

Sustaining Focus on High and Equitable Student Success Through Leadership Transition

Josh Wyner

Executive Director, Aspen Institute College Excellence Program



ASPEN CEP: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

WHAT:

We aim to advance higher education practices and leadership that significantly **improve student learning, completion, and employment after college**—especially for the growing population of students of color and low-income students on American campuses.

HOW:

- The Aspen Prize
- Presidential Fellowships
- Research
- Professional Development
- Technical Assistance

WHO:

35 staff with expertise in college leadership, quant/qual research, network building, adult learning, comms, and the ever-changing world of higher ed

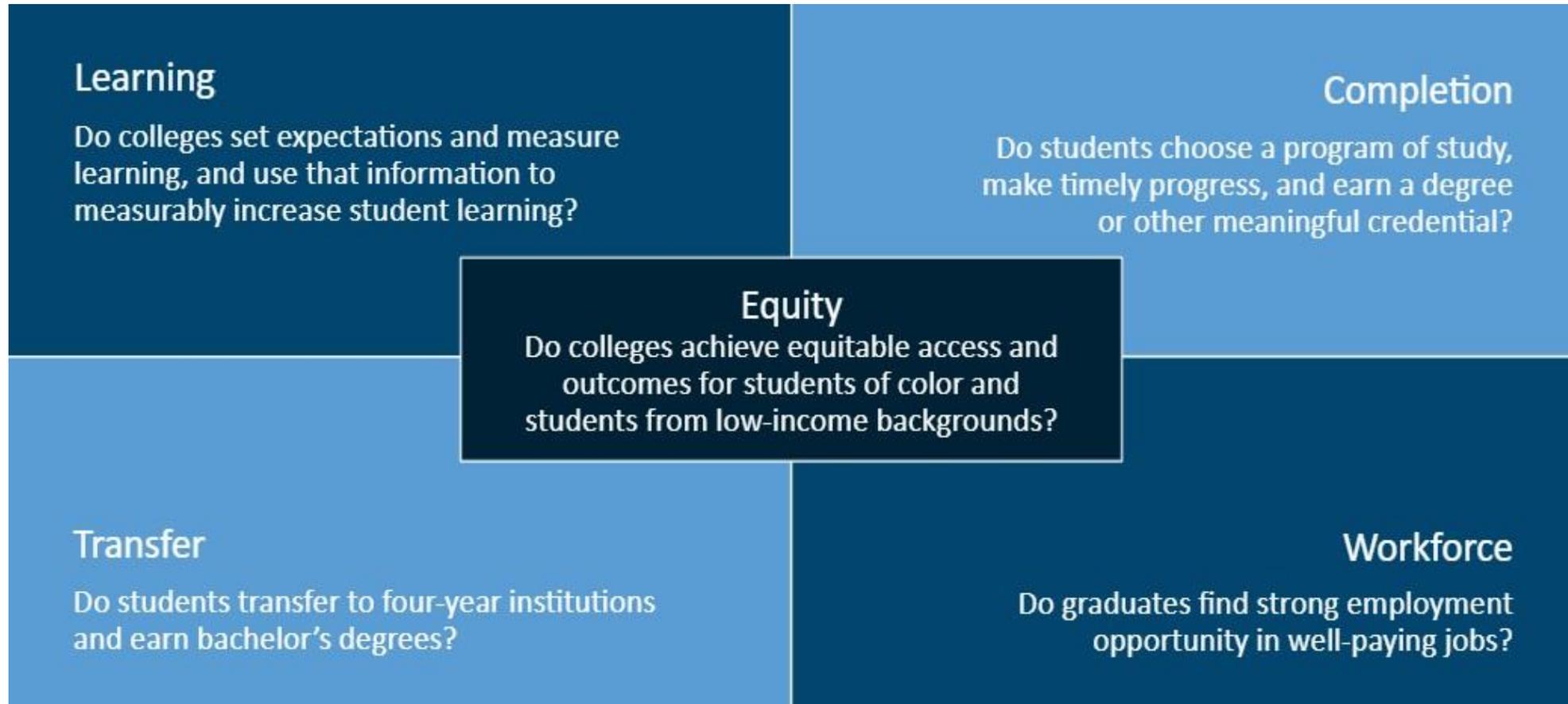


CENTRAL QUESTION FOR TODAY:

How can institutional leaders keep the college focused on pathways reform and other student success and equity work in the face of leadership transition?



The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership strategies that help colleges significantly improve student outcomes in five areas:



