

Defining Student Success

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SPEAKERS

Marisol Gonzalez, Charles Lu, Holly Maine, Donnet Montanez, Lindsay Romasanta

Lindsay Romasanta 00:00

Welcome Tritons, to Triton Tools and Tidbits. We are your hosts, Dr. Lindsay Romasanta-

Charles Lu 00:05

And I'm Dr. Charles Lu.

Lindsay Romasanta 00:07

And this week our episode is about defining Student Success. We've trained Donnet Montanez, Marisol Gonzalez, and Holly Maine. We're excited to have you here to experience our podcast. Let's dive in. Okay, so let's do name, major, college, [and] pronouns for each of you.

Donnet Montanez 00:24

Hey, everyone, my name is Donnet Montanez. My major is international studies with a focus in sociology. My college is Revelle, and my pronouns are he, him, and his.

Marisol Gonzalez 00:36

Okay, hello, my name is Marisol. She/her/hers pronouns. Major: applied mathematics with a minor in ethnic studies. And from Marshall College.

Holly Maine 00:47

Hi, my name is Holly Maine. I'm a communications major from Muir college. And I'm from Newbury Park, California, which is in Ventura County, just about an hour north of Los Angeles, and my pronouns are she, her, and hers.

Lindsay Romasanta 01:04

So, the first question is, tell us about yourself and your path to UC San Diego.

Donnet Montanez 01:09

I can go ahead and start. I'm a transfer student. I come from Ventura County, Ventura College. I came in as a communication major, I transferred. At some point in at UCSD, I changed my major to international studies. Because I think when you're in university, anyone and everyone has some sort of existential sort of moment, where you're like, "you know what, I don't think I like what I'm learning, I want to switch it up." So that's what happened. I think, especially after taking my one education course,

it was EDS 25 - I mean, I am giving a shout out to OASIS - but I think it was a really important class in helping me learn what I wanted to do with my path. So, after taking all these classes, within International Studies, learning about what's going on in the world, and how basically, a lot of the problems that people have outside of this country are very similar to the ones we have here, it just looks different, right? And, you know, I had this vision, or epiphany, where I [realized] I want to get a job that can help me maintain my soul. I want to be able to survive off of it. Because that's important. But at the same time, I want to be able to give back to my community. I looked at it more from a spiritual side. It's really interesting. And then I decided that if I wanted to pursue education, it would probably be the best industry for me to go into because I realized that education is so important - in any sort of nation building or, you know, community building. So, it took me a while to pinpoint what I wanted to do. Like I said, the reason why I was communication before is because it was so broad, you know. It allowed me to explore a little bit, which is okay, but eventually I had to decide what I wanted to go into.

Marisol Gonzalez 02:58

Okay, my name is Marisol. I'm from Anaheim, California, born and raised. I went to Anaheim High School, which is a predominantly Latino-Hispanic High School. A majority of the students, well - only a good handful of us went to college. I was fortunate enough to be one of them. I think my path was really interesting. I knew I didn't know what I wanted to do. I wanted to go to college because I was an AVID, but it wasn't clear until my junior, or I think my senior year. I think my brother had a big influence on me. He attended UCSD. So, I think that was another plus for me wanting to go to UCSD besides the location - how great of a school it is. I think someone from my family was there, so I felt comfortable. So, my hard work paid off. I got into UCSD. I agreed to go. I went in as a structural engineering major, just because everyone in my high school - all my teachers and everyone used to tell me that going into engineering, you'd be guaranteed a job - do that. Because I was always really [interested in] science and math. Or those were my favorite subjects in high school.

Holly Maine 04:10

Okay, hi, my name is Holly Maine. I'm a third-year communications major, and I'm in Muir college. I'm from Newbury Park, California, which is about an hour north of Los Angeles. It's technically Ventura County, and I'm on the women's water polo team.

Lindsay Romasanta 04:30

How would you define success? And how will you know that you've made it?

