Title of Project: A Culture of Care and Equity: An Integrated Approach to Structured Onboarding and Persistence at Delta College
College/District: San Joaquin Delta College
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FAST FACTS
Fall 2019 Headcount: 19,977
Fall 2019 FTES: 5,958.34
Fall 2018 FTEF: 715.2
Location: Stockton, CA
Structure: Single-college district

Background & Purpose
Delta College is aligning with the California Community Colleges Vision for Success, and the College is dedicated to the closing of achievement gaps, increasing the attainment of degrees, promoting the successful transfer of students to four-year universities, and ensuring the employment of graduates above the living wage. Delta College’s IEPI SEM project is to specifically redesign the entire outreach and onboarding process in order to increase persistence and success, coupled with intentional efforts at closing achievement gaps. The thematic approach—their theory of change—is building a ‘culture of care and equity’ that will engage students and concretely connect them with faculty and classified professionals in programs from the onset and through their progress at the College. Our work is building this culture, and employing efficient, intentional and meaningful systems that are sustainable. The key components are as follows:

1. Integrated and Holistic Onboarding. Rather than multiple locations, lines, and divisions, the College will restructure to form a one-stop Welcome Center (Delta Connect Center), which will focus on students choosing career goals and meta-majors through exploration, assessments, and local and regional career data. The Center will be a central hub for the entire onboarding process and it will combine the interests of our Strong Workforce efforts, Career Advising, Transfer Center, and Basic Needs (housing, food, transportation, and mental health) efforts. A data and CRM system will need to be developed so that students can be tracked and monitored after their first moment of contact with the College, and so that interventions can be designed to impact success and equity.

2. Success Coaching/Cohort Management. Focusing on equity and care, the College will restructure and provide training for new jobs central to SEM: ‘success coaches’, who will function as ‘single points of contact’ for caseloads of students. As classified professionals, they will be provided training and professional development around growth mindset, key college processes, success coaching, mental health first aid, and the culture of poverty. These success coaches will be housed within the Transfer and Career Pathways (TrACs) and spend time as both in-reach or outreach specialists. Those in outreach will work with students and their families throughout the
entire onboarding process, imagined as a holistic approach to student care. Those assigned to in-reach will be assigned to meta-major programs, and they will care for students throughout their academic journey, serving as the single point of contact and a bridge between support services and instructional units. Using a cohort management approach, all specialists will monitor student progress and the equity gaps across populations, intentionally reaching out to and following up with those needing help and coaching in terms of applications, financial aid, registration, declaring areas of interest, taking career and needs assessments, following first year pathways plans, connecting with resources, meeting college timelines and processes, and accessing instructional support. The success coach specialists will be central personnel in success teams that will integrate counselors, classified professionals, deans and instructional faculty to systematically perform strategic interventions within meta-majors and programs. Imagined at-scale, students in cohorts will receive targeted interventions, which might include systematic events for specific majors that would be themed around transfer or jobs, success-in-the major works, and more.

Process & Procedures

The SEM Project is led by the Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Instruction and Planning. The project planning team included a cross-functional group of instructional and student services leaders, instructional faculty, counseling faculty, outreach staff, classified staff, and institutional research and effectiveness staff. The SEM project timing aligned with the College’s participation in its first year with Achieving the Dream and its continued work on planning and implementation of Guided Pathways. Due to the overlapping goals, the three projects were merged under the umbrella of the ‘Completion Plan’, and the Institutional Effectiveness Workgroup was established to focus on the student journey and ensuring equitable student outcomes. The Institutional Effectiveness Workgroup has been meeting regularly since fall 2020 and has collaboratively developed the draft Completion Plan.

The Completion Plan will be integrated into the College by becoming an addendum to the Comprehensive Master Plan. The Completion Plan will be regularly evaluated and maintained through the Institutional Effectiveness Workgroup and will be implemented throughout the College through the action plans associated with the responsible areas.

Outcomes & Effectiveness

The Completion Plan has not yet been implemented, but it includes metrics for every point along the student journey and momentum points. Annually, the College will evaluate its progress on these metrics and momentum points for all students, by Transfer and Career Pathway (TrAC; meta-majors), and disaggregated by student demographics to examine equity implications. Part of the project involves developing a student progress monitoring data system so these metrics and momentum points can be proactively tracked and the College’s success teams can support students in achieving their intended outcomes.
Benefits

Though the project has not been fully implemented, we are seeing benefits in some of the work included in the plan. For example, 15 success coaches were hired in March 2020 to support students in their Transfer and Career Pathways. With the shift to remote learning and working environment due to COVID-10, the success coaches were quickly moved into Canvas ‘Support Platforms’ where they have been engaging with their students, providing information, referring to technology support, and answering critical questions. The success coaches have also started working closely with their deans and program faculty to support students in their Transfer and Career Pathways (TrACs). The addition of success coaches has shown to be a great benefit to students, especially in a time when they needed a point of contact at the College.

At the Spring 2020 SEM Academy, our SEM coaches recommended that we narrow our focus to one aspect of the student journey for our SEM project. We took their advice and had a long flow-chart session outlining the ideal student experience from application to enrollment and onboarding onto a TrAC. This flow-chart has started being used to inform the Virtual Delta Connect Center (CCCMyPath) and our new outreach plan.

Lessons Learned

One of the biggest challenges early on for the SEM project team was the ‘initiative fatigue’ felt by team members due to the many college-wide projects. In addition to SEM, we were in the midst of an accreditation year with our Institutional Self-Evaluation report due in the fall 2020. We were also in our first year of Achieving the Dream and continuing our work on Guided Pathways implementation. We found that many people on the SEM team were on all of the other teams as well, so we decided to integrate into the Institutional Effectiveness Workgroup and focus our efforts on the student journey and developing on Completion Plan that included Guided Pathways, Strategic Enrollment Management, and Student Equity. From this group, we had smaller work sessions and larger forums focused on the different segments of the student journey.

Next Steps

- Add action plans to the Completion Plan draft and finalize the Plan.
- Add the Completion Plan as an addendum to the Comprehensive Master Plan.
- Distribute the Completion Plan to responsible areas to ensure implementation.
- Develop data system for student progress monitoring and evaluation.