Salut, Priyadarshini!

Question: What do you get when you divide the circumference of your jack-o'-lantern by its diameter? Answer: Pumpkin \( \pi \)

Trick or Treat! The recent Strengthening Student Success Conference was a combination of tricks and treats. The Conference welcomed over 700 participants, the largest attendance in its history. Offering over 75 sessions during its three-day course, the conference engaged faculty, student services professionals, administrators and institutional researchers around critical issues in the California community colleges.

Oh, you weren't able to attend? Or, you weren't able to attend two sessions at the same time? Fret not! Given that today is Halloween, we will help you dress up as someone who was at the Conference via two easy channels:

1. This issue highlights four sessions from the Conference focused on issues of equity, accountability and technology.
2. Materials and resources from all conference sessions as well as video recordings of both keynote presentations (by Dr. Francisco Rodriguez, Chancellor, Los Angeles Community College District and Dr. Martha J. Kanter, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Higher Education and Senior Fellow, New York University) are available for download [here](#).

Eat, drink, and be scary!

Sincerely,
Statewide Spotlight | Expanding Student Success in the 21st Century: Innovation, Disruption or Improvement?

Author: Priyadarshini Chaplot, Senior Researcher, The RP Group

In her keynote presentation at the recent Strengthening Student Success Conference, Dr. Martha Kanter shared her perspectives on the state of evidence, progress and impact of community colleges. She launched her conversation by identifying some key challenges to community college reform efforts:

1. *Marginal, instead of holistic, solutions rise to the top.* More often than not, finance or funding mechanisms are tinkered with at the margins, instead of investing in holistic efforts to address the problems.
2. *Not enough time exists for actual implementation.* Everything moves so quickly that there isn't enough time or opportunity to walk an innovation through and understand what worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be revised.
3. *Many voices are missing in policy conversations.* Most of the individuals who make policy decisions around big issues don't have the front-line expertise and experience to advocate on behalf of students and colleges.
Dr. Kanter highlighted some promising local efforts—including Long Beach City College's approach to assessing student readiness and Cuesta College's no-cost textbooks initiative—that are pioneering ways to improve the student experience. She applauded their bravery and innovation in entering uncharted waters and basing their decisions on what would be in the best interest of students. Such efforts highlight strong partnerships between research and practice, where evidence on what works is informing which policies or processes should be implemented.

She concluded by sharing advice about priorities which support students while empowering colleges:

- Revise the remediation process, including its implementation and evaluation over time
- Redesign the federal student aid program, including opportunities to simplify the process (e.g., student eligibility, loan options, interest rates)
- Determine the timely and appropriate rewards, milestones and reinforcements for retention, progress and completion
- Map pathways from courses to certificates to degrees to transfer to the workforce
- Ensure that students tackle math and English during their first year
- Ensure that eighth graders are on track
- Support students in developing individual educational plans and portfolios
- Guarantee the cost of college when a student enrolls
- Keep nay-sayers and skeptics in the conversations as they have unique and useful insights
- Advocate at the state and federal level and ensure that the voices of faculty administrators are heard
- Keep the whole student in mind
- Continue the practitioner-researcher partnership

**Resource:**

- Full keynote presentation

**Research | A Comprehensive Diversity Framework**

**Authors:** Dr. Angelica Garcia, Dean of Counseling, David Hasson, Math Faculty, Lucia Lachmayr, English Faculty, Aaron McVean, Dean of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness, and Regina Stanback Stroud, President, Skyline College

It is probably safe to say that there isn’t a community college around that doesn’t have some statement about valuing diversity in their mission, vision, values or goals. To address it, colleges typically identify student needs—often framed as deficits—and then propose solutions to address them. Developed by the Stewardship for Equity, Equal Employment and Diversity (SEEED) Committee, Skyline College uses a Comprehensive Diversity Framework that goes beyond considering student deficits. Instead we look at our institutional structures, processes and practices to address student success.
We sought to create a paradigm shift from our traditional celebratory framework to a systemic transformative framework. Using the Minnesota Diversity Project as a starting reference and California Tomorrow's Equity Systems Change Model as our theoretical framework, SEEED used college-wide forums and an extensive two-day retreat to engage a broad range of constituents in determining the domains or areas we would consider.

