Study Research Questions

Background

Student Success (Re)defined aims to answer the following overarching research question:

- In an environment of extreme scarcity, which student support activities can be delivered inside and outside of the classroom to improve success for all students, and in particular for African American and Latino students?

The RP Group launched this study with a preliminary literature review which identified two key assumptions about student support activities. Student support must be (1) integrated into students’ daily experience and (2) included in the overall curriculum. This review also identified six factors that contribute to student success: connected, directed, engaged, focused, nurtured and valued. For more information on the literature review and these success factors, visit http://www.rpgroup.org/content/research-framework.

Student Perspectives Research

In spring 2012, the RP Group will conduct phone surveys and face-to-face focus groups to get students’ perspectives on the factors that contribute to their success. Four general research questions will drive our student perspectives research:

- What supports, both in and out of the classroom, do students identify as important to their success as community college students?

- What is the relationship between what students think is important and their actual persistence and success?

- What is the interaction among the six factors of success?

- How do the above results vary for different groups of students?
Student Survey and Focus Group Research Questions

The student survey and focus groups will explore the following specific research questions based on the six factors that contribute to success and the importance of each of these factors to student success:

**Connected**
- What are the nature, quantity and quality of students’ connectedness to the institution?
- What is the relationship between students’ connectedness and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students’ connectedness and their retention and completion?

**Directed**
- Can students articulate an educational goal and do they know the steps required to achieve this goal?
- What is the relationship between students having an educational goal and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students having an educational goal and their retention and completion?

**Engaged**
- What factors related to the instructor, course content and course structure do students identify as most important to their learning?
- What is the relationship between students’ sense of classroom engagement and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students’ sense of classroom engagement and their retention and completion?

**Focused**
- What motivates or hinders students’ ability to make a commitment to actively pursue their education?
- What is the relationship between students’ commitment to their education and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students’ commitment to their education and their retention and completion?
Nurtured

- What are the most significant types of support -- both personal and academic -- that an instructor or staff can provide to make a student feel important?
- What is the relationship between students’ feelings of being nurtured and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students’ feelings of being nurtured and their retention and completion?

Valued

- What institutional structures do students feel provide them with opportunities to contribute to and enrich the college culture and community?
- What is the relationship between students feeling valued and the other factors related to success?
- What is the relationship between students feeling valued and their retention and completion?

Importance to Success

- What did students feel was most important to their success and why?
- What is the relationship between what students identify as important and the six factors of success?
- What is the relationship between what students identify as important and their retention and completion?

Practitioner Perspectives Research

After the student survey and focus groups results have been analyzed, we will engage practitioners in a discussion of the findings. The RP Group will use the information gathered through this dialog, along with student survey and focus group results, to guide development of both general and specific research questions for the practitioner survey and interviews. We will conduct practitioner perspectives research during the 2012-2013 academic year.