Student Support (Re)defined

What African-American students say about the support they need to succeed

Umoja Conference
November 2012

Presenters
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Agenda

- What is Student Support (Re)defined?
- What have we found so far?
- What do students have to say?
Session outcomes

Participants will:

- Learn about six factors that support students’ success and how they relate to UMOJA’s educational philosophy and activities
- Hear what students say is most important to their progress and achievement
- Use this research to identify how they can further advance their students’ success
- Help inform our Year 2 practitioner research
OVERVIEW OF STUDY PURPOSE, DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

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
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
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)
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
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

*No significant differences by ethnicity in counseling, assessment and ed plan*
## Six success factors

### Directed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Related Umoja Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students have a goal and know how to achieve it</td>
<td>• Guidance/counseling courses</td>
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<td>• Library info literacy course</td>
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<td>• FAFSA completion</td>
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### Six success factors

#### Focused

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<td>Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize</td>
<td>• Student educational plan</td>
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<td>• Regular/required advising</td>
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<td>• Mentoring program</td>
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## Six success factors

**Nurtured**

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<td>Students feel somebody wants them to succeed as a student and helps them succeed</td>
<td>• Counseling (2 sessions per semester)</td>
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<td>• Mentoring program</td>
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<td>• Peer mentoring</td>
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## Six success factors

### Engaged

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| Students actively participate in class and are involved in extracurricular activities | • Service learning  
  • Student leadership conference  
  • Learning communities  
  • Culturally-relevant pedagogy  
  • Academic support  
  • Tutoring/supplemental instruction |

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## Six success factors

### Connected

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<tr>
<td>Students feel a connection to the college</td>
<td>• Learning community/cohort approach</td>
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<td>• Umoja Village</td>
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<td>• Mentoring programs</td>
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<td>• Rite of passage events</td>
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Six success factors

Valued

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<td>Students feel that what they have to contribute to the college is valued</td>
<td>• Cultural activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Culturally-relevant pedagogy</td>
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<td>• Umoja Village</td>
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<td>• Mentoring programs</td>
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<td>• Service learning</td>
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<td>• Student leadership conference</td>
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SUMMARY OF STUDENT PERSPECTIVES RESEARCH

What did we find?
Directed: Key Findings

*Having direction…*

- Identified by students as **top driver of achievement & top success factor**
- Impacted significantly by counselors and faculty who help with goal selection, ed plan development and monitoring progress
Directed: Key Findings

African-American students...

- At colleges with high % of African Americans were less likely to have received counseling or have ed plan
- More likely to cite the importance of having programs and services available to help them successfully navigate college
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 students as *most important to their success*
- Defined as…
  - Having self-motivation
  - Doing the work required
  - Managing time effectively and efficiently
Focused: Key Findings

African-American students...

- Were more likely to report the inability to register for needed classes, lack of transportation and the lack of financial aid as barriers to their persistence

- Along with Latinos, were more likely than whites to indicate that not passing a class as a very important reason to not re-enroll.
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 students 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
Nurtured: Key Findings

African American students...

- Were more likely to indicate that **others wanting them to succeed** is particularly important to their success
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)
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)
Engaged: Key Findings

African-American students...

- Were more likely to report that their success is impacted by the presence or absence of academic support (along with Latinos)

- Were more likely to indicate that working with diverse groups of students positively affected their learning
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
- Potentially limited by community college setting
Connected: Key Findings

African-American students...

- Were more likely to indicate that they learn best when working with others
- Were also more likely to be report spending their time outside of class on campus alone
- Were more likely to reference their peers and less likely to reference a class when sharing a time when they felt connected to the college
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
Valued:
Key Findings

*African-American students*... 

- Were more likely to indicate that *feeling valued was important to their success* (along with Latino, EOPS and first-generation students)

- Were more likely to highlight the importance of *sharing family history, culture and traditions*, and *taking on leadership roles* as ways *they want to add value*
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)**
Key Messages

1. Colleges need to foster students’ motivation.
2. Colleges must help students learn how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.
3. Multiple coordinated and integrated elements must come together to help students reach their goals.
4. Strategic investments in comprehensive support are critical to the success of historically underserved students.
5. Everyone has a role in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.
STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES

What do students have to say?
Questions for Student Panelists

- What factor(s) has/have been most important to your success as a student and why? How has Umoja helped you be more Directed, Focused, Nurtured, Connected, Engaged, and Valued?

- What information from this study should we share with students and how do you think we should present it?
Other Questions to Consider

- Using the six factors as a framework, how are you currently helping students get directed, focused, and engaged, and feel connected, nurtured and valued?
- How can you best use the time you have to effectively support students?
- What Umoja activities could be scaled at an institutional level in a cost effective manner?
- Who else needs to hear about these findings?
Next steps

Phase 2

- Sharing these findings among a variety of constituent groups
- Facilitating dialogue about the findings (convenings)
- Gathering practitioners’ perspectives on student support, identifying related practices that can be sustained and scaled in a cost-effective manner
For more information

Student Support (Re)defined website
http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support

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Thank you!