
Perspectives... covers new developments, discusses emerging ideas, and features practical resources in the areas of research, planning, assessment, and community college leadership. The publication is sent out to more than 5,000 higher ed professionals every other month. For more information, or to inquire about becoming a contributor, please [contact us](#), or [submit your proposal, here](#).

What's Inside...

- Student Support (Re)Defined Introduction by Dr. Darla Cooper
 - Implementing the Six Success Factors at East Los Angeles College: Faculty and Student Services Make a Pledge to Partner
 - Student Support (Re)Defined... and (Re)Designed — for Physical Environments
 - (Re)defining Student Support: Building a College Culture Around The Six Success Factors
 - The 2018 RP Group Award Introduction
 - The 2017 Past, Present, and Future of NonCredit Education in California Project: Transforming California Community Colleges
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Articles

Student Support (Re)defined: What it Means Today (Introduction)



When the RP Group launched our **Student Support (Re)defined** study in 2012, we aspired to elevate student voices, recognizing the critical value of student experiences and perspectives to our colleges' efforts to improve student equity and success and providing the field with evidence-based information to support these initiatives.

We aimed to capture findings that practitioners could apply in their daily interactions with students, as well as identify broader considerations for how colleges could re-examine processes and practices at the department, program, and institutional level with an eye towards what students said they need to succeed. We sought to reach a wide audience of faculty, staff, and administrators by presenting the research in a way that helped different stakeholders connect these findings and implications with their own work — whether it be directly with students or in an indirect support or leadership role.

While these goals felt lofty, the reception of Student Support (Re)defined throughout California far exceeded our greatest expectations and confirmed that student voices are indeed a powerful motivator and driver for change.

Since releasing key findings and recommendations in 2013, we have presented at over 80 venues across the state. Time and again, these presentations reveal that the project sparked a movement across our system.

Institutions are actively using the [Six Success Factors](#) framework identified through the study to facilitate dialog among people, programs, and divisions; engage in strategic and equity planning; and pursue actions designed to meaningfully strengthen student success and attainment. We feature many of these examples on the [Student Support \(Re\)defined page](#) of our website as inspiration for colleges engaged in their own effort to increase student equity and completion.

While the study turns six this year, Student Support (Re)defined is now more relevant than ever.

As California embraces Guided Pathways (GP), this study serves as an important foundation for the drive to transform our colleges into more student-centered institutions. As we continue to share Student Support (Re)defined, we particularly demonstrate how the success factors align and coalesce with the four GP design principles or “pillars.”

To this end, we created a [crosswalk](#) to show these intersections and help colleges practically understand how their work with the success factors can naturally support and facilitate adoption of the GP framework.

In this issue of *Perspectives*, we wanted to highlight how three colleges have approached using the Six Success Factors to improve student success. These examples also offer ideas for how to support your college’s Guided Pathways work, whether it be to generally make your institution more student-centered or to pursue a particular aspect of the GP framework.

As you peruse these articles, we encourage you to share your own story of using Student Support (Re)defined to advance student success and invite you to recommend ways we can additionally utilize this research to support GP efforts, both on your campus or across the system.

Sincerely,
Dr. Darla Cooper
Executive Director
The RP Group

Implementing the Six Success Factors at East Los Angeles College: Faculty and Student Services Make a Pledge to Partner

This article is based on a presentation delivered at the 2017 Strengthening Student Success Conference. Presenters included: Paulina Palomino, Dean of Student Services, East Los Angeles College; Amber Marsden and Carmen Soto, Counselors/SSA Coordinators, East Los Angeles College

Consider a community college classroom where your instructors know your name, tell you they care about your educational choices, and provide guidance on the value of: meeting with a counselor, networking with professionals, connecting with peers, and utilizing financial aid. You’ll find this kind of support from a Student Success Advocate at East Los Angeles College (ELAC).

