What Matters for Student Success

First Year Student Success Workshop
June 23, 2016

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for Undergraduate Education

Agenda: Set the Context

✓ **Student Success in College: Why focus on student success? What is it?**

✓ **Research about What Matters for Student Success**

✓ **Implications**

Why Focus on Student Success?

- **External Pressures**

- **Internal Pressures**

- **It's why we're here . . .**

Why Focus on First-Year Student Success?

- [Put] first-year students first – not because sophomores, juniors, and seniors deserve any less attention, but because the foundation for the entire undergraduate experience is built from the student's early college experiences.

- Simply put, institutional decisions and actions are critically important in shaping student expectations [which] shape the way students approach higher education. (Swing & Skipper, in Kramer et al 2007)

DEFINING FYSS

- A Good Beginning: Solid foundation for achieving student and institutional goals and outcomes. Solid foundation for all the transitions and challenges to come.

- Including:
  - Academic achievement: "Good standing" is a minimum. What academic achievements do student and institutional goals require?
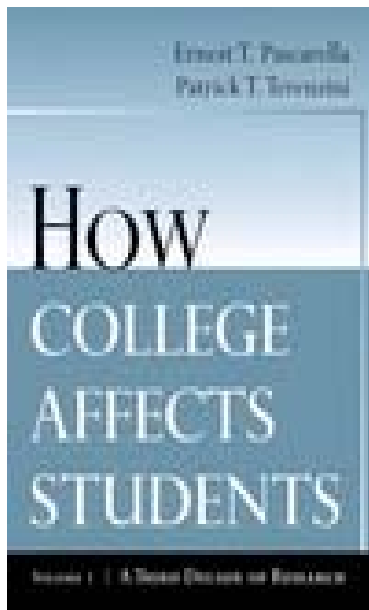 - Timely progress to degree
  - Persistence to graduation

Research: What Matters for Student Success

Pre-college Characteristics Associated with Student Success:

- –Academic preparation
- –Ability
- –Family background and support
- –Financial wherewithal

But What Matters Most for Student Success: *Student Engagement*

The greatest impact appears to stem from students' total level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing

Pascarella & Terenzini, *How College Affects Students*, **2005, p. 647**
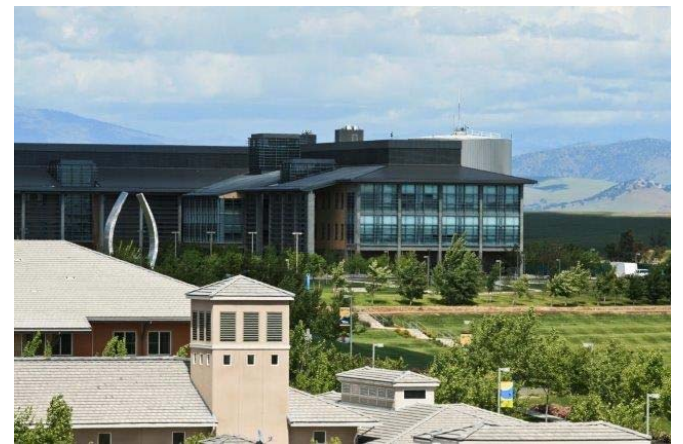
But What Matters Most for Student Success: *Student Engagement*

Simply put, what students do during college has a greater impact on what they learn and whether they graduate than who they are or even where they go to college. (Manning et al, 2014)

