

THE EQ FACTOR IN STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Workshop Overview

- ▶ Retention and Graduation – Key predictors of success
 - ▶ What is Emotional Intelligence?
 - ▶ How does emotional intelligence predict student success?
 - ▶ How can emotional intelligence be leveraged to enhance student success?
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The Failure to Retain: Cuseo's 4 Factors

▶ ACADEMIC

- Inadequate preparation
- Disinterest in/boredom with content or delivery

▶ FINANCIAL

- Inability (real or perceived) to pay for college
- Perception that cost outweighs benefits

▶ MOTIVATIONAL

- Low level of commitment to college – This is EI!
- Perceived irrelevance of college

▶ PSYCHOSOCIAL

- Social and emotional issues – This is EI!

EQi Testing to Promote Retention

- ▶ **Early Alert Systems**
 - Higher Ed Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi) flags students who score below 80 on a subscale ; referral to counselors or others for extra support
- ▶ **Developmental Advising**
 - Lack of self actualization (goal for being in college)
 - Lack of reality testing (amount of work needed to be successful)
 - Lack of impulse control (party over study)
 - EI results guide an advisor to appropriate conversations and interventions
- ▶ **Faculty-Student Interaction**
 - Students enjoy perusing their results and discussing them with a faculty member
 - Forming a developmental plan with the advisor who can help with accountability

Is *Emotional Intelligence* really a new concept?

- ▶ **The construct was first studied by Darwin in 1837 and described in 1872:**
“The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals”
 - ▶ **The concept was first defined by Thorndike in 1920:**
“The ability to perceive one’s own and others’ internal states, motives and behaviors, and to act toward them optimally on the basis of that information.”
 - ▶ **The term itself was first used by Leuner in a 1966 publication:**
“Emotional Intelligence and Emancipation”
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What is Emotional Intelligence?

- ▶ There are a number of definitions to choose from.
- ▶ According to the [Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology](#), there are 3 major EI models:

The Salovey-Mayer Model

The Goleman Model

The Bar-On Model

Most Definitions Include at Least One of the Following 5 Clusters of Emotional & Social Competencies

[all of which are included in the Bar-On model]:

- ▶ The ability to understand and express one's feelings
 - ▶ The ability to understand how others feel and to relate with them
 - ▶ The ability to manage and control emotions
 - ▶ The ability to manage change and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature
 - ▶ The ability to generate positive mood and be self-motivated
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The Bar-On model of Emotional Intelligence

“emotional-social intelligence is a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures.”

How is EI measured?

Once again...

- ▶ There are a number of measures to choose from.
- ▶ The *Encyclopedia of Applied Psychology* suggests that there are 3 major EI measures:

EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory)

MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test)

ECI (Emotional Competence Inventory))

Emotional Competencies measured on the EQ-i®

▶ **INTRAPERSONAL SCALES**

- Self Regard
- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Assertiveness
- Independence
- Self-Actualization

▶ **INTERPERSONAL SCALES**

- Empathy
- Social Responsibility
- Interpersonal Relationship

▶ **ADAPTABILITY**

- Reality Testing
- Flexibility
- Problem Solving

▶ **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

- Stress Tolerance
- Impulse Control

▶ **GENERAL MOOD**

- Optimism
- Happiness

Why Emotional Intelligence?

“It is clear that **academic success** goes hand in hand with **emotional and physical well-being**. College is a fresh start for many students, but **dysfunctional coping styles** can cripple their efforts. Even students who “get by” or succeed academically can be at risk if unhealthy behavioral patterns follow them after college. Promoting **emotional health** in students is an **investment** in the **future**. It should be part of the mission of all colleges and universities”.

**Dr. Richard Kadison, Chief of Mental Health
Harvard University**

Why EQ-i Matters in Higher Education

Interpersonal & Intrapersonal Competence

- Realistic self-appraisal and self understanding

Persistence and Academic Achievement

- Manage college experience to achieve academic and personal success

Practical Competence

- Effective communication: capacity to manage one's affairs

From Transformative Liberal Education Learning Reconsidered - A Campus-Wide Focus On the Student Experience (ACPA and NASPA 2004)

Recent findings related to EI & the first year of college or university

- ▶ Incorporating Emotional Skills Content in a College Transition Course Enhances Student Retention ([Schutte & Malouff, 2002](#)).
- ▶ Adaptability and stress management skills, as well as interpersonal abilities, were strongly associated with academic success in over 1400 first year students ([Parker et al., 2005](#)).
- ▶ Seligman found that scores on a test of optimism in 500 UPENN freshmen were a better predictor of actual grades during the first year than SAT scores or high school grades ([Schulman, 1995](#)).
- ▶ Significant positive correlations ranging from 0.29 to 0.39 between EI and GPA ($p < .05$) were found in 304 first-year students from various cohort groups (honors, athletes, transitions, first-year college) at one NC institution ([Reported at Annual Conference of FYE, 2004 by A. Jaeger](#)).

