Student Success:

A Plenary Meeting of the ECC Academic Senate

Tuesday, November 5, 2013
12:30-2:00, Alondra Room

Agenda

Christina Gold, Student Success and the Academic Senate of California Community Colleges

Kristie Daniel-DiGregorio, Faculty Leadership for Student Success

Francisco Arce and Jeanie Nishime, The Student Success Initiative and the Completion Agenda

Faculty Discussion and Reporting
1. How do you define student success?
2. What do students need to do to improve student success?
3. What do faculty need to do to improve student success?

Resources

Page	Title
2-3	"Searching for an Authentic Definition of Student Success," ASCCC *Rostrum.*
4	"Student Success: Novel Idea?," ASCCC *Rostrum*.
5	"Faculty Leadership for Student Success," DiGregorio handout.
6-11	"The Student Success Initiative and the Completion Agenda," Arce/Nishime PowerPoint handout.
12-13	Student Success Task Force Recommendations Summary
14-17	The American Graduation Initiative, White House Press Release
18-32	"Student Support (Re)Defined: What Students Say They Need to Succeed," RP Group

"Searching for an Authentic Definition of Student Success"

Educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders have long debated what it means for students to be successful, and the Student Success Initiative has brought the discussion to the forefront yet again. The Student Success Task Force recommendations indicate the measures in the Accountability Report for Community Colleges, more commonly known as the ARCC Scorecard, as the basis for setting goals at both local and state levels. The ARCC Scorecard certainly provides useful data, including an overarching view of student persistence, degree and certificate completion, and progression through remedial coursework. Although these metrics are part of the picture, many faculty are emphatic that they are inadequate and exclude some of the most important aspects of success. Not every student who comes to our system has the goal of fulfilling remediation requirements, achieving a certificate or associate degree, or transferring to baccalaureate institution. Rather, California community college students comprise an extremely complex demographic with characteristics and life circumstances that directly affect both their goals for themselves and our goals for them as educators. Can a student be successful without meeting one of the standard metrics? Faculty throughout the state would answer this question with a resounding "yes."

For example, Jared is the first in his family to attend college. He lives in an economically depressed area, and his most immediate goal is to obtain full-time employment as quickly as possible in a job that both interests him and will allow him to support himself. His passion lies in health and fitness, and he entered college with the goal of completing the personal trainer certificate program. However, after successfully completing the first few courses, Jared was able to pass the national exam, and he left school before completing the certificate when he was offered a full-time job at a fitness center as a personal trainer.

Similarly, Sharon is a working mother of two who is attending her local community college to improve her keyboarding skills in order to earn a promotion. She has no degree or certificate aspirations, nor does she plan to persist beyond successfully completing her keyboarding class. Sharon perseveres, passes the class, and earns her promotion.

Jared and Sharon are just two examples of success that are not currently reflected in the ARCC metrics. Even though job attainment, promotion, and salary increases are concrete success indicators that are relatively easy to measure, the ARCC report does not account for them, nor are they communicated at the system level where policy and funding decisions are made.

But the ARCC report also fails to include an even more significant element of success, one that seems more abstract and subjective and does not lend itself as readily to quantitative measurement systems: student learning. As faculty, we strive to help students gain knowledge and confidence in a particular discipline. We are even more fervent, however, about helping them become competent in the "big picture" outcomes that employers are demanding and that so many colleges have articulated as institution-level goals: communication, critical thinking, quantitative literacy, and citizenship. Success means empowering our students to contribute to

finding solutions to challenges in their communities and to become thoughtful members of society. Although these institutional-level goals seem more difficult to measure, they lie at the heart of what we do. We do not have to start from scratch: faculty have already been testing many different approaches at their colleges, and we must continue to share these ideas with each other. Goals such as these are no less valuable to California's vitality than more easily quantifiable measures, but they seem glaringly absent from the ARCC Scorecard metrics.

Education in the United States is rapidly evolving, and community college faculty must therefore develop novel ways to capture student success and learning more comprehensively and to more effectively communicate these successes to the public both formally and informally. We may be able to learn from our partners in adult education, who have adopted the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). The data obtained through CASAS is compiled in the California Adult Education Annual Performance Report, which shows outcomes for hundreds of thousands of students in the program, including those who were served at California community colleges. The intake form paints a clear and comprehensive picture of who their students are and goes beyond the standard demographics (e.g., age, gender, race, and ethnicity) to dive deeper into student characteristics and goals such as personal status (e.g., veteran, displaced homemaker, etc.), native language, primary and secondary goals for one year, work status, highest degree earned, and affiliation with special programs such as Perkins or State Corrections. This rich student profile is coupled with learner results in a variety of categories, including work status (e.g., got a job, entered an apprenticeship, entered job training, etc.), citizenship successes (e.g., achieved U.S. citizenship, registered to vote for the first time, increased involvement in the community), and personal or family successes (e.g., increased involvement in their children's education or met another family goal).

In addition to the measured successes, CASAS provides a reporting mechanism for those individuals who leave the program—a type of data that would be of use to community college faculty, who have great interest in understanding the reasons that students do not complete our programs. CASAS offers a solution through the assessment process by capturing "reasons for exiting," which include program completion, met goal, got a job, moved, lack of childcare, family problems, lack of transportation, health problems, and others. The CASAS system lets adult education faculty know who their students are, why they are in the program, and what their outcomes are, whether they be "completers" or "leavers."

The truest definition of student success is determined by the goals and personal situation of each individual student. For this reason, no single comprehensive statement or simple set of metrics can offer a complete and meaningful picture of the many ways in which our students succeed every year at all of our colleges. Nevertheless, although tracking and defining student outcomes and progress is a difficult task, we have an obligation to our stuents and our society to develop meaningful student success metrics and indicators and to find ways to more authentically communicate our students' successes on the ARCC Scorecard. We must continue to work to help policy makers both within and outside of our system understand that simple definitions and purely quantitative measures cannot present an accurate image of the many ways in which our students succeed or of how our colleges serve the state. Only through our continued and determined efforts in this area can we ensure that the metrics by which student success is measured will benefit both our students and the state as a whole and will align with the important and complete mission of the California Community Colleges.

