

Creating a capabilities-based persistence framework (or matrix) on university student persistence

A Framing Paper

**‘Pragmatic’ capabilities
matrix section**

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Creating a ‘pragmatic’ capabilities matrix for application

This section will streamline the capabilities and also the conversion factors to propose a pragmatically focussed list. Each of the capabilities and the conversion factors are outlined in the Tables below, which includes examples of practical applications that may support the application and generative growth of these.

Capabilities / Capitals	Recommendations	Examples of good practice/approaches
<p>Demonstrating ‘Sisu’ (including questioning the status quo)</p>	<p>Drawing on student life skills and experience to bring attention to behaviours they can draw upon</p> <p>Providing targeted workshops that aim to get students to reflect on their life stories as a means to foreground and affirm the resilience and motivations for their study</p> <p>Foreground the positive potential of negative or disruptive experiences by drawing on other students’ stories.</p> <p>Welcome and encourage ‘counter narratives’ of students that disrupt the normalised and assumed nature of the student population and academic culture - deliberately foreground this diversity and recognise that this is the ‘norm’ not the exception.</p>	<p>Many institutions have begun to feature digital stories from diverse students and ‘counter narratives’. Some examples include:</p> <p>Drawing on life skills and experience, in particular this young woman’s inspiring story where she recognises that “sport gave me ambition and the drive to succeed in other areas of my life”; see also others in FirstDegree student stories (Charles Sturt University)</p> <p>Targeted workshops modelled on building storytelling capacity which is strengths-focused, such as these stories developed through Digital Storytellers</p> <p>Drawing on other students’ stories, such as Stories from First-Generation College Students, (University of Massachusetts)</p> <p>Encouraging ‘counter narratives’ could be through the adoption of a national day, such as in the US: National First-Generation Student Day which involves universities running First-Gen orientated activities in tandem, using social media to share their celebratory events and diverse stories of first-gen students. Institutions sign up for the day and pledge to run a range of profiled activities.</p>

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<p>Familial Capital</p>	<p>Engage productively with both the student and their wider community - particularly those members of the community that have a caring or close relationship with the student. These relationships should not necessarily be based upon 'bloodlines' but rather recognise that family can be translated in different ways by different people and cultures.</p> <p>The university community should productively leverage the 'influential circle' of the students to ensure that these people are brought on the journey with the student rather than left behind or unacknowledged</p> <p>Acknowledge and celebrate the different kinds of support from family/community that assist students to persevere in their studies</p>	<p>A family/community focused approach to engage those who play a significant role in the lives of FiF could be inspired by Vanderbilt University's 'Vandy Firsts': parents and family members of first-gen students can be involved in the university journey through targeted programs, information and events.</p> <p>Acknowledging the crucial role of those within the 'influential circle' of FiF students could follow the initiative of Rice University, Houston TX. To bring them on the journey they congratulate parents on their first gen student, have a New Families Orientation as well as a parents' homepage.</p> <p>Universities need to better understand the important role of family, especially the emotional support provided to low-SES students. Roksa and Kinsley (2019) recommend engaging parents and significant others in discussions on the academic and social needs of their FiF student, which can help validate and strengthen the support they provide, as well as give them tools to refer to appropriate student interventions, if needed</p>
<p>Help Seeking Behaviours</p>	<p>Shifting the subtle deficit discourse around seeking additional assistance in your studies - this should be normalised as an expected rather than an unusual behaviour.</p> <p>Renaming student services related to academic skills so that the focus is on 'success' and maximising 'success' rather than 'support' or 'needing help'</p> <p>Foregrounding the numbers and types of students</p>	<p>Success by design is an innovative model for an institutional approach to integrated support that responds to the changing characteristics of the 'typical' student. This begins with particular campuses developing a definition of success as the end goal to develop "a holistic, student-centred strategy across all dimensions of the student experience, from the classroom to support services to campus operations to relationships with the broader community, with all designed to foster measurable improvements" (p. 4). The diagram below shows intervention planning for student support (p. 12)</p>

