Community college approaches to address basic needs and improve financial stability for low-income students: Lessons from the Working Students Success Network implementation evaluation

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We are thankful for the participating colleges and for their partners, who provided their time and knowledge to help the evaluation team document implementation progress, and lift up promising approaches to provide support services for low-income students that address basic needs and financial instability. This work is not easy, and required significant efforts by community college administrators, faculty, and staff, to re-think who their students are, and develop innovative approaches that went beyond business as usual. We hope this report is representative of the work they’ve done during Working Students Success Network – and fairly documents both the successes and challenges faced along the way.

The evaluation team also thanks the funders – Annie E. Casey Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Kresge Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Met Life Foundation, and Bank of America Charitable Foundation – for their commitment to meeting the basic needs and improving the financial stability of low-income college students. Without their financial resources and communication platforms, it would be much harder to raise awareness and act on these critical issues.

This implementation evaluation would not have been possible without the support of Achieving the Dream, Inc., an organization steadfast in its commitment to community colleges and the students they serve. We also appreciate the guidance and feedback from our evaluation partners at Mathematica Policy Research, especially Ann Person and Margaret Sullivan. Thanks finally to Martha Allan for copyediting and to NVS Design.
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In 2014, a group of philanthropic organizations launched the Working Students Success Network (WSSN) - a consortium of 19 community colleges in Arkansas, California, Virginia and Washington, led by Achieving the Dream, Inc. WSSN colleges were charged with addressing the broad financial insecurities of low-income students by providing information about and assistance applying for public benefits, offering financial literacy training and personalized counseling, and delivering these non-traditional support services in an integrated or bundled manner. The theory undergirding this effort was that by providing support services to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability, colleges would increase persistence and completion rates, and thereby help to improve the economic mobility of low-income students.

To help build the evidence base and inform the broader field about the initiative, the WSSN hired DVP-PRAXIS LTD to conduct an implementation study focused on (1) documenting the services colleges designed and delivered to students to help address basic needs and improve financial stability, including the integration or bundling of these services, and (2) assessing implementation progress – from the exploration and design stage, to early and mature implementation, and eventually to institutionalization and sustainability. The overarching evaluation questions were:

- What types of services did colleges provide to students across the three WSSN pillars of education and employment advancement; income and work supports; and financial literacy and asset building; including the integration or bundling of these services to better meet students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability?

- How have colleges made implementation progress around the delivery of services and pillars identified by WSSN, the collection and use of data, and institutional culture change, and did colleges reach the institutionalization and sustainability stage of implementation?
This is the final report for the implementation study, summarizing findings across three waves of data collection conducted from October 2015 to June 2017, including telephone interviews with 19 colleges and site visits to a subset of eight colleges.

WSSN colleges designed and implemented a wide variety of new and expanded support services in both high- and low-touch modalities, and in line with WSSN program requirements, included the offering of high-touch financial coaching. The evaluation identified six overarching findings in how colleges organized and provided support services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability:

1. **Colleges provided more than 225 services that address education and employment advancement, income and work supports, and financial literacy and asset building.**

2. **Colleges focused their efforts on developing and delivering new services to assist students in accessing public benefits and to improve students’ financial stability.**

3. **Colleges incorporated new services in success courses or orientation programs.**

4. **Colleges targeted high-touch coaching support to students who were participating in special programs at the college, such as those serving adult basic education or basic skills students, students on public assistance, or students in workforce education and training programs.**

5. **Colleges provided both pre-determined and customized integrated services across multiple areas.**

6. **External partners shared expertise by delivering support services directly to students, and through training of college staff.**
During the three-year initiative, five of the eight colleges where the evaluation team conducted in-depth site visits made substantive implementation progress by establishing integrated student services and fostering cultural change on campus to better address low-income students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability.

The implementation evaluation identified six factors that enabled WSSN colleges to achieve a mature level of implementation and make progress toward institutionalization and sustainability of services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. In some cases, these factors were already part of the colleges’ organizational environment; in others WSSN leaders actively fostered these conditions.

1. The commitment of executive leaders and the presence of stable, distributed leadership with responsibility and accountability for implementation.

2. The integration of support services that broke down silos between various student services programs and departments.

3. The widespread, collective buy-in and support for the college to provide high-touch coaching to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability.

4. A growing cultural responsiveness to the conditions of poverty that affect their students.

5. The visibility of new food pantries that served as a symbolic reminder of and commitment to the basic needs and financial insecurities of students.

6. The broadening engagement and collaboration with external partners.

The implementation evaluation also identified three challenges that can affect institutionalization and sustainability of the services developed during WSSN, and how colleges deliver them.

1. Limited grant resources and capacity to make system-level changes to college policies, practices, and procedures that address students’ basic needs and financial stability;

2. Administrative leadership for WSSN was based in divisions or departments of student services and workforce development without organizational authority over academic and curricular decisions; and,

3. The need for ongoing and sustained engagement of faculty to generate cultural responsiveness to student poverty, and thereby build support and buy-in for support services that address the wide array of issues their students face.
The 19 colleges across Arkansas, California, Virginia, and Washington that participated in the Working Students Success Network (WSSN) sought to tackle the complex issues of poverty that undermine their students’ educational progress and success. Through the expansion of existing support services, and the design and development of new support services – especially around income and work supports, and financial literacy and asset building – these colleges sought to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability.

This implementation evaluation report highlights two promising approaches for colleges that want to provide comprehensive and integrated services to students that address a broad spectrum of students’ basic needs and can improve their financial stability.

1. **One-on-one, personalized assistance (e.g., coaching) that addresses multiple areas and issues related to students’ basic needs and financial stability.**

High-touch, personalized coaching was seen by administrators, faculty and staff as a critical resource to meet the needs of low-income students. The personal relationships developed between coaches and students were widely praised as a “game changer” for addressing the complex circumstances facing students who face poverty barriers like food and housing insecurity, limited access to high-quality child care, and unreliable transportation. Colleges embraced the concept of providing high-touch, personalized assistance to students and worked hard to find the resources to support coaching positions. This approach enabled colleges to provide students a personal contact who understood the variety of resource issues — school, personal and family — they confronted, had the time and ability to help them address them, and was “there for them” no matter the circumstances. This was especially important to students who had little to no prior experience or familiarity with postsecondary education.
2. A centralized location where students’ basic needs and financial insecurities can be addressed.

A campus one-stop or “Hub” to provide services in a centralized location to address student’s basic needs and financial insecurities creates synergy around services and enhances opportunity to integrate or bundle services provided by college staff and by external partners. A “Hub” for wraparound support services also serves as a visible signal for the campus and community that addressing students’ basic needs and financial insecurities is the responsibility of the college, and can become a rallying cry for administrators, faculty, staff, and students – generating widespread buy-in and support around addressing the daily struggles faced by low-income students.

The implementation study concludes that college efforts during WSSN to systematically address the daily challenges of poverty that their students face was comprehensive and complex, requiring a willingness to tackle organizational integration of student support services across multiple programs and departments, and to intentionally improve cultural awareness of and responsiveness to student poverty. The qualitative data collected point to a strong operational thread that enabled effective implementation, including the regular engagement of senior leadership and the continuity of project-level leadership, the need to work across divisional lines, the importance of building faculty buy-in to embrace non-academic support services as relevant to academic success, and the engagement of external partners to bolster student support.
The evaluation also notes the significant emotional and intellectual empathy expressed by campus stakeholders, who widely reported an enhanced understanding of student poverty and its related challenges, and the responsibility of colleges to provide culturally responsive services and approaches to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. This was most notable when administrators, faculty and staff discussed campus food pantries as a visible signal, close to peoples’ hearts, influential in engaging the entire campus, and signifying the college’s commitment to meeting students’ basic needs. These food pantries served as high-profile symbols of what the grant was intended to address.

Meeting the complex needs of today’s students — low-income, working, and often with family responsibilities that compete with their educational goals — requires that colleges make strategic decisions to allocate resources around organizational integration so that a wide array of support services that address basic needs and financial stability can be provided to large numbers of students. This type of change needs to be systemic – not programmatic – and should include widespread efforts to improve cultural responsiveness among administrators, faculty, staff, and students on issues of poverty and inequity that are undermining college reform efforts to improve student success. Providing support services to address the daily struggles low-income students face to pay for food, housing, child care, health care, and transportation along with college tuition and fees should be an essential strategy of the college completion agenda.
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Only two out of five students who begin at a public two-year college complete within six years. These low postsecondary attainment rates are especially disastrous for low-income working students, many of whom have families and look to college as a pathway for economic mobility. It is also problematic for America’s economy and working families, as the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that by 2020, 65% of jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school. The combination of low college completion and increased labor market demand for more educated and skilled workers is creating a labor shortage—projected to be 5 million college-educated workers by 2020—and means lost economic opportunity for millions of Americans and the nation as a whole.

To improve postsecondary attainment and economic opportunity, colleges need to systematically address an array of factors that undermine student persistence and completion such as the daily struggles low-income students face to pay for food, housing, child care, healthcare, and transportation along with college tuition and fees. One estimate suggests that these “indirect costs” of attending college represents 60% of the total cost to attend college. A recent survey conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab of more than 33,000 students at 70 community colleges across 24 states paints an even starker picture of the real-life barriers facing today’s community college student: two in three students report being food insecure, about half report being housing insecure, and one in seven report being homeless.

In 2014, a group of philanthropic organizations launched the Working Students Success Network (WSSN)—a consortium of 19 community colleges in Arkansas, California, Virginia and Washington, led by Achieving the Dream, Inc. These colleges collectively enrolled almost 170,000 students in fall 2015, of which around 50,000 received the federal Pell Grant indicating they were low-income. [See Figure 1] WSSN sought to improve postsecondary attainment rates by assisting these community colleges to expand existing services and design new supports that address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. This initiative built on several prominent national efforts to assist low-income families to secure better employment, strengthen their financial circumstances, and generate economic self-sufficiency, such as the Working Families Success Network, Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Financial Opportunity Centers, the United Way of the Bay Area’s SparkPoint Centers, and the Benefits Access for College Completion initiative.

