Caring

I had professors who cared about me as a person

These categories group actions that provide the psychological safety required for a student to stay enrolled and feel seen. They focus on the *environment for being*.

- **Relational (Validating Identity):** The foundation of "Belonging." This groups names, "name stories," active listening, and compassion. It answers the student's internal question: "Do I matter in this space?" – would like to add midterm feedback/ student feedback to instructor
    - **Foundational Recognition (Seeing the Person):** This is the "Belonging" layer. It involves learning names, using name stories, and active listening. It establishes that the student is seen and valued as an individual, which is the prerequisite for all other interactions.
- **Structural (Navigating the "Hidden Curriculum"):** Grouping the demystification of office hours, clarifying expectations, and referring students to tutoring or SI sessions. This addresses the "Safety" and "Security" needs.
    - **Navigational Guidance (Demystifying the System):** This addresses the "Hidden Curriculum." It groups office hour expectations, "Connections are Everything" frameworks, and clear communication about academic standards. It provides the "Safety" and "Security" needed to navigate higher education.
- **Communicative (Personalized & Targeted Support):** Shifting from generic alerts to personalized "Kudos" for success and intentional outreach for struggle. It ensures the student doesn't feel like a number in a spreadsheet.
    - **Holistic Advocacy (Supporting the Person):** This category moves from academic support to human support. It includes targeted outreach (kudos and check-ins), referral to campus resources (counseling, tutoring), and proactive recognition of basic needs like food or housing security.
- **Physical (Embodied Presence):** Focuses on faculty and staff visibility beyond the classroom—eating in the cafeteria, visiting the library, or attending student events. It confirms the institution is a community, not just a workplace.

- Communal Integration (Presence & Belonging): This focuses on the “wider” aspect—moving care outside the classroom walls. It groups faculty/staff presence in common spaces (cafeterias, libraries) and attendance at student events. It confirms that care is an embodied, campus-wide commitment.

Relational: Validating Identity

A. Connecting with students individually

B. Conveying effective messages about social belonging & growth mindset culture

C. Creating a belonging story

D. Creating an attuned assessment wrapper

E. Supporting self-efficacy by integrating self-relevance and a sense of purpose into your course

F. Encouraging connections in the classroom

Actionable strategy	How to implement it	Resources/Examples
Conveying effective social belonging messages		Effective Belonging Messages - SEP
Conveying effective growth mindset culture messages	“Mindset culture refers to the degree to which values, norms, policies, and practices in an environment signal whether that ability is malleable or fixed. Instructors and administrators can create growth mindset cultures in their classrooms and campus communities by communicating that they believe all students can grow their abilities over time with effort and support. As a result, they can increase student engagement and improve student learning and academic outcomes.”	Effective Growth Mindset Culture Messages - SEP

Structural: Illuminating the “Hidden Curriculum”

Grouping the demystification of office hours, clarifying expectations, and referring students to tutoring or SI sessions. This addresses the "Safety" and "Security" needs.

Navigational Guidance (Demystifying the System): This addresses the "Hidden Curriculum." It groups office hour expectations, "Connections are Everything" frameworks, and clear communication about academic standards. It provides the "Safety" and "Security" needed to navigate higher education.

A. Explicitly demystifying the “hidden curriculum”

Why this matters

B. Establishing clear expectations

C. Creating student-centered course policies

D. Supporting financially stressed students

"Financially stressed students' academic motivation and feelings of self-efficacy can be bolstered when course policies reduce financial barriers and actively support well-being and when instructors convey that they and the institution care about them (Browman & Destin, 2016). These practices, in turn, can support academic performance and retention."

The below is a digest of this resource from SEP: Supporting Financially Stressed Students

Actionable strategy	**How to implement it**	**Resources/Examples**
Create equitable course policies and practices that accommodate the needs of high financial stress students	Grading policies that offer flexibility can benefit all students, while ensuring that students who are facing outside obstacles in their education are not disproportionately penalized, by providing reasonable opportunities for students to: • miss a small number of classes and catch up afterwards, • turn in some work late without a loss of points, or • drop a low score.	*Example 1 - Lowest Homework Grade Drop Policy:* "There is a homework assignment due every week. At the end of the term, your lowest two homework grades will be dropped, and will not be included in your overall course grade."

	"Drop the lowest score" policies allow for reasonable exceptions while providing the opportunity for students to showcase their learning and mastery. ● In contrast, no-exceptions policies assume that all students are capable of making school their number one priority at all times, which is not the case for many students with hardships and/or external responsibilities.	*Example 2 - Make-up Quiz Policy:* "Make-up quizzes will be given for excused absences (e.g., severe weather, religious holiday, severe illness, family emergency), and must adhere to the following guidelines: 1) When at all possible, you must contact me prior to missing a quiz deadline or you may not be able to make up the quiz, 2) Make-up quizzes must be taken within one week of the original due date if at all possible, and 3) Any make-up quiz will be administered in a format determined by the instructor and may differ from the original quiz. If the above guidelines are not met, you may use your "drop the lowest quiz score" opportunity for an unexcused missed quiz; any additional unexcused missed quizzes will result in a 0 for that quiz."
Acknowledge that facing financial hardship in college is increasingly common, and not a sign that students don't belong, then connect students with resources that can support their overall well-being		
Get involved in institution-level efforts to support students' financial needs		

Avoid common pitfalls that may make things more challenging		

E. Revising syllabi to improve student experience

"Instructors can communicate a growth mindset and promote a sense of belonging on the first day of class through the course syllabus and by taking a growth mindset approach to discussing course expectations."

Actionable strategy	**How to implement it**	**Resources/Examples**
Keep things consistent & structured		
Communicate that the instructor has a "growth mindset" rather than a "fixed mindset" about students' abilities		
Communicate that it is normal to be challenged by course material, and that this is not a sign that a student is not capable of learning or does not belong in the course		

Communicate that the instructor and the instructional team care about students' success		
Communicate that diversity is valued in the classroom		
Normalize challenges that students often face in college, and connect students with resources that can support their overall well-being		
Communicate that utilizing academic resources is a standard part of succeeding		
Highlight important dates/deadlines in an accessible format	Color-coded calendar	Eric Mazur & Applied Physics 50

- Getting student feedback on classroom experience & communicating adaptations transparently

Communicative: Personalized & Targeted Support

A. Affirming Academic & Social Supports

B. Designating a Wellbeing TA

AP50 Wellbeing Teaching Assistant Brief

C. Tracking student performance to flag struggling students

D. Sending/supporting early alerts notifications with messaging that normalizes academic difficulty

E. Communicate about course withdrawal option

F. Creating a wise feedback framing statement

Actionable strategy	How to implement it	Resources/Examples
Support/send/revise early alerts notifications emails with messaging that normalizes academic difficulty Revise early alerts notifications emails to normalize academic difficulty Engage instructors in communicating about early alerts to students	"Early warning practices refer to processes that allow instructors to identify students who, based on course performance in the opening weeks of the term, may not be on track to receive a passing grade and provide interventions that can help students improve their performance." Some institutions have an institutional To support existing early alerts	Example supporting syllabus statements from SEP: • UNC Charlotte • CU Denver Example early alert notification language from SEP: • UNC Charlotte • CU Denver • Portland State
Communicate about course withdrawal option		University of Toledo Withdrawal Option Email Templates
Wellbeing TA		

Physical: Embodied Presence

Driver 3: Welcoming Department & Campus Climate

A. Cultivating a responsive learning environment (physical, sensory, temporal)

B. Normalizing accessible presence

C. Improving campus spaces to be places where all students can succeed

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