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"Student success...when students pass through our gates with their dreams and ambitions of becoming meaningful contributors to society...and, with diploma in hand pass through our gates for the final time, look back and realize the lifelong friends they have made and the efforts of the many people who are dedicated to their success-instructors and staff." *Bill Dyea, Staff, Facilities*

STUDENT SUCCESS—WHA WHA WHAT???
BY EDWARD HUMMINGBIRD

What is student success? If you were to ask a student, a faculty member, an administrator, an alum, a community member, and a prospective employer, you would likely get six different responses. To students, student success might be final course grades (or the fact that they passed a course). Others might define it as completing all courses and graduating with a degree or certificate. Others might define it as completing a select group of courses and transferring on to a four-year university. To prospective employers, student success might be whether or not students have the required skills to make a difference in the workplace. Student success is often difficult to nail down at times, and when we try, we find ourselves like the six blind men trying to figure out what an elephant looks like. The first man grabs the trunk and decides that the elephant is long and flexible. The next man grabs the tail and decides that it is thin and weak. The next man grabs a tusk and decides that it is hard and sharp. The next man grabs an ear and decides that it is flat, thin and floppy. The next grabs a leg and decides that it is round and large, like a tree trunk. The last walks into the side of the elephant and decides that it's like a solid wall. Who is right? Everyone, when you put all the pieces together.

The reality is...student success is a simple notion that students are achieving their educational goals. There are several points in the process that we can measure progress toward achieving those goals, and it is important for us to address those milestones of student success. It is equally important for us to examine how well our students are achieving those milestones. Finally, it is most important that we identify ways of using that data to develop approaches to improving student success.

The focus of this month's newsletter is exploring the various facets of student success here at SIPI.

"Student success means providing access to additional instruction and services that will enable students to accomplish their educational goals and become lifelong learners." *Stephan Haskie, Staff, Tutor*

"Student success means doing well in school to prepare yourself to enter the professional world and make it a better place for future generations." *Kimani Chan, Student, Vision Care Technology*

Randall Sahmie, Monica Stewart, Dwight Carlston, Mindy Burnett

THE STUDENT SUCCESS IMPERATIVE
BY EDWARD HUMMINGBIRD

Let's start by taking a look at SIPI's Mission...Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) is a National Indian Community College that prepares Native American students to be productive life-long learners, as tribal members, in an ever-changing global environment. As a land grant institution, SIPI partners with tribes, employers and other organizations with a stake in Indian education. **An enduring commitment to student success is the hallmark of SIPI's operations.**

Here's a simple reality—if you work in an educational institution, you are in the business of student success. Faculty members realize how they directly contribute to student success in the classroom (through evaluating student performance for grading and for assessment of learning outcomes). Those outside the classroom may not directly see their impact on student success; however, it is there, and it is very real.

The Facilities Department maintains a physical environment on campus for student learning. Information Technology maintains systems **(Cont. on pg. 2)**

THE STUDENT SUCCESS IMPERATIVE (CONT. FROM PG. 1)

for managing courses and communications. Human Resources maintains processes to ensure that qualified faculty and support staff are here to help students learn. Every department in the institution ultimately contributes directly to student success, or helps create an environment that enables students to succeed. In short, we're all in this together.

SIPI has in place actions to ensure continuous improvement of student learning and processes. A central issue in the continuous improvement process is that departments identify how "what they do" contributes to this environment for student success. SIPI also has in place processes for systematic review of program and department performance to ensure long-term sustainability. At the heart of this process is the expectation that departments clearly define how they are contributing to student success. SIPI also has a strategic planning process, that requires departments and committees to develop initiatives that support the institution's mission and vision. There are two major requirements for developing strategic initiatives: 1) they are truly strategic in nature (they have a lasting, or enduring impact on the institution), and 2) they can be clearly viewed through a prism of student success (in other words, we can see how they will ultimately enable students to succeed).