WSSN targeted community colleges because they are the most affordable access point into postsecondary education for millions of Americans and serve a diverse group of students, including those from immigrant, minority, low-income, and first-generation communities. For example, about half of black and Hispanic students started at a public two-year institution compared with a little more than one-third of white students. Community colleges are also an important access point for working adults. For example, 60% of community college students work more than 20 hours per week and 25% work more than 35 hours per week.

WSSN colleges were charged with addressing the broad financial insecurities of low-income students by providing information about and assistance applying for public benefits, offering
financial literacy training and personalized counseling, and delivering these non-traditional support services in an integrated or bundled manner. [See Sidebar pages 11-12] The theory undergirding this effort was that by providing support services to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability, colleges would increase persistence and completion rates, and thereby help to improve the economic mobility of low-income students.

WSSN colleges were provided modest grants between $75,000 and $100,000 annually over a three-year period to tackle these critical barriers facing low-income college students. Additionally, each college received technical assistance through a dedicated facilitator, participated in learning communities around common challenges facing their implementation efforts, and received training for staff around financial coaching.

To help build the evidence base and inform the broader field about the initiative, the WSSN hired a team of external research partners to conduct a two-pronged evaluation to assess college implementation efforts and to measure participant outcomes. The implementation study – led by DVP-PRAXIS LTD – focused on (1) documenting the services colleges designed and delivered to students to help address basic needs and improve financial stability, including the integration or bundling of these services, and (2) assessing implementation progress – from the exploration and design stage, to early and mature implementation, and eventually to institutionalization and sustainability. [See Appendix C for more details on these implementation stages]. The ongoing summative participant outcome study – led by Mathematica Policy Research – is focused on describing participants, their take-up of WSSN services, and their educational and employment outcomes as documented in administrative data. A final summative report is expected in spring 2018.

This is the final report for the implementation study, summarizing findings across three waves of data collection conducted from October 2015 to June 2017, including telephone interviews and site visits to a subset of colleges. Although 19 colleges participated in WSSN, only 18 are included in the implementation evaluation study. [See Appendix A for a detailed discussion of the study methodology]. The overarching evaluation questions were:

- What types of services did colleges provide to students across the three WSSN pillars of education and employment advancement; income and work supports; and financial literacy and asset building; including the integration or bundling of these services to better meet students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability?

- How have colleges made implementation progress around the delivery of services and pillars identified by WSSN, the collection and use of data, and institutional culture change; and did colleges reach the institutionalization and sustainability stage of implementation?

Following this introduction, Section II describes the wide variety of support services the colleges provided to students in three service pillars (education and employment advancement; income and work supports; and, financial literacy and asset building), including how colleges integrated or bundled services across these pillars. Section III offers an assessment of implementation progress at a subset of eight colleges visited by the evaluation team, focusing on the five colleges that reached a mature stage of implementation and are moving forward toward institutionalization and sustainability. Finally, the report concludes in Section IV by raising two promising approaches to consider for colleges wanting to systematically address the basic needs and financial insecurities of their students.
ABOUT THE WORKING STUDENTS SUCCESS NETWORK

WSSN defined **three types of services** that should be delivered and bundled to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. These types of services were known as pillars:

- **Pillar 1** addressed **education and employment advancement services**, which included academic supports like tutoring, as well as career and employment supports such as resume development, mock interviews, job search strategies, and job placement assistance;

- **Pillar 2** addressed **income and work supports**, including personalized assistance with applying for public benefits, like nutritional assistance, housing, and workforce education programs, tax preparation assistance, and help with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and,

- **Pillar 3** addressed **financial literacy and asset building**, including banking and debt, money management, and financial coaching.

WSSN also encouraged colleges to **integrate or bundle services by combining supports provided to students across the three pillars.** Colleges were required to provide a **pre-determined** bundle of low-touch financial literacy and public benefits services through a student success course, and to design systematic processes for packaging **customized** service bundles based on student’s unique circumstances.

In addition to delivering services in all pillars, colleges were expected to **collect and report data on service receipt**, matching these data with institutional and external administrative records, to **strengthen the evidence base** for providing integrated or bundled support services that address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability.

Finally, WSSN anticipated that **culture change across campuses was needed for colleges to successfully implement and sustain these services** by embedding them into existing organizational structures and processes. Thus, colleges were encouraged to engage campus stakeholders broadly to build awareness of student poverty, and to build commitment and buy-in from administrators, faculty, and staff that providing supports to students that address their basic needs and improve their financial stability is a necessary strategy for increasing student persistence and completion.
By adapting existing operations and infrastructure to deliver bundled services that address education and employment advancement, income and work supports, and financial literacy and asset building—community colleges would better support a broad range of students who would persist to gain postsecondary credentials, and use their educational success to achieve economic goals. *Source: WSSN Request for Proposals

**WSSN THEORY OF CHANGE**

**ARKANSAS**
- College of the Ouachitas (Malvern, AR)
- East Arkansas Community College (Forrest City, AR)
- North Arkansas College (Harrison, AR)
- Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (West Helena, AR)

**CALIFORNIA**
- Cabrillo College (Aptos, CA)
- Cañada College (Redwood City, CA)
- East Los Angeles College (Monterey Park, CA)
- Los Angeles Harbor College (Wilmington, CA)
- Los Angeles Southwest College (Los Angeles, CA)
- Porterville College (Porterville, CA)
- Skyline College (San Bruno, CA)

**WASHINGTON**
- Big Bend Community College (Moses Lake, WA)
- Clark College (Vancouver, WA)
- Highline College (Des Moines, WA)
- Walla Walla Community College (Walla Walla, WA)
SECTION II
PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE BASIC NEEDS AND IMPROVE THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF LOW-INCOME COLLEGE STUDENTS

WSSN colleges designed and implemented a wide variety of new and expanded support services in both high- and low-touch modalities, and in line with WSSN program requirements, included the offering of high-touch financial coaching. In this section, the overarching findings on the colleges’ WSSN services are presented, followed by a description of services offered within each pillar and, finally, the documentation of integrated or bundled services across pillars.

OVERARCHING FINDINGS ON HOW COLLEGES DELIVERED WSSN SERVICES

The services provided during the initiative included new supports for students, and if they were expanded during the initiative, existing support services aligned with the three WSSN pillars. The evaluation identified six overarching findings in how colleges organized and provided support services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability:

1. Colleges provided more than 225 services – both low- and high-touch – across three pillars.
   In general, college staff provided low-touch services through workshops and presentations both within and outside of scheduled class times; as well as provided high-touch services by trained college staff outside of class. College staff were typically professionals charged with providing an array of student services, such as advising and counseling, career guidance, and financial aid assistance.

   “[WSSN] services have made all the difference in not only getting access to college but also to navigate college and develop confidence in being a student. Lots to handle with school, home and children, and this support helps reduce stress [by providing] assistance in getting thru things and dealing with problems.”

   —Community College Student

2. Colleges focused their efforts on developing and delivering new services around income and work supports, and financial literacy and asset building.
   Prior to WSSN, colleges did not systematically provide these service to students, though colleges often had programs at the college that support students enrolled in public benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, (TANF). Notable new income and work supports included food pantries to address immediate hunger needs of students, tax preparation assistance, emergency aid, and assistance with applications for public benefits. All colleges offered high-touch financial coaching and provided basic financial literacy information through student success courses or orientation programs.
3. **Colleges incorporated new services in success courses or orientation programs.** By incorporating low-touch services in courses that are often required for new students, colleges intended to reach large numbers of students with low-touch services that addressed students’ basic needs and financial insecurities. The expectation was that, by providing information on support services in classrooms, students would be more likely to seek additional one-on-one support or assistance.

4. **Colleges targeted high-touch services to students who were participating in special programs at the college, such as those serving adult basic education or basic skills students, students on public assistance, or students in workforce education or training programs.** Colleges often required students in these programs to participate in additional, new high-touch supports such as financial coaching, and leveraged existing case managers or program advisors who were already meeting with students on a regular basis. Most commonly, colleges targeted students enrolled in workforce education and training programs, including students using public benefits such as SNAP and TANF, as well as students in special programs like Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) in California, and, at one college in Virginia (Patrick Henry), students seeking a GED and intending to transition into college.

5. **Colleges integrated or bundled services across multiple areas to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial security.** These integrated or bundled services were packaged in two ways: first, as a pre-determined combination of services, for example those delivered in a student success course or orientation program that included basic financial literacy education, public benefit information, and career or employment services; and second, as a customized package of services identified through an intake or needs assessment process through which a coach, advisor, or counselor worked with the student to identify needs and develop solutions to address those needs. In general, pre-determined service bundles were low-touch while customized service bundles were high-touch.

6. **External partners shared expertise by delivering support services directly to students, and through training of college staff.** These partners—community-based organizations, businesses, and human services agencies—participated in campus-wide events such as Resource Fairs, and located staff on campus (typically once a week) to provide one-on-one assistance in applying for public benefits such as hunger assistance (i.e., SNAP). External partners also trained college staff to provide financial literacy workshops and to offer tax preparation assistance; and, on occasion, delivered these services directly to students on campus.
SERVICES WITHIN EACH WSSN PILLAR

This subsection details the types of services offered in each of the three WSSN service areas.

Pillar 1: Education and Employment Advancement Services
Support services in this pillar were intended to assist students in education and career planning, and offered academic supports, career counseling and employment services like resume development and mock job interviews to prepare students to apply for and be placed in jobs. WSSN colleges generally offered both career preparation and employment readiness services, and during the initiative worked to bolster these services to reach more students.

