

Relationship-Rich Education and the 'New Normal'

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Photos by Martin Springborg



What is “normal” teaching and learning?









Pandemic Pedagogy

🔒 Private group · 32.6K members



Tressie McMillan Cottom  @tressiemcphd · Jan 14



Here's the thing. I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to reverse engineer an abbreviated, accelerated, online class for exhausted students. I don't want to beta test online modules. I don't want to do any of it.



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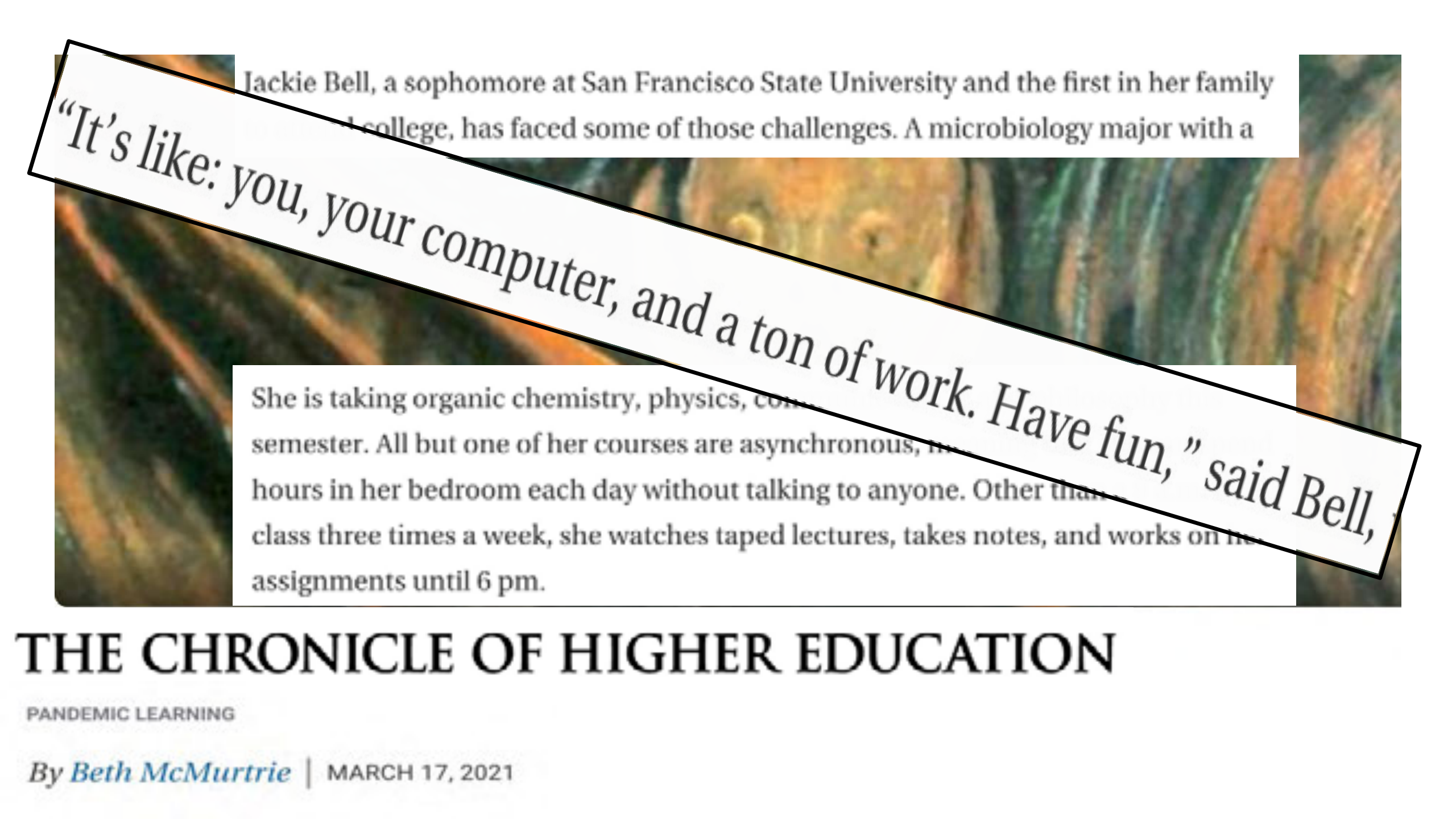


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4.8K





Jackie Bell, a sophomore at San Francisco State University and the first in her family to attend college, has faced some of those challenges. A microbiology major with a

