Student Success Teams at Santa Ana College

CLP | Career Ladders Project

THE BEGINNING

Santa Ana College (SAC) set out to develop success teams that would improve college communication with students and also improve communication between offices and services. The Guided Pathways team defines success teams as "cross-functional teams focused on supporting and guiding students through their academic journey." SAC started by piloting one Success Team around their "Future Educators" Career and Academic Pathway (CAP), the college's form of meta-majors. This team had a CAP coordinator, counseling lead, three discipline faculty leads, a career coach, student success coaches, and an administrative support team consisting of a financial aid specialist, a research analyst, and technology support. This team worked for one year to design the communication systems, support systems, and collaborations across the college before the Guided Pathways Team in partnership with CLP expanded success teams to all eight of the CAPs.

> *"We not only supported students in their college and career needs in the Career and Academic Pathway, but in their academic and social/emotional needs too."*
>
> *Sara Vu, Student Services Coordinator/Student Success Coach*

IMPLEMENTATION

The Future Educators Success Team started with trying to better understand who the students are in that specific CAP and what challenges they face. They looked at the student demographics, finding that most are age 19 or under, female, and Latinx. Given this demographic, the team worked to understand the needs of students transitioning from high school and adult reentry programs because these groups make up the majority of the students in the CAP. The Success Team also surveyed students to identify what barriers they were facing to completing their goals at the college, discovering that the types of barriers were varied but all equity populations faced some challenges.

From there, the team set goals that were focused on the college's identified equity populations and grounded in equity-minded approaches and practices, and they planned ways to assess success in reaching their goals. The team identified seven goals for students in the Future Educators CAP:

- Complete English and math in their first year
- Persist from fall to spring semester
- Receive support to complete their educational goals, especially those that are close to completion
- Participate in a program orientation
- Establish a mentor relationship with one faculty lead
- Complete a CAP student self-assessment
- Engage in an early field work experience

"The peer to peer connection is key."

Tanisha Burrus, Student Services Coordinator/Student Success Coach

The team started by taking inventory of the existing supports offered to students in the CAP and tried to identify gaps and opportunities to make service more seamless. The inventory also helped them identify areas for improvement where they could learn about best practices and apply them. After the first semester, the team worked with institutional researchers to monitor student progress. They discovered that only 45 of the 166 students were enrolled in the next semester's classes, so the team emailed students to provide direct and intentional registration support. They learned that many of the students were unsure how to register and needed the extra support to find the information they needed to persist.

The faculty leads reached out to all of the faculty in the CAP to make sure that they were familiar with the Success Team, Early Alert software and processes, and how the team would be using the alerts to respond to student needs. Additionally, Career Coaches developed employer agreements with Santa Ana Unified School District, SAC's K-12 partner, to build solid connections and help students access paraeducator job openings. They developed a system that would ensure

that students enrolled in the Future Educators CAP would have first access to the jobs. The students were able to participate in an interview skills workshop and received support in finding and applying for jobs. They also worked to build community relationships and partnerships with local libraries, professional associations, and other professional development opportunities.

Counselors and coaches went to classes, did presentations, and made connections with the students to develop one-on-one relationships with each student, knew their name and their program of study, and met the students where they were even when that meant meeting them outside their classes. Connection to students was key. The team wanted all students to know there was a team there to support them. Counselors continued to be available for students outside of class to answer questions and to make appointments to complete their Ed Plans before or after class.

As the team closed the year, they developed common goals for all success teams to aid in the expansion to all of the CAPs in the second year of implementation.

Common goals:

- Ensure that the college data system has the correct major/program recorded for all students
- Ensure that Pell-eligible students are receiving their financial aid
- Ensure that all new full-time students in CAPs have a two-semester or comprehensive student educational plan

"I really enjoyed the collaboration between academic and student services because that provides a seamless pathway for students and gives them the holistic support that really shows we are here for them and want them to succeed."

Sara Vu, Student Services Coordinator/Student Success Coach

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TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING SUCCESS TEAMS AT YOUR COLLEGE

This is a collection of three guides outlining key steps in developing success teams: exploring the framework; building your success team; and assessing the impact. Each guide includes resources, activity suggestions, and discussion questions.

