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
What is Student Support (Re)defined?
Motivation for the study

- Constrained budget environment
  - Requires efforts that are effective, scalable and affordable

- Low student success rates
  - Call attention to ensuring equitable outcomes for all students

- Statewide focus on student support
  - Provide critical perspective on reform initiatives
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)
Study participants (cont.)

Among survey participants…

- 71% had taken an assessment test
- 61% received need-based financial aid
- 40% had seen a counselor
- 36% had an ed plan on record
- 14% were in EOPS
- 7% were in DSPS
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
- Inferential 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
SUMMARY OF STUDENT PERSPECTIVES RESEARCH

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
Directed: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Provide career exploration and discipline-specific advising (faculty)
- Connect students to existing academic support programs and services (faculty, counselors & support staff)
- Provide additional resources and tools for goal selection and monitoring of progress (administrators)
- Direct more intrusive outreach to first-generation and undecided students (administrators)
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
Focused: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Provide regular feedback on students’ performance and progress (faculty)
- Have high expectations for students (faculty)
- Connect students with special programs (e.g., DSPS, EOPS, Puente, Umoja, etc.) that provide intensive support (counselors & support staff, faculty)
- Develop resources that enable students to track their own progress towards meeting their educational goals (administrators)
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)
Nurtured: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Offer direct and tangible academic support (faculty)
- Ensure students understand course material (faculty)
- Know students’ names (faculty)
- Communicate and demonstrate to students that you care about their success (faculty, counselors, staff, administrators)
Discussion Question

How might you go about measuring whether students are directed, focused and/or feel nurtured?
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**
Engaged: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Encourage students to utilize academic supports and ensure adequate access to these resources (faculty, administrators)
- Offer challenging classes with hands-on, real world applications (faculty)
- Allow students to provide feedback in both formal and informal ways (faculty)
- Highlight the advantages of and encourage participation in extracurricular activities (faculty, counselors, administrators)
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
Connected: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Provide both formal and informal opportunities for peer-to-peer connections both inside and outside of class (faculty, administrators)
- Find ways to link students to available support resources and programs (faculty, counselors, administrators)
- Promote your community college as a place of pride and worth in students’ postsecondary experience (administrators, faculty, staff, counselors)
- Show students what makes you feel connected to the college (faculty)
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
Valued: Students’ Suggestions for Action

- Provide community service and leadership opportunities (administrators)
- **Create opportunities for and encourage students to provide feedback** (faculty, administrators)
- Offer venues where students can share their family history, culture and traditions (faculty, administrators)
- **Recognize students’ potential and encourage them to use their skills, abilities and experience to help others** (faculty, counselors, staff, administrators)
Discussion Question

How might you go about measuring whether students are engaged, feel connected and/or 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.
UTILIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

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
Action Guide

Outlines a step-by-step process that includes resources and activities designed to help colleges…

- Prepare to engage a cross-functional team in the effort
- Reflect upon current support practices in light of study findings
- Identify what more could be done
- Prioritize a plan of action
For more information on Student Support (Re)defined

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

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Thank you!