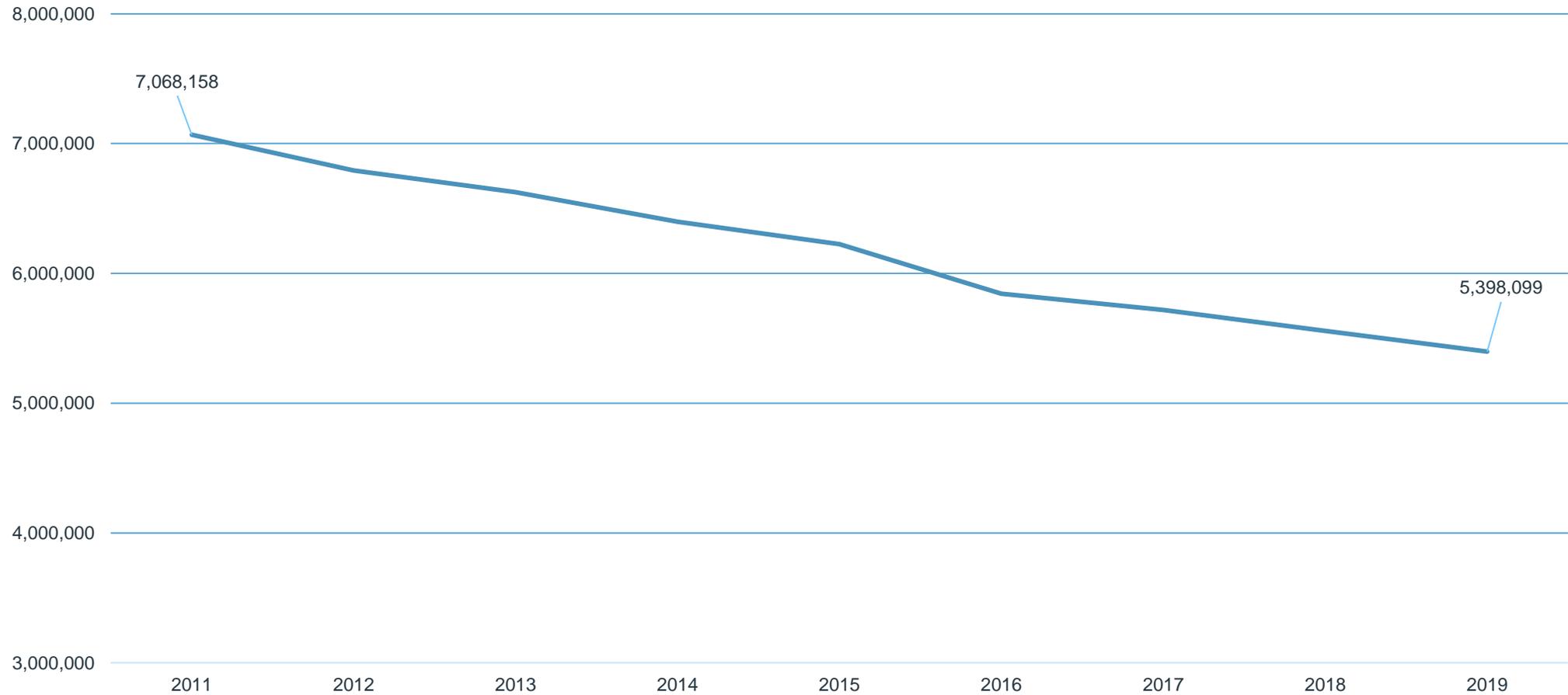
WHY DOES GUIDED PATHWAYS WORK MATTER SO MUCH **RIGHT NOW?**

- **Enrollment is declining** nationally and is expected to drop more
- Colleges delivering value **have not seen the same enrollment declines as others**
- **Dual enrollment** is increasing and irrational



LONG TERM ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Total fall enrollment at community colleges, 2011 - 2019



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2021, Table 303.25

WHY PATHWAYS WORK MATTERS

Enrollment cannot come back in a sustained way unless colleges:

Rebuild trust in higher education by **delivering degrees of value**

Develop new models that reach new populations

Ensure that students feel a **sense of belonging and purpose**

Done well, guided pathways reforms do just that.



KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES

What essential actions can leaders take to ensure that guided pathways reforms deliver value?



- Ensure that programs and advising are **aligned to delivering value**
- **Monitor the metrics that matter** – always asking how we know if reforms work and creating a culture of continuous improvement
- Build and communicate, repeatedly, through words and deeds, a **common understanding of why reform matters**
- **Institutionalize reforms** through finance, human capital reform, implementation systems, and more



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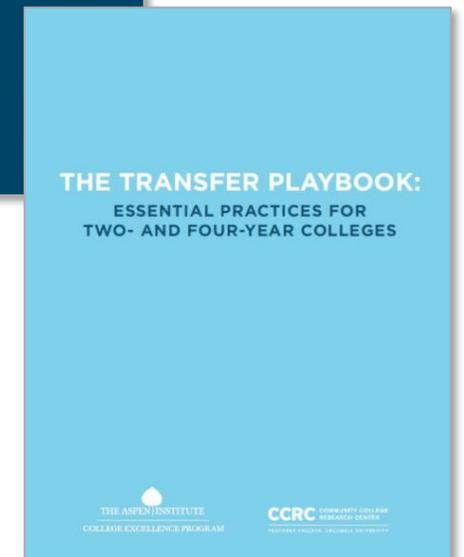
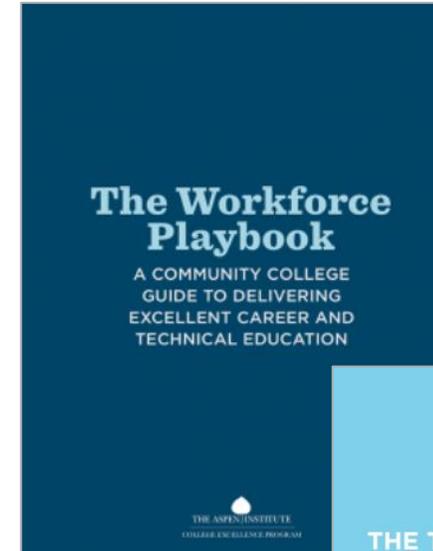
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KEY STRATEGIES: DELIVERING VALUE

