

Student Success Brainstorming Sessions

Ideas from Employees

El Camino College hosted three brainstorming sessions with managers and supervisors, faculty, and Classified staff in Fall 2013 to gather ideas about how to improve student success. More than 200 employees participated in one of the three events. The two main guiding questions were “*What can **student do...?***” and “*What can **faculty or staff do...?***”

Each session included discussion of the current status of student achievement and recent research on what students believe supports their success. The latter research¹, sponsored by the California Community College’s Research & Planning Group (RP Group), categorized responses from students into one of six themes (in order of importance):

1. **Directed:** students have a goal and know how to achieve it
2. **Focused:** students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize
3. **Nurtured:** students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed
4. **Engaged:** students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities
5. **Connected:** students feel like they are part of the college community
6. **Valued:** students’ skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated.

Ideas from employee brainstorming sessions were collected and categorized by these themes where possible. Ideas are sorted below by category. *

What can students do to improve their success?

1. Directed

Many suggestions focused on making sure that students understand what resources are available in order to help students achieve their goals. Suggestions to help improve knowledge of available resources were directed at both students and the institution – students need to be more proactive in researching and finding

¹ Booth, K., Cooper, D., Karandjeff, K., Purnell, E. S., & Willett, T. (2013, January). *Student support (re)defined: What students say they need to succeed*. Retrieved from <http://www.rpgroup.org/sites/default/files/StudentPerspectivesResearchBriefJan2013.pdf>.

* Exact ideas available in Appendix A, B, & C, sorted by Focus Group

available support while institutions need to make resources and information more readily accessible. Students also need to know what academic skills are necessary to reach their goals. Many faculty participants specifically commented on encouraging or teaching students to understand themselves, such as their passions, skill sets and individual situations, in order to set realistic goals before being able to determine the best path to reach these goals (such as taking remedial classes to be better prepared).

2. Focused

There was a general recognition that students need to stay focus to reach their goals. This includes minimizing outside stressors, knowing the available options, learning discipline, and declaring a major within the first year of school. It was also suggested that students need to understand the value of an education in order to keep them focused and on track.

3. Nurtured

Every focus group suggested students seek support from two different sources - their cohorts and staff. First, students can get support from their cohorts by creating study groups and meaningful interactions with other students, student mentors, ambassadors, and tutors. The second source of support can come from staff members, such as counselors and faculty.

4. Engaged

There was a general consensus amongst the focus groups that students need to be more involved in their classes and some suggested that students need to be more involved with school programs and activities.

5. Connected

There were no direct suggestions that encouraged students to feel like they are part of the college community. There were suggestions for students to become more involved in school programs and activities, which may indirectly enhance their sense of belonging to the college community as a whole beyond feeling a connection to a particular program or group.

6. Valued

There were no suggestions of any student behaviors that would increase recognition of their achievements. The original Student Success (Re)Defined research could be consulted for ideas on how to value our students strengths.

What can faculty or staff do to improve student success?

1. Directed

Many suggested that faculty become more knowledgeable, not only about their own field, but about other fields and departments. This could help students form better goals and understand which academic path to take. It was also suggested that faculty and staff become more aware of school policies and resources and communicate these to students. There were also suggestions that faculty teach or at least inform students of the necessary skills required for academic success.

2. Focused

There were suggestions that faculty encourage students to see counselors during quieter periods to ensure that they stay focus and on track.

3. Nurtured

There were many suggestions on how faculty and staff can help nurture students. Faculty is suggested to create an atmosphere that promotes growth and a safe environment to ask questions regarding course material or more personal questions regarding their personal goals. Staff was suggested to make office environments more welcoming to students. Faculty is suggested to be more compassionate and understanding of students' situations and show that students are cared for through discussions and personal attention.

4. Engaged

Faculty can encourage student participation during class through group activities and use of social media. Students may also become more involved in extracurricular activities if there was increased faculty involvement in extracurricular activities.

5. **Connected**

There were suggestions that faculty should increase their involvement in school activities. This may indirectly help students feel connected to the college community by interacting with their instructors inside and outside of the classroom.

6. **Valued**

There were no suggestions that were directly related to increasing recognition of students' skills, talents, abilities, and experiences.

Overall, the focus groups seemed to have more suggestions regarding the themes **directed** and **nurtured**. There was a large emphasis on students learning about themselves, creating realistic goals, choosing the best path to reach those goals, and learning to stay on that path while receiving the proper support from other students and staff.

There were general suggestions regarding how the college can help student success. These suggestions included making relevant information more readily accessible to students, re-educate students throughout the semester about information given during orientation, not bouncing students between departments which may hinder their focus, train parents, and to have streamline processes.

The specific ideas from each focus group are listed below in Appendix A (Classified), B (Faculty), and C (Managers). Within each focus group, the ideas are separated by what students can do and what faculty can do.

