



The program is more beneficial and results in more successful students than Advanced Placement courses through the College Board. Statistically, dual-enrollment students earn higher grades, are more likely to continue to post-secondary education and earn a post-secondary degree and have overall improved college confidence and readiness.

"It's scary taking a college course and not knowing whether or not you'll get the credit," Strehlow said. Advanced Placement is the typical college course that students can take in high school but earning that credit depends on the final exam at the end of the year.

From personal experience, I can attest that AP classes bring a lot of stress, late night study sessions, and frustration. However, UW - Green Bay's dual enrollment only requires students to maintain a 3.0-grade point average to stay in the course, which makes it easier for students to earn a college degree faster than Advanced Placement.

Students participating in UW - Green Bay's dual enrollment program receive help from success coaches who teach them "how to college," by providing study tips, homework help, and credit processing, Koehler said.

"I couldn't imagine going to college without knowing these things -- these things are how to college," Strehlow said.

Through UW - Green Bay's program, there are 68 high school students walking down the university stage for an associate degree, putting them ahead of their school peers and preparing them for their futures.

Another area promoting student welfare in schools is focused on acceptance and safety through all levels of the education system.

Eugene Pitchford and Steve Gerner, authors of *Superhero Educator*, spoke on their personal experiences with discrimination in schools and how to counteract it.

Professor Pitchford was assumed to be a dining hall worker by one of the students at the university because he "didn't look professional enough."

"This student asked me, 'What's for lunch?' and I wondered why they thought I would know. I said, 'I don't know.' I know now it's because I am black." Pitchford said. "It's insulting."

Misunderstandings like these are more frequent when students lack the presence of "superhero educators". According to Pitchford and Gerner, superhero educators value the truth, are inspired to make a difference in their community, and consistently promote change and diversity education in schools.

Pitchford and Gerner aim to be intentional by teaching their students and other educators about diversity and acceptance of others. They acknowledge that everyone has privilege that is not always visible.

"Diversity isn't just racial, it's what we can't see," Pitchford said.

With the integration of diversity into schools and workplaces, Pitchford and Gerner hope to improve the education students receive, improve student safety and feelings of acceptance, and

to increase the number of superhero educators throughout the country. The duo strives to prevent stereotypes and wrong assumptions.

“You should be inspired to make a new plan,” Pitchford said. “You should be inspired to diversify the world.”

As the stressful time of college application approaches, more opportunities and resources are being created every day. Dr. Dana Zahorik aims to make the college integration process easier for incoming students by discerning between merely surviving and intentionally thriving.

Manager of Advising Services at Fox Valley Technical College, Zahorik said that surviving is “just hanging in there,” while with “thriving, on the other hand, there’s a joy.”

It is common for students to be miserable and in distress throughout their college years due to unrealistic expectations for them to be college ready when they arrive. I still have over a year before I start college, and I already feel the pressure to meticulously prepare myself, while college administrators are expecting me to have it all together before I arrive.

Zahorik wants to flip the switch and create an atmosphere where colleges focus on what they can do to be student ready.

“We have a responsibility to educate students as they are, not as we wish they would be,” Zahorik said.

To improve the college integration experience, Fox Valley Technical College has already taken steps to make students more comfortable. The college has a program where every student can charge up to 700 dollars for course supplies to ensure the right materials before their classes begin, as well as a tutoring system that is already built into the school day for science classes.

Zahorik emphasizes the need for students to feel like they matter. Minor details such as administrators remembering names or following up on previous conversations help students know they are cared for at college. As a student myself, the impact of a teacher merely remembering my name makes all the difference.

“Admins say ‘Is there anything else I can help you with today?’ I love that,” Zahorik said. “That means [they] want to help you.” She wants students to feel like they matter, not to feel like a burden for needing help.

Instead of giving students directions to the resources they need, Zahorik instead leads them and walks them there herself, because “it [sticks] with you.”

Colleges like to think that they know what students need, Zahorik admits. But, in reality, only students know what they need, which is support from their educators. Students need colleges to actively listen to their needs and be accommodating.

Incoming college students, like myself, want to feel important at school. It’s more than being valued just for our tuition or our grades, we want to be valued for who we are as people. These educators are doing the work needed to improve student wellbeing, belongingness, and ensure that schools are meeting the evolving needs of students.