Strategic Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports Toolkit

Achieving the Dream

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Introduction

A holistic student support approach is a paradigm shift from centering the convenience of the institution in the design and implementation of services and supports to centering the students' needs in a manner that accounts for the myriad experiences, obligations, aspirations, and assets that students bring with them to their educational journeys.

Building a holistic student supports model that enhances what the college already offers requires looking outside the college to leverage and expand community partnerships to respond to additional needs that may hinder students' progress in meeting their academic and career goals. These partners may include community-based organizations, nonprofits, other educational institutions, businesses, industry, and government. "Leveraging partnership opportunities also allows the institution to more efficiently provide holistic services to students, stretch limited budgets, reduce redundancies, strengthen college relations, and improve persistence and completion."[1]

When partnerships are formed that provide mutual benefit to the college and its partner institutions in service to a shared vision and goals, the results can be transformative for the institutions, and life-changing for the students and community members they serve.

This *Strategic Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports Toolkit* is designed to provide a guided process for community and technical colleges to engage with community partners to provide meaningful and impactful holistic supports for students to achieve their personal, academic, and career goals. This toolkit was informed by ATD's ongoing work with ATD Network colleges as well as insights from interviews with leaders from eight diverse community and technical colleges of various sizes from across the country. These eight colleges have accomplished measurable and impactful results in providing holistic student supports through community partnerships, including during the unprecedented interruption to education, work, and life caused by the coronavirus pandemic from early 2020 to the time of publication. We hope that the values that ground this work, the narratives and stories from institutions, and the structures and process outlined here will help college leaders maximize their community partnerships in service to their students and the people of their community.

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1   *Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit* (2018), p. 81

For Consideration from the Outset: Build an Integrated Infrastructure for Holistic Supports

Programs to fulfill the needs of students outside of the classroom are often implemented in silos across the institution. This may mean that administrators and staff from multiple areas are involved without some type of executive oversight. Putting holistic student supports under one umbrella can help with centralizing administration, communication, and coordination with internal and external partners. This is helpful to consider early in the process of developing holistic student supports so that the internal structure that supports activities can coordinate the continuous improvement and expansion of programs and services. When services are integrated and coordinated rather than siloed, it makes it easier for staff and faculty to refer students, and for students to navigate the resources made available through the college and its partnerships. Columbus State Community College, for example, has created a new position of Associate Vice President, Holistic Student Experience, to provide leadership and oversight over the college's many holistic student supports. Providing this type of leadership position helps to ensure that services are being coordinated and shared widely throughout the campus community so that students are aware of what is available to them and leaders can assess what pieces might still be missing.

Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports Workbook

A workbook is provided for individuals and teams to capture their work in following the step-by-step process outlined in this toolkit. This workbook is in a fillable and saveable document to allow college teams to iterate on their plans. Click here for the *Strategic Partnerships for HSS Workbook*.

Values That Ground This Toolkit

This toolkit is grounded in the importance of **student-centered design, equity and antiracism**, an **asset-minded approach** to students, **mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships**, **leveraging** "**localness**," and a **systems approach** to the work.

Student-Centered Design

Student-centered design is an adaptive approach to serving students that contextualizes and refines the process of design thinking to the higher education field, with a central focus on students and equity. The process can be applied to any aspect of the institution's design, including structures, policies, processes, services, and culture. When establishing partnerships:

- Students need to be involved in informing each aspect of the process, and their feedback needs to be sought throughout

- The outcomes must focus on student and community success; therefore, the process must be designed with positive student outcomes as a key criterion for success

- The success of students can be measured in multiple ways: student sense of belonging, persistence and connection, access to leadership roles, completion, employment, and the attainment of personal, academic, and career goals.

Equity and Antiracism

Achieving the Dream's equity statement states that to create equitable student outcomes, institutions must address the historical racist structure of our higher education system, take meaningful steps and actions to dismantle these structures, and create antiracist systems that serve all students. When structuring strategic partnerships, the process should consider how:

- Student access and success in higher education continue to be impacted by the effects of structural racism and systemic poverty

- Achievement gaps among student groups reflect structural inequities that are often the result of historical and systemic social injustices

- These inequities typically manifest themselves as the unintended or indirect consequences of unexamined institutional or social policies

- Every community and technical college should do all they can within and outside of their institutional walls to ensure that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience

- Colleges must invest in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors that lead to success for all students

- The dismantling of historically racist systems, structures, policies, procedures, practices, and attitudes can redistribute power in an equitable manner

Asset-Minded Rather Than Deficit-Based

When engaging in student-centered design, student success must be seen as an opportunity to serve students through the challenges they face. In doing so, addressing student challenges through partnerships should be discussed through an asset-based framework that:

- Focuses on recognizing and leveraging the strengths of the community and the students themselves

- Recognizes that people make decisions based on the information they have and on their access to resources to help them to navigate situations. Lacking experience or exposure is not a deficit, but something that needs to be addressed through intentionality, including building social capital[2]

- Includes culturally responsive practices that do not marginalize or exclude any members of the community

Mutually Beneficial Reciprocal Relationships

Meaningful relationships are key to the success of any partnership, as reported by every leader interviewed for this toolkit. Those relationships need to:

- Be mutually beneficial and grounded in respect, appreciation, value, and shared resources across the community college and its external partners

- Be informed by student voices and put the needs of students at the center

- Include meaningful and reciprocal relationships with the community, and ensure that people who know the community are designing and implementing the programs[3]

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2   Bergen Community College's Summer Intensive Program is an excellent example of a program that has been highly successful at connecting students and helping them to build leadership skills and social capital. See the Appendix for more information.

3   A common observation from the leaders interviewed for this toolkit is the importance of staffing: having the right people who know the community, are passionate about the students, and who believe in the students, as the leaders and staff who run programs and initiatives that provide holistic student supports.

Leveraging Localness: Centering the "Community" in Community College

Community colleges should be viewed as critical hubs at the intersection of economic development, education, employment, and social services. Services provided at the college have to consider:

- Students' needs outside of the classroom; they should be in service to the broader community of which the institution is a part

- The context of the college and community so that programs, services, and partnerships are grounded in the local community

- How community engagement can lead to designing equitable solutions, resulting in community and college transformation

Systems Thinking (Looking at the Community Ecosystem)

Education, employment, and economics are multiple systems within one larger ecosystem. Appreciating the interconnectedness of these systems helps in cultivating and sustaining meaningful partnerships in service to students and their success more generally. Taking a systems approach can:

- Reveal the ways that systems may be marginalizing or excluding groups of individuals, and then open the door to transform those systems toward equitable outcomes

- Help identify the interconnectedness that exists between systems. Positive results in one area, such as employment, has a trickle-down effect that positively impacts other systems, such as education, housing, and other key community outcomes

- Ensure systems work together and feed each other's capacity — leading to greater synergy and positive outcomes when done with intention and focus

Steps for Success in Building Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports

Below are seven steps to work through as you explore partnerships to meet your students' needs. The appendices at the end of this toolkit provide excellent ideas and approaches from exemplars in the field, along with **Reflection Questions** that can help college teams in their planning.

