

TECHNOLOGY

TRANSFER

AACRAO

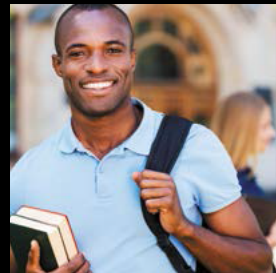
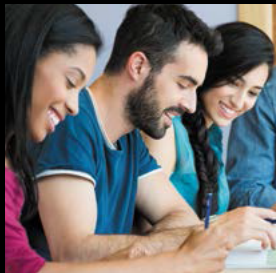
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology & Transfer Conference

Student Support (Re)defined: What Students Say about the Support They Need to Succeed

JULY 9-11, 2017  SHERATON NEW ORLEANS  NEW ORLEANS, LA

WWW.AACRAO.ORG



Sponsored by
 CollegeSource®

 AACRAO
Advancing Global Higher Education

Student Support (Re)defined: What Students Say about the Support They Need to Succeed

Speaker: **Dr. Darla M. Cooper**, *Director of Research & Evaluation, Research and Planning Group (The RP Group), for California Community Colleges*

Overview

Between 2012 and 2014, the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) conducted the Student Support (Re)defined study. This research initiative asked nearly 900 students from 13 community colleges about the factors that support their educational success. This study paid special attention to what African American and Latinos cited as important to their achievement.

The participants prioritized six success factors: directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued. Institutions must endeavor to structure student support in ways that address these factors through scalable programs. In addition, all college employees must recognize that they have a role to play in supporting student achievement.

Context

Dr. Darla M. Cooper summarized the Student Support (Re)defined research project and highlighted the six student success factors that served as a framework for the study.

Key Takeaways

- **Student Support (Re)defined used survey and focus group data to prioritize student success factors.**

Student Support (Re)defined was a research study designed to discover what leads to student success in and out of the classroom. The study paid special attention to African American and Latino students, due to the equity gaps that exist with these groups. The research project had two components:

- *Telephone survey.* This survey targeted students from 12 community colleges. Results were gathered from 785 students. Approximately one third (36%) were currently enrolled, one third (32%) had recently completed a degree or certificate, and one third (32%) had stopped out a semester. In terms of demographics, 30% were first-generation students, 32% were white, 31% were Latino, and 25% were African American.
- *Focus groups.* At four community college campuses, 102 students participated in focus groups.

The research brief, full report, action guide, tools, and featured practices primer can be downloaded from the [Student Support \(Re\)defined web page](#).

Students are more successful when directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued.

The research participants prioritized six factors that lead to student success in the following order: directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued. Dr. Cooper discussed why students believe these factors are important to their success on campus:

1. *Directed.* Students have a goal and know how to achieve it. Many students come to campus and don't really know why they're there. Simply asking why students are in college can wake them up and begin to point them in the right direction. Professors and other campus staff can direct students to the career center, counselors, or other resources that can help them find direction.
2. *Focused.* This factor relates to students' own self-motivation and taking the daily steps needed to be successful. Focused and directed are closely linked, with students saying that both together are critical to their success. Many institutions have degree works or degree audit programs. These practical tools can give students reassurance that they are on the right track. However, many students refer to degree works systems when feeling down to help motivate them to keep going because these systems show students all that they have achieved and how close they are to graduation.
3. *Nurtured.* Students simply want to know that someone on campus cares about them and how they are doing. People often demonstrate care in informal ways that aren't part of their job descriptions. Just asking how a student is doing can make a big difference. Even if a person can't solve a student's problem, he/she can point them in the right direction. For example, a student who had recently emigrated from Iran was wandering around his local community college, trying to get help with English classes. The front desk employee in the Disabled Student Programs and Services department stopped and helped him, even though it wasn't part of her job. This one incident made a large, positive impact on the student's life. No matter where an individual sits on campus, it's possible to make a difference in a student's life just by showing that you care.
4. *Engaged.* When students are engaged, they participate actively in their learning in and out of the classroom. Institutions often don't do a good job explaining to students why they need to engage in class, office

hours, group work, and extracurricular activities. In some cases, colleges and universities may need to step back and examine why they do what they do, so they can share that information with students. For example, a professor asked students to participate in group work, peer review, and critical thinking exercises. The students thought she was a terrible teacher because she wasn't spending all her time lecturing. It would have been helpful if the professor had explained why she was using different teaching styles and how it would benefit them. If she had, it might have increased students' engagement in their own learning.

