Insights from Guided Pathways Webinar:
"Leading Holistic Student Support Reform"

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Who can use this: administrators, instructional and counseling faculty, classified staff

PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES:

- Learn promising practices and strategies from community colleges to design and implement equity-focused and student-centered Student Success Teams on campus.

- Get a preview of "The Student Success Teams: An Implementation Guide for Community Colleges" from Phase Two Advisory.

Keywords: student success teams, student needs, holistic student support, equity, unconditional belonging, design, implementation, continuous improvement, student-centered

Designing Student Success Teams to Provide a Student-Centered Ecosystem

STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT STUDENT SUCCESS TEAMS ON CAMPUS

Students' life circumstances and educational experiences beyond the classroom play a significant role in their ability to be successful learners. Increasingly, college professionals are reimagining their institutions to support students' many and interconnected needs (e.g., child care, housing, food, mental and physical health). These kinds of student-centered services help us shift the burden away from students to seek out support during a time of crisis and toward the institution to develop a proactive process to support students in a timely manner to achieve their educational and career dreams. These services are particularly effective when used to build on existing equity approaches to support students who have historically faced the greatest number of systemic barriers.

College professionals can offer a range of resources that are integrated into a system of academic, social and personal supports to ensure that students are served proactively and equitably. From the student perspective, that will create an ecosystem in which they will be able to easily navigate and access support, all within the context of their college.

One growing approach to creating a student-centered support ecosystem is the **Student Success Team,** defined as a cross-divisional team of college professionals who collaboratively engage in cohort case management to support groups of students from entry to completion, with a focus on equitable outcomes. This brief provides highlights from Phase Two Advisory's "Student Success Teams: An Implementation Guide for Community Colleges," which was developed based on learnings from community colleges in California and across the nation.

> " You probably don't even know how much it means to us students. To have someone who cares. … It's like a lifeline when everything else feels like chaos. I think, oh, they say I can do it. So I think, maybe I can.
>
> **— Student**

> " No one knows everything but together we know a lot.
>
> **— Adapted from Margaret Wheatley and The National Equity Project**

STRATEGIES

1. Consider types of cohort-based Student Success Teams

Based on conversations with 80 practitioners at nine colleges, Phase Two Advisors identified the following three types of team designs that focus on supporting groups of students:

- **Back-end coordinating** helps to streamline and improve programming and policies. Students do not always know there is a team working behind the scenes on their behalf, and the team's impact is felt in smoother policies, stronger programming, and engaging activities and workshops.

- **Networked support** creates an easily identifiable network of people whom students can go to for a variety of supports and builds communication channels across team members to streamline and integrate their activities. Team members are listed in a student's portal. Students receive targeted messaging from their team members. When students reach out, the team member they contact has information to guide the conversation.

- **Networked single point of contact** means a single point of contact has access to behind-the-scenes data and resources. Students have a single go-to person for questions and concerns, and that person reaches out regularly, helping to connect students to others as necessary with a warm handoff and following up to ensure support is received and issues are resolved.

2. Develop your Student Success Team and take action

Recognizing the iterative nature of designing and implementing Student Success Teams, it is important to root teams in your colleges' definition of equity and learnings from the student experience. The most successful colleges committed to a design, ran with it and refined along the way. One college talked about the first Student Success Team as "the first pancake" – it's not pretty, but it's edible. Find the balance between enough planning to do this well and enough space to iterate down the road, with a clear vision of where you want to end up.

3. Build on your existing targeted equity-focused programs

Student Success Teams should supplement, not replace, programs such as Umoja, Puente, MESA, EOPS and TRIO. Colleges tried to maintain, elevate and learn from those personalized and identity-forward programs. Colleges took three approaches:

- **Permitting eligible students to be served by both a Student Success Team and an existing cohort-based program:** Students receive outreach from both and students are at liberty to reach out to whichever Student Success Team or cohort-based program they choose to contact.

- **Tiered approach:** Existing programs are the first line of contact for students. Students can still also engage with the broader services offered by an academic-based Student Success Team through faculty interactions, career workshops and other specialized academic pathway activities.

- **Assigning students to one or another:** Students are served by either their existing cohort-based program or a Student Success Team, not both.

4. Ensure people can be successful team members

Dedicate time and space to build understanding around the what, why and why now, and as you move toward implementation and launch, faculty and staff should dive into how to shift mindsets, build skills and work cross-functionally. Colleges expressed a thirst for knowledge around the how and shared the following tactics to build how-focused learning structures:

- Explicitly ask "What do you need to do your job?"; build workshops around the answers; and dedicate time in weekly team meetings around those answers.

- Build a culture that encourages reaching out to colleagues if team members need more information to answer student questions.

- Develop online repositories of resources for team members.

5. Lead from the middle and from the top

Leadership from faculty, staff and administration is important to sustaining Student Success Teams. Phase Two Advisory suggests the following practices of effective leaders:

- **Senior leaders**

  - **Set a clear vision for teams** that includes the purpose for student success and a model for those leading from the middle to focus their work.

  - **Bridge the cross-divisional nature of Student Success Teams** by coordinating and communicating to ensure consistent messaging.

  - **Provide support and resources** including verbal support, securing funds or personnel for implementation, and advocating to leaders to garner necessary resources.

  - **Empower mid-level leaders** by conveying confidence, backing them up and understanding when to let mid-level leaders make decisions and when to step in to make hard calls.

  - **Take action** and know when to stop planning and move forward.

- **Mid-level leaders**

  - **Provide connection to broader college work** by sharing perspectives in early higher-level conversations with senior leaders so that final decisions align with institutional and departmental efforts.

  - **Inform the reflection phase** by participating in planning meetings and professional learning opportunities.

  - **Lead the subsequent phases** by making tactical decisions, meeting across functions and divisions to create planning networks and generate understanding of Student Success Teams, and create and lead the process to continue refining the team.

  - **Support professionals who work directly with students** by understanding impacts on their work, maintaining open lines of communication, developing supports and advocating on staff members' behalf so they can focus on their work.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For further guidance and examples of strategies in action from colleges in California and across the country, access Phase Two Advisory's full guide: "Student Success Teams: An Implementation Guide for Community Colleges"

The Success Center at the Foundation for California Community Colleges independently prepared this overview based on the presentation; the overview may not fully represent the presenters' viewpoints.

California Community Colleges

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