

Photos by Martin Springborg



# Learning and relationships in (and beyond) our courses

Listen – encourage – inspire – challenge

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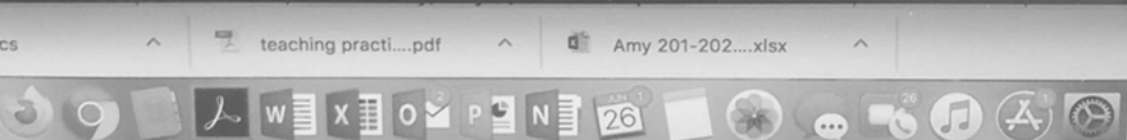
“The college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of institutions. The classroom may be the only place where students and faculty meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced.”

(Tinto, 1997)



“In humanized online courses, instructor-student relationships are the connective tissue between students, engagement, and rigor.”

(Pacansky-Brock et al., 2020)





“Learning and talking together, we break the notion that our experience of gaining knowledge is private, individualistic, and competitive. By choosing and fostering dialogue, we engage mutually in a learning partnership.”

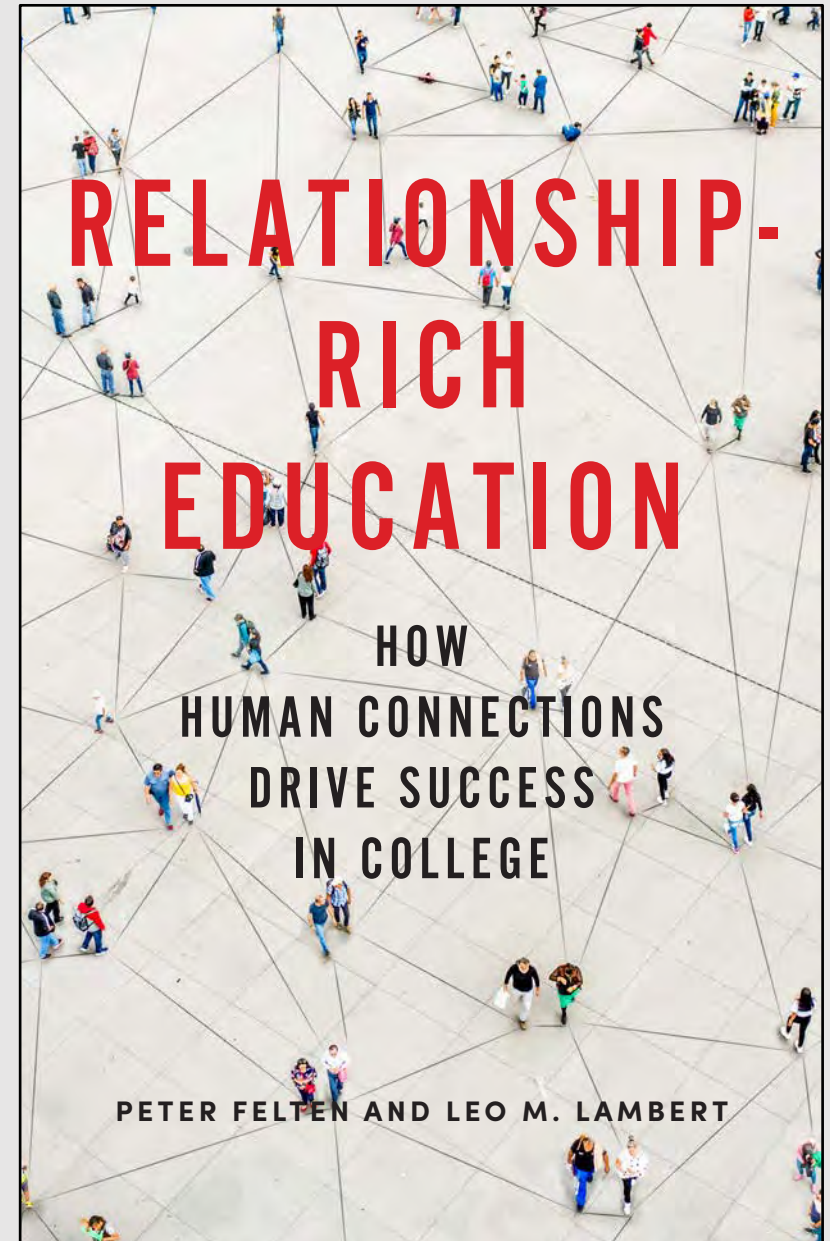
(hooks, 2009, p. 43)

