

## Obtaining Academic Success: Nurturing Grit in Students

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Grit is the effort and interest exercised toward a set goal and positively sustained throughout the course of reaching that goal. Recent evidence suggests that it is not IQ that best determines academic success, but rather the personality trait of grit. Grit being the best predictor of academic success, further research is needed to determine what mechanism can be used to strengthen and nurture grit in struggling students. The goal of this article is to fill this gap, through utilizing character strengths as a means of nurturing and strengthening grit. Moreover, this article goes further on to propose a mechanism of nurturing and strengthening grit in students on academic probation, as means of increasing their GPA. The proposed model is called the Grit Effect (GE).

*Keywords:* academic probation, character strengths, grit, self-regulation, success

La ténacité consiste en l'effort et l'intérêt exercé envers un objectif fixé et soutenue positivement dans l'atteinte de cet objectif. Des données récentes suggèrent que ce n'est pas le QI qui détermine une meilleure réussite scolaire, mais plutôt le trait de personnalité de la ténacité. La ténacité étant le meilleur prédicteur de la réussite scolaire, des recherches sont nécessaires afin de déterminer quel mécanisme peut être utilisé pour renforcer et entretenir la ténacité chez les élèves en difficulté. Le but de cet article est de combler cette lacune, par le biais de l'utilisation des forces de caractère comme un moyen d'entretenir et de renforcer la ténacité. De plus, cet article poursuit en proposant un mécanisme d'entretenir et de renforcer la ténacité chez les étudiants en probation, comme moyen d'accroître leur moyenne pondérée cumulative (MPC). Le modèle proposé est appelé le « Grit Effect » (GE).

*Mots-clés :* probation académique, forces de caractère, ténacité, autorégulation, succès

Success is something for which every person strives. While some people strive for professional success in the workplace or academic success at university, everyone has a goal they wish to attain. For college students, academic success is sought by all, but achieved by only some. In fact, about 33% of college students will be placed on academic probation at one point of their academic career, and of these 33%, 44% will drop out of college (Lindo, Sanders, & Oreopoulos, 2010). However, in the National Academic Advising Association's Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising, there is no indication as to a defined process or manner in which academic advising must be carried out (National Academic

Advising Association [NACADA], 2005). Rather, the advisor's personal beliefs and the institution's own requirements are suggested as the guidelines in advising. Although the NACADA does layout that the advisor is responsible to the student and the academic institution, all advisors are encouraged to do is to guide the student toward appropriate avenues such as tutoring. With such lacking guidelines, these dropout rates should come as no surprise. With almost half of the students placed on academic probation dropping out of college, academia needs to take steps in helping these students build the necessary skills to succeed. However, what is it that the other 56% have that the 44% lack? More importantly, what is it that separates those who are placed on academic probation from those who are not?

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These questions have been asked at even the most competitive institutions including the Military Academy of West Point. Not only must applicants of West Point be nominated by a member of Congress to be considered for admission, but they are also judged on their academic, physical, and leadership potential. Thus, those who are accepted into West Point have high potential for great success in their lives. However, even with such impressive credentials, 1 in 20 of these ARSOF candidates do not pass their first summer at West Point (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Yet, with such remarkable admission credentials, why are these West Point cadets failing? What is lacking in those who fail compared to those who pass? When looking at these West Point cadets, the personality trait of grit was a stronger determinate of success than any of the admission credentials.

Up until about twenty years ago, IQ, which claims to assess human intelligence, was considered the main determinate of academic success (Duckworth et al., 2007). Now, however, the personality trait of grit has been shown to be the strongest correlate of academic success. According to Duckworth et al. (2007), grit is the effort and interest exercised toward a set goal and positively sustained throughout the course of reaching that goal. These findings should give hope to all struggling students because unlike IQ, grit is a personality trait that can be nurtured and strengthened.

While research has looked at different aspects and correlations on grit and its facets of interest and effort, research purposing a means of nurturing and strengthening grit for the purpose of attaining academic success is lacking. This is what the following article seeks to accomplish, a means of defining a way to nurture and strengthen grit in struggling students in order to help them reach academic success. This will be done by first exploring the different facets of grit and how grit relates to self-regulation. Next, a means of pinpointing a way of nurturing and strengthening grit will be given. Lastly, a model will be offered to test the mechanism.

