Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success

Practices and Policies that Eliminate Demographic Disparities in Academic Performance, Student Engagement, and Post-Graduate Success

Prepared for UNLV
An Equity Moment in Education and Beyond

Political and Social Forces Bring Historical and Current Inequalities to Light

"Being Not-Rich": Low-Income Students at Michigan Share Savvy Advice

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

"Canadian Universities, Colleges Working to Indigenize Programs, Campus Life"

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

"Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility"

OPPORTUNITY INSIGHTS

"UNC Boards Meet in Aftermath of Confederate Statue Toppling"

AP

University of North Carolina System emphasizes rural student gaps in campus evaluation

"A Black Smith College Student Was Eating Her Lunch When an Employee Called the Police"

The Boston Globe

"Higher Education Alone Can’t Bridge the Wealth Gap That Separates Black Americans from Their White Peers."

The Atlantic

"Long After Protests, Students Shun the University of Missouri"

The New York Times

2023

Projected year when U.S. high school graduating class becomes majority-minority

Source: From news organization websites, full list available upon request; Rick Seltzer, “The High School Graduate Plateau”, Inside Higher Ed, December 6, 2016; EAB interviews and analysis.
Pre-College Narrative Focuses on Access

Identifying the Breaks in the High School to College Pipeline

**Main reasons:**
- Students’ poor perceptions of own ability
- Lack of relevant role models and examples
- **75%** of Hispanic students in New York City attend an “intensely” segregated\(^1\) school
- **72%** of high-ability\(^2\) African American students were left out of AP Science

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**Main reasons:**
- Insufficient process knowledge (exams, deadlines, etc.)
- No required course work taken
- **49%** of low-income students undermatch

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**Main reasons:**
- Logistical and financial barriers
- **20.3** percentage point college enrollment gap between low-income and high-income groups

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\(^1\) Schools that are less than 10 percent white

\(^2\) With PSAT scores suggesting success in relevant AP course.

Off-Campus But Not Off Our Minds

Post-Graduate Outcomes Muddled by Bias and Economic Conditions

Attempted Intergenerational Mobility...

- Expected family income of children raised in the 90th income percentile is three times that of children raised in the 10th percentile.

- Of African American men who grew up in the top income quintile are in the bottom quintile as adults compared to 10% of white men.

...Thwarted by Bias and Debt

- 10% of African American college graduates are under-employed compared to 5% for white graduates.

- 15% Hispanic applicants received 15% fewer call backs from job applications than similar white applicants.

- 23% Of African American college graduates default on their student loans.

"Many [Indigenous] people on reserves don’t have the resources they need to rise above the poverty rates of their parents, and struggle against a legacy of deprivation and neglect. A key factor causing low income mobility among many Indigenous communities, economists say, is the lack of high-quality educational opportunities in reserves and northern communities."

-Doug Saunders and Tom Cardoso, on Canadian mobility data

Financial Aid and Student Equity Policy Under Growing Scrutiny

Still Awaiting a Two-Page FAFSA

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) unrolls full FAFSA form to illustrate its length and complexity.

Use of Race in Admissions in the Spotlight as SCOTUS Changes

Justice Department sides with groups suing Harvard over use of race in admissions

Concerns and Questions about Proposed Title IX Regulation Changes

Changes in accountability, due process, and standards of evidence add to an already confusing set of rules and requirements

Free College Spreads, but not Without Controversy

Questions remain about who benefits most, low-income or wealthier students?

More Innovation May Not Equal More Equality

Questions Remain about Discrimination Hardwired into Technology

Bias in Predictive Analytics and Artificial Intelligence

How do predictive analytics engines influence personal bias when interacting with a student?

An Emerging Paradox Colors the Debate about Equity as More Students Embrace Multi-Modality

Lower grades, higher completion rates among multi-modal students

Point decrease in GPA of lowest performing students (based on previous term GPA) in online courses

Of low-income adults have access to broadband service at home

1) Refers to historically underrepresented groups, including racial and ethnic minorities

Focusing on What Higher Ed Can Control

What Institutions Do (or Don’t) to Create or Worsen Gaps

Seeking to Increase Access and Improve K-12 Education

Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success on Your Campus

Helping to Create Jobs and Meet Employer Workforce Needs

Two Guiding Questions

“What gaps do we have to react to and attempt to remedy?”

“What gaps do we contribute to or make worse by action or inaction?”

