Student Support (Re)defined

**Equitable
Integrated
Cost Effective**

10 Ways Everyone Can Help Support Student Success

Students participating in Student Support (Re)defined tell us that everyone on a college campus can play a role in their success. As illustrated below, colleges can sometimes organize support differently from how our learners experience it (see *Figure 1. Support from the Student's Perspective*). Yet, no matter what your job title may be or where you may sit in your organization, students say you can help them reach their goals. Based on suggestions from nearly 900 study participants, **find below 10 ways everyone at your college can help students experience the "six success factors"**—focused, directed, nurtured, engaged, connected and valued (see sidebar, *Six Success Factors Defined*).

FIGURE 1. SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

What we see...

Student Services

Instruction

Special Populations Programs

What the student experiences...

the teacher who believes in me

the dean who helped me get into Math 1A

student

the counselor who helped me with my ed plan

the students I study with

the patient tutor

the nice woman in financial aid

the man in the cafeteria who asks how i'm doing

Six Success Factors Defined

As part of Student Support (Re)defined, the RP Group reviewed leading studies on effective support practices and interviewed both practitioners and researchers to identify "six success factors" that contribute to students' achievement. We list them below in order of importance according to those participating in our research.

DIRECTED: Students have a goal and know how to achieve it

FOCUSED: Students stay on track—keeping their eyes on the prize

NURTURED: Students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed

ENGAGED: Students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities
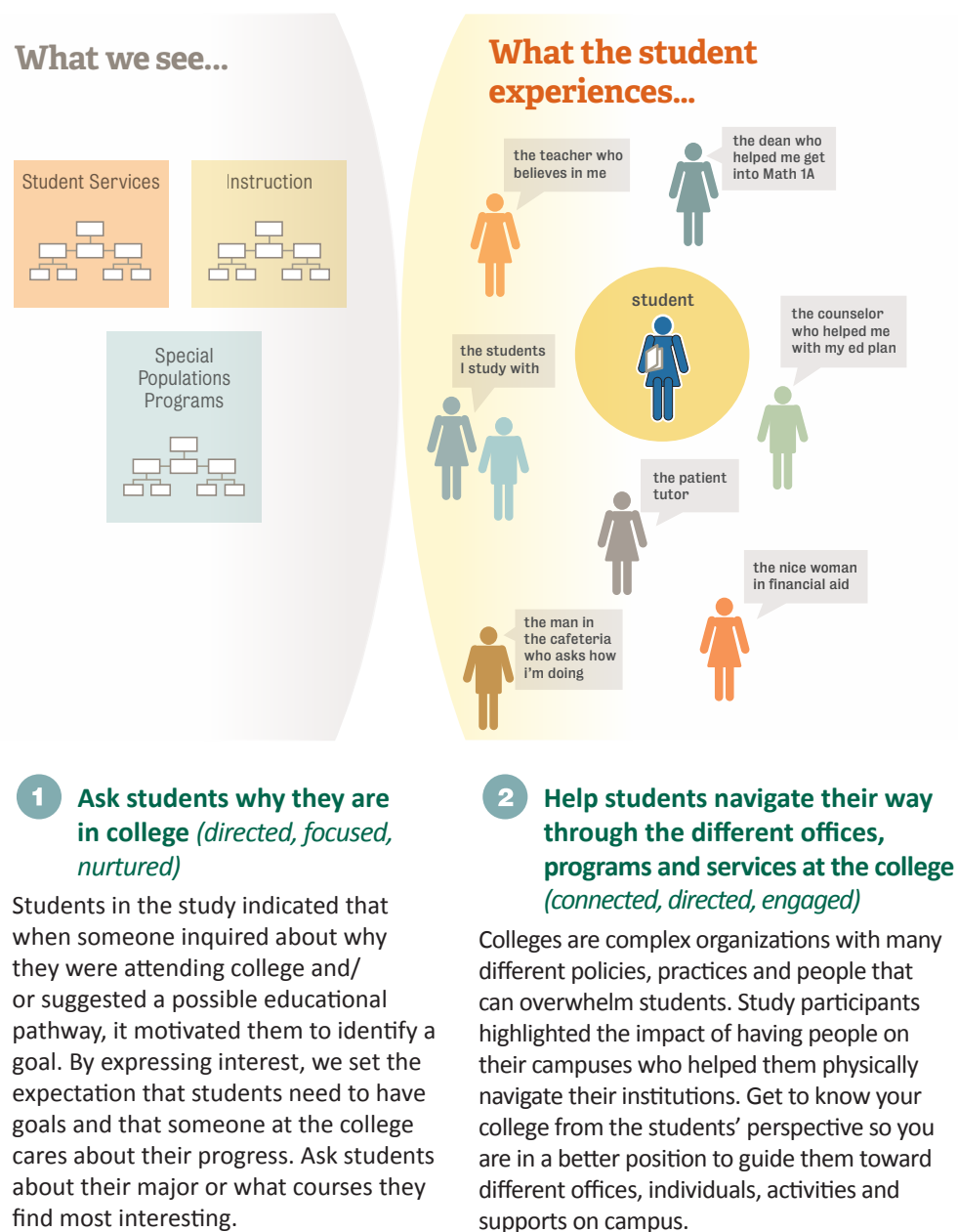
CONNECTED: Students feel like they are part of the college community