But What Matters Most for Student Success: *Student Engagement*

1. What **students** do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities

2. What **institutions*** do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things

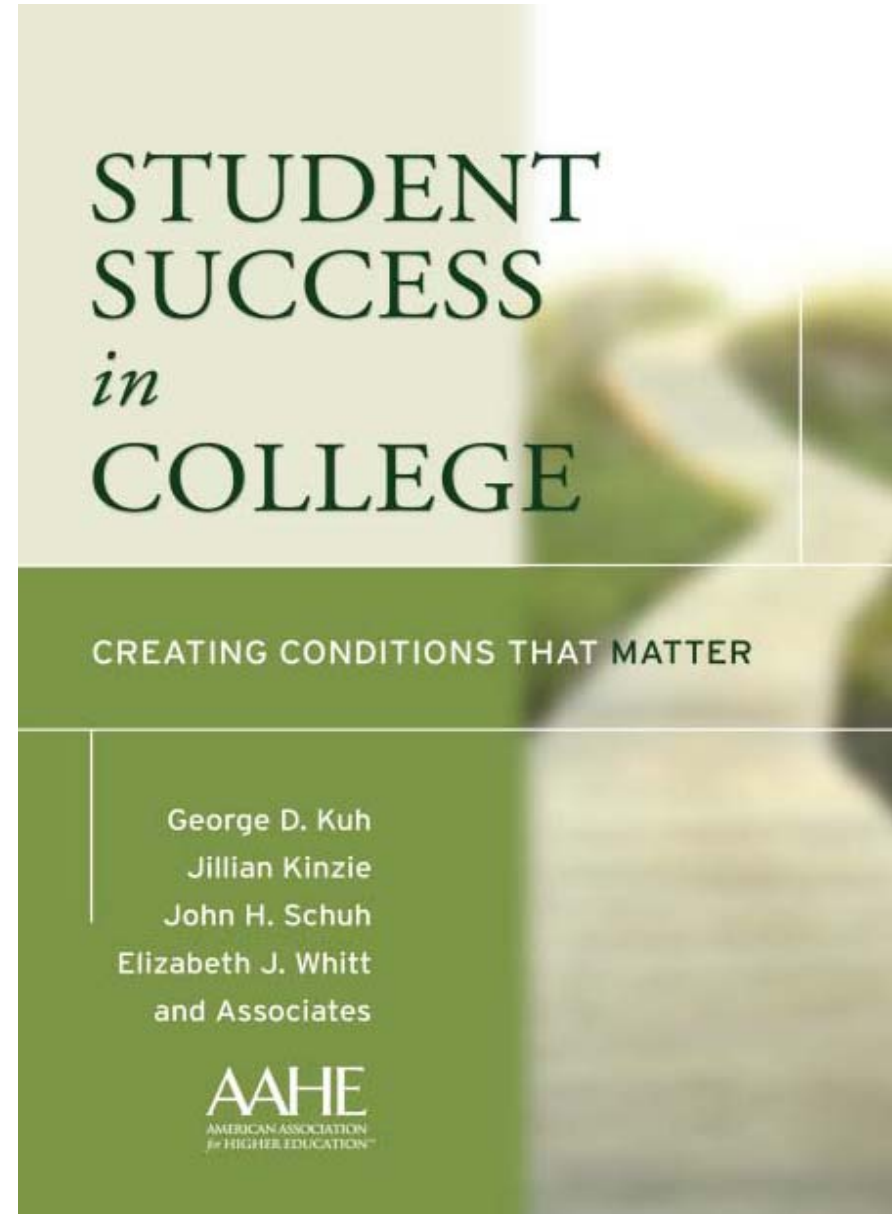# But What Matters Most for Student Success: *Student Engagement*

Effective Educational Practices

- Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environments

(c.f., Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

Project DEEP

What does an educationally effective college look like at the turn of the 21st century?

STUDENT SUCCESS *in* COLLEGE

CREATING CONDITIONS THAT MATTER

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DEEP Guiding Questions:

❖What do 'high-performing' colleges and universities do to promote student success?

❖What campus features -- policies, programs, practices, environments – are related to higher-than-predicted graduation rates and student engagement?

Six Shared Conditions

1. "Living" Mission and "Lived" Educational Philosophy
2. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
3. Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success
4. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
5. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality
6. Environments Adapted for Student Success

Clear Pathways to Student Success

College as a jigsaw puzzle – an empty bag to fill with puzzle pieces.

Students who cannot discern meaning from their college activities often report academic difficulty or social isolation and are at risk of leaving school . . . This is particularly true for first-generation college students. (Cross in Kuh et al, 2005, 2010)

Clear Pathways to Student Success

Understanding the importance of coherence in learning for student success, DEEP institutions have created pathways clearly marked to show students what to expect and what success looks and feels like. In short, they create structures and practices that help students bring meaning to their college experiences.

