mSuccess™

Grow, Belong, Stay: A Smartphone Approach to Student Success and Retention

mSuccess is designed to help improve retention and promote student success by delivering a research-based intervention to students' smartphones. The intervention uses growth mindset and social belonging strategies that have been shown to enhance student success (GPA) and retention. Participating institutions will be able to deliver a tailored growth mindset and social belonging intervention to their incoming students in the fall of 2017. The intervention will be delivered via the RealLife Exp app, which is free to end users. Participating institutions will also receive expert consultation throughout the process, with specific guidance in terms of student enrollment and engagement.

Case for Mobile Delivery of Growth Mindset and Social Belonging interventions

Several "non-cognitive" strategies have been successfully employed to bolster student success (Paunesku et al, 2015; Yeager et al, 2014; Yeager, Walton and Cohen, 2013). The most promising of these have been growth mindset and social belonging interventions, which have demonstrated particularly robust results among underrepresented and underserved student populations (Mendez, 2015; Paunesku, Walton, Romero, Smith, Yeager, & Dweck, 2015; Tough, 2014; Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011; Walton, Logel, Peach, Spencer, & Zanna, 2015; Walton & Yeager, 2014; Yeager & Walton, 2011). Consider the following:

> Growth mindset interventions have been shown to increase GPA among middle school and college students (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002; Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).

> Social Belonging interventions have been found to improve the GPA of black college students over three years, cutting the black-white achievement gap in half (Walton & Cohen 2007, 2011).

> "The positive effects of growth mindset interventions appear to be most pronounced among at-risk students" (Paunesku, Walton, Romero, Smith, Yeager, & Dweck, 2015, p. 8).

Walton and Yeager (2014) describe growth-mindset as the belief that "intelligence is not fixed but grows with hard work, effective strategies, and help from others" (p. 1). Social-belonging, on the other hand, addresses issues of social acceptance and belonging in college. Most first-year students worry about fitting in at college, especially early-on (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Socially stigmatized groups, such as African-American students, are more likely to have negative and discriminatory social experiences, leaving them especially vulnerable to questions of acceptance. Social belonging interventions appear to provide a psychological buffer for these students, enabling them to engage more fully in the college experience. These interventions suggest that questions about fitting in are common to all freshmen and invite students to share their future college success to benefit others. Of course, these interventions don't operate in a vacuum.

> "A well-timed, well-targeted psychological intervention can improve students' relationships, experiences, and performance at a critical stage and thus improve their trajectory through their school careers" (Yeager, Walton & Cohen, 2013, p. 63).

> "Mind-set interventions depend on resources and learning opportunities in the academic environment: They encourage students to take advantage of such opportunities and may be ineffective if these opportunities are absent" (Paunesku et al., 2015, p. 8).

In the past, these non-cognitive interventions were typically delivered in-person once at the beginning of the semester or before school started. However, smartphones now provide a cost-effective and easily scaled means of delivering these interventions. We've piloted and, later, experimentally tested smartphone (app) delivery of growth mindset and social belonging in the first two weeks of the semester. Findings provide evidence that smartphone delivery of GMS and SB interventions can improve academic performance and persistence, particularly among minority students.