The most common low-touch support services in this pillar addressed career exploration, development, planning and readiness, as well as employment services such as resume development, mock interviews, and job search assistance. Colleges typically required these services for students enrolled in a student success course or who attended an orientation program. For example, all four Virginia colleges introduce students to the Virginia Wizard, a state-operated electronic portal that supports students with career and academic planning. Opt-in education and employment advancement services were offered by college staff through out-of-class workshops or at campus-wide events with external partners.

The most common high-touch support services in this pillar also revolved around career planning and employment readiness, and were almost always provided out-of-class on an opt-in basis by college staff or external partners. Three Washington colleges and one Arkansas college required both high-touch career exploration and high-touch employment services for students involved in workforce development and training programs, including students receiving public benefits. Two Arkansas colleges required high-touch career exploration services for career pathway students or students in the College Success Skills course; and two California colleges required high-touch employment services for students in CalWORKS. The remaining 10 colleges provided high-touch education and employment advancement services on an opt-in basis. Notably, six colleges developed a new clothing closet high-touch service to prepare students for job interviews.
**Figure 2: Education & Employment Advancement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-Touch</th>
<th>High-Touch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Exploration, Development, Planning &amp; Readiness</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Services</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support &amp; Assistance</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Assistance</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 shows about three-fourths of WSSN colleges offered low-touch career exploration and/or employment services, while 39% offered low-touch academic supports as part of the initiative. Additionally, 67% of WSSN colleges offered high-touch career exploration and/or employment services; 39% offered high-touch academic supports and assistance; and 28% offered high-touch clothing assistance.
Pillar 2: Income and Work Supports
Support services in this pillar were mostly newly developed by WSSN colleges during the initiative, and focused on enabling students to tap into available public benefits and other resources that addressed basic needs and financial insecurities. These services also assisted students in filing their taxes and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

**FIGURE 3: INCOME & WORK SUPPORTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public benefits information workshops/presentations</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid workshops/presentations</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantry (LT)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public benefits application, enrollment &amp; maintenance assistance</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax preparation assistance</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasfa/scholarship assistance</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantry (HT)</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency aid</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; homeless assistance</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation assistance</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3 shows that 89% of WSSN colleges provided low-touch public benefits information through workshops or presentations, and 89% provided high-touch public benefits application assistance, and in some cases, ongoing assistance with enrollment and maintenance of their public benefits. Additionally, 44% of WSSN colleges offered low-touch financial aid workshops or presentations, and 44% provided high-touch FAFSA or scholarship application assistance. More than half of WSSN colleges offered a low-touch (17%) or high-touch (39%) food pantry; 28% offered high-touch housing and homelessness assistance; and 17% offered high-touch transportation assistance. Moreover, 50% of WSSN colleges provided high-touch tax preparation assistance and 39% offered emergency aid for students.*
WSSN colleges were prolific in creating or expanding high-touch income and work support services, with most of these services offered to students on an opt-in basis. Seventeen colleges offered high-touch income and work support services, with six colleges requiring certain students to receive assistance in applying for public benefits, and two colleges requiring some students to participate in financial aid counseling. The remaining 11 colleges provided high-touch income and work supports on an opt-in basis:

- Nine colleges provided tax preparation assistance;
- Six colleges offered FAFSA or scholarship application assistance;
- Seven colleges provided emergency aid;
- Five colleges offered housing assistance for homeless students; and
- Three colleges provided transportation assistance like gas cards or bus vouchers.

The most common low-touch support service in this pillar was providing public benefits information to students in a success course or orientation program. Colleges that provided public information through a success course or orientation program often coupled this service with financial literacy information, and these services were required for students enrolled in these courses or who attended orientation. Some colleges introduced students to their state’s online public benefits portal (e.g., Washington Connection) where students could complete a screening process and learn if they were eligible for public benefits, such as nutritional assistance. Colleges also provided bookmarks and flyers to students with information about public benefits programs as well as support services on campus.

Food pantries were one of the most widespread new services implemented by WSSN colleges.³ Six colleges designed their food pantry as a high-touch service, with personalized assistance by college staff (and sometimes external partners) who pre-screened students for food stamp eligibility and assisted them in applying if eligible. North Arkansas is a notable example of a high-touch food pantry (see call-out). Three colleges offered a low-touch food pantry where students could receive temporary food assistance, but did not have a formal process in place to assist students who visited the food pantry to apply for public benefits.

Pete’s Pantry at North Arkansas College

Located in an impoverished and rural area, North Arkansas College launched Pete’s Pantry in fall 2015 as a high-touch food pantry where college staff meet the immediate food insecurity of students and assist them in applying for public benefits programs.

The pantry is a highly visible and motivating symbol for administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and reinforces the “NorthArk Cares” culture. The pantry (and newly named Pete’s Clothes Closet) signals to the community that the college is here to meet students’ needs – above and beyond the academic programs students are pursuing.

College leaders report there is “no shame” in going to Pete’s Pantry, and that students know they can get one-on-one help there – above and beyond food assistance. Faculty report the pantry is a “huge success” and point to classroom conversations among students about how valuable this service is to them.
Pillar 3: Financial Literacy and Asset Building

Support services in this pillar were also new for most WSSN colleges, and consisted of information, training, and tools to help students make informed financial decisions around budgeting, financial aid, and debt and money management, as well as to learn about banking services, such as checking and savings accounts, and credit cards.

**Figure 4: Financial Literacy & Asset Building**

- **High-Touch**
  - Financial Literacy Workshops & Presentations: 100%
  - Financial Coaching: 100%
  - Assistance Opening Bank Accounts, Credit Building, & Financial Planning: 22%
  - Individual Development Accounts: 22%

Figure 4: shows that 100% of WSSN colleges provided both low-touch financial literacy workshops and presentations, and high-touch financial coaching by trained staff. In addition, about one-fifth of WSSN colleges provided high-touch assistance for students in opening bank accounts, credit building, and financial planning; and/or creating Individual Development Accounts.

All WSSN colleges provided low-touch financial literacy and planning services to students – 17 of which required this service for students enrolling in student success courses or as part of an orientation program. The content of these services varied among the colleges, and covered banking and credit, debt and money management, and bankruptcy. Seven colleges that required these low-touch financial literacy and asset building services used a formal curriculum, such as FDIC Money Smart, SALT, United Way Your Money Your Way, or the St. Louis Federal Reserve. 

Fourteen colleges also provided low-touch financial literacy and asset building services out-of-class through workshops or campus-wide events on an opt-in basis.
All WSSN colleges also provided high-touch financial coaching, which was a new service and a required element of the WSSN initiative. Eleven colleges required this high-touch financial literacy and asset building service for certain students, such as those receiving emergency aid; students enrolled in a certain college programs\textsuperscript{18}; or students enrolled in student success or developmental education courses. Seven colleges provided high-touch financial coaching only on an opt-in or voluntary basis. A handful of colleges (4) also worked with external partners to provide one-on-one assistance to students around opening bank accounts, credit building, and financial planning.

SALT Interactive Money Courses at Clark College

SALT is a program of American Student Assistance that covers topics like budgeting, identity theft, and student loans for students to make smart decisions about paying for college.

Clark College used the SALT curriculum in their College 101 student success course, which is required for all transfer students (i.e., those enrolled who intend to transfer to a four-year college or university); as well as during Penguin Welcome Days, which is an optional orientation program for new students. SALT workshops were also offered periodically on campus for all students on a voluntary basis.
Integrating or bundling support services

One of the central tenets of the WSSN approach was for support services to be integrated or bundled for students; that is, colleges were to combine low- and/or high-touch services across two or more service areas that could include sequential or simultaneous delivery. There was not a prescribed approach to integrating services and colleges combined support services across multiple areas, with a large majority focusing on non-academic supports to address basic needs and to improve the financial stability of low-income students.

Figure 5 provides a typology of integrated services that were most commonly offered by colleges: 78% of WSSN colleges provided low-touch service bundles across all three pillars; and 78% of WSSN colleges also provided high-touch service bundles across all three pillars. Additionally, 39% combined high-touch services across two pillars. These data indicate that colleges took the idea of integrated or bundled service delivery seriously, and offered both pre-determined service bundles and customized service bundles during the initiative. WSSN colleges also packaged services within pillars; for example, one-third offered a low- to high-touch bundle with the education and employment advancement pillar, and 22% offered a low- to high-touch bundle in the financial literacy and asset building pillar. 28% of WSSN colleges also offered a high-touch bundle within the income and work supports pillar.

The most common way WSSN colleges integrated or bundled low-touch support services was by delivering a pre-determined combination of services across all three service pillars by incorporating content in a student success course or orientation program. Colleges were expected to combine public benefits information and financial literacy services, and most also included education and employment advancement services such as career development services or employment services like resume development and interviewing skills. These pre-determined bundles were required for students enrolled in student success classes or who attended an orientation program; colleges hoped to reach large numbers of students by packaging this bundle, and to encourage students to seek out more personalized high-touch services. This pre-determined service bundle was typically delivered through presentations or workshops during a class period; rarely was the content of these services formally adopted as curriculum for the student success course.
### Figure 5: Typology of Integrated or Bundled Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Percentage of Colleges Offering Service (of 18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-touch service in all 3 pillars</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-touch &amp; high-touch service in all 3 pillars</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-touch &amp; high-touch service in 2 or 3 pillars</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-to-high-touch service in 1 pillar</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple high-touch service in 1 pillar</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; employment; income &amp; work; financial literacy &amp; assets</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; employment; income &amp; work; financial literacy &amp; assets</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income &amp; work; financial literacy &amp; assets</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income &amp; work; financial literacy &amp; assets</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income &amp; work; financial literacy &amp; assets</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentage of Colleges Offering Service (of 18)*

- 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
The most common way WSSN colleges integrated or bundled high-touch services was by customizing supports across all three service pillars based on personalized one-on-one engagement with students. This customized bundle of high-touch services was often required for students in certain programs that already include one-on-one case management or advising; with students in these programs receiving new services not previously available at the college, such as financial coaching or assistance with applying for public benefits programs. A typical process was for a program case manager, college advisor or counselor, or a financial coach to conduct a needs assessment when they met with a student that addressed their potential needs across all three service pillars. The result of this needs analysis ranged from a referral to support services on campus or from external partners, to a formal plan for getting the student the supports identified with ongoing follow-up by college staff who conducted the initial needs assessment.

