

Student and Faculty Engagement Strategies for Student Success

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About Public Agenda

- Nonprofit, nonpartisan research and civic engagement organization.
- An Achieving the Dream national partner helping to create a culture of “*engagement for problem solving*” within the colleges and in the communities in which they reside.



Why Engage Stakeholders?

- **Improve policies and practices.**
- **Minimize resistance, avoid backlash.**
- **Create shared ownership for results.**

This session will look at promising practices of engagement with faculty and students.



Goals for this Presentation

- **Share promising faculty and student engagement activities in Achieving the Dream colleges aimed at helping all students succeed, to:**
 - Gaining input that helps planning.
 - Gaining involvement, ownership.
 - Decrease resistance to change.
- **Share insights from focus groups on faculty and student engagement.**
- **Hear from colleges themselves who are employing these kinds of practices.**



Examples of faculty and student engagement strategies

- Including student (as well as faculty) reps on core team
- Student and/or faculty surveys and focus groups
- Student ambassador program
- Faculty participate in problem-solving committees and task forces

Focus Group Results

Barriers and Opportunities for Faculty Engagement

Many faculty are cynical—about students, the administration, their colleagues and about the possibility for meaningful institutional change.

On Colleagues:

I think that a lot of people don't care. I think a lot of people are just putting time in...you can never find them in their offices.

On Administration:

I don't necessarily think that if I am having a problem, that there's some administrator waiting to jump on the problem...sometimes they have their own agendas.

On Possibilities for Change:

The effort is there to do it, but there's a certain anticipation of the same thing-that it's going to be taken to a certain point, and then dropped.



Success is what counts.

Focus Group Results

Barriers and Opportunities for Faculty Engagement

On Students:

Everything that we have talked about is how WE can help students succeed, but that will be a failure until we let them know that THEY have a responsibility. Nothing is going to change until we make parents and their children responsible for their actions.

Many of them just take it for granted that they're going to have a college degree when they don't have adequate motivations or incentive to actually do the work, or have any enthusiasm for almost any discipline that they study.



The issue with adjuncts

Adjuncts make up a very sizable part of the faculty at CCs, and yet are most likely to feel out of touch, and/or be left out of institutional efforts to involve faculty in student success.

Adjuncts

Sixty percent of our courses are taught by adjuncts. There's no communication. The only reason I get communication is because I worked here full-time.

We'll get a note, there's going to be a faculty meeting, everyone come. When you're adjunct...it just becomes one more "to-do" on your list while you're running from here to there.



Focus Group Results

Barriers and Opportunities for Faculty Engagement

No matter what the engagement method—faculty needs to see progress & follow up. The current feeling is that efforts come and go, and still, nothing changes.

•After 30 some years, what the hell happened to what we recommended? I have been on enough committees to make me sick.

•We have spent endless hours making recommendations...once in a while it becomes important for a little while, then it goes away.

•We've tried them [student success strategies], and they have worked. Then the next semester we're not doing it anymore, and we don't know why.

Success is what counts.



Faculty Suggestions for Improving Engagement

1) More scheduled time for thinking about these issues

The new schedule for fall will supposedly give us more latitude there with Tuesday and Thursday common time. Free to schedule meetings with a core group of people.

2) More places for faculty to connect with one another.

One person used to suggest that we needed a faculty lounge and maybe a faculty dining room. So that faculty could get together and talk about these things like many organizations do.

3) Feedback about the feedback

Some feedback about the feedback...I need to know that my input is heard somewhere.



Faculty Suggestions for Improving Engagement

4) Problem-solving workshops

The school started faculty workshops where the head of the department would sit with the members of the faculty that's teaching the course, and ask you, "How are you teaching the subject? What do you do in the class? Maybe you've got something good, and maybe we can help go over the curriculum, and you can [get] our input."

5) Friday "Engagement Days"

I thought it would be great if classes could be on a four day basis and then say Fridays could be reserved for these kind of meetings and for students who are truly struggling and are motivated but just can't seem to get the work.



Focus Group Results

Barriers and Opportunities for Student Engagement

Students by and large were somewhat cynical about engagement—they wanted to see that they were being taken seriously and that there is follow up.

On Surveys:

The survey is s a good idea because there are some things that we as students feel, but we may not vocalize it to teachers, faculty members.

People might fill it out the first time, but if nothing changes, they're going to throw it away next time.

Some like idea of other students conducting the survey:

You would feel more at ease taking to another student...they're going through the same thing you are.



Focus Group Results

Barriers and Opportunities for Student Engagement

Meetings/task forces:

- *Have an orientation after every semester with that whole year where it's the faculty, the president, the students all talking about what problems, what could we make better?*
- *Administration and staff get together in the morning and talk about issues... Then they put out a newsletter of things that we've accomplished by doing this.*
- *It depends on what the topic is because about the dining hall, I don't use it so I wouldn't need to go to that particular meeting. But if it's something else about night classes or something like that, then I will go.*