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	<p>that seek out support and the ‘success’ that results from accessing these areas.</p> <p>Utilising the expertise and experience of peers to both foreground how this activity is necessary and ‘normal’ and equally highlight how these ‘help seeking behaviours’ have assisted other students</p>	<p>Success by design</p> <p>Figure 5. Coordinated intervention planning for student support</p> <p>4. Tailor nudges to individual student needs Model suggests interventions in the form of strategic nudges based on reason codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cap “gatekeeper” courses Noelty: Registrar Facilitate proactive tutoring Noelty: Advisor, instructor Assign new advisor Noelty: Department <p>3. Segment students Based on the success score, students are segmented into predicted success groups:</p> <p>Success scores are supplemented with illustrative reason codes Example: REASON GROUP: Academic preparedness SEVERITY: Worse than average REASON MESSAGE: 1. AP courses lower than avg. 2. SAT/ACT score lower than avg. 3. HS GPA lower than avg.</p> <p>2. Predict the likelihood of success Build a predictive model to arrive at a PREDICTED SUCCESS SCORE for each student using: • Pre-enrollment data (e.g., income, demographic, high school scores, and performance) • Post-enrollment data (e.g., class scores, class participation, and class attendance)</p> <p>1. Define the end goal Define student success as: Timely degree completion Uninterrupted retention Cumulative minimum GPA of 3.0+</p> <p>Student attribute Relationship with success a. Higher first-term GPA Increase b. More AP coursework in HS Increase c. Major “A” Increase d. Major “B” Increase e. “Gatekeeper” courses Decrease f. First-gen student indicator Decrease g. Legacy student indicator Increase</p> <p>Source: Deloitte Consulting LLC. Deloitte University Press dupress.deloitte.com</p>

The above figure represents an institutional approach to predictive modelling for support interventions which may be useful in identifying students who need extra assistance in their first year. The model uses pre- and post-enrolment data (demographic characteristics, family income; academic and social experiences during semester e.g. attendance, low grades, lack of engagement) to arrive at a “success score” (p. 10). A lower score would generate individualised prompts to direct the student to particular support services

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<p>Experiential Capital including the discipline derived from other areas of life</p>	<p>Translating existing life skills into what is required within the HE environment but doing this is a deliberate and structured manner</p> <p>Creating opportunity within the curriculum to reflect upon existing skills and importantly to validate these through structured assignments or tasks linked to the curricula foci</p> <p>Creating the opportunity and the 'space' for students to 'share' their personal experiential resources and strategies - i.e a 'reflective' workshops or conversation group / yarning circle</p>	<p>There are a number of career apps designed to get students to consider their strengths and also direct them to possible career avenues – some examples include:</p> <p>Career Quiz at Job Outlook: https://joboutlook.gov.au/CareerQuiz.aspx</p> <p>Open Colleges: https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/careers/career-quiz</p> <p>Foregrounding and acknowledging existing life skills could be done through opportunities which encourage the student voice: such as equity through discussion strategies which are intentional in calling on diverse voices to ensure multiple perspectives. This video also provides insight into how one lecturer provides these opportunities; also 5 ways to give students a voice is geared to schools but strategies could also be useful in HE.</p> <p>Self-assessment tools could be adopted in HE where students' prior knowledge or experience are explicitly sought and connected to the curriculum. An example of some of the questions that would make these links explicit can be found here. Diagnostic tests that encourage self-reflection on existing strengths is also useful and examples from the Nursing field can be found here. Similarly self-assessment rubrics could also be utilised by adapting existing ones like Employing Student Success.</p> <p>Opportunities for students to be involved as 'change agents' of curriculum (re)design and/or evaluation can bring about change which creatively draws upon their skills and strengths such as in various digital literacies initiatives, or other innovative approaches to issues such as Therapaws to foster student mental health and wellbeing</p>

