

Student Success Impact Report | 2023

Closing the Student Impact Gap: Maximize Student Success with Data-Activated Strategies

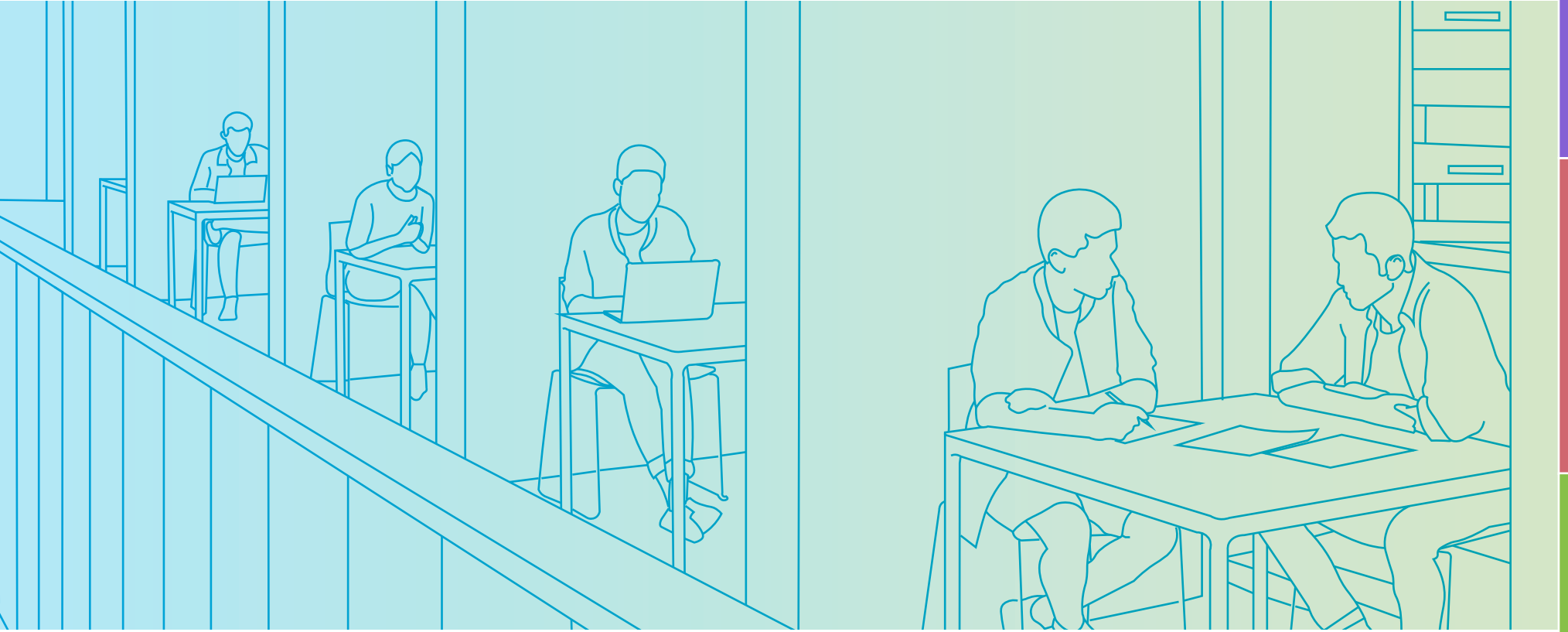


Table of Contents:

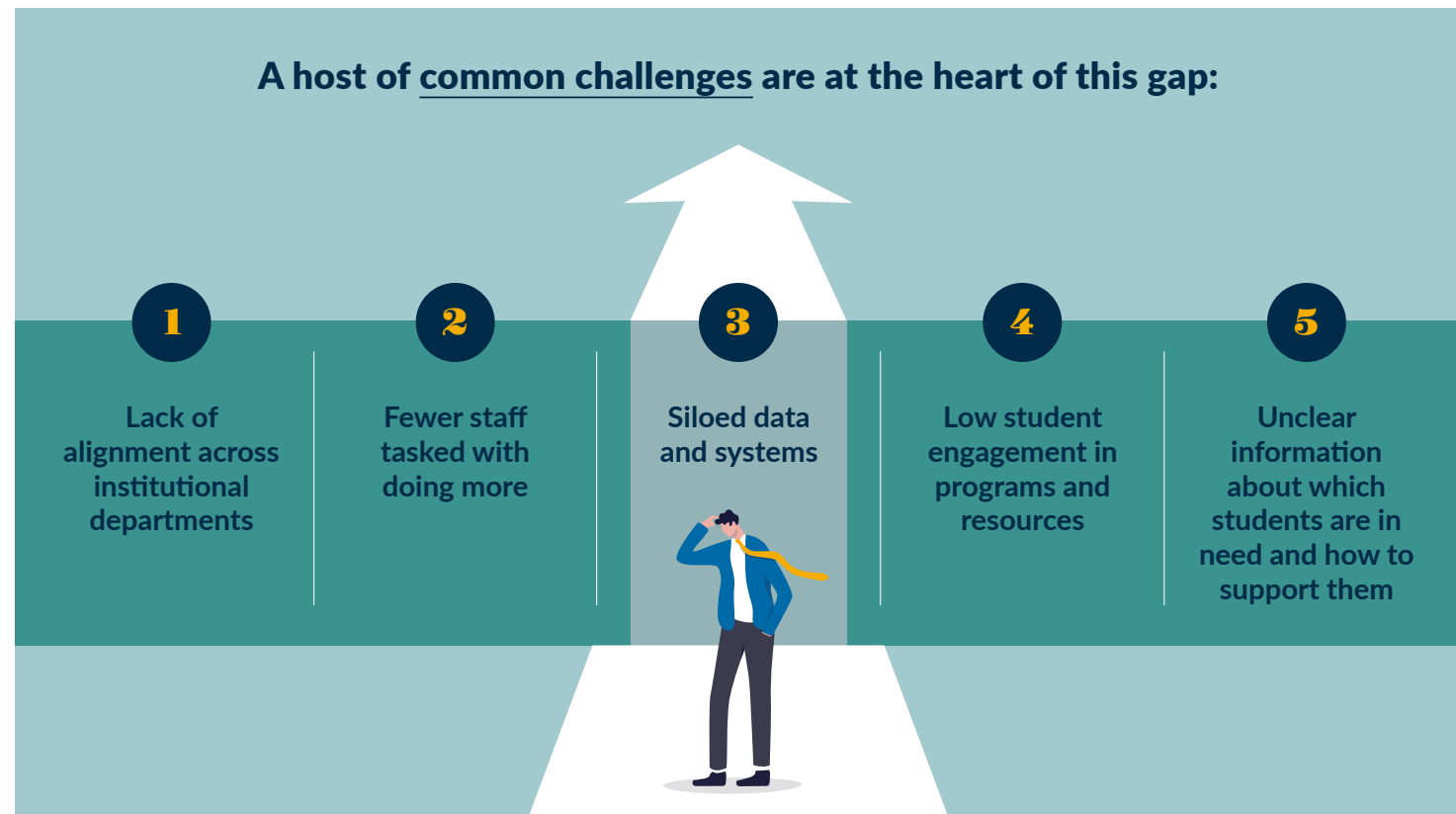
1. Introduction Welcome to the Civitas Learning Student Success Impact Report	<u>3</u>
2. Overall Trends Supporting the Whole Student	<u>6</u>
3. Cautionary Findings Practices with a Harmful Impact on Persistence	<u>12</u>
4. Top Initiatives, by Student Population Pinpointing What Works	<u>16</u>
5. Methodology The Strength of Propensity Score Matching	<u>24</u>
6. Conclusion Plan Your Own Data-Driven Strategies	<u>26</u>

Welcome to the Civitas Learning® Student Success Impact Report

This report reviews student success strategies, sharing what interventions work and for whom with the Civitas Learning partner community. For this installment, we explore trends revealed by evaluating a broad range of student success initiatives across 48 institutions.

The goal of this effort is to help higher education leaders implement the right combination of strategies and investments at their colleges and universities to improve student and institutional outcomes.

Investments in initiatives to enhance student success have included various services and support for years. But too often, colleges and universities rely on unresponsive one-size-fits-all approaches, resulting in a disconnect between the desired outcomes and those they actually achieve. At Civitas Learning, we call this phenomenon the *Student Impact Gap*.



Finding the path to overcoming these concerns is imperative, particularly during this time of declining enrollment, increasing competition, and shifting student priorities. That route begins by using actionable analytics to identify the right combination of strategies that will deliver the outcomes institutions want to achieve. *But it doesn't end there.*

To truly harness the power of data, institutions must use it to:



Predict potential risks to succeeding for every individual



Diagnose the underlying “why” to identify the supports or policies that address it



Facilitate coordinated action by leaders, staff, and students, leading to better results in less time

In other words, moving beyond the Student Impact Gap—and toward outcomes that align with investment and mission—requires not only gathering student data but also using it effectively.



Using student success analytics can enormously impact institutions and their students. When they rely on data-activated strategies and programs, institutions can:

- **CONNECT** students to support that works for them;
- **INFORM** strategic planning and decision-making;
- **ALLOCATE** resources to the most effective combination of initiatives; and
- **FOSTER** collaboration to coordinate student success approaches.

For this Student Success Impact Report, we examined data related to services and supports during the 18 months between summer 2021 and the end of calendar year 2022. From advising appointments to library resources, our analysis focused on over 500 initiatives serving over 3.9 million students at 48 institutions.

To evaluate programs' effectiveness across our community of partners, we applied persistence propensity score matching capabilities in the Citivas Learning Student Impact Platform to understand which programs had a statistically significant impact on outcomes for specific student populations. This report shows the percentage-point (PP) impact that each type of initiative had on persistence, a leading indicator of student success.

This Student Success Impact Report highlights key insights revealed from the selected period. It also spotlights several institutions that are iterating and improving on the effectiveness of their programs to improve those trends.

Institutions should perform their own analyses to inform their student success programming since it is essential to monitor student persistence on a regular basis. This practice allows colleges and universities to proactively address the changing needs of their students, faculty, and staff and understand how these changes in programming impact their goals.

It also helps schools avoid the Student Impact Gap now—and in the future.

18
months

500+
initiatives

3.9M+
students

48
institutions

2

Institutions that achieve the best outcomes focus on a broad range of support related to students' overall experiences.



