COLLEGE of the DESERT

GUIDED PATHWAYS PILLAR TEAM III		
MINUTES FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019	**1:30 – 3:00 PM**	**Communications building, Room 103**
Members Present:	Carlos Maldonado, Christine Schafer, Claudia Derum, Curt Luttrell, Daniel Aucutt, Daniel Mayo, Donna Greene (Co-Chair), Jeff Baker (Co-Chair), Jermaine Cathcart, Leslie Young, Louis Lasarte, Tiffany Abeytia	
Members not Present:	Anthony Jones, Jenna Huntzinger, Kurt Struwe, Paulina Rodrigues	
Recorder:	Mary Lou Marrujo	

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call (1:49 p.m.)		
2. Action Item(s)		
2.1 Approval of Agenda		
DISCUSSION	None.	
CONCLUSION	Agenda approved as submitted.	
FOLLOW-UP ITEMS		PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
2.2 Approval of Minutes		
DISCUSSION		
CONCLUSION	Minutes of February 1, 2019 approved as submitted.	
FOLLOW-UP ITEMS		PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
3. Reports		
3.1 Interact Report		
DISCUSSION	Comments on the Interact Summary Report that was just presented by Kelly Hall and Christen Smith: • Nothing notably surprising, but did confirm there's a lot of work to do. • There were many positive comments by students. • Confirmation that this institution is doing amazing work as we continue to improve. • Glad to see students' desire for online counseling. Reinforcing what we are already moving towards as an institution. • Making connections with each student is important. • Stats of those students lost was very good information in understanding their needs. Discussion ensued on ways to communicate with students.	
CONCLUSION		
FOLLOW-UP ITEMS		PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
4. Action Items		
4.1 Review Norms and Roles		
DICUSSION	Add #5 to the Norms and Roles approved at the last meeting:	

	1. Respect each other 2. Keep an open mind 3. Good listening skills 4. Do what's best for the students 5. <u>The co-chairs' roles are to support the team and provide the resources to complete tasks.</u>		
CONCLUSION			

4.2 Teaching Across Generations

DICUSSION	Discussion on, "Teaching Across Generations," and what does that mean for us? Link: Teaching Across the Generations We have students across several generations which require us to use different strategies for teaching because each generation communicates differently. A lack of understanding across generations can have detrimental effects on communication and working relationships and undermine effective services. This drives home the point that we need to see things from the students' lens and be responsive to every demographic.		
CONCLUSION			

4.3 Conference

DICUSSION	Team members were asked who would like to attend the IEPI Ready-Set-Design-Accelerate Guided Pathways to the Next Level Conference on March 11th in Riverside. 1. Claudia Derum 2. Daniel Aucutt		
CONCLUSION			

4.4 Break Out Teams

DICUSSION	The teams reviewed the *Student Support (Re)defined* article that was previously emailed to them (copy attached). They broke out into small groups to discuss what we are doing well to keep students on the path and where are the gaps. GAPS: • Better communication about events. • Utilize Canvas more to push out information. • Creating program/discipline list-servs to target different populations to advertise events, announce a class opening, etc. • Physical tours by faculty of the tutoring center so they get that visceral element. • How many staff know about the tutoring center and know what services are provided.		
CONCLUSION			

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
5. Adjournment: (3:00 p.m.)		

NEXT MEETING:
Friday, March 1, 2019 – 1:00 -3:00 p.m.
Communication building, Rooms 111-112

Student Support (Re)defined

Equitable
Integrated
Cost Effective

Using student voices to redefine support

What community college students say institutions, instructors and others can do to help them succeed

Kathy Booth, Darla Cooper,
Kelley Karandjeff, Michael Large,
Nathan Pellegrin, Rogéair Purnell,
Diane Rodriguez-Kiino, Eva Schiorring
and Terrence Willett

Table of Contents

Introduction

As California's community colleges (CCC) respond to the state's Student Success Task Force recommendations, many constituents are considering how student support can be implemented to improve completion. College practitioners, policymakers and advocacy groups are all exploring how to preserve delivery of existing supports, while at the same time, rethink ways to effectively engage more students with the assistance they need to succeed. To inform this dialog at both institutional and system levels, the RP Group **asked nearly 900 students from 13 California community colleges what *they* think supports their educational success, paying special attention to the factors African Americans and Latinos cite as important to their achievement.**

Students offer considerable insight into what they find particularly supportive in their educational process and how institutions can advance their progress and achievement. As colleges work to reimagine student support and increase completion, their learners can contribute important perspectives on a number of key questions. How can colleges help students find direction and develop clear plans for success? Who is best positioned to provide support, what do these different players need to do and how can they effectively work together? What factors are critical to students' learning and completion? Given these tough economic times, what vital supports may need strategic investment and which ones can colleges deliver with minimal or no cost?

These are the questions that drive **Student Support (Re)defined—a multiyear study that aims to understand how, in an environment of extreme scarcity, community colleges can deliver support both inside and outside the classroom to improve success for *all* students** (see sidebar, *Student Support (Re)defined).*

California's community colleges face powerful pressures to change the scope and focus of their work

as they negotiate multiple challenges—increased enrollment demands, significant budget constraints and intensified focus on student attainment, particularly for underrepresented minority groups. It has become common knowledge that many CCC students never reach the educational goals they set out to achieve.[1] Moreover, African-American and Latino learners are even less likely to complete certificates, degrees or transfer than other groups.[2]

Yet, CCCs are heeding these challenges and demands as an opportunity. Innovation and reform efforts designed to improve completion using targeted student supports are underway at institutions across California. It is with this context in mind that the RP Group launched this research, with an eye to providing actionable evidence that the colleges and the CCC system can use as they work to embrace these challenges and initiate change.

1   Hayward, C. (2011). The Transfer Velocity Project: A Comprehensive Look at the Transfer Function. *Journal for Applied Research in Higher Education*, 18.2, 21-32

2   Bahr, P. R. (2010). The bird's eye view of community colleges: A behavioral typology of first time students based on cluster analytic classification. *Research in Higher Education*, 51, 724-749

Reader's Guide

This report summarizes discoveries from the RP Group's Year 1 examination of student support. The RP Group designed this report for those interested in advancing students' success, including community college leaders, faculty and instructional administrators, student services professionals, staff and students themselves. University practitioners, advocacy groups and policymakers may also benefit from these findings when considering policy and funding decisions that impact efforts to improve completion and/or the delivery of student support. We intend for this document to:

- Provide a detailed description of student perspectives on what *they* find supportive and their suggestions for how to best meet their needs

- Promote a dialog about how people in different roles across the college can use this research to improve student success

- Lay the foundation for Year 2 research focused on engaging community college practitioners in discussions about how to deliver and scale supports that work

This report begins with a brief overview of the research design and methodology. We then offer a high-level summary of the key themes or implications from the student perspectives findings. **Readers can find a full discussion of these key themes in *What Students Say They Need to Succeed* at** http://www.rpgroup.org/content/reports-presentations-and-resources. Following, we highlight student perspectives on each of the "six success factors" that serve as the framework for this study (see p. 4, *Defining the "Six Success Factors"*). Readers will find discussion questions embedded throughout this section to stimulate reflection on and dialog about the individual success factor findings. We also provide several suggestions for action—offered by students in the study—that can be used by different constituent groups at the college to support their success. Finally, we share information about the study's next steps.