Student Success, Novel Idea?

Student success has hit the press and airwaves as though it is a new idea, an innovative concept. It is bandied about as if no one had ever thought of such a novel idea. Well, California community college faculty have always thought about and planned for student success. Faculty are dedicated to supporting and facilitating student success. In fact, student success is the core guiding principle of our work.

The California community colleges have numerous missions that have guided course offerings, program development, and provided the foundation for which student success has been gauged. Colleges have provided core work for students intending to transfer, career technical education (CTE) programs for those enriching job skills or entering a profession, and noncredit programs for students that need a program that does not follow the more traditional format. We have also provided fee based programs, contract education, lifelong learning, and concurrent enrollment. Recently it was suggested that we even offer bachelor's degrees.

As the budget quagmire continues, our once diverse, community-serving, and responsive mission statement has been focused more narrowly. Colleges have been told to focus efforts on CTE, basic skills, and transfer. In doing so, we will actually change the role of community colleges in our communities, and we will turn even more students away. Lifelong learners, elder adults, and personal enrichment students will find little or no access to our campuses. In narrowing what missions our colleges fulfill, we are running a clear risk of decreasing the health of California's older adults, decreasing the appropriate methods for stress reduction in those that take enrichment courses, and changing the culture of community colleges. We may even be risking our open access philosophy and decreasing overall student success. The even greater impact is that we are risking the overall emotional well being and general feelings of life satisfaction of our population. I wonder how the limiting of the mission will ultimately affect California's future.

Faculty have many urgent and difficult discussions to have and questions to consider, questions such as "Who do we really serve?", "Which group of students should we stop serving?", "What is our definition of student success?", "Who are we willing to turn away?" As we have these discussions on our campuses and as we look toward unprecedented times, it is imperative that our colleges' decision-making processes are followed. It is essential that faculty are a core participant on campuses in all decisions covered under the 10+1. And, more importantly, faculty must not allow anyone to tell us that student success is a new idea. Faculty have always been driven by student success, and we need to assert and share our expertise. No matter what decisions are made, student success will be at the core, just as it always has been.

Faculty Leadership for Student Success

"Students most commonly recognized faculty as having the greatest potential impact on their educational journeys." *Student Support (Re)defined: What Students Say They Need to Succeed,* *www.rpgroup.org*

Helping Students PLAN, CONNECT, COMPLETE

	IDEAS: In CLASS	IDEAS: In COLLEGE
PLAN for success	- Communicate high expectations & an investment in students' success. - Ask students to set learning goals, goal grade & to monitor their grades. - Discuss careers in discipline: faculty career paths, former students, variety of career paths available. - Discuss/require/practice applying strategies for success in class.	- Discuss options in higher education and associated opportunities. - Require students to turn in updated (current semester) ed plan. - Refer students to resources to help establish career goals: Career Counselors/Center, HDEV courses, experienced faculty. - Inform students of key deadlines and implications for their success. - Make explicit choices and behaviors associated with success in college.
CONNECT with learning process, resources & people	- Incorporate active & collaborative learning & real-world relevance: invite questions, group projects, case studies, peer review, service learning, field trips & guest speakers. - Communicate value for student understanding: clickers & student surveys can quickly gather feedback & assess student learning, early assignments offer feedback on performance. - Learn students' names & facilitate student networking with success/study partners/teams, familias. - Emphasize availability and importance of office hours to student learning. - Build personal connections with colleagues in student services to facilitate referrals.	- Help students learn about student services: early alert, guest speakers, handouts. - Incentivize students' use of academic supports: writing center, tutoring, math study center, reading success center, computer labs. - Encourage student involvement in clubs, organizations and leadership opportunities. - Identify course content & success strategies from class which are transferrable to other classes
COMPLETE the goal	- Require mid-point grade check & conference. - Discuss value of successfully completing course: for academic progress, networking, clarifying major choices. - Suggest sequencing and strategies for further coursework in discipline. - Underscore content & learning in current course that is relevant to subsequent courses in discipline	- Make explicit key steps/deadlines required to graduate/transfer. - Encourage/require students to meet with counselor to monitor progress toward goal. - Encourage networking related to major/career: Career Center/Counseling, faculty, professionals - Highlight data re: attainment and opportunity.

Student Success & Support Program (SB1456)

and the

College Completion Agenda

Student Success Act of 2012

- Senate Bill 1456 signed into law September 2012
- SB 1456 re-names the Matriculation program as the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP).
- Targets funding to core services of orientation, assessment, counseling/advising to assist students with development of education plans
- Focuses on helping new students define goals and get on track to achievement

1

Key Provisions to Incentivize and Support Goal Completion

- Mandates assessment, orientation, and education planning
- Requires students to declare a course of study
- Sets minimum academic standards for state financial aid
- Establishes Student Success Scorecard at all colleges