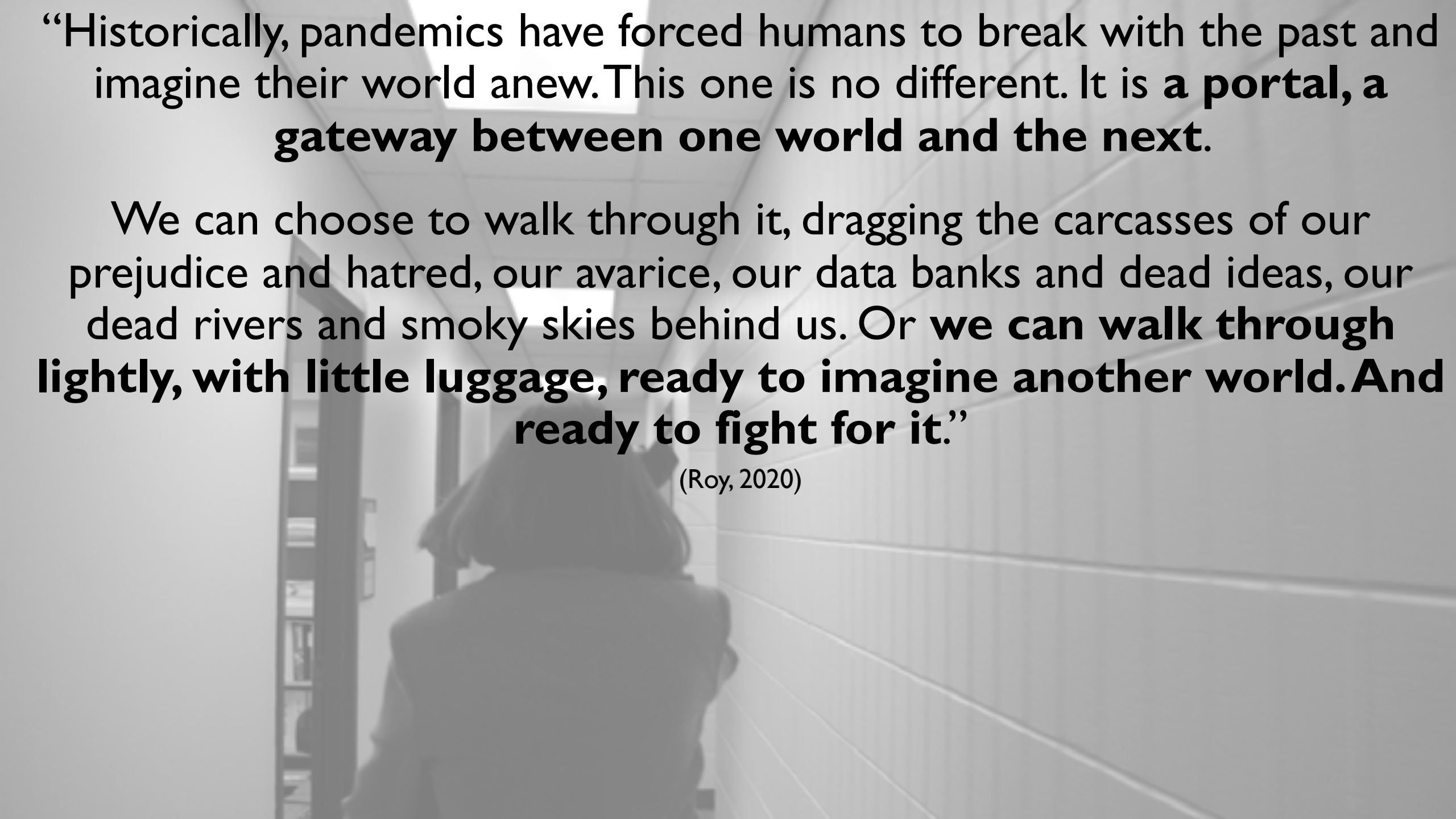
"It's like: you, your computer, and a ton of work. Have fun," said Bell,

She is taking organic chemistry, physics, and calculus this semester. All but one of her courses are asynchronous, meaning she spends hours in her bedroom each day without talking to anyone. Other than her in-person class three times a week, she watches taped lectures, takes notes, and works on her assignments until 6 pm.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