We held hard conversations about race, class, gender, age and ability. We gave each other permission to be imperfect and created safe spaces for complex ideas to be explored. Don't be misled by the sterile description. Conversations about race and ethnicity are messy. Although we did our best, sometimes our best wasn't good enough. We stumbled over each other's privilege and power. This work requires context, structure, support, expertise and generosity of spirit. Facilitation and preparation are essential and resources should be available to allow for such.

Through a series of facilitated meetings, the Equity Audit process resulted in eight domains being identified for further inquiry, of which we addressed four:

1. Community Connections
2. Curricular and Pedagogical Approaches to Equity
3. Hiring Processes
4. Communication - Information Dissemination

We have yet to address:

1. Student Support
2. Leadership
3. Resources to Succeed
4. Institutional Climate

In order to guide the process for inquiry into each of the domains, the SEEED Committee developed a focus question, which served to maintain consistency across the work of separate teams:

"How do our practices and processes in connection, entry, progress and completion impact campus equity and student success at Skyline College?"

Teams then worked to develop Inquiry Questions within each of the domains. Members from each group conducted a mini equity audit focused on their specific domain. Inquiry Questions were developed that were informed by the Completion By Design framework (i.e., paying attention to the structural aspects of the Connection, Entry, Progress and Completion phases). The Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness office critically supported this process by operationalizing the Inquiry Questions.

In one of our sub-groups, we learned that the best way to communicate Financial Aid and Scholarship information is through classroom presentations. This led to more classroom presentations by the Financial Aid office which ended up doubling the number of scholarship applications. Thus, action research led to significant change in the short term.
The Student Equity Plan is a good start towards developing a Comprehensive Diversity Framework because colleges must complete campus-based research to identify the areas of disproportionate impact as it relates to student success. While the Student Equity Plan calls for addressing the disparity of educational success in students, the Comprehensive Diversity Framework calls for identifying, understanding and developing an action plan for the entire institution. It calls for identifying and addressing those areas which are based in the cultural dimension such as the attitudes and beliefs of community members, as well as those based in the structural dimension such as the leadership practices around communication, hiring and curriculum development.

The ultimate goal of our educational institutions is student success. Colleges can achieve that goal by developing an action plan that is relevant and equity-driven using a comprehensive diversity framework.

**Resources:**
- Stewardship for Equity, Equal Employment, and Diversity (SEEED) Committee
- Diversity Framework
- 2014 SSS Conference - PPT Presentation (path: 2014 Strengthening Student Success Conference Materials\Critical Topics for CCs\Comprehensive Diversity Framework.pptx)

**Planning | The Power to Change: Locally Derived Institutional Standards and Scorecards**

**Authors:** Dr. Sonya Christian, President and Dr. Janet Fulks, Biology Faculty, Bakersfield College

Rating colleges and universities with 'scorecards' is not a new phenomenon. As far back as 1911, Kendrick Charles Babcock authored A Classification of Universities and Colleges with Reference to Bachelor's Degree, where he rated undergraduate institutions using a rubric of the students' ability to perform in a graduate school environment.
More recent national efforts include a scorecard put out by the College Affordability and Transparency Center that includes five indicators: (1) Costs, (2) Graduation Rate, (3) Loan Default Rate, (4) Median Borrowing and (5) Employment, or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office's Scorecard based on Momentum Points (Remedial, Persistence, 30 Units) and Completion Outcomes (Degree/Transfer and CTE).

Bakersfield College's (BC) scorecard is closely tied to its college mission through institution-set standards and targets developed through campus-wide engagement of faculty and staff.

**Principle 1: Content Matters**
The BC Scorecard includes four data strands: 1) Student Learning, having students learn and become critical thinkers and effective communicators; 2) Student Achievement, momentum points and completion outcomes; 3) Perception Data, which includes CCSSE and Climate surveys; and finally 4) Operations Data, to ensure a quality learning environment.