"Keep in mind that you have the power to make or break a student's experience just by how you do your job every day."

— Dr. Darla M. Cooper

5. *Connected.* This factor is defined as a sense of belonging and feeling that one is part of something larger. Professors as well as all other college staff can create connection through the ways they do their jobs, how they treat students, and the help they provide to them. For example, how a professor teaches a class can engage students in the subject matter in such a way that students feel more connected to the professor and their fellow students.
 6. *Valued.* When people feel valued, they believe they have something worthwhile to offer and are appreciated for it. If students understand that they matter, they will be more likely to persevere and work harder to achieve their goals. The top two ways that make students feel valued are opportunities to help other students both formally and informally, and being asked for their opinion. Institutions need to encourage students to help and support each other and then provide the means for them to do so. Focus groups are a great way to show students that their views are important to the institution.
- **College faculty and staff play an important role in promoting student success and reducing equity gaps.**

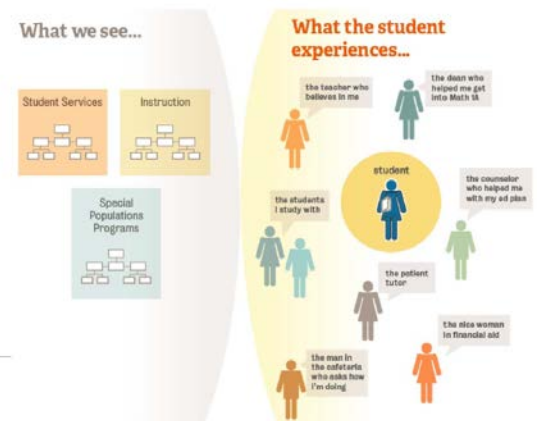
The Student Support (Re)defined study revealed five key themes:

1. *Colleges must foster students' motivation.* Most students accept that their motivation is their responsibility, but colleges can play a positive or a negative role. Institutions need to examine whether their policies, practices, programs, and interactions with students are helping students stay motivated or are they creating barriers that discourage students.
2. *Colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.* The transition to college is difficult. Students often don't know what it takes to be a successful college student and/or don't yet possess the study and time management skills they will need to

succeed. Colleges need to provide that guidance and support.

3. *Colleges must structure support to ensure that all six success factors are addressed.* Not all students need all six factors in the same way at the same time, but if institutions cover all the bases, then students will be able to find what they need when they need it. The six success factors are universal, whether a student is entering college or university as a freshman or is transferring from a community college to a four-year institution.
4. *Colleges must provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing.* Thousands of students struggle to be successful on campus. Special programs that serve small numbers will never move the needle. Institutions must find ways to help students at scale. A first step can be to look at what works in these special programs and identify which aspects could be implemented at scale.
5. *Everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.* Instructional faculty must take the lead because unfortunately not every student sees a counselor or belongs to a special program, but every student has a teacher and sometimes that teacher is the student's only connection to the college. Faculty members play an important role by putting students in touch with support and services that can help them.

Differing Perspectives



"Students characterize colleges in two ways— institutions that really care about students and those that don't. What type of message do you want to send to students? Is your college one that cares about students or not?"

