Success & Equity Through Quality Instruction

Executive Summary

Too few of today's students — in particular racially minoritized, returning adults and those from low-income families — will hold a college degree in the coming decades, unless trajectories change. Increasingly, colleges and universities are recognizing the critically important role of faculty in student success efforts. This toolkit provides helpful resources and rubrics for colleges and universities with a framework to fully engage faculty in the student success movement.

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Every student deserves a strong start in their first year of college. This toolkit is part of a SSTF three-part series, providing resources to assist postsecondary leaders design and implement reform strategies that support equitable outcomes for students who are marginalized and racially minoritized.

ACUE | Student Success Through Exceptional Teaching   SOVA   STRONG START to FINISH

Executive Summary

Higher education has adopted a wide range of *student success* interventions to help many more students graduate with the skills, knowledge and dispositions needed for the opportunities they seek. These range from advising, use of predictive analytics, and open educational resources to re-structured degree programs, co-requisite remediation, co-curricular opportunities and integrated supports, to name just a few.

As helpful as these interventions are, attainment projections suggest that we're still meaningfully off track. In the coming decades, if national trajectories don't change, too few of today's students — including Black, Latinx, Indigenous students, returning adults and students from low-income families — will hold a college degree.[1]

The Role of Faculty

Increasingly, colleges and universities are recognizing the critically important role of faculty in student success efforts. Students spend more time with their professors than any other college professional, be it in person or virtual. For many of today's students — juggling academic, family and work responsibilities — time in class is the best, sometimes only, opportunity to help them succeed.[2] Plus, COVID-19 powerfully demonstrated the importance of faculty: campuses shuttered but educators ensured that teaching and learning were sustained.

Research has identified teaching practices that, when used by faculty, create engaging and inclusive learning conditions, make content relevant, promote deeper learning, and develop lifelong skills.[3] Studies confirm that students achieve at higher levels, more equitably among student subgroups, when professors design and deliver courses using these evidence-based approaches.[4] Moreover, graduates are twice as likely to be living fulfilling lives and doing rewarding work when taught well by a faculty member who took an interest in students' lives, got them excited about learning, and assigned meaningful and relevant work.[5]

1. Nettles, M. T. (2017). *Challenges and opportunities in achieving the national postsecondary degree attainment goals.* ETS Research Report Series, 1–72.

2. Education Advisory Board. (2015). *Defining the faculty role in student success: Building ownership for student progression among individual faculty and distributed academic units.* MacCormack, P., Reilly, K. P., & Brailow, D. G. (2019). Creating value. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 51(4), 40–47.

3. Sekel, J. C. (July 2018). The essentials of college instruction: A comprehensive bibliography. Association of College and University Educators.

4. Gyurko, J., & Snow, M. (2020). Our "Directive": Quality Teaching and Learning. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 52:5, 6-16.

5. Gallup. (2014). Great jobs, great lives. A study of more than 30,000 college graduates across the U.S. Gallup-Purdue Index report; Gallup. (2015). Great jobs, great lives. The relationship between student debt, experiences and perceptions of college worth. Gallup-Purdue index 2015 report.

Yet through no fault of their own, faculty aren't prepared to use these evidence-based and equity-promoting teaching practices. Comprehensive training in pedagogy is largely absent from most PhD programs. Hiring often looks to pedigree and publications, creating little reason for graduate training to change. Professional incentives for full-time faculty emphasize service and research. Adjuncts from professions outside of academia, such as nursing, law and the building trades, to name just a few, are experts in their fields but not necessarily in how to teach those vocations well. Valuable in-service resources, such as on-campus teaching centers, are typically understaffed and only frequented by the interested few.

Teaching and Developmental Education Reform

Quality instruction is particularly important in the reform of developmental education, where students are disproportionately Black, Latinx, Indigenous and those from families with low incomes and from underserved communities. For example, the Guided Pathways model of dev ed reform[6] defines clear and coherent pathways of study and helps students choose and stay on their chosen path through integrated advising. But within this approach, colleges must give greater attention to what happens among faculty and students, in class and online, to help students *stay* on their chosen path and ensure learning, Pathways' fourth pillar. Policymakers may be "paying more attention to this area,"[7] but there is still much more work to do if we are to ensure that faculty have the support they seek so that students get the quality of education they deserve.

