

Pathways of support lead to student success

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Students who take part in certain “high-impact practices” are more likely to succeed academically and complete community college, according to a new report from the [Center for Community College Student Engagement \(CCCSE\)](#).

A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways identifies which practices have the most impact on student success. In one example, it found students are far more likely to complete a developmental math course if all of their instructors clearly explained the class attendance policy. In another example, developmental education students who took a student success course were nearly four times as likely to complete a gatekeeper English course.

That’s crucial in boosting college completion rates, because 62 percent of community college students take at least one developmental course and, the report notes, “for too many students, traditional developmental education is a terminal roadblock to success.”

In another example, the report cited students who registered for all of their classes before the start of the first class session are mostly to persist, from the fall term to the spring and next fall terms.

Engaging students

The study looked at how each of the 13 [high-impact practices](#) identified by CCCSE in an earlier report related to the likelihood of success in three outcomes: completion of a developmental course, completion of a gateway course (freshman-level English or math) and persistence.

The more engaging the practices that students experience, the more likely they are to reach key academic milestones, the report said. Also, students are more successful when institutions adjust the academic model so these high-impact practices are intentionally integrated into coherent educational pathways.

“These findings do not offer a checklist, and the goal shouldn’t be to have one of each practice,” said CCCSE Director Evelyn Waiwai. “Instead, the goal should be to improve student engagement and success by intentionally building multiple high-impact practices into every student’s educational experience.”

Preliminary findings on the effectiveness of various pathway models are promising.

[Focusing on adjunct faculty to improve student success](#)

“Attending college should not be a series of disconnected classes and experiences, but instead it should be a complete – and completed – educational journey,” added Kay McClenney, director emeritus of CCCSE.

Prime examples

The report describes activities under way at several community colleges to adopt pathways aimed at promoting student success. In one example, [Alamo Colleges](#) in Texas started requiring all students in 2014-15 to enter one of six institutes, such as business and entrepreneurship, science and technology, or health and biosciences. Each institute provides contextualized support services, including a college success course, career and transfer counseling, mandatory study groups and other embedded supports.

[Ramping up engagement to boost student success](#)

Another example is the [Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\)](#) developed by the [City University of New York](#). ASAP combines multiple high-impact practices into a coherent, structured student experience. Community college students in ASAP must attend college full-time, take a summer institute, take classes with an ASAP cohort, and take part in intrusive advising.

This is the third report in CCCSE’s [A Matter of Degrees series](#) on [high-impact educational practices](#). The first report described 13 practices and explored data on institutional offerings and student participation. The second report focused on notable differences in engagement between students who participated in those practices and those who didn’t.

High-impact practices

These are the high-impact practices identified by CCCSE:

- **Orientation** – A single event or extended structured experience to familiarize students with the college and its resources.
- **Accelerated or fast-track developmental education** – Learning experiences designed to help students move more quickly through developmental coursework.
- **First-year experiences** – A freshman seminar or a combination of in-class and out-of-class activities to help students in their first year.
- **Student success course** – A course to teach skills and strategies, such as time management and study skills, to help students succeed.
- **Learning community** – Two or more linked courses that a group of students take together.
- **Academic goal setting and planning** – Advising that creates a clear path to help students reach their goals.
- **Experiential learning beyond the classroom** – Internships, apprenticeships, community-based projects and similar experiences that reinforce classroom learning.
- **Tutoring** – Academic assistance provided outside of class.
- **Supplemental instruction** – A regularly scheduled class for a portion of students enrolled in a larger course section.
- **Assessment and placement** – Assessment of academic skills to ensure students are placed in the proper course.
- **Registration before class begins** – Atudents are registered for all courses before the first class day.
- **Class attendance** – Instructors let students know they are expected to attend every class and the consequences for not doing so.
- **Alert and intervention** – A systematic process for letting students know if they are struggling in class and offering them assistance.

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