Civitas Learning equips your institution with optimized student data to help you uncover insights about your unique students. You can use these insights to guide, or nudge, them towards their goals. Think of a nudge as a type of outreach that is intended to alter behavior.

Nudges are small pushes in the right direction that do not require prescribed actions, but encourage certain behaviors. When students are presented with a nudge sent from a trusted person at your institution, they have the freedom to make their own choices with information about behaviors we know are more strongly associated with positive persistence and graduation outcomes.

- Kuh, George D., et al. *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

The concepts below can be used to effectively nudge a student towards behaviors that lead to positive outcomes.

# BELONGING

Students often don't feel like they belong in college. This could be because they are first generation students or because they are struggling either academically or socially. Telling a student that other students feel the same way they do and affirming that they do, indeed, belong in college can have a powerful effect on his or her motivation to keep working hard.

- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*, 324-345.

# MATTERING

An important part of being in a community is feeling the sense that you matter to the people in the community. If you feel like others in the community are interested and concerned about you, it can influence your behavior within the community. It is common, especially at large institutions, that students do not feel like they matter to the community. This affects students' sense of belonging. Even a simple message from a faculty member expressing interest in a student's performance in his or her class can have a powerful effect. Telling students that their success matters to people at your college or university can positively influence their sense of belonging at your institution and encourage behavior leading to successful outcomes.

- Schlossberg, N. K. (1989), Marginality and mattering: Key issues in building community. *New Directions for Student Services*, 1989: 5–15. doi:10.1002/ss.37119894803

# EMPATHY

College students need to feel professors, advisors, and others in the community understand what they are experiencing, are proud of their accomplishments, saddened by their failures, and believe they are capable of learning. Expressing empathy towards students will create these feelings in students and increase their sense of belonging, mattering, connection, and self-confidence.

- Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education, 19*(1), 33-51.

# GOAL SETTING

How students perceive their goals may impact whether or not they succeed. If a student's goals for her education are merely to achieve good grades, and appear competent and superior to her classmates, then she may not be committed to deeply learning the material in a course; she may focus only on doing enough to achieve a certain grade. If a student sees her primary goal as learning, then she is likely to be more committed to gaining deep understanding of the concepts she is learning, leading to better outcomes in future coursework. These two types of students are respectively referred to as performance-oriented and mastery-oriented. Help students to become mastery-oriented by telling them that the goal of college is not simply to earn good grades, but to learn new knowledge and skills that will help them throughout life. This will lead to better outcomes for students not only in college, but also in their careers and life.

- Pintrich, P. R. (2000). Multiple goals, multiple pathways: The role of goal orientation in learning and achievement. *Journal of educational psychology,92*(3), 544.

- Eison, J. A. (1981). A new instrument for assessing students' orientations towards grades and learning. *Psychological Reports*, 48, 919-924.

# GROWTH MINDSET

All students face challenges during their educational journey. How students perceive those challenges can determine whether they ultimately reach their goals. If a student believes challenges cannot be overcome, or his abilities are fixed, he is less likely to push through the challenges he encounters along the way. If a student believes that she can overcome challenges over time and with effort, and that her abilities are not fixed, but can grow, she will respond resiliently when challenges arise. Telling students that the challenges they experience can be overcome, and that with effort, their abilities will grow, can change students' mindsets about challenges and, in turn, build resiliency.

- Yeager DS, Dweck CS. Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*. 47: 302-314. DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2012.722805

# NORMALIZING

Students may feel that other students do not feel or experience the same things they do. This can lead to a sense of isolation and loss of sense of belonging and connection. A student may believe that his feelings regarding the academically challenging nature of college are something he alone experiences. He may not feel he fits-in socially, or that his experiences of anxiety surrounding his transition from high school to college, or transferring from one college to another are not shared by his peers. Reassuring students that these feelings and experiences are normal, that other students have the same feelings and experiences, and that there is support available to them to move past these perceived roadblocks to their goals, can reduce the stress and negative feelings getting in the way of their success. Normalizing the challenges of college and all its transitions can encourage students to utilize the myriad support mechanisms already in place on campus.

- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *92*(1), 82-96.

- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes among minority students. *Science*. *331*(6023): 1447-1451.