Student Success
BY THE NUMBERS:
Building Capacity for a Culture of Evidence
In Texas Community and Technical Colleges

Project Description

Executive Summary

“Student Success BY THE NUMBERS” is designed to build the capacity of community and technical colleges to understand and communicate about data depicting student progress, engagement and success; to use those data in targeting and monitoring improvements in postsecondary preparation, access, persistence and completion; and to build an increasingly powerful culture of evidence to support and promote an effective student success agenda. Selected Texas community and technical colleges will be invited to apply for participation by making specific commitments to the work of the project. Major project components in Phase 1 (2011) include: assignment of seasoned and expert technical assistance providers to each participating college; and preliminary visits to each college for collaborative assessment of current data capacity, uses of evidence and interest in project participation. Phase 2 (January 2012 – May 2014) involves two 2-day technical assistance visits to each participating college each year for three years; CCLP-brokered access to a tailored package of online professional development courses in institutional research; a webinar or workshop series focused on key components of data work in support of a student success agenda; and an intensive 2 ½ -day institute for leadership teams from each college.

Overview of the Initiative

Recent years of work with community and technical colleges on the development of capacities and culture requisite to an effective student success agenda have demonstrated that there is no more powerful or potentially constructive prompt for change than the process of engaging a campus community with data that accurately depict the experiences of students as they move to and through the college. (Or don’t.) Thus, building the human capacity of community and technical colleges to collect, analyze, display and communicate data; to engage key campus constituencies in understanding and interpreting the data; to use multiple sources of data to deepen understanding of students’ experiences and thence to target areas of improvement; and to evaluate the effectiveness of improvement strategies is fundamental to the ultimate goals of strengthening postsecondary preparation, access, persistence and completion. Clearly, creating that culture
of evidence will not by itself produce better outcomes for students; but such a culture is fundamental to success.

**Purpose and Major Activities of the “Student Success by the Numbers” Initiative**

The overall purpose of the “Student Success by the Numbers” initiative is to build the data use capacities at the participating Texas community and technical colleges. The work aims to strengthen the colleges’ abilities and inclinations to gather, analyze, communicate and use data in work to strengthen student success. Very importantly, it includes the objective of helping the institutions build a culture of evidence—engaging the people of the college in the continuing process of understanding their strengths and needed improvements, targeting strategies and evaluating their impacts.

**Benefits to Participating Colleges**

College participation in the initiative will include the following benefits:

- Free on-campus technical assistance provided through the initiative to assist participating colleges in building their institutional data and research capacities (two expert consultant visits per year for the three years of the project).
- Free registration for AIR or other online professional development courses for institutional researchers
- Free registration for initiative Webinars and workshops
- All onsite expenses (hotel, meals, breaks, materials) for the college’s five-person team to participate in the 2 1/2-day “Student Success By the Numbers Institute.” *(Colleges will pay travel expenses.)*
- Access to the initiative’s print and online resources
- 50% subsidy for the colleges to participate in the 2012 CCSSE administration, including the planned special-focus study of high-impact practices in community and technical colleges (50% of survey fees averaging ~$4000 - $4500/college); (alternative: participation SENSE 2011 or 2012)

**NOTE:** total cash value to each college *(on average)* for the above= >$45,462 (not including value of Webinar/workshop series).

- Invitation to compete for a grant from Greater Texas Foundation or a partner organization for programs related to Greater Texas Foundation’s strategies for postsecondary retention and completion (4 awards of $25,000 each, with a major criterion being the college’s appropriate and compelling use of data to make a case for its proposal)

**College Commitments**

Institutions interested in participating in the preliminary / exploration activities of the initiative (“Phase 1”) will commit to host a preliminary 2-day college visit by a 2-person team of consultants who are experts in the uses of data to promote student success. The purpose of the visit is to assist each institution in an assessment of current data use and culture of evidence and to
ascertain institutional interest in proceeding to full participation in the initiative (“Phase 2”). There is no charge for these services.

Institutions that wish to proceed to full participation (“Phase 2,” described below) will submit a statement of commitment that includes their own aspirations and objectives for the work and full commitment to the following:

- Host and participate in periodic campus visits (2 per year) by the initiative’s assigned technical assistance provider
- Participate in Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2012 (or Survey of Entering Student Engagement 2012), receiving a 50% registration fee subsidy through the grant.
- Fully participate in professional development offerings of the initiative, including online courses (e.g., AIR), Webinars and workshops.
- Fully participate via a college team (president, CAO, CSSO, IR lead and faculty leader) in the Student Success By the Numbers Institute. Full participation shall include completion of advance data work assigned by the initiative and completion of an action plan during the Institute.

**Major Activities of the Initiative: Phase 1 (Summer 2011 through Fall 2011)**

- Technical assistance team visits (2 experts per team) to each of the colleges whose CEOs express interest; the 2-day preliminary visit will assist the institutions in their own assessment of current data use and culture of evidence and ascertain institutional interest in proceeding to full participation in the initiative.
- Based on reports and college feedback from this visit, college submission of a commitment document. (See following outline of commitments.)

**Major Activities of the Initiative: Phase 2 (January 2012 through May 2014)**

- College visits by the assigned technical assistance expert (using a matching process based on the initial campus visit)—two 2-day visits to the college during each year of the initiative.
- Participation of institutional researcher(s) from each of the colleges in a package series of 2-4 online courses (as appropriate to the individual’s existing experience and expertise) offered by the Association for Institutional Research, with a focus on key research skills and strategies requisite to work on the student success agenda.
- Administration of the 2012 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) or 2012 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE); reporting back to colleges.
- A series of webinars and/or invitational workshop sessions (e.g., in conjunction with the meetings of the Texas Association for Institutional Research) on topics potentially including:
  - Longitudinal student cohort tracking
  - Use of CCSSE and SENSE websites for benchmarking effective practice and for generating special analysis and custom reports using each college’s CCSSE and/or SENSE data
✓ Effective evaluation of student success strategies

- A 2 ½-day “Student Success by the Numbers” institute for leadership teams of five participants from each of the participating colleges, assisting them to use student cohort data and student engagement data to create action plans for improvement of student engagement and success.

- A concluding Request for Proposals from participating colleges—a competition for 4 grants of $25,000 each, using data to make the case for a project focused on postsecondary access or success.