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This episode will be focused on your identity, and how that plays into achieving your educational goals, as well as some study tips for students cooped up at home! We will also be learning about the Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services (OASIS) and what they do to help students thrive.

Triton Tools & Tidbits is a podcast that is focused on discussing topics that will engage and enrich student life and education. Brought to you by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

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Episode 1 - The Power of Identity, Education, and Making Strong Virtual Study Groups

[Intro, Preface]

[00:00:11] Brian: This is Triton Tools & Tidbits, I'm Brian Chen. Join me on this journey that started from the simple question of how to make strong virtual study groups and dove into the realm of identity, and how that can influence your education.

[beat]

[The Colorless Ask]

[00:00:36] When I was given the task of producing this first episode, the topic I was suppose to cover was how to create virtual study groups online.

My initial reaction was that of mild skepticism. I felt that there wasn't anywhere that this topic could go to make for a more engaging story. I personally wanted to find something deeper.

I kept this in mind as I prepared a set of questions for an interview with Charles Lu, the director of OASIS.

[00:01:01] Brian: So Charles, could you introduce yourself?

[00:01:04] Charles: Sure! Hi my name is Charles Lu, I am the director of OASIS at UC San Diego. A little bit about me: I'm originally from Washington DC, grew up there on the east coast, then I moved to Texas and lived in Austin Texas for a number of years before I moved out to San Diego, and I love working at UCSD! I love the Triton Life, I love being in La Jolla, and I'm excited to be apart of this podcast series!

[00:01:36] Brian: Awesome! Here, tell me your favorite joke.

[00:01:37] Charles L: Yeah, so I am a nerd at heart and I think in tradition with UC San Diego, one of my favorite jokes is what do you call an acid with an attitude?

[00:01:53] Brian: Oh, I think I've heard of this one, oh... it's something with a base right?

[00:01:59] Charles: It's an a-mean-no acid [laughter]

[00:02:02] Brian: Ohhh! [laughter]

[00:02:05] Charles: Yeah! I'm a sucker for those cheesy science jokes, I just think they are hilarious.

[00:02:10] Brian: I'm sorry, we need to cancel this interview, I don't want to be here anymore.

[00:02:14] Charles L: [laughter]

[00:02:16] [Brian]: Could you tell me a little more about OASIS?

[00:02:19] Charles L: Sure, Oasis is one of the largest Student Success Center at UC San Diego, we have 43 years of history, and we have four transitional programs that are designed to help students transition into UC San Diego but also out UC San Diego into the world.

[00:02:37] Charles L (Cont.): Oasis also offers academic resource communities, so students are able to get to meet other people in their classes and get help with issues or topics that they might be encountering in those classes.

[00:02:51] Brian: [...] Do you have a favorite story to tell about Oasis?

[00:02:54] Charles L: ...so I'm thinking of one student in particular who came to UC San Diego, had a little bit of a hard time with the transition right, it's a really big campus, and this is one of our students who didn't have a particularly stable home growing up, so when she came to UC San Diego and she found OASIS, a lot of our students describe OASIS as being a home away from home, and I think that's kind of been how folks describe this center and we have 43 years of experience, so a long history in OASIS. And I think, this was a student when she first came on board was super shy, didn't really want to interact with a lot of people, was really kind of to herself, and very gradually started interacting with more people, made some great friends, built some great relationships, ended up serving as one of our mentors, and ended up mentoring a group of 8-10 students, and later on she's actually graduating and going into the classroom next year. And so I think, you know, it's just kind of like a nice story that shows the success of a student who came [...] not completely out of her shelf quite yet, and I think as a result of being at UC San Diego and being with the Triton family has really been able to go off and will be impacting hundreds of lives in the future, so I thought that that was really cool.

[00:04:28] Brian: I noticed in the signature on your email that it says PHD. What do you have a PHD in?

[00:04:33] Charles L: Yeah, so my PHD is in higher education and administration. So, the research that I did was actually looking at various organizations in higher education. So taking a look at higher education institutions. And the research that I did was actually on science identity in Latino men within their first year of courses. [...] So there's this theory of science identity, it's part of identity development theories. So it takes a look at three different components of how someone views themselves as a scientist. So there's recognition, which is, do you recognize yourself as a science person, and do other people recognize you as a science person? Competence, which is kind of your knowledge and abilities in science. And, the last one is…sorry, recognition, competence, oh and performance. So that one is kind of about are you able to perform like a science person? Do you speak in a scientific language? Are you able to use scientific objects and tools? So it's kind of like how those three things interact with each other to form science identity in students.

[00:05:53] Brian: I've never heard of this theory of science identity. Does it come from more of a sociology background?

[00:05:59] Charles L: Yeah, it comes from a little more of a psychological framework. A little bit more of a social-psychology framework, and there's also a good amount of people who study science education specifically that take a look at science identity as well.

