Student Support (Re)defined
Using Student Voices to Redefine Student Support

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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?

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?

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

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?
**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.

**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 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)

Directed: Discussion Questions

• When, where and how are students provided with specific information about how to develop an educational plan? How is that plan revised as needed?
• What different support approaches and strategies are needed for students with a clear goal in mind versus those who are undecided?
• In what ways can faculty regularly incorporate activities that help students to see the connection between their education and their long-term goals?

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 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)

Focused:
Discussion Questions

- When are students most likely to become less motivated and what can be done to help them remain focused?
- How can students be mobilized to help their peers become and stay motivated?
- What structures could be put in place to help students monitor and track their progress toward their goals?
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 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)
Nurtured: Discussion Questions

- What do you currently do to show students you care about them and their success?
- What types of support can colleges provide to faculty and staff to help them understand the range of ways—both small and large—to show they care about students and their success?
- What can colleges do to encourage and/or facilitate students nurturing other students?

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 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)

Engaged: Discussion Questions

- In what ways do faculty already promote classroom and campus engagement at your college—in their courses and/or programs?
- What professional development and ongoing support do faculty need to ensure they are using engaging, student-centered pedagogical approaches in their courses and programs?
- In what ways can academic supports be structured and offered to reach more students inside and outside the classroom?

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 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)

Connected: Discussion Questions

- On your campus, what are some ways that administrators, faculty and staff help students feel a sense of connection to the college?
- How can the time students spend in the classroom be structured to help them be more connected to their peers, faculty and the institution as a whole?
- How does your college help faculty and staff feel connected to your institution and develop an awareness of how their work links directly and/or indirectly to students’ success?
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 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)
**Valued: Discussion Questions**

- What opportunities could be developed that allow students to provide feedback throughout the semester about their classes instead of just at the end?
- How can the institution create safe spaces where students can share their cultural, family and work experiences and learn from those of others?
- How can your college encourage and empower faculty and staff to look for, recognize and utilize students’ unique talents, skills, abilities and experiences?

**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.
Key Themes: Discussion Questions

- How do these themes align with your own experience working with students?
- Which of these themes might be the easiest to address at your college?
- Which of these themes might be the most difficult to address at your college?

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
Thank you!