

Could GRIT be a trend that sticks in higher-ed?

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A new partnership focuses on teaching students to improve their GRIT in order to help them accomplish their goals.



[1]Recently, the idea of GRIT, or Growth, Resilience, Instinct and Tenacity, is increasingly seen by educators [2] and even the Obama Administration [3] as a key to success in higher education.

And the same goes for employers. A poll sent to 20,000 employers across the world by PEAK Learning [4] revealed that if a decision came down to someone with perfect skills and qualifications but little to no GRIT versus someone with high GRIT but missing a few pieces of useful experience, a whopping 98 percent said they would rather employ the later.

PEAK Learning was founded in 1987 by Paul G. Stoltz, Ph.D., as part of his 35-year quest to answer the question of why certain people win or succeed while others do not. Initially, Stoltz turned to everything from psychology to neuroscience, but was unable to find any substantive answers. Eventually, he discovered what he believes is an accurate predictor: adversity.

“Adversity is surely the epicenter,” Stoltz said. “There is something fundamental about when human beings interact with adversity. It’s high-octane, pivotal, and affects everything that happens in life and who we become.”

PEAK Learning developed the GRIT Gauge, which the company says is the only assessment validated to quantify predictors such as performance, productivity, optimism, quality of life and innovation to measure the quality and quantity of GRIT.

“We know GRIT can be improved, and we know how to do it,” Stoltz said. “We can enact a measurable improvement of a statically significant amount, and once it goes up, we have never seen it go down. Now, students will gauge it, grow it, and it will stick. When we measure this, GRIT heightens the likelihood of improving your station in life.”

(Next page: How the GRIT Gauge is used in institutions)

Building on the blooming popularity of GRIT in higher-ed, Pearson Education [5] has recently partnered with

PEAK Learning in order to infuse their MyCareerSuccessLab ^[6] service with the means assess a student's GRIT.

Pearson's MyCareerSuccessLab, an online homework, tutorial and assessment technology, will now come equipped with a customized GRIT Gauge, aiming to provide learners with the skills and mindset they need to secure successful, sustainable career opportunities. Through this, learners will be able to better define career goals, map academic and career plans, and learn how to best market themselves to future employers, explains Pearson.

"From our perspective, mindset and skill set are equally important to the success of the student in their education and career life," said Pearson VP for College and Career Readiness Jodi McPherson. "Faculty respond well to the idea of mindset and GRIT, and we want to shift the focus towards students taking more accountability and responsibility in bringing about their goals. To grow both mindset and skill set gives students the ability to change their very life."

Students, and even faculty, are able to take the assessment required to gauge their initial GRIT, after which they will receive a full breakdown of what their scores mean. They will then be given tips continually to help them improve, and complete activities called GRIT gainers at the end of each of the nine milestones of MyCareerSuccessLab. Learners will also have access to Career Live Coaching provided by GRIT-certified coaches (which students can specifically request or be randomly paired with) to give students individually-focused attention and help them build effective career plans.

In addition to helping students better enhance their growth mindset, resilience, instinct and tenacity, the GRIT Gauge also measures robustness and the quality of one's GRIT, emphasizes PEAK Learning. This includes dumb GRIT, or stubborn approaches to improving, versus smart GRIT, wherein one steps back and decides if they still want something and if so, how to best change course. Similarly, good GRIT or bad GRIT extends to how beneficial or stressful the pursuit of a goal is to one's self or others.

Ultimately, GRIT is focused on bolstering factors such as ambition, energy, goal completion and magnitude, persistence, employment level, wellness and quality of life, and aims to make huge strides in closing the gap between what employers need and universities provide.

"Everybody cares about something, be it a healthy life, accomplishing goals, or contributing to the world," Stoltz said. "Once you help people revisit and reconnect to that, the why reawakens their try."

Stoltz hopes that eventually the learning world, no matter the location or format of the institution, will embrace the idea of GRIT, and that schools will make it a selling point and part of their culture to teach faculty, staff and advisors about how to best help students enhance their GRIT. Pearson is similarly committed to helping institutions use GRIT to enhance their current practices.

For now, the GRIT Gauge is available for higher education and high school students on MyCareerSuccessLab, with plans to continue expanding to middle school in the coming year.

“I really commend Pearson for their commitment, Stoltz said. “They’re really transforming into to a true learning and impact entity. In a very sincere way, they very much care about equipping students to succeed.”

In conclusion, Stoltz added, “I think it might be the single biggest game-changer in the world of education. I really do.”

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