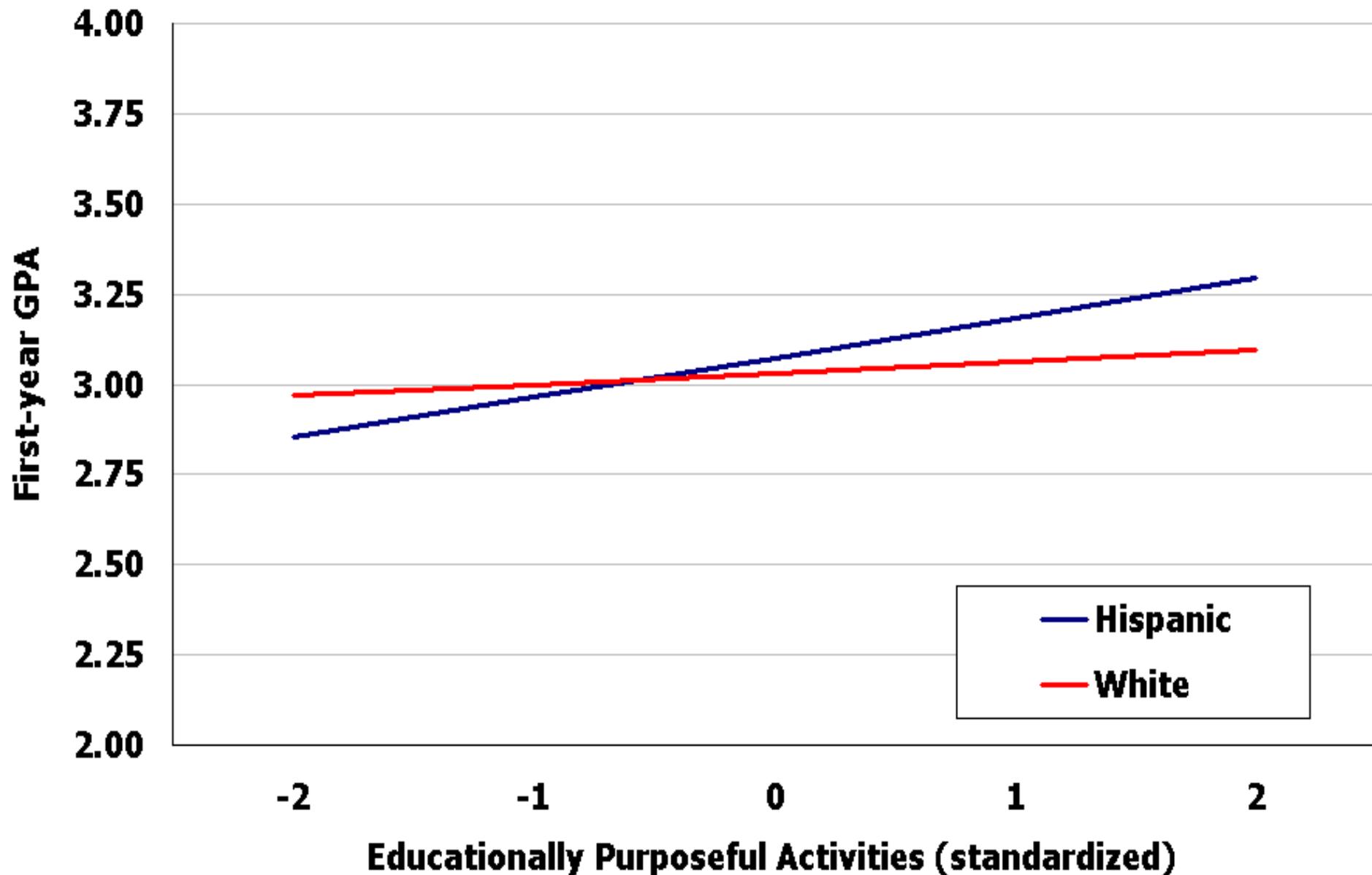
Who's (on average) more engaged?

