Suggested SmarterMeasure Discussion Topics

The SmarterMeasure Learning Readiness Indicator is an assessment which quantifies a learner's readiness to learn based on non-cognitive indicators of success. Upon completion of the assessment, the learners receive a score report with a guide to interpret the scores. A course discussion prompts students to read their report, reflect on their level of readiness to learn, and identify steps they can take to foster academic success.

Suggested discussion topics are provided below for the SmarterMeasure scales and sub-scales and may be edited as appropriate. Please note that these suggested topics are purposefully crafted as open-ended questions with no right or wrong answer. An appropriate discussion topic for the SmarterMeasure content should nudge the student to reflect on their prior experiences and share their personal reflections and not prompt a yes, no, or brief response.

Life Factors

- **General life factors** - Many students drop out of school because "life happens." Each student's situation is different. Some students are working multiple jobs. Some are single parents. Some have little support from family and friends. Some get easily discouraged. What will be a challenge that you will face as you continue your education? What can you do to help yourself overcome the challenge?
- **Availability of time to study** – Finding time to study is often one of the major challenges of continuing your education. Students are encouraged to be intentional and plan ahead about when they will engage in school related activities. Identify which days of the week may be best for you to study and list any times of the day that you can make available to study.
- **Availability of a dedicated place to study** – Commercials on television often show students studying while sitting on the couch or at the kitchen table. But these locations are typically not the best study environments. Describe some places that are available to you for working on school related activities. Identify places that are as free from distractions as possible and which should allow you to focus for extended periods of time.
- **Reason for continuing one's education** – Why are you continuing your education? "To get a degree" seems the obvious answer. But how will that degree benefit you? How will your life be different upon completion of the degree?
- **Support resources from family, friends and employers** – Imagine it is your graduation night. A group of people have gathered to celebrate with you. Who all can you imagine that you will need to thank for their support as you continued your education? In what ways can you imagine that these people will support you?
- **Perception of academic skills** – Completing a degree is not easy. There will likely be many pages to read, papers to write and exams to study for. Expect there to be times that it may seem overwhelming. Imagine that you find yourself in that situation. What can you say to yourself that will encourage you to hang in there?

Learning Styles

List your dominant learning style (you may have more than one), then describe a strategy you can use to help yourself learn that is consistent with your learning style. For example, a student with a solitary learning style may find studying in a location such as a library or alone in their car helps them focus.

Distance Education

Individual Attributes

- **General individual attributes** – Sometimes our own personalities and habits can get in the way of continuing our education. Some students are prone to procrastinate, and other students manage their time well. Some students give up easily, and some hang in there when the going gets tough. Some students think they are "college material," and others do not. What is a habit or attitude that you have that could present a challenge to your college success? Or, you may describe a habit or attitude that you think will help you be successful with college.

- **Procrastination** – Describe a time in your life that you procrastinated about something. How did that impact the outcome of the situation? What strategies can you use to prevent procrastination?

- **Time management** – Many people would admit that they could do a better job managing their time. Just knowing that we need to do better does not seem to motivate us to act. Perhaps a better approach is identifying some tools or strategies that we could use to better manage our time. What are some apps, web sites, books, calendar software, etc. that you either have used or could use to better manage your time?

- **Persistence** – Describe a time in your life when you found yourself in a difficult situation but you stuck it out or a time when it was just too hard and you had to give up. What did you learn from the experience?

- **Willingness to ask for help** – Imagine that in one of your courses you are finding the content very difficult. In addition to the faculty member, who could you reach out to for assistance? Why would they be an appropriate person to assist you?

- **Academic attributes** – What is something you have learned in your prior educational experiences that you find useful?

- **Locus of control** – Describe a time (it does not have to be an educational experience) in which you either worked hard and were rewarded for your work or in spite of your hard work, you were not successful.

Reading Skills

Suppose that you were assigned to read an article for one of your college courses. Based on the length of the article, you guess that it will take you about 30 minutes to read it. You have the article equally available in a book, on a computer, on a tablet or on your phone. Which device would you prefer to read it from and why?

Technical Knowledge and Competency

Many college courses require you to use some form of technology. You may be required to search for information on the Internet, listen to an audio file, download software, etc. How do you feel about having to use technology in your learning? To what degree do you consider technology to be a barrier or helpful tool for your learning?

Keyboarding

Some persons frequently use a keyboard to type information in their daily lives, others do not. How often do you find yourself having to type information? To what degree will your typing skills be a useful tool or a barrier to continuing your education?