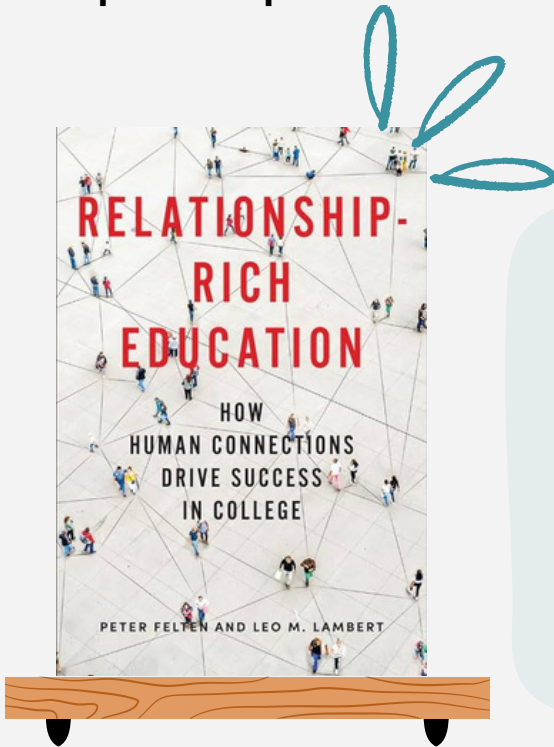


Relationship-Rich Discussion Guide

The OTL Book Club read and discussed *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success In College* (Lambert & Felten, 2020) in Fall 2023. You can use this document to guide your own reading or start a book club with colleagues. These questions were written by educational developers from the Office of Teaching and Learning at the University of Guelph to help facilitate discussions.



About This Book

Relationship-Rich Education draws on nearly 400 interviews with students, faculty, and staff at 29 higher education institutions from across the United States. Readers are presented with stories and practical strategies of how to develop relationship-rich environments in their own context that will open the doors to creating a university experience that is steeped in building connections with peers, faculty, staff and mentors.

Discussion Questions

Chapter 1: Visions of the Possible



1. Why do you think faculty-student relationships are so important to student success – maybe even more important than student-student relationships, in higher education?
2. How can you help foster faculty-student relationships?



Discussion Questions

Chapter 2: Why is this so hard?

1. One common challenge in relationship building is that students often feel like imposters in higher education. How can you create a sense of belonging and community in your interactions with students that help to reassure them that they belong in a university or college classroom?
2. Knowledge of how to build relationships in higher education is often part of the hidden curriculum. What small changes can you make to your teaching that would help to reveal aspects of the hidden curriculum and allow greater access to relationship-rich education?

Chapter 3: Making Relationships a Cultural Priority

1. What institutional policies or initiatives could be implemented to make meaningful interactions a pervasive aspect of the educational experience?
2. How can institutions instigate a cultural shift that values relationships as a core component of education? What role can leadership play in promoting this cultural change?

Chapter 4: Creating Relationship-Rich Classrooms

1. What do instructors do that inadvertently constrains relationship building with students? What behaviours should instructors avoid if they want to develop relationship-rich classrooms?
2. What strategies can be employed to create a classroom where diverse perspectives are respected, and meaningful dialogue can occur?

Discussion Questions

Chapter 5: Rich Relationship Everywhere

1. In what ways do the programs and practices discussed in the chapter contribute to the creation of a dynamic ecosystem of relationships on campuses? How do these initiatives help students build meaningful connections throughout their education?
2. How can faculty and staff actively engage in and support programs outside of the classroom to contribute to relationship-rich education? In what ways can their involvement enhance the overall student experience?

Chapter 6: Mentoring Conversations

1. How can mentoring practices be integrated into various aspects of higher education beyond traditional mentorship programs? What structures or initiatives might facilitate informal mentoring opportunities?
2. How can the impact of mentoring conversations be measured, both qualitatively and quantitatively? What specific indicators or outcomes could be used to assess the effectiveness of these mentoring initiatives?

Conclusion

1. In what ways would higher education institutions look and feel different for students, faculty and staff if policies and practices were examined through a lens of relationships?
2. Classrooms, whether in-person or virtual, are described in the book as the most important places where meaningful relationships begin. While acknowledging that there can be significant challenges to centering relationships in the classroom, what changes could you make to modify your teaching practices to support “an unfolding conversation of three months”?