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Infographic: Barriers to Student Success

108 Disparities Identified Across the Student Lifecycle

Using this Infographic

- Thematically organized around key functional areas of your portfolio
- Assists taskforces in identifying potentially hidden disparities
- Prioritize key areas of focus based on broader strategic and institutional goals
- Designed to identify leading indicators of gaps in common success metrics

Surprising Gaps Identified:

- Impact of grading practices
- Effect of parental expectations on academic perseverance
- Effect of student self-efficacy on first-year course grades
- Faculty dropping students from courses
- Responses of faculty to comments on student discussion boards

Source: Bibliography available upon request; EAB interviews and analysis.
Creating a Data-Driven Student Equity Action Plan

5 Steps to Use EAB’s Student Equity Audit

1. Start with common success metrics e.g. graduation rates, first-year retention
2. Consider your current student success and equity goals
3. Select two to three of the gaps EAB has identified that align with your institutional and strategic goals
4. Work with your institutional research office and academic units to collect relevant data to understand your current practice
5. Develop a solution-oriented action plan

Forthcoming Resources in Q1 2019

• Asset-based Communication Audit
• Peer-to-Peer Support Maturity Diagnostic
• Innovative Institutional Gap Analysis Repository

Source: Bibliography available upon request; EAB interviews and analysis.
Orientation and Bridge Programs Narrowly Focus on Social, Remedial Needs

Missing Less Visible Contributors to Stop-Out

Intensive Programming for High-Need Students
- Bridge programs
- Basic skills boot camp

Ignoring More Widespread Transitional Needs

**Shock to high-flyers**

“Some of our students, especially from rural high schools, are devastated when they see their first grade”

**Stereotype threat triggers**

“[E]ven passing reminders that someone belongs to one group or another, such as a group stereotyped as inferior in academics, can wreak havoc with test performance”

Effective but Small-Scale Programs

- Basic skills boot camp

Social and Transactional Support

- Traditional orientation programming
- Leadership programming

Positive Experience but Does Not Ease the Transition

1) American Psychological Association citing Claude Steele, Joshua Aronson, and Steven Spencer

More Professional Staff Not Enough to Destigmatize Help-Seeking

Never Going to Hire All the Advisors and Staff We Need...

- Not enough funding to make initial investment
- Struggle to determine the exact placement of new staff

...And We Miss an Opportunity to Engage Students and Close Trust Gaps

- Chance to build belongingness among current students plus experiential learning among mentors
- Perceived lack of common experience
- Less able to normalize help-seeking behaviors among hesitant students

Clear Benefits to Using Peers as Coaches and Mentors

Retention
- Retention gains over similar non-participants

Sense of Belonging
- Students with engaged mentors report less feeling of isolation on campuses

Lower DFW, Higher GPA
- Course performance gains in sections with course assistants

Failing to Deploy Peers Broadly

- Disconnected from core academic experiences
- Mentorship not leveraged as experiential learning
- Relegated to programs tangential to primary student success efforts

A Vicious, Self-Reinforcing Cycle

Financial Need and Lack of Perceived Educational Relevance Fuel Stop-Outs

Financial and Personal Obligations

71%
Student citing the need to make money as a cause of dropout

43%
Students citing that too many classes were not useful as cause of dropout

Perception of Irrelevance Adds to Stop-Out Pressure

“[Y]oung Americans who dropped out of college often faced the double-edged challenge of working to make a living and going to school at the same time. What’s more, many seem to have drifted into college without a specific goal or purpose beyond hoping for a “better job” or a “better future... the findings here suggest that young people who leave college before finishing...are less likely to strongly agree that their parents always instilled in them the importance of college, less likely to strongly agree that people who have a college degree make more money and less likely to say they would still go to college if they knew they could get a good job without a degree.”

“With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them,” Public Agenda

Source: Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind, Amber N. Ott, and Samantha DuPont, "With their whole lives ahead of them (New York: Public Agenda, 2009); EAB interviews and analysis.
Today’s Focus
Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success

The Two Questions Guiding Our Research

What disparities from outside of higher education do institutions need to remedy when their students enroll?

What do institutions do (or not do) to create or make gaps worse among their increasingly diverse student bodies?

