

2018-19 Annual Report

*"Thank you
all for one of
the best organized,
effective, and helpful
trainings I've ever
been to!"*

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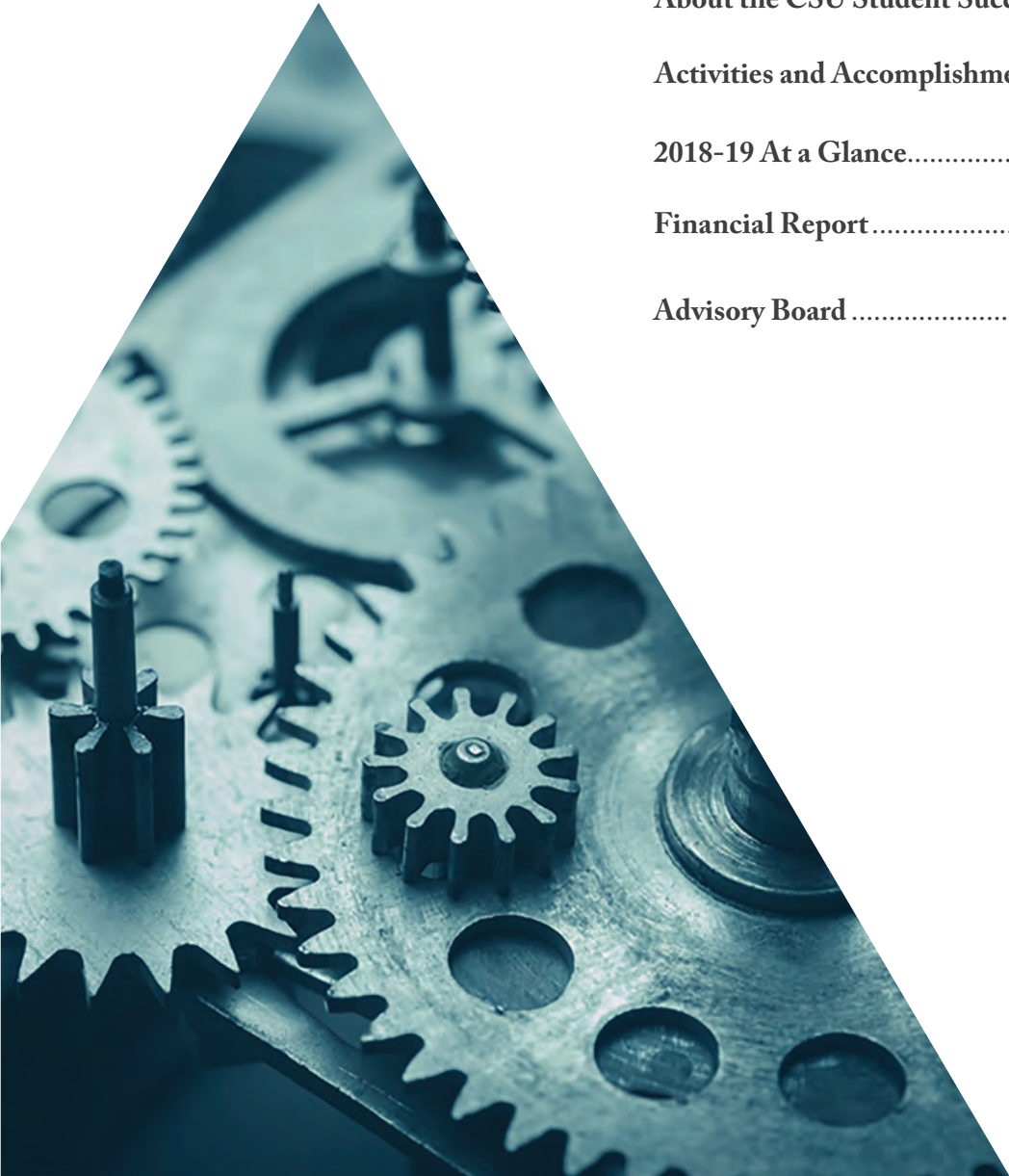
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Report Highlights

The California State University (CSU) Student Success Network complements student success efforts underway in the CSU by offering forums for sustained, cross-campus, cross-role, professional learning opportunities for “middle leaders”—faculty, staff, and administrators at the campus level who work closely with students—and students who participate in these teams.