- **Women**
- **Full-time students**
- **Students who live on campus**
- **Students with diversity experiences**
- **Students who start and stay at same school**

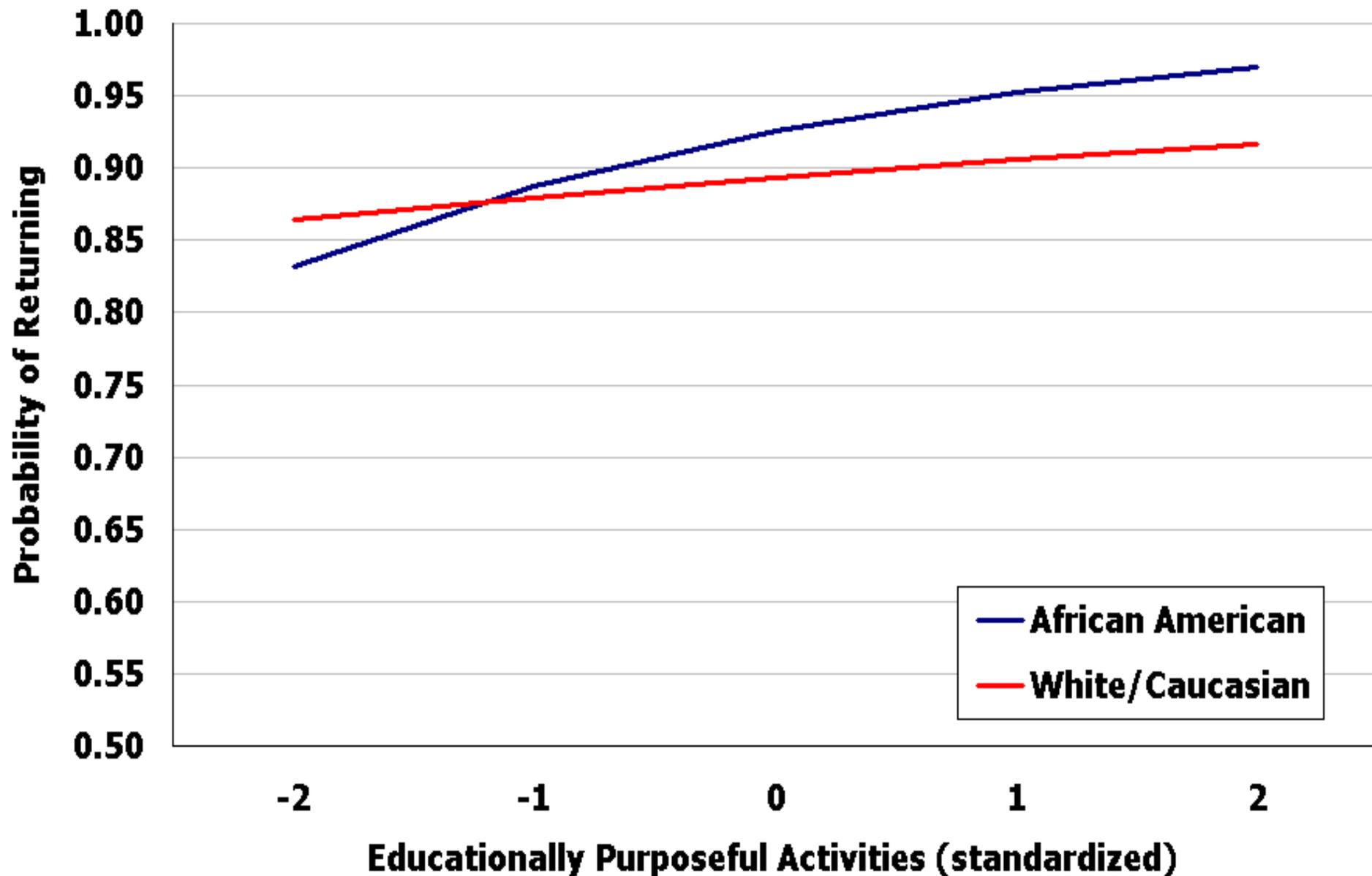
Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Pre-College Achievement Level



Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on First Academic Year GPA by Race/Ethnicity



Impact of Educationally Purposeful Activities on the Probability of Returning for the Second Year of College by Race



Who's more engaged?