PANDEMIC LEARNING

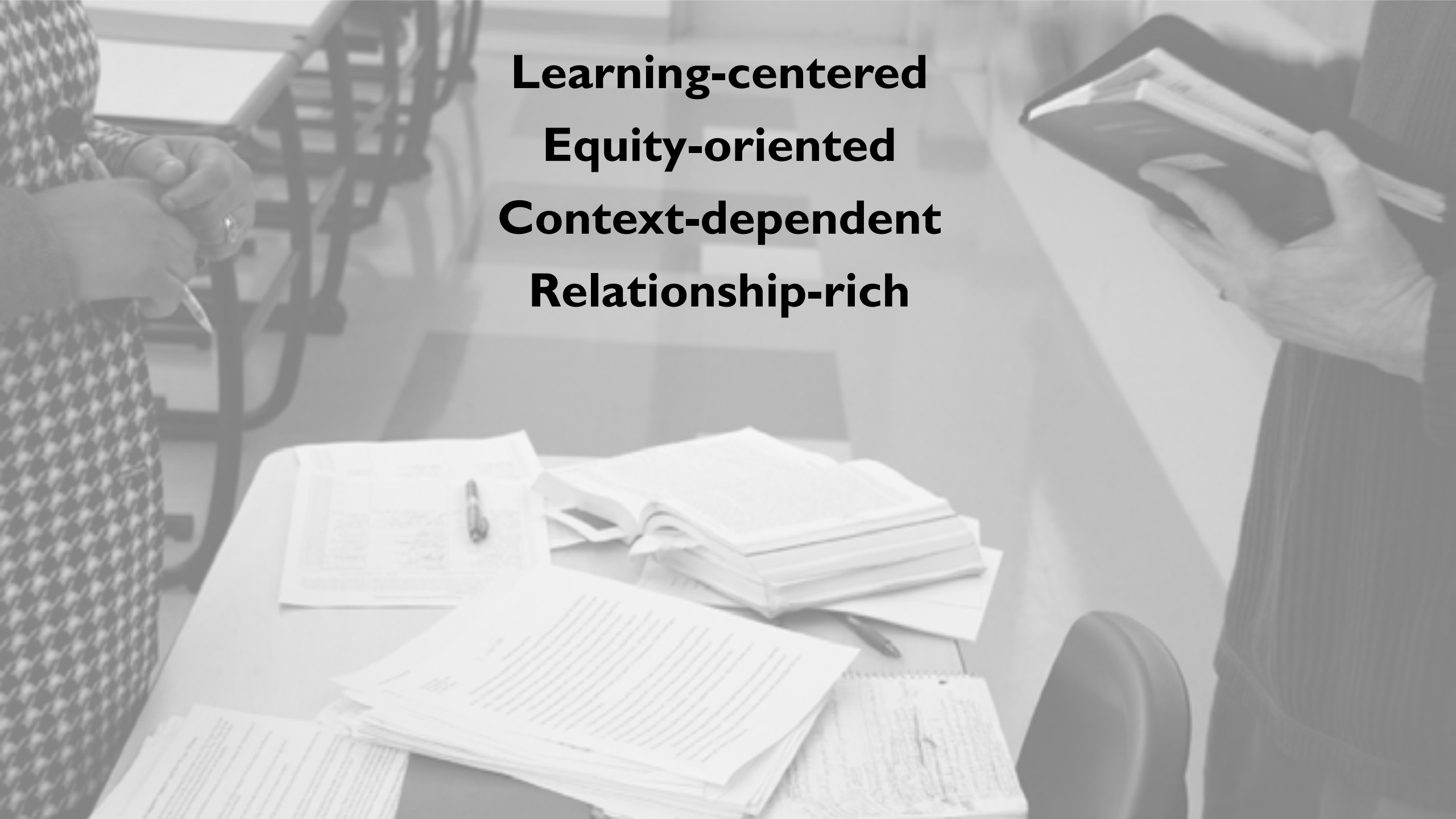
By *Beth McMurtrie* | MARCH 17, 2021



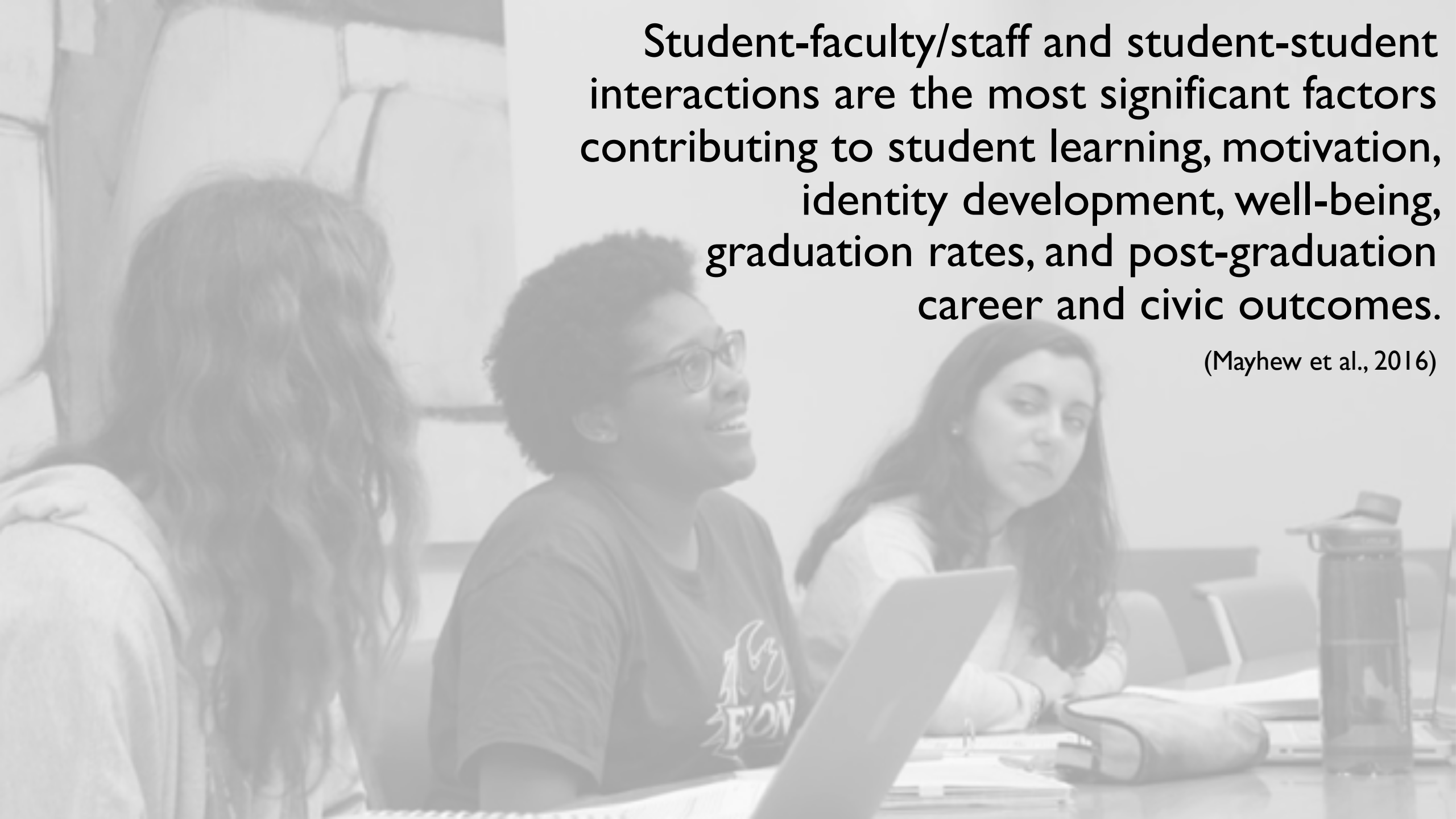
“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is **a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.**

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or **we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”**

(Roy, 2020)



**Learning-centered
Equity-oriented
Context-dependent
Relationship-rich**

A grayscale photograph of three students in a classroom. On the left, a student with long, wavy hair is seen from the back. In the center, a student with short, curly hair and glasses is looking towards the right. On the right, a student with long, dark hair is looking down at a laptop. They are all seated at a desk with papers and a water bottle. The background shows a whiteboard and a window.

