How has the way we define and measure student success changed over time?

**YOUR FUTURE**

Student success doesn’t need to mean the same thing to all schools. Your strategy should be tailored to the specific needs of your students, your finances, and the mission of your institution.

Use this space to reflect on what student success means at your institution and what data you have—or still need—to measure it.

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**TODAY**

**Student experience**

Institutions work to improve the student experience to better match innovations in the consumer economy, removing friction from administrative processes and connecting data to make it easier for students to tailor their academic and extracurricular activities to their interests.

**1990s—EARLY 2000s**

**First-year experience**

Student engagement efforts focus on incoming students. Leaders plan to reduce attrition by easing the transition to college.

**What are we tracking?**

- Social participation
- First-year retention

**The completion agenda**

Leaders shift their focus beyond the first year to address frustrations with inconsistent course offerings and murky academic requirements. Institutions organize requirements into standard degree plans.

**What are we tracking?**

- Graduation rate
- Degree output

**1980s—1990s**

**Affinity programs**

Student success leaders begin documenting equity gaps in college access and completion. Institutions develop underrepresented minority affinity programs to provide tailored support to specific groups.

**What are we tracking?**

- Underrepresented minority enrollment

**1970s**

**Student engagement**

Researcher Vincent Tinto popularizes the idea that retention is driven by student engagement.

**What are we tracking?**

- Scattered measures of student satisfaction

**1950s—1960s**

**The beginnings of student success**

In the late 1950s, the federal government surveys 60 schools in the first-ever study of “student mortality.” Later, post-war enrollments swell as a result of the GI Bill and baby boom until the late 1960s, when the impact of expanding college access to new populations combines with the effects of student movements to generate the first widespread concerns over student attrition.

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**2010s**

**Guided pathways**

Institutions create structured pathways for specific educational goals. Lowering complexity and constructively limiting choice keeps students on track.

**What are we tracking?**

- Time to degree
- Excess credits

**Holistic advising**

Advising starts to include academic, financial, and personal needs. Advisors use technology to contact students and manage caseloads. Institutions begin building early alert systems to proactively identify and reach students in need of support.

**What are we tracking?**

- Advising engagement
- Persistence rate
- Support utilization
- Issue resolution

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**THE FUTURE**

**Pandemic recovery**

Institutions expand support to grapple with the long-term academic and socioemotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Career relevance**

Institutions aim to make higher education career relevant and re-enroll working adults to aid them in lifelong upskilling.

**Equity and inclusion**

Institutions widely promote equity and inclusion, investigating which policies and structures have a disproportionate impact on their minoritized students.

**What are we tracking?**

- Graduation by race
- First-year retention by race
- Some other disaggregation of existing metrics

**What will you track?**

- Issue resolution
- Support utilization
- Persistence rate
- Advising engagement

**Your strategy should be tailored to the specific needs of your students, your finances, and the mission of your institution.**

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**Lineages of Student Success**

Best Practice

- Student engagement
- Degree planning
- Next-generation advising
- Equity gaps

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**What are we tracking?**

- Mental health support utilization
- Enrollment and pass rates in developmental education

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**TODAY**

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**Anti-racism**

Equity and inclusion initiatives move to proactive antiracism in the wake of national racial justice movements.

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