A Holistic Plan of Action

It will require more than a professional development workshop here or there to fully engage faculty in student success efforts and ensure that students benefit from evidence-based and equity-promoting instruction, resulting in outcomes that are indistinguishable by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or gender. The change we seek requires a holistic plan of action across five domains: **strategy, equity, approach, evaluation and culture.**

Strategy   **Equity**   **Approach**

Evaluation   **Culture**

6. Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success. Harvard University Press.

7. Scott, D., Dizon, J.P.M., & Kezar, A. (2019). State of the Faculty: 2018 Report. University of Southern California, Pullias Center for Higher Education.

How This Toolkit Helps

This toolkit addresses each of the five domains. It provides helpful resources and rubrics for colleges and universities to self-assess current efforts in each domain. The rubrics, along with "questions to consider," can assist strategic planning and build consensus on new actions to take. These resources and rubrics are followed by illustrative "practice profiles" that showcase colleges and universities making changes in one domain or more. The domains and recommended actions are based on decades of research and informed by ACUE and Sova's work with hundreds of institutions and tens of thousands of faculty members nationwide.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit provides helpful resources and rubrics for colleges and universities to self-assess current efforts in each domain.

- **Five domains:** Each domain includes an overview, questions to consider, a self-assessment rubric and resources for more information.

- **Policy Typology:** An overview of the policy implications of each domain.

- **Measures of Structural Change:** An overview of how to measure the extent to which an institution is fostering an environment conducive to the highest levels of faculty development.

- **Practice Profiles:** Short stories that highlight colleges doing exceptional work; one for each domain.

Key Takeaways

Strategy domain

- Incorporate teaching and faculty support in your strategic plan. Align to your student success goals, involve faculty and measure.

- Identify sufficient resources and measure your return.

- Review your standards and align professional development to support criteria for accreditation.

Equity domain

- Prioritize equity in strategic plans.

- Be intentional about the language used; have inclusive conversations.

- Ensure your campus culture supports a growth mindset.

- Explicitly address equity issues in your faculty development.

- Disaggregate student data; gather feedback on campus climate.

Evaluation domain

- Measure faculty learning and implementation of practices.

- Measure student engagement and learning, and disaggregate data.

- Measure impact on completion, retention, and financial and admissions figures.

- Identify the infrastructure and resources needed to properly evaluate efforts.

Approach domain

- Ensure faculty development addresses a comprehensive set of core competencies and practices.

- Evaluate whether or not offerings are evidence-based.

- Offer professional learning opportunities year-round, on a weekly or monthly basis and consistently throughout the year.

- Create an evidence-based learning design that engages faculty as learners, encourages collaboration, promotes autonomy and requires application.

- Determine what percentage of faculty participate in professional learning offerings, and make sure that all types of faculty and staff have access to opportunities.

Culture domain

- Celebrate great teaching through internal communications and special announcements.

- Determine incentives that can be utilized to reward quality instruction.

- Establish clear expectations for faculty around instructional development; consider employment offers and contracts to make expectations explicit.

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About This Toolkit

This toolkit provides institutions, higher education systems and state agencies with a framework to fully engage faculty in the student success movement. It was prepared by ACUE and Sova based on decades of research and insights gained by these organizations through direct work supporting hundreds of institutions committed to scaling ambitious, equity-grounded student success reforms.

Toolkit Authors

Jonathan Gyurko, Ph.D.
President and Co-founder, ACUE

Dr. Gyurko is president and co-founder of ACUE and has spent more than two decades leading innovative efforts to create and expand educational opportunities for students at all levels, in the United States and around the world. Gyurko spearheaded ACUE's earliest work with faculty, provosts, presidents and experts to define the evidence-based teaching approaches that every college educator should possess — ACUE's Effective Practice Framework. Together with ACUE's chief academic officer and founding team, Gyurko devised ACUE's online courses in effective teaching and developed ACUE's comprehensive approach to institutional partnerships which encompasses academic, research, planning and communications services. Gyurko formed and maintains ACUE's collaborations with leading higher education associations and national philanthropies, including the American Council on Education, with whom ACUE's credentials are co-issued. He co-authored ACUE's approach to program accountability, which underlies numerous studies demonstrating the positive impact of effective instruction on student outcomes.

Penny MacCormack, Ed.D.
Chief Academic Officer, ACUE

Dr. MacCormack is the chief academic officer at ACUE. In this role, she led the creation of ACUE's Effective Practice Framework — a research-based and independently validated statement of the teaching skills and knowledge that every college educator should possess. She also leads the development and implementation of all ACUE course offerings, through which faculty are awarded the only nationally recognized teaching credential endorsed by the American Council on Education. Under MacCormack's direction, ACUE has published numerous studies finding statistically significant improvements in outcomes among students taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty. These peer-reviewed studies have been commended for their range, depth and rigor of analysis.

