Oklahoma Panhandle State University, OK

Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Participation Start: 06-24-2015   **Participation End**: 03-20-2020

Date Completed: 06-14-2020

Scholar(s):   Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s):   Rachelle Darabi

Team Lead: Laura Leiter

Team Member(s):   Amber Glass
                       Brent Shoulders
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Context

Q: **The Collaboration Network is the Academies online project management tool that serves to help institutions track the progress of their work and facilitate a shared learning experience amongst Academy institutions. Please introduce your institution to other Academy Teams. Provide contextual information on your institution including but not limited to institutional type, size and student populations served. Note: You may use portions of your application responses to answer this question**

A: Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) was created by an act of the Oklahoma State Legislature in 1909 as Pan-Handle Agricultural Institute offering secondary agricultural education for the Panhandle area. The university grew and developed from a secondary school to a two year college, and eventually, into a four year baccalaureate institution. It was renamed by the Oklahoma State Legislature in 1974 to Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

OPSU is located in the middle of the Oklahoma Panhandle, which consists of three rural, agricultural-based counties. The population of the Panhandle has always been low in number; however, the current segment composed of Hispanics has seen the most dramatic increase in number in recent years related to the arrival of pork and beef production facilities to the area. These aspects provide challenges for the university to recruit potential students. The fact that OPSU is the only institution of higher education funded by the state of Oklahoma within a 125 mile radius adds to those challenges.

The area high schools are mostly small in size with many having less than 25 graduates each year. This results in the need for OPSU to reach out beyond state borders to recruit an adequate student population each academic year. Many of these potential recruits are the first in their families to attend college, making the admittance process unfamiliar to most and making retention a critical emphasis for these students. Most students are from a rural communities and generally going to college is their first experience away from home. Approximately 25% of the student body is student-athletes. The average ACT and SAT scores are 18 and 878 respectively.

OPSU has a student body of approximately 1,300 students. It is an open-enrollment university, which means students not meeting the ACT/SAT score minimum requirement are admitted conditionally. Students who do not qualify for unrestricted admission are admitted through the University College, which houses the bridge program providing remediation and preparation for college level coursework for these students. They remediate through the University College to complete associates degree programs in order to matriculate to four year programs in the five schools of the university. The university is comprised of five schools: Agriculture; Business and Technology; Education; Liberal Arts; and Math, Science, and Nursing.

Retention focuses on the school's ability to keep and re-enroll students from one year to the next. Retention is a university-wide initiative. Faculty, advisors, the Academic Services Center, which provides tutoring services, counseling services, Student Affairs office and financial aid office collaborate to provide support for the students' efforts and progression.

Q: **Having compiled a Data Book following the Data Discovery meeting, please describe what data sets were chosen to be included in the book and how those data sets will help you define and address persistence and completion issues.**

A: The data collected at the Data Discovery includes: the university-wide retention, persistence and graduation rates, student ethnicity data, and the pass/fail, retention, persistence, and graduation rates for students originating in the University College. One group stands out, however, as a potential model for data, and that is the University College (UC) that serves at-risk students. UC has collected much data on their students including success rates in developmental classes, participation in tutoring, and overall persistence. UC students also have the ability to earn Associate Degrees (AA/AS) before moving into their major colleges. The UC has collected more detailed data regarding the students matriculating through its program, providing a model for the collection and analysis of university-wide data regarding the students at OPSU.

It has been determined by the OPSU team that OPSU will pursue the data development track for the Academy for Student Persistence and Completion project. Not much data is currently available on retention rates of specific groups, in particular those identified by the Academy Team as potential persistence concerns.

Q: **Are there data sets that you believe will be important to your work which are not currently available? In what ways do you think will these data be important to your persistence and completion efforts?**

A: The proper collection and analysis of retention data is of paramount importance. Information regarding students is generated each semester and needs to be utilized to foster an understanding of the patterns and trends surrounding retention and completion. Once the data is collected and analyzed, strategies to increase retention can be developed and implemented. The University desires to increase the retention and completion rates of the students enrolled in programs. Operating in an open enrollment environment creates unique challenges to retention. The OPSU Data Development Project will encompass categories such as: AA/AS completion rates as well as bachelor degree completion rates; persistence rates for groups considered at-risk including athletes, Hispanic students, and transfer students; and other data including persistence rates for in-state versus out-of-state, urban versus rural, GPA levels (persistence for 0-1.0, 1.0-2.0, 2.0-3.0, 3.0-4.0); and completion rates of AA/AS degree holders versus those eligible for a AA/AS degree but not awarded. OPSU desires to utilize this information to improve student support and increase retention and completion for these groups of students.

Impact Report

Q:

Note

A: Due to the Higher Learning Commission's cancellation of the Spring 2020 Result Forum, this project's sustainability plan was not required.

For a final overview and visual depiction of the institution's Academy project, please see its poster linked below.

Link 1: [Oklahoma Panhandle State University](#)

Impact Report

Response to Impact Report

Q:

Describe your general impression of the institution's progress in the Academy. Consider recognizing progress made, challenges overcome, and their impact on student learning and student success.

A: Susan Hatfield

Oklahoma Panhandle developed clear processes and responsibilities for the collection and analysis of data. Progress has been made to promote buy-in and ownership of student success among faculty and staff. The Academy committee worked closely with other committees on campus which will facilitate a seamless transition of the project from the Academy Team to the Persistence and Completion Committee.

This project has spawned a number of initiatives directly designed to support student success, including a revamped student success course, early intervention, peer achievement coaches, and assisting students in remedial English and Math.

It appears that there has been a culture shift at the university that emphasizes the sharing and use of academic and survey data to understand and promote student success.

Q:

Reflecting on what the team has shared about their plans for their project after the Academy, what recommendations and/or cautions do you have for them as they champion sustaining and expanding support for their students' success.

A: Susan Hatfield

The project built an infrastructure which appears poised to extend beyond the time in the Academy.

The big challenge in the near future will be understanding the differences between what *was* known about Panhandle students, and how the student population (and their needs) will have changed when they return to learning in the fall. The emphasis on data will be important! Will it be a smaller cohort of a similar group of students, or will the population served have shifted over the summer? It is not clear for how long any changes in population will last, but understanding that there might be/ probably are changes might require rethinking what you have learned in the Academy and adapting it (at least in the short term) to best serve the students who are enrolled in the Fall. The Persistence and Completion Committee will have a lot on their plates in the fall, but it appears that the Academy Team has left them a lot of tools with which to work.

Q:

Comment on lessons learned and shared with their peer institutions.

A: <u>Susan Hatfield</u>

The OPSU team was at times hampered by turnover, but they were still able to move forward. Their suggestions related to meeting minutes and dedicated staff are important points! The OPSU poster does a nice job of summarizing the project and sharing the results in a way that is self-explanatory and engaging.

Q:

Share any other observations, thoughts or advice you would like to give the team.

A: <u>Susan Hatfield</u>

This was a large project with the potential to impact the campus for years to come through the scorecard, early intervention, peer advising/mentoring, and FYE. We will be interested in hearing about the longer-term impact of your work over the next several years.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 10.0 - Project

Q:

Briefly summarize (no more than 1-2 paragraphs) your project for schools you might be new to the academy and/or reviewing your project for the first time.

A: Oklahoma Panhandle State University's project comprises four phases. The first phase of this project, data collection, required to focus efforts on hiring a dedicated institutional reporting employee as well as an assessment coordinator to help gather information about the broad questions of student success and learning. The second phase was to get the entire campus to buy into student persistence and completion. The addition of the two new positions as well as a supportive administration have moved efforts on this front forward significantly. Phase three deals with the communication of data. Combining meetings and including members of both the Recruiting and Persistence Committee and the Completion Committee has enabled communication of data. Further efforts have included sharing data at the welcome back breakfast each semester as well as disseminating data through deans across campus. Open communication of data has allowed the fourth, and ultimate, phase to come forth, student success, which is integrally tied to persistence and completion. A variety of initiatives have begun to further student success. One initiative was to rework the student success course to include the development of skills such as reading like a professor, note taking, and scheduling as well as information regarding financial aid, campus resources access, and student professionalism. Other initiatives include developing and incorporating an early intervention form for faculty and staff to report student issues early to the Academic Resource Center director, checking athletes' academic progress through a digital three-week check-in (as opposed to the former paper format), starting a peer achievement coaches program to assist students more thoroughly (by pairing students with more advanced peers who can help them navigate the demands of college life and college work), focusing attention on helping students with D's and F's at midterm to receive assistance needed, and defining student success based on Satisfactory Academic Progress

Version 10.0 - Update

Q:

Summarize the goals of your project. Who are/were you attempting to impact and why? If the project shifted focus during the time in the Academy, explain why.

A: At the beginning of this project, the focus was data discovery and development. The goals were to obtain, organize, analyze, and utilize data on campus. Collecting accurate data allowed our university to determine pressure points and measure our efforts for persistence and completion, which allowed for a focus change of the academy group, separating recruitment and retention efforts. The retention efforts were then refocused into assisting students in remedial English and mathematics courses and in the freshman student success

course, creating surveys to analyze student and employee opinions, general education pass rates and discovery of gateway courses, and using data to drive changes made in the university. The project shifted focus because of the addition of an enrollment retention group, now called the Persistence and Completion Committee, which allowed a wider variety of voices on campus to work together on common issues

Q:

What, if any, direct or indirect indicators do you have regarding the impact of your project? If you did not see an improvement, do you have ideas as to what other variables may have intervened?