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		<p>Creating a safe space for students to share can be used in formal and informal situations in HE through Yarning Circles. These have been integral to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture over millennia for building respectful relationships through creating a safe space for honest interactions and active listening (see Gnibi @ SCU, QCCA; applying YC methodology in HE). Establishing open cultural spaces on campus to create opportunities for students to share on country, e.g. Macquarie University Learning Circle</p>
<p>Reflexivity</p>	<p>Characterising the HE journey as one that requires ongoing self-reflection, emphasising the importance of a growth mindset and providing the tools / resources that encourage this state.</p> <p>Consider the role of 'life coaches' as a safe space for students to reflect upon their journey - these coaches could provide and support within the whole of student life-cycle and act as a 'one-stop' shop for the learner, advising on both practical and more personal issues related to studying at university - this could range from essential academic skills / wellbeing / personal traits and qualities through to accommodation / financial issues.</p>	<p>At the University of South Carolina Academic Coaching for students is approached as 'holistic advising' where academic coaches provide individualised support across the lifecycle of the university experience to set students up for success.</p> <p>Building students' capacity to manage change in positive ways in their HE journey could utilise strengths-based approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI focuses on strategies for creating effective healthy and interconnected relationships, throughout the entire change (or transition) process. This could be through ensuring genuine opportunities for the student voice in decision-making at all levels (e.g. institutional policy, assessment topics/criteria, learning pathways); through active involvement encourage questioning that stimulates creative and positive alternatives to issues that contribute to continual improvement in the learning experience.</p>
<p>Maturity</p>	<p>Foreground and celebrate the mature age population rather than relying on stock images of young people!</p> <p>Understand that maturity is not only derived from age or stage of life but also life experience - this</p>	<p>Featuring stories of mature age learners with photos such as 'Being a mature-age student: my story', CSU's FirstDegree where mature students are encouraged to share their stories, or student authored blogs or articles feature mature students (such as Wise ASSC blog).</p> <p>There is growing interest in the benefits of combining different age groups,</p>

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	<p>relates to 'experiential capital' where essential life skills and experiences can provide key skills and attributes that support persistence behaviours.</p> <p>Create meaningful opportunities for students at various ages and stages of life to engage in information sharing - a two-way approach to learning about university culture</p>	<p>particularly in the community sector such as mixing aged care with childcare e.g. ConnectAbility Australia. This is a concept that could be adopted in HE such as in peer mentoring programs, or group projects as a way of encouraging intergenerational sharing of skills and knowledges.</p> <p>Similarly passing on wisdom from generation to generation could be better utilised in HE, such as including older and younger students in research related projects within the HE space as co-curricular activity</p>

Conversion Factors	Recommendations	Examples of good practice/approaches
<p>Personal Agency and Fluidity</p>	<p>Be explicit about the many different 'paths' that students take into and through university including the many interruptions that can occur during the degree.</p> <p>Ensure these paths are clearly articulated and accessible to all students and their family / community so that it is clear, for example, that a 3-year degree is no longer the norm but rather the exception. Gamification is one way to explore this area in an immersive way as existing or future students can explore options as they move through the 'virtual' university landscape</p>	<p>Victoria University Block Mode is an innovative approach in HE, which responds to different paths that students take and acknowledges the increasing diversity in the student population. Block mode teaching is enacted through focus on flexibility, active learning and small group learning, catering to a wide diversity of students. Block subjects are taught one at a time over a few weeks rather than several subjects over a semester. This enables a more flexible pathway of study for students, especially beneficial for those with work/family/cultural responsibilities or if geographically distant. Block mode enables a pathway which can more readily fit into their lives and circumstances.</p> <p>Campus Quest (online open access game) has been created by Curtin university to highlight the 'pitfalls' and 'successes' of university life. There are also quizzes available to test out online learning and future career options.</p>