Lessons from your experiences

Faculty-student relationships

Student-student relationships

Your next steps





Think about your own experiences with educational relationships. What's a practice or principle we should draw from your experience?

Keep doing what works for you –  
with more students, more often.

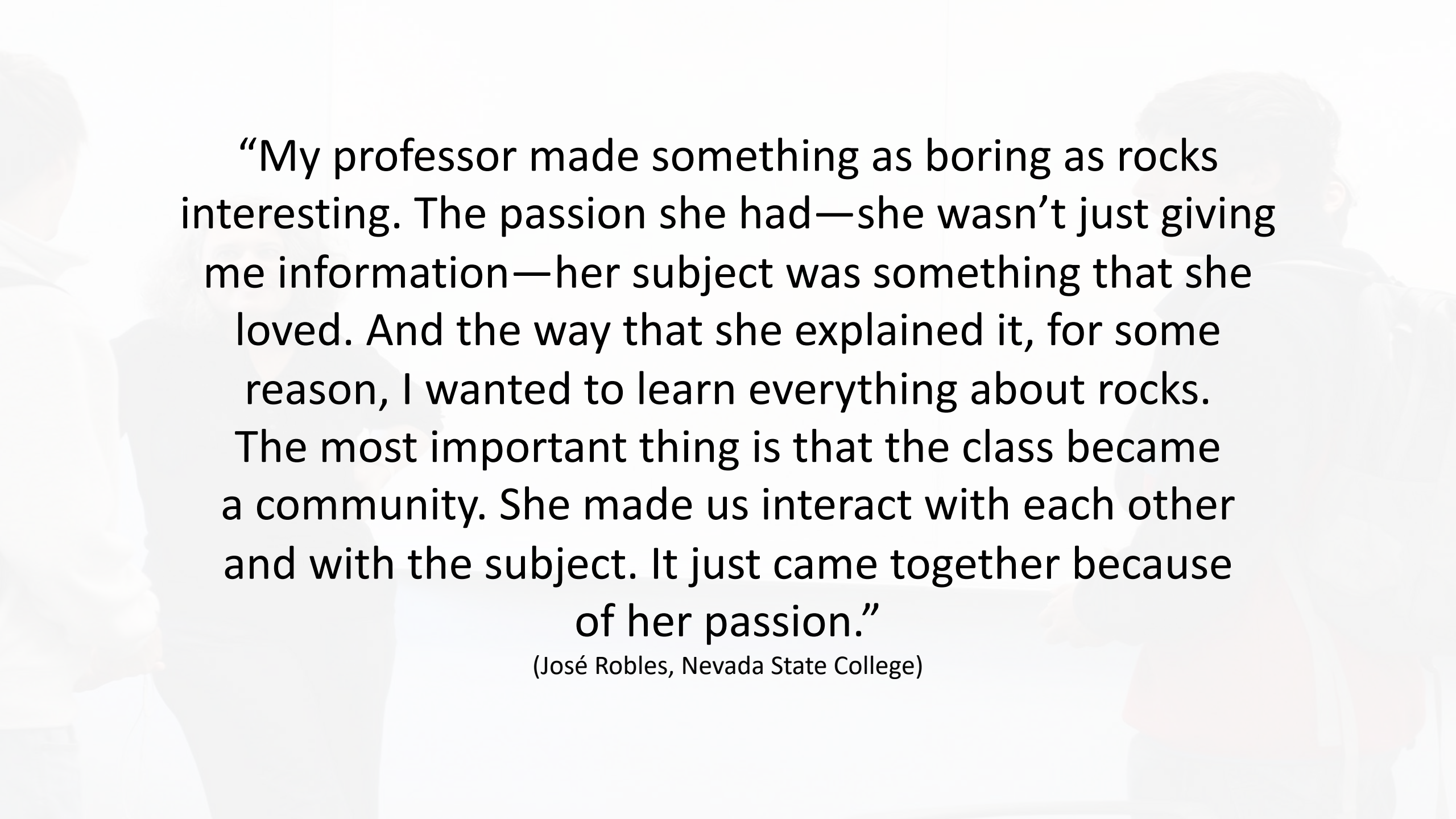




Faculty – student relationships

Student – student relationships



A faint, grayscale background image showing the silhouettes of two people, likely a man and a woman, engaged in a conversation. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. They appear to be in a professional or academic setting, possibly a classroom or office.

“My professor made something as boring as rocks interesting. The passion she had—she wasn’t just giving me information—her subject was something that she loved. And the way that she explained it, for some reason, I wanted to learn everything about rocks. The most important thing is that the class became a community. She made us interact with each other and with the subject. It just came together because of her passion.”

(José Robles, Nevada State College)

“At the start of class one day about half-way through the semester, my first year writing prof said to class:

‘Near the end of the semester, one of my best students is going to stop coming to class because they feel overwhelmed with all the pressure and they are really scared that they are going to do poorly. I want to assure that student to keep coming to class, even if you missed an assignment or feel like you didn’t do well on an essay, because it’s going to be okay.

Come see me, don’t just disappear.’”

(Taylor Schlesinger, LaGuardia Community College)



