



Quality Enhancement Plan Executive Summary

Title: Resiliency through Growth Mindset

Institution: Averett University, 420 Main Street, Danville, VA 24541

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Averett University's Quality Enhancement Plan, "Resiliency through Growth Mindset," was developed based on student success themes emerging from strategic planning and supports the University's mission: "Averett University prepares students to serve and lead as catalysts for positive change. Averett fulfills this mission by educating students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and nations through liberal arts-based undergraduate and graduate programs in a personal, collegial, interdisciplinary environment."

Research suggests the assumptions students make about the malleability of their own intelligence impact their resilience and thus their academic achievement. Students who believe that intellectual ability or intelligence is finite and cannot be developed are more likely to view academic difficulty as a sign that they lack ability or a natural aptitude for the subject. They are less likely to conclude that learning and academic success are possible if they work harder and/or adopt new learning strategies (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

In contrast, students who adopt a growth mindset – who see intelligence as something that can grow and develop – are more likely to seek out academic challenges and to meet these challenges with resiliency. They are more likely than their fixed-mindset counterparts to increase their efforts and improve their learning strategies. A growing body of research indicates that with relatively simple interventions it is possible to help students understand that they can increase their intelligence with effort and learning strategies. Once this shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset occurs, students with difficulties demonstrate improved academic performance and persistence. Students who are already academically successful are provided with opportunities to grow as well and encouraged to work beyond core expectations by faculty and staff who promote the shifts in attitude.

The Averett University QEP is intended to provide interventions that will be successful in changing mindsets and promoting student success and persistence. Faculty and staff training, faculty development and implementation in courses of growth mindset strategies, and online modules for students in first-year seminars are components of the project. Assessment includes questions incorporated into course evaluations, online module assessments, NSSE data, course assessments for growth mindset infused courses based on a rubric developed for the QEP, and tracking of University student records data on student performance and persistence.