Clear Pathways to Student Success

Acculturation:
- DEEP colleges are thick with expectations about college life.
- They recognize that people rarely exceed their own expectations without being challenged.
- Therefore, these institutions have high expectations for everyone.
- They begin preparing students to meet these expectations long before they arrive on campus.

Clear Pathways to Student Success

- Clear, high expectations for student success consistent with students' characteristics and institutional mission.

- Consistent messages about those expectations from the student's first contact with the institution – and beyond – and from everyone.

- Clear, widely-shared policies, practices, and programs to help students meet those high expectations; consistent across academic and student affairs

- "Draw them a map and keep it in front of them at all times. And make sure it's always the same map."

Clear Pathways

Miami's First Year Experience (FYE) Committee designed a way to bring more coherence to the first-year by linking: (1) Miami Plan Foundation courses; (2) optional first-year seminars; (3) community living options that emphasize leadership and service; and (4) cultural, intellectual, and arts events.

Clear Pathways

Among the explicit goals for MU students are: "Invest considerable time in your own and your peers' academic learning. [Ask yourself] 'Why did I come to college? Am I devoting enough time to my studies?' Identify your educational goals and make purposeful choices about your major, courses and extracurricular experiences to advance those goals."

Clear Pathways

- Among the explicit goals for MU faculty are: "Set high expectations for learning in your courses. Partner with others on campus to deepen students' learning."
- Goals for student affairs staff include "Assist students in focusing on their educational objectives and devoting time to their studies."
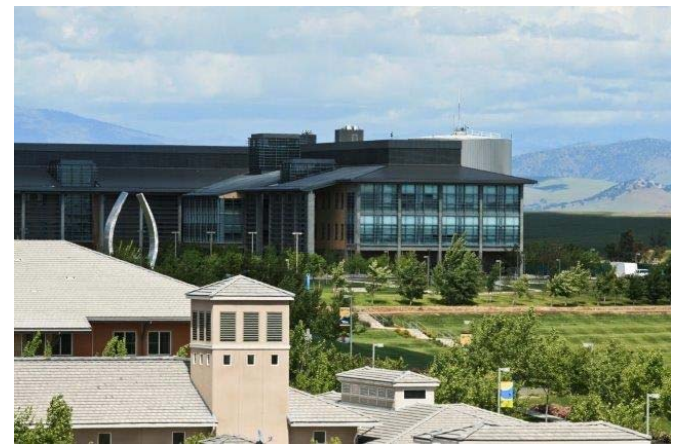
Clear Pathways

At Wheaton College, Resident Assistants and Residence Directors are 'in the loop' of the early intervention system for students at academic risk. Residence Life staff are in regular contact with academic advisors and faculty and vice versa. And an 'early alert' team, composed of staff and faculty consider, and respond to, concerns about students.

So What?

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

1. **What students do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities**

2. **What institutions* do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things**

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

- **What students do -- time and energy devoted to *educationally purposeful activities*.**

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

- **What institutions* do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things**

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

Teach new students what it takes to succeed.

➢ Clear, consistent high expectations for success and for using resources to meet challenges.

➢ High-quality comprehensive network of early warning systems and safety nets.

➢ Accurate "maps," distributed widely and followed consistently.

➢ <u>If you know something works, take it to scale and require it: "Frosh don't do optional."</u>

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

Use Data to Inform Decisions

➢ Conduct ongoing outcomes assessment and program evaluation and use the results.

➢ Do more of what you know works for student success; do less of what you know doesn't [or can't demonstrate does]

➢ Use data to review and revise time commitments and priorities: what can you stop doing, what should you stop doing, what must you start doing?

Clear Pathways to FY Student Success

Know your setting and your students.

Effective policies, programs, and practices must be aligned with (1) your students and (2) the institution's mission, values, and culture.

So: How do you get good data about them?

Questions?