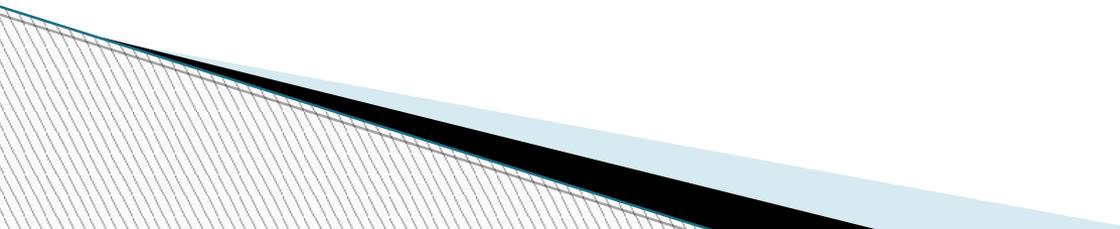


# **Taking the Widescreen View: Moving Toward Holistic Assessment of Student Success Courses**

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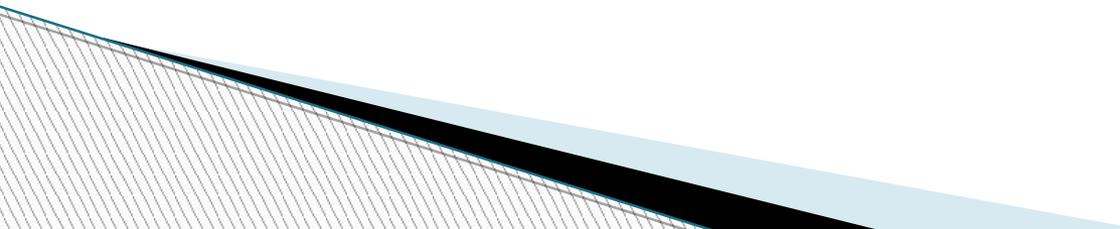
# Big Hairy Fact:

In spite of volumes of persistence research and extensive commitment of resources to programs to improve student persistence, overall college completion rates have changed very little over the past several decades (Adelman, 2004; Barton, 2002; Horn & Berger, 2004).



# Student Success Courses

A broad range of courses offered to foster skills, knowledge, and experiences that support students in successfully engaging in college.

- Have a long history in post-secondary education
  - Implemented on 95% of four-year campuses
  - Supported by a substantial body of theory and research
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# From Four-year College to Community College

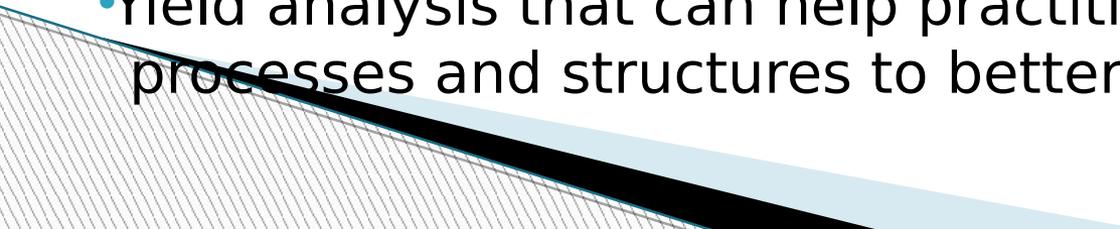
Success Courses are now implemented on about 70% of community college campuses.

However...

- No well-defined body of persistence theory based on two-year college culture.
  - Few strong studies specifically focus on success courses in two-year colleges.
  - Study designs are largely participant/outcome with little or no attention to course contexts and processes.
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# Shifting the Assessment Perspective

How can we better understand how success courses influence community college students?

