The Student Learning Progress Model is a powerful expansion and redefinition of the limited and dated traditional “student success” metric. Institutions nationwide currently rely on a metric that may represent only a small portion of their student body: the rate at which first-time, full-time degree seeking students complete associate or baccalaureate degrees within 150% of the college catalog time. The new student-centered model provides better documentation of all students’ learning progress and award completion.

The new model supports national initiatives such as President Obama’s “educational moon shot” to increase student success and award completion. It documents a greater range of value added by higher education, makes tracking the effects of learning improvement strategies easier, and creates long-term reference points to assess change.

Above all the model supports decision-making by addressing the most fundamental question: “for whom and where should we distribute resources for the most efficient and effective student success outcome?” The model was designed by Gary Rice at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and field tested at Mt. Hood Community College (Oregon).

How the Model Responds to Traditional Metric Limitations

UAA’s Model:
- Incorporates all students including non-degree seekers, transfers, part-timers and stop-outs.
- Recognizes all awards earned, including those beyond the traditional 150% time frame.
- Recognizes students’ learning progress.
- Is student outcomes-centered and examines success among sub-cohorts.
- Refocuses student success accountability on the institution’s instructional mission.

Ten Year Tracking Map: First-Time Entry Cohort

The ten year map serves the same function as a cloud chamber used by scientists to study ions, by following the “tracks” various student sub-cohorts leave over a decade.

A group of first-time students starting in the same term are tracked for ten years as each student moves between six categories: enrolled, intermittent, interim award recipient, graduated, transferred, or non-returned.

www.uaa.alaska.edu/ir/reports/success
How UAA’s Model Operates
The model tracks, maps and assesses successful learning progress of first-time cohorts for a decade following initial entry. Cohorts can be divided into sub-cohorts of interest.

The Model’s Approach to “Student Success”
Success is determined by official certificates and degree awards completed by all students over ten years, as well as levels of successful learning performance for non-degree seekers. The central metric for this assessment is the Successful Learning Rate (SLR) or ratio of courses successfully completed with a passing grade to total courses attempted. Passing grades are used only to differentiate learning progress versus no learning.

Why Change Student Success Assessment?
• Student success should be viewed from a learner’s perspective, not an institution’s.
• There is no single, homogeneous student body. One-size decisions don’t fit all.
• We serve all students who enroll, not only degree seekers.
• Student learning is progressive, not just success or failure.
• Acquiring knowledge is the one reason students enroll. An institution is responsible for optimizing that process within its capability and resources.

Key Model Benefits
• Documents results of an institution’s efforts to enhance student learning progress.
• Uses data already routinely gathered, so it can be quickly implemented and maintained by a small IR office.
• Applicable to all levels of higher education.

How can my institution use the model’s findings?
• Targeting sub-cohorts with strategies to increase completion rates
• Documentation for reaccreditation
• Assessing progress in an institution’s strategic plan
• Sharing best practices between institutions
• Respond to the community legislative question, “What am I getting for my educational dollar?”

If your campus could benefit from implementing this model, please visit our website and fill out an interest form.

For additional information:
Gary Rice, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Research
University of Alaska Anchorage
3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508
(907) 786-1544
angar@uaa.alaska.edu

© 2010, University of Alaska Anchorage
Office of Institutional Research

www.uaa.alaska.edu/ir/reports/success