Centering Student Voice, Purpose, and Agency to Promote Asset-Based Program Choice

**MEAUXMENTUM SUMMIT**
February 7-8, 2024

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Motivate Lab
Mindset Academy Objectives

1. Define and understand **Learning Mindsets**
   
   Define **CHOICE Architecture** and make connections to the Meauxmentum Framework

2. Understand why **Advisor/ Faculty Learning Mindsets** matter

3. Understand how **MINDST GPS and CHOICE** align

4. Apply **practical tools and strategies** that integrate Learning Mindsets that can lead to asset-based program choices on your campuses
Meet LaDonna

LaDonna is a champion for educational equity and racial justice. With over 23 years of urban K-12 and higher education practitioner and administrative experience, LaDonna supports Motivate Lab by providing leadership and strategic vision for partner relationships and equity-centered initiatives. Before joining Motivate Lab, LaDonna served as the founding Dean of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Mathematics at Southwest Tennessee Community College (Memphis, TN), which led to the creation of The Office of High Impact Practices and Innovation (HIPI) and the Gatekeeper Faculty Fellowship, which is a multi-year, faculty-driven initiative targeted at closing the equity gaps in the College's Top 12 Gatekeeper (Gateway) and corequisite courses. As an Achieving the Dream Equity Coach, LaDonna enjoys coaching campus leaders and practitioners to interrogate and mitigate policies, practices, pedagogy, and systems that perpetuate (in)equity and opportunity gaps for historically marginalized and underserved students, particularly Black and Brown students. LaDonna believes education is at its best when all of humanity is centered in educational practice. We all do better when we all do better. LaDonna is an Alabama (Roll Tide!) native and enjoys all things hip-hop and cookies-n-crème related.
Motivate Lab Mission

To improve people’s lives through rigorous motivation research.
What are Learning Mindsets?
Learning Mindsets

Students’ beliefs about themselves as learners and their learning environment.

- **Growth Mindset**
  Belief that intelligence can be developed through hard work, the use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed.

- **Purpose and Relevance**
  The belief that one’s schoolwork is valuable because it is connected to a larger purpose and/or relevant to one’s life.

- **Sense of Belonging**
  Belief that one is connected to and respected by peers, cared for by teachers and mentors, and fits in with the culture.
3 Motivational Questions

G Can I do this?

P Do I want to learn this?

S Do I belong here?
Why Focus on Learning Mindsets?

**Meaningful**
Related to academic success and students’ well-being

**Measurable**
Can be assessed and tracked

**Malleable**
Can be altered through targeted activities and changes in the educational context

**More effective**
Learning mindset interventions can be particularly powerful and improve outcomes for students from traditionally marginalized groups (e.g., Black, Latine, Indigenous, 1st generation)
Enhance the Quality of the Psychological Air

Research suggests that in contexts that support well-developed Mindset GPS, their students are more motivated to take on challenging work, more likely to persist in the face of obstacles and setbacks, and more likely to achieve higher levels or personal and academic success.
Motivational Turmoil

When students encounter one barrier after another, with each accumulating more stress on top of the previous one, they experience a downward spiral of motivation and confidence, causing them to worry about their situation and question their ability, effort, purpose, belonging, and **PROGRAM CHOICE**.
The Meauxmentum Agenda

What is Choice and the Choice Architecture?
<table>
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Institutions that implement *Meauxmentum* aim to help students accomplish three things in their first year.

1. Gateway Math and English course
2. 3 courses in academic area of focus
3. 30 total credit hours
Goal: Students make a purposeful program choice

The term “choice architecture” is the choice process designed to guide students through the decision process and encompasses the institutional structures and processes that enable advisors/faculty to empower students to make purposeful program choices.
Growth Mindset
Do I have what it takes?
If I ask for help, will people think I can’t make it?

Purpose & Relevance
What is important to me right now?
How does my lived experience and values connect to my education and career interests?

Sense of Belonging
Do I belong in my program choice and career?
How do I find my people?
Learning Mindset Supportive Messages

- Students feel they belong in their program of choice, and feel connected to the students, faculty, and staff in their program choice.
- Students believe they can be successful in their program choice, and that their growth and development in their program choice is connected to their current and future goals.
- Students see purpose and relevance to their program choice.

Asset-Based Program Choices
Learning Mindsets Matter!

