Happy New Year! As the new academic term begins, I want to give you an update on happenings around the Center.

We have recently had the good fortune of receiving grant funding to support two new undertakings. Thanks to generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Center, under the direction of the American Association of Community Colleges, is part of the national Pathways Project. In addition, thanks to funding from the MetLife Foundation, the Center will conduct research on community college student financial health and its impact on engagement. As the White House and state houses are discussing free community college tuition, understanding the financial health of students could not be timelier.

In May 2016 the Center will host its annual National Advisory Board meeting. The board is composed of college presidents and higher education policy leaders from across the country who provide guidance and insight to the Center. We are pleased to have four new members: Audrey J. Jaeger, Professor of Higher Education and Alumni Distinguished Graduate Professor, North Carolina State University; Steven L. Johnson, President, Sinclair Community College (OH); Dale K. Nesbary, President, Muskegon Community College (MI); and Lawrence A. Nespoli, President, New Jersey Council of County Colleges. For a complete list of the Center’s National Advisory Board members, visit www.ccsse.org/center/nab.

As the spring conference season kicks off, I hope to see you at one of the Center’s sessions. We’ll be highlighting the work of our latest report and facilitating sessions on how colleges are using Center data to bolster their student success agenda. I hope you will join us, and I look forward to hearing what your college is doing to improve the lives of students and ensure they are successful! See you soon!

It is frequently said that changes in higher education happen slowly. However, that is definitely not the current case in the area of developmental education: Experimentation and innovation are occurring in assessment, placement, and course redesign. For instance, some institutions are no longer using a stand-alone placement test score as the primary means of assessment, but instead are using multiple measures for assessing readiness. Institutions are also developing corequisite courses, in which students take a developmental class and a higher-level class at the same time, while other institutions are accelerating and modularizing the developmental sequence in alternate ways. Other colleges are redesigning math so that there are differentiated pathways based on students’ goals. Why? Because student success rates tell us that what we have been doing is not working.

Next month, the Center will release its national report at the DREAM annual convening. Expectations Meet Reality: The Underprepared Student and Community Colleges highlights cutting edge practices in work with underprepared students, but it also focuses on the typical experience of the community college student in the areas of assessment, placement, and developmental coursework.

One thing is certain: A divide between students’ expectations and reality exists. Institutions working to bridge this disconnect understand that something must change.

However, innovative practices in developmental education are thus far only reaching small numbers of students in most places, and understanding the typical student experience is key in order to improve processes for working with all underprepared students in the future.

Join us for a webinar on Wednesday, March 2, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. (CST) to learn more about the report and to share what your college is doing to improve the underprepared student experience.

Source: 2014 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) Promising Practices items

86% of students believe they are academically prepared to succeed in college

Based on their academic goals at their college, 61% of students believe it will take them two years or less to reach those goals

67% of students who take a placement test need a developmental course in at least one area

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LISTEN UP

At the Center, we’re always listening! Since 2001, the Center has been uplifting the student voice through surveys and focus groups, helping community college practitioners better understand their students’ experiences.

Citrus College Conducts Focus Groups to Better Understand Benchmark Scores

Institutional researchers at CITRUS COLLEGE (CA) saw below-average CCSSE benchmark scores and differences in student and instructor perceptions of engagement as an opportunity for growth. The college’s 2012 CCSSE results indicated opportunities for improvement in three benchmark areas, and CCFSSE data revealed significant gaps between student and instructor perceptions of classroom participation and feedback. These findings spurred the college’s Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness to collaborate with the Institutional Research and Planning Committee on a campus-wide focus group study.

Citrus College’s focus group study was both purposeful and targeted. By focusing on specific aspects of the college’s CCSSE results, establishing standard protocol, and cultivating a representative set of participants, the focus groups helped refine the college’s understanding of its survey data. College researchers first established outcome areas and developed questions that targeted these outcomes; then proceeded to recruit 63 students of varying academic, demographic, and special program statuses; and finally, ensured the reliability of results through comprehensive training of focus group facilitators and data coders.