A: The impact of the project can be seen in a variety of ways. There have been many additions to data collections to assist in tracking important data points. Some of these indicators include a new graduation evaluation by academic records to award associate's degrees when due, return on investment analysis, pass rate analysis in general education coursework, first-to-second-year retention rates, success of students turned in on the Early Intervention Form in subsequent semesters as measured by their Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), an addition of tracking strategic plan goals annually using key performance indicators and measures, a biweekly meeting of the Persistence and Completion Committee, and the creation and revision of surveys to measure indirect impact. Progress on this project toward success from a long-term view were hampered by the change to a new Student Information System called Banner, a new administration, high turnover rate in the academy group, and a change in institutional research.

Q:

What will happen to your project now that your time in the Academy is ending?

A: As our time in the academy comes to an end, processes have been put into place to keep strong the efforts for persistence and completion at Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU). The majority of the efforts of the academy group has been handed off to the Persistence and Completion Committee on campus. Other annual efforts to enhance looking at and using retention and graduation data have been put into place including the strategic plan performance indicators and measures, as well as surveys for graduates, current students, employees, and alumni.

Q:

What were the three most important suggestions you would offer to schools beginning similar improvement efforts? How can you apply those suggestions to future improvement projects at your own institution?

A: The three most important suggestions to assist in being successful in efforts toward persistence and completion efforts include: (1) Keeping a stable turnover rate on the committee in charge of these efforts, (2) Keeping detailed minutes for each of these committee meetings and share them across campus, and (3) Having dedicated staff members to coordinate efforts and analyze information into a usable format. At OPSU, these have been used by having a broad and large committee over efforts for persistence and completion, detailed minutes being dropped into a shared campus server, and hiring a coordinator two years ago to centralize efforts.

Version 10.0 - Response

Q:

    Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A:

Q:

    What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A:

Q:

    What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?

A:

Q:

    What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A:

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 9.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: As we come to the end of our project, we have found ourselves focusing more on completing our Persistence and Completion Project and not following the Collaboration Network.

Version 9.0 - Update

Q:

What progress have you made on your goals for this six months? How does your progress advance your overall project goals?

A: In the last six months, those on the Persistence and Completion team at OPSU have shared the university scorecard and its benchmarks with all by including all its statistics on the university website under the "About OPSU" tab as a part of the strategic plan measures. Other analyses have occurred to search in-depth the graduation rates and persistence rates by programs as a part of a Return-on-Investment investigation as well as the completion of a multi-year analysis over gateway courses in general education. All this data has been used across campus in a variety of committees and groups to help make decisions towards change for improvement.

In the Academic Resource Center, goals to improve face-to-face contact were improved by adding a first-year experience for students. This is a program that pairs all freshmen on campus with a peer academic coach, who is a mentor to the freshmen and who reaches out to them to invite them to events and to help acquaint students with campus and services available. Other students such as those who have appealed academic suspension (and are not freshmen) are also paired with a peer academic coach for mentoring. Resources such as tutor.com, a new tutoring program, which was instituted within the last year have been shown to increase in usage.

Our last goal to increase the use of the Early Intervention Form is not yet realized. The spring 2019 semester use of the form was considerably less than the fall use of the same form and will likely need to be compared to this year's fall numbers to get a valid analysis.

Q:

How have you used the feedback you received from your mentor and scholar?

A: Our mentor and scholar emphasized a need to focus on data. We have continued to do this.

The scorecard, specifically, was questioned on what it includes and how it is utilized. We made certain to include information to measure progress on our strategic plan for the university and use the data all across campus. This spread of data has allowed a review of results of some of the initiatives which have been started through the university's inclusion in this academy. Specifically, we have looked into Satisfactory Academic Progress rates and Early Intervention form use and success of students after use.

Q:

What specific activities remain to be accomplished to achieve your goals during your remaining time in the Academy?

A: We plan to analyze the Professor Feedback forms about each student who was turned in on the Early Intervention form as well as analyze the amount and types of contact with these students that were made. We plan to evaluate the initiatives for the new student success course in terms of how many students persisted to the next semester and year after the changes to the course were made in Fall 2018 by comparing to the Fall 2017 cohort data.

Version 9.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Rachelle L Darabi

rdarabi@missouristate.edu

Susan Hatfield

SHatfield@ hlcommission.org

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Both mentors see a number of strengths in your progress as reported in the posting

Progress is being made on the university scorecard, particularly its use as part of the strategic plan. This unifying approach will keep all actions focused on student success.

Another great dimension to the work is the data-based decision making approach that you've adopted. With this focus on using data to see whether or not you've actually achieved improvements through your programming, you will be able to utilize resources most effectively.

The addition of the first-year experience with a focus on face-to-face interactions with students is another strength. This approach could be critical in making progress in the persistence and completion rates of your students.

Connecting each first-year student with a peer academic coach not only helps first-year

students navigate their first year more successfully, but it also helps those peer coaches tremendously by providing them with invaluable experiences that they will carry on into their professional lives.

We applaud the development of an early intervention form. Although this initiative did not perform at the level you'd hoped, you are clearly tracking that and analyzing the data in appropriate ways to improve this in the future.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?

A: Rachelle Darabi

Regarding your early intervention form, do you have any idea why it was not widely adopted? Are there still members of the university community that have not bought into the student success agenda? Might you consider an Academic Intervention Team—an Academic Care Team? Rather than just have the form drop into one office, perhaps a committee that includes faculty could review the forms. If faculty are involved with support staff, perhaps the usage will increase.

I'm also curious about your three-week check-in. You've mentioned the success of this approach with athletes. Might this approach be extended, particularly with the students who have appealed their suspensions? I was also wondering whether these at-risk students are connected to academic coaches.

One question I still must ask is whether everyone agrees on the definition of satisfactory academic progress? And where are you now compared to when you began this process? What are your persistence and completion rates? Also, how are campus constituents using the scorecard? What's included in the scorecard? You mention looking at historical data to gauge your progress. This is a great plan. You might also look to peer institutions to see how to set goals for the future.

Susan Hatfield

Beyond posting the data on the website, are there more active ways in which you are sharing data with faculty? It appears that the data is being utilized at the committee levels, but it might help with faculty engagement (which would translate into higher participation in Early Intervention) if they not only see the data but engage in discussions about what it means

Is the Academic Resource Center still addressing the issue of students with D or F at midterm?

In terms of the First-Year Experience, what is the peer advisor to advisee ratio? How were the peer advisors selected, and what is the plan for evaluating the advisors and success of

the program?

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Rachelle Darabi

You've got a lot of great tools in place to continue your student success work. You've hired people into critical positions that allow you to track data more effectively.

For the future, you need to continue to scrutinize that data to determine where to focus your resources. You've got a great opportunity to analyze the first year experience since it's just gotten started. Take a close look at the data before and after that intervention was implemented. Continue the great work you are doing in disseminating your data. Sharing data at events like the Welcome Back breakfast is a great plan. Also, make sure you keep information flowing between your key committees.

Now that you have a scorecard and staff who can examine your historical data, set specific goals related to persistence and completion. These goals should tie into your strategic plan. Most of all, keep up the good work!

Susan Hatfield

Ås you move toward the end of your time in the Academy, it appears that you have built an infrastructure which should allow you to continue to make data-based decisions.

Work still appears to remain, though, in persuading faculty to commit to their role in supporting student success. One way to do this is to continue to focus, as you have been, on sharing the data as often as you can in as many venues as possible. Certainly not presenting the same data over and over, but instead showing the results of the various initiatives, celebrating success if appropriate, thanking faculty for their participation, and facilitating discussions about how processes and programs might be modified or adapted to be more successful.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 8.0 - Project

Q:

Briefly summarize (no more than 1-2 paragraphs) your project for schools you might be new to the academy and/or reviewing your project for the first time.

A: Oklahoma Panhandle State University's project comprises four phases. The first phase of this project, data collection, required to focus efforts on hiring a dedicated institutional reporting employee as well as an assessment coordinator to help gather information about the broad questions of student success and learning. The second phase was to get the entire campus to buy into student persistence and completion. The addition of the two new positions as well as a supportive administration have moved efforts on this front forward significantly. Phase three deals with the communication data. Combining meetings and including members of both the Recruiting and Persistence Committee and the Completion Committee has enabled communication of data to begin. Further efforts have included sharing data at the welcome back breakfast each semester as well as disseminating data through deans across campus. Open communication of data has allowed the fourth, and ultimate, phase to come forth, student success, which is integrally tied to persistence and completion. A variety of initiatives have begun to further student success. One initiative was to rework the student success course to include the development of skills such as reading like a professor, note taking, and scheduling as well as information regarding financial aid, campus resources access, and student professionalism. Other initiatives include developing and incorporating an early intervention form for faculty and staff to report student issues early to the Academic Resource Center director, checking athletes' academic progress through a digital three-week check-in (as opposed to the former paper format), starting a peer achievement coaches program to assist students more thoroughly (by pairing students with more advanced peers who can help them navigate the demands of college life and college work), focusing attention on helping students with D's and F's at midterm to receive assistance needed, and defining student success based on Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Version 8.0 - Update

Q:

What progress have you made on your goals for this six months?

