Ohio Inspiring Faculty Practices in Student Success

A Call for Discussion and Action
Ohio Inspiring Faculty Practices in Student Success

A Paper for Discussion

Coordinated by Capital University and the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education

with

Ohio Postsecondary Educators

The Writers

Jody Fournier, Capital University

John N. Gardner, Gardner Institute

Andrea M. Karkowski, Capital University

Matthew L. Partin, Bowling Green State University

Margaret Puckett, North Central State College

Stephanie G. Wilson, Capital University

The Editors

Betsy O. Barefoot, Gardner Institute

Vicki McGillin, Gardner Institute

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Ohio Inspiring Faculty Practices in Student Success: A Paper for Discussion

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The Workshop: ‘It’s Time: An Agenda for Increasing Faculty Participation in Ohio’s Efforts to Increase Student Success’

Chairs: Jody Fournier, Provost, Capital University & Vicki McGillin, Associate Vice President, Gardner Institute

Conference and Workshop Administrative Coordinator: Deanna Wagner

Steering Committee:

Shelly Amstutz-Szalay, Dean of Student Educational Services, Muskingum University
Andy Dohanos, Associate Professor of Communication Arts & Sciences, Baldwin Wallace University
Karen Keptner, Assistant Professor of Health Sciences, Cleveland State University
Lisa Henderson, Associate Provost, Baldwin Wallace University
Megan McInnis, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Galen College of Nursing
Manuel Martinez, Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ohio Dominican University
Catherine Montalto, Associate Professor of Consumer Sciences & Director of First Year Experience, The Ohio State University

Panelists:

Jon Duraj, Senior Associate Dean for Student Success & Retention, Wittenberg University
Lori Long, Professor of Management, Baldwin Wallace University
Megan McInnis, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Galen College of Nursing
Catherine Montalto, Associate Professor of Consumer Sciences & Director of First Year Experience, The Ohio State University
Karen Sirum, Associate Professor of Biology, Bowling Green State University

Facilitators:

Shelly Amstutz-Szalay, Dean of Student Educational Services, Muskingum University
Lisa Green, Professor of Psychology, Baldwin Wallace University
Megan McInnis, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Galen College of Nursing
Catherine Montalto, Associate Professor of Consumer Sciences & Director of First Year Experience, The Ohio State University
Matt Partin, Teaching Professor/ Marine Lab Curator, Bowling Green State University
Amit Shukla, Professor of Mechanical Engineering & Chair, Miami University
Laura White, QEP Director, Galen College of Nursing
Stephanie Wilson, Professor of Psychology & Associate Provost for Experiential Education, Capital University
Jacob Popovich, Professor of Finance/Program Coordinator for Student Financial Wellness, Columbus State Community College
Chapter 1: Introduction. How This Paper Came To Be

In 2019, Capital University of Ohio partnered with the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education to offer for the first time an Ohio-focused conference on “Inspiring Practices for Student Success,” drawing upon the rich Ohio resources of institutions, faculty, and other higher educational professionals and their inspiring work to increase student success. Over 250 people attended this first conference where over 40 papers, panels, and speakers shared exemplary work promoting student success across all institutional types. Speakers represented all institutional roles and focused on success efforts in various institutional areas (academic, student life, financial, etc.). Attendees were unanimously interested in offering a second such conference, which was held in February 2020.

One unique element of the second conference was the offering of a pre-conference workshop on February 25, 2020, convened as a special forum to focus on the role of Ohio faculty in student success. Forum participants working in small groups explored the many ways that faculty support student success. Attendees engaged in facilitated discussions on the roles and responsibilities of individual faculty members, of departments and institutions in supporting those faculty, and the larger higher education eco-system (disciplinary bodies, state regulators, accreditors, alumni, community partnerships, etc.) in supporting institutions of higher education, their departments, and the individual faculty who are trying to make a difference in promoting student success. Participants were told that it was the hope of conference organizers to use this forum as a basis for a subsequent white paper to focus on this topic, to provide a complimentary copy of the paper to all participants and a wider audience of Ohio college and university educators, and to introduce the paper for live discussion in a virtual
forum. This paper is the result of that vision and the contributions of a select group of volunteers from that forum in 2020. A team of 35 faculty and institutional leaders served as facilitators, note-takers, and provocateurs in these discussions. After the conference, a smaller group of eight writers and editors committed to writing about the highlights of these deliberations, the current evidence from the field, and the exemplars that were submitted by conference attendees in response to a call for Ohio “best practices.” The result of this commitment is this paper offered for your consideration, discussion, and action.

What Is Student Success?

In order to identify policies and practices in the state of Ohio that will increase student success, it is important to define the concept. The definition of student success has evolved over time in response to changes in student demographics and recognition of the fact that students, faculty, administrators, government entities, funding agencies, accreditors, employers, graduate programs, alumni, and others have different ideas about what it means for students to be successful. Student success has traditionally been defined and measured by first-to-second-year retention and persistence through to degree completion. These variables that institutions report to their accrediting agencies and the U. S. Department of Education are used as measures of the success of an institution. However, the variables alone do not adequately capture the full range of student educational and personal goals.

Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot (2005) offer this eight-part definition of success for first-year students:

1. Developing academic and intellectual competence
2. Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships
3. Developing an identity
4. Developing a career choice
5. Maintaining personal health and wellness
6. Exploring faith and spirituality
7. Developing multicultural awareness
8. Developing civic responsibility

This definition transcends racial, ethnic, gender, and age diversity of first-year students. It describes their basic commonalities.

Amelia Parnell, vice president for research and policy at NASPA, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in Higher Education, proposed that successful students know when and how to adapt to or attempt to change their environment; ... understand their own needs and the needs of others and know how to balance competing individual and community priorities; ... know how to manage resources, both those for which they are individually responsible and those they share responsibility for with others; ... realize their unique contributions to the world and are prepared to leverage their abilities to improve the conditions around them. (2018)

These expanded definitions of student success are consistent with the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) Defining Student Success Data Initiative, supported by the Lumina Foundation. The Higher Learning Commission is the accreditor for Ohio’s post-secondary sector.

In a series of position papers, the HLC makes the recommendation to “substitute the current phrase, ‘student retention, persistence, and completion’ with ‘educational intent, progression, completion, and post-completion outcomes’” (2019, pg. 2). An expanded definition of student
success includes additional academic variables (learning outcomes attainment and GPA/final grades) along with student satisfaction; career placement; development of civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes; a commitment to lifelong learning; personal growth; and attainment of developmental goals (e.g., Tinto, 2017; Kuh et al., 2006). These student-centered variables reflect the broad range of students’ educational and personal goals, which may or may not align with their retention, persistence, and completion, particularly within the timelines used to measure these variables.

Ensuring student success for the diverse population of students who attend our higher education institutions is an issue of justice and equity. Many of the practices that have been shown to increase student success (e.g., engagement in high-impact practices) are particularly impactful for students from underrepresented groups, including racial-minority, low-income, and first-generation students (Kuh, 2008). Our understanding of what student success means and our efforts to ensure student success must be inclusive and equitable in order to fulfill the missions of our colleges and universities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had, and continues to have, a significant impact both on how we define student success and our ability to support student attainment of various student success measures. As classes moved to online or hybrid formats to reduce the number of students on campus, student support services that traditionally were delivered in person (e.g., mental health services, academic support services, disability services) also moved to remote delivery. The extent to which students accessed these support services in a remote format and the effectiveness of remote delivery of these services remain open questions. These questions
are most specifically directed at the delivery of such services to our students from under-
resourced backgrounds.

Just as the health and financial impacts of the pandemic are disproportionately negative for members of racial and ethnic minority groups, the same is true for educational impact. A poll by Gallup and the Lumina Foundation assessed how changes in course delivery format resulting from COVID-19 restrictions affected the fall 2020 student experience and how students believe COVID-19 will impact their ability to continue to pursue their degree. Although 76% of students pursuing a bachelor’s degree and 72% of students pursuing an associate degree rated their fall 2020 educational experiences as “excellent” or “very good,” 33% of bachelors-degree students and 38% of associate-degree students reported that they had considered withdrawing from classes in the last six months. Close to 50% of both bachelors- and associate-degree students report that it is “likely” or “very likely” that COVID-19 will negatively affect their ability to complete their degree. This perceived negative impact is higher for Black students (56% and 60%) and Hispanic/LatinX students (56% and 60%) than white students (44% and 52%) seeking bachelors and associates degrees, respectively.

The pandemic has highlighted once again the need to identify and address how policies, procedures, and outside influences like a pandemic disproportionately impact certain subpopulations of students. These differential impacts are also important to acknowledge and address in terms of access to education.