Tool 1   Exploring the Student Success Team Framework

Thinking of developing success teams?
Use this guide to get the conversation going.

■ Part 1: Bring a cross-functional team together

Student success teams are a collaboration with roles across the college. As you are exploring building success teams at your college, bring the faculty, staff, administrators, and students together early to ensure your team understands student challenges and understands the problem you are trying to solve by building student success teams. Here are suggestions of representative roles to invite to explore development of student success teams:

- Counseling faculty
- Student support staff
- Guided Pathways Coordinator
- Student Equity Coordinator
- Instructional faculty

- VP of Student Services
- Student health services
- Financial aid
- Dean of Workforce or Employment Specialists
- Dean of Counseling

■ Part 2: Gather data to review

Qualitative data can be particularly useful when exploring the development of success teams because often the students will tell you why something is happening in a focus group or survey, while the quantitative data will tell you what is happening. For example, the SAC pilot Success Team used quantitative data to determine that students were not registering from one semester to the next, but talking with students helped them understand why they weren't registering. The team then focused their problem solving on removing the barrier. You can find qualitative data in surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and institutional student focus groups. If you do not have qualitative data, start with quantitative data found in your Student Equity and Achievement Plan, Strong Workforce Program data, and Guided Pathways Self Assessment reflections and goals.

■ Part 3: Explore use of student success team as a lever for equity and student success

Plan a series of meetings with the key constituents such as the dean of counseling, dean of equity, equity and guided pathways coordinators, distance education coordinators, student health services, and tutoring program leads. At the meetings, you can explore the data, discuss what is working well, and talk about challenges. Here is a sample set of questions to lead a series of meetings:

Meeting 1: Discuss student challenges and understand the problems you are trying to solve

☐ **Start with a data walk:**

- Review and reflect on outcome data. On large poster paper (or on google slides if virtual), write one data point per page. Post 8-10 data points around the room. Ask participants to walk around the room reviewing and reflecting on each data point, taking notes on the data and why they think the college may be seeing that outcome.

- Discuss each data point as a group. Ask participants to share their thoughts on what is going on behind the data. What challenges are students facing? What factors at the college are contributing to the outcome? Record the group's major conclusions on sticky notes (or in the notes section for each google slide).

- Decide on the major challenges students are facing at your college. Write those challenges on a new poster paper or google slide.

Meeting 2: Discuss approaches at other California community colleges

☐ **Before the next meeting, send out these resources and ask your cross-functional team to read them before you meet:**

- Bakersfield College's Student Completion Teams
- Santa Ana College's Student Success Teams
- Santa Rosa Junior College's Peer Coach Model
- West Hills College Lemoore's Retention Coach Approach

☐ **Start the meeting by reviewing the major student challenges identified at the first meeting. Then ask participants to reflect on the practices at other colleges:**

- Which of the college examples to address student challenges did you find most exciting? Why?

- Which of the approaches do you think would be most useful to students and the challenges they face at your college? Why?

- What existing resources or college efforts are currently underway to address the challenges students face? Does the college have programs and resources that are already working to address the challenges? Could that program or resource be integrated into larger collegewide efforts to bring students just-in-time supports?

- What resources or strategies are missing to address the identified student challenges?

- Record key takeaways on a poster paper visible to all (or in a google slide).

Meeting 3: Discuss the Student Success Team approach

☐ Discuss how the team approach to supporting students could help overcome the challenges you identified. Discuss with the group:

- How would the team approach work to address the student challenges you identified?
- Which approaches from the college examples would you want to learn or build from?
- What resources do you need to get started?
- Who should lead the effort?

Tool 2   Building Your Success Team

Are you ready to build your success team?

Use this guide to plan the roles and operations of your team.

Ecosystem Mapping

Like most of the California community colleges, your college probably has some stellar programs and services that you can lift up and learn from as you are building a team approach to supporting students. Start your planning with an audit of what you already have. This will help you build on existing student supports and help you identify gaps.