Three Imperatives to Reduce Demographic Disparities in Academic Performance, Retention, and Graduation

1. Create opportunities for early academic wins to prepare students for future challenges
   - Growth mindset priming exercise
   - Pre-college academic simulation
   - Math catch-up pathway

2. Scale student support and normalize help-seeking behavior by expanding the use of peer coaches and mentors
   - Peer support expansion diagnostic
   - Peer advisor-led outreach and service referral campaigns
   - Mentor career skill reflection exercises

3. Regularly reinforce the connection between students’ education and long-term goals
   - Course-based goal reflection exercise
   - Step-by-step bounce back plans
   - Scholarship recovery intervention
   - Experiential learning incentive scholarship

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Create opportunities for early academic wins to prepare students for future challenges

1

2

Scale student support and normalize help-seeking behavior by expanding the use of peer coaches and mentors

3

Regularly reinforce the connection between students’ education and long-term goals
### Primed with Internal and External Doubts

Disparity in Self and Others’ Expectations Creates Uneven Starting Point

#### Others’ Doubts Tarnish Interactions with College Faculty and Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>40%</strong></td>
<td>African American teachers were 40% more likely than White teachers to predict the same African American student would finish high school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7%</strong></td>
<td>African American high school students were 7% more likely to finish college if assigned to teachers with higher expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>39%</strong></td>
<td>Of first-gen parents expect their child will attain a BA or higher</td>
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#### Self-Doubt Affects Access, Course Placement, and Transition to College Coursework

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>54%</strong></td>
<td>Of low-income students between the ages of 12 and 18 who expect to attend college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23%</strong></td>
<td>Of African American students feel more emotionally prepared for college than their peers (compared to 35% of white students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2x</strong></td>
<td>Hispanic students are twice as likely to require academic remediation if students lack academic self-efficacy (vs. comparable students)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1) Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief (conviction) that he or she can successfully achieve at a designated level on a task or a specific goal, i.e., confidence.
A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

High-Stakes Failures Compound Stereotype Threat

Early Semester Obstacles Reinforce Student Fears About Belonging in College

Unfamiliar with course material

Has time management issues

Doesn’t go to tutoring center

Fails midterm

“Is college right for me?”

“How do I complete all these assignments and 100 pages of reading?”

“Where do I go for help?”

“I was right, I’m not cut out for college.”

Gaps in First-Year Retention a Problem Despite Institutional Control

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Private Institutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall-to-Fall African American student retention (Fall 2016-17)</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall-to-Fall white student retention (Fall 2016-17)</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
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A Mindset to Overcome Academic Hurdles

Asset-Based Communication and Growth Mindset Strengthen Perseverance

Orientation Exercises Inoculate Students Against First-Term Shocks

Review Information on Growth Mindset
- Letters from other students
- Online modules about the ability to gain new skills and overcome challenges

Reflect on Personal Story of Overcoming Obstacles
- Essay on past struggles that the student has overcome
- Write a letter to the student’s past self about resilience

Give Advice on Overcoming Challenges
- Record a video reflecting on what the student learned
- Write to a suggested high school student summarizing information from exercise

50% Reduction in the gap in 12+ credit completion between underrepresented and majority students

50% Reduction in the GPA gap between African American and white graduates

1) Underrepresented students defined as African American, Hispanic, and first-generation students (Tough, 2014)
2) Replication of growth mindset intervention at elite, northeastern private university

Reimagining Bridge Programs

Pre-Semester Boot Camp Creates Opportunity to Course Correct Early

Three Components of NevadaFIT’s Success

Course Simulation Boosts First-Term Readiness

- Pre-semester, for-credit week-long math intensive course with semester-long corollary
- 8 boot camps operated by individual colleges
- College-level, graded assignments and exams with in-depth faculty feedback

Peer-Led Cohorts Build Belongingness

- Creation of smaller, six-student cohorts with assigned peer mentors who check-in with students across the first term
- Peer mentors are academic and social role models and help students balance competing priorities

Mentors and Faculty Normalize Help-Seeking

- Daily academic and college navigation skills workshops
- Early introduction to available resources

Source: University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT Summary, Spring 2018; EAB interviews and analysis.
Focus on Early Academic Success Increases Student Confidence

“What makes this work is focusing the program on what it means to be successful in a college class and letting students experience that early in their college career.”

Kevin Carman, Executive Vice President and Provost, University of Nevada, Reno

“The most surprising part of NevadaFIT was how much more confident I felt about college afterwards...I felt like I could accomplish a lot within my first semester.”