A: Progress was made on 3-week grades for athletes, as the process is now online instead of on paper, which allows for these grades to be compiled and received by the Athletic Compliance Coordinator and the Dean of the Academic Resource Center to further communication about reaching out with the appropriate resources necessary for student success.

Committees on campus have seen some more changes in order to become more efficient. These changes have been achieved through adding purposefully driven agendas to meetings, having minutes easily accessible through the university's file sharing service, and restructuring membership in meetings to better enable sharing of information by including members of the Persistence and Completion Committee and the Enrollment Management Recruiting Committee in both meetings.

Grades of D or F at the midterm point were a focus for the Academic Resource Center last semester. Students who received these grades were sent alerts with information about appropriate resources to assist them. Their advisors also contacted these students. A result of these attempts is a further goal at trying to improve face-to-face contact with students and get them to go to the Academic Resource Center when they struggle.

The Higher Learning Commission Persistence and Completion Academy Team achieved a goal of compiling data into a University Scorecard to help create measures of success across campus.

Q:

How does your progress advance your overall project goals?

A: We have seen progress in the development of ways to collect data and the channels to apply the data. The Academic Resource Center is seeing the development of new and better data-proven ideas to assist students in their success on campus. Meetings are more focused and more driven through agenda use/development as well as data sharing. The University Scorecard has shown a campus-wide investment in improving the university for students.

Q:

How have you used the feedback you received from your mentor and scholar to move you closer to completing a successful project?

A: Feedback from the mentor and scholar have helped to drive the Persistence and Completion Committee meetings. Specifically, the feedback has encouraged the following: better sharing of data between the Enrollment Management Recruiting Committee and the Persistence and Completion Committee, the evaluation of how student success can measure persistence and completion, an analysis of success rates of cohort courses before and after changes made in the student success course, an increase in the use of the early intervention form, and measurements of success based on Student Academic Progress.

Q:

What specific activities remain to be accomplished to achieve your goals during your remaining time in the Academy?

A: One of the main activities still to be accomplished includes a very close analysis of the data collected over time to focus on how much improvement in Student Academic Progress is

seen. In addition, we are working on creating a new focus on using historical data and comparing it to current data statistics. For the Academic Resource Center, focus will lie in finding better ways to have face-to-face contact with students in need, reaching out with appropriate resources, getting students connected to peer achievement coaches, increasing usage of the early intervention form, and improving three-week athlete grade checks and midterm general student grade checks to reach out to students. The last activity to accomplish is to continue to develop the University Scorecard and use it to create university benchmarks.

Version 8.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Rachelle L. Darabi rdarabi@missouristate.edu

Susan Hatfield   SHatfield@hlcommission.org

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

One of the key strengths I see in your plan is the reorganization of committees to improve effectiveness. Recognizing key individuals to serve and having purposeful agendas will improve the flow of data and information.   Also, the two key positions noted, Assessment Coordinator and Institutional Reporting, will greatly help your overall data efforts. These two changes, committee reorg and new positions focused on data, will allow you to make data-driven decisions. You mention that in relation to the Academic Resource Center which is a critical place to use your data effectively.

 An additional strength is sharing the data widely with campus constituents so that everyone can own the student success agenda. Already you have solid initiatives coming from your efforts. I'm particularly pleased to see the reworking of the student success course as well as the peer coaching. Your three-week check-in is also a great way to identify at-risk students as is the utilization of midterm grades. Making processes easier by incorporating online tools/forms is useful to get campus buy-in. Creating a University Scorecard is also a great way to keep everyone focused on fully utilizing your data.

 Finally, sharing information across your two major committees, Enrollment Management Recruiting and Persistence and Completion, is critical to ensure that you are all on the same page as you move forward with student success planning.

Susan Hatfield

To reinforce Rachelle's comments, it appears that OPSU has been able to build an infrastructure (personnel, committe structure, leadership, communication, processes) that has the potential to change the cultue of the campus to one that is focused on student success.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

I have a few questions regarding your work. First, what is incorporated in the University Scorecard and how is it utilized? Can it be used as part of your early-alert program? Also, how will you continue the work of the Persistence and Completion Committee once you have completed the academy? I'm wondering if at some point you may include persistence and completion as part of your Enrollment Management Committee. Recruiting is critically important, but you want to make sure that the enrollment management group considers persistence and completion equally important. With declining high school graduation rates across the country, it becomes more and more important to focus on a persistence and completion plan.

 One other thing I'm curious about is your definition of student success. Does everyone on campus share the same definition for Satisfactory Academic Progress? It's important that faculty, staff, and students clearly understand what that means, so it does not become a moving target.

 Susan Hatfield

In addition to Rachelle's questions (which I was wondering about, too) -- Did you find any change in the completion rate or drop rate on courses where students with Ds or Fs at midpoint were sent alerts? How many of those students followed throgh with the Academic Resouce Center? Were changes made to the process as a result of what you discovered?

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

In the next 6 months, I strongly believe you need to continue to focus on data. Now that you are getting a cleaner and clearer picture, what are your major measures? What is your fall-to-fall retention rate? What is your completion rate? Who are those students who are most at-risk? The way you set up your University Scorecard should allow you to easily access this information. Once you have a clear picture, you can get those year-to-year comparisons that you mentioned in your report. Take advantage of the fact that you have a supportive administrative and set the parameters for your programming. Putting forth a clear strategic plan will tie everything together for you. You are moving in the right direction. Keep the momentum going

Susan Hatfield

As you move toward the end of the Academy, it looks like (as I mentioned in my previous response) that you have started to develop the infrastructure that will sustain your work beyond the Academy.

How does your work connect with the institution's planning documents (long range plan, strategic plan)? Reinforcing that connection will be anoher structural way you can continue the momentum that you have developed.

Additionally, continuing to review the results of the initiaitves you have started and actively discovering how your processes could be even more effective will be helpful. Be sure to remember that students are a good source of information -- talking to them about what worked and what didn't, why they took advantage of a progrm or didn't, etc. will provide useful insight.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 7.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

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A: With our new group, we are starting to look again at projects from other universities.

Version 7.0 - Update

Q:

How have you continued to engage or increased engagement from institutional stakeholders since attending the Midpoint Roundtable, if at all? If there has been no increase in engagement, or even a decrease, please explain.

A: As part of our attendance, we started two committees: the Enrollment Management Retention Committee and the Enrollment Management Recruiting Committee. Both of these groups hold biweekly meetings. We have worked at doing a better job at data sharing by sending out every semester a preliminary report to the whole campus and more frequently to stakeholders with an increased interest in those areas, such as deans, department chairs, financial aid officers, among others. We have revised and created surveys in order to measure student retention better. Specifically, we have worked on the student success survey, we have instituted peer academic coaches, and we have revised the early intervention form. We have also restructured the student success courses using a large faculty group from all areas representing all stakeholders of the university. In restructuring the student success courses, we have made emphasis on placing students in specific cohort groups. In addition, content was revised to emphasize skills that will help students better retain college-level coursework and that will increase awareness and utilization of campus resources.

Q:

What tasks do you plan to accomplish in the next six months?

A: We are working on increasing visibility of three-week student-athlete grades to assist professors in their intervention needs.

The Enrollment Management Retention Committee meetings are being restructured to be more purposeful. Previously, in these meetings committee members discussed what they were doing to increase retention. We want to change this approach to a more data-driven

one where ideas for improvement are centered around data.

Students who are earning a D or an F after midterm grades will be meeting in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) to create an academic progress plan with the director of the ARC, their professors, and their coaches. These students will meet again with the director of the ARC after three (3) weeks in order to check in on their progress.

The Academy team will be meeting regularly. At these meetings, data will be shared and the distribution of this data to appropriate stakeholders will be done. These meetings will focus specifically on the recent changes in the interventions conducted by the ARC. At the end of the fall semester, all the important information will be evaluated and compiled into a presentation that will be shown at the spring welcome-back forum.

Q:

What additional guidance is needed to see your project through to the end of the program?

A: Our recent consultation was very successful. As a result, we have a clear vision of our future path.

Q:

Now, in your final year, your team should begin to think about how your institution will continue to support and sustain improvement efforts without the structure of the Academy. What are some of your initial thoughts that your team has for continuing your momentum post-Academy?

(Note: Formal sustainability planning will be facilitated at the Results Forum).

A: To continue our momentum, we have hired an assessment coordinator to keep our focus on data. We will also continue to hold our retention meetings as well as continue to evaluate data and use it to guide our university's future paths. The administration's support at the university is very strong and the institutional buy-in has become improved as a result.

Version 7.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Rachelle L. Darabi rdarabi@missouristate.edu 417-536-6374

Susan Hatfield SHatfield@HLCommission.org

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

Your report and our discussions during the third year review revealed a number of strengths.

First, your emphasis on evaluation of OSPU's data and its use as a guide to planning is critically important. This is a fundamental step that will ensure that the practices you engage in are effective (i.e. your peer academic coaches, restructured student success class, and early intervention form).

Also important is the formation of your enrollment management committees as these are important groups to get the data before as they develop strategies for recruitment and retention.

I'm also very happy to see that the data is being shared with the entire campus every semester and even more frequently with various stakeholders. The more you can get the entire campus invested in the information that the data reveals, the more likely you will be able to develop a culture of student success. Everyone needs to understand why this information is important and what their role is related to the programming that is generated from that data.

Another strength is your new hire of an assessment coordinator. She will be a great asset as your various committee review data and evaluate your student success programs. Finally, the administration's strong support of student success is very valuable for as you've already noted, institutional buy-in has improved.

