

Degree in Ninja

Assessing Intentions and Personal Purpose

Goals

- To help students develop a more purposeful mindset while in college
- To help students identify cultural and societal promises about college and to assess personal beliefs about college
- To enable students to reflect on their ideas about opportunity

Preparation

- See pages 7 and 8 of Degree in Ninja. Find articles online (see recommended in Appendix) that address similar issues. Watch 'Don't Go To College' video (5 minutes in length).

Skills

Critical thinking, goal setting, personal awareness

Frame of Reference

It is widely assumed and stated that college is the natural and 'right step' for all individuals that want to thrive in the United States. Because most young people in college are inundated with the messaging that 'college is the next step', most people never take a step back to ask themselves, "Why am I really here? Is it just what I'm supposed to do or am I here to get something from the experience?" Not all students that graduate are getting jobs, not all students in jobs know how to perform 'real world tasks', what is your purpose for being here? Is it because you 'have to' or because you're driven toward a goal?

Big Picture

You want to take students through a reflective and discussion-oriented process that helps them transition from 'I'm in college because I'm supposed to' to 'I'm in college because I am confident it will take me where I want to go'.

Activity

Ask students to begin activity sharing their answer to 'why are you here'? Students will ask for clarification wanting to know if 'here' means this discussion group, this program, this school, this class, or other. Allow students to interpret for themselves.

Ask students if they have ever heard anything 'negative' about college, college results or the college experience. Where did those come from?

Show students articles or specific highlights from articles that you want them to notice, and watch 'Don't Go To College' video. Discuss legitimacy or illegitimacy of these claims. If we've heard all of this stuff, why do we still go to college? Why not something else? Is it safe, comfortable, otherwise? If you saw all these 'red flags' entering into a relationship, would you still enter the relationship? Why do we then jump into college, sometimes without hesitation?

Reflection

Read Degree in Ninja 9-12

Written or verbal. Ask students to address new perspectives gained from the activity. Do students have a new or stronger intention for their college experience? Why are you here?

Degree in Ninja

Education and its impact

Goals

- To help students have a more committed attitude towards their education
- To help students identify past experiences that impact assumptions about education
- To help students redefine the relationship between education and self
- To give students the foundation for overcoming personal challenges that may negatively impact their learning outcomes

Preparation

- Page 13 of Degree in Ninja and article 3.7 from Appendix

Skills

Critical thinking, personal awareness, social awareness

Frame of Reference

- 1) Of students that drop out of college or high school, over 50% of those students drop out because they are bored, not because of failing grades. The social commentary among peers toward education does not help either. Sit in the Student Union for 20 minutes and listen to the conversations among students, “I can’t believe my professor expects this of me...” “I was so hung-over for class today...” “Why can’t my professor just tell us what we need for the test...” are only a sampling of comments you will hear. Do students fall into this dialogue because of social pressure, or do we believe what we say?
- 2) Students aren’t born bored. They aren’t often made to not participate in class. It’s not that students don’t have questions, sometimes students don’t know if they can ask them. Many of a student’s biggest challenges derive from past experiences that have defined their current attitudes and classroom performance.

Big Picture

You want students to identify their own attitudes towards education and learning and to explore whether or not that attitude is impacting their learning opportunities in college.

Activity

Ask students to facilitate a 'social experiment' in order to discover peer perspectives towards education. Offer them the freedom to do 'whatever it takes' to find the answer. This will allow them the opportunity to think for themselves. If students still struggle with the concept of 'creating a social experiment', suggest ideas like the previously mentioned sit-in-the-union approach or tell them to post a Facebook status similar to 'I can't believe my classes...' and take note of the several reflections peers will offer.

Ask students to think of past experiences from school that have directly impacted how they perform in the classroom today. Examples will vary but will include such things like:

- High school was easy, I realized I could wait until the night before a test to study and still would get an A.
- I never understood math and I had a lot of questions during a particular lesson. On a particular day, I needed further help on a particular challenge and I felt the teacher roll their eyes or get annoyed, since then, I've asked a lot less questions.
- I was raised to respect my elders, it's very difficult for me to have a conversational-style relationship with faculty that go by their first names.
- I don't offer my opinions because I don't think anyone is paying attention, so I don't see the value in speaking my mind.

How will the above and similar attitudes impact the college experience?

Reflection

Have students reflect on observations from peer groups and from past experiences to help identify personal barriers that will hold the student from fully getting the most from college.

What action steps will they take to overcome those barriers?

Debrief

As a part of the activity, it is recommended that a facilitator addresses each individual past experience and help guide the individuals to campus resources, mentors or faculty that will cultivate the habits of asking questions, class discussion, mentor-based relationships with professors and otherwise.

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Creating an Intentional College Experience

Goals

- To understand what it means to be a fully developed individual
- To gain an understanding and commitment towards the opportunities and resources available to students on campus
- To create a plan that will encourage character development and positive educational experiences among students

Preparation

- Read Career Development, Internships, Get Involved, Resources, Development and Planning from Degree in Ninja

Skills

Critical thinking, personal awareness, goal setting, planning, creative thinking, problem solving, self-motivation

Frame of Reference

Most students will need a letter of recommendation.

Big Picture

Employers and the 'real world' want graduates with more than a list of relevant classes and GPA. They want students that can demonstrate critical and creative thinking, problem solving, strong communication skills, a desire to learn, self-starting abilities, self-directed abilities and more. Students should understand 'real world' needs and take the initiative to cultivate these skills.

Activity

In small groups, have students read sample letters of recommendation. Have students identify the character qualities that are addressed in each letter of recommendation and if there are examples of these character qualities addressed in the letters of recommendation.

Have students list the character qualities or 'soft skills' they want to develop and demonstrate by the end of their college experience. Through a scavenger hunt style process, have students identify 2-3 campus opportunities for that will develop each 'soft-skill'. For example, attending discussions on art exhibits or gallery openings can help cultivate empathy, understanding from other perspectives, and critical thinking; joining student organizations can create a stronger sense of self, communication skills and team work.

Ask students to explore the learning opportunities through the campus website, available brochures and literature, and interviewing representatives from different offices and departments. You may even want to go as far as to challenge students to call local businesses and ask 'what would you want to see on a resume from a new graduate'.

Using the provided template, have students create a plan of action for attending and enrolling in available programs and opportunities.

Debrief

Discuss the benefits of an intentional college experience and the real purpose behind available activities offered on campus. The hypnotist isn't on campus just for 'funsies', it's to help develop a sense of connection to the campus, a positive student experience, an emotional bond with the campus community and more. From student perspectives, are out of class learning opportunities meeting their goals? What will it take to ensure students attend and follow through on attending the available opportunities? Do students know that many times, they can request specific programs to visit campus? Do students know the steps to take to do that, who to talk to, or where to go?