

# Advising and Validating Underserved Students for Success

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# Six Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity/Gender

	Non-Minority			Minority			Gender	
	Res	Non Res	Total	Res	Non Res	Total	Male	Female
Iowa	66.3%	67.4%	66.8%	62.4%	52.8%	57.8%	63.4%	68.1%
Iowa State	69.2%	67.4%	68.8%	58.5%	55.6%	57.2%	64.8%	70.3%
UNI	64.2%	58.6%	64.0%	61.7%	31.3%	46.3%	60.4%	64.5%

# Enrollment at Iowa Community Colleges, Fall 2008

- Iowa's 15 community colleges are experiencing enrollment growth, and over 88,000 students in two-year colleges represent a viable pool of potential students for Iowa Regent Institutions.
- Most students (50.9%) were part-time, enrolled for less than 12 credits
- Females represent 56% of enrollments
- Average age is 22.5
- African Americans are the largest minority group, but Hispanics are the fastest-growing
- 4.9% of all minorities in Iowa are enrolled in community colleges, the third largest in the nation. In California it is 5.8%.

# Leaky Educational Pipeline

According to the *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education* (2004)

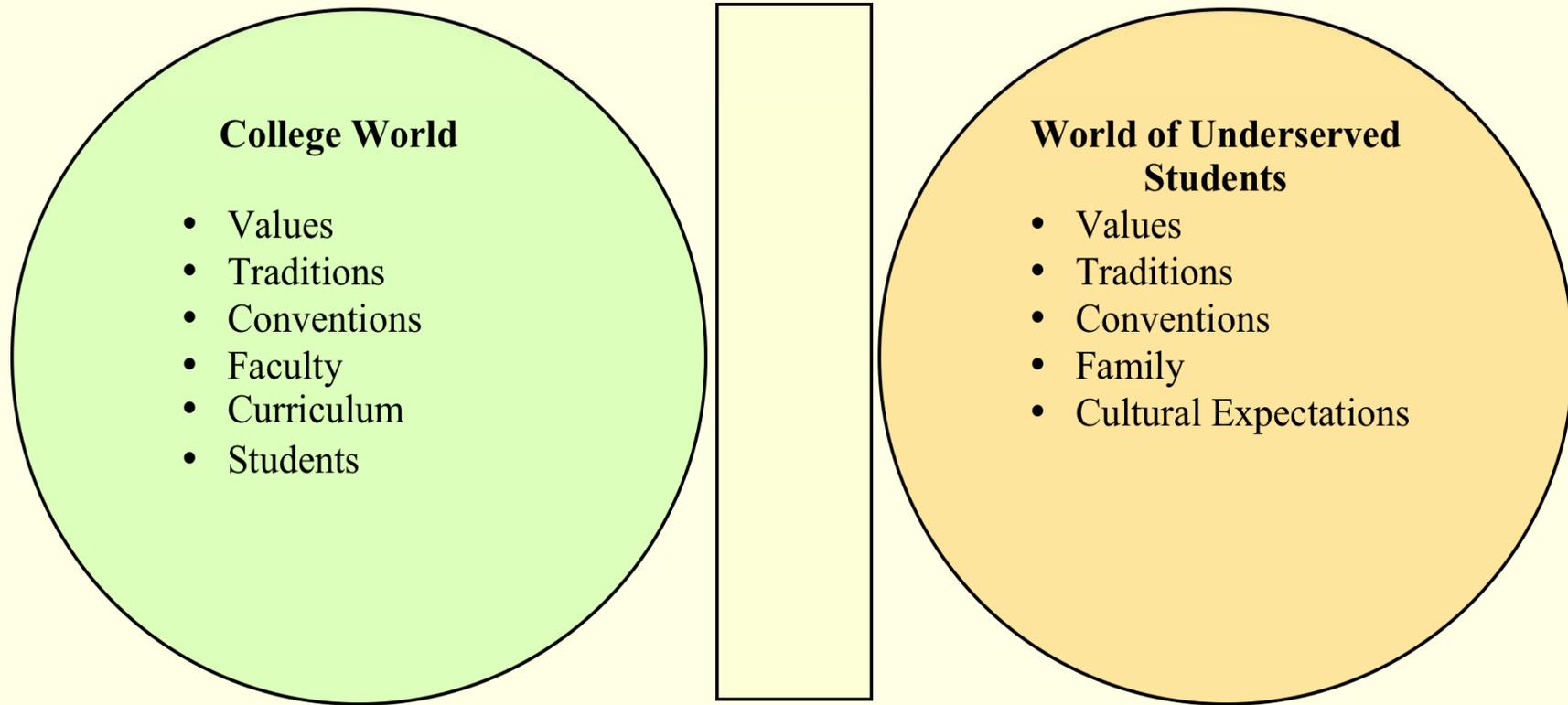
Out of every 100 ninth graders:

- 68 graduate from high school
- 40 immediately enter college
- 27 are still enrolled in their sophomore year
- Only 18 complete any type of postsecondary education within six years of graduating from high school

# Factors contributing to Retention of Underserved Students

- Family college-going culture is usually not present
- Financial Barriers (socioeconomic status)
- Low expectations set for them (belief students will only go so far)
- Limited access to pre-college preparation programs
- Experiences between the world of the student and the world of college are incongruent

## Incongruity of College World and World of Low-Income, Underserved Students



- **Worlds are dissimilar**
- **Worlds are disconnected**
- **Underserved students face barriers and transitional problems crossing the academic border**
- **When they cross into the college world, they will experience incidents such as: alienation, cultural assaults (i.e., racism, stereotyping, discrimination)**

# What Helps Underserved Students Stay in College

- Family support and encouragement
- Strong academic performance and skills (time management/study skills)
- Assistance with the transition to college
- Receptive, ethnically-diverse campus climate
- Learning communities like Puente Project
- Campus Engagement
- Financial aid
- Validation and encouragement from significant others
- Study groups
- Full-time attendance
- Working on campus
- Proper advisement
- Community service learning

# Validation

A Tool to Foster Success for  
Underserved Students

# Validation Theory

## Working with Underserved Students

Validation is an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and personal development (Rendón, 1994)

**There are two forms of validation:**

1. Academic--when in- and out-of-class agents take action to assist students to trust their innate capacity to learn and to acquire confidence in being a college student.
2. Interpersonal--when in- and out-of-class agents take action to foster students' personal development and social adjustment.

# Students Want to Know:

- I matter
- Somebody cares about me
- I am a capable learner
- I can be a valuable member of this college community
- What I bring to the college classroom is as valuable as what others think and know (student voice)
- The curriculum reflects who I am (inclusive curriculum)

# Validating Underserved Students: Best Practices for Advisers

- **Build a relationship with students.**
  - Ask questions about their life, struggles they have been through.
  - Emphasize the importance of education for their families.
- **Do not assume all students know how to get involved and how to access campus information.**
  - Advisors should take the first step in reaching out to assist students and helping them to get involved in campus life.
- **Whenever possible, affirm students as being capable of college-level work.**
  - Indicate to students that what they know and the backgrounds they bring are as important as what others know and bring to college.

# Validating Underserved Students: Best Practices for Advisers

- Call students by name. Be friendly, accessible, supportive and helpful.
- Praise student success.
- Introduce student to other students in similar situations.
- Encourage students to validate and support each other (i.e., students provide positive reinforcement, form friendships, serve as support network).

# Impact of Validation: Students Will.....

- Believe *“I can do it”*
- Believe they have inherent capacity to learn
- Become excited about learning
- Feel a part of the learning community
- Become motivated or driven
- Feel cared about as a person, not just a student