

# Experiencing Confidence and Enjoyment of Learning ExCEL Programs

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## Purpose of the Innovation

Experience Confidence and Enjoyment of Learning (ExCEL) program was developed at CSUN to provide our students a way to gain a greater sense of self-efficacy in their ability to learn new and perceived difficult material first developed by Clinical Psychologist Dr. Mark Stevens in 2007 who was then the Director of our University Counseling Services, and is now on faculty in our College of Education department of Educational Psychology and Counseling

### Inspiration

- ◆ We have a moral obligation for increasing the retention and graduation rates of our students.
- ◆ Graduating from CSUN will open new doors and provide opportunities that will significantly change the lives of our students, and their families and future generations.
- ◆ We know that most of our students who do not graduate have the intellectual abilities to do so.
- ◆ Dreams go unfulfilled by too many of our first-generation and historically underrepresented groups.
- ◆ We have the talent and heart here at CSUN to be better *Dream Navigators* for students

### Mission/Goals

The ExCEL program draws from psychosocial, learning and social justice theories and provides interventions and teaching strategies with the objective of increasing student success to our well-intentioned and deserving students. More specifically the interventions and teaching strategies are designed for students to:

1. Increase their sense of belonging at CSUN,
2. Create and better remember their purpose for learning and graduating,
3. Reinforce the importance of help-seeking behaviors,
4. Acknowledge and create a new narrative about the impact and roadblocks created from past academic mini-traumas,
5. Help students access their sense of resiliency and remember their proud learning moments,
6. Learn more about the strategies and mind-set involved in the learning process,
7. Increase self-reflection about their learning habits, learning styles and learning expectations.

## What is the Innovation

### Who Has Been Involved in ExCEL Programming?

#### STUDENTS

- ◆ Developmental Math Students
- ◆ Students on Academic Probation
- ◆ Residential Life Students
- ◆ First-Year Orientation Students
- ◆ U100 Students
- ◆ Students not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress-Financial Aid
- ◆ University Counseling Center Students

#### CAMPUS COLLABORATORS (Through the Years)

- ◆ Dr. Kate Stevenson, Andrea Nemeth, Peter Mora-Developmental Math
- ◆ Drs. Jose Montes, Veronica Sullivan, Araceli Mejia, Lideth Ortega-Villalobos-University Counseling Services
- ◆ Dr. Cheryl Spector-U100
- ◆ Mellisa Giles-Residential Life
- ◆ Dr. Frankie Augustin-Faculty in College of HHD
- ◆ Lili Vidal- Financial Aid
- ◆ Joe Bautista-Viscom
- ◆ Dr. Michael Neubauer -Provost Office and Developmental Math

### Tools of ExCEL

[www.csun.edu/counseling/excel](http://www.csun.edu/counseling/excel)  
Videos/Facilitation Guidebooks

#### Building Academic Confidence (2014)

Ow.ly/rTTsg.

In this 28 minute video, Dr. Stevens summarized the core concepts of the ExCEL program by providing 7 steps towards building academic confidence and enjoyment of learning.

Facilitation and Self Reflection Guidebook:  
[www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/excel-guidebook-faculty-staff.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/excel-guidebook-faculty-staff.pdf)

#### Selfies of Your Professors (2015)

[www.csun.edu/counseling/selfies](http://www.csun.edu/counseling/selfies)

Dr. Stevens interviewed five CSUN professors from minority racial and SES backgrounds about their experiences of getting in and going to college. The video is edited into different chapter themes and invites students to relate to their professors with the intention of closing the often-felt power gap between professors and first generation college students.

Facilitation and Self Reflection Guidebook:  
<http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/Selfies-Video-Guidebook.pdf>

#### Curriculum

A variety of interventions/lectures/workshops have been developed by a team of campus collaborators. *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life* by Skip Downing has been a valuable resource for ideas.

### ExCEL Programs in Action

#### ◆ RAISE Your GPA Class

Two or Three sections of this one unit course are taught each semester. The class utilizes ExCEL principles and is intended for students on or close to being on academic probation

#### ◆ Developmental Math Retention Project

Supplemental Instruction Courses in Developmental Math have utilized ExCEL training and interventions in their 092 Spring Courses. Faculty have been trained to

#### ◆ Residential Life/Developmental Math Interventions

Interventions with first year residents who were taking Developmental Math classes. Also trained Residential Life Math tutors on ExCEL Principles.

#### ◆ Faculty Training

Faculty Learning Communities, New Faculty Orientation and Faculty Retreat have been venues to better understand how ExCEL principles can be utilized in their classrooms. ExCEL program has recently created a set of **specific culturally responsive teaching practices** that address the learning history and learning styles of our first generation and under-represented students

#### ◆ In the Classroom

Many Faculty have provided their students access to ExCEL tools. In some circumstances live ExCEL workshops/interventions are provided.

## ExCEL Principles

### Key Terms

Academic Capital  
**Academic Mini Traumas**  
Proud Learning Moments  
**Learning Skills vs. Study Skills**  
Enjoyment of Learning  
**Confidence to Learn New Material**  
Brain Food

### Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Strategies (Specifics are available)

#### Facilitate Self-Reflection

Build a relationship with your students-be approachable  
**Connect Students with other students**

Share your wisdom and love for learning

**Share your expectations with Compassion**

Encourage help seeking

### Principles of Student Success

**Remember Your Purpose for going to college**

Know Your True Academic Worth (not what you have been told)

**Ask for Help (often)**

Uplift your attitude about learning  
**Purposeful Effort—Pays off**

Put Aside Your Distraction

**Magnets—better retention**

**Remember Your Proud Learning Moments- building resiliency and hope**

## What Impact Does the Innovation Have

### Measured Impact (One Example) (092 Spring 15)

### Developmental Math 092 Spring Courses Supplemental Classroom Intervention

### Description of the Intervention

- ◆ 092 Faculty and Supplemental Instructors participated in a 6 hour ExCEL training before the start of the Spring Semester
- ◆ Supplemental Instructors met weekly with a trained professional familiar with the ExCEL program. The SI's were provided an opportunity to discuss classroom challenges and were provided supervision how to handle these challenges.
- ◆ Students were given assignments (provided in the training) to help encourage a better mind-set, motivation and develop more effective learning strategies.
- ◆ Three in-classroom interventions were provided to each SI classroom during the semester. Towards the beginning, middle and end of the semester. Interventions were facilitated by faculty from University Counseling Services and other departments

### Promising Results

- Passage rates increased by more than **20 percentage points** for both African-American and Latina/o (n=197) students over the Spring 14 092 cohort of similar students.
- The results indicated a elimination of the achievement gap in those particular courses.
- Being tested again Sp 16 semester