April showers bring May...commencement speeches! The commencement season is well underway and that means last night or this morning or this very minute, graduates across the country are swimming in post-college advice.

If you find yourself sitting through a tedious one or need a jolt of inspiration, a team at National Public Radio (NPR) has browsed through hundreds of grad speeches dating all the way back to 1774 (Barnabas Binney, by the way!) to compile the best 316 speeches, EVER. Its online database features video and/or transcripts of speakers ranging from Kurt Vonnegut to Kermit the Frog, from Richard Feynman to Sting.

Going a step further, they tagged each speech to one of fifteen themes or take-home messages. Here they are:

1. Play  
2. YOLO  
3. Inner Voice  
4. Embrace Failure  
5. Remember History  
6. Make Art  
7. Unplug  
8. Work Hard  
9. Don't Give Up  
10. Fight for Equality  
11. Be Kind  
12. Change the World  
13. Tips  
14. Balance  
15. Dream  

So, there you have it! Maybe one of them can help us all prepare for the real world. It'll be interesting to see if any speech this year or in the future will break through these fifteen archetypes. Perhaps Robert De Niro's speech this year at New York University.

Sincerely,  
Priyadarshini Chaplot  
The RP Group

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Announcements

Join the RP OC Regional Meeting on June 18
The next meeting of researchers in the Orange County area will be held at Orange Coast College on Thursday, June 18 from 9:00 am. to 12:00 p.m. To RSVP and review the meeting agenda, please contact Denice Inciong at dinciong@socccd.edu.

Register for the 2015 SSS Conference (October 7-9, Oakland)
The 10th annual SSS Conference will be held October 7-9 at the Oakland Marriott City Center. Register for the general conference (October 7-8) and/or the post-conference sessions (October 9) here.

STATEWIDE SPOTLIGHT | Partnering Reading Apprenticeship and STEM

Author: Nika Hogan, Associate Professor of English, Pasadena City College and Community College National Coordinator, Strategic Literacy Initiative / WestEd

What is the role of literacy in STEM learning? How can we balance the need to cover rigorous science content with our desire to support students as independent and critical learners?

These are some of the questions that more than 100 California community college faculty and administrators have started to explore in their classrooms and with their colleagues as members of the Reading Apprenticeship Community College STEM Network (RACCSN). This network is funded by the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust as part of their nationwide portfolio of projects supporting STEM education reform efforts based in recent research (Wieman, 2014) on the efficacy of active learning in STEM (particularly for underserved minority populations). RACCSN, currently involving 13 CA community college campuses and expanding to a total of 16 campuses next year, aims to leverage the Reading Apprenticeship framework as a resource to support faculty to transform their instruction, thus narrowing the equity gap in STEM course persistence and completion.

Reading Apprenticeship professional development helps faculty to think metacognitively about the multiple texts of their disciplines so that they can see beyond their "expert blind spots" and identify discipline-specific ways of grappling with text. Participants ask: How do we define text in this discipline? What is the role of multiple types of text in STEM learning? What are the disciplinary habits of mind into which we hope to apprentice students? Instructors work to identify text-based assignments that allow students to practice reading as problem solving (or as part of problem solving) in discipline-appropriate ways.

Reading Apprenticeship also helps instructors consider how they can cultivate the social and personal dimensions of their classrooms so that students are willing to engage in collaborative sense-making and knowledge construction. Instructors become increasingly adept at creating classroom cultures in which students learn to surface their thinking. "Metacognitive conversation," making the often "invisible" ways of reading, reasoning,
questioning and problem-solving in STEM disciplines "visible," provides students with the space to surface confusions, and the social and intellectual resources to work toward solving them. Ultimately, students learn how to engage in metacognitive conversation, deepening their understanding of how they are learning as well as what they are learning.

Network participants engage in the long-term process of inquiry into one's own disciplinary texts and ways of thinking through a variety of professional learning options: a six-week online course, RA 101 for STEM, a 3-day seminar, an eight-week online Campus Coach course or the Leadership Community of Practice. Connecting to and building from the Reading Apprenticeship Project that the California Community Colleges Success Network (3CSN) has established in the state, members of the Reading Apprenticeship Community College Success Network benefit from a supportive community in which to share their challenges and successes.