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<p>HE attendance understood in an embodied sense</p>	<p>Finding out students' passion for learning - not assuming this is always to do with future employability or increased earning potential</p> <p>Acknowledging the emotional nature of learning and leveraging existing 'passion' and 'desire' to assist in maintaining motivation levels.</p> <p>Adopting more flexible approaches to assessment topics that align to what students are intrinsically interested in as a way to encourage their passion for learning</p>	<p>Matching passion with purpose challenges the 'pursue your passion' discourse. Through research with 5000 managers and employees, the author demonstrated that passion when coupled with a strong sense of purpose led to more focused energy and better performance in work/career. The principle of identifying passion and purpose, such as in career support programs or WIL subjects could assist students with greater satisfaction in what they can contribute as well as future employability.</p> <p>'Students as partners' (SAP) provides a means to alternative approaches to student engagement and support and is emerging as an important initiative within the HE sector (Matthews, 2016). Authentic partnerships can take shape through learning, teaching and assessment; curriculum design and pedagogical consultancy, subject-based research and inquiry and the scholarship of teaching and learning (see Educause Review). Involvement in decisions that can have a positive impact on the learning experience, such as in SAP in formative assessment.</p>
<p>Resilient Lived Experience</p>	<p>Create meaningful opportunities for students to share how they overcome difficulties</p> <p>Provide resources and strategies that re-vision 'difficulty' as a form of 'strength' - this needs to be deliberate and foregrounded as our student populations are derived from such a diversity of backgrounds and often students have endured and overcome many different hurdles or obstacles in life. By not acknowledging the student in a 'holistic sense' we are failing to leverage the many complex dimensions of these learners.</p> <p>Include a range of public speaking events that focus</p>	<p>Feature university magazine article on aspects of the first-gen experience e.g. First-Generation Faculty Share Stories of Overcoming Setbacks to Pursue their Passions</p> <p>This may include well-known people, such as Michelle Obama's inspiring message on being a first-generation student, or less well-known but authentic (such as links to stories in Demonstrating Sisu, Familial Capital and Maturity sections)</p> <p>Graduated or FiF students in their final years could be invited to form a panel or share their story or advice, for events targeted at FiF and their family/significant others</p>

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	on inspirational stories that the student population can relate to and apply to their own contexts	
Well-developed self-concept or efficacy	<p>Avoid adopting a one-size fits all approach for students from equity backgrounds</p> <p>This includes not making any assumptions that all FiF or equity students require the same level and types of services</p>	<p>Victoria University offers 'Advising for Success' as part of their support program where students meet with a dedicated Student Advisor for personalised advice and support to help them succeed in their studies as well as getting the most out of the university experience.</p>
Access to productive relational networks	<p>These networks exist both within and outside university - including emotional champions such as family, friends and community members as well as more strategic influencers who are often employers, teachers or those occupying roles that impact on the learner.</p> <p>Consider ways that these networks can be included more deliberately in the HE journey of the student.</p> <p>Recognise the importance of validation or encouragement that is derived from within the university, particularly when offered by academic or teaching staff - such recognition can be a powerful signifier of belonging for students, often validating their decision to attend university.</p>	<p>(See also examples in Familial Capital)</p> <p>Storytelling has the power to bring diverse people together "Everybody's story is as important as the next" (Steve Simundson) and is a great way to validate the efforts of others as networks of support for students https://tribalcollegejournal.org/storytelling-power-bring-people/)</p>
Access to contextual applications of learning that are immediate and	Expand opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities to all students by recognising that some students may not have the financial resources needed to volunteer and so access to financial aid	<p>The Universities Admission Centre (UAC) provides a list of Australian Government financial assistance such as Youth Allowance, Student Start-up Loan or Education Entry Payment, as well as Equity Scholarships available to Indigenous Australians or those with refugee status, those with</p>

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<p>authentic.</p>	<p>will be required.</p> <p>Offer solutions to the most fundamental issues around participating in internships or work experience for students - for example, provide assistance with transport / offer a ‘business attire’ clothing pool so that students can ‘dress for success’ , provide meal vouchers for lunches/ options for child minding</p>	<p>carer responsibilities, English language difficulty, financial hardship, medical/disability or ongoing effects of abuse, regional/remote disadvantage, sole parent responsibilities. Individual universities usually offer a range of scholarships.</p> <p>Dress for Success is an international not-for-profit organisation supporting ‘women achieve economic independence’ including providing professional attire. This initiative could be adopted in the university sector to support equity students - with staff donating ‘gently-used clothing’ to a clothing pool</p>

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