In Fall 2016, ELAC, a Hispanic Serving Institution, began to build a community of practice with the goal of empowering faculty to foster student completion through intentional collaboration with Student Services via the framework of the RP Group’s [Six Success Factors](#). Since the college serves many low-income, first-generation, and Latino students, utilizing the complementary strengths of faculty and student services can mean clarified educational pathways and increased available support for students.

The Student Success Advocates (SSAs) are a group of faculty that execute completion-focused programming such as career or major panels. The implementation of such

programs is instrumental to closing the achievement gap and help lay the groundwork for a more guided and integrated student experience.

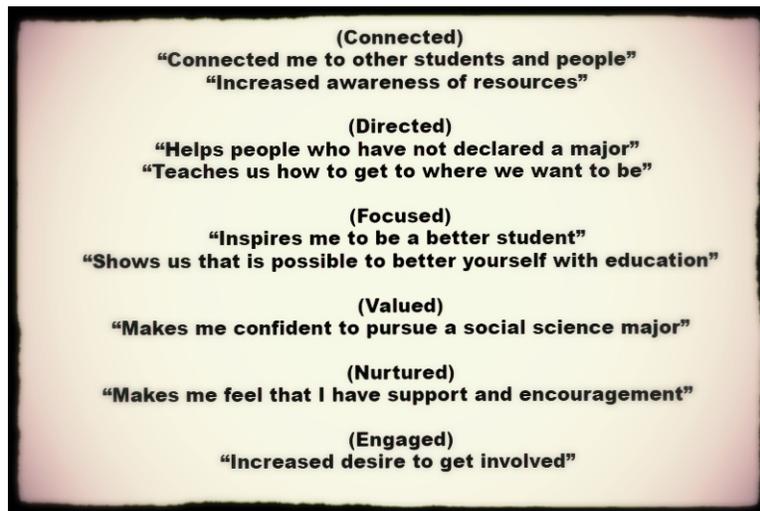
This group is also charged with educating students on — and emphasizing to them — the value of degree completion and transfer; hosting department open houses that inform students about certificate, degree, and transfer options; and adopting a help-seeking mindset.

SSA Coordinators also provide foundational trainings to faculty each semester to explain the Six Success Factors framework and provide partnership ideas to Student Services. In these trainings, faculty sign a Participant Agreement pledging to implement one project such as an Open House; and receive ongoing support from the coordinators to ensure that their project event is successful and evaluated to measure student impact.

Social Sciences Open House Project Highlight

In Spring 2017, more than 130 students attended a Social Sciences Open House where faculty presentations were delivered by the Chair of Social Sciences and an Assistant Professor on the topic of what a social science major could offer students. Attendees were also connected to prospective peer mentors (current student club presidents) who demonstrated an avenue for student engagement outside of the classroom and the importance of a student's involvement in supporting the completion of their own educational goals.

At the conclusion of the event, students were surveyed on their impressions of the event. The Six Success Factors surfaced in their responses:



What We've Learned

"An SSA event is a meaningful experience for students," says Carmen Soto, Counselor/SSA Coordinator. "It also provides recognition of the great work that faculty do in complement with Student Services to drive student completion."

The college also found that, logistically, Spring semester is a better time to implement projects on campus because faculty have more time to plan events by utilizing the Winter term.

Also, faculty promotion of events is key. In fact, 73 percent of students who attended the Social Science Open House indicated they found out about the event through a class announcement.

Students also want to hear from other students. "From our work so far, we have determined that events are most successful when they include perspectives from faculty, students, and a supportive campus."

For more information or ideas about how to incorporate the Six Success Factors on your campus, email [Paulina Palomino](#), [Carmen Soto](#), or [Amber Marsden](#).

Student Support (Re)Defined... and (Re)Designed — for Physical Environments



This article is based on a presentation delivered at the 2017 Strengthening Student Success Conference. Presenters included: LaDonna Trimble Dean, Enrollment Services, Antelope Valley College; Deborah Shepley, Director, Higher Education and Ashley Marsh, Design Strategist, Gensler; Darla Cooper, Executive Director, The RP Group

Student Support (Re)Defined examined how community colleges can improve success for all students with a specific focus on what students themselves say they need to succeed. The findings are integrating into new policies and practices at community colleges all over California with tremendous results. [Antelope Valley College](#) (AVC) has embraced the Six Success Factors and is partnering with [Gensler](#), a global architecture, design, planning and consulting firm, to answer a new question: "How can we design physical environments to support student success?"

