Enhancing Student Success

LEATHA M. BENNETT, PH.D.
PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELING
ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY
Defining Student Success

- Many different definitions; we must clarify our focus which will determine our measures
- Student Success can refer to different elements*
  - Graduation from high school, enrollment in college, retention, graduation from college
  - Quality and content of learning and skills
  - Positive educational experiences
- All initiatives should be tied to the institution’s strategic plan (living document)

*Ewell & Wellman’s NPEC 2007 Report; NSSE Reports
Student Success/NSSE: Positive Outcomes

- Students who complete a Capstone Seminar/project that required a final product or performance gain more in desired areas
- Time on task continues to matter, in that students who devote more time to an inquiry activity benefit more
- Students who meet with their advisors at least twice a year are more satisfied with their college experience.
- Faculty guidance and feedback enrich learning, at least in terms of student self-reported data
Student Success/NSSE Data: Room for Change

- The number of hours full-time students spend studying per week has remained constant since 2001, i.e., 13-14 hours.
- First-generation and transfer students were much less likely than other students to participate in a high-impact activity.
- One in ten students never met with their advisor during the current academic year.
- More than half (54%) of all seniors never participated in a community-based project as part of their regular coursework.
- In their last year of college, half of all seniors did not write a paper or report longer than 20 pages; one in ten (9%) did not write a paper longer than 5 pages.
Factors Impacting Student Success

- Pre-college readiness (elementary and secondary preparation, social and cultural experiences, economic circumstances)
- Cannot alter the students' backgrounds but we can target the investments and deliberate interventions for the highest potential payoff
- Create a culture of shared academic responsibility across the University community
Categories of Students

- First-year students in regular courses
- First-year students in developmental courses
- Students who are first-generation
- Students who are married/families
- Students who are single parents
- Student-athletes
- Students who are Veterans
- Students who live in state
- Students who live out of state
- Returning adults
- Students with disabilities
- International students
- Commuter students
- Students on academic probation
- Students on both academic and financial aid probation
- Students with English as a Second Language
- Students who are non-African American
- Students who are from low-income families
- Students who are from middle-high income families
Proven Practices that Increase Student Success

- High expectations students will succeed
- Curricular and behavioral integration
- Pedagogies involving active learning and collaboration
- Frequent feedback
- Time on task
- Respect and engagement with diversity,
- Frequent contact with faculty
- Connections between academic and non-academic experiences
- Emphasis on the first year experience
Most Powerful Tool: Faculty

- Consensus of research concludes that faculty do make a difference in student learning
- Students report higher levels of engagement and learning at institutions where faculty members:
  - use active and collaborative learning techniques
  - engage students in experiences
  - emphasize higher-order cognitive activities in the classroom
  - interact with students regularly
  - challenge students academically
  - value enriching educational experiences
- Improve the professional skills of faculty
What Faculty Can Do To Increase Student Learning

- Spend time getting to know their students, recognizing that students have different skills and abilities and different ways of learning
- Communicate and embrace high expectations, *i.e.*, setting and expecting
- Engage in pedagogical practices that positively influence subject matter learning (*acquire and apply*)
- Know the academic support resources available to students and refer early
- Be cognizant of assessment practices, *i.e.*, assignments; applying Bloom’s Taxonomy, *kcaase*, when creating exams, etc.
- Providing appropriate and prompt feedback
Academic Advising

- Good advising makes the difference…minimum of TWO sessions or more per semester – NSSE data
- Must be deliberate and intentional to achieve effective, measurable results (*educational plan*); if well executed, students will embrace it
- Extremely important for students to connect to their major department/program and with their major adviser early in their first year, i.e., increases *connectedness* thus increases retention
- Early alert system must be an important part of the adviser’s role (*help keeps the student focused and serves as an immediate point of contact*)
Improving the Advising Experience

- Two fifths of 9,000+ students/27 institutions (37% of first-year students, 44% of seniors)...advisor did not inform them of academic support services, such as tutoring
- Two fifths of students (35% first-year students, 42% seniors)...advisor did not provide information about various educational options such as study abroad or national and international exchange programs
- Seniors rated their advisors significantly lower than first year students in the quality of career support and information about educational support services

Source: NSSE
Students’ Support System/Perceived Academic Preparation

- Students were most likely to talk with their mother about personal issues, academic performance and family matters; Academic performance was the most common discussion topic with fathers.
- Three quarters of students frequently followed the advice of a parent or guardian.
- Students whose parents intervened on their behalf reported higher levels of support regardless of parents’ educational level.
- Students with high perceived academic preparation are more likely to intend to graduate from their current institution compared to those students with perceived low academic preparation.
Consensus of data shows that students should participate in *at least two high impact activities* during their undergraduate program

1. One in the first year (well-executed activity)
2. One in the final year related to the academic major

(Curricular and co-curricular experiences must be perceived as a coherent whole. Emphasis should be placed on the continuity of the students’ education.)
### Benchmark High-Impact Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Later/Senior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• First-Year Seminars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Service Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internships and other field experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culminating experience <em>(Capstone Seminar or Project)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Beneficial Experiences

- Writing for the student newspaper
- Working in an office or program on campus,
- Participating in an honors program
- Being a leader for a student organization or campus committee
- Playing intercollegiate athletics to name a few.
  (Usually limited to a small group of students)
AAMU: Mentoring Program
2008-2012

- Purposeful activity paired first year students with peer/faculty/staff/alumni mentor
- Well structured, well-executed; qualified staff
- Measurable results—maintained comprehensive data
- Students who participated had higher GPAs and reported a higher satisfaction with their first-year experience per annual survey results
- Participating students returned for their second year at a higher rate than their cohorts
- Students who participated in the program had higher GPAs than students with similar characteristics who did not participate
AAMU: ASAP
2008 - 2012

- Purposeful activity: Academic Success Assistance Program (ASAP) for Conditionally Admitted students, *i.e.*, over 50% of entering first-year students were being placed in developmental courses
- Well-structured, well-executed; highly qualified staff
- Measurable results—maintained comprehensive data
- Students participated in structured, small-group workshop, *How to Graduate in Four Years*, providing foundational skills
- Students reported high levels of satisfaction with ASAP and their own success, *i.e.*, completing 24 credit hours with GPA over 2.0 in the first year; most attended summer school to become official Sophomores in subsequent year
AAMU: Accredited Tutorial/SI Program
2008 - 2012

- Purposeful tutorial activity that served undergraduate students; self- and instructor-referral; was open to all undergraduates
- Well-structured, well-executed; highly qualified staff
- Measurable results-maintained comprehensive data
- Collaborated closely with all faculty in all departments throughout each academic year
- Classroom visits...crucial to Program’s success
- Students who attended tutorial sessions had higher GPAs than students with similar characteristics who did not use the tutorial services
References/Resources

1. Factors that Enhance Student Success.  

2. Classroom Teaching.  


4. NPEC Symposium on Student Success.  
http://nces.ed.gov/npec/papers.asp

5. Enhancing Student Success and Retention:  
Enhancing Student Success

- Question & Answer

Thank you!