The Network offers several activities: day-long convenings on topics of importance to the campuses, a year-long Middle Leadership Academy that provides professional learning opportunities for cross-role campus teams, and applied research projects focused on issues related to students' experiences. All activities are supported by communications efforts to share learnings with campuses across the CSU. Student participation in Network events is welcomed and encouraged.

During its third year as a public-private partnership, the Network released two research studies on academic advising; facilitated the second Middle Leadership Academy, with 12 campus teams participating; supported two convenings hosted by CSU campuses; launched an improved website; and continued to cultivate key relationships across the CSU, including, for the first time, engaging all 23 CSU campuses in Network activities. The Network administers surveys after every event; those data are included in this report. Starting in the 2019-20 academic year, the Network will have a new external evaluator, *Informing Change*.

About the CSU Student Success Network

The Network is an independent effort, developed by CSU faculty, staff, and administrators. With financial support from the State of California, The Kresge Foundation, College Futures Foundation, and The James Irvine Foundation, the CSU Student Success Network creates spaces for learning and experimentation and provides new knowledge for people across the CSU system in support of increasing graduation rates, equity-based inquiry and action, and closing opportunity and outcomes gaps.

Foundational to the Network's Theory of Action is that supporting improvements in student learning, engagement, progression, and completion in the CSU does not need to start with people in formal leadership positions. People who work closely with students, regardless of job title, have the power and relationships to make change from where they sit. Developing and supporting these middle leadership skills is at the heart of the Network.

There are many student success efforts underway at every level in the CSU to support educational opportunities and close opportunity and outcomes gaps. As a complement to ongoing efforts, the Network offers forums for sustained, cross-campus, cross-role, evidence-based, professional learning opportunities. The issues the Network takes on are not simple, nor are the solutions clear cut or necessarily the same at different campuses. Through relationship-building, collaboration, experimentation, and evidence-sharing, the Network strives to support meaningful connections across and within campuses that bridge professional roles and responsibilities.

The Network is facilitated by the Education Insights Center (EdInsights) at Sacramento State. EdInsights is an education research and policy center devoted to student success and the public benefits of education; its mission is to inform and improve policymaking and practice for K-12 education, community colleges and public universities.



"It was great - thoughtful and well planned. Forming relationships with other campuses has been fantastic."

Activities and Accomplishments

The Network offers a suite of activities and communications resources to help middle leaders access and use evidence-based strategies that help students reach their educational goals. By creating both physical and virtual spaces for collaboration and information-sharing across various roles and responsibilities in the CSU, the Network works to facilitate the connections that make these advancements possible.

In its third year as a public-private partnership the Network further refined and improved its ability to deliver content and programming that helps CSU middle leaders develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities to close opportunity and outcomes gaps.

CONVENINGS

We learn best when we learn from one another because the expertise resides in our system.

Convenings provide opportunities for middle leaders in the CSU to come together across institutions and roles to focus on issues of practice that affect students. During the day-long convenings, participants explore key issues, discuss evidence-based strategies, and take steps to create action plans. Convenings support the cultivation of cross-campus, cross-role relationships and resources that can strengthen student success efforts.

Each convening is centered on a topic concerning campuses across the system and is designed to stimulate conversations and encourage collaboration among participants. Cross-role teams of faculty, staff, and administrators from across the system come together to explore what they can learn from, and what they can teach, their CSU colleagues. The Network aims to host two convenings per year; past topics included: College Readiness, Transfer Student Success, First-Year Student Success, and Using Data to Support Student Learning and Success.

2018-19 Accomplishments and Learnings. The Network hosted two convenings in 2018-19, the first, on supporting regional education partnerships was held in November 2018 at Sacramento State; and the second on supporting student success after the first year was held in April 2019 at Cal State East Bay. To date, the Network has hosted six convenings and had teams from 22 of 23 campuses.

All respondents rated the convenings' multiple learning outcomes as at least moderately useful, with the majority (58.3% for the November 2018 convening and 56.4% for the April 2019 convening) rating each one as "quite" or "extremely" useful. The convenings seem to be most constructive in helping participants build relationships, identify and share their successes and challenges across campuses, and reflect on their learnings. Participants typically rate team time and learning from other campuses as the best aspects of the convenings.

From the convenings, the Network is starting to see shifts in programming and in practice; for example, based on learnings from a transfer convening and a follow-up webinar, CSU Long Beach opened its first transfer student center this past academic year.

Activities and Accomplishments (cont.)

MIDDLE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

A space for evidence-based collaborative learning and middle leadership development.