Seven colleges delivered a pre-determined high-touch service bundle that included both income and work supports, and financial coaching – two areas where colleges created new services not previously available to students. For example, colleges integrated high-touch tax preparation assistance with financial coaching; emergency aid with financial coaching; and, public benefits assistance with financial coaching. The most common pre-determined high-touch bundles across these two service areas were required for students based on certain conditions: for example, requiring students who received emergency aid to meet with a financial coach.
Ten colleges offered integrated or bundled services within a single pillar, in some cases by using a low-touch service to connect students with more personalized one-on-one supports, or by packaging two high-touch services together:

- Eight colleges offered low-touch to high-touch services within a single pillar either in the education and employment advancement pillar or the financial literacy and asset building pillar; for example, at Phillips (AR), a course-based career planning module was designed to transition students to high-touch career coaching; and classroom-based academic supports were connected to high-touch tutoring.

- Five colleges combined high-touch services from the income and work supports pillar, most often by combining individual financial aid assistance with assistance for housing or food, or with tax preparation.

In sum, the evaluation documented that WSSN colleges provided more than 225 low- and high-touch services across all three pillars, and focused their efforts on developing and delivering new services to address basic needs (e.g., connect students with public benefits) and to improve financial stability through low-touch literacy training and high-touch financial coaching.

**Case Management at Big Bend College**

Big Bend College in Washington leveraged the case management model for students enrolled in Workforce Education Services (WES) programs. WES includes the Basic Foods Education and Training Program (SNAP), Work First (TANF) and the state Opportunity Grant program.

WES staff conduct an initial needs assessment for each student, and were trained to be sensitive to the diverse needs of students based on different backgrounds and experiences, and to identify relevant services on- and off-campus to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability.

This approach to customized high-touch bundles has expanded to students in transitional studies, which are programs for adult education students and English language learners.

Colleges incorporated new low-touch services by integrating or bundling supports in student success courses or orientation programs, which were intended to reach large numbers of students. Colleges also offered integrated or bundled high-touch support services delivered by trained college staff, which were typically provided out-of-class and as an opt-in service; colleges reported that high-touch services reached a much smaller number of students, in part because students did not voluntarily seek out these services.
Section III
Implementation Progress: What the Field Can Learn from the Working Students Success Network

WSSN implementation proceeded differently among participating colleges, with some progressing more than others toward institutionalizing and sustaining support services. Findings from the analysis of implementation progress at a subset of eight colleges – focusing on colleges that reached a mature stage of implementation and are moving toward institutionalization and sustainability – can serve to highlight factors that contributed or challenged college’s progress. [For more detailed information on the Implementation Stages Framework, see Appendix C].

Five of eight colleges made substantive implementation progress by establishing integrated student services and fostering cultural change on campus to better address low-income students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. These five colleges (Big Bend, Clark, and Highline in Washington, North Arkansas, and Patrick Henry in Virginia) reached a mature stage of implementation delivering integrated student services and fostering culture change around equity and the de-stigmatization of poverty, and signaling clear actions toward the institutionalization and sustainability of their efforts. In addition, each of these colleges took steps to expand their services in ways to reach a broader student population. These colleges demonstrated that within a fairly short time (i.e., three years) and with modest resources, substantial progress in strengthening institutions to better serve and support low-income students can be achieved.

In this section, the characteristics of mature colleges are described, followed by a discussion of key facilitators and challenges for implementation progress.

Characteristics of Mature WSSN Colleges

Six key accomplishments characterize the implementation progress of mature colleges.

1. Developing and delivering new services to meet students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability, and incorporating these services into the normal experiences of students. Two primary service areas stand out: financial literacy and asset building as well as income and work supports. These types of student services are not typically provided by colleges, and during WSSN these five colleges designed new ways to bring such supports to students. As noted in the previous section, colleges focused their efforts on new services in these two pillars, which at these five mature colleges included tax preparation assistance, public benefits assistance (e.g., nutrition, housing, transportation), food pantries, and emergency grants; notably, financial coaching was required for certain students at all five colleges.
Financial literacy involves educating students on the primary concepts of money management, banking, credit and debt. Mature colleges delivered this low-touch service by embedding information in college courses, most often student success courses that are required of certain student populations such as newly matriculated students, first generation students and those needing developmental or remedial coursework. Colleges such as Clark made formal changes in curriculum learning objectives to ensure that mastering this content was an expected outcome of the course, thus indicating a commitment to institutionalize and sustain financial literacy services.

**Formalizing Curriculum and Learning Outcomes at Clark College**

*Clark College formally modified the College 101 curriculum to include financial literacy and public benefits as student learning outcomes in addition to the pre-existing learning outcome for career development. The College 101 curriculum is available in Canvas, including course materials and assignments, so that the instructors who teach the roughly 115 sections of this course annually can draw on uniform content that address the revamped learning outcomes for the course. College 101 is required for all students enrolled who intend to transfer to a four-year college or university.*

These colleges are taking similar actions to educate students on the availability of public benefits by including information on public benefits programs in student success courses. In some cases, students are directed to electronic portals such as Washington Connections where they can access information on specific benefits such as childcare and transportation as well as assess their eligibility for such benefits. Students at these colleges are also referred to external community social service partners that have defined and contractual relationships with the campus to serve students.

College staff at mature colleges provide high-touch assistance to address individual financial and public benefit needs. College staff members – both existing and new –were trained in the content and approach to provide financial coaching to students, which could involve efforts to develop a personal or family budget or to address credit or debt issues. Similar expertise was needed for staff to assist students with applying for public benefits. At North Arkansas, the college moved toward institutionalization and sustainability by changing job descriptions at the outset of the grant to encompass the delivery of these services to students, while other colleges such as Big Bend and Clark allocated additional grant and institutional resources to sustain these positions.
2. **Offering integrated or bundled services as a “system of supports” rather than unique or independent student services, and integrating service delivery into existing institutional functions and activities.** These colleges used student success courses, orientations, and campus events to raise awareness and knowledge about the importance of these new resources to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability, and thereby promote student success. At mature colleges, services were embedded in other functions and institutional activities; for example, Patrick Henry Community College crossed-trained traditional student services staff to provide financial coaching and to assist students in accessing public benefit, thus helping to institutionalize these services into mainstream student service efforts. In addition, Patrick Henry partnered with United Way to train community volunteers who annually provide tax preparation assistance to students on campus. Notably, WSSN services at Patrick Henry are available in a new centralized hub, called the Student Success Center, where almost all student supports are provided.

Mature colleges offered a combination of wraparound services to more holistically address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability. For example, Highline College established and structured a student assessment and planning process that allowed staff to assess an array of needs related to academic and career planning, public benefits, and financial issues, which was then used to prepare an action plan to address the identified needs. This structured process was adopted and applied by other campus programs and staff at the college, thus furthering efforts to institutionalize and sustain these efforts.

3. **Expanding services beyond the initial groups served, and broadening overall campus awareness of and commitment to the importance of addressing students’ basic needs and improving their financial stability.** These colleges established a solid foundation for delivering services to low-income students, and are making progress toward institutionalizing and sustaining this work by expanding the provision of services to other student populations, and by taking intentional actions to engage and gain the support of campus staff and faculty for this work.
As noted above, mature colleges connected their WSSN efforts with existing programs and staff serving low-income populations enabling them to deliver integrated or bundled services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. As these efforts became established, colleges expanded their services in two important ways that signify progress to institutionalize and sustain this work. First, colleges broadened the programs in which services would be provided to students; for example, Highline College engaged with first generation, TRIO and Umoja students enrolled in their academic transfer program, and extended their efforts to serve students in their pre-college or basic skills transitions program. Clark College targeted academic transfer students that received academic warning notices, and Big Bend College assigned staff and coaches to specific career tech programs of study, thereby exposing their services to additional students and faculty. Second, colleges promoted services to everyone on campus, most notably by opening and operating a food pantry. The food pantry became a symbolic representation of the everyday barriers community college students face, and was noted as a key entry point by colleges to present information about other high-touch services available to students.

Mature colleges also established greater campus awareness of student poverty by advertising the availability of WSSN services and by making presentations at both student and faculty events. For example, Clark College engaged its marketing staff to orchestrate a campaign to communicate that student success was tied to students’ personal and financial stability, and that the college had a role in helping students access additional services and resources, including public benefits. As noted above, the opening of campus food pantries provided a tangible and visible action for all campus stakeholders that highlighted the responsibility of the college to address students’ basic needs.
4. **Strengthening campus culture and norms to openly acknowledge the importance of addressing students’ basic needs and improving their financial stability, and the college’s role in addressing these issues to increase educational success.** These colleges focused their cultural change strategies on de-stigmatizing negative campus perceptions around poverty. In practice, this meant building awareness and acceptance that students’ academic success is affected by several non-academic barriers related to student poverty, and that the college has an important role in addressing students’ basic needs and to improving their financial stability as a strategy to increase student persistence and credential attainment. As noted above, Clark College used its marketing department to conduct a communications campaign around poverty and student success. Similarly, North Arkansas College branded its effort as “NorthArk Cares” from the onset of WSSN, displaying banners across the campus and building a dedicated website about the services available to students. These coordinated and strategic efforts helped move campus stakeholders to become more aware and accepting of the basic needs and financial circumstances facing their students.