Resources:

- Learn more about Reading Apprenticeship, including its framework, approach, Campus Coach course, Leadership Community of Practice, and the Reading Apprenticeship Project (RAP)
- Request an application to join the Reading Apprenticeship Community College STEM Network in fall 2015
- Non-STEM faculty can begin working with Reading Apprenticeship through the online course RA 101 or 3-day seminar

RESEARCH | The "Community College Disadvantage" at the National Level

Author: Willard Hom, Contributing Author, The RP Group

If a student begins his postsecondary work for a bachelor's degree at a community college, how does s/he fare compared to if s/he had skipped the transfer route and had enrolled as a freshman at a baccalaureate institution? A number of studies have investigated the concept of "disadvantage" for students who begin their path to a bachelor's degree at a community college. Ideally, those who begin the path at a community college would experience no disadvantage, but past studies have produced a range of estimates.

In a paper published in March 2015, Monaghan and Attewell from the Graduate Center at the City University of New York inject their own estimate into the mix, with the application of propensity scoring (a modern statistical method) on a relatively new national data set (2004/2009 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study Restricted Use Transcript Data Files). Their analysis indicates that "undergraduates who start their higher education at a community college have a BA graduation rate that is nearly 17 percentage points lower than otherwise similar students who begin at a 4-year college, a large and
statistically significant effect." Bearing in mind that this study used a national data set, individual colleges or districts may need to consider the generalizability of these results to their narrower populations.

Monaghan and Attewell also cite prior studies where the disadvantage rate is as high as 30 percentage points (Alonso 2006) and as low as no disadvantage (Rouse 1995). However, their literature review found that the Rouse study was the only one to estimate no disadvantage. One prior study (Reynolds 2012) estimated different levels of disadvantage by gender, in which males were found to have a 24.5 percent disadvantage compared to a 31.5 percent disadvantage for females.

Monaghan and Attewell identify "three main "chokepoints" that contribute to the gap in BA attainment:

1. **Lack of transfer among students who have completed 60 credits.** The study states that "only about 60% transfer to a 4-year college. What the mechanisms are which prevent students from transferring--whether they fail to apply, or apply to too few schools, or whether they are discriminated against by 4-year institutions--is a fruitful ground for future research. Research on the effectiveness of articulation agreements has only just begun, but so far findings are not particularly promising."

2. **Loss of credits among those who do transfer.** The study states that "students who have all or almost all their credits transferred have an odds of graduation more than 2.5 times greater than students with less than half their credits transferred (the reference category), while students who get between half and 89% of their credits accepted by their 4-year institution have a 74% higher odds. These large effects of credit transfer on degree completion occur after controls have been added for pre-transfer GPA and the number of credits earned at a community college, as well as controls for the selectivity of 4-year institution to which the transfer student moved." Monaghan and Attewell suggest that transferability of credits earned at community colleges is an important factor for subsequent BA attainment.

3. **An often-debated concern,** the study notes that remedial courses (developmental courses) probably contribute to the disadvantage, and the use and effects of remedial education deserve further research to inform policy decisions.

The transfer function is a core mission of community colleges, and impartial, empirical information about the efficacy of transfer work can help in education policy discussions and in research supporting those discussions.

**Resources:**

- **What We Know About Transfer**, Community College Research Center, Columbia University (Davis Jenkins and John Fink, January 2015)
**PLANNING | Planning Comes Full Circle With Coordinated Focus On Institutional Effectiveness**

**Authors:** Julie Slark and Linda Umbdenstock, Founding Board Members, The RP Group, and Denice Inciong, Chair of Planning Policy, The RP Group and District Director, Research, Planning & Data Management

In this month's issue, longtime planning pros Julie (JS) and Linda (LU) have a candid conversation with Denice Inciong (DI), The RP Group's Chair of Planning and Policy and an active researcher/planner in the field. Using three key questions as anchors, the trio discusses the status of and emerging trends in planning and institutional effectiveness today.

1. **Why does it seem that the research function has had a greater prominence--compared to its planning counterpart--in community colleges in recent years?**

DI: Planning has prominence in the RP community. While I'm seeing a lot of new research and planning analysts focusing on data and research, more seasoned directors/deans are almost always involved in strategic planning, enrollment management, environmental scans and ed/facilities master plans, so they are leading planning conversations. We, as research and planning professionals, have a unique position where we can see the connections of multiple mandates and plans with data and research. By understanding the broader picture, we can lead the coordination across the campus.

LU&JS: We'd like to see another step, a move from "involved in," keeping track of the many plans and even leading the coordination--all important activities--to directing the college through articulating policy issues, formulating alternative plan-based solutions and leading discussions on implications about effectiveness. This requires being a participant in top-level leadership, a role that colleges often don't have in mind when hiring research and planning professionals; typically, colleges look for research expertise. While the discipline of institutional research has consequently advanced tremendously in recent years, we've been mostly successful integrating research and assessment into the planning cycle, primarily with environmental scanning and promoting data-based plans. The planning function itself is a step-child now emerging from the shadows and in its infancy stages of development when it comes to expertise and profile in the professional community. The RP Group could advance the IE agenda by highlighting its relationship to integrated planning in all its activities and by training on career pathways for RP professionals.