- Women
- Full-time students
- Students who live on campus
- Students with diversity experiences
- Students who start and stay at same school
- Students who have done “*high-impact*” practices



LEAP



LEAP

High-Impact Educational Practices



WHAT THEY ARE,
WHO HAS ACCESS TO THEM,
AND WHY THEY MATTER

BY GEORGE D. KUH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER
AND FINDINGS ON STUDENT SUCCESS FROM AAC&U'S
LEAP INITIATIVE



www.aacu.org

High-Impact Activities



- ★ **First-Year Seminars and Experiences**
- ★ **Common Intellectual Experiences**
- ★ **Learning Communities**
- ★ **Writing-Intensive Courses**
- ★ **Collaborative Assignments and Projects**
- ★ **“Science as Science Is Done”;
Undergraduate Research**
- ★ **Diversity/Global Learning**
- ★ **Service Learning, Community-Based
Learning**
- ★ **Internships**
- ★ **Capstone Courses and Projects**



Essential Learning Outcome:

NSSE Deep/Integrative Learning

- ◆ **Integrating ideas or information from various sources**
- ◆ **Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/writing**
- ◆ **Put together ideas from different courses**
- ◆ **Discussed ideas with faculty members outside of class**
- ◆ **Discussed ideas with others outside of class**
- ◆ **Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory**
- ◆ **Synthesizing & organizing ideas, info., or experiences**
- ◆ **Making judgments about the value of information**
- ◆ **Applying theories to practical problems or in new situations**
- ◆ **Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views**
- ◆ **Tried to better understand someone else's views**
- ◆ **Learned something that changed how you understand an issue**

Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Deep/Integrative Learning and Gains

	Deep Learning	Gains General	Gains Personal	Gains Practical
--	---------------	---------------	----------------	-----------------

First-Year

Learning Communities	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++

Senior

Study Abroad	++	+	++	
Student-Faculty Research	+++	++	++	++
Internship	++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++
Culminating Experience	++	++	++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Student Engagement

	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collab. Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Supportive Campus Env.
--	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------

First-Year

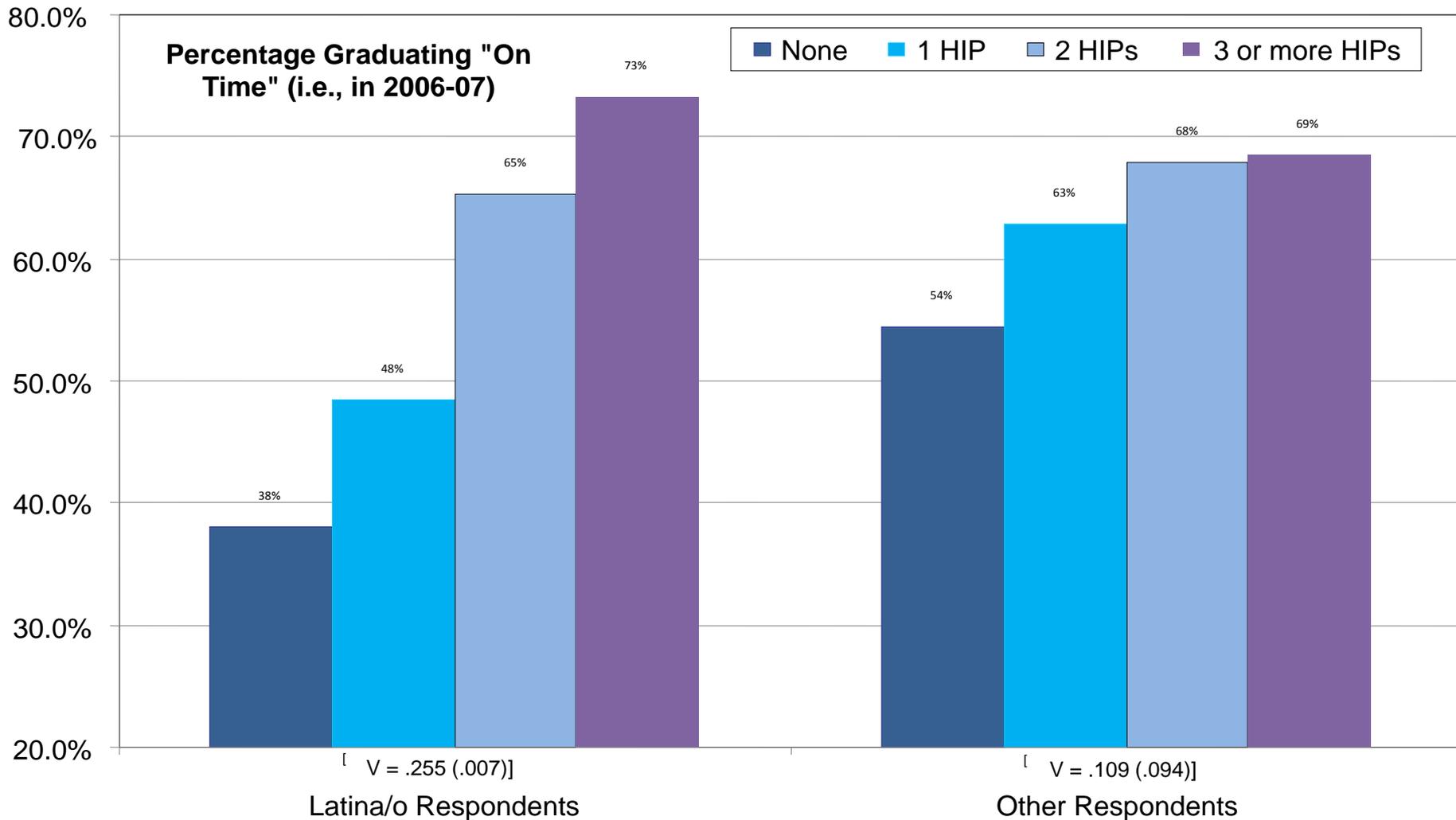
Learning Communities	++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++