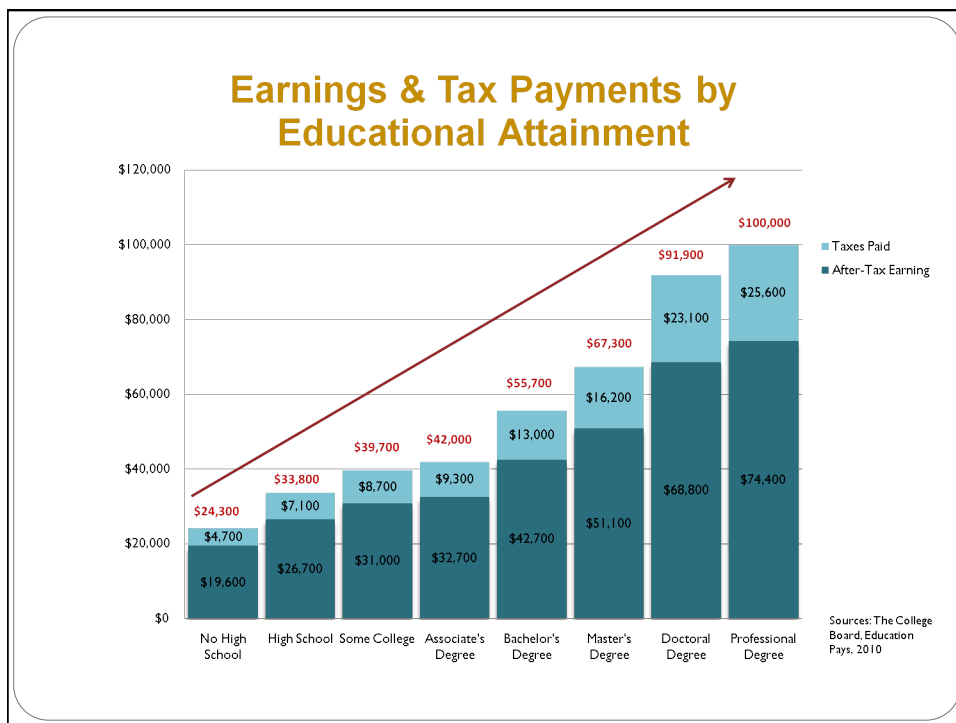## Student Success & Support Programs

- Fall 2014 – registration priority given to new students who complete assessment, orientation, and educational planning
- Fall 2014 – registration priority lost for students on 2nd semester probation or who earn 100+ units
- Fall 2015 – Board of Governor Fee Waiver (BOGFW) students must meet academic and progress requirements to receive a waiver of their enrollment fees
- Fall 2015 – all new students must complete assessment, orientation, and educational planning to enroll; continuing students with 15+ units must declare a program of study and complete an educational plan
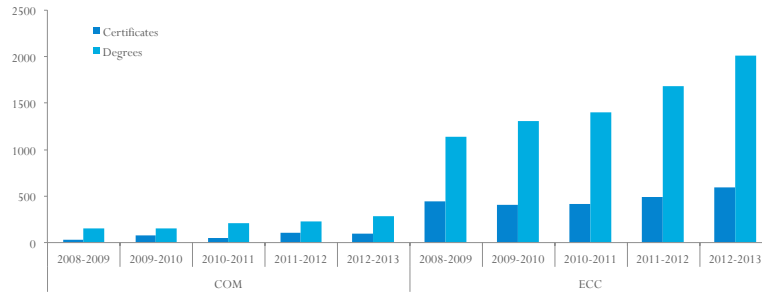
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Coming Events....

- Statewide common assessment
- Required completion of basic skills remediation within the first year
- Required declaration of a career goal as well as a major
- Adult education transferred to community colleges in partnership with K-12
- Increasing emphasis on completion of certificate, degree, or transfer

The College Completion Challenge

- Only half of all undergraduates complete a college degree in six years.
- 38% of all U.S. students take a remedial course in their first or second year.
- More than 60% of jobs will require a postsecondary education.
- Students with a bachelor's degree will earn 40% more in their lifetime (29% more with a community college degree) than students with only high school diplomas.
- The U.S. is 9th in the world in college attainment for the 25-34 year old population.

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Education Requirements for Jobs, 2018

Some college
12%

Bachelor's degree
23%

Associate's degree
17%

Graduate degree
10%

Less than high school
10%

High school graduate
28%

Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010 p. 14
http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/FullReport.pdf

Earnings & Tax Payments by Educational Attainment

	Total	Taxes Paid	After-Tax Earning
No High School	$24,300	$4,700	$19,600
High School	$33,800	$7,100	$26,700
Some College	$39,700	$8,700	$31,000
Associate's Degree	$42,000	$9,300	$32,700
Bachelor's Degree	$55,700	$13,000	$42,700
Master's Degree	$67,300	$16,200	$51,100
Doctoral Degree	$91,900	$23,100	$68,800
Professional Degree	$100,000	$25,600	$74,400

Sources: The College Board, Education Pays, 2010

ECC and CEC Certificates and Degrees Awarded

Campus	Award Type	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	1-yr change (%)
ECC	Degrees	1,137	1,303	1,399	1,686	2,012	19%
ECC	Certificates	442	403	414	489	592	21%
COM	Degrees	150	157	211	230	281	22%
COM	Certificates	27	78	51	102	96	-6%

ECC and CEC Transfer Rates
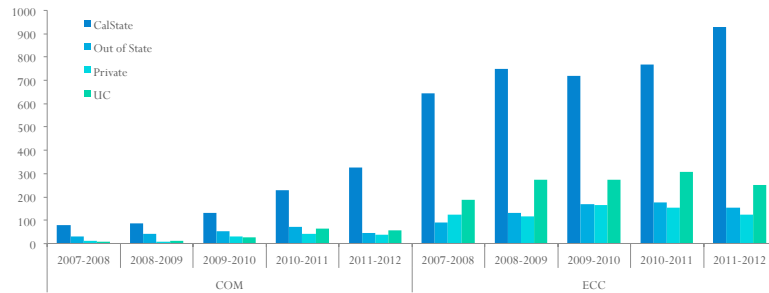
Campus	Transfer Type	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	1-yr change (%)
ECC	UC	186	272	274	307	252	-18%
ECC	CalState	644	749	719	769	930	21%
ECC	Private	122	115	163	153	125	-18%
ECC	Out of State	89	130	168	175	153	-13%
COM	UC	8	11	27	63	55	-13%
COM	CalState	79	88	133	227	326	44%
COM	Private	11	9	30	43	38	-12%
COM	Out of State	30	42	54	71	44	-38%

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Discussion

Partnering for Student Success and Goal Completion

We Need Your Input

- How do you define student success?
- What do students need to do to improve student success?
- What do faculty need to do to improve student success?

