

Setting Our Sights:

Addressing Urgent Change
with the Long Term in Mind

Kathy Booth

Executive Director

Completion

Student Success Act

Equity Gap

Budget Cuts

Leadership Turnover

With changes of this magnitude ...

we have to start thinking about different ways of delivering our services.

Two research studies

- What's Completion Got to Do with It?
Using Course-Taking Behavior to Understand Community College Success
- Student Support (Re)defined

WHAT'S COMPLETION GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Understanding the cost of the status quo

The Research

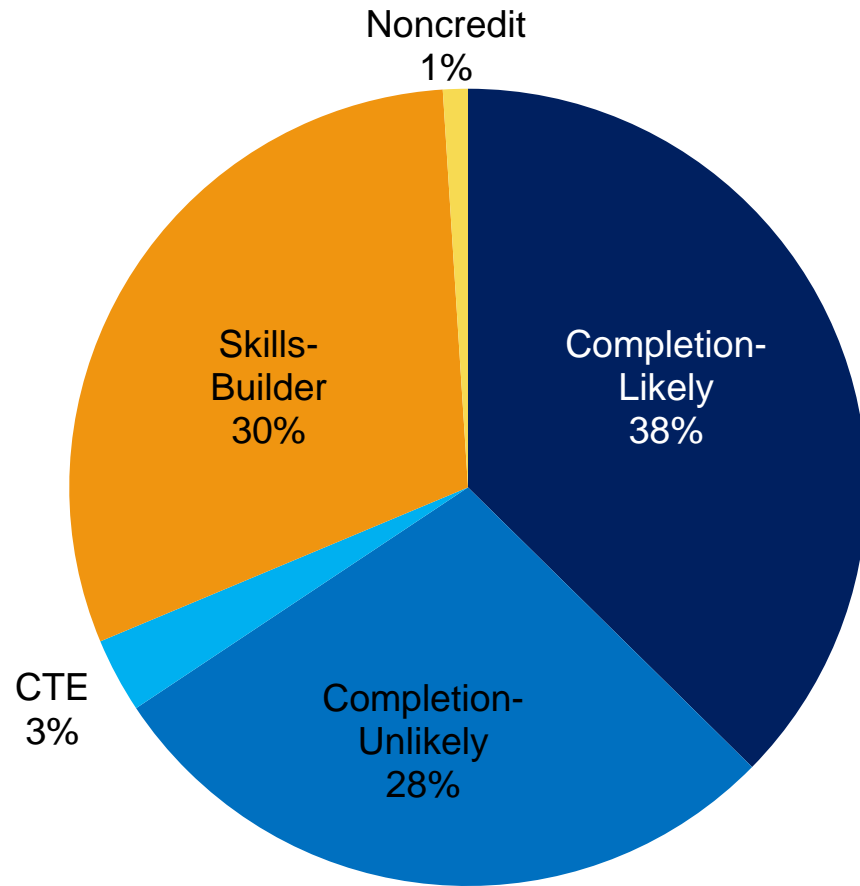
Research Question:

What goals do students appear to be working toward, based on the courses they take, and how successful are they?

What Was Studied:

A cohort of 165,921 first-time students who enrolled in fall 2001 were tracked for 7 years (represents 70% of students and 4/5 of units taken in 2001-02)

The cost of the status quo



First-Time Student Types, Based on Head Count

Our successful
students take
four to six
years to complete
and attempt
65-125 units

Completion-Likely Continuum

Students Most Likely to Complete

- Enroll full time, stay about 6 years
- Attempt an average of 123 credits in transferrable courses
- Pass 73% of courses and have high completion rates (68%)

Students Somewhat Likely to Complete

- Enroll full time, stay about 4 years
- Attempt 66 transferrable credits, but fewer math, physical & life sciences
- Pass 73% of courses but have low completion rates (31%)

CTE Students

- Enroll full time, stay about 5 years
- Attempt 82 units in commercial services, engineering and industrial technologies, health fields and public and protective services
- Pass 80% of courses but have low completion rates (35%)

African American,
Latino and Native
American students are
more likely to
be in our
less-successful
clusters

Completion Unlikely

- Course-taking patterns indicate they are seeking a degree or transfer
- Enroll part time, attend intermittently, stay about 2 years
- Attempt 16 transferrable credits, with more CTE
- Pass 26% of courses and have very low completion rates (10%)

Unless we change,
time-to-complete will be
unacceptably long
and success rates for
an increasingly low income and
of-color student
population will be
unacceptably low

STUDENT SUPPORT (RE)DEFINED

**Why we can't use job titles,
isolated programs, or angel
funding to structure our
solutions**

The Research

In an environment of extreme scarcity, which student support activities can be delivered inside and outside of the classroom to improve success for all students, paying special attention to African-American and Latino learners?