Step One: Conduct Student Needs Assessment

The first value that grounds this toolkit is taking a **student-centered design approach**, which places student success at the center of the equation. This means ensuring that "no decision, at any level, is made without considering the impact on students."[4] The first step, therefore, is to clearly understand the needs of students across every aspect of their lives: academic, social, employment, economic, technology, transportation, mental health, health care and medical, and family. If any aspect of these areas is out of balance or inadequately provided for, someone can struggle and their education can be interrupted or stopped, sometimes permanently. "The more you address the distinct interests, aspirations, cultural backgrounds, and life complexities of individual students and groups of students, the better their outcomes."[5]

"We need to challenge ourselves to see our students not only as learners, but also as individuals whose life contexts impact their academic journey." (ATD, 2021)

There are many techniques that you can use to collect student data. Often the answer is a combination of the following tools:

- Quantitative data on student identities and experiences, and on the student experience of a given problem

- Quantitative data on student outcomes

- Student understanding of needs and experiences through a combination of surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and/or journals

- Third-party perspective of student needs and experiences

- Student-led process mapping

> **The first thing we did was a student needs analysis. What do our students need and how do we know? We have to adapt [to student needs] or cease to exist… that then becomes a capacity question, do we have what our students need when they need it and can we sustain it long term?**
>
> **— Dr. Lisandra De Jesus, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs, College of Southern Nevada**

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4 *Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit* (2018), p.7

5 p.31

Achieving the Dream's *Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success* guidebook has some excellent guidance on collecting student data to seek student perspectives.[6]

INVENTORY WHAT THE NEEDS ARE:

The "Knowing Our Students: Student Needs Assessment Worksheet"[7] from the *Knowing Our Students* guidebook provides a template of possible data to collect. The *Strategic Partnerships for Holistic Student Supports Workbook* includes this worksheet with several additional questions based on advice of colleges interviewed for this resource.

Community and technical colleges should build structures and processes to periodically check in with students to ensure that unmet needs have not changed.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEEDS AND HOW THEY ARE MANIFESTED:[8]

- **Academic:** College readiness, orientation to being a college student, tutoring support, academic advising, career advising, meeting with a professor

- **Social:** Feeling connected to the college, belonging/affiliation/connection, family needs (which may occur across all of these same areas)

- **Employment:** Connecting to well-paying jobs

- **Economic/Financial:** Making ends meet, food, shelter, saving money, paying bills, rent/homeownership, home-related expenses that may be unexpected such as hot water heater or furnace repairs

- **Technology:** Equipment and WiFi

- **Transportation**

- **Mental Health:** Trauma and counseling

- **Health Care and Medical**

- **Family:** Caring for others, including child care and elder care, and education for family

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6   See Section III "Collecting the Data."

7   *Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success*

8   See the Appendix for innovative approaches to providing holistic academic supports for the needs listed.

Step Two: Identify What It Will Entail to Meet Students' Needs

What would it entail for students' needs to be met so that they can focus on their academic and career goals? What structures need to be put into place? If barriers to access and opportunity are connected to expenses, especially rent and food, then reducing that cost and the burden of obtaining food and making rent will allow the students to focus more directly on successfully completing their program. For example, at Columbus State Community College, food is provided to students who need it through the Mid-Ohio Market, which may mean that those students work 4–5 fewer hours each week, thus allowing them to concentrate more on school. Through the Success Bridge program, students who are shelter-insecure are able to have housing stability as long as they continue on their academic path toward completion. This allows them to focus on school rather than having to live out of their car or having to find a friend's couch to sleep on. (See Appendix C.)

The goal should be **independence, economic stability, economic mobility, and successful credential completion.**

> …**research is very clear about the need for two-year college students who are generally low to moderate income. The first thing we asked advisors to do is just to conduct a brief survey of our students to find out if food insecurity was indeed a need for them — the results came back overwhelming.**
>
> **— Dr. Walt Tobin, President, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College**

IDENTIFY WHERE NEEDS CAN BE MET BY THE COLLEGE'S CURRENT RESOURCES:

What does the college already have in place that can be leveraged and what can it redesign to meet the needs of students without necessarily having to engage community partners?

- What does the college currently provide that can meet the needs of students relative to the issues identified in the needs assessment?

- How are those services currently being delivered?

- Are those services adequate to meet student needs?

- Are those services located in the right place and at the right time?

- Can those resources and services be sustained at the college for the foreseeable future?[9]

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9   Through a comprehensive needs assessment, the College of Southern Nevada determined that the counseling resources at the college were not sufficient to provide for the increased need for therapeutic counseling that students required during the COVID-19 crisis. They reached outside their borders to a key community partner to expand their capacity in serving the needs of the students and thus were able to provide counseling in the evenings, virtually, and through telemedicine. See Appendix B for more detail.

- Do students know how and where to access those resources and services?

- How are students made aware of those services that are currently offered? Are those mechanisms effective?

- Are there additional ways that can make it easier for students to access those resources and services?

- Are all current systems being used most effectively to focus on student success, including full utilization of available technology to monitor student academic progress (e.g., Early Alert Systems[10])?

Fill in your team's responses to these questions in the *Strategic Partnership Workbook*.

In examining these questions, it can be helpful to explore the ways that the design of an institution impacts a student's experience. A simple framework that is introduced in *Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success* (2021) looks at **structures, processes, and attitudes** to identify barriers. "To truly make change, identify if the structures and policies on campus that are supporting some students may be creating challenges for others."

- **Structures** are the foundational components of an institution that make up its internal and external functions.

- **Processes** are the steps required to navigate the internal or external functions or structures.

- **Attitudes** are the mindsets and beliefs that shape institutional or organizational culture.

For example, a college may have academic and career advising in two separate offices with two separate advisors or specialists.

This is a structure. This requires the process of students going to separate offices for academic and career advising, and neither is coordinated with the other. The attitude held by people at the institution is that academic and career advising are separate and should not be coordinated. The result is that a student's academic planning may not be aligned with their career goals, and they may not even realize it.

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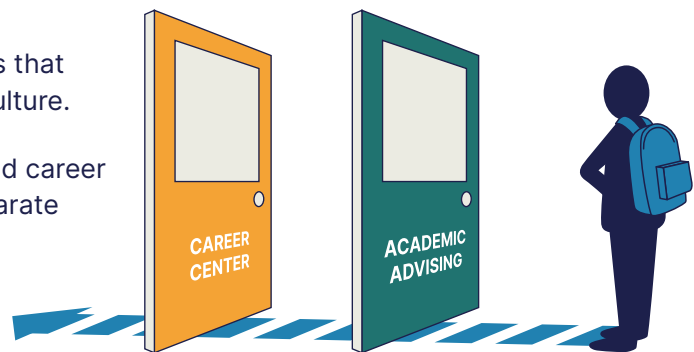
10 Technology can be used in innovative ways to provide holistic supports. For example, at Columbus State Community College, Starfish is used to help students to apply for SNAP benefits, schedule appointments at the Mid-Ohio Market during the pandemic, and have referrals around mental health needs and housing. The "Raise hand" feature allows one to indicate what they need. At Rappahannock Community College, students are encouraged to use the "Single Stop" portal to determine if they can qualify for additional federal benefits to meet their needs. See Appendices for additional details.

This can create a barrier to that student meeting their academic and career goals. Unpacking the structures, processes, and attitudes can help to uncover these and other barriers to student success from a holistic perspective. The *Strategic Partnership Workbook* includes a table that can be used by college teams to explore how structures, processes, and/or attitudes may be hindering student success.[11]

Out of this examination can come new insights into the "root causes" of barriers for students. It can also lead to new solutions to ensure that students understand and can access the resources currently available at the college.