Susan Hatfield

Rachelle has done a good job of summarizing your project. Most impressive to me is that the project continues to evolve as the result of your ongoing reflection and review.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

I do have a number of questions. First, you've made the decision to run two enrollment management committees rather than combining these efforts. Do these two committees share information? Do they have any joint meetings? Has the relationship between the students being recruited and their retention been examined? It seems to me that the two groups may have valuable information to share.

My second question is about the student success surveys. You mention that you are using them to measure retention? How so? I'd be interested in seeing one of the surveys to understand how you are using them as a measure.

I'm also curious about the early intervention forms. Who fills them out? How are they accessed? Who responds to the forms? I'd really like more information on this intervention to understand how it works.

 I'm also very interested in the student success course. You mention the use of cohorts. How are those established? Do you have any evidence that the course is more effective using these cohorts than the previous model? I'm glad to see the faculty involvement in the development of the revised course. I'm curious to know what skills are being emphasized that help students better retain college-level coursework.

Susan Hatfield

I too was wondering about the purpose and implementation of the student success surveys and early intervention forms.

Will the assessment coordinator be working just on enrollment / retention issues, or broader questions of student success and learning?

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

In the next 6 months, I'd focus on the impact of your data analysis. Pay attention to how your attention to the data has improved your practices and processes. Also make sure that your two enrollment management committees communicate to make the most effective use of your data and resources. Utilize your new assessment coordinator to tie everything together.

 Also, keep up the good work as far as communication strategies with the campus and your critical stakeholders.

Susan Hatfield

A more data-driven approach to the Enrollment Management sounds like a good idea, though I hope you have a collection of what people were doing to increase retention that you can share with faculty and staff.

As you move think this year, considering your processes and results will be important. I always think it is a good idea to go back to the data that you reviewed early in your Academy participation that prompted the development of your persistence and completion initiatives. That isn't the only place where you might see some progress but is a good place to start.

You seem to have created some momentum and buy-in on your campus.... continuing to nurture and develop that so that it becomes part of the culture of the institution would be a worthy endeavor.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 6.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: We have been following the project at Cameron University and studying their development of sense of community and of faculty and staff buy-in. We feel this will be an important component of our planning and project. The project information from Northwestern Oklahoma State University regarding professional development opportunities surrounding their retention and completion project has provide food for thought about implementing this type of strategy on our own campus. Redlands Community College's project facilitating the definition of at-risk and early alerts has provided us with ideas to research within our own collected data to "paint a picture" of at-risk students and the impact of early alert systems. They like OPSU have reorganized their student services and it is helpful to have access to their point of view on the reorganization.

Version 6.0 - Update

Q:

Looking back at the tasks that you had outlined for your project following the Midpoint Roundtable, what progress has been made and what tasks remain?

A: Following the Midpoint Roundtable, we have continued collecting, analyzing and sharing data with the intended result being that it has become an interactive process and is truly an ongoing process at this institution. The areas of focus after the Midpoint were midterm grade interventions, probation/suspension interventions, and redeveloping student success courses. The midterm intervention process was implemented in the fall and has just occurred for the spring term. This process has provided a plethora of new data to be analyzed by the committee and will be shared with target audiences at the beginning of next fall. The process continues to be fine-tuned to make it fit and work for the students of the university. The switch to Banner is complete and has made the probation/suspension intervention a bit more challenging than we thought it would be. Adjusting to a new system has also meant adjusting to "where" and "how" to identify certain subgroups of students. We continue to revise the collection and identification of students on probation and suspension in order to facilitate an intervention strategy for those students. Many of those students are also identified on the midterm information. The revision of the freshman student success course continues for the fall semester. It has been moved to the five individual schools for instruction with student academic support services providing support

for various topics. This will be an ongoing process.

Q:

How have you continued to engage or increased engagement from institutional stakeholders since attending the Midpoint Roundtable, if at all? If there has been no increase in engagement, or even a decrease, please explain.

A: The faculty and staff of the university are given an update at the beginning of each semester at the university-wide meetings. The membership of the committee has changed dramatically, with the death of one member and two other members leaving the university. New committee members have been added and have been brought up to speed on the activities with the academy. The new committee members take information back to their respective areas and bring thought provoking questions from those areas. Advisers and coaches have been included in the early interventions surrounding the midterm grade process.

Q:

In your last posting, you were asked to list your goals for the remaining two years of the Academy. At this point in the Academy project, what challenges remain in reaching your goals for participation?

A: The budget remains a constant challenge, we are facing another cut from our state. New committee members bring new input and enthusiasm to the process, but also challenges in that they have limited history as to how we have come to the point we are at with the academy process. It is always a balancing act to provide a historical context without compromising their fresh viewpoint.

Q:

What specific questions or topics would you like to discuss with your mentor during the Third Year Consultation in order to advance your Academy project?

A: Quality Initiative Project

timeline for moving from data to project

Version 6.0 - Response

Q:

Given the information provided by the institution, what questions or points of clarification do you have that needs to be addressed during the Third Year Consultation?

A: Rachelle Darabi

I would like clarification on a number of issues.

First, the report mentions a reorganization of student services. What does that entail, and how has it moved that student success agenda forward?

Second, the report also mentions using Redland's model to research at-risk students at OPSU. What has the result been? Does the team have a clearer picture of who those at-risk students are? If so, has there been any modification of the 3 key interventions to target those populations? Finally, the report mentions studying Cameron's sense of community. I know that a lot of effort has gone into communications about the student success initiatives to campus constituents. I also know that the team has expanded to include more people and that the student success course has moved to the five schools. Have these efforts created a more student-centered culture on campus? Such a culture could go a long way in helping OPSU accomplish its student success goals. If not, what might be done to better create this culture?

Another clarification I need is what information does OPSU need regarding the QIP? My understanding is their participation in the academy will serve as their QIP. Also, OPSU has been moving from data to projects – student success course, midterm grades, probationary student interventions, so I'm not sure what the issues are surrounding these 2 areas. I need some more specific information on what the expectations are for their third-year consultation.

 Susan Hatfield

Prior to the Third Year Consultation Rachelle will talk with the Team Lead (and other team members if present) to discuss the focus of consultation. Rachelle has asked some great questions (above) that will serve as the starting point for useful discussions on the next steps for OPSU.

I would like to suggest that a potential topic for conversation will be your perceptions of the level of faculty engagement and commitment to student success. Also, it will be a good time to start talking about how you are going to measure the impact of your efforts.

Q:

Are there any specific areas of concern not outlined by the institution that should be discussed at the Third Year Consultation?

A: Rachelle Darabi

A concern I'd like to address is the balancing act. How can an institution do this work in troubling times – budget cuts, changing committee members, and so on. What are the best strategies to keep making progress and keep up enthusiasm for the work? How can the team capture the enthusiasm of the new team members and at the same time maintain historical knowledge while continuing to move forward?

Susan Hatfield

Other areas for discussion might be the revision, coordination and effectiveness of the student success course, and how you might be able to keep student persistence and completion front-and-center during the actual semester (in between all university meetings at the start of each term).

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 5.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: Rather than following projects in the network this work period, we utilized the time in our team meetings to discuss our process with the other three teams that were in our team room. We all discussed the uses of student success/orientation courses as a part of the retention process. We also met with 4 other schools in the sharing session to discuss dashboards to be utilized for data collection, analysis and sharing. We also discussed how to implement student success into the curriculum for the greatest impact with students. The input and shared experiences with the other members of our cohort provided a great deal of information and helped us to look at our data and the collection process with more objective eyes.

Version 5.0 - Update

Q:

Describe your short-term plan for implementing and revising your project created at the Midpoint Roundtable. What tasks do you plan to accomplish in the next six months?

A: We plan to continue collecting, analyzing and sharing data with the intention that this interactive process will become an ongoing activity at the institution. Based on the data collected and analyzed so far and with the input of our cohort and HLC facilitator, we have determined three areas of focus for the development of our persistence and completion project. These areas are: a) midterm grade interventions, b) probation/suspension interventions, and c) redeveloping student success course to develop cohort groups of students based upon intended majors.

The team is in the process of further developing a plan of action begun at the midpoint roundtable. Student success is being refocused and curriculum developed over the summer months and will be piloted in the fall term. The midterm grade interventions with policies and procedures should be ready to roll out at midterm of the fall term. The probation/suspension interventions will be designed and developed to be implemented at the end of the fall term.

Q:

Describe your long-term goals for the final two years in the Academy.

A: The collection of data will continue and be used to make critical decisions regarding students and their persistence. The team looks to use the next two years to "tweak" and improve the areas of focus and hopefully improve persistence and completion of the students.

If the data indicates another area of focus, we would hope to be able to adjust our focus and include any area with the hope of increasing retention.

Q:

What steps do you need to take in order to achieve those goals?

A: Continue to collect data, analyze that data and implement the areas identified for the project. This summer will be a busy one in order to get the project pieces in place for the fall term.

Q:

Is additional data collection required to move forward? If so, briefly describe the data you will gather and their source.

A: Not at this time.

Q:

What institutional stakeholders need to be involved in moving the project forward? How will the team engage these individuals and groups?

