



# Why Students Do Not Seek Help and How to Help Them

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PERSISTENCE  
+PLUS

► TODAY'S FACILITATOR



**Ross E. O'Hara**  
Behavioral Researcher

- Ph.D. in social psychology from Dartmouth College
- Behavioral Researcher at [Persistence Plus](#) since 2014
- Writes about nudging in higher education for *Psychology Today* ("[Nudging Ahead](#)")



## ► STRUGGLING WITH FINANCES

### Why Would He Not Seek Help?

- ☐ Unaware of financial resources
- ☐ Wants to figure things out on own
- ☐ Afraid to jeopardize financial aid
- ☐ Uncomfortable asking for money
- ☐ Ashamed to reveal poverty

## ► STRUGGLING IN CLASS

### Why Would She Not Seek Help?

- ☐ Unaware of tutoring center
- ☐ Wants to figure things out on own
- ☐ Doesn't want to let people down
- ☐ Given up on improving math skills
- ☐ Afraid to ask for help





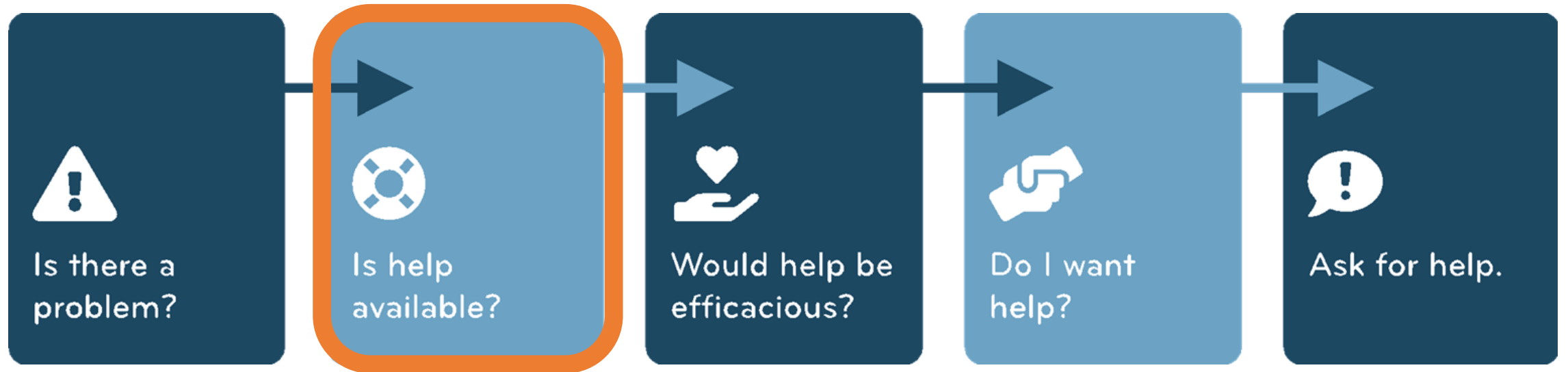
## ► STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION

### Why Would He Not Seek Help?

- ☐ Unaware of counseling center
- ☐ Wants to figure things out on own
- ☐ Assumes these feelings are normal
- ☐ Doesn't want to be a burden
- ☐ Raised to not discuss feelings

# A Psychosocial Model of Help Seeking

## ► A PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HELP SEEKING

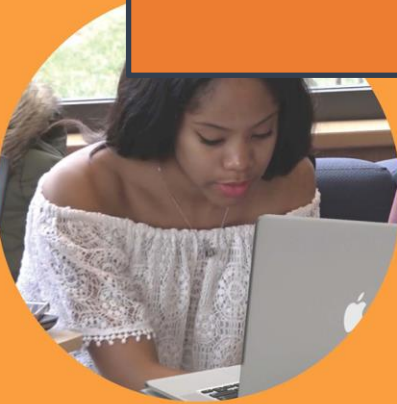


Adapted from Karabenick & Dembo (2011)



# INFORMATION IS NOT ENOUGH

Meet  
 Math  
 Syed  
 Babul  
 Brandon



It's interactive.  
 It's convenient.  
 It's free.

Make an appointment  
 in Mercy Campus

## STEM SCIENCE ~ TECHNOLOGY ~ ENGINEERING COHORT ENHANCED

FREE  
 TUTORING

LAPTOPS  
 TEXTBOOKS  
 CALCULATORS

COFFEE  
 SNACKS  
 MICROWAVE

STUDY SPACE



### SUBJECTS

- Accounting
- Anthropology
- Art
- Astronomy
- Biology
- Business
- Chinese
- Communication Science
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Engineering
- English

**MAIN LOCATION**  
 1720 CHEMISTRY  
 734.764.9326  
**SATELLITE LOCATION**  
 2165 UNDERGRADUATE SCIENCE BUILDING  
 734.764.5326  
[slc@umich.edu](mailto:slc@umich.edu)

**ABOUT US**  
 The Science Learning Center (SLC) is an interdisciplinary resource center sponsored by the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) to support teaching and learning in the natural sciences at the University of Michigan.

**OUR MISSION**  
 The Science Learning Center (SLC) provides inclusive spaces and opportunities for undergraduate students to collaborate and learn in the natural sciences. Through coordinated efforts with LSA faculty and staff and the use of evidence-based practices, the SLC offers peer-led study groups, tutoring, and other programs to actively engage all students in their learning and empower them to reach their academic, personal, and career goals.

- The SLC employs six full-time staff members.
- The SLC employs over 300 student staff, including study group facilitators, tutors, and desk staff.
- The SLC provides both drop-in and appointment-based tutoring services (see details on back).

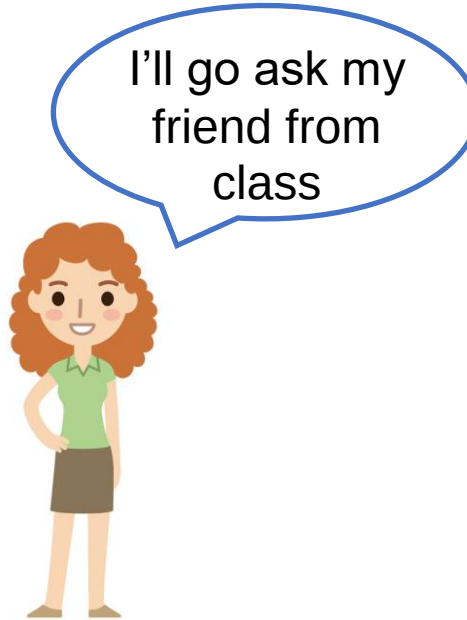
**OVERVIEW OF SERVICES**  
 81 Computers/MPrinting  
 Classes/Labs  
 Course Reserve Materials  
 GSI Office Hours  
 Meeting Space  
 Pre-Health Advisor Office Hours  
 SLC Library  
 Special Events  
 Study Groups  
 Tutoring  
 Workshops