[00:06:14] Brian: How would you apply this research?

[00:06:17] Charles L: Yeah, so I think we take a look at a few different things, so one of the big applications is, you know, that identity is really important in science right? The more likely that you are able to recognize yourself as a science person, the more you believe in yourself, and the more that you are able to apply, you know, kind of your abilities and knowledge and skills into your work. We've also taken a look at the importance of having scientific mentors, so people who are within the science community who can serve as mentors to students, and [...] as far as that recognition piece with science identity, one of the big findings was that just having someone recognize you as a science person made a really really big difference in terms of your own self-confidence in your abilities to be able to do and produce science, right?

[00:07:18] Brian: Yeah.

[00:07:19] Charles L: But a big part of the identity and I think this is where some of that social justice framework comes in as well, is that they also talk about how science identity interacts with other parts of your identity. So it might be race, it might be gender, it might be sexual orientation…you know different parts of your identity. I think a few other people in my study actually even talked about how their musical identities affected their science identities because one of the participants was actually, like a really great musician, and for a long time, he talked about how he felt that he had to basically choose between those identities, right, because I think oftentimes both are quick to label you as one or the other, right? Like if you are a science person then you are not an art person, if you're an art person then you are not a science person. So he talked about how he had to negotiate that, you know, those identities for a really long time, and how you know it influenced the way he viewed himself as a scientist. Age was a big one too right, so a lot of my students talked about how they felt like scientists had to be old people? [laughter] Even physical attraction, like they, I had students that were like yeah I don't even know if I see myself as a science person or a scientist because I always thought that scientists had to be kinda, you know, look nerdy and kinda be ugly right? [laughter].

[00:08:42] Brian: [laughing] Yeah! yeah!

[00:08:46] Charles L: And so yeah! It was just a really interesting study and it was something that we continue to apply and I think that's why identity work is so important because it intersects with academic work which intersects with the way that you feel about yourself and your community and that's all the type of work that we try to build in OASIS.

[00:09:10] I remember my eyes widening as the comment dawned on me. The intersection of identity work and academic work was something I had never considered before. There was just something there, and I had to know more about it.

[00:09:22] However, I was torn. I felt like the topic of identity work and virtual study groups didn't have that much common ground. At the same time, this theory of identity felt like the deep topic that I was looking for. With this debate in my head, I pressed on.

[00:09:37] Brian: How would you go about creating a strong virtual study group?

[00:09:41] Charles Lu: [...] just to be really honest, is that in my life, I've never really had to create a virtual study group, you know. I'm also a little bit older, so I grew up when the internet was kind of just getting started, and we used to have like AOL right? [laugher] And that's kind of what I grew up

around. So just to be really honest and kind of preface it with, I'm not in the same generation as many students at UC San Diego, but I think what I would suggest, what I would probably do in terms of creating virtual study groups is to be proactive…I would start small and build up. I'm one of those people where I probably wouldn't email someone all at once just because that's a little bit intimidating to me, and so I think what I would probably do is identify a few people in class that I might be able to work with [...] possibly even suggesting to the faculty member to be able to create study groups, especially if you are in a huge class, it might be easier for the faculty member or the TA to even be able to do that on your behalf, so it's already kind of created for you. Sometimes I think that it takes as much as a student just asking the professor or asking the TA to get that ball rolling to get it started, so I think if it hasn't already been created in class, it wouldn't hurt again to just ask. [...] it requires a little bit of an amount of self-awareness, you have to know how you are as a learner and how you are as a team member. And so I think once you have that you probably want to identify a few people that are in the same boat as you. So for example, if I'm someone where, I'm really functional in the mornings and I'm really not functional in the evenings, like for me, I'm a bit older, like, I go to sleep super early. People make fun of me for that right? Like I'm literally in bed at eight o'clock, which is where I think most people get their day started…like, their evening started right? You probably wouldn't want to get a study group where they're trying to get stuff done, or they're trying to have meetings at ten or eleven o'clock at night right? Like that just wouldn't work for me. So I think that having a little bit of self-awareness about your own schedule, about how you work, and how you study, and then trying to identify people that mesh with that would be really helpful.

[The Interesting Offramp]

[00:12:20] I spent a lot more time thinking about this type of identity work and education. The virtual studying question was still there, but it was second to what I wanted to learn more about.

[00:12:30] I had an interview setup through Charles to a group of OASIS mentors and tutors who were also students. This is how I met Anahi, Charles A., Jorge, Diana, and Donnet. After a set of more fun questions to get everyone comfortable, I asked Charles to briefly explain his PhD research again, before asking what their thoughts were on identity work and education.

[00:12:53] Charles Adams, a fourth-year studying nano-engineering and both an OASIS tutor and mentor spoke to it.