Defining the "Six Success Factors"
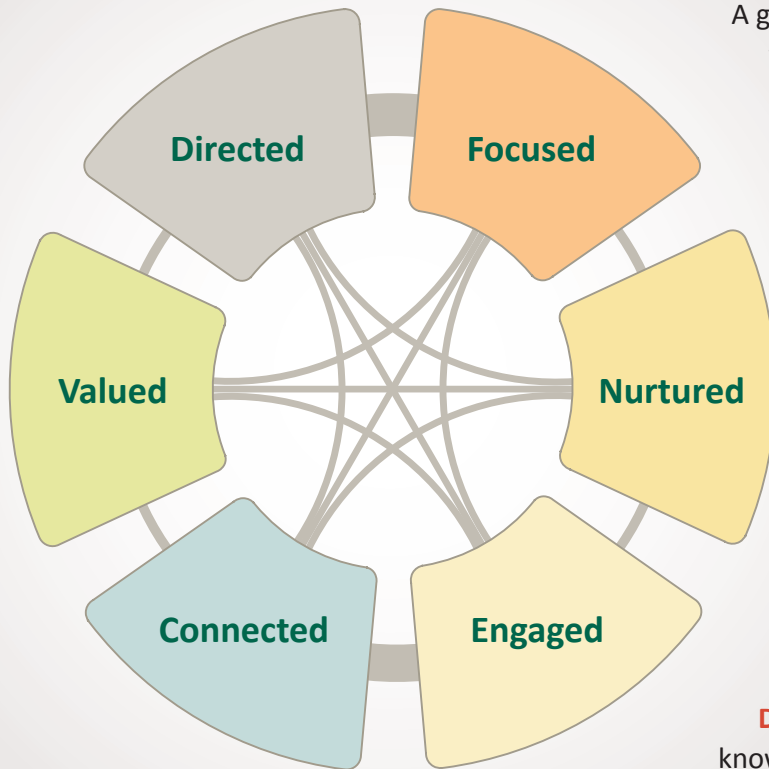
A growing body of evidence indicates that strategic supports—delivered inside and outside the classroom—can increase students' abilities to achieve completion and transfer. This research suggests that student support activities must be (1) integrated into students' daily experience and (2) included in the overall curriculum. The RP Group's review of leading studies on student support found that effective support—in addition to being integrated and intrusive—helps students become:

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 and helps them to succeed

Engaged: students actively participate in class and extra-curricular activities

Connected: students feel like they are part of the college community

Valued: students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

These "six success factors" form the basis for the RP Group's student-focused investigation of support. Readers can find complete definitions later in this report as well as a full discussion of these factors in the study's literature review at http://www.rpgroup.org/content/research-framework.

Research Design
& Methodology

Participating Colleges

The RP Group purposefully designed Student Support (Re)defined to have student perspectives drive the study and to contribute to the growing body of research that adds their voices and experiences to the subject of support. Moreover, the RP Group anticipates that student perspectives gathered in this first phase will both (1) offer concrete strategies for community college educators to consider and (2) keep the dialog about redefining support services focused on students in both the practitioner and dissemination phases of this project.

To launch Student Support (Re)defined, the RP Group engaged a range of colleges to participate in this first phase of research. In an attempt to capture a broad representation of the California community college system, 15 institutions were selected and invited to take part in the study due to their geographic and demographic diversity (e.g., campus location, transfer rates, college size, urban or rural setting and student population). Thirteen colleges elected to participate (see map, *Participating Colleges*).

Using a mixed-methods approach, the RP Group implemented both quantitative and qualitative measures to gather students' perspectives from participating colleges on the following overarching research question:

*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 and, in particular, for African-American and Latino learners?*

The RP Group employed two primary methods that resulted in feedback from nearly 900 students, including phone surveys with 785 students (current students, leavers and completers[3]) and focus groups with 102 participants from four colleges (students enrolled in spring 2012). Survey participants were selected based on a stratified random sample of 10,918 students that oversampled African Americans and Latinos from each college in order to ensure adequate representation from these two groups. These activities aimed

---

3   For the purposes of this study, "current students" are those who enrolled in the fall 2011 term, "completers" are those who had obtained a certificate or degree between fall 2010 and spring 2011 and "leavers" are those who were enrolled in spring 2011, but not enrolled in fall 2011 and had not earned a certificate or degree prior to fall 2011.

Student Survey QuickStats

Total respondents: 785

Enrollment status: 36% current students, 32% completers, 32% leavers

College representation: each institution represented 7 – 11% of the sample

Ethnicity: 32% white, 31% Latino, 25% African American, 12% other

First-generation status: 30%

Educational goal: 46% transfer, 30% associate's degree, 13% "other," 6% certificate, 5% multiple goals

Decision point for education goal: 58% before enrollment, 27% within first year, 15% after first year

Currently employed: 66%

Average time worked per week: 28.7 hours

Assessment test participation: 71%

Counseling participation: 40%

Education plan on record: 36%

Special program participation: 61% received need-based financial aid, 14% EOPS, 7% DSPS

to capture students' input and feedback on what they viewed as important to supporting their success.

The research team additionally linked quantitative data from the CCC Chancellor's Office on students' demographics and academic history to their survey responses in order to examine the results of different populations (see sidebar, *Student Survey QuickStats*). Subpopulations were identified and examined to determine particular patterns or trends. Specifically, we reviewed responses by enrollment status (completer, leaver or current student), gender, ethnicity, age, first-generation status, field of study, record of educational plan and special program participation (financial aid, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services [EOPS] and Disabled Students Programs and Services [DSPS]). Three general questions guided this phase of research:

1. In reflecting on the six factors of success, what supports—both inside and outside the classroom—do students identify as important to their success as community college learners?

2. What is the relationship among the six factors of success?

3. How do the above results vary for different groups of students?

The research team analyzed the findings for factors that appeared to be particularly effective with Latino and African-American students and explored if these factors may also be effective for students of *all* ethnicities. Additionally, the team worked to identify themes in the findings that speak directly to how colleges can support students more effectively, and in turn, improve their students' success.

In keeping with the RP Group's emphasis on an applied inquiry model, this study employs an action research framework. Moving forward, the RP Group will involve participants and researchers in a reflective process to regularly examine these and other study findings. This process will help guide, refine and revise the proposed research activities and approaches based on what both researchers and practitioners observe and learn.

For a full description of the study's methodology, including how the colleges were selected, the criteria used to create the student sample and the data analyses performed, please visit: http://www.rpgroup.org/content/research-framework.

Key Themes
from Student Perspectives Research

Given current and anticipated future budget constraints and increased calls for reform, now is the time for colleges to redefine support in a way that aligns with what students say they need to succeed. When considering the overall findings, five distinct themes emerge. These key themes supply colleges with a framework for reflecting on the outcomes they want for their students. They also offer colleges a launch pad for identifying how support can be strategically integrated across institutional divisions and into students' experience both inside and outside the classroom, from entry to exit. Finally, the themes imply many ideas for change designed to connect more students to necessary support, ranging from actions that individuals and programs can take immediately to those that will require systemic reform of institutional structures. Key themes include the following:

> To further explore these key themes, including related discussion questions, please visit *What Students Say They Need To Succeed* at http://www.rpgroup.org/content/reports-presentations-and-resources.

1 **Colleges need to foster students' motivation.** While this research acknowledges students as key agents in their own educational success, it also highlights that the motivation learners bring to their college experience may not be enough to guarantee completion. Moreover, some students may arrive without this drive and need even more help developing the required focus and direction.

2 **Colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.** These findings also imply that colleges must show students how to translate their motivation into success. Students need assistance building the specific skills and knowledge necessary to navigate their community college and thrive in this environment, particularly those who are new to higher education or who arrive without a specific goal in mind.

3 **Colleges need to structure support to ensure all "six success factors" are addressed.** This research indicates that (1) students find all six success factors (directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected and valued) to be important to their progress and achievement and (2) different factors interact with each other in various ways to contribute to their success. Students noted how experiencing one factor often led to realizing another, or how two factors were inextricably linked to each other. Since students do not experience these factors in isolation, these findings imply that colleges should consider solutions that can help students attain multiple factors at once.