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## ► FOUR TYPES OF HELP SEEKERS



STRATEGIC  
FORMAL (17%)



STRATEGIC  
INFORMAL (25%)



NON-STRATEGIC  
(35%)



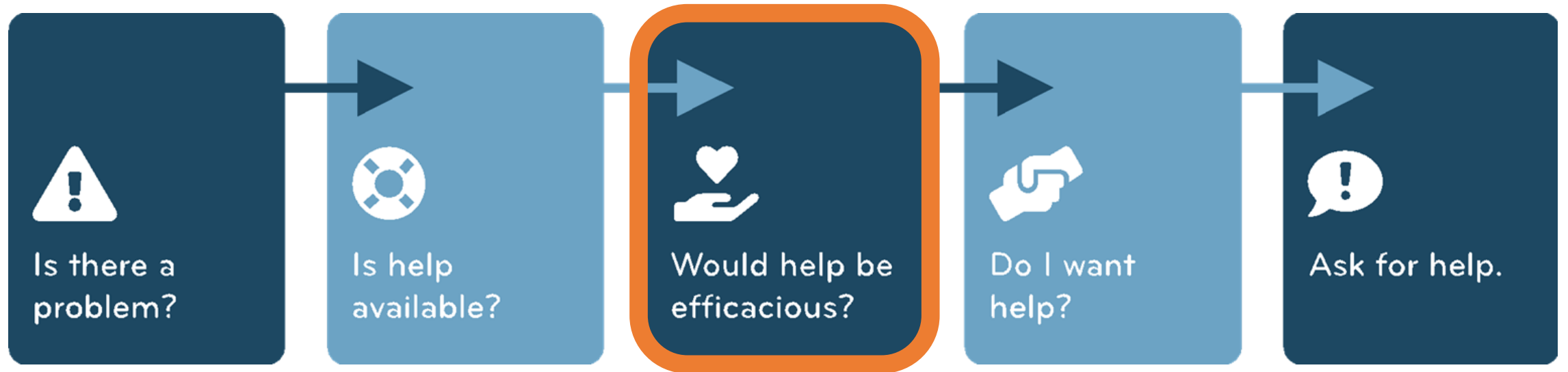
AVOIDANT (23%)



## ► WHO CAN I GET TO HELP?

- A student's help seeking strategy may vary by type of help needed
- Would this student feel more comfortable getting help from...
  - Formal sources? (e.g., Professor, Tutoring Center, yourself)
  - Or informal sources? (e.g., friends, family, internet)
- Could this student help themselves?
  - [Advice giving interventions](#) (e.g., Ekreis-Winkler et al., 2018; 2019)
- Does this student truly want help, or just the answer?
  - Developing growth mindsets (e.g., Dweck, 2016)

## ► A PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HELP SEEKING



Adapted from Karabenick & Dembo (2011)

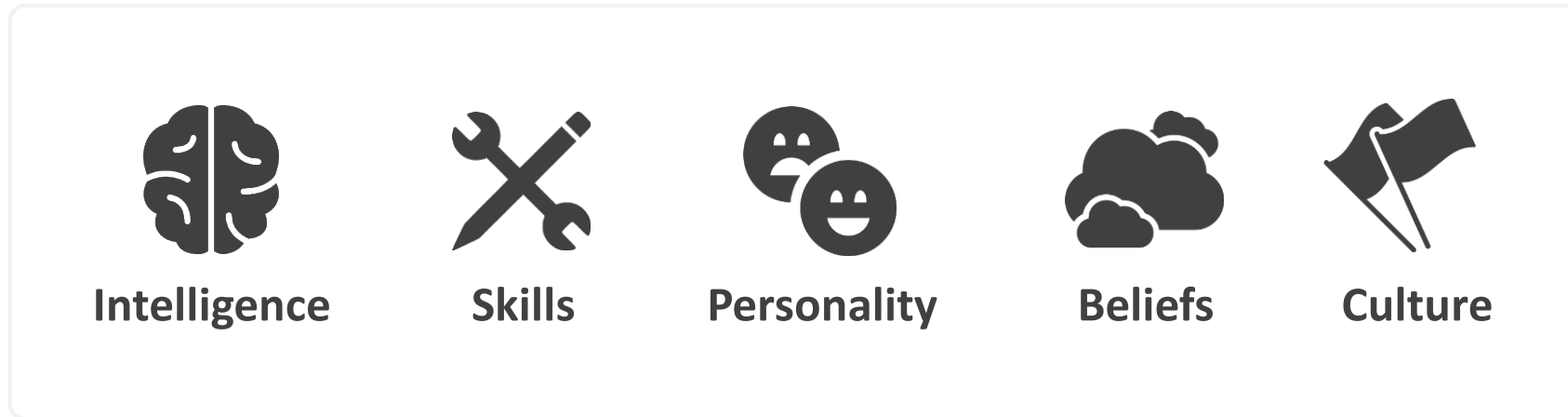
## ► FIXED VERSUS GROWTH MINDSETS ABOUT LEARNING

|                                 | FIXED MINDSET | GROWTH MINDSET |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| LEARNING GOAL                   |               |                |
| VIEW OF EFFORT                  |               |                |
| RESPONSE TO CHALLENGE           |               |                |
| GRADES IN RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY |               |                |

Adapted from Yeager & Dweck (2012)