The Middle Leadership Academy brings together campus-based teams of CSU faculty, student affairs staff, researchers, and students for three intensive seminars over the course of an academic year. Together, teams work on common issues related to student learning, engagement, progression, and completion through an equity lens. The Academy is grounded in a problem-based learning model that motivates participants to “lead from the middle” as they explore and apply strategies to strengthen student success on their campus, with a focus on closing opportunity and outcomes gaps.

Teams of up to six participants from a CSU campus are partnered with a facilitator who helps guide the team and provides targeted support as they delve into an issue of equity on their campus. In 2018-19, participating campuses focused on conceptualizing innovative strategies to enhance student success, especially for traditionally underserved students. On top of leadership development and dedicated facilitation support, the Academy provides teams with access to external speakers, collaborative team time, action planning, and cross-campus consultation opportunities.

2018-19 Accomplishments and Learnings. Having completed its second year in operation and selected its cohort for the third year, the Academy has now welcomed teams from 19 of 23 campuses.

Participants identified opportunities to share experiences, network, and brainstorm ideas with colleagues from other campuses and team time as the best aspects of the Academy. Respondents also highlighted equity, promising practices, and failing successfully as topics they would like to learn more about.

From the Academy, the Network is starting to see changes in equity- and completion-focused activities that affect students, such as the use of equity-based metrics to track and understand students' milestones and provide appropriate supports and learning opportunities. For example, Chico State's team worked to include equity language in the campus's new strategic and master plans, as well as writing equity into the campus's General Education mission.

"Great format, great program with a great staff. We look forward to creating and implementing a successful and impactful program on our campus. Thank you."

Activities and Accomplishments (cont.)

APPLIED RESEARCH

Making sense of the different aspects of the student experience in the CSU.

Network research helps to bring evidence about students' experiences into the system and to develop shared language and knowledge on key topics.

2018-19 Accomplishments and Learnings. This year, the Network published *Destination Integration*, a two-part research study of academic advising that explores the perspectives of administrators, students, and advisors on advising and advising reform on five CSU campuses. *Part One* looked at the strategies campuses are using to coordinate efforts more effectively and leverage limited advising resources. It identified a focus among the participating campuses on better coordinating advising services across colleges, divisions, and departments and improving their integration with other campus units, such as tutoring, career centers, and financial aid. *Part Two* expanded on the first study by bringing in perspectives from faculty advisors, professional staff advisors, and students in the context of campus efforts to improve advising. Across administrators, advisors, and students, researchers found that advising on these campuses is largely focused on course selection and program planning. While many administrators and advisors expressed a goal of providing a more holistic and cohesive experience for students by integrating academic advising with other services, students confirm more holistic services are primarily experienced by students in special programs for underserved populations. Students largely concurred with administrators' descriptions of the major challenges facing advising. They cited issues with limited access to advising, fragmentation of advising, and a lack of communication across different advisors and advising offices. Campus leadership, student success, and other similar campus committees are using the reports to inform the refinement of their advising programs.

COMMUNICATIONS

Making connections and sharing knowledge about what works (and what doesn't)

The Network provides channels of engagement for participants to communicate with one another, and venues for them to share evidence and lessons learned with the broader CSU community. By disseminating new knowledge and targeted information, the Network works to ensure that middle leaders are empowered with the knowledge and evidence they need to enrich student experiences.

2018-19 Accomplishments and Learnings. The Network continued to grow the resources available to participants. It developed and published monthly blog posts that highlight "bright spots" in the system and examples of middle leadership, maintained an active social media presence, and launched a redesigned website. The Network has also begun developing features to help campuses find and connect with other CSU colleagues so they can share evidence and learnings about student success efforts. The subscriber list has grown by 90 percent over the past year and word of mouth continues to be our strongest tool for generating interest in the Network among middle leaders.