NevadaFIT Participant 2015, Mentor 2016 and 2017
Pre-college academic simulation

Acceleration of First Challenges Closes Gaps

First-Gen, Pell Recipients, and Hispanic Students Persist at Higher Rates

NevadaFIT Eliminates Gaps in Retention

Student Retention to Spring 2017 by Demographic, NevadaFIT Participation, and Cohort Year

First-gen NevadaFIT students from Fall 2016 cohort have 5 percentage point higher retention rates than their non-NevadaFIT peers.

Pell students in NevadaFIT from the Fall 2016 cohort have 10 percentage point higher retention rates than non-NevadaFIT peers.

Hispanic NevadaFIT participants from Fall 2016 cohort have 9 percentage point higher retention rates than their non-NevadaFIT peers.
Past Academic Experiences Determine the Future

Student Preparation Differences Create Curricular Navigation Hurdles

Points Within the Curriculum That Create Gaps Based on Preparation

- **UNPREPARED FOR FIRST MATH COURSE**
  - 55%
  - Of 12th grade low-income students performed at “below basic” math levels compared to 29% of higher income students

- **PEDAGOGY RAISES STEREOTYPE THREAT**
  - 45%
  - Moving from lecture-based pedagogy to active-learning decreased course grade gaps by 45%

- **SWITCHES OUT OF MAJOR AFTER TOO MANY DELAYS**
  - 36%
  - Of students who persisted in a STEM major took introductory college-level or lower math in their first year compared to 63% who took calculus in their first year

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The Equity Barriers Built into Our Pathways

Front-Loading Math-Heavy Content Can Create Multi-Term Delays

**Algebra-Ready Student**

- **FIRST TERM**: Gen Chem 1
- **SECOND TERM**: Gen Chem 2
- **THIRD TERM**: Organic Chem 1
- **FOURTH TERM**: Organic Chem 2

**Non-Algebra-Ready Student**

- **FIRST TERM**: Algebra and Gen Chem 1
- **SECOND TERM**: Algebra
- **THIRD TERM**: Gen Chem 1
- **FOURTH TERM**: Gen Chem 2

- *High DFWI likelihood*
- *Start the sequence over*
- *Now two semesters behind*
- *Delayed graduation likely*

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Delay Math but Boost Engagement and Equity

Faculty-Driven Curricular Redesign Experiment May Level the Field

A Pilot with Non-Majors (Hopefully) Leading to Major Path Change

- New pathway created by John Frederick, former provost and professor
- First cohort will include 50 Environmental Science majors
- First course emphasizes elements of inclusive pedagogy including peer-led learning, instruction on working together in groups, multiple formats to learn the material, and open educational resources
## Revisiting a Familiar Concept

### Faculty Learning Communities: Structured Forums for Teaching Scholarship

**Faculty Learning Community (FLC)**

- 8-12 cross-disciplinary instructors (tenured, junior, adjunct, graduate student)
- Long-term seminar- and activity-based curriculum about teaching innovations
- Supported through Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

### Traditional FLCs

#### Cohort-Based
- Designed to meet developmental needs of specific faculty groups
- Prevents alienation and attrition through community building
- E.g., New, senior, or mid-career faculty; lab instructors; adjunct/part-time faculty

#### Topic-Based
- Addresses specific theme, opportunity, or teaching need identified by institution
- Culminates in deliverable that addresses campus need
- E.g., Incorporating technology into the classroom, developing an inclusive campus climate

#### Course-Based?
- Convenes instructors of a multi-section course to address needs specific to that course
- Promotes cohesion between sections through development of shared materials
- E.g., First semester Calculus, Biology, English

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*Source: Milton Cox, “Website for Developing Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs): Communities of Practice in Higher Education.”*
Practice #4: Multi-Section Calculus Redesign

It Takes a Village

Calculus-Based FLC Fosters Collective Action Through Individual Exploration

Phase 1: Exploratory FLC

- Members pursue individual pedagogical exploration
- Share practice, outcomes, and assessment
- Build consensus around effective pedagogy

Phase 2: Collective Action FLC

- Agree on common structural elements
- Pilot unified approach + share feedback
- Ongoing discussion and course material development
- Provision of materials to non-FLC instructors

Outcome: Multiple instructors engaged in individual and collaborative redesign efforts

Outcome: Development of sharable resources and clear recommendations for common practice