## ► GROWTH MINDSETS ARE NOT JUST ACADEMIC

- The belief that efforts to change can be successful

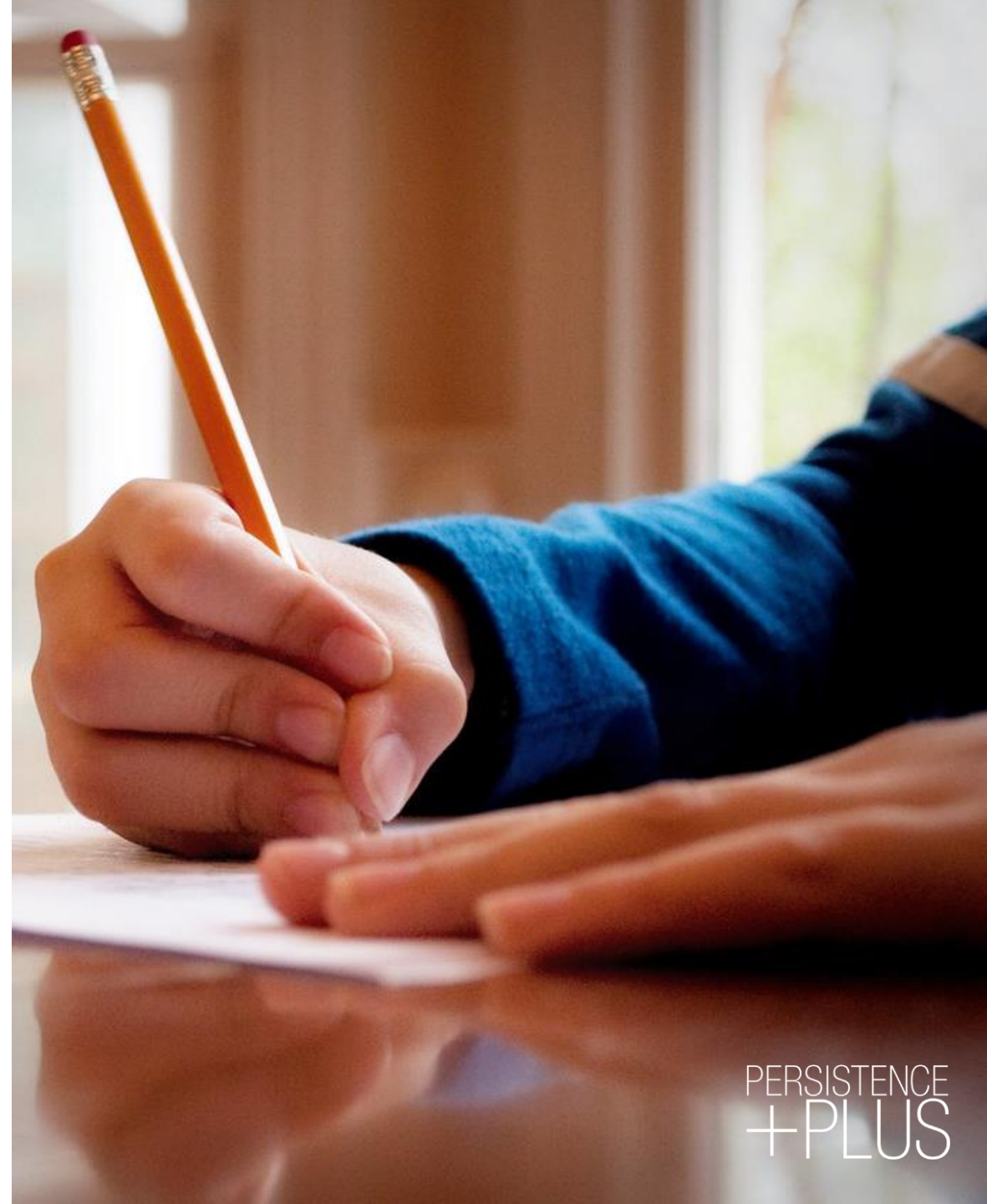


- Growth mindsets also lead to...
  - Giving people the benefit of the doubt
  - Lower stress levels
  - Overall better health (Yeager et al., 2014)

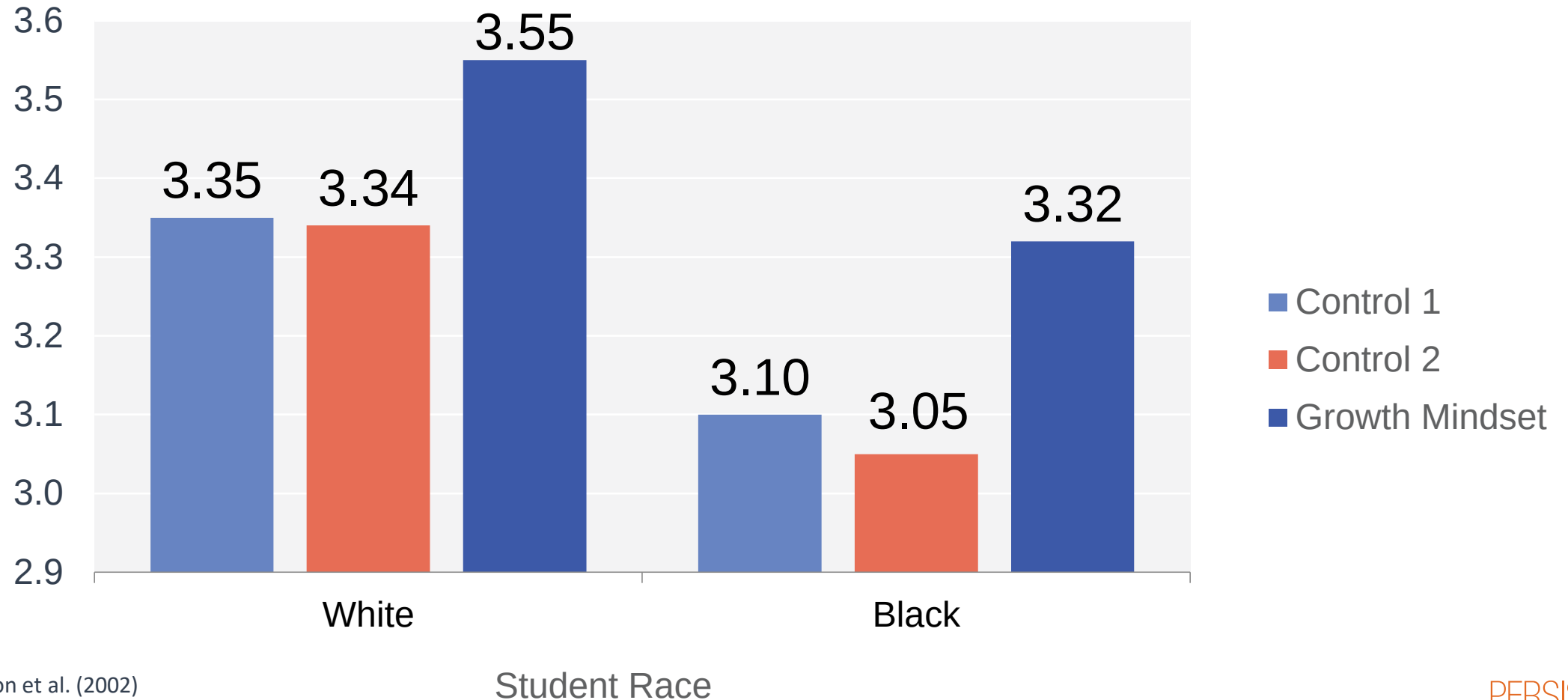
## ► A GROWTH MINDSET INTERVENTION

“Because intelligence is malleable, humans are capable of learning and mastering new things at any time in their lives. This message is especially important to get across to younger, struggling students. If these students view intelligence as a fixed quantity, they may feel that they are incapable of learning if they encounter difficulty with their school work. If, however, students can be convinced that intelligence expands with hard work, they may be more likely to remain in school and put effort into learning.”