Mature colleges also took important steps to articulate the cultural issue of student poverty as an institutional priority. Patrick Henry, North Arkansas and Big Bend used nationally acclaimed books — *Bridges Out of Poverty* and *Blind Spot* — to engage faculty and staff in ongoing educational and professional development sessions with a specific goal of solidifying the colleges’ commitment to addressing students’ basic needs and improving their financial stability, and to do so in an equitable and culturally responsive way. At Patrick Henry, these actions resulted in a new option for faculty and staff payroll deductions to allow for direct contributions to the campus food pantry.

5. **Demonstrating their commitment to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability by aligning their efforts with institutional mission and strategic priorities.** These colleges indicated that meeting the basic needs and improving the financial stability of their students has become an integral part of their mission and strategic priorities.
For example, Clark College identifies its WSSN work as central to three of its four college goals – academic excellence, economic vitality and social equity – and notes the Board of Trustees requested the college secure resources for financial coaching as part of their commitment to economic vitality for students and the institution. At Patrick Henry Community College, the prior focus on student success as its core mission, which leaders attribute to their longstanding involvement with Achieving the Dream, provided the basis for the Student Success Center to become an important component of the college’s strategic plan.

6. Collecting data to support the summative outcome evaluation and, in some cases, making significant changes to their data collection processes; although limited institutional level analyses were conducted to examine the effects of the receipt of services on student outcomes. Three of the five mature colleges made significant changes to their data collection process, which bodes well for future data analyses. These changes included Big Bend College adapting a new card swipe system to collect service data; Patrick Henry Community College developing a new software system that collected service receipt data and linking it with student administrative records; and Clark College modifying its Advisor Track/SAGE system to record service data.

Notably, mature colleges reported they did not need formal data analyses or reports to justify their commitment to delivering supports that address students’ basic needs and financial stability. These colleges noted they are comfortable committing to institutionalizing and sustaining this work given their observations and understanding that both students and faculty support and value efforts to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. Of the five mature colleges, only Clark and Patrick Henry have initiated ongoing efforts to analyze service data usage and outcomes, and both are in early stages of analysis, exploring the best ways to measure progress and assess impact. Neither college has released any findings nor used data to support decision making about improving service delivery or sustaining their commitment to the work. The key issue college leaders at Clark and Patrick Henry hope the data will address is how to determine what services provide the best return for specific student populations, and how to best allocate resources to address those needs.
FACILITATORS AND CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

This subsection presents a discussion of both facilitators and challenges to implementation progress.

FACILITATORS

The evaluation identified six factors that enabled WSSN colleges to achieve a mature level of implementation and make progress toward institutionalization and sustainability of services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. In some cases, these factors were already part of the colleges’ organizational environment; in others WSSN leaders actively fostered these conditions. Throughout this subsection, representative quotes collected from evaluation site visits are provided to provide context and support for the analysis of facilitators and challenges.

Six Facilitators for Effective Implementation of Services that Address Students’ Basic Needs and Improve their Financial Stability

1. The commitment of executive leaders and the presence of stable, distributed leadership with responsibility and accountability for implementation.

2. The integration of services that broke down silos between various student services programs and departments.

3. Widespread, collective buy-in and support for the college to provide high-touch basic needs and financial stability supports for students.

4. The broadening and deepening engagement and collaboration with external partners.

5. A growing cultural responsiveness to the conditions of poverty that affect their students.

6. The visibility of new food pantries that served as a symbolic reminder of and commitment to the basic needs and financial insecurities of students.
The commitment of executive leaders and the presence of stable, distributed leadership with responsibility and accountability for implementation. Senior-level administrators – typically a vice president of student services – at mature colleges regularly engaged throughout the project and empowered deans and directors to implement services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. These senior-level student services leaders also engaged their counterparts in academic affairs to collaborate around implementation efforts – especially those involving instructors in student success courses – and to build cross-divisional support and buy-in for the delivery of these services.

Several mature colleges also shared project leadership among administrative staff in different departments or program areas, further spreading ownership and responsibility for the colleges’ efforts to address student poverty. The stability of project leadership was also a key factor supporting effective implementation; for example, at Clark College the co-leads developed the grant application together from the onset, getting support from their respective staff and senior leaders at the college, and maintained their leadership throughout the grant period. In fact, stable project leadership was a notable characteristic at these colleges.

The integration of services that broke down silos between various student services programs and departments. College administrators described integration from an organizational or functional perspective. This included collaborative actions across programs and departments that helped to eliminate redundant services, embedded new services into existing programs on campus that addressed students’ basic needs and financial stability, and in some cases, eased the centralization of most if not all student support services – including those implemented during WSSN – in a single physical location.
“The creation of a student success center – we had programs in different buildings, silos. When we received this grant, we put it in a central hub – one place, one resource, a single team. We still have student support services, testing, tutoring – we are in one big building to make it that hub.”

-College Administrator

Several colleges referred to WSSN as the expansion of wraparound services to meet multiple academic and non-academic needs of students, and indicated how embedding services in other programs (e.g., financial literacy in TRIO) and collaborating across programs to deliver services (e.g., workforce education and training departments collaborating with Financial Aid around public benefits and the FAFSA), represented the “de-siloing” of resources and programs that enhanced interdepartmental coordination.

Big Bend and Patrick Henry reported that a centralized service location – or Hub – benefited students by practicing a “no wrong door” philosophy to receive services, and assisted in bridging relationships across programs and departments. The centralized location represented a shift from the past, and introduced a new organizational model of supporting students by providing a suite of services for all students in a single location.

Highline (WA) also pointed to a Hub as an important organizational feature they believe can further enhance the services they are providing to students, and enable them to reach more students.

Widespread, collective buy-in and support for the college to provide high-touch coaching to address basic needs and financial stability supports for students. Administrators, faculty and staff at these colleges discussed how the delivery of holistic support services, an increased awareness of poverty, and the importance of serving diverse student needs represented a necessary evolution of their institutional mission and practice. The result was widespread, collective buy-in and support for one-on-one coaching, because it represents the kind of deep engagement with students needed to improve student success.

“Having dedicated staff that is willing to help address their needs rather than relying on faculty [is critical]; and creates a knowledge base on campus among students so that they know where to go for help and are encouraged to do so.”

-Faculty Member
This one-on-one personalized interaction with students was mentioned at several colleges as an indicator of institutional commitment, because coaches could dedicate themselves fully to meeting students’ basic needs and financial insecurities.

A growing cultural responsiveness to the conditions of poverty that affect their students. Mature colleges described cultural responsiveness as addressing and meeting the needs of student poverty. Remarks around cultural responsiveness had an emotional tone and highlighted colleges’ empathy and compassion for students in poverty, as well as the collective responsibility for student success.

Cultural responsiveness was addressed through professional development programs and campus events that promoted individual and collective self-reflection of unconscious beliefs and habitual patterns around the stigma of poverty.

Patrick Henry and North Arkansas each emphasized a campus culture of student care and increased understanding of the needs of students in poverty, such as homelessness, and food and transportation insecurity. The culture of care encompassed viewing students holistically and addressing barriers of poverty directly through reducing the stigma of poverty. A common refrain from college stakeholders was how WSSN shifted the focus of the institution to more deeply understand the challenges of their most financially vulnerable students. College stakeholders reflected on how WSSN changed the institutional conversation about student poverty, and helped faculty, staff, and administrators to think and act differently and more empathetically.
The visibility of new food pantries that served as a symbolic reminder of and commitment to the basic needs and financial insecurities of students. Overall, the food pantry was the most frequently cited factor when college stakeholders discussed their implementation success, both in terms of the overall quantity of comments as well as the distribution of comments across stakeholder interviews. Colleges highlighted the food pantry as the “heart” of their WSSN work, and emblematic of what the WSSN aims to achieve. Several campus administrators, faculty and staff at the mature colleges spoke passionately about meeting students’ basic human needs.

The food pantries were described as “something everyone rallies around,” and is very close to people’s hearts. Food pantries visually elevated the importance of non-academic supports, and provided a focus point to either build the institutional will to carry forward culture change around student poverty, or strengthen the cultures of care that may have already existed. Many respondents called this their “crowning achievement” or “biggest success”. By maintaining a food pantry on campus, colleges raised the visibility of student needs to the broader campus community, and demonstrated that addressing student hunger and meeting their needs is an institutional priority.

“The pantry has given the whole campus a focal point on student needs and the barriers to student success.”

-Support Services Staff
In sum, the establishment of a campus food pantry brought great visibility campus-wide to students’ basic needs and the importance of improving their financial stability, with administrators, faculty, staff, and students acknowledging that some people on campus face hunger on a routine basis. Thus, food pantries served as both a symbol of need and an opportunity for action by all campus stakeholders to address an important resource issue around student poverty and educational success.

The broadening and deepening of engagement and collaboration with external partners. These mature colleges noted that highly engaged external partners - community organizations, local and regional public agencies, and non-profits - were essential in resource-sharing and helping colleges deliver new support services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability.

Patrick Henry singled out the power of external partners willing to come directly to campus to interact with students; the college’s large and rural geographic area, as well as the absence of a public transport system to easily traverse the city and neighboring areas made it difficult for students without reliable personal transportation to receive supports that could be provided by external partners, such as public benefits agencies.
CHALLENGING FACTORS

In addition to these facilitative conditions, mature colleges faced challenges during implementation; the evaluation identified the following three challenges that can affect institutionalization and sustainability of the services developed during WSSN, and how colleges deliver them.

Three Challenges to Effective Implementation of Services that Address Students’ Basic Needs and Improve their Financial Stability

1. Limited grant resources and capacity to make system-level changes to college policies, practices, and procedures that address students’ basic needs and financial stability.

2. Administrative leadership for WSSN was based in divisions or departments of student services and workforce development without organizational authority over academic and curricular decisions.