References


Chapter 2: Understanding the Role of Faculty in Student Success

Although there are many factors contributing to college student success, the role of faculty is absolutely crucial. Kim et al. (2010) describe three broad categories of variables influencing student success:

1. Academic achievement and aptitude (e.g., grade point average; SAT or ACT)
2. Circumstance variables (e.g., socio-economic status; ethnicity; other demographics; sense of adjustment, belonging, and engagement)
3. Personal variables (e.g., attitudes, self-perceptions, behaviors, problem solving, values)

Whether college student success is defined in terms of course performance, grade point average, retention, progress toward a degree, becoming competitive in the job market, or acquiring valued life skills, faculty play a large role in whether students meet or exceed the assigned objectives.

Prior Research

There is a deep body of literature examining college student success. In a comprehensive review of the literature on this subject, Kinzie and Kuh (2017) list several of the major contributions to this work (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1993; Braxton, 2000; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Kuh, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1994; Tinto, 2005; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). They also mention a set of seven papers on defining student success that were commissioned by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative
After organizing and assimilating this body of literature, they list nine common propositions about student success that most stakeholder groups share. Four of them are directly related to faculty (Kinzie & Kuh, 2017).

1. Completion is an important component of student success, but equally important is engaging in educational experiences associated with acquiring proficiencies that equip students for life and work.

2. The proverbial village is needed to help a student succeed. One's family, home community, K-12 teachers, as well as everyone on the college campus influence success in college, particularly in classroom experiences and challenging but supportive relations with faculty, staff, and peers.

3. Certain kinds of educational practices—when done well—seem to be related to desired outcomes including high expectations, a challenging coherent first-year experience, prompt feedback, experiences with and respect for diversity, active and applied learning, and student-faculty interaction, among others.

4. An institution's total learning environment—its context and culture—matter for how student success is defined, addressed, and achieved (p.22).

What specifically can faculty do to contribute to college student success?

Faculty efforts to promote college student success can be divided into student factors and instructor factors. Although student factors are aspects of success that come from within the student, they may be promoted or developed by actions taken by faculty. Student factors include the following:
1. Achievement goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988)
2. Motivation (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988)
4. Learning environment (Black & Deci, 2000; Dorman, Aldridge, & Fraser, 2006; Fraser, 1998; Harper, 2012).

One component of the learning environment that is particularly important is whether students find the material they are studying personally relevant (Partin & Haney, 2012).

Instructor factors include attitudes and behaviors that encourage student success such as the following:

1. Empathy (Meyers, Rowell, Wells, & Smith, 2019)
2. Seeking professional development opportunities (Kinzie & Kuh, 2017)
3. Best practices in pedagogy (Hutchings, Jankowski, & Baker, 2018; McCallum, Schultz, Sellke, & Spartz, 2015)

**Theoretical Basis for Recommendations**

There are a number of important theories about the ways individuals learn. These theories can then become the basis for recommendations for improved classroom practice.

*Learning Theory and Constructivism.* Learning theory explains how students understand, process, integrate, and retain knowledge. Prior experience, environmental factors, cognitive ability, and emotions play a large part in a student’s world view or understanding of the world in which they live. World view influences the way knowledge and skills are acquired, changed,
and retained. There are generally three contemporary theories of learning teachers use to guide their teaching practices: Cognitivism, Transformative Theory, and Constructivism.

Cognitivism stems from Gestalt psychology and focuses on the learner and memory. In Gestalt theory, psychologists believe that humans learn by making sense of the relationships between new and old information. The human mind views entities as part of a bigger picture—components of more complex systems (Cherry, 2019). Cognitive theories of learning focus on the learner instead of the environment and have two underlying assumptions: (a) the memory system of the brain is a structured and operational processor of information; (b) prior knowledge plays a key role in learning (Smith, 2018). Because each individual has a unique view of the world, humans create their own learning experiences and uniquely decipher information in ways that may differ from others.

Transformative learning theory explains how people adjust and reinterpret meaning (Taylor, 2008) and is related to the mental process of creating change in a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). A frame of reference defines the way humans view the world, and emotions play a large part in creating that view (Illeris, 2016). Adults typically reject information that conflicts with their views and understanding of the world. A frame of reference is made up of habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind (such as mindset or persistence) are very difficult to change; however, points of view may change over time as a result of reflection, criticism, or feedback (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning occurs when a student critically ponders evidence in support of competing understandings and points of view (Mezirow, 1997).

Constructivism is a concept often mentioned when discussing science classroom-learning environments. In fact, much of the current science education research and literature
has focused on constructivism. Constructivism is a philosophy about how people learn and specifically addresses how knowledge is acquired and constructed. More specifically, “according to the constructivist view, meaningful learning is a cognitive process in which individuals make sense of the world in relation to the knowledge they already have constructed, and this sense-making process involves active negotiation and consensus building” (Fraser, 1998, p. 13). While science educators may agree that constructivism is ideally a more desirable method of instruction, many will debate exactly how knowledge is built.

The two primary descriptions of constructivism derive from Piaget’s (1954) theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism focuses on internal cognitive processes (Piaget, 1954) and an individual’s attempts to make sense of the world (Glasersfeld, 1995), whereas social constructivism stresses the significance of society, culture, and language (Lemke, 2001). Knowledge is socially constructed and acquired in specific social and cultural contexts. Despite their differences, both branches of constructivist thought stress the importance of experiential learning and acknowledge that motivation is crucial for the construction of knowledge and the progression of conceptual change.

The learning literature contains many testimonials and research studies supporting the idea that meaningful learning is tied to experience (Angelo, 1990; Bodner, 1986; Bybee, 1993; Caprio, 1994; Lawson, Rissing, & Faeth, 1990; Lawson, 1992; Lawson, Baker, Didonato, Verdi, & Johnson, 1993; Leonard, 1989a; Leonard, 1989; Lord, 1994; Lorsbach & Tobin, 1995; Roth, 1994; Seymour, 1995). The National Research Council’s 1999 Report, How People Learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999), aligned with the constructivist view through the authors’ recommendation that STEM faculty employ inquiry-based learning (i.e., doing real scientific
investigations in which practicing scientists define problems, formulate and test hypotheses, and draw conclusions). Inquiry-based learning has many non-science classroom applications as well.

Currently there are many models of constructivist learning (Glasson & Lalik, 1993; Hewson et al., 1999; Nussbaum & Novick, 1982). However, Palmer (2005) examined the extent to which motivational strategies have been considered in the design of existing constructivist-informed teaching models and found that existing models were inadequate in explicitly integrating motivation. Palmer also found that some models, in fact, conflict with the currently accepted views of motivation. Thus, new models integrating motivation and constructivism are needed. In a 2012 manuscript by Bowling Green State University faculty, Partin and Haney, such a model is proposed, and they discuss implications for further research in this area (Partin & Haney, 2012).

Locus of Control, Growth Mindset, and Control of Learning Beliefs.

These three theories relate to students’ beliefs about themselves and their abilities to learn, grow, and change. The first model, Locus of Control, was developed in 1954 by Julian B. Rotter (1954), then a psychology professor at The Ohio State University. Locus of control refers to a person’s belief about how much control they, or other circumstances, have over outcomes in their life. Locus of control can be internal or external. Individuals with a strong internal locus of control tend to believe that incidents in their life stem predominantly from their own actions. For example, excellent performance on an exam is a result of their own effort or ability (e.g., they studied a lot, or they are highly intelligent). Conversely, poor performance on an exam is the result of their own inadequate preparation. In contrast, those with a strong external locus
of control may be inclined to praise or blame external factors for their exam grade, such as the “terrible” teacher or the exam that was too hard or too confusing.

An important theoretical construct about the power of mindset was developed by Carol Dweck and explored in her 2006 book, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Dweck explained that mindsets can be described along a continuum between fixed mindsets and growth mindsets. Students (or faculty) with a fixed mindset believe that physical or mental abilities are predominantly constant (or fixed) and view the cause of failure as resulting from the lack of essential proficiencies. They may give up on a difficult task quickly because they believe they lack the required skills for success. They believe that they have a certain amount of intelligence, and it cannot change. Their goal may become to appear smart at all costs and to not look dumb. They tend to avoid difficult problems and view a “wrong answer” as a failure.

Students with a growth mindset believe that they can acquire or improve any skill or ability if they invest enough time or effort into learning how to do it. They tend to choose more difficult problems to work on if given the choice and see “wrong answers” as an opportunity to learn. They tend to persist much longer at a task than students with a fixed mindset and tend to be more successful.