VALUED: Students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

1 Ask students why they are in college *(directed, focused, nurtured)*

Students in the study indicated that when someone inquired about why they were attending college and/or suggested a possible educational pathway, it motivated them to identify a goal. By expressing interest, we set the expectation that students need to have goals and that someone at the college cares about their progress. Ask students about their major or what courses they find most interesting.

2 Help students navigate their way through the different offices, programs and services at the college *(connected, directed, engaged)*

Colleges are complex organizations with many different policies, practices and people that can overwhelm students. Study participants highlighted the impact of having people on their campuses who helped them physically navigate their institutions. Get to know your college from the students' perspective so you are in a better position to guide them toward different offices, individuals, activities and supports on campus.

3 **Connect students with services or resources that can help them with career exploration, goal selection and ongoing academic assistance** *(directed, engaged, connected)*

Participants in our study indicated that students are often unaware that help is available, or they simply do not know how or where to ask assistance. Learn about the resources and supports on your own campus. Raise students' awareness about career exploration opportunities (e.g., career center, clubs). Talk to students about your own profession and career path. Encourage learners to meet with a counselor and establish an education plan. Urge students to take advantage of academic supports such as tutoring and learning centers.

4 **Have high expectations for students and hold them accountable** *(focused, nurtured)*

Students in the study indicated that they want to be challenged and held to a high standard. They specifically shared that having someone on campus to whom they are accountable motivates them to succeed. Make sure students know you are aware of their potential and expect them to work diligently toward the goals they have set for themselves.

5 **Ask students for feedback about their experience, including what works, what needs improvement and what's missing** *(engaged, valued)*

Study participants frequently referenced how providing feedback reinforced their sense of belonging and value to their college. Look for opportunities beyond the usual surveys colleges conduct to ask students in both formal and informal ways about their experience and to get their input on what does and does not work well on campus. Consider offering feedback loops at the course, program and institutional levels.

6 **Encourage participation in out-of-class activities** *(engaged)*

Many students in our study did not see the benefit of joining extracurriculars or have the time for traditional activities (e.g., student government). We can help students see how certain out-of-class activities can support their in-class learning. For those students who can fit associations or clubs into their lives, encourage them to get involved. For others, consider broadening their definition of extracurriculars beyond traditional activities to include more informal and off-campus opportunities.

7 **Help students build peer support networks** *(connected, valued)*

Students are a critical and untapped resource of support for one another and participants in this research cited many ways they can help their peers reach their goals. Help learners connect with each other by introducing those with similar interests or goals. Encourage students to form study groups outside of class or engage in peer mentoring. Suggest clubs they might join or direct. Let students know about spaces on campus where they can meet.

8 **Show students that you are proud to work at your institution and that they should proud to be enrolled at your community college** *(connected)*

Some students do not see their community college as a place of pride. One reason cited by participants was an absence of strong organizational identity among faculty and staff at their institutions. Demonstrating to students your own sense of connection to your institution and sharing why you choose to work in a community college environment can invoke a greater sense of place and pride in students.

9 **Recognize the value of students' talents, abilities, skills and experiences and connect them with opportunities to contribute** *(valued)*

Students indicated they felt most valued when helping other students. Guide students in identifying opportunities to lead and/or assist in class, on campus or in the community. Connect students with on- and off-campus jobs, internships and volunteer activities.

10 **Communicate and demonstrate to students that you care about their success** *(nurtured, valued)*

Study participants spoke about the small but significant gestures that helped them feel more supported on their campus. Learning the names of the students you regularly encounter and asking how they are doing can go a long way to making them feel that they matter. Moreover, we often do things as part of our job that we believe are good for students, but we do not always tell students why we do what we do and how our work supports them. Share your own name and let students know how your work contributes to their success.

+ For more information...

Find more information on Student Support (Re)defined and all project resources at: www.rpgroup.org/projects/student-support