To check if **programs** are aligned to strong transfer and workforce outcomes, ask:

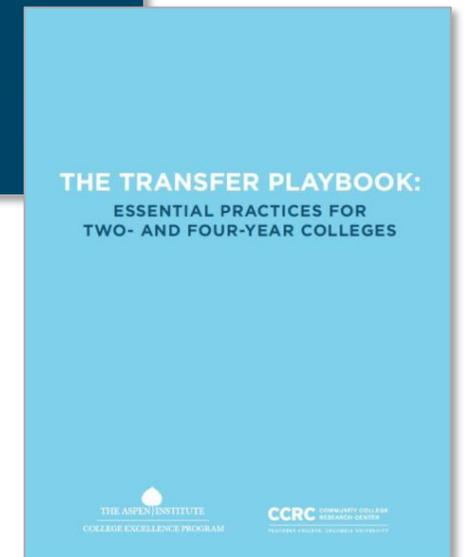
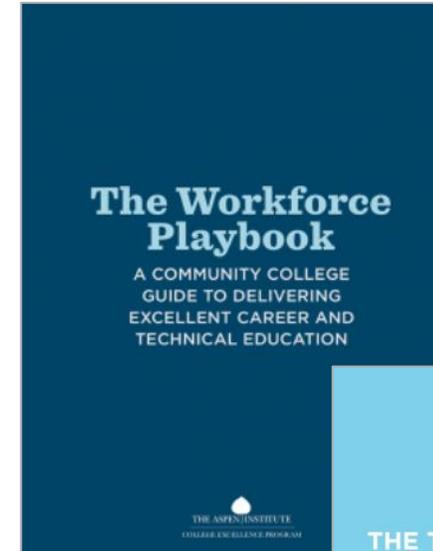
- Has your college assessed programs against a waterline for living wage?
- Do your pathways confer value upon completion?
- Do your program maps incorporate the kind of work-based learning needed for good jobs?
- Do your program-related systems ensure that you can monitor whether programs of study deliver value (program approval, program review)?



KEY STRATEGIES: DELIVERING VALUE

To check if **advising** is aligned to strong transfer and workforce outcomes, ask:

- Does advising support students in selecting a pathway that both fits their lives **and** provides value by connecting them to good jobs?
- Do you connect students to career aspirations early?
- Do you ensure that those with bachelor's aspirations select a pre-major and transfer destination by 30 credits?



KEY STRATEGIES: CONNECTING STUDENTS TO PURPOSE



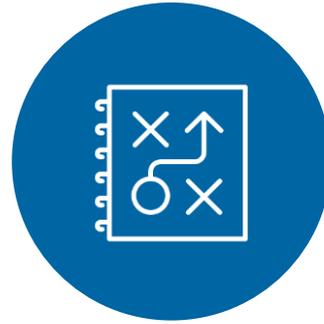
Ask



Connect



Inspire



Plan

There is evidence that when students have purpose, they are more likely to stay on their pathways and complete.

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RESEARCH CENTER

Hana Lahr and Davis Jenkins. *Ask-Connect-Inspire-Plan: How to Reimagine Onboarding into a Program of Study.* Community College Research Center, June 2021.



KEY STRATEGIES: EXAMINING PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS FOR VALUE AND EQUITY

Know...

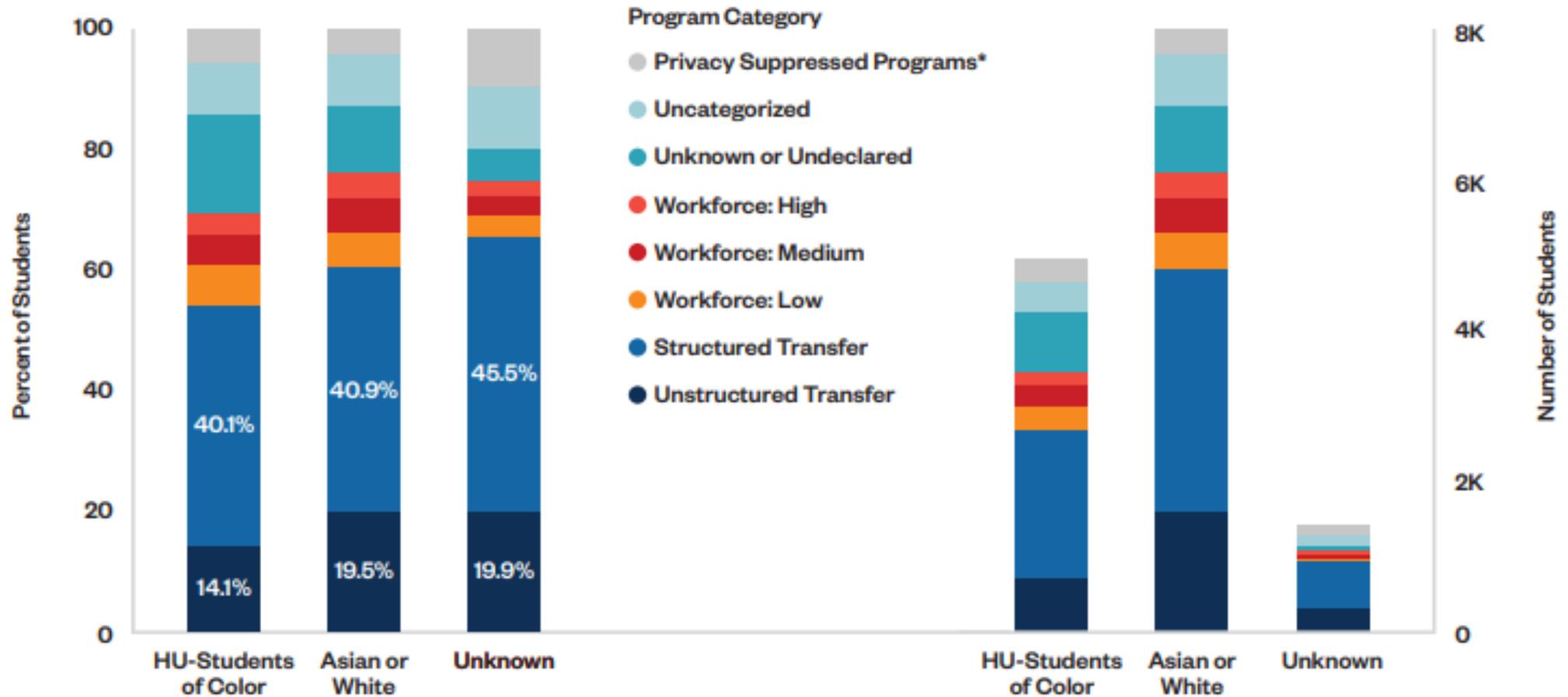
- Who is enrolled in what types of programs?
- How can you change the mix of where students are enrolled in low-outcome programs versus high-value?
- Are there equity gaps that could be closed?



PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS: SAMPLE DATA

Figure 4.

College B: Program Opportunity Categories by Race/Ethnicity



*This figure is based on a CCRC analysis of SBCTC data that required the suppression of program information among those programs with fewer than 10 students enrolled.

KEY CAPACITIES: DELIVERING VALUE

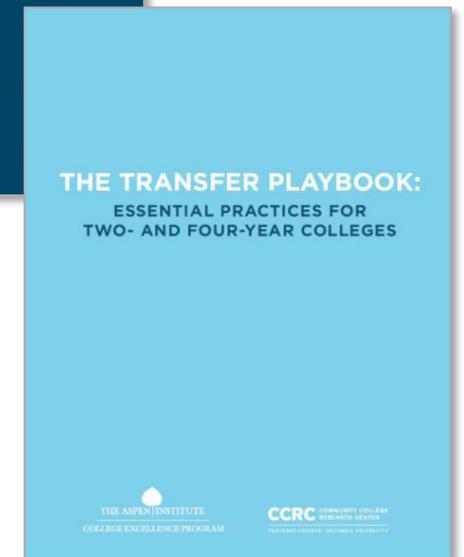
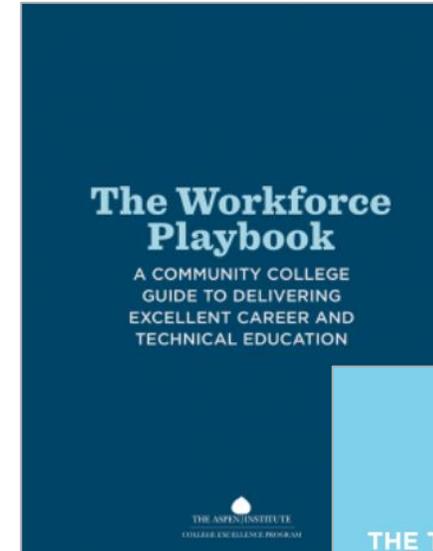
To check if **evaluation and implementation systems** are aligned to strong transfer and workforce outcomes, ask if...

Program-related systems
(e.g. program approval and review)

and

Implementation systems
(e.g. committee structures and KPIs)

...monitor whether programs of study deliver value?



KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES

What essential actions can leaders take to ensure that guided pathways reforms deliver value?



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KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES: MONITORING WHAT MATTERS

ACTIONS

- Define a limited set of aligned goals, including internal completion and post-graduation goals
- Keep goals in front of everyone at the college
- Include data review as a standing agenda item at cabinet and board meetings



KEY LEADERSHIP ROLES: MONITORING WHAT MATTERS

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Create dedicated time to discuss progress to metrics at cabinet and board meetings.

For trustees: Pick what matters most and monitor those metrics – this may mean reviewing metrics already reported to trustees, or it may mean rethinking from scratch.

For the cabinet: Create a timeline for reporting progress toward goals at the cabinet level, ensuring that these are not just updates, but open to strategic consideration of why or why not they're being met, resulting in next steps.



MONITORING WHAT MATTERS: LEADING INDICATORS

Consider indicators that depict student momentum.
Disaggregate all data by race and ethnicity.
Discuss implications of part-time enrollment.

1 Program Momentum

- What % of students successfully complete (C or better) transfer-level English and math appropriate to their programs in the first year?
- What % of students successfully complete at least 9 credits in their chosen field of study in the first year?

2 Credit Momentum

- What is the successful course completion rate (C or better) for the term?
- What % of students attempt 15/30 credits in one term/one year? Complete?