Boise State “Coherent Calculus” Scales Redesign Benefits to All Students

A Coherent Multi-Section Course

- **Shared textbook and syllabus**: Promotes consistent grading policies and material coverage
- **Synchronized homework and quizzes graded by individual faculty**: Unifies content delivery timing across sections, fosters student community building
- **High similarity between exams crafted by individual faculty, but reviewed by FLC**: Guards against assessment disparities across sections
- **Active-learning strategies incorporated across all FLC-influenced sections**: Reinforces material and increases class engagement

**Immediate & Visible Impact on Pass Rates**

- Pre-FLC: 61%
- Post-FLC: 74%

**Non-FLC Instructors Quick to Adopt New Methods**

- 100% of next semester Calculus I instructors adopted redesigned structure and material

**High-Impact, Low Cost**

- Course Release Participation Incentive

1. Create opportunities for early academic wins to prepare students for future challenges

2. Scale student support and normalize help-seeking behavior by expanding the use of peer coaches and mentors

3. Regularly reinforce the connection between students’ education and long-term goals
Peer Support Bypasses Fraught Relationships with Authority Figures

Inconsistent Relationship with Authority Figures

Discipline
48% of preschool children receiving multiple out-of-school suspension are African American

Physical Restraint in Schools
75% of students who are subjected to physical restraint at school are students with disabilities

Referrals to Law Enforcement
24% of students who are referred to law enforcement at school are Hispanic

Teacher Expectations
Secondary teachers predict that high-poverty students were 53% less likely to earn a college diploma

Reliance on Peers and Informal Networks Impossible to Overcome

47%
Increase in proportion of URG\(^1\) students receiving As and Bs when peer-led workshops introduced

58%
Of adults with a four-year degree received advice about major choice from informal social networks\(^2\)

"...as a student, I can identify with my peers and imagine myself using the course material in the same way they do. This gives the material meaning and a sense of purpose that goes beyond memorization. When I hear a peer’s story, it connects to the story I am telling myself about who I want to be in the future."

Cary Roseth, Professor of Educational Psychology, Michigan State University


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1) Includes African American, Hispanic, and Native students
2) Compared to 45% who mentioned formal networks

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Four Ways to Deploy Peers

A First Line of Defense for Academic, Social, and Personal Support

Common-experience mentors for all students

Students in a holistic mentoring program reported that personal and emotional support was most beneficial

- Mentors provide personal, emotional, career, and academic support
- Each session focuses on a different skill development area, such as life skills

Extension of advising, particularly for high-need groups

Retention gains of up to 15-20% over similar control group populations, at public and private institutions

- Program designed for immigrant and ELL students
- Mentors are trained to support the unique needs of these students

Course assistants in high DFW courses

Students in classes with course assistants have higher semester GPAs and lower DFW rates

- 0.45 GPA gain for supplemental instruction participants in study of 37 institutions
- Course assistants drawn from past successful students, though typically not the highest performers

Study group facilitators

Study sessions at one University have attendance rates of 80% despite not being mandatory.

- Students can opt into a well-advertised weekly study group for high DFW courses
- Attendance agreement states students can only miss three sessions

Peers Help Overcome Resource Constraints and Belonging Gaps

“For a university as large as UCF, when resources are limited, we likely need to implement a robust peer-to-peer success model.”

Elizabeth Dooley, Provost, University of Central Florida

“Students are on campus with people who they can relate to, who have similar life experiences which I think has added to the draw of this place. At Whittier, there is mentoring with students who look the same. That is a draw. That helps a lot to dispel imposter syndrome.”

Joel Pérez, VP and Dean of Students, Whittier College
Too Few Students Have Formal, Structured Peer Learning Opportunities

Haphazard Connections vs. Multiple Formal Near-Peer Relationships

- **Orientation leader**: Short-term engagement
- **Resident assistant**: Minimal formal connection
- **Course assistants**: Effective but typically in too few courses
- **Tutors**: Ad hoc interactions purely focused on subject
- **Student leaders**: Meaningful interactions but haphazard connections

Number of formal, extended peer guide relationships: 1

- **Peer guide through pre-enrollment experience**: Sets stage for help seeking
- **Peer mentor in shared academic experience**: Regular contact and formal curriculum
- **Several courses with student assistants**: Sustained engagement and lower trust gap
- **Study group facilitators**: Low-stakes, supportive relationship building college success skills
- **Major peer advisor**: Shared goals and experiences increase trust and openness

Best-in-class institutions create more chances for formal peer learning: 3-5

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Peer support expansion diagnostic

Critical Overlaps with Central Success Programs

Leading Peer Programs Complement All Aspects of Professional Support

Questions to Guide Analysis of Your Campus’ Portfolio of Peer Support Programs

How extensively have you deployed peers as course assistants?

