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Inquiry about instruction in entry-level mathematics courses that promotes academic success and positive identity development is critical to address issues of STEM retention. This report presents an analysis of positive instructional features that 16 first-year college students, including white women and students of color, reported as potential challenges to marginalization that they encountered in pre-calculus and calculus classrooms. Three themes that characterize such positive instructional practices were revealed. First, instructors getting to know and building strong relationships with students, in and out of the classroom, challenge the impersonal nature of large lectures. Second, instruction that challenges notions of innate ability and holds high expectations for students' success was perceived as minimizing students' emotional labor of managing how they are perceived by others. Lastly, disruptions of exclusionary values in STEM disciplines (e.g., authoritarianism, individualism) re-shapes hierarchical power dynamics between instructors and students, which broadens opportunities to learn for understanding and sets a positive emotional tone for the classroom. These findings are used to raise implications for equitable classroom instruction in undergraduate mathematics. (Received September 25, 2018)