## Grit

The personality trait of grit is rooted in interest and effort. This first facet of interest serves as the motivational starting point that gives the goal a meaning and that feeds a person's optimism. Interest is not, however, associated with pleasure because pleasure focuses on immediate short-term satisfaction (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014); pleasure also discourages sustaining the long-term interest necessary to reach the long-term goal. Rather, interest is associated with meaning. There must first

be personal meaning and passion in reaching a long-term goal in order for a person to overcome the unavoidable setbacks and challenges that will arise. From this, the experience of going after the goal can become satisfying. In fact, "a sense of meaning is positively associated with overall well-being and negatively associated with anxiety and depression" (Von Culin et al., 2014, p. 307). Accompanied by this meaningfulness is optimism. In order to achieve a long-term goal, growth and improvement is necessary. However, being able to receive feedback and overcoming negativity is key. Thus, it is important not to allow challenges and negativity influence the goal. Having meaningfulness within the long-term goal is what allows a person to acknowledge willingly where improvement is needed without applying negativity. Therefore, while grit's facet of interest might not always be about the immediate satisfaction of pleasure, the meaning behind the goal results in more long-term satisfaction and encourages well-being.

The second facet of grit is effort. When a long-term goal has significant meaning, there must be something within a goal that is thought to be engaging. It is from this engagement within a challenge that persistence to keep moving forward in the face of difficulty is rooted (Von Culin et al., 2014). Through this, a sustained effort is encouraged. When looking at engagement, past research has compared it to an experience called flow, "the state of complete absorption and full mastery in highly challenging, highly skilled activities (...) so intense as to preclude self-awareness" (Von Culin et al., 2014, p. 307). Therefore, engagement is being able to lose one's self within a challenge to the point of forgetting time and being able to live completely within the present moment. In order for this to happen, the challenge must be difficult enough to not be considered boring, but easy enough to not be discouraging. The daily challenges that must be beaten in order to achieve the long-term goal need to have some degree of flow in order for anyone to overcome challenges, stay on track, and sustain effort. Although this engagement is not always about pleasure, as the facet of interest shows, a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction would come along with each overcome challenge. While the first facet of grit is about not giving way to instant pleasures and focusing on the meaningfulness behind the long-term goal, grit's second facet of effort is about sustaining effort while going after the goal.

In order to understand and appreciate grit fully, its relationship to self-regulation must be noted. Self-regulation is often considered a facet of consciousness and is "the self's capacity for altering its behaviors" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p. 115). From

self-regulation, self-control and motivation stem. This act of self-control is vital as it is “the successful resolution of a conflict between two action impulses – one that corresponds to a goal that is more valued in the moment, and another that corresponds to a goal that is of greater enduring value” (Duckworth & Gross, 2014, p. 321). Therefore, self-control is what determines whether a student will spend his time out with his friends for the night or study for the next day’s exam. This is an exhausting process as the body consumes high levels of blood glucose while exercising self-control (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Because of the daily demanding effects of self-control, self-regulation’s next ingredient of motivation is crucial. Motivation is what keeps the student going and what gives the self-regulation process personal meaning. Without it, giving up is likely. Together, these ingredients work toward feeding self-regulation. With this in mind, self-regulation does not come without a cost.

Although self-regulation is an important tool to achieve a goal, this process is not perfect. Self-regulation is a limited resource (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). Whenever self-regulation is exercised toward a task, the subsequent task might suffer. This is what Muraven et al. (1998) call “regulatory depletion”. The base of their research is that self-regulation requires willpower. When self-regulation is practiced, a person’s willpower lowers and other tasks may suffer. Over a period of time, practicing self-regulation can lead to fatigue and resignation. Thus, self-regulation is thought to be a limited resource that must be monitored in order to avoid failure. Thankfully, however, self-control is like a muscle that can be trained. According to Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice (2007), “regular exertions of self-control can improve willpower strength” (p. 352). Just as a muscle can be strengthened, so can self-control be nurtured. Although depletion is still possible, the practicing of self-control can reduce the length of time a person can go before experiencing depletion.