Appendix A

Ideas by Classified Staff

How STUDENTS can improve their own success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Encourage group study.	X	X		X		
Ensure that the students have goals and are planning; knowing life goals and interests so that they can focus on objectives in school.	X	X				
Peer mentoring.	X		X	X		
Student-run forum for answering questions.	X		X			
Ask questions/ask for help.	X		X			
Student ambassador mentors.	X		X			
Counseling.	X		X			
Be more accountable and prepared in classes; understand that it takes more than attendance to succeed in college.	X			X		
Students should consider taking academic strategy courses that may help address communication and reading skills.	X					
Utilize services school provides.	X					
Think about what you want to achieve, create goals.	X					
Visualize their options.	X					
Utilize the support services on campus.	X					
Be aware of the support services on campus.	X					
Check school email more often.	X					
Need to know what free resources are available.	X					
Better distribution of information to students- transparency.	X					
Assessments for skills and interests, not just placement.	X					
Human development skills course should be mandatory for new students.	X					
Improve communication and reading skills.	X					
Understand how to navigate through college.	X					
Take personal responsibility as early as possible to know and meet requirements.	X					
Read E-mails.	X					
Orientation.	X					
Know the importance of their education (future salary, place in labor market, national degree and job statistics).	X					

Appendix A

Ideas by Classified Staff

How STUDENTS can improve their own success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Take initiative- too many let fear and shyness prevent them from seeking information they need.	x					
Be more motivated.	x					
Have a good sense of urgency.	x					
Put the cell phones away.		x				
Try to minimize outside stressors that detract from education (e.g., work, children, family).		x				
Don't procrastinate.		x				
Have new focus and commitment.		x				
My ECC personalized direction from counselors.			x			
Become more involved in school programs and activities (e.g., school government or clubs).				x	x	
Show up for class.				x		

Appendix A

Ideas by Classified Staff

How STAFF can improve student success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Staff need to be consistent in message when students ask questions.	X					
Interdepartmental communication.	X					
Have students check ECC email regularly.	X					
Ask managers to share this information with their staff.						
Make sure classified staff know- communicate to one another, have those resources for us as well.	X					
Stop bouncing students between departments.						
Orientation may be too much information at one time. Students may feel overwhelmed, so staff may need to reeducate the students later.	X					
Marketing campaign.	X					
Be relevant. Teach them the future, not just what we've learned.						
Look at how to streamline processes for students.	X					
Simplify processes and forms to expedite services.	X					
Understaffed.						
High school outreach counselor inform new students on new policies and existing students on support programs at ECC.	X					
Give structure to ease students' transition from high school to college. Encourage a sense of agency among students.	X					
Staff directory.	X					
At the time of applying, provide students with links to available services with descriptions and benefits to each service.	X					
Make a tutorial for how students can access ECC email using the mail app on their smartphone.	X					
Make an announcement in-class for available services.	X					
Promote services through student ambassadors.	X					
SSTRS- having this brochure information available to all staff so they can refer students to assistance.	X					
Supply resources.	X					
Informational table.	X					
Need the resources.	X					
Better support staff for the students.						
Guide students through online process.	X					

Appendix A

Ideas by Classified Staff

How STAFF can improve student success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Make sure students know and are educated about procedures and requirements for degrees or certificates.	x					
Update webpages and make them more user friendly.	x					
Improve website.	x					
Some of the online systems and website do not function.	x					
Handbook for business practices.	x					
Staff need to be better educated about programs. Periodic staff orientations.	x					
Train staff (60 out of 375 classified staff attended this workshop. Need to share this information with all staff).	x					
Staff need to be informed about what services are available in order to refer students out to the appropriate location.	x					
Staff orientation- ongoing training.	x					
Focus on customer service.			x			
Create an environment where it is welcoming for the students to ask questions.			x			
Increase communication to students.			x	x		
Ask the students questions about their goals.			x			
Allow time for mentorship between staff and students.			x			
Engage in social media.				x		

Appendix B

Ideas by Faculty

How STUDENTS can improve their own success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Students need accountability for the courses and quest for degrees.	x					
Understand the value of their own assets.	x					
Learn to sacrifice rather than be entitled.	x					
Have accountability.	x					
Self-awareness: what skill sets do they have, requisite knowledge to pass class, and sense of purpose.	x					
Learn how to learn, develop study skills, and learn how to self-assess.	x					
Learn to be students.	x					
Basic skills are the key.	x					
Basic success skills and strategies.	x					
The value of skills learned.	x					
Focus on the sequence of courses- speak with counselors	x					
Set goals.	x					
Understand relevance: how do skills in one course transfer to other places.	x					
Need a road map.	x					
Purpose in life.	x					
Students being informed on campus policies and educational policies.	x					
Go to orientations.	x					
More inter-school interaction information about the transition period.	x					
Utilize resources available.	x					
Be aware of resources.	x					
Increased awareness of options.	x					
Human development courses.	x					
Learn how to learn.	x					
Learn how to question and wonder.	x					
Be realistic about multiple roles: student, child, worker.	x					
Change perception.	x					
Increase hope.	x					
Personal responsibility.	x					