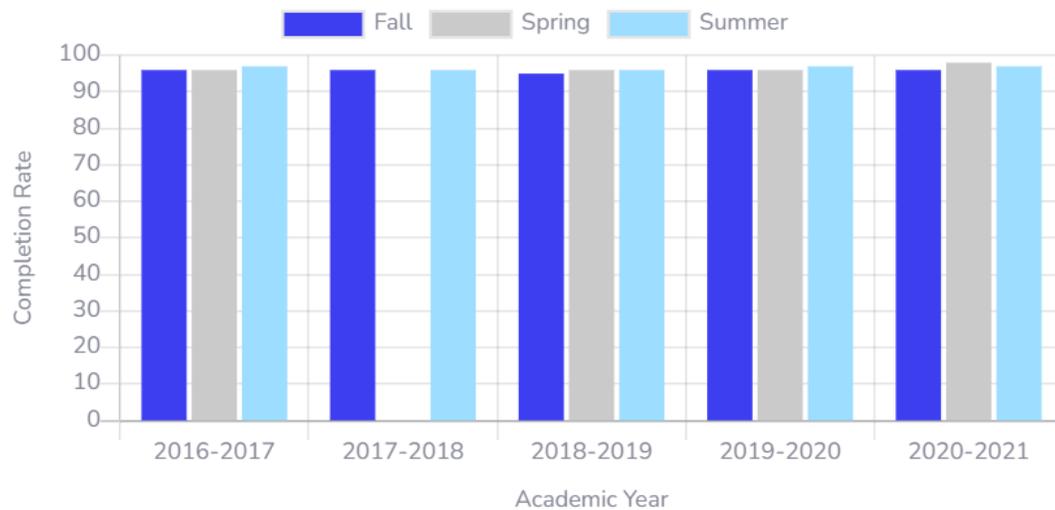


MONITORING WHAT MATTERS: ODESSA COLLEGE (TX)

Course Completion Rates

Institution Goal: Greater than 90% Course Completion Rates

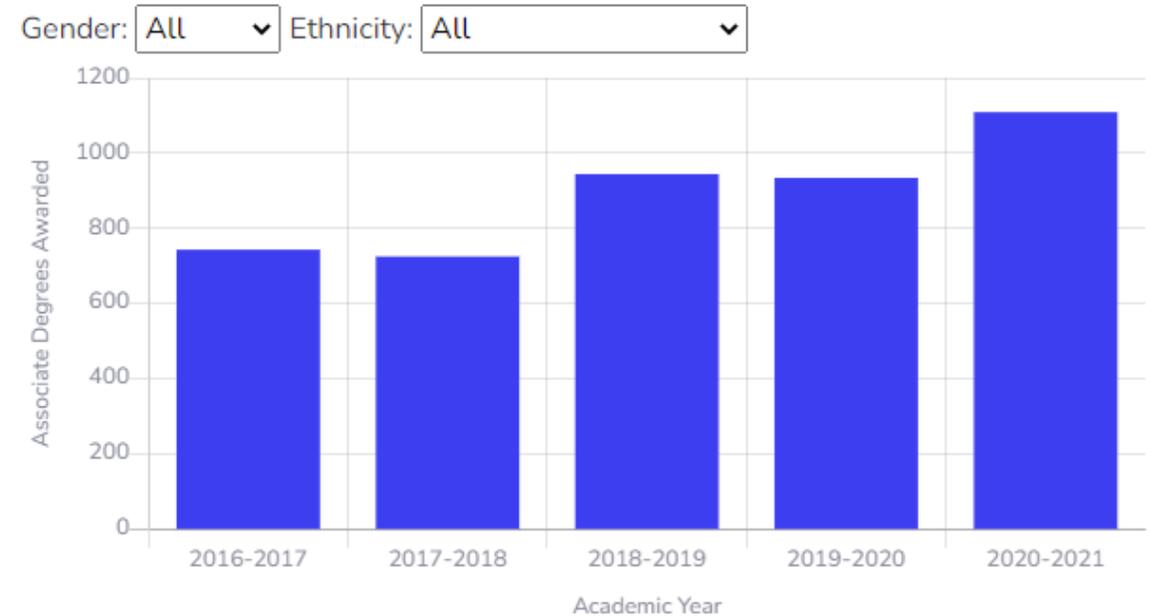
Definition: Percent of enrolled students who complete a course with any grade (A, B, C, D, or F)



Associate Degrees Awarded

Institution Goal: Annually Increasing Number of Associate Degrees Awarded

Definition: Number of associate degrees awarded



Source: Odessa College institutional Effectiveness, Student Achievement Data



MONITORING WHAT MATTERS: LAGGING INDICATORS

Transfer

Disaggregated percentage of students who:

- Transferred to a 4-year within 3 years of entry
- Transferred and completed a bachelor's degree within 6 years of entry to community college

Employment

- Percentage of students who left or graduated from the institution in a given year who are employed 1 year and 5 years after leaving

