

STUDENT SUCCESS

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Student Success

AACRAO is a non-profit, voluntary, professional association of more than 11,000 higher education professionals representing approximately 2,600 institutions in more than 40 countries. Its commitment to the professional development of its members includes best practice guidance on admissions strategies to meet institutional diversity objectives, delivery of academic programs in innovative ways to meet the needs of a changing student body, and exemplary approaches to student retention and completion.

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THE WORK GROUP



Purpose

The AACRAO Student Success Work Group will identify needs of membership in the areas of professional development, resources, and technology related to improving student success.

Context

AACRAO Board of Directors identified student success as foundational to its strategic plan. The Board developed a purpose statement and goals to guide efforts and programming in support of the membership. The purpose statement for student success is below.

Charge

AACRAO will:

- Empower members to participate fully in the definition of student success at the institutional, state and national level;
- Enable the use of data and technology to reframe the conversation about student success, to demonstrate success, and as a catalyst for action;
- Foster the application of strategic enrollment management principles centered on student success; and
- Cultivate a culture of curiosity to foster research into student success and to differentiate AACRAO in the arena of student success.



- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historically, student success was viewed through the lens of retention, attrition, and enrollment data. As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, AACRAO acknowledges a need to take a deeper look into the practice of measuring, maintaining, and supporting student success throughout higher education. Toward that end, in 2018 the AACRAO Board of Directors commissioned the Student Success Work Group, charged with investigating and crafting best practices and guidelines to support student success.

The work group is co-chaired by Tim Amyx, Director of Admissions and College Registrar at Volunteer State Community College, and Bianca Thompson-Owen, Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Success at Rutgers University–School of Health Professions and has nine (9) additional members from various higher education institutions.

The work group was further charged with the following:

- Develop recommendations for professional development opportunities to educate members in the area of student success using the framework of the professional core competencies;
- Identify resources within the AACRAO organization to assist members in tracking trends in student success;
- Identify resources within the AACRAO organization to assist members in selecting appropriate technologies to support efforts in student success;
- Identify best practices in promoting and fostering student success;
- Develop assessment tools to assist member institutions in identification of policies and processes that act as barriers to student success; and
- Identify public policy associated with student success that needs AACRAO support.

The Student Success Work Group provided definitions of “good, better, and best” behavior as a guide for AACRAO practitioners to use as a guide when examining this topic on their respective campuses. The Functional Practices section of this work product is meant to be a “tear out” to assist with the self-examination process. It is divided into three sections for Admissions, Registrars, and Enrollment Management. Practical examples of how the definitions may be seen in action are provided. Each example is also linked to an AACRAO Proficiency and/or Competency.

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, AACRAO established a Student Success Work Group to investigate and develop guidance for AACRAO membership and their institutions on student success strategies. The charge of the work group was to investigate, research, and explore student success from the perspective of enrollment management professionals. The overall goal of the work group is to provide guidelines for AACRAO professionals that support student success and to provide professional development, training, and information to members. This Student Success Work Group report will help establish a baseline for AACRAO professional members and help inform work group deliverables.

The term “student success” has been widely used throughout higher education for decades. Student success emerged as a way for higher education institutions to measure completion rates amongst entering freshman cohorts. Students were viewed as successful if they completed their academic program within four or five years.

The role of enrollment management practitioners was to measure the success of students by the value of retention and to report graduation completion rates. Colleges and Universities later sought to understand why students who entered college never completed their educational requirements (Kuh, et al., 2005). In the early 1980’s, institutions began to re-conceptualize this term and broaden their scope to examine the student experience (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Research suggest student success is not the value of college retention or attrition. Rather, student success takes a holistic approach including completion rates, campus experiences, institutional culture, and classroom experiences (Kirst & Venezia, 2004).

KEY TERMS

Terms below are defined to allow the reader to understand how they are used in the context of this work product.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Practices, policies, and procedures of an institution that impede a student's ability to progress toward credential attainment.

COLLABORATION

All stakeholders coming together for a greater purpose.

FORM DRIVEN

Is an example of when an institution ensures a student can progress to credential attainment within a reasonable timeframe. It is considered a "good" practice.

HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES

Meaningful, student-centered experiences that require student and institution participation that contribute to the success and lifelong learning of the student.

PERSISTENCE

The continued enrollment of a student from year two through the point of credential attainment.

TRANSPARENCY

Allowing all stakeholders access to information pertaining to the overall success of students, i.e., retention rates, graduation rates, early alert flags.

WITHDRAWAL INTERVENTION

As soon as a student indicates they want to withdraw from the institution, a specified person sits down with the student and discusses reasons for withdrawing in hopes of figuring out the issues and retaining the student.

CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

The achievement of a certificate, degree, or other credential within higher education that a student receives within a reasonable timeframe.

DATA DRIVEN

Is an example of when an institution has fully adopted a culture of student success. Routine analysis of institutional practices is conducted and barriers removed. It is considered a "best" practice.

FUNCTIONAL AREA

Includes those areas that support a student's progression and success in credential attainment.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The continuous process of acquiring knowledge and/or skills to promote one's success and credential attainment.

RETENTION

The continued enrollment of a student from first year to second year.

WHOLE-PERSON EDUCATORS

When an institution fosters stakeholders to be aware of the whole student and preparing them for the whole world.

DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Introduction

The work group developed the definitions below within the scope of its charge. To develop the definitions, the work group engaged the attendees of the June 2018 AACRAO Leadership meeting which included members of the AACRAO Professional Activities Committees, the Program Committee, chairs of other AACRAO committees and work groups, State & Regional leadership, members of the Board of Directors, and the AACRAO staff.

Members of the work group analyzed the Leadership Meeting work output and distilled it to common themes. The Student Success Work Group then took those themes used them as the foundation to develop the definitions below. The output of the work from the Leadership meeting can be found later in this report.

GOOD

The institution ensures a student can progress to credential attainment within a reasonable timeframe. The curricula and co-curricular experience is designed to prepare the student for post-credential goals. Staff are well trained in their functional areas.

BETTER

The institution ensures a student can progress from pre-enrollment to post-credential-attainment within a reasonable timeframe. Employees of the institution identify and anticipate student needs. The institution has identified appropriate personnel to address student retention and progression.

BEST

The institution has fully adopted a culture of student success, and students understand the role they play in their own success. Barriers to student success and progression are regularly identified and addressed. Employees of the institution are introduced to the culture of student success during the onboarding process and are engaged in ongoing professional development. Employee practices are fully immersed in the culture of student success. Institutional policies and business processes are student-centered and promote student retention and persistence towards graduation and lifelong learning.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

FUNCTIONAL PRACTICES

Enrollment Management is the work of seeing the student cycle from recruitment through graduation or credential attainment. Student outcomes, as defined by retention and graduation rates, directly influence the way we recruit and enroll new students. Student success is therefore as important to enrollment management as is the managing of recruitment strategies and the use of financial resources in seeking new students.

