



Center for
Community College
Student Engagement



Student Discussion Guide

A MIND at Work

Maximizing the Relationship
Between Mindset and
Student Success

2019 NATIONAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a discussion guide that can be used to facilitate conversations with students about their experience and perceptions around academic mindset.

To access the full CCCSE Focus Group Toolkit, visit <https://cccse.org/resources/focus-groups>. Featured on this page is the Focus Group Manual, which provides comprehensive guidance around planning and conducting focus groups with students, faculty, and staff. This manual contains several appendix resources, such as templates for invitation emails and consent forms as well as sample intake survey questions and basic focus group opening questions. In addition, the Toolkit includes a variety of discussion guides (including this one) devoted to a diverse array of topics important to community college student engagement and success.

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

OUTCOME #1

To understand what motivates students to pursue higher education.

1. When did you decide to go to college? While in high school? After high school?
2. Let's talk about why you decided to attend this college.
 - a. Did anyone urge you to go to college? Parents? Friends? High school teachers or counselors?
 - b. Why did you select to attend this college? To earn a degree? For a job or career? Something else? [Let students name these areas and use their words in subsequent questions.]
 - c. Have your goals changed since you've been in college? What are they now? What caused your goals to change?
 - d. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not very confident and 5 being extremely confident, how confident are you that this college is preparing you for what you plan to do in life?
3. Think about how you felt when you first got started here at this college and complete this sentence: "When I first started here, I felt _____." Describe why you felt that way.

OUTCOME #2

To understand students' perceptions of their intelligence and their own learning.

4. Let's talk about your perceptions around intelligence.
 - a. Do you believe that there is anything that people can do to change their intelligence?
 - i. If not, why not?
 - ii. If so, how can people change their intelligence? How much of someone's intelligence can be changed?
5. Let's talk about the material in your college courses.
 - a. Have you ever taken a course in which you didn't think you could learn all of the material? Which course? Why did you feel that way?
 - b. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not very confident and 5 being extremely confident, how confident are you that you will be able to keep up your courses at this college?
6. Let's talk about your own learning.
 - a. Pretend that you are getting ready to take a test in one of your classes. Do you believe that you can do well on tests, even when they are difficult? Why or why not?
 - b. Talk about your learning at the college. Do you feel that what you learn in your classes is necessary for your success in the future? Why or why not?
 - c. How is your academic work at the college preparing you for the career field that you are interested in?
7. Let's talk about math.
 - a. How did you decide which math to take (multiple measures, placement test, etc.)? Did someone tell you which math to take? If so, was it required that you take a specific kind of math? Did the person explain why? If so, did you understand?
 - i. Which of these statements most accurately expresses your views about math and intelligence? a) I can learn new things in math, but I cannot really change my basic intelligence in math; b) I can change my intelligence in math a lot.
 - ii. Why do you feel that way?
8. Now, let's talk about English.
 - a. How did you decide which English to take (multiple measures, placement test, etc.)? Did someone tell you which English to take? If so, was it required that you take a specific kind of English? Did the person explain why? If so, did you understand?

- i. Which of these statements most accurately expresses your views about English and intelligence? a) I can learn new things in English, but I cannot really change my basic intelligence in English; b) I can change my intelligence in English a lot.
- ii. Why do you feel that way?

OUTCOME #3

To understand the significance of relationships in student persistence and success.

9. When you think about your experience at this college outside of the time you spend in class, are there particular relationships you have developed here that come to mind?
10. Who are these relationships with? Other students? Instructors? Counselors? Academic advisors? Other staff members? Others?
11. How important would you say these relationships are to your success here? Which ones in particular? How are they important to you? Describe what impact they have on your success here (positive and negative).
12. If there are times when you have considered whether or not to continue attending this college, have any of those relationships had any impact on your decision? In what way(s)?

OUTCOME #4

To understand how and to what extent students experience academic mindset in their courses at the college.

13. Have you taken a course at this college in which the instructor discussed academic mindset?
 - a. If so, what was the name of the course?
 - b. How do you define academic mindset?
 - c. What did you learn about academic mindset in the course?
 - d. What activities were involved (readings, taking an online assessment, an activity, a failure project, etc.)?
 - e. Did learning about academic mindset in your course change your views on intelligence and learning? If so, how did your views change?
 - f. How can someone develop a growth mindset when it comes to education and failure?
 - g. What did you like most and least about this course?

SUMMARY AND CLOSE

1. Describe a time or an experience you have had at the college that has not been favorable. In your opinion, how could the college have made this experience more positive?
2. What advice would you give the college about one or two things the college could do to help students succeed?
3. What is the single most important factor that keeps you coming back to this college?
4. On a personal note, who is one of your role models (can be a family member, someone at the college, a celebrity, etc.), and why do you admire that person?