Early in the design process for a new Student Services and Student Center, a large group of faculty, staff, and students gathered for a visioning workshop where this question was posed. The Gensler design team facilitated the workshop focusing on the student experience and explored ideas for how the buildings and spaces could be designed to support the Six Success Factors.

Dr. Jill Zimmerman, Dean of Student Life and Services, described this dialogue as a major shift from "what do we want" to "what do our *students* want, and how do we want them to feel when they are in these new buildings."

While there was complete agreement that the focus needed to be on students, the group also considered another important question — what do our staff need to be successful? This sparked a lively discussion and resulted in the development of the 'AVC Staff - Six Success Factors.' Through a series of interactive conversations and activities, the group established a set of shared values to guide the overall design process.



AVC and Gensler have collaborated over the past year to design physical environments to support student, as well as faculty and staff success. The shared vision and mindset has served as the basis for all discussions and decisions regarding the building design.

Building entries and the placement of functions are designed to help students feel directed; spaces are created to enhance student and staff's ability to focus; and students feel

nurtured inside offices as well as in common areas and the surrounding outdoor spaces. Gathering areas that support social interaction are designed to enhance student engagement, improve connections and let AVC communicate that each member of our community is valued.

Dr. Zimmerman stresses that "as a community college we often only have students for a short period of time; we must maximize their sense of belonging immediately and help them find their way. Bringing the student perspective into the design process early helped our team create a set of shared values to guide decision making and create optimal environments for students to succeed."

For more information, email [Jill Zimmerman](#) or [Deborah Shepley](#).

(Re)defining Student Support: Building a College Culture Around The Six Success Factors

James E. Todd, Ph.D.
Vice President of Student Services,
Modesto Junior College
Board Member, The RP Group

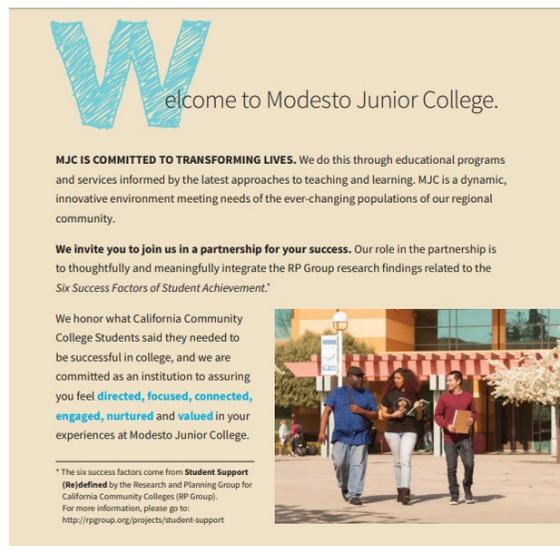
Changing institutional culture is hard work, but it also takes worthy ideas that can galvanize action. At Modesto Junior College (MJC), Student Support (Re)defined has helped to reshape our institutional focus, and it has become an umbrella set of aspirational outcomes we want students to experience. While the California Community College system may have some fatigue from various initiatives, the Six Success Factors — being directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued — have become our beacon bringing everything together, as we ask, "how will our plans address equity and help students succeed?"

It is also important that students *know* we are using the Six Success Factors. **(See [MJC brochure images and information above and below.](#))** Associated Students of MJC President, Cindy Barragan Lopez talks publicly about how she has been nurtured and valued by her mentors, and her experiences through the lens of Student Support (Re)Defined. Cindy also noted that:

Throughout my experience here at MJC I have been recognized for my hard work and reminded to never give up on my dreams. My mentors are what help me stay motivated... remind me of the potential that I have, and how far I can go... Overall, the six [success] factors have definitely been a major factor of my success here at MJC and I am extremely grateful for my journey.