Supporting the Whole Student

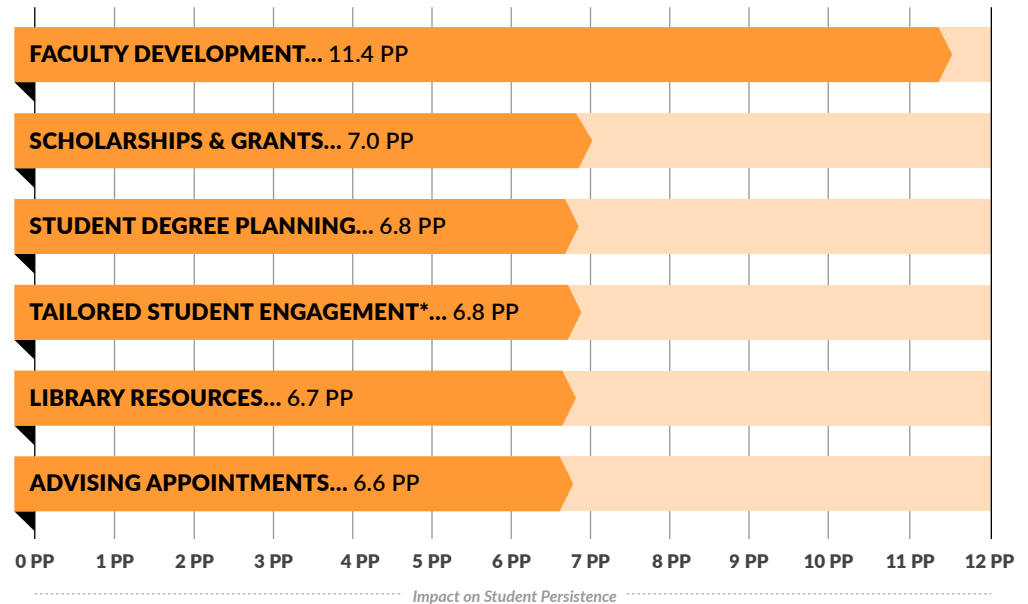
A key trend that emerged from our initiative analysis is that, while traditional student success supports continue to encourage persistence, they don't represent the entire picture of what it takes for students to succeed.

Academic advising and support services—*supplemental instruction, tutoring, and writing center availability*—provide an important foundation for models that encourage persistence. Initiatives that achieve the best outcomes, however, focus on a broad range of support related to students' overall experiences.

Following is a look at some of the clear winners among student success practices. These efforts include emerging practices that are delivering significant impact, as well as long-used approaches whose results reinforce the value that they've historically shown in enhancing student success.

High-Impact Practices

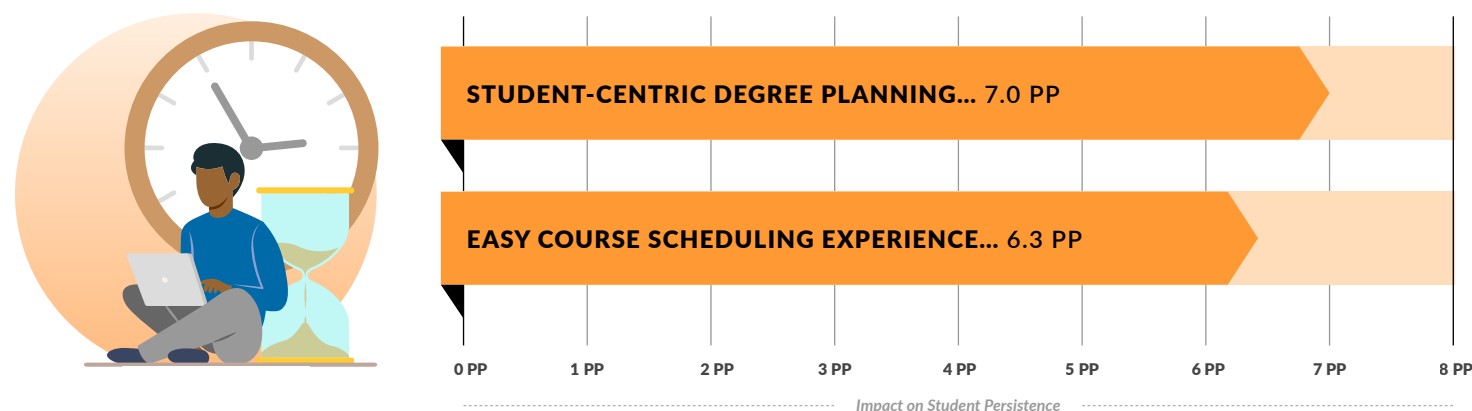
Student success is complex and influenced by many factors and experiences. **Our analysis reveals, however, that some key initiatives had the greatest positive impact on student success across institutions and student groups:**