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CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Advancing Student Success in
California Community Colleges

STUDENT
SUCCESS
T A S K   F O R C E
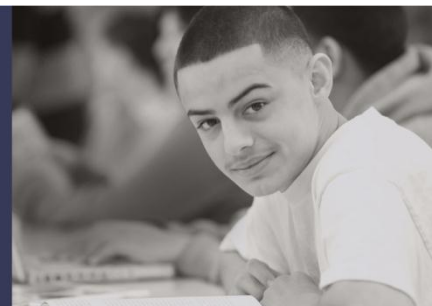
The Vision

For 2.6 million students, the California Community Colleges system is the gateway to a better life. In addition to the personal fulfillment that a college education brings, students who earn a community college degree or certificate nearly double their earnings within three years. Whatever the academic skill-level at the time of enrollment, all students should be given the tools and guidance to successfully complete their educational goals. The recommendations of the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force lay out reforms that will increase transfer, degree and certificate attainment and help close the achievement gap for historically underrepresented students.

The Challenge

Years of severe budget reductions have put tremendous strain on the colleges' ability to serve students. At a period when demand is at an all-time high, budget cuts have forced colleges to slash course offerings and turn away hundreds of thousands of students. In 2009-10 alone, 133,000 first- time students were unable to register for a single course due to a lack of space. Student support services have also been dramatically cut to roughly half of pre-recession levels. These services are the lifeboat for underprepared students. Unfortunately, only about half of degree-seeking students achieve their educational goal – for Latinos and African-Americans the rate is even lower. Bold changes are needed to improve completion rates, narrow the achievement gap and keep pace with an economy that is increasingly demanding more college-educated workers.

The Opportunity

Last year, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors established the Student Success Task Force to find new and better ways to increase student outcomes. After a year of study and research, the task force issued a report with 22 recommendations that will greatly enhance the opportunity for students to succeed in completing their certificates, degrees and educational goals. The report takes the unprecedented step of identifying core priorities – basic math and English instruction, transfer preparation, career technical training and degree attainment – and refocusing policies and future investments to support these priorities.

Never before have California community colleges engaged in such a comprehensive examination of how to systemically improve student success. The student-focused recommendations create new efficiencies from which savings will be reinvested in student success.

The Recommendations

- *Give students the tools they need to succeed.*   All students will be required to participate in a diagnostic assessment, attend an orientation, and develop an education plan to guide them toward completion of their educational goals. Without these services students face an uphill battle to navigate the system with success.

- *Prioritize student enrollment.* Currently, registration priority is given to students with the most units, thus rewarding unit accumulation rather than progress in their program of study. This is a disservice to first-time students who are the most likely to be turned away due to a lack of space.

<p align="center">-   *continued*   -</p>

The new policy will give priority to returning and first-time students who have taken a diagnostic assessment, participated in orientation and have developed an educational plan. All students will need to identify a program of study within three semesters or they will lose their priority.

- *Increase transparency and close the achievement gap.* The recommendations direct the Chancellor's Office to work with community college districts to establish state and local student success goals. Each campus will be required to post a score card highlighting a select number of metrics that show student progress in meeting goals. The score card will also be disaggregated by race and ethnicity to assess the progress of students by subgroup and determine the degree to which the achievement gap is being closed.

- *Improve basic skills education.* More than 70 percent of community college students who enter the system are under prepared to do college-level work with the majority being first generation college students, low-income and/or minority. Changes will support faculty in developing new and innovative approaches to teaching basic skills courses and by providing more quality professional development opportunities for teaching basic skills.

- *Use technology to help students and create greater efficiency.* Student-friendly technology will be leveraged to better support student needs. Technology applications will generate efficiencies, and help students navigate the college system more effectively.   For instance, all students will have access to common online assessment tools for English, mathematics and ESL and to pre-testing programs that help improve assessment outcomes. They also will be able to take the results of their tests to any community college in the state. In addition, students will be able to develop education plans online and regularly monitor their progress in completing courses necessary to finish their programs of study, thus reducing their dependence on face-to-face meetings with counselors. This will free up counselors duties so they can spend more time working with students with more complex issues.

Key Supporters

The Campaign for College Opportunity, Alliance for a Better Community, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Bay Area Council, Chandler Farms, Californians for Justice, California EDGE Campaign, California Hospital Association, California State Student Association, USC Rossier School of Education, Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor, City of Los Angeles, The Education Trust-West, Excelencia in Education, Families in Schools, Girls Inc. of Orange County, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, Hispanas Organized for Political Equality, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Progressive Christians Uniting, Parent Institute for Quality Education(PIQE), Project GRAD Los Angeles, Greater Sacramento Urban League, Southern California College Access Network, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS), Women's Foundation of California, Youth Policy Institute.

For More Information Visit: **http://bit.ly/qy7qMA**

California Community Colleges STUDENT **SUCCESS** TASK FORCE

THE AMERICAN GRADUATION INITIATIVE: STRONGER AMERICAN SKILLS THROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGES

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
July 14, 2009

"Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but one that helps us thrive and compete in a global economy. It's time to reform our community colleges so that they provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future."
– President Barack Obama
–

In an increasingly competitive world economy, America's economic strength depends upon the education and skills of its workers. In the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as those requiring no college experience. To meet this economic imperative, President Barack Obama asks every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training and set a new national goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

Today, at Macomb Community College in Michigan, he outlined his plan to reform our nation's community colleges, calling for an additional 5 million community college graduates by 2020 and new initiatives to teach Americans the skills they will need to compete with workers from other nations. He outlined new initiatives to increase the effectiveness and impact of community colleges, raise graduation rates, modernize facilities, and create new online learning opportunities. These steps -- an unprecedented increase in the support for community colleges -- will help rebuild the capacity and competitiveness of America's workforce.

