Student Success Task Group Draft Recommendations

Presented to the PASSHE Board of Governors at its meeting on January 16-17, 2019

Background

Purpose: To recommend to the Board for consideration student success measurement framework(s) to guide the establishment of System goals, university strategies, and associated resourcing plans. The adopted measurement framework will also inform development of a methodology for allocating the state appropriation and the accountability framework that will be used to evaluate individual and institutional performance and ensure and support continuous improvement.

For each measurement framework that is proposed, the task group will recommend a core set of measures around which the System should set goals, identify strengths and potential weaknesses of the framework and the goal setting recommendations, as well as any implications with respect to how adoption of the framework and goals will inform how we think about the System's role, its governance, strategies, and resource planning approaches, etc.

In developing recommendations, the task group will:

- Review the System's data resources and capabilities.
- Review and consider emerging best practices in higher education.
- Recommend measures that enable the System to gather and report on university and System progress in a consistent way, while providing each university the flexibility needed to chart the course that best suits the needs of its students and the community it serves.
- Recommend what measures the System ought to set goals around
- Consider the measures—at both the university and System levels—as an opportunity to guide and report on ongoing strategic discussions about student success, such as: who are our students? who ought they be? what is meant by "student success"? what level of success is expected of students? how do we support them in achieving success?
- Adopt a disaggregated approach that recommends data be collected for specific student groups (e.g. at different income levels, by race/ethnicity, etc.), enabling us to understand and enhance support for the success of all students.

Importance: Student success is at the core of the State System's mission, which is to provide access to high-value, relevant educational experiences that prepare our students in a timely manner for pathways to successful lives and careers. The success of our students promotes the success of our universities, the communities and regions they serve, the System as a whole, the Commonwealth, and beyond.

Measuring student success is critical to identify issues, measure progress, and guide change. Comparable metrics are necessary to allow institutions and policymakers to identify issues and make changes. Without measuring outcomes, it is difficult or impossible to know whether progress is being made.

When measurable goals are defined, they can be used to guide and implement much-needed reform at universities. In the absence of measurable goals and outcomes, institutions and policymakers must resort to making key decisions using insufficient and subjective information. Data can be used to increase attention to and action around issues that are hindering student success.

Student Success Task Group - Invited Participants:

Name	Stakeholder Group
Laurie Carter (TASK GROUP CHAIR)	President
Marion Moskowitz	Board Member
John Wetzel	Trustee
Donna Wilson	Provost
Jasmine Oakman	Student
Joseph Croskey	Faculty
Beth Sockman	Faculty
Chad Brown	Staff
Ross Brumagin	Staff
Rachel Michaels	Staff
Barbara Moore	Staff
Peter Garland	OOC staff
Mamie Voight	Outside expert

Our discussions: Preliminary discussions with the members of the task group were illustrative of the many different ways to measure and document student success, particularly as it relates to different student groups (age, race/ethnicity, academic preparation, educational and career goals, etc.). For example, current definitions that narrowly define success as the attainment of a baccalaureate degree do not capture the differing educational expectations our students have and how they may evolve over time. As one task group member put it: *for adult students with work and family responsibilities, attaining a degree in 8 years may be an accomplishment.* Put simply, student success can be viewed as an individual act. Choices about what and how to measure success must be thoughtful.

To that end, it is important that student success metrics (1) present meaningful information; (2) consistently measure the same thing over and over; (3) provide for comparisons among System universities and externally; and (4) are accessible and understandable to multiple audiences.

Nationally, there has been recognition that many current data collection efforts fall short of meeting the growing needs that states and institutions have for robust, reliable sources of information on which decisions can be made and policies can be established.

The Postsecondary Data Collaborative (http://www.ihep.org/research/initiatives/postsecondary-data-collaborative-postsecdata), which is emerging as the national standard in higher education, has developed a set of metrics within three key subject areas – Performance, Efficiency, and Equity. These metrics focus on measuring institutional performance related to student access, progression, completion, cost, and post-college outcomes. Metrics such as those developed by the collaborative can be incorporated into the foundation of a data-driven approach to measuring and enhancing student success at the State System.