■ Part 1: Map your support services to match the student journey

One way to approach this is to map based on unit completion, as shown in the table below. First, ask your team to identify the types of support important for students at specific stages in their academic journey. Second, highlight (or boldface) the supports that you don't currently offer in a systematic way to differentiate them from supports you already have in place. Third, note supports not currently offered at the college.

Services	0–15 units	16–30 units	31–45 units	46–60+ units
Registration & Financial Aid Support				
Counseling and Career Exploration Support				
Academic & Learning Support				
Student Engagement and Wellness Support				

■ Part 2: Define roles for members of the team

For the success team to work well together, it is important to define what role each person on the team will play in supporting students. The table below can be tailored to your team and your college needs.

Role at the College	Responsibilities on the Success Team
Research Analyst	*Example: Support the team with data collection at key points in the semester.*
Counseling Faculty	
Financial Aid Specialist	
Discipline Faculty Mentors	
Peer Success Coach	
Add as many roles as you have and need to provide the best just-in-time support for your students	

■ Part 3: Develop a communication plan

A large part of the impact success teams have on supporting the student experience is in communicating with students about key resources at the point in time when they need assistance. Develop a plan for what you are going to communicate, when you are going to communicate it, who will be responsible for communicating, and by what means that communication will occur. Again, adapt the example table below as needed for your college and your team.

When	What	Who	Method of Communication
Before the term starts			
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Add weeks as you need them			

Tool 3 **Assessing the Impact of Your Success Team**

Ready to examine your impact?

When you established your success teams, you set out to address specific challenges students were facing in reaching their goals. Now you want to assess your strategy annually to learn if you are successfully addressing the student challenges and iterate if needed. Start by linking the student challenges to outcomes.

Student Challenge	Measurement Outcome
Example 1: Students are not enrolling in classes after their first semester	Persistence data from Fall to Spring
Example 2: Students are not taking classes in their declared major	Complete comprehensive ed plans
Add as many challenges as you set out to improve	

■ Part 1: Gather data

Work with your institutional research office to gather the data annually that you need to assess your success teams. Gathering data that is disaggregated for your college's student equity populations will help to ensure you stay focused on improving equity gaps. Examining data annually will allow you to make changes and iterate. Because students are always changing, their needs are always changing and an iterative continuous quality improvement process will ensure that your success teams remain effective and make the best use of resources.

■ Part 2: Examine the data with your team

• **Before the meeting:** Send the data out to your team with enough time for them to review and process the meaning they see in the data.

• **During the meeting:** Use the chart on the next page to critically examine the work of the team in removing student challenges. Discuss ways that you can improve progress toward removing the barrier. Try to write down all ideas for improvement! You don't want to remove any ideas until you have the full picture. You can do this with google slides if the team is meeting remotely or on large poster paper using sticky notes if you are meeting in person.

Examine the data with your team (cont.)

Student Challenge	Measurement Outcome	Success Team Activities	Iteration Ideas for Next Year
Example 1: Students are not enrolling in classes after their first semester	Persistence data from Fall to Spring	Pulled data at the end of Fall on enrollment in classes for the following semester Called all students who were not enrolled and helped them register	In Year Two, we should hold course registration workshops for students in the meta-major. In Year Two, we can develop a resource for students that guides them through registering for classes
Example 2: Students are not taking classes in their declared major	Complete comprehensive ed plans		
Add as many challenges as you set out to improve			

■ Part 3: Agree on changes for the next year

Now you want to decide on what changes you will make for Year Two and beyond. You can use the chart above to highlight or circle the tweaks or changes the team decides to make to the focus and operation of the success team in the following academic year. Here are a few considerations as you plan to iterate:

- Try not to make too many changes in one area at the same time. It will make it difficult to identify what is working and what isn't.
- Try to focus on changes that the team is excited about and feels motivated to implement. Leveraging the team's energy and enthusiasm is important as you institutionalize new processes.
- Take time to reflect on whether the student challenges have changed because of outside forces that didn't exist while you were planning for the first year.