Student-faculty/staff and student-student interactions are the most significant factors contributing to student learning, motivation, identity development, well-being, graduation rates, and post-graduation career and civic outcomes.

(Mayhew et al., 2016)

These effects are “particularly strong”
for “students of color and first-
generation college students.”

(Kezar & Maxey, 2014, p. 31)



“Students fear failure and being challenged beyond their limits. They may not have been challenged academically in high school and for the first time are really experiencing academic rigor. They fear embarrassing their families—being afraid to come home and say, ‘I am not achieving in college right now. I’m struggling.’

They fear talking to a professor because a professor represents an intimidating authority figure. They also resist asking for academic help because that is perceived as meaning you’re not smart. They do not want to go to counseling when they have emotional problems because that’s for people who are weak.

The fear of shame is everywhere.”

(David Latimer, City Tech – CUNY)





“Coming to college was a difficult experience for me. There was the just being away from home part. And then there was race. I never felt like I was a student first. I was always Black first, and then a student.

For example, during my junior year, I remember walking into class on the day after Tamir Rice was killed by police. I was distraught. I walked into class and sat there, and it seemed like no one else was fazed by it. The day went on as usual for other students. It was just so surreal to have all of this weight on me because of something that happened, and not feeling that reflected at all by the students and professors around me.”

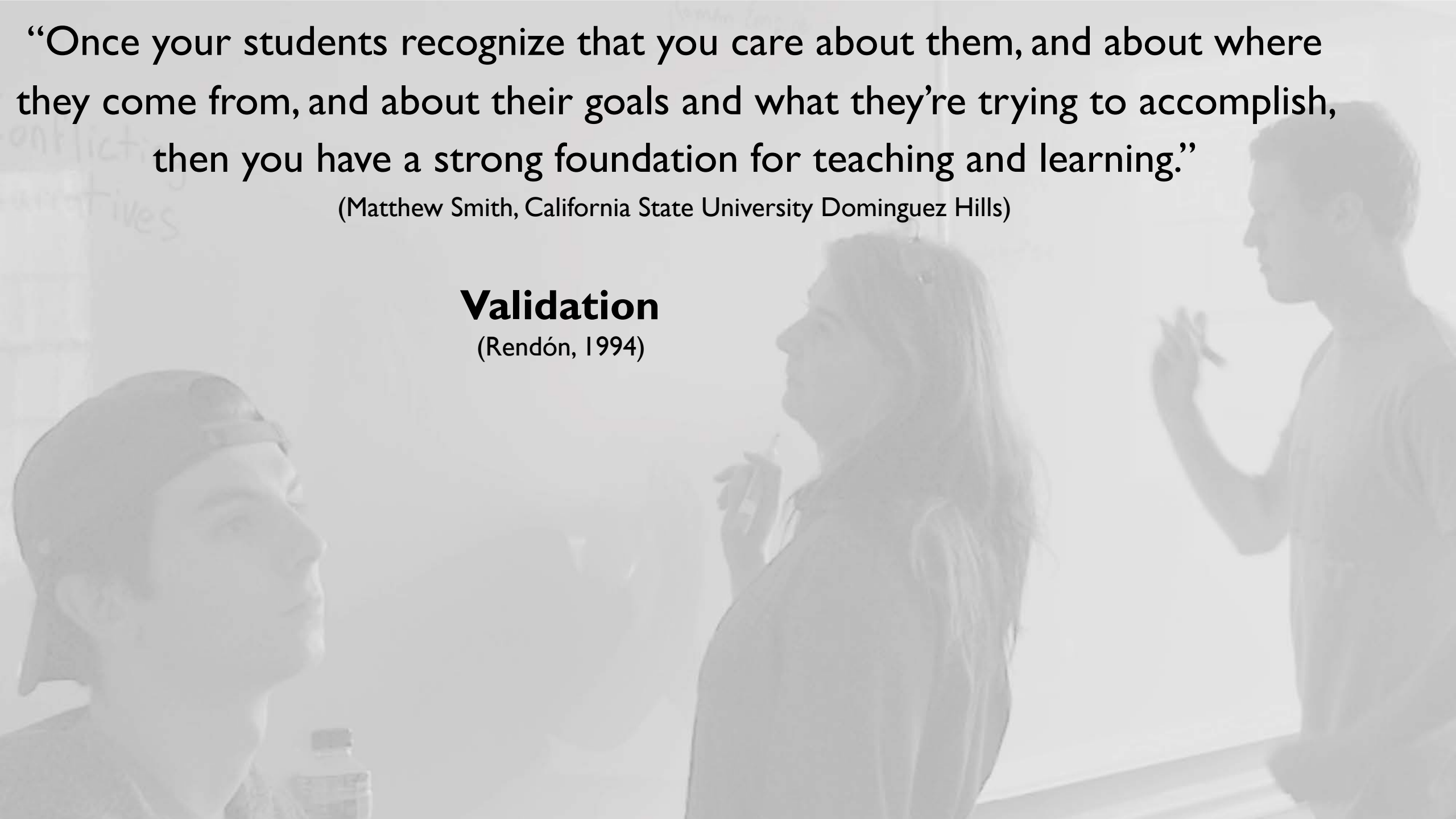
(Khadijah Seay, Bryn Mawr College)

“Once your students recognize that you care about them, and about where they come from, and about their goals and what they’re trying to accomplish, then you have a strong foundation for teaching and learning.”