Enrollment managers have historically embraced data-rich environments in the recruitment and enrollment process, serving as a good precursor to using such expertise in making decisions to best impact student success.

At its best, Enrollment Management can lead strategic and intentional conversations on college campuses that directly impact decisions regarding individual campus initiatives to help students meet their educational goals.

To outline the role of enrollment management using the “good, better, best” framework, please review the charts on pages 11 - 13 and the narrative below.

Good-better-best in Enrollment Management

Enrollment managers are high-performing professionals with at least five core functions. They include:

- Building relationships with campus partners,
 - Combing through data,
 - Hiring and training new team members,
 - Serving on campus-wide committees, and
 - Making decisions about how to attract and retain students.
- Of course, each job description may look different, but these core functions of the enrollment management portfolio are likely common across institutional type.

GOOD

In relation to these five core functions, a “good” enrollment management effort has solidly formed relationships with all units which are a part of the enrollment management team. This typically involves units such as Admissions, Financial Aid, and Registrar. Professionals within these three areas know one another, coordinate deadlines, are cross-trained, and engage in strategy conversations which impact all three units. Leaders of these organizations have experience working in all three functional units throughout the course of their careers.

Professionals collect, analyze, and share data among the enrollment management units and leadership. Qualitative data about student and/or applicant experience is gathered, as well as quantitative data of demographics both in aggregate and



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disaggregate forms. Both inform decision-making. Disaggregating data may reveal racial, gender, and/or income disparities about the success of students in the applicant pool or following matriculation. Such disparities should be reviewed for possible development of needed initiatives within the enrollment management units to work towards an equitable process for all students served by the institution.

At the time of onboarding new staff, the “good” framework includes consideration of student success elements as part of the training for new team members. If a unit-wide definition of student success has been established, it gets shared in the onboarding process. Team members are trained on how to interact with students in distress by a campus professional, such as someone from Student Affairs. Trainings to learn about the academic support and personal support elements on campus are integrated into the onboarding of new enrollment management professionals so they may properly refer students and family members to these resources. An expectation to care about student success is stressed during the onboarding phase for all new employees.

While ongoing collaboration among enrollment management units is a feature of the “good” framework, professionals are expected to serve on campus-wide committees that influence university strategy for student success. The enrollment management reputation on campus is one in which leaders and other team members are looked to as positive campus collaborators and part of student success initiatives beyond their core enrollment management functions. If the enrollment management unit is not invited to be part of larger campus-wide conversations, a serious look into the culture of the institution and the expertise, or lack thereof, of professionals should be reviewed.

Attracting students during the admissions process and then retaining admitted students beyond the first semester should be part of the campus-wide student success strategy. A “good” framework assumes that enrollment professionals contribute accordingly. For instance, financial aid strategies are used to attract and retain students at all points along the college continuum. Discussions about students at risk of not returning to the institution are considered and strategy, even financial strategies, are examined and considered tools to meet university and student success goals.

BETTER

At the “better” level, the collaborations formed by enrollment management professionals expand further across the university to include areas that some might not see as directly linked to the enrollment process. Enrollment management professionals need to understand the role of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Career Services and how these areas will affect the success of the students admitted to the institution. Familiarity with these areas allows enrollment management team members to better answer questions and explain how these offices will play a part of the student success experience.

After data has been collected in the enrollment management process, this data can be analyzed and shared with critical campus constituencies. This will allow other offices on campus to be prepared to serve the students who are admitted. Having access to data, such as which students are first-generation, which are academically underprepared, which are qualified for services for low-income students, and other categories, allows enrollment management professionals to refer incoming students to supports on campus that are geared to specific groups of students, and when shared will allow those support services to hit the ground running in reaching out to the incoming students. This way students can receive services right away that will be vital to their success on campus.



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Enrollment management staff receive training that will continue after the initial onboarding process. In-house training focusing on services available on campus for specific populations of students, like Disability Services or TRIO programs, will be vital in helping team members know how to direct prospective students and their parents to these services. Enrollment management professionals should also be encouraged to continue their training through attendance at conferences that link enrollment management efforts to student success and other topics.

In the “better” model, enrollment management professionals see themselves as engaged partners who contribute to the campus strategy for student success. As the first campus personnel who get to know incoming students, they play an integral part in setting the tone for student success on campuses. How they present the support services and normalize the use of these services as they bring students on board is crucial to incoming students’ perception. Enrollment management team members also communicate the campus culture as one where students are cared for and where the campus wants to see all students succeed.

In this framework, merit and need based aid is used strategically to enroll and retain the optimal number of students. Meeting financial needs of students is a strong incentive for students to persist at a particular institution. Financial struggles are often cited when students make a decision to leave a particular institution. With strategically awarded aid, some of those financial pressures can be removed, and students can thrive and succeed on our campuses.

BEST

The “best” framework is conceptualized as the “gold standard” with regards to enrollment management professionals supporting student success. Considering the five same elements, the “best” framework includes campus-wide relationships above and beyond the functional units on the enrollment management team and other linked units. Collaborations and relationships extend to faculty members, instructors, and possibly instructional designers. In this framework, student success is the campus wide priority and all paid employees are part of the effort to support student’s matriculation to, through, and out of the university. The enrollment management team interfaces with faculty to gather feedback and fold them into their processes of admitting students, creating affinity groups for high-risk students, scheduling courses considering success factors, etc. Another key player in the student success framework are the university advancement or fundraising efforts. Enrollment management professionals may be included in meetings or spaces to help develop proposals for increasing need-based or merit-based aid scholarships, for instance.

In the “best” framework, data is vitally important and at the forefront of the enrollment management operation. Leaders ask helpful questions and data analysts produce answers to critical questions concerning enrollment and re-enrollment patterns to inform the campus-wide success strategy. Beyond numbers, qualitative data from prospective, admitted, beginning, and continuing students and family members is also part of the overall data plan. De-identified data and trends are also shared with peer-institutional colleagues in an effort to learn from one another to more fully support students on their respective campus.

Beyond focusing on undergraduate students as their sole emphasis, institutions performing at their “best” have an interest in how all student populations perform and use data to understand such trends. This may include reviewing data on transfer students, online students, graduate/professional students, and/or students who re-enroll following a hiatus. The campus-wide strategy would include student populations beyond first-time-in-college freshmen.



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Enrollment management professionals actively participate in nationwide and/or global conversations and presentations about student success. Not only are they attending conferences, but they are presenting and sharing what works on their campus. Professionals are supported to serve in leadership capacities within these national and international organizations to represent their university as a model of best practice. The unit may apply for and receive awards to celebrate their success. Even more than attending and presenting, leaders are making tweaks and continually taking action to improve outcomes. As the landscape changes, so too must our campus-wide enrollment management efforts.