Aronson, Fried, & Good (2002)

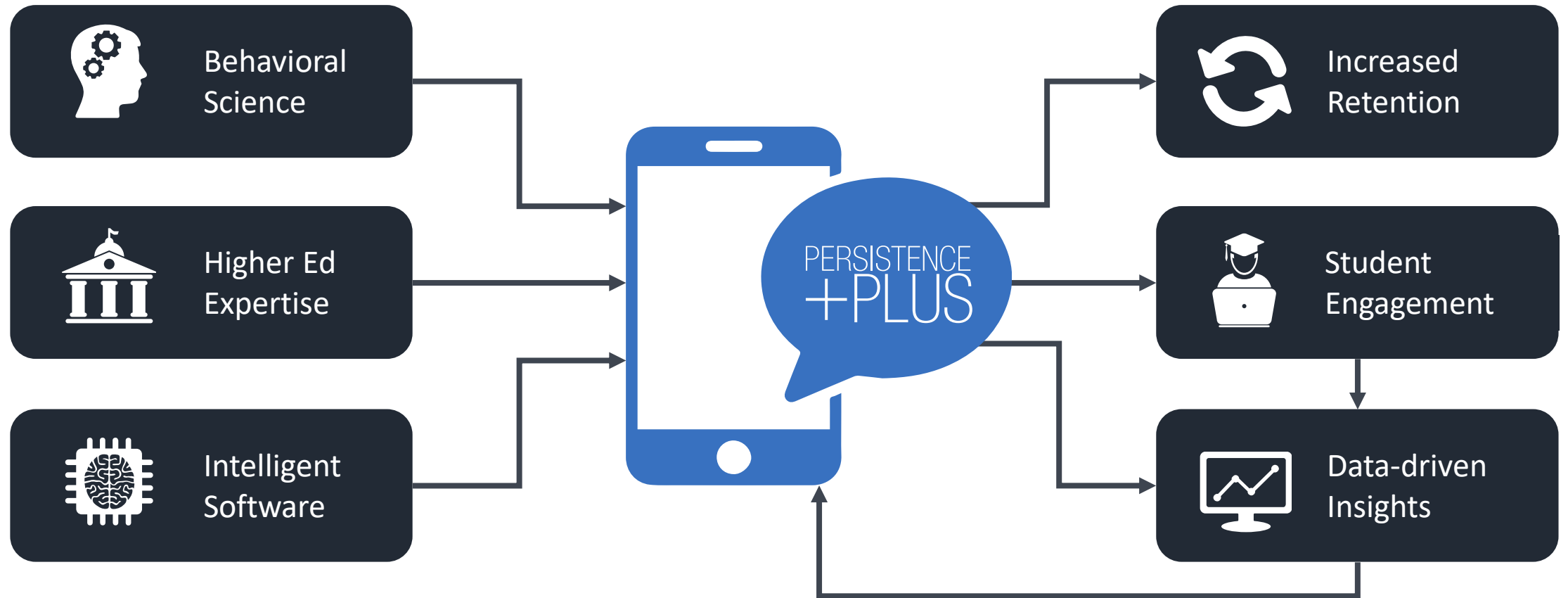


► GROWTH MINDSETS INCREASE COLLEGE GPA

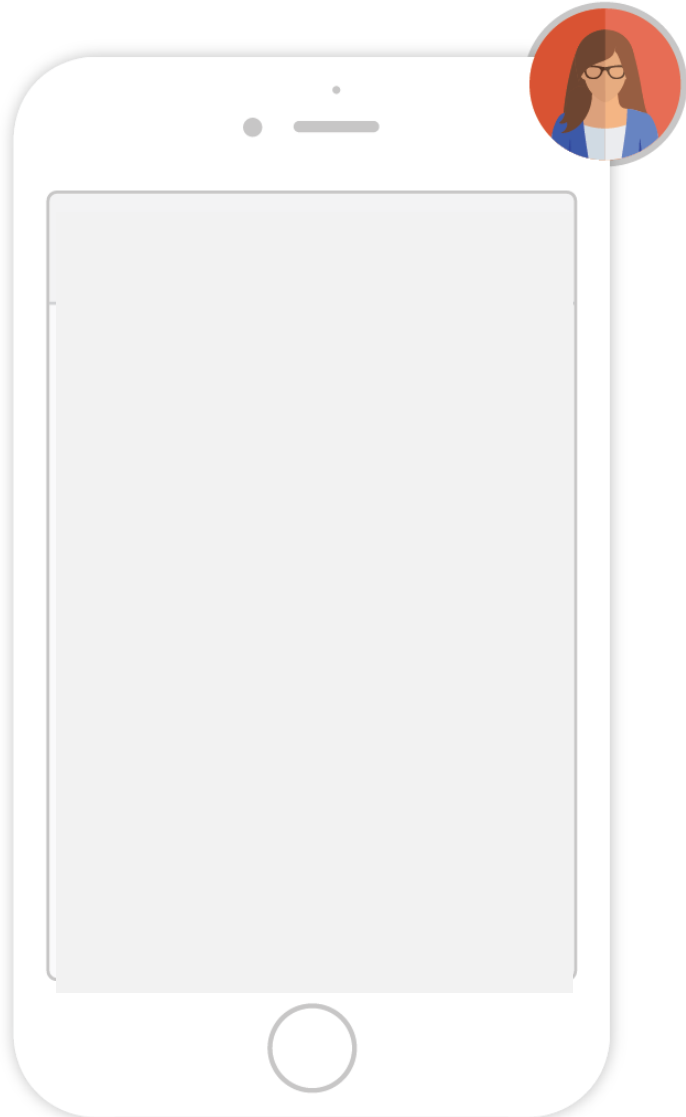


Aronson et al. (2002)

## ► THE PERSISTENCE PLUS MODEL



## ► NUDGING A GROWTH MINDSET



Some people believe you're born smart, other people believe you work hard to become smart. Which do you believe? Text: Born, Work, Unsure

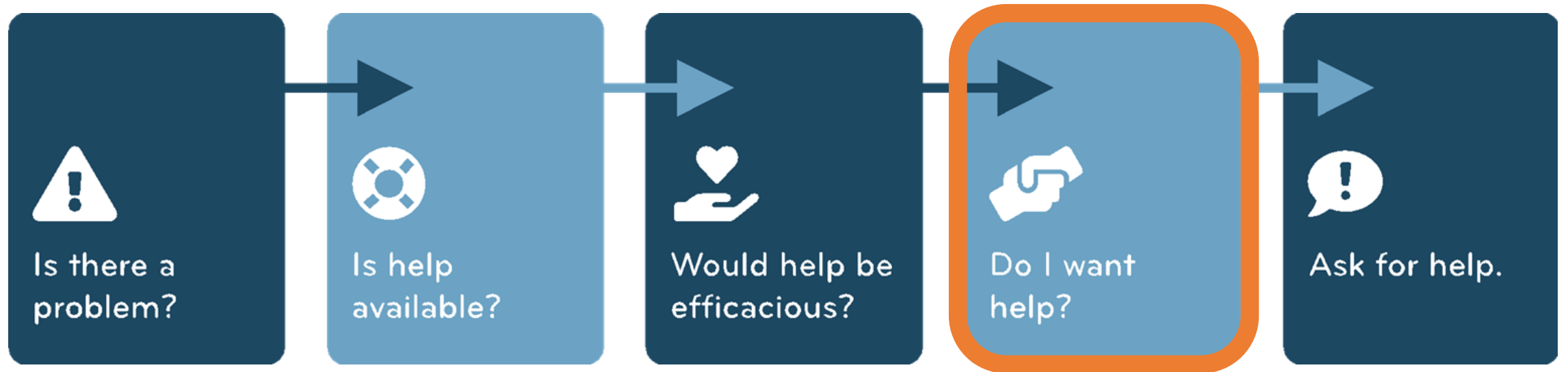
Born

Research shows that your brain improves with practice. What's one thing you used to be bad at but became better at over time?

