



# WEDNESDAY @ 1PM

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS

THE MEN OF THE TENTH INC. | [WWW.THEMENOFTHETENTH.ORG](http://WWW.THEMENOFTHETENTH.ORG)





# SUMMARY

**The Men of the Tenth Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the educational experiences of students by transforming their learning environments. This E-Booklet introduces three core principles designed to guide students, college leaders, staff, and faculty toward achieving above-the-line performance within their institutions. To foster meaningful transformation, institutions must commit to:**

- 1. Practicing honesty,**
- 2. Providing consistent support to students throughout their educational journey, and**
- 3. Conducting regular check-ins to monitor progress and engagement.**

**By applying these principles, institutions can expect to see higher graduation rates, a stronger organizational culture, and increased national recognition.**



# INTRODUCTION

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In a recent report from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) 4-year institutions have a 61% graduation rate for students that complete in five years and 2-year colleges have a 39.4% graduation rate for students that complete in three years. Sadly, if we treated these graduation rates as exam scores, we would be extremely below the line of achievement. Moreover, with the rising cost of higher education, these results can be viewed as a waste of money. Students are questioning the value of a degree. The once-coveted college experience is now marred by unwelcoming campuses, a lack of inclusivity, and growing discontent among faculty. The traditional higher education system is failing to meet the moment—and the consequences are undeniable. In fact, the current landscape of education suggests the department should be dismantled.

Despite these educational challenges when students enroll in college and institutions cultivate their talent, students have a stronger chance to achieve upward mobility. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that when individuals have the highest degree attainment they earn the most, are in leadership positions, and have the lowest unemployment rate.

## STUDENT SUCCESS

According to Ascendium, the United States has over 41 million students that have some college experience but have not attained a degree. This E-book is a guide to help educational leaders improve the experiences of students and their rate of completion.

In order to achieve student success, we must first understand students' experiences. For example, let's review what the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has highlighted about the community college sector:

- Students are unfamiliar with the college experience
- Many students are first-generation
- A significant amount enrolled from a single parent household
- More than half are less than 22 years of age
- Majority taught by adjunct faculty

Given this review, how can we expect students to succeed in an environment that is unfamiliar? In an environment that does not invest in them and does not commit to providing the full-time faculty necessary for students to succeed?

# ABOVE THE LINE PERFORMANCE

To achieve Above the Line performance, you must first understand that performance rises and falls on behavior. Executing Above the Line Performance consist of conducting a winning behavior that is intentional, on purpose, and skillful. It is the opposite of Below the Line performance which is comfortable and convenient. Below the Line is about accepting the status quo. With this in mind, the current state of education clearly indicates that it is time for change.

According to Senator Bernie Sanders, "As higher education becomes more corporate-like and bureaucratic, more bureaucrats are needed to run them." Senator Sanders questions, "Exactly how much do students benefit by having, in some cases, dozens of vice presidents of this or that, each earning hundreds of thousands of dollars or more?" He points out that higher education is now a racket. For example, too often students have a joyous graduation that leads to an anxiety-ridden decades-long financial bind.

In other words, higher education in this country is unaffordable for so many. There are over 44 million people-current students, graduates, and those who left college before graduating owing more than \$1.3 trillion in student loans.

Although we believe education is the great equalizer, colleges are becoming too focused on market share than helping student achieve upward mobility. Colleges are spending huge amounts of money on fancy student centers, dorms, state-of-the-art gyms, and sports stadiums, and countless other campus amenities instead of spending on bells and whistles that will academically and financially benefit students.

The purpose of this document is to share some keys to solving many of the serious problems of economic, racial, and gender inequality plaguing our education system.







# STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

## BE HONEST

As a student success expert, the first thing you must do to create an inclusive successful environment is to be honest with students, faculty, and staff. To be honest with individuals you must explain the purpose of an education. The great scholar, W.E.B. Dubois has provided a great explanation for the purpose of an education. In 1903, Dubois declared, "The final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man." In other words, education is the ultimate tool for humans to develop and make wise decisions consistently.

One of today's colloquial is "keeping it 100" and for so many administrators and professors it is something that they do not partake in. Famed Harvard Professor of Emeritus, Chris Argyris referred to this level of honesty as being able to "discuss the undiscussable." It is an individual's willingness to discuss and address barriers that are made by fancy footwork. For example, if you were to access a report and see a significant number of students failing a math course with the same instructor you cannot overlook it and say the students are not prepared or the instructor is difficult. By discussing the undiscussable, you must have a serious conversation with the students and instructor. You must evaluate the instructor's teaching ability and you must also evaluate the students' commitment to utilizing the academic learning center.

By having an open and honest discussion with both parties you are able to find and eliminate barriers that were consistently present.

