

Solution Areas

Student Support

Putting observed practices to work

This activity walks you and your team through a collection of observed practices — good ideas from lean institutions that are making progress in narrowing attainment gaps and increasing student success. Let them serve as a source of inspiration for brainstorming.

Observed practice

Connect new students by similar academic interests or academic pathways to form learning communities

To discuss

- How might we connect new students through their academic interests?
 - How can we help students find meaningful learning communities ?
 - How can we make participating in a learning community do-able for especially busy students (e.g., those with long commutes, significant family commitments, or long work hours outside of school)?
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Observed practice

Provide supplemental instruction and tutoring opportunities integrated into the classroom, particularly for high DFW (D, F, Withdrawal) courses or courses with high enrollment

To discuss

- What supplemental instruction (SI) and tutoring opportunities does our institution offer?
 - What's working with our current offerings? What are the current gaps?
 - What are some additional SI and tutoring opportunities worth exploring?
 - How might we involve faculty in SI and tutoring efforts to bolster student success?
 - How can we best encourage students to participate?
 - How might we promote these resources to students in classes with high DFW rates?
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Observed practice

Establish small group programs for entering students identified as at risk

To discuss

- How does our institution define at-risk students?
- What small group programs does our institution offer new students, particularly those at at risk?
- How do we define "small group" at our institution (e.g., 12 students or 200 students)? How might the definition of "small" vary based on type of group?
- Are there opportunities or needs for additional programs?

Observed practice

Offer human service supports that help with social needs such as hunger or housing

To discuss

- **What human service supports does our institution offer? Who can receive these supports (e.g., anyone, only Pell recipients)?**
 - **How do students find out about these supports (e.g., advisor and faculty outreach, embedded services like food pantries at tutoring centers)?**
 - **Are there opportunities or needs for other human service supports?**
 - **How might we incorporate help from organizations in our community?**
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Observed practice

Implement an orientation program for new and transfer students that allows for a more individualized student experience

To discuss

- **What is the student experience at our school from admission through the first year and then graduation?**
 - **How does the experience differ for new (“native”) and transfer students?**
 - **What particular experiences or activities does our institution currently offer each group of students?**
 - **What are the opportunities for improvement or additional services?**
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Observed practice

Invest in professional coaches for rigorous courses with high enrollment and high DFW (D, F, Withdrawal) rates

To discuss

- **What makes these courses so difficult for students?**
 - **Within our institution, what is a professional coach and how does this role differ from tutors?**
 - **How might professional coaches help students succeed in these classes?**
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Observed practice

Invest in student housing to encourage students to live on-campus with support services and create community that embodies “the full-college experience”

To discuss

- How much on-campus housing exists at our institution?
 - Is it at capacity? If not, what are some of the reasons more students don't live on campus (e.g., too expensive, no or not enough family housing)?
 - If on-campus housing is at or over capacity, how might we expand it?
 - Regardless of capacity, how might we improve the on-campus experience?
 - What does the phrase "full-college experience" mean on our campus right now? What would we like it to mean in the future?
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Observed practice

Facilitate relationship building and collaboration across student services through regular cross-training, physical location, and / or centralized reporting structure

To discuss

- What student services does our institution offer?
 - Which groups offer which services? Is there any overlap?
 - How might these groups collaborate?
 - What are the opportunities to cross-train and to share space and other resources?
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Observed practice

Use mobile apps or texting to connect students to the community and use data to inform subgroup engagement programs

To discuss

- How do our students use apps and texting in their daily lives? How does this usage vary by the different groups of students at our institution?
 - How might our institution better connect with them using these or other digital tools?
 - What internal and external data might be useful in this discussion?
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Observed practice

Offer supplementary programming as outreach to potential students, building a more prepared pipeline (e.g., summer bridge programs for students who have been out of school for an extended period of time)

To discuss

- Where do incoming students need the most support in their learning (e.g., writing, mathematics, critical thinking, study skills)?
 - What supplemental programs currently exist at our institution?
 - What additional programs or services might be of value to new students?
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Observed practice

Bring together HR, student services, and academic services to map out all services and identify gaps and improvement opportunities

To discuss

- **What student and academic services does our institution currently offer?**
 - **What and where are the gaps in our offerings?**
 - **What are the opportunities for improvement?**
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Observed practice

Organize student services around the student lifecycle, one group of services for incoming and new students, and another for continuing students, to minimize handoffs (particularly if case management is not an option)

To discuss

- **What's the student lifecycle at our institution?**
 - **What aspects of student services seem to work best?**
 - **Which present opportunities for improvement?**
 - **How might we organize services around the student lifecycle?**
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