



Kirkwood
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS

Matt Falduto

Senior Director of Financial Aid

Kirkwood Community College

AGENDA

- **Why Do We Do What We Do?**
- **Who Are Our Students?**
- **What Are Their Challenges?**
- **How do we Connect?**
- **How Do We Break Through?**

**Why do we do what
we do?**



STUDENTS

Who are you students?

- Economic profile
- Academic Preparedness
- Mental Health
- Background

STUDENTS

Economic Profile

- **Pell Eligibility**
 - 60% Pell eligible
- **Zero EFC**
 - 40% Zero EFC
- **Poverty**
 - 31% of our students/families are below poverty line
- **Living Wage Calculator**
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 - 63% of student/families do not earn a living wage
- **Need**
 - 85% of our student have Need

STUDENTS

Academic Preparedness

- **Remedial education**
 - **60% of community college students need remedial education**
- **Persistence**
 - **28% of remedial students earn a degree in 8.5 years compared to 43% of non-remedial students**

STUDENTS

Mental Health

- **39% of college students reported suffering from serious depression**
- **Nearly 50% of community college students have a mental health issue**

STUDENTS

Background

- **First generation students**
 - Neither parent completed college
 - **31%** of our students are first generation
- **Country of Origin**
 - **11%** of our students are from a country other than the United States

What do these statistics tell us about our students?



CHALLENGES

- **Economic challenges**
 - Lack of resources
 - Need financial aid immediately
 - Adds stress
- **Learning challenges**
 - Harder to complete coursework
 - Lack of self-confidence
 - Adds stress

CHALLENGES

- **Mental health challenges**
 - What might be easy for neuro-typical folks is much more difficult for neuro-diverse folks
 - Small things can seem huge
 - Adds stress
- **Social challenges**
 - Learning the ways of college is challenging
 - 1st Generation students might not have effective support system
 - Adds stress

CHALLENGES

- **Cultural challenges**
 - Cultural norms are not understood
 - Instructors assume students understand
 - Adds stress

CHALLENGES

What do all of these challenges
create?

STRESS



Our job:

- **Help them move forward on their educational path**
- **Reduce their stress level**
- **Help them over financial aid barriers**

How we do that:

- **A human face - not all business**
- **Make a connection**
- **Remember our job**



CONNECTION

Reach out before they come to you and ask questions!

- **What are you studying? Why are you interested in that subject?**
- **What job do you have?**
- **What are some outside of school/work interests?**
- **Favorite college (or high school) class?**
- **Tell me about your living situation outside of college.**
- **Are they feeling prepared for the semester?**
- **Are classes going well?**

CONNECTION

- **Ask follow up questions. The key here is to make a connection with something the student tells you and to share something about yourself.**
- **Watch for body language to see if the student is comfortable and feeling positive about your interaction.**

CONNECTION

After you've made the connection, you want to get an idea of where they are on the success ladder.

The five main factors that lead to a student not succeeding at college are:

- Academic Preparedness
- Sense of Belonging
- Financial Issues
- Purpose
- Time Management

CONNECTION

- **Academic Preparedness**

- What characteristics about you will most contribute to your success?
- Did you receive extra help/accommodations in high school or college?
- Are you able to easily access the internet and a computer?

- **Sense of Belonging**

- What activities do participate in?
- Do you have a mentor at the college?

CONNECTION

- **Purpose**

- What are your educational goals?
- What are your plans beyond college?

- **Time Management**

- What other responsibilities do you have outside of school?
- If you're working, does your work schedule allow for homework and other study time?
- Do you have personal concerns that may impact your ability to be successful?
- Have there been any major changes in your life in the last year?

CONNECTION

- **Financial Issues**

- Do you feel comfortable with your housing situation?
- Are you taking care of others (children, parents, siblings, etc.)?
- Are you worried about having enough money to afford college?
- Do you have transportation identified to get to and from school?

RESOURCES

- TRIO?
- Food pantry?
 - <https://www.findhelp.org/find-social-services/Indiana>
- Tutoring?
- Student Assistance Office?
- Emergency grants?
- County or state level resources?
 - <https://www.in.gov/ihcda/homeowners-and-renters/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap/>

RESOURCES

- **YOU**
 - You are knowledgeable
 - You care
 - You've been there and done that
 - You are willing to go the extra mile to help



BREAK THROUGH

- Recognize a student in distress
- Take Action
- Follow Up



BREAK THROUGH

REACH OUT



BREAK THROUGH

- Recognize a student in distress
- Take Action
- Follow Up



BREAK THROUGH

□ Recognize a student in distress

- **Mood/Attitude**
 - Irritability
 - Sadness, Helplessness
 - Distancing
 - Acting-out Behaviors
- **Changes in Academic Performance**
 - Check SIS to get a quick view of their academic performance
- **Lack of Good Hygiene**
 - If the student isn't take care of themselves, that's a clue that there might be something wrong

BREAK THROUGH

☐ Take action

- Be clear from the start that you are here to help
- Open ended questions before you even start addressing whatever their issue is
 - Not “Are you all right?” Try “Can you tell me what happened that has made you upset/sad/angry?”
- Listen – let them get it all out. Ask follow up questions to get full picture.
- “When was the last time you had a good meal?”
- Ask about their past experiences. Have them verbalize a challenging situation and how they overcame it. Helps students see what they have.

BREAK THROUGH

☐ Take action

- Name the issue
 - This tells the student you understand
 - Once it's named, you can try to help
- Use team language
 - “Let's figure this out together.”
 - “How about we work together to figure out a plan?”
- Ask for agreement
 - The more they say Yes to you, the more they'll be on board
 - “I'm going to look up your financial aid – does that sound good?”

BREAK THROUGH

☐ Take action

- Talk about resources
 - Take them to the resource if possible
 - Make an appointment for them if needed
- Write down their next steps so they are leaving you with a solid plan
- Reiterate the plan
- Check for any other issues
- Give them your card so they know you are available for future questions

BREAK THROUGH

Follow up

- Call the student later to see how they are doing
 - Indicates you care about them
 - Holds them accountable for what they agreed to do



STUDENT CONNECTION

- **Final Thoughts**

- Within the boundaries of your role, it is better to do too much than too little
- If the student was your brother or sister or sibling, or your son or daughter or child, what would you want someone to do for them?
- Trust your instincts

QUESTIONS?