## BE PRESENT

No matter your role in education, your purpose is to be a chief meaning officer to students. You are responsible for being open and honest with students to help them develop. To put it another way, students are independent contractors hiring you and the institution to do a certain job for them. The job requires you to help them navigate through their college experience successfully by providing the best experiences.

This is something that many student affairs offices miss. Institutions are too busy trying to figure out why students do not respond to their emails instead of asking the student what they need to succeed. In order to be present in the students' lives you must know what they want. We have found that the only way to find students' needs is by asking them. Over the years, we have asked students questions to create experiences that are meaningful.



### Be Honest

- Explain the purpose of an education
- Discuss the undiscussable



### Be Present

- Be a chief meaning officer
- Listen to your students
- Provide the best experiences



### Conduct Checkups

- Have an open line for communication
- Maintain consistency

# CONDUCT CHECKUPS

Tracking students' progress is extremely important to their success. This initiative requires constantly checking on students' grades, mental health, employment, and familial obligations to build trust. Constantly conducting checkups creates an open line of communication for students to share their experiences. Building a rapport with students creates a culture and establishes expectations for current and prospective students to follow. For example, when interacting with students we discuss the need for Above the Line Performance. We teach students that Above the Line Performance provides limitless opportunities such as scholarships, awards, and financial freedom.

In addition to conducting checkups with students individually, we also conduct checkups in a group setting every Wednesday at 1PM. We provide a space to allow students to share their thoughts with their peers. Research suggest word of mouth is the best marketer and we create a space for students to teach each other. These meetings have a significant impact on students' lives because they create consistency.

Consistency is extremely influential to students' success. For many students they have experience so much inconsistency that it is hard for them to believe an institution, faculty, and staff have their best interest. In other words, students' experiences have led them to become numb to believing in themselves and fulfilling opportunities for achievement. However, we found utilizing consistency to conduct checkups on students every 3 weeks, sending text messages, and hosting weekly meetings improves student success.

Moreover, using the appropriate software is also crucial. Over the years, countless educational products have claimed to offer the best solutions for engaging students—whether it is EAB, Ellucian, Element 345, Cadence, Canvas, Blackboard, Advise, or others. However, choosing the most effective tools requires a careful assessment of student needs and campus culture. In our view, the best software is user-friendly, accessible to a broad audience, and designed with a visually appealing interface that enhances the user experience.





# WHAT'S NEXT

**Necessity is  
not only  
the mother  
of  
invention,  
but the  
mainspring  
of exertion**

Frederick Douglass

The Men of the Tenth Inc. strongly encourages you to collaborate with us to develop and design a personalized educational map. This proven approach leads to measurable outcomes and lasting impact by delivering the following benefits:

**1. Provides a Clear Path to Success**

An educational map offers a structured, step-by-step guide for academic progress. It minimizes confusion, helps students avoid taking unnecessary courses, and builds confidence by clearly outlining the journey toward graduation.

**2. Reduces Dropout Rates and Delays in Graduation**

Without a roadmap, students can easily veer off course. A well-defined educational map keeps them focused and on track, significantly increasing the likelihood of timely graduation and long-term academic persistence.

**3. Supports Informed Decision-Making**

By outlining key milestones, required courses, and career-aligned choices, the map empowers students to make intentional, informed decisions that align with their personal and professional goals.

**4. Enhances Student Engagement and Motivation**

When students can see where they are headed and understand how each course fits into their bigger picture, they are more motivated to stay the course. The map turns academic planning into a mission with purpose and clarity.

**5. Promotes Equity and Access**

Educational maps help close the opportunity gap by providing clear guidance—especially for first-generation or underserved students who may lack access to consistent academic advising or support systems.

**6. Strengthens Advising and Institutional Support**

A shared roadmap enables faculty, advisors, and support staff to deliver consistent, targeted support. It helps institutions identify barriers early, offer timely interventions, and create a campus culture centered on student success.

By using this educational mapping process, you are not just helping students plan their academic journey—you are equipping them to own it. Lastly, we have used this framework to help colleges increase their graduation rates. As a result, one college was able to increase their success sixfold.



# RESULTS FROM LAST YEAR

Higher education stands at a defining moment. The long-standing reliance on unproven theories and disconnected messaging no longer meets the evolving needs of today’s—and tomorrow’s—students. Now more than ever, institutions need practical, evidence-based strategies that drive measurable, lasting results.

This e-book introduced three such strategies—rooted in real-world application and capable of sparking institutional transformation. You have seen the outcomes: improved graduation rates, powerful student success stories, and cultural change driven by intentional action.

More than a reflection on past success, this resource provides a forward-looking roadmap, including graduation rate projections for the next five years.

The time for theory has passed. The time for transformation is now. Your next step could shape the future of your students, your institution, and higher education itself.

Thank you for investing your time. To explore partnerships or speaking engagements, visit [www.themenofthetenth.org](http://www.themenofthetenth.org). We look forward to connecting.

