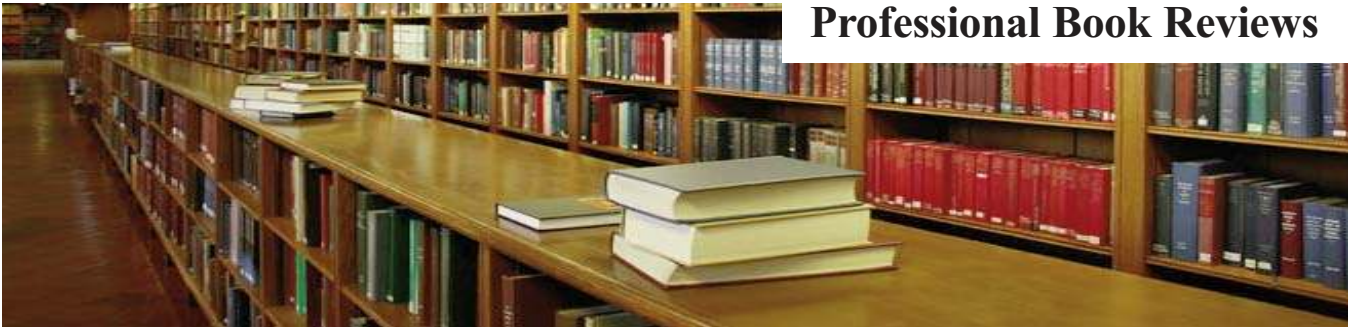


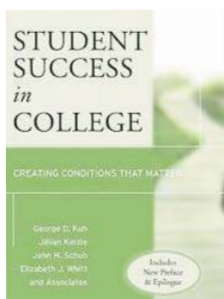
## Professional Book Reviews



### *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter.*

Kuh, George D., Kinzie, Jillian, Schuh, John H., Whitt, Elizabeth J., and Associates, 2010. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. \$30.00 ISBN: 978-0-470-59909-9

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*Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* offers a closer look into the U.S. system of higher education, seeking to answer the following question: What policies, programs, and practices promote student success? The authors embark on this journey examining a group of 20 four-year

colleges and universities (e.g. schools included eight private and 12 public institutions representing 17 different states, with populations ranging from 682 to 23,063 students) that have fostered educational environments where engagement and success have transformed the experiences of enrolled students. For the purpose of this review, we organize our thoughts in the following two sections:

#### **Promoting Student Success**

The book thoroughly describes necessary conditions for student success and provides guidance for how institutions can create those environments. The authors reiterate throughout that the policies and programs described in the book are not unique to these institutions. What sets these 20 institutions apart is that when they design and implement policies and programs, they take serious consideration of their environment (e.g., campus location, setting, student demographics, traditions, history) and make sure that decisions taken align with the mission and vision of the institution. For example, the authors describe in detail how the University of Kansas begins stressing the

importance of success to freshmen students during “Hawk Week.” This weeklong schedule of activities at the beginning of the year teaches incoming students the traditions on campus, and encourages them to become part of those traditions, hence encouraging student success by creating a strong campus community.

The authors argue that these schools work to offer opportunities that are tailored to their students, creating a meaningful learning experience centered on engaged and involved students. Among several examples, the authors describe how Evergreen State College (small public liberal arts college) provides affordable childcare to accommodate a large number of students who have dependents. They illustrate how Manchester College (a small private liberal arts college), a school located in a large urban area, has designed its campus around creating an intimate community atmosphere with the use of small buildings and classrooms. They also highlight how Alverno College (a private women's college) connects nursing students with the local Hmong community in Milwaukee, providing cross-cultural experiences right at home.

Within each of the sections and chapters, the authors achieve a conversational tone that incorporates these rich specific examples, includes commentary by faculty and staff, and provides detailed accounts of how and why the work of these institutions is worth replicating. This approach makes the book personable and provides an encouraging message to schools looking to improve student engagement, satisfaction, and personal development.

#### **Lessons Learned: Working with International Students**

A feature defining these schools is that they continuously attempt to develop a campus that offers opportunities for all students to enhance their educational experience. Thus, a question that must be asked is how institutions fulfill the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, especially one that represents a myriad of backgrounds and characteristics? In 2011, the number of international



students increased to 723,277 in the United States. As a group, it is argued that international students can bring diverse global perspectives to the classroom, provide a renewed perspective on global education, and open a valuable window for cross-cultural interaction with local students. While these and many other educational benefits are associated with the presence of international students on campus, it is important to remember that international students also confront adjustment challenges (e.g., language differences, adapting to new learning environments, acculturation, and associated stress and depression), come face-to-face with a new society, and must quickly adapt to a changing educational environment.

These 20 institutions present several formulas for student success and offer valuable insights that could be adapted to our work with international students. After all, the authors emphasize that their intention is not to provide a list of policies or practices to follow line-by-line to achieve student success, but rather to share fresh ideas, entice creativity, and foster collaboration. Three lessons can be taken from *Student Success: Creating Conditions That Matter* in relation to our commitment to the well-being of international students today:

First, many schools place a strong focus on multicultural learning. Many offer programs such as learning communities, globalization research, cultural activities, and other practices that have been shaped by a growing impetus to prepare students to succeed in a global and interconnected society. While international students can play a key role participating and serving as a resource to organize these types of activities (e.g., intercultural night, cultural celebrations, dances, language partners, etc.), international students must also engage with opportunities, where the objective is to learn from and about the culture in the U.S. This can be achieved by facilitating programs to interact with domestic students, collaborate in academic and non-academic projects that allow them to familiarize with the U.S. culture. The goal is to create spaces where international students can become active learners and engage in mutually beneficial relationships and interactions that extend beyond the classroom.

Second, the authors argue that one of the best predictors of student learning and growth is involvement in purposeful activities. This type of engagement is driven by a system of shared responsibility for educational quality and student success, where student learning takes place through

experience and involvement in those 20 institutions. Purposeful activities such as research opportunities (University of Kansas), living-learning communities (University of Michigan), peer-tutoring (Wofford College), or community-focused learning activities (Fayetteville State University) provide students with opportunities to form more meaningful relationships with fellow classmates, faculty, and staff. At its core, the message is that the university's commitment to creating opportunities for engagement is fundamental. This book reminds that keeping international students engaged will not only contribute to their overall well-being and success, but will also provide rich opportunities for the campus to promote internationalization, paying attention to the benefits of social relationships that are fostered within academic communities.

Third, these 20 institutions increase levels of engagement by implementing programs that focus on the experience of particular groups. Institutions must be responsible for connecting different groups of students with opportunities where they can learn from each other, engage in self-reflection, and open their minds to different perspectives. Research has found a positive impact on racial attitudes from students who are exposed to those of other races and ethnicities (Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, D., 2008). Therefore, a campus that designs opportunities for international students to connect with each other and to interact with students from different backgrounds, fosters a sense of campus community, and can truly prepare students to work and live in a global community.

## Reference

Sidanius, J., Levin, S., Van Laar, C., & Sears, D. (2008). *The diversity challenge: Social identity and intergroup relations on the college campus*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

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