The announcement comes a day after the Council of Economic Advisers released a report describing how the U.S. labor market is expected to grow and develop in the coming years. The CEA described an expected shift toward jobs that require workers with greater analytical and interactive skills and summarized the attributes of a well-functioning education and training system designed for the jobs of the future.

THE AMERICAN GRADUATION INITIATIVE

Fifty years ago, President Harry Truman called for a national network of community colleges to dramatically expand opportunities for veterans returning from World War II. Today, faced with rapid technological change and global

competition, community colleges are needed more than ever to raise American skills and education levels and keep American businesses competitive. President Barack Obama called for an additional 5 million community college degrees and certificates by 2020 and new steps to ensure that those credentials will help graduates get ahead in their careers. Together, these steps will cost $12 billion over the next decade. The administration will pay for them as part of a package that cuts waste out of the student loan program, increases Pell Grant scholarships, and reduces the deficit.

Community colleges are the largest part of our higher education system, enrolling more than 6 million students, and growing rapidly. They feature affordable tuition, open admission policies, flexible course schedules, and convenient locations, and they are particularly important for students who are older, working, need remedial classes, or can only take classes part-time. They are also capable of working with businesses, industry and government to create tailored training programs to meet economic needs such as nursing, health information technology, advanced manufacturing, and green jobs, and of providing customized training at the worksite.

Business and industry play an important role in training the workforce of the future and meeting the on-going demands of the marketplace. Many community colleges are already working with businesses to develop programs and classes ranging from degrees to certified training courses for retraining and on-going training for enhancing skills. For example, Cisco's Networking Academy is working with community colleges to train students throughout the country on technology-based jobs and it is expanding this platform to train for broadband infrastructure and health care information technology.

The American Graduation Initiative will build on the strengths of community colleges and usher in new innovations and reforms for the 21st century economy. It will:

- **Call for 5 Million Additional Community College Graduates**: In February, President Obama called for America to once again lead the world in college degrees by 2020. Affordable, open-enrollment community colleges will play a critical role in meeting that goal. Today, he set a complementary goal: an additional 5 million community college graduates by 2020, including students who earn certificates and associate degrees or who continue on to graduate from four-year colleges and universities.

- **Create the Community College Challenge Fund**: Too often community colleges are underfunded and underappreciated, lacking the resources they need to improve instruction, build ties with businesses, and adopt other reforms. Under President Obama's plan, new competitive grants would enable community colleges and states to innovate and expand proven reforms. These efforts will be evaluated carefully, and the approaches that demonstrate improved educational and employment

outcomes will receive continued federal support and become models for widespread adoption. Colleges could:

- Build partnerships with businesses and the workforce investment system to create career pathways where workers can earn new credentials and promotions step-by-step, worksite education programs to build basic skills, and curriculum coordinated with internship and job placements.

- Expand course offerings and offer dual enrollment at high schools and universities, promote the transfer of credit among colleges, and align graduation and entrance requirements of high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

- Improve remedial and adult education programs, accelerating students' progress and integrating developmental classes into academic and vocational classes.

- Offer their students more than just a course catalog, through comprehensive, personalized services to help them plan their careers and stay in school.

In addition, the initiative will support a new research center with a mission to develop and implement new measures of community colleges' success so prospective students and businesses could get a clear sense of how effective schools are in helping students -- including the most disadvantaged -- learn, graduate, and secure good jobs.

- **Fund Innovative Strategies to Promote College Completion**: Nearly half of students who enter community college intending to earn a degree or transfer to a four-year college fail to reach their goal within six years. The College Access and Completion Fund will finance the innovation, evaluation, and expansion of efforts to increase college graduation rates and close achievement gaps, including those at community colleges. Promising approaches include performance-based scholarships, learning communities of students, professors and counselors, colleges tailored to promote the success of working adults, and funding formulas based on student progress and success as well as initial enrollment. Resources would also be provided to improve states' efforts to track student progress, completion, and success in the workplace.

- **Modernize Community College Facilities**: Often built decades ago, community colleges are struggling to keep up with rising enrollments. Many colleges face large needs due to deferred maintenance or lack the modern facilities and equipment needed to train students in technical and other growing fields. Insufficient classroom space can force students to delay needed courses and reduce completion rates. President Obama is proposing a new $2.5 billion fund to catalyze $10 billion in community college facility investments that will expand the colleges' ability to meet employer and student needs. The resources could be used to pay the

interest on bonds or other debt, seed capital campaigns, or create state revolving loan funds.

- **Create a New Online Skills Laboratory**: Online educational software has the potential to help students learn more in less time than they would with traditional classroom instruction alone. Interactive software can tailor instruction to individual students like human tutors do, while simulations and multimedia software offer experiential learning. Online instruction can also be a powerful tool for extending learning opportunities to rural areas or working adults who need to fit their coursework around families and jobs. New open online courses will create new routes for students to gain knowledge, skills and credentials. They will be developed by teams of experts in content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology and made available for modification, adaptation and sharing. The Departments of Defense, Education, and Labor will work together to make the courses freely available through one or more community colleges and the Defense Department's distributed learning network, explore ways to award academic credit based upon achievement rather than class hours, and rigorously evaluate the results.

