



STUDENT SUCCESS

WORKING GROUP DELIVERABLE

The **Student Success Working Group** will focus on identifying evidence-based and otherwise promising strategies to boost college completion at New Jersey's colleges. The group will explore opportunities to strengthen student success by scaling and replicating academic, social, and financial interventions that are innovative and effective. Specifically, the group focused on:

- ➔ Exploring and recommending alternatives to traditional developmental education.
- ➔ Identifying creative strategies that can accelerate student progress to a degree and reduce the impact of student financial challenges.
- ➔ Exploring opportunities to expand and standardize college credit for prior learning models.
- ➔ Investigating multi-intervention models, such as CUNY ASAP, to see what lessons can be applied in New Jersey from first year to graduation.

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OVERVIEW

In March of 2019, the State of New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education released its plan for higher education in New Jersey. The plan, [Where Opportunity Meets Innovation: A Student-Centered Vision for New Jersey Higher Education](#), outlines steps that institutions of higher education in New Jersey should take to ensure that postsecondary education is accessible to all students, affordable, equitable, high-quality, inclusive, and safe.

In an effort to make sure that New Jersey college students can realize their educational objectives, the state plan identifies five working groups to develop strategies that support students and lead to the overall goal that 65% of working-age New Jersey residents obtain a postsecondary educational credential by 2025. Each working group has a discrete focus and charge that aligns with the vision for the [New Jersey Student Bill or Rights](#) and with specific goals of the state plan.

THE STUDENT SUCCESS WORKING GROUP HAD THE FOLLOWING CHARGE:

To identify evidence-based strategies to boost college completion at New Jersey colleges, including exploring alternatives to developmental education, strategies to accelerate student progress to a degree, opportunities to standardize college credit for prior learning assessment, and possible multi-intervention models.

The Office of the Secretary selected 40 members from among those who applied to a state-wide call and two co-Chairs for the Student Success Working Group. Ph.D. Harvey Kesselman, Ph.D., President of Stockton University and Mr. Reginald Lewis, Executive Director of the Newark City of Learning Collaborative, serve as co-Chairs. Working Group membership represents racial, ethnic, gender, age, and status diversity as well as diversity across higher education sectors in the state.

The Student Success Working Group began its work in June and delivered its recommendations to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education at the final meeting of the Working Group on October 30, 2019.

To facilitate its work, the Student Success Working Group broke into 4 subcommittees, each with a specific charge. Each subcommittee has one lead or two co-leads. This group was charged with:

1. To explore and recommend alternatives to traditional developmental education
2. To identify creative strategies to accelerate student progress to a degree and reduce the impact of financial challenges
3. To explore opportunities to expand and standardize models for accepting college credit for prior learning
4. To investigate multi-intervention models to support students from first year to graduation

The full Student Success Working Group met once a month, and the subcommittees met as needed from June to October. The subcommittee members presented their research and draft recommendations at monthly meetings of the Working Group. The co-Chairs as well as the staff from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority reviewed and commented on each draft of the subcommittees' recommendations prior to the monthly meeting. Subcommittees' final recommendations were submitted to the co-Chairs and to the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education for their review by October 10, 2019.

On October 30, the subcommittees presented their final recommendations. The staff of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will forward the final recommendations from each subcommittee to the Secretary of Higher Education, following that meeting.

The Student Success Working Group subcommittees created four documents that provide realistic recommendations for 2-year and 4-year institutions to streamline developmental education, to develop smooth pathways from high school to 2-year and 4-year institutions and from 2-year to 4-year institutions, to explore ways to accelerate time to degree, to expand and standardize prior learning assessment, and to create multi-intervention services that support students academically, financially, personally, and in terms of physical and mental wellness. In addition, the subcommittees recommend that the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education promote professional development to support faculty and administrators' sharing best practices and learning new methods for effecting reforms related to student success, provide a means for regular data collection from and dissemination to institutions of higher education, and explore opportunities for encouraging a third academic semester in the summer. The Student Success Working Group members believe that moving in the recommended directions will help students achieve their educational goals in a timely fashion while incurring the least amount debt and contribute to the state goal for 65% of working-age adults to obtain a postsecondary credential by 2025.

