

Foundation for Student Success's Self-Assessment Toolkit for Institution Culture Transformation to Reduce Equity Gaps and Improve Success for Hispanic Students in STEM Programs

In order to increase Hispanic¹ student success in STEM programs, it is sometimes necessary to transform the culture of an institution. There is no easy or quick fix to reduce equity gaps, but transforming the culture has a lasting effect. Thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Foundation for Student Success (FSS) has created a set of self-assessment tools. They enable institutional leaders to reflect on various components of their institution's culture and identify areas for improvement.

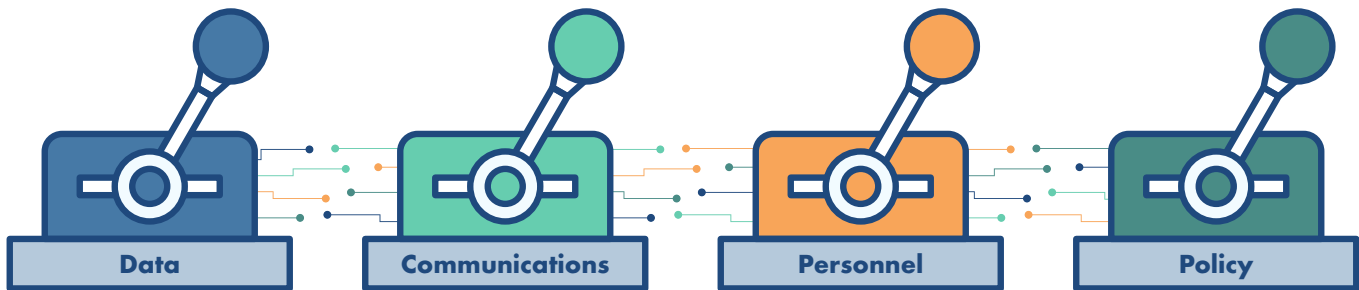
This set of self-assessment tools is in the form of questionnaires. These tools incorporate research conducted from 2017 to 2019 that included 28 public community colleges and universities from 19 states across the United States.² The tools were vetted by two groups of presidents/chancellors, five from public community colleges and five from public universities.

These self-assessment tools are intended for use by presidents/chancellors. They will help them and their senior leadership consider the key elements of institutional culture transformation that lead to equity gap reductions for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students. These questionnaires focus especially on Hispanic students in STEM programs.

To learn more about the Foundation for Student Success's research, visit <https://nchems.org/project/foundation-for-student-success/>.

Implementing these tools all at once is a daunting task. Choosing which ones to spend the most time on is up to you. Using the tools to identify areas of focus can aid strategic planning and accreditation self-studies. This process may take a year to accomplish.

As you begin to use these tools, it is suggested you select one topic at a time for discussion among your senior leadership team. Each questionnaire represents one of four levers identified in the research mentioned above. The levers are:



1. Data collection, analysis and use.

- Accessing and effectively using data; using data better to inform decisions (disaggregate data, share data broadly and clearly).
- Using institutional research as a key pillar of student success planning.
- Developing key metrics on student success and using data to hold the institution community accountable.

2. Effective institution-wide communication and engagement.

- Coordinating institution-wide professional development for all employees, including facilities and services staff.
- Communicating to the entire community regarding institutional culture transformation and equitable student outcome strategies.
- Communicating the results of data analysis on student success and progress with the institution community.
- Engaging all faculty and staff as partners in the goal of institutional culture transformation and equitable outcomes.

3. Hiring strategies and personnel policies.

- Implementing strategies for hiring of employees that more closely represent the make-up of the student body.
- Empowering a high-level leader to drive the transformation. The leader will have resources to ensure progress on equity goals. They will have the authority to hold others accountable and be responsible for meeting institutional-level goals.
- Implementing hiring strategies that promote an institutional culture that encourages greater student success.
- All community members see a role for themselves in student success.

4. Audit of institution and state policies and practices to identify those that perpetuate lower student achievement.

- Identifying alignment with institutional culture transformation resulting in greater student success.
- Evaluating those typical practices that can easily change and those that are mandated by institutional or state policies.
- Working to modify practices and policies as needed.

None of these levers are completely independent. But, the order of the questionnaires in this packet is a sequence recommended by our presidential advisory groups.³

As your senior leadership reflects on your policies and practices, it can give you a sense of which areas need further attention and which are working well. At the end of each topic set, there is room for you to record your reflections. You can write down possible steps to help lead successful institutional culture transformation to increase success for Hispanic students in STEM programs.

Please note, these questionnaires are not intended to produce a score for the institution. Rather, they aim to encourage discussions that lead to incremental and meaningful change that positively impacts the success of students. We hope these can inspire useful discussions.

Happy exploring,

Sally M. Johnstone

Executive Director, Foundation for Student Success and President Emerita, NCHEMS



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Endnotes

- 1 The National Science Foundation's grant specifies the use of the term "Hispanic". In this instance, FSS uses "Hispanic" to include individuals of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.
- 2 Mentor institutions involved in the initial FSS study: California State University Channel Islands; Los Medanos College, CA; Rutgers University, NJ; San Jacinto College – Central Institution, TX; Santa Fe College, FL; University of South Florida; Winston Salem State University, NC. Mentee institutions: Adams State University, CO; Augusta University, GA; Arizona Western College; Central State University, OH; Coconino Community College, AZ; Community College of Aurora, CO; Edmonds Community College, WA; El Paso Community College, TX; Kentucky State University; Langston University, OK; Monroe Community College, NY; New Mexico State University; Northeastern Illinois University; Salt Lake Community College, UT; Savannah State University, GA; Southern Connecticut State University; Texas Southern University; Thomas Nelson Community College, VA; University of Michigan, Flint; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and Yakima Valley Community College, WA.
- 3 Advisors include: Rhonda Epper, President, Trinidad State College, CO; Pam Eddinger, President, Bunker Hill Community College, MA; Chris Villa, President, Skagit Valley College, WA; Eric Leshinskie, President, Scottsdale Community College, AZ; Adena Williams Loston, President, St. Philip's College in the Alamo Community College District, TX; DeRionne Pollard, President, Nevada State University; Cathy Sandeen, President, California State University East Bay; Joseph Shepard, President, Western New Mexico University; Neal Smatresk, President, University of North Texas; and Jack Warner, President, Rhode Island College.