Holly Maine 04:36

I would probably define it as just finding happiness within yourself and just being happy with yourself and what you're doing. I think that a lot of times people define success by, judging what they're doing, or comparing themselves to the people around them and I think that is - I've definitely done that a lot, and it causes a lot of problems with me. Comparing yourself to others doesn't really help you with anything. And I think success is just like, you're happy with where you are and what you're doing and doing what you love, I guess. Yeah.

Donnet Montanez 05:15

That's such an interesting question. Because I mean, it's so relative, right? To think about what the meaning of success is. I mean, at least for me, I think success is always a constant thing. I feel like a lot

of us graduated from UCSD this year, right? You could define success, but I think - I don't know - I succeeded. I would consider myself a successful student. Right? Because even though I graduated, I will still continue to explore and continue to learn outside of my UCSD experience. For me, it's sort of like what defines success, you know - you continue to learn and continue to self-develop.

Marisol Gonzalez 05:54

I agree. Yeah, success is really, I guess, a person-by-person definition. Like success can be like, "Oh, getting an A in the class," or it can be to another student like, "Oh, I got a B, but I worked so hard for it." I think to say you made it is - I can say I made it. Like, I feel like a made-it moment was when I made it into UCSD. But it was only temporary. Because now I feel like another made-it moment will be when I graduate. But then after that, I feel like that's a first-gen student thing, being able to do everything first. You're always a go-getter, you always want to do more things. So, once I graduate, I feel like that made-it moment will be temporary. Now I want to do - what's the next thing? Go to grad school? I made it once I get in. You know, it's just different made-it moments for me, I think.

Donnet Montanez 06:41

Yeah, I definitely agree with you. I mean, it's so funny, because I feel like a lot of our students, at some point in our career, or as a UCSD student or any student university, we're always trying to reach that ultimate goal. And I mean, if something wrong happens, if something doesn't go the way you want it to - kind of beat yourself over, because you're reaching that goal. But I think this is a good question. Because it's important to remember that you've got to enjoy the process. It's basically like Marisol said, right? It's never really over.

Holly Maine 07:16

I mean, like, as a student, I would say I would, I've arrived when I graduate. That's, I think college is probably the most challenging thing a lot of people will ever experience just mentally and for me physically, also, like college water polo and college rowing. It's just, I've never been that sore, that tired, like, going to bed at eight o'clock, waking up at five, and it's just, and also mentally, like, when you know, you have a test the next day, and just, it's a lot of pressure all the time and anxiety. And I think that anyone who's in college or school at all and trying their best and whether you graduate or not, like if you went out and tried, I think and if you're like happy with what you've done, I think that's when you've made it.

Lindsay Romasanta 08:12

Thank you. So, expanding on that, what do you think "successful students" do? What do successful students do? And what gets in the way of success? And how have you overcome it?

Holly Maine 08:27

I think successful students would probably try their best in all of their classes and utilize as many resources as they could. I think I could probably be a little better at that. I think UCSD has a lot of resources that people may not know about. And I think that athletics has helped a lot with that. Just telling me where I can go to study. I think that's something we could work on - trying to share where resources are and stuff like that. And I think successful students are comfortable with like their learning environment, and just feeling like a safe space to do their best work. I think that's what makes a student successful, is having a safe learning environment and utilizing resources and trying their best.

Holly Maine 08:29

One of those obstacles is being able to jump out of one culture, to jump into a new one - something that has to do with your career, because I think being back home is super cool. But you do have to change a lot of about yourself, you know. You have to be more disciplined. And sometimes family and friends can get in the way of that. Not that there's anything wrong, but you do have to kind of learn how to be more disciplined and keep your goal, and your bigger goal in mind, even though there's little things going on in your environment.

Marisol Gonzalez 10:30

Yeah, I agree that it's kind of hard to say what successful students do. I feel like the most basic thing is time management or being organized. But I feel like there's more to that. Successful students take advantage of the resources they have, that being like tutoring, or just the mentors they have, or their family, depending on what needs they need in order to be successful. I feel like I - for emotional support - I use my family a lot. For resources, and education, I feel like I go to my supervisors or mentors. And I feel like that's made me successful, or at least what I define as successful here at UCSD. And I feel like the challenges that could potentially -definitely with COVID, that's a big challenge that all of us are gonna face. No one expected that - but I feel like other challenges are like family expectations, adapting to the university, and just stuff that you didn't think was gonna happen at the university. Just because everything - every year, it seems like different stuff is happening outside of the university that you can't control.