3. The need for ongoing and sustained engagement of faculty to generate cultural responsiveness to student poverty, and thereby build support and buy-in for support services that address the wide array of barriers their students face.
Limited grant resources and capacity to make system-level changes to college policies, practices, and procedures that address students’ basic needs and financial stability. College leaders reported that the resources (e.g., financial, personnel, expertise, time) available to carry out the systems-level work was challenging to meet the goals of institutionalization and scaling of services within the timeframe of a three-year grant. These comments focused on the grant specifically, and noted the relatively small amount of money provided to implement new and expanded, resource-intensive services and staff roles meant to affect wide-scale system change. For example, one administrator said: “Money is always an issue – although we did not get a lot of money so not much to backfill when grant ends – but the grant provided a margin of excellence.”

North Arkansas added new duties to existing positions at the outset of the grant to address students’ basic needs and improve financial stability. Although this greatly enhanced the viability of sustaining the WSSN efforts, current roles and responsibilities were not reduced to accommodate the new duties, which created risk of staff burnout. Colleges also found it challenging to meet all the needs of their students through the one-on-one coaching services. Colleges highly valued the role of the coach and their impact on students, reporting that a higher number of full-time coaches are necessary to meet all the target student population.

“Students need one-on-one attention period. I could keep as many [coaches] busy as you give me. I could help every student who goes here with financial literacy. I could totally use more hours for [the] coach… this adds anxiety for students …[it’s] tough to work around students’ schedules. There are thousands of students … who need to see coaches and don’t.”

-Support Services Staff
At Patrick Henry, administrators acknowledged the importance of one-on-one assistance but expressed concern that efforts to serve more students without additional resources potentially diminishes the intensity, quality and effectiveness of these services. The college reported a decline in student retention rates from years one and two, and believe the increased coaching caseloads that grew from about 100 students per coach to several hundred was one reason for these lower retention rates.

Administrative leadership for WSSN was based in divisions or departments of student services and workforce development without organizational authority over academic and curricular decisions. Mature colleges sought to overcome this challenge by engaging senior academic leaders as well as faculty; yet for the most part project leaders were unable to make the formal curriculum changes necessary to sustain the low-touch services being delivered through student success courses. Only two colleges – Clark and North Arkansas – went through formal curriculum changes, and have defined student learning outcomes around financial literacy and/or public benefits for the student success course.

“The people who took on WSSN are classified staff – and you need faculty to move this forward at this college. If it’s not on the academic side … it’s tough to institutionalize. We tried with counseling classes, and it does not work – [faculty] do it for a while, and then it goes away.”

-College Administrator
The remaining colleges, while delivering services during the grant period, did not pursue formal curriculum changes; the result is that without grant resources, there is no extrinsic or policy motivation for financial literacy services to be sustained in the student success course. In other words, if financial literacy is not a learning outcome formalized into curriculum, once the grant resources sunset, faculty are unlikely to continue offering this content during classroom time as other instructional and administrative demands may be prioritized.

The need for ongoing and sustained engagement of faculty to generate cultural responsiveness to student poverty, and thereby build support and buy-in for support services that address the wide array of issues their students face. Despite effectively engaging some faculty during WSSN, college leaders and program administrators acknowledge that building support and commitment from all faculty will require an ongoing effort. Mature colleges acknowledged the critical role of faculty engagement and buy-in, and are pleased with the progress made to date. However, they note that more work is needed to gain the engagement and support of all faculty, and change their attitudes about the importance of poverty on student success and their commitment to supporting college efforts to address this issue. Colleges also reported challenges to engage adjunct and part-time faculty, whose schedules may be after hours and in evenings, or are on campus infrequently.
SECTION IV
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS THAT ADDRESS STUDENTS’ BASIC NEEDS AND IMPROVE FINANCIAL STABILITY

The colleges across Arkansas, California, Virginia, and Washington that participated in the Working Students Success Network (WSSN) sought to tackle the complex issues of poverty that undermine their students’ educational progress and success. Through the expansion of existing support services, and the design and development of new support services – especially around income and work supports, and financial literacy and asset building – these colleges collectively delivered 225 services to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. Colleges also deliberately integrated and bundled these services to provide students a comprehensive set of support services to address their needs. The implementation evaluation highlights two promising approaches for colleges that want to provide comprehensive and integrated services to students that address a broad spectrum of students’ basic needs and can improve their financial stability.

1. One-on-one, personalized assistance (e.g., coaching) that addresses multiple areas and issues related to students’ basic needs and financial stability.

High-touch, personalized coaching was seen by administrators, faculty and staff as a critical resource to meet the needs of the low-income students. The personal relationships developed between coaches and students were widely praised as a “game changer” for addressing the complex circumstances facing students who face poverty barriers like food and housing insecurity, limited access to high-quality child care, and unreliable transportation. Colleges embraced the concept of providing high-touch, personalized assistance to students and worked hard to find the resources to support coaching positions. This approach enabled college to provide students a personal contact who understood the variety of resource issues – school, personal and family – they confronted, had the time and ability to help them address them, and was “there for them” no matter the circumstances. This was especially important to students who had little to no prior experience or familiarity with postsecondary education.
Colleges structured coaching positions in various ways; for example, some colleges trained coaches to be expert in financial literacy or public benefits, while other cross-trained staff to be knowledgeable in multiple areas. Regardless of the organizational approach, coaches engaged students in a similar process, conducting a comprehensive assessment of students’ basic needs and financial insecurities – often alongside career exploration and education planning – that resulted in an individualized action plan to address the identified needs, a time schedule for moving forward, and a process for monitoring progress and staying in-touch with the student. Explicit in these action plans were direct linkages to the array of services that were deemed useful to meet the student’s basic needs and financial insecurity. Sustaining this high-touch, personalized support service is a challenge for colleges to provide to large numbers of students, especially colleges facing declining enrollments and shrinking budgets. Colleges who are looking to implement this work may need prioritization processes and analytic tools to help coaches identify students most in need of high intensity supports.
College Profile: Highline

Highline College in Des Moines, Washington, enrolls almost 17,000 credit and non-credit students, including almost 11,000 credit students (64% of total enrollment). Their diverse student population is 25% white, 20% Asian, 17% Hispanic or Latino, 17% African American, and 13% multi-racial. According to the college’s website (www.highline.edu), 35% of enrollments are students who intend to transfer to a four-year college or university, 26% are in professional or technical courses, and 25% are in basic skills courses. The remaining enrollments are in pre-college or community courses.

Highline embraced the idea of providing students comprehensive high-touch services as a core approach to enhancing supports for its diverse student population. In doing this, the college trained existing and new staff to assess student needs in each of the three primary areas: education and employment advancement; income and work supports; and financial literacy and asset building, including training eleven staff specifically in financial coaching.

Students are first engaged in an orientation process that occurs when either starting a college program or investigating opportunities for targeted program supports or assistance. Newly developed comprehensive assessment instruments are used to identify student strengths and needs; these assessments then lead to an action plan designed to help advance a student’s academic and career goals. These plans can lead students to services such as focused career counseling, emergency grant assistance, or financial coaching.

Highline first initiated this approach with staff serving students seeking targeted program supports or assistance offered in the college’s Workforce Education Services and Women’s Programs/WorkFirst departments. It then extended this approach to staff in the career center as well as staff serving students in the college’s basic skills program and to specific populations of students enrolled as transfer students (i.e., TRIO participants); these actions expanded high-touch service delivery to the broader student population. The Highline approach of providing students upfront one-on-one assessment and assistance is also used at other colleges such as Big Bend, Clark and Patrick Henry.
2. A centralized location where students’ basic needs and financial insecurities can be addressed.

A campus one-stop or “Hub” to provide services in a centralized location to address student’s basic needs and financial insecurities creates synergy around services and enhances opportunity to integrate or bundle services for students provided by college staff and by external partners. A “Hub” for wraparound support services also serves as a visible signal for the campus and community that addressing students’ basic needs and financial insecurities is the responsibility of the college, and can become a “rallying cry” for administrators, faculty, staff, and students – generating widespread buy-in and support around addressing the daily struggles faced by low-income students.

Both Patrick Henry (see profile) and Big Bend created a visible and widely known space on their campuses that administrators, faculty, staff, and students know is where students’ basic needs and financial stability can be addressed. Similarly, project leaders at Highline – though unable to establish a newly renovated Student Support Center during the initiative as envisioned – believe the increased visibility that WSSN created around student poverty on campus and their commitment to addressing issues related to poverty, has enabled their programs to gain a positive identity across campus. College leaders imagine that with a new, centralized “Hub” that can accommodate external partners, improve campus visibility, and concentrate service providers, they could further increase both service usage and effectiveness.
Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville, Virginia, enrolls about 3,000 students annually, 53% part-time and 47% full-time. More than half of the student population receives a Pell Grant to help pay for college. The student population is 69% White, 24% African American, and 4% Hispanic or Latino.

Patrick Henry recognized the potential value of a centralized location where students’ basic needs and financial stability could be addressed at the start of the WSSN initiative. As such, one of the college’s top priorities and first actions was to create a Student Success Center to serve as the Hub for engaging and supporting students in their academic, career and personal activities, and to increase student success and completion. This meant securing dedicated space, bringing various support staff together with those engaged in the WSSN initiative, and establishing an identifiable and branded space for student to receive assistance and support.

The Student Success Center was completed and operational during the first year of the initiative. In addition to bringing various staff together in a common location, the effort also led to all staff in the Student Success Center being cross-trained to become knowledgeable about a variety of matters ranging from advising and tutoring, to opportunities for accessing public benefits and addressing money management and other financial issues. This all-inclusive Hub has both internal and external resources to address students’ basic needs and to improve their financial stability. According to Christy Yaple, the Director of the Student Success Center, “[we] have been able to offer a knowledgeable and highly skilled group of employers to offer a range of services to meet students’ needs, from basic to academic, to increase student enrollment, retention and completion. The Student Success Center is an integral part of individual student success as well as the overall success of Patrick Henry Community College and the community it serves.”

A notable addition to the Student Success Center toward the end of year two was the establishment and location of a food pantry. This proved to be an important step in enhancing the awareness and visibility of the Hub, especially for college instructors and staff. This enhancement was instrumental in expanding campus awareness of student poverty, and building support for the college to institutionalize comprehensive and integrated services that address the broad range of student financial needs.