1st Year College GPA

The sample was divided into groups for the purpose of comparison, according to college GPA scores. The sample was divided into thirds, as follows:

- Bottom third (n=205): up to 2.49
- Middle third (n=208): 2.50 – 3.34
- Top third (n=206): 3.35 and higher

Subscale	Bottom 1/3	Middle 1/3	Top 1/3
Assertiveness	*		*
Independence		*	*
Social Responsibility	*	*	
Stress Tolerance	*		*
Reality Testing	*	*	
Problem Solving			*
GPA	*	*	*

Sex, GPA & EQ-i

The sample was divided by sex to determine differences in the EQ-i subscales and GPA among first year college students.

Males

- ▶ Self Regard
- ▶ Assertiveness
- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Stress Tolerance
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Optimism

Females

- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Social Responsibility
- ▶ Reality Testing
- ▶ GPA

Predicting 1st Year GPA

The sample was divided by sex to determine differences in the EQ-i subscales and GPA among first year college students.

$$\text{GPA} = 1.77 + .149 * x_{\text{Gender}} + .014 * x_{\text{OP}} - .009 * x_{\text{IN}} - .009 * x_{\text{SR}} + .008 * x_{\text{IC}} + .007 * x_{\text{PS}}$$

Male

$$2.87 = 1.77 + .149 * 0 + .014 * 100 - .009 * 100 - .009 * 100 + .008 * 100 + .007 * 100$$

Female

$$3.02 = 1.77 + .149 * 1 + .014 * 100 - .009 * 100 - .009 * 100 + .008 * 100 + .007 * 100$$

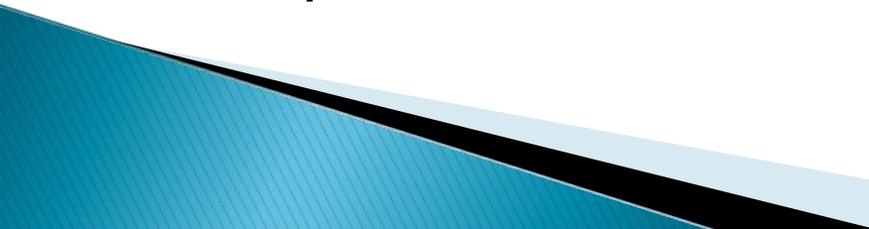
PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND RETENTION (Cuseo)

- ▶ ISOLATION - lack of meaningful contact with others in the community
 - Activities are not the only answer!
 - Skill building in interpersonal relationships will diminish isolation and transfer to other experiences
- ▶ FIT - mismatch between student expectations and the actual experience
 - Must enhance self actualization, reality testing, flexibility and problem solving to overcome this (all measured on EQi)

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS (con't.)

- ▶ ADJUSTMENT – students experience difficulty coping with demands or stressors of new environment (EQi traits shown below in bold)
 - Enhance their **stress tolerance** ability
 - Develop **independence** to cope with living away from home
 - Develop **impulse control** (study before party!)
 - Frame events **optimistically** rather than pessimistically (D paper can be a learning experience rather than a failure)
 - Develop **flexibility** to deal with a variety of situations
 - Enhance **reality testing** so expectations are realistic

Retention Intervention (Cuseo): 11 Keys that EQi Testing Provides

- ▶ Student-centered – focus on well being of student
 - ▶ Intentional – deliberate design; research basis
 - ▶ Intrusive – reach out to students
 - ▶ Proactive – early, preventative action
 - ▶ Diversified – to meet the needs of every student
 - ▶ Comprehensive – student as a “whole” person
 - ▶ Collaborative – partnership
 - ▶ Developmental – longitudinal sequence
 - ▶ Systemic – central to organization; pervasive
 - ▶ Durable – programs built into organizational structure (e.g., FYE course) and budget
 - ▶ Empirical – evidence to support EI and retention
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Peace College Applications

▶ WHAT WE DO

- 20 Faculty and Staff trained in EQi interpretation
 - ▢ Counseling Center Staff
 - ▢ Most of Student Development Staff
 - ▢ Most of FYE instructors (faculty and Student Development Staff)
 - ▢ Career Center staff
- Student takes EQi during summer orientation
 - ▢ Students with low scores flagged for Student Intervention Team, Counseling Center Staff and/or advisor
- Emotional Intelligence Interpretation in FYE class

Peace College Applications (con't.)