BEST PRACTICE & BUSINESS PROCESS EXAMPLES

Good	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress to credential attainment within a reasonable timeframe. The curricula and co-curricular experience is designed to prepare the student for post-credential goals. Staff are well trained in their functional areas.</p>	<p>Admissions, Financial Aid, and Registrar meet monthly to discuss issues.</p>	<p>Proficiency: SEM Assessment Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>EM leader collects and shares data on incoming class with enrollment management team.</p>	<p>Proficiency: SEM Leadership Competency: Interpretation of Application of Institutional & External Data</p>
	<p>New EM employee training includes information about institutional student success efforts.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing Leadership Competency: Holistic & Systemic Thinking</p>
	<p>EM professionals serve on campus-wide retention and student success committees.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing Leadership Competency: Collaborative Decision Making</p>



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Better	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress from pre-enrollment to post-credential-attainment within a reasonable timeframe. Employees of the institution identify and anticipate student needs. The institution has identified appropriate personnel to address student retention and progression.</p>	<p>EM team regularly reviews technology products used and considers enhancements as needed to improve efficiency.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Technology Competency: Technological Knowledge</p>
	<p>EM leader shares data concerning incoming class with Registrar's Office, Academic Assistance Offices, and others in preparation for supporting students for success as the academic year begins.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Leadership Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>EM staff are trained on a variety of campus services so they can properly refer students beyond EM units.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing Leadership Competency: Collaborative Decision Making & Communication</p>
	<p>Institutional financial aid</p>	<p>Proficiency: SEM</p>



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Best	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution has fully adopted a culture of student success, and students understand the role they play in their own success. Barriers to student success and progression are regularly identified and addressed. Employees of the institution are introduced to the culture of student success during the onboarding process and are engaged in ongoing professional development. Employee practices are fully immersed in the culture of student success. Institutional policies and business processes are student centered and promote student retention and persistence towards graduation and life-long learning.</p>	<p>EM collaborates with Diversity offices and Academic departments to inform recruitment and yield strategies.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Technology Competency: Technological Knowledge</p>
	<p>EM team members share innovative practices using data at national conferences.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Leadership Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>EM units seek input from current students through focus groups and/or admitted student surveys to improve and/or refine the enrollment process.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing Leadership Competency: Collaborative Decision Making & Communication</p>
	<p>Institutional financial aid</p>	<p>Proficiency: SEM</p>



ADMISSIONS

FUNCTIONAL PRACTICES

Student success as measured by retention and credential completion are a primary focus in enrollment management. And student recruitment and college admissions are critical components to a successful strategic enrollment management plan (Sigler, 2018). Still, college admission is sometimes overlooked in student success conversations and initiatives.

College admission and recruitment departments are unquestionably part of the collective solution in reaching an institution's student success goals. Speaking to the importance of cross-institutional partnership in providing a campus environment which encourages success, Secore (2018) stated; "Only with well-informed and complete understanding of how students feel and what they want and expect from a college campus can enrollment managers, admission officers, and administrators truly provide students with the best possible environment for social and academic success."

Good-better-best in Admissions

The below "good, better, best" framework describes practices in college admission that not only includes work admission offices can pursue on their own, but also student success initiatives that are linked with the overall campus community. From data driven recruitment strategies that intentionally target prospective student populations that fit an institution's overall student success goals to contributing to an institutional-collective onboarding process for admitted students that provides a sense of belonging, college admission provides both a window and doorway into a house of student success.

GOOD

Characteristics of a "good" student success framework for college admissions includes utilizing data to identify and attract intentionally targeted student populations. Communications and publications include information on admission standards, the admission process, deadlines, and the next steps upon being admitted in the enrollment process.

Additionally, enrollment goals are clearly defined and met. While recruitment and admission staff might not be a part of the institution's student success planning and goal setting process, they are knowledgeable about the defined goals and contribute as directed.



BETTER

College recruitment and admission practices which exhibit “better” student success characteristics are less siloed and represent a more institution-wide collaborative approach toward establishing and pursuing goals. However, admissions participation in student success planning might be limited and operations may still be separate from other student success initiatives at the institution.

Some collaboration efforts are pursued with other departments (e.g. academic departments, Institutional Research, etc.) and include identifying, collecting, and analyzing enrollment data for a more defined recruitment process that is connected to student success. Through this partnering, admission standards might be adjusted for certain programs, and additional factors beyond academics are identified moving toward a more holistic approach in making admission decisions. Some collaboration with the Financial Aid office results in merit and need scholarships for students with identified attributes.

Information to admitted students includes information that is directly linked to some student success goals. For example, students admitted to an engineering program may be given information regarding successful preparation strategies to be successful their first year in the program, student groups and activities which are engineering related, assigned mentors in the engineering department, and resources to utilize if they struggle academically or socially their first year.

BEST

“Best” college recruitment and admission practices are completely integrated with the institution’s student success planning, goal setting, and operations. Every recruitment strategy, admission decision, and on-boarding communication is done through the lens of the institution-wide student success goals. Indeed, the admission office serves on an institution-wide committee which promotes and creates student success goals. Recruitment communications not only include elements of what is required to be successful in admission, but also as an enrolled student and eventual graduate. The journey from prospective student, to admitted, to enrolled, and eventually credential completion is clear and seamless.

A close partnership with Financial Aid ensures that scholarships, both merit and need-based, are deployed strategically to maximize available funds and yield specific populations aligned with university goals.

All admitted student populations, including first-time freshmen, transfers, and adults, are made to feel included and are provided resources specific to their needs. The institution-wide student success team identifies special student populations to attract and uses data to develop and reach recruitment goals. Additionally, both academic and other desired attributes for targeted student populations are identified and utilized in the recruitment and admission process. Support services for all unique student populations are integrated in the recruitment, admission and enrollment processes. The institutions’ goals are reflected in their reputation.

For example, an institution-wide student success committee reviewing data may see that there is a shortage of women



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in their computer science program. Additionally, the local industry has expressed a demand for more computer science graduates, particularly women. As such, a recruitment, scholarship, and enrollment plan is created including clear admission criteria; a course plan for the duration of the degree is clearly communicated; support, including computer science-focused mentorships, are provided to female students; early alert systems are put in place to help students maneuver through obstacles; and graduates are celebrated and connected to future jobs.