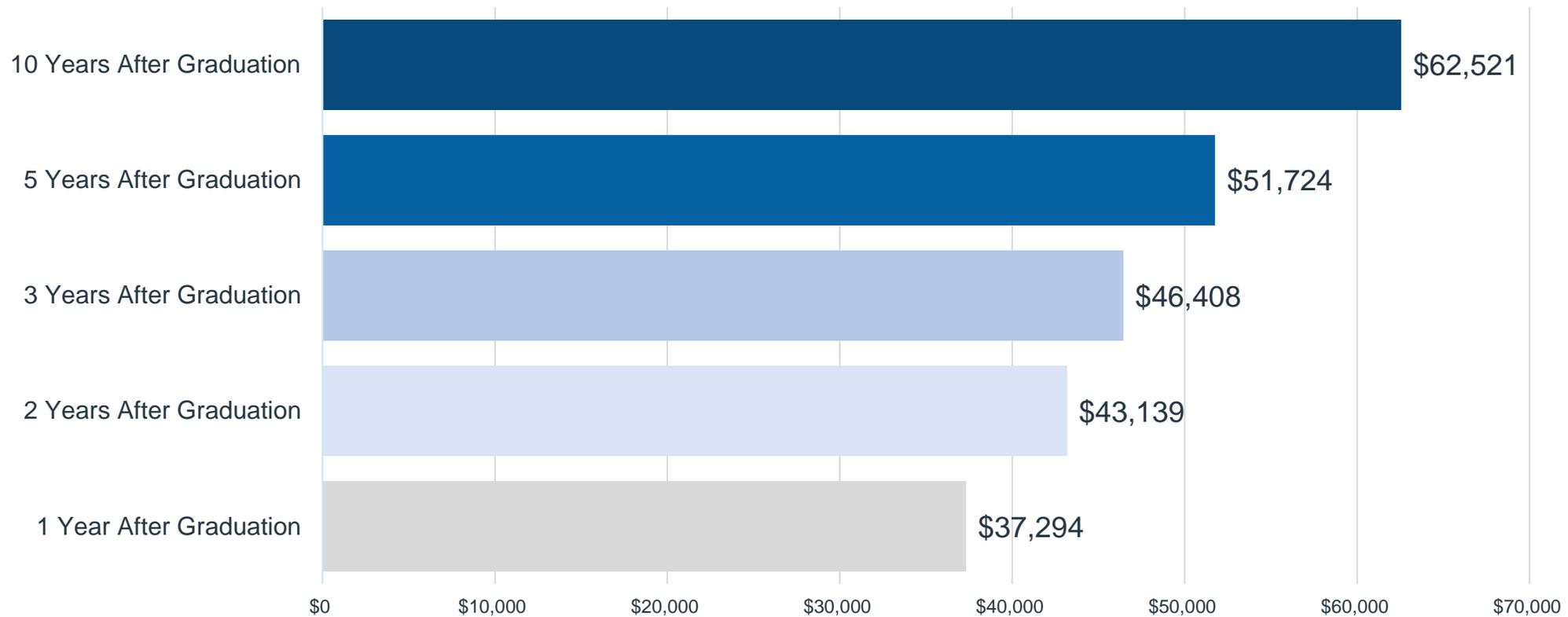
Earnings

- Annual earnings of students who left or graduated from the institution, 1 year and 5 years after leaving, relative to the median earnings of all high school graduates, all new hires, and all workers in the region



MONITORING WHAT MATTERS: LAGGING INDICATORS

Annual Median Wages by Year After Graduation in NYS



Source Graph: SUNY Fast Facts, <https://www.suny.edu/gradwages/>

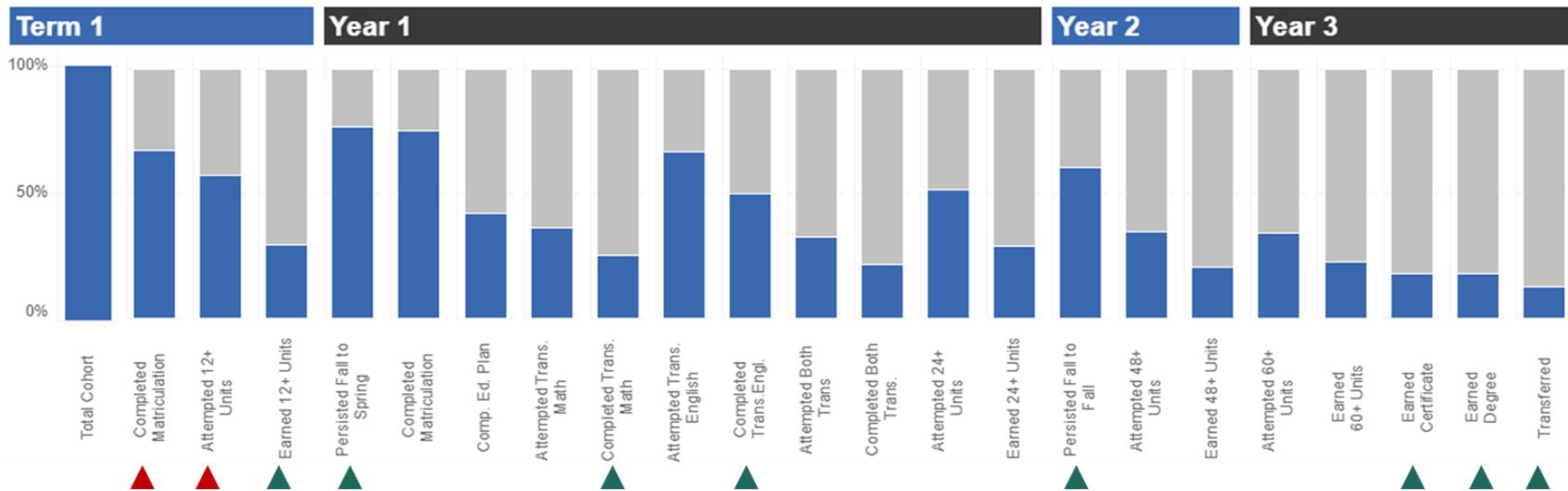
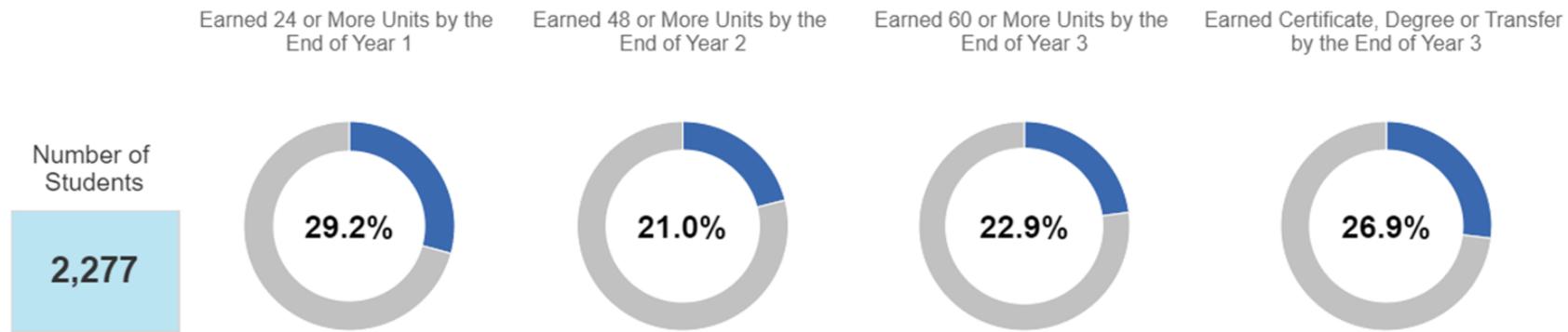