* also referred to as nudge campaigns

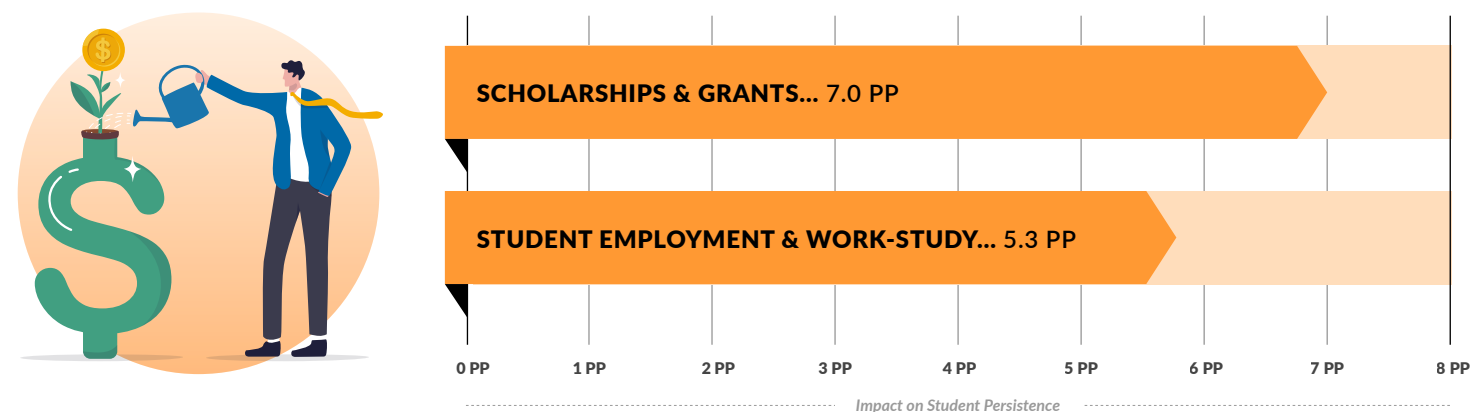
Academic Planning & Course Scheduling

An integral part of the student experience—planning and scheduling courses—is often a barrier to student persistence and completion. For many, difficulty fitting courses into their lives is a primary reason they don't complete their education on time. Our findings show that efforts to help students plan their schedules around responsibilities like work and caregiving significantly encourage persistence toward graduation. **Outcomes include:**



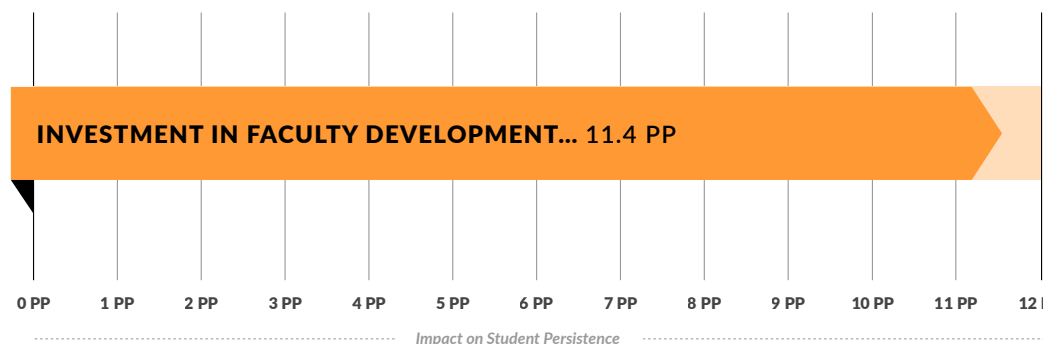
Financial Support

Providing financial assistance to cover tuition and living costs is support proven to encourage persistence.³ They're not the only benefit that institutional assistance provides. When students participate in school-based work-study opportunities, they can help the institution fill open positions, connect more closely to faculty and staff, focus on education as their main priority, and build their professional skill set. **The results of our analysis show the impact this support has:**



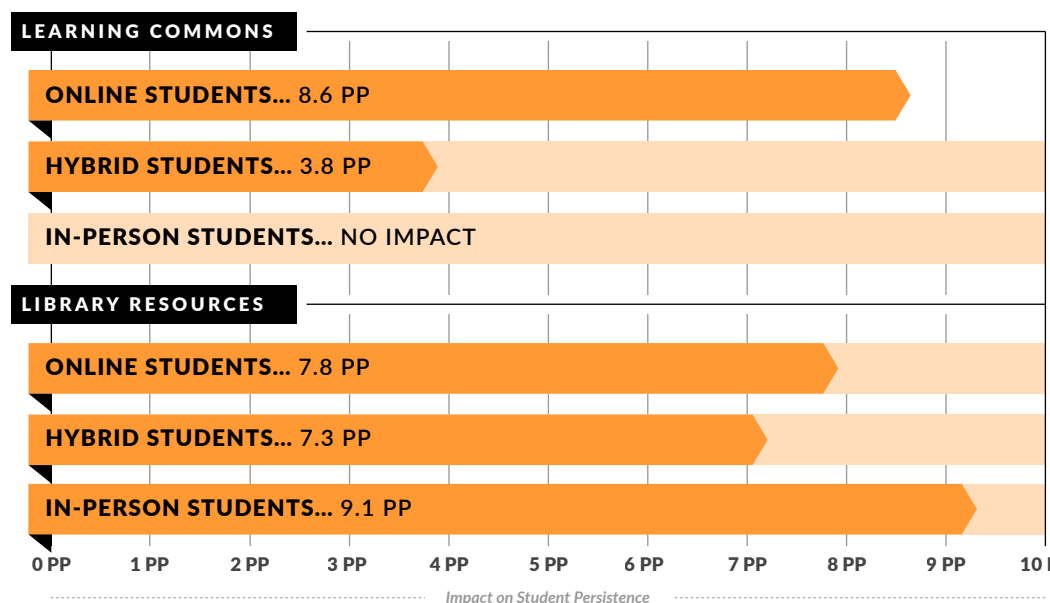
Faculty Development

The results of our analysis send a clear message stronger faculty are good for student success. Investing in faculty development yielded a significant increase in persistence. **In fact, the percentage point lift associated with this effort was more significant than that for many of the tried-and-true initiatives.**



Learning Spaces

To successfully complete their courses, students need the space and tools to do the work. Providing ample locations for learning, including library resources and shared spaces, significantly impacted student success across populations and course formats. **Our analysis shows positive results for students—regardless of course modality—accessing the following learning spaces:**





PARTNER EXAMPLE:

Holistic Support Leads to Doubled Graduation Rate

After improving equitable outcomes by creating a campus infrastructure and culture that support data-activated student success efforts, one Florida-based public university did not rest on its laurels. Instead, they looked more closely at ways they could holistically support the needs of the institution's diverse student population.