Control of Learning Beliefs is a construct derived from a theory called Self-Regulated Learning (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). This theory states that learning is guided by metacognition (thinking about one’s thinking); strategic action (planning, monitoring, and assessing advancement in skill level); and motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, self-efficacy, task value). The theory argues that self-regulated learners are aware of their academic strengths and weaknesses. They have a selection of strategies they use to overcome typical academic
tasks. They most likely believe intelligence can be gained and it is not fixed. They also tend to attribute their success or failures to things within their control. In short, self-regulated learners believe that academic achievement will result from opportunities to take on difficult assignments, practice new skills, acquire a profound understanding of a topic, and put effort into learning. They are successful because they control their learning environment. They apply this control by aligning their actions toward their learning goals and regulating their progress.

Although locus of control, growth mindset, and self-regulated learning are consistent with Kim et al.’s (2010) description of personal variables, faculty can influence each of these variables by discussing these factors with students, providing opportunities for students to have “small victories” early in a class, and continually providing feedback that emphasizes a student’s learning (i.e., growth) and their ability to directly impact their own success.

Sense of Community/Belonging, according to the definition proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), is "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). According to Vincent Tinto (1975), distinguished Syracuse University Professor of Sociology and Education, in order for students to persist in college, they must become socially and academically integrated into the institution and the associated communities found within.

In fact, according to Schreiner (2013), developing a sense of community among college students has been shown to be a strong predictor of a student’s success and it is the best way to help all students “thrive” on campus. She defines “thriving” as being “fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally in the college experience” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4). While
success is typically measured as academic performance or graduation, Schreiner (2010) looks far beyond that single measure and states the following:

Students who are thriving are engaged in the learning process, invest effort to reach important educational goals, manage their time and commitments effectively, connect in healthy ways to other people, are optimistic about their future and positive about their present choices, and are committed to making a meaningful difference in the world around them. (p. 41)

Faculty can contribute to students’ sense of belonging by engaging with them both inside and outside of the classroom, explicitly telling them that they belong, and providing the support they need to be successful. In particular, the use of active learning pedagogies that require students to work together to solve problems and answer questions promotes both a sense of academic belonging and social belonging among students (Tinto, 2017). According to Tinto and Engstrom (2008), participating in shared social and academic experiences increases student learning and both the desire to persist and likelihood of doing so. Tinto also emphasizes that engagement alone is not enough to lead to a sense of belonging. Belonging derives from students’ daily interactions with students, faculty, staff, and administrators who regularly convey the message that the student is an important and valued member of the social and learning community at the institution.

**Undergraduate Research and Belonging**

One example of a faculty approach that can make a difference in a new student’s sense of identity and belonging is undergraduate research. Beginning students who participate with
faculty or graduate students in a meaningful research project discover an academic identity that gives them a greater likelihood of persistence and success.

At some Ohio colleges and universities, undergraduate students are encouraged to work alongside graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, and professors in various STEM labs. Undergraduates may volunteer their time, earn academic credit for experiential learning, or receive a stipend. Sometimes the work is tedious, however the rewards can be invaluable. Ideally, the undergraduate will find a mentor in the lab who will teach the student how to become a productive scientist, illuminate the cultural nuances of academia, and explain theory, philosophy, and concepts. Participating in a graduate lab as an undergraduate also allows for socialization to occur because the undergraduate has opportunities to meet other students, scientists, and researchers working in the field. If undergraduates feel accepted into a lab, they may gain a very powerful sense of community or belonging.

Undergraduate research offers opportunities for independent research, experience in the field of study, and professional mentoring. There is evidence suggesting that undergraduate research benefits students by preparing them to become scientists and contributing to their retention in STEM fields (Graham et al., 2013). Furthermore, in some instances the results of an undergraduate research project may be published in a peer-reviewed journal with the student as a coauthor.

Linn et al. (2015) believe the benefits of undergraduate research have been poorly studied and that positive outcomes may be due primarily to mentoring. They state that mentoring is essential for undergraduates considering careers in the sciences, and one of the main benefits of undergraduate research may be undergraduates’ close proximity to faculty,
postdoctoral researchers, and other members of the lab who help mentor the students. Mentors can serve as guides who orient the undergraduates and help them make connections among their experiences. They may also serve as role models, provide professional socialization, and facilitate the undergraduate’s professional identity as a scientist.

Linn et al. (2015) back up their claims by citing several studies including one indicating that students who feel they are supported by faculty are more likely to attend graduate school (Eagan et al., 2013) and a study indicating higher rates of attrition among students with inadequate interactions with mentors (Thiry et al., 2011). They also cite a study indicating that a student’s confidence in science proficiency and their likelihood to pursue a research career correlates with the number of mentor meetings (Taraban & Logue, 2012).

Undergraduate Research Experiences (UREs) and Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) have recently become very popular among STEM disciplines in colleges and universities in the United States. UREs are usually limited to few students and are competitive. Students who apply for UREs are typically highly interested in research, high achieving, and motivated. Students work closely with faculty, post-doctoral researchers, or graduate students during a summer, semester, year, or longer. On the other hand, CUREs are embedded in a course as part of the curriculum and typically only last for one term. However, they may span two or more courses. CUREs may put a strain on the professor teaching the course because they need to oversee many students simultaneously. However, embedding undergraduate research experiences into courses increases the likelihood that all students, including those from underrepresented populations, will have the opportunity to engage in research with a faculty member.
In self-report surveys, students typically rate their UREs and CUREs highly. However, in a 2011 paper by Thiry et al., the authors explain that continuous participation in a URE of three or more semesters is required for a student to build identity as a scientist. They also explain that short-term or patchy URE involvement could have negative outcomes. It seems that many students need at least a year to gain an adequate appreciation of concepts and techniques used in a particular lab. Linn and colleagues (2015) explain that during the first year of a URE, students spend most of their time setting up and conducting an experiment. That leaves little or no time devoted to understanding theory, philosophy, or concepts. Furthermore, students may not be adequately trained to interpret their results.

The level of student understanding of underlying theories and concepts may be higher in CUREs than in UREs (Thiry et al., 2012). CUREs typically incorporate lectures and readings with the study of a particular research question. The added formal instruction may allow students to make connections with prior knowledge, spend more time studying the topic, and gives them more opportunities to ask questions. However, without adequate contact time between the student and professor, the student may not view the professor as a mentor.

**Conclusions**

In the United States, professors are regarded as high caliber professional educators who are, ironically, rarely taught how to teach or to promote student success. There is a large body of literature describing various aspects of college student success, but faculty are seldom exposed to that information unless they happen to seek it out for themselves. Faculty may contribute to their students' success by first educating themselves on best practices in pedagogy in their discipline, followed by engaging in regular professional development to improve and expand on
their teaching skill set. Ideally, these efforts will be rewarded through the tenure and promotion process. In addition, faculty need to show a reasonable amount of empathy toward their students in order to build trust and to promote safe and productive learning environments.

Faculty need to be taught how to design ideal learning environments, promote personal relevance, increase student motivation, and instill metacognitive self-regulation among their students. They should give their students a high level of commitment and, in return, expect a high level of commitment from students. Pedagogy should include ways to promote students’ control of learning beliefs, autonomy, and a very strong sense of community or belonging.

If students feel that they belong to a community of learners within a classroom and have some control over what is learned in the class and how they will learn it, they will put much more effort into their own success. Undergraduate students should be engaged in the types of research relevant to their discipline, and faculty should serve as meaningful mentors. It is the wonder of discovery that drove many faculty into their current professional positions, and by serving as true mentors they may have a tremendous and lifelong impact on their students.

While learning-science researchers know these findings are important to student success and how to use them in teaching, this information is infrequently passed on to faculty. Furthermore, faculty time is limited with ever-increasing demands for scholarship, service, and direct classroom teaching with little time to develop as a teacher-scholar. As a result, faculty devote most of their time and mental energy to activities that are rewarded by the administration. When departmental and institutional frameworks for what is recognized and rewarded prioritize teaching and learning (or student success) in the work of the faculty,
appropriate levels of professional development, feedback, and support are often provided.

Unfortunately, undergraduate teaching is typically not one of those institutionally recognized activities at an institution focused on research and on graduate programs.

As explored in Chapter 3, until the day when professors are formally taught how to teach in graduate school while designing their courses for the first time and are supported in their ongoing professional development as faculty, they will need to teach themselves how to teach by reading relevant books and articles, asking colleagues for advice, and seeking professional development opportunities on their own.

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Chapter 3. Departmental and Institutional Support for Enhancing the Role of Faculty in Student Success

Faculty work occurs in the context of each institution’s structure and culture. But is the academic workspace characterized by faculty-driven leadership and decision making? How invested are faculty in the governance system? How do these other faculty roles influence what faculty can focus on, value, and accomplish? How do institutions provide the time, space, encouragement, rewards, and other resources needed for faculty to engage in student success initiatives? Institutional support must come from all levels of the college or university, regardless of organizational structure.