4 **Colleges need to provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing.** Comprehensive support is more likely to address the multiple needs—academic, financial, social and personal—identified by African-American, Latino and first-generation students participating in this study. These students were more likely to cite a lack of academic support, the absence of someone at the college who cared about their success and insufficient financial assistance as reasons for them not to continue their education. While it may not be feasible to expand existing special populations programs, colleges must find a way to provide a significant portion of these student groups with comprehensive support—at scale. If they do not, the equity gap will likely continue to grow.

5 **Everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.** Student responses highlight how everyone on a campus can affect their achievement. They underscore the importance of colleges promoting a culture where all individuals across the institution understand their role in advancing students' success. Yet, across the board, students most commonly recognized faculty as having the greatest potential impact on their educational journeys. Instructors can support student achievement by finding ways to incorporate elements of the six success factors into course content and delivery. Faculty can also work with others across the college to integrate different types of support into the classroom and help connect students with any assistance they might need outside their coursework.

Key Findings
by Success Factor

This stage of the research asked students broadly what contributed to their community college success and then gathered their specific experience with and perspectives on each of the six success factors—focused, directed, nurtured, engaged, connected and valued. The following section presents a summary of students' responses by success factor, including a definition of each factor, key findings about that factor from both the survey and focus groups and any significant highlights by survey participant subgroup (i.e., student type, ethnicity, age, gender, field of study, participation in a special program, first generation status, education plan holder). This section primarily focuses on findings that faculty and instructional administrators, counselors and other support professionals, staff and administrative leaders might find actionable. Students' will also find some insights about what they can do to improve their chances for completion.

As the RP Group constructed and defined these six success factors for the purposes of this research, students did not always talk about what they find supportive of their achievement based on these discrete and separate elements. This research underscored the value of having each of these success factors present in a student's experience and uncovered relationships among these different drivers of success. At the same time, students placed higher value on and made stronger associations between particular factors. Consequently, we present key findings on these six factors in order of importance and association according to the study's participants: focused and directed first, nurtured second, followed by engaged and connected and then valued.

Learning from Completers and Leavers

Survey responses from current students, leavers and completers revealed stark differences in what these groups find supportive of their educational efforts. Completers—those who earned a certificate or associate's degree—largely recognized all six success factors as critical to their success. On the other hand, leavers had yet to arrive at this place of appreciation, generally indicating that none of these factors was important to their achievement. Current students' responses mostly closely aligned with those of completers.

That said, most leavers reported they planned to re-enroll in the future, indicating that institutions have an opportunity to both re-engage these learners and intentionally build these success factors into their experience. Colleges might consider how to strategically reach out to these students, who to prioritize for reconnection and how to support their re-entry.

Directed and Focused

When discussing what contributed to their success, students prioritized and made inextricable links between having a specific educational goal and plan (directed) and staying motivated to achieve that goal (focused). Many participants indicated that having a goal helped them remain motivated while others stated that staying focused on school helped them clarify a direction and establish a specific outcome over time. Students provided unique insights on each factor as described in the highlighted findings below; at the same time, many of their perspectives also underscore the interconnectedness of these two elements.

> I think being focused goes hand in hand with having a goal. If you don't have a goal, you're not going to be focused.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

> Some people just don't know how to start. I didn't … I'm the first in my family to go [to college]. I didn't know how to apply … it was easy but there's a fear, a fear about going somewhere and having no guidance. And that's a big issue, when new students come through the door to see a counselor for the first semester, that's scary. And if a counselor scoffs at you, that right there just breaks your college education, just breaks it for a good year, a good semester. That's why people drop out and why they do badly.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*
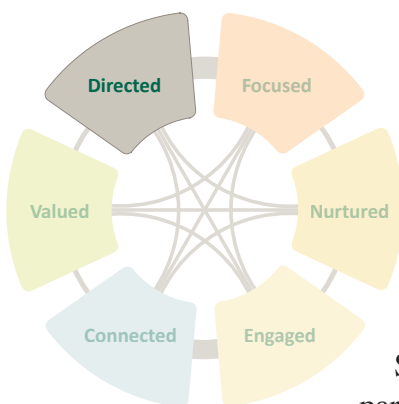
Directed

Helping students clarify their aspirations, select an educational focus they perceive as meaningful and create a plan that moves them from enrollment to goal achievement *(Students have a goal and know how to achieve it)*

Simply put, having direction is vital to students' success. Students participating in both the surveys and focus groups identified having direction as a top driver of their achievement. **Over three quarters (79%) of survey respondents stated that making a connection between their success in college and their life goals was very important to their own progress.** Accordingly, survey respondents who indicated having direction was important to their success pointed to a range of reasons,

> 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.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

such as wanting a better life (34%), wanting to complete their program or achieve transfer (25%) or wanting a particular career (12%). Focus group participants echoed these sentiments. **These students most frequently rated directed as the primary factor driving their achievement and often attributed their success to having a specific goal and taking action.**

When observing indicators for having direction, a large majority of survey respondents reported that they either decided on their educational goal before coming to a community college (58%) or within their first year of enrollment (27%). Nearly all (99%) stated a primary goal for attending college; top goals included transferring (46%) or earning an associate's degree (30%). The percentage of students indicating transfer as their goal ranged from a low of 23% to a high of 67% among the 12 colleges. The percentage of students indicating an associate's degree as their primary goal ranged from a low of 16% to a high of 43%. Most survey respondents reported knowing what they needed to do to achieve their goal, such as the courses they needed to take to complete or the transfer requirements they needed to fulfill *(see Table 1)*.

TABLE 1

Students' Knowledge of Requirements for Goal

To Meet Their Goals, Students Knew:	%
Courses Needed	89%
Tests Required	86%
Transfer Requirements	83%
GPA Required	80%

At the same time, many focus group participants shared that while they had found direction, they and their peers were often challenged to do so. **Given both the priority participants place on having a goal and their reported struggles to find direction, this research suggests that students need support—both in the form of tools and people—that help them establish an end-point, identify what courses they need to take and allow them to track progress toward their educational goals.** A primary mechanism for goal development and tracking appears to be the educational plan (ed plan). Most focus group participants self-reported that they found direction by selecting a major and mapping

out related academic requirements semester by semester. Analysis of survey participant data shows that over one third (36%) had an ed plan on record. Some focus group participants spoke about struggling to find information and establish plans upon enrollment and suggested that colleges should be more proactive in reaching out to students upon entry and helping them establish a direction.

Additionally, students indicated that **counselors and faculty need to play a key supporting role in helping students with both goal selection and ed plan development and tracking.** Focus groups yielded a range of students' perspectives on the ways these two critical players can offer assistance. Some participants reported that seeing a counselor immediately upon enrollment was instrumental in helping them plan their education and navigate the institution. Others noted that counselors they met through special programs like Educational Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS) and Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) provided them important direction and guidance. **Given the role students say counselors can take in offering direction and guidance, being more proactive with undecided and first-generation students could make a significant difference in the progress and success of these learners.**

Similarly, focus group **participants across all four colleges emphasized the need for faculty to take an active role in helping students find direction.** They underscored the value of faculty involvement in helping learners establish goals and plans for achieving those goals. Several students mentioned the value of faculty insights when exploring and choosing particular programs and/or career paths and suggested discipline-specific advising by instructors.

That said, **both survey and focus group participants also emphasized the importance of students taking initiative, seeking out information that helps them identify their education and career goals, and checking multiple sources to ensure this information is accurate.** When offering advice to their peers about how to be directed, survey participants most often suggested students be proactive in finding information on what classes and requirements they need to complete followed by specific advice on what and how many classes to take and when to take them.