- ▶ **Developmental Plan**
 - Each student meets with her FYE instructor (or other trained individual) to receive an individual interpretation and to develop a self-improvement plan (graded based on thoroughness and feasibility)
 - ▢ Target dates
 - ▢ Specific behaviors
 - ▢ Student driven
- ▶ **Emotional Intelligence Instruction**
 - FYE course includes instruction and skill building activities on most of the EI scales with particular emphasis on stress tolerance, impulse control, optimism, empathy, self-awareness, reality testing, problem solving
- ▶ **Residence Hall Programming**
 - Discussions infuse EI language such as impulse control
 - Bulletin boards carry EI messages
 - Resident Assistants all take EQi and receive EQi training

Example EI Activities in FYE course

- ▶ Self-Awareness and Stress Tolerance
 - Take colored hair bands and place on right wrist (Peace is an all-women's college!)
 - Use at least 3 colors (e.g., green=academic, blue=interpersonal, red = financial)
 - As student notices stress (self-awareness), she moves appropriate colored band to other wrist
 - Complete worksheet at end of day
 - ▢ Number of each type of stressor
 - ▢ Identification of trigger event (homework assigned, bad grade, conflict with professor, unclear instruction)
 - ▢ Coping strategies used
 - ▢ Debrief in class – students help each other come up with more effective coping strategies

Problem Solving Activity

- ▶ Teach students the steps of effective problem solving
 - Accurate identification of the problem
 - Generate possible solutions
 - Try one or more solutions until something works
- ▶ Give students brief, written case studies of other students who are experiencing a common problem of college students (e.g., student who runs out of money each month, student who is on academic probation, roommate conflict, etc.)
 - Students work in small groups to apply steps of problem solving to the case study
 - Bring groups together to share their results (this will often result in students debating what the real problem is which helps them sharpen skills in problem identification)
 - Students complete a worksheet for a current problem they are facing using the steps of problem solving;
 - ▢ set an accountability date for 1-2 weeks to see if students are implementing solutions effectively (if not, individual intervention with the advisor or FYE instructor is needed)
 - ▢ If not problem solving effectively, work with student to identify other EI dimensions that may interfere with ability to carry out the solutions (lack of interpersonal relationship skills, lack of self-actualization, lack of assertiveness) and work with student to build those skills

Optimism – Framing Events

- ▶ Teach students A-E cognitive model for framing events
 - **A = action**, event (e.g., failed a test)
 - **B = (irrational/faulty) belief** (e.g., I can't do college work, I'll never pass this class, I'm just not good at Biology)
 - **C = consequences** of B are usually negative (give up trying to do well, blame professor, stop attending class)
 - **D = dispute** irrational belief (e.g., only the first test, I can go to the Learning Center, I've bounced back from a poor start before, etc.)
 - **E = effect** of Disputing is that student will be proactive and appropriate about how to improve the grade (e.g., talk to professor, go to tutoring, study more, etc.)
- ▶ Have students collect experiences throughout week and bring them to class, work through the A-E model with students

Retention and EI at Peace College

- ▶ 1st to 2nd semester retention correlated with
 - Higher optimism
 - Better impulse control
- ▶ 1st year to sophomore retention not associated with EI; retention influenced only by financial data such as amount of parental loans (data was for spring 2009 when economy affected private school retention)
- ▶ BUT, our retention for 1st year students was flat while many privates suffered declines – WAS EI instruction related to better than expected results? Need more data to be sure.

Longitudinal Applications

- ▶ Need to develop systematic follow-up for 1st years
- ▶ Current follow-up options beyond FYE
 - LEA/PSY 344 – Emotional Intelligence: 1 credit hour course to help students learn more about EI and develop their skills
 - Course specific EI infusion
 - ▢ Psychology senior seminar
 - ▢ Political science and Leadership courses

Cuseo's Factors : PEACE Checklist

- ▶ Student-centered – focus on well being of student
- ▶ Intentional – plan for different types of intervention based on scores
- ▶ Intrusive - reach out to students based on EI results
- ▶ Proactive – early, preventative action in 1st year
- ▶ Diversified – individual development plan for each student
- ▶ Comprehensive – student as a “whole” person
- ▶ Collaborative - partnership between faculty, counseling center, career center, student life staff
- ▶ Developmental – longitudinal sequence of EI opportunities
- ▶ Systemic – built into FYE course; buy-in from Academic Affairs and Student Development
- ▶ Durable – programs built into organizational structure (e.g., FYE course) and **budget**
- ▶ Empirical – evidence to support EI and retention (ongoing research)