Framework for Establishing Multi-Intervention Models in New Jersey

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this document belong to the Working Group and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the State of New Jersey. The content provided is intended to serve as a resource to help develop strategies to increase support for students at New Jersey's colleges and is provided in good faith. Due to time constraints, the Working Group notes the information may not be comprehensive and readers should take into account context for how the deliverable is used as well as further research that may be available after publication.

Problem Statement

Across our state, students encounter many obstacles to college completion. Low-income and first-generation students, in particular, often face multiple barriers that impede their ability to remain enrolled through degree attainment. Common difficulties include the struggle to balance financial commitments and the need to meet academic requirements. Family obligations can also interfere with students' ability to maintain momentum in their studies. In addition to these barriers, students oftentimes struggle to become immersed in college life and, therefore, do not experience a sense of belonging.

Unfortunately, colleges often address the many barriers students face in piecemeal fashion. Rather than implementing disconnected interventions, a number of studies have cited the benefits of multiple, connected interventions that can reinforce one another and, as a result, contribute to increased retention, academic success, and persistence to graduation (Strumbos, Linderman, & Hicks, 2018).

Recommended Action Items for New Jersey Institutions

1. New Jersey higher education institutions implement or improve the design of student success interventions on state campuses.

The more interventions are structured, coordinated, and viewed as a total-campus effort, the greater student retention, persistence, and graduation rates (Schneider & Clark, 2018). As Schneider and Clark's research indicates, multi-intervention services must approach the student holistically and address issues related to each student's current academic, personal, social, financial lives, and future goals.

2. Explore the possibility of creating Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) programming, or EOF-like programming, available to all students.

In New Jersey, the EOF program, in existence for 50 years, specifically targets students with academic and financial need; thus, not every student can benefit from the multi-intervention services offered to EOF students. Campus EOF programs offer comprehensive services, including high-quality curricular and co-curricular programs and educational support services intended to assist students with academic, as well as social, financial, and personal success.

Other states have multi-intervention models through which they offer comprehensive supports to students. Similar to the State of New Jersey's EOF program, Amarillo College and the City University of New York (CUNY) system have developed anti-poverty programs to support their neediest students. These institutions recognized that poverty is a major barrier for students and have sought to alleviate some of the burden poverty imposes on students. [Amarillo College's No Excuses Poverty Initiative](#) and [CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\)](#) support students through degree completion with several strategies to connect students to the institution and the surrounding community.

Amarillo College's No Excuses Poverty Initiative offers rent payments, transportation vouchers, childcare subsidies, free food from an on-campus food pantry, and free clothing. Additionally, Amarillo runs "...data analytics to create at-risk profiles for all incoming first-year students and invites those with incomes below \$19,000 to come in before an emergency strikes" (Mangan & Schmalz, 2019). In this way, Amarillo takes a proactive approach in its student outreach efforts. Because data is at the core of Amarillo's work, the College collaborated with the Wisconsin HOPE Lab to do a basic needs survey of all students (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). The results of the survey showed that 54% of respondents experienced food insecurity and 59% of respondents experienced housing insecurity in the previous 30 days (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2018). Following the implementation of No Excuses in 2011, three-year completion and transfer rates at Amarillo rose from 19% to 48%, and equity gaps in graduation nearly closed for Black and Hispanic students (Mangan & Schmalz, 2019).

The CUNY ASAP multi-intervention model is similar to Amarillo's. It offers CUNY students enhanced advising, academic and career services, financial support, highly structured degree pathways, and tuition waivers. Students are required to take a full-time course load of 12 credit hours per semester, and encouraged to take developmental courses early to create a pathway to graduation within three years or less (Strumbos, Linderman, & Hicks, 2018). Since the implementation of the CUNY ASAP program, graduation rates for African American students have risen (Strumbos, Linderman, & Hicks, 2018).

Recommended Action Item for the State of New Jersey

1. Ensure availability of annual EOF data.

Adequate supports should be provided to the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to update EOF data on a regular basis. This will ensure that data is provided annually and will offer insights into the efficacy of the program. These insights will also inform which interventions are working and how they may be applied to students who do not qualify for EOF.

