Retention, student engagement and deep learning

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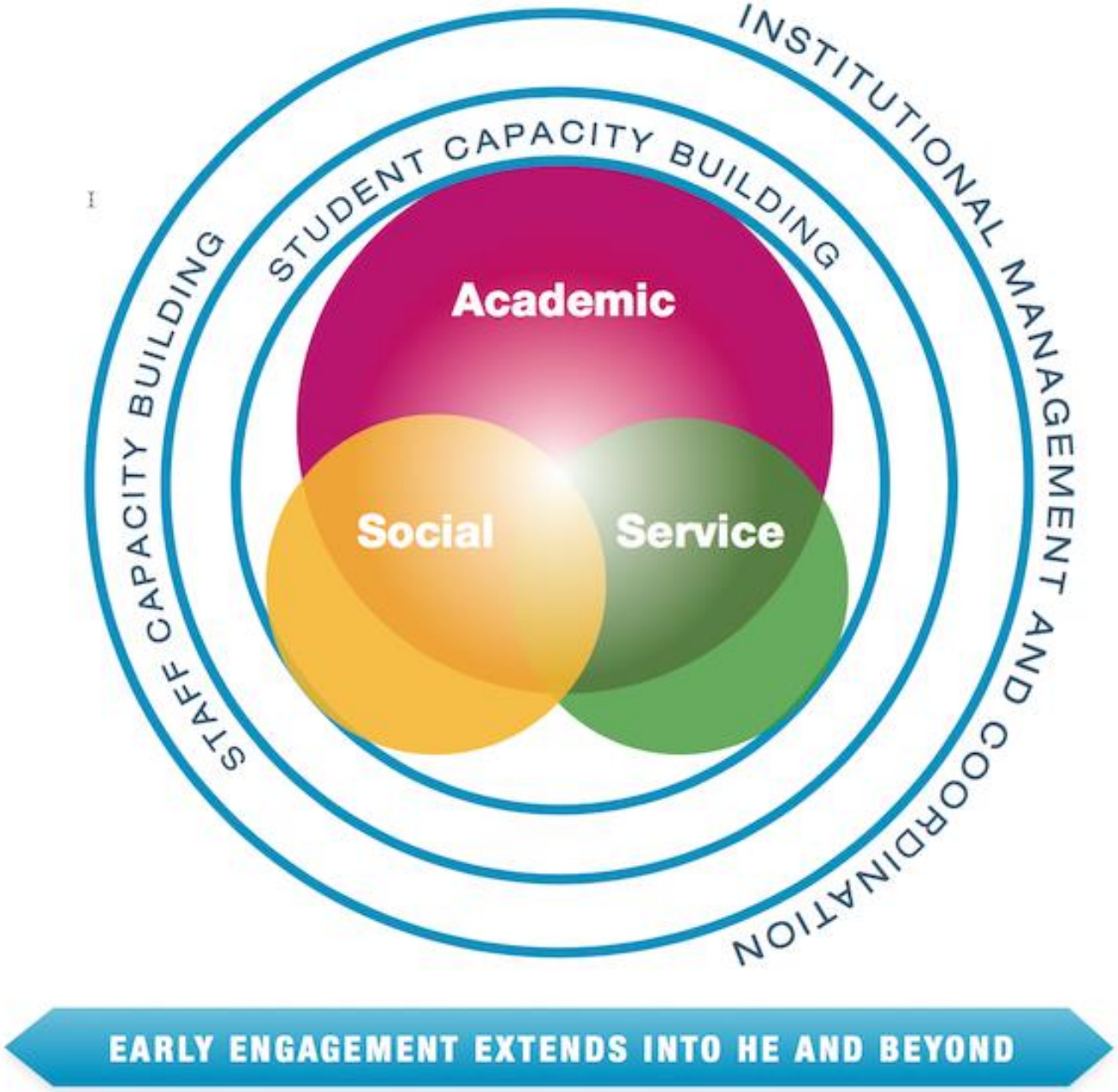
Figure 1: Model of student retention and success from *'What Works?1'*.