## **Two principles of faculty-student relationships**

1. Validate student capacity
2. Do things you can sustain

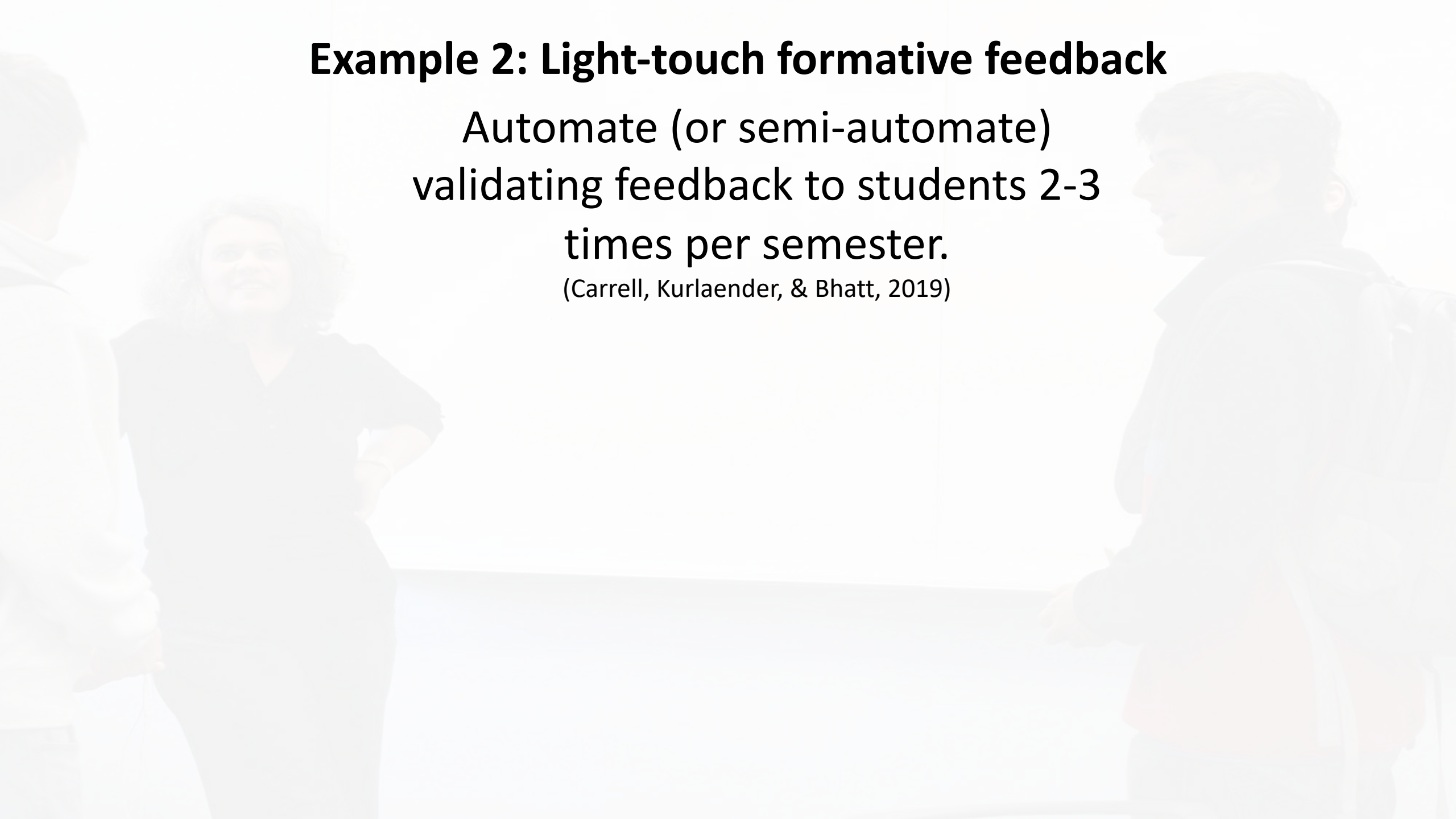
### **Examples of practices**

1. Use student names
2. Light-touch formative feedback

## **Example 2: Light-touch formative feedback**

Automate (or semi-automate)  
validating feedback to students 2-3  
times per semester.

(Carrell, Kurlaender, & Bhatt, 2019)



Dear XXX, [students earning B]

As we approach mid-term, I'm writing to give you some quick feedback on your performance so far.

You've demonstrated you are learning a lot in this course with your consistent scores on weekly homework. Keep doing what you are doing!

I encourage you also to take advantage of online formative quizzes about the reading so you can be more prepared for in-class activities in the second half of the term.

