Operating Capacities

Student-focused Operating Model

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 brainstorms.

Observed practice

Centralize student-success functions under one leader to provide a clear point of accountability and responsibility for improving student outcomes; reorganize functions as needed to minimize duplication of services and maximize efficiencies

To discuss

- **How are student-success functions currently organized at our institution?**
- **Are there any duplications of effort?**
- **How and where might we centralize services that help students transition to college, choose a major, learn study skills, master time management, overcome academic struggles, and connect — academically and socially — on campus?**

Observed practice

Professionalize and centralize research support staff, both to help grow research enterprise and allow faculty to be more efficient

To discuss

- **How are research support staff organized at our institution?**
- **What are the signature traits of a professionalized research support staff?**
- **How might we better maximize the value of our research support staff?**
- **How can research support work best with faculty?**

Observed practice

Elevate positions of importance to the transformation to the cabinet or top leadership team

To discuss

- **How can we pull together a dream team for our institutional transformation?**
- **What positions at our institution are key to a student-focused operating model?**

Observed practice

Align operating model to student lifecycle (e.g., admissions and new student services, continuing student services, alumni affairs and workforce development), moving away from traditional organizational units and reporting lines

To discuss

- **How do we describe our operating model?**
- **In what ways is it focused on students?**
- **In what ways is it not focused on students?**
- **What elements of the model are most important to students?**
- **How might we better align our operating model to the student lifecycle?**

Observed practice

Convene faculty and staff from multiple divisions to map student services processes, policies, and technology

To discuss

- **How does our institution involve faculty and staff from multiple divisions in mapping student services processes, policies, and technology?**
- **How might we bring together faculty and staff to better map student services across our institution's departments?**

Observed practice

For institutions with multiple campuses, promote a “one college” model such that students may access the same types and quality of services on any campus

To discuss

- **What are the cohesive elements of our institution’s multiple campuses (i.e., what unites them)?**
- **What elements might benefit from being more in sync or cohesive?**
- **How can we show students and the community that our campuses offer the same quality and services?**

Observed practice

Evaluation and redesign of student-services functions is based on enhancing a set of specific milestones in the student lifecycle (e.g., financial planning, career conversations, academic course mapping)

To discuss

- **When we consider student services alongside the student lifecycle, what milestones emerge? Can we rank each milestone?**
- **How might we redesign some of the key milestones?**