MONITORING WHAT MATTERS: MIRACOSTA COLLEGE (CA)



Guided Pathways Overview All Students

Source: MiraCosta College



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HOW CAN THE PRESIDENT BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHY REFORM MATTERS?

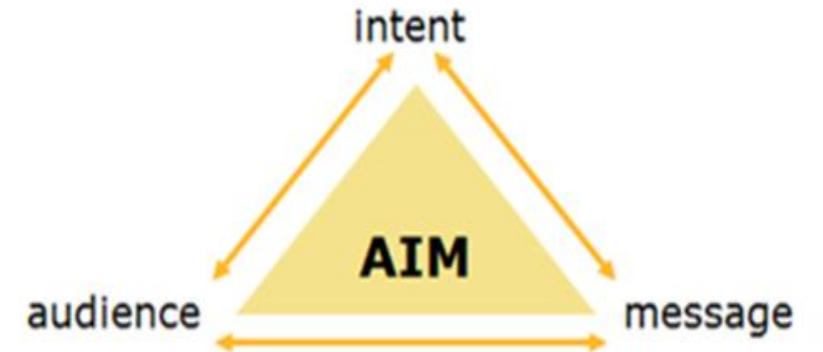
- Consistently reinforce common understanding with leaders about **why reform matters and what strategies will be used**
- **Align all communications** to that why and what and repeat often
- Broadly share the **most important data points** – both leading and lagging indicators
- Activate the **student voice** and elevate the student experience
- Demonstrate the importance of the work through **how time and money are spent**
- Create **clear messaging for different groups** using the AIM framework



HOW CAN THE PRESIDENT BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHY REFORM MATTERS?

Sample messages to deans:

- “When students stay on the path it can dramatically improve logistics, including making scheduling much more predictable and preventing last-minute cuts/additions of course.”
- “Students staying on their pathway more often can help meet enrollment goals in a more predictable way. This can help you make the case for longer-term resource allocation to programs, increasing capacity to deliver high-quality.”
- “Students of color discontinue at higher rates than others. Thus, keeping students on their pathway can increase equity and diversity in programs of study, aligned to collegewide equity goals.”



JD Schramm, Communication Consultant and Coach



HOW CAN **CABINET-LEVEL LEADERS** BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHY REFORM MATTERS?

Reinforce priorities through consistent and compelling data slides, goals, and language

- List the big goals for the year on **every agenda**
- Use data aligned to goals in **every cabinet discussion**
- Hold regular meetings that address ***only* the priority reforms and strategies**
- Develop **clear, compelling, consistent talking points** and data slides on **reform**



HOW CAN **CABINET-LEVEL LEADERS** BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHY REFORM MATTERS?

Replicate communications, data, and resource processes in divisions

- Ensure that each cabinet member has a **communications plan, data plan, and resource allocation plan** aligned to the institutional plan
- Share a set of **common talking points** and a **set of clear compelling data slides** to use in each division
- Create and implement a plan to **communicate the link between resource allocation and student success**
- Discuss **scale and sustainability** for each new initiative



HOW CAN TRUSTEES BUILD COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHY REFORM MATTERS?

Help the whole board understand the why and the what of guided pathways reform.

Make sure they know how guided pathways will help...

The college deliver on its community goals

Students at the college meet their goals

Close equity gaps by race, ethnicity, income level, gender

Ask trustees to envision:

If we substantially improved student success and closed equity gaps, how specifically would employers, the community, and the college benefit?



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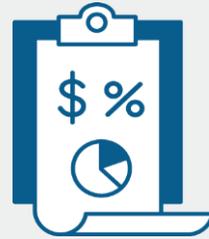
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HOW CAN THE PRESIDENT INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?



Data Use



Strategic Finance



Human Capital



Strategic Implementation

Communication



HOW CAN **CABINET-LEVEL LEADERS** INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?