BEST PRACTICE & BUSINESS PROCESS EXAMPLES

Good	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress to credential attainment within a reasonable timeframe. The curricula and co-curricular experience is designed to prepare the student for post-credential goals. Staff are well trained in their functional areas.</p>	<p>Admissions staff are siloed but are knowledgeable about institution's student success goals.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing and Operations Competency:</p>
	<p>Admissions employs data to identify desired student populations.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Market analysis Competency: Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data</p>
	<p>Recruitment strategies clearly define academic standards and institutional requirements.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Communication Plan Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>The admissions process is clear to prospective students.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing Leadership Competency: Collaborative Decision Making</p>
	<p>Admissions admits prospective students. Admitted students are provided clear information on next steps in enrollment process.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Communication Plan Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>Institution has met their enrollment goals</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Goals Competency: Leadership and Management</p>



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Better	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress from pre-enrollment to post-credential-attainment within a reasonable timeframe. Employees of the institution identify and anticipate student needs. The institution has identified appropriate personnel to address student retention and progression.</p>	<p>Admissions is involved in some student success planning, but may still be siloed in student success operations.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing and Operations Competency: Leadership and Management</p>
	<p>Admissions collaborates with various departments to collect data to help inform the recruitment process.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Emerging Technologies Competency: Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data; Collaborative</p>
	<p>Recruitment strategies intentionally include additional desired student profile attributes beyond academics.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Goals; Market Analysis Competency: Collaborative Decision-Making; Holistic and Systemic Thinking</p>
	<p>The admissions process is easy to navigate and intentionally requests relevant information that matches student success goals.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Communications Plan; Emerging Technologies Competency: Communication; Technological Knowledge</p>
	<p>Admitted students are provided with clear information on next steps in enrollment process. Some information is provided to link students with other student success services.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Communications Plan; Social Media Utilization Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>Enrollment goals are met and some effort is made to connect student success goals with enrollment goals.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Goals Competency: Leadership and Management; Collaborative Decision-Making</p>



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Best	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution has fully adopted a culture of student success, and students understand the role they play in their own success. Barriers to student success and progression are regularly identified and addressed. Employees of the institution are introduced to the culture of student success during the onboarding process and are engaged in ongoing professional development. Employee practices are fully immersed in the culture of student success. Institutional policies and business processes are student centered and promote student retention and persistence towards graduation and life-long learning.</p>	<p>Admissions serves on institution-wide committees to develop and promote student success goals. Student success is incorporated as institution-wide goals and not departmentally.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Staffing and Operations; Communications Plan Competency: Communication; Collaborative Decision-making</p>
	<p>Data-driven decision making is employed in collaboration with institutional community partners to develop recruitment goals. Special targeted prospective student populations are identified and strategies are developed to meet these specific goals.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Goals; Market Analysis Competency: Diversity and Inclusion; Holistic and Systemic Thinking Data; Collaborative Decision-Making Data</p>
	<p>Recruitment strategies intentionally include both academic and other desired student profile attributes equally. The additional attributes are developed in collaboration with all relevant the institution community partners. The institutions brand is accurately promoted and reflected in all recruitment and marketing strategies. Prospective students clearly understand the factors required to be successful and persist and meet their intended goals.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Enrollment Goals; Communication Plan Competency: Collaborative Decision-making; Communication; Holistic and Systemic Thinking</p>



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Best	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
continued	The institution community works collaboratively to attract and enroll students who match the institutions holistic student success goals.	Proficiency: Enrollment Goals; Social Media Utilization; Speeches and Presentations; Market Analysis Competency: Diversity and Inclusion; Communication; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data
	The admission process is clear, easy to navigate, and employs a holistic approach in collecting information relevant to student success goals and making admissions decision.	Proficiency: Emerging Technologies; Enrollment Goals; Communications Plan Competency: Communication; Technological Knowledge
	Admissions works collaboratively with various campus partners to provide a holistic and seamless enrollment process that identifies key student success services. Services for targeted special populations are incorporated in the admissions enrollment process.	Proficiency: Enrollment Goals; Communications Plan Competency: Collaborative Decision-Making; Holistic and Systemic Thinking; Leadership and Management Collaborative Decision-Making



RECORDS AND ACADEMIC SERVICES

FUNCTIONAL PRACTICES

Office of the Registrar

The Office of the Registrar is considered the gatekeeper of the institution's academic records while ensuring the accuracy, integrity, and security of those records. One central mission of the Registrar's Office is to provide quality and professional service to students, alumni, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders. The Office of the Registrar is accountable for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of all academic student records in compliance with all state and federal reporting and records maintenance guidelines. Furthermore, providing an academic climate based on well-established regulations and procedure is crucial to the success of the students

Good-better-best in the Registrar's Office

The Office of the Registrar is process-driven as it attempts to ensure effective and efficient operations. Although consistency is important, being able to make appropriate changes as technology, policy, and culture evolves is equally important.

GOOD

The Registrar's office at the "good" level of operational processes seeks to ensure that schedules are available in a timely manner with input from faculty, make sure classroom space is available and accessible to all populations of students in line as needed, and establish and prioritize schedules, including final exams. Leaders within the Office of the Registrar must take a collaborative approach in these endeavors.

As a leader charged with the expressed responsibility of "gatekeeper" of academic records, the Office of the Registrar must hold true to ensuring that grades earned are reported and maintained per the established standards of its regional accredited agency and the U.S. Department of Education. The processing of accurate and timely transcripts for current students and future alum is required by all educational institutions of higher learning.

Staff in the registrar's office typically have their own role and stick to that role. They are not able to provide general support for all students. There are no programs set in place to help students engage in their own education.

Transfer evaluations done at the "good" level are dispersed and reviewed amongst faculty.



BETTER

The Registrar works to anticipate student needs in support of their student life cycle. This approach incorporates a close working relationship with other offices such as academic advising and academic affairs. The Registrar works as a collaborative partner in identifying course and enrollment patterns in support of student degree completion. This work supports the timely completion of student degrees and supports efforts to keep students on a core degree pathway. The Registrar can also play a role in core business processes, such as course drops and withdrawals, working with academic advising and related student support offices to reach out to students.

In many ways, the Registrar is the keeper of the data when it comes to the student life cycle and as such should be an active partner on enrollment and retention-related programming. In “better” environments there are regular interaction points across areas that support students and student success. Sharing data and analysis gained from key business processes and cycles can better inform academic and campus partners in student behaviors and needs. Registrar office staff are moderately cross-trained and able to assist in the absence of other staff members.

Transfer evaluations done at this level are more accurate and transparent. Students review their potential transfer credit equivalencies as a shopping process to figure out which institution will accept the most credit, thus reducing the time a student needs to complete a degree. The Registrar utilizes a transfer credit program (TES, Transferology) to publish transfer credit equivalencies.

BEST

In the “best” setting, the Registrar plays an active role in all enrollment management, retention, and student success programming, serving as a central focal point for continuous improvement in support of students’ academic goals and experience. The Registrar plays a vital role (as the keeper of the rules) for academic programs and academic advisors. They are in the best position to identify areas in need of adjustment. Efforts include regular business process design and review of academic policies and practices. There is also a role for regular feedback in support of making student-centered academic policy decisions.

“Best” models are forward thinking in course/section management and allow students the ability to plan and attain a four-year degree in a timely fashion. All aspects of the academic calendar are utilized, incorporating summers for credit-bearing internships and course offerings.

The “best” models embrace courageous conversations, supported by data and feedback to make adjustments and improvements when and where necessary. Ideally, there is a student success center that is a one stop shop, where a registrar staff member is available at all times. The registrar, in the role of enforcement and authentication, also incorporates feedback, improvement, and support.

Registrars empower students through programming to engage and be in charge of their education.



Student Success

According to Reid Kisling, AACRAO Senior Consultant, “Registrar staff are not only able to track record and registration data but use it effectively to guide student registration practices and advising; help faculty understand implications of curricular decisions; help interpret and implement policy; and suggest changes that may better meet the intent of the educational philosophy of the institution.”