Senior

Study Abroad	++	++	++	+
Student-Faculty Research	+++	+++	+++	++
Internship	++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Culminating Experience	++	++	+++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

High-Impact Practices and Senior NSSE Respondents Graduating on Time



Source: *Does Participation in Multiple High Impact Practices Affect Student Success at Cal State Northridge?* by Bettina Huber (unpublished paper, 2010).

Employers assess the potential value of high-impact educational practices

% saying each would help a lot/fair amount to prepare college students for success

- 84%** Students complete a significant project before graduation that demonstrates their depth of knowledge in their major AND their acquisition of analytical, problem-solving, and communication skills (*62% help a lot*)
- 81%** Students complete an internship or community-based field project to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences (*66%*)
- 81%** Students develop research skills appropriate to their field and develop evidence-based analyses (*57%*)
- 73%** Students work through ethical issues and debates to form their own judgments (*48%*)

High-Impact Activities **Increase Odds Students Will:**

- ✓ ***Invest time and effort***
- ✓ ***Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters***
- ✓ ***Experience diversity***
- ✓ ***Get more frequent feedback***
- ✓ ***Reflect & integrate learning***
- ✓ ***Discover relevance of learning through real-world applications***

High-Impact Practices and the Disparities Within...

Frosh: Service Learning and LCs

- ✓ *Parity among racial/ethnic groups*
- ✓ *Fewer 1st gen students*
- ✓ *Fewer part-time students*
- ✓ *Fewer transfer students*
- ✓ *Fewer older students*

High-Impact Practices and the Disparities Within...

Seniors in All HIPs

- ✓ *Fewer 1st gen students*
- ✓ *Fewer students of color*
- ✓ *Fewer transfer students*
- ✓ *Fewer part-time students*
- ✓ *Fewer older students*

Ponder This

- 1. What high-impact practices (HIPs) – those identified by AAC&U *and others* -- are available at UH or in our department? Which students do them?**
- 2. Do students know about the HIPs available at *UH*? How do they learn about them?**
- 3. How do we know our HIPs are effective? What is the evidence?**



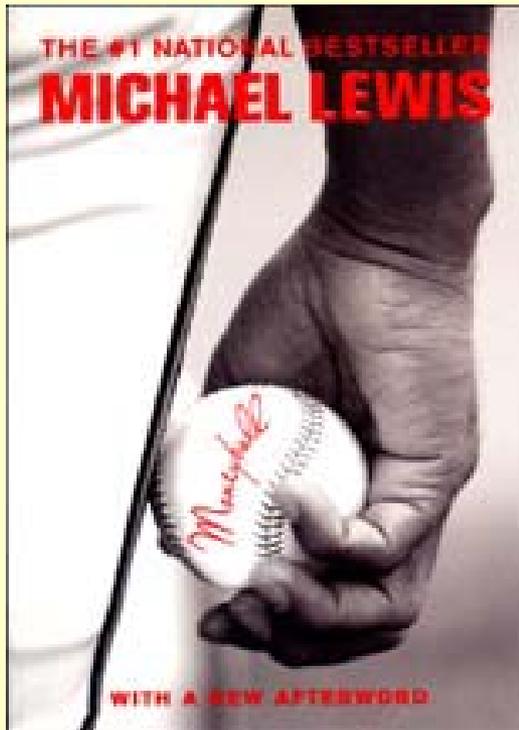
Ponder This

“If all you ever do is all you’ve ever done, then all you’ll ever get is all you ever got”

Texan quoted in T. Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded* (2008, p. 6)

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success.