Why do Advisor/ Faculty Learning Mindsets Matter?
Growth Mindset

Analyses controlled for
- Discipline
- Ethnic/racial underrepresented minority status
- Generational status
- Adult Learner status
- Gender
- Pell recipients
- High School GPA

Semester GPA

Course Grade
Growth Mindset

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Course Grade
Semester GPA
Purpose and Relevance

Growth Mindset

Purpose & Relevance

Semester GPA

Course Grade
Sense of Belonging

- Growth Mindset
- Purpose & Relevance
- Belonging Uncertainty

- Semester GPA
- Course Grade
“There are places where advisors/faculty can be tactical and influential.”
What messaging are students receiving that inform them of who the college and career center is for?

What messaging have advisors/faculty adopted that communicates to students it is okay to make mistakes and miss the mark?

What strategies have I modeled to students that help them determine how and when to try hard things?

What strategies do you equip student with to navigate through challenges?

How do you communicate resources (and people) available to help students navigate challenges?
Mindset GPS + Choice

Practical Strategies
One strategy is the advising framework used to empower students to make a asset-based program choice.

**Prescriptive Advising**

“Occurs when an advisor’s primary responsibility is to dispense information and prescribe solutions to problems students face without considering the student’s context.”

**Development Advising**

“Advisors rarely make decisions for students. Rather, they encourage students to ask open-ended questions, use campus resources to find answers, and plan courses of student and schedules around the outcomes of their explorations (Susan Frost).”
Another strategy centers students' unique values, perspectives, interests, goals, and skills to promote an asset-based/ strength-based program choice.
“Advisors who pursue excellence in their practices are keenly aware of their student’s experiences. They learn about their students and the obstacles they face to responsively foster learning mindsets that help them navigate those obstacles, and they acquire content knowledge about the options and resources available to student as they gain (re)entry into their postsecondary journey.”

- Dr. Jaqueline Taylor, Higher Ed Consultant
Our Unique Role as Advisors & Faculty

- **Gather special knowledge** about the student
- **Learn and share content knowledge** about the student’s program choice and pathway options
- **Amplify and create space** for students to bring their whole selves to academic settings
- **Communicate and model** learning mindset supportive messages and strategies
- **Advocate for changes** in institutional practices
Centering Student Voice, Purpose, and Agency

Practical Tools & Resources
Strategy #1
Everyday Growth Mindset Phrases
Everyday Growth Mindset Phrases

EXAMPLE

Growth Mindset Phrase Examples
Below are examples of growth mindset phrases and common phrases that may unintentionally promote a fixed mindset. These phrases should be combined with messages around the specific resources and strategies available to the students. Please remember the growth mindset phrases given below are only suggestions. You are encouraged to craft your own based on your relationship with your students so they feel natural to you.

Praising a student after success:
• "You're improving... your efforts are really paying off."
• "Great, you've learned so much!"
Instead of
• "See, I told you you're naturally good at math!"

Offering encouragement when faced with difficulty:
• "Struggling on this assignment doesn't mean you can't get it, it means you're learning it. Your brain is making connections that are not yet strong."
• "This is just a measure of what you can do right now. It's not a measure of what you can ever do."
Instead of
• "Not everybody is good at math. Just get through it."
• "Keep trying and you'll get it."

Providing critical feedback:
• "This class has a high standard... to really understand the math. AND I wouldn't hold you to it if I didn't believe that together we could get there."
Instead of
• "Well, you may not be good at math, but you have real strengths in __________."

Everyday Growth Mindset Phrases
Strategy #2
Value Writing Intervention
Value Writing Interventions

Instructional Strategy – What is it?
This is a writing intervention that is typically done in the first or second semester. It has been shown to improve students’ writing skills and general learning experiences.

The Activity
Ask students to:

Part A: Pick one of the topics or concepts that they have covered in this unit and briefly summarize the main parts.

Part B: Ask students to apply this topic/concept to their life, or to the life of someone they know. How might the information be useful to you, or a friend/relative, in daily life? How does learning about this topic apply to their future?

You can either: 1) write about it in at least 5 sentences, 2) draw a concept map with a description, or 3) draw a sketch with a description. If you do a concept map or a sketch, be sure to describe it well enough so that the reader can understand it.

For example, if you were studying nutrition, you could choose a topic such as how food is digested. Briefly summarize the digestive process—how foods are broken down in the mouth, stomach, and intestines to make energy. Then you could write about how this applies to your own life. For example, eating healthy foods helps your body produce energy to play your favorite sport or study for exams.