The importance of the Student Success Center is recognized at the highest levels of the college. For example, the programs and services of the Hub are embedded in the college strategic plan with goals and objectives that need to be met annually. Patrick Henry is actively fundraising to sustain and increase its abilities and resources to meet students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. A top priority in this effort is to raise sufficient funds to build a new and enhanced Student Success Center.
The Working Students Success Network (WSSN) initiative was a systems-level endeavor, requiring participating colleges to undertake policy, practice and procedural changes across multiple levels of the institution and across organizational functions.

Based on an in-depth implementation study at a subset of eight colleges, the evaluation finds two overarching issues that colleges need to address if they want to implement and sustain the delivery of support services that meet students’ basic needs and can improve their financial stability. First, operational success of WSSN services requires organizational integration; and second, campus administrators, faculty, and staff need to be more culturally responsive to needs of students in poverty and the services the colleges should provide to address these needs.

College efforts during WSSN to systematically address the daily challenges of poverty that their students face was comprehensive and complex, requiring a willingness to tackle organizational integration of student support services across programs and departments, and to improve cultural awareness of and responsiveness to student poverty. The evaluation finds a strong operational thread that enabled effective implementation, including the regular engagement of senior leadership and the continuity of project-level leadership, the need to work across divisional lines, the importance of building faculty buy-in to embrace non-academic support services as relevant to academic success, and the engagement of external partners to bolster student support. The evaluation also notes the significant emotional and intellectual empathy expressed by campus stakeholders, who widely reported an enhanced understanding of student poverty and its related challenges, and the responsibility of colleges to provide culturally responsive services and approaches to address students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability. This was most notable when administrators, faculty and staff discussed campus food pantries, which had the potential to engage the support of the entire campus. These food pantries served as high-profile symbols of what the grant was intended to address, and signified the colleges’ commitment to meeting students’ basic needs.

Meeting the complex needs of today’s students — low-income, working, and often with family and work responsibilities that compete with their educational goals — requires that colleges make strategic decisions to allocate resources around organizational integration so that a wide array of support services that address basic needs and financial stability can be provided to large numbers of students. This type of change needs to be systemic – not programmatic – and should include widespread efforts to improve cultural responsiveness among administrators, faculty, staff, and students on issues of poverty and inequity that are undermining college reform efforts to improve student success. Providing support services to address the daily struggles low-income students face to pay for food, housing, child care, health care, and transportation along with college tuition and fees should be an essential strategy of the college completion agenda.
APPENDIX A:
IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION
METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Study Design

The Working Students Success Network (WSSN) Implementation Study was designed as a utilization-focused evaluation (1) to document the services colleges designed and delivered to students to help address basic needs and improve financial stability, including the integration or bundling of these services, and (2) to assess the implementation progress of colleges’ efforts. Utilization-focused evaluation emphasizes design, analysis, and results that are oriented toward the use of intended audiences (Patton, 2008). Thus, the evaluation design reflected an intentional approach that systematically gathered qualitative data from WSSN constituents and stakeholders who were best suited to describe the breadth and depth of WSSN services, as well as provide rich and contextual description of implementation progress across the colleges. As such, the evaluation results are based on the direct experiences of those involved with WSSN, and the intention of results are to inform funders, colleges, and state systems about possible best practices to support this work. This qualitative approach allowed for the capture of rich, contextual data to describe case-specific similarities and differences, as well as work and processes that occur over time in the implementation and enactment of programs (Patton, 2002).

The overarching evaluation questions for the implementation study were:

1. What types of services did colleges provide to students across the three WSSN pillars of education and employment advancement; income and work supports; and financial literacy and asset building; including the integration or bundling of these services to better meet students’ basic needs and improve their financial stability?

2. How have colleges made implementation progress around the delivery of services and pillars identified by WSSN, the collection and use of data, and institutional culture change, and did colleges reach the institutionalization and sustainability stage of implementation?

The evaluation team co-created a set of domains and constructs to document WSSN services (Appendix B) and an implementation stages framework to measure implementation progress (Appendix C) through a
series of discussions with funders that included supporting documentation from the WSSN initiative on service constructs, and was informed by the National Implementation Research Network. The team adapted these materials to fit the context of the WSSN initiative, and developed a set of site visit protocols that consisted of interview guides and notes templates that aligned to the evaluations questions and frameworks. These protocols ensured systematic data collection across the colleges.

Over the course of 18 months, the evaluation team systematically gathered qualitative data from WSSN constituents and stakeholders who were best suited to describe the breadth and depth of WSSN services, as well as to provide rich and contextual description of implementation progress across the colleges. To document the services colleges made available to students, the evaluation team reviewed college implementation plans and annual reports to Achieving the Dream, and conducted phone interviews with all colleges during the first year of implementation. These data collection activities informed the domains and constructs matrix in Appendix B that was developed during the second year of implementation and further refined during the third and final year of implementation. During spring 2017, the evaluation team conducted structured phone interviews with key project leaders at 18 colleges, using the domains and construct matrix to catalogue and describe the types of services colleges were providing in each pillar, how colleges were integrating or bundling services across pillars, and if services were required for students or offered as an opt-in or voluntary support.

To assess implementation progress, the evaluation team selected eight colleges to conduct in-depth site visits during fall 2016 and spring 2017, which was the third year of implementation. These colleges were selected after an initial round of evaluation phone interviews with all WSSN colleges in fall 2015, and reflected a diverse set of institutions that were deemed to be in the best position to make significant progress during the initiative to deliver integrated or bundled services to students, to collect data on student receipt of services, and to intentionally address culture change on campus. Colleges were also selected so that at least one college in each of the four states would be part of the in-depth implementation study. The eight colleges were: North Arkansas (AR); Cabrillo and LA Harbor (CA); Danville and Patrick Henry (VA); and Big Bend, Clark and Highline (WA). All eight colleges were visited during fall 2016 and six of the eight colleges were visited a second time in spring 2017.
To guide data collection and analysis, the evaluation team developed an implementation stages framework based on prior implementation studies and informed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). This framework is provided in Appendix C, and provides a series of implementation progress indicators across four stages of implementation: exploration and design; early implementation; mature implementation; and, institutionalization and sustainability. These stages of implementation were mapped to the three WSSN goal areas – service delivery, data collection and use, and culture change – and the evaluation team assessed progress for colleges in each goal area to determine implementation progress at two distinct points in time: fall 2016 and spring 2017.

**Study Sample**

Two samples were drawn from the participating colleges based upon the area of evaluation inquiry: (1) documentation and description of service constructs and (2) measurement and assessment of implementation progress.

For service construct documentation, project leads and staff with WSSN-specific programmatic knowledge were selected as participants because they had the most knowledge of WSSN services across the three pillars. Table A1 summarizes the participants who were interviewed about service constructs in fall 2016 and spring 2017. Service construct interviews took place during fall 2016 (Year 2) implementation progress site visits, therefore, a subset of colleges were interviewed. Eight colleges and 20 stakeholders at those colleges participated in service construct interviews in fall 2016. Eighteen of the 19 colleges and 43 participants were interviewed in spring 2017.
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For the assessment of implementation progress, the participant sample consisted of 9 groups of WSSN stakeholders: (1) project leaders; (2) direct service providers (includes both staff and faculty); (3) faculty (both direct and non-direct service providers); (4) mid- and upper administration (e.g., deans, vice-presidents); (5) student services staff (non-direct service providers); (6) students (fall 2016 only); (7) information technology and institutional research (IT/IR); (8) president; and (9) external partners (e.g., state or county agencies, local non-profit organizations).

The college sample for the fall 2016 data collection consisted of eight of the 19 WSSN colleges: Big Bend, Cabrillo, Clark, Danville, Highline, LA Harbor, North Arkansas, and Patrick Henry. The criteria of college selection were based on at least one college from each state served by the WSSN and colleges that represent a range of WSSN implementation progress to date, as informed by a careful review of the data collected in 2015 during the first year of the initiative. A total of 239 stakeholders participated in the fall 2016 data collection. See Table A2 for a summary of the totals of participants by stakeholder groups across the eight colleges.
Table A2: WSSN Site Visit Sample Fall 2016

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<th>COLLEGES</th>
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<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>IT/IR</th>
<th>PRESIDENT</th>
<th>EXTERNAL PARTNERS</th>
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1The participant number reflects an observation of a meeting, rather than a focus group.

The college sample for the spring 2017 data collection consisted of six of the 19 WSSN colleges: Big Bend, Clark, Highline, LA Harbor, North Arkansas, and Patrick Henry. These colleges were selected because they achieved at least mature implementation progress in two of the three WSSN goal areas as of fall 2016. Table A3 summarizes the 125 participants in the spring 2017 sample.

Table A3: WSSN Site Visit Sample Spring 2017

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Data Collection and Analysis
For service construct documentation, interviews with project leads and staff familiar with the WSSN program were conducted in fall 2016 during the in-person site visit on implementation progress to eight colleges; and, in spring 2017, phone interviews with project leads and staff familiar with the WSSN program were conducted. These phone interviews were conducted by two evaluation team members; one evaluation team member facilitated the interview while the other evaluation team member captured notes into an excel spreadsheet that specified all pillars and dimensions of service constructs. The service construct data were then aggregated and compiled into a taxonomy adapted from Landwher et al. (1994). After instances of WSSN services were captured into the categories of the taxonomy, aggregations of each service type were calculated, and patterns across pillars and bundles were identified.
For the assessment of implementation progress, data were collected during in-depth site visits in fall 2016 and spring 2017. Each site visit consisted of two evaluators who visited campus for 1-2 days; one evaluator conducted the interview or focus group, while the other evaluator scribed notes into pre-defined notes templates aligned to the interview questions, evaluation frameworks, and study design (each site visit team individually determined who would conduct interviews and scribe notes). Prior to the site visit, evaluators coordinated with project leads to schedule interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders summarized in Tables A2 and A3. Data collection consisted of interviews, focus groups, and an observation of meeting (when an interview or focus group was not possible to schedule). Interviews and focus groups were guided by a semi-structured guide organized around the evaluation questions and aligned to the Implementation Stages Framework in Appendix C. Interviews and focus groups were 30 to 60 minutes in length, and held in private rooms or areas on campus. Each participant gave oral consent per the approved IRB protocol.