A: We will be adding members to the team from each school, as well as from counseling, residential life, student activities, and Hispanic services. These members will become part of the information sharing effort and bring back input from their respective areas of expertise. The new VPAA will be briefed on the progress and focus of the Academy Team. There will be an update on the project at the back to school breakfast and beginning with the start of the fall term, email updates will go out campus wide on a regular basis.

Q:

What challenges do you anticipate as you move ahead? How will you use the experience gained from the first two years of the Academy to mitigate these challenges?

A: Most of our challenges revolve around an abysmal budget for higher education in Oklahoma and numerous personnel changes in the last 6 months. I have requested a dashboard of some type to be utilized with the project and data sharing, but this does not look possible with the severe budget cuts just handed down by our legislature. Our current VPAA is retired at the end of June, the new VPAA begins July 1. One member of our team (Joe

Breeden, Dean of Business) resigned to take another position outside the university one week prior to the end of the spring semester. He was replaced by David Miller (chair of Business Administration department) who traveled with us to the midpoint roundtable and was a great addition. Sadly, David passed away last week. To top it all off, the hotel lost our notebook with all of our notes from our work at the round table! Slowly but surely I am re-piecing the information back together in order to get the process moving forward. We will continue to move forward, even if it is slowly sometimes. Never look back only forward!

Version 5.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Rachelle Darabi   rdarabi@missouristate.edu

417-380-4700 / 417-836-6374

Susan Hatfield   SHatfield@hlcommission.org

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Rachelle Darabi

One of the primary strengths is the commitment to institutionalize the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data. These practices will keep student success in the forefront at Oklahoma Panhandle State University and keep decision-making in regards to initiatives data-driven. Another strength is the focus on three specific student success initiatives--midterm grades interventions, probation/suspension interventions, and major-focused student success courses. Also important is the timeline that has been established to implement these initiatives. The team has picked wisely as all three of these areas can serve as tremendous boosts to student success.

Finally, expansion of the team to include someone from all the colleges plus staff from critical offices like counseling and residential life is a great step forward. This will not only increase the opportunities for communication among a larger scope of departments but will also provide a diversity of perspectives which will make all programming much richer. The update at the back to school breakfast along with the planned email updates are important to keep the campus engaged in the new initiatives.

Susan Hatfield

OPSU made good use of the Round Table to connect with other schools and plan for the next two years.

The team has a clear sense of direction and purpose and are making good use of the summer

months in order to put their plans into action this fall.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to improve student persistence and completion?

A: Rachelle Darabi

I have a number of questions regarding the team's experience at the midpoint round table.

The report mentions that interactions with others at the round table allowed the OPSU team to look at data and their collection process with more objective eyes. I wondered how that specifically helped the team. In particular, did those interactions give insight into how to develop the data dashboard?

I know that the dashboard has been a priority in the past, and I think it could be essential in helping with the first two of the new initiatives as well as pointing to curriculum needs for the student success course. For instance, if the dashboard indicates that a large number of students are first-generation college students, then the content of the course could be shaped to help those students more effectively transition to the university.

I know that the team believes that the dashboard may be out because of budget cuts, but its development may be the most cost effective way to work towards increased persistence and completion.

Without the dashboard, it may take much more work to ascertain midterm grades or to determine signs that may be leading a student toward probation.

Susan Hatfield

I'll be interested in hearing more about the revised student success course pilot. How many sections will you offer in the fall? Ultimately, is the goal to have all students enroll in the course? Will you teach the course again in the spring to newly enrolled students?

Is there some way to develop -- just on your own -- a low-tech basic dashboard of some kind --Just to keep some up-to-date information available?

How will you roll out the interventions? How will you follow up with the students who have participated / not participated in the interventions? What will be the metrics of against which you will judge success?

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Rachelle Darabi

For the next 6 months, the team needs to pull in those people necessary to accomplish their goals. I understand that there have been drastic budget cuts and many staffing changes. My condolences on the death of David Miller. The team seems to feel that many of their objectives are unobtainable like the dashboard because of the financial situation. The team may need to do some research on the return on investment in student success initiatives. Small increases in persistence can make a significant financial impact on an instruction. If the team can demonstrate how great that impact could be, then perhaps the campus leaders would consider making an investment in developing the dashboard which may be critical to the desired initiatives.

 I also think the curriculum development for the student success classes is a critical issue. Since the team has representation from all of the colleges, that should help to ensure that subjects unique to each of them will be covered in the course. I hope that the information and connections made at the midpoint round table will point the team to some well-established curriculum that they can build from. These courses have a long history, so there is a wealth of materials to draw on from national organizations like the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition as well as from other state institutions. I would say the same thing regarding the other two interventions. Study the best practices and then adapt them to fit OPSU students. One consideration for the midterm grades initiative is to develop a parent program where students can sign FERPA releases that allow a chosen adult/family member to receive their midterm and final grades--at least through their first year. The designated family member could also receive updates on key resources for students as well as information on when their student should register for classes and other key dates.

 As always, I give such credit to the OPSU team. They have persevered through tremendous difficulties--budget cuts, staffing changes, the loss of team members, and a lost notebook. Keeping each other's spirits up through these trying times may be the most important thing for the team in the coming months. The work of the team is critical to the OPSU's students. The initiatives put forth can change the lives of students forever through the opportunities afforded to a person holding a degree. In fact, those degrees can change the trajectory of an entire family, so they need to stick to it no matter how tough things get. The team is making a difference, and I salute their efforts on behalf of their students.

Susan Hatfield

I echo Rachelle's comments. It would have been easy for the team to simply take a break after the extremely unfortunate incident with the notes at the hotel almost immediately followed by the untimely passing David Miller. But you didn't. You pushed forward, reconstructed the work, and are moving forward. Under the circumstances, that's remarkable.

You have a busy summer ahead of you, and I have every confidence that the team will be ready to go in the fall. One thing to continue to think about is what can faculty do --even a small thing-- this semester to help facilitate student engagement / connection / success? While the academy tends to focus on broader initiatives, the smaller, facutly -driven classroom-based initiatives can add up... creating a shift in the culture.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 4.0 - Project

Q:

> **What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?**
>
> *To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.*

A: Like many of our counterparts in the state of Oklahoma, we are being directed to redesign the program that prepares under-prepared students for college courses. This has added to the challenges of developing a persistence and completion project, as the attention and resources have been divided to encompass the two. With limited resources and faculty, this is proving to be quite challenging and time consuming. We have located several ideas from the projects of other schools in the state of Oklahoma including Connors State, NEO, Langston, Cameron and UCO. We have examined their methods used to facilitate the development, organization, and utilization of data sources. Data was existent on our campus, however it was not in very usable form nor easily accessible. We are encouraged to know we are not alone in this, others have the same issues with data collection. The sharing of methodologies has been useful.

Version 4.0 - Update

Q:

> **Your team has reached the midpoint in the Academy. Summarize your team's three most significant accomplishments thus far.**

A: 1. The locating and identifying the silos of data on the OPSU campus. We now know where specific data sets are located, who controls access to them and how to access them.

2. Areas have been identified through analyzing the data, that will be included in the project once data collection and organization is completed. These areas are high "DFW" courses (top three are English I, speech and economics), students on academic probation, at-risk, under-prepared students, and Hispanic students.

3. The addition of a team member from the school of liberal arts, to enhance collaboration in light of two of the three DFW courses are housed in that school and are a part of every student's general education requirements.

Q:

> **Describe the significant challenges and encountered thus far. How effectively have you been able to address these challenges?**

A: Severe cuts to state funding have adversely affected programs and resources creating challenges in all areas of the academic life of our institution. These cuts have resulted in numerous personnel being assigned additional duties and responsibilities to carry the needed work load. Time comes at a premium for meeting and working on the retention and completion project for several on the academy team. The current VPAA, who took office in April of 2016, is retiring in July of 2017. The search is underway for her replacement, this is one more challenge in the area of a new administration. The continued implementation of Banner has also stretched people thin and provides challenges to obtain data, while it is becoming a great source for certain types of information previously not available to the team.

The team continues to meet weekly in order to continue forward progress in their goal of data collection and a feasible project.

Q:

How have you incorporated the feedback from your Mentor and Scholar?

A: We have searched out data sets they have recommended to us, involved the new administration in our work and kept them abreast of our progress, and continued to set up a usable, efficient method of storing the information we are gathering. Their questions have lead to deeper examination of our interpretations of the data and caused us to clarify ideas and target areas for our continued work on our project.

Q:

Describe your campus's level of engagement in your project.

A: All faculty and staff are apprised of the progress of the committee at the beginning of the semester campus-wide meetings each term. Each member of the academy team reports back to their respective school at faculty meetings monthly. The changes with a new administration have directed the focus to other areas and the committee strives to bring the issues of persistence and completion to the forefront of the institution's concerns. The chair of the team, VPAA and President will be attending the national HLC conference in March-April, and the team's poster was accepted by the conference for the poster session.

Q:

The Midpoint Roundtable will offer an opportunity to review, refocus, and recharge the Academy team's efforts. How will the midpoint round table function in the life-cycle of your project?

A: The team hopes to utilize this round table to define and finalize its project as determined by analyzing the collected data. We hope to use the time away from campus to refocus the team and generate enthusiasm for the next step of our journey....a project.