The latter speaks to the important interaction and relationship between the Registrar and other units (academic and student support services). Communication between offices is the key to effective collaboration--and to improved learning for students. Reynolds, M. (2009)

Transfer evaluations done at this level are immediate. There is also a responsive and published process for workforce credit (portfolio). The Registrar or another campus office oversees a testing center and advertises credit for testing.



BEST PRACTICE & BUSINESS PROCESS EXAMPLES

Good	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress to credential attainment within a reasonable timeframe. The curricula and co-curricular experience is designed to prepare the student for post-credential goals. Staff are well trained in their functional areas.</p>	<p>Registrar’s Office is form-driven and processes work in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Technical Knowledge Competency: Systems Management</p>
	<p>Records staff are only trained in their specific job duties.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Recordkeeping Compliance; Operations Management Competency: Professional Development & Contributions to the Field</p>
	<p>Course scheduling is based on historical offerings without data analysis of student needs.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Academic Policy Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking</p>
	<p>Graduation process is initiated by the student who must apply to receive a credential.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Graduation & Events Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking</p>
	<p>Transparency of data is poor. Many stakeholders are not aware of key data points such as retention, graduation rates, and early alert flags.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Reporting & Research Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>The Registrar’s Office is not involved in many initiatives for student success.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Academic Policy Competency: Collaborative Decision-Making</p>
	<p>There is little to no access for information regarding transfer credit, credit by exam, portfolio credit, or other prior learning assessment (PLA).</p>	<p>Proficiency: Operations Management Competency: Communication</p>



Student Success

Better	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution ensures a student can progress from pre-enrollment to post-credential-attainment within a reasonable timeframe. Employees of the institution identify and anticipate student needs. The institution has identified appropriate personnel to address student retention and progression.</p>	<p>Registrar's Office uses data to justify processes and completes work in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Technical Knowledge Competency: Systems Management; Data Stewardship</p>
	<p>Records staff trained in their specific job duties and are cross-trained in other areas of the Registrar's Office.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Recordkeeping Compliance; Operations Management Competency: Professional Development & Contributions to the Field</p>
	<p>Course scheduling is requested by faculty with the Registrar's Office utilizing data to make recommendations to administration for student needs.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Academic Policy Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking; Problem Solving; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data</p>
	<p>Students are nudged to apply to graduate based on a broad assumption of those likely close to completion.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Graduation & Events Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data</p>
	<p>Data transparency is acceptable but stakeholders are not given proper support to make informed change decisions based on the data.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Reporting & Research Competency: Communication</p>
	<p>Registrar's Office is part of collaboration across campus for student success.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Academic Policy Competency: Collaborative Decision-Making; Diversity & Inclusion</p>
	<p>Transfer credit, credit by exam, portfolio credit, or other prior learning assessment (PLA) information is available but not readily accessible by students.</p>	<p>Proficiency: Operations Management Competency: Communication</p>



Student Success

Best	Examples	Proficiencies/ Competencies
<p>The institution has fully adopted a culture of student success, and students understand the role they play in their own success. Barriers to student success and progression are regularly identified and addressed. Employees of the institution are introduced to the culture of student success during the onboarding process and are engaged in ongoing professional development. Employee practices are fully immersed in the culture of student success. Institutional policies and business processes are student centered and promote student retention and persistence towards graduation and life-long learning.</p>	Registrar's Office uses data to inform processes and actively engages in continuous improvement to better serve constituents.	Proficiency: Technical Knowledge; Problem Solving Competency: Systems Management; Data Stewardship
	Records staff understands their role and responsibilities within the institution as well as a high level of awareness on how those responsibilities are interconnected with institutional functions outside the Registrar's Office.	Proficiency: Recordkeeping Compliance; Operations Management; Systems Management Competency: Professional Development & Contributions to the Field; Communication
	Course scheduling is data driven to meet student needs based on demand and course sequencing within academic pathways.	Proficiency: Academic Policy; Technological Knowledge Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking; Problem Solving; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data
	Identification of students who have completed academic requirements for their credential is automatic and requires only student consent for conferral.	Proficiency: Graduation & Events; Systems Management; Technological Knowledge Competency: Holistic and Systemic Thinking; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data
	Data is transparent and easy to access and understand. Stakeholders are supported throughout the inquiry process including active participation to ensure the constituent's needs are met.	Proficiency: Reporting & Research; Data Stewardship Competency: Communication; Interpretation and Application of Institutional and External Data
	The Registrar's Office is a regular contributor to a large scale collaborative effort to be whole-person educators.	Proficiency: Academic Policy Competency: Collaborative Decision-Making; Diversity & Inclusion; Holistic and Systematic Thinking; Communication
	Transfer credit, credit by exam, portfolio credit, or other prior learning assessment (PLA) information is pushed to potentially eligible students, and the Registrar's Office is actively engaged with faculty in the process of developing and promoting PLA opportunities for students.	Proficiency: Operations Management; Academic Policy Competency: Communication; Diversity & Inclusion;



INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS INVENTORY

Colleges have a wealth of data, knowledge, and experience that can empower a campus when shared, discussed, and analyzed more broadly. The following is a framework for approaching student success within any institutional setting. This is not a comprehensive inventory -- only a starting point for institutions developing and/or enhancing their culture and roles regarding student success. It is easy to say "it is everyone's job," but much more instructive to look at the following elements to see if the institution is supporting that goal.

It is a best practice when individuals across the AACRAO professions and each institutional setting are engaged in a regular assessment of the following areas:

Data Gathering/Sharing – Gather all institutional studies, core metrics and annual student inventory results to review. Allow staff across the institution the time and space to discuss the information. (E.g. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) Student Satisfaction Inventory (Ruffalo Noel Levitz), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS), National Student Clearinghouse, Institutional Data).

Discussion Questions:

- What do you see and discuss across all data?
- What information do you collect when a student withdraws and how is this used/analyzed?
- What would you like or need to know more about your students? For example, do you regularly check to see the average number of credits students are earning at the time of degree completion and how does this compare to the minimum credits required?
- How is data shared with necessary stakeholders?

Shared Governance - Complete an inventory of all college governance structures and teams. Review those that have a direct connection to student success focusing on retention, progression and graduation.

Discussion Questions:

- Are groups working together towards a common goal or are groups duplicating efforts?
- Do you have the appropriate groups, membership and direction?
- How are goals tied to the strategic plan and university action steps?

Student Success

Business Process Questions – Review all core business process ties to retention, progression and graduation points for student-centered practices.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you anticipate student needs?
- Are there policies/practices that create barriers for students and staff?
- How are academic standing/recovery practices employed at your campus?
- How frequently are core student facing processes assessed and do you regularly collect student feedback?

Technology Assessment – Review all systems that are used to support the student experience for use/usability for all campus stakeholders.