Starting Points

1. **Conduct a Needs Assessment**

In order to address student needs, every institution should conduct a needs assessment, as Amarillo College did, to understand what assets students lack, what barriers they face, and what interventions might yield the best results.

2. **Consider intrusive advising**

Most colleges have an advising center that offers academic, personal, and social support to students as they transition into college and continue to navigate the institution. In an intrusive advising model, advisors reach out to students prior to their first day on campus rather than waiting for the semester to begin or for students to find their way to the advising center. Intrusive advisors approach the whole student and build a supportive relationship with students. A large amount of research shows that the advisor-student relationship can be at the heart of a student's college experience. The advisor is a teacher, advocate, and guide who may be aware of the student's personal struggles, advise the student on academic plans, know when the student needs assistance, and can show the student where to get help when needed (Varney, 2007).

3. Encourage early developmental education

By encouraging students to take developmental education courses early, perhaps even during the summer prior to beginning their first year of college, students and advisors can create an academic plan that keeps students on track to graduate on time. Most EOF programs in New Jersey engage students in a precollege summer bridge program (OSHE, 2019).

4. Explore strategies for providing needy students with financial assistance

Students often need funding to help stay on track, whether it be funding to supplement financial aid, for childcare or car repairs, or gift certificates to the local supermarket. An institution does not have to provide students with funding for all of these needs; however, providing access to funding for urgent needs can prevent a student from falling behind academically. Partnerships with local community agencies, businesses, alumni, and donors can help an institution raise the capital to provide this kind of emergency or completion grants.

The multiple interventions listed in the figure below reflect those highlighted in the research we reviewed. Each institution should be intentional about which interventions are necessary and will work to support students on its campus. The best way to do this is through a needs assessment which produces data that allows for each institution to reflect on its unique circumstances and make decisions effectively.

ADVISING

- intrusive, with high levels of contact
- academic advisors, mentors, success coaches, faculty advisors, and peer leaders
- metacognitive engagement
- success planning
 - guided pathways
 - academic planning



DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

- assessment and evaluation
- invites immediate change/correction



ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

- tutoring
 - including eTutoring
- supplemental instruction



REAL-TIME CAREER CONNECTIONS

- focus on competencies
- meta-majors
- internships
- relevant on-campus employment
- online mechanism for career exploration
- faculty engagement



PARTNERSHIPS

- on-campus offices and departments
- faculty
- CBOs/government agencies/social services
 - childcare
 - housing
 - food insecurity
 - transportation
 - mental health services
 - physical health services



CURRICULAR RE-DESIGN

- multiple measures for placement decisions
- co-requisite remediation
- competency-based education
- prior learning assessment (PLA)
- swift transfer credit evaluation
- revamping of developmental education



GAP FUNDING

- meets costs after aid has been applied
- priority on seniors close to graduation
- reduced loan encumbrance



ENGAGEMENT

- exposure to success
 - alumni/faculty mentorship
- high-impact practices
 - internships
 - first-year seminars
 - learning communities
 - service learning
 - faculty-led research experiences



SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS

- precollege articulation
 - courses
 - workshops
- courses taught by (tenured) faculty



STUDENT COMMITMENT REQUIRED

- contracts
- intrusive advising
- partnership with advisor(s)
- personal development
- academic commitment
- working with faculty



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

- financing
- representation
- self-assessment
- comprehensive student success plan
- faculty development



TECHNOLOGY

- student tracking/CRM
- data management system
- social media
- text messaging capabilities
- internal and external in-time communication
- loaner system for students



STATE COMMITMENT

- policy/legislation
- significant financial resources
 - innovation grant funding
 - accountability measures

Selected Resources

- Goldrick-Rab, S., and Cady, C. (2018). Supporting community college completion with a culture of caring: A case study of Amarillo College. Madison, WI: The Wisconsin HOPE Lab. Retrieved from <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/wisconsin-hope-lab-case-study-amarillo-college.pdf>
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