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS. When looking at specific subgroups of survey respondents, completers and current students, those with an ed plan and students with a field of study (nine or more earned units in one discipline) particularly stood out as those who both valued and acted on finding direction. Completers and current students (versus leavers), those with an ed plan

(versus those without) and those with field of study (versus those without) were more likely to indicate having direction and seeing a connection between their success in college and their life goals was very important to their achievement. Additionally, completers and those with a field of study were also more likely to have received counseling. Those with an ed plan were much more likely to have received an assessment.

Discussion Questions

- *How does your college help students find direction— both inside and outside the classroom?*

- *When, where and how are students provided with specific information about how to develop an educational plan? How is that plan revised as needed?*

- *What different support approaches and strategies are needed for students with a clear goal in mind versus those who are undecided?*

- *What resources and tools do faculty, counselors and other student services professionals need in order to incorporate activities at the course level that help students develop direction?*

- *In what ways can faculty regularly incorporate activities that help students to see the connection between their education and their long-term goals?*

- *Which components of a student success course do you think provide the most important and useful information to your students? How does your college direct the students who most need to build these success skills to these courses?*
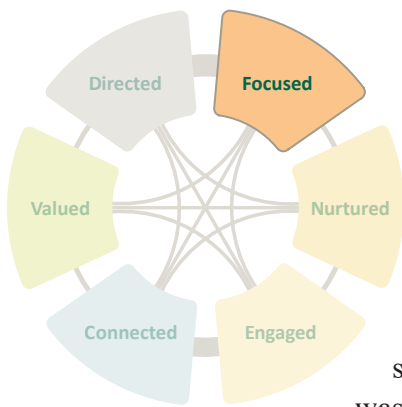
Focused

Fostering students' motivation and helping them develop the skills needed to achieve their goals (Students stay on track— keeping their eyes on the prize)

While emphasizing the need for a specific goal and plan of action, students also stressed that staying focused on achieving their goal was critical to success. **When asked which of the six factors was most important to their achievement, the largest percentage of survey respondents (40%) cited being focused.** When looking more closely at this factor, students primarily described being focused as having motivation, doing the work required for class and managing their time. Similarly, when offering advice to their peers, students also most frequently recommended staying focused (55%), including studying and doing homework, working hard and attending classes as well as not procrastinating, stopping out or "giving up."

Surveys and focus groups also gathered student perspectives on what encourages (or impedes) their motivation, offering interesting insight into where educators might take action to cultivate focus. **When asked about what motivates them to attend their classes, participants rated several reasons as very important including the desire to pass the class and wanting to get a good grade in the class** *(see Table 2)*. **When asked why they might miss a class, survey participants most commonly cited as very important the need to care for family followed by the need for work** *(see Table 3)*. When asked about what made them return to school each semester, top reasons cited by survey respondents included having earned good grades, being able to register for the classes they need and having the money to pay for college. Notably, least important to students' class attendance or semester-to-semester persistence were the expectations or attendance of friends *(see Table 4)*.

TABLE 2

Students' Motivations for Attending Class
(Percentage indicating "very important")

You want to pass the class	96%
You want to get a good grade	94%
You are learning a lot	79%
You want to show your family you can succeed in college	75%
Your instructor expects you to attend	61%
You love your classes and want to be there	56%
You don't want to disappoint anyone	55%
Your friends expect you to come	15%
Your friends are there	14%

TABLE 3

Students' Reasons for Skipping Class
(Percentage indicating "very important")

You had to take care of your family	53%
You had to work	32%
You couldn't find child care	24%
You couldn't find transportation	16%
You are not learning anything useful	13%
You can just read the textbook	12%
You probably won't pass the class anyway	9%
You had not done the homework	9%
Your instructor doesn't know you, so you won't be missed	9%
You feel that nobody cares if you go or not	7%

TABLE 4

Factors Influencing Students' Persistence
(Percentage indicating "very important")

Being able to register for the classes that you need	88%
Receiving good grades	86%
Having the money you need to pay for college	77%
Getting the academic support you need to do well in your classes	75%
Having reliable and/or affordable transportation	70%
Having someone at the college like a counselor or instructor who cares about your success	67%
Receiving financial aid	64%
Having reliable and/or affordable child care	41%
Having college friends who are also returning that semester	21%

Additionally, some focus group participants described experiencing and recognizing some success and progress toward a goal as helping them remain focused. Students spoke of tracking their progress from semester to semester by meeting regularly with a counselor to monitor their achievements, revise their ed plans and select additional courses. Others discussed using degree audit or other web-based systems hosted by their college that allowed them to look at their advancement from term to term. Students additionally reported monitoring their progress on a day-to-day basis through the ongoing feedback of instructors through tests, assignments, quizzes and projects. These findings suggest that **while students' own intrinsic drive is important to their progress and achievement, there are many opportunities for faculty, counselors and support professionals, college leaders and staff to take action and engender students' motivation and movement toward their goals.**

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS.
When considering the role of being focused in the success of specific subgroups, the persistence of African-American and Latino students seemed particularly impacted by finances. African-American and Latino students placed a higher importance on receiving financial

aid as a factor in their decision to return to school each term than students of other ethnicities. Among those who skipped a term or left the college all together, African-American students were more likely than others to cite a lack of money to pay for college and/or a lack of financial aid as a very important factor in their choice not to return. Additionally, among leavers, African-American and Latino students were more likely to cite the inability to register for classes as a critical factor in their decision not to re-enroll.

> 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.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

Students' views on focus also appeared to vary by age. While not critical to survey participants overall, the motivation of younger students appeared particularly connected to the presence of their friends. For example, younger students (specifically those under 20) said it was important to their decision to continue or complete their education that their friends were also returning to school. That said, friends also surfaced as an important driver for those 44 and older. For those in this age group, the presence of friends in class served as a significant motivator.

Discussion Questions

- *On your campus, what are some ways that administrators, faculty and staff help students stay motivated to realize their academic goals?*

- *When are students most likely to become less motivated and what can be done to help them remain focused?*

- *How can students be mobilized to help their peers become and stay motivated?*

- *What structures could be put in place to help students monitor and track their progress toward their goals?*
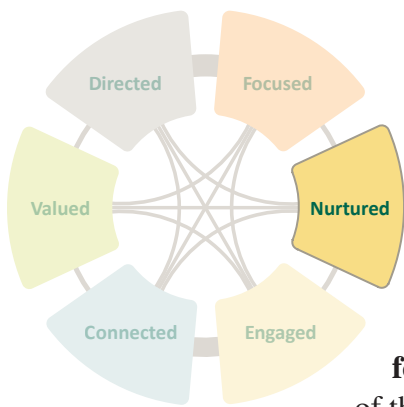
Nurtured

Conveying a sense of caring where students' success is important and expected *(Students feel somebody wants and helps them succeed)*

Like having focus and direction, **students strongly indicated that feeling nurtured was vital to their success.** When asked about which of the six factors was most important to their achievement, feeling nurtured (22%) was the second most common response (behind being focused). Focus group participants echoed this sentiment, with students across all four colleges indicating that receiving care and concern from others was a critical motivator in their academic progress and success. Moreover, **this research suggests that when someone cares about a student and his or her achievement, that student is also likely to experience the other factors for success.** Participants often stated that receiving this kind of support led them to develop a direction, maintain focus, be engaged and/or feel connected.

With the emphasis placed by students on this factor and given the tendency to equate it with "mothering," it is important to note that the discussion of nurturing offers a particular area of support that can benefit from redefinition. As recognized throughout this report, students are clearly active agents in their educational process. Yet, this research underscores that students still need to feel others care about them and their success. The sources of nurturing and the range of ways students identified feeling nurtured underscore the diversity of approaches educators can take to make students know that their success counts.