You could also draw a concept map of how your knowledge of digestion applies to your life. An example is provided below. Remember that you would also need to add a brief written description with a concept map or diagram.
Strategy #3
Getting to Know Your Students Survey
Why are you interested in a career in psychology?

Ask students to reflect on their program choice, their “why,” and consider their “fit” with their future career goals.
Do you know this student?

Marianna’s Story
Marianna’s Story

Continue reading about Marianna’s story with your partner(s). When you finish, answer the questions at the end.
Marianna is an 18-year-old bi-racial multilingual female who grew up and lives in a multigenerational household in New Orleans, Louisiana. She values her family and community and holds a strong sense of responsibility to represent where she comes from well. She also feels a sense of responsibility being the oldest of two siblings and wants to leave a legacy they can follow. Marianna is Pell Grant eligible and receives enough financial aid to cover her direct college expenses and has to manage additional expenses beyond tuition on her own. She knows her parents can't afford the expense of college, so Marianna works a part-time job at a local fast-food restaurant and contributes financially to her household by paying utilities and groceries when she can.

Marianna attended a private all-girls Roman Catholic high school and is the first in her family to attend college. She's very proud and excited to be her family's first college attendee but is a bit apprehensive because she’s acutely aware that, unlike her, most of her peers have families with the kind of experience and knowledge that help navigate the college process. She is concerned about forming a peer group since she comes from a close-knit high school, and many of her friends are leaving the state to attend college. Marianna is relieved that one of her math teachers attended the community college she’s attending and offered to share any advice he could offer. In high school, Marianna enjoyed her math classes, mainly due to her relationship with her teacher, even though it wasn’t her highest-performing subject.

Marianna learns that she must enroll in a corequisite math course, even though she is not quite sure what this means. She looks up the word remediation and corequisite math. She finds ‘remediation’ connotes “reversing” or “correcting something defective or deficient.”

In her free time, Marianna loves playing softball and volleyball and varsity in high school and coaches her little sister’s pee-wee softball team on the weekends. While she’s not interested in playing collegiately, she does hope to join an intramural team once she feels she has a handle on navigating college culture, specifically academics. Marianna also spends quite a bit of time with her grandparents. She usually coordinates game nights for her grandparents and other elderly members in the community once a month at their local community center. She is energized by searching for resources and networking and enjoys the attendees’ reactions and gratitude.
Instructions

1. **PAIR UP:** Read Marianna’s *story* (1-2 minutes).
2. **REFLECT:** What *assumptions* did you make about Marianna (2-3 minutes)?
3. **DISCUSS:** What special knowledge, i.e. *student voice, purpose, and agency*, might you leverage to empower an informed program choice (3-4 minutes)?
4. **IDENTIFY:** Instances where Marianna experienced *motivational turmoil* (5 minutes).
5. **APPLY:** What *learning mindset messaging* would you use to help Marianna navigate the motivational turmoil and *make an informed program choice* (5 minutes)?
Rewriting Alicia’s Story

Sense of Purpose

Placed in corequisite math and English classes.

Doubts about Ability

Awareness of self doubt/stigma/stereotypes

Doubts about Purpose

Difficulty receiving financial aid

Lack of connection to material

Difficulty making friends

Low grade on first exam

Outcomes
Poor performance
Considers changing major
Lower social capital
Rewriting Marianna’s Story

Do One

Sense of Purpose

Awareness of students’ special knowledge, “why,” family legacy, and career choice.

Prepare to learn student’s special knowledge and “why.”
Met with academic/faculty advisor

Prepare environmental context for ALL students
Placed in corequisite classes.

Prepare students with strategies and mindsets.

Difficulty receiving financial aid

Prepare staff/faculty strategies and mindsets.

Difficulty making friends

Make connections to student’s special knowledge, “why” and program choice
Lack of connection to material

Provide low-cost opportunities for connection

Low grade on paper

Improve classroom practices

Before Semester
Beginning of Semester
Time
Mid Semester

Do One

P

P

P

P

Rewriting Marianna’s Story
Additional Resources & Tools

Appendices
Three Fundamental Questions of Student Motivation

Electronic Communication with Students

Reflect on Your Purpose for Learning

Purpose First Report - Complete College America (2019)
## Active Learning Mindset Strategies To Support GPS

### Purpose and Relevance
The belief that a larger pool of students are engaged, more confident, and better able to connect and make connections to others.