(Matthew Smith, California State University Dominguez Hills)

Validation

(Rendón, 1994)

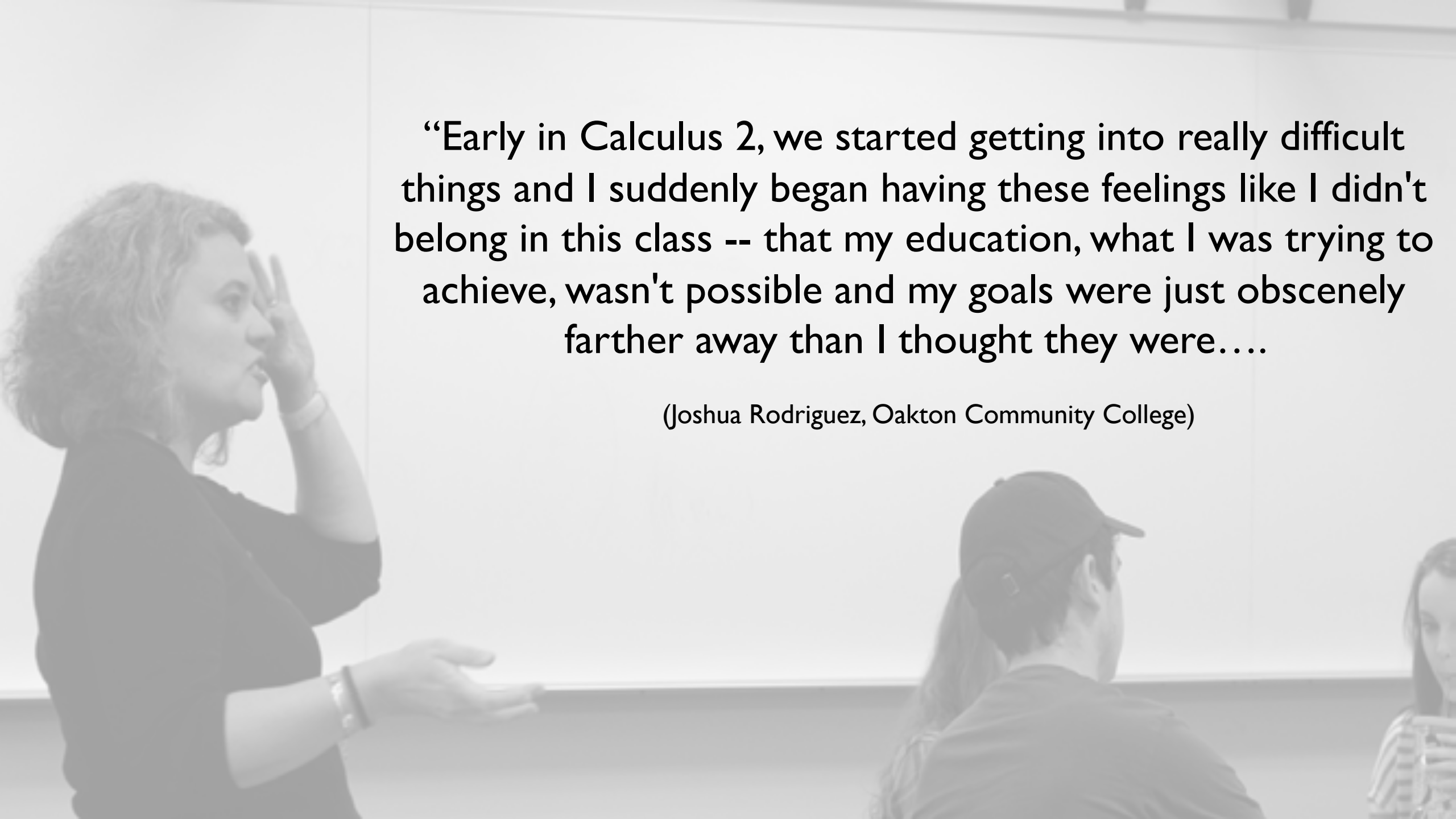




Feedback that validates conveys:

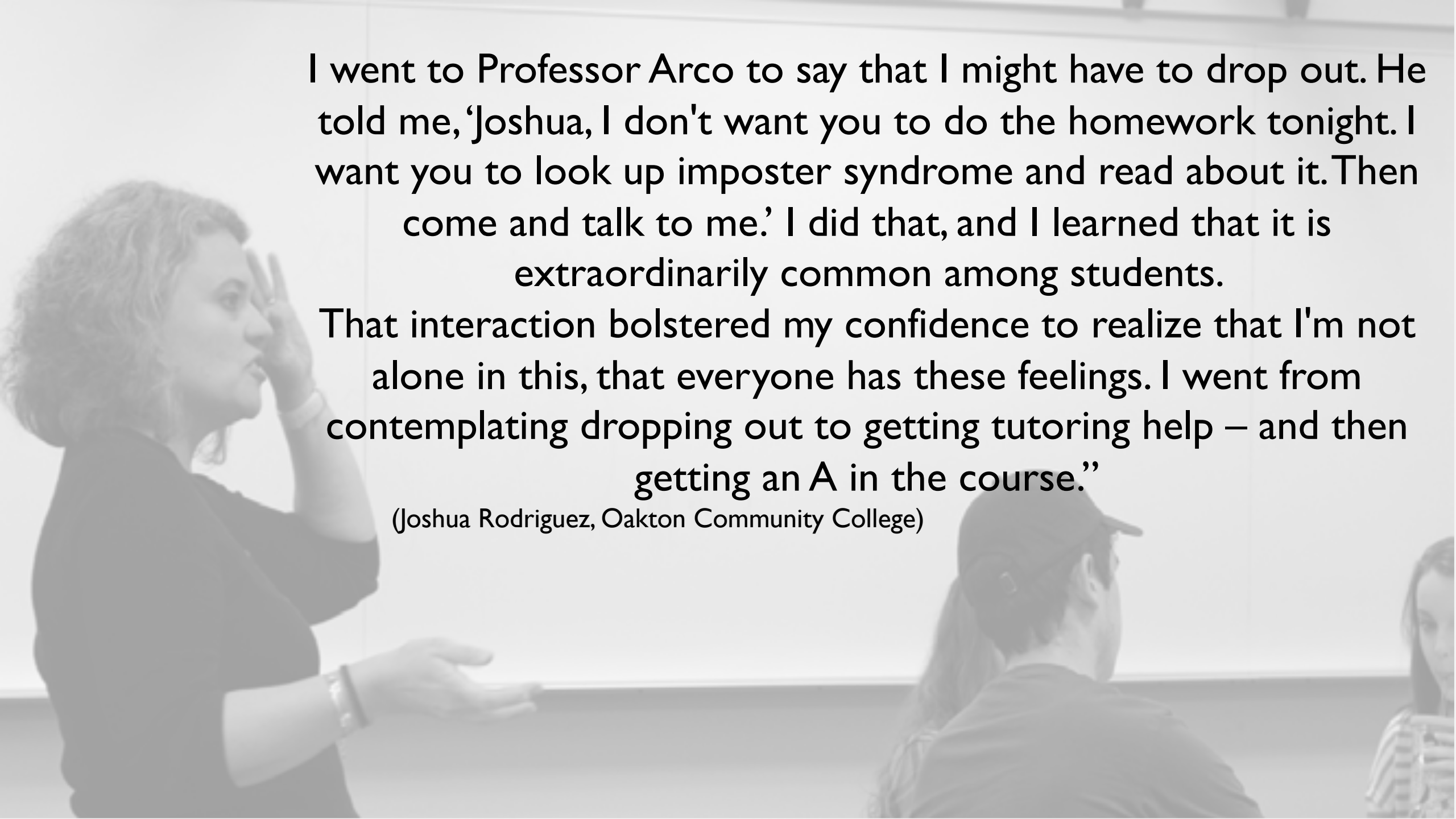
1. High academic standards and expectations;
2. Belief in the student's capacity to meet those standards, even if their work does not do so right now;
3. Specific guidance about how to improve;
4. Availability of resources to support the student's improvement.

(Cole, 2008)



“Early in Calculus 2, we started getting into really difficult things and I suddenly began having these feelings like I didn't belong in this class -- that my education, what I was trying to achieve, wasn't possible and my goals were just obscenely farther away than I thought they were....

(Joshua Rodriguez, Oakton Community College)

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark top, is speaking to a group of students in a classroom. She is gesturing with her hands as she speaks. The students are seated and listening. The background is a plain wall.

I went to Professor Arco to say that I might have to drop out. He told me, 'Joshua, I don't want you to do the homework tonight. I want you to look up imposter syndrome and read about it. Then come and talk to me.' I did that, and I learned that it is extraordinarily common among students.

That interaction bolstered my confidence to realize that I'm not alone in this, that everyone has these feelings. I went from contemplating dropping out to getting tutoring help – and then getting an A in the course.”

(Joshua Rodriguez, Oakton Community College)



Example 1: Use Student Names

When students perceive an instructor knows their names, they report feeling more valued, motivated, and comfortable asking for help.

(Cooper et al., 2017)



“I didn’t understand why the instructors asked us to use name tents. At first, I thought it was pointless, no one really cares what your name is. Now I [see that] knowing someone’s name will help you talk to them. Calling people by name is better than, ‘Hey, want to study later?’”

(Erika, p. 10, in Cooper et al., 2017)

Example 2: Meaningful Peer Connections

Introduction to Psychology

Manda Williamson, U of Nebraska

Online “study lounge”