Step Three: Assess Partnership Landscape (Current and Future)

INVENTORY CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS:

What are existing partnerships and relationships that can help to address the remaining needs?

Review existing education, community organization, business, and industry partnerships. Do any of these partners provide for the needs that are currently not being met?

- If yes, reach out to those existing partners to look at solutions for students.

- If no, inventory what other resources are available in the community.

Example: For CSN, UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling had the capacity and resources to respond to the increased need for therapeutic services. (See Appendix B.)

REVIEW EXTERNAL PARTNER LANDSCAPE FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES:

Are other organizations within the community serving this need or trying to solve this problem?

- Inventory those organizations: Identify partners that are serving the need you are hoping to address.

> I tell students that your genius lies at the intersection of your passion and your skills. I think if we can find that alignment with various organizations and where all our paths cross, then you find opportunity for great work to be had and done.
>
> — Dr. Damyen Davis, Director, Office of Summer Intensive Program, Bergen Community College

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11 *Knowing Our students: Understanding & Designing for Success* (2021) contains a helpful example on p.34, which is summarized in the workbook. There are additional tools and resources in this section of *"Knowing our Students"* which will be helpful if you want to dive deeper into this.

- Look for existing relationships with those organizations within members of the college community.

- Evaluate potential partners and select those most aligned with your student needs.

The *Strategic Partnership Workbook* includes a helpful worksheet to map out the value and match of current and future potential partners.

Step Four: Conduct a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) for These partnerships[12]

This helps you to anticipate internal weaknesses and external threats, and leverage internal strengths and external opportunities to mitigate weaknesses. Answer the questions below to fill out step 4 on the *Strategic Partnerships Workbook* for a SWOT worksheet that will assist with this process.

- **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** are internal to the organization.

  - What are the strengths and weaknesses in moving forward with this partnership?

  - What are the strengths internal to the college that could make this partnership a particular success?

  - What are the weaknesses internal to the college that could undermine this partnership?

- **Opportunities** and **Threats** are external to the organization.

  - What are the opportunities and potential threats of moving forward with this partnership?

  - What are the opportunities that this partnership opens for the college externally? Could this lead to a larger coalition focused on the community at large, for example? Does this partnership appeal to the priorities of an important political or business leader in the community?

  - What are potential external threats to the success of this partnership that could lead to its failure?

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12 Based on *Employer Engagement: A Business Plan for Further Education and Training Colleges* (JFF, 2012)

Step Five: Design and Build Partnerships for Holistic Supports

DECIDE ON YOUR PARTNER(S)

Based on the SWOT analysis and examination, select the partners that you will be approaching and working with.

BEGIN PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSION AND DEVELOP A STRONG WRITTEN AGREEMENT[13]

- Speak their language

- Be aware of institutional differences

- Effective partnerships must be win-win

- Be prepared and be flexible

- Keep students at the center

BUILD PERSONAL MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS

> Our leadership really believes in this work and our workforce. She goes out not just to secure funding but is out there in the community working with our regional alliance. We also have the right staff in place. Our team knows this community, the different groups and players. They know how to engage them.
>
> **— Paula Nachtrieb, Executive Director of Workforce Operations, Illinois Central College**

According to all of the leaders interviewed for this toolkit, "relationships are key in every aspect of the work" (Dr. Damyen Davis). These relationships should be mutually beneficial and have mutual value, and the partnership should help the college address its strategic priorities. Serving the holistic needs of students should be a core value of the partnership, although the partners may approach the work from different perspectives (see more on Columbus State Community College's approach on the following page).

IDENTIFY SHARED VISION, PURPOSE, GOALS, AND PRINCIPLES

It is important at the beginning for both partners to be "on the same page" in terms of their shared vision, purpose, goals, and principles for the partnership. If this is not clear, the partners may not operate effectively. Even when the partners are explicit about their shared vision, purpose, goals, and principles, they may approach the work differently based on their missions and focuses.

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13 From *Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit* (2018), p.86. Guidance on "Setting up a Written Agreement or MOU" can be found on p.87.

Dr. Lisa Phillips, student financial stability administrator at Columbus State Community College, relayed a story about the different approaches that the partners involved in the Success Bridge program took. The purpose of the program was to stabilize students' housing so that they could complete their academic program. The college approached the partnership from the perspective of it being focused on students successfully completing their programs. The goal was for the housing provided to be temporary until the student met their academic goals. Whereas the community partner, whose work revolved around providing affordable housing, focused its efforts on providing housing. Its work had most often been to provide long-term housing for residents in need. As Dr. Phillips described it, the college was saying "student first" in a "short-term program," and the community partner was approaching it from a "housing first" structure that was set up to lead to long-term solutions. Ultimately, they met in the middle by focusing on putting the person at the center of the equation. Being explicit about mission and approach is invaluable so that misunderstandings and potential conflict can be mitigated. Ultimately, "partners work together in order to solve their *shared* problem."[14]

ENSURE RECIPROCITY

- Effective partnerships must be a win-win[15]

- What does this partnership mean for the college? How does it help the college in attaining its strategic goals?

- How does this partnership benefit the partner organization you are working with? How does it help them to fulfill their mission? What doors does this open for them in meeting their organizational priorities?[16]

IDENTIFY A PARTNERSHIP TEAM AND DETERMINE THAT EVERYONE IS ON BOARD

It is critical to have buy-in throughout the college to proceed with this partnership toward the expressed goal. It is important to establish:

- Who is in charge and accountable for the success of the partnership?

- Who will support them in this effort and how this will these duties fit into their other responsibilities?

- How will this partnership and the work of this new program or activity affect other aspects of college operations, and who needs to be consulted and informed before proceeding?

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14 Schmida, S. (2020). *Partner with Purpose: Solving 21st-Century Business Problems with Cross-Sector Collaboration.* Irvington, NY: Rivertown Books., p.7. See Appendices for additional details about the Success Bridge program at Columbus State Community College.

15 Achieving the Dream (2018). *Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A toolkit for redesigning advising and student services to effectively support every student.*

16 For example, with Illinois Central the community-based organizations they worked with had growth in community members requesting services as a result of their partnership with the college. This helped with expanding their clientele, securing additional funding, and helping them to fulfill their mission.

CREATE PARTNERSHIP PARAMETERS INCLUDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:[17]

- What is the **purpose** of the partnership? (This needs to be clear and realistic.[18])

- What does **success** look like for the partnership? Are there specific activities or objectives for the partnership?

- What **roles** do members need to fulfill?

- What **resources or skills** do they need to provide to ensure the success of your partnerships?

- What organizations, agencies, and leaders need to be **represented** to ensure success?

- What **assets** are needed?[19]

- Always be up front with what you can or cannot deliver with the partnership.[20]

- What are the **financial aspects** of the partnership and how will those be managed by each partner (so that there are no surprises)?

- Ensure **commitment and ownership**.[21]

- Develop and maintain **trust.**

- Ensure open and frequent **communication**, as this is critical throughout the process.

IDENTIFY GOALS, SUCCESS METRICS, AND TIMELINES TO ACHIEVE MILESTONES IN MEETING STUDENT HOLISTIC NEEDS

- Build in an evaluation plan that measures process and outcomes

  - What will be measures of success?

  - How do you know you are making progress?

  - How will data be shared between partners?

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17 Hendricks, D. (2017). "The Right Way to Build Strategic Partnerships."