### Sense of Belonging
The belief that one is academically and socially connected, supported, and respected.

### 1. 1st Day Student Survey
On the first day of the course, ask students key questions to learn more about them: Surveying your students is also suggested as an active learning tool to introduce them to your current and future teaching goals. One way to accomplish this is to ask students about their past experiences in the class, what they think is the best way to learn, what concerns or questions do you currently have about the course? (This is an example used in one of our classes. There was a comprehensive list of all students individually or even more detailed, such as create a single class email summarizing and addressing the major concerns/questions raised).

### 2. Polling
Another technique growing in popularity especially when teaching larger classes is testing students' confidence in knowing or being able to get a particular point across the class. To test it with a survey, you could implement poll questions in your course to help students self-assess what they know and don't. For example, you could include a question to help students assess whether they feel confident in their understanding of the course material.

### 3. Smaller Group Discussions
Break students up into smaller group discussions. This can be done in person or virtually using break-out rooms. Use tools like polls to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the material. For example, you could use polls to ask students to rate their confidence in their ability to answer specific questions or to assess their understanding of key concepts.

### 4. Identity Share-Out
Provide students opportunities to share one or two things that are important to them and their life experiences. Consider using a tool like polls to gather this information. For example, you could use a poll to ask students to rate their confidence in their ability to collaborate with others or to assess their understanding of the material.

### 5. Current Events
One way to help students connect their knowledge with current events is by using polls. You could ask students to identify events that are relevant to the course material and then poll them on their understanding of these events. For example, you could use polls to ask students to identify key events in history that are relevant to the course material or to assess their understanding of the material.

### 6. What's, So What, Now What
After an activity or particular unit in class, have students use polls to identify where they are, what they have learned, and how they will apply the knowledge to real-world situations. For example, you could use polls to ask students to rate their confidence in their ability to apply the knowledge they have learned to real-world situations or to assess their understanding of the material.

### 7. Use Student Names
Although using polls can be challenging when teaching larger classes, take advantage of opportunities to personalize your course by using students' names. Another approach is to use polls to assess student interest in the course material. For example, you could use polls to ask students to rate their interest in the course material or to assess their understanding of the material.

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### Resource: Active Learning Strategies

- **Active Learning Strategies**
- **LOUISIANA MATH MENTUM FRAMEWORK**
- **GPS**

### Key Points

- **1. Current Confidence and Prior Experience**
  - At the start of a course or new unit, have students reflect on their previous experience in the skills they are about to teach.
  - Ask for their comments or experiences on their confidence and experience with those skills.

- **2. How are you studying?**
  - Ask students to keep a brief log on how they are completing a particular assignment or group and how the students reflect on what is helping or not helping them.

- **3. Advice Letter From Former Students**
  - Ask students to keep a brief log on how they are completing a particular assignment or group and how the students reflect on what is helping or not helping them.

- **4. One-Minute or Two-Minute-Add-on**
  - Ask students to keep a brief log on how they are completing a particular assignment or group and how the students reflect on what is helping or not helping them.

- **5. Time Traveler**
  - At the start of the semester, have students reflect on the questions that will be similar to what they have been in the past.

- **6. Think-Pair-Share**
  - Rather than asking a single question, ask for students to respond to the entire class.
  - Ask students to respond to a question that is relevant to their daily lives.

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**Active Learning Strategies**

- **1. Student Interest Survey**
  - At the start of the course, collect a survey to ask students if they believe they have a particular interest or are completing a particular assignment or group and how they reflect on what is helping or not helping them.

- **2. Make it Personal**
  - During activities or assignments, ask students to personally impact them or someone else.

- **3. Experiential Learning**
  - Another way to help students reflect on their previous experience in the skills they are about to teach.

- **4. Current Events**
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Choice Architecture

“Should students be encouraged to go into high-paying careers regardless of whether or not those careers are aligned with their skills and interests?”

“No, but let’s make sure we are providing them with the labor market information and guidance they need to make an informed choice of career based on their interests, skill set, and financial goals.”
“If the data suggests that certain student populations are less likely to pursue high-paying careers, are you suggesting we intentionally work to funnel underrepresented students into majors associated with high paying careers?”

“Yes and no. Too often underrepresented students are not exposed to major and career information that would lead high-paying occupations. It is only be ensuring that all students receive the necessary information and support to make an informed decision.”