Getting better with time management.  
Procrastinating less!

Any skills (such as math & writing) can be improved with study & perseverance. For more help check out the resources available to you at the Academic Support Ctr in CC204.

## ► A PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HELP SEEKING



Adapted from Karabenick & Dembo (2011)

► IMPOSTER SYNDROME

“I’m stupid compared to everyone else in my dorm and I’m doing all I can. They’re already doing research and in three different leadership organizations and still making 4.0s and I need to be on their level but I’m not.

“Only bombed 4 out of my 5 midterms. Who really needs to succeed? McDonalds is fun.



▶ AVOIDING SHAME

► CULTURE OF SELF-RELIANCE

“If I’m feeling down... feeling like kinda’ sad that day... I rarely talk to anybody like that, you know. you know. I like to just stay to myself, just breathe. I do a couple of things that I feel like that will make feel a little bit comfortable. But as far as talking to somebody or showing them exactly what is going on with me, I feel like I do not do that as often.

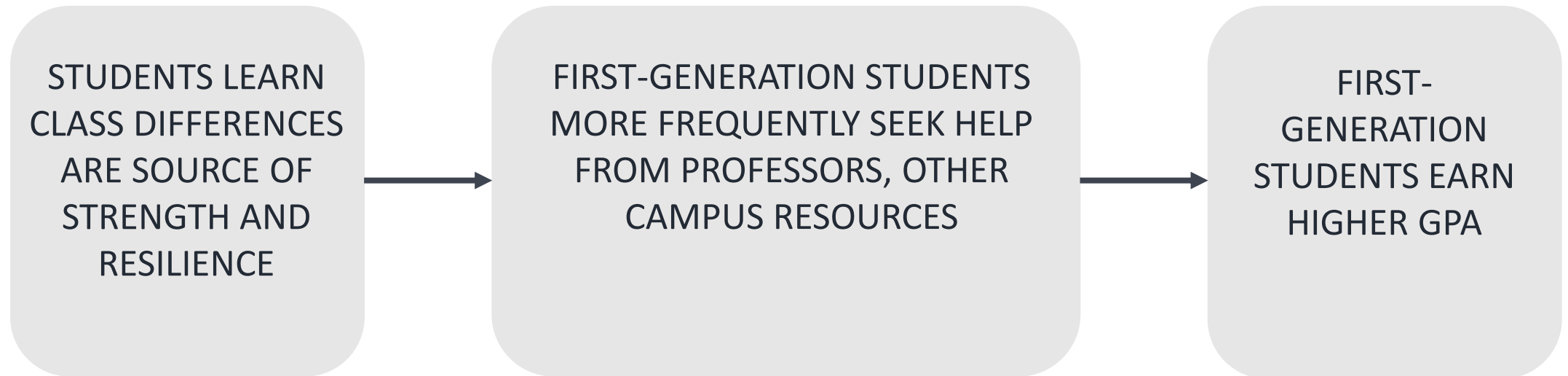
## ► A DIFFERENCE EDUCATION INTERVENTION



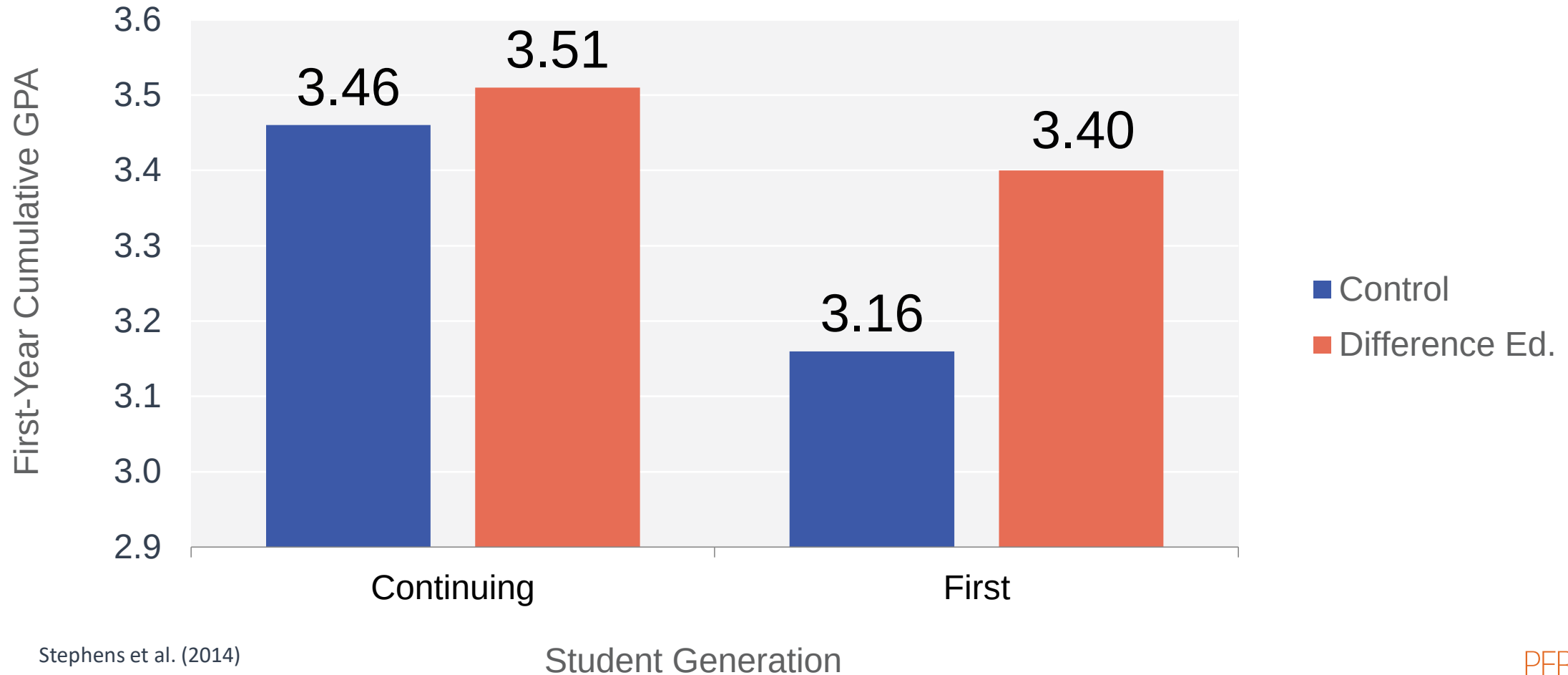
Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin (2014)