Development of understanding about retention and success

First generation: Retention

Fixing up students through bolt-on interventions

Second generation: Success

Engagement and belonging in academic learning

Third generation: Excellence

Whole institution approach

What Works? Student Retention & Success

phf Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Higher Education Academy

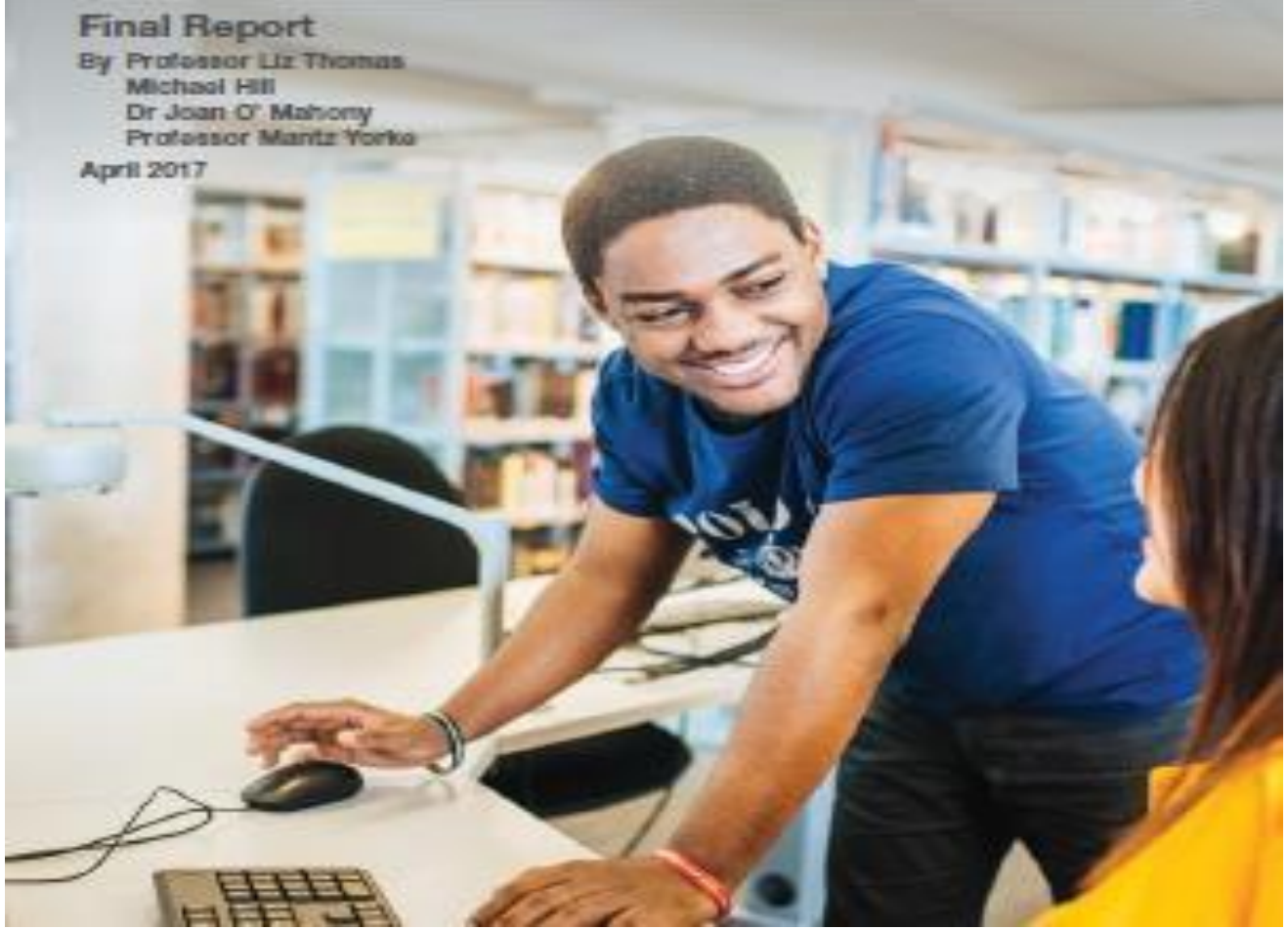
Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change

What Works? Student Retention & Success programme

Final Report

By Professor Liz Thomas
Michael Hill
Dr Joan O' Mahony
Professor Mantz Yorke

April 2017



13 universities and 14 disciplines

- Birmingham City University
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Newman University
- Staffordshire University
- St Mary's University, Twickenham
- University of Brighton
- University of Chester
- University of Salford
- University of Glasgow
- University of South Wales
- University of Ulster
- University of Wolverhampton
- York St John University

Whole institution approach

- Leadership at all levels
- Culture
- Policies
- Systems and processes
- Student involvement
- Wide staff engagement
- Data and evidence

