

GANAS

Gaining Access 'N Academic Success

For Hispanics in the United States, the educational experience is one of accumulated disadvantage. Many Hispanic students begin formalized schooling without the economic and social resources that many other students receive, and schools are often ill equipped to compensate for these initial disparities. (Schneider, Martinez, and Ownes 2006).

Gaining Access to University Preparation through Culture, Language and Mentoring

The California State University system is the primary destination for Latinos who transfer from California Community Colleges (50 percent). According to the report by The Campaign for College Opportunity only 63 percent of the Latino CCC transfer students to the CSU, graduate with their baccalaureate degree within four years. These statistics and trends show a growing number of Latinos entering college, however, when only 11 percent of Latino adults have earned at least a bachelor's degree, the small numbers of graduating Latinos affects California's economy and families.

California State University East Bay in an effort to raise the number of Latino baccalaureate graduates initiated a support program for entering juniors known as (GANAS) **Gaining Access 'N Academic Success**. GANAS formed by a team of professors, counselors, and mentors work toward developing a support system that will keep the students focused on graduating within two years and lessen the chances of dropping out.

In an effort to assist incoming community college transfer students, A group of faculty members and other staff assisted by Dr. Lettie Ramirez, and Dr. Luz Calvo came together to write and apply for the Academic Affairs grant funded by California State University East Bay, Investments in Programmatic Excellence and Innovation in Learning (PEIL). These competitive grants provide funding to faculty teams to design; implement and research/assess new approaches to teaching that improve learning.

THE NEED FOR GANAS

Question 1: What are you most proud of after your first quarter.

Something I'm proud of, with GANAS is how they helped me balance my time because it was really hard for me transitioning from a semester to a quarter system; that was really hard for me.

This is my first quarter at East Bay, and I'm a single mom so it's hard to juggle, you know, my responsibilities and schoolwork and commute because I don't live close to school. But I feel really successful that I passed all of my classes and I maintained a decent, above 3.0 GPA. So that was an anchor to me, and I really believe it was because of the guidance I received from GANAS. If I were to just be navigating myself through my classes it would have been more frustrating for me to be successful.

I agree. At the beginning I was lost with what class to take and how to go about school in general. Also, ...Dr. Luz (culture class) in our first class, made me feel welcome and comfortable in this new environment I wasn't used to, which made me feel very supported.

I have other people believing in me so that's all I need. Just someone to believe in me to boost up my



who can provide them with the confidence and experience they need when they have questions or do not know what questions to ask. The GANAS students are learning how privilege can make a difference in their university experience.

Forming a Community of Learners

Question 2: Have the seminars, advisory and peer mentoring made any difference in your transition to Cal State?

Once again students gave varied answers to this question depending on what their needs were coming into the program. Some had experience with resume writing, financial assistance and other topics covered in the seminars and for this group of students, they questioned the need for seminars during a time they needed to take classes. Other students felt the seminars were absolutely essential.

Outstanding or primary was the importance of building community. Many of the students felt that becoming a community of learners made the difference leading to a successful first quarter. One of the students mentioned the importance of building community but inherent in creating a community of learners is the risk of cliques forming and once again the danger of creating divisions. One of the purposes of GANAS is to build friendships and sources of support.

I believe that most helpful has been having a certain amount of classes together. We take the classes [together] as a whole class because it builds consistency and it also builds our community with each other. If for some reason we're not able to attend some of the workshops or the support meetings given by staff members, we have that community within ourselves that we're able to bounce off information and just -- ultimately just grow, you know, between classmates.

Schwartz & Holliday (2012) explain this phenomena as intellectual mattering.

A student who experiences authentic intellectual mattering with a professor may not only receive a boost of energy and self-worth in that moment but may become more engaged in the larger learning journey. Students reported that these moments increased their confidence, motivated them to want to produce higher quality work, and helped them see that they could engage in deep conversation with faculty and explore their ideas through original research.

Student comments during the focus group sessions spoke about the importance of someone believing in them. "...yes I could do it, yes. You know I have other people believing in me so that's all I need. Just someone to believe in me to boost up my confidence in school." This student maintained a 4.0 during the Fall quarter. She traveled two hours to get to school and before starting her homework, she helped her son with his.

The Heart of the Educational Process: Culturally Responsive Teaching

"Caring is one of those things that most educators agree is important in working effectively with students, but they are hard pressed to characterize it in actual practice." (Gay 2010)

To translate the word *Ganas* in Spanish, requires creativity in thought. It can mean pushing yourself to want. It denotes an inner feeling of want that comes from the spirit or the gut. Bringing out that inner push makes all the difference in a person's accomplishments but when the individual does not want to do something, it is hard to motivate them. For many of the students attending the university for the first time, and their family having little understanding of the school system in the United States, *GANAS* will definitely make a difference. However, Geneva Gay in her writings on caring passes some of the responsibility of the student's educational success to what she calls culturally responsive teaching.



She states,

Caring is one of those things that most educators agree is important in working effectively with students, but they are hard-pressed to characterize it in actual practice, or to put a



References

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