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► DIFFERENCE EDUCATION INCREASES HELP SEEKING

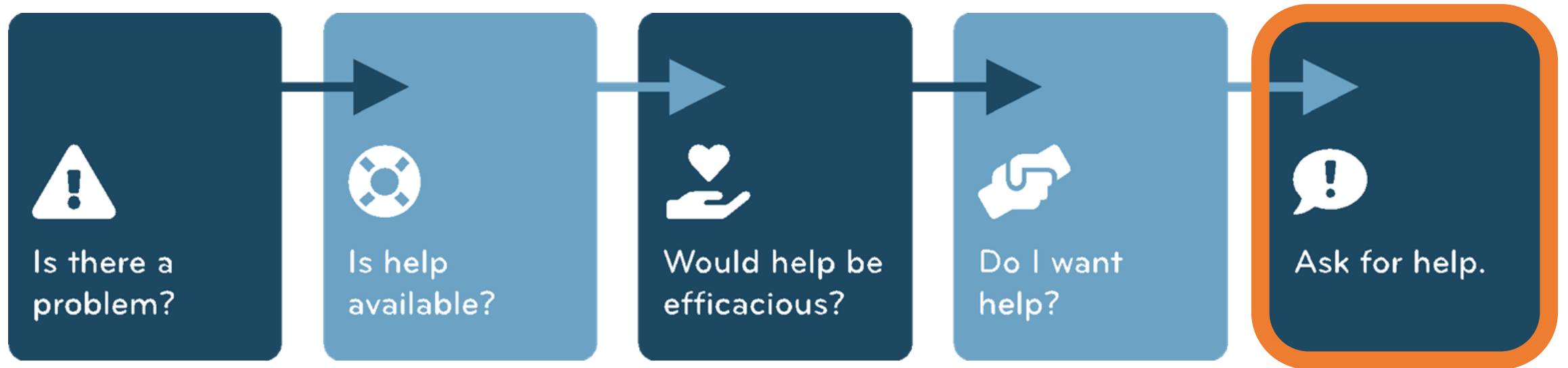


► DIFFERENCE EDUCATION INCREASES GPA



Stephens et al. (2014)

## ► A PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HELP SEEKING



Adapted from Karabenick & Dembo (2011)

► GETTING A FLU SHOT



## ► IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

**[Company Name] IS HOLDING A FREE FLU SHOT CLINIC.**

Many people find it helpful to **make a plan** for getting their shot. You can write yours here:



,

(day of the week) (month) (day)

Flu shots will be available on site at the **[location of relevant free flu shot clinic]** at the following times:

|                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Monday, October 26th    | 7:00 am – 3:30 pm |
| Wednesday, October 28th | 7:00 am – 3:30 pm |
| Friday, October 30th    | 7:00 am – 3:30 pm |
| Tuesday, November 3rd   | 7:00 am – 3:30 pm |
| Thursday, November 5th  | 7:00 am – 3:30 pm |

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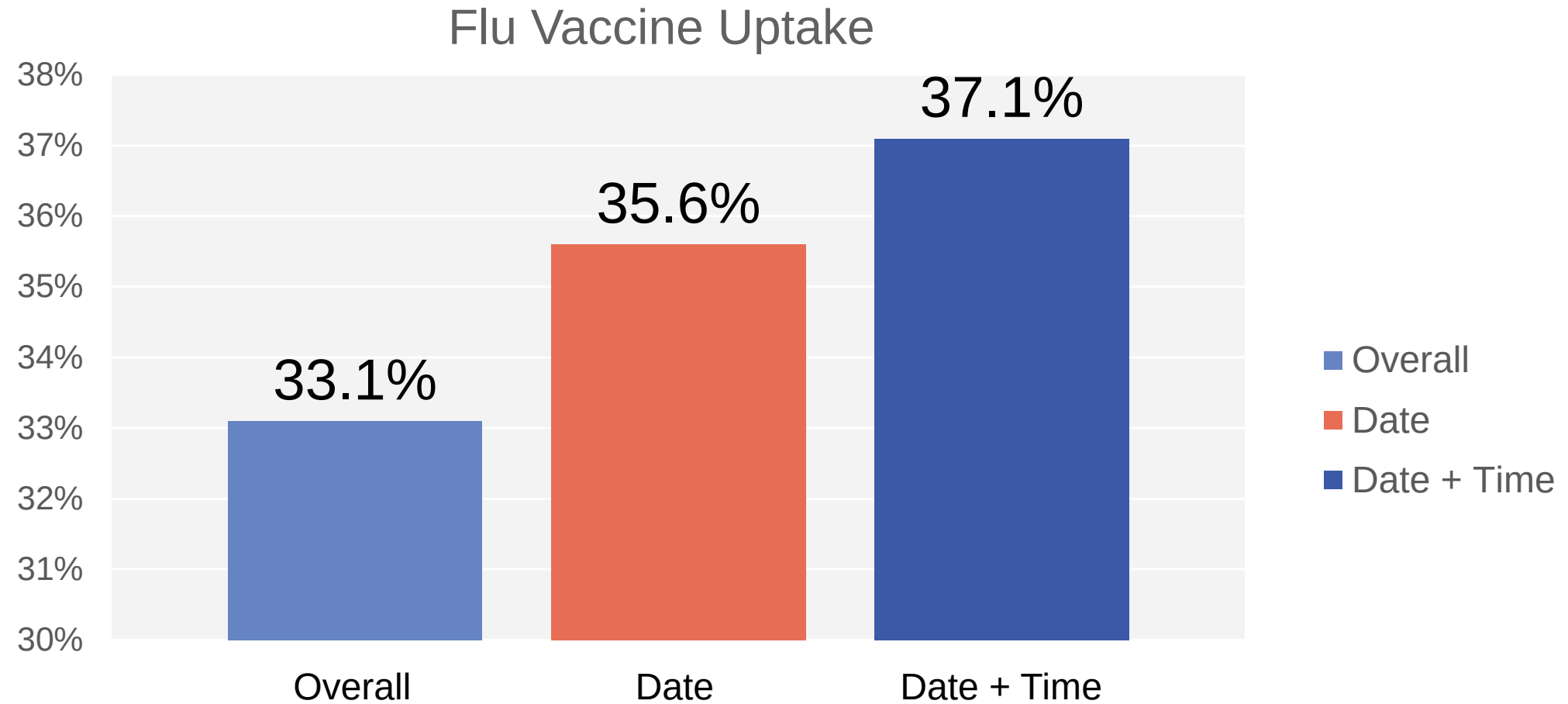
,   at

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## ► SPECIFICITY MATTERS



Milkman et al. (2011)

