Student Support
(Re)defined

Using Student Voices to Redefine Student Support

Presenters
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Agenda

- What is Student Support (Re)defined?
- What have we found so far?
- What does all this mean?
- How can you use this research?
Session outcomes

Participants will:

- Learn about six factors that support students’ success
- Hear what students say is most important to their progress and achievement
- Use this research to identify how it can further advance their students’ success
OVERVIEW OF STUDY PURPOSE, DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

What is Student Support (Re)defined?
General 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, paying special attention to African-American and Latino learners?
Student Support (Re)defined

- 3-year study supported by the Kresge Foundation
- 3 phases of research
  - Student perspectives (Year 1)
  - Practitioner perspectives (Year 2)
  - Dissemination (Ongoing, Year 3)
- Action research design
- Mixed-methods methodology
Action Research

- Literature Review
  - Included interviews with researchers and practitioners

- Project Advisers
  - Provide input on different stages of study
  - Incorporate advisers’ input into reports, briefs, action guide

- Presentations/Convenings
  - Collect feedback from participants (including students) and incorporate into next phase of project
College selection

- Selection criteria:
  - Significant proportion of African-American or Latino students OR high transfer rates among African-American and/or Latino students
  - Region (northern, southern, central)
  - Area density (urban, suburban, rural)
  - Institution size (small, medium, large)

- 15 invited, 13 participating
Participating colleges
Survey Sampling

- Colleges submitted list of current students, completers and leavers and matched students with their MIS data
- Created a random sample within each group, oversampling African-American and Latino students
- Sent stratified random sample of 10,918 students to CSUF Call Center
- Telephone survey conducted between January and March 2012
Study participants

- Survey: 785 students (12 CCCs)
  - 36% current students, 32% completers, 32% leavers
  - 30% first generation
  - 32% white, 31% Latino, 25% African American, 12% other

- Focus groups: 102 students (4 CCCs)
Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics tabulated for each question
- Open-ended questions coded
- Cross-tabulations were performed by:
  - Student type, ethnicity, gender, age, 1st generation, financial aid, EOPS, DSPS, ed plan
- Inference statistical analyses:
  - Chi square, ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis, Bivariate correlations
Reflection

1. Thinking back, what would you say was most important to your success as a college student?

2. What do you think is most important to community college students’ success today?
Six success factors

- **Directed**: Students have a goal and know how to achieve it
- **Focused**: Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize
- **Nurtured**: Students feel somebody wants them to succeed as a student and helps them succeed
Six success factors (cont.)

- **Connected**: Students feel they are part of the college community

- **Engaged**: Students actively listen and participate in class and are involved in extracurricular activities

- **Valued**: Students’ skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated
What have we found so far?
Directed: Key Findings

Having direction...

- Identified by students as an important driver of achievement
  - Most frequently rated by focus group participants as top success factor
  - 79% of survey participants thought seeing a connection between their success in college and their life goals was important to their progress

- Impacted significantly by counselors and faculty who help with goal selection, ed plan development and monitoring progress
Focused: Key Findings

Being focused…

- Prioritized by *survey respondents* as *most important to their success*

- Defined as…
  - Having self-motivation
  - Doing the work required
  - Managing time effectively and efficiently

- For *African Americans and Latinos*, significantly influenced by access to *financial aid* and the ability to register for classes
Nurtured: Key Findings

Feeling nurtured...

- Prioritized by survey respondents as a top success factor (after focused)
- Cited as a critical motivator of academic progress
- Often linked to other factors of success
- Fostered in a range of ways—both small gestures and more comprehensive approaches
- Particularly important to African-American students (others wanting them to succeed)
Engaged: Key Findings

Being engaged…

- Happens inside and outside of classroom
- Significantly influenced by teachers
- Is not always recognized as important by students (and needs to be)
- For African-American and Latino students, engagement is notably impacted by the presence or absence of academic support
Connected: Key Findings

Feeling connected…

- Goes hand-in-hand with being engaged
- Most often facilitated by faculty
- Is more important to younger students
- May be an area of focus for African-American students who say they learn best when working with others but are often alone on campus
- Potentially limited by community college setting
Valued: Key Findings

Feeling valued…

- Happens in a range of ways
  - Performing community service
  - Providing feedback to instructors, college
  - Sharing family history, culture and traditions
  - Mentoring other students
  - Taking leadership roles

- Prioritized by African-American, Latino, EOPS and first-generation students as important to their success
Discussion Question

How might you go about measuring whether students

• are directed
• are focused
• feel nurtured
• are engaged
• feel connected
• feel valued
IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

What does all this mean?
Key Themes

1. Colleges need to foster students' motivation.
2. Colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.
3. Colleges need to structure support to ensure all "six success factors" are addressed.
4. Colleges need to provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing.
5. Everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.
How can you use this research?
How to Use This Research

- Widely disseminate research brief, report and webinar
- Use discussion questions within each of these resources to hold conversations about improving support
- Include people who interact with students at all points in their college journey
- Consider linking to existing efforts on your campus to advance student success
- Involve students in these conversations to ensure that their experience is truly represented
How Researchers Can Use This Research

- Lead discussions about how to use the findings to reflect on current state of student support at your college and plan for improvement
- Use the survey instrument and focus group protocol to inform own research efforts
- Use the six success factors as a framework for tracking student needs and measuring impact of support on student success
How Will You Use This Research?

- Have you done any research at your college/district that relates to or possibly informs this study?

- What ideas do you have for using this research at your college or district?
Next steps

Phase 2

- Sharing these findings among a variety of constituent groups
- Facilitating dialogue about the findings (convenings)
- Developing an action guide that helps facilitate the improvement of student support
- Identifying related practices that can be sustained and scaled in a cost-effective manner
For more information on Student Support (Re)defined

http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support

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Thank you!