In this section, we cover how institutional and departmental climate affects student success, the importance of institutional and departmental responses to changing student demographics and building multicultural institutions, how institutions and departments support faculty-student mentoring relationships, and how department chairs and deans can shape the ways that faculty can work toward student success.

How Institutional Climate Affects Student Success

The college or university climate affects how faculty work and how they relate to students, and thus the institutional climate can facilitate or hinder faculty efforts in working with students. The climate of a college or university includes the academic quality and focus, the sense of community that promotes active engagement with all students and particularly students from underrepresented groups, the safety and wellbeing of students, and the institutional environment (i.e., institutional policies and procedures as well as organizational and structural qualities of the campus) (Wang & Degol, 2016). For example, if student completion of a
baccalaureate degree is one measure of student success, then we can examine whether the institutional environment at community colleges successfully supports the transition from a two-year to a four-year degree in order to achieve the goal of ultimate baccalaureate degree attainment.

Using the results of the *Beginning Postsecondary Study: 2003-2009*, LaSota and Zumeta (2016) identified college-level characteristics that predict whether students will transfer from a community college to a baccalaureate degree program. Key characteristics are academic program focus (which is under the control of the institution) and transfer-out rate. Articulation agreements, particularly those at the state level, also increased the likelihood that students would transfer to a four-year institution. In addition, LaSota and Zumeta (2016) found that participation in academic advising had a significant impact on transfer to a four-year institution. They categorized participation in academic advising as a student characteristic, and yet institutions establish academic advising culture and norms (i.e., the sense of community) and thus influence whether and to what degree students participate in academic advising.

**Institutional Responses to Changing Student Demographics**

College student populations have changed over the last decades. Ohio is a very competitive college environment, being one of the top 10 states for per capita rate of existing higher education institutions. However, within Ohio, several organizations (e.g., National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017; Ohio Development Services Agency, 2018; Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, 2016) have projected a steep decline in the number of high school graduates from 2010 to 2030. At the national level, these demographic shifts are now reflected in college and university student populations.
Approximately 21% of Ohio’s population identify as minority, representing a 38% increase since the year 2000 (https://www.development.ohio.gov/files/research/P7001.pdf). Among the Ohio 23 community colleges, 24 university regional campuses, and 13 university campuses that comprise the University System of Ohio Campuses, approximately 31% of undergraduate students identify as minority and 84% of undergraduate students are from Ohio (https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/hei/Diversity%20Fall%202019_0.pdf). Similarly, 21.9% of domestic students enrolled in the 68 private colleges and universities in Ohio identify as minority (private communication, Tori Rehr, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, 2021).

Student outcomes and particularly degree completion for different populations vary greatly; for example, McCallen and Johnson (2019) cite national data indicating that nearly 90% of first-generation students do not earn their bachelor’s degree. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (https://nces.ed.gov/) demonstrate a direct relationship between family income and bachelor’s degree completion, with nearly 45% of students in the lowest income bracket completing a bachelor’s degree and 78% of students in the highest income bracket completing a bachelor’s degree. In addition, more students arrive at colleges and universities needing behavioral or medical accommodations. For example, Cox and colleagues (2017) report that less than 40% of college students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder will graduate.

Despite these grim realities, much evidence indicates that when faculty make small changes to their courses in content, pedagogy, and expectations to promote the success of students from underrepresented groups, all students in the class benefit. A clear example of this can be found in the practice of increasing the transparency of course assignments to help
first-generation students (the intended audience). When transparency is enhanced, all students in the class benefit (Winkelmes, 2013). For faculty to make these changes, institutions and departments must provide both professional development so that faculty stay current on changing demographics and effective teaching practices, both overall and in their disciplines, as well as a safe environment for faculty to experiment with their teaching. Savvy institutions ensure that faculty have access to disaggregated data about the changing demographic and personal characteristics of students; in addition, these institutions host campus discussions about the implications of the data and provide faculty training for how to effectively work with different populations of students – to the benefit of all students. As Sandoval and colleagues (2018) remind us, sharing student data with faculty empowers faculty to intervene early so that students are successful in their classes. More fundamentally, such information helps identify which students most need such interventions.

As student populations and (we hope) faculty ranks continue to diversify, many colleges and universities need to develop into multicultural organizations that overtly and explicitly value diversity – in doing so, these institutions will build the sense of community that facilitates the success of students and faculty. As suggested by Grapin and Pereiras (2019), there are several ways that institutions can “embrace diverse worldviews, methodologies, and perspectives”:

Employ culturally responsive teaching and research paradigms, use culturally responsive evaluations of students and faculty, provide mentorship and professional support, reduce cultural bias in the curriculum and co-curricular activities, encourage multicultural education, offer diversity training, promote collaborative and cooperative
pedagogies, host intergroup dialogues, and enact culturally sensitive approaches to managing and responding to conflict. (p. 309)

We recommend that faculty play a primary role in shaping and changing the policies and procedures that govern student progress at the institution and examine how their institutions’ policies and procedures may disenfranchise first-generation or racially minoritized populations.

**Early Alert Systems**

To further help faculty target their student success efforts to the students who most need them, many colleges and universities are now adopting early alert systems, such as Beacon, the system in use at Capital University in Columbus, OH. These systems allow any faculty member or employee (e.g., coach, work-study supervisor) to identify and report student problems, such as class attendance, test performance, housing or food insecurity, behavioral health concerns, or difficulty accessing needed academic resources. Student success personnel and academic advisors monitor the system and can step in to help the student connect with campus and/or community resources to resolve the issue. Training and support for faculty and other employees is needed to help them develop a practice of noticing and reporting student concerns and design their courses so that early really means “early and often” assessments.

At Capital University faculty have been trained to use the early-alert system (Beacon) and to respond to reports in the system. To facilitate reporting, all course shells in Capital University’s learning management system have a link to Beacon (visible only to the course instructor) so that it is easy and convenient for faculty to submit a report.

**Institutional Support for Faculty-Student Mentoring Relationships**
Faculty-student mentoring relationships help to promote student success, particularly among vulnerable populations, such as first-generation college students (McCallen & Johnson, 2019). For example, Hurd, Tan, and Loeb (2016) revealed that for students from underrepresented demographic groups at primarily white Institutions, the presence of a faculty mentor resulted in higher GPAs and fewer symptoms of depression. Institutions can foster these mentoring relationships by ensuring that faculty have the time to devote to mentoring, offering professional development workshops that help faculty build the skills needed to be effective mentors, and valuing mentoring in the faculty reward system (e.g., promotion and tenure process, merit pay increases, teaching load reduction, etc.).

Institutions can foster faculty-student mentoring via undergraduate research experiences, as we have explained in our previous chapter, which are popular among faculty and transcend institutional type. Much evidence points to the value of undergraduate research experiences for student success particularly for students from underrepresented or vulnerable groups. As one example, Collins, Grineski, and Shenberger (2017) demonstrated how students from a Hispanic-serving institution attained better outcomes when they participated in undergraduate research experiences. Specifically, undergraduate-research students experienced gains in knowledge and skills, reported better overall satisfaction, and attained higher grade point averages.

One way that Capital University promotes faculty-student mentoring via undergraduate research is by including mentored undergraduate research projects through to professional dissemination of the students’ work as part of the faculty promotion and tenure rubrics. Having this requirement for promotion and tenure demonstrates to junior faculty that the institution
values such relationships and establishes the expectation that student success (which in this case is the professional dissemination of student scholarship or research) is also faculty success – that is, junior faculty are unable to move up through faculty ranks if they have not had their students professionally disseminate their scholarship or research. Faculty will do that which is rewarded and recognized by their institutions and colleagues. College and university administrators and faculty governance systems are encouraged to take an unflinching look at their own reward systems and work toward aligning the reward system with what the institution values.

**Department Chairs and Deans Shape Faculty Student Success Work**

What are some other ways that institutions can help faculty engage in student success efforts? Academic department chairs or deans can assist faculty by providing formative feedback to faculty about their mentoring activities during their annual reviews; guiding curriculum reform in the department that leads to a deeper understanding of the skills students need to master in lower-level classes so that they can be successful in upper level classes; distributing work across the department based on faculty skills and interests (with care taken to ensure that overall workload is equitably distributed); managing class sizes for faculty; and promoting, valuing, and making time for faculty development for their colleagues in the department. Those who supervise academic department chairs or deans can facilitate these activities during the annual leadership review process by working collaboratively to develop an annual plan for departmental progress on these activities.