When compared to self-regulation, grit is similar and yet different. Not only do self-regulation and grit both predict success, but grit’s facet of effort has similarities to self-regulation such as self-discipline. However, the striking difference between self-regulation and grit is grit’s facet of passion. Unlike self-regulation, a personal meaningfulness is embedded within a long-term goal that encourages a person to keep driving toward the goal even in the face of disappointment and setback. The positivity that must be sustained and directed toward that long-term goal, that might take a decade to achieve, is what differentiates grit from self-regulation when a person is faced with depletion. Thus, this is what makes grit

such an important trait in the academia field. Education is a necessary means in order for achievement to be reached. For a young person who dreams of entering the world of politics for example, four years must be spent as an undergrad student, followed most likely by law school, and then years of building up a career. Grit is what keeps this person driving towards his or her goals, in the face of life changes as an undergrad, to study for the LSAT, to take the bar exam and to seek for career challenges. Grit’s facet of effort is what keeps this person on track, but it is grit’s facet of interest that keeps the passion alive.

Although both self-control and grit are determinates of success, there are some further differences that must be noted. As mentioned by Duckworth and Gross (2014), gritty people do not always display high levels of self-control and people with high levels of self-control do not always display high levels of grit. When comparing self-control to grit, the major difference is that self-control deals with an everyday adaptive mechanism whereas grit is centered on long-term exceptional achievements regardless of numerous disappointments and setbacks. So a person with high self-control might be able to diet successfully for a period of time; without grit, however, this person will most likely jump from diet to diet without staying dedicated to one for an extended period. Also, gritty people who are faced with depletion are more likely to stay positive and bounce back unlike people with just self-control who will be faced with failure and move on to something else.

The positive force within grit that fights depletion is reflected in the West Point study. Not only must applicants of West Point be nominated by a member of Congress to be considered for admission, but they are also judged “on their academic, physical, and leadership potential” (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1094). At their admittance to West Point, these participants completed voluntary confidential questionnaires, which were used to measure their grit and self-discipline levels. After the first summer training session, grit was a better predictor of who would complete the training than any of West Point’s admission credentials. In fact, “West Point cadets with a standard deviation higher in grit have 62% higher odds of remaining at West Point long-term” (Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014, p. 2). In addition, the cadets’ self-discipline scores were positively correlated with grit, displaying the positive relationship between the two traits. Although academics, physicality, and leadership are all important aspects of succeeding at West Point, grit was what ultimately determined who would survive

the Beast Barracks and who would not. Grit bypasses the Beast Barracks, reaches each student's everyday struggle and is essential in achieving success, which is why it must be studied further.

This, however, is where the research on grit ends. No means of nurturing and strengthening grit has been proposed. Because of the significance grit plays in success, this is a vital next step in the research on grit. With nearly half of the students on academic probation dropping out of school, applying a grit-focused nurturing and strengthening mechanism in an academic setting is important in order to help these students. Thankfully, this gap is exactly what this article proposes to close through utilizing the *Values in Action*, or VIA, character strength questionnaire (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

### Detailing the Mechanism

A character strength is “a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing” (Yearley, 1990, p. 13). In Peterson and Seligman's (2003) *Values in Action* (VIA), their 24 character strengths fall into 6 different core virtues of “wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence” with various facets within each (Waters, 2011, p. 82). Moreover, this character strength classification of the VIA is universally applicable as it is not culturally limited (Linkins, Niemiec, Gillham, & Mayerson, 2015). While all of these character strengths are positive qualities that are all admirable, the degree to which each character strength can exist varies from person to person and therefore, can be measured as an individual difference. An important aspect of the VIA is that each character strength can be reflected upon and discussed (Park et al., 2004). This gives people the ability to reinforce a character strength and improve themselves upon it.

To date, several studies have researched character strength interventions. In their 2003 study, Peterson and Seligman found a significant increase in several character strengths after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Some of these increased character strengths included (a) gratitude, (b) hope, (c) leadership and (d) teamwork (Peterson & Seligman, 2003). This research supports the idea that character strengths do fluctuate and react to the environment. In order to see if an intervention targeting specific character strengths could manipulate those particular strengths, Proyer, Ruch, and Buschor (2013) studied life satisfaction and character strengths. With their goal being to increase life satisfaction through targeting specific character strengths that they

believed were associated, the authors found significant increases. When comparing before and after life satisfaction scores against a control group's results, it was found that the intervention group had a significantly greater increase in life satisfaction. These two studies demonstrate that interventions targeting character strengths can be successful. This study gives support to utilize character strengths within an intervention.

