Creating a sense of belonging online

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Overview

- What is belonging?
- Some useful evidence
- How do we foster belonging online?
- Discussion

What is belonging?

- Academic and social integration (Tinto 1993)
- Belonging to what? University / School / class / group of friends?

"Key to fostering a sense of belonging at the University is that students feel:

- Valued as people
- Welcomed in all aspects of their University experience
- Their culture, beliefs and values are respected in University life" (UoE Sense of belonging taskgroup 2020)

Who belongs?

"We've found that lots of BAME students lack a sense of belonging. This tends to make them less engaged with the university, specifically in terms of reading lists, module content and assessments. A diversified curriculum with more books and journal articles by BAME authors can help… is good for everyone. Representation matters: if a person is able to identify with something or someone they will be more likely to emulate and imitate. Seeing BAME staff in senior positions, such as lecturers, is vital, so long as those roles aren't tokenistic." (Adebesi 2019)

The arithmetic of engagement

"…even a small number of engaging people and events, properly located, can have a disproportionately positive **impact…out of perhaps twenty five teachers a student has during college, she needs only one or two 'great' ones to feel that she has had an excellent academic experience**. In a small college, a tiny number (say, five or ten) of excellent large courses can positively affect large numbers of students. **Conversely, a single poor professor, teaching a large introductory course can easily destroy scores of students' interest in a discipline**." (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014: 68).

Teachers have a key role

"Good teaching matters. It really matters…good teaching is the primary means through which institutions affect students. In addition high quality instruction was generally more effective in promoting the learning, cognitive, and educational attainment outcomes of students from historically underserved populations than those from majority groups. Importantly, these practices also promote desired outcomes for all students." (Mayhew et al 2016: 592)

But…

"students may come to the same lecture halls several times a week for a whole term and never actually meet anyone else in their class" (Quinlan 2016:106)

We all have a part to play

- Miss Rita, Wofford College
- The worst workman analogy
- Coffee and cake conversations
- Learning & Teaching conversations
  http://edin.ac/2Es1m0q

engagEd in...
learning and teaching conversations

Some useful evidence

Student-staff relationships key to positive outcomes

(Bovill, 2020; Lamport 1993; Mayhew et al 2016)

Active learning

(Freeman et al, 2014; Mayhew et al 2016)

Names

(Bovill 2020; Cooper et al 2017)

Demonstrating interest in students

Opportunities to share – small groups, discussions

How do we foster belonging online?

Academic

- Synchronous and asynchronous approaches

- Cameras on/off discussion

- Learn names

- Time for getting to know each other

- Small group work / discussions

- Padlet/Miro??

- Top Hat /Mentimeter/other voting software

- Flipped classroom approach

- Outdoor classes (<30)

- Regular communication
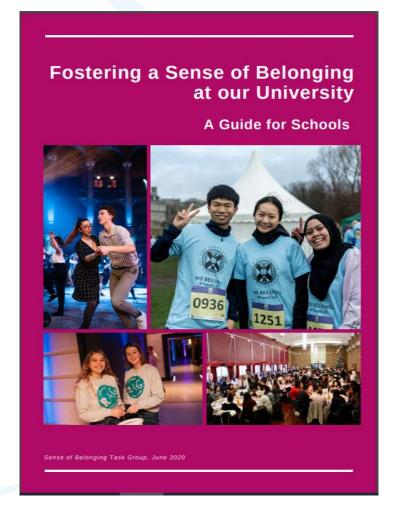
How do we foster belonging online?

Social

– Quizzes (individuals or small groups curate rounds)

– Informal coffee hour / coffee and cake conversations

– Read a novel/watch a film then discuss

– Take turns to teach a skill (origami, rubiks cube…)

– Encourage student-only social media groups

– Regular social email to class/cohort

Guide for Schools on belonging

https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/learningexchange/wp-content/uploads/sites/1606/2020/06/A-Guide-for-Schools-on-Belonging.pdf

Fostering a Sense of Belonging at our University

A Guide for Schools

Sense of Belonging Task Group, June 2020

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