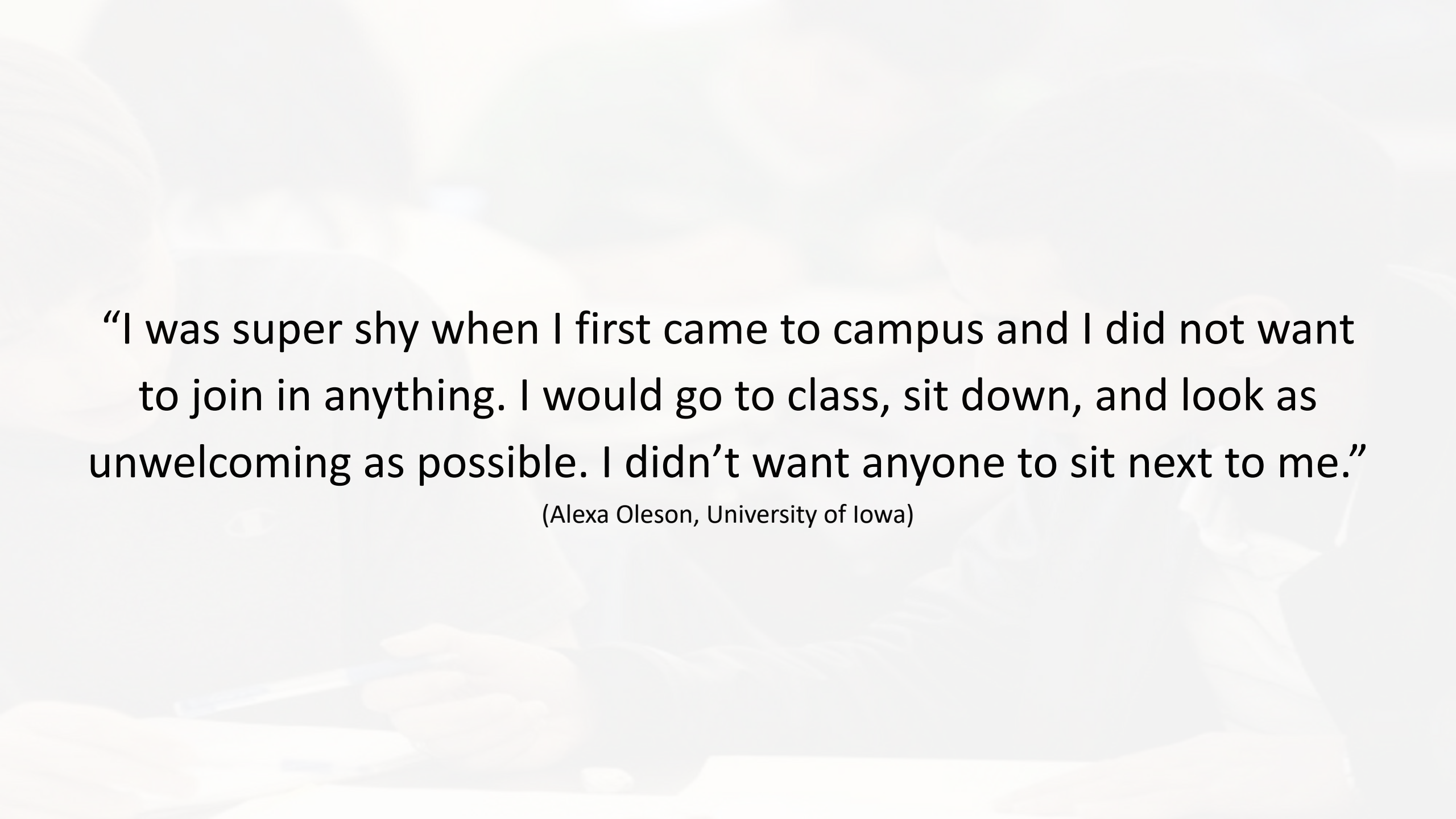
If you have questions or would like to chat, stop by my office hours or catch me before/after class any day.