[00:13:00] Charles A: Yeah I can resonate with that. It's very interesting that you brought that up cause I was thinking about it. When I first came to UCSD I was undeclared. I had no major, but I wanted to get into engineering because the high school I went to throughout my life, like it was kind of pushed on to me that science was really important and I kind of looked into like taking things apart. And I was growing up and I was like what if people do it like that and my dad was like that's an engineer, they always make things, and create things. I was like, " I want to do that!" And then in high school I was on like a special engineering pathway, and I loved it but when I got into UCSD I was undeclared. I wanted to be a chemical engineer, but I had to apply of course and obviously I was so focused on it, but then you know, it was really challenging too! Cause I couldn't take any like classes at that time. I know some people could take like specific to my major like Nano-4, Nano-5, but I was just looking at my own thing at what I can do, and then being with OASIS, I was an intern my first-year was a lot more like talking to more people, talking, building relationships basically. And then when I finally got to my major my second-year, it was exciting, I loved it, I was like, " Yes I'm a part of a family, this is gonna be part of my identity". But, as I was in my major, I kept continuing building my relationship in OASIS, and getting into positions where I am. It's interesting where I love being in my major. I like being an engineer. But, it's something for me, I prefer having those personal relationships with being in a tutor, being a mentor. Those are my strong suits, and I kind of like those interactions a lot more than working at a lab, or doing research. Because I like seeing the growth I have with my students, or I like helping students on the way to doing amazing things and so it's

interesting that being an engineer isn't a big part of my identity anymore! It's more about with the experience I had and the relationships that I've built with those students, and it's...it's... I agree, it's so interesting, I've seen some of my students, where they're switching majors so they realize they don't want to do this, and sometimes it's heartbreaking. Because they've felt like that for an entire portion of their life, "I want to be this or I want to be this" and that sudden transition can be challenging. So, it's quite interesting seeing those developments.

[00:15:10] Donnet, a graduating senior and transfer student with a major in International Studies and Sociology had this to say.

[00:15:16] **Donnet**: [...] I was thinking really hard about where at that identity came from like cause at some point I change my major from communication to international studies, I mean I already knew I wanted to do social studies for sure. But, I think it came from a place of... family and for my identity the reason why I change my identity cause when in communication I felt like I wasn't really learning relevant stuff. When I was in international studies, I changed it because I felt like I wanted to learn more about you know like our community and like our relationship as global citizens and try to understand why there's conflict, and know how can we come together you know. And I think that came from a place of like family. I can think that's also one of the reasons why I'm here at UCSD, because like I want to get back at some point. I maybe kind of individualistic sometimes, but at the end of the day I feel like the way my academics are going, I feel like it comes from a place of family identity. If that makes sense.

[00:16:16] As the interview came to a close, I was left with these various viewpoints about identity development. In the case of Charles A., he discovered a new dimension of his identity, which surpassed his initial identity as an engineer. For Donnet, he embraced an educational identity that includes a responsibility towards his family.

[00:16:37] This was a departure from what Charles was describing about science identities and the three components of recognition, competence, and performance. These can become some of the building blocks that lead to the acceptance of an identity, which can then be expanded upon further through self-discovery.

[00:16:53] Upon reaching this point in the investigation of topics surrounding identity and education, I began to think about virtual study groups again, not necessarily with the skepticism that I felt when I was originally presented the topic, but in a more critical way. Since identity has the ability to impact your educational experiences, it helps to be reflective of your mindset when entering a new study group. It's similar to what Charles was saying about having that self-awareness—participating in not just study groups but also classrooms or discussions with the mindset of believing you are capable can help facilitate a strong team dynamic among your peers. If we all can be more cognizant of our needs and abilities, then we can use that awareness to take charge of our own learning and development.

[00:17:40] To help students, the team over at OASIS also prepared 3 do's and 1 don't when it comes to making effective virtual study groups.

[00:17:50] **Charles Adams**: I think one very important thing when forming study groups is really looking to yourself first. Like, we're in a setting online, most of us are either at home with their families, I know myself I am, and I think it's really good to keep yourself motivated right? Finding a space where you can work, a quiet space, and that can help you be motivated as well, and also find a space, that you know, not only being motivated where you can get your work done too. Like having a desk, you know, instead of sitting on your bed, so you can keep being in focus. Because no matter where you are we're still a quarter system. We're still starting the ground running, we still have live groups and all that. And once you get that space situated you feel settled, you can start working, make sure to test all your connections. We're on an online community now, so it's more than ever that we have really good internet connections, our computers are okay, and testing everything out,

wheter you're using Zoom, Skype, Face Time. So that you can build those connections with either new people or your friends so that you can study for those classes very well.