Standard performance metrics such as enrollment, retention, persistence, and graduation rates need to be disaggregated to provide insight on target populations in the cohort (e.g. low-income, first-generation) and expanded to include data on non-traditional students (e.g. adult, transfer, and part-time students). For example, assessing metrics such as completions per student, credits to credential, and cost for credits not completed will provide measures of success not traditionally reported in national comprehensive publicly-available resources. Similarly, incorporating characteristics including economic status, age, race/ethnicity, and college preparation provides additional depth to the analysis of performance and efficiency metrics.

Considerable work has been undertaken in recent years by institutions, higher education associations (membership organizations), policy organizations, and initiatives to better

understand what is meant by student success and how best to measure it. Importantly, there is growing consensus around student success encompassing (1) access and affordability, (2) progression to completion, and (3) student outcomes. This work is documented in two source documents used by the task group to inform their discussions:

> ***Leading with Data: How Senior Institution and System Leaders Use Postsecondary Data to Promote Student Success*** by Jamey Rorison and Mamie Voight; A Report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, April 2106. http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/postsecdata/docs/resources/ihep_leading_with_data_-_final.pdf

> ***Answering the Call: Institutions and States Lead the Way Toward Better Measures of Postsecondary Performance*** by Jennifer Engle, Ph.D.; The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016. https://postsecondary.gatesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AnsweringtheCall.pdf

In addition, in the current and previous versions of the System's accountability and performance funding programs, a variety of measures—not dissimilar to many of those discussed in the national conversation on measuring student success in the documents above—have been used over the years. These measures are found in Appendix D(1): *Student Centered Metrics Used by the State System*.

As a result, we decided to take advantage of the work undertaken by so many around the country leading to a growing consensus regarding student success measures and focus on those detailed in *A Field-Driven Metrics Framework* found Appendix D(3).

Particularly important in our use of this framework to focus our work was that it is based on evidence that attention to these measures and developing strategies around them make a difference in increasing rates of student success.

In discussing the measures, we focused on those that made the most sense to the System, our universities and students. For example, some measures are better suited to two-year colleges than four year colleges. Second, while many of us have questions or concerns about the data definitions, data sources, and methodologies, we put those aside (leaving them to professionals better able to address and resolve them) to be undertaken *after* decisions are made about the measures for which System and university goals and targets will be developed as well as those that will be monitored to inform improvement. And third, identifying the student groups most in line with university missions is essential to guiding the development of strategies. The metrics that fit best for our universities—that is reflect our ongoing attention to various measures of student success as well as those that better align our work to national standards in student success—are found in Appendix D(2), *Metrics to Inform Improvement/Increase Student Success.*

Recommendations

As a result of our robust discussions, we have identified three (3) of these metrics around which goals should be established for the System and the universities:

- Credit completion ratio
- Graduation
- Earnings threshold

In addition, to ensure attention to improving student success rates for *all* students, disaggregating the data for the various student populations in the chart under "*Equity"* should be part of the goal setting process.

Appendix A. Student-Centered Metrics Used by the State System

System Accountability

The State System's System Accountability Plan (SAP) in use from 2003-04 through 2011-12 was rooted in the values of the System as identified in goals from *Leading the Way*, the 2004-2009 State System's Strategic Plan. The Plan provided a means of reporting on performance outcomes in key areas related to student achievement, university excellence, and operational efficiency.

Performance Funding

The State System's 2012-2017 Performance Funding Program was designed to measure the outcomes of the State System University's efforts in the success of our students, comprehensive access to opportunity, and stewardship of our resources in service to the Commonwealth's communities and regions.

Student-Centered metrics used within both the System Accountability and Performance Funding plans can be categorized into five groups:

1. Completions
2. Persistence
3. Graduation Rates
4. Access/Enrollment
5. Student Assessment/High-Impact Practices.

1. *Completions*

Completions or awards, were measured in multiple ways, looking at total number of completions, completions by program type, and as a ratio of awards per full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment. Completions were also analyzed by race/ethnicity, federal Pell Grant recipient status, and transfer status.

Completion Measures used in System Accountability/Performance Funding

- Degrees Conferred
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Health Profession (STEM-HP) Degree Recipients
- Undergraduate Degrees Awarded per 100 FTE (Full Time Equivalent students)

2. *Persistence*

Persistence and retention were measured by looking at the percentage of students who returned for their second, third, and fourth years. Measures included analyses comparing second-year persistence rates by race/ethnicity.

Persistence Measures used in System Accountability/Performance Funding

- Second-Year Retention
- Third-Year Persistence
- Fourth-Year Persistence
- Closing the Freshmen Second-Year Persistence Rate Gap for Non-majority Students

3. *Graduation Rates*

Graduation rates were measured by looking at the gaps between completion percentages of students based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Graduation rates were analyzed for both first-time freshmen and transfer student cohorts.

Graduation Rates Measures used in System Accountability/Performance Funding

- Closing First-Time Freshmen Achievement Gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell-recipient status
- Closing Transfer Student Achievement Gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell-recipient status

4. *Access/Enrollment*

Access/Enrollment was measured by looking at the gaps between enrollment percentages of students based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Enrollments were analyzed for both first-time freshmen and transfer student cohorts. Additional access/enrollment measures examined the enrollment trends of certain subpopulations of interest including international students and students enrolled in distance education courses.

Access/Enrollment Measures used in System Accountability/Performance Funding

- Closing the First-Time Freshmen Access Gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell-recipient status
- Closing Transfer Student Access Gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell-recipient status
- Increasing the Number of International Students
- Increasing the Number of Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses
- Increasing the Number of Students Enrolled in Study Abroad Programs

5. *High-Impact Practices/Student Assessment*

High-Impact Practices/Student Assessment was measured by looking at students' critical thinking and writing test scores as well as participation in nationally recognized activities identified as high-impact practices (HIPs). HIPs include a variety of activities that have been demonstrated to improve student engagement, persistence and degree completion including student research, internships, study abroad, etc.

High-Impact Practices/Student Assessment Measures used in System Accountability/Performance Funding

- Senior CLA, CAAP, or ETS Proficiency Profile Scores
- Number of Students Participating in Research with a Faculty Member
- Percent of Freshmen Participating in First-Year Experiences
- Percent of Seniors Participating in High-Impact Practice Activities

Appendix B. Metrics to Inform Improvement/Increase Student Success

	Access	Progression	Completion	Cost	Post-college Outcomes

Performance	Enrollment	Credit Completion Ratio Program of Study Selection Retention Persistence 1st Year Credit Accumulation	Graduation Rate	Net Price Unmet need Debt Accumulation	Employment Rate Median Earnings/Earnings Threshold Loan Repayment and Default Rates Learning/other Outcomes
Efficiency		Cost for Credits not Completed	Time/Credits to Credential Completions per Student		
Equity	Enrollment by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, FT and PT, Transfer in	Progression by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, FT and PT, Transfer in	Completion by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, FT and PT, Transfer in	Cost by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, FT and PT, Transfer in	Outcomes by Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, FT and PT, Transfer in

Appendix C. Metrics Framework

A FIELD-DRIVEN METRICS FRAMEWORK

	ACCESS	PROGRESSION	COMPLETION	COST	POST-COLLEGE OUTCOMES
PERFORMANCE	Enrollment	Credit Accumulation Credit Completion Ratio Gateway Course Completion Program of Study Selection Retention Rate Persistence Rate	Transfer Rate Graduation Rate Success Rate Completers	Net Price Unmet Need Cumulative Debt	Employment Rate Median Earnings Loan Repayment and Default Rates Graduate Education Rate Learning Outcomes
EFFICIENCY	Expenditures per Student	Cost for Credits Not Completed Cost for Completing Gateway Courses Change in Revenue from Change in Retention	Time/Credits to Credential Cost of Excess Credits to Credential Completions per Student	Student Share of Cost Expenditures per Completion	Earnings Threshold
EQUITY	Enrollment by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity	Progression Performance by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity	Completion Performance by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity	Net Price and Unmet Need by (at least) Economic Status, Preparation, Age, Race/Ethnicity Debt by (at least) Economic Status, Preparation, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Completion Status	Outcomes Performance and Efficiency by (at least) Preparation, Economic Status, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Completion Status

Key Student Characteristics

Enrollment Status
Attendance Intensity
Credential-seeking Status
Program of Study
Academic Preparation

Economic Status
Race/Ethnicity
Age
Gender
First-generation Status

Key Institutional Characteristics

Sector
Level
Credential /Program Mix
Size
Resources

Selectivity
Diversity
Minority-serving Institution (MSI) Status
Post-traditional Populations
Modality