Ensure divisions have accountability systems in place:

- At the cabinet level, discuss the importance of planning for scale and sustainability, as well as accountability for results
- Consider training mid-level managers on implementation
- As a team, normalize and encourage admitting challenges
- Set the expectation at the cabinet level that SMARTER goals are set for each major initiative



HOW CAN TRUSTEES INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?

Adopt policies to support strategically-aligned implementation

POTENTIAL SCENARIOS

- **President and trustees consider if there is a need to revisit college policies that affect students.** Considering the needed changes, what specific board policies would be most helpful to amend to make clear that this reform is an enduring priority?
- **Board makes a public commitment to reform efforts.** Would any recent changes—including guided pathways reforms—benefit from a board statement of support in the form of a new policy or resolution?



HOW CAN TRUSTEES INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?

Reallocate resources to support progress on what matters most

Consider:

What substantial resource changes will be needed to advance the reform agenda?

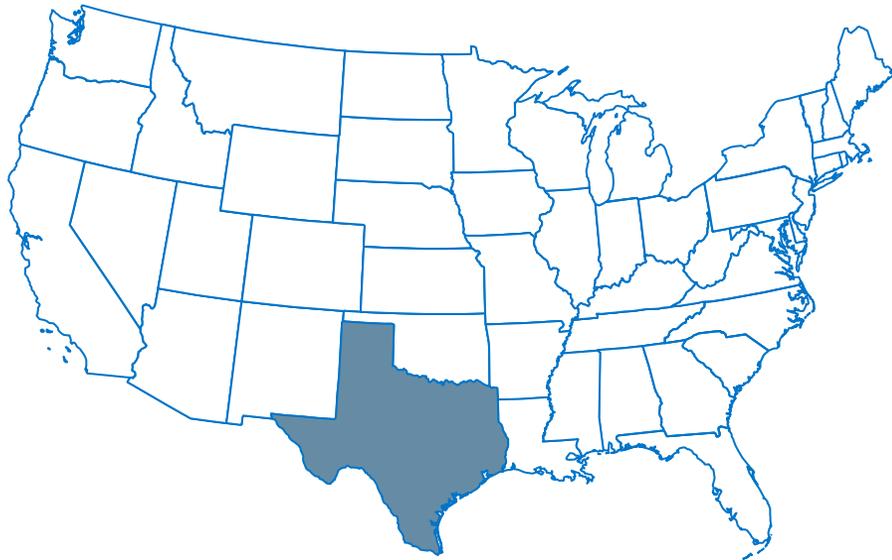
What issues may arise among those who see themselves as “winners” or “losers” in resource reallocation?

How can trustees act and communicate in ways that might help everyone understand the reasons for reallocation?



HOW CAN TRUSTEES INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?

Alamo Community Colleges (TX)

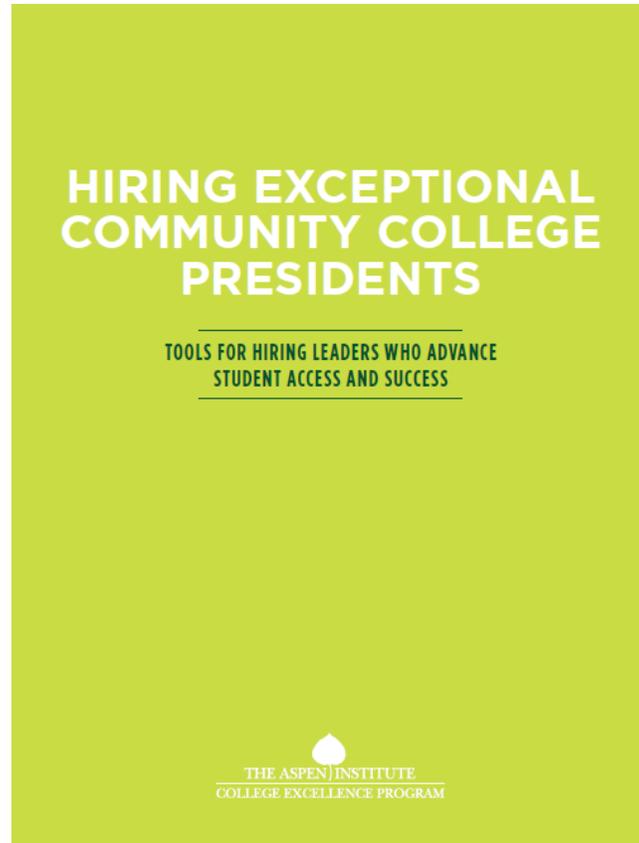


ALAMO
COLLEGES
DISTRICT

- Adopted a board policy that prioritized “intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences ... that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market.”
- Enabled many changes, including substantial personnel reallocation and investment in the Alamo ADVISE initiative to bring advisor-to-student ratio down to 1:350

HOW CAN TRUSTEES INSTITUTIONALIZE REFORM TO SUSTAIN THE WORK?

Conduct presidential hiring, transitions, and evaluations with student success and equity goals at the forefront.



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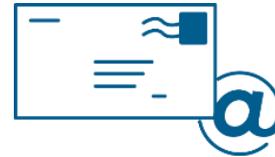


THANK YOU!

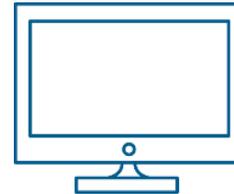
Questions or reflections?



THANK YOU



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