Although all 24 VIA character strengths are valuable regarding well-being, several have been found to be positively correlated to academic success. Looking at college students, Lounsbury, Fisher, Levy, and Welsh (2009) focused on the relationship between the VIA character strengths and academic success. Of these 24 character (a) strengths, (b) persistence, (c) judgment, (d) love of learning and (e) self-regulation were most positively correlated with a higher GPA in undergraduate students. This is key as their research pinpointed what character strengths are most significantly correlated with high GPA. In return, high GPA is predicted by grit as it has been shown previously. Thus, through targeting these four particular character strengths, a means of nurturing and strengthening grit is initiated. Furthermore, a relationship between grit and these four character strengths can be found.

First, grit's facet of interest is depicted in various ways in these character strengths. As grit's relationship to self-regulation has already been discussed, the focus will remain on the other three character strengths. Defined as “mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally” (Park et al., 2004, p. 606), love of learning embodies the passion character within the interest facet. Just as this facet is key to beginning a long-term goal, so is the character strength of love of learning is key to the beginnings of academic success. Furthermore, a love of learning supports interest's optimism in the face of negativity character. This is because a love of learning is associated with a willingness for growth and improvement. Next, persistence, defined as “persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles” (Park et al., 2004, p. 606), expresses the strength to keep going and falls within interest's meaningfulness aspect. When a goal is meaningful, persistence to keep going is a natural desire. In fact, persistence can lead to a “stronger interest in future task engagement” (Ntoumanis et al., 2014, p. 233). Lastly, judgment, defined as “thinking things through and examining them from all sides” (Park et al., 2004, p. 606), can be found with grit's facet of interest. This character strength identifies with a level of emotional intelligence that is necessary when making appropriate judgments. As

such, this character strength of judgment allows a person to accept criticism without negativity as things would be examined from all sides. Also, this character strength deals with the self-control aspect of grit. In order to manage time appropriately, mature judgment must be applied to be effective at getting tasks done.

Grit's second facet of effort is also depicted in various ways within these character strengths. First, the love of learning character strength is connected to effort's engagement characteristic. When students are engaged in their work, they are more willing to exert effort. However, the students must first love the intellectual challenge within the material and have the desire to grow from it. Second, the persistence character strength is going to become visible when flow is achieved. As flow makes the challenging experience pleasing, the students' willingness to persist will come naturally. Last, the judgment VIA character strength helps the students recognize when flow is being achieved and when it is not. Furthermore, judgment helps the students recognize when their efforts are resulting in no merit and gives them the wisdom to know when to find another means of going after a goal more successfully.

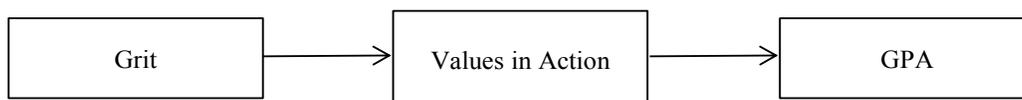
With character strengths being significant factors in successful interventions, they are a valuable means of providing an intervention to help increase GPA. Not only is the VIA able to layout the specific character strengths associated with high GPAs, but these character strengths are also directly related to grit. When looking for a means to nurture and strengthen grit, no studies prior have proposed what specific character traits must be targeted in order to do so. Not only does the research on the VIA mention what key character strengths are correlated with academic success, but those character strengths are directly tied to grit. Thus, through targeting these character strengths of persistence, judgment, self-regulation, and love of learning, a means of nurturing and strengthening grit can be offered (see Figure 1).

### Testing the Model

While the VIA has given a means of targeting how to nurture and strength grit, validating this with empirical proof is essential. The goal is to manipulate

and increase the four VIA strengths of persistence, judgment, self-regulation, and love of learning in order to significantly increase GPA and to ultimately nurture and strengthen grit in students on academic probation. Thus, what follows is an intervention model utilizing the 4 VIA character strengths as a means of helping students increase their GPA, get off of academic probation, and ultimately increase grit. This model, or Grit Effect (GE) as it will be called, represents all 4 VIA character strengths within its methodology. First, the GE will be described and then, the three interventions that inspired this model will be credited.