In summary, faculty cannot work in isolation in their efforts to advance student success. Colleges and universities can, indeed must, establish practices, as described above, that make it
possible for individual faculty to be effective in every student interaction. Colleges and universities must be committed to a campus culture of student success that values and cherishes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Administrators need to arm faculty with current disaggregated data about their students so that faculty can adjust their teaching to meet the needs, strengths, and expectations of their students. They also must ensure that faculty have support for their mentoring efforts both programmatically and within the faculty reward system, as well as supportive feedback that will help faculty grow into their mentoring roles. In addition, administrators, particularly at the department level, play a key role in managing faculty workload and focus and in promoting discussion and collaboration about curriculum and student outcomes.

References


Chapter 4. Eco-Systemic Support for the Faculty Role in Student Success: How Community Stakeholders Can Work with Faculty to Support Student Success

Beyond the walls (physical or virtual) of the university or college, many systems and organizations can partner with faculty to support, facilitate, and promote student success initiatives. Governmental agencies and legislators, accreditors and disciplinary societies, and business and industry all have contact with college and university faculty and a stake in higher education outcomes. What is needed, however, is direction about how to enlist these organizations in student success initiatives. This chapter provides examples of how these organizations can work with faculty to promote college student success across the nation.

What role do state and federal governments play in student success? What role can they play? The state and federal governments work with the non-profit, non-governmental organizations that accredit colleges and universities and provide funding for student tuition in the form of grants and loans, etc. Thus, it is important to understand how governments define student success. “State and federal policymakers typically use the term student success to mean access to affordable postsecondary education, metrics of degree completion in a reasonable time frame, and post-secondary employment and earnings” (Kinzie & Kuh, 2017, p. 19). We note that “access” to higher education is a minimum precondition for student success – that is, students cannot succeed in higher education without access. However, access is not sufficient to yield student success. The point here is that a focus on student success goes beyond a focus on student access. It can be said then that “access” institutions perform differently than “success” institutions and that the focus of this paper is on the role of faculty in institutions that strive to do more than simply provide access to post-secondary education.
State government initiatives have a direct effect on the colleges and universities in their states. Some states have moved to a unified state college model, for example, the Florida College System, the University System of Georgia (which involves all post-secondary public non-technical institutions), and the California State System (which includes the three-tier system of 110 community colleges, 24 California State Universities, and 11 University of California institutions).

The Momentum Year in the University of Georgia System strongly focuses on the academic components of student success in the first year. The Momentum Year includes academic focus areas (i.e., meta-majors) that allow students who are uncertain about their major to explore related potential majors; program maps to guide students in course selection that leads to degree completion; and the promotion of an academic mindset so that students can build resilience and overcome obstacles. The Momentum Year included all campuses except the University of Georgia-Athens in the non-profit John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education Gateways to Completion (G2C) initiative for redesign of high failure-rate gateway courses. Within Ohio, Capital University and The Ohio State University at Newark also participate in G2C.

A unified state college model allows for consistent collaboration and leadership across the colleges within the system. Even the states without a unified state public college system have initiatives in place to support a student success agenda in its colleges. As one example, Ohio provided support and promoted promising practices in the area of student success to all of the 23 community colleges via the state-sponsored Student Success Leadership Institute, which provided two-day workshops each term to ten-member teams from each college. These
workshops shared updated data, research on student success, and promising practices from successful colleges within the state. This process eliminated the need for every college to “reinvent the wheel” in creating success policies for its students. And the Ohio State Department of Higher Education sponsored a gratis state-wide convening for all public and private two and four-year colleges in February of 2020 at Capital University. This convening was designed to examine how to enhance cross-sector institutional partnerships to enhance transfer student success.

Kinzie and Kuh (2017) list five drivers of student success. The first is “the development of a comprehensive, integrated approach to student success... that requires the identification of and elimination of scattershot, isolated, duplicative, or boutique programs for student success and bringing together stakeholders and efforts to ensure collaboration and wide coverage...” (p. 23). Individual parts of this driver include “data-informed evaluations... of programs and services... [and] more interconnected policies and programs, [and] fewer isolated initiatives” (p. 24). It is this type of effort that both the state higher education systems like California and the collaborative state systems like Ohio are seeking to fulfill.

Most student success initiatives require resource investments, and many of these investments are modest in cost; some of these investments are without any direct cost because they are a matter of mission intentionality, attention, attitudes, priority and aspirations for increased student success. One of the problems that colleges and universities face, of course, is a decrease in state funding. Further complicating availability of resources is the role of competition in state funding of public higher education, especially in states like Ohio which have some form of performance-based funding. For example, Ohio’s 23 community
colleges all compete for funding from an established pot of money. Funds no longer go to these community colleges based on headcount; instead, lawmakers use a complex formula that includes emphasis on students achieving certain milestones such as completing developmental classes, enrollment in 12 credit hours or more including college level English and/or math and graduating or transferring to a four-year college or university. Colleges today are being held accountable for providing a quality product to their students; the key measure of that quality is student success, and the state government rewards this via additional funding.

At the national level, the federal government through grants also plays an integral part in student success. North Central State College in Mansfield, Ohio received a five-year Title III grant to create a robust advising system, hire additional academic advisers, and train advisers and faculty on promising advising practices. Many colleges also have received a grant to fund a federal TRIO program, which includes Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, Veterans Upward Bound, The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Training Grants. TRIO programs are designed help individuals who are low-income, first-generation college students, and/or have disabilities progress through the academic pipeline through to completion of a bachelor's degree. Admittedly, the most important form of federal support for higher education is financial aid for students in both public and private colleges, provided since 1965 through Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Thus, the federal government is responsible for literally making higher education possible for hundreds of thousands of Ohio students.

In the midst of the 2020 pandemic and financial crisis, Dickler (2020) reported that families and college-bound students experienced significant difficulties in paying for higher
education. For example, “40% of parents have tapped their child’s college fund to help cover expenses due to economic fallout from the pandemic” (Dickler, 2020). With these rising fears of additional financial strain, there has been a corresponding decrease (by 2.8%) in the number of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) applicants. This has been attributed to students and families deciding that it is not financially feasible for the student to attend college at this time. In addition, with many colleges and universities holding classes remotely, and some students requiring remote instruction due to their own health concerns or the health concerns of people with whom they live, students have also needed additional technology (e.g., upgraded computers or laptops, cameras, headsets, better internet-provider services) to attend class – all of which add to students’ financial strain.

Thus, financial strain is directly linked to both completing post-secondary education and student success. Since the adoption of the Higher Education Act of 1965, state and federal governments have focused on equity issues, including access to post-secondary education for diverse populations of students. Agencies like the National College Access Network work with federal and state governments to create policies to assist under-resourced populations of students in accessing and completing post-secondary education. To promote degree completion, some sources of financial aid require that students take no more than 150% of the courses needed for graduation, which means that students commit to a major early in their college experience; this keeps them on a clear, straight path to completion without taking multiple additional courses. Financial aid sources further promote student success by requiring students to complete and pass two thirds of their classes, which is called “satisfactory academic progress” or SAP, in order to remain eligible for continued federal financial aid support.
Accreditors and Disciplinary Societies

Accreditors work to ensure that colleges and universities provide the quality of education that they claim to provide. We note that the structure for accrediting has been changed in recent years whereby the six “regional accreditors,” like the Higher Learning Commission, may no longer be regional. All six formerly regional accreditors can potentially evolve to become national accreditors.

The impact of accreditors on student success often manifests through institutional documentation and accountability reporting on student learning outcomes and other student success data, particularly disaggregated retention and graduation rates. Is it possible to determine whether this approach affects student success? It is demonstrable that the influence of accrediting bodies has increased, particularly in recent years, as they have made more institutions accountable for quality assurance and for documenting student success. For example, the Higher Learning Commission’s AQIP Process and now the Quality Initiative apply to all HLC institutions. A natural focus for such quality initiatives is on some aspect of increasing student success. It is important for faculty to understand the importance of the reaffirmation process because without regional accreditation the institution is not eligible to receive Title IV financial aid for its students, making it practically impossible to stay in operation.

Biwas (2006) documents the steps that regional accreditors in the United States have taken to support and promote student success. These actions include refocusing accreditation standards to prioritize outcomes over inputs and address student needs, which might vary across schools and across populations within schools. Accreditation standards can highlight the diversity of learners within institutions and broaden the need to demonstrate effective learning
and student outcomes beyond courses and curricula to student development and support services, such as university libraries, tutoring and career centers, academic advising, and co-curricular programming.