18 Hardy, B., Hudson, B. & Waddington, E. (2003). *Assessing Strategic Partnership: The Partnership Assessment Tool*. London, UK: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

19 The first six bullets adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008). *Evaluation Guide: Fundamentals of Evaluating Partnerships*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

20 Per the advice of Luz Taboada, Director of Workforce Development at El Paso Community College.

21 Hardy et. al (2003)

Step Six: Measure Success and Plan for Continuous Improvement

It is very important to be intentional about both formative (process) and summative (outcome) measures to determine whether the particular program or activity that is being implemented is working and addressing the needs that have been identified by students. This requires careful planning, regular assessment, data collection, and making changes as needed based on learning from the process. Strong evaluation and measurement will also provide the justification for expanding and/or scaling program activities, especially when important student outcomes are included. Below are a series of considerations for you when implementing this step. Step 6 in the *Strategic Partnerships Workbook* provides space for you and your team to map out your evaluation plan.

When mapping out this plan, consider what the leading and lagging indicators are that can help you identify both student challenges and ultimate outcomes. What other broader outcomes are seen?[22] You can use ATD's *Holistic Student Supports Redesign* toolkit (2018) for more resources on data collection and partnership evaluation, including:

- The creation of a neutral or equitable evaluation team

- Assembly of a holistic student services data system advisory committee

- Identification of data review timelines and continuous improvement guidelines

- Creation of equity goals focused on increasing access and opportunity for individuals from underserved groups

To identify data that will be collected and analyzed to measure the effectiveness of these supports, determine how partners will collect and share data and ensure that all data agreements are compliant with FERPA guidelines. Data that may be included:

- Process/Formative Data — Student satisfaction, frequency of use of particular services, number of students who have utilized services, response to surveys and other data collection mechanisms

- Outcomes/Summative Data — Retention/persistence (from one semester to the next, from one year to the next); number of certifications, industry recognized credentials, certificates, and/or degrees attained; workforce readiness skill attainment

> **Student needs change as they move through their path. Continue talking to your students — one time isn't enough. Finding out 10 years ago what they needed doesn't tell you what they need now.**
>
> **— Teddi Lewis-Hotopp, Director Student Academic Success, Columbus State Community College**

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22 See "B The Change" (2017), *6 Principles for More Effective Partnerships* from Last, A.'s book.

Once you collect data be sure to disaggregate it by different demographic information to look at intersections of identity — for example, when disaggregating data by race and ethnicity, also disaggregate those data by gender, and vice versa.[23]

Finally, consider how this partnership will be evaluated and how you can work toward continuous improvement.

- The process of needs assessment, data collection, root cause analysis, and evaluation should continuously cycle to improve services and student outcomes.

- Continue to collect and analyze data to understand where aspects of programming and the partnership are working and where improvements can be made.

- Continue unpacking root causes by looking at structures, processes, and attitudes and how they are either supporting or undermining the efforts toward holistic student supports.

- Identify pain points and investigate what others have done.

- Build in how evaluation will continue to inform the process.

- Ensure that student voice and community partners are actively included in the evaluation of the success and effectiveness of the services the partnerships provide.

The *Strategic Partnerships Workbook* provides space for you and your team to begin to map out your **Evaluation Plan** on step 6**.** The worksheet is organized to capture the (1) goal in meeting student holistic needs, (2) specific strategy that is being employed, (3) equity objectives for particular student groups (if applicable), (4) milestone and target date, (5) outcomes, and (6) next steps.

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23 Taking a holistic look at all students "pays dividends," according to Dr. Lisandra De Jesus at CSN. Disaggregating data by race and ethnicity, first generation, income level, Pell, etc., allows you to ask many questions with the data. Dr. De Jesus explains that it can't just be lip service or window dressing.

Step Seven: Pilot, Validate Proof of Concept, Operationalize, and Scale

Pilot: A pilot can start with a small group of programs or it can be implemented more broadly. In the case of College of Southern Nevada, they opened up their new therapeutic counseling supports through their partnership with UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling to every student and then disaggregated the data in multiple ways to look at whether there were patterns in student groups or demographics that needed to be addressed through additional supports or communication. As you develop a pilot, consider what funding mechanisms to use, such as grant funds focused on improving certain student outcomes. For pilots to be successful, they should be flexible and agile.

Validate proof of concept: Through implementation of the evaluation plan and continuous improvement based on data collection, regular engagement with students, community members, and key partners, the specific programming and/or strategy should be adjusted to be most effective in responding to specific student needs.

Operationalize: This data, especially in measuring positive student outcomes, can make for a strong case to expand and/or operationalize specific interventions in colleges' annual budgets, thus leading to sustainability.

Scale: Is the data demonstrating strong effectiveness in attaining goals for holistic student supports? Is the infrastructure for the programming solid enough to scale, and are there additional resources that can be used to increase capacity? Be sure to have proof of concept fully developed before exploring scaling, in that failed scaling can be costly to the institution and the students they serve.

> **(It) takes institutional commitment to allow the new redesign and the new intervention… to grow… Don't be too quick to pull the plug on an intervention, because, as we know, things take a couple of years for us to figure out what the moving parts are doing.**
>
> **— Dr. Lisandra De Jesus, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs, College of Southern Nevada**

Advice from the Field

The college leaders interviewed for this toolkit were asked about the key features of success in their partnerships. Overwhelmingly, they pointed to the importance of relationships, leadership, coalition building, communication, staffing, and change management. Additional recommendations were made for using grant funding and philanthropy as well as providing sufficient training.

It's All About Relationships

Dr. Damyen Davis, director of the Summer Intensive Program at Bergen Community College, captured the sentiment of all of the leaders: "You cannot do this work alone, you know you're just a branch on a tree and you have to understand how we're all connected… It is about the relationships."

College leaders in various roles spoke about the importance of building strong relationships with members of the community across business, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations (especially those providing social services). This required going to where people were, meeting one-on-one, which was easier pre-pandemic, and developing personal relationships. Leaders interviewed for this resource discussed getting together regularly with community members, listening deeply to their needs and capacities, looking for win-win scenarios each step of the way, and co-constructing solutions with their community partners. This approach built trust and commitment, which led to successful partnerships. As Dr. Walt Tobin, president of Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, put it, "Don't have a request without having an established relationship."

Leadership Is Key

Support from the top is very important to success. Many of the leaders interviewed for this resource are the presidents of their institutions. It was through their personal relationships with members of the community that many of the partnerships were formed. In other cases, presidential leadership

around the principles of holistic student support was critical to move the work forward, as it required a cultural shift to a student-centered design in providing for students' needs outside of the classroom.

Leadership also existed across roles in the organization. As Dr. Lisandra De Jesus at CSN explained, you need "leadership in every seat." Many had worked with or for partner organizations and were able to make connections to the partners to answer college needs. Assessing the connections of college personnel to prospective partners in the community can pay dividends when expanding holistic student supports.

Build Coalitions

Coalition building can happen across areas within a community, whether it be in rural, suburban, or urban settings. As Dr. Damyen Davis of Bergen Community College explained, "Individual to individual is an important place to start but things are even more effective when it is multiple individuals with individuals and organizations with organizations."