Version 4.0 - Response

Q: **Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

A:

Rachelle L. Darabi

rdarabi@missouristate.edu 417-836-6374

Susan Hatfield

SHatfield@hlcommission.org

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

Once again, I commend the Oklahoma Panhandle State University team for their perseverance in tough times. With severe budget cuts and bifurcation of their objectives, I understand that it is difficult to stay on task, but the team has done so and made progress. For example, utilizing ideas from other schools across that state gives the team valuable opportunities, not to learn new techniques but also to bond with other professionals who experience similar challenges. In addition, they have located important data even though it was across various parts of the institution, and they have used that data to identify high D-F-W courses. Because of that identification, they have added members to their team from the school that houses two of those courses. This should help them tremendously in determining ways to improve those rates. Identifying this data in light of their challenges related to their Banner implementation should be considered a big win as should their continued effective use of their communication plan. The all faculty and staff meeting at the beginning of the semester is a brilliant place to present the team's progress. I continue to believe that the communication strategy the team is using is one of the most important aspects of this project, especially as issues of persistence and completion do not seem to the number one priority of the administration. Perhaps attendance of the HLC Conference by members of the administration will bring greater attention to the team's work. Congrats to the team on getting their poster session accepted!

Susan Hatfield

Rachelle outlines the many strengths of the Academy Project -- the two that I would like to emphasize are their perseverance and communication plan. There must be days (perhaps even weeks) where the Academy Team must just feel like the obstacles are too high and the task is too daunting, but still, they meet every week and move forward. That really says a lot about the Team and their commitment to their students.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.

A: Rachelle L. Darabi

One question I have is how is the team managing their dual objectives: prepare under-prepared students for college and improve persistence and completion? I ask the question because, in my mind, these are not mutually exclusive. What proportion of under-prepared students make up OPSU's student population? What are the persistence and completion rates of these students? I imagine that improving the situation for these students will improve the persistence and completion rates overall. If these students, in fact, are identified as those most at risk at OPSU, then the future persistence and completion project could focus on them. The identification of high D-F-W courses clearly has ties to both

objectives, so this seems a step in the right direction.

I'm also curious to know what issues are considered more important to the administration than persistence and completion? Has the team calculated the cost of recruitment versus retention? It should be very easy to calculate. Also, could the team find examples of schools that have improved their persistence rates (other Oklahoma schools or peer institutions to OPSU) and provide information about those schools to the campus? Perhaps testimony from the administrations of those schools would make an impact.

Susan Hatfield

I was surprised by the list of the top three DWF courses -- usually, a math class manages to wind up on that list. Interesting, too, that speech and English are generally held to smaller class sizes. Meeting with faculty in who teach those classes might be useful to get a sense of their perspectives relative to the lack of student success in those courses. Are there developmental courses in English, or do all students regardless of preparation take English 1? Do these courses have support in place (tutoring, practice labs, supplemental instruction, etc.?)

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?
A: Rachelle L. Darabi

 In the next 6 months, the team should continue to focus on the communication plan. Having an opportunity to report back on what they learn at the HLC conference and sharing their poster session experience may be an effective strategy to garner more enthusiasm for the project. Continued research into the practices of other schools, especially centered around the importance of persistence and completion agendas, seems critical. Persistence in going after the data is necessary even though there are continuing challenges with Banner. I've experienced Banner transitions at two institutions, so I can say that things will improve once everyone adjusts to the implementation.

Susan Hatfield

I continue to think that taking your communication plan to the next level and actually engaging faculty in discussions about how they connect with students and facilitate student success might be valuable. Very few schools in the Academy are taking this whole campus / faculty-driven approach. OPSU seems like a school where this approach might gain traction.

The midpoint round table will be a great opportunity for the team to focus specifically on your data, and, as importantly, talk with other schools about what they are doing, what's working, etc. The agenda for this event tends to be a bit less structured than the initial round table, because each school in the cohort is at a different place in their project, and we want each school to be able to get what they need to move forward. Coming with a list of questions that you'd like to ask other schools might be helpful -- but you will have ample time to focus on your data as well.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 3.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: We have followed projects from schools in the state of Oklahoma. It seems that we are all facing the challenges to our projects created by the drastic cuts in state appropriations. The implementation of the new enrollment management system "Banner" has been a challenge for many institutions.

Version 3.0 - Update

Q:

If you have collected additional data since the Roundtable, what data have you collected and how has it impacted your project scope? If you have not, what data are you finding most helpful in developing/piloting your Academy project?

A: We have continued to collect data on first generation students, DFW courses, and students who completely withdraw from college. The challenges presented by the move to Banner and the new focus areas of the new administration have resulted in the slow down of collecting data. The committee was affected by the death of one of the members father and one member became critically ill during the spring semester. The committee is now back up to speed and working to locate data and collect it in usable formats.

Q:

What were your goals for the previous six months? Did you achieve them? What facilitated or inhibited your progress?

A: We had planned to complete the collection of data regarding first generation students, track the students that comprise the DFW numbers and revise surveys to collect information about why students stay. The implementation of Banner has been a challenge with a small support staff and budget cuts, this has impacted our data collection. Sometimes the information that was in the old system is not there in Banner and when it is we have to locate it and pull it into our reports. All with minimal training in the system. The revision of the university website has caused a delay in the development of new surveys, as the webmaster is also the institutional research person. He has had other priorities to this point, data collection is now back on his radar for the committee.

Q:

How did you incorporate the consolidated feedback that you received for version 2.0?

A: We took the suggestions to develop surveys of seniors about what made them stay through their graduation and began the process. The surveys are currently under revision and will be sent out upon approval. The committee has increased the amount and frequency of communication with the faculty and staff regarding the project. Each committee member takes an update of any new information back to their respective schools, and the staff is also updated. The committee works hard to keep retention and completion relevant in light of the new administration's focus on recruitment.

Q:

What are your goals for the next six months? What internal and external challenges do you anticipate in reaching those goals?

A: Continue to learn and master the new enrollment management system, collect data, analyze the data, develop areas of focus for the future retention project based upon the analysis of the data gatherer. The forward progression of the committee and the project will be a continuing challenge with the devastatingly drastic cuts to state appropriations. The new enrollment system has a component for data analytics that will be accessible to OPSU hopefully by the fall of 2017. The committee feels this will be a great help in the process.

Version 3.0 - Response

Q: **Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

A: Rachelle Darabi rdarabi@missouristate.edu   417 836 6374

Susan Hatfield SHatfield@HLCommission.org

Q: **What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

A: Rachelle Darabi

One of the major strengths I see in this project is the perseverance of the committee. Despite setbacks due to health and loss of family members, drastic budget cuts, and limited access to the IR person, the committee has remained committed to gathering and analyzing data that will help determine the best way to move forward with a plan to improve persistence and completion. Another strength I see is the communication plan the committee has put in place. Sharing the information with respective schools and staff members is key to keeping a student success agenda in the forefront of people's minds. The committees desire to take advantages of the new enrollment system is an additional strength as is the commitment to create evidence-based retention projects. Staying the course, no matter how challenging it seems, is critical for success in implementing any new initiatives if those initiatives are to improve persistence and completion rates.

Susan Hatfield

I concur with Rachelle's observations -- there's a lot going on right now, both on campus and with the team -- but the team has continued to focus on moving forward in spite of the challenges. Following the other Oklahoma schools in the academy is good idea -- I am hoping the Network provides opportunities to learn from each other and share ideas.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.

A: Rachelle Darabi

One thing that is not clear to me at this point is the investment in this process by the administration. The report mentions the "new administration's focus on recruitment." What ways has the committee interacted with the administration to demonstrate the importance of persistence and completion? There are models that can be found online to help institutions calculate the cost of recruitment versus persistence. Perhaps demonstrating that persistence is more cost effective than recruitment might sway the administration and put more focus on this project.

I'm also curious about the implementation of the senior surveys. How will that be done to ensure a high completion rate? Is there a senior exit exam or survey requirement? That may be something to consider. I would recommend doing the survey before students graduate.

Further, what training is available on campus to help with the transition to Banner? Are there ways the company can help with better access to data? Are there training opportunities to help everyone adjust to the new system? I wonder the same thing about the data analytics package that will be added to the enrollment system. Who will be trained on that, and how will it be used?

Susan Hatfield

As usual, Rachelle asks important questions. And again, she leaves me without anything to add to her astute list.

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Rachelle Darabi

In the next six months, there are a number of critical things to consider. First, continuing the communication plan is critical. Also, has that communication pushed interest on campus? Can that interest be used to persuade the administration of the importance of persistence and completion? Have students been part of the communication plan? Can students be a voice for the committee to emphasize the importance of this work?

Taking advantage of the IR person to help get data collection back on track is essential as is finding ways to generate correct data from Banner. Transitioning from one system to another is always problematic, so the committee will need to continue to push forward on this. I commend the team for staying as much on track as the have considering all the challenges they have faced. I look froward to hearing about the results of the senior survey and additional insights that are gained from the committee's data collection and analysis.

Susan Hatfield

A few things I was wondering -- Since Banner is a system-wide implementation, are there any possibilities of cross campus user groups to fill in the gaps on the training? I'm

assuming that there must be and IR person who came from a different school that used Banner. Forming a user group might help address the shortcomings in any training that is provided and create a support network.