Appendix B

Ideas by Faculty

How STUDENTS can improve their own success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Spend time finding passion.	x					
See the value in degrees/education.	x					
Independence and responsibility of learning.	x					
Coordinate with high school and adult ed.	x					
Identify skills that will enhance their own employability (e.g. bilingual skills).	x					
Use support services such as counseling.	x		x			
Gain discipline.		x				
Increase focus.		x				
Build support network with other students with similar goals.			x			
Contact meaningful people repeatedly; more interaction.			x			
Student support classes.			x			
Broader offering of basic skills and accelerated remediation e.g. between high school and college.						

Appendix B

Ideas by Faculty

How FACULTY can improve student success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Point kids to resources, options, and care about their lives.	x		x			
Needs to include support services and administration faculty development- counselors, EOPS, program success.	x					
Include basic etiquette in syllabus.	x					
Communication between instructional faculty and counselors to better understand student goals.	x		x			
Standardize basic skills success requirements.	x		x			
Be approachable.			x			
Listen with an open heart, mind, and will.			x			
Telling students the truth.			x			
Instill a sense of wonder; transferable skills to other classes, workforce.			x			
Teach that it's okay to stretch and be uncomfortable.			x			
Don't shame kids who ask questions or for help.			x			
Discussion on consequences in class vs. real world.			x			
Portray reality of the world we live in.			x			
Real world problems.			x			
Help students and encourage group learning.				x		
Offer more support programs like FYE and SI. Identify things that work and institutionalize them, identify at-risk students and behavior.			x	x		
Support accelerated developmental programs.						
Take our own responsibility to stay abreast of field of expertise.						
Help administration understanding the support needed by faculty to implement student success.						
More collaboration.						
Change the calendar.						
Separate Summer and Fall registrations.						

Appendix C

Ideas by Managers

How STUDENTS can improve their own success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Declare a major after a semester or two.	x	x				
Clear picture/goal of expectations when they apply.	x	x				
Have peer mentor and peer tutors.	x		x			
Counselors in high schools/division.	x					
Career planning class.	x					
Get counseling during slower periods.	x					
Take accountability.	x					
Discipline/division orientations.	x					
Take remedial classes first.	x					
Learn college culture (orientation, bridge programs, HD8, HD5, and HD12).	x					
Knowledge of long-term payoff of AA and AS degrees.	x					
Accept differences in teaching styles and learn how to work with them.		x				
Make use of faculty hours.		x	x			
Get involved; get connected, cohorts.			x	x		
Stay engaged with instructors (office hours, emails, phone calls).			x			
Need some training for the parents too.						
Provide more information about placement testing and assessment. Implement multiple measure and available resources.						

Appendix C

Ideas by Managers

How FACULTY can improve student success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Encourage students to seek counseling during quieter periods.	x	x				
Systematic approach/specialized support structures. Success and the underlying factors of: finances, life struggles, and true emergencies.	x		x			
Encourage instructor to teach college culture in the classroom (assume students don't know instead of poor behavior).	x		x			
Host "major meetings" and mentoring of students.	x		x			
Tell students what their class fulfills.	x					
Degree audit knowledge.	x					
Course planner knowledge.	x					
Increase human development class offerings. Tailor to FT and PT students- they have different needs.	x					
All faculty should receive "on course" training (flex day- large meeting/workshops, division meetings).	x					
More TAG agreements; continue increasing articulation agreements.	x					
Clearly articulate expectations and responsibilities to students.	x					
Engage and connect with students.			x	x		
Start students with an A+ (100%) in class instead of an F (0%) and the student will work to keep the A (change mindset to positive experience).			x			
Be sensitive to student work life (be willing to work with student).			x			
Change culture- we are not going to let you fail.			x			
Involve faculty in identifying the underlying reasons students are not succeeding. Training, intervention, show the value of helping a student.			x			
Give students personal attention (call them, email them, encourage them).			x			
Faculty workshops are creating a buzz and greater awareness of student barriers. Counselor sign-ups.			x			
Consider students larger picture beyond discipline.						
Show that you care.			x			
Task team: for out-of-class/life issues (more than workshops and seminars). A response team/hotline/live chat.			x			
Understand what students had in high schools.			x			
Get faculty in something they like (i.e. clubs organizations, and let students influence instructor).				x	x	
Use technology in classrooms to engage students.				x		

Appendix C

Ideas by Managers

How FACULTY can improve student success...	Directed	Focused	Nurtured	Engaged	Connected	Valued
Make support services available for all students (evening hours for evening students).			x			
Support services (FYE/EOPS/Puente/FYE).			x			
EOPS use of early academic alert system should be the model for others.			x			
Classes need to be offered in an order that completes an ed plan; some sort of guarantee that the classes needed are available.						
Need to engage with high school teachers.						