Student-set goals for average exam scores

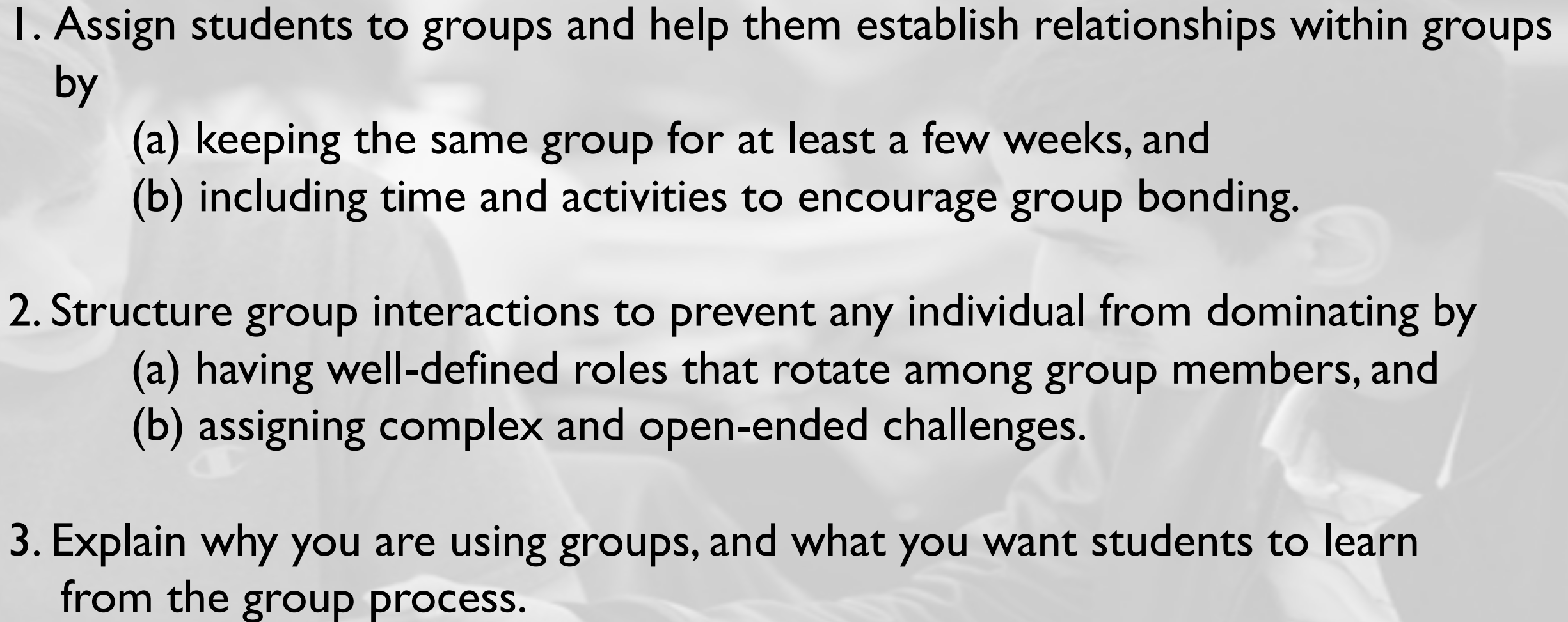
Peer feedback on writing or video submissions



Example 3: Structuring groups to support all students

“Our data raise the possibility that perhaps instead of students being lazy or unmotivated, students face barriers such as anxiety about group work, low perceived value of peer discussion for their learning, or contending with other students in the group who are dominating. Reframing inequities in participation in this way puts the onus on the instructor to structure the interactions in peer discussions to promote equal opportunities for allowing students to participate in the learning activity.”

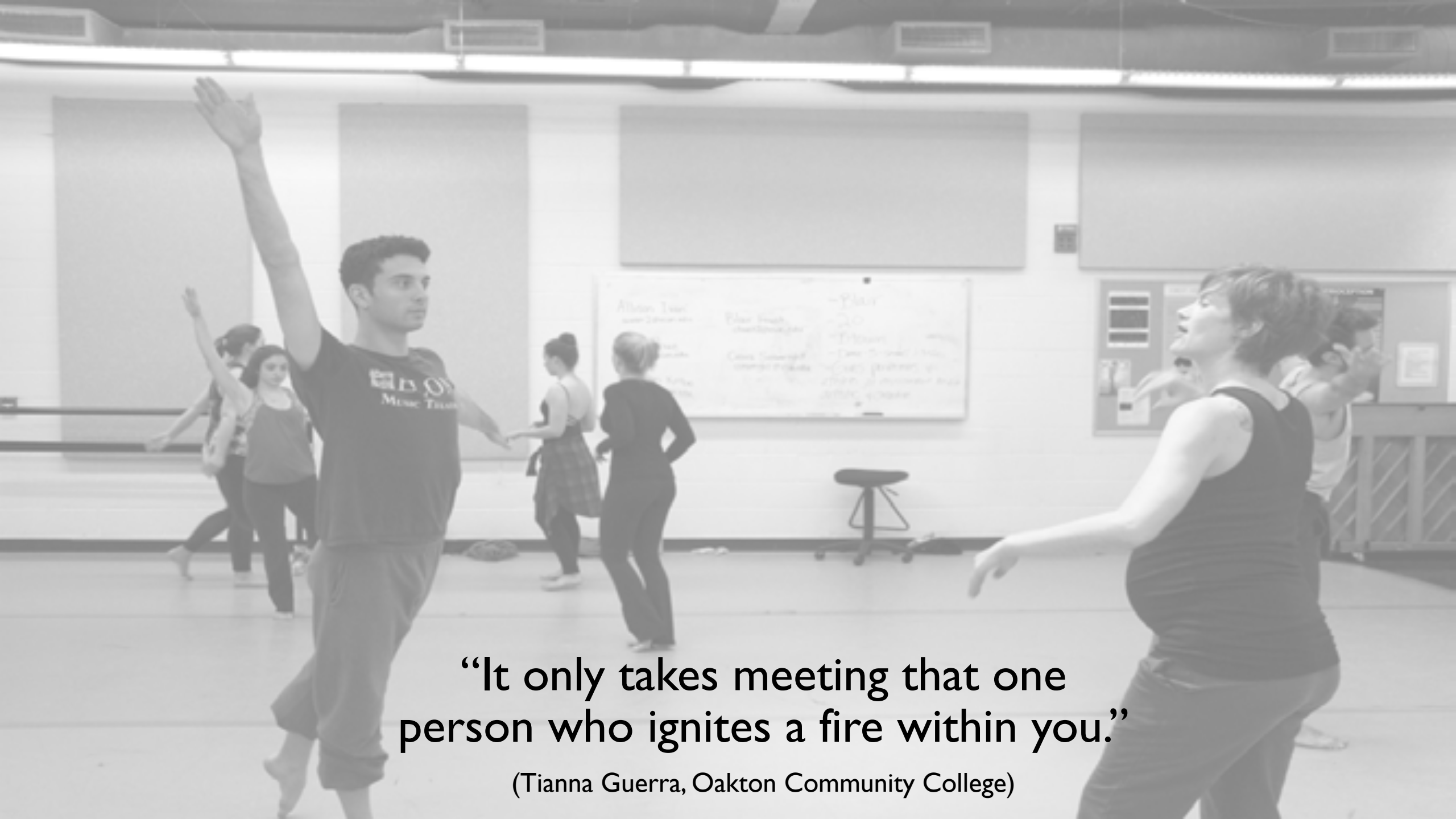
(Eddy et al., 2015)

