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RESEARCH

From July 15 to October 13, 2015, Hart Research conducted an online survey among 325 Chief Academic Officers or designated representatives at AAC&U member institutions to measure the prevalence of specified learning outcomes in higher education institutions today and to document priorities and trends in undergraduate education. The margin of error is ±4.4 percentage points for the entire sample, and it is larger for subgroups. The total population for the survey included 1,001 AAC&U member institutions that were invited to complete the survey, and thus the response rate for the survey is 32%. The sample is representative of AAC&U's total membership in terms of both institution type (11% associates, 30% bachelor's, 39% master's, 19% doctoral/research, and 1% other) and affiliation (46% public, 28% independent, 25% religious, and 1% proprietary).

Additionally, from August 4 to September 24, 2015, Hart Research conducted 14 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with higher education leaders who completed the online survey. Individuals who indicated in the survey that their institution is tracking and disaggregating data and setting goals related to diversity and equity were invited to participate in these in-depth interviews. Respondents represented institutions from various states, Carnegie classifications, and included some minority-serving institutions. The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The discussions were designed to provide a deeper understanding of how diverse institutions are focusing on advancing equity and closing attainment and achievement gaps.

Select findings

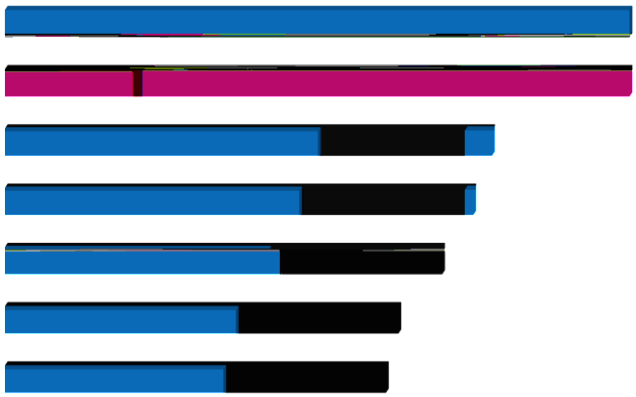
embedded within

Fully 85% of AAC&U member institutions report that they have a common set of intended learning outcomes for undergraduate students. This is up from 78% of institutions that said they had common learning outcomes in 2008. In addition,

learning communities, undergraduate research, and internships are offered by many institutions, but few require all students to participate in them.

First-year experiences that support the transition to college		31
First-year academic seminars		30
Global or world culture studies		41
Diversity studies and experiences	34	53
Service learning in courses	14	79
Learning communities	12	59
Undergraduate research	9	87
Practicums and supervised fieldwork	7	90
Internships	6	92
Study abroad	2	94

Data tracking on retention and graduation rates is universal across AAC&U member institutions, and large majorities of institutions say they track data on participation in key high-impact learning experiences (78%), achievement of credit/course completion milestones (75%), and achievement of institutional learning outcomes (70%). Fewer campuses, but majorities nonetheless, also track enrollment in remedial courses (63%) and successful completion of those courses (61%).



More than four in five campuses disaggregate data on retention and graduation rates by at least one of three variables (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status[1], and parents' level of educational attainment[2]). No more than one in three disaggregates data in any of the other three areas, however. For instance, while 78% of institutions say they track participation in high-impact practices, only 31% disaggregate that data by at least one of the three variables. Specifically, 30% of campuses say they disaggregate participation by race and ethnicity, 16% disaggregate by students' socioeconomic status, and only 12% disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment. Similarly, while 70% of institutions track achievement of institutional learning outcomes, just 17% say they disaggregate that data. Only 16% disaggregate by race and ethnicity, 9% by socioeconomic status, and a mere 6% do so by parents' level of educational attainment.

As illustrated in the accompanying table, in each case, campuses are more likely to say they disaggregate data by students' race and ethnicity than by their socioeconomic status or parents' level of educational attainment.

[1] In the in-depth interviews, administrators indicate that looking at Pell-eligible students vs. those who are not Pell-eligible is a proxy that many institutions use for disaggregating by socioeconomic status.

[2] In the in-depth interviews, respondents indicate that disaggregation by parents' level of educational attainment typically involves looking at data among first-generation students.

Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	80
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	40
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	29
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	80
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	39
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	29
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	30
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	16
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	12
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	31
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	16
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	12
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	16
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	9
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	6
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	31
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	17
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	11
Disaggregate by race/ethnicity	30
Disaggregate by socioeconomic status	15
Disaggregate by parents' level of educational attainment	10

students, c) the transition to early alert systems and intrusive advising, and d) the expansion of high-impact learning practices (most of which are optional at this point).

Administrators describe a variety of ways in which their campuses are redesigning developmental education to advance student success. With underserved students overrepresented in remedial education, they believe that these efforts benefit many underserved students with improved retention and learning quality. Administrators describe a wide variety of changes their campuses are making to redesign remedial education beyond the specific strategies described below.

Replaced developmental education with a program in which students who normally would need remediation are required to take a two-week session prior to the start of the semester that provides intensive writing and mathematics instruction at no extra charge. This is supplemented by another program, which continues into the semester and provides intensive tutoring for students who did not achieve everything needed in the pre-semester session.