Despite these efforts by accreditors, Flores (2018) reveals that more work is needed by accrediting bodies in support of student success. Specifically, Flores recommends the collection and analysis of common student outcomes data across accreditors that includes equity indicators in data collection, provides clear performance expectations that connect accreditation standards with annual data collection, holds low-performing colleges accountable for their performance, and implements a federal student-level data system. The intention here is to have ongoing documentation, analysis, conversation, and reflection about student success that drives colleges and universities to keep student success at the forefront of what they are doing and to make reaffirmation of accreditation contingent upon meeting quality standards related to student success. It is especially important that Ohio institutions use the data obtained from accreditation-driven assessment measures as bases for decision making to drive educational improvements. The Higher Learning Commission’s Student Success Academy Experience builds upon these recommendations using the following framework for institutional reflection:

- Data (who the institution’s students are and what the institution knows about them); Initiatives, or what the institution does to support student success;
- Infrastructure (how institutional processes, policies and procedures affect student success); and
- Engagement, or who is engaged in student success efforts and how student success is promoted and recognized.
As Biwas stated, “Continuous improvement [in support of student success] requires ongoing dialogue between accreditors and institutions, a conversation that is very different from a model of high-stakes, periodic interactions” (p. 20).

Disciplinary accreditors and societies can have a narrower and specifically focused impact on student success initiatives, albeit to a smaller audience—academic disciplines. Disciplinary accreditors, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Accreditation Council for Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), and ABET, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, can promote student success initiatives through the disciplinary accreditation standards that they set.

Many accrediting societies have realized the importance of changing from documenting inputs to evaluating student outcomes. These accrediting bodies can further promote student success by ensuring that the student outcomes data and required documentation include components consistent with the definitions of student success provided in this manuscript. Peer reviewers also should be trained to seek evidence of student success across all demographic groups in the programs they accredit. Disciplinary accreditors can also offer effective guidance on gateway courses into the discipline by ensuring that these courses are offered in ways that afford equitable access to the disciplines for all students. Left unaddressed in terms of attention for improvement, these courses often result in high D, W, F, I grades that are positively associated with voluntary decisions by students to drop out of college, revealing gross inequities for students as a function of race, ethnicity, income, first-generation, and Pell status.
Disciplinary societies influence what is recognized/rewarded in the role of faculty both by what they, themselves, recognize and reward. Through their imprimatur these bodies determine what their faculty members deem as legitimate, substantive, and academically credible approaches to research and teaching in the discipline. Examples are initiatives, such as the American Historical Association’s History Gateways Courses project funded by the Mellon Foundation and delivered in partnership with the Gardner Institute, where the disciplinary societies fully underscore support for institutional course transformation to enhance gateway success. Many disciplinary societies (e.g., American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, American Historical Association) now include teaching-focused divisions and sessions at their conventions. Thus, these organizations are in an excellent position to promote student success initiatives directly to faculty. Disciplinary societies that do not currently have teaching-focused conferences or conference sessions are encouraged to explore how their discipline can benefit from advancing teaching excellence as well as how the disciplinary society can initiate and sustain conversations about pedagogy. Disciplinary societies that already have a focus on teaching and learning can refine that focus to ensure that faculty stay current on ways to foster student success, retention, and persistence.

Disciplinary societies can help faculty understand who their students are and how they have changed through the years because of their exposure to different cultural phenomena. For the disciplinary societies that have grant programs, some of the grant opportunities can be dedicated to support the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL), specifically in the context
of student success, as it applies to that discipline. Disciplinary accreditors may have more credibility with faculty in their disciplines than do regional accreditors. In addition, regional disciplinary groups, such as the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Ohio PKAL (Project Kaleidoscope), and the College English Association of Ohio support and advance these efforts.

**Support from Graduate Faculty Preparation Programs**

Many graduate programs have learned the value of preparing their students to become college professors. For example, The Ohio State University's Preparing Future Faculty program pairs advanced graduate students with faculty at smaller colleges so that the graduate students can develop a deeper understanding of careers in academia. These faculty-preparation programs for graduate students are the ideal conduit through which the next generation of faculty can become invested in student success. Such programs often include curricula on engaged pedagogies; these curricula can be refined to emphasize how different pedagogies promote student success, retention, persistence, and sense of belonging.

It is important for graduate students who will enter the professoriate to understand the incoming generations of students and the factors that have shaped their lives. Even though there might be less than a decade difference in age between undergraduate and advanced graduate students, the world has changed drastically in the last few years, and those changes have had an impact on the skills, abilities, knowledge, and goals that entering first-year students bring with them. Graduate programs that prepare future faculty can help graduate students to develop the habits of mind that allow them to continually ask, who are our students today, and how can I best serve them?
College and university teaching and learning centers are well positioned to promote student-success initiatives to faculty and help faculty incorporate activities that cultivate student success into their daily interactions with students. Beyond offering workshops on teaching and learning in the classroom, these centers can help faculty take a holistic approach to student success and recognize that their interactions with students outside the classroom are just as important as (and at times more important than) what happens in the classroom. For example, at institutions where faculty participate in academic advising or teaching/learning centers can hold workshops that promote an advising-as-teaching model (Lowenstein, 2005). In the model that Lowenstein promotes, the advising process becomes one of meaning-making for students and helps them reflect on their choices and develop effective self-advocacy skills, all of which contribute to student success. In Ohio, Franklin University has made major investments in mandatory faculty development practices, which include faculty development workshops and courses, as well as course-specific coaching.

Alumni are in a unique position to promote student success. Alumni, especially recent graduates, both understand some of what current students might be experiencing and demonstrate for current students what is possible. Alumni networks can connect students to resources, internships, field sites, and employment opportunities. Alumni can also serve as mentors for students—particularly students from underserved groups. Beyond direct connections with current students, alumni also are ideal for helping university faculty, staff, and administrators understand the long-term impact of the student experience on their campus. Recall that our definition of student success goes beyond graduation; alumni across several cohorts can illuminate what academic programs are working and what needs to be changed.
Alumni are well-suited to help the institution keep current with the changing work environment and the future of work. Alumni also serve on institutional governing boards (as well as local, state, and national legislatures) where they can influence the long-term strategic directions of the institution so that student success is at the forefront. Faculty are well-advised to help cultivate alumni who will give back to the institution in these ways as well as encourage their own children to attend their alma mater.

**Businesses and Organizations**

A 2019 research article by Farruggia, Solomon, Back, and Coupet provides a model of partnerships between universities and nonprofit organizations to help students be successful in their transition to college. Specifically, the coaching programs identified by Farruggia et al. (2019) help to ensure that students “follow through on college enrollment and return to the university for their second semester, their second year, and onwards” (p. 3). The transition coaches assist with building important self-regulatory skills such as how students can effectively study, set goals, and manage their time. In addition, transition coaches help students navigate the higher education system by teaching them how to advocate for themselves, how to complete forms, and how to find and use campus resources.

One way that private companies can promote student success is to work directly with colleges and universities to establish individual development account (IDA) initiatives (Kezar, 2011). These IDAs provide funding for students from low-income families to support the costs of attending college. Too often, student financial stress has both direct (e.g., in ability to afford tuition and textbooks) and indirect (e.g., food insecurity, which leads to poor nutrition that
affects learning) impacts on student success. Through this financial assistance, IDAs can have a
direct, local impact on students’ ability to attend and succeed in college.

In addition to providing instrumental support via funding for low-income students, private companies and firms, both for-profit and not-for-profit, can also offer authentic learning experiences (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). Through collaborations between private companies and universities, faculty can have students work on issues that connect class content with the needs of the companies. These authentic learning experiences help students build several skills that are linked to student success, such as intrinsic motivation by working on “real-world” problems, a sense of purpose, and employability skills that will transfer to success in internships and careers. These learning experiences can employ many different pedagogies. For example, using a problem-based learning approach, students can help a company solve an existing problem. When the company is a small local business, it offers students the opportunity to engage in student-centered learning and provides the opportunity for students to see the immediate impact of the small business on the local community. Through service-learning and community-engaged learning projects, students can help small local businesses plan and carry out projects and meet the needs of the community.

Beyond providing instrumental assistance for individual students and projects for college classes, the business and professional community can offer a wealth of information to faculty. Close connections between business and faculty will help faculty stay current with the changing needs of the workforce. The business community is well-served by prompting faculty to repeatedly ask, how can I change my courses and curriculum to better meet workforce needs?
Private and Governmental Funding Agencies

Private and governmental agencies that provide grant funding also have a role in promoting student success. Many such agencies are refocusing some of their grant programs to specifically fund student-success projects. These projects can include career grants to support a scholar-teacher, undergraduate experience grants that target equity and access for all undergraduate students, programs that provide opportunities for students from underserved groups, and scale-up grants to institutionalize small student success projects. Each of these ideas can be the focus of a grant program or can be included in a larger grant that faculty submit, with additional funding available for the integration of student-success initiatives into the faculty project.