In the case of Rappahannock Community College and Roane State Community College, multiple employers were engaged to provide valuable and impactful partnerships. Rappahannock Community College's president, Dr. Shannon Kennedy, cultivated a close relationship with the local workforce development board, while Roane State Community College worked with several local employers to develop a new program and pipeline into good jobs with family-sustaining wages. Columbus State Community College has been able to leverage the Central Ohio Compact that was first formed years ago to expand partnerships in support of meeting students' needs. It was through those relationships that the Mid-Ohio Market and Success Bridge programs were formed.[24]

How can the leaders in a community, including businesses, community-based organizations, local government, and educational institutions, including the community college, join together to ensure that the members of that community are able to reach their personal, educational, and career goals? That is where the magic happens.

24 The Central Ohio Compact is described in the *Knowing Our Students* guidebook (2021), p.40. Formed over 18 months of listening sessions with community and business partners with Columbus State as the anchor and convener, the Central Ohio Compact has grown to be a coalition of 50 school districts, universities, and employers "committed to the understanding that 'regional prosperity is tied to student success, and it can only be achieved through collaboration of education and industry players.'"

Communicate Regularly and Manage Change

Communication needs to be open, frequent, and ongoing. For partnerships to work, there has to be trust and clarity of purpose. As Luz Taboada, director of workforce development at El Paso Community College, said, "A clear path of communication on both sides is critical. Follow-up and follow-through are equally as important."

As Dr. Shannon Kennedy explained, leaders who are working to shift the cultures of their institutions have to make difficult decisions when putting students at the center, but they are successful when they have the buy-in and support of the college community. This requires communication, keeping people informed, and providing ongoing professional development so that everyone has the tools to be successful.

Staffing Is Critical

Several of the leaders interviewed spoke about the importance of having the right people "on the bus" and "in the right seats," per the advice of *Good to Great* (2001)[25]. This meant that it was important to have staff across roles who were passionate and knowledgeable, cared about the community, and understood its resources, assets, and needs. In many cases, this meant recruiting critical staff positions from within the broader community rather than bringing in new people from the outside. For example, at one of the colleges interviewed, the coordinator hired was from the community, and was deeply connected to social services that have focused on serving people of color in the city. The college was able to effectively connect with those social service agencies. In other cases, staff at the college already had connections to community organizations that led to valuable partnerships. Leveraging the connections, relationships, and strengths of staff, and giving them the opportunity to lead, was important to success throughout the colleges interviewed.

It is also important for colleges to dedicate resources to hiring part-time and full-time staff rather than relying on volunteers. Although volunteers help to complement full-time staffing, volunteers alone are not enough. Additionally, Peer mentors and peer leaders are invaluable for staffing. Students often seek advice from peers, and ensuring that appropriate information is shared will help students navigate the different resources available to them.

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25 Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Use Grants and Community Philanthropy

It can be very valuable to collaborate with the Grants Office at your community or technical college, as well as the foundation for the college. Often, those offices are aware of federal, state, or local grants and community foundations whose goals might align with the holistic student supports you hope to provide. This also spreads out the work so that it doesn't all fall on one administrator's lap. It is valuable to involve the President's Office so that the college's top leadership is aware of the priorities and can help to make connections. This was critical to the success of initiatives across rural, urban, and suburban settings. See the example of Rappahannock Community College, which was able to scale its successful High School Navigator Model through the generous support of a local philanthropist. (See Appendix F.)

Provide Adequate Training to Staff and Faculty

Holistic student supports through community partnerships will not be successful if staff and faculty do not understand the purpose of these supports and how to connect students to these resources. It is critical, therefore, to provide ongoing professional development, communication, and other forms of information-sharing with faculty and staff so that they can refer students to supports that will help them when needs arise. This involves engaging staff at all levels in providing holistic student supports and focusing on student success. Roane State Community College simplified its referral system for students by instituting the use of the email need@roanestate.edu, which is regularly read and staffed by college personnel to help students to connect to college and community resources, and to be proactive in responding to student needs.

Conclusion

Community and technical colleges across the country are having great success in utilizing community partnerships to provide holistic student supports that remove barriers to academic and career success and help students to reach their personal, academic, and career goals.

A summary of the most common steps is outlined here:

Step One: Conduct Student Needs Assessment

Find out what challenges your students are facing through data collection by various means including student outcome data from institutional research offices; student understanding of experiences through a combination of surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and/or journals; third-party perspectives of student needs and experiences; and student-led process mapping.

Step Two: Identify What It Will Entail for Students' Needs to Be Met

What must your students have access to so that they can focus on independence, economic stability, economic mobility, and successful degree completion? Identify where needs can be met by the college's current resources and determine what needs remain unmet.

Step Three: Assess Partnership Landscape — Current and Future

Inventory current partnerships: What are existing partnerships and relationships that can help to address the remaining needs? Conduct a review of external partners within the community already serving this need.

Step Four: Conduct a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the Partnerships You Identified

- Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the organization. What are the strengths and weaknesses in moving forward with this partnership?

- Opportunities and threats are external to the organization. What are the opportunities and potential threats of moving forward with this partnership?

Step Five: Design and Build Partnerships for Holistic Supports

- Decide on your partner(s)

- Begin partnership discussion and develop a strong written agreement

- Build personal mutually beneficial relationships

- Identify shared vision, purpose, goals, and principles

- Ensure reciprocity

- Identify a partnership team

- Create partnership parameters including roles and responsibilities

- Identify goals, success metrics, and timelines to achieve milestones in meeting student holistic needs
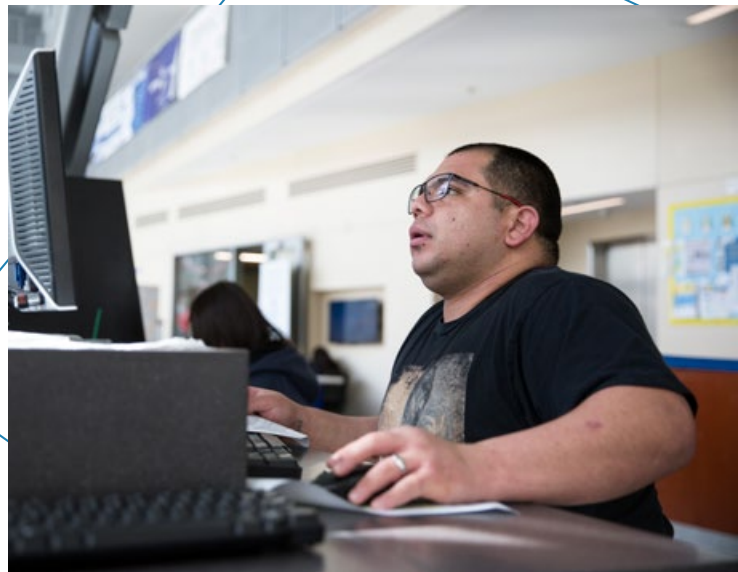
Step Six: Measure Success and Plan for Continuous Improvement

Identify, collect, and analyze data to measure how effective partnerships have been in meeting student needs. Measure broader outcomes as well as specific outputs. Disaggregate data to look at intersections of identity and circumstances. Have a plan in place for continuous improvement.

Step Seven: Pilot, Validate Proof of Concept, Operationalize, and Scale

- **Pilot** to explore effectiveness of programming or strategy, and adjust based on data collected

- **Validate** proof of concept through implementation of the evaluation plan and continuous improvement toward student success

- **Operationalize** programming and plan for sustainability

- **Scale** when proof of concept is determined and additional resources are available to expand activities

The *Strategic Partnerships Workbook* is designed to help community and technical college leaders and their teams to follow these steps in mapping out their plan for building and maintaining community partnerships to expand and support the implementation of holistic student supports.