> I feel that whenever someone wants me to succeed and is supportive of me, then I am motivated to work harder and be successful. The motivation they provide me is vital to me pushing myself and being focused, engaged and directed towards success.
>
> —Focus Group Participant

In terms of sources of nurturing, students cited friends, fellow classmates and family members who encouraged them as they pursued their educational goals, providing support and assistance to keep them focused and motivated. Students also spoke of caring counselors, particularly those who helped them with course scheduling and transfer planning, and who provided words of encouragement. In addition, staff, from administrative assistants to librarians to lab technicians, played a key role in nurturing students by taking an interest in their success and providing assistance and support.

> When I think of nurturing, I think of my Math 125 teacher because that class is intense. It's a five unit class and it was a lot in the beginning for a person who can't handle math. I would talk to the professor and I said, "I can't handle the class. I think I'm going to be dropping out."
>
> So she was able to keep me here. She welcomed me during her office hours and she helped me personally . . . she gave me emotional support and she really cared. She was also interested where my future was going and gave me advice. She said, "Oh, are you thinking of going to Northridge? You don't want to take those noncredit classes. You want to really earn your grade." She really cares about her students. So, that's where I got my nourishment.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

> 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."
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

While survey participants most commonly identified nurturing from family (51%) as key to their success, **students also suggested that faculty were a top source of this support.** Among survey participants, nearly a third (32%) said nurturing from teachers was critical to their achievement and an overwhelming percentage (94%) indicated that it was either very or somewhat important to them that their instructors cared about them. The percentage of students who indicated it was very important ranged from a low of 37% to a high of 67% among the 12 colleges. The range of students indicating somewhat important ranged from 22% to 57%. At the same time, when asked to recall a time when someone cared about them on campus, 18% indicated they could not cite a specific instance—ranging from 10% to 29% across the 12 colleges. For those who were able to identify a particular occasion, **a majority of survey participants identified a teacher.**

Notably, students in both the survey and focus groups identified a broad range of ways that faculty provide nurturing, from small gestures to more comprehensive approaches. Many participants described faculty who provided direct and tangible assistance and support, who took an interest in students'

TABLE 5

Ways Instructors Make Students Feel They Care
(Percentage indicating "very important")

Your instructor makes sure that you understand the material	90%
Your instructor makes you feel that it is important to him/her that you do well	83%
Your instructor makes sure that you have an opportunity to participate in class discussions	81%
Your instructor directs you to other resources that might help you perform better in class	80%
Your instructor helps you make connections between the class and your personal goals, interests and experiences	73%
Your instructor asks for your feedback on the course content and his/her instruction	61%
Your instructor takes an interest in you and your life	50%
Your instructor makes you feel you share something in common	45%

success and who understood that individual students are whole people with whole lives. Survey participants indicated **several actions their instructors could take to make them feel cared for including making sure they understand the course material, making them feel that it is important that they do well and ensuring they have an opportunity to participate in class discussions** *(see Table 5)*. Focus group participants additionally noted that faculty showed they cared when they believed in and did not give up on students and when they went out of their way to help them learn and realize their full potential.

Students also emphasized the less time-intensive ways their faculty made them feel nurtured. Focus group participants cited simple gestures, such as knowing their names and asking how they were doing. Participants' responses to questions about nurturing implied that faculty do not have to develop deep relationships with each student in order to show learners that their success matters. Rather, **students implied that small and informal gestures and symbols of nurturing can go a long way to making them feel that they and their success is important to their teachers and the college community as a whole.**

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS. Nurturing surfaced as a critical success factor for several groups of students, notably African-American and first-generation learners. Nearly two thirds of African-American students indicated that others wanting them to succeed considerably impacted their success in college. Among those participants enrolled at the time of the study, African Americans were more likely than others to rate having someone at the college who cared about their success (alongside getting academic support) as critical to their decision to continue their education.

Similarly, feeling nurtured at their institution appeared important to first-generation students. These survey participants were more likely to indicate that an instructor caring about them was very important to their achievement. Moreover, first-generation students who had left their college at the time of this research were more likely to indicate that having no one at the institution who cared about their success significantly influenced their decision *not* to return.

Among other subgroups, particular age groups (including those 20 and 21 years of age and those 44 and older) and EOPS participants indicated that having a counselor or instructor who cared about their success factored significantly in their decision to return to or complete their education. Completers and current students (versus leavers) were also more likely to feel that it was critical for their performance to be important to the instructor and for their teacher to make sure they understood the material.

Discussion Questions

- *What do you currently do to show students you care about them and their success?*

- *In what ways can the institution make explicit to students, particularly historically underrepresented and first-generation students, that someone at the college cares about them and their success?*

- *What types of support can colleges provide to faculty and staff to help them understand the range of ways—both small and large—to show they care about students and their success?*

- *What can colleges do to encourage and/or facilitate students nurturing other students?*

Engaged and Connected

Like directed and focused, students made strong associations between being engaged and feeling connected to their colleges—often talking about the ways they experience each factor synonymously. While students placed a higher degree of importance on being engaged when discussing what supports their success, they often reported that active involvement both inside and outside their classrooms led to a sense of connection. The key findings below offer students' perspectives on each of these factors while, again, demonstrating their inter-related nature.
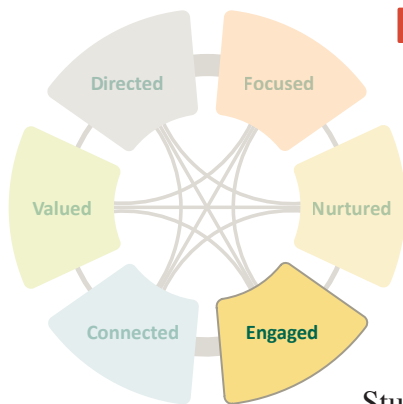
Engaged

Actively involving students in meaningful and authentic educational experiences and activities inside and outside the classroom *(Students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities)*

Students recognized active engagement as integral to their success. When asked about the most important factor to their success, the third largest percentage of survey respondents (18%) cited being engaged (after being focused and feeling nurtured). When describing engagement, students most commonly reported that having teachers who engaged them in class was key to their success (48%), followed by receiving academic support such as tutoring (16%), taking classes that actively engage students in their learning (9%), being involved in a particular academic program (8%) and participating in extracurricular activities (7%).

> 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.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

> Having support from the school like EOPS, that really works as an incentive to do well in school. Got to keep your grades up so you can keep getting that free stuff.
>
> —*Survey Participant*

Accordingly, students emphasized that engagement happens both inside and outside of class. Focus group participants frequently stated that **having both academic and extracurricular engagement was critical to realizing their success.** Some students specifically referenced how being involved in the campus community helped them find interest and stay motivated in their classes. Similarly, others indicated that participation in particular extracurricular activities such as athletics or support programs like EOPS required them to stay focused on their coursework and to maintain good academic standing.

> The first time I felt actually engaged is when the professor would select students to actually say something that's on [their] mind which allowed them to actually think about the topic that is being discussed in class or giving the students a chance to . . . speak out . . . . In my math class, we're able to go up and do problems and get worksheets and help out other students. And most math classes . . . that I've taken on campus, it's more like here's the lesson, everyone be quiet. . . . This is more like a social class and I've never actually engaged in math. I'm not confident in math. So yes, I'm actually learning a lot.
>
> *-Focus Group Participant*

At the same time, some focus group respondents noted that **many learners do not necessarily understand the value and importance of engagement**— both in their courses and on their campuses—to their academic success. These students suggested that their peers need to be more proactive in getting involved in their college experience and that institutions could better inform students about engagement opportunities (e.g., in student success courses, through club days or extracurricular activity fairs).

