perspectives

RP Group | May 2014

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Two fun and promising bits of news from the RP Group front:

1. We are pleased to announce that effective June 1, the new RP Group office will have relocated to 1102 Q Street, Suite 3500, Sacramento, CA 95811. The office phone numbers and e-mail addresses will remain the same. Our new office location will allow us to collaborate more easily with the Foundation for California Community Colleges to support and streamline back-end office activities such as accounting and payroll. Should you have any questions on the relocation, please feel free to contact RP Executive Director Michael Howe at mhowe@rpgroup.org.

2. The 2014 RP Group Summer Institute is now accepting applications and takes place from Tuesday, August 5 through Thursday, August 7 at the Kellogg West Conference Center in Pomona, CA. This multi-day training features content for all researchers and planners (new and seasoned) in the California community college system who are interested in advancing evidence-based strategies at their colleges.

The 2014 Summer Institute will employ a case method approach to provide deeper, more focused training in skills and knowledge tailored to have immediate application at each applicant's home institution. Participants will select one of several scenarios from which they will develop a case study. The scenarios simulate real situations currently facing community colleges and participants will be using data on their own institutions to form the foundation of their case investigations. At the close of the Institute, each team will have created a case portfolio they can take back to their institution and use as a vehicle for further dialogue and action. To help Institute participants achieve greater traction in the application of their case studies at their home institutions, RP will provide follow-up support through its statewide regional research group infrastructure. Details, including curriculum, case studies, cost and logistics are available here.

Sincerely,
The RP Group

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Change of Location for Orange County Regional Research Group Meeting
The inaugural meeting of the Orange County Regional Research Group has changed from Saddleback College to Irvine Valley College. The day (Friday, June 20) and time (9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.) remain the same. Details here.

Statewide Spotlight: Discover Community College Practices That Help (Re)define Student Support

Authors: *Kelley Karandjeff,* Senior Researcher, The RP Group

Several efforts are afoot in California to advance community college achievement. The 2012 Student Success Act and subsequent revisions to Title 5 are prompting colleges to consider significant changes in how they effectively transition students into their institutions, deliver strategic support and move learners along clear pathways to completion. In turn, many practitioners are seeking practical solutions that can help more of their students reach their educational goals.

The RP Group recently released Practically Speaking: Community College Practices that Help (Re)define Support, A Practitioner Primer, which offers community college practitioners insight into how their peers are tackling these challenges across various levels and divisions of their institutions and with different groups of students. This resource is the culminating product of Student Support (Re)defined, a multiyear study of what over 900 students from 13 California community colleges said supports their educational success. The primer features 23 community college practices from California and across the nation that show the study's five key themes and six success factors in action.

This primer is not a research report. Rather, it offers a range of practical examples and aims to inspire concrete dialog about what community college practitioners can do to strengthen student support at the individual, program and institutional levels. It includes a bookmarked table of contents and a series of quick guides at the beginning of the document to help readers connect with the practices that are of greatest interest and relevance to their work. It also incorporates discussion questions throughout the document designed to help practitioners reflect on their own colleges' practices, consider ways to strengthen existing supports and/or begin planning for the adoption of new approaches that promote the success of all learners on campus.

Resources:

While Student Support (Re)defined ends this spring, the practitioner primer and numerous resources and tools resulting from the study will remain available on our website. Resources include:

- a full report of research findings
- a brief outlining key themes from the research

- an action guide designed to help colleges initiate a process of inquiry and planning based on the study results
- practical ideas for how faculty and everyone on campus can support student success, based on suggestions from study participants
- examples of how California community colleges are using the research on their campuses

Colleges interested in a presentation of the Student Support (Re)defined research or customized technical assistance designed to help your institution use findings for action can contact Dr. Darla Cooper, Director of Research and Evaluation, at dcooper@rpgroup.org for more information.

Research: Curricular Redesign and Gatekeeper Completion - A Multi-College Evaluation of the California Acceleration Project

CALIFORNIA ACCELERATION PROJECT

Authors: *Terrence Willett,* Director of Planning, Research and Knowledge System, Cabrillo College and *Craig Hayward,* Director of Research, Planning and Accreditation

Large numbers of students are being placed into long basic skills sequences from which few emerge. Using the Basic Skills Progress Tracker, across the California community college system only 7% of students beginning at three levels below transfer-level successfully complete transferable math within three years. The comparable number for English is only 19%.

The California Acceleration Project (CAP), an initiative of the California Community Colleges' Success Network (3CSN), provides training in the development of accelerated English and math pathways. Only remedial coursework is redesigned; transfer-level gatekeeper courses are not changed.

Our recent study tested the hypothesis that students in accelerated pathways complete the transfer-level gatekeeper course at a rate higher than comparable students who participate in the traditional sequence. This hypothesis was examined by contrasting the completion of the transfer-level gatekeeper course by accelerated students relative to comparable students who were enrolled in the traditional English and math basic skills sequences in the 2011-2012 academic year, CAP's pilot year. Over 3,000 accelerated students at 16 colleges were followed through Spring 2013.

The study found that accelerated pathways had an overall effect of increasing the odds of completing transfer-level gatekeeper courses regardless of the placement level or prior developmental coursework of students (see Figure 1). After controlling for an array of potentially confounding demographic and academic variables, students' odds of completing a transferable college-level course were 1.5 times greater in accelerated English models overall and 2.3 times greater in high-acceleration models. Students' odds of completing a transferable math course were 4.5 times greater in accelerated pathways than for students in traditional remediation. Qualitative analysis suggested that the effect size for accelerated pathways was smaller for "low acceleration" pathways that required additional coursework or active waiver processes before students were eligible to enroll in transfer-level coursework, whereas high-acceleration pathways had streamlined articulation with

transfer-level courses. Qualitative analysis also suggested that the acceleration effect was greater for colleges that incorporated more of the CAP course design principles.

