



Statement on Student Success Plans

Planning Committee on Higher Learning Accountability and Productivity

Ohio Board of Regents

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Student Success Plan Defined

A Student Success Plan is a clear, public statement of the measurable learning outcomes expected of students attending an institution, published on the institution's own web site.

A complete Student Success Plan has these components. First, it defines learning outcomes in General Education and reports on student achievement relative to those outcomes. Second, it defines learning outcomes in undergraduate majors and reports on student achievement relative to those outcomes. Third, it identifies and measures the impact of special features of the undergraduate learning experience that occur in institution-wide programs (for example, first-year experience programs, residential learning communities, undergraduate research, study abroad, internships and co-ops, service learning). These components reflect attainment of student goals in professional and personal endeavors, a larger purpose of higher education.

The Planning Committee for Higher Learning Accountability and Productivity of the Ohio Board of Regents recommends strongly that all of Ohio's public two- and four-year institutions publish their Student Success Plans online and link them through a gateway website such as <http://regents.ohio.gov/studentsuccess>. The Committee also urges Ohio's independent colleges to share demonstrations of student success.

Rationale for Student Success Plans

Sensible measures of student success require evidence that students are learning the skills and strategies needed to contribute to societal needs and to compete in the global economy.

At present, however, the measures of student success are deficient. Also, employers express concerns about poorly prepared graduates. Grade point averages, certificates of completion, and graduation itself have become insufficient evidence of student success. Rankings and ratings of institutions tell incomplete and even misleading stories—reflecting the caliber of the students that are attracted, rather than the quality of their achievement shown in tangible products of student learning. Many typical measures fall short of providing meaningful information. For example,

- The SAT, ACT, high school GPA, and a variety of subjective criteria may determine an applicant's acceptance into an Ohio college or university, but these indicators do not measure progress or ultimate achievements.
- Measures such as faculty to student ratios, graduation rates, and post-graduation job placements tell Ohioans something about educational quality, but they pay little attention to what students can *do* after completing their educational programs.
- Indirect measures, such as surveys asking current students or graduates to report the quantity and quality of faculty-student interaction and the amount of homework, can provide useful information, but they measure reactions rather than learning.
- Even validated measures of student learning, such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress, cited in the report of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, fail to measure the breadth and depth of collegiate learning. These measures focus narrowly on general education skills and abilities, while ignoring the content and abilities specific to the major area of study, the natural focus of the baccalaureate degree.

Student Success Plans signal a fundamental change toward more direct measurement of student learning in higher education. They present a practical alternative to the typical measures and also to “one-size-fits-all” standardized testing of college students.

Student Success Plans honor the distinctiveness of each individual institution by emphasizing its specific mission, unique programs, and learning outcomes—these strengths and assets remain intact.

Student Success Plans provide the framework for asking tough questions and demonstrating accountability for students' educational progress. The components of Student Success Plans defined above provide common definitions and measures in general education, specific programs and majors, and any special features of the college experience, including the critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills that all graduates should possess.

By making their Student Success Plan methods and results available online, Ohio's higher education institutions can lead the way in documenting educational accountability while maintaining a clear focus on what really counts, student learning.

This statement and other information and resources appear online at <http://regents.ohio.gov/accountability>.

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