Created a free program in the summer with academic workshops in several areas. Students take an evaluative test after the program and can place out of remedial classes.

Redesigned the approach to remedial math in various ways, including on-time remediation, a math bridge program, and modularized instruction.

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There are learning communities in the first year—which include the first-year seminar and two other classes—so that a student is in at least three classes with the same group of peers to provide a sense of community that enhances learning.

There is a vertically integrated Gen Ed curriculum that includes the first-year seminar, second-year seminar, and a capstone course. Learning outcomes are introduced in the first year and reinforced in the second, and it includes an assessment protocol.

Many campuses are using predictive modeling and early alert systems to trigger intervention by an advisor. These systems typically are within the structure of the first-year experiences at institutions that have such a program in place.

Some administrators mention that they are using specific retention and completion tools that have early warnings. These predictive analytics highlight where supports are needed and inform the outreach and support provided by advisors. Some institutions also have user-friendly degree tracking tools for faculty and students to track a student's progress.

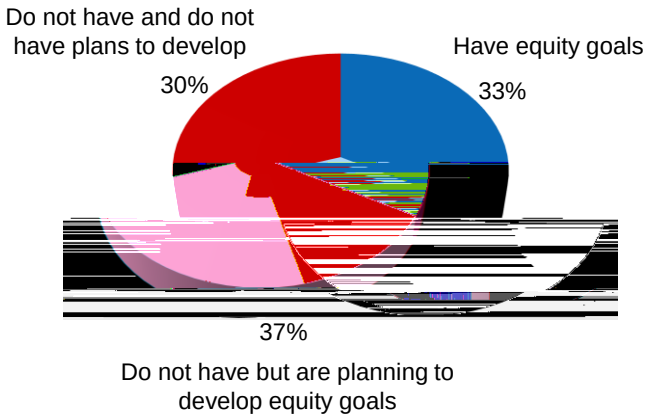
The full utility and value of these systems has yet to be realized as their use still is in the early stages (or has not yet begun) on most campuses. Some administrators note that predictive analytics and early alerts also could be used to tease out data on specific groups (e.g., minorities, low-income, or first-generation students) to inform interventions for those groups.

As noted above, administrators acutely recognize the value of high-impact learning practices. Some institutions require high-impact practices through their General Education program, while some include a component in their required first-year experience. Many are expanding optional high-impact practices such as service learning, internships, study abroad, civic engagement, undergraduate research, capstone projects, a campus-wide research day, or an introduction to composition class that requires all students to present their work. Few require all students to participate in these types of high-impact practices beyond what they require through first-year experiences, however.

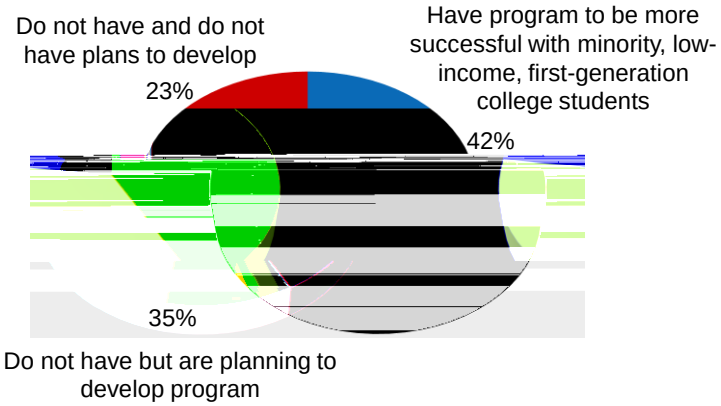
Colleges and universities are doing many things to advance student success that are in addition, and often complementary, to the four major areas of focus outlined above. These various initiatives and programs include outreach to and transition-coaching for local high school students, aggressive onboarding during required new student orientation, promoting summer school, ensuring small class sizes, moving to professional advisors, adding peer mentors, and ensuring that schedules and course offerings align with students' needs.

Other administrators describe how their campus has introduced a campus narrative about graduation that did not exist before to influence the mindset and the conversation, as well as the creation of a time-to-completion program that encourages students to complete their undergraduate education in four years and makes them aware of

While only one in three AAC&U member institutions says that they have specific, explicit equity goals that are aimed at building new opportunities for high-impact learning for first-generation students, low-income students, and/or students of color, another 37% say they are planning to develop them. This leaves only 30% who do not plan to do so.



Additionally, more than two in five (42%) member institutions have a program to build faculty, instructor, and staff capacity to use culturally competent teaching and program strategies and be more successful among underserved groups, and another 35% say they are planning to develop such a program. That leaves only 23% who have neither a program nor plans to create one.



In the in-depth interviews, many administrators indicate that a key focus of their campus's faculty development efforts relating to diversity and inclusiveness is a strong emphasis on hiring and retaining faculty that reflect the student body. They are focused particularly on efforts to hire more minority faculty, but they also talk

Closely linking the Provost's Office with the Office of Diversity

While some of the training forums for faculty are required (particularly for new faculty), most administrators say their institutions have developed programs and forums that are voluntary for faculty, and they stress the importance of getting faculty buy-in and engagement with these efforts to ensure their success.