

# Using Data to Transform Student Success

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**Abstract:** SUNY Oswego participated in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Student Success Equity Intensive (AASCU SSEI) project to deeply understand our students' experience through multi-layered data collection and analysis, a strong leadership team to reflect on that data and propose initiatives, and a U.S. Department of Education grant to support those initiatives. This short paper describes that process, focusing primarily on the data collection components.

This short paper and illustrative visualization provides a description of how SUNY Oswego used the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Student Success Equity Intensive (AASCU SSEI) project to frame student success initiatives through a rich understanding of institutional data and context. SSEI was a multi-year experience for institutions striving to accelerate equitable student success funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. SUNY Oswego participated in the first SSEI cohort, beginning in 2021, in an effort to more deeply understand student success at our institution and frame interventions going forward.

SUNY Oswego is a comprehensive liberal arts institution in central New York that serves roughly 5500 undergraduate students and 1200 graduate students. We prioritize student success, an inclusive community, and academic and creative excellence and have a firm commitment to serving the needs of students from diverse backgrounds across the state of New York.

The SSEI program used a five-step Theory of Change that included a significant early emphasis on forming a collaborative team for student success work, data collection, and a deep understanding of the student experience at the university. Through that process, we engaged in multiple data collection and review activities.

- Participating and analyzing data and information through our partnership with the Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP) through the National Student Clearinghouse.
- 81 key team members on campus provided input on our strengths and weaknesses around student success through the Institutional Transformation Assessment, an AASCU survey tool.
- We examined student academic progress and performance more intensively through exploring outcomes through an intersectional lens, such as examining data using multiple demographic factors, and disaggregating outcomes by experience paths, such as by more closely analyzing major change pathways.
- We gathered survey data from students on engagement (focused on student experiences and activities) and belongingness (focused on student feelings of

belongingness) across three key areas – academic, co-curricular and social/cultural, and personal health and well-being. For example, the survey included items assessing both academic engagement and academic belongingness.

- We had previously observed students both at Oswego and in national samples reporting a rapid increase in distress surrounding finances. For this reason, we included several survey items for students to measure economic class so that we could extend our equity conversations and initiatives more intentionally towards financial equity.
- We also included qualitative input from student focus groups in our data collection efforts. Through those focus groups, we learned more deeply about student experiences that threatened their feelings of belongingness on campus as well as frequent accounts of dissatisfaction with not understanding financial aid information and, more broadly, information about financial literacy relevant to being a college student and young adult.

Through our student success team and their review of the many sources of data gathered through this project, we identified several key initiatives that we anticipated would help to address areas of concern that we had uncovered. We were fortunate to also apply for a U.S. Department of Education Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III) grant at this point in the project, which was funded, so that we had financial support to pursue these initiatives. Our key areas of intervention moving forward include the following. These are currently in progress and we are hopeful that they will be effective in better supporting our students to and through graduation.

- Academic success through faculty development – Our goal in this area is to increase student academic success through significantly increasing the use of inclusive pedagogies in the classroom as well as through targeted course redesign of higher failure rate courses.
- Academic success through peer supports – Our goal in this area is to increase student academic success through placement of peer tutors that are embedded in higher failure rate courses so that students can access another line of academic support in addition to their instructor.
- Financial literacy peer mentors – Our goal here is to provide financial literacy information to students through peer mentors who can share with them timely information in places and modalities that they will respond to. We are particularly emphasizing financial literacy regarding their current and near future decisions, such as accessing student scholarships and negotiating with landlords, since immediately usable information was identified as an area of concern in our focus groups.
- Financial aid strategy – Our goal in this area is to reexamine our financial aid strategy as an institution to better support equity in student success. As is true for many institutions, our financial aid strategy is trying to meet many goals, some of which are internally conflicting, so that student equity is not always currently prioritized.

We are sharing a poster that we presented at the AASCU 2024 Summer Meeting for Academic and Student Affairs Leaders that illustrates some of the data collection components of this

project. We appreciate the support of AASCU to engage in the SSEI project and to share our experiences.



# Using Data to Transform Student Success

Dr. Scott Furlong & Dr. Kristin Croyle | State University of New York at Oswego

❖ Exploring outcomes through an **intersectional** lens  
❖ **Disaggregating** outcomes by experience paths and policy avenues

## Strategic Priorities



Student Success



Inclusive Community



Academic & Creative Excellence

## SUNY Oswego & SSEI

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) – Student Success Equity Intensive (SSEI)

The SSEI is

- ❖ A multi-year experience for institutions striving to accelerate equitable student success
- ❖ Funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

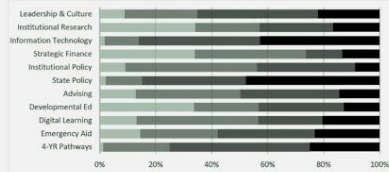
★ SUNY Oswego's participation in the first SSEI Cohort (2021) provides a model of how to more deeply understand student success and its related factors

## Know Your Institution

### Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA), AASCU's SSEI

81 respondents completed the ITA

- ❖ "Transformation Team" members completed a 100-question version
  - ❖ "Student Success Community" members completed a ~30-question version
- AASCU provided the survey tools, summary analysis, write-up, and deep discussions of the results with the transformation team



**Exemplary** means there is a high consensus among respondents that Oswego is well-positioned to address equity gaps in this category.

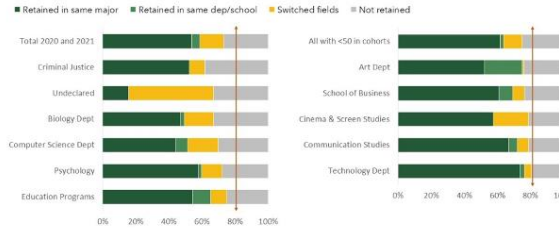
Note on scale: 1=Emerging 2=Developing 3=Accomplished 4=Exemplary

## Know Your Students

### 3 Pillars of Equitable Student Success

### Academic Performance

#### Retention of 2020 and 2021 Freshmen

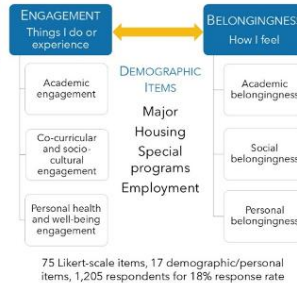


Local "remix" of PDP: Intersectional Framework → Slice and Compare

### Belongingness

#### The Laker Experience Survey, Fall 2022

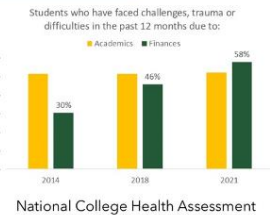
- ❖ Combined engagement and belongingness items in an intentional manner
- ❖ Limited demographic items to locally actionable measures
- ❖ Launched data collection at locally ideal time



75 Likert-scale items, 17 demographic/personal items, 1,205 respondents for 18% response rate

### Financial Literacy & Stability

- ❖ Laker Experience Survey included several items to measure economic class, to extend "equity" in that direction more intentionally
- ❖ Goal is to understand the rapid increase in financially-related stress and address its negative impacts on student success



## Implementation - Title III

### Academic Performance

- ❖ Embedded tutoring
- ❖ Faculty development

### Belongingness

- ❖ Cohorting
- ❖ Inclusive pedagogy

### Financial Literacy & Stability

- ❖ Student financial aid mentors
- ❖ Examining scholarship priorities and efficacy