Citrus College’s focus group findings highlight the interaction of student, faculty, and institutional factors in student engagement. In the area of Active and Collaborative Learning—a benchmark of concern at the study’s outset—nearly half of participants acknowledged that classroom participation enhances their learning. However, participants also noted that student, faculty, and course factors all influence whether a student actually participates. Fortunately, simple instructor actions—such as clearly stating participation expectations and encouraging students to speak up without fear—increase the chance that reluctant students will engage.

Student feedback also led to several institution-specific recommendations, such as increasing the length of writing center appointments and changing the hours of operation for campus academic support centers.

For more information on Citrus College’s focus group work, visit http://bit.ly/1PyhFsH. For Center focus group toolkits, please visit www.ccsse.org/tools.

The path to student success starts HERE

Registration for the 2016 entering student survey (SENSE) is open now through April 30, 2016 www.cccse.org

And Coming in 2017… CCSSE Refresh
More at ccsse.org/refresh
Key Measures of General Learning Outcomes

1. Determine a consistent method of measuring institutional GLOs.
2. Establish a process for using the measurement results to inform overall desired assessment goals.
3. Develop a meaningful annual institutional assessment plan using areas not meeting goals for improvement.

Since Northark already administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) every other year, the AAT began development of the new assessment process by aligning the six GLOs with CCSSE items.

During the redesign process, the AAT established three key goals:

1. Determine a consistent method of measuring institutional GLOs.
2. Establish a process for using the measurement results to inform overall desired assessment goals.
3. Develop a meaningful annual institutional assessment plan using areas not meeting goals for improvement.

Since Northark already administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) every other year, the AAT began development of the new assessment process by aligning the six GLOs with CCSSE items.

The AAT selected for GLO1, students will apply critical thinking and problem solving skills across disciplines, the AAT selected CCSSE Item 12e (thinking critically and analytically).

For GLO2, students will apply life skills in areas such as teamwork, ethics, and study habits, CCSSE Items 12h (working effectively with others), 12i (learning effectively on your own), and 12l (developing a personal code of values and ethics) were selected.

For GLO3, students will communicate clearly in written and oral formats, the AAT selected CCSSE Items 12c (writing clearly and effectively) and 12d (speaking clearly and effectively).

The AAT selected CCSSE Item 12g (using computing and information technology) to assess GLO4, students will use technology appropriate for learning.

For assessment of GLO5, students will discuss issues of a diverse global society, the team selected CCSSE Item 12k (understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds).

And for GLO6, students will demonstrate math and/or statistical skills, CCSSE Item 12f (solving numerical problems) was selected.

Northark’s goal for each identified CCSSE measure is to be at or above the CCSSE cohort level. The annual assessment report will include Northark’s performance as compared to the CCSSE cohort and will more effectively demonstrate achievement of institutional GLOs. When Northark’s results fall below the CCSSE cohort for any measure, the data will be incorporated into the annual assessment plan. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the AAT will develop program- and course-level assessment measurements for program- and course-specific learning outcomes.

Center Webinar Helps Colleges Dig Into Survey Data

The Center provides member colleges with an assortment of tools to maximize their ability to analyze, interpret, and communicate SENSE and CCSSE results. In order to provide an interactive overview of these resources, the Center hosted a live webinar in September of last year for representatives from over 50 community and technical colleges. Participants learned about the Center’s standard reporting of institutional survey results, as well as about custom reporting options, including the availability of comparison reporting and reporting broken out by various student characteristics. The webinar also highlighted exercises that can be used with internal audiences as catalysts for discussion of results and implementation of changes, along with templates that facilitate communication with external stakeholders.

A video of the webinar and PDF document of the accompanying slides are available at www.ccsse.org/tools/workingresults.

