

ASLA “Advice from Northwestern Undergrads” Videos Information for Faculty and Staff

This [set of four videos](#) is meant to promote the mindsets and approaches to learning that will help students succeed academically at Northwestern, and to provide information about the range of services Northwestern offers to help students meet their academic goals. In the videos, students with a range of social identities openly share their own academic challenges, as well as how they have worked to overcome those challenges. These peer role models both normalize and provide a sense of hopefulness around academic difficulty. The videos also seek to demystify some of the structural features of higher education that require navigation, such as large class sizes and the “hidden curriculum” (or unarticulated taught norms) of practices like office hours.

The videos are **not** meant to provide detailed instruction on study strategies; however, ASLA provides handouts (see below) that supplement the videos and provide such information. The handouts are also available on the [video web page](#).

The four videos address four different topics:

- Making the Academic Transition from High School to Northwestern – and [Handout](#)
- Getting the Academic Help You Need – and [Handout](#)
- Using Effective Study Strategies – and [Handout](#)
- Finding the Right Mindset for Learning – and [Handout](#)

How the Videos Can Help Students

These videos use peer modeling and endorsement to send messages which have been shown in the research to promote academic success of all students, and often particularly of students whose identities are underrepresented or marginalized in the academic environment. Key messages include

- **It’s perfectly ordinary to experience difficulty making the transition** from high school. **Everybody at Northwestern faces academic challenges.**
- The academic **challenges you experience are not due to inherent personal weakness, but rather typically to external factors** (e.g., challenging environment) **or to factors you can change** (e.g., your study strategies).
- **Your peers have successfully sought academic help**, despite initial discomfort. They have also felt a lack of academic confidence, but **have gained confidence over time.**
- There are proven **strategies you can use to improve your learning, and you can improve** at any given task.
- You need to **take care of all your needs** – including rest – in order to thrive.
- There are plenty **of resources to support your success** at Northwestern.
- Northwestern is hard, but **you belong here and you can succeed.**

How to Use the Videos

The videos are best used as springboards to discussion or reflection around how students think about and approach learning. They might be shown in a group setting with conversation afterward, or used as an assignment followed by individual or shared reflection. ASLA has provided [suggested discussion questions](#) you can draw from.

Some students may be looking for more detailed information about the practices suggested in the videos. **ASLA has handouts available (see links on previous page) that you can provide to students and/or use as part of an activity or assignment.**

You may have students who feel they are already familiar with the ideas being conveyed in the videos. If they're like many new Northwestern students, though, they will later be surprised that their approaches to studying aren't working quite as well as they expected. You might share stories you have heard from former students about coming to such a realization, and encourage your new students to keep an open mind to considering new approaches. In a new environment, with new academic content and new pressures, even the most savvy learners may need to recalibrate their approaches.

References

- Aronson, J., Cohen, G., & McColskey, W. (2009). Reducing Stereotype Threat in Classrooms: A Review of Social-Psychological Intervention Studies on Improving the Achievement of Black Students. *Issues & Answers*. REL 2009-076. Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast.
- Aronson, J., Fried, C. B., & Good, C. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, *38*(2), 113-125.
- Good, C., Aronson, J., & Inzlicht, M. (2003). Improving adolescents' standardized test performance: An intervention to reduce the effects of stereotype threat. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *24*(6), 645-662.
- Shapiro, J. R., Williams, A. M., & Hambarchyan, M. (2013). Are all interventions created equal? A multi-threat approach to tailoring stereotype threat interventions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *104*(2), 277.
- Steele, C. M. (2011). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. WW Norton & Company.
- Walton, G. M., Logel, C., Peach, J. M., Spencer, S. J., & Zanna, M. P. (2013). Two brief social-psychological interventions transform women's experience, relationships, and achievement in engineering. *Journal of Educational Psychology*.
- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *92*(1), 82.
- Wilson, T. D., Damiani, M., & Shelton, N. (2002). Improving the academic performance of college students with brief attributional interventions. In *Improving academic achievement* (pp. 89-108). Academic Press.
- Yeager, D. S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., ... & Cohen, G. L. (2014). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *143*(2), 804.