Discussion Questions:

- Do students have access to track their progress and seek out support?
- What technologies do you use to interact with students and coordinate academic and student support?

Communication Audit – Gather a subset of communication across academic and student affairs units. Review for readability and student-centered content.

Discussion Questions:

- Who produces regular communication in support of student progression, retention, and continued enrollment?
- Are student communications integrated/coordinated/branded/concise?
- What methods are you utilizing to communicate with your students?
- Are you regularly polling/surveying students about their experiences?

Strategic Plan – Student success as a term is embedded in virtually all campus strategic plans.

Discussion Questions:

- Does your plan incorporate definitions and strategies?
- Are all progression, retention, and enrollment strategies shared with all faculty and staff?
- Are regular updates shared and discussed as a campus?

Engagement – Review the patterns of engagement across your institution from prospective student, to on-boarding to enrollment.

Discussion Questions:

- When are students assigned a point of contact?
- How are they supported throughout their student life cycle?
- Do students know the who, how, where and why of connecting with campus resources?
- How do you handle student referrals between academic and student support resources?

Student Success

Diversity/Inclusion - Develop a list of academic and student support programming designed to facilitate diversity and inclusion across your institution. Determine the connections and goals relative to student success.

Discussion Questions:

- Are we doing an effective job of connecting students to resources?
- Does the campus understand the needs of first-generation students?
- Are plans developed to address any performance and progress differences?

Professional Development/Talent Management - Review professional development experiences and compare these to your overall student success goals. Determine the campus positions and leaders that have core student success roles and review job descriptions for expectations and needs.

Discussion Questions:

- Does your institution invest in regular student success professional development?
- Are position descriptions written and defined to support students and student success?

FUTURE WORK

This Student Success Work Group report addressed many key opportunities which institutions may pursue in supporting their students to persist and graduate. Clearly, student success is not a destination but an ongoing journey. Looking forward on our terrain of student success, the workgroup has identified areas of future work where AACRAO and its members can support continuous improvement of student success initiatives in enrollment management and beyond.

As student success practices are constantly presenting themselves and evolving through time, the list below is a starting point and will continue to grow:

- Collaborate with national and regional organizations with similar educational missions on projects and initiatives that focus on student success for a larger scale impact, such as: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators; American College Personnel Association; National Association for College Admission Counseling; Association of American Colleges and Universities; American Association of Community Colleges; National Academic Advising Association; National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities; State Higher Education Executive Officers; Complete College America; NAFSA-Association of International Educators; Achieving the Dream; and many many more.
- Host AACRAO-sponsored webinars on both new and proven student success initiatives as well as other ongoing professional development and training opportunities.
- Publish ongoing articles on both new and proven student success initiatives for AACRAO members.
- Identify data collection which expands definitions of success so that it is more connected to the student's goals. For example, not every student attends an institution of higher education to earn a credential; successfully passing two business management courses for professional development could be the student's intent and personal measure of success.
- Given that the face of student success changes, it is important that AACRAO do regular assessments to determine if a major shift in practice has occurred.
- Additional research on the connection of non-traditional learning to student success is needed. For example, the impact of Prior Learning Assessment initiatives that provide course credit for work-based learning, military experiences, challenge exams, portfolio reviews, etc., on student success.
- Deeper data dives into the increase of college courses offered to high school students (i.e. dual and concurrent enrollment) and its impact on student success.
- Increased initiatives, programming, training, and research into effective student success practices which target special populations. In particular, increased attention to special populations which sometimes get ignored, such as: race and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, former and current foster youth, active duty military and veteran students, returning adults, etc.
- Cultivate and grow initiatives which decrease higher education costs like Open Educational Resources.
- Contribute to a culture that supports innovation and trying new, creative, and well thought out approaches to student success.

Student Success

- To assist in decreasing the number of students who stop-out, make mainstream everyday life supports in higher education for students who need it. For example, provide more food banks/pantries, offer discounted housing for students with housing insecurities, offer child care for both students and staff, provide grants from donations for students who need emergency funding for things like a flat tire, offer programs which effectively support students with mental health issues, etc.
- Improve outreach and accommodations to students with all different types of disabilities. Create a campus culture where serving students with disabilities is not perceived as a burden but a valued endeavor.
- Nurture solutions to student success which are systemic and not just an initiative pursued by one department.
- Cultivate and promote the practice of partnerships between institutions of higher education, industry, non-profits, K-12, governments, and more with the goals of decreasing barriers to earning a credential and increasing student success.
- Make student success data in increase forms more accessible to staff. Create a culture where data is used to pursue proven successful strategies, and environment where staff feel empowered to pursue new well thought out innovative ideas.
- Promote practices which involve students more in identifying solutions to student success barriers.

AACRAO BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the report, the AACRAO Student Success Work Group suggests the leadership Board consider the following recommendations:

- Our work revealed several best practices of student success work happening at member institutions. Dedicating a student success pre-conference at the Annual Meeting and/or SEM conference would give space for institutions to share and learn from one another. Additionally, we recommend the inclusion of a “student success track” to link breakout sessions. This would signal and advance AACRAO’s commitment to student success for members.
- Throughout our work together, we regularly referenced impressive work happening in other national organizations related to student success. As such, we recommend creating intentional and strategic partnerships with organizations such as NAFSA, NASPA, AAC&U, Achieving the Dream, The Community College Research Center, etc. to signal a commitment to collaboration as well as expanding the notion that student success is ALL of our work. A holistic commitment to student success should break down historical silos which have hindered institutions from shifting to a student-ready and student-centered model whereby institutional processes, culture, and bureaucracy are re-examined and action is taken.
- We suggest the addition of “student success” as a topic for consideration within the AACRAO consulting offerings. The institutional student success inventory included in this report could serve as a starting point. Additionally, our work revealed great work happening across the country, and we recognize it would not happen without great professionals leading the efforts. This effort would be a way to draw in top performers for further engagement and use of talent to ultimately impact students and their success.
- A question to consider: In what ways could student success become more evident or directly discussed in the existing professional proficiencies or competencies? As a team, we agree that the current proficiencies and competencies link to student success but perhaps a review of such competencies by either the definitions or labels is warranted. A group of student success professionals could review and make suggestions to the board as a follow up project.
- The included Student Success Inventory is a beginning framework for the development of a Self Assessment. We encourage the AACRAO Board to invest resources in developing a self assessment for the three identified areas of Admissions, Registrar, and Enrollment Management. Further, we encourage this and other self assessments be collected and used as normative data for individual institution’s use in continuous improvement.

APPENDIX A



WORK GROUP MEMBERS

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APPENDIX B

ANNOTATED SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Admissions

Wang, Yan & Pilarzyk, Tom. (2007). Mapping the enrollment process: Implications for setting deadlines for student success and college management. *Journal of College Admission*, Fall 2007, 24-33.

