Practical Approaches to Building a Culture of Evidence-based Decision Making to Support Student Success

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What is very much needed in this time is space (6 feet), compassion, and grace.

Thank you for your commitment today.
The coronavirus pandemic draws needed attention to the underlying inequities in our education system, society, and economy...

At the same time, the nation is undergoing a reckoning with systemic racism that is at the foundation of these disparities.

Colleges and universities must set a path to a more equitable higher education system.
How to Reorient Assessment and Accreditation in the Time of COVID-19 Disruption

Jillian Kinzie

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- Realistic, Compassion Driven Course & Program Level Assessment
- Leverage Flexibility in Accreditation
- Reorient Assessment (offer students more agency, equity, prioritize most important learning outcomes)
Poll

Which of the following did you accomplish during CV-19 work from home?

Answers:

- Baking bread
- Demonstrating helpful (or fun) tech tools to coworkers
- Learning something while being the homeschool teacher
- Going a day without hearing: “You’re muted”
- Completing a TikTok challenge
- Identifying birds in your yard
Jillian’s Perspective

My points of view on data, evidence, equity and student learning and success: Higher education scholar of student development, success, effective educational practice, assessment, quality improvement, and teaching & learning

6.4 million students @ 1,600 4 yr. institutions

• Accreditation peer reviewer
• TEAC, CAEP former board member
Student success and equity matter more today than at any other time in U.S. higher education.
“Student success” can be understood in its simplest form as getting students into and through college to a degree or certificate.
Evolutionary Timeline for Student Success

1970: Retention hinges on students' sense of commitment (Tinto)

1980: Declining enrollments led to EM, focus on student populations

1990: Focus on transitions, first-year experience, access

2000: Affordability, analytics, quality learning, equity

2010: Employment, student success metrics, transparency

Access & grad rate concerns, institutional accountability

STUDENT SUCCESS in COLLEGE
CREATING CONDITIONS THAT MATTER
George D. Kuh
Jillian Kinzie
John H. Schuh
Elizabeth J. Whitt and Associates
21st Century Student Success Goal

More students completing the degree they start, in a high quality educational experience that prepares them for 21st century workforce.
Equity: Closing the Racially Minoritized Student Experience & Outcome Gaps

Quality: Completion through a quality student experience and quality learning
Data in Higher Education

Predictive Analytics

Data-Informed

Dashboards

Big Data
• Higher education institutions are data rich

• Information about enrollment, credit hours earned, retention, faculty, teaching & learning, students’ experiences, advising, community engagement, use of services... are stored in numerous systems (but typically, these systems do not share data)

• Institutions must implement strategies to connect the dots; that is, they must find a way to combine and “relate” the data to create more complete pictures
Data now available allow institutions to deeply examine evidence and understand patterns and trends that can help leaders throughout campus navigate their day-to-day decisions.

Data can be used to enhance teaching, learning, and advising; to inform curriculum reinvention and program renewal; and to monitor and address student success outcomes.
However, Available Data is Not Enough

The issue becomes how to think strategically and analytically about which data matters, how it will be used, and who needs to use it.
How does data about your undergraduate students’ help you be smarter about student success?

Susan Whealler Johnston,
NACUBO Pres/CEO
Poll
How effective is your institution at using data to aid and inform campus decision-making?

a. Very effective
b. Somewhat effective
c. Not too effective
d. Not effective at all

Provosts Responses (2020)

22% a. Very effective
64% b. Somewhat effective
12% c. Not too effective
1% d. Not effective at all

2020 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers by Inside Higher Ed.
How do we shift from being “data rich and information poor” to creating a more advanced culture for data use?
Not Data Driven, but Data-Informed

Data Don’t Drive

Purpose-Driven, Data-Assisted, Data Inspired
Mount Saint Mary’s University, made the news in 2016 with the Presidents plan to improve their retention rate by requiring new students to take a survey, and then use answers to identify those who were likely to drop out. Those students would then be encouraged to leave to boost retention by 4-5%.

“Georgia State is showing, contrary to what experts have said for decades, that demographics are not destiny. Students from all backgrounds can succeed at comparable rates.”

-- Tim Renick, Vice Provost, GSU
Higher Education Data Analytics Framework

**CULTURE**
- How might leaders create a culture that values data-informed decisions?
- How can business officers empower staff across the institution?
- In what ways might business officers collaborate across the institution?

**HINDSIGHT**
What happened?
Why did it happen?

**INSIGHT**
What is happening today?
Should we act on this information?

**FORESIGHT**
What might happen?
How can we achieve better outcomes?

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT**
What are the outcomes?
How has data improved our processes and outcomes?

**CAPACITY**
- What tools do we need to facilitate a data-informed culture?
- What skills do our staff need?
- Do we have the necessary data?