## ► MENTAL CONTRASTING

### GOAL

Practice for the PSAT

### SAMPLE

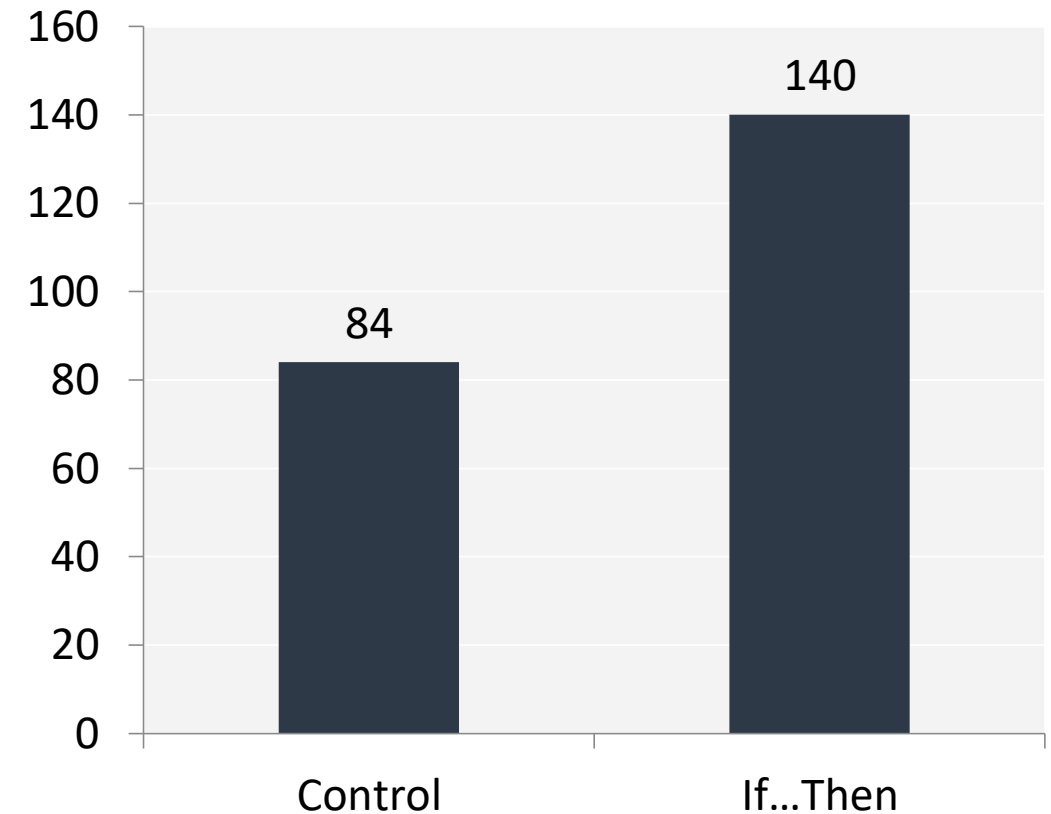
66 high school sophomores

### PROCEDURE

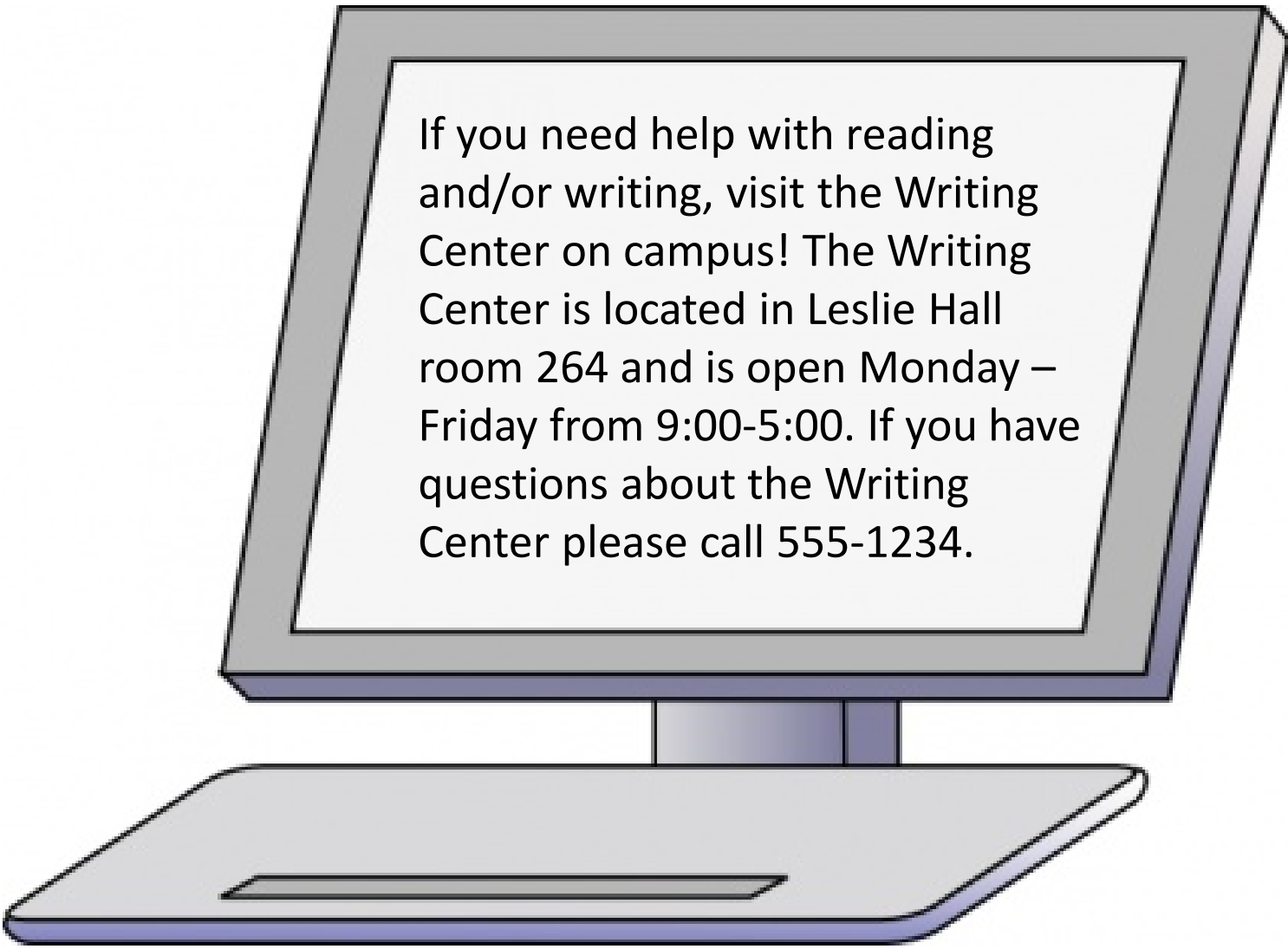
- Students given PSAT prep book
- Half of students randomly assigned to use If...Then statements

Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettinger & Gollwitzer (2011)

PSAT practice problems solved

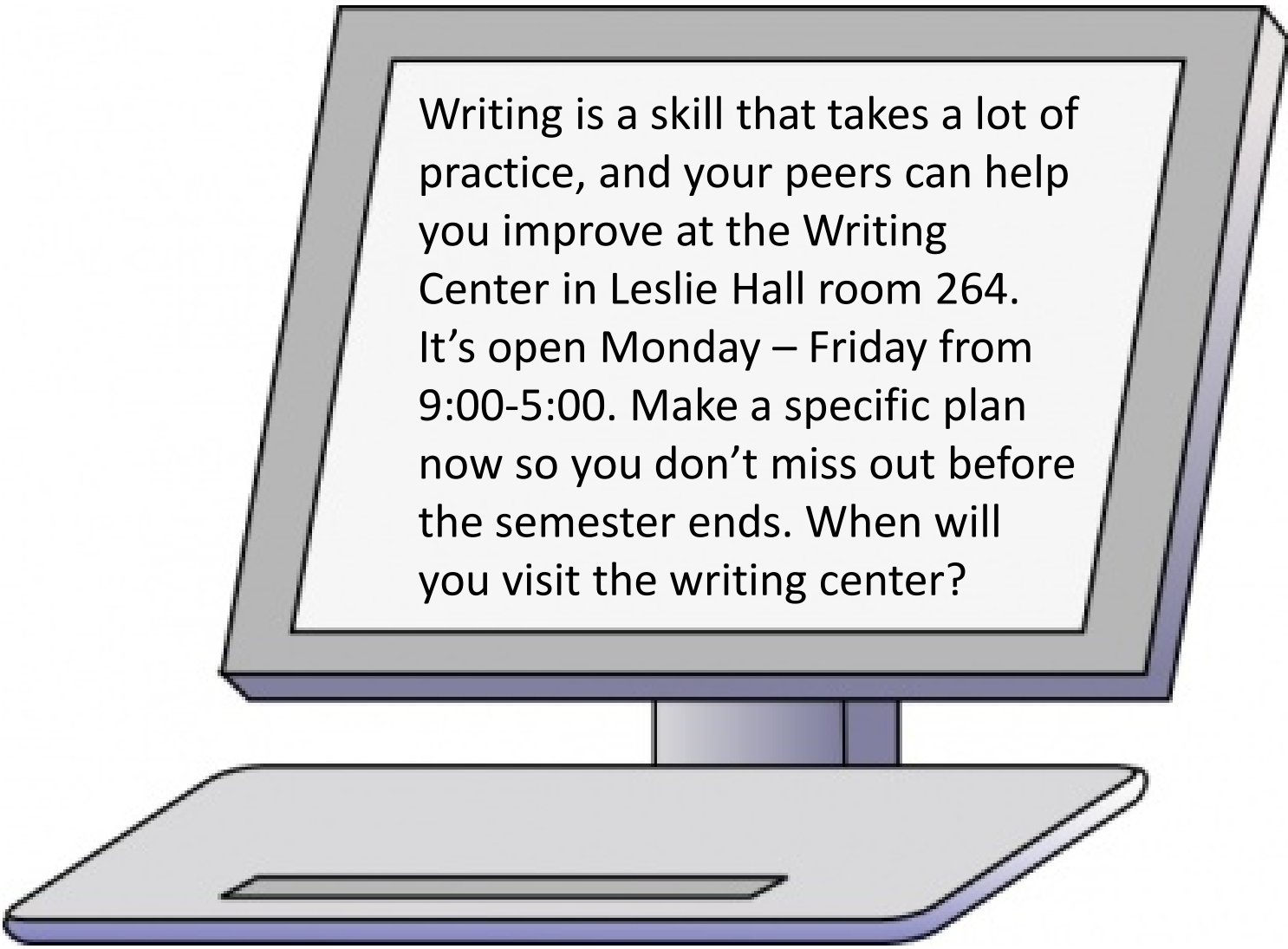


## ► INFORMATION ABOUT CAMPUS RESOURCES



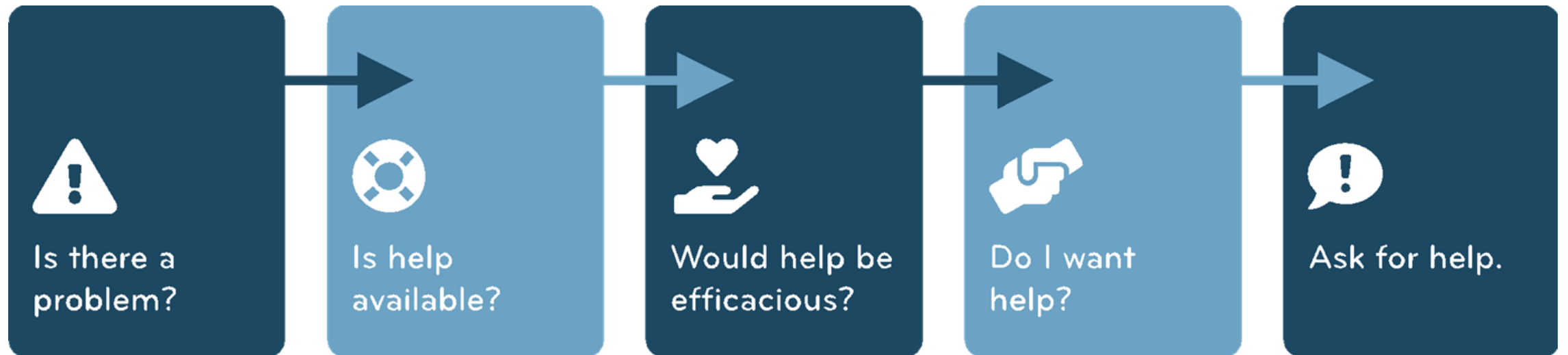
If you need help with reading and/or writing, visit the Writing Center on campus! The Writing Center is located in Leslie Hall room 264 and is open Monday – Friday from 9:00-5:00. If you have questions about the Writing Center please call 555-1234.

## ► NUDGING TO CAMPUS RESOURCES

A stylized illustration of a computer monitor with a grey frame and a light blue base. The screen is white and contains black text. The text is a reminder to visit the Writing Center in Leslie Hall room 264, noting its hours (Monday-Friday, 9:00-5:00) and encouraging students to make a plan to visit before the semester ends.

Writing is a skill that takes a lot of practice, and your peers can help you improve at the Writing Center in Leslie Hall room 264. It's open Monday – Friday from 9:00-5:00. Make a specific plan now so you don't miss out before the semester ends. When will you visit the writing center?

## ► A PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF HELP SEEKING



Adapted from Karabenick & Dembo (2011)



# THANK YOU

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[@student2grad](mailto:@student2grad)

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[psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nudging-ahead](https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nudging-ahead)