



EXPLORING STFX STUDENT QUALITY OF LIFE

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide a conceptual summary of ideas and practices that have been shown, directly or indirectly, to contribute to commencing students' satisfaction, engagement and persistence in higher education. Multiple frameworks are available to guide university analysis of key student experience drivers. For the most part, the frameworks agree on what constitute the key drivers, however, they differ in the ways in which they categorize those drivers. The Senate Quality of Life Committee selected Lizzio's (2006) Five Senses framework as the one best suited for discussion given the Senate Quality of Life Committee's mandate. The framework is not intended to be either prescriptive or exhaustive, but rather, to provide a "shared language" for our reflections and discussions.

In his work *Designing an Orientation and Transition Strategy for Commencing Students*, Lizzio (2006) presents five categories of student need as relevant to student success at university, particularly in the early years.

1. Students' success at university depends on their sense of CAPABILITY: understanding the student role, expectations, and mastering of academic knowledge and skills.

Examples of hi- impact and evidence- based practices (Kuh, 2008) that build capability include:

- summer bridge or transition years programs,
- first year seminars and experiences (e.g. "University 101"),
- writing intensive courses,
- tutoring,
- programming focused on specific student populations such as first- generation students from underrepresented minority groups or student athletes,
- residence "living learning communities".

2. Students' success at university depends on their sense of CONNECTEDNESS: building relationships with peers and staff, as well as identifying with the University.

Examples of hi impact and evidence- based practices that build connectedness include:

- orientation,
- learning communities,
- collaborative assignments and projects such as study groups within a course to team- based assignments and writing,
- cooperatives projects and research,
- common intellectual experiences,
- access to advising and mentoring,
- residence living learning communities.

3. Students' success at university depends on their sense of PURPOSE: setting realistic goals, engaging with the discipline, and developing a sense of vocation.

High impact and evidence-based practices that can promote a sense of purpose include:

- service learning,
- work integrated learning,
- experiential learning,
- co-ops, internships, and placements,
- undergraduate research experiences,
- capstone courses and projects,

- diversity/global learning experiences,
- advising and mentoring,
- career development/career counselling.

4. Students' success at university depends on their sense of RESOURCEFULNESS: knowing about university resources and procedures. Balancing work, life and study.

High impact and evidence-based examples of this category include:

- orientation activities,
- student services,
- student success services,
- advising and mentoring
- Supports for students to meet "basic" needs and provide easy access to assistance such as financial aid/emergency funding, food security/housing, child-care, access to internet, and access to computers.

5. Students' success at university depends on their sense of academic and community CULTURE: appreciating the core values and ethical principles of higher education and their university.

Examples of university practices in this category include:

- orientation,
- residence programming,
- university traditions such as the Xaverian Welcome,
- service learning,
- residence living learning community

Equity and Inclusion

Frameworks used in combination with an Equity Lens (example available [here](#)) provide a means to assess how we support specific student populations at St.FX so that retention practices meet the unique needs of students or groups such as:

- African Nova Scotian students and other Black Students
- Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous Students
- First-generation students
- International students
- Low income/low socioeconomic status (SES) students
- Rural students (as the current MOU between Nova Scotia and the Province states we will be aiming to pull more rural NS students into our university)
- Students with disabilities
- LGBTQQIA+ students

Kuh, G. (2008). High Impact Educational Practices. What are they, Who has Access to them and Why they Matter. Washington, D.C.: AAC&U, Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Lizzio, A. (2006). Designing an Orientation and Transition Strategy for Commencing Students: Applying the Five Senses Model. http://fyhe.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Lizzio-TheFivesensesofStudentSuccessSelf-AssessmentFrameworkforplanningandreviewofOT_doc.pdf