These efforts doubled the four-year graduation rate and earned national praise.

To achieve these successes, leaders first evaluated activities that encourage student involvement to determine whether they impacted persistence—and, if so, for whom. The leadership team compiled records of participation in campus activities. Then they used the Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform to analyze how participation and student engagement lifted a student's persistence probability.

The analysis showed that student involvement in key programs improved success.
Results included:



2.5 PP lift

Health consultations
& workshops



2.6 PP lift

Campus Recreation
fitness & sports



2.2 PP lift

Career Center career
development & assistance



4.9 PP lift

Involvement in any of 550
academic groups, clubs,
& social organizations

Leaders used Initiative Analysis capabilities to identify which students benefited from each program. The results informed the collaborative efforts of staff, who encouraged students to get involved in the activities and programs.

They added these interventions to other student success strategies to achieve a dramatic graduation rate increase; the four-year rate was nearly 48% in 2020, compared with 19% in 2014. Historically underserved groups—including Black, Latino, and Pell Grant-eligible students—showed the most significant gains.

Leaders used Initiative Analysis to identify which students benefited from each program. The results informed the collaborative efforts of staff, who encouraged students to get involved in activities.



3



An approach that considers students' data-identified needs can lead to positive outcomes, but cookie-cutter application often has the opposite effect.

Practices with a Harmful Impact on Persistence

Our trends analysis also highlights some common student success practices that warrant caution when implementing. These interventions appear to be beneficial but can actually be harmful when institutions use them ineffectively.

An approach that considers students' data-identified needs can lead to positive outcomes from these type of initiatives, but cookie-cutter application often has the opposite effect. **Institutions should use care when employing these student success tactics:**

Early Alerts

While there can be exceptions—including peer-to-peer early alert programming, described later in this report—early alerts to students needing assistance are a well-intentioned intervention that can backfire. **Without a targeted approach informed by student, faculty, and staff needs, these alerts can:**

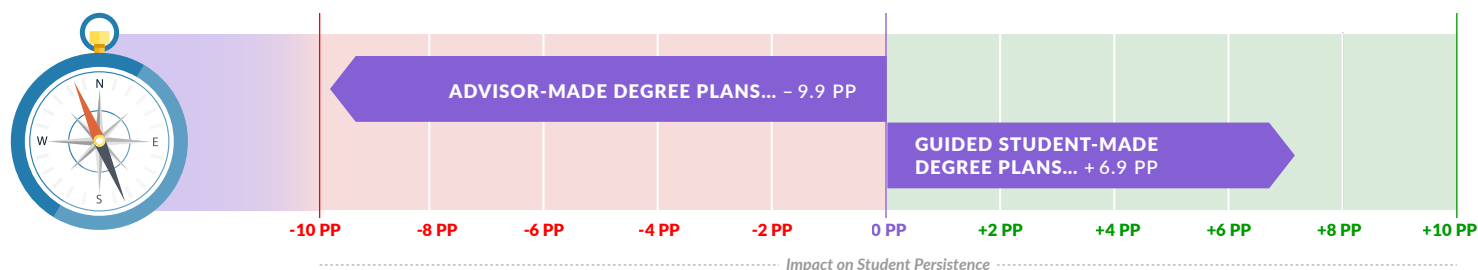
- *Discourage student engagement and a sense of belonging;*
- *Overwhelm staff with alerts that do not reflect a whole picture of student performance and behavior;*
- *Occur at peak times that prevent staff from responding quickly; and*
- *Perpetuate implicit bias and systemic barriers to success for students of color and other underserved populations.*

Our analysis reveals an overall trend that bears out the potential problems with early alerts, showing a decrease in student success:



Advisor-Prepared Degree Plans

Assigning advisors the task of preparing degree plans for students might seem like a smart way to keep students on track. But involving students in planning not only allows them to take an active role in preparing for their future, it also fosters a connection to their advisor and the institution.⁴ In fact, our analysis shows that advisor-designed degree plans often harm student success. **When students took the lead with advisors acting as a guide, the results were much different: a significant increase in student success.**



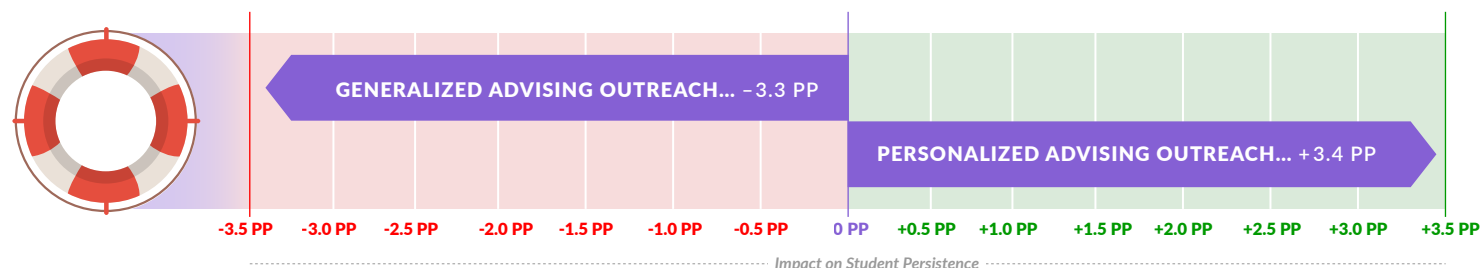
Advising Outreach

Advisor outreach to students can be effective. In fact, with a 6.8 percentage-point lift, tailored student engagement campaigns (also known as nudge campaigns) rank among the high-impact student success practices previously noted. The key to success lies in the word “tailored.” Insights from student success analytics should inform which students to engage, the tactics teams use to communicate, and which resources to connect them to. Colleges and universities can ensure that their communication with students is productive by taking this approach instead of one with general, transactional messages.

