



LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Pathways Project Implementation Memorandum

TO: Laura Rittner, Executive Director, Success Center – OACC
FROM: Dr. Heather Davis & Dr. Brendan Greaney
RE: Using Non-Cognitive Assessments to Support Under-Resourced Students
Upon Entry to the College
DATE: May 31, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION

Dating back to the earliest days of the Community College movement, two-year colleges across the country have had a large focus on access. By providing access to students who may otherwise not be able to access a postsecondary education, we simultaneously provide these students with a chance at bettering their lives, while also taking on a responsibility to assist them with the numerous challenges they may bring with them. More and more, these challenges are not related to a student's academic abilities, yet the challenges they face in their daily lives that may lead to their inability to be successful in college. Over the last decade, a growing number of Community Colleges have begun offering non-academic support services in order to address these challenges. From food pantries, child care, and emergency financial assistance, Community Colleges are more and more taking on the role of holistic caregivers for their students. However, how can colleges identify these potential challenges before they endanger a student's success? A tool is needed in order to identify these potential challenges then provide college staff and administrators with the ability to connect students to resources to mitigate these challenges. The purpose of this memo will be to introduce such a tool and the expected challenges in implementing this tool.

RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEWED

One publication the team reviewed in the development of this memo was titled "Ask-Connect-Inspire-Plan: How to Reimagine Onboarding into a Program of Study" (2021, June) written by Hana Lahr and Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center. This publication, developed by the Community College Research Center, discussed the Ask-Connect-Inspire-Plan approach to student onboarding. This approach, also developed by the Community College Research Center, focuses on engaging students early on in the onboarding process and creating a highly

personalized onboarding process. The implementation team took this approach to heart when developing the plan to be discussed later in this memo.

The second publication the team examined written by Fagioli, Baker, and Orona (2020), titled “The Role of Non-cognitive Variables in Identifying Community College Students in Need of Targeted Supports”. Fagioli, Baker, and Orona conducted research on 3,000 incoming students at two Community Colleges. Their study sought to answer three questions; One, can non-cognitive assessments improve predictions of academic success, Two, do behavioral mediators (i.e. visiting tutoring or number of credit hours in a student’s first term) explain the relationship between non-academic measures and academic outcomes, and Three, how helpful can these measures be in identifying students who may be at risk.

The final publication the implementation team studies was titled “Exploring the use of non-cognitive factors in predicting college academic outcomes” Cooper (2014). In her publication, Cooper studies over 8,700 entering college students, combining both cognitive (i.e. ACT or GPA) and non-cognitive assessments to determine their efficacy in predicating college student academic success.

DATA EXAMINED

The most powerful data the implementation team examined was from the aforementioned study by Fagioli, Baker, and Orona. In their study, in a surprise to the implementation team, they found little correlation in the use of non-cognitive assessments and prediction of future student academic success. This finding, at first, forced the implementation team to reconsider the approach. However, upon further reading, Fagiolo, Baker, and Orona reported a strong correlation in prediction of future student academic success and the use of non-cognitive assessments when combined with cognitive assessments, such as the ACT or the student’s high school GPA. This finding, gaveended further credence to the study conducted by Cooper.

PROPOSED CHANGES/REFORMS TO BE ADOPTED

It can be difficult to recognize the under resourced student. To help ensure student success, colleges and/or universities need to recognize student limitations that can hinder academic focus and performance. By gaining a deeper understanding of student limitations, colleges and/or universities can intervene and assist. As we know, earlier intervention is key and can have a large impact on long-term success.

Including the *Non-Cognitive Needs Intake Survey* (see below) at the time of admission is imperative. With the application to college, students can self-identify their needs and limitations. As a result, the advising team, staff, and faculty can attempt to match their identified needs and limitations to resources offered by the college and/or university or to resources with the community. By connecting students to meet their basic needs, retention and graduation rates have the potential to increase.

Non-Cognitive Student Needs Intake Survey

Purpose of the Tool

Colleges collect a wide range of information on student profiles during the student application process but rarely utilize the information collected to tailor student interventions. The following sample student intake survey provides a template for a basic student intake survey that is mapped to the non-academic resource matrix on the following page. These survey questions may be integrated into the application itself or included as an addendum to the application.

Student Intake Survey

1. Do you need information about housing options?
No Unsure Yes
2. Are you comfortable using a computer on a daily basis?
No Unsure Yes
3. Do you have regular (daily) access to a reliable computer with reliable Internet access?
No Unsure Yes
4. Do you plan on joining any social or extracurricular groups?
No Unsure Yes
5. Would you like to learn more about accommodations from Disability Services?
No Unsure Yes
6. Do you have reliable transportation to and from class?
No Unsure Yes
7. Do you feel confident in your major and/or career pathway selection?
No Unsure Yes
8. Are you sure of your declared program/major?
No Unsure Yes
9. Do you plan to work while attending college?
No Unsure Yes
10. Do you have a financial plan to pay for all present and future semesters?
No Unsure Yes
11. Are you responsible for the care of children and/or other dependents?
No Unsure Yes
12. Are you or a family member a veteran or a current member of the armed forces?
No Unsure Yes
13. Do you or a family member need assistance understanding English?
No Unsure Yes
14. Do you have trouble feeding yourself or a family member?
No Unsure Yes
15. Do you feel comfortable managing stress?
No Unsure Yes

Source: EAB interviews and analysis. ©2015 The Advisory Board Company 31457 86 eab.com

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Several challenges can be anticipated:

1. Ensuring that the students complete the survey.
It is suggested that the Non-Cognitive Needs Intake Survey be included with the application for admission. We hope that the application is completed in full before submission/review. If not, this can pose as a challenge.
2. Institutional buy-in.
As with anything, change can sometimes be a struggle and we understand that it can be difficult to change a process that is already in place. Staff/faculty usually need time for transition and to adopt the new policy and/or procedure in place. Additionally, all faculty and staff need to be informed and educated on the under-resourced student and the impact that this has on student success and college completion. If not, this can pose as a challenge.
3. Who might be responsible to collect the data/analysis/follow-through with identified needs.
Advisors, faculty and staff wear many hats. Adding an additional responsibility might not fare well with employees. Again, the purpose and importance of this change should be stressed. Admin would need to identify who (or what team) might be responsible for the collection, analysis, and monitoring of student self-identified needs. Being sure that the identified person or team follows through with this new responsibility is so important. If not, this can pose a challenge.
4. Who might be responsible for connecting students to identified needs/follow through.
Similar to above, adding the additional responsibility to a person or team for connecting/monitoring students to identified needs might not fare well or have its' set of struggles. Admin would need to identify who (or what team) might be responsible for the collection, analysis, and monitoring of student self-identified needs.

Overall, this change in policy/procedure will be a team effort.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, identifying the under-resourced student at the time of admission can change the path of the student. We not only need to identify the resources that are needed, but we also need to do a better job at connecting the students to the resources that are needed. Advisors, faculty and staff can offer resources that are provided by the institution or resources that are provided within the local community. Helping and assisting the under-resourced students can increase retention and graduation rates for the college and/or institution. Most importantly, it can increase the student's academic success in their chosen program of study and it can increase the student's success in their future.