At University of Utah, students who attended one peer-led study session per week earned a course GPA one letter grade higher than students who attended none\(^1\). The effect was especially pronounced for students with lower predicted GPAs.

Do peers facilitate year-long or term-long common academic experiences for all students?

Every UT Austin student is assigned to a <20-student cohort with a peer mentor who facilitates shared academic experiences.

Do peer mentors help students set academic and career goals regularly?

Peer mentoring that incorporated peer mentor-led early and regular goal setting exercises report strong positive effects on GPA, retention, and goal achievement.

Do peers extend the reach of advising in encouraging students to seek help?

West Coast University\(^2\) hires “Commuter Assistants” to ensure that commuter students know the resources on campus and remember critical deadlines, which has eliminated gaps between commuters and resident students.

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\(^1\) The effect was especially pronounced for students with lower predicted GPAs.

\(^2\) Pseudonym for a small, private university on the West Coast.

Peer advisor-led outreach and service referral campaigns

An Initial Investment Saves Time in the End

When Trusted with Some Advisor Duties, Peers Can Free Up Time

An Overwhelmed Associate Director for Campus Life¹

*Attempting to Manage a Changing Student Population*

- Connecting students to resources across campus
- Outreach for events and service referrals
- Academic Support
- 1:1 advising sessions

40%

Commuter population quadrupled to 40% in just three years

Commuter Assistants Build Engagement and Add Capacity

*Shifting Transactional and Low-Level Interactions to Peer Advisors*

- Managing higher level cases for students
- Support for other student populations on campus

Peer “Commuter Assistants” Lighten the Workload

- 3000+ text messages sent to commuters
- Over 200 student meetings in first year, 89% of commuters reached
- Retention gap between commuters and residents narrowed from 12% to only 1.6%

1) At a small, private university on the West Coast

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Scaling Peer Support and Experiential Learning

Make Peer Support a Career-Relevant Opportunity

Do Your Peer Mentors Realize These Benefits?

- Regular intensive training
- Reflective exercises
- Career-relevant skills
- Progressive leadership opportunities
- Course credit and/or stipend

“What mentors liked most about the program was that they gained leadership skills, gained a chance to share their experiences, and participated in planning and organizing activities for mentees. This was seen as a great benefit as it gave them the opportunity to take on a position as a role model and provide an influence to upcoming students.”

- Gunn, Lee, and Steed 2017

Case in Brief: University of Texas, Austin’s University Leadership Network Peer Mentors

- **Program:** 2,000-student cohort with a four-year experiential learning curriculum, peer mentoring, and dedicated advising based on lower predicted graduation rates
- **Mentors:** 70-80 second-, third-, and fourth-year Network participants with multiple mentor ranks to offer more benefit to mentors and more management capacity
- **Experiential Learning Component:** Mentors produce a capstone project in which they reflect on the skills and knowledge learned in the program

Elements of Successful Peer Support Programs

Forthcoming Tools and Resources in Late 2018 and early 2019

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<tr>
<th>Maintain Regular Formal Contact with Mentees</th>
<th>Training Focuses on Relationships and Professional Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mentors meet with students weekly or bi-weekly</td>
<td>• Intensive, multi-day initial training followed by regular professional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Frequent check-ups help students stay on-track</td>
<td>• High expectations for mentor responsibility and professionalism</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide a Mentor Curriculum Mapped to the Mentee’s Academic Milestones and Deadlines</th>
<th>Ensure That Mentors Understand the Benefits They Gain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sessions are catered to important moments during the semester</td>
<td>• Mentors value the leadership opportunity and mentees value academic and social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentors provide students with:</td>
<td>• Enthusiasm and high expectations contribute to success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Transition support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– Direction to campus resources</td>
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<td>– Goal setting</td>
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**Mentorship calendar templates**

**Peer mentor training guide**

**Mentor curriculum templates**

**Mentor experiential reflection tool**

1. Create opportunities for early academic wins to prepare students for future challenges

2. Scale student support and normalize help-seeking behavior by expanding the use of peer coaches and mentors

3. Regularly reinforce the connection between students’ education and long-term goals
Student Focus Pulled in Multiple Directions

Doubts about Relevance and Practicality Compound Existing Pressures

**Relevance Concerns**
- Is this course relevant?

**Financial and Life Pressures**
- Study or take a few more hours of work?

**Ability to Give Attention to Courses**

**Pressures on Major Choice**
- I picked this major because my parents thought it was best
- If I’m already not going to succeed in the major, should I just leave?

