Key Findings from RP Group Projects

Student Support (Re)defined, Completion by Design, Basic Skills Research Project, and the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

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Agenda

- National trends
- RP projects
  - Student Support (Re)defined
  - Completion by Design (CBD)
  - Basic Skills Research Project
  - Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence
National Trends in Higher Education

Predominant Political & Economic Forces

1. Resource scarcity is here to stay
2. Increasing push toward greater accountability
3. Further implementation of the completion agenda
4. Continued expansion of market-based innovations and alternatives (e.g., MOOCs, internal corporate training programs, private sector innovations)
5. More discourse and attention on issues of equity
Some of the major reform initiatives

Academic program redesign & contextualization

- Creating clearer pathways
- Early and regular faculty mentoring
- Contextualization of curriculum

Accelerating students through pathways

- Early placement testing and prep
- Redesign of developmental education
Some of the major reform initiatives (continued)

Integrated/coordinated student services
  • Process reengineering
  • Mandatory academic advising, orientation

Institutional and state policy
  • Better tracking (milestones, gateways, momentum points, completion, etc.)
  • Student incentives to persist & complete
  • Rewards/incentives promoting innovation in classroom
  • Labor market outcomes
Overall Key Messages/Implications

- Need to look at reform and change from the view of the students
- Attention to students is currently frontloaded with very little contact afterwards with exception of academic probation and graduation
- If changes to student services are not integrated with instruction, successful and lasting reform is less likely
- Most efforts to date have only nibbled at the edges of reform affecting pockets of students; in order to impact large groups of students, we must act systemically
- Need more than changes to law, colleges need help with implementation, how to change not just what to change
OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

Student Support (Re)defined
Let’s Talk

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 students’ success today?
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?
Research design and methodology

Student Perspectives Methodology

• Literature review

• Student telephone survey (current students, leavers, completers)

• Focus groups (current students)
Participating colleges
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)
Six success factors

- Directed
- Focused
- Nurtured
- Connected
- Engaged
- Valued
Directed: Student Voices

I came here for liberal arts and then I got offered to take several human resources and business classes. I was doing well in these classes and just going along and the professor asked me, “What are you here for? What are you doing?” I said, “Just having fun and stuff.” He said, “You really need to focus on something.” So it was the instructor that helped me choose a direction.
Directed: Key Observations

- Students reported struggling to find direction, particularly regarding what courses they need to take and how educational milestones relate to life or career goals.

- If counselors and faculty worked together proactively, particularly with undecided and first-generation students, to develop an education plan, it could make a significant difference.
Focused: Student Voices

On my college website, they have a “degree works” system where I can go and check all the classes I’ve taken. And I keep looking at it when I’m a little down. I think, “Oh, I’m almost there.” So, it’s kind of a big motivator. I see my grades and what I’ve accomplished and it lifts my spirits.
Focused: Key Observations

- **Concentrating support at the front door** will be important to help that “least likely to success cluster,” but it is not sufficient.

- While many students arrive to college motivated, **their drive needs to be continuously stoked and augmented** with additional support in order for success to be realized.

- **It is not just an issue of study skills**, it is also a question of being able to secure financial aid and get the classes you need.
Nurtured:  
Student Voices

The first day I came to campus to register, I was lost and didn’t know where to go. I unintentionally ended up in DSPS office and there’s a lady that sits in front. . . . She was very helpful to me. She actually told me exactly what I have to do. . . . She even sat down with me on the computer to help me finish my registration. And she has been very helpful since then. I really feel that . . . when somebody cares about you, it makes you more responsible. Because she's been taking care of me, I think that I have to do my best. Whenever she talks about me she says, "This is the student that I helped and he’s so successful."
Nurtured: Key Observations

- **Job title at the college is not important** in providing nurturing—this support can come from anyone and it can be fostered in small as well as large ways.