Effective advising outreach is:

- *Personalized, with messaging that makes it clear that the advisor cares about the student’s success;*
- *Multichannel, using not only in-person communication but also email, text, and video; and*
- *Attuned to the student, recognizing the level of assistance they need.*

The impact to student success from advising outreach campaigns shows risks associated with an unintentional approach:





PARTNER EXAMPLE:

Peer-to-Peer Early Alerts Lift Persistence

One public university in the western United States has bucked the trend to achieve outstanding results from its early alert program. The secret to its success? Building relationships.

Starting in 2018, the university has taken a peer-to-peer approach to mitigating early alerts that focuses not on information, *but on engagement*. It employs students as success specialists to provide outreach that builds connections instead of simply serving as an alert. The student success specialists provide a supportive ear and, when needed, referrals to services that can help.

When they analyzed this program, they saw it led to a 6.8 percentage-point lift in persistence.

Outreach, conducted primarily by text, begins during welcome activities for new students. Throughout their first year, students identified as needing assistance quickly receive messages reassuring them that someone at the institution cares about them—and asking them open-ended questions that encourage a connection about any struggles they may be facing.

This approach to early alerts seeks to improve students' academic performance, but the greater emphasis is on helping students overcome challenges that can interfere with that performance.

In Spring 2022, results from the peer-to-peer outreach around early alerts included:



2.7K
early alerts
submitted to peer
mentors



27%
participation from
faculty, up from
13% the prior year



20K
messages sent
& received



60 – 65%
student
response rate



6.8 PP
lift in persistence

4

By analyzing student data for different populations, institutions can connect programs & services to the students they will benefit most.

Pinpointing What Works

Because taking a tailored approach is critical to student success efforts, it's important for leadership teams to have access to segmented data about a wide range of activities. By analyzing student data for different populations, institutions can connect programs and services to the students they will benefit most. This customization helps colleges and universities to:

- *Move beyond one-size-fits-all student success methods to tailored marketing tactics, program organization, and student engagement campaigns;*
- *Maximize their investment by ensuring that the right combination of interventions reaches the right students; and*
- *Realize cumulative benefits from their student success programs, with the capability to measure how different students respond to interventions over time and adjust accordingly.*

With the importance of analyzing outcomes for different students in mind, the following are some high-performing initiatives by population:



By Gender

MALE-IDENTIFIED

- Student Employment/Work-Study... 10.4 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 8.9 PP
- Library Resources... 8.4 PP
- Degree Planning... 8.3 PP
- Scholarships... 8.2 PP

FEMALE-IDENTIFIED

- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.9 PP
- Library Resources... 7.3 PP
- Advising Appointments... 7.2 PP
- Student Employment/Work-Study... 7.2 PP
- Tutoring... 6.8 PP



By Race

HISPANIC/LATINO

- Library Resources... 11.3 PP
- Peer-to-Peer Early Alerts... 10.7 PP
- Writing Center... 10.9 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 8.9 PP
- Advising Appointments... 8.0 PP

BLACK

- Peer-to-Peer Early Alerts... 19.4 PP
- Library Resources... 14.1 PP
- Scholarships... 12.1 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 10.6 PP
- Advising Appointments... 9.9 PP

ASIAN

- Student Engagement Campaigns... 15.5 PP
- Orientation... 12.1 PP
- Library Resources... 11.8 PP
- Degree Planning... 10.2 PP
- Advising Notes... 10.0 PP

WHITE

- Scholarships... 8.0 PP
- Early Alerts... 7.7 PP
- Tutoring... 7.3 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.1 PP



By Student Type

FIRST TIME IN COLLEGE

- Library Resources... 8.0 PP
- Advising Appointments... 7.1 PP
- Streamlined Scheduling Experience... 7.1 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.0 PP
- Scholarships... 6.9 PP

TRANSFER

- Scholarships... 8.8 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 8.7 PP
- Advising Appointments... 8.7 PP
- Degree Planning... 8.3 PP
- Tutoring: 7.2 PP

RE-ADMITTED

- Advising Appointments... 11.0 PP
- Advising Notes... 10.0 PP
- Student Engagement Campaign... 9.9 PP
- Scholarships... 8.1 PP
- Advising Outreach... 7.7 PP
- Degree Planning... 7.0 PP





By Persistence Likelihood

VERY LOW LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Scholarships... 18.7 PP
- Advising Appointments... 16.3 PP
- Writing Center... 15.5 PP
- Degree Planning... 13.1 PP
- Streamlined Scheduling Experience... 13.0 PP

LOW LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Library Resources... 14.5 PP
- Degree Planning... 12.7 PP
- Student Employment/Work-Study... 12.7 PP
- Scholarships... 12.3 PP
- Learning Commons... 11.8 PP