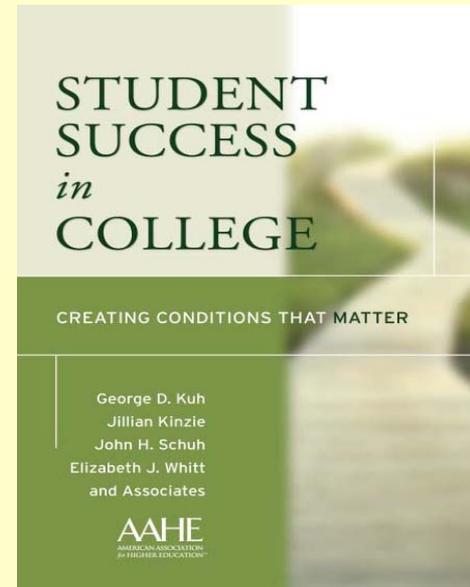


“...in professional baseball it still matters less how much you have than how well you spend it”

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success.

*It's not **how much** you spend but **where** (DEEP study, Delta Cost Project, Cornell studies)*



Wellman's Conclusions

- **Intentionality matters as much or more than money alone**
- **Spending on instruction and *student services* pays off in learning, retention and graduation**
- **Excess units cost institutions money, cost students in time and money, and do not get students to the finish line**

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success.
2. **Sunset redundant and ineffective programs**
3. Have ***every student*** do (at least) one high-quality “high-impact” experience in the first year and another linked to the major
4. **Make work a high-impact activity**

U of Iowa Student Employment Pilot Project

- Supervisors from Student Health Service/, Housing, and Iowa Memorial Union
- Supervisors received one hour of training on:
 - Outcomes of student employment
 - Results from the previous year's Division of Student Services Student Employment Survey
 - Background on the role supervisors can play in helping students make connections between work and academics
 - Expectations for the Pilot Project

U of I Student Employment Pilot Project

- Supervisors had two structured conversations with every student employee during spring semester and coded conversations into the following categories:
 - How the job and academics complement each other (“How is your job fitting in with your academics?”)
 - Transfer between work and academics (“What are you learning here at work that is helping you in school?”)
 - Transfer between academics and work (“Are you learning anything in class that you can apply here at work?”)
 - Transfer between work and future career (“Give me a couple of examples of things that you are learning here at work that you will be using in your future profession?”)

U of Iowa Student Employment Pilot Project

- **Student Employment Survey used to examine differences between pilot and non-pilot participants.**



Student Employment Outcomes: U of Iowa Pilot Project Participants

<i>Outcome</i>	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	Pilot Participants	Non-Pilot	Pilot	Non-Pilot
My job helped me develop more effective time management skills.	100%	77%	4.3	3.9
My job helped me improve my oral communication skills.	100%	68%	4.8	3.8
My job helped me develop conflict resolution skills.	69%	59%	3.9	3.6

Student Employment Outcomes: U of Iowa Pilot Project Participants

<i>Outcome</i>	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	Pilot Participants	Non-Pilot	Pilot	Non-Pilot
My supervisor helps me make connections between my work and my life as a student.	77%	46%	4.1	3.3
My job has helped prepare me for the world of full-time work.	54%	43%	3.6	3.1
My job has helped me improve my written communications.	69%	17%	4	2.6

Student Employment Outcomes: U of Iowa Pilot Project Participants

<i>Outcome</i>	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	Pilot Participants	Non-Pilot	Pilot	Non-Pilot
I can see connections between my job and my major/coursework.	69%	29%	3.7	2.7
My job has helped me learn about career options.	54%	30%	3.6	2.9

Student Employment Outcomes: U of Iowa Pilot Project Participants

<i>Outcome</i>	% agree/strongly agree		Mean	
	Pilot Participants	Non-Pilot	Pilot	Non-Pilot
Because of my job, I am able to work effectively with individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.	83%	75%	4.3	4
My job has helped me use critical thinking skills	77%	56%	4	3.4

