Build Student Success Knowledge Infrastructures Collaboratively

March 12, 2012/7:30 AM - 8:30 AM
Lumina Models of Success Team from
The U. of Texas at El Paso, Prairie View A&M U., and
Texas A&M International U.
Funded by Lumina Foundation
Program Outline

• Background: the Lumina-funded collaborative project (5m)
• Collaborative leadership and the connection with conference theme (5m)
• Overview of the steps to build student-success knowledge infrastructures (5m)
• Sharing of experiences (35m)
  – Challenges, and why collaborations can help address them
  – Specific strategies and tools to deal with challenges
  – Summary of challenges and strategies
• Insights gained from this roundtable session (10m)
Background

With support from Lumina Foundation, UTEP, PVAMU, TAMIU, and EPCC have been collaborating to build institutional knowledge infrastructures to undertake studies that examine the effects of student and institutional factors on student success.

The infrastructure consists of three major components

• First-time-in-college (FTIC) student success
• Transfer student success (with EPCC)
• Student success in specific fields (next step)
Goals of this roundtable session

(1) call for closer collaboration between student affairs and institutional research professionals in campus-wide student success efforts and

(2) promote institutional collaborations in multi-campus student-success efforts.
Learning Outcomes

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

• Identify ways to use assessment and research to influence change
• Be inspired to lead in assessment, evaluation, and research

Leadership

• Identify strategies for developing a shared vision
• Identify strategies for influencing change
• Identify strategies for igniting engagement
Knowledge Infrastructure

Knowledge-Supported Change Cycles

The Practitioner, Custodian, and Analyst roles are embodied in each of us, no matter where we are positioned organization-wise or profession-wise.
Student Success
Knowledge Infrastructure

What **actionable** factors explain students’ success at minority-serving institutions (MSI)?

Do the success and risk factors have changing effects over time?
Knowledge Extraction : 3-D

Definition
What are the outcomes that define and measure “student success”?

Description
What does each outcome look like?

Design
How do we identify factors that influence the outcomes and estimate their effects?
Knowledge-Supported Changes : A-R-Q

Action
Based on our new knowledge, what actions at what time are most likely to have significant impacts on student success?

Reflection
As we reflect on the actions taken, how do we assess their effectiveness and impacts?

Question
New questions are formed based on what we have learned and what is still uncertain.

... the next round of knowledge extraction and knowledge-supported changes...
Sharing of Experiences

Next, presenters from Texas A&M International U., The University of Texas at El Paso, and all roundtable participants will share their experiences on knowledge-supported changes.

- Challenges, and why collaborations can help address them
- Specific strategies and tools to deal with challenges
- Summary of challenges and strategies
## Participant Discussion

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Goals
The goal of this roundtable session is to discuss examples and strategies for closer collaborations between student affairs and institutional research professionals in campus-wide student success efforts and to promote institutional collaborations in multi-campus student success efforts.

Learning Outcomes
By sharing the experiences, challenges, and lessons learned from an ongoing (year two of a three-year Lumina-funded project) collaboration among four institutions focused on student success, the presenters will use real-life examples to structure the discussion around two overarching questions: the rationale for collaboration (why) and the strategies for effective and sustainable collaborations (how). The presenters will guide the discussions around these guiding questions and draw on both the presenter’s and the participants’ experiences to explore answers and solutions. Participants are expected to walk away with a deeper conviction of the importance of and their leadership roles for reaching out beyond professional and institutional boundaries. In addition, participants will be better equipped with specific strategies and practical tools for dealing with challenges that may emerge at each step of the collaborative process of building knowledge infrastructures to support student success practices.

Relevance to the Conference Theme
This session is closely related to the conference theme, “Ignite Leadership, Influence Change,” in that it emphasizes collective leadership across professional and institutional boundaries and focuses on knowledge-guided changes that lead to cumulative success and goal achievement.

The presenters believe that leadership is more effective when it originates from people who effect incremental but positive outcomes through daily work. At the same time, the division of labor and integration of insights go hand-in-hand in achieving optimal results through concerted collaboration that is both efficient and effective. Promoting student success requires campus-wide and multiple-campus collaboration and the involvement of student affairs administrators as well as institutional researchers, faculty, other administrators, and students themselves.
As for influencing change, the presenters stresses that changes are plausible and conducive to success only when they are clearly aimed at improvement with the guidance of empirical evidence. Change for the sake of change itself is meaningless and may be even counterproductive. Therefore, knowledge infrastructures are pivotal in influencing changes and worthy investment that will support long-term positive changes.

**Conceptual Foundation in Literature**

This roundtable program is grounded in two areas of studies in higher education: student success and organizational change.

The student success literature largely focuses on identifying explanatory factors of student success (Kuh et al., 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2008; Spady, 1970; SSRC, 2005; Tinto, 1975, 1994, 2006). However, the conceptual distinctions between student success and institutional success are often blurred. Although student and institutional success are undoubtedly connected, the institutional influences on student success (college impact) must be conceptually and empirically isolated from the influences of student factors in order to evaluate institutional and program effectiveness (Astin, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Raudenbush, 2004) and guide program intervention practices (Seidman, 2005). Although the literature has documented many “best practices” that are believed to be effective in promoting student success (Kuh et al., 2010), their effects on student success are yet to be empirically evaluated to support program improvement. Existing empirical studies often use national sample data or cohort data from one institution and the results may not be useful to practitioners at another institution. It is necessary to build an institutionally-customized knowledge infrastructure to support student success initiatives; however, the challenges are multifaceted and require resources often beyond the capacity of one organizational unit or one institution and lead to the needs of collaboration.

Collaboration beyond internal and external organizational boundaries entails organizational changes. Although institutions of higher education may be viewed in multiple images or metaphors, this program focuses on building knowledge infrastructures and therefore adopts the particular organizational image of the brain to guide the understanding of organizational change. This brain metaphor views colleges and universities as learning organizations which are self-regulated with their subsystems responding a number of inputs to monitor their operation and make corrections and adjustments as necessary (Birnbaum, 1991; Morgan, 2006). With knowledge as a significant organizational resource, incremental, adaptive, cumulative, and positive changes may be effected. Although sometimes viewed as conservative and maintaining the status quo, the learning organizations may actually use their knowledge infrastructures to support radical changes that involve paradigm shifts. In order to support such shifts, the key is to develop the organizational capability of learning to learn (adaptive learning).

Connecting the insights from the two areas of literature, the presenters believe that effective practices that promote student success are sustainable by building the institutional capacity of adaptive learning and adaptive change. Within their expertise in data integration and analytical methods, institutional researchers serve the functions of knowledge management and reduction of uncertainty in decision making (Alavi, 2001; Davenport, Harris, & Morison, 2010; Howard, 2001; Hubbard, 2010; McLaughlin, 1998) while student affairs administrators serve the important role of “practitioner-as-researcher” in the
knowledge production process (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004). The direct involvement and close collaboration of professionals in both fields are vital in the building, application, and improvement of student success knowledge infrastructures that contribute to the institutional capacity of adaptive learning.

References