**Ability to Access Experiences**
- How much would study abroad help me get a job?
- I need to keep working the whole time in college

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Attention on First Year But Gaps Worsen Later

**Selective Private University**
*Retention Gaps Widen 2nd to 3rd Year*

“When I step on this campus... I feel like a tourist... I feel a distinct feeling of 'you are not supposed to be here.'”

![Chart showing retention rates for White, Black, and Latinx students at a selective private university.](chart1)

**Large State Institution**
*Retention Gaps Widen 2nd to 3rd Year*

“Sophomore year brought a whole new round of challenges. I felt old habits returning and let myself slip.”

![Chart showing retention rates for White, Black, and Latinx students at a large state institution.](chart2)

1) Data is for the 2015 cohort

Course-based goal reflection exercise

Reinforce Link Between Courses, Goals, and Values

Simple Class Activities Buffer Students Against Doubt and Stereotypes

Sample Syllabus: Biology 111
Professor B. Macklin

Course Goals:
• Goal 1

Assignments:
• Assignment 1

In-class writing assignment to target students’ perceived value of and engagement in coursework

“Write an essay addressing [topic] and discuss the relevance of the concept or issue to your own life...include some concrete information from the unit, explaining why this specific information is relevant to your life or useful to you.”

61% Decrease in course performance gap1 between first-gen URM students and continuing-gen majority students in biology course

In-class exercise to safeguard students against the possibility of confirming stereotypes about their groups

“From the list provided, select two or three values most important to you and explain, in a few sentences, their importance and relevance to you. List the top two reasons the selected values are important to you.”

61% Decrease in in-class exam score gap between men and women in introductory physics course2


1) Based on course grade
2) Results after controlling for prior SAT/ACT Math scores
It’s Not an Ability Problem

Focusing on Those in Good Standing to Find Equity Gaps

A Topographical Map of National Student Outcomes
6.7 million student records, Student Success Collaborative

The Murky Middle
(GPA 2.0-3.0)
87% retention rate
66% graduation rate

Critical Decisions on the Horizon
- Chose a major
- Consider jobs and internships
- Begin a career path

Possible Roadblocks
- Inability to get into a major
- Financial pressures
-Increasingly challenging work

Loss of Motivation
- Coursework doesn’t connect to goals
- Conflicted about need to support dependents

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Pain Points Amplify Belonging Uncertainty

Determining Which Shocks Worsen Demographic Disparities

Source: Timothy Pleskac, Jessica Keeney, Stephanie Merritt, Neal Schmitt, and Frederick Oswald, “A Detection Model of College Withdrawal”, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 2011; EAB interviews and analysis.

Harmful to All, but Worse for Those Already Experiencing Uncertainty and Distress

- Creates potential for stereotype threat to arise
- Reinforces uncertainty of ability to succeed
- Challenges college navigation skills during recovery
- Inspires doubts about relevance of education due to immediacy of financial needs
Set a Specific Recovery Plan

Beyond an Advisor Meeting, A Step-by-Step Plan Helps Close Gaps

Step-by-Step Positive and Negative Goal Setting Makes Course Correction a Reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Self-Authoring Worksheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What will your life look like if you meet these goals? If you do not?

In detail, describe your plan for meeting these goals. Also, describe what will happen if you don’t follow this plan.

Course Correction Never Fully Takes Hold

- Sophomore Year Experience staff typically suggests resources
- Onus is on the student to seek support
- Guidance remains vague and disconnected from student’s goals

Student still stops out after failing to reengage

Implemented a Goal-Setting Intervention

Who

Benefits new first-year and continuing students

Format

Interventions have been effective both in-person and online

Results

- Closed ethnicity GPA gaps
- Increased credits earned
- Students made significant progress towards stated goals

Depleting the Already Depleted

Across All GPA Bands, Students Who Lose Aid Are Less Likely to Persist

Next-Year Persistence Rates by GPA Range and Change in Financial Aid Award

Institutional, GPA-Dependent Aid Can Be a Double-Edged Sword

18%
Proportion of first year students who lose GPA-restricted scholarships at EAB University