Several major foundations already have robust student-success programs, for example, Lumina Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Ascendium Education Group, ECMC Foundation, Walmart, Sloan Foundation, Teagle Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The United States Department of Education’s Title III and Title V grants as part of the Higher Education Act fund many student-success initiatives. Other major governmental sources of funding include the TRIO Programs as described earlier.

In summary, there are many ways for faculty to partner with individuals and organizations outside of the institution to promote student success. These partnerships can provide rich sources of encouragement, imprimatur, and funding for faculty-led student-success initiatives, mentoring for students, and engagement opportunities to ensure that students gain valuable experience using what they have learned in college. Colleges and universities are encouraged to examine their own practices relative to what is presented here...
and develop pathways to adopt practices that help to advance their commitment to student success.

References


Chapter 5. Conclusion

This concluding section will include recommendations that emerged from the original convening in February of 2020 on “The Role of Ohio Faculty in Student Success” and those from the chapter authors and editors of this paper. In addition, we have included a sampling of what we termed “exemplars” drawn from specific Ohio institutions for illustration purposes.

It was the plan from the original organization of this convening that the thinking of the faculty involved in the in-person meeting on the topic of the role of faculty in student success would be enshrined in a paper for subsequent gratis dissemination to all post-secondary institutions in the state of Ohio. This paper has been produced by a team of volunteer Ohio faculty members and their colleagues at Capital University and the Gardner Institute. This team then produced and invited all interested Ohio faculty and other college and university educators interested in enhancing student success to attend a gratis, virtual event featuring a panel of contributors to this paper and facilitated by representatives of Capital University and the Gardner Institute. It is the hope that this paper will be a stimulus for individual campus-based discussion and actions on the current role of faculty in student success and what could/should it be.

While no subsequent Ohio convenings on this topic have been planned as yet, that certainly is one of a number of possibilities for potential follow-up actions. Still another course of further development of this focus could be seeking and obtaining multiple forms of investment from private and corporate philanthropies to deepen and extend this work. One thing is for certain: the need for faculty to have a role in student success will be greater than
ever, and it would be highly advantageous to be more intentional about precisely what this role should be.

**Overall Underlying Assumptions and Recommendations for Advancing the Role of Faculty in Student Success**

It would be helpful to ensure that an institution’s definition of student success goes beyond access, retention, and graduation (institutional perspective) to include variables that predict student persistence (e.g., students’ sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and relevance of the curriculum; Tinto, 2017). Our understanding of student success must also expand to include how the acquisition of knowledge and skills allows students to achieve their career, civic, and personal goals.

Ideally, each Ohio institution should have its own definition for planning, management, and accountability purposes of what constitutes student success, coupled with some kind of intentional plan to accomplish such outcomes. Such a definition needs to be consistent with and an organic outgrowth and extension of the institutional mission statement that is required for institutions to be accredited. Because institutions must be regionally accredited and hence must engage in at least one quality improvement initiative every ten years, it would behoove all of us who want to see student success advance to intentionally integrate student-success efforts into reaffirmation of accreditation processes. Definitions of and aspirations for student success should also be explicitly embedded into institutional strategic plans.

It is important for faculty to own their leadership responsibilities for student success. Simultaneously, however, they should recognize that this goal must be pursued in concert with
student affairs and student success colleagues. While faculty engagement is necessary, it can never be in and of itself sufficient.

**Individual Recommendations From this Paper’s Faculty Contributors:**

- Regularly seek out and learn best practices in pedagogy, both overall and in your discipline.
- Demonstrate reasonable empathy for your students.
- Determine how to make course material personally relevant for each student.
- Allow students to have some control over what is learned and how they will learn it (support autonomy).
- Promote metacognitive self-regulation.
- Promote motivation (intrinsic goal orientation/motivation, self-efficacy, task value).
- Teach in a manner that will instill a sense of belonging (with other students and with faculty and staff in a shared enterprise) such as the employment of active learning pedagogies.

**o EXEMPLAR 1:** The Ohio State University, through the Drake Institute, provides professional development to all Ohio faculty to improve instructional strategies for student success and engage adult learners, students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and students of color. As of April 2021, approximately 700 faculty in Ohio had signed up for training.

**o EXEMPLAR 2:** “Incorporating Inclusive Pedagogy for a Classroom of Opportunity,” a program at Franklin University, is a multifaceted approach to ensuring student success through promoting inclusive teaching practices. Two
unique components to promoting inclusive pedagogy include the following: 1) A faculty development course on inclusive pedagogy; 2) An inclusive pedagogy instructional coaching protocol. First, the course, "Incorporating Inclusive Pedagogy for a Classroom of Opportunity" helps faculty develop the knowledge and skills needed to engage and support students who possess diverse characteristics and behaviors that are embedded within systems of structural inequity.

- Seek partnerships across departments (and across all divisions of the institution) to better support student success.
  - EXEMPLAR 3: A faculty member in the Occupational Therapy program at Cleveland State University developed a credit-bearing course that works within an Integrated Model of Support for At-Risk Students. Students are referred to the course through CARE Management and Disability Services and the referrals typically follow a hospitalization or full/partial medical withdrawal the previous semester. Since students are many times referred to CARE through the institution’s early-alert system, it facilitates a continuum of care that is unique and can follow a student from initial observation of crises and back to campus. The semester-long remote course utilizes a strength-based occupational therapy framework to assist students in developing critical personal management skills. The course assures student participation since it is assigned a grade, allows the student to practice skills in real time as they progress through the semester as
they learn skills in the course and provides them with elective credits towards their degree.

- EXEMPLAR 4: The Ohio State University has developed learning communities for at-risk students. Faculty are part of the learning community and participate in not only academic activities with these students, but social and cultural activities as well.

- Apply aspects of universal design to address the learning needs of all students.

- Introduce your students to research or scholarship as appropriate for your discipline and mentor them in that learning.

- Support student participation in high-impact practices (HIPs) (e.g., mentored research, short-term study away, community engaged learning).

  - EXEMPLAR 5: Wittenberg University provides scholarships to first-year students to match them with faculty for mentoring in research during their first year on campus.

  - EXEMPLAR 6: The Ohio State University has a Second-year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) in which faculty and students develop meaningful academic and intellectual engagement. Students are matched with select faculty members who guide them through an exploration of education-enhancing experiences, interact with students one-on-one and in groups, and provide advice and mentoring that will help students in their transition from student to globally minded professional.
EXEMPLAR 7: Capital University’s application of an Interdisciplinary Immersion Model pulled together unique student skill sets to create a distinct product. This course required group collaboration between students with a broad range of skill sets and backgrounds to achieve a common goal—to tell a story important to the larger university community through a documentary. In addition to providing students with hands-on experience, the documentary opened the way for multiple collaborations with university librarians, archivists, the alumni office, the provost’s office, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and local historical societies.

- Advocate for changing departmental, college-level and/or university level structures to better support student success, including changing the balance of faculty work to better address student success

EXEMPLAR 8: Cleveland State University has instituted a peer mentoring component into its First-Year Experience program and has noted an increase in faculty willing to teach this FYE course since the peer mentors facilitate relationship-building with students.

- Be responsible for knowing the resources available to support student success and to make active referrals, when appropriate.

**Departmental/Institutional Level Recommendations:**

- Commit to a campus culture that values and cherishes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Examine and refine internal campus practices so that they demonstrate a commitment to student success.
EXEMPLAR 9: The Ohio State University’s Office of Student Academic Success partnered with the Office of Distance Education and E-Learning and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion to create the Student Academic Success Research (SASR) Grants Program, which provides seed funding to support faculty research on OSU student access, academic excellence, retention, and graduation, with a particular focus on underserved students.

EXEMPLAR 10: Cuyahoga Community College engages faculty in student success through a wide range of efforts and initiatives that come from varying offices and areas college wide. The College is especially concerned with transfer student success and providing faculty development to meet the needs of students.

- Explicitly recognize and reward in the promotion and tenure review process faculty activities that promote student success (e.g., advising, use of active-learning pedagogies, support for student participation in high-impact practices). A very appropriate step that could be taken at all Ohio campuses wanting to increase the role of faculty in student success would be an examination of the current rewards structures for faculty to be engaged with student success with an eye towards creating a new system that would provide both more rewards and more accountability for faculty.

- Re-examine faculty loads to ensure faculty can actively participate in student success initiatives (HIPs, pedagogical reform, etc.).

- Provide ongoing professional development for all levels of faculty around pedagogy and, specifically, active learning pedagogies that promote student success by developing self-efficacy and a sense of belonging.
EXEMPLAR 11: Chamberlain University College of Nursing provides a range of professional development opportunities for its nursing faculty that is monitored and updated on a regular basis to assure that the nursing faculty are equipped to provide active learning to students to develop students into competent and confident nurses.

