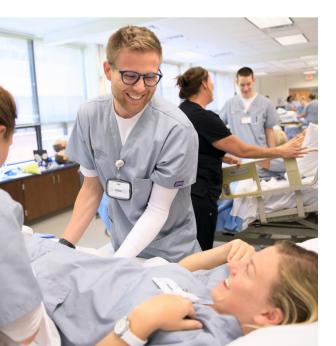**A GUIDE TO:**

FOSTERING A GROWTH MINDSET IN THE CLASSROOM

Mindsets are beliefs in an individual's basic qualities (e.g., intelligence, talents, personality). Education scholar Carol Dweck (2016) explains that mindsets frame beliefs, thoughts, and opinions that influence how an individual interprets and responds to various situations. In the context of higher education, students who believe that their basic abilities are "fixed," believe that their basic abilities cannot be change in any meaningful way (Dweck, 2016). Students with a growth mindset, however, believe that their basic abilities can develop and grow through dedication, effort, trying new strategies, and seeking feedback (Dweck, 2016). Most importantly, students attribute their growth mindset to their success. On the following page, consider these four practical strategies as ways to foster a growth mindset and thus create an opportunity for students to be successful in your classroom:

- ***Encourage Reflection.*** Reflection helps deepen students' learning and provides effective ways to identify areas where students need to change, recognize places where they have grown and keep them moving forward to achieve academic and personal goals. This handout provides a variety of reflection activities so that students can reflect on prior knowledge, cognition, metacognition, competency, and personal growth.

- ***Give Students Options to Show Content Mastery.*** Allowing students, the option to choose how they want to demonstrate the learning outcomes increases engagement, self-directness, motivation, and empowerment, which can lead to greater academic success (Wolpert-Gawron, 2018). For example, an instructor might provide students with the option to write an academic paper, teach a class lesson, present a photo essay, create a webpage, prepare a portfolio/e-portfolio, or conduct a debate.

- ***Use Inclusive Language.*** One of the most powerful ways to foster growth mindset is to shift language (Dweck, 2016). Language that excludes perpetuates a fixed mindset and deficit thinking, particularly for first-generation and underrepresented students. Take a look at these inclusive language examples. If you are teaching online, you can do this through individual messages or announcements. Incorporating inclusive language in your course design, syllabus, feedback, and other course communication have the potential to:
    - Help students cultivate a positive attitude about their abilities
    - Create a shift from helplessness to optimism
    - Promote student motivation
    - Build relationships
    - Reduce deficit thinking
    - Create a sense of belonging

- ***Acknowledge Imposter Syndrome.*** Many students, especially first-generation and underrepresented students, experience imposter syndrome or the psychological doubt of their intellectual competency (California State University Long Beach, n.d.). While common, such thoughts can exacerbate students' feelings of being incapable or unqualified. Therefore, the attempt to change may seem hopeless. Here are some practices to help students who are experiencing imposter syndrome:
    - Let students know that they belong
    - Create opportunities from open-discussion
    - Share your experience of imposter syndrome
    - Encourage students to be self-compassionate

References

California State University Long Beach (n.d.). Imposter syndrome. https://www.csulb.edu/navigating-grad-studies-at-the-beach/imposter-syndrome

Dweck, C. (2016). Mindset: The new psychology of success (2nd ed.). Ballantine Books.

Walpert-Gawron, H. (2018, November 18). Why choice matters to students learning. KQED. https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52424/why-choice-matters-to-student-learning

TIP: For larger classrooms, try the Muddiest Point activity. Students are asked to write down the most confusing/difficult part of a lesson. This quick activity reminds students that it is normal to have some questions and difficulties while learning.