See you in class Monday –



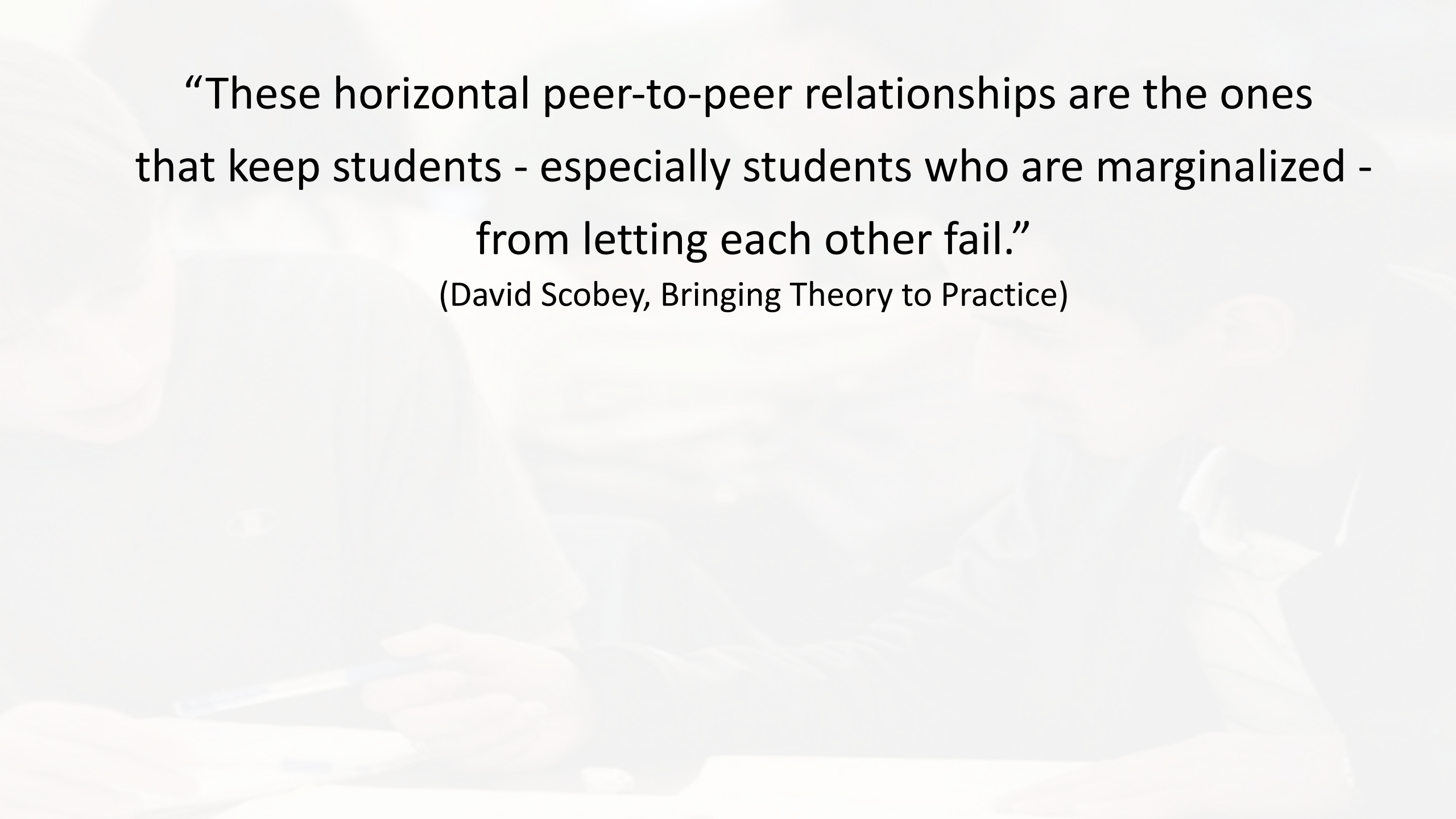
Faculty – student relationships

Student – student relationships



“I was super shy when I first came to campus and I did not want to join in anything. I would go to class, sit down, and look as unwelcoming as possible. I didn’t want anyone to sit next to me.”

(Alexa Oleson, University of Iowa)



“These horizontal peer-to-peer relationships are the ones that keep students - especially students who are marginalized - from letting each other fail.”

(David Scobey, Bringing Theory to Practice)



## Example 1: Note-taking pairs

Periodically pause class to ask students to compare their notes with those of a couple of other students.

Encourage students to talk about both the content and the format of their notes.

Ask for volunteers to show (and discuss the merits of) different note-taking approaches.

(Major, Harris, Zakrajsek, 2016)

## Example 2: Structure groups to support all students

“Our data raise the possibility that perhaps instead of students being lazy or unmotivated, students face barriers such as anxiety about group work, low perceived value of peer discussion for their learning, or contending with other students in the group who are dominating. Reframing inequities in participation in this way puts the onus on the instructor to structure the interactions in peer discussions to promote equal opportunities for allowing students to participate in the learning activity.”