Donnet Montanez 11:41

Yeah, I mean, it's so funny, they didn't touch on that - but I'm glad you brought it up - even your experience during university. There's like a lot of obstacles. It's so funny that we're getting to explore ourselves, while at the same time figuring out what is it that we want for our future. It's almost a paradox. Super interesting.

Donnet Montanez 11:59

I was gonna say, can I ask a follow up question, Lindsay?

Lindsay Romasanta 12:00

Please.

Charles Lu 12:00

So, I think it was really interesting, because with this last response, it made me think about how implicit within the word success - there's a notion that there's some hard work and labor that goes into it. Right? If something is easy, then I think most people don't think of it as a success necessarily. So, can you reflect on a moment that you've had at UC San Diego where you have been successful? Maybe that can be a class, maybe that can be an extracurricular activity that you've been involved in, something that you, you know - putting some time and effort into - that led to success?

Holly Maine 12:44

Gosh, I think probably when I took the risk from leaving the sport. And I didn't - I felt really bad leaving rowing, because those were my friends, those people took a risk and got me into the school for a sport that I had never done. And then to try out for another collegiate sports team, and to make it - because I

always wanted to play college water polo, but I didn't think I was good enough. I always doubted myself. And just to make that and know that I was good enough for taking that risk, and then having it pay off - I think that was a really successful moment for me in college.

Donnet Montanez 13:34

My first quarter at UCSD, I was a little lost, you know? I was kind of like, "Where do I go? It's my first quarter. I feel so small." It's big out there. One thing I knew was that I needed to do something different here. I need to get out of my comfort zone somehow. And that's hard. I think it makes sense, that sucks. When you are successful, something is not easy. I think it was kind of hard - getting out of my comfort zone. But I eventually did it. I applied to an internship. And I think that's probably one of the biggest highlights of my university experience. I will say where to apply, get my letter of recommendation, fill out the application. And that was successful in itself. But the coolest thing was like, having to move to Sacramento. Doing my internship out there. Working in the capitol, in and out of the Capitol, working with different organizations in Sacramento, a team that was super cool. And in itself, I will say that at the end of the day, once I completed my internship and I learned all those things - I created a network out there. Even if I were to go back to Sacramento, they're still there. I can still get reconnected to all those people that I met. I think for me that would be considered success.

Marisol Gonzalez 14:50

Yeah, I was trying to think of a time that I was successful. I feel like sometimes I forget what I did at UCSD. But I feel the same when it comes to applying to jobs. Applying for jobs or applying to research. I did do a research program this summer with TRELS. I think the process of applying, asking my mentor, coming up with the proposal, just doing all the work, and then seeing the completed project - I feel like that was my moment. I was like, "Okay, I was successful." Here, at UCSD - I presented at a UCSD conference. Like, wow, that's big. Who would have thought?

Lindsay Romasanta 15:24

What do you think gets in the way of success? And how have you overcome?

Holly Maine 15:30

I think the main thing that gets in the way of success is people like doubting themselves or comparing themselves too much. I don't think there's one exact, successful - there's no perfect, successful person. Everyone is successful in their own way, and like what they're doing. And so, I think that if you think you're successful, you are, in whatever you're doing. And I think that's the main way that people - you are successful no matter what. But if you're doubting yourself, or comparing yourself, or letting someone tell you that you're not, then that's going to interfere with your success or your view on your success.

Lindsay Romasanta 16:14

Thank you for experiencing our podcasts for defining student success. We are your hosts, Dr. Lindsay Romasanta-

Charles Lu 16:20

And I'm Dr. Charles Lu-

Lindsay Romasanta 16:22

We hope you all have a great week, and we will see you next time on Triton Tools and Tidbits.