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1. Assign students to groups and help them establish relationships within groups by
 - (a) keeping the same group for at least a few weeks, and
 - (b) including time and activities to encourage group bonding.
 2. Structure group interactions to prevent any individual from dominating by
 - (a) having well-defined roles that rotate among group members, and
 - (b) assigning complex and open-ended challenges.
 3. Explain why you are using groups, and what you want students to learn from the group process.

(Eddy et al., 2015)

What relationship-rich practices could you center in your 'new normal' teaching?





**“It only takes meeting that one
person who ignites a fire within you.”**

(Tianna Guerra, Oakton Community College)

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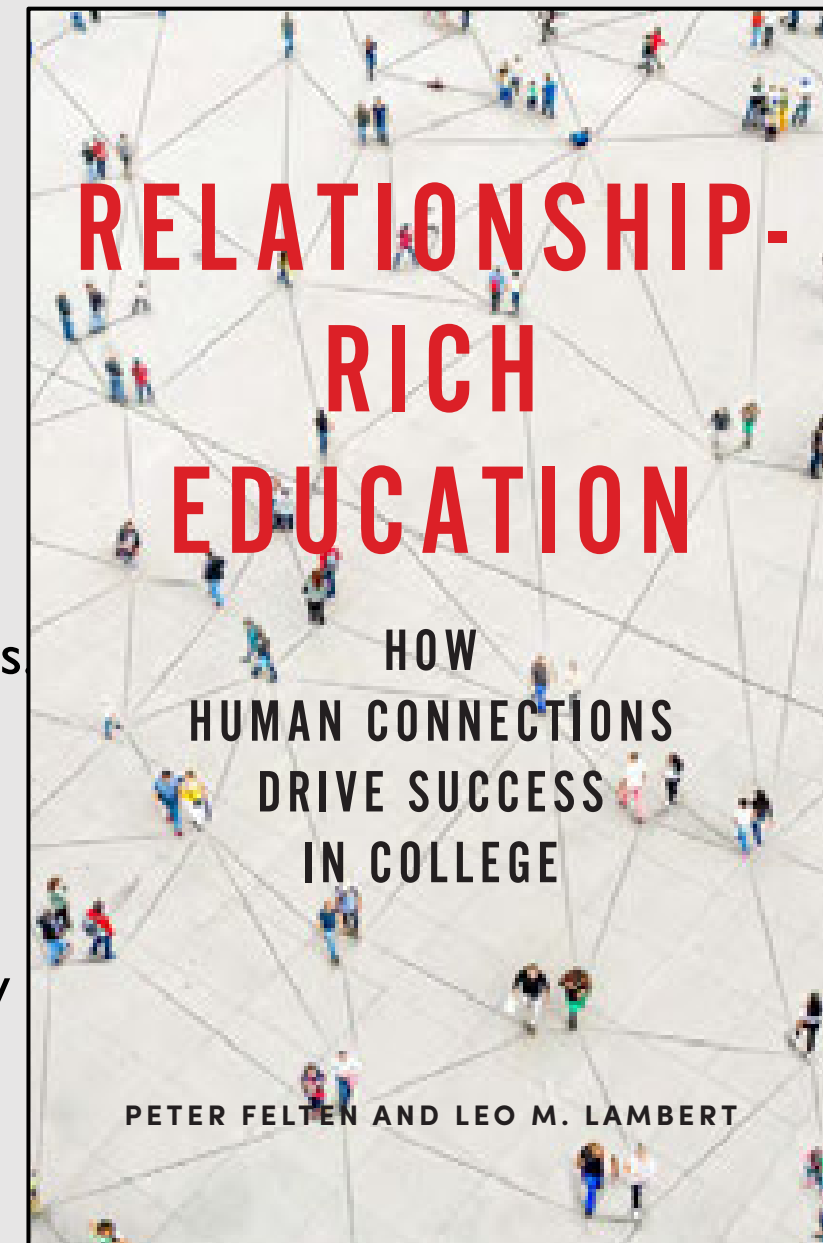
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