The authors studied a large community college's enrollment patterns to recommend improved admissions processing, enhanced retention efforts, and maximized fiscal support, while maintaining the mission of the open-access community college. Since late applicants for Admissions tend to also be late applicants for financial aid and course registrations, it was recommended that the college strictly adhere to its deadlines. In addition, a college success course resulted in a positive impact to students' GPAs and therefore was recommended by advisers. Strategic enrollment management and data-driven decisions are key to testing assumptions and recommending change.

Financial Aid

Boatman, Angela & Long, Bridget Terry (2016). Does financial aid impact college student engagement? Evidence from the Gates Millennium Scholars Program. *Research in Higher Education*, 57, 653-681.

The authors, researchers at Vanderbilt University and Harvard University, investigated outcomes from the Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program, a grant program to undergraduate students of color with financial need. Using a regression discontinuity research design, they compared outcomes for GMS recipients to similar students who had not received the award. Results suggested students with less financial burden are more able to engage with others and be involved in campus and off-campus community activities. Financial aid policies to support low-income students will have a positive impact on their feelings of belonging, engagement, and making an impact.

Chen, Jin & Hossler, Don. (2017). The effects of financial aid on college success of two-Year beginning nontraditional students. *Research in Higher Education*, 58, 40-76.

The research question posed by the authors was related to the impact of Pell and student loans on six-year college outcomes for community college students. The authors state that the use of this 6-year outcome for associate-degree students is "conventional accountability" at community colleges and are not appropriate, but they do not adjust their own study to a 3-year completion rate for 2 year degrees. Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) data set was analyzed. Findings indicated that nontraditional students were most likely to drop out in the third college year; all 3 types of financial aid (Pell grant, unsubsidized and subsidized loans) appeared effective in reducing dropout risks. Unfortunately, aid did not seem to encourage timely degree completion. The authors suggest an incentive-based financial aid system that rewards colleges for serving large numbers of nontraditional students.

Student Success

Mendoza, Pilar, Mendez, Jesse P., & Malcolm, Zaria. (2009). Financial aid and persistence in community colleges: Assessing the effectiveness of federal and state financial aid programs in Oklahoma. *Community College Review*, 37(2), 112-135.

This study, examining the persistence of low-income and minority students enrolled in Oklahoma community colleges, provides valuable insights about the effect of financial aid. The Federal Pell grant, the Stafford Loan, and the state's financial aid program were all found to be predictors of persistence from first-year status to second-year status. Of note, the state's financial aid program, OHLAP, includes academic and other supports in addition to funds. As such, it could be an effective strategy for other states to replicate; however, students who were most likely to benefit were white students with income about \$40,000. For low-income minority students, the largest effect on persistence was found with OHLAP grants were combined with Pell grants and Stafford loans.

Registrar

Education Advisory Board. (2016). Promoting Timely Degree Completion: Reconciling Student Choice and the Four-Year Graduation Imperative.

The Education Advisory Board (EAB) completed a white paper on their research into causes of delayed graduation and preventing these delays. It examines how "conventional wisdom" differs from what their research actually indicates. For example, many advisers assume that at-risk students will be overwhelmed by added coursework, but their research shows that with added support, at-risk students can succeed when expectations are raised. Most relevant are conclusions about course scheduling and capacity management.

Other

Martin, Kimberly, Galentino, Richard, & Townsend, Lori. (2014). Community college student success: The role of motivation and self-empowerment. *Community College Review*, 42, 221-241.

This qualitative study examines common characteristics of community college students who graduate. The authors conclude that students who enter college with the ability to manage external demands, have clear goals and who are self-empowered and motivated can typically overcome academic underpreparedness and other typical predictors of low persistence. No evidence of social reproduction theory was found among the participants; social and academic integration had no effect on their persistence. The authors recommend more programming that addresses designing a well-defined college plan.

Mancini, Tracy Janine. (2017). First-day attendance and student course success: Does being there make a difference? – A literature review. *Community College Enterprise*, Fall, 32-53.

This article investigates the connection between first-day attendance and course completion and success in order to guide registration policies. Through a thorough review of existing literature on this topic, the author concludes that first-day attendance alone is not an indicator of success. High-quality interactions with faculty have long-term effects and instructors should be encouraged to engage with students from the very first day. A study that examines first-day attendance as well as creative, thoughtful plans for a meaningful first class was suggested.

McNair, Tia Brown, Bensimon, Estela, Cooper, Michelle Asha, McDonald, Nicole, & Major Jr., Thomas. (2016). *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A new culture of leadership for student success*. Jossey-Bass.

The authors of this book has taken the typical question of "How do we create college-ready students?" and flipped it to "How

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do we create a student-ready college?" This provocative question means that the institution must take responsibility for students flourishing, a much different lens than the traditional view. Using the authors' collective experiences and expertise, they suggest radical, if seemingly overwhelming, changes to the way faculty, staff, and administrators perceive students, governance, and the university's place within a larger ecosystem of communities.

Sparkman, Larry A., Maulding, Wanda S., & Roberts, Jalynn, G. (2012). Non-cognitive predictors of student success in college. *College Student Journal*. 46 642-652.

Emotional intelligence is explored in this study as a variable that predicts a student's ability to persist and graduate in four years. Three status groups – not enrolled, enrolled, and graduated – were studied and were found to be significantly different on the variables of Empathy, Social Responsibility, Flexibility, and Impulse Control. Social Responsibility was the stronger emotional intelligence predictor of graduation while Impulse control was the second highest. Flexibility was negatively related to graduated status and was highest among those not enrolled.

APPENDIX C

2018 LEADERSHIP MEETING SURVEY RESULTS

BACKGROUND

Employing focus groups as a data collection tool enables researchers to understand phenomena by asking questions and pursuing answers from participants to develop evidence (Patton, 2002). The context of this focus group took place at the AACRAO Leadership retreat in Washington, DC. For the purpose of this focus group, the team decided used purposeful sampling to select the participants. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling allows researchers to identify and select participants that may have information on the phenomena. The focus group participants are all active AACRAO leadership members representing a variety of colleges and universities, including private, public, two-year, and four-year institutions throughout the US. Participants were asked to complete an 11 question survey and four open-ended questions. Additionally, the participants were asked to engage in a group activity to and complete a poster on student success.

The focus group team was tasked with investigating and analyzing the four open ended questions and posters. In order to interpret the data that was collected, pattern coding was used to analyze the data. Pattern coding allows researchers to interpret data by identifying common themes that were used by the participants (Saldana, 2013). This was useful for the analysis of the focus group questions because common themes clearly became evident throughout this process. To explore the posters, the focus group team employed the graphic elicitation research approach. Graphic elicitations are particularly helpful in qualitative research designs as it enables participants of the study to explore new ideas and concepts that may have not been addressed in the research questions (Bagnoli, 2009).

QUESTION THEMES

Question 1: What is your definition of student success?

Themes

Student growth, student achievement, helping students achieve their educational success and workforce development, successfully helping students navigate college, support, empowerment, removing obstacles

Question 2: What do you think is your institution's definition of student success?