The GE model is designed to take place over during a semester long academic term within an academic university setting. As the end goal is to nurture and strengthen grits and ultimately increase GPA, all participants would be students on academic probation, typically defined as a GPA below a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. To begin, all students would be given both VIA and grit questions to complete and their scores would be recorded. A *Prepare-Generate-Reflect-Closure model* (Martin, 2008) would serve as the baseline to the GE. These four steps of (a) prepare, (b) generate, (c) reflect and (d) closure would be divided weekly and be applied to the various modules. These modules would include specific focal points that would each be highlighted over a two week period. These modules would include (a) mindfulness, (b) valuing, (c) task management, (d) persistence, (e) anxiety, (f) failure avoidance and (g) uncertain control. To begin, each student would receive a journal to track their experience throughout the intervention. This would serve as a reinforcement tool when trying to implement each module into their daily lives. Each week, a different module would be introduced. During the first week, the Prepare and Generate steps would be completed, and the Reflect and Closure steps the following week. For the Prepare step, the week's module would be explained, and the students would be given general rules and ideas in applying the module (Martin, 2008). Additionally, various outside sources such as examples within the media or university relevances should be highlighted. This would be in order to keep the intervention engaging and meaningful to the students. For the Generate step, students would be given exercises in applying the module. This would be done so that each



*Figure 1.* The theoretical model by which an increase of GPA will be obtained by focusing on the Values in Action in order to nurture Grit.

*Note.* GPA = Grade Point Average.

student could find ways to identify with the module and a means of challenge themselves. For example, the mindfulness module would focus on the emotional intelligence applied when receiving criticism on a homework assignment. Rather than reacting with thoughts of the professor's unfair character or giving up in the class, the mindfulness module would focus on encouraging the students toward a growth mindset by looking at the setback as an opportunity for personal growth. In addition to this, an "if...then" implementation model would be added into this step (Gollwitzer, 2014). This would help fight procrastination when implementing the modules and ultimately create a habit of fighting procrastination in academics as well. For the Reflect step, students would reflect upon the week's module when applying it to their own lives. The goal would be for the students to journal about each experience in order to discover how the module helped them and in what ways were their thoughts and actions challenged. Lastly, for the Closure step, the students would come together again to discuss each of their experiences. Also, showing relationships between modules and how they interact would be done in order to not let the students forget about their past completed module exercises. Lastly, finding ways of continuously engaging the students would be done. This could be achieved through conferences occurring on campus, or having the students visit the faculty to discuss various opportunities on campus. The goal of this would be to get the students more involved and committed to their studies. By the end of this semester-long intervention, students would again be given VIA and grit questionnaires, and their pre and post intervention score would be compared along with the change of their GPAs. Ultimately, these students participating in the GE would have a significant increase in GPA, the four VIA character strengths would be significantly increased, and their grit scores would be significantly increased as well.

At the base of the GE model would be Martin's (2008) *Prepare-Generate-Reflect-Closure model*. Researching the effects of a multidimensional intervention targeting low performing high school students, Martin (2008) sought to nurture motivation and engagement in struggling students. His intervention consisted of a Prepare-Generate-Reflect-Closure process that consisted of 13 various modules. The module of (a) valuing, (b) task management and (c) persistence were all significantly increased. There was also a significant decrease in (a) anxiety, (b) failure avoidance, and (c) uncertain control. This intervention serves as a good baseline for the GE for several reasons. First, Martin (2008) found both the motivation and engagement of the students to have significantly increased when comparing pre and post

scores. These two increases embody both the interest and effort facets of grit as well as the love of learning, persistence, and self-regulation character strengths within the VIA. Second, this intervention occurred within an academic setting, which makes its reasonably applicable to the GE.

The second intervention drawn upon was Gollwitzer's procrastination intervention (2014). In his implementation intentions or "if...then" planning, Gollwitzer (2014) examines an intervention of framing where and when to go after a goal (the "if") and a next step response (the "then"). For example, a student might decide that if they finish the outline of their paper, they will then immediately start on the paper's introduction. This intervention purposed by Gollwitzer (2014) focuses on the idea of taking advantages of opportunities, staying focused, using resources effectively, and not becoming exhausted. One of the intervention applications mentioned is the mental contrasting, which "implies juxtaposing fantasies about desired future outcomes with obstacles of present reality" (p. 311). Through applying both mental contrasting and the ("if...then") implementation theory, Oettingen and Gollwitzer (2010) purposed an intervention to enhance self-regulation. First, desired outcomes are imagined along with any possible difficulties that might arise; next, "if...then" statements are created to help prevent and resolve those potential difficulties in order to stay on track toward the desired outcome (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010). In this study, both self-esteem and self-discipline were also significantly increased.