While you are waiting for the focus of administration and IR to return to persistence, you might want to conduct a series of focus groups with faculty who teach the first year students and begin to collect best practices for encouraging student engagement in their classes (and outside of class). These ideas might serve as the basis for some faculty development programming. First year student focus groups might also provide an interesting perspective on what goes into decisions to persist or leave.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 2.0 - Project

Q: **Select your Track:**

A: Track A: Data Development and Analysis

Q: **Describe your team's initial implementation of your data collection plan.**

A: The Academy Team for OPSU continues to meet monthly to gather and analyze data related to the persistence and completion project. Data has been collected for the following sub-groups of students from the last five years: Hispanic student retention numbers including information regarding those that are first generation college students and those Hispanic students who are members of the Hispanic Leadership Organization on campus; student/athlete retention numbers both by individual sports as well as by overall athlete numbers in relation to the population of campus; student retention numbers for fall to fall retention for the years, fall 2010 through fall 2015; comparison data for students who begin their college career via the University College (which is the university bridge program) versus students who gain admission to the university without remediation; and retention rates by student major have also been accessed. Five years of data regarding DFW rates for general education courses has been compiled to analyze to determine the presence of "gatekeeper" courses. Surveys have been developed and sent to students who left the university; those results are beginning to come to the committee for analysis. A survey has been developed and sent to all Hispanic students requesting input and information as to why students choose to remain at OPSU. This data has begun to come in for the committee to analyze. The results of the Senior Survey, Student Satisfaction Survey and Freshman Survey(all of which were in use prior to the academy) have been collected and are compiled for analysis by the committee.

Q: **What preliminary hypotheses have you developed about student persistence, based on the data you now have?**

A: Based on the analysis of data collected so far, the project committee has learned Hispanic student retention numbers at OPSU are in line with retention numbers of Hispanic students nationwide. At OPSU, there is not a significant difference in the rate of retention for students who matriculate via the University College versus students who do not go through the bridge program. Based upon discussions with the Deans' Council and the Vice President of Academic Affairs, a group of students were identified for study and analysis. This group of students are students who have been placed on academic probation and/or first suspension. This is a group of students who come from all subgroups on campus. At this point, this is an area of possible focus for our project.

Q: **Are you prepared to begin planning a project that addresses those hypotheses? If not, what additional work do you need to do? If so, what help do you need to transition into planning mode.**

A: With the identification of a possible area of focus regarding the retention and persistence of students placed on probation and/or first suspension, the persistence and completion committee at OPSU has identified one possibility for inclusion in their project. OPSU is not prepared to address this one facet of focus. The committee wishes to complete the following: gather data and information on first generation students who began college in a

fall semester and then did not return the following spring semester (for previous five years in addition to the information we have for the past academic year), retention specific to individual departments within each of the schools, compile data regarding the effectiveness of the use of tutoring by students, gather and analyze information on students placed on probation and/or first suspension. OPSU is developing and sending a senior survey to attempt to acquire information regarding their retention to complete their degree (what made them stay through completion of their degree), and develop a survey for athletes to gather retention information, in addition to gathering information from the student athlete survey currently in use by the athletic department.

Version 2.0 - Update

Q: **What are your goals for the next six months? How will this work advance your project?**

A: The OPSU persistence and completion committee plans to complete the data gathering and compilation of the data groups listed previously, analyze the new data, re-analyze the previously gathered data to determine trends and commonalities, and transfer all data from the existing system to the new Banner system. The committee wants to identify the focus of the project by July 1 and then present the project to the faculty/staff in August at the beginning of the year meetings. This will allow for a transition to implementation of the project with the new academic year.

Q: **What challenges do you anticipate?**

A: The committee anticipates challenges with the retirement of the current president and vice president of academic affairs. The President will be gone from OPSU effective July 1 and the VPAA will be gone effective April 1. In addition, the Dean of Student Affairs is leaving the university by mid April. The transition to a new administration may be a challenge, with a new area of focus a possibility. The transfer of data from the old records system to the new Banner system is of concern campus wide. The committee recognizes the increasing pressure for recruitment to become the priority over retention, due to decreasing numbers of incoming freshmen. Faculty support and buy-in continue to be a concern for the committee, especially with the uncertainty of a changing administration.

Version 2.0 - Response

Q: **Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**

A: Rachelle L. Darabi   rdarabi@missouristate.edu   417-380-4700 cell   417-836-6374 office

Susan Hatfield   SHatfield@HLCommission.org

Q: **What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**

A: Rachelle Darabi

OPSU faces many challenges in the implementation of their academy work--changing administration, conversion to Banner, and declining enrollment.

In light of all these challenges, I commend OPSU for remaining focused and pushing through to complete their data collection plan. The perseverance and commitment of the team are major strengths of this project. The monthly team meetings to gather and analyze data are critical to the process.

The more focused examination of groups you identified as highly at-risk--Hispanic (particularly first gen), athletes, and University College admits--will help shape your plans for future interventions.   Viewing the data by major should also lead to useful information on your students and may help with by-in for units outside the University College.

Another positive step is examining your DFW rates to determine whether there are gateway courses at OPSU. I also think it's a great idea to survey students who have decided to remain at OPSU. The analysis of all this data will help determine what factors help students persist and complete their degrees at OPSU.

Susan Hatfield

As was the case in your first posting, Rachelle does a great job of identifying the many strengths of OPSU's Academy work.

I too appreciate that OPSU has continued to focus on data -- this will serve the Team well as they refine their project as well as provide valuable metrics from which to gauge progress.

This Academy Team has begun to fill in some of the gaps in their dataset through surveys of students who left the university and successful Hispanic students, in addition to a satisfaction survey. First year and Senior surveys continue to be administered.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.

A: Rachelle Darabi

I have a number of questions related to your project.

Your data collection so far has indicated that your Hispanic student persistence rates as well as those of your University College (UC) admits are not out of line. Your UC rates are the same as regular admits, and Hispanic rates are comparable with national trends. Since this is the case, where are you losing students? Can you dig deeper into your data and determine what common characteristics those who don't persist share? Male versus female? Traditional vs. nontraditional? Students below a certain GPA at the end of the first year? Students who complete less than a certain number of hours in their first year? As for as Hispanic students, how do your numbers compare to the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)? Isn't a goal of your current president for OPSU to become a Hispanic Serving Institution? Will that continue to be a goal going forward with a new administration?

 The team mentioned first generation status of Hispanic Students. What about at the institution overall? What is the percentage of first gens, and are their persistence and completion rates different than non-first gens? How about first generation Pell eligible students? How does financial need figure into persistence and completion of your students (first gen and non-first gen)?

 Although you have noted some of your current findings related to persistence, what is your hypothesis? What conclusions have you drawn from the data you've examined so far? Does what you've seen match any of the hunches you mentioned when we first spoke about persistence and completion?

 My final question relates to one of your comments regarding students placed on probation and/or first suspension. You mention that "OPSU is not prepared to address this one facet of

focus." What do you mean by that? You don't intend to gather any data on this, or you don't think it's significant? I would recommend at least examining the data on this group of students, particularly as it relates to the DFW rates you've collected on your courses. If a lot of students end up on probation after taking the same sequence of classes, then some examination of the pedagogical strategies of those classes may be in order.

Susan Hatfield

Rachel's questions are right on target and are essentially the same questions I was wondering about. I was also wondering about the students on probation. Is this group a specific priority of the Deans and VPAAA? If so, why? Is there external pressure to examine this topic? I'm especially curious since another Oklahoma (OKC, I think) is addressing that specific issue. Like Rachelle, I'm unclear as to the meaning of the statement about not being prepared to address that focus.

Even though the retention rages of Hispanic students are in line with National Averages, is there still room for improvement?

What have you learned from the subgroup data you have collected so far?

Does the Bridge program have any impact on student persistence (for any population?)

It seems like a lot of data will be coming to the committee for Analysis. Is the committee equipped for the workload of analyzing all of the data? Is the data collected in such a way that it will allow for tracking of data across surveys and connecting survey responses to academic data -- so you might discern the connection between the self-reported information and how long a student persists?

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?
A: Rachelle Darabi

I believe a major concern going forward is how to remain relevant. I would recommend that the team have a concise, compelling report of your work including the purpose of the Academy, its significance to OPSU, and relevant data prepared for the incoming President and other administrators. You must emphasize the importance of persistence and completion and how it contributes as much or more to the health of the institution as recruitment. Perhaps you might recommend the creation of an Enrollment Management Council that has a focus on recruitment, persistence, and completion. The Chair of the Academy team could serve on the council to ensure that the work of the Academy team is always at the forefront. Pushing the notion that a student-centered campus is a great recruiting tool may be an effective strategy, particularly if the work of the Academy team includes the development of a culture of student success.

I hope that the team can stay focused on analyzing the data through these challenging times. It's more important to make sure you have the data well-examined than jumping into any projects. You are facing more than your share of challenges. Keeping your work relevant is going to be the most important thing you can do. Get your new administrative team on board as soon as you can. Seek out faculty allies to build campus commitment. Expand your team to include those allies if necessary.

Susan Hatfield

Between the change in leaderships, pressure from State level initiatives, and declining state budgets, there are a lot of challenges facing OPSU. Having a clear summary of the work that the Academy Team is engaged in and the potential benefit to the University on hand and ready to give to the new administration will likely be greatly appreciated -- you want to send the message that your team is working hard and moving forward. It might also make sense to try to get on the calendar of the new administrators before classes start in August to talk about your Academy work. You need their support.