- **Students noted that feeling nurtured has a big impact on their academic progress and success**—having a coherent approach for providing nurturing throughout students’ experience can help build a larger culture of student success.
Engaged: Student Voices

For me [engagement] happens in the classroom, outside of the classroom and in activities. . . . For me it’s important to do all three. That’s just the type of learner I am because I’m not just here to . . . be in the classroom and engage in the classroom and then leave and not engage. I have to because otherwise I’ll forget what I just learned or it’s a waste of time for me to be here.
Engaged: Key Observations

- Instructional approaches matter—students said they learn best when instructors (1) care about their students, (2) challenge learners to do the best they could, and (3) are interested in what their students thought. Sufficient academic support is also highlighted.

- We can look for practices that break down the classroom walls by helping students engage with other students, faculty, the local community, and the larger world through activities like service learning or peer mentoring.
Connected: Student Voices

I think . . . making the student feel more connected, it sort of lies a bit within the professors as well. Because there’s been some classes where the professor has one or two tests a semester and doesn’t lecture and it’s all based on the book. And you don’t feel very connected to that class. Whereas you can have a professor that fully engages you in lectures. There’s classwork spread throughout the whole semester and you can see he really cares. You’re more motivated to go to that class to be at the school.
Connected: Key Observations

- Students often don’t feel connected to community colleges because it is a temporary stop toward a larger goal—there may not be a sense of pride in being at a community college.
- Connection isn’t just an issue for students—practitioners may be just as disconnected.
Valued:
Student Voices

I worked in a particular field so I bring my professional experience to the classroom and I feel that's valued. I've been told I bring an enormous professional background, specifically in debates and in answering questions about my professional experience and organization . . . I'm able to make arguments about why you don't do certain things . . . So, yeah, in that sense, I feel very valued.
Valued:
Key Observations

- Roughly three quarters of survey participants cited giving back through community service and providing feedback to instructors as key opportunities.

- Colleges can build low-cost opportunities for students to share their expertise, such as on-campus jobs, service learning, and civic engagement.
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.
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
OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

Completion by Design
Completion By Design

- Signature initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Postsecondary Success Strategy
- **Goal:** Significantly raise community college completion rates for most students (focus on low-income students under age 26)
- Three cadres selected to lead CBD implementation in Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio
- 9 colleges/campuses: 5 in NC, 3 in OH, 1 in FL
- 3 phases over **5 years**
  - Planning (12 months)
  - Implementation (24 – 30 months)
  - Scaling and Adoption (24 months)
Q. How can a community college raise completion rates for large numbers of students while containing costs, maintaining open access and ensuring quality?
A. Develop strong completion pathways, defined as integrated policies, practices, programs and processes designed to maximize students’ progress from start to finish.
Successful Completion
Loss & Momentum Framework

CONNECTION
Interest to Application

ENTRY
Enrollment to Completion of Gatekeeper Courses

PROGRESS
Entry into Course of Study to 75% Requirements Completed

COMPLETION
Complete Course of Study to Credential with Labor Market Value

POLICIES

PRACTICES

PROGRAMS

PROCESSES

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Mandatory intrusive advising focused on programs of study

Accelerate entry to POS

Effective academic catch-up programs

Mandatory intrusive advising toward certificates, degrees & transfer

Incentives to transfer with

First Time Student

Aggressive Financial Aid support

Remove barriers to graduation

Successful Completion

Take placement test in High School

Dual Enrollment & AP Credit

Emergency aid for students

Learn & Earn and Career Pathway Programs

Foster college-going norms in High School

Expand awareness of college programs and requirements

Student progress to completion monitored & feedback provided

Accelerated competency-based programs

Effective academic catch-up programs

Shorter, faster, cheaper course design

Programs to incentivize optimal attendance

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Successful Completion

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Incentives to transfer with
Pathway Redesign Process

CONNECTION
From interest to enrollment

ENTRY
From enrollment to entry into program of study

PROGRESS
From program entry to completion of program requirements

COMPLETION
Completion of credential of value for further education and (for CTE) labor market advancement

- Market program paths
- Build bridges from high school and adult ed. into program streams (e.g., strategic dual enrollment, I-BEST)