**Principle 2: Context Matters**
Scorecard metrics are layered and derived from policy contexts, where each layer reflects increasing specificity: e.g. from overall completion, to disaggregated completion by prepared and remedial students (BSI), to ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SSSP & SEP), to specific course success for MESA students or Veterans. Data is provided in context—longitudinal data, comparative data, association standards, etc. rather than just stand-alone data points.
Most metrics have five tabs: (1) Data, (2) Goal, (3) Evaluation, (4) About the Numbers and (5) Feedback. The About the Numbers tab provides additional details—data sources that may not be generally applicable but are nonetheless essential. The Feedback tab records input from committee meetings and surveys, which assist in documenting dialog on campus.

**Principle 3: College Ownership**

Setting the institutional standards is an institution-wide iterative and interactive process engaging the college community. Key committees weigh in on scorecard data through the use of iClickers™ that allow anonymous votes using three simple measures: thumbs up, thumbs down or hang loose. As voting progresses, results are simultaneously graphically displayed and members volunteer their analysis about the data. Even as a majority emerges on the overall evaluation, a rich dialogue ensues. Community members suggest potential standard or "passing grade" goals as well as "stretch" goals based upon referential data such as state averages or trend data, which BC's data coaches—who are specially training in data--use to determine final standards.

**Principle 4: Equity Integrated**

Ownership of the achievement of subpopulations is essential to successful interventions and closing achievement gaps, and provides a lens to evaluate and improve institutional processes. Such equity data are critical components of the BC scorecard.

Creating and using BC's scorecard requires the college community to critically engage in what the data means, assess how the college is doing and offer input to improve. In doing so, the community owns the data, and the scorecard becomes a living document as the college plans, improves and makes critical decisions.

**Resources:**

- [Bakersfield College's Institutional Scorecard](#)
- [2014 SSS Conference - PPT Presentation](#) (path: 2014 Strengthening Student Success Conference Materials\Linking Accountability\The Power to Change-Institutional Score Card.pptx)

**Assessment | The SLO Cloud: Success Through Simplicity**

**Authors:** *Aeron Zentner*, Dean of Research, Effectiveness, Planning and Grant Development, and *Jesse Lawson*, Programmer, Coastline College

The recent climate of reporting course and service assessment data has inadvertently created an emerging trend of institutions establishing isolated data warehouses in the name of effective planning. The focus on efficiency has succumbed to more administrative work on the technical end, raising a new mound of barriers that withhold institutions from seamless evidence-based decision-making.

In 2014, a survey was conducted to obtain insight on perspectives related to issues that hinder the SLO reporting process. Findings from the qualitative responses indicated that issues associated with low participation included: (1) a lack of training
In fall 2011, a small rural community college adopted a manual paper process to record SLO assessment findings and action planning initiatives. Due to the limited proximity and access to data, the evidence-based decision-making was hindered in providing substantial evidence to support planning. In response, the institution employed a third party vendor service, which provided a database repository to record SLOs, assessments, findings and action plans as a means to increase access to information and drive efficiency in the planning process. However, the limitations to the strategy related to an increased workload for faculty to learn a new process of data reporting. Though there had been an increase in participation, the results still fell below the threshold of 100% proficiency. The findings of the independent project mirrored the results of the survey, identifying the limitations of using a difficult user interface, offering limited training materials and experiencing low adjunct participation.

In fall 2013, the institution piloted a secure SLO Cloud that could more intuitively and seamlessly manage assessment data. This strategy disconnected the difficult user interface and allowed faculty members a single, centralized page to enter the assessment data as well as generate reports. Click here for a demo. Participation of SLO reporting increased from low levels with the manual/paper process to relatively higher levels with the electronic database repository to strong levels of proficiency with the cloud-based system.

A review of the literature and findings from the research studies identified preliminary limitations in the manual paper processes. While shifts to electronic processes assume increased efficiency, that is not always the case. The research uncovered major restrictions in access, training and usability. Once these restrictions are addressed, the participation rate significantly increases and the value of these processes becomes more real.

**Resources:**

- Demo of the SLO Cloud
- Shifting the Paradigm in Reporting SLOs (Full research article)
- 2014 SSS Conference - PPT Presentation (path: 2014 Strengthening Student Success Conference Materials\Critical Topics for CCs\SLO Clouding v.1.5.pptx)

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The Research and Planning (RP) Group

... Providing leadership in research, planning, and assessment in the California community college system.