First Semester GPA for First-Year Students Receiving mSuccess
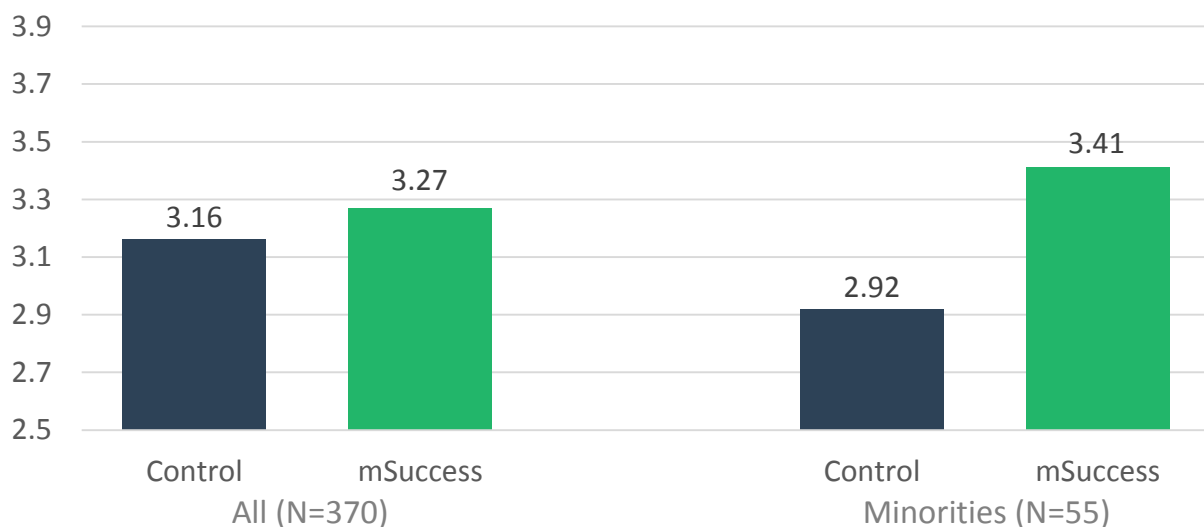
Second Semester Retention Rates for Students Receiving mSuccess
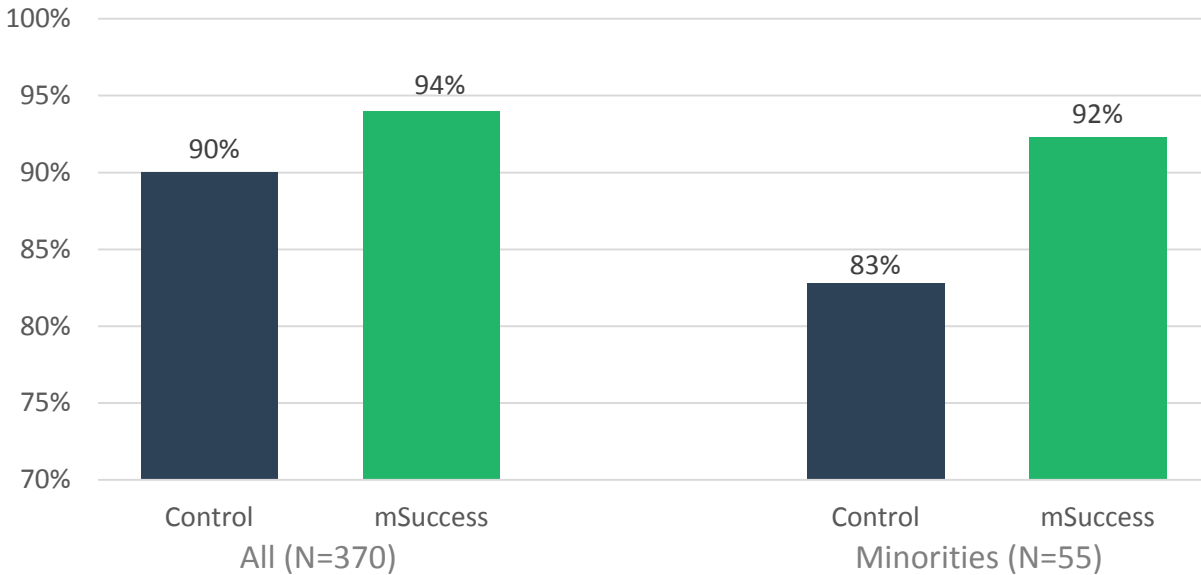
As the previous graphs demonstrate, the 2016 mSuccess project found benefits for those students receiving the intervention, both in terms of GPA and retention. The greatest benefits were found for minority students, and this was consistent with earlier pilot study findings.

2015-2016 Pilot Study with At-Risk Students

A pilot study of 71 students in remedial math and English courses revealed consistent relationships between app engagement and academic performance. End-of-semester GPA was positively correlated with level of engagement with app-delivered growth-mindset material, $r_{(69)} = .25$, $p < .05$); social-belonging material, $r_{(69)} = .32$, $p < .01$); and overall use of the app, $r_{(69)} = .30$, $p < .01$.

Minority students ($N = 23$) demonstrated similar, though stronger, positive correlations between GPA and engagement with growth-mindset material, $r_{(21)} = .45$, $p < .05$; social-belonging content, $r_{(21)} = .51$, $p < .05$; and overall responses to app notifications, $r_{(21)} = .47$, $p < .05$.

What Benefits Can I Anticipate with the mSuccess Smartphone GMS and SB Intervention for My Students?*

- 4-10% increase in first-year student persistence
- Improvement in the average GPA of first-year students
- Greater intervention benefits in persistence and GPA among minority students
- Financial improvement as a result of enhanced student retention.

*While existing evidence supports the efficacy of growth mindset and social belonging interventions for first year students, results are likely to vary based on the characteristics of students on your campus, the method used to engage students, etc.

Want More Information on mSuccess Pricing and Deliverables?
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