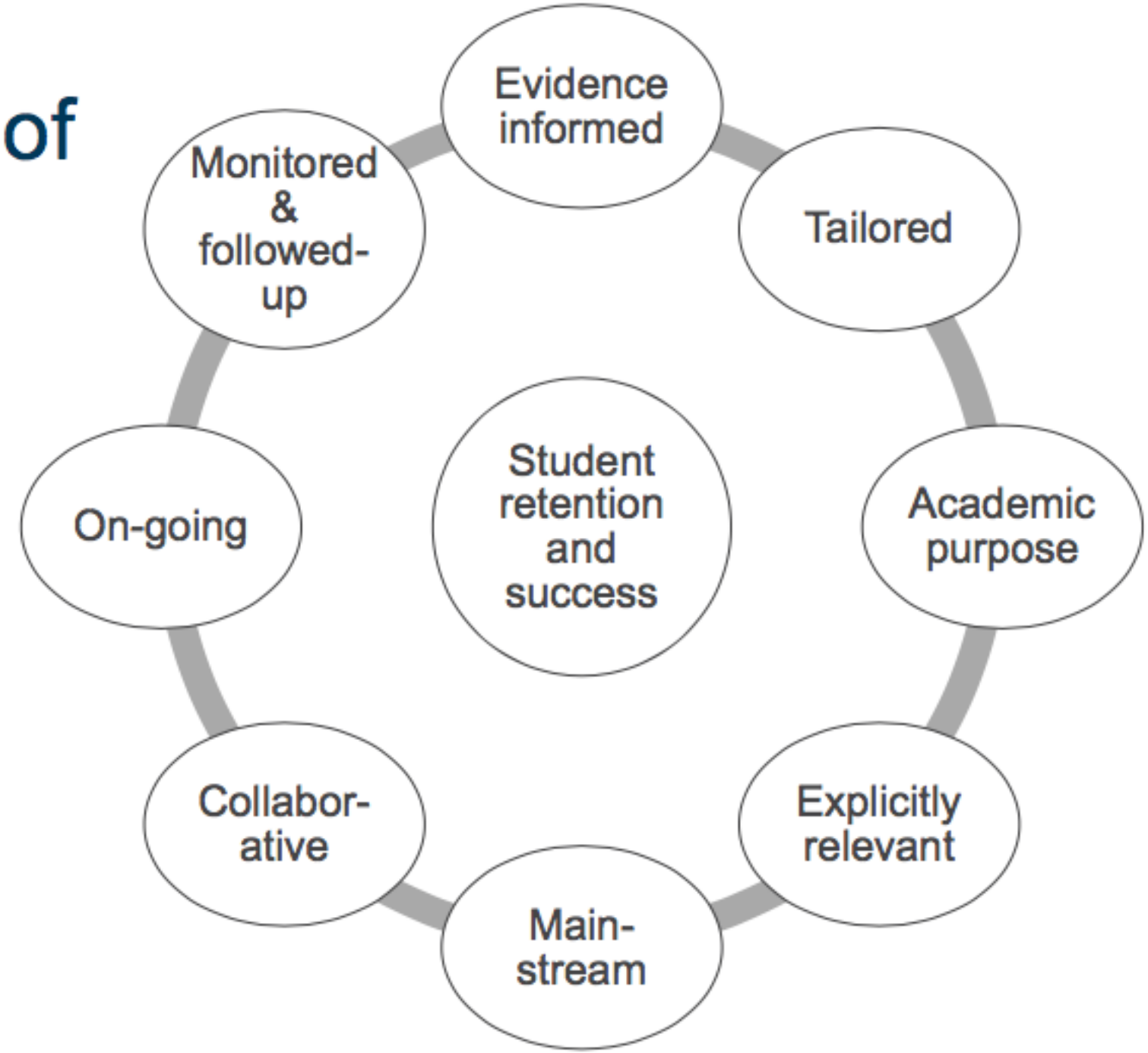
Student outcomes include:

- First year continuation and attainment levels improved.
- Increased number of assessments completed.
- Increased success at first attempt (in assessment) and first year failure rates were reduced.
- Increased levels of engagement, belonging and confidence.
- Increased internal transfers (rather than withdrawal).
- Reduced attainment differentials between black and minority and white students.
- Fewer extenuating circumstances forms submitted.
- Fewer student complaints.
- More satisfied students.
- Enhanced employability and positive feedback from employers.