In the most recent version of the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) criteria for accreditation, a new section has been added, which requires us to explore various measures of student success. The following is the new component:

4C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Why did the HLC add this new component? At a recent workshop on the HLC's expectations, they indicated that the purpose of this new component was to ensure that schools were having broad discussions of student success. How has this impacted SIPI? This expectation was the starting point for the Retention Committee to evaluate measures (based on historical data), set measurable goals (based on SIPI's positions in the National

Community College Benchmark Project), and augment tracking data with data on student motivations for success to develop data-driven success initiatives. These initiatives are still a work in progress, but the wheels are moving. An example of how SIPI is approaching this requirement is in persistence. Given the low persistence rates of SIPI students, the Research Office surveyed non-returning students to find out what factors kept them from returning to college. Students provided a variety of reasons for not returning, but those reasons appeared in patterns. By analyzing the data, four segments of non-returners were identified:

Accomplished (37%)

Completed desired courses

Transferred to 4-year institution

Transferred to 2-year institution

SIPI lost accreditation

Other

Disenfranchised (28%)

Couldn't get needed courses

Couldn't get courses at needed times

Didn't like instructor or instructional methods

Was doing poorly in classes

Had unpleasant experience

Blocked from enrolling

Audrey Gachupin's family and Glennoah Billie, SIPI's New Mexico All State Academicians

"Student success is a measure of the support that a student receives. Faculty, staff, and fellow students all contribute to the success of the individual." Randall Sahmie, Student Business Administration and Accounting

Student success to me means that all Native American students within the United States are given the opportunity to achieve academic success in a safe, clean, living and learning environment. SIPI offers affordability where students can successfully complete their education goals and be prepared to continue onto a four year university." *Irene Shaw, Staff, Residential Life*

"Student success—when a student initially enrolls here at SIPI, is in the Adult Basic Education program, progresses onto a certificate or degree program, and graduates. This student then goes on to attend a four year university or gain employment in his/her field of study. This student has succeeded in accomplishing the goals he/she set!" *Barbara Chino, Staff, Admissions*

THE STUDENT SUCCESS IMPERATIVE (CONT. FROM PG. 2)

Personally Impacted (26%)

Personal issues

Transportation issues

Needed child care

Could not afford

Lost room in dormitory

Work Impacted (9%)

Began full-time job

Increased work hours/ changed shift

Schedule conflict

Each segment had a unique profile. The following summarizes former students belonging to each segment:

Accomplished—These were students who accomplished a meaningful part of their education goal at SIPI. Many of these are students who do not intend to graduate from SIPI, but want to complete a set of courses to either enhance their current skill set, or to prepare to transfer to another institution. This segment was deeply impacted by the loss of accreditation and repeatedly indicated concern that subsequent coursework taken at SIPI would not be accepted by other institutions.

Disenfranchised – These were students who did not feel an adequate "fit" at SIPI. Many are students inconvenienced by the fact that they could not get what they wanted, when they wanted it at SIPI. It also includes students who struggled to succeed at SIPI, and had a less positive experience than other segments.

Personally Impacted – These were students who were impacted by personal or financial issues. This includes students who largely believed that they could succeed, had they not been subjected to extraordinary circumstances (beyond their or the institution's control). These students are potential short-term stop-outs, rather than long-term drop-outs. Before considering a return to college, they must rectify issues that have become prohibitive barriers to success. These students were most likely to be impacted by a single tipping point.

Work Impacted – This small segment includes working students who find it difficult to balance work and study. Because most SIPI students are full-time resident students, this group is the smallest. Like the personally impacted students, these students are potential short-term stop-outs, rather than long-term drop-outs. These students were least likely to be impacted by a single tipping point, indicating that the work conflict was likely there from the start.

By understanding the nature of non-returning students, the Research Office is developing a predictive model that will allow us to identify students most likely to face the pressures of any given segment, and develop resource portals that focus on those specific needs. Directing students to the appropriate resources before the student decides to drop out of college may help improve persistence. Our goal at SIPI is to base interventions like this on empirical data.

"Student success is when a student does their best, stays true to themselves, works to achieve their goals, and learns along the way." *Erin Riley, Faculty, Natural Resources*

Course Retention Rates

Retention is a measure of course completion (or students enrolled in a course at census date, who complete the course and receive a grade of A, B, C, D or F). Course retention is a building block for term-to-term persistence and degree completion. SIPI's course completion rate for the Fall 2010 trimester was 81.83%, which places SIPI in the 3rd percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 National Community College Benchmark Project). The SIPI Academic Affairs Committee has set a goal of increasing course retention by 2% annually, and is exploring actions that would substantially improve course retention. A course exit survey is being developed to allow students to provide feedback on issues that led them to withdraw from courses, and provide guidance for corrective action.