The **Appendices** below provide a deeper dive into the specific partnerships of many of the community and technical colleges interviewed for this resource. Each appendix includes the institution, the holistic needs being met by their partnership, a description of the program(s) and its outcomes, and a reflection question that can be used to explore how a similar approach might be implemented at your institution.

Appendices

Overview

The appendices include descriptions of seven of the community and technical colleges that were examined for this toolkit. Each college is listed with its designation as urban, suburban, or rural, and its designation as a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) and which type (three of the seven examined below are MSIs). This is followed by the holistic needs that were met through their community partnerships, and a description of the work that has been accomplished. A reflection question is included at the end of each description for individuals or small groups to use in their own planning for holistic student success.

MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION TYPES INCLUDED:

- Asian American & Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)

- Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)

- Predominately Black Institution (PBI)

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Appendix A

Bergen Community College (Paramus, New Jersey)
Suburban with its main campus in Paramus and satellite campuses in Hackensack and Lyndhurst. Designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

The Holistic Needs Met: Developmental education, belonging and community, leadership, and building social capital

THE SUMMER INTENSIVE PROGRAM

The Summer Intensive Program uses state resources, college resources, grant funds, and community partnerships to provide holistic supports to Black and Latinx students and students from low-income backgrounds to be successful at the college. The program is hosted four days a week for seven weeks and is designed to build community while helping students prepare their academic skills for college-level coursework. It is built around relationships, connectedness, academic success, leadership, and college completion. The program entails developmental and college coursework for high school students or recent graduates prior to their enrollment. Participants are also given access to some college courses and can begin building their GPA if they are ready. This creates a powerful bridge from high school to college.

> **They have direction, they're comfortable, they're confident, they're connected to their campus, and all of that is just a positive when it comes to retention and ultimately graduation rates.**
>
> **— Dr. Damyen Davis, Director, Office of Summer Intensive Program, Bergen Community College**

The program emphasizes leadership skills by involving students in community event planning and programming with organizations such as the Bergen County Chapter of the NAACP, the Urban League, and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Bergen-Passaic Chapter. Students who are involved with organizing events and activities make important personal and professional connections, and these experiences build their confidence and self-efficacy. The program also builds leadership skills through peer leaders who are students at the college, and it builds community and trust for students new to the college. They feel connected, that they belong, and that they understand and can navigate the college campus. They also continue to be connected to the program office and its staff throughout their time as students. Even in the context of COVID-19, the program was able to build community through small group activities with peer leaders on an online platform.

The program staff are intentional about keeping students informed. As Dr. Damyen Davis, the director, explained, "A lot of times the choices we make, we're just not fully informed, so we don't make the best choices for ourselves.

So, we position ourselves to be connected and be part of that information highway for students." The care and concern that the Summer Intensive Office shows the students builds trust and assures them they are not alone. Students know they have someone looking out for them. This is especially important for first-generation college students.

Partners in the community invest in the program and its students because of their passion for education and success for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, and because of the success of the program. Community connections also include area high schools and community organizations, which help with the recruitment and support of students into the program. The results are powerful: 92–93% retention from year to year and a graduation rate of 80.1%. The "secret sauce" is "campus connectedness," as Dr. Davis explained.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

What are the *structures* (foundational components that make up the institution's functions), *processes* (steps to navigate those functions), and *attitudes* (mindsets and beliefs that shape culture)[26] that make this program such a success at Bergen Community College? How might similar approaches make a difference at your institution?

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26   *Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success* (ATD, 2021)

Appendix B

College of Southern Nevada (CSN) (Las Vegas, NV)
Suburban; the largest public college or university in Nevada with three main campuses in the Las Vegas Valley. Designated as an Asian American & Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

The Holistic Needs Met: Mental health and therapeutic counseling

EXPANDING THERAPEUTIC COUNSELING SERVICES THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

CSN, which has three campuses and several local centers serving the Las Vegas Valley, conducted a student needs assessment and additional ongoing assessments through a student satisfaction survey, interviews, and information conversations with students. This assessment included exploring students' mental health needs. The college learned that their existing Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) was not able to provide adequate support to service the therapeutic needs of students in a timely manner. College administrators saw they had a waitlist for appointments, and they realized that they did not have sufficient staffing to be responsive to students' demands for evening and weekend hours. They discovered that three positions were not sufficient to respond to the increased demand for counseling services, so they looked at the organizations in their community that had the resources and capacity to augment their services and complement them in a way that would provide sufficient supports to students. They found the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Medicine-Mojave Counseling to be a good fit.

Through this partnership, one-on-one counseling was made available in the evenings, on weekends, and through telemedicine, which became a critical resource during the COVID-19 crisis as it provided greater flexibility and safety to accommodate students' schedules and needs. UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling also provided group counseling, which helped students to connect to others and to be a part of a community. This was particularly helpful and important in the context of COVID, when many students may have experienced isolation and stress while also juggling college, family, health, and work obligations. Group counseling helped students to know that they were not alone and that others were going through similar challenges. Being able to cope with stress and talk to someone or in groups helped students to persist at the college.

> So that's the capacity question. It was a matter of do we have what our students need when they need it and can we sustain it long term?
>
> **— Dr. Lisandra De Jesus, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs, College of Southern Nevada**

The partnership between CSN and Mojave Counseling provided for the mental health needs of CSN students, increased the clientele and demand for UNLV Medicine-Mojave Counseling, and increased awareness of their services in the community. The reciprocal nature of the partnership was truly a win-win-win for all interested parties, and invaluable to the students at the college.

These services were complemented at CSN by the implementation of the Mental Health First Aid program, which was a three-year grant-funded program that provided training to faculty, staff, and student leaders to notice and provide supports to students struggling with stress and challenges that were affecting mental health, which included referring them to CAPS. This program has concluded, and the college is looking at how to continue to provide this type of professional development in support of students' mental health needs.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

How did the needs assessment and other data collection help the college identify that they did not have sufficient staffing and resources to respond to the increased demand for therapeutic counseling? What kinds of questions would have been critical to ask to make this determination? How might your college benefit from a similar approach to assessing student needs?

> **... as a human being, and as a student affairs practitioner, we have to do great things all the time for all of our students. Because we never know where the student is at that day of the week and we don't know when is the day that we are going to save a life.**
>
> **— Dr. De Jesus**

Appendix C

Columbus State Community College (Columbus, Ohio)
A large urban college with its main campus in downtown Columbus with a second campus in Delaware County and additional satellite campuses.

The Holistic Needs Met: Removing food, housing, and technology insecurity as barriers to academic completion

MID-OHIO MARKET AND SUCCESS BRIDGE

Mid-Ohio Market

The Mid-Ohio Food Collective was looking at creating new markets while Columbus State Community College (CSCC) was seeking to support students facing food insecurities. Both connected and decided to open a food market at the CSCC campus in downtown Columbus. Originally, volunteers were hired to support the day-to-day operations. Unfortunately, this approach was not sustainable. To support operations, an experienced food pantry manager was hired in March 2020 right before the college went virtual. The market was able to stay open throughout the pandemic to provide free produce and food to students and community members in the area. It also became the avenue for distributing technology and hotspots when that need was identified during the course of the pandemic. This was particularly important as the college campus was closed during the time.