Figure 1.
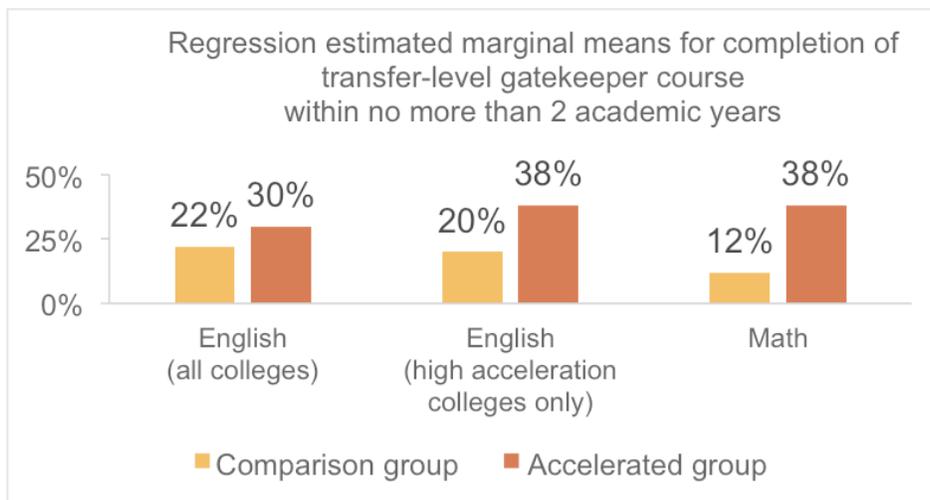
In addition to the finding that accelerated pathways were associated with increased odds of sequence completion for students at all levels of the basic skills sequence in both English and math, a diverse range of students in the analysis showed higher outcomes in accelerated pathways. Acceleration showed main effects for student completion of transfer-level gatekeeper coursework, regardless of demographics such as ethnicity, gender, financial need, disability status, and prior ESL course-taking.

The study has led to changes in how CAP trains faculty to design accelerated curriculum. The finding that high-acceleration pathways were more effective than low-acceleration pathways has led CAP to emphasize the development of streamlined, high-acceleration pathways.

Resources:

- California Acceleration Project Evaluation
- Basic Skills Progress Tracker

Planning: Ten Pieces of Advice On Strategic Planning

Author: *Priyadarshini Chaplot,* Senior Researcher, The RP Group

While strategic planning is sometimes perceived as a futile exercise, a good strategic plan actually works. It can connect faculty, staff, administrators and other stakeholders with a shared sense of purpose and a common plan for action. When done well, it can create a shared picture worthy of everyone's commitment and effort.

In their article, "Be Strategic on Strategic Planning," Patrick

Sanhagan and Mary Hinton share lessons from speaking with campus leaders and faculty who were unsure about the value of strategic planning. Then, they translated the insights from their conversations into ten practical points of advice, listed below. Further details for each point are explained in their article.

1. Visible and committed senior leadership is essential.
2. Authentic faculty involvement and engagement will make or break a strategic planning process.
3. The board of trustees needs to have a balanced role in the strategic planning process.
4. It is important to avoid "listening to yourself too much."
5. You need to make extraordinary efforts to communicate with stakeholders throughout the planning process.
6. Trust is the most important factor in a planning process.
7. Planning is not a linear process.
8. Visionaries are a dime a dozen.
9. Campus stakeholders need a way to keep score.
10. The danger of doing too much.

Resource:

- [Be Strategic on Strategic Planning](#) (Article)

Assessment: Recognizing What is Working - The CHEA Awards

Author: *Robert Pacheco*, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, MiraCosta College

For a decade and a half, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has been at the forefront of fostering conversations about the advancement of learning. One way CHEA sustains the dialogue about learning is by sleuthing and sharing what's working in outcomes assessment. Each year, the organization distributes its [CHEA Award](#) for Outstanding Institutional Practice in Student Learning Outcomes.

Yes, that's right, practice.

CHEA's selection criteria are less about overall college performance and more about what practices seem to be having a positive effect on learning outcomes. In this way, we can reflect on which efforts hold promise and how to bring them home. It employs a comprehensive selection committee consisting of members from institutions, associations, accrediting organizations and the public at large. Criteria for the award include the right stuff: the quality of the articulated outcomes, the evidence of success, the communication of the findings and the use of the results for positive change.

The selection committee examines the degree to which outcomes assessment is embedded in institutional culture, the use of emerging technology in methods and tools, the level of faculty participation, the amount of institutional leadership and the extent to which the approaches used can transfer to other colleges.

The 2014 winners include:

- [Eastern Kentucky University](#) (EKU). Selected for its "Assurance of Learning" process for programs and degrees, EKU faculty set clear expectations for programs, collaboratively discuss data, review and revise curricula based on the findings, identify effective instructional strategies and implement improvements.
- [Excelsior College](#). Recognized for its Masters program in Liberal Studies, Excelsior, an online university, has clear and rigorous outcomes measured at the course level and integrated across the curriculum.
- [The Citadel](#). Chosen for its E-Leadership Portfolio, this state-supported military institution connects its general education outcomes to its core institutional mission and values.

Resources:

- [CHEA Awards](#)
- Eastern Kentucky University - [Assurance of Learning](#)
- Excelsior College - [Masters Program in Liberal Arts](#)
- The Citadel - [E-Leadership Portfolio](#)

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