

WHAT WORKS NOW

April 2015

The Campaign for
College
Opportunity



LATINOS



BLACKS



ASIAN AMERICANS
NATIVE HAWAIIANS
PACIFIC ISLANDERS

California State University, Fullerton

As the Campaign for College Opportunity releases its 2015 State of Higher Education in California: The Latino Report, we felt it was important to highlight best practices that can support Latino student success. This profile is one of two that showcases colleges and universities that have committed to and are working toward improving educational outcomes for Latinos.

We can do better. That is the attitude of leaders at California State University, Fullerton (CSU Fullerton) where, despite already serving Latino students well, they are striving to do more.

Located in a suburban environment in Orange County, CSU Fullerton is the largest campus in the CSU system. In fall 2014, the university served 38,128 students. Of those students, 36% were Latino, making them the largest racial/ethnic group of students on campus. The university's student body has been at least 25% Latino since 2002 and it is designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. Almost half of the current Latino students are first-generation college students, which means their chances of succeeding in college are already lower than their peers who have at least one parent who went to college. One national study found that 59 percent of first-generation students had not earned a credential or degree within six years compared to 46 percent of students whose parent(s) are college degree holders. However, at CSU Fullerton first-generation Latino students have a much better chance at reaching graduation. In fact, the university is number one in California and tenth in the nation among top universities awarding bachelor's degrees to Latinos. Yet, gaps in the success of Latinos students and their White and Asian peers continue to exist. This is unacceptable and leaders at CSU Fullerton have made a commitment to narrow these gaps.

The first step in closing the gaps in outcomes between Latino students and their peers is to develop a plan for doing it, and

that is exactly what university leaders at CSU Fullerton did. In 2013, CSU Fullerton launched a new university wide strategic plan that provides a roadmap for the university's future. The plan not only details CSU Fullerton's goals, but outlines objectives and strategies to meet those goals. It also guides the university's decisions about the use of programmatic, faculty, staff, and financial resources.

One explicit goal of the strategic plan is to cut the achievement gap for underrepresented students and their White and Asian peers in half from the current 12% gap. Four key strategies have been employed to meet that objective.

"There is a real achievement gap among historically underrepresented and first-generation students. To effectively serve many of our students, we need to have deep conversations about how to best support them and allow them to thrive...for all students, success requires a thoughtful, well-designed, multi-faceted approach."
- President Mildred Garcia

Goal: Improve student persistence, increase graduation rates University-wide, and narrow the achievement gap for underrepresented students.

Objectives:

- Increase the overall 6-year graduation rate, such that the Fall 2012 cohort of first-time full-time freshman is at least 10 percentage points higher than that of the Fall 2006 cohort.
- Increase the 4-year transfer graduation rate, such that the Fall 2014 cohort is at least 10 percentage points higher than that of the Fall 2008 cohort.
- Reduce by at least half the current 12% achievement gap between underrepresented and non-underrepresented students.
- Increase participation in High-Impact Practices (HIPs) and ensure that 75% of CSUF students participate in at least two HIPs by graduation.

Strategies:

1. Identify and expand programs that have a documented impact on increasing student achievement in bottleneck, gateway and low success rate academic courses.
2. Identify and increase participation in new and ongoing efforts that support underrepresented student persistence and achievement.
3. Identify, track and integrate curricular and co-curricular High-Impact Practices (HIP) and ensure participation in one HIP in the first year and one subsequent HIP in student's major field.
4. Establish accountability metrics at the division, college, department, and program levels to ensure progress on retention and graduation rate strategies.

Redesigning Bottleneck Courses

Bottleneck courses are courses in which students have difficulty enrolling because of high demand, or receive a D, W (withdraw), or F at high rates and are forced to retake the courses. As implied by their name, they block students from making progress toward graduation. Because students either cannot get in or are forced to retake them, they lengthen a student's time to degree and their overall cost of a college education. This issue has been recognized across the CSU system and the CSU Board of Trustees has incentivized campuses to address it by providing funding to specifically reduce bottleneck courses.