EXEMPLAR 12: The Ohio State University provides course development grants that recognize time and effort that is needed to develop high-impact courses. The University has offered these grants for service-learning courses and will begin offering them to faculty to support research courses.

EXEMPLAR 13: The Ohio State University at Newark has two experiential courses for students in which faculty can develop mentoring relationships with students, especially for those students who are traditionally underrepresented.

EXEMPLAR 14: Faculty at Ohio Wesleyan are able to teach a first-year course and/or a course for transfer students that introduces students to liberal arts and resources on campus, among other activities.

EXEMPLAR 15: Baldwin Wallace University implemented an early-alert system that identifies students who are having difficulty or are at risk for course non-completion. During the fourth week of each semester, faculty are reminded to post an alert for any student they observe having difficulty in their course. This early alert starts a process of pairing students with faculty who then engage with these students to help them identify their challenges and work towards solutions.
• Implement early-alert systems to identify students who are demonstrating signs that they are struggling academically and/or socially through integrative systems to monitor student performance.
  
  o EXEMPLAR 16: The pharmacy school at Cedarville University has instituted an early-alert system that monitors grades weekly and have set thresholds to flag students who are struggling and automatically refer them for assistance.
  
  o EXEMPLAR 17: Cleveland State University uses Starfish as an early-alert system. Faculty can communicate student concerns directly to the students' advisors through the Starfish system. Faculty are encouraged to use this system at any time that students have excessive absences, a drop in performance, or other problems noted by faculty that might need attention.
  
  o EXEMPLAR 18: Miami University uses CIVITAS to identify students at risk and uses nudges, mid-term grades, and proactive advising to support all students and especially those at risk of dropping out.
  
  o EXEMPLAR 19: Galen College of Nursing provides training, workload compensation and a framework for faculty advisors to work with first-term students to make sure students have the support they need as they acclimate to the college.

• Many schools have a dedicated team of success coaches or integrated delivery of support through Student Affairs.
  
  o EXEMPLAR 20: As was referenced in Exemplar # 3 above, Cleveland State University uses a CARE (Community Assessment Response & Evaluation)
team. CARE is a holistic campus service that provides case management services to students within the Division of Student Affairs to facilitate student success in any form. Referrals are received from faculty and staff. Students can also self-refer if they are dealing with physical health or illness, mental health concerns, interpersonal relationship issues, grief, concerns related to finances, or housing or food insecurity.

- EXEMPLAR 21: Ohio University’s My Ohio Success Network.
- EXEMPLAR 22: Mercy College’s Student Success Centers.
- EXEMPLAR 23: University of Dayton’s Student Success Teams.

- Promote discussion and collaboration about curriculum and student outcomes.

  - EXEMPLAR 24: Capital University instituted Signature Learning, which is the new name for its general education curriculum. This restructuring focuses on program and student learning goals as opposed to individual learner outcomes to facilitate student understanding of the curriculum as a whole to improve student success.

- Arm faculty with current data about their students so that faculty can adjust their teaching to meet the needs, strengths, and expectations of their students. It is particularly important that disaggregated data are provided by race, gender, ethnicity, Pell eligibility and first-generation status. Only by seeing student outcomes at this level can the institution’s real story about student success be made apparent. Aggregated data such as retention or completion rates are not nearly nuanced enough, especially to suggest directions for interventions to improve success.
o EXEMPLAR 25: At Kent State University, departments have been provided data about student retention and have been tasked to develop plans to reduce DFWI rates when they are over 25%.

o EXEMPLAR 26: Cedarville University uses data to monitor their students and to make decisions about programming and support needs. As a response to an identified need among their large non-white population of students, they implemented an identification system to target students are more likely to struggle, partner them with faculty for one-on-one support, and use data to make decisions about what is working and what is not working for student success.

o EXEMPLAR 27: Miami University uses CIVITAS to identify students who are in need of additional support.

• Provide support for faculty mentoring efforts, both programmatically and within the faculty reward system, and ensure supportive feedback that will help faculty grow into their mentoring roles.

o EXEMPLAR 28: As mentioned in Exemplar 13, The Ohio State University at Newark has two experiential courses for students where faculty can develop mentoring relationships with students, especially for students who are underrepresented.

Eco-Systemic Level Recommendations:
Seek new community partnerships that can provide funding for faculty-led student success initiatives, mentoring for students, and engagement opportunities to ensure that students gain valuable experience using what they have learned in college.

- EXEMPLAR 29: Capital University has a client-based immersion program that was developed by its public relations department. This program pairs students with community partners to provide support to clients that allows students to gain rich experience working with professionals in the “real” world.

- EXEMPLAR 30: The Sullivan-Deckard program at Cleveland State University provides support to youth aging out of foster care who are enrolled in post-secondary studies. The program is built on Seven Core Program Components:
  1. Financial aid for tuition, books, fees, and instructional resources
  2. Year-round housing with an approved meal plan
  3. Academic coaching and institutional support services
  4. On-campus employment with career advising or mentoring
  5. Campus and community engagement with a wide range of volunteers pledged to provide additional student support
  6. Peer assistance, mentoring, and support
  7. Structured development planning for academic breaks and transitioning periods through university life and after graduation.

Examine current partnerships and build on those to support student success

- EXEMPLAR 31: The Ohio Department of Higher Education has developed the Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways in collaboration with over 300 faculty to
facilitate an easy transition between Ohio’s Community Colleges and Universities.

○ EXEMPLAR 32: The Ohio Department of Higher Education has worked with both two- and four-year institutions on learning objectives that address diversity, equity, and inclusion to assure that students who are transferring between institutions are recognized for efforts in these areas.

● Accreditors (both disciplinary and national) should highlight the diversity of learners within institutions and broaden the expectation that institutions demonstrate student outcomes beyond courses and curricula.

● Accreditors (both disciplinary and national) should create common student outcomes.

● Peer reviewers for disciplinary accreditors should seek evidence of student success across all demographic groups in the programs.

● Disciplinary societies should all create a section on teaching and learning and promote excellence in these areas across their society.

○ EXAMPLAR 33: Ohio-Project Kaleidoscope’s vision is to create a regional community of practice to promote and enhance learner-centered STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education through evidenced-based best practices, faculty development, and community engagement and education.

Additional Questions for Consideration and Discussion.

Those of us who participated in the creation of this paper are well aware that what matters most is what occurs at the institutional level. However, what happens at the campus level can and should be influenced to a certain extent by what is happening in the larger state context--
particularly one which is so competitive as is Ohio—combined with the current demographics of declining high school-age graduates coupled with the additional combined negative impact of declining numbers of international students and students dropping or stopping out because of the current pandemic conditions. For all these reasons, a focus on student success is more important than ever.

But, like war, student success is far too important to be left only to the generals. In the case of Ohio all the 500 or so of us who attended the 2019 and 2020 Ohio Inspiring Practices for Student Success Conferences clearly saw that, as in the rest of American higher education, many Ohio Institutions now have full-time professional staff/administrators/units/divisions designated as being for “student success.” It is unknown to us how many of these relatively new types of both professional, administrative, and academic units were created with any significant input from faculty. It is also unknown as to what extent these new approaches assumed any participation by faculty. We would argue that even before the pandemic, it was the faculty who had more direct contact with students than any other category of college or university educators.

Now with the increasing number of credits being generated through virtual instruction, that ratio of faculty to students over other types of educators is even greater, for better or worse. And we would argue that ultimate responsibility for the academic outcomes for students rests with the faculty in keeping with all the traditions of the academy and the standards of the accrediting bodies. All of these factors suggest to us then that there is no better time to be having robust discussions on Ohio campuses about the roles of faculty in student success. And thus, we find ourselves left with these questions:
1. Just what are those roles for faculty in student success?

2. Are they sufficient to meet the needs of our current students and the other constituencies we serve?

3. Are chief academic officers adequately engaged and supportive?

4. Are faculty taking sufficient and appropriate leadership initiatives to explore these questions?

5. Are faculty legislative/senate bodies engaged in pursuing related questions?

6. Is this question of the proper and needed roles of faculty in student success one that should also be examined by governing boards?

7. And how can and should faculty be meaningfully exploring these questions with our student affairs/student success colleagues, given that we are all part of an academic community dedicated to furthering student success.

It is our hope that Ohio faculty from all higher education sectors will continue to pursue these questions in ways that they deem appropriate and as will be encouraged by their own campus communities. And we hope that we have made a constructive contribution herein for seeding this needed attention, dialogue, and actions. Additional contributions from an expanded cohort of Ohio faculty and their other campuses colleagues are needed and would be welcomed.

Reference