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success.
2. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs
3. Make it possible for *every student* to do at least one high-quality “high-impact” experience in the first year and another later linked to the major
4. Make work a high-impact activity
5. Develop and use **checklists** (Gawande, 2009) where they have promise to make faculty and staff more intentional in their practice

Why We Need Checklists

“The volume and complexity of what we know has exceeded our individual ability to deliver its benefits correctly, safely, or reliably” (p. 13)

“Checklists ..remind us of the minimum necessary steps and make them explicit. They not only offer the possibility of verification but also instill a kind of discipline of higher performance” (p. 36)

Where Checklists Could Make a Difference

- ✓ **Academic advising**
- ✓ **Service learning courses**
- ✓ **Internships, field placements**
- ✓ **Independent student inquiries**
- ✓ **Academic skills centers**
- ✓ **Residence hall & student group advisors**
- ✓ **Study abroad coordinators**
- ✓ **Others?**

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success
2. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs
3. Have *every student* do (at least) one high-quality “high-impact” experience in the first year and another linked to the major
4. Make work a high-impact activity
5. Use checklists
6. **Insist on doing what works**

Targets of Opportunity

- ✓ **Front-load resources and support**
- ✓ **Require advising and orientation**
- ✓ **Use valid placement tests**
- ✓ **Reduce D/W/F rates**
- ✓ **Deploy early warning systems**
- ✓ **Organize residences around educational themes**
- ✓ **Communicate with at-risk student family members**

7 Step Agenda

1. Put money where it makes a difference to student success
2. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs
3. Have *every student* do (at least) one high-quality “high-impact” experience in the first year and another linked to the major
4. Make work a high-impact activity
5. Use checklists
6. Insist on doing what works
7. **Stay the course**

7. Stay the course

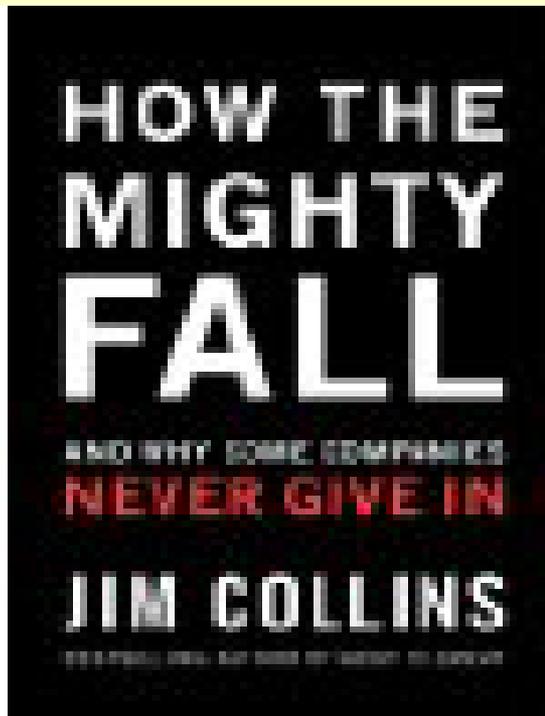
The good-to-great-transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough...

(Collins, 2001, p. 186)

7. Stay the course

- **For what shall UH be known?**
- **Leadership**
- **Intentionality**
- **If it works, consider requiring it**
- **Beware the implementation dip**

High performance is not guaranteed to last



*It's not complacency
but over-reaching
that better explains
how the once
invincible self-
destruct*

Keys to Sustaining the Student Success Agenda

- a. Student success becomes an institutional priority when everyone--especially campus leaders--make it so.***
- b. Measure and act on what matters to student success***
- c. Stay positively restless***

The Major Tasks

Teach students to:

- **Reflect** – on their experiences inside and outside the classroom
- **Integrate** – see the connections between different courses, out-of-class experiences, and life beyond the institution
- **Apply** – use what one has learned in different settings presenting novel challenges and opportunities (e.g., writing across the curriculum)?

Last Word

- ❖ **We must embrace the lineage of our students.**
- ❖ **Campus cultures do not change easily or willingly.**
- ❖ **To foster more student success we must use promising policies and practices more consistently throughout the institution.**
- ❖ **Do we have the *will* to do so?**
- ❖ ***For what shall UH be known?***



Questions & Discussion