These findings also strongly suggest that faculty have a critical role in promoting students' engagement through the relationships they develop with their learners, the instructional approaches they take and the connections they help students make with their peers and the college. **When asked about a time when they learned the most in a class, participants indicated the most important factors were the instructor (1) caring about their students, (2) challenging learners to do the best they could and (3) being interested in what their students thought.** Other top approaches taken by faculty that students cited as engaging included delivering relevant coursework with real-world, practical applications and providing opportunities for learners to work with a variety of students in class *(see Table 6)*.

TABLE 6	
Factors that Make Students Feel Like They Are Learning (Percentage indicating "very important")	
The instructor challenged you to do the best you could	80%
The instructor really cared about the students	80%
The instructor was interested in what students thought	78%
You could relate to what you were studying	77%
The course had real world, practical applications	69%
The class wasn't all lecture; students were actively engaged	69%
The instructor gave you regular feedback about your performance in the class	66%
The course was hands-on and engaged you in different projects and experiences	66%
You had opportunities to work with different kinds of students	58%

Focus group participants echoed these findings when identifying specific ways faculty promote student engagement. Students described engaging faculty as those who:

- Provided feedback to students

- Showed energy and passion for their subject matter

- Demonstrated their care for students by asking personal questions

- Created opportunities for open dialog and engagement in class

- Expected more from students' academic performance

- Rewarded participation with extra credit

- Promoted opportunities to get involved in the college outside of their courses

Access to and involvement in academic support programs and experiences also surfaced in survey responses as a key facilitator of students' engagement, particularly for specific student populations *(see*

Subgroup highlights below). Categorical programs and special support initiatives stood out as providers of these services. When offering advice to their peers, several survey respondents suggested students proactively take advantage of resources at the college, particularly DSPS, EOPS, Puente or TRIO. Similarly, some focus group participants spoke of receiving important academic and other support from these special programs as well as from other home-grown initiatives. These students often indicated that they received not only critical academic assistance through these programs but also were able to make connections to a community of peers and educators and links to resources across the institution.

> [An academic support program at my college] gives you a chance to continue studying with fellow students and with a supervised instructor who has taken the course. They can guide you to what the teacher wants.
>
> —*Survey Participant*

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS. Engagement surfaces as an important success factor for a number of subgroups in various ways. EOPS participants were more likely to state that being engaged was important to their learning and were more likely to advise their peers to be engaged in order to achieve success than non-EOPS participants. Recommendations to stay engaged increased with age, from 4% for those under 20 years of age to over 10% for those 35 or older.

Faculty and their instructional approach also figured prominently in the engagement of several different subgroups. **Completers, EOPS and DSPS participants, older students and those with a field of study all indicated that the expectations of, being challenged by and receiving feedback from their instructors significantly impacted their learning.** Completers, EOPS and DSPS participants, female students and those with a field of study also placed a high value on classes that were not all lecture, actively engaged students, had practical applications and included hands-on activities. Additionally, African-American, Latino and first-generation students were more likely to indicate that working with students of diverse backgrounds and experiences was important to their learning.

Access to and receipt of academic support stood out as critical to several subgroups, particularly African Americans. **Of the completers and current students who had skipped a term of college, lack of academic support was a very important factor in deciding *not* to enroll for 30% of African Americans and 20% of Latinos (versus 7% of whites). Similarly, among**

leavers, African Americans were more likely than Latinos or whites to indicate that a lack of academic support was very important in their decision *not* to return; more than a quarter of those 44 years of age and older reported the same.

Discussion Questions

- *In what ways do faculty already promote classroom and campus engagement at your college—in their courses and/or programs? Which educational programs on your campus do this particularly well?*

- *What professional development and ongoing support do faculty need to ensure they are using engaging, student-centered pedagogical approaches in their courses and programs?*

- *In what ways can academic supports be structured and offered to reach more students inside and outside the classroom?*

- *What opportunities exist on campus for students to be actively involved in experiences and activities outside of class that will help them be/become more engaged learners?*
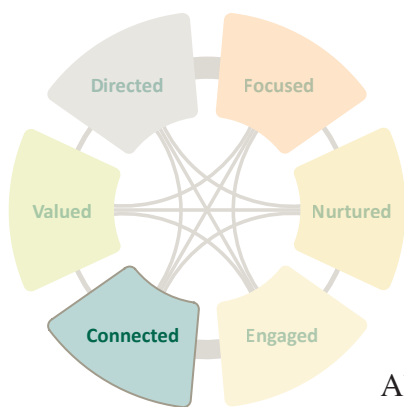
Connected

Creating connections between students and the institution and cultivating relationships that underscore how students' involvement with the college community can contribute to their academic and personal success *(Students feel like they are part of the college community)*

Although students appeared to prioritize this factor somewhat lower than others when discussing what facilitated their success, these findings suggest that feeling connected goes hand-in-hand with being engaged. Students reported feeling connected when they were involved in their college community—both inside and outside the classroom. Focus group participants indicated **they achieved a sense of connection by joining clubs, making friends, helping peers and forming study groups.** Some students reported this kind of involvement was particularly important for those who come to college without an educational focus—allowing students to stay involved while they clarified their goals and direction.

As with engagement, **students suggested that faculty have a key role in fostering their sense of connection by promoting their involvement in the college, both during and outside of class time.** When asked what made them feel connected, survey respondents most commonly reported faculty (20%), followed by a particular class they took (10%), other students (6%) or a counselor (5%). Focus group participants further reported that faculty facilitated their sense of connection by showing they care about students, delivering course content in an engaging way, promoting connections between students and informing students about resources available to assist in their success.

These findings also suggest that institutions need to pay special attention to cultivating a sense of connection because there are fewer anchors than in other educational contexts. Specifically, community colleges have high numbers of part-time faculty and students and are viewed as a stepping stone to a longer term goal. When asked if they feel connected to the college, 77% of survey respondents said yes, with the responses

> This semester, my English teacher started off the class by doing an ice breaker. So, at first, it was like we're all just here to take a class and then it was okay, we're students and we all got to know each other on a better level than we probably would have earlier. To actually know the people and know your teacher more, it felt like we were all kind of connected, and it was like we can actually speak to each other and ask each other questions better than if we had done it two weeks ago and we didn't have any ice breaker.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

ranging from a low of 69% to a high of 86% among the 12 colleges. Additionally, analysis of survey results also revealed that time spent on campus outside of class also correlated positively with participants' sense of connection across all student types. Simply stated, **the more time spent on campus outside of class time, the more connected all students indicated they felt.**

At the same time, s**urvey findings indicate that students spend little time on campus outside of class and, when they are on campus, they are often alone.** Approximately 41% reported spending fewer than five hours a week on campus outside of class, 36% between five and ten hours and 20% more than ten hours *(see Figure 1)*. When asked how they spent their time on campus when not in class, the most common response was studying alone followed by spending time on campus studying with friends and hanging out alone *(see Table 7)*. **In focus groups, some students discussed the limitations of the community college setting in creating connections.**

FIGURE 1
Time on Campus Outside of Class
(Hours per week)

3% Online only

20% More than 10 hours/week

41% Fewer than 5 hours/week

36% 5-10 hours/week

Some students did not see the need to feel connected to the college because they viewed community college as a stepping stone to bigger and better things, a place to spend a short time, get what is needed and leave. Some students also observed that their *faculty* can seem disconnected, particularly part-time instructors, which made their own sense of connection more tenuous.