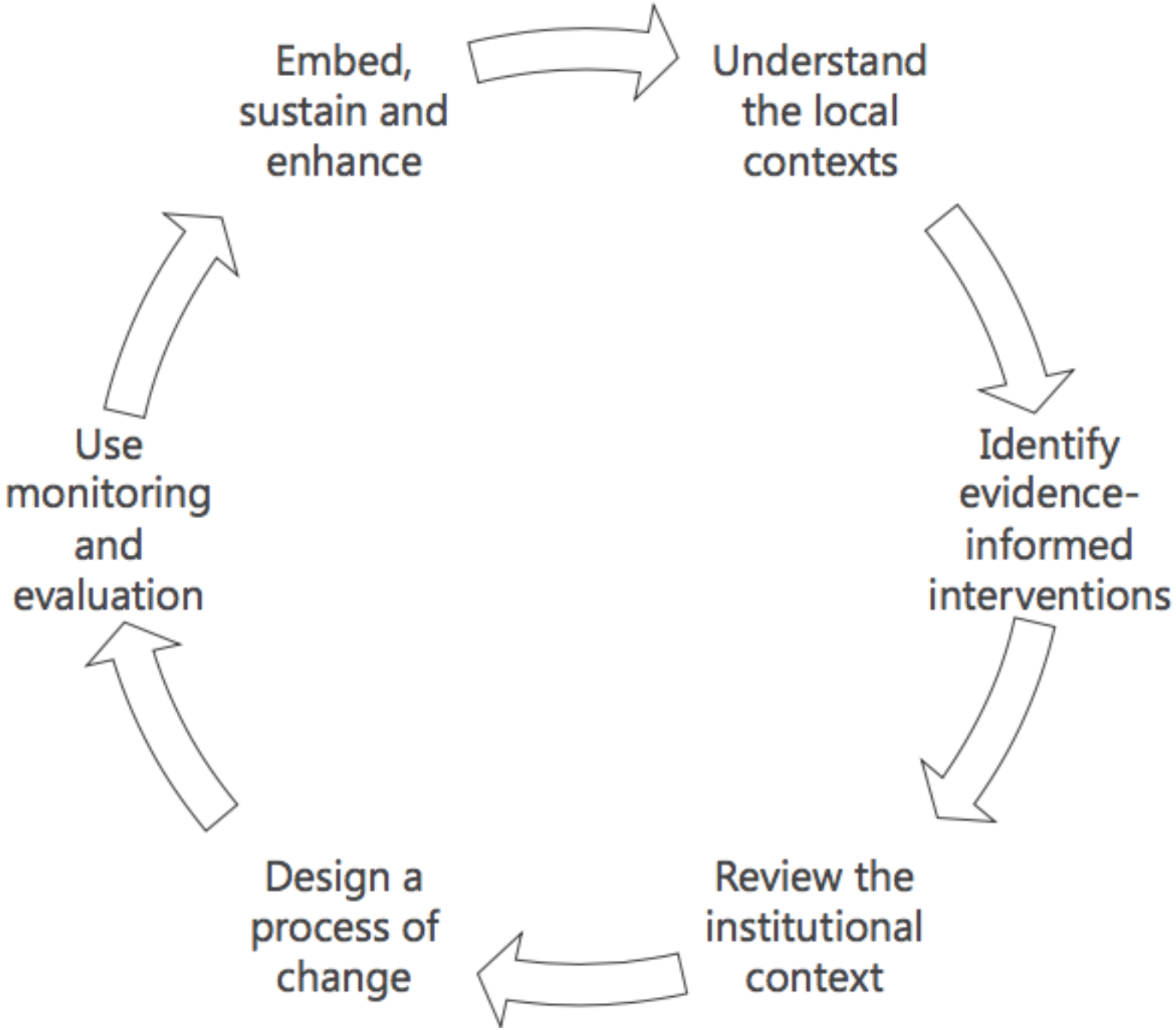
Institutional outcomes include:

- Greater understanding of the issues impacting on retention and success.
- More integrated and up to date student data made available to staff to inform their decision-making.
- Increased staff capacity to work across the institution and bring about change.
- Greater student voice integrated into work across the institution.
- Wider policy developments informed by learning from the programme.
- Effective initiatives rolled out across the institutions.
- Other discipline teams joining the process of implementing and researching change to improve student experience and outcomes.
- More pedagogical research outputs.
- HEA fellowships awarded.

Features of effective practice



Process of change in the context of complexity



University of Glasgow case-study

- A fully engaged team who feel ownership of the project;
- Student involvement wherever appropriate;
- Dedicated administration and project management support so at least one person has a good overview of all activities to keep the project on track;
- Support from senior management and existing committee structures;
- Continuity of team membership;
- Time to embed changes to see the longer-term impact on student engagement, belonging, retention and success.