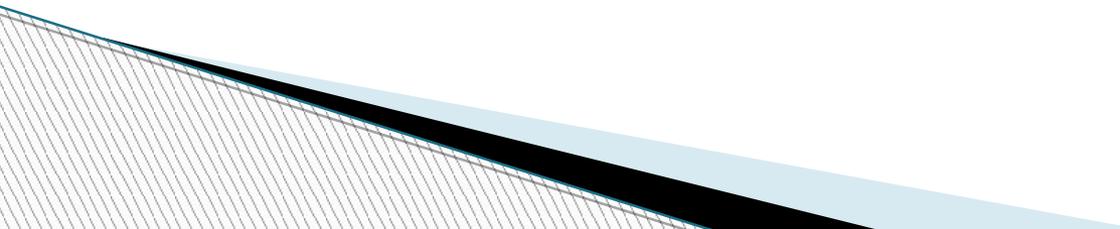
- Use data sources already available or easily produced within the institution.
  - Create capacity to articulate experiences of diverse student populations.
  - Be adaptable to different campus environments.
  - Yield analysis that can help practitioners improve program processes and structures to better serve students.
- 

# Research Design

**Exploratory:** Sought understanding to help develop practical tools for assessing context-specific success course influence on engagement.

**Multiple Cases:** Attempted to examine both student and institutional dimensions of course influence by comparing four colleges with highly similar success course policies and goals.

**Mixed Methods:** Provided a fuller picture of course influence in situ by cross-analyzing CCSSE data, student focus group data, and web sited analysis.

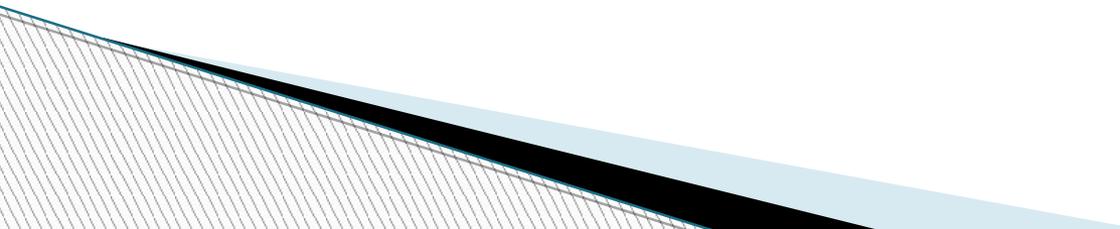


# Holistic Assessment Process

1. Define the program goal.
  2. Determine the standards for accomplishing the goal.
  3. Define expectations of good performance for each standard.
  4. Select authentic tasks—those that are native and meaningful—to be assessed.
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# The Goal

Students who take a success course will become more engaged in college.

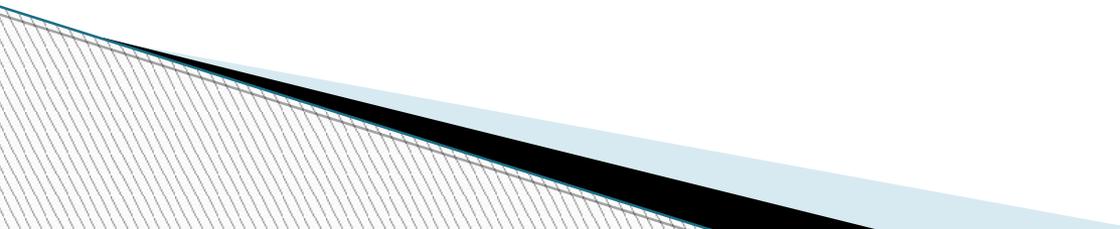


# Engagement Theory:

Student success is strongly associated with *engagement*, loosely defined as active participation in purposeful educational experiences. Theory articulates two dimensions of engagement:

- Time and effort *students* put into educational activities that lead to success.
- Ways the *institution* allocates resources and organizes opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities. (Kuh et al., 2005)

# Standards:

1. Success course participation will have a positive influence on student engagement.
  2. Institutional commitment to success course will promote positive course influence on student engagement.
- 

# **STANDARD I: Success course participation will have a positive influence on student engagement.**

1. **Expectation:** Course participants will show significantly higher levels of engagement than non-participants.

