

Research Summary

From Scatterplot to Roadmap: New Efforts to Improve Student Success in the CSU

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Many CSU campuses are recognizing the need for systemic, institutional reform beyond discrete program adjustments, but they face challenges in making the shift.

CSU campuses are planning and implementing a wide range of new programs, services, collaborations, and other innovations designed to increase graduation rates and reduce opportunity and outcomes gaps. The innovations are partly in response to GI2025, launched by the CSU Chancellor's Office in 2016.

- The strategies at many campuses encompass the major functions of the institution and some span the full student pathway from college preparation to completion (see “Institutional Strategies” on the reverse).
- Some campuses are also beginning to plan or implement reforms that are campuswide in scope.

According to Colleen Moore, the study's lead author, “We found an emerging awareness among administrators and faculty that significant **improvements in student success will require a systemic approach that engages all key functions** of the institution.” This finding reflects national research about the importance of broad campuswide changes—not just discrete program adjustments—in addressing institutional barriers that can impede student progress.

“The really important goal would be to pull together all of these activities and really have a roadmap, ... [an] intentional plan, as opposed to this kind of scatterplot of activities.”

—CSU Campus Administrator

Researchers found a **range of challenges** that CSU campuses face in improving student learning and success:

- Allocating resources more effectively;
- Supporting faculty engagement in student success efforts;
- Finding strategies to integrate academic and student affairs;
- Supporting faculty and staff in using evidence about students to improve programs and services;
- Addressing the financial, social/emotional, and academic needs of students;
- Promoting visible and consistent leadership that champions student success; and
- Leveraging the CSU as a system by finding ways to learn from peer campuses.

Based on these findings and national research, the authors suggest that campuses work to align three institutional functions typically housed in separate divisions: 1) resource management and planning, 2) programmatic and curricular design, and 3) guidance on navigating the student pathway. Campuses may need to fundamentally shift their strategies to find the organizational coherence that places student success at the center of all campus functions and helps them achieve their ambitious goals.

Framework: Institutional Strategies to Improve Student Success in the CSU

Consider using this framework to map the breadth of your campus efforts to improve student learning and success. In our research, many campuses were considering strategies in all six categories of institutional actions and some were planning interventions at all four stages of the student pathway. Most of the reforms, however, were in planning stages rather than being implemented.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES	STUDENT PATHWAY			
	PREPARING FOR AND CHOOSING THE CSU	ENROLLING AND EARLY ATTENDANCE	SELECTING A MAJOR AND MEETING REQUIREMENTS	PREPARING FOR GRADUATION AND FUTURE PLANS
LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE		Campus-wide Messaging on Equity and Student Success* Clear Prioritization of Student Success Mission* Data Broadly Distributed and Discussed Resources Allocated to Maximize Student Progress Facilitation of Collaboration Across Divisions/Departments		
	Regional Partnerships on College Readiness and Enrollment Planning*			Partnerships with Regional Employers/Leaders
DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING		Improved Data Tools and Systems* Accessible Data Dashboards for Planning Building Data Capacity through Workgroups/Fellows Programs <i>Predictive Analytics (Bottleneck/High Failure Courses, At-risk Students, etc.)*</i> <i>Evaluating Program Effectiveness</i>		
	<i>Student Data Sharing across Sectors/Institutions</i>	<i>Evaluating Placement and Remediation Effectiveness</i>	Tracking Disparities in Progress by Course/Major*	<i>Tracking Student Employment Outcomes</i>
PROGRAM/ CURRICULAR PLANNING		Student-centered Course Scheduling* Capacity Expanded through Summer, Online, Evenings, Weekends* Four-/Two-year Graduation Programs/Pledges		
	<i>Alignment of Program Pathways across Sectors</i>	Redesigned Gateway Courses* Revised GE Programs <i>Placement/Remediation Reforms*</i> <i>Meta Majors</i> <i>Block Schedules/Course Packages</i> <i>Credit for Prior Learning</i>	Improved Program Roadmaps Revised Major Declaration or Other Academic Policies to Support Student Progress Streamlined Program Requirements	<i>General Studies or Other Broad Degrees to Facilitate Completion</i> <i>Using Labor Market Information to Inform Programs</i>
ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT		Increased Full-time Faculty* Focus on Diversity and Inclusion Celebration of Student Achievements and Milestones Cultural Programming* <i>Social-emotional Learning Assessment/Interventions</i>		
		Expanded First-year Experience and Learning Communities* Sophomore Programs	Expanded Service Learning, Research, Study Abroad	Senior Capstone/Project Increased Internships/On-campus Employment
SUPPORT SERVICES		Broad Use of E-advising Tools* Increased Advisors/Counselors Restructured Advising Services Intrusive Advising/Early Alert/Learning Assistance* Emergency Funds and Services		
		Mandatory Orientation/Summer Bridge Mandatory Early Advising Supplemental Instruction in Remediation* Success Skills Workshops <i>Financial Literacy Programs</i>	Mandatory Major Advising Peer Mentors/Advisors Supplemental Instruction in High-failure Courses*	<i>Career Development and Readiness Services</i> Graduation Readiness Reviews* <i>Incentives for Timely Completion</i>
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT		Training on Data Tools/Dashboards Faculty Development on Pedagogy, Technology, Course Redesign and Cultural Competency Training to Improve Academic Advising		
		Faculty Development on Redesigning Remedial and Gateway Courses	Advisor Training on Major Requirements	<i>Faculty and Advisor Training on Supporting Post-Grad Transition</i>

* The Chancellor’s Office recommended prioritizing these strategies in campus plans for Graduation Initiative 2025. Note: Italicized text indicates emergent strategies.

This summary is based on From Scatterplot to Roadmap. A discussion guide is available to support campus conversations about the implications for CSU campuses. Findings are based on a review of strategic and planning documents associated with student success efforts at all CSU campuses and on interviews with administrators and faculty at four campuses. The research was conducted by the Education Insights Center (EdInsights) for the CSU Student Success Network.

The CSU Network creates spaces for CSU faculty, staff, and administrators to share ideas and take the lead in supporting equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. The Network is facilitated by EdInsights at Sacramento State, a research and policy center devoted to student success and the public benefits of education.

Student Success Network 
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