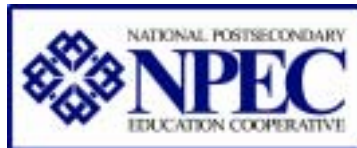




Faculty Professional Choices in Teaching That Foster Student Success

Executive Summary

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The topic of college student success receives an immense amount of attention in the literature. The files of the Education Resource Information Center identify 9,287 documents that designate *college student success* as key words. During the last 10 years, 1,273 publications in *Education Abstracts* indicated college student success as key words. Moreover, *Dissertation Abstracts* registers 2,086 dissertations completed during the last 10 years that list *college student success* as key words.

Such a flurry of activity strongly signifies a topic of great interest. However, college student success stands as a topic that cries out for some form of systematic empirical attention. Without the benefit of such scholarly attention, uninformed, ad hoc views on student success and ways to achieve it will emerge. Moreover, achieving student success requires attention by state higher education public policymakers and the leadership of individual colleges and universities.

Focusing systematic empirical attention on postsecondary student success requires substantial clarity on the meaning of college student success to pave the way for the development of theoretical perspectives on achieving postsecondary student success. The development of policies and practices to attain student success by state higher education public policymakers and by individual colleges and universities requires clarity in both these areas.

Toward these ends, this report offers three conclusions:

1. Although student retention and graduation form markers of student success, the meaning of student success extends considerably beyond these two well-recognized indicators. From the literature on the intended and actual outcomes of college attendance, eight domains of college student success emerge: academic attainment, acquisition of general education, development of academic competence, development of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions, occupational attainment, preparation for adulthood and citizenship, personal accomplishments, and personal development. These eight domains and the specific indicators within them provide substantial clarity to the meaning of college student success. These domains differentiate student success well beyond student persistence and graduation, clearly indicating that multiple ways exist for postsecondary students to demonstrate success.
2. The theory of faculty professional choices in teaching role performance put forth in this report explains how faculty elect to engage in particular aspects of teaching role performance that enhance student learning. However, *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* best describes this theory. The formulations of the theory explain how faculty might make professional choices if the elements of the various formulations of the theory existed in reality. This theory prescribes those elements that should exist at the level of state higher education public policymakers and individual colleges and universities.
3. Student success in the form of course learning depends on the implementation of the recommendations for policy and practice set forth in this report. The implementation of the vast majority of these recommendations at the level of state policymakers, the central administration

of individual colleges and universities, and the involvement of the chairpersons of academic departments must occur for individual faculty members to make those professional choices in their teaching that contribute to student learning.

Examples of Recommendations for State Higher Education Policymakers and Institutional Leaders

This report advanced one overarching recommendation and four specific recommendations for enactment by state higher education public policymakers, seven recommendations for implementation by the central administration of individual colleges and universities, and six recommendations for execution by the chairpersons of academic departments. Presented below are the most salient recommendations for state public higher education policymakers:

1. Performance funding policies should continue to set performance goals for student learning, but such performance goals should also include those aspects of teaching that require some degree of effort by faculty to enact. Such performance funding policies should stipulate that the central administration of those state-supported colleges and universities that meet faculty teaching performance goals use these additional financial resources to give above-average increases in the annual salaries of individual faculty members who engage in those aspects of teaching role performance that require some degree of effort.
2. States that use targeted budget allocations should specifically earmark such allocations for funding faculty development activities at the institutional level. Given that most college and university faculty members were not trained in pedagogy as part of their graduate studies (Braxton & Bayer, 1999), faculty development workshops and seminars funded by state-targeted budget allocations should focus on those aspects of faculty teaching role performance that contribute to student course-level learning.
3. State higher education policies should stipulate that academic program reviews and performance indicators document the various ways faculty at state-supported colleges and universities engage in those aspects of teaching role performance that contribute to student learning.

The key recommendations for leaders of the central administration of colleges and universities are as follows:

1. The president, chief academic affairs officer, and academic deans of colleges and universities desiring faculty teaching role performance directed toward the improvement in student course learning should express their commitment and support for excellence in undergraduate teaching. Public speeches, speeches made before university assemblies, memoranda, and day-to-day conversations of such members of the central administration should express the high value the institution places on teaching directed toward the improvement of student learning.
2. Institutional policies regarding the search process for faculty appointments should require that candidates present a teaching demonstration or a pedagogical colloquium as part of the on-campus interview process. The adoption of such a policy shows the importance a college or university accords teaching.

3. The academic reward structures of colleges and universities should accord recognition to the scholarship of teaching as a proper form of scholarship. Moreover, other aspects of teaching role performance that contribute to student course learning should also receive some weight in the academic reward structure. Put more forcefully, faculty who expend effort to enact those aspects of teaching role performance that contribute to student learning should perceive that they will receive a valued outcome for their efforts. Such outcomes include an increase in annual salary, tenure, promotion or reappointment.

Of the six recommendations advanced for the chairpersons of academic departments, the most significant one counsels chairpersons to make their recommendations for such faculty personnel decisions as annual salary increases, reappointment, tenure, and promotion reflect efforts by departmental faculty members to make choices in their teaching role performance that enhance student course learning.

Reference

Braxton, J. M., & Bayer, A. E. 1999. *Faculty misconduct in collegiate teaching*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.