**To Assess:** Compare CCSSE engagement measures for participants vs. non-participants.

2. **Expectation:** Course participants will articulate a generally positive sense of course experience and value.

**To Assess:** Analyze student focus group discussion of success course experience for perceptions of course value.

# **STANDARD II: Institutional investment in success course will promote positive course experience.**

1. **Expectation:** Clear course information will be readily available to students through public information sources.

**To Assess:** Search college web site for information about success courses, requirement for enrolling, and credit value.

2. **Expectation:** Students will articulate a generally positive perception of the institution's commitment to the success course.

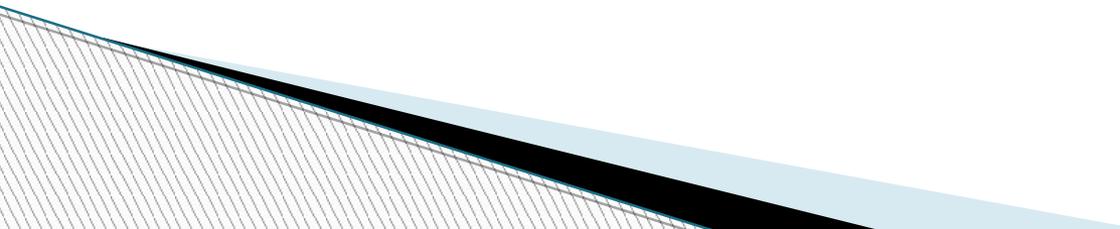
**To Assess:** Analyze student focus group discussion for student perceptions of institutional commitment to success course.



# About the Colleges

Institutional Characteristics			Student Demographics (%)				Enrollment Characteristics (%)		
<u>College</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Inst. Age (yrs.)</u>	<u>Students &lt;25 yrs.</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>African Amer.</u>	<u>Academic</u>	<u>Technical</u>	<u>Part-time (%)</u>
<i>I</i>	13,000	14	76	45	43	6	92	8	69
<i>II</i>	8,000	25	70	65	31	2	87	13	64
<i>III</i>	20,000+	85	65	48	43	5	59	41	65
<i>IV</i>	10,000	100+	56	47	34	16	53	47	64

# Success Course Policy

- Required for students entering with 15 or fewer hours (dual credit hours excluded)
  - Must be taken during the first semester
  - Subject to regular tuition
  - Credit is at the “0” level—non-transferrable and does not fulfill degree requirement
- 

# The CCSSE Story

	College I		College II		College III		College IV	
	Course	EnrLvl	Course	EnrLvl	Course	EnrLvl	Course	EnrLvl
Active/collaborative learning	ü	-	-	ü	ü	ü	-	-
Student effort	ü	ü	-	ü	-	ü	-	-
Academic challenge	ü	ü	-	ü	-	-	-	-
Student/faculty relationships	ü	-	ü	-	ü	-	-	-
Support for learners	ü	-	ü	-	-	-	ü	-

# The Web Site Story

	College I	College II	College III	College IV

# The Student's Story

	<b>College I</b>	<b>College II</b>	<b>College III</b>	<b>College IV</b>
<b>Student Sample</b>	minimal developmental, traditional age	basic skills, young adults	two or more developmental, mixed ages	basic skills, young to middle aged adults
<b>Course Value</b>	negative	positive	mixed (instr)	positive
<b>Course Requirement</b>	negative	positive	mixed (instr)	mixed
<b>Course Credit</b>	saw as empty	didn't understand	mixed (instr)	didn't understand
<b>Valued Learning</b>	college knowledge	self as learner	college knowledge, self knowledge	self knowledge, life skills
<b>Valued Format</b>	discussion, group work	group work, book work	discussion, group work, self assessment	discussion, group work

# College I Summary

**Standards I:** Strong engagement data but negative perception of course value among prepared students.

**Standard II:** Good info available through e-catalog, evidence of course integration across college, but students questioned institutional motives re. course requirement (e.g. source of tuition revenue).