Data analysis for implementation progress occurred in three stages to ensure data quality, reliability, and validity of the evaluation findings. Each stage of data analysis used the Implementation Stages Framework [Appendix C] to determine the levels of implementation progress colleges achieved at the time of the site visit. These levels ranged from exploration and design to early and mature implementation, and finally to institutionalization and sustainability. Moreover, the evaluation team assessed the stage of implementation for each of the three WSSN goals: service delivery, data use, and culture change.

For stage 1 analysis, notes were compiled from each interview or focus group as well as an overall site visit summary that assessed college progress along the implementation stages for each WSSN goal. Both site visit team members contributed and mutually agreed to the site visit summary documents before submitting them to the overall evaluation team for data analysis and review.

For stage 2, a content analysis approach with the support of QSR NVivo©, a qualitative software package, was used. Data analysis at this level consisted of placing segments of text from interviews or focus groups (excluding overall site visit team summaries) into one of the indicators in the evaluation framework for implementation progress. Next, the comments in each indicator or theme were aggregated and synthesized to produce initial summaries of individual colleges’ implementation progress.
The final stage of data analysis occurred within the reflective context of the evaluation team. Each team member read every summary from the fall 2016 and spring 2017 site visits, and based on those summaries, placed the colleges in one of the implementation stages for each WSSN goal. These assessments were completed, along with a review of the service construct and implementation progress data analysis summaries completed in Stage 1, in preparation of an all-day, in-person evaluation team meeting held on July 11, 2017. During the in-person meeting, the evaluation team reviewed, discussed, interpreted, and revised the service construct and implementation progress summaries, based on site visit team experiences and patterns that emerged across the colleges. This discussion served as a data quality check to the interpretation of Stage 1 and 2 data analysis, and further enriched and contextualized the findings (not every person went to every site visit, so the collective discussion filled gaps in explanations for site visits that an evaluation team member may not have participated in).

References


## Appendix B:
Domains and Constructs to Document WSSN Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Service Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain 1: Service Content</strong></td>
<td>Employment and education • Career development and planning • Employment services (e.g., resume writing, interviewing, job search and placement) • Academic support and assistance, including tutoring • Career services (both planning and employment services) • Short-term training • Other—clothing assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Domain 1: Service Delivery** | Required (mandatory) • Opt-in/voluntary • Online • In-class • Out-of-class • External partner actively engaged • Personalized, one-on-one, “high-touch” interaction (e.g., financial coaches) |

| **Domain 1: Bundling** | Two or more low-touch services across two or more pillars are delivered in an integrated manner, sequentially or simultaneously • Multiple low-touch services and one or more high-touch services from two different pillars are delivered in an integrated manner, sequentially or simultaneously • Multiple high-touch services across two or more pillars are delivered in an integrated manner, sequentially or simultaneously • At least one low-touch and one high-touch service from a single pillar are delivered in an integrated manner, sequentially or simultaneously • Two high-touch services from a single pillar are delivered in an integrated manner, sequentially or simultaneously |

| **Domain 4: Administrative Home (Level of Leadership with Responsibility)** | Vice president/executive • Dean • Project/program director |
# APPENDIX C: IMPLEMENTATION STAGES FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION STAGES</th>
<th>WSSN SERVICES</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>CULTURE CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **EXPLORATION & DESIGN** | • Ideas and plans for services developed  
• Resources for services identified  
• Project leaders and support team identified  
• Target group of students identified | • Project leaders and support team identified  
• Data elements identified and procedures for data collection designed | • Project leaders and support team identified, including external partners  
• Administrative home for WSSN services identified |
| **EARLY IMPLEMENTATION** | • Project leaders and support team trained to deliver services  
• External partners identified and contacted to support service delivery  
• Services delivered to “pilot” student populations  
• Relevant policies, practices and procedures identified that need to change | • Data systems launched to collect student-level information on services received  
• Staff trained to collect and enter data on services received | • Senior administrators publicly acknowledge institutional culture change is a goal  
• Middle managers, faculty and staff indicate buy-in for culture change  
• Activities planned for all campus stakeholders to address culture change goals |
| **MATURE IMPLEMENTATION (YEAR 3 FOCUS)** | • Low- and high-touch services are delivered in each of three pillars, including required services in student success class, and financial coaching  
• WSSN services are bundled across two or more pillars  
• WSSN services reflect equitable and culturally responsive approaches  
• Plans for scaling WSSN services to serve all targeted student populations are being developed  
• External partners have ongoing presence on campus, engaging students, faculty, staff and administrators | • Project leaders regularly review data on WSSN service utilization and outcomes to make improvements to service delivery  
• Data on WSSN service uptake and outcomes for students receiving services are reported to senior administrative leaders  
• IT/IR regularly engage with WSSN program staff to optimize programmatic data use | • Regular and ongoing college-wide communication and professional development about culture change goals and activities, such as equity and/or cultural responsiveness  
• Campus stakeholders are aware that college should and will address students’ needs in culturally-responsive manner  
• Policies, practices and procedures changed at college to support cultural responsiveness |
### Appendix C: Implementation Stages Framework (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Stages</th>
<th>WSSN Services</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Culture Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Institutionalized and Sustained (Year 3 Focus)** | - WSSN services are weaved into the normal experience of students (e.g., not an ‘add-on’), and integrated into other institutional activities  
- Campus stakeholders understand and describe WSSN services as regular and standard supports for student  
- Job descriptions include expectations for referral and/or provision of WSSN services as core role and responsibility of faculty and staff  
- Formal curriculum changes enacted w/r/t WSSN services, if applicable  
- Budgetary and staff resources allocated to support WSSN services post-award  
- Leadership aligns WSSN services to institution’s strategic framework | - WSSN service utilization and outcome information integrated into annual, regular data reports, and shared with broad cross-section of campus stakeholders  
- Plans are in-place for WSSN data to be regularly used to improve program and service delivery, and to inform decision-making  
- WSSN data are disaggregated to address equity gaps | - Faculty, staff, and administrators articulate equity and culturally responsiveness as institutional priority  
- College has a codified and enacted stakeholder engagement and communication plan around equity and cultural-responsiveness  
- A broad cross-section of faculty, staff, and administrators can point to changes in their attitudes and behaviors to demonstrate a commitment to equity and cultural responsiveness |

Note: The implementation stages are based on the National Implementation Research Network, [http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/](http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/). The institutionalized and sustained level of implementation progress was also partially informed by Achieving the Dream’s Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool. The WSSN formative evaluation team developed the indicators for each stage based on prior implementation research and experience.
ENDNOTES:


3. Ibid.


5. Wisconsin HOPE Lab’s report, “Hungry and Homeless in College” (March 2017). http://www.wiopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf. Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner. Homelessness means that a person is without a place to live, often residing in a shelter, an automobile, an abandoned building or outside, while housing insecurity includes a broader set of challenges such as the inability to pay rent or utilities or the need to move frequently.


7. Based on the Center for Working Families approach, the Working Families Success Network provides a coordinated set of services to help low-income individuals and families achieve financial stability. More information about WFSN can be found here: http://workingfamiessuccess.com/

8. Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs) are career and personal finance service centers that help low- to moderate-income people build smart money habits and stabilize their long-term financial outlook. More information about the FOCs can be found here: http://www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/financial-stability/financial-opportunity-centers/

9. SparkPoint Centers are one-stop financial and education centers that enable low-income residents to access a range of services to help them out of poverty and achieve long-term financial stability. More information about SparkPoint Centers can be found here: https://uwba.org/sparkpoint

10. Benefits Access for College Completion was a multi-year initiative focused on helping community college students access a suite of public benefits and enable the college to intentionally and systematically embed benefits access and related services directly into its operations. The final report is available here: http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Benefits-Access-for-College-Completion-Lessons-Learned.pdf. The final BACC evaluation report is available here: https://www.dvp-


Achieving the Dream defined culture change as: (1) the establishment of a senior leadership and administrative home for WSSN accountability and reporting; (2) the development and delivery of formal campus events to promote WSSN services and promulgate the values of equity and excellence; (3) the provision of professional development and training opportunities for campus stakeholders to support and prioritize WSSN services college-wide; and (4) the facilitation of a climate of equity and inclusiveness by embedding the WSSN initiative into the systems and structures of the college.

See http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EOPSCARE.aspx. EOPS supports students disadvantaged by language, social, economic, and educational circumstances.

See https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/home

A thirteenth college, Skyline (CA), had a food pantry prior to the launch of WSSN, which they implemented as part of their SparkPoint Center.

Money Smart: https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/

SALT: https://www.saltmoney.org/index.html

United Way: http://www.unitedwayofhcm.org/money-management-mentoring-program

St. Louis Federal Reserve: https://www.stlouisfed.org/Education/

Colleges targeted students already engaged with public benefits programs like SNAP and TANF, as well as certain workforce education and training programs.

This implementation report focuses on the services colleges provided to students, and does not assess how many students received services or their educational outcomes. A summative outcome study by Mathematica Policy Research is planned for March 2018, and will document receipt of WSSN services and related educational outcomes.

TRIO is a federal program that funds institutions of higher education to provide support services to assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to succeed in college.

Umoja (a Kiswahili word meaning unity) is a college-based program dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students.

Although 19 colleges are represented in WSSN, the implementation study includes only 18 of these colleges; one college is excluded because qualitative data were unable to be collected during the study period.

See http://niirn.fpg.unc.edu/