This intervention holds several key factors that the GE would benefit from. This is because of the increased (a) self-regulation, (b) self-esteem, and (c) self-discipline that Gollwitzer's (2014) intervention found. While the self-regulation could be applied to the self-regulation VIA character strength, self-esteem could be applied to the love of learning and persistence VIA character strengths. Lastly, self-discipline could be applied under the self-regulation VIA character strength. This would make the GE more effective in nurturing and strengthening the four VIA character strengths.

Finally, the last essential intervention that would be imbedded with the GE would be one that nurtured mindfulness. Defined as "a state of nonjudgmental attentiveness to and awareness of moment-to-moment experiences", mindfulness has several striking characteristics (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013, p. 310). First, mindfulness involves an emotional intelligence regarding the recognition of inner experiences with the outside environment. Next, mindfulness is about being able to process this without

applying any evaluations, positive or negative. Third, a mindful individual is not concerned about the past or the future; rather, mindfulness is about living in the present without the worries of the future and the holdbacks of the past. Lastly, mindfulness is not an all or nothing personality trait; it varies in degree from person to person. Together, these aspects of mindfulness embody the judgment and love of learning VIA character strengths. The engagement of living in the present allows students to more fully participate and appreciate their studies. Also, mindfulness prevents a person from any quick or impertinent decisions as the focus is not on applying evaluations, but rather simply taking things in as they come.

Together, these three interventions inspired the GE. While each of the interventions targets a different aspect of the four VIA character strengths through different means, they all reasonably bounce off of and support one another. Through the offered GE model, utilizing the VIA as a means of increasing GPA and to ultimately nurturing and strengthening grit in students is reasonable. With the significant findings of the previous three interventions, creating a character strength focused intervention seems to be a good step toward helping students on academic probation to increase their GPA. The GE model offers the beginning of a theoretical grit nurturing and strengthening intervention for struggling students.

### Discussion

While grit has shown itself to be a powerful tool in attaining success, the VIA gives research the mechanisms needed to format an intervention to nurture and strengthen grit. This is the vital next step in grit research, and it must be taken seriously in order to help academics better their own counseling programs. First, in this research, we addressed the similarities and differences between self-regulation and grit in order to fully appreciate grit's unique qualities and distinct voice. Next, the significant findings of how grit is more strongly correlated to success than IQ was shown with the West Point study. Following this, grit's facets of interest and effort were broken down in order to fully understand what gives grit its significance. However, this is where all past research has stopped and where this research comes into play. Through detailing the components of the VIA, how the VIA's character strengths of persistence, judgment, self-regulation and love of learning can increase grit and in turn GPA was shown. This tool is what lays out the mechanisms needed to nurture and strengthen grit in students.

Lastly, an intervention utilizing the VIA's character strengths related to academic success ought to be tested. This future intervention could incorporate the past intervention above as a starting point. This could be done as a semester-long intervention with students on academic probation. This future study could hopefully help reduce the number of students of academic probation who dropout every year.

This article alone, however, is not sufficient. Further research on a possible gender difference in regards to grit seems reasonable. Indeed, Campbell and Henry (1999) conducted research on gender differences on the self-attribution of academic success in relation with the process of learning. Their study showed a significant difference between men and women's responses regarding their specific explanation for their performance in their college classes. While women chose "effort" significantly more than men did, women also chose "ability" significantly less than men did (Campbell & Henry, 1999). In support of Campbell and Henry's research, Lindo et al. (2010) looked at gender differences regarding academic probation. Their research shows that women are more motivated by rewards than men and that, because of this, academic probation does not have any significant effect on women. However, it was found that men are twice as likely to drop out due to being placed on academic probation (Lindo et al., 2010, p. 97). Both of these studies support the idea that women attribute success to effort, while men think of success in relation to ability. Thus, a difference between genders regarding grit levels and strengthening ability seems reasonable due to grit's facets of interest and effort.

While struggling in college is common, how one approaches each challenge is what makes the difference. Thankfully, the personality trait of grit can be nurtured and strengthened. This personality trait has repeatedly been the most positive determinant of success and not IQ. Therefore, for struggling students, there is a means of achieving your goals. However, it is the responsibility of the academic institution to give these students the necessary tools on how to do this.

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