Student Support (Re)defined

Equitable
Integrated
Cost Effective

What students say they need to succeed

Key themes from a study
of student support

Kathy Booth, Darla Cooper,
Kelley Karandjeff, Rogéair Purnell,
Eva Schiorring and Terrence Willett

Introduction

As California's community colleges (CCC) respond to the state's Student Success Task Force recommendations, many constituents are considering how student support can be implemented to improve completion. College practitioners, policymakers and advocacy groups are all exploring how to preserve delivery of existing supports, while at the same time, rethink ways to effectively engage more students with the assistance they need to succeed. To inform this dialog at both institutional and system levels, the RP Group **asked nearly 900 students from 13 California community colleges what *they* think supports their educational success, paying special attention to the factors African Americans and Latinos cite as important to their achievement.**

The RP Group performed this research in Year 1 of **Student Support (Re)defined**—a study designed to **understand how, in an environment of extreme scarcity, community colleges can deliver support both inside and outside the classroom to improve success for all students** (for more information, see sidebar at left). This brief highlights key themes and implications resulting from this exploration of student perspectives.

Student Support (Re)defined

Student Support (Re)defined is a three-year study (2011-2014) funded by The Kresge Foundation where the RP Group will:

- Ask students what factors are most important to their success, paying special attention to what African Americans and Latinos cite as critical to their achievement (Year 1)

- Engage practitioners in assessing their own colleges' approach to support based on what students say they need to succeed and identifying opportunities for related institutional change; profile examples of colleges that have pursued coherent institutional change to improve student support (Year 2)

- Promote dialog and action at both the college and system levels about how to encourage institutional approaches that strategically improve student support and increase completion, particularly for historically underrepresented populations (Ongoing, focused in Year 3)

How We Think about Student Support
Student Perspectives
Research Framework

In Year 1, we gathered students' feedback on what generally supports their educational progress as well as their perspectives on the relevance and importance of "six success factors" to their achievement. We derived these success factors based on a review of existing research on effective support practices and interviews with practitioners

and researchers. During this literature review, we paid particular attention to the outcomes different strategies and approaches intend to accomplish with students. By exploring what outcomes these practices aim to achieve—rather than simply documenting how structures like learning communities or student success courses are delivered—we intend to begin shifting the conversation away from how to replicate entire programs to how to feasibly achieve these student success factors at scale.

The six success factors are listed below in the order of importance according to students participating in our study:

- **Directed:** students have a goal and know how to achieve it

- **Focused:** students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize

- **Nurtured:** students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed

- **Engaged:** students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities

- **Connected:** students feel like they are part of the college community

- **Valued**: students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

A full definition of these factors can be found in the study's literature review brief at http://www.rpgroup.org/content/research-framework. The RP Group will also produce an inquiry guide in spring 2013 that will offer colleges a step-by-step process for using this six-factor framework to strategize institutional change. For project resources and information, visit: http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support.

How You Can Use This Brief
Reader's Guide

This brief presents five key themes that (1) synthesize what students say about the six success factors and (2) share strategies that students suggest may improve their achievement. The RP Group designed this report for those interested in advancing student success, including community college leaders, faculty and instructional administrators, student services professionals, staff and students themselves. University practitioners, advocacy groups and policymakers may also benefit from these findings when considering policy and funding decisions that impact efforts to improve completion and/or the delivery of student support. We intend for this document to:

- Share high-level analysis of what the student perspectives research findings collectively mean

- Promote a dialog among community college leaders about the how these implications can inform change in policy and practice

- Lay the foundation for Year 2 research focused on engaging community college practitioners in discussions about how to feasibly deliver and scale supports that work

After a brief overview of the study's research design and methodology, we present and describe each of the five themes (including the findings that support the theme). We follow this section with a series of discussion questions intended to stimulate high-level practitioner reflection on how your college currently approaches support and to instigate exploration of related institutional strategies for advancing student success. **Readers can also find an extended report of our Year 1 research—including what students say about each of the six success factors and their suggestions for what the people serving in different roles at the colleges can do to improve support—at http:// www.rpgroup.org/content/reports-presentations-and-resources.** This full report provides additional discussion questions for more in-depth reflection on and dialog about how these individual factors relate to your college's own delivery of student support.

How We're Studying Student Support
Research Design & Methodology

The RP Group purposefully designed Student Support (Re)defined to bring student perspectives to the growing body of research on how to increase completion through strategic support. To start, we engaged 13 colleges that represent the broad geographic and demographic diversity of the California community college system (see map, *Participating Colleges*). Using a mixed-methods approach, the RP Group reached 785 students through phone surveys (current students, leavers and completers) and 102 students through focus groups at four of the colleges (current students only). Survey participants originated from a random sample that oversampled African Americans and Latinos from each college in order to ensure substantial representation from these two groups. The research team additionally linked quantitative data from the CCC Chancellor's Office to their survey responses—including students' demographics and academic history—in order to examine the results of different subpopulations.

For a full description of the study's methodology, including how the colleges were selected, criteria used to create the student sample and the data analyses performed, please visit: http://www.rpgroup.org/content/research-framework.

Participating Colleges

Butte College
Mendocino College
Sierra College
Contra Costa College
Laney College
Las Positas College
De Anza College
Fresno City College
Porterville College
Los Angeles Valley College
Los Angeles Southwest College
Chaffey College
Irvine Valley College

What Students Say They Need to Succeed
Key Themes & Strategies for Colleges

When speaking to students about their efforts to achieve their educational goals, five distinct themes emerged that can inform college initiatives to increase completion through targeted support. Collectively, these themes:

- Acknowledge students as key agents in their own educational success while highlighting that the motivation learners bring to college may not be enough to guarantee completion

- Speak directly to the need to teach students how to succeed

- Highlight the value of providing support that helps students experience multiple success factors

- Underscore the importance of comprehensive service delivery to particular populations

- Recognize the important role the entire college community plays in student success, but emphasize the need for faculty leadership

Implicit in these themes are strategies for colleges to consider when planning for support initiatives.