Faculty, staff, and administrators also need to know about the Six Success Factors, and that their help ensures the college fosters an intentional and transformative campus culture.

Over the past three years, MJC has embraced the Six Success Factors by redesigning advising through cohort-based work, employing Success Specialists, creating



Welcome to Modesto Junior College.

MJC IS COMMITTED TO TRANSFORMING LIVES. We do this through educational programs and services informed by the latest approaches to teaching and learning. MJC is a dynamic, innovative environment meeting needs of the ever-changing populations of our regional community.

We invite you to join us in a partnership for your success. Our role in the partnership is to thoughtfully and meaningfully integrate the RP Group research findings related to the Six Success Factors of Student Achievement.*

We honor what California Community College Students said they needed to be successful in college, and we are committed as an institution to assuring you feel **directed, focused, connected, engaged, nurtured** and **valued** in your experiences at Modesto Junior College.

* The six success factors come from Student Support (Re)defined by the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group). For more information, please go to: <http://rpgroup.org/projects/student-support>

Pathways Centers, constructing one-stop service centers, and connecting students to success teams of instructional faculty, counselors, and classified professionals.

Part of this work meant constructing new Student Services Representative (SSR) positions to provide immediate assistance to students. "By creating the SSR positions, MJC is serving the students more efficiently and thoroughly which demonstrates they and their time are valued," says SSR Susie Manning-Torres.



MY COUNSELOR AND I MET a few times which ultimately led to a comprehensive educational plan. I didn't know how my studies were going to lead me to my career. I now have **a plan that lines up everything** I need to finish my transfer program to the UC. Those conversations with my counselor allowed me to choose the right degree, and the right university that will position me for my professional goal.



WHEN I BECAME A PART of a special program at Modesto Junior College, I received support that made me feel like others truly cared about me and wanted me to succeed. We checked in often and talked about what was happening in my schoolwork.

as well as the responsibilities I had in my personal life. I have always felt like I have **someone in my corner** who is dedicated to my success.

Because of the efforts by the SSRs, students have also expressed a better understanding of what is required of them, gratitude and feelings of connection, according to Manning-Torres.

MJC has even branded itself around the factors. Students receive [this brochure](#) when they arrive on New Student Days, an event designed to engender long-lasting connections on campus. Our campus is filled with posters and brochures that leverage the Success Factors across our student spaces, and, students are noticing.

Alexis Zaragoza, a student at MJC, notes:

When I first walked into the Student Center and saw the incredible things my college put on, such as career and transfer events, or food being passed out, I felt a connection. This was no longer just a place to take notes and get by, but an environment in which I could thrive. I found a few mentors along the way... who keep me engaged in my future, nurtured within my studies, and valued as a person.... I have felt the Six [Success] Factors throughout my entire college experience. My counselors, alongside professors, helped me to set up my education plan since day one.... Leadership programs and classes pushed me to keep focus, and understand my goals in order to be successful academically and personally.

Importantly, these stories, and the leveraging of language and ideas of the factors, not only makes sense — it has been transformational.

At MJC, the goal of engendering the factors has also recently paved the way for our implementation of Guided Pathways; and our entire redesign of advising is about establishing relationships with students at-scale through meaningful events and cohort advising that involve instructional faculty, counselors and classified professionals.

With the Six Success Factors in mind, we have decided that all 24,000 of our students need an assigned counselor and success specialist who intentional reach out to them to provide steps for success.

Our questions are now: "How can we create Pathways that aim to provide direction and a sense of focus? How can we redesign advising to create a network of nurturing, engaging support? How can we ensure we connect with pathways students immediately and ensure they feel valued?"

For more information, email [James Todd](#).

The RP Group Awards Introduction

In the past, the [RP Group Awards](#) have recognized excellence and outstanding achievements in research, planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. This year, we revamped the RP Group Awards to focus on a single award category: **RP Project of the Year**.