— Dr. Darla M. Cooper

Biographies

Scott Berinato

Senior Editor, Harvard Business Review; Author of [Good Charts: The HBR Guide to Making Smarter, More Persuasive Data Visualizations](#)

Scott Berinato, senior editor at *Harvard Business Review*, is an award-winning writer, editor, content architect, and self-described “dataviz geek” who relishes the challenge of finding visual solutions to communication problems. At HBR he has championed the use of visual communication and storytelling and has launched successful visual formats, including popular narrated infographics, on [HBR.org](#). In addition to his work on visualization, he also writes about technology, business, science, and the future of publishing. He has a master’s degree in journalism from the Medill School at Northwestern University.

Dr. Darla M. Cooper

Director of Research & Evaluation, Research & Planning Group (The RP Group) for California Community Colleges

Dr. Darla M. Cooper is an educational leader and expert in research and evaluation dedicated to using inquiry, data, and evidence to improve the lives of all community college students. She currently serves as the Director of Research and Evaluation for the Research and Planning Group for the California Community Colleges ([RP Group](#)). In this role, she oversees all the research and evaluation projects for the organization. Dr. Cooper has worked in the California Community College system for almost 20 years, having previously held institutional research director positions at Santa Barbara City College, Oxnard College, and Ohlone College.

She led [Student Support \(Re\)defined](#), a research project that examined what supports student success, and has been invited to present on this work at various venues across the state. Dr. Cooper is currently serving as one of the coaches for the American Association of Community Colleges’ (AACCC) Pathways Project, and on the advisory committee for the California Guided Pathways Project. She is also co-directing a research study funded by the College Futures Foundation that will examine what happens with students who appear ready to transfer, but do not.

Dr. Cooper has extensive experience serving as an external evaluator for several federal and private foundation grants and has worked on various other projects designed to promote student success including the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, and the RP Group’s Bridging

Research Information and Culture (BRIC) initiative, Student Transfer in Professional Pathways Project, and Accreditation Study. Dr. Cooper also has direct experience assisting students in achieving their educational goals in her previous work at the University of Southern California as a director of research and information, student services counselor, and ombudsperson. She holds a BA in Psychology from the University of California, San Diego, and an MS.Ed. and Ed.D. from the University of Southern California.

Dr. Kevin Pollock

President of Montgomery County Community College

Dr. Kevin Pollock is the fifth President of Montgomery County Community College. He began his tenure on April 1, 2016. Dr. Pollock has more than 35 years of education experience at four-year private and public colleges as well as community colleges. His diverse roles include college administration, strategic planning, leadership, and teaching. He is a national expert on student success models, a frequent national speaker who has spoken more than 100 times at conferences and colleges, and has authored multiple book titles, particularly for AACRAO. His next article, “IT: The Forgotten Student Success Partner”, will be featured in *AACRAO Quarterly*.

Before arriving at Montgomery, Dr. Pollock served as President of St. Clair County Community College in Port Huron, Michigan, from 2009 to 2016. During his tenure, the institution experienced record enrollment, embarked on new student success initiatives, increased its grant funding, became a leader in green initiatives, and strengthened its connections with the community. The institution also adopted a new vision, mission, and strategic plan that is tied to national best practices and is based on data.

Prior to assuming a presidential role, Dr. Pollock spent nine years as Vice President of Student Services at West Shore Community College in Scottsville, Michigan. He also held a number of leadership roles in admissions and recruitment, and he taught middle and high school English early in his career.

Dr. Pollock holds a Ph.D. in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education from Michigan State University and a Master of Arts in Education and Bachelor of Science in Education from Central Michigan University.

THESE SUMMARIES REFLECT BULLSEYE RESOURCES, INC.’S SUBJECTIVE CONDENSED SUMMARIZATION OF THE APPLICABLE SESSIONS FROM THE 2017 TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSFER CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS (AACRAO). THERE MAY BE MATERIAL ERRORS, OMISSIONS, OR INACCURACIES IN THE REPORTING OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SESSIONS. IN NO WAY DOES AACRAO OR BULLSEYE RESOURCES, INC. ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN, OR FOR ANY DECISIONS MADE BASED UPON THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS DOCUMENT.