2018-19 At a Glance

23

CSU campuses
took part in
a Network
activity

381

Individual
participants
since launching
in 2016

49

People attended
more than one
activity

Activities

Academy

83 attendees from 12 campuses

Convenings

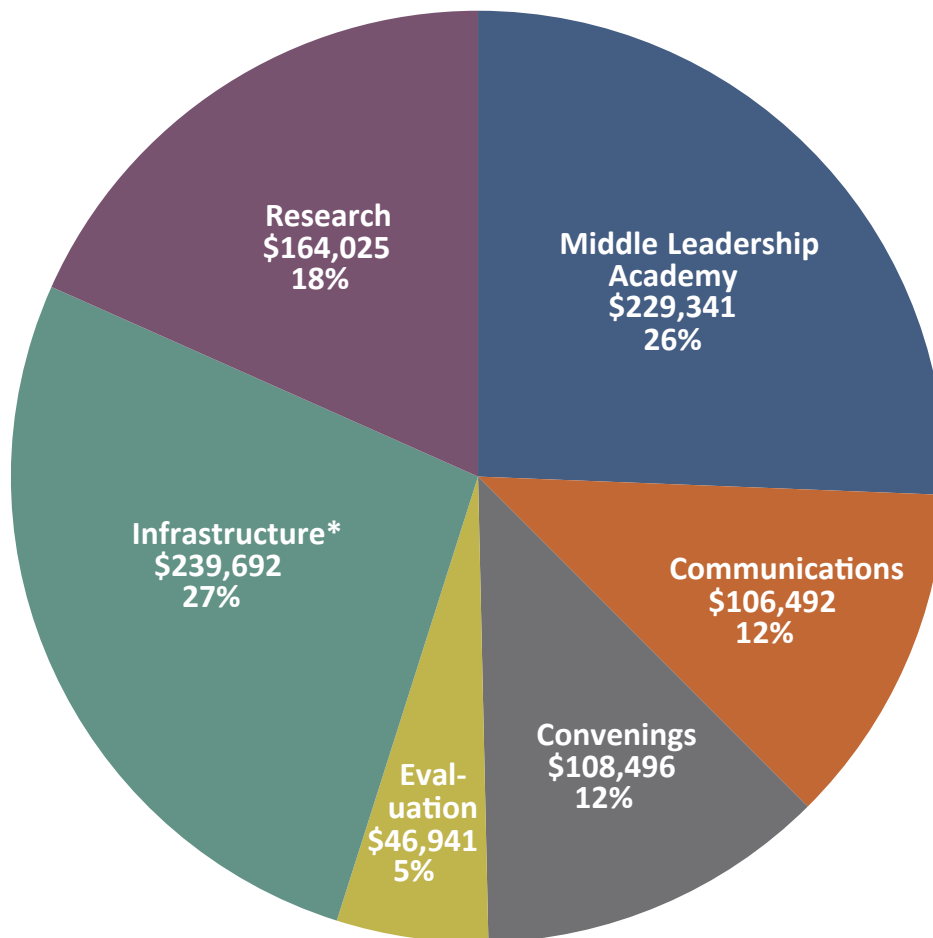
120 attendees from 18 campuses

Research

128 interviewed & 344 surveyed

Financial Report

The Network received \$1.1 million from the State of California for fiscal year 2018-19. At the time of publication, the Network had spent nearly \$895,000 (81.4%) of the allotted funds. Any funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year will rollover and may be used in future years.



Participation is free for people in the CSU.

All reasonable travel, food, and lodging costs are reimbursed by the CSU Student Success Network.

*Infrastructure supports all other Network functions.

Advisory Board

The Network's community of collaborators share a commitment to student success. The Network is guided by an Advisory Board composed of representatives from CSU campuses who serve in a variety of roles. The Advisory Board meets throughout the year to provide oversight and direction for all Network activities and to help identify topics for Applied Research, Convenings, and the Middle Leadership Academy. Advisory Board members act as Network liaisons on their campuses.

James Drnek

Associate Vice President, Student Affairs
California State University, Bakersfield

Diana Bargas

Executive Director, Transfer Students Program
Cal State East Bay

Bernadette Muscat

Associate Dean of Social Science
Fresno State

Ioakim Boutakidis

Associate Professor of Child and Adolescent Studies
California State University, Fullerton

Simon Kim

Associate Vice President, Research and Sponsored Programs
California State University, Long Beach

Susan Opp

Provost
California State University Maritime Academy

Ántonia Peigahi

Faculty Librarian, Chair of Faculty Senate
California State University, Sacramento

Susan Baxter

Executive Director
California State University Program for Education and Research in Biotechnology (CSUPERB)

Kim Altura

Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education
San Francisco State University

Adam Petersen

Student Success Analyst, Office of Undergraduate Studies
California State University, San Marcos

Wilson Hall

Student Representative
California State Student Association



Student Success Network



in the California State University

Facilitated by the Education Insights Center (EdInsights)

California State University, Sacramento

6000 J Street

Sacramento, California 95819-6081

studentsuccessnetwork@edinsightscenter.org

<http://csustudentsuccess.net>

[@CSU_SuccessNet](#)