2. **Do you think planning mandates have made a difference for colleges and students?**

DI: Yes, I believe the manner in which the mandates have been established, coordinated and communicated has created buy-in at our college and we are tying planning for student success with our resources. While it's a little too early to tell how much of an institutional impact it will make on student completion and success, I feel the general sentiment is going in the right direction. We are collaborating and coordinating together, which is a positive step in how planning is viewed at our district and colleges.
LU & JS: It appears that we're finally moving beyond the stages of defensiveness about accountability and coordinating our structures and strategic directions with corresponding metrics to a deeper internalization of meaningful norms that can advance student success. Time will tell if the tension between the backlash to the requirements for the many planning mandates and the slow but definitive focus of the colleges on outcomes gives way to demonstrable impact for students and society.

3. There are many challenges to addressing the multiple planning and assessment mandates in an integrated and effective fashion at a college. Do you see any solutions and successful approaches?

DI: Yes, I see in our own district that we have more staff and resources to conduct our strategic planning efforts, and we have made a very concerted effort to have broad participation and collaboration on setting goals, objectives and key performance indicators. This strategy was instrumental to developing a plan that reflected voices from across the campuses and community. Our planning and decision making manual, which documents the definition of consensus, organization and purpose of committees, committee structure and membership, and the flow of decisions, was pivotal to constructive faculty and staff participation. Additionally, we try to ensure that our various plans reinforce each other by using district/college planning frameworks and by consistently reflecting district/college strategic goals in all plans.

LU&JS: A resource of documentation, in the form of a manual, about a college's assessment and planning and decision making procedures and processes is one of the most useful tools for ensuring systematic implementation and coordination of these complex activities. More and more colleges are establishing such written protocols. Some other suggestions we have come across include having dedicated, hands-on and centralized planning administration for effective coordination and assurance that plans endure and persist through full cycles. Planning offices and officers assigned with this responsibility are having success elevating the profile, integration and utility of college-wide plans. Further, crafting and using a college mission statement to be central to all plans provides the foundation for coordination for all planning tasks.

Resources:

• Peruse [South Orange County Community College District's planning resources](#), including the Planning and Decision Making Manual and the District-Wide Integrated Budget Planning Resource Guide
Peter Thiel, founder of PayPal, financier of Facebook and clearly one of America's leading intellectuals, criticizes our higher education system for serving other, less productive functions rather than fostering learning (nurturing conformity and perpetuating prestige, for starters).

In his provocative book, Zero to One, Thiel posits that the college and university system itself and the debt-laden students it produces stifle creativity, risk-taking and entrepreneurialism. Graduates will need to accept jobs that help pay the bills rather than take ones that are risky and low-pay at first, but could create more value for society.

Thiel points out that baby boomers speedily dismiss his thesis, seeing the college degree as the requisite ticket to professional, personal and economic prosperity. That was then, and this is now. Thiel's perspective resonates with the millennials living in the era of "is college worth really it?"

In a New York Times piece from September 2014, Thiel states, "Many founders seem to have some kind of Asperger's, [they] are bad at understanding social cues. What does it say about our society when they are the innovators, and normal people basically learn to conform?" David Sacks, Thiel's colleague at PayPal, argues, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that creative people do not possess the "imitation gene;" hard-wired to eschew herd-like behavior.

Calling higher education overvalued, Thiel sees the education bubble bursting soon, with life thereafter having "no single track, no single path" to success. Will colleges and universities be ready? Bill Gates, Thiel suggests, would have missed the personal computer train entirely had he stayed in school at Harvard. The once aberration from the college path, the geeky college dropout, will become more common.

Still, Tom and David Kelley, brothers and part of the founding team at Stanford's Design Thinking school (d.school), argue in their book, Creative Confidence, that each of us is creative, and that creative thinking can be directly elicited from learners by fostering self-efficacy using methods based on Albert Bandura's concept of guided mastery.

Thiel, famous for his provocative quote at Yale, "We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters" suggests that the innovation once spoofed in The Jetsons, in real life often stumbles and fails to improve authentic life-changing technology.

**Resources:**

- Browse Zero to One by Peter Thiel, Creative Confidence by Tom and David Kelley,