Student Success in Colleges & Universities: Advancing Know-What and Know-How

12th Annual National Symposium on Student Retention – Nov. 2, 2016

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Current Context for Postsecondary Education

- Is a college degree necessary?
- Are all students experiencing success?
- Are divides deepening?
- Are our students learning?
- Is this college worth it?
59% say colleges today are more like businesses and care mainly about the bottom line.
21\textsuperscript{st} Century: Turning Point for Higher Education

• Getting students in the front door is only the first step—\textbf{we also have to help} them reach the graduation stage.

• Need students to have \textbf{high quality educational experiences}— and be better prepared for 21\textsuperscript{st} century workforce.
Quality Learning & Success
Equity Completion
Today’s Student Success Challenge
Too much attention to simple measures of college completion distract from the important work of ensuring educational quality & vibrant learning experiences.

We must fully invest in optimizing the college experience for all students.
Your Definition of Student Success

• What does student success mean at your institution and how are you measuring it?
Student Success Defined

Increased numbers of diverse student groups participating in high-quality educational experiences, earning high-quality credentials.
What to Do to Increase Student Success?

• Theoretical guides
• Empirically-tested approaches
• Time-honored practitioner wisdom
We Know A lot About Student Success

Theoretical Roots

Psychology
Sociology
Economic
Organizational Development

Student success
More Theories/Models for Student Success

- Learning-centered
- Talent development
- Engaging institutions
- Sense of belonging
- Growth Mindset
- Student engagement
- Inclusive excellence & equity
Student Success, in the Classroom

Challenge & Support

Engaging pedagogies

Community & Collaboration

Feedback
Gateway Course Redesign:

“Nothing I’m doing here is in line with how learning works” Kelly Hogan, Bio. professor UNC Chapel Hill

Revised instructional practice...

• Introduce new material through assignments
• Start each class with a question, then T-P-S
• E-poll for understanding
• Quizzes, challenge games
“Talent Development” Perspective

• **Believe**: *Every Student Can Learn Under the Right Conditions*
  – Important for historically underserved students

• Resist that students under-preparedness is their defect – **instead**, believe students come to college able to do the work, but that they might need guidance about what they should be doing... **be explicit, spell out what students should do.**

(Astin, 1993; Chickering, 2006)
Project DEEP: To discover, document, and describe what strong performing institutions do to achieve their notable level of effectiveness.

DEEP Guiding Questions:

• What do “strong-performing” institutions do to promote student success?

• What campus features – policies, programs, practices – are related to higher-than-predicted retention and grad rates & student engagement?
Conditions to Promote Student Success

1. “Living” Mission & “Lived” Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
4. Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success
5. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
6. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality
NSSE Finding: *Engaged learning is a gateway to the desired outcomes of college*

Students who engage more frequently in educationally purposeful activities both in and outside the classroom get better grades, are more satisfied, and are more likely to persist and graduate.
To Increase Student Retention & Success, Foster Student Engagement

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First Year Student Engagement Correlations with Institution Retention & Graduation Rates
First Year Student Engagement Correlations with Institution Retention & Graduation Rates
Promote a Culture With High Expectations for Studying, and Where FY Students Practice Positive Study Habits
“High-impact practices” provide substantial educational benefits to students

High Impact Activities

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses/Projects
Impact of Participation in HIPs on % of Senior NSSE Respondents Graduating on Time by Racial & Ethnic Background

HIP participation benefits Latina/o students more; Latina/o respondents graduating “on time” increases as HIP participation increases, rising from 38% to 73%
Student Success Strategies
Student Success Strategies

Ellucian Student Success and Retention Planning Services

Gather data and generate insights into learners’ activity
Do I really belong here?

Do I have what it takes?
Students must build supportive connections with others to find a sense of belonging.

Cultural Navigators Can Help

“Individuals who strive to help students move successfully through education and life”

(Strayhorn, 2015)
Growth Mindset* for Student Success

**Fixed**

“If I have to try hard, I’m clearly just not smart”

- There is no point in trying if one is not a “natural”

**Growth**

“Trying harder makes you smarter”

- Obstacles can be overcome through effort, help from others & use of improved strategy (not just “try hard” but take advantage of help resources)

*Dweck; Yeager; Duckworth*
Entering students at UT Austin received growth mindset intervention

**Intervention**

- Read message about working hard, using resources, from successful UT Austin students
  - “I thought I was the only one who struggled.”
  - “I was shocked at how hard I had to work.”

**Outcome**

- More likely to complete a full load of courses, and effect was stronger among at-risk students.
- Students reported use of services, feeling supported
NSSE and Growth Mindset

Mindset and Engagement

- Students with strong Growth Mindset were most likely to use effective learning strategies & engaged in reflective and integrative learning more often.
- Growth mindset students well-served by engagement.
Nudges to Influence Success Behavior

• Automated text msgs remind students of deadlines (aid, registration) positively influence enrollment & retention

• Academic coach calls “at risk” students to advise on study strategies, time management for upcoming exams

Helping the Poor in Education: The Power of a Simple Nudge
By SUSAN DYNARSKI JAN. 17, 2015
We Know A Lot About What Increases Student Success
Recall...Theories/Models for Student Success

- Learning-centered
- Talent development
- Engaging institutions
- Sense of belonging
- Growth Mindset
- Student engagement
- Inclusive excellence & equity
PAUSE for reflection: Do you agree we know a lot? What is getting in the way of making greater progress for student success?
“Know-What” Challenges

• Uneven application across institutions & among students

• Lack of integration across efforts

• Expansion of discrete, disconnected programs

• Leap to implement before developing a clear sense of the problem, or the unique aspect of the context
To Make Greater Strides to Improve Student Success

• Re-examine assumptions about improving student success
  • What are stakeholder beliefs?
• What is our theory about “how” to achieve the goal?
Student Success Stakeholder Views

- Engagement in High-Quality Experiences
- Credentials for workforce needs
- No Grad Rate Gaps
- Learning Gains
- Support for Underserved Students
- Gainful Employment
- On time completion
- Student success
Shared Propositions about Student Success...