The market was able to stay open throughout the pandemic through the use of Federal Work Study students and regular volunteers, including a group of students who had been out of state but were back home and displaced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were able to build community among the staff and volunteers, and among the students and community members who used their services. During the pandemic, they had to shift to curbside services, but they were able to stay open the entire time and still provide boxed groceries for students and community members who were at or below the federal poverty level. They also offered SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) workshops, college program resources, and other information to people who utilized the market. The Mid-Ohio Market has become the fifth largest food pantry in Central Ohio, and it is a critical resource to the students and other community members who live in the area. According to Dr. Lisa Patterson Phillips, student financial stability administrator, the keys to success have been putting student success first and creating a welcoming environment.

> **Our students are really diverse, coming from a lot of different perspectives, but need those social supports as much as they need academic support, so these partnerships become so crucial.**
>
> **— Dr. Lisa Patterson Phillips, Student Financial Stability Administrator, Columbus State Community College**

Success Bridge

According to the #RealCollege survey conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, approximately 50% of CSCC students were experiencing housing insecurity with approximately 17% of students experiencing homelessness, similar to national data collected by the Hope Center in 2019. In response, CSCC, Home for Families Foundation (formerly Homeless Families Foundation), Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Affordable Housing Coalition of Central Ohio, and the Community Shelter Board collaborated to create the Success Bridge Housing Stabilization program, a three-year pilot that was launched in fall 2020 to provide rental assistance, student support services, career development, and employment counseling to Columbus State students experiencing housing insecurity so that they could finish their programs. It was set up as a "housing stabilization and completion program." Students who had completed at least 24 credit hours of their program (this was later changed to 18) and who were in good academic standing were eligible to have housing support for up to two years.

Partnering with Capital University

At the same time that the Success Bridge program was launching, college leadership was working with Capital University on the Foundations of Excellence Transfer Initiative. Capital University had residence halls that were unfilled because of the economy and pandemic, and Columbus State still had students with housing needs. Out of that realization emerged a partnership, under the umbrella of Success Bridge, for CSCC students to live in 24 housing units in Capital residence halls at a subsidized cost. The Columbus State students at Capital did not pay for their housing but they were expected to maintain nine credit hours per semester including summers, and to maintain positive progression toward completion. Students had a case manager and an advisor to help with career planning and connection to supports so students could successfully complete. Both programs have been very successful in helping to retain students who would have in the past stopped out or dropped out because of housing and food insecurity. This is a strong demonstration of the power of community coalitions in providing social supports to help students to reach their personal, academic, and career goals.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Read the quote below from Dr. Lisa Patterson Phillips, student financial stability administrator at CSCC. How does the role of the student affairs or student development professional shift when we take a holistic approach to student success? How is this different from how you were trained or educated originally and what does this mean for the potential evolution of your current role? (Look at Dr. Phillips' title. What does that say about the value that the college places on this work?)

"… there has to continue to be the student affairs and the student development perspective in all of these conversations. It can't just be the complete absorption of the social services role no matter how important it is. So I've stopped saying that I don't do social services, because I do. But I'd rather say I'm a student development professional who understands the importance of partnering with social services agencies to better serve our students." (Dr. Lisa Patterson Phillips, Student Financial Stability Administrator)

Appendix D

Illinois Central College (Peoria, Illinois)
Urban and rural-serving campuses with the main campus in East Peoria and two additional campuses in Pekin and Peoria. The college serves a district that is 2,322 square miles covering three counties and parts of seven additional counties.

The Holistic Needs Met: Employment and financial security

PROVIDING HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS THROUGH THE WORKFORCE EQUITY INITIATIVE

Illinois Central College (ICC) focused its efforts on providing viable short-term training in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand industries to members of the community who have often lacked access to those opportunities. The college partnered with community organizations to provide wraparound supports so that participants in the program were equipped with the tools and knowledge to have financial security as they moved into new jobs with family sustaining wages.

Through the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI), a state-funded partnership between the Illinois Community College Board, 17 community colleges (with ICC as the lead), and the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, the college received funding to remove barriers to enrollment and completion for individuals from low-income backgrounds, with the goal of serving at least 60% African Americans. The program at ICC supports short-term workforce training opportunities of a year or less for industry-recognized credentials and job training that leads to pay 30% above the living wage for the region. These careers are focused on high-skill, high-wage, in-demand industries, such as welding. The services offered by the college help students with the skills to obtain and keep employment, and wraparound services are offered to help to ensure success in participants meeting their personal, academic, and career goals.

To support this work, ICC has partnered with two community organizations. METEC Resource Center assists individuals and families in becoming homeowners, permanently employed, and money savers. METEC has partnered with ICC by providing case management services for students in the WEI program. According to Gregory Wilson, community outreach manager at ICC, this extra wraparound support has been instrumental in identifying and addressing certain barriers that would otherwise influence a student's decision to

> **Removing barriers is key to improving equity… Common issues that our students face (are) the need for rental/ mortgage assistance, home repair, energy assistance, and water assistance.**
>
> **— Gregory Wilson, Community Outreach Manager, Illinois Central College**

stop out or drop out. PCCEO (Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, Inc.) is a community action agency started in 1963 that promotes self-sufficiency and economic security. Through this partnership, students have been provided with rental/mortgage assistance, home repair, energy assistance, and water bill assistance. PCCEO has also provided scholarships of up to $500 to cover the costs of books, uniforms, and other school-related expenses for students at ICC.

These partners have expanded the college's capacity to ensure that students are able to complete their academic and career goals. The barriers that often exist because of financial insecurity are removed, and students complete the program with a pathway to jobs with family-sustaining wages, and knowledge and resources to help them to be financially secure for the long term. These partnerships not only benefited the college and its ability to support students in the WEI program, but also benefited the community partner in growing their client base and getting people in the community connected to their services, thus helping them to fulfill their mission.

The WEI program at ICC has been successful in serving over 60% African Americans, exceeding the goal for certifications and credentials (110%), with the average wage at well over 40% above the regional living wage.

Over the last several years, the college's culture has shifted to a focus on student success, with the college president and leadership fully behind these efforts. The key to success for this program has been having relationships with members of the community, especially in the areas of social services. Through these connections, they have been able to provide for students' needs across many different areas.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

What are some of the innovative ways that ICC developed a model to equip students from underserved communities with the tools and resources to obtain their personal, academic, and career goals? How might your college take a proactive approach to ensuring that students have the knowledge, resources, and skills to be financially secure? Who might your partners be in your community to provide these resources?

Appendix E

Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College (Orangeburg, SC)
A small, rural-serving institution; designated as a Predominately Black Institution (PBI).

The Holistic Needs Met: Food insecurity

COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL SALVATION ARMY

Shortly after he started as president of Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, Dr. Walt Tobin started making the rounds with area employers and made connections to community partners that could have a direct benefit to students. This included meeting with members of the local Salvation Army. Sometime afterwards, the college was approached by a regional food bank provider about opening up their services to students, but there was concern that this regional provider would be inaccessible to many students who lacked personal transportation. When the college's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society chapter was exploring ways to contribute to the students at the college and the larger community, they saw the opportunity to provide a food pantry right there in the local community.