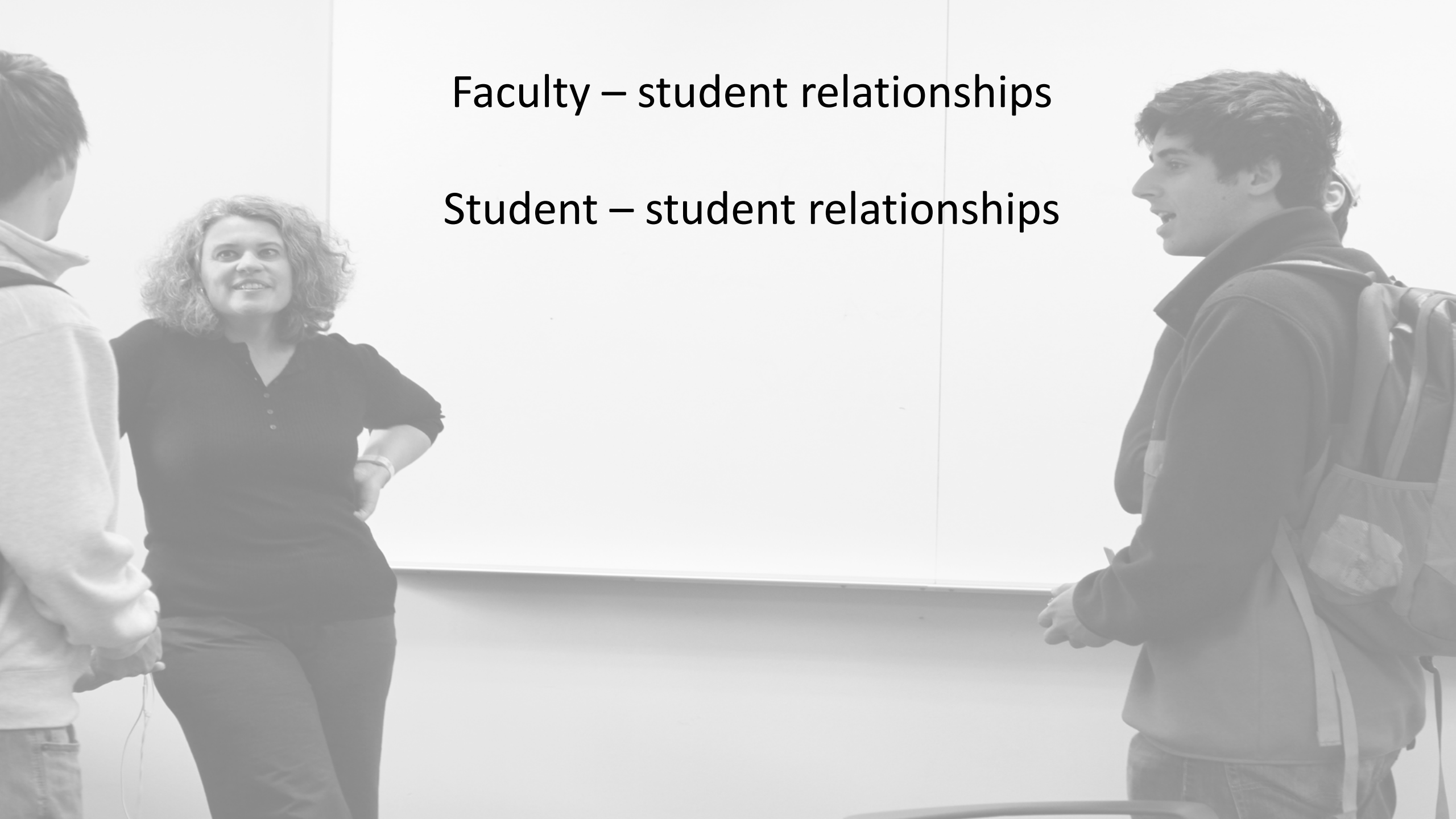
(Eddy et al., 2015)