MODERATE LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Student Employment/Work-Study... 11.7 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 9.5 PP
- Library Resources... 9.1 PP
- Tutoring... 8.9 PP
- Advising Notes... 6.9 PP

HIGH LIKELIHOOD TO PERSIST

- Student Employment/Work-Study... 8.2 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.2 PP
- Supplemental Instruction... 4.6 PP
- Advisor Outreach... 3.8 PP
- Advising Appointments... 3.6 PP



By Attendance Status

PART-TIME

- Scholarships... 11.8 PP
- Advising Appointments... 10.8 PP
- Library Resources... 10.1 PP
- Degree Planning... 10.0 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 8.8 PP

FULL-TIME

- Peer-to-Peer Early Alerts... 7.7 PP
- Scholarships... 7.2 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.1 PP
- Library Resources... 6.8 PP
- Advising Appointments... 6.2 PP



By Course Modality

ONLINE

- Scholarships... 11.3 PP
- Advising Appointments... 10.3 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 10.0 PP
- Degree Planning... 8.7 PP
- Learning Commons... 8.6 PP

HYBRID

- Scholarships... 7.5 PP
- Library Resources... 7.3 PP
- Advising Appointments... 7.2 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 7.0 PP
- Streamlined Scheduling Experience... 5.8 PP

IN-PERSON

- Peer-to-Peer Early Alerts... 14.3 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 9.6 PP
- Scholarships... 8.8 PP
- Degree Planning... 8.7 PP
- Learning Commons... 8.6 PP



By Major

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, & MATH (STEM) STUDENTS

- Student Employment/Work-Study... 14.6PP
- Learning Commons... 11.7 PP
- Scholarships... 10.2 PP
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 10.1 PP
- Library Resources... 8.7 PP

NON-STEM STUDENTS

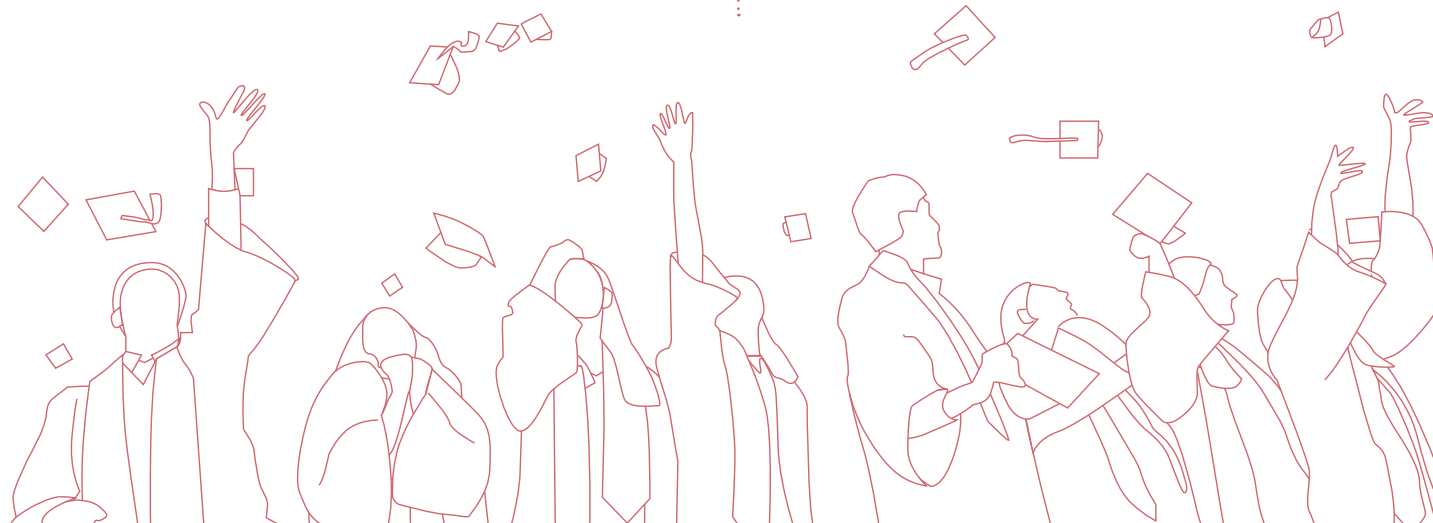
- Student Engagement Campaigns... 8.5 PP
- Degree Planning... 7.3 PP
- Library Resources... 7.2 PP
- Advising Appointments... 7.1 PP
- Peer Responded Early Alerts... 7.0 PP



Initiative Types Evaluated in this Analysis

Academic Mentoring/Coaching
Academic Planning
Advising Appointments
Advising Notes
Advising Outreach
Athletic Event Attendance
Student-Centered Scheduling
Computer Labs
Early Alerts
Faculty Teaching Improvement & Development
First Year Seminar
Learning Commons
Library Resources
Major Declaration
Student Engagement (Nudge) Campaigns
Nutrition Center

Online Tutoring
Orientation Events
Provisional Admission
Scholarships
Scholarships Total
Service Learning
Supplemental Instruction
Sorority & Fraternity Life
Student Employment / Work Study
Student Leadership & Involvement
Study Groups
TRIO
Tutoring
Wellness Center
Writing Center





PARTNER EXAMPLE:

Persistence Increases Inform Advising Strategies

A public community college in South Carolina has learned the value of targeting student outreach according to expected persistence. An Institutional Research (IR) pilot program showed the institution how effective a proactive, tailored approach can be.