In the meantime, I'm still wondering about what the campus at large knows about the Academy work. How common is talk about student persistence? Is persistence widely recognized as and issue? How involved are faculty in persistence - related endeavors? As I believe I mentioned earlier, while the Academy Team is working on defining their project, faculty and staff can be engaged in their own classroom and program based initiatives. It seems that it would be helpful to start this campus wide conversation before you begin addressing the high DWF courses -- it might be helpful to have the DWF discussion in the context of the larger initiative.

While decreasing numbers of incoming students is definitely a concern, you might be able to calculate the cost of recruiting a student vs. the cost to retain a student.   Recruiting is definitely important -- but you not only need to get students to OPSU, you need to keep them there.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi

Project: Oklahoma Panhandle State University Project

Version 1.0 - Project

Q: **Select your Track:**

A: Data Development

Q: **How did your discussions with other teams at the Roundtable help you identify data that might be useful to your team as you begin to understand persistence and completion on your campus? What ideas did you get for obtaining that data?**

A: OPSU was placed in a working group with other institutions in the data development track in the team working sessions. The discussions with the three other schools provided reassurance that we are not the only ones struggling with developing a plan for obtaining, organizing, analyzing, and utilizing the data that exists on campus to develop an effective plan for persistence and completion for our students. The work with the mentor assigned to our group proved to be most useful in identifying areas of data and locations. She brought ideas to each school from her conversations with the other groups as she worked with all groups. Some of the other schools in our group utilize "Banner" an enrollment management system, and were able to share the different categories of data provided by that system. OPSU will be converting to Banner in the summer of 2016. For the next year, we will continue to identify and gather data from the existing system, and then move to data from the new system.

Version 1.0 - Update

Q: **Describe the plan for data development that you crafted at the Roundtable. Describe the specific steps you will be taking in collecting data and building/improving your data infrastructure.**

A: The team that attended the Academy Roundtable was designated by the VPAA as the Retention Committee: Persistence and Completion. This committee has the responsibility of identifying, gathering and analyzing the data for this project. The committee will meet monthly beginning in August 2015. The first task to be completed by the committee is to develop a detailed list of data regarding the students at OPSU. This list will no doubt be a living document, evolving as the process moves forward. The list of data sets with sources identified will be divided into sub -sets to be gathered over the period of the next several months. The committee will request a sub -set of data from the office responsible for that data each month. The data will be returned to the committee for organization and initial analyzing. The requests for data will continue until the list has been exhausted. It was determined by the committee this would possibly prevent those "keepers" of the data from becoming overwhelmed with requests and allow the committee to organize the data in an effective, efficient system.

Q: **What challenges do you anticipate?**

A: We anticipate that faculty and staff buy in may prove to be a challenge when collecting the data and addressing issues the data indicates for the retention of students. The change in enrollment systems will provide a challenge, due to the learning curve all will experience. Another question of concern regards the transfer of the historical data of the university to

the new system of enrollment management.

Q: Now that your institution knows more about the Academy experience, how do you think participation supports your institution's strategic plans? Revisit the answer provided in the application to the Academy and discuss how your response may have changed.

A: The current goals of the OPSU Strategic Plan encompass the following:

- Enhance the reputation of OPSU
- Ensure quality customer service
- Ensure that OPSU is the institution of choice in the region
- Embrace an integrated approach to student recruitment, retention, and completion.

The goals of participation in the Academy will facilitate the development of strategies for persistence, retention and completion that will improve attainment of the goals within the University's strategic plan. The effective collection and analysis of student data, and the creation and implementation of a proactive retention plan will enhance the ability of the institution to meet the goals for student service and university improvement.

Based upon what we have learned thus far with the Academy, we have separated the responsibilities of the Recruitment Committee and the Retention Committee. The goals for OPSU's attendance at the Academy have not changed at this point in the process.

Q: Is there other relevant data that might exist on campus?

A: The committee will begin meeting in August when all members have returned for the academic term. The list of data to be collected will be extended beyond that which is currently accessible, and the data that was listed in the questions when the data track was recommended.

The OPSU Data Development Project will encompass categories such as: AA/AS completion rates as well as bachelor degree completion rates; persistence rates for groups considered at-risk including athletes, Hispanic students, and transfer students; and other data including persistence rates for in-state versus out-of-state, urban versus rural, GPA levels (persistence for 0-1.0, 1.0-2.0, 2.0-3.0, 3.0-4.0); and completion rates of AA/AS degree holders versus those eligible for a AA/AS degree but not awarded. OPSU desires to utilize this information to improve student support and increase retention and completion for these groups of students.

Version 1.0 - Response

Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Rachelle L. Darabi   rdarabi@missouristate.edu   417-836-6374

Susan Hatfield   HLC Senior Scholar   SHatfield@hlcommission.org

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Rachelle Darabi

OPSU is moving forward with their Data Development project. The team has come together to focus on gathering information that will create a more comprehensive picture of who their students are and what factors impact their success. Their understanding of the significance of proper collection and analysis of data is the greatest strength of this project. The categories OPSU has selected to examine are appropriate and should yield good

information about which students are persisting and moving on to completion. Examining the impact of the AA/AS on bachelor degree completion is a solid approach. Since many of their students are first-generation college students, this accomplishment may be a significant milestone.

The OPSU team has a good sense of the challenges they face relative to data fatigue and faculty/staff buy-in. If the team demonstrates a similar level of inclusiveness during their process as during the Data Discovery, they should have strong buy-in. They have communicated with other schools that have made the transition to banner already which is an additional challenge they face. Continuing to reach out to other schools to learn about effective data collection strategies through banner may be useful as they proceed. Also, the team has noted the difficulties of improving retention at an open-admissions institution. On all levels, they are aware of what they face which should serve them well in their work.

An additional strength is the team's recognition that recruitment and retention should be examined separately. Institutions often put far more emphasis and resources into recruitment even though it is less costly to retain than to recruit students, I'm happy to see OPSU put equal emphasis on the two areas.

I am fully confident in the team at OPSU. I believe they will develop more comprehensive persistence and completion data that will allow them to uncover stumbling blocks for their students. From there, they can develop meaningful programming to enhance the success of their students.

Susan Hatfield

In addition to the strengths Rachelle listed, I'd like to add the OPSU is willing to take the time to develop the data infrastructure from which they can move forward in an informed manner. They are not allowing themselves to feel pressured either internally or externally to jump at a solution without understanding the dimensions of the issue.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work improve student persistence and completion.

A: Rachelle Darabi

Although the OPSU team has outlined the challenges it faces, it is less clear how they will meet some of these challenges. What steps will the team take to meet the challenges they have outlined? The team has support from the President and Chief Academic Officer, but how well-known is that on campus? By-in will come when the university community comes together around student success, but that must be communicated regularly. Since the team anticipates data fatigue, have any resources been set aside to help those who may be impacted most? Will the other colleges be receptive to the University College as a model, or do they look at UC as a place of remediation only? Will the upcoming move to Banner overshadow the work of the academy team? How will human capital be divided to handle both of these big projects?

Susan Hatfield

All of Rachelle's questions are important to consider and she offers some good suggestions (resources to assist those who will be most impacted by the requests for data).

I am especially interested in the level of awareness among the faculty and staff

about persistence and completion concerns on the campus. It this a widespread concern?

Will there be an opportunity to introduce the Academy Project during pre-semester Faculty Development or all-campus meetings, even if only to talk about your plans in broad strokes? This might be a good way to find out if there is potentially helpful data out there that you didn't know about.

Q: **What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

A: Rachelle Darabi

The most critical issue will be faculty/staff buy-in as noted in question one. The team has an important job conveying the significance of this project and how it benefits the institution and individual student success. The more inclusive the team can be; the better by-in will be for the project. During Data Discovery, we found that pockets of important data exist across campus. Breaking down data silos will be critical. Listening to voices outside academic affairs like the Dean of Students and the Director of Counseling will enhance the project as affective factors often have more to do with attrition than academics. The team rightly recognizes that data fatigue will not be useful to the process. Since the Office of Financial Aid has many of its records still in paper format, additional resources may need to be deployed to help examine that data.

In our conversations during the Data Discovery, the University College stood out as a model of data collection at OPSU. More use could be made of this data particularly by pulling the various pieces together and examining the data for patterns. As OPSU's data collection expands, they may want to consider additional aspects of the student experience beyond persistence, GPA, and completion data.

For example, OPSU may also want to explore whether there are any predictable roadblocks to student success like "gateway" courses that are impeding students or major requirements that keep students from making academic progress. Determining what leads to persistence can take time and diligent attention to detail. The team notes that they will begin to meet monthly to not only collect data but also to analyze it which I highly recommend. The data is only useful if it can be used to generate thoughtful action.

Susan Hatfield

Again, Rachelle's comments are right on target. Faculty and Staff buy in will be a significant issue (hence my question in the previous section). As OPSU will have a lot of behind-the-scenes work to do during the first part of the Academy developing their dataset, I was wondering if it would be possible in the meantime to begin engaging the faculty in discussions about how faculty can contribute to persistence and completion. My guess is that many of your faculty have ideas and best practices about increasing student engagement and persistence in their classes that they might be willing to share.

Communication will also be key. Keeping faculty and staff informed on the project - and perhaps even participating in data analysis -- may increase buy in.

I was also wondering if there might be some value in talking with your seniors (esp. first generation) to find out what kept them enrolled at UPSU.

This anecdotal evidence might help identify the specific data you want to find / collect.

Scholar(s): Susan Hatfield

Primary Mentor(s): Rachelle Darabi