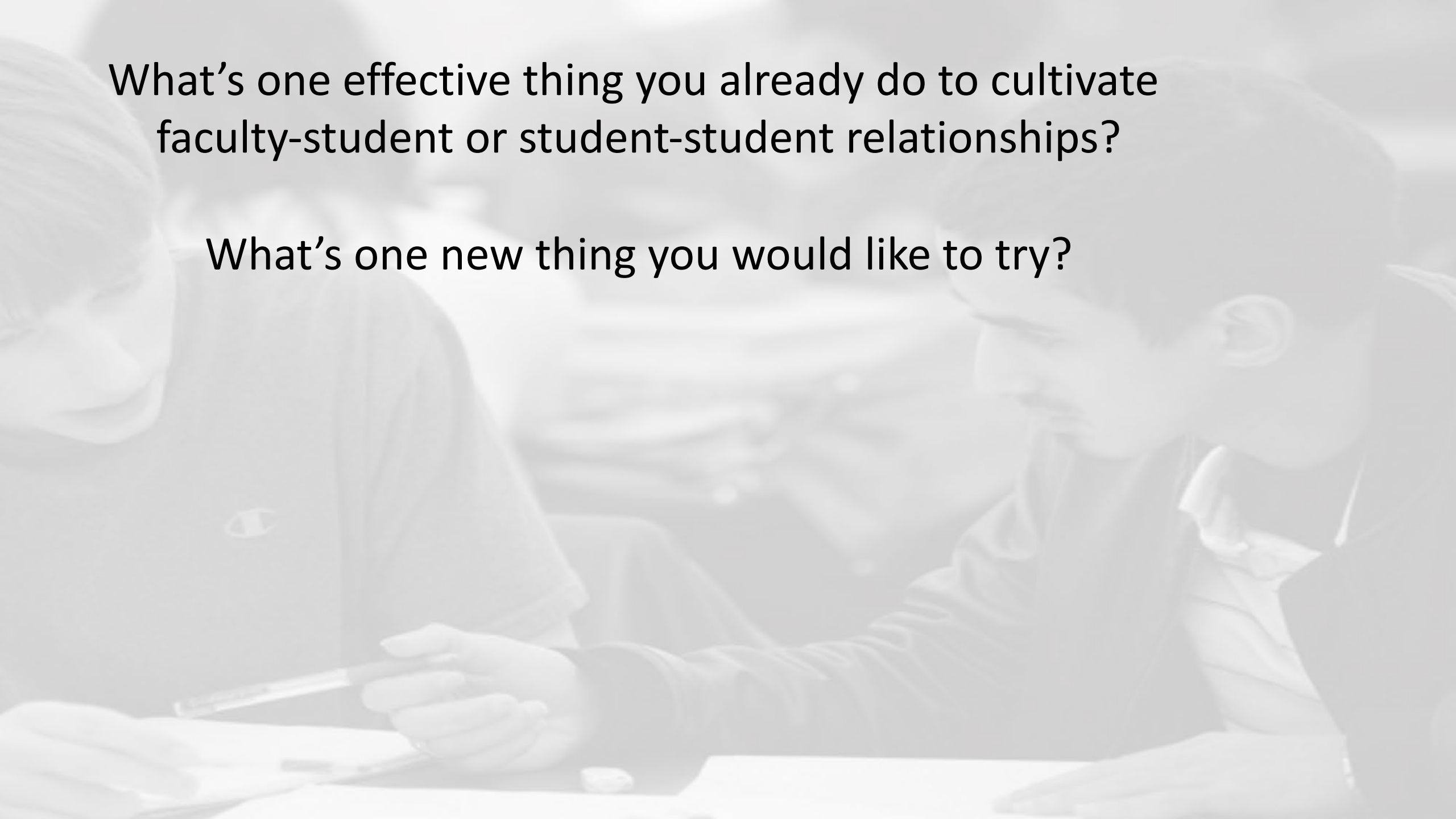
## Example 2: Structure groups to support all students

1. Assign students to groups and help them establish relationships within groups by
  - (a) keeping the same group for the term, and
  - (b) purposely including time and activities to encourage group bonding.
2. Structure group interactions to prevent any individual from dominating by
  - (a) having well-defined roles that rotate among group members, and
  - (b) assigning complex and open-ended challenges.
3. Explain why you are using groups, and what you want students to learn from the group process.

Faculty – student relationships

Student – student relationships





What's one effective thing you already do to cultivate faculty-student or student-student relationships?

What's one new thing you would like to try?

“Beyond the serious science we’re doing, there’s this whole other aspect of caring about each other’s lives. The faculty will make the time to ask, ‘How are your classes going?’ ‘What are you thinking about for next year?’ ‘What are you getting involved in outside of the lab?’ ‘Who do you want to be after you graduate?’ And then they would really listen and encourage me, even when I wasn’t sure if I knew what I was doing or where I was going.”

(Samantha Paskvan, University of Washington)



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