# Student Support (Re)defined

Equitable
Integrated
Cost Effective

# What is Student Support (Re)defined?

Student Support (Re)defined aims to understand how community colleges can feasibly deliver support both inside and outside the classroom to improve success for *all* students.

## What are the six factors for success?

Through a review of leading studies on effective support practices and interviews with both practitioners and researchers, the RP Group identified "six success factors" that contribute to students' success. These factors subsequently drove our inquiry into what *students* find critical to their achievement. We list them below in the order of importance according to students participating in our study.

**DIRECTED:** Students have a goal and know how to achieve it

**FOCUSED:** Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize

**NURTURED:** Students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed

**ENGAGED:** Students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities

**CONNECTED:** Students feel like they are part of the college community

**VALUED:** Students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

*For a full report of student perspectives on these six success factors, please visit:* www.rpgroup.org/sites/default/files/StudentPerspectivesResearchReportJan2013.pdf



## What did we discover?

In phone surveys and focus groups, the RP Group asked nearly **900 students from 13 California community colleges what supports their educational success, paying special attention to the factors African Americans and Latinos cite as important to their achievement.** Five distinct themes emerged:

1. **Colleges need to foster students' motivation.**

   While this research recognizes students as key agents in their own educational success, it also highlights that even those who arrive to college motivated need their drive continuously stoked and augmented. Findings suggest that undecided and first-generation students in particular may need additional support to find, hone and maintain their motivation.
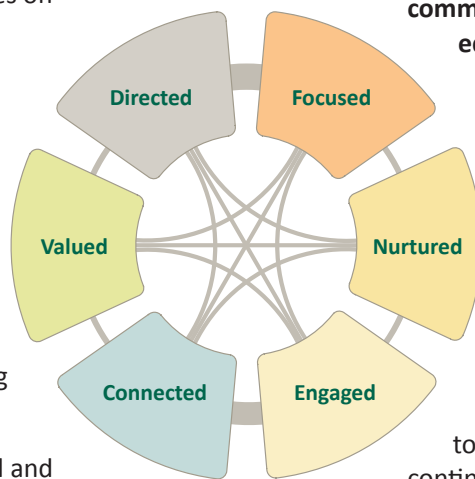
2. **Colleges must teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment.** These findings also imply that colleges must show students how to translate their motivation into success. Students need assistance building the specific skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and thrive in their community college, particularly those who are new to higher education or who arrive without a particular goal in mind.

3. **Colleges need to structure support to ensure all six success factors are addressed.** Participants (a) confirmed the six success factors were important to their progress and achievement and (b) indicated that the factors interact with each other in various ways. Students noted how

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experiencing one factor often led to realizing another, or how two factors were inextricably linked to one another. Since students do not experience these factors in isolation, colleges need to consider ways to help students attain multiple factors at once.

4. **Colleges need to provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing.** Comprehensive support is more likely to address the multiple needs—academic, financial, social and personal—identified by African-American, Latino and first-generation participants in this study. These students were more likely to cite a lack of academic support, the absence of someone at the college who cared about their success and insufficient financial assistance as reasons not to continue their education. Colleges must find a way to provide comprehensive support to these student groups—at scale. If they do not, the equity gap will likely grow.

5. **Everyone has a role to play in supporting student achievement, but faculty must take the lead.** Participants noted how everyone on a campus can affect their achievement. Their responses underscored the importance of colleges promoting a culture where all individuals across the institution understand their role in advancing students' success, no matter their position at the college. Yet, students most commonly recognized instructional faculty as having the greatest potential impact on their educational journeys and suggested multiple ways teachers can support their progress both inside and outside class.

*For a detailed discussion of these themes, please visit:* www.rpgroup.org/sites/default/files/StudentPerspectivesResearchBriefJan2013.pdf

# How can you use Student Support (Re)defined on your campus?

Interested in using Student Support (Re)defined results to strengthen student support and achievement on your campus? Consider the following resources:

- **Practically Speaking: Community College Practices that (Re)define Student Support:** A primer that features 23 practices demonstrating the study's five themes and six success factors

- **Action Guide: Exploring Ways to Strengthen Student Support at Your College:** A tool that can enhance existing campus student support initiatives or facilitate new efforts through an inquiry and planning process based on the study's results

- **10 Ways *Everyone* Can Support Student Success:** Practical advice based on students' suggestions for how anyone working on a college campus can support their success

- **10 Ways *Faculty* Can Support Students' Success:** Practical advice that highlights students' ideas for how faculty can integrate support in and out of the classroom

- **Research in Action:** Project webpage sharing these and other resources; includes examples of how community colleges are using Student Support (Re)defined on their campuses

*Contribute your own example of how your institution is acting on Student Support (Re)defined by contacting Dr. Darla Cooper at* dcooper@rpgroup.org

## For more information . . .

Find more information and all project resources at: www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support

**If you are interested in having a customized presentation or workshop on Student Support (Re)defined at your institution or believe your institution could benefit from technical assistance specifically designed to help your institution use findings for action**, please contact Dr. Darla Cooper, Director of Research and Evaluation, dcooper@rpgroup.org.