

Center for Student Success

In July 2000 the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) awarded a three-year grant to a consortium of 17 colleges and the state Research and Planning (RP) Group to establish a Center for Student Success. City College of San Francisco will act as the lead college and fiscal agent for the consortium, which will receive \$281,000 for the 2000-2001 fiscal year. Additional funds are expected for future years.

The purpose of the project is to develop a Center for Student Success (CSS) that will identify, promote, and share exemplary practices occurring across the state. The CSS will highlight innovative models, strategies, and best practices that have had a positive impact upon student success in the five areas targeted in the Partnership for Excellence (PFE).

Historical Antecedents

Most colleges in the California Community College (CCC) System have achieved significant levels of success in some of the PFE areas, but most colleges have yet to attain significant increases in all areas and successes in individual areas are different from college to college. To achieve goals in each of the five PFE areas, colleges must invent new programs and adapt old ones to promote higher levels of student success. Current approaches to programs that promote higher levels of student success are a hodgepodge of hit or miss initiatives conducted by individual colleges. There are some collaborations between colleges that are helpful in spreading success strategies, but great strides must still be made before there are any meaningful partnerships between individual colleges.

There is also a lack of centralized research and analysis on exemplary practices. Because of this lack of a single source of comprehensive and easy-to-understand research and information, research on

practices is repeated every few years. Insights discovered in the 1970s and 1980s are now being rediscovered by a new generation of research and planning offices throughout the state. Insights gained 20 years ago were lost due to the lack of a systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination system within the statewide Community College System.

The creation of a center that will enable researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers from colleges and the CCCCCO to continuously work together to identify exemplary practices and educational strategies that work for CCC students will alleviate much of the scattered work done to date. The center's work will refine strategies and practices and will adapt practices to real situations at the college level. It will also require a creative dissemination strategy that meets the needs of faculty, counselors, and administrators at the college level.

Creation of the Center for Student Success

After the grant was awarded to the original 17 consortium colleges in July 2000, an announcement was sent out outlining the Center's goals and objectives and requesting responses from any additional colleges interested in participating in the Center. Colleges were asked to notify the project administrator, Dr. Robert Gabriner, to receive additional information about joining the consortium.

Colleges interested in joining the consortium were required to have a letter of commitment signed by the president of the institution. Consortium colleges were also asked to provide access to student data, to select a liaison from the college to participate on the Advisory Council, and to assist in distributing and completing the exemplary practices survey. Michael Dowdle, Research Analyst, has been selected as the liaison for Mt. San Antonio College. A letter of agreement was signed by the college president allowing the CCCCCO

MIS Unit to transfer student record data to the Center for Student Success. The letter provides assurance that all student data will remain strictly confidential and allows the college to terminate the agreement at anytime, requiring the Center to discontinue the use of the data and destroy all records.

Consortium colleges agreeing to participate in the Center will provide information on student data and exemplary practices occurring within each of the colleges. Complementary to the research collected on a national basis, consortium colleges' data will constitute the California sample. In return the benefit of being a consortium college is that the college will have up-to-date access to information and resources as quickly as the work groups complete their activities. The intent is to provide the information to colleges early on, so that they will have an opportunity to utilize the research in developing and/or strengthening programs and services, as well as for planning purposes of campus-wide activities such as faculty and staff development.

Center Structure

Forty community colleges now comprise the consortium along with representatives from the RP Group, Vice Chancellors of the State Chancellor's Office, faculty representatives, and representatives from other educational institutions and other research organizations. The Center is made up of a steering committee, four work groups, and the advisory council.

The Center Steering Committee, made up of the project administrator, the project director, the RP Group representative, and the coordinators of the four work groups, will provide leadership for the implementation of the research and dissemination agenda of the Center. The committee has also selected the members of the Center's work groups. It will develop new policy directions for the Center and

discuss and evaluate work-products from the Center's work groups.

The Center Work Groups, comprised of researchers and planners from community colleges, have been established to carry out the objectives of the Center. The **MIS Research Work Group** will develop and implement research studies using the Chancellor's Office MIS files; the **Exemplary Practices Work Group** will conduct a literature review to compile exemplary practices among community colleges; the **Survey Work Group** will survey colleges to discover new and exemplary practices; and the **Web Design Work Group** will develop and implement new approaches to disseminating exemplary practices and research results as well as the work of the other groups.

The Advisory Council comprised of representatives from the consortium colleges will act as the liaison between the Center and the local college. They will provide information to college practitioners on the progress of the Center's activities and access to college and district student data. The Council will assist in identifying and disseminating exemplary practices, critique and evaluate studies and analyses conducted by the Center, and review and provide input into the policy directions set by the steering committee.

CSS Objectives - Year 1

Establishment of the Advisory Council, the four Work Groups, and the Steering Committee will help in meeting the objectives created by the CSS for year 1. These objectives include: Identifying 20 exemplary practices; conducting five research studies using MIS data; creation of a system-wide survey; establishing a web site for the studies, reports, and findings; and developing a plan for Phases Two and Three. Phases Two and Three will focus on building a statewide learning community to disseminate exemplary practices.

Note: The content of this *Brief* was adapted from materials presented at the first Advisory Council Meeting held on November 16, 2000 and excerpts from the *Proposal to the Fund for Student Success, June 2000*. Any additional questions about the Center for Student Success or Mt. SAC's role in the Center should be directed to Michael Dowdle, Research Analyst.

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