$1,000
Average amount of institutional grant aid students at private colleges lost between first and senior year 2011-12

19
Percentage point increase in proportion of student costs covered by Gates Millennium Scholars Program from first year to sophomore year

1) Data from SSC analysis of data at three large public universities
2) Private university in the north east
3) Attributed to change in financial aid from first to second year

A Plan to Keep HOPE Alive

Academic, Personal, and Financial Intervention Course Corrects Students

Improving Outcomes for HOPE Regainers and All Participants

20.2
Percentage point improvement in 6-year graduation rate of participants, even for students who never regain

55%
Of participants regained the scholarship by the next marker (2011-2015)

>377
Number of students served since 2009

1. Target
Target first-year students with GPA between 2.75 and 2.99, just below 3.0 cutoff for HOPE

2. Recovery Plan
Create an academic recovery plan, including use of academic and financial literacy services and taking 30 credits

3. Accountability
Regularly meet with success coach for financial and personal guidance before reapplication for HOPE

4. Bridge Funding
Receive a $1,000 scholarship to aid in completion of requirements ($500 per term)

Source: Tim Renick; Four Strategies for Supporting Low-Income Students, Student Financial Success Conference at Georgia State University, May 30, 2018; Georgia State University, Keep HOPE Alive; Complete College Georgia, "Georgia State 2016 Financial Aid Interventions"; Martin Kurzweil and D. Derek Wu, “Building a Pathway to Student Success at Georgia State University”, Ithaka S+R, April 23, 2015; Georgia State University, "Keeping HOPE Alive", Georgia State University Giving, September 26, 2012.
Ensuring Regular Education-Career Connections

Get Ahead of Critical Loss Points to Keep Focus on Student Goals

Curriculum of Career Development Milestones
- Career development course
- Meetings with peer and professional staff

Proactive Clearance of Administrative Barriers
- Guaranteed access to high-demand courses

Access to a Pre-Made, Engaged Professional Network
- Special events with industry leaders
- Mentoring relationships with alumni and campus partners

Compliance-Based, Aid-Like-A-Paycheck Scholarship
- Monthly distribution of aid after hitting milestones

UT Austin University Leadership Network
- 55% Actual four-year graduation rate of first ULN cohort
- 33% Predicted four-year graduation rate of first ULN cohort

Hamilton College Joan Hinde Stewart Program
- 90% Summer internship participation for Hamilton low-income and first-gen students

Braven Fellowship Program with Rutgers-Newark, SJSU, and National Louis University
- +30 Percentage points more likely to have an internship than first-generation students nationally

Today’s Focus

Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success

The Two Questions Guiding Our Research

What disparities from outside of higher education do institutions need to remedy when their students enroll?

What do institutions do (or not do) to create or make gaps worse among their increasingly diverse student bodies?

Three Imperatives to Reduce Demographic Disparities in Academic Performance, Retention, and Graduation

1. Create opportunities for early academic wins to prepare students for future challenges
   - Growth mindset priming exercise
   - Pre-college academic simulation
   - Math catch-up pathway

2. Scale student support and normalize help-seeking behavior by expanding the use of peer coaches and mentors
   - Peer support expansion diagnostic
   - Peer advisor-led outreach and service referral campaigns
   - Mentor career skill reflection exercises

3. Regularly reinforce the connection between students’ education and long-term goals
   - Course-based goal reflection exercise
   - Step-by-step bounce back plans
   - Scholarship recovery intervention
   - Experiential learning incentive scholarship

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
Implementation Session Instructions

Choose One Barrier to Remove, Choose One New Action to Take

**Choosing a Barrier**

Review your notes from the session today to identify a barrier that you are aware of or want to investigate on your campus that creates performance, retention, or graduation gaps. For example:

- Administrative policies with disproportionally negative impact on some population
- Aid dispersal to support experiential learning participation
- Curricular pathway review and modification to acknowledge preparation gaps

**Choosing an Action**

Review your notes from the session today to identify a new practice or action you want to take to actively close gaps on your campus. For example:

- Expanding peer coaching and mentoring to more students with an academic focus
- Creating all-student pre-college simulation
- Creating goal-setting interventions at critical loss points

Discuss the items you have selected with one to two people around you. Share ideas for how to implement the practice, potential challenges, and insights from your experience. Prepare to share back with the larger group the conversation that you had and the steps you plan to take when you return to campus.