[00:18:53]Jorge: So mine is a bit of a three sets of advice for how to start a group chat or study group in a community. The three things is how do you start right? so we have to start messaging. Zoom is new for all of us, at least for most of us and it is for myself, but I noticed you can either send a group chat to the entire class or you can choose to send personal messages to individuals within the class. At that point, it's up to you what you are more comfortable with. Personally I think I'll find a couple people and individually message them with a pre-made message that you can make on Word document. That way you just copy and paste it, make sure you fill out all the things such as: when you're trying to meet, how many people you're trying to get, and what you're really trying to get out of this, which most of us is a study group right? And so, let them all know that to allow them to make a better decision, and quickly right? We don't really have much time to set these things up.

[00:19:55] Anahi Ibarra: Diana, what is something you can offer the students when trying to form study groups?

[00:20:00] Diana Torres: I think the biggest thing when forming study groups is to kind of be considerate to each other that this is the first time we are all going through this. Many people have different responsibilities we don't know about and we can't see. So the best thing to do would be to plan out what are you going to be meeting for, who are you going to meeting with, and at what time. Everybody has different schedules because of those different responsibilities. So being able to communicate effectively with each other, being able to schedule those a lot of the times of when to when we plan to meet, or when to when a person is available, and also another thing if somebody can or can't being considerate of your group mates would probably be a very good idea to record on the Zoom meeting itself! It's a way for other students to be able to access the information and still be engaged, and they can still come back to you with any other remarks that they might have or any other questions. So, being considerate of each other and having each other's backs.

[00:20:55] Anahi Ibarra: [...] We're gonna switch it up a little bit with Donnet. So we've been talking really about what are somethings you can do when forming online study groups, so Donnet why don't you tell us a little bit about what students should try to avoid doing... when trying to form these online study groups?

[00:21:11] Donnet Montanez: Yea definitely! This is an interesting one I think it connects with other points you might have, that all of our colleagues have said before. I think one really important thing that you shouldn't do is - "don't ghost your team", and this might look different because it's virtually now you know it. [...] There can be certain communication limitations that might de crease our participation of people in the group. I mean not all of us have the same access to internet or computers you know? So I think it's important that if this is the case for some people that they feel free to open up to their team about this stuff, about these limitations. As my collegue Diana said earlier being flexible, your team should be flexible and open to adapt to this, or other student's needs. Otherwise, if you try to figure out by yourself, if you don't open up to your team they might think that you're not really trying to participate. Like you're not doing your best.

[00:22:23] Charles Lu: Hi so this is Charles, so I think one of the things that I would like to add, that I kind of heard a few folks kind of talk about [...] So just in case, anyone out there isn't familiar with this, the vice-chancellor of student affairs office is actually able to help with certain equipments, you know loaning and things like that. So I highly encourage anyone who might need those types of resources to visit VCSA.UCSD.EDU and take a look through the website as some of the resources that can be offered. And if you need any help finding resources as well, please also contact us at OASIS, we are happy to help in any way, shape or form that we can within our capacity so feel free to visit us or email us at OASIS.UCSD.EDU as well, and we'd be happy to help out in any way that we can.

[00:23:30] Anahi Ibarra: Thank you, Charles, for that valuable piece of information. And thank you to everyone for sharing the insight that they provided today. We hope that our viewers were able to learn a little something about how to form effective online study groups whether that's minimizing the distractions, having open communication, being flexible wit folks, or just establishing those guidelines. Those are all really important steps you can take to form these study groups, and while we do know and understand that these are very strange times that we find ourselves in, we do want to remind you all that we are all going through this together, and you are not alone. As Donnet mentioned earlier, it is kind of strange with our practicing this distancing, but I do want to say a little something cheesy, that I've heard, that we should be practicing social distancing but social closeness right? Let's just try to find a way to transition into this new virtual world together, and still keep close to our community and continue to build community with one another. With that being said, this wraps up our first podcast, and thank you so much for tuning in.

[Post-Script]

[00:24:49] Thanks for listening to the first episode of Triton Tools & Tidbits! I'd like to extend a huge Thank You to the people at OASIS for participating in this series! We unfortunately ran into some recording issues which is why some parts of the interview seemed so brief. Asides from that, I hope you enjoyed this first episode! If you liked it, please consider subscribing or whatever the equivalent is on the platform your listening from.. Keep an eye out for Episode 2 launching next week, where we discuss the social ramifications of online learning.

Songs Used in Episode 1:

In order of appearance:

- Easy Sunday by Bad Snacks
- Slimheart by Blue Dot Sessions
- Greylock by Blue Dot Sessions
- Onwards Upwards by Ketsa
- Our Digital Compass by Blue Dot Sessions
- Greyleaf Willow by Blue Dot Sessions
- Even Dreams of Beaches by Blue Dot Sessions