FEATURED ONLINE TOOL: DATA NARRATIVE EXERCISE

Colleges that participate in CCSSE and SENSE receive a wealth of data about institutional practices and student behaviors correlated with student success. To help members take those data points and share them with diverse audiences in a way that promotes positive change, the Center has developed a data narrative exercise. This tool provides a framework for discussing specific survey items and crafting powerful and relatable data-driven stories. By engaging in small group conversations and, later, in facilitated discussion, college leaders can augment survey results with meaning and context. The data narrative exercise is available in the CCSSE and SENSE tools sections of the Center website.
The Center joins AACC and six other partners in this work: Achieving the Dream—the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)—a community college association of Community Colleges (AACC)—a community college president declared, “Pathways is the next big thing in community colleges.”

Building on emerging research and experience in the field, the Pathways Project expands upon recommendations set forth by the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges’ 2012 publication, Reclaiming the American Dream, and the 2014 implementation guide, Empowering Community Colleges: To Build the Nation’s Future.

The Center joins AACC and six other partners in this work: Achieving the Dream, Inc.; The Aspen Institute; Community College Research Center; Jobs for the Future; the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement; Dream, Inc.; The Aspen Institute; Community College Research Center; and Public Agenda.

After a highly competitive national process to identify colleges that are committed to implementing guided academic and career pathways at scale for all students, 30 colleges located in urban, suburban, and rural locations in 17 states, with fall headcount enrollments ranging from less than 3,000 to almost 60,000 students, were selected:

- Alamo Colleges (TX)
- Bakersfield College (CA)
- Broward College (FL)
-  Cleveland State Community College (TN)
- Columbus State Community College (OH)
- Community College of Philadelphia (PA)

The Center’s role in the Pathways Project is to coordinate the logistics for six institutes, serve as the main contact for the Pathways colleges in their completion of advance work prior to each institute, lead the development of Pathways Institute #4, and produce video segments reflecting student experiences in pathways.

Pathways Institute #1 (Leadership for Transformational Change: Implementing Pathways at Scale), for the selected colleges and their 12 designated coaches, will be held in the beginning of February in San Antonio, Texas. To learn more about the Pathways Project, visit www.ccsse.org/center/initiatives/pathways.

Look for our sessions at these upcoming events:

- **FYE Annual Conference**
  - February 20 – 23, 2016
  - Orlando, FL
  - sc.edu/fye/annual

- **Achieving the Dream — DREAM**
  - February 23 – 26, 2016
  - Atlanta, GA
  - achievingthedream.org

- **TAIR Annual Conference**
  - February 28 – March 2, 2016
  - San Antonio, TX
  - texas-air.org/conference/2016

- **SXSWedu**
  - March 7 – 10, 2016
  - Austin, TX
  - sxswedu.com

- **AAHHE Conference**
  - March 10 – 12, 2016
  - Costa Mesa, CA
  - aahhe.org

- **League Innovations Conference**
  - March 20 – 23, 2016
  - Chicago, IL
  - Center Booth: 620
  - www.league.org/innovations

- **AACC Convention**
  - April 9 – 12, 2016
  - Chicago, TX
  - Center Booth: 218
  - aacc.nche.edu/convention

- **NISOD Conference**
  - May 28 – 31, 2016
  - Austin, TX
  - nisod.org/conference

- **League Learning Summit**
  - June 12 – 15, 2016
  - Scottsdale, AZ
  - www.league.org/ls2016

**WHAT’S NEW AT THE CENTER**

Pathways Project—a $5.2 million grant sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and led by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)—a community college association of Community Colleges (AACC)—a community college president declared, “Pathways is the next big thing in community colleges.”

**What is pathways, and why now?** The guided pathways model can be defined as “clearly structured, educationally coherent program pathways that lead to students’ end goals, and in rethinking instruction and student support services in ways that facilitate students’ learning and success as they progress along these paths” (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, 2015). It begins at the student’s point of entry and leads to completion, with high-quality credentials that are aligned to strong employment opportunities. Time is of the essence as colleges are trying to improve completion rates. Individual reform efforts that are more piecemeal in nature are not having the college-wide impact on student success and completion that the public is demanding. A transformational change is needed.

Building on emerging research and experience in the field, the Pathways Project expands upon recommendations set forth by the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges’ 2012 publication, Reclaiming the American Dream, and the 2014 implementation guide, Empowering Community Colleges: To Build the Nation’s Future.

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