

ENGINEERING

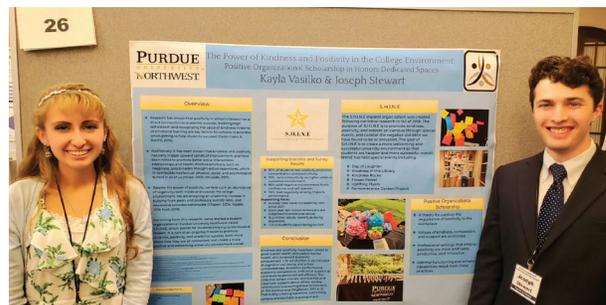
The Power of Kindness and Positivity in the College Environment

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The world is overwhelmed with mounting numbers of suicides, high college dropout rates, and low university retention. There are many complex and overwhelming causes behind these statistics. They include everything from bullying by peers and professors, family loss, and feelings of isolation. Are there also solutions? Our research suggests that there is one solution that can improve these negative effects no matter the causes behind them: kindness.

Kindness and the inherent positivity behind it have been scientifically linked to improved mental health, focus, sleep patterns, creativity, productivity, and in turn, overall success of any goal, according to Otake (2006) in “Happy People Become Happier Through Kindness: A Counting Kindness Intervention” and Bhujade (2017) in “Depression, Anxiety, and Academic Stress Among College Students: A Brief Review.” The emotions that come from kind acts and making an effort to be positive broaden thought-action repertoires in the brain. This effect then stimulates intellectual, psychological, and physical factors in all of us, according to Gadermann and Reichil (2016) in “Measuring Kindness at School: Psychometric Properties of a School Kindness Scale for Children and Adolescents.”

In the aspect of college as a professional environment, positive organizational scholarship can greatly boost success in its own right. Kindness and positivity have been cited to stimulate problem-solving skills and stronger determination, according



Kayla Vasilko and Joseph Stewart at the Purdue service-learning conference.

to Pace (2011) in “Unleashing Positivity in the Workplace.” Great student success leads to greater university retention. The creation of positive work environments increases not only cognitive well-being, but overall life satisfaction as well, according to Stiglbauer (2011) in “The upward spiral of adolescents’ positive school experiences and happiness: Investigating reciprocal effects over time.” Increased life satisfaction only furthers the goal of reducing stress and increasing a person’s motivation to be successful, and so it uplifts the entire university as a whole, one individual at a time.

Continuing to further this research will raise awareness for the power of kindness, and provide communities across the country with the tools to make the world a more positive and successful place.

Research advisor Debbie Bachmann writes: “It is so fitting that Kayla and Joseph focused on kindness for their research. They both show an abundance of kindness every day through their words and actions. Their research is so timely as the world continues to overcome the ill effects of not being kind.”