1. Success begins before students enter college

2. More than graduation or completion

3. Everyone – family, community, K-12, all members of the campus, particularly faculty – must be committed to student success principles and practices

4. Some practices – high expectations, first-year experience, feedback, respect for diversity, active and applied learning, student-faculty interaction, among others – should be intentionally implemented, integrated and of high quality, everywhere
(Edgier) Shared Propositions about Student Success...cont’d

5. Crediting student success to institutions & lack of success to individual students, must cease

6. **Precursors** to student success rate gaps (race-ethnicity, gender, first-generation etc.) must be better understood and the proximal causes redressed

7. The extent to which program/practice is based in empirical research, reduces inequity (or increases equity), and is assessed for quality, must be factored in implementation

8. **Address student success in holistic ways**, accounting for mental health, food & housing insecurities, financial stress, racist incidents, and other contemporary student realities
Need a Theory of How, or More “Know-How”

Today’s agenda for student success needs a better representation of the *how* of student success -- a conceptual structure that offers a comprehensive representation of the key structural components for student success, emphasizing *how* student success will be achieved.
Driver Diagram: a tool for building and testing theories for improvement

- Change
- Change
- Change

**Change:** Specific ideas to be attempted.

**Hint:** Tend to be processes, cultural norms, structures or roles
### BIG GOAL: Increased student success

1. Development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success.
2. Implementation of literature-informed, empirically-based approaches.
3. Enactment of cultural system of student success.
5. Enactment of a student success mindset.
Development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success. An integrated approach requires the identification and elimination of scattershot, isolated, or boutique programs for student success and bringing together stakeholders and efforts to ensure collaboration, and where necessary, special programs for underserved students.
Implementation of literature-informed, empirically-based approaches to student enrollment, transition, persistence, and student learning & success, and assessment of outcomes to ensure quality and effectiveness.
Enactment of cultural system of student success between postsecondary institutions & P-16 partners and among all units and departments and stakeholders (trustees, governing board, state legislatures) across the institution.
Application of clear pathways for student learning & success that guide students to completion and is monitored with real time data systems that identify when a student is off track.
Enactment of a student success mindset that employs an asset-based narrative for students and institutional belief in talent development.
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SECONDARY DRIVERS

- Greater consideration for evidence about the quality of student and student success.
- Emphasis on assessment data informing the sustainability and improvement of student success.
- Greater integration of curriculum and co-curriculum.
- More interconnected policies and programs, less isolated initiatives.
- Enhanced relationships between faculty, staff and student affairs.
- Greater reliance on and reliable implementation of empirically-based approaches.
- Systematic early college exposure and support networks with P-12.
- Effective orientation and transition experiences.
- Reformed gateway courses and developmental education.
- Greater use of engaging pedagogies.
- Strategic relationships with P-12 systems, community partners, and preparation.
- More collaboration between 2-year and 4-year institutions.
- Greater attention to transitions between high school and college.
- Promotion of asset-based narrative about students.
- More communication with prospective students about enrollment.
- Maps to guide student transition to college and through majors.
- Require students to make “big choices” about whole programs of study.
- Greater use of student information such as past performance and curricular involvements, and other beneficial experiential learning.
- More comprehensive data and information systems accessible.
- Encouragement of the belief that all students can succeed.
- Greater attention to grit, growth mindset orientation to promote.
- Faculty and staff development to foster student success mindset.
- Pervasive culture of student support across faculty, administration.
- Involvement of students in success planning and in institutional a
Development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success.

Implementation of literature-informed, empirically-based approaches

Enactment of cultural system of student success

Application of clear pathways for student learning & success

Enactment of a student success mindset
An Invitation for Input

• Help refine the driver diagram for student success!
  – Consider it against the theories and strategies your campus employs
    • What’s missing?
    • What needs elaboration?

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Address Shortcomings to Mobilize Higher Education for Student Success

• a success narrative that too easily blames students,

• conceptions of student success that focus too narrowly on completion, without equal attention to educational quality,

• a deficiency of illustrations of equity-minded practices, and

• piling on solutions instead of implementing problem-focused, integrated, improvement-oriented strategies.
Student Success

Know-What

Know-How

Can-Do!!
NSSE Annual Results 2016 released November 17, 2016

Engagement Insights
Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education

Support for Learners
Are the students who most need support getting it, and does it help?

Mindset Matters
How does a growth mindset affect learning in college?

Safety and Belonging
How safe and valued do students feel on campus? Who feels least safe and valued?

Dual Enrollment and the First Year of College
Does taking dual-credit courses in high school make a difference in the first year of college?

Student-Faculty Interaction and Effective Teaching
How do faculty identities relate to good practice?
Thank You.

Know what student success research is salient, how to implement, and monitor & learn from local research on what makes a difference.

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