## **Raises questions about...**

- ▶ Alignment of course goals with needs of different student groups.
- ▶ Conflicting messages within the college on value of success course.

# College II Summary

**Standard I:** Some evidence of increased engagement. Basic skills students found course valuable.

**Standard II:** Excellent info availability and organization on web site; no evidence of course integration across college. Basic skills students approved of course requirement.

***Raises questions about:***

- ▶ Are course views of basic skills students representative?
- ▶ Is course impact affected by isolation from other areas of college?

# College III Summary

**Standard I:** Some evidence of increased engagement; student perception of course value strongly related to instructor.

**Standard II:** Course info available but hard to access on cluttered, weakly organized web site; conflicting evidence of course integration. Students expressed mixed views of course requirement.

***Raises questions about:***

- ▶ Dependence of course quality on staffing; instructor selection and training.
- ▶ Program inertia—long history, deep habits.

# College IV Summary

**Standard I:** No evidence of increased engagement. Older basic skills students found course valuable but noted importance of instructor, objected to poor planning

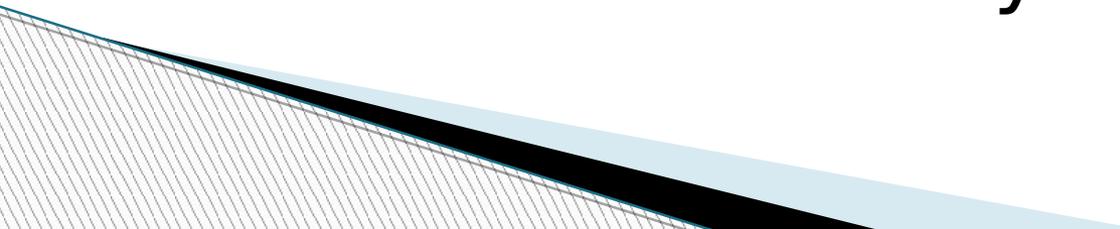
**Standard II:** Very weak course info availability and organization on web site; course not integrated with first year program or academics. Students generally approved course requirement but objected to amount of time required, expense of materials, and poor initial organization of course.

## ***Raises questions about:***

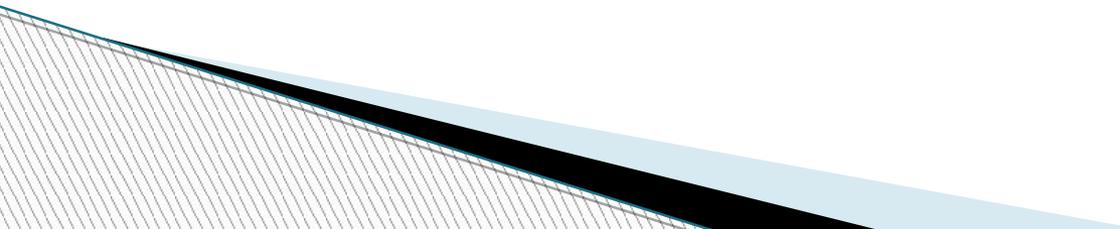
- ▶ Implementation processes for relatively new success course program.
- ▶ Administrative support and institutional commitment of resources for success course.

# Next Steps...

Holistic assessment tools for  
community college practitioners...

- Assessment process rubric
  - Institutional information asset inventory
  - Policy audit process
  - Holistic data analysis matrix
- 

The [student success] seminar should not be left at the margins of institutional life, its ideas treated as add-ons to the “real business” of the college. Too frequently the freshman seminar is treated as a type of vaccine that we hope will make the students immune to the many dangers of the freshman year. Unfortunately, by isolating the seminar from the curriculum, students tend to discount the seminar and its activities as unimportant when in fact it is.  
(Tinto, 2006, p. 6)



# Questions?

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