1 Colleges need to foster students' motivation.

This research suggests that relying on student motivation alone will not lead to improved completion. Certainly, students must be committed to setting and reaching their educational goals. Across the board, those participating in this research strongly recognized the role they play in their own success; students most frequently cited their own motivation and dedication to their education as a critical factor in their achievement. However, they also acknowledged that **while many students arrive to college motivated, their drive needs to be continuously stoked and augmented with additional support in order for success to be realized.** Moreover, participants reported that students who begin college without a clear motivation for attending may need extra help clarifying how postsecondary education may benefit them in the short and long term. Like those who arrive motivated, these students also need

support that will keep them focused and committed. Students reported that colleges can foster their motivation by:

- Helping them develop a clear educational plan and assisting them in monitoring their progress

- Making direct links between their educational experience and their goals for career mobility and a better life

- Engaging them with course content in meaningful ways

- Providing them with opportunities to connect with other students and instructors through both formal and informal means

- Fostering their sense of place and belonging on campus

- Facilitating their achievement of early and frequent successes

These findings also suggest that colleges may need to reflect on institutional policies, processes and practices and interactions with students that may inadvertently erode their motivation.

> I formed a relationship with my counselor. She's just on me, like, checking up on me here and there. If you don't have a relationship with your counselor, you're not going to make it.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

2 Colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.

This research also indicates that many students do not always know how to translate their motivation into success in the postsecondary setting. Specifically, **students spoke of their struggles to understand what they needed to do to succeed in college.** For example, some focus group participants recalled having a hard time selecting a goal and establishing a plan to reach their desired end-point when they first enrolled. Moreover, others questioned how certain successful factors contributed to their achievement at all. For example, some asked how feeling connected had any impact on their success and questioned the value of extracurricular involvement. Survey findings echoed these focus group insights. Completers—those who earned a certificate or associate's degree—largely recognized all six success factors as critical. On the other hand, leavers—those no longer enrolled at their college—had yet to arrive at this place of appreciation, generally indicating that none of these factors was as important to their achievement as completers found them to be. **These findings imply that colleges should educate students about how to navigate their community college and**

thrive in this environment.
Colleges can help learners understand both why and how to choose a goal and stay focused, develop connections, engage both inside and outside the classroom and make contributions on their campuses. Students suggested several ways colleges could help learners see the benefits of these activities:

> I have friends that did not take [a student success] class and they don't feel connected because they don't really know what's going on. They ask questions like, "What's happening at the student services center? Do we even have a transfer center? Do we even have a counseling center? Do we even have EOPS or DSPS?" They don't know because they never had an opportunity to sit in a class where they go over these services and what happens on campus.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

- Require that first-time students enroll in a high-quality student success course

- Widely advertise services, supports and activities designed to facilitate success

- Have faculty inform students about assistance, resources and extracurriculars available both at the college and in the local community

- Encourage faculty and staff to share with students their own success stories and what makes them feel connected to the college

3 Colleges need to structure support to ensure all "six success factors" are addressed.

In addition to teaching students the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in higher education, this research suggests that colleges must also offer students the chance to experience all "six success factors"— directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected and valued—throughout their time with the institution. In both the survey and focus groups, **students described how different factors interacted with each other to contribute to their success.** Participants acknowledged that some learners might not require all of these supports, or that they may need to experience them in different combinations and intensities at varying points in time. Yet, **they also identified relationships between the factors and noted how experiencing one factor often led to realizing another, or how two factors were inextricably linked to each other.** In response to a question asking what makes them successful, most students did not just mention one factor, but usually two or three. Since students do not experience these factors in isolation, colleges

cannot expect to provide these factors to students in silos. These findings imply that colleges should consider solutions that can help students attain multiple factors at once. For example, students indicated that being asked for their feedback helped them feel engaged, valued and nurtured and that completing an education plan empowered them to develop direction and stay focused on their higher education experience. Moreover, colleges are likely to realize efficiencies when implementing strategies that promote many factors at the same time. This research indicates that colleges should:

> You have to know what you want and how to get it. After that, you're able to engage with extra-curricular activities and be connected to the college. It's a matter of having a solid base first.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

- Ensure all students have the opportunity to experience each success factor

- Coordinate efforts to address specific success factors

- Build opportunities that intentionally integrate multiple success factors

- Tailor the combination of interventions based on the needs and strengths of the student population and stage in their educational journey

4 Colleges need to provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing.

Survey responses from African-American, Latino and first-generation college students indicate that these groups would particularly benefit from experiencing comprehensive support that addresses their academic, financial, social and personal needs. When compared to other participants, these student groups were more likely to cite the lack of academic support, the absence of someone at the college who cared about their success and insufficient financial assistance as reasons for them not to continue their education. These students were also more likely to indicate that contributing on campus and receiving recognition for their contribution was important to their success. Given the specific needs identified by these student groups, this research suggests that **colleges should consider investing in structures that connect more African-American, Latino and first-generation learners to existing services.** In particular, African-American, Latino and first-generation students in this study highlighted the following as key to their success:

- Connecting with necessary and available financial assistance

- Receiving explicit insight about how the experiences provided and approaches taken by their instructors, programs and institutions contribute to their achievement

- Experiencing opportunities to connect with others, including peers and educators, both during and outside of class

- Receiving academic assistance outside of class through either formal tutoring and mentoring programs or informal study groups and peer networks

- Feeling their success mattered to others

- Having their family history and culture valued in the educational setting

- Taking part in their campus community and feeling recognized for their contributions

> I feel that whenever someone wants me to succeed and is supportive of me, then I am motivated to work harder and be successful. The motivation they provide for me is vital to me pushing myself and being focused, engaged and directed towards success.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

While it may not be feasible to expand existing special populations programs, **colleges must find a way to provide a significant proportion of these student groups with comprehensive support—at scale.** If they do not, the equity gap will likely continue to grow.