Their behavior-focused outreach propelled persistence among targeted students to a rate of 25 percentage points greater than expected.

And those positive results inspired the two-year school to further segment groups who might benefit from this outreach and other programs, yielding additional promising student success gains.

The IR team wanted to identify which students were least likely to persist—based on data that reflected behaviors, not on biased observations—and then develop an outreach campaign specifically for those students. In 2020, the college's IR team initiated a pilot project to do just that. They contacted students with a low projected likelihood of persistence at just 32 percent likelihood as a group. Then, following IR's outreach to these students, the institution measured whether their persistence was better than anticipated.

The student's actual rate of persistence at the end of the term increased to 57 percentage points. Over several terms, IR noted that interventions led to greater-than-anticipated persistence. Without outreach, persistence stayed on course with projections.

After achieving these outcomes, the college focused much of its annual advising training on targeting students least likely to persist. Student success staff then differentiated messaging for subpopulations beyond that based on the data from previous efforts.



IR evaluated the outcomes of a host of student success interventions, including those examined by population.

Among the initiatives and behaviors garnering positive results in 2023 were:



7.6 PP

Electronic Library Users



6 PP

Tutoring



10.6 PP

Made & Kept Advising
Appointments



9.8 PP

African American Males
with Scholarships



17 PP

Proactive Advising, Bottom
Quartile of Projected
Persistence

Over several terms, Institutional Research noted that interventions led to greater-than-anticipated persistence. Without outreach, persistence stayed on course with projections.

5

**Move beyond
simply measuring
participation &
demographic data
for individualized
programs to evaluating
how those factors
correlate to students'
likelihood to persist.**

The Strength of Propensity Score Matching

As a diagnostic tool that informs near-term efforts, persistence provides a more accurate and actionable picture than lagging indicators, such as retention and graduation rates. The Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform relies on this more-dynamic indicator to help provide a snapshot of what is working and what is not—and for whom—and reveal trends that can help guide institutions' work.

We use prediction-based propensity score matching (PPSM) to determine student success outcomes for various academic and non-academic activities. The Civitas Learning PPSM approach combines real-time data on students' propensity to participate in activities and programs with data showing students' likelihood of persisting in their studies. PPSM meets the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse standards for evaluation of quasi-experimental designs and enables institutions to achieve the benefits of randomized control trials, while working within limits of existing, observational student data. Our software integrates data from across an institution and its student populations and calculates the impact different practices and programs have on persistence. **By relying on these real-time glimpses of student success outcomes, institutions can:**

-  **Pinpoint** which interventions institution-wide are making the greatest impact—and which students are benefiting most;
-  **Pivot** to focus on different programs and practices as needed, according to the results of their data analyses; and
-  **Optimize** their investment in student success programming.

To gain the most meaningful insights into the effectiveness of student success initiatives, institutions should consider assessing a broad range of activities. Additionally, they should move beyond simply measuring participation and demographic data for individualized programs to evaluate how those factors correlate to students' likelihood to persist.

Then they should act on what they learn, using the results of their data analysis to take quick action specifically tailored to their student's needs and plan for longer-term programming.

Findings in this study are based on data from 48 institutions, including 35 four-year universities and 13 two-year colleges. Findings were excluded if the number of students who participated in the program was less than 200 or if the p-value was greater than or equal to 0.05.

Plan Your Own Data-Driven Strategies

Many colleges and universities implement a variety of student success strategies, from scholarships to student engagement programs. But in planning and carrying out these interventions, they often encounter obstacles such as needing more data to know when and where to scale. This leaves them with a mismatch between their investments and desired outcomes.

They face the Student Impact Gap.

The effective use of clear student persistence data—revealing who is in need and how best to support them—can help avoid the one-size-fits-all approaches that ignore the unique circumstances of their students. By taking quick, targeted action to address the needs of the whole student with proven effective initiatives, institutions are achieving transformational and sustained student success outcomes.

Civitas Learning helps colleges and universities develop focused student impact strategies based on data from various programs and populations. The Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform allows institutions to easily and quickly identify trends, allowing advisors, faculty, and staff to collaboratively tailor their efforts according to the individualized and evolving needs of students.

Do you know which combination of initiatives is supporting persistence for your students? Get in touch to discover how you can improve student success—and close the Student Impact Gap—at your institution.

Sources Cited

- ¹ The Chronicle of Higher Education, *Reimagining the Student Experience: How College Can Help Students Connect, Belong, and Engage* (2022).
- ² Pepperdine University Graphic, “Dual Responsibilities: Students Balance Work and Studies.”
- ³ Homeroom, the Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education, “The Importance of Academic Advising in Higher Education.”

About Civitas Learning

Civitas Learning empowers colleges and universities to achieve transformative levels of student success and reshape higher education for decades to come. The Civitas Learning Student Impact Platform brings institutional data together for a clearer picture of each student and situation, equipping institutions to take bold, data-driven action, lead with a new purpose, and find new possibilities to impact success for their students.

With this precise knowledge at hand, administrators can know exactly which levers to pull to influence student success and prescribe specific guidance for maximum impact and higher ROI. Advisors, faculty and staff can collaborate on the most up-to-date data to quickly spot trends, check in with students and course correct without delay.

Today, we work with nearly 400 colleges and universities, reaching over 8 million students. Together with our growing community of customers, we are closing the Student Success Impact Gap and advancing the goals of generations of students.





www.civitaslearning.com