Course Completer Success Rates

Of students who complete credit courses for the Fall 2010 trimester, the success rate was 69.95%, which places SIPI in the lowest percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 National Community College Benchmark Project). SIPI is currently working on strategic initiatives to improve student success, such as the hiring of additional tutors, hiring additional faculty, improving technological learning resources and library resources for students.

Persistence Rates

Of students enrolled at SIPI

A QUICK SNAPSHOT OF STUDENT SUCCESS MEASURES AT SIPI BY EDWARD HUMMINGBIRD

during the Fall 2010 trimester, 59.34% returned to college for the Spring 2011 trimester. This persistence rate places SIPI in the 6th percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 National Community College Benchmark Project). Of those students, 39.82% returned to SIPI for the Fall 2011 trimester. This persistence rate places SIPI in the 9th percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 National Community College Benchmark Project). The SIPI Academic Affairs Committee has set a goal of increasing persistence by 2% annually, and is exploring actions that would substantially improve course retention. The Office of Institutional Research has recently surveyed non-returning students to determine factors that led students to leave college before graduation, and to determine what SIPI could do to keep students from leaving early.

Degree/Certificate Completion Rates

Of students enrolled at SIPI for the first time in the Fall 2009 trimester, 21.05% completed their degree or certificate within 150% of normal time (that is, 3 years for an associate degree, and 2 years for a certificate). This completion rate places SIPI in the 54th percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 Nationally Community College Benchmark Project). This reflects a substantial improvement over previous years, when completion rates typically ranged from 8% to 14%. The SIPI Academic Affairs Committee has set a goal of increasing graduation rates by 1% annually, and is exploring actions that would substantially improve course retention. SIPI is also considering transfer rates for non-graduates. Surveys of non-returners and graduates suggest that many SIPI students transfer to other colleges and universities

SIPI is located in the heart of Indian Country, in the center of New Mexico's high-tech corridor. The College was established by a consortium of tribes including the All-Indian Pueblo Council (19 New Mexico tribes), the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Southern Ute Tribes and other southwestern tribes. On September 16, 1971, SIPI officially opened its doors for classes. Today, the College as a federally-operated institution offers advanced technical education and a university transfer degree to students who are members of federally recognized tribes.

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute

A NATIONAL INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE THAT PREPARES NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS TO BE PRODUCTIVE LIFE-LONG LEARNERS, AS TRIBAL MEMBERS, IN AN EVER-CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT.

A QUICK SNAPSHOT (CONT. FROM PG. 4)

upon leaving SIPI (whether they graduate or not). Until now, SIPI has been unable to effectively track its graduates, but the college is in the process of joining the National Student Clearinghouse, which will allow us to track our former students (graduates and non-graduating leavers) to other colleges and universities.

<u>Student Satisfaction with Progress</u>

Through surveys of graduates and non-returners, SIPI has measured satisfaction with goal attainment. A survey of SIPI graduates in the spring 2011 trimester revealed that 97.70% of graduates were satisfied with their goal attainment. This places SIPI in the 74th percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 Nationally Community College Benchmark Project). A survey of SIPI students who left the college (without graduating) after the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 trimesters revealed that 84.40% of non-returners were satisfied with progress toward their educational goals. This places SIPI in the 82nd percentile of community colleges nationally (according to the 2012 Nationally Community College Benchmark Project).   Students generally felt like SIPI met their college expectations, according to the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, administered in the Summer 2012 trimester. SIPI's satisfaction score for "college experience met my expectations" placed the College in the 60th percentile among community colleges nationally. Measuring and acting on student satis-faction measures are now part of the assessment processes at SIPI.

Student success results are mixed at the moment; however, the college's leadership has identified areas of greatest concern and is developing strategic initiatives to address these issues. Some measures have shown marked improvement over the prior year, and higher targets have been formally established for all student success measures.

SO WHAT IS NEXT?

As noted in our mission statement, an **ENDURING** commitment to student success is the hallmark of SIPI's operations. SIPI is committed to continuous improvement, which is basically a belief that "whatever we do, we can always do it better." Academic and non-academic assessment have required all programs and departments to refocus on their role in contributing to student success. SIPI has used those processes to feed directly into institutional planning and budgeting. New initiatives are being developed and incorporated into strategic planning. As we continue to collect, analyze and share more data on student success, the concept becomes increasingly clear, and our opportunities to make meaningful improvements become just as clear.