Meghan Snow
Chief Data Officer, ACUE

Ms. Snow is the chief data officer at ACUE. In this role, she is responsible for setting and executing a strategic research agenda and supporting a culture of data-driven decision-making across the organization, with the goal of delivering on the mission to ensure student success and equity through quality instruction.

At ACUE, Snow led the development of the organization's approach to evaluating the impact of ACUE's courses on faculty and students at partner institutions. To date, ACUE has published over twelve evaluations demonstrating, in part, improved student performance and improved faculty self-efficacy. Snow has presented papers and sessions about this work at conferences including the Association for the Study of Higher Education, the American Educational Research Association, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Christine Ferrell
Executive Director of Strategic Communications, ACUE

Ms. Ferrell served as executive director of strategic communications at ACUE. A strategic marketing and media leader with extensive experience ranging from brand management and strategy to integrated marketing communications and digital media optimization, Ferrell has dedicated more than a decade of her career to enabling growth for institutions of higher education. Prior to her tenure at ACUE, Ferrell served as director of marketing and media relations at North Carolina State University's Poole College of Management, and served as director of marketing and business development for the Executive MBA and online MBA@UNC programs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

Alison Kadlec, Ph.D.
Founding Partner, Sova

Dr. Kadlec is a founding partner at Sova, where she leads a body of work focused on accelerating the pace and improving the quality of large-scale, equity-grounded reform of higher education. She has worked with scores of colleges and universities across the country to support the capacity of senior and mid-level leaders to effectively engage members of their communities as constructive partners in the hard work of change on behalf of equitable student success. Alison and her team also work with state policymakers and system leaders in more than half the states in the U.S. to help improve the quality of policy development and implementation around higher education and workforce issues. She has been active in the Guided Pathways movement since its origins, led the 2020 update of the Core Principles for Transforming Remediation, and is working in several states on issues related to scaled redesign of developmental education.

Paul Markham, Ph.D.
Founding Partner, Sova

Dr. Markham's work focuses on building and sustaining cultures for innovation and change. Prior to launching Sova, Paul served as vice president for organizational strategy at Public Agenda and vice president for strategic partnerships & development at Achieving the Dream, Inc. Paul also served as senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where he led the Foundation's work focused on developmental education redesign and the creation of Pathways for student success. As

a faculty member, he served as associate professor of education at the University of Washington Bothell (UWB) and assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Western Kentucky University (WKU), both broad access universities committed to the success of all students who seek a postsecondary education. Paul has extensive experience in building capacity for social change organizations and initiatives through his roles as director of strategic partnerships & community engagement at UWB and director of the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships and director of the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility at WKU. In all these roles, Paul focused on developing organizational capacity to contribute to healthy communities, strong economies and an engaged democracy. In the private business sector, Paul has led a number of implementation and improvement efforts as both a process engineer and quality assurance manager.

Ashmi Patel
Program Manager, Sova

Ms. Patel's work focuses on equity, inclusion and diversity within higher education. Prior to joining Sova, Ashmi served as the director of the Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity at Eastfield College, where she developed programs to enhance students' social and intellectual development, eliminate barriers to student access and success, and develop a culture of equity-mindedness and inclusivity. Previously, as a program associate at the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, Ashmi worked on executive leadership development for aspiring community college presidents. As a first-generation child of immigrant parents from India, Ashmi has experienced the importance of student success support structures and identity development within colleges.

About The Association of College and University Educators (ACUE)

ACUE promotes student success and equity through quality instruction. In partnership with colleges, universities, higher education systems and associations, ACUE prepares and credentials faculty in the evidence-based teaching practices that improve student achievement and close equity gaps. Numerous and independently validated efficacy studies confirm that students are more engaged, learn more and complete courses in greater numbers — more equitably with their peers — when taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty. ACUE's online, cohort-based credentialing programs are delivered through institutional partnerships and open enrollment courses endorsed by the American Council on Education.

About Sova

Sova is a mission-driven organization focused on promoting equitable upward mobility for more students through reform of higher education and workforce development. Sova's work is based on the conviction that sustainable, scalable, high-quality innovation in higher education and workforce development must be designed and implemented with rigorous attention to the human dimensions of change. Sova's core services are focused on adaptive change leadership, strategic communications and will-building, program strategy and implementation support.