- Help students choose program pathway and track entry
- Build prescribed “on-ramps” customized to largest program streams

- Clearly define and prescribe program paths
- Monitor students’ progress and provide feedback and supports JIT
- Incentivize progress

- Align academic program outcomes with requirements for success in further education and (for CTE programs) in the labor market
Status Quo Pathway Design (example AA in LAS or Gen Studies)

- AA requirements not aligned with requirements for junior standing in a major at transfer institutions
- Lack of clear pathways to transfer in a major for cc students; many choices
- Students progress toward AA and transfer not tracked; little on-going guidance, support
- No mechanism to inform choice of major pathway
- Dev ed narrowly focused on math and English, not customized to particular paths
Ideal Pathway Design

- Program learning goals clearly defined and aligned with the requirements transfer with junior standing in major and (for CTE programs) career advancement
- Program pathway well structured and prescribed, with electives only as needed to achieve learning goals
- Students’ progress toward meeting requirements is monitored and feedback/support provided “just-in-time”
- “On-ramps” to help students choose a program of study and customized to accelerate entry into specific program streams
CBD Pathway Principles

1. Accelerate Entry into Coherent Programs of Study
   - Provide a structured, efficient, and prescriptive student progression experience
   - Clear sequence of courses that lead to completion

2. Minimize Time Required to Get College Ready
   - Clearly map out program requirements and sequence
   - Prescribe course of study for students based on goals and level of readiness
CBD Pathway Principles

3. Ensure Students Know Requirements to Succeed
   - Ensure students understand assessment & placement process and importance of preparation
   - Clearly communicate requirements for degrees & certificates and the path to achieving them

4. Customize and Contextualize Instruction
   - Use program-specific content to make developmental education relevant and engaging
   - Use of experiential learning
CBD Pathway Principles

5. Integrate Student Support with Instruction
   - Embed student support within instruction where appropriate
   - Ensure student support serves students who most need it

6. Continually Monitor Student Progress and Proactively Provide Feedback
   - Monitor and celebrate student progress toward goals and provide prompt and tailored feedback
   - Use data on student progress to inform planning and creation of safety nets
CBD Pathway Principles

7. Reward Behaviors that Contribute to Completion
   - Potential for monetary incentives to encourage progress / completion
   - Also consider non-monetary incentives such as recognition of progress

8. Leverage Technology to Improve Learning and Service Delivery
   - Use technology to monitor and celebrate progress
   - Use of technology within curriculum
OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

Basic Skills Research Project
Basic Skills Research Project

- Joint project of UC Berkeley and RP Group
- Goal is to understand what happens in basic skills instruction through triangulation of:
  - actions of instructors and students
  - the content of the classroom
  - the institutional setting
- Involved 20 CCCs
  - 169 classroom visits
  - 323 practitioner interviews
Basic Skills Research Project

Relevant Key Findings

- Misalignment between assessment tests and course content
- Lack of integration between instruction and student services
- Laissez-faire vs. proactive and intrusive
OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence
Aspen Prize Goals and Purposes

- Identifies colleges that have outstanding outcomes for completion, labor market alignment, and equity
- Emphasizes the use of evidence to drive improvement, exemplary leadership, excellence in teaching, and coherent, scaled institutional efforts
- Offers an opportunity to better understand how effective colleges work
Aspen Colleges
What I Saw in Common

- Students don’t do optional – mandatory orientation, assessment and advising
- Most are trying acceleration efforts to get students through dev ed and to college level as soon as possible
- Above all else, these institutions have cultures that drive towards excellence, embrace change, and are committed to students in every way possible
Overall Key Messages/Implications

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- Matriculation is currently frontloaded with very little contact afterwards with exception of academic probation and graduation
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- Most efforts to date have only nibbled at the edges of reform affecting pockets of students; in order to impact large groups of students, we must act systemically
- Need more than changes to law, colleges need help with implementation, how to change not just what to change
For more information on Student Support (Re)defined

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

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Thank you!