Themes

Metrics, graduation, retention, career attainment, enrollment

Findings

The definition of student success varies by institution type and size. However, the themes suggest that that the individual (professional members) view differs from that of the institution. Most members focused on prospect to growth while engaging students and improving the college experience. Additionally, members equally felt the importance of academic navigation such as offering tutoring and curriculum mapping as well as student engagement. The institutions definitions including a more quantitative approach to student success. Such as looking at metrics, retention and graduation rates, FDW rates, and overall enrollment rates.

Student Success

Question 3: What signature or in-house programs have been used at your institution to promote student success?

Themes

1. Internal/in-house programs were identified such as “Vandal Star Program”, a strong first year experience program, strong math module programs, tuition freeze programs, etc.
2. Collaboration across departments was identified as an activity contributing toward student success.
3. Purchase/use/implementation of software such as Starfish and Power BI were indicated as useful tools as a student success activity.

There were several student success initiatives that were highlighted by our members as being models. Such as, Vandal Star Program powered by Starfish- web based retention and advising tool, SASP program that supports academic success and transfer of students who traditionally have more challenges to go through to reach their goals. In addition to commercial software, there were several homegrown solutions.

Question 11: From your perspective, what efforts are needed to investigate and improve Student Success in higher education?

Themes

- A need to examine and refocus our efforts/review infrastructure
 - Repurposing and/or adding staff
 - Focus on sub populations: first gen, URM, transfer, mental health
 - Explore dedicated center & staff
 - Policy review – why do we do what we do?
- Need for disaggregated data
 - Who are the strugglers?
 - Technology products as possible solution
 - Need to first understand who and then earmark resources to develop and implement an outreach strategy which might include: career development, increase in scholarship dollars, etc
- Training for faculty and staff

POSTER THEMES

There were a total of nine posters submitted by the various groups attending the AACRAO Leadership meeting. I examined the following posters to explore the graphic elicitation and determine common themes: Table 2, Table 6, and Table 9.

Table 2

Group Definition: “Persistence, graduation, fulfillment, gainful employment. Remove grades- success? Mature citizen- next phase. Role: smooth transitions, enable support structure, remove institutional barriers.”

Graphic Elicitation: Several phases of the college experience from entry to employment. Each phase of the graphic elicitation is noted with smiling faces, with a degree highlighted and student employment as the ultimate goal.

Table 6

Group Definition: “Student success is becoming a well-rounded, healthy, socially conscious citizen capable of making contributions to benefit society at large.”

Graphic Elicitation: An icon of Dark Vader with a heart, money, GPA, and sports. This graphic elicitation appears to support

Student Success

a graduate enjoying their student experience by engaging in supports, focusing on their academics and obtaining the overall degree.

Table 9

Group Definition: “Helping students discover and create, achieve their own dream. A more effective/creative utilize and analyze, data.”

Graphic Elicitation: It appears to represent someone looking through a magnifying glass at a computer screen. An image of a college graduate with money in hand is projected from the computer screen.

APPENDIX D



WORKS CITED

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APPENDIX E

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

Amber

“Without the support of my scholarship, I wouldn’t be able to focus on my education and volunteer my time with those with autism and other disabilities while working towards my overarching goal of being an occupational therapist. Financial support has definitely contributed to my success.”

Toni

“College has provided me with the confidence that people like me can be successful and make something of themselves.”

Leo

“I’m pretty open when it comes to specialties in the medical profession as I’m so early in my career, but I think I would like to do something along the lines of trauma surgery, transplant surgery, or neurosurgery. Not only does the difficulty and rigor of these specialties appeal to me, but they also carry some very weighty ethical and moral challenges associated with them. I want to sit at the forefront of that.”

Ashlee

“I came from a poor high school district and we didn’t have a lot of money to do extra prep and tutoring. When I enrolled in college it was hard at first because I didn’t have that support from high school. But, I found support through the student success office. They helped to connect the dots for me and provide extra support not just for my school work but also counseling. Now, I’m a senior and ready to graduate all because of this support.”

Isaiah

“There is one thing for certain, all students coming into college aren’t always successful. I believe this is because there may not services offered to help students along the way. I know so many of my friends who dropped out or failed out because they didn’t take advantage of the services or other success programming. Thankfully I became active in these types of programs and services and now I help out other students who need additional support.”

Student Success

Josh

"I guess we all have a different experience with success for me it was the help of my academic advisor and student success coach. Without their support I would not have been able to complete my undergraduate degree and enter my first year of graduate studies. So grateful for their encouragement and never giving up on me even when I gave up on myself."

Johanna

"College is a journey that isn't solely based on how much you learn, but also how much you grow. You end up in this strange foreign place and you have no choice but to either find a place to fit or make your own. I made my own."

Niya

"Strive for excellent grades. Do not just do enough work or put forth the minimum amount of effort just to "get by." In order to get good grades, utilize the educational resources on campus. Find an ideal place to study so that there are no distractions. There are tutoring services, mentors, and libraries and I suggest using them to the best of your ability."

Megan

"If your goal is succeeding you must have high attendance and make sure that your assignments are turned in on time. Procrastination can hinder your success and your mission as an Undergraduate."

Larry

"As a new College student I have a newfound respect for people with degrees. I have even more respect for students that have the ability to keep their scholarship."

Student Success

RZ

“This past semester, I have learned a lot about being independent and learning to stay focused. At first, I was not really paying attention in my classes and studying enough, and it showed in my grades. I really only buckled down when the finals came around, and although I could have done a lot better, I’m still proud of myself for getting through my first semester. Overall, it was a great first semester, and I’m looking forward to learning more about myself, and my abilities in the next few months.”

CP

“My first semester of college was quite an event. I was not sure of how things would be exactly. My friends that had already experienced their first semesters of college gave me some helpful advice, but I still had to learn for myself. College is a place to come and learn how to live on your own away from home, make important decisions, and become a more mature young adult. These are a few things I have learned during my first semester in college. Another thing I learned about myself in college is that if I go to class every day, study hard, and go to tutorial sessions if I need help then I can maintain a 4.0 GPA. I was so proud that I achieved this goal that I set for myself, and hope to do the same for this semester and the ones to follow.”

DS

“I have learned how to be an independent young woman. I have learned to do my own laundry, be my own boss, and form support systems. Being my boss means that I have to manage my time in a fashion where I can socialize with my friends and still make good grades. I have formed strong bonds with friends so that we are always there to help one another in time of need. In this I have also learned to care about friends as I would family. I have learned more about the person I am and the person I want to become. I feel like this is a big stepping-stone for becoming successful in the future. I have also learned academics information. I have learned more about animals as I take each step to become a veterinarian.”

HD

“I’ve learned that how you treat college, is the same way it will treat you in return. If you come in with your goals in mind and with a serious attitude and apply yourself, you will get nothing but positive feedback from yourself, professors, and your grade.”

DeJon

“As an incoming Freshman, I came in new to college life, however, my success in my English Comp I class has really boosted my confidence. I am really interested in seeing how I do in this class further on in the year. My goal is to maintain a 3.5 GPA.”