



## WEBINAR: USING NON-COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS TO HELP UNDERSERVED STUDENTS TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

During the second annual Early College High School Week, May 4-10, 2010, Jobs for the Future hosted a webinar to explore the use of assessments of non-cognitive abilities to enhance high school and college persistence for students in danger of dropping out. Non-cognitive abilities are certain behaviors and attitudes—such as educational commitment and resiliency—that are distinct from the traditional verbal and quantitative areas that ability tests or achievement tests are designed to measure. University of Utah Professor Dr. Paul A. Gore and Dr. Valerie J. Calderon, a managing consultant for the Gallup Student Poll, presented material on two different non-cognitive assessment tools that help students understand and utilize their strengths to stay on the pathway to college. Click here to access the PowerPoint and audio presentations.

► <http://www.earlycolleges.org/publications.html#creatingearlycollegehighschools>

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## SYNOPSIS

DR. PAUL A. GORE

### **DATA-DRIVEN STUDENT SUCCESS SOLUTIONS: THE ROLE OF NON-COGNITIVE ABILITIES IN PREDICTING AND PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS**

Dr. Gore began the webinar by defining non-cognitive abilities and introducing the role of non-cognitive assessments. The tremendous value of assessing these abilities is that such traits are highly malleable: they can be supported and developed to improve student outcomes. Research has shown that a person's non-cognitive abilities are strong predictors of their academic performance and persistence. Some studies suggest that they are especially potent predictors of outcomes for students whose parents have not graduated from college.

"When you take non-cognitive abilities, and you combine them with more traditional elements such as GPA or standardized achievement scores," Dr. Gore noted, "they can actually add to your ability to predict what your student outcomes are going to be." Grade point average accounts for 15 to 20 percent of the predictability of student outcomes, and standardized achievement tests add another 5 to 8 percent. Non-cognitive abilities add a further 10 to 15 percent to our ability to predict and affect student outcomes.

The Student Strengths Inventory, created by Dr. Gore and others at the educational research firm C-Sync, measures the six non-cognitive abilities that are the strongest indicators and are also malleable: self-efficacy; goals; academic engagement; resiliency; social comfort; and educational commitment. Schools using the SSI receive Student Strengths Profiles, a measure of each student's six non-cognitive abilities, as well as customized Personal Development Plans that are created with the assistance of guidance counselors, teachers, and parents. According to Dr. Gore, "The Personal Development Plan is an opportunity for schools to develop custom recommendations to students based on score ranges—high, medium, low—so you can develop recommendations about what a student might consider doing next in your institution, on your campus." Each school also receives a school profile to chart the same six non-cognitive abilities in the student body as a whole.

Asked how a school can use SSI data effectively, Dr. Gore indicated that it depends on a school's resources and what intervention strategies it already has in place. Having parents, counselors, and faculty on board for the SSI creates a robust network of support to make a difference in the students' lives. According to Dr. Gore, "We promote student action through the delivery of customized

'what's next?' statements, as well as the more general three-step process: capitalize on your strengths, focus on areas that need improvement, and utilize the resources."

Dr. Gore is expanding work with the SSI to more high schools and colleges. He is also examining and documenting various data-use models and exploring the use of the SSI in high school programs that create pathways for at-risk students.

▶ For more information on the Student Strengths Inventory, go to: <http://www.studentstrengthsinventory.com>.

▶ For a demonstration of the SSI, go to: <http://www.demo-ssi.com>. Enter your email address as username and ssidemo as password.

DR. VALERIE J. CALDERON

## UNDERSTANDING THE GALLUP STUDENT POLL: MEASURING HOPE, ENGAGEMENT, AND WELL-BEING IN STUDENTS

Dr. Valerie J. Calderon shared information on the Gallup Student Poll and how it measures high school students' levels of *hope*, *engagement*, and *well-being*. Working with America's Promise Alliance, a partnership of organizations focused on improving the lives of children, Gallup surveyed a quarter-million students in 37 states and the District of Columbia in fall 2009. Dr. Calderon presented the national percentages from the poll for each of the three indicators and suggested the ways in which these non-cognitive abilities can predict student success.

The Gallup Student Poll and America's Promise Alliance describe the three indicators as follows:

- > **Hope** is the energy for the future. Hope drives attendance, credits earned, and GPA of high school students. Hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are achievement scores. Fifty percent of students surveyed were hopeful; 33 percent were stuck; and 17 percent were discouraged.
- > **Engagement** is the involvement in and enthusiasm for school. The level of engagement among students distinguishes between high-performing and low-performing schools, and boosting engagement directly influences average scores on standardized tests. Nationally, 52 percent of students were engaged; 29 percent were not engaged; and 19 percent were actively disengaged.
- > **Well-being** is how we think about and experience our lives. Students with high well-being earn more credits (up to 10 percent more) and attain higher GPAs than peers with low well-being. Well-being had the highest positive indicator with 62 percent of students thriving; 37 percent struggling; and 1 percent suffering.

Dr. Calderon pointed out that features of early college high schools—adult mentors, emphasis of the importance of schoolwork, recognition and praise of student's successes, and encouragement of students to plan their future—are all designed to raise students' levels of hope, engagement and well-being.

According to Dr. Calderon, the Gallup Student Poll also produces school reports. Counselors and administrators use this information to develop action plans to effect change within their school environments. By recognizing how their students rate on these three scales, the schools have a clearer understanding of how they can intervene to create more positive outcomes.

▶ For more information on the Gallup Student Poll, go to: <http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com>.

### THE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Early college is a bold approach to high school reform, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Early college schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and one to two years of transferable college credit/tuition free. Today, the Early College High School Initiative includes more than 200 schools serving more than 46,000 students in 24 states.

Jobs for the Future assists schools, school districts, and initiative partner organizations in planning, implementing, and sustaining early college high schools and other high-quality secondary school designs that blend high school and college. JFF provides professional development opportunities and advocates for policies that facilitate the creation of these schools.