They started by conducting a survey of students to see if food insecurity was an issue, and an overwhelming need was identified. People at the college were concerned that there might be a stigma associated with students visiting a food pantry on campus, and there was a fear that many students would be reluctant to go to a designated space on campus to pick up food. The college therefore partnered with the local Salvation Army to provide a space for their students to access food at no cost. In turn, the Phi Theta Kappa chapter committed to doing a quarterly food drive with faculty and staff to collect food for the food pantry. Each Thanksgiving, they have also provided full meals to students who cannot afford them. In 2021, 34 full family dinners were distributed to students. College employees have been able to access the food bank as well, including part-time staff and adjunct faculty (these services are open to anybody with an OCTech ID). This has provided an additional service to the community.

The partnership with the Salvation Army has provided food in the local community at no cost to students who need it. In addition, students who have used the food pantry have had access to additional resources and services offered by the Salvation Army. This has been an innovative no-cost resource to serve the needs of students in the community, and the work has been staffed at the college by volunteers, most of whom are students. Dr. Tobin hopes to expand these services to be able to grow food and provide fresh produce to students in the future.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

In the case of Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, the local Phi Theta Kappa chapter took the initiative with the support of the college leadership to provide for students as part of its focus on community service. How could student organizations at your college become an important partner in providing holistic student support?

Appendix F

Rappahannock Community College (Glenns, Virginia)
Small, rural-serving institution located in Eastern Virginia with its main campus in Glenns and a second campus in Warsaw, with three satellite sites.

The Holistic Needs Met: Federal resources, holistic supports for high school students through the college

SINGLE STOP AND HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE NAVIGATOR

Rappahannock Community College, in rural Eastern Virginia, uses a case management approach in providing holistic student support through the use of college navigators, staff members who provide advising and support services to help students with academic, career, and personal needs. The college has recently expanded these supports to include high school navigators, which are staffed by the college in all of the area high schools. This innovative model of holistic student advising is leading to a five-time increase in the number of students pursuing higher education after high school, and a significant increase in college students accessing federal resources that can help them to meet their personal needs.

Through a partnership with the local Department of Social Services, the college's "Single Stop" program identifies students' needs and eligibility and connects them to the appropriate federal agency for enrollment. This has a direct benefit to students, as they receive additional services based on their income and other needs. The college also benefits, in that it receives resources from the federal government to help to support students based on the number of students who use the service.

Through funding from a federal grant and collaboration with area high schools, the college piloted a new high school navigator role with eight of the 14 high schools in the region. These high school navigators, who were paid by the college, took the place of counselors in helping students with career, academic, and college planning while they were still in high school. Starting in 9th grade, the navigators worked with students on resume writing, navigating dual enrollment, scholarship applications, and transitioning to college. If the students chose to matriculate to Rappahannock Community College, there was an intentional handoff to college navigators to make the transition of support services seamless. This program was recently expanded to all 14 high schools in the region.

> **The key to success is doing what's best for the students rather than what's best for the staff, which is the old paradigm.**
>
> **— Dr. Shannon L. Kennedy, President, Rappahannock Community College**

Through a generous gift from a local member of the community, this program is now endowed. When the grant ends at the end of 2023, the program will be able to continue through the endowment. This is an excellent example of a grant being used as a seed for a permanent program to be funded locally.

The model at Rappahannock Community College is an innovative and powerful model which uses community partnerships and federal resources to provide holistic student support in meeting the academic, career, and personal goals of students as they transition from high school to college. This unique program, which entails the use of a high school navigator followed by a college navigator, includes helping students with accessing the Single Stop portal to apply for federal resources that can help with food, housing, and other supports. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding also helps the college to provide career planning and resources to find good jobs. The college can provide wraparound supports for students from high school up to and through college from day one.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

The high school and college navigator positions at Rappahannock Community College provide wraparound academic, career, and personal supports to students from high school through their college career. How might your college collaborate more directly with your local high schools to provide wraparound supports to students, especially those who might not otherwise matriculate to a college after graduation? Are there community partners that would support this type of approach, especially in service to students of color and students from low-income backgrounds?

Appendix G

Roane State Community College (Harriman, Tennessee)
Rural-serving institution in Eastern Tennessee with its main campus in Harriman and ten satellite campuses and centers.

The Holistic Needs Met: Employment, career-connected learning, financial security

PROVIDING AN "EARN AND LEARN" MODEL THROUGH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP

Roane State Community College in Eastern Tennessee has a unique employer partnership that has provided a powerful pathway to employment for students in the community. Through its "learn and earn" model, Roane State and its partners at United Cleanup Oak Ridge (UCOR) and Tate and Lyle provide jobs with family-sustaining wages, medical benefits, and retirement benefits to community members while they complete a degree in chemical engineering technology in order to work as chemical operators. This program is a paid internship that provides full-time benefits with flexibility to take classes in the evenings and on weekends.

This partnership was made possible because of the strong relationship that the college has had with area employers who have come to trust the college and to look to it to fulfill their workforce needs. UCOR, which cleans up hazardous waste to transform "brown fields" into "green fields," explained that they are in desperate need of chemical operators. Other industries in the area had similar needs. The college responded by working with UCOR and another community employer, Tate and Lyle, a global supplier of food and beverage ingredients, to develop an associate degree program with paid work-based learning structured into the program. The employers were directly involved in supporting the development of the curriculum, in providing guidance on the advisory committee, and in financially supporting activities of the college. UCOR was proactive in partnering with the union to create this paid internship with benefits.

> From my experience, to have students working solves a lot of their other support needs… Even just hope, you know. It gives you hope, it makes you feel valued, a lot of all those sides that… a college would try to serve (with) wraparound services can be solved by having them work.
>
> **— Teresa Duncan, Vice President, Workforce Community Relations, Roane State Community College**

The companies helped to promote the program and to recruit students from the community to the college. Teresa Duncan, vice president of workforce and community relations, described this effective approach as a "pull system," meaning the employer was pulling prospective students from the community to the college to participate in the paid internship, complete their degree, and ultimately work at the company. As Ms. Duncan described, "They are helping to pull people from us to them versus us recruiting to get them and kick them out after graduation — go find a good job." At their first information session pre-pandemic, they had 80 people show up (an unprecedented level of interest from the community).

The college has benefited the company through positive public relations and successful students who have completed the program. This unique partnership addresses holistic student support by eliminating the issues that come from low wages — food insecurity, challenges with finding shelter, paying for necessities, etc. — and has the additional benefits of providing career-connected learning, paid employment with benefits, purpose, structure, and a seamless pathway into long-term employment in the region. This type of model represents a powerful partnership to lead to high-skill, high-wage, in-demand jobs with family-sustaining wages in ways that mitigate many of the barriers to success.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Roane State is building employer partnerships through their "earn and learn" program. As Teresa Duncan described, "[Students] can see where their education really matters because they see how it's tied to their work." How might such an approach to higher education transform our current systems in helping students to reach their personal, academic, and career goals?

Acknowledgments

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32   For a list of Minority-Serving Institutions visit 2020 CMSI Eligibility Matrix.pdf (rutgers.edu)

Achieving the Dream

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Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a partner and champion of more than 300 community colleges across the country. Drawing on our expert coaches, groundbreaking programs, and national peer network, we provide institutions with integrated, tailored support for every aspect of their work — from foundational capacities such as leadership, data, and equity to intentional strategies for supporting students holistically, building K–12 partnerships, and more. We call this Whole College Transformation. Our vision is for every college to be a catalyst for equitable, antiracist, and economically vibrant communities. We know that with the right partner and the right approach, colleges can drive access, completion rates, and employment outcomes — so that all students can access life-changing learning that propels them into community-changing careers. Follow us on **Twitter**, **Facebook**, and **LinkedIn**.