

An Emerging Student Success Framework
Jillian Kinzie, Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research

Student success: “Increasing the numbers of students from different backgrounds proportionate to their age cohort consistent with national goals for postsecondary attainment who participate in high-quality educational programs and practices culminating in high-quality credentials (e.g., certifications, certificates, degrees) and proficiencies that enable them to be economically self-sufficient and civically responsible post college.”

Student success (short definition): Increased numbers of diverse student groups participating in high-quality educational experiences, earning high-quality credentials.



Propositions About What Matters to Student Success:

1. Success is a process and it begins before students enter college.
2. More than graduation or completion – equally important is engaging in educational experiences associated with acquiring proficiencies that equip students for life and work.
3. Everyone – family, community, K-12, all members of the campus, *particularly faculty* – must be committed to student success principles and practices.
4. Certain kinds of 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, student-faculty interaction, among others.
5. An institution’s total learning environment – its context and culture --matter to how student success is defined, addressed and achieved.
6. Crediting student success to institutions & lack of success to individual students, must cease.
7. *Precursors* to student success rate gaps (race-ethnicity, gender, first-generation etc.,) must be better understood and the proximal causes addressed.
8. Key factors in fostering equitable outcomes are the extent to which a policy, program or practice is based on empirical evidence and is implemented well.
9. Contemporary realities of students must be addressed including mental health, food and housing insecurities, financial stresses, sexual violence, racist incidents, and other circumstances issues that threaten persistence, completion, and attainment of desired learning and personal development outcomes.

The student success agenda must be guided by a conceptual structure emphasizing how student success will be achieved. Driver diagram depicts the five primary drivers and range of actions required to reach the big “increase student success” goal.



Secondary drivers in the diagram identify the range of factors that explicate the more concrete, operational actions where change can occur. Examples of primary drivers and their corresponding secondary drivers:

Primary Driver 1: Development of comprehensive, integrated systems for student success. An integrated approach requires the identification and elimination of scattershot, isolated, or boutique programs for student success and bringing together stakeholders and efforts to ensure collaboration, and where necessary, special programs for underserved students.

- Data-informed evaluations of the quality of student experience, and programs and services intended to foster student success
- Use of evidence of student learning to inform the sustainability and improvement of student success efforts
- Operational integration of curricular and co-curricular experiences
- More interconnected policies and programs, fewer isolated initiatives
- Cooperative, respectful working relationships between faculty, staff and student affairs professionals
- Policies and practices that acknowledge and address students' current realities (financial stress, food insecurity, sexual assault, racism) in a holistic manner

Primary Driver 2. Implementation of empirically-based approaches to student enrollment, transition, persistence, and student learning & success, and assessment of outcomes to ensure quality and effectiveness.

- Greater reliance on and reliable implementation of empirically-based approaches to student success
- Systematic early college exposure and support networks with P-16 partners
- Effective orientation and transition experiences
- Reformed gateway courses and developmental education
- Greater use of engaging pedagogies

Primary Driver 3. Enactment of cultural system of student success between postsecondary institutions & P-16 partners and among all units and departments and stakeholders (trustees, governing board, state legislatures) across the institution.

- Strategic relationships with P-12 systems, community partners, and families that facilitate a culture of expectation and academic preparation
- More collaboration between 2-year and 4-year institutions
- Greater attention to transitions between high school and college and between 2-year and 4-year institutions
- Promotion of asset-based narrative about students
- More and better communication with prospective students about enrollment and what is required to achieve educational goals
- Recognition and reward for cultural navigators -- faculty and staff that guide, mentor and support students

Primary Driver 4. Application of clear pathways with monitoring systems that guide students to completion and is monitored with real time data systems that identify when a student is off track.

- Maps to guide student transition to college and through majors are explicit and available
- Require students to make "big choices" about whole programs of study while other "small choices" are laid out and clear
- Greater specification of step-by-step roadmaps and use of intrusive guidance to support college completion
- Greater use of student information such as past performance and interest inventories to inform student choice of major, co-curricular involvements, and other beneficial experiential learning
- More comprehensive data and information systems accessible throughout the institution

Primary Driver 5. Enactment of a student success mindset that employs an asset-based narrative for students and institutional belief in talent development.

- Encouragement of the belief that all students can succeed
- Greater attention to grit, growth mindset orientation to promote student success
- Faculty and staff development to foster student success mindset
- Greater emphasis on the benefits of involvement in co-curricular activities and documentation of value and learning gains
- Make under-served students achievement visible and valued

Source: Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. (2017). Reframing student success in college: Advancing know-what and know-how. *Change Magazine: the Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49(3), 19–27.