The RP Project of the Year represents a significant achievement that advances the work of our state's community colleges and ultimately the success of the students across the system. With the growing number of practitioners entering our field and the role of our offices rapidly changing to meet the needs of our colleges, the 2018 RP Project of the Year's recipients play a vital role in setting the tone for our collective work in the years ahead.

We are delighted to share with you the incredible work from these dedicated professionals and practitioners in this month's issue of *Perspectives*!

Sincerely,

Brian Murphy
RP Group Awards Committee Co-Chair, The RP Group
Director of Institutional Research, Butte College

Aeron Zentner
RP Group Awards Committee Co-Chair, The RP Group
Dean of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness, Coastline Community College

The 2017 Past, Present, and Future of NonCredit Education in California Project: Transforming California Community Colleges

This article is focused on the work awarded the 2018 RP Project of the Year Award. Project team members include: Carlos O. Turner Cortez, President; Michelle Fischthal, Vice President of Instruction; and Jessica Luedtke, Research and Planning Analyst, San Diego Continuing Education; Theresa Tena, Vice Chancellor; and the IEPI Team, California Community College Chancellor's Office; Noncredit Coalition

The equalization of Career Development and College Preparation (CDCP) noncredit program funding has motivated many credit colleges to either begin intensive noncredit program development or expand existing programs. Yet, even as noncredit education is growing in the California Community Colleges and transforming the way colleges approach student programming, information on the current state of noncredit operations and instruction statewide is sparse.

Faculty, staff, and administrators need resources to plan, develop, and grow both instructionally and operationally. Researchers need to understand noncredit and the challenges associated with studying new/growing programs within their colleges that are structurally different from credit programs and that serve unique student populations.

San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE) — the noncredit division of the San Diego Community College District — is the largest provider of noncredit education in California. In this capacity, it has taken the lead on research and sharing best practices for providing noncredit programs. SDCE's President's Office and Office of Institutional Effectiveness, in partnership with the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Educational Services, created the *California Community College Noncredit Offerings Survey*, wherein each of California's 114 colleges and two noncredit institutions participated.

The survey served as the foundation for the first-ever compilation of collective work about the development and expansion of noncredit in California's Community Colleges. [The 2016 Past, Present, and Future of Noncredit Education in California](#) reviewed the history of noncredit programs in California, included a snapshot of programming, services, and operations across the state; and developed recommendations to the field.

In 2017, based upon the original report, a new initiative was developed to scale up the original study and advocate for noncredit statewide. This year's goals and accomplishments took three forms:

(1) Reflect upon and augment the 2016 survey based upon input solicited from practitioners across the state in areas believed to be of critical importance to noncredit. The 2017 survey maintained instructional programming, operations, and the future of noncredit as central themes, yet newly addressed such areas as open educational resources, student services, and research capacity. Results were also developed to provide context by the size of noncredit offerings at institutions.

(2) Host the first statewide noncredit conference on building and expanding programs in community colleges to further support our colleagues throughout the state in their development and growth in noncredit programming and services. SDCE worked with the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) to develop and then host the two-day Noncredit Summit, "The New World of Noncredit", in October 2017. The summit provided teaching and learning opportunities for community college administrators and practitioners to share best practices and learn how to build or expand noncredit education locally.

(2) Advocate for noncredit in association with the Noncredit Coalition, a coalition of noncredit leaders that meet to discuss regulatory, legislative, and budget-related noncredit issues. Based upon the results and recommendations reported in *The 2017 Past, Present and Future of Noncredit Education in California*, SDCE President Carlos Turner Cortez worked with the Noncredit Coalition to legislate specific 2017 recommendations that could positively impact noncredit education across California.

SDCE, through research and advocacy will continue to inform state enhancements in support of noncredit program growth as we look toward supporting the mission of the community colleges, the most underserved populations, and advocating for its future in California.

Excerpts of Recommendations are also [available here](#).

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