Academic Confidence Script

Slide 1: Hello. My name is Nicole Subik and I am the Assistant Director of Learning Support Services here at Villanova. This session is going to be about academic confidence and the role it plays in success as a student.

Slide 2: What is Academic Confidence?

For our purposes, we are going to define academic confidence as:

* The belief that you can be successful here at Villanova.
* The belief that you have the skills and abilities to achieve your academic goals.
* The belief that you are among your academic peers and that you belong at Villanova.

Slide 3: Why does it matter?

The more research that is done about the impact of confidence on things like test-taking, writing, and general academic success, the more we realize that students who believe in their ability to succeed are going to be in a better place to do just that.

Slide 4: How do you bolster your academic confidence?

There are three things you really need to do:

1. Silence your inner critic.
2. Nurture your positive inner voice.
3. Get “gritty”

Slide 5: Silencing your inner critic

This is form the ACT 2011 Engage College “Building My Self-Confidence” handout

Short exercise:

“Think of a recent experience in which you felt embarrassed or down on yourself. Write down all of the negative messages you gave yourself when the event happened. Where do these negative messages come from?”

<https://engage.act.org/toolshop/college/pdf/Building%20My%20Selfconfidence.pdf>

Take a moment to do this. What are some of the things your inner critic is telling you? Some common things we hear from students:

* “I am not smart enough to be here at Villanova.”
* “My grades in high school were so much higher. I’ll never succeed here.”
* “Everyone else is confident. I am the only one who doesn’t know what he’s doing.”
* Slide 6: Nurturing your positive inner voice

Take a look at the example(s) you provided in the exercise. Now, think about some positive rebuttals.

Example:

* “I’m not good at tests.”
* Rebuttal:
* “I’ve been having a hard time with math tests, but I did well on my psychology test and I did go up 10 points on my last math test.”

This is a far more positive message. Notice: you are not denying reality (that does not help), but you are framing your challenges in a more positive light. Why does this matter? Well, to simple say something like, “I am bad at tests” does not lead you toward any solutions. It’s dismissive of your potential.

Slide 7: Silencing your inner critic

This type of thinking, no matter what sparked it, is detrimental to your confidence. When you feel your inner critic “kick in”, you must silence it. Some ways to do this:

1. Remove yourself from the situation.
2. Focus on something else.
3. Summon a positive experience.
4. Mantras and mentors (more on that later)

Slide 8: Internal and external supports

So, bolstering your positive inner voice is important. You can do that by battling those negative critical thoughts with more positive ones that focus on building on your strengths and confronting your challenges with solutions.

Some individuals even decide to choose a mantra, a word or phrase they repeat to help them focus and block out some of those negative critical thoughts. That is something to try if you are really struggling in that area.

Here in the Villanova community, it is important to know that there is a lot of support available for individuals struggling with academic confidence. You don’t have to go it alone.

Let’s do another exercise. This one is about mentors. What’s a mentor? The Oxford English Dictionary says that a mentor is an “experienced and trusted advisor.” Every student should seek out a mentor or mentors while here at Villanova for a variety of reasons, one being that they can help you maintain academic confidence.

Here’s the exercise: think about a three-legged stool. You are sitting on top of this stool and you know that in order to stay upright, you need the support of the three legs. Each leg represents a person here at Villanova who you think is a sturdy and steadfast support for you. Try to make at least one of the legs someone who is currently a mentor or who you think could be a good mentor in the future. Other legs may be professors or fellow students. Other groups to think about: advisors, staff members, tutors, work-study advisors, RAs.

Keep this list of you’re the people on your personal support network (Lipsky, 3) handy. When you are feeling that you confidence needs an external boost, think about seeking out one of these people.

Slide 9: --what to do when you hit a bump (a lesson on resiliency—GRIT)

Angela Duckworth, a psychologist, researcher at Penn, and author of *Grit: the power of passion and perseverance*, has done a lot of work about how an individual’s grit can positively or negatively impact his or her success. She defines GRIT as, “the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals” (Duckworth et al., 2007.)

Completing your degree is a long-term goal and the path is often dotted with bumps and setbacks. Poor test grades, a rough group project, etc. can be discouraging; it is important to persevere! In order to do that, you need to work on becoming “grittier.” As Dr. Duckworth says, “Failure is not a permanent condition.” One needs real stamina to get through college.

Take a few moments and take Duckworth’s 12 item Grit scale:

<https://upenn.app.box.com/s/et30heyb2e7keq4t2w8b7c65l230pscn>

The maximum score on this scale is 5 (extremely gritty), and the lowest score on this scale is 1 (not at all gritty).

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Where do you fall? If you are gritty—great! That means you have the skills to persevere! Not so gritty? What are some of the things you can do to get grittier?

See Angela Duckworth’s TED Talk on GRIT: [https://www.ted.com/talks/angela\_lee\_duckworth\_the\_key\_to\_success\_grit?language=en#t-22038](https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en)

Slide 10. Sally Lipsky has written a number of books on academic success in college and I think this list sums it up nicely.

Successful College Students:

* **Motivation.** They want to achieve and are determined to reach their academic goals.
* **Persistence.** They do not let hurdles block persona; achievement. When problems arise, they seek out help and persevere until a satisfactory solution is reached.
* **Self-Discipline.** They are willing to make the necessary sacrifices and devote the necessary efforts to receive that college degree.
* **A Personal Support Network.** They have at least one family member or close friend they can rely on for personal encouragement and support. Likewise, they tend to associate with peers who are responsible and caring.

Source: *College Study: The Essential Ingredients* by Sally A. Lipsky (2008)

Slide 11: Final thoughts

If you are feeling unsure about your abilities or if you have suffered a hit in your academic confidence, know that you are not alone. Do not give up. Many other students have felt this way at some point and then have become successful here at Villanova.

Slide: 12: Exercises

If you have been referred to this workshop, there are three things you will have completed and may need as proof of attendance. All three exercises are available under the online workshops section of the Learning Support Services website:

Exercise 1: Silencing your inner critic

Exercise 2: Three-legged stool: Internal and External supports

Exercise 3: GRIT