5 Everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.

Students cited many individuals who influenced their success ranging from counselors who helped them choose classes to staff who assisted them in physically and logistically navigating the college to family and friends who offered ongoing support and inspiration. Their responses highlight how everyone on a campus can affect their achievement. **These findings underscore the importance of colleges promoting a culture where all individuals across the institution understand their role in advancing students' success.** At the same time, **students most commonly recognized faculty as having the greatest potential impact on their educational journeys.** Time and again, students underscored the ways faculty taught, challenged and engaged them, both during and outside of class, and described how these efforts made a critical difference in helping them reach their goals. **This research indicates that because faculty are at the center of every student's educational experience, they have a significant opportunity**

and ability to influence their students' success not just in, but beyond, their own classroom. Instructors can support student achievement by finding ways to incorporate elements of the six success factors into course content and delivery. Faculty can also work with others across the college to integrate different types of support into the classroom and help connect students with any assistance they might need outside their coursework. Students specifically argued that faculty have a primary hand in helping them:

- Find direction by providing discipline-specific insight and advising

- Stay focused on their goals

- Develop a connection to and actively engage with their peers

- Link to resources and supports across their campus

- Feel that their success is important to their college

- Both contribute to and feel valued by their institutions

Clearly, students in this study are asking faculty to assume a larger role in their success both inside and outside the classroom. These findings imply that college administrators will need to work with instructors to establish the professional development, supports and incentives necessary to fulfill this expanded role.

A teacher's engaging when they're not just writing on a board or showing you a PowerPoint, but really talking to the class, when they make the eye contact and ask questions. Don't just give us the answer. Talk to the class. Engage people. Make them answer questions. Pick on somebody a little bit. Make a joke here and there. And, connect us to outside resources and extra tutoring. I have teachers who go the extra mile to create workshops, like my chemistry teacher. The hour before the class starts, she does a workshop and I think that's an extra thing that teachers can do [to help us be successful].

—*Focus Group Participant*

What You Can Do
with This Research
Discussion Questions

Given current and anticipated future budget constraints and increased calls for reform, **now is the time for colleges to redefine support in a way that aligns with what students say they need.** The key themes generated by this study supply a framework for (1) reflecting on the outcomes colleges want for their students and (2) identifying how support can be strategically integrated across institutional divisions and into students' experience both inside and outside the classroom, from entry to exit. **We encourage colleges to use the results from this research when reimagining student support and working to advance the completion of *all* learners.** This brief offers many ideas for change — including actions that individuals and programs can take immediately to improve your students' achievement. That said, reaching more students with necessary assistance will likely require faculty and instructional administrators, student services professionals, staff and administrative leaders and students to collaboratively explore and develop new structures that lead to *systemic* change.

The following questions are designed to help initiate this reflection and planning. Several natural venues exist on campuses to hold these conversations including the president's cabinet; student success, basic skills and/or accreditation committees; the academic senate; joint meetings of instructional and student services deans and directors; and department and division meetings. The RP Group recommends that **the primary ingredient for productive discussions is the inclusion of people who interact with students at all points in their college journey** (from outreach to enrollment, through progress and completion). Moreover, involving students in these conversations can add critical perspectives about how your learners currently experience support and how prospective changes might impact their efforts to achieve their educational goals.

▶ When thinking about the need to continuously foster students' motivation, when and where does your students' focus begin to fade? Based on what evidence? How do you currently intervene to stoke their motivation? What more can you do either individually or as an institution? Are there policies, processes or practices at the college and/ or interactions the college has with students that may be inadvertently eroding students' motivation?

▶ What policies and practices currently exist on your campus to ensure students know how to succeed in the postsecondary setting (e.g., mandatory orientation or student success courses)? What more could your college do to ensure all students have the skills to navigate and achieve at your institution?

▶ In what ways do offices, programs and departments work together to ensure students have the opportunity to establish a goal, create a plan of action and continuously connect not only with needed resources but other students at the college? How might your college scale these efforts to reach more students?

▶ Which populations on your campus need the most comprehensive support to persist and complete? When and where is support needed? Given what evidence? How does or how can your college strategically invest in supporting these student groups?

▶ How does your college develop a culture where all people—faculty, staff and administrators—feel responsible for students' success and are aware of how their individual work at the college links directly and/or indirectly to students' achievement?

▶ What policies and practices does your college embrace to empower classroom faculty as primary supporters of student success, in their classroom and beyond (e.g., faculty advising)? What support do classroom faculty need to more fully inhabit this role as the primary champion for students' success?

Where We Go From Here
Next Steps

We recognize that the Year 1 student perspectives research may raise many questions about how practitioners should act on these findings. The next phase of our research will focus on engaging college practitioners in a dialog to explore answers to some of these questions and collecting concrete examples of programmatic strategies designed to help students experience the six success factors at scale. To begin, we will develop an inquiry guide that helps practitioners (1) use the key themes and findings presented in this report to assess their own college's approach to support and (2) identify opportunities for feasible institutional reform. We will pilot this inquiry guide with colleges participating in the study and then make it widely available through various presentations and meetings with community college educators throughout the state. Next, given that many of the Year 1 key themes and findings imply the need for structural and systemic change, we will examine and profile examples of colleges both in California and across the nation that have pursued coherent, strategic institutional initiatives to improve student support and increase completion. The RP Group will likely release the results of the study's second phase in between fall 2013 and spring 2014. Readers can find the most current project results, resources and updates at: http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support.

the **RP** group

the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) strengthens the ability of California community colleges to undertake high quality research, planning and assessments that improve evidence-based decision making, institutional effectiveness and success for all students.

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Who supports this study?