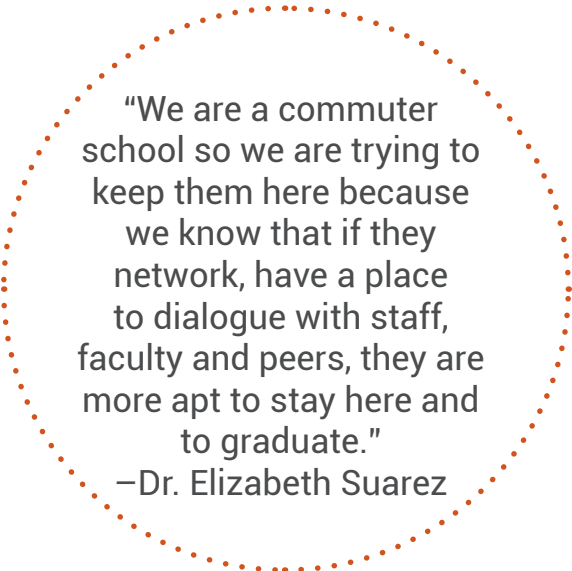
Under the system's Course Redesign with Technology effort, two programs are focused on reducing bottlenecks – Proven Course Redesign and Promising Practices. The Proven Course Redesign program is, “focused on system wide adoption and adaptation of previously redesigned courses that have documented increases in the proportion of students successfully completing. These courses have included such strategies as flipped classrooms, online homework, virtual labs, hybrid course designs, supplemental instruction, etc.” The Promising Practices program is, “focused on local campus course redesigns that have not yet been proven to increase student success and/or that address local campus bottlenecks.” At CSU Fullerton, faculty were already interested in course redesign in science and math but the system's focus on bottlenecks provided an impetus for the work to begin.

Five of CSU Fullerton's faculty have been designated as “proven lead faculty” under the Proven Course Redesign program. These faculty have created proven course redesign strategies and are a part of 15 proven lead faculty across all CSUs. Faculty leaders with this designation train other faculty making them “proven adopted lead faculty.” Over the past three years of the existence of the effort, close to 40 faculty have been involved in course redesign. Courses in biology, math, physics, political science, chemistry, business, history, and philosophy have been redesigned and more are in the works.

The redesigned courses increase the success rates of students, allow them to continue their studies in a timely fashion, and make space for new students by freeing spots in classes.

Student Cultural Resource Centers

The Chicano/a Resource Center (CRC) is one of four cultural resource centers at CSU Fullerton. The center is led by Dr. Elizabeth Suarez, adjunct faculty at the College of Education, Elementary and Bilingual Education. The center provides a second home for Latino students. It is a place where they can study, network with peers and faculty, and meet as organizations. It serves as both a communal space for students and an academic help center. Students can attend regularly offered workshop trainings or special events such as conferences. The CRC offers students computer workstations and maintains a small research collection on Chicana/o and Latina/o themes. The goal of the CRC is to engage students, make sure they feel welcomed and supported, keep them on campus, and get them to graduate.



"We are a commuter school so we are trying to keep them here because we know that if they network, have a place to dialogue with staff, faculty and peers, they are more apt to stay here and to graduate."

—Dr. Elizabeth Suarez

Scaling of High-Impact Practices (HIP)

"We have a lot of boutique programs that are just not going to move the needle," said Jose Cruz, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Association of American Colleges & Universities is at the forefront of pushing for the increased use of High-Impact Practices (HIP). HIPs are practices that have been proven to promote student engagement, retention and graduation for college students from many backgrounds. Sample HIPs include:

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning

- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects

At CSU Fullerton, seventy five percent of students are now required to participate in at least two HIPs by graduation. While this strategy is still in the early stages of implementation, a committee has been formed to begin identifying what possible HIP programs already exist on campus. They have conducted an initial evaluation of practices among all of the departments and colleges that could be identified as HIPs and are now working with faculty to assess their effectiveness. The goal is to have many HIPs from which students can choose to participate in to improve the likelihood that they will cross the graduation stage. "Students can't be in every HIP but we need to find the one that works for them. We have to recognize their lives and their experiences, and we have to come to them," said Alison M. Wrynn, PhD, Director of Undergraduate Studies and General Education.

Student Success Teams

Students at CSU Fullerton now have additional teams that are exclusively dedicated to ensuring their success through an advising effort that is the result of collaboration between the Academic and Student Affairs department. Each of CSU Fullerton's eight colleges now have a Student Success Team. The teams consist of a graduation specialist, a retention specialist, and a college and career specialist. The graduation specialist supports juniors and seniors nearing graduation. The retention specialist ensures freshmen and sophomores are making progress toward degree completion and the college and career specialist assists students in career planning. Team members use predictive analytics, which examines a student's academic history to predict outcomes for graduation, to target high-risk students for these services. The goal of the success teams is to help students get back on track to complete their degree. The teams each have targets and meet regularly. The Chair of each team also meets monthly with the Provost to review progress.

Team members are responsible for finding and reaching out to their respective students to provide them with the support they need to get back on track. They provide information about graduation requirements, career planning, and personal development and can be accessed by students at some Student Success Centers on campus.



Together these strategies present a well-designed, multi-faceted approach to helping all students at CSU Fullerton succeed, and a specific approach to helping Latino students succeed. CSU Fullerton is a model campus for other colleges and universities who are looking for solutions to better support Latino students.

For more information regarding CSU Fullerton's efforts to help Latino college students succeed, please contact: José Cruz, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at jcruz@Exchange.fullerton.edu.

"When our diverse students come to our campus, we will help them along the way... The graduation specialists, career specialists and retention specialists work collaboratively so that students know we care about them, and that we are here to help them achieve their academic goals and life dreams."

—President Garcia



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