



## Student Experience Constructs

**Social Belonging.** Interpersonal and situational cues signal to students whether they belong (or not) in a particular context. These cues differ for students, depending on their group membership (e.g., gender, race, first-generation, low-income). While most students experience some uncertainty about whether they belong in college, students from groups that are underrepresented or negatively stereotyped tend to experience higher rates of belonging uncertainty than others.

**Trust and Fairness.** Students from negatively stereotyped or historically underserved groups can question whether faculty and staff may treat them fairly in interactions, grading, and other forms of evaluation. Faculty that communicate and behave in ways that engender trust and a perception of caring can mitigate social identity threat for students from these groups.

**Institutional Growth Mindset.** A growth mindset is the belief that abilities are malleable and can be improved with effort, feedback, and using effective strategies for learning. In contrast, a fixed mindset is the belief that abilities are innate and immutable. When instructors convey a growth mindset about intelligence to students, students are found to experience less identity threat and perform better academically. Students' perceptions of instructors' beliefs tend to be a better predictor of student outcomes than instructors' self-reported beliefs.

**Self-Efficacy.** Feeling self-efficacy — which involves having confidence in and estimation of one's abilities — is important for persistence and success in academic fields. Research indicates the experience of identity threat (the lack of identity safety) can contribute to lower levels of self-efficacy among students experiencing it.

**Identity Threat.** Situational cues can signal that a social identity one holds is devalued in a particular context. When the situation cues the potential for identity threat, one's identity becomes strongly felt and psychologically central. Experiencing identity threat is associated with higher rates of belonging uncertainty and lower rates of academic performance among college students.

**Social Connectedness.** Social connectedness refers to the creation of bonding relationships. Feelings of connectedness are a contributing factor to students' social belonging and are essential elements of student satisfaction, academic success, and retention in their own right. Students who feel a sense of social connectedness are more likely to have better social and academic experiences during college, including higher emotional wellbeing and better health.