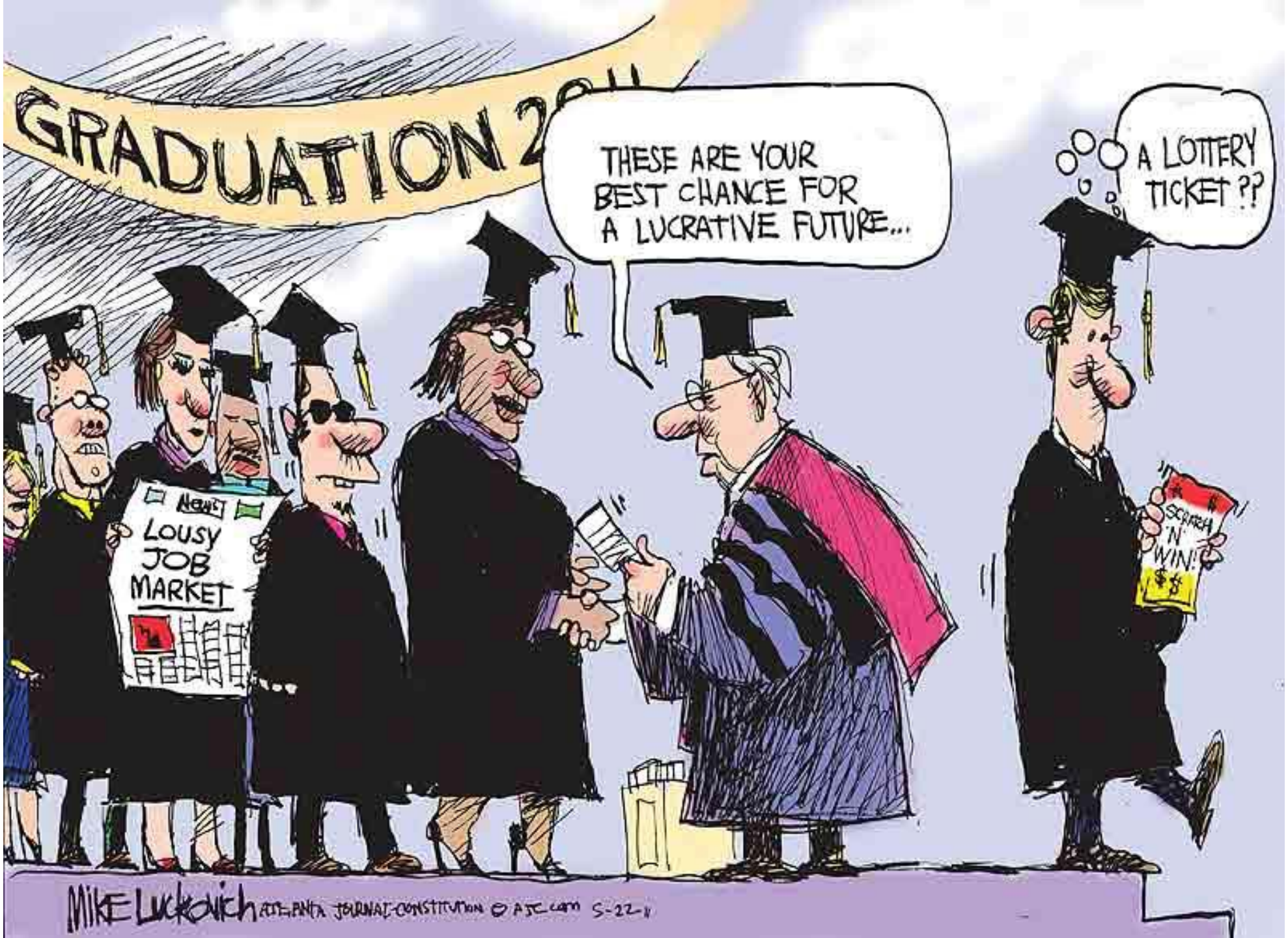
University of Ulster case-study

- Encourages dialogue, mutual respect, and shared insights.
- reduces students' anxieties and allows staff to provide more personalised guidance.
- Encourages active learning and promotes active engagement.
- students more likely to take responsibility for their learning;
- encourages staff to innovate.
- Partnership should be an ethos or a process of engagement.
- works best when it becomes a mind-set, at the module, course, discipline and institutional levels.
- predicated on relationship-building.
- enhances student belonging, self-confidence and engagement.

Retention, student engagement and deep learning.

- **A sense of belonging**
- **A sense of ownership**
- **Feeling respected**
- **Feeling confident…..**

Its not really about how clever you are!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THANK YOU!