**CONTINUOUS CHECK IN**
- Does my institution support a data-informed culture?
- Is everyone on campus empowered to use data?
- Does my institution have the human resources needed?
- Does my institution have the technology to support data analytics?
Postsecondary Data Partnership

Measure Student outcomes.
Grow student success.
Postsecondary Data Partnership

Data-Informed Framework

- Interactive dashboards
- Powerful filtering tools
- Simpler reporting to third-party education organizations
- An analysis-ready file
- Benchmarking data
Joining the PDP is a solid 1st step to gain a fuller picture of student progress and outcomes, but a data culture must also be cultivated.

What facilitates the development of a culture of decision-making using a data-informed framework?

What are the features of a data-informed culture?
1. Grass Roots, Participatory Efforts to Bring Data into Meetings, Committees, Conversations

- Empower everyone – deans, department chairs, faculty, staff, even students - to “speak data”
- Start routine meetings (departments, cabinet, staff, committees, etc.) by discussing a relevant data point, or the state of a metric,
- Participants take responsibility for data presentations
- User-friendly dashboards to promote a common focus
- Data acts as a powerful trigger for group learning about inequities in educational outcomes
2. Create occasions for people to come together for collective reflection & meaning making

People come together to identify questions about student success and equity, and to consider data

- **Data is not “the answer” but an invitation to deliberation and conversation**
Gateway Courses Can Quickly Derail Students

When I saw the grade distribution in my course by race-ethnicity and Pell status, I was shocked by the inequitable pattern.

What’s a reasonable target for DFWs in Gateway courses? How do your faculty explain Gateway performance?
3. Assemble a Student Success Data Team

- Field a team to oversee student success data, to monitor and interpret, and connect others to data
- The team can train others in using the PDP dashboards
4. Begin with a Question

Organize data conversations around issues educators care about
(not around the data point, or source of evidence)

Examples: Are this years first year students on track to persist to the second year? Is the likelihood of progression different by race/ethnicity or among income groups? Are students in the College making better progress given our new first year seminar course and experiences?
5. Eyes on the Prize, but Focus on Most Proximal Data that can be Improved

- Graduation, Employment, Graduate and Professional School Enrollment are distal metrics
- The likelihood of improving those distal outcomes increases if the focus is proximal things more within the immediate control of the participating leaders and practitioners
- Distal metrics require early intervention

*Focus on indicators of student progress for early intervention*
6. Ensure Everybody Counts in your Counts

• Disaggregate data by demographics (racial minority, other underserved student populations) to study inequity

• Use Person-Centered Approaches* that emphasize people do not behave monolithically when sorted into groups based on identity
  • Limits normalizing the experiences of majority populations
  • Helps protect small sample sizes

  **Approach:** Start with the outcome NOT groups – for example, create credit accumulated terciles (Low 0-20, moderate 21 – 29, or high 30 +) then display proportions in terciles by first-generation status of race-ethnicity
  • Then examine the results: Where are students more or less represented in terms of low credit accumulation, vs. moderate or high?

*see Malcolm-Piqueux, L. (2015). Application of person-centered approaches to critical quantitative research. New Directions for Institutional Research, 163
7. Expose Myths and Respond with Data

• Take a light load your first semester; don't stress academics!

• I was kind of worried when he told me 12 units, but I figure my advisor knows what he's doing.

Academic momentum is real: the number of credits accumulated in the 1st year sets a trajectory that influences later chances of degree completion.

What do your data demonstrate to counter this advice for new students?
8. Require Concrete Plans Linked to Data

- Foster the development of concrete plans linked to the evidence
- Plans should call on programs and units to report what actions will be taken in response to data
- Allocate institutional resources to support implementation of plans
- Communicate an A priori design of how plans will be evaluated (what will success look like?)
9. Require Action on Data

• Map the transition from planning to action
• Encourage prototype or pilot testing proposed plans with feedback mechanisms to inform the final design
• Support, fund action on data
• Commission internal or external evaluators
10. Close the Loop, and Showcase the Data-Use Story

• Loop-closing refers to monitoring and evaluation processes to assess the impact of implemented plans

• Share broadly how data were used to support student success
Poll
Which of the following is the greatest barrier to a data-informed culture?

a. Data silos
b. Using data as a hammer
c. Hiding bad-news data
d. Treating data as if it speaks for itself
e. All of the above
to harness the power of analytics, institutional leaders need to create a campus-wide culture that understands, values, and uses analytics as part of the regular responsibilities.
If a campus doesn’t have a culture that has focused primarily on using data effectively, and data systems and analytics are implemented, you’ll find shadow systems, Excel systems, and apprehension about sharing data.
Data are an institutional strategic asset and should be used as such
Ultimately, data do not make change . . . people do

Build relationships across departments, educate colleagues about the value of data, and report on outcomes. Data are not going to give you a decision...it’s what you say and do about the data that matters.
• What questions, comments do you have about creating a data informed culture?
• What practical ideas from this session might you focus on in your work with the PDP?