Six success factors

- **Directed:** Students have a goal and know how to achieve it
- **Focused:** Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize
- **Nurtured:** Students feel somebody wants them to succeed as a student and helps them succeed

Six success factors (*cont.*)

- **Connected:** Students feel they are part of the college community
- **Engaged:** Students actively listen and participate in class and are involved in extracurricular activities
- **Valued:** Students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

Students weigh in

In surveys and focus groups with nearly 900 students from 12 California community colleges, we learned:

- Which factors are most important to their success
- How they have experienced those factors
- What they recommend colleges could do to strengthen these factors

Directed: Student Voices

I came here for liberal arts and then I got offered to take several human resources and business classes. I was doing well in these classes and just going along and the professor asked me, “What are you here for? What are you doing?” I said, “Just having fun and stuff.” He said, “You really need to focus on something.” So it was the instructor that helped me choose a direction.

Directed: Observations

- **Students reported struggling to find direction**, particularly regarding what courses they need to take and how educational milestones related to life or career goals.
- **If counselors and faculty worked together proactively**, particularly with undecided and first-generation students about establishing an educational plan, it could make a significant difference.

Focused: Student Voices

On my college website, they have a “degree works” system where I can go and check all the classes I’ve taken. And I keep looking at it when I’m a little down. I think, “Oh, I’m almost there.” So, it’s kind of a big motivator. I see my grades and what I’ve accomplished and it lifts my spirits.

Focused: Observations

- **Concentrating support on the front door** will be important to help that “least likely to success cluster,” but it is not sufficient
- While many students arrive to college motivated, **their drive needs to be continuously stoked and augmented** with additional support in order for success to be realized
- **This is not just an issue of study skills**, it’s also a question of being able to secure financial aid and get the classes you need

Colleges need to
build support
systems that

**foster
student
motivation**

Engaged: Student Voices

For me [engagement] happens in the classroom, outside of the classroom and in activities. . . . For me it's important to do all three. That's just the type of learner I am because I'm not just here to . . . be in the classroom and engage in the classroom and then leave and not engage. I have to because otherwise I'll forget what I just learned or it's a waste of time for me to be here.

Engaged: Observations

- Instructional approaches matter—students said they learn best when instructors (1) **care** about their students, (2) **challenged** learners to do the best they could and (3) are **interested** in what their students thought, and (4) sufficient **academic support** is provided.
- We can look for **practices break down the classroom walls** by helping students engage with other students, with the surrounding community, and the larger world, like service learning or peer mentoring

Nurtured: Student Voices

The first day I came to campus to register, I was lost and didn't know where to go. I unintentionally ended up in DSPS office and there's a lady that sits in front. . . . She was very helpful to me. She actually told me exactly what I have to do. . . . She even sat down with me on the computer to help me finish my registration. And she has been very helpful since then. I really feel that . . . when somebody cares about you, it makes you more responsible. Because she's been taking care of me, I think that I have to do my best. Whenever she talks about me she says, "This is the student that I helped and he's so successful."

Nurtured: Observations

- **Job title is not important** in providing nurturing—this support can come from anyone and it can be fostered in small as well as large ways
- Students noted that feeling nurtured has a big impact on their academic progress—having a coherent approach for providing nurturing throughout a student’s experience can help build a **larger culture of student success**

**Everyone has a
role to play**
in supporting
students,
not just
student services

Connected: Student Voices

I think . . . making the student feel more connected, it sort of lies a bit within the professors as well. Because there's been some classes where the professor has one or two tests a semester and doesn't lecture and it's all based on the book. And you don't feel very connected to that class. Whereas you can have a professor that fully engages you in lectures. There's classwork spread throughout the whole semester and you can see he really cares. You're more motivated to go to that class to be at the school.

Connected: Observations

- Students often don't feel connected to community colleges because it is a **temporary stop toward a larger goal**—there may not be a sense of pride in being at a community college
- Connection isn't just an issue for students—**practitioners may be just as disconnected**

Valued: Student Voices

I worked in a particular field so I bring my professional experience to the classroom and I feel that's valued. I've been told I bring an enormous professional background, specifically in debates and in answering questions about my professional experience and organizationI'm able to make arguments about why you don't do certain things So, yeah, in that sense, I feel very valued.

Valued: Observations

- Roughly three quarters of survey participants cited giving back through **community service and providing feedback to instructors** as key opportunities
- Colleges can build low-cost opportunities **for students to share their expertise**, such as community-based research, service learning, and civic engagement

Colleges need to
structure support
so that **all six**
success
factors are
addressed

The Bottom Line

- Enabling more students—particularly Latinos and African Americans—to make it to completion and ensuring that the Student Success Act is sustainably implemented means looking for broader, longer-term solutions.
- The good news is that if we approach this together, leveraging strengths across our college communities, we're much more likely to reach our goals.

Our solutions
will emerge from
**long-term,
collaborative
thinking**

**For more information on
the Course-Taking Patterns Study and
Student Support (Re)defined
visit www.rpgroup.org**