TABLE 7

Ways Students Spend Time on Campus Outside of Class

Study alone	81%
Study with friends	57%
Hang out alone	53%
Hang out with friends	46%
Other activity	21%
Clubs or student government	14%
On campus job	9%

> . . . [Feeling connected] would be a lot more important if we weren't at a community college. If we were at [a university], of course it's important because we want . . . them to know who we are and we want to be able to say, oh, we went to [this university]. But if you're [at a community college], you don't' really care if anyone knows you went there, so you don't really need to be connected. I mean we need to be involved so we can transfer. It's on your application, but the college itself isn't very important to your application.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

> Most of my teachers are part-time and they have 30-minute office hours per week. So I really don't see how accommodating the teachers are, or how much they can be because they're never here. Most of them don't even live nearby or they have so many different students here and at other schools and, so, it's hard for them. The best you can do is email them and get a response back a couple days later. I don't see how anybody graduates here, to tell you the truth.
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS. Having and valuing college connections appeared to vary by some subgroups. Completers reported feeling more connected and having spent more time on campus on average than current students or leavers. EOPS participants and financial aid recipients were more likely to be on campus five hours or more per week outside of class time. First-generation students and students with a field of study were more likely to report spending over ten hours per week on campus outside of class time and to indicate that connectedness was very important to their success. First-generation students were also more likely to say that it was a counselor who made them feel connected.

Connections with peers and friends seemed particularly important for specific populations. African Americans (versus Latinos) were more likely to reference other students when speaking of a time they felt connected. That said, African Americans and Latinos were more likely to study alone while on campus than other students. Moreover, African Americans were also more likely to report hanging out alone while on campus compared to other students. **These findings suggest that African-American students in particular might benefit from supports that formally connect them with their peers outside of class time.**

As with being focused, **younger students were more likely to indicate that feeling connected was important to their success and friends also appeared to have a particular impact on this age group.** These students,

especially those under 20, said their decision to continue or complete their education was considerably influenced by their friends returning to school. At the same time, older learners also appeared to be effected by their relationships on campus. Students 44 and over reported that having a personal connection to other students, staff or instructors factored significantly into to their success.

Discussion Questions

- *On your campus, what are some ways that administrators, faculty and staff help students feel a sense of connection to the college?*

- *In what ways can the college create spaces where students can build personal connections that allow them to support and encourage each other?*

- *How can the time students spend in the classroom be structured to help them be more connected to their peers, faculty and the institution as a whole?*

- *How does your college help faculty and staff feel connected to your institution and develop an awareness of how their work links directly and/or indirectly to students' success?*
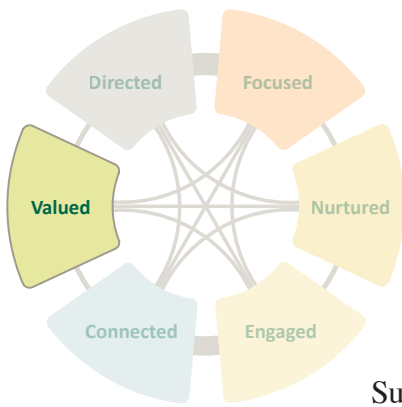
Valued

Providing students with opportunities to contribute to and enrich the college culture and community (Students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated)

Survey participants prioritized valued lowest when discussing which of the factors was most important to their success. Similarly, focus group participants often struggled to understand this success factor and feeling valued on their campus was not often the first thing that came to their minds as a top driver of their achievement. At the same time, when asked specifically about this success factor, students were able to describe a variety of contributions that they had made to their college and indicated that having the opportunity to make these contributions had played a role in their success. **Nearly three quarters of survey participants stated that it was somewhat or very important that they added value to their college.** When asked if they felt like they contributed to their campus community, 68% said yes, with the responses ranging from a low of 60% to a high of 84% among the 12 colleges.

When asked about specific activities that were likely to make them feel valued, **roughly three quarters of survey participants cited giving back through community service and providing feedback to instructors as key opportunities.** Other activities identified as important to students included

I was approached by another student, not because a professor got Involved but because we were in the same class. They felt I was friendly enough so they asked me to show them how to do an online class, what to look at, where to go, where to answer . . . they were confused. So I definitely felt valued because I'm not a paid tutor and I'm not a professor yet this student felt comfortable enough [with me] to ask for help.

—Focus Group Participant

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 organization . . . I'm able to make arguments about why you don't do certain things . . . So, yeah, In that sense, I feel very valued.

—Focus Group Participant

sharing family history, culture and traditions and mentoring other students *(see Table 8)*. Many students said they had participated in these activities, with the most (84%) reporting having provided feedback to instructors and the least (26%) having participated in leadership roles. Focus group participants additionally highlighted feeling that they added value when they were able to help others, in particular their peers.

> I started to feel valued when I helped out with clubs. I'm big into clubs on campus and I inspire other students to go and run for office. To me, that's being valued, being a resource for someone else . . . .
>
> —*Focus Group Participant*

TABLE 8

Activities that Make Students Feel Like They Are Adding Value to the College
(Percentage indicating "very important")

Activity	%
Giving back to the larger community through community service	76%
Providing feedback or suggestions to your instructors on what you cover or do in your classes	74%
Sharing your family history and talk about your culture and traditions in ways that make you feel proud of who you are	66%
Giving feedback on what's happening at the college	65%
Supporting and mentoring your fellow students	65%
Taking on leadership roles (e.g., student government, student ambassador)	63%

SUBGROUP HIGHLIGHTS.
While not recognized by students overall as a critical factor to their success when compared to the other factors, adding value and feeling valued surfaced as more important to certain subgroups, particularly underrepresented and nontraditional populations. **When looking at survey responses, African-American and Latino students, EOPS participants and first-generation college students were more likely to indicate that feeling as though they added value to their campuses was important to their success.** For African-American and Latino students, sharing family history and culture in ways that made them feel proud of who they were and taking on leadership roles at their college surfaced as particularly important to their sense of worth. Similarly, first-generation and EOPS participants underscored the importance of having their cultures respected; first-generation students were also more likely to prioritize the opportunity to provide feedback on college happenings.

In addition, **the older the student, the more likely they were to place high importance on adding value to their institution.** Survey participants 44 years and older were more likely to report that adding value to their college was a significant contributor to their success. These students (as well as those under 20) also noted that having their culture respected was also particularly important to their achievement. Older students participating in focus groups additionally spoke about the merits of sharing their knowledge and experience, particularly in an effort to help younger students make efficient and effective use of their time in college.

Finally, as with most of the success factors discussed above, stark differences surfaced between students who were either currently enrolled or who had completed and those who had stopped attending (leavers). Completers and current students were more likely to indicate that having something to offer and feeling respected for their culture was very important to their success. Additionally, completers were more likely to feel that adding value and the opportunity to give back to their community supported their achievement. **Leavers, on the other hand, were more likely to report that having something to offer and feeling valued for their contributions were not important to their success.**

Discussion Questions

- *In what ways can students be connected to leadership, mentorship and service opportunities both on campus and in the larger community?*

- *What opportunities already exist or could be developed that allow students to provide constructive input and feedback on what happens at the college, both inside and outside the classroom, and through formal and informal means?*

- *How can the institution create safe spaces where students can share their cultural, family and work experiences and learn from those of others?*

- *How can your college encourage faculty and staff to look for and recognize students' unique talents, skills, abilities and experiences and empower them to link students with opportunities to share these with others?*

Supporting African-American, Latino and First-Generation College Students

Analysis of survey findings by ethnicity and first-generation status offers preliminary insight into which aspects of the sixv success factors these populations find particularly important. As ethnicity and college going status are not always mutually exclusive, related findings are highlighted by success factor.

Directed and Focused: Students at colleges with high percentages of African Americans were less likely to have received counseling or have an ed plan. However, these same students cited having programs and services available to help them successfully navigate college as important to their success. On the other hand, students at colleges with high transfer rates among Latinos at CCCs or high percentages of Latinos were more likely to have received counseling.

African-American and Latino learners were also more likely to underscore the importance of financial aid to their persistence from term to term, citing the absence of this kind of support as a key factor for those who left or skipped a semester. Similarly, the inability to register for classes also surfaced as a more critical barrier to re-enrollment for these two groups of students when compared to other participants.

Nurtured: African-American participants and first-generation college students were also more likely to report that others wanting them to succeed considerably impacted their success in college and their persistence from semester to semester. First-generation students particularly indicated that an instructor caring about them was important to their achievement and that the absence of this support influenced their decision ***not*** to return.

Engaged and Connected: In terms of continuous engagement, a lack of academic support surfaced as particularly important to those African-American and Latino students who skipped a term and African Americans who had left their colleges.

Conversely, African-American, Latino and first-generation students were all more likely to indicate that working with a diversity of students promoted their learning and sense of involvement. Additionally, African Americans were more likely to reference peers when talking about a time they felt connected to their college. However, African-American and Latino participants were also more likely to say they primarily spent time on campus studying or hanging out alone.

Valued: African-American, Latino and first-generation participants were all more likely to report that feeling they both added value to their campus and were valued for these contributions were important to their achievement. These populations all also indicated that sharing family history and culture in ways that made them feel proud figured prominently into their sense of worth on campus.

Students Speak:
Suggestions for Action

The students engaged in this research offered a multitude of ways the many actors in their community college lives—faculty, counselors and student services professionals, administrators, staff and their peers alike—can support their success. The following section offers a series of suggestions for action by constituent group, including students themselves, some of which are already in progress at colleges participating in this study. Most suggestions come directly from students, while the research team derived others based on what participants said. Related success factors are mapped to each suggestion.

Students' recommendations range in terms of the time, money and professional development required for implementation and some raise policy considerations. We recognize that because these are students' ideas for action, many critical policy and practice suggestions may be missing. For example, the recommendations for college administrators are particularly light. However, these ideas will inform the next stage of Student Support (Re)defined. They will offer the basis for research and dialog with community college practitioners about how roles, responsibilities, structures and systems may need to change for more students to receive the support they say they need to succeed.

Faculty

▶ Help students form a goal by providing discipline-specific guidance and advising as part of the structure of your classes (directed, focused)

▶ Provide regular, constructive feedback on students' performance and progress (engaged, focused)

▶ Offer opportunities for students to share input on your course(s) (engaged, valued)

▶ Show students you care through simple gestures like knowing their names and asking how they are doing (engaged, nurtured)

▶ Call on students in class and offer opportunities for open dialog (engaged, valued)

▶ Offer ways for students to incorporate and honor their own culture, history and traditions (connected, valued)

▶ Have clearly articulated and high expectations for students, their performance and completion (engaged)

▶ Engage students in hands-on learning and practical applications that help them make the connection between their community college experience and life goals (engaged)

▶ Encourage students to connect with peers and offer in-class opportunities to do so (engaged, valued)

▶ Reward students' participation in class (e.g., with extra credit or as part of their grade) (engaged, valued)

▶ Provide or connect students with academic support outside of class (engaged, connected)

▶ Help students learn about other support resources and opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Share with students your own success story, your educational and career paths (engaged, nurtured)

▶ Recognize students' potential and encourage them to use their skills and abilities to help others (engaged, nurtured, valued)

Counselors and Student Services Professionals

▶ Proactively ask students about their goals and help them form a specific direction early in their college experience (directed)

▶ Based on their goals, provide students with a realistic sense of the time they are likely to spend at the institution; explain that most students spend more than two years and help them understand the important role their community college experience will play in their educational journey (directed, focused)

▶ Integrate career counseling and job considerations into academic advising (directed)

▶ Seek out first-generation and undeclared students to provide specialized assistance (directed)

▶ Connect as many students as possible to special programs like EOPS, DSPS and home-grown support initiatives that help them identify a direction early on and receive ongoing guidance for reaching their goals (directed, focused)

- ► Encourage students to develop educational plans and provide mechanisms for students to regularly review them, either online or at a counseling session (directed, focused)

- ► Promote support resources to both students and faculty (focused, engaged)

- ► Help students learn about engagement opportunities including extracurricular activities and clubs (engaged, connected, valued)

- ► Inform students of opportunities for them to contribute to the college or local community (valued)

- ► Express to students that you care about their success—in addition to providing tangible guidance and advising (nurtured)

- ► Recognize students' potential and encourage them to use their skills and abilities to help others (engaged, nurtured, valued)

Administrators

- ► Create opportunities for students to receive assistance and information upon entry that helps them select and plan for an educational direction (e.g., establish a welcome center or one-stop-shop for enrollment services) (directed)

- ► Support college policy that encourages mandatory enrollment in student success classes or educational planning that specifically addresses how to make and track progress toward goal achievement and engage with the college both inside and outside the classroom (directed, focused, engaged, connected)

- ► Widely promote opportunities for students to engage in clubs, extracurricular activities and campus leadership (engaged, connected, valued)

- ► Consider ways to bolster the community college image not as an educational stop-over but as a place of pride and worth in the students' postsecondary experience (engaged, connected)

Staff

- ► Make students feel welcome on campus (nurtured)

- ► Help students navigate their way to offices, services and supports (engaged, connected)

▶ Recognize how your own role at the college contributes directly or indirectly to student success (connected)

▶ Express to students that you care about their success and that you are there to support their achievement (nurtured)

▶ Recognize students' potential and encourage them to use their skills and abilities to help others (engaged, nurtured, valued)

Students

▶ Be motivated and dedicated to achieving an educational goal (focused, directed)

▶ Seek out your own information on the requirements for your desired certificate, degree and/or transfer destination including what classes to take and when to take them (directed, focused)

▶ When obtaining information, check multiple sources including websites, counselors, faculty, alumni and classmates (directed, focused)

▶ Organize peer-led educational planning through student leadership groups (directed, focused)

▶ Form study groups (engaged, connected)

▶ Formally or informally mentor fellow students (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Proactively meet people in class and exchange contact information (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Join student clubs and organizations (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Help other students learn about resources available at the college (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Share your own professional, educational and life experience with other students (engaged, connected, valued)

▶ Encourage each other to accomplish your individual goals (focused, engaged, connected, valued)

Next Steps

We recognize that the Year 1 student perspectives research may raise many questions about how practitioners should act on these findings. The next phase of our research will focus on engaging college practitioners in a dialog to explore answers to some of these questions and collecting concrete examples of programmatic strategies designed to help students experience the six success factors at scale. To begin, we will develop an inquiry guide that helps practitioners (1) use the key themes and findings presented in this report to assess their own college's approach to support and (2) identify opportunities for feasible institutional reform. We will pilot this inquiry guide with colleges participating in the study and then make it widely available through various presentations and meetings with community college educators throughout the state. Next, given that many of the Year 1 key themes and findings imply the need for structural and systemic change, we will examine and profile examples of colleges both in California and across the nation that have pursued coherent, strategic institutional initiatives to improve student support and increase completion. The RP Group will likely release the results of the study's second phase in between fall 2013 and spring 2014. Readers can find the most current project results, resources and updates at: http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support.

theRPgroup

the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group)
strengthens the ability of California community colleges to undertake high quality
research, planning and assessments that improve evidence-based decision
making, institutional effectiveness and success for all students.

Student Support (Re)defined Project Team

Darla Cooper	Kelley Karandjeff	Eva Schiorring
Michelle Barton	Michael Large	Vinod Verma
Kathy Booth	Nathan Pellegrin	Terrence Willett
Priyadarshini Chaplot	Rogéair Purnell	Adore Davidson
Rob Johnstone	Diane Rodriguez-Kiino	Loann Solem

@ **For more information...**
Contact Dr. Darla Cooper, Director of Research and Evaluation,
dcooper@rpgroup.org.

Who supports this study?