Leveraging Student Strengths to Support Student Success

UTSA College Completion Academy
Session I

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New Demographics for Higher Education

• Fewer young children in school classrooms across the country due to low fertility rates.
• Fewer young children are White or Black.
• More young children are Asian and Hispanic.
• Where younger age groups get bigger, people are poorer.
• In the highest-income, most educated counties, the supply of young children has dwindled. Affluent, white children are going to be in short supply.
• There is a growing population of high-school students who would be the first in their families to attend college—
Source: Chronicle of Higher Education (1.21.14)
Key Higher Education Trends (Lawlor Group, 2013)

1. **College Affordability.** Families experiencing a diminished ability to pay for college and reassessing the price they are willing to pay for a college education.

2. **Demographic Shifts.** Number of high school grads is shrinking, but the proportion who are ethically diverse is growing. From 2012-19, the number of White college students is expected to increase to 5%, while the number of Hispanics will increase 27%. Students age 25 and older more likely to drop out of college. Seek assistance in the financial aid process, tutoring, counseling, centers for veterans.
Key Higher Education Trends (Lawlor Group, 2013)

3. **Swirling Students.** Transfer is a cost-conscious part of long-term plans to affordable degree completion. About 33% of all college students who began in 2006 transferred at least once within 5 years. About 14.4% of first-time students who started at a 4-year college in the fall of 2005 subsequently “reversed transferred,” enrolling at a 2-year college outside of summer months.

4. **Student interest in mobile online access, social media and MOOCs** (massive open online courses). Are MOOCs similar enough to traditional courses that they should be eligible for transfer credit? How define success in MOOCs?
Graduation Rates Haven’t Changed

- The nation’s six-year graduation rate hasn’t budged.
- 54% of students who enrolled in college for the first time in 2007 had a certificate or degree to show for it 6 years later. This is exactly the same as the previous year.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2013)
## National Six-Year Graduation Rates For Males & Females At Four-Year Institutions Who Began College in Fall 2005/Full-Time, First-Time
(Digest of Education Statistics, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>Alaska Native</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
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UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS: TRANSITIONS, STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

Research Employed:
Rendon, Kanagala & Nora 2013
Rendon, 2011
Andreotti, 2011
Harper, 2012
Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005
Hurtado, Griffin, & Arellano, 2008
Nora, 2001
Núñez, 2009
Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004
Sáenz, & Ponjuan, 2012
DOMINANT: THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE IS LINEAR AND FAIRLY EASY TO ACCOMPLISH.

REALITY: STUDENTS TRAVERSE BACK AND FORTH AMONG MULTIPLE WORLDS AND OFTEN EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES.
Entre Mundos

Familia

Native Country

Barrio y Community

Peers

Work

Spiritual
El Choque – The Collision

Positive

- Make new friends
- Learn new/different perspectives
- Gain new experiences
- Interact with diverse cultures
- Potential for transformation with new identity
- Acknowledge opportunity to make a difference

Liminality/ Nepantla
Ni Aquí,
Ni Aya
Neither Here, Nor There

Negative

- Financial burden
- New academic world
- Microaggressions/Culture shock
- Separation from family & friends
- Less time at home
- Loneliness
- Stress
- Guilt
- Feeling lost & intimidated
- Changing identity
Operating in Multiple Worlds

Entre Mundos

- Native Country
- Barrio y Community
- Spiritual
- Family
- Peers
- Work

Navigating the College World

- Separating from Family/Transition to College--Endings & New Beginnings
- Academic Completion, Renewal & Transformation
- Psychological Transformation
- Liminality
- Positive and Negative Aspects of Operating in Multiple Worlds

El Choque

Academic and Social Engagement in College
DOMINANT: UNDERSERVED STUDENTS COME TO COLLEGE WITH PROBLEMS THAT NEED TO BE FIXED (DEFICIT PERSPECTIVE).

REALITY CHECK: STUDENTS COME TO COLLEGE WITH SOME PROBLEMS, BUT ALSO WITH CULTURAL WEALTH (ASSET PERSPECTIVE).
Tara Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth Model

- Cultural Capital
  - Navigational Capital
  - Resistant Capital
- Community Cultural Wealth
  - Social Capital
  - Linguistic Capital
  - Familial Capital
  - Aspirational Capital
Adding to Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth Model

- Cultural Capital
  - Linguistic Capital
  - Aspirational Capital
  - Navigational Capital
  - Resistant Capital
  - Social Capital
  - Familial Capital

- Spiritual Capital
  - Ethnic Consciousness Capital
  - Pluri-Consciousness Capital
  - Adaptability Capital
  - Academic Capital

Community Cultural Wealth
Student Cultural Wealth

- **Familial**
  - Support from parents & siblings
  - Family is a strong value

- **Linguistic**
  - Bilingual
  - Helps to communicate with others

- **Navigational**
  - Able to traverse & operate in multiple worlds (other races/ethnicities; work, family, college)
Student Cultural Wealth

**Spirituality/Faith**
- Sense of meaning and purpose of life and earning a college degree
- Strong connection to religious beliefs

**Resiliency**
- Inner strength for self and others
- Self reliant & responsible—focus on survival
- Determination & confidence—not quit
- Recognize & embrace sacrifice of college
- Able to turn a negative into a positive

**Ethnic Consciousness**
- Pride of Latino heritage and being in HSI/Prove Latinos can do it
- Recognize microagressions & inequities
- Want to complete college because they recognize others have paved way for their success
Student Cultural Wealth

Adaptability

- Able to make academic, social, and cultural adaptations to succeed in college
- Survival skills
- Able to dislocate & relocate
- Ability to operate in liminal spaces (neither here, nor there)

Pluri-Consciousness

- Able to entertain multiple competing and often contradictory thoughts and tensions (undocumented/documented; Mexican/American; Spanish/English, world of college/world of personal life, immigrant/American, etc.)

Academic

- Many students are academically strong
- Many students enter as STEM majors
DOMINANT: STUDENTS ARE TO BLAME FOR THEIR OWN FAILURE.

REALITY CHECK: A NUMBER OF OBSTACLES GET IN THE WAY OF STUDENT SUCCESS.
Obstacles for Success

Lack of College Readiness
- Poor high school preparation
- English, writing and math problems

Problems Navigating Transition to College
- Moving to large campus
- Leaving parents and old friends behind/first to leave home
- Guilt for being absent in family
- Culture shock/don’t understand world of college
- Lost in college/lack of direction/loneliness
- Feeling intimidated being “the only one”
- Transfer students fall through the cracks

Experiencing Intercultural and Intracultural Microaggressions
- Speaking Spanish or not knowing how to speak Spanish
- Playing Spanish music
- Treated as outsider
- Cooking ethnic foods
- Latina women not expected to be intelligent or to be in STEM
- Latino males viewed as “short” & unable to play basketball
- Perceptions that Latinos/as recruited to HSI to be a minority school
Obstacles for Success

Cultural Pull
- Expectation to get married and have children
- Expectation to return for family responsibilities

Financial Struggles
- Affordability
- Need to work to survive
- Family responsibilities especially when father is absent

Advising Challenges
- Need assistance navigating world of college
- Peers and family often provide more information
- Some students rarely see adviser
- Cannot readily see economic and intellectual benefits of attending college
Obstacles for Success

Invalidating Experiences
• Having been publicly embarrassed in past
• Lack of family support; absent fathers

Setting Unrealistic Goals
• Men may think they are the next “star” athlete
• Men tend to think short-term, as opposed to long-term, and take quick money jobs (construction, oil fields, electrician, truck driver)

Unexpected Crises
• Unexpected pregnancy
• Illness or death in family
Obstacles for Success

Perception “nobody really cares”
- Reliance on luck/serendipity
- Faculty and staff that don’t follow up leading students to believe “nobody really cares”

Undocumented Status
- Students and family afraid to reveal information on financial aid forms
- Students feel stigmatized/become “the other”
- Students feel there is little to no hope for them to fulfill their dream of earning a college degree

Transfer Student Status
- Limited resources available for transfer students
- Loss of credits
- Negative perceptions about transfer students
DOMINANT: WOMEN ARE DOING BETTER IN COLLEGE, SO LET’S CONCENTRATE MAINLY ON HELPING MEN SUCCEED.

REALITY CHECK: BOTH MALES AND FEMALES FACE CHALLENGES AND NEED ASSISTANCE TO FIND SUCCESS IN COLLEGE.
Differences Between Men and Women

- Men may want to be the next “star” athlete
- Men tend to think short-term and may be tempted by quick money jobs (construction, oil fields, electrician, truck driver)
- Men often take the role of being the “man of the house,” especially in a single-parent household
- Men may be perceived as those who *give help*, while *women receive help*
- Men may drop out when partner becomes pregnant
- Women have family responsibilities and may be told that getting married and having a family are more important than college.
- Cultural norms predicated on a limited vision of what females can accomplish.
DOMINANT: INSTITUTIONS CAN TRY TO FOSTER SUCCESS, BUT ULTIMATELY STUDENTS ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR SUCCESS.

REALITY CHECK: STUDENT SUCCESS DEPENDS BOTH ON THE INSTITUTION AND THE STUDENT.
What Helps Students Succeed

Pre-College Preparation & College Literacy
- Pre-college academic preparation, early college high school
- College literacy—how navigate world of college, transition to college, how to access financial aid and other college resources
- Costs, benefits and consequences of attending and not attending college (especially for males)
- Advising & mentoring—need clear sense of direction (how choose college, value of degree, how choose major, connect major to profession, consequences of attending for profits)
- Faculty interactions—role models, support

Support Programming
- Support programming (supplemental instruction, living learning communities, tutoring, service-focused sororities)
- Counseling & Guidance—how to deal with microaggressions and cultural pressures
- Organizations & extracurricular activities—student government, table tennis
What Helps Students Succeed

Peer Support & Validation
- Critical mass
- Study groups
- Help with course selection & college completion

Financial Aid
- Access to opportunities and diverse forms of aid
- Suitable financial aid package
- Affordable

Engaging Pedagogy & High-Impact Practices
- Diverse pedagogy—active learning, group work, field trips, internships, Honors College, etc.
- How to apply knowledge in practical settings
- HIPs
What Helps Students Succeed

**Campus Climate**
- Welcoming
- Diverse
- Accepting
- Place of opportunity
- Sense of pride
- Resembles “home”/ sense of community
- Critical mass

**In-and Out-of-Class Validation and Support**
- Affirmation and support from family, peers, faculty and staff
- Faculty who are friendly, have been through the college completion process, and provide encouragement and support
- Having a connection to a validating agent

**Interactions With Diverse Cultures**
- Learn new ideas and exposed to new perspectives
- Diversity is a value
What Helps Students Succeed

**Human Element:** Being Treated as a Person

- Faculty who are friendly, have been through the college completion process, and provide encouragement and support
- Having a connection to a validating agent
- Able to respond to authentic caring and concern

**Exposure to Role Models**

- Exposure to faculty, staff and community leaders who have succeeded
DOMINANT: HISPANIC STUDENTS UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT HSI STATUS.

REALITY: WHILE SOME STUDENTS SUPPORT STATUS, OTHERS CONCERNED ABOUT LABELING AND EXCLUSIONARY CONNOTATION OF HSI.
The Paradox of Attending HSI

Positive
- Enthusiasm about institution
- Give sense Latinos not left behind
- Critical mass—sense of belonging
- Welcoming
- Helps to get involved
- Can speak Spanish

Negative
- Dislike labels—lots of stereotypes about Latinos are derogatory
- An emphasis on Latinos may leave out others
- An Hispanic focus may lead to belief Hispanics can’t do it
DOMINANT: HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES WORK THE SAME EVERYWHERE.

AMONG THESE INCLUDE: 1) LEARNING COMMUNITIES, 2) SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES, 3) STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES, 4) INTERNSHIPS, 5) CAPSTONE COURSES OR CULMINATING SENIOR EXPERIENCES, AND 6) RESEARCH WITH A FACULTY MEMBER.

REALITY CHECK: HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES OFFER A RICH LEARNING EXPERIENCE, BUT THERE ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS TO MAKE BEFORE IMPLEMENTING THEM.
Pros and Cons of HIPs

Pros

- Many exist
- Some have been credibly evaluated
- Several hold potential
- Perceived as portable, easy to use and budget for
- Can be innovating, engaging and transformative

Cons

- Underserved students may drop out before they even enroll in a HIP
- Might be perceived as “quick fix”
- “One size” does not fit all
- Evidence of success is sometimes lacking
- HIPs may exist at margins
- Faculty & staff in HIPs often work in silos
Case Study of A Fourth-Year Latina Student

- Silvia, fourth-year student at university
- Gen 1.5 student (first 12 years in Mexico)
- Graduated in top 10% of high school class
- Transfer student—attended two community colleges before enrolling in four-year university
- Associate of Arts (emphasis in Math & Physics)
- Now majoring in Mechanical Engineering
- Planning graduate work in Chemical Engineering
- Born in Juarez, Mexico
- Previously undocumented
- Married, no children
- First-generation, low-income
- No models of college graduates in family
The Drama of the Gifted Student

• Academically strong
• Family wants the path of least resistance: Get married and find a job
• No models of college graduates in family
• Doesn’t believe anyone in college really cares even if they say they do
• Doesn’t understand the economic and intellectual pay-offs of attending college
• College attendance happens by “luck”
Student Movement

- Mexico Educational System
  - Elementary School

- California, USA
  - Salano Community College

- San Antonio, TX
  - University of Texas

- Texas, USA
  - Middle & High School

- San Antonio, TX
  - San Antonio College
Silvia's Journey

1. Juarez, Chihuahua, MX
   Grade K - 7

2. San Antonio, TX
   Grade 8 - 12
   Graduated Top 10%

3. San Antonio College,
   San Antonio, TX
   1 Year of study

4. Salano Community College,
   California
   3.5 Years of study
   AA in Math & Physics

5. Transferred to UTSA in
   San Antonio TX,
   Major: Mechanical Engineering & Chemistry
What Are Silvia’s Strengths & Challenges

• What challenges does Sylvia bring to higher education?
• What strengths does Sylvia bring?
• What can institutions of higher education do (both in and out-of-class) to leverage these strengths and foster student success?
Phases of Academic and Cultural Consciousness

**Choque/Cultural Collision in Academic Borderlands**

- Experiencing academic, social & cultural clash
- Experiencing personal conflicts
- Learn new college world
- Operating in multiple worlds
- Deal with microaggressions
- Abandon family & friends
- Family conflict—clash of values
- “Forgotten Spanish”
- Identity conflict

**Cultural, Social & Academic Adaptations**

- Academic, cultural and personal adaptations
- Learn how to relate to family in new way
- Develop a new worldview
- Develop confidence
- Comfortable interacting and learning with diverse students
- Learn to navigate distinct worlds
- Begin to use Spanish with comfort

**Ethnic/Pluri-Consciousness**

- Recognizing deeper meaning of earning a college degree for self and for Latino community
- Develop pride in Mexican heritage
- Recognition of role to pave way for others
- Pluri-conscious identity (undocumented/documented; Mexican/American; transfer student/four-year student)
Developing An Institution-Wide Asset-Based Framework

• What is an asset-based framework?
  – **Shatters paradigm** where deficits about students are emphasized such as viewing students as “problems,” “incapable of college-level work,” “lost cause,” “bad news,” “too overwhelming.”
  – Student **assets are recognized** and worked with both in and out of the classroom. These assets may include:
    – Family
    – Language
    – Navigational
    – Resilience
    – Spirituality/Faith
    – Ethnic consciousness
    – Adaptability
    – Pluri-consciousness
    – Academic
Developing An Institution-Wide Asset-Based Framework

– Asset-based perspectives **permeate the culture of the entire institution** including mission statement, faculty development workshops, training for student affairs administrators, etc.

– **Asset-based theories** are employed to guide thinking about designing interventions and strategies that promote student success.

– **Research** that supports conditions favorable to student success is employed to guide thinking about making access and college completion strategic, attainable goals.
Developing An Institution-Wide Asset-Based Framework

• Guiding principles are developed for the organization, and all faculty, staff and students are called to embrace them, for example:
  – All students have potential and possess diverse forms of knowledge.
  – With proper support, guidance and information students can be academically successful.
  – The focus will be on possibilities rather than problems, on strengths rather than weaknesses, on what is working well rather than what has yet to be accomplished, on enthusiasm rather than despair.
  – Successes will be documented and celebrated.
Developing An Institution-Wide Asset-Based Framework

• Transformational language that reframes deficit-based perspectives is employed, for example:
  – Deficit-Based: All low-income students are not ready to learn.
  – Asset-Based: Low-income students can achieve high levels of excellence with proper support, guidance and information.
  – Deficit-Based: Low-income parents care little about their children’s education.
  – Asset-Based: Low-income parents care very much about their children and need support, guidance and information to decipher the K-16 educational system to help their children succeed.
  – Deficit-Based: We’ve tried this idea before and it didn’t work.
  – Asset-Based: Let’s remain open to new ideas and give them time to work before moving on.
Asset-Based Pedagogy

• **Student Focused**
  – Based on a recognition of student’s community cultural wealth
  – Teaching & learning attends to the education of the whole person

• **Equity-Minded Curriculum**
  – Culturally relevant, Inclusive curriculum—developed around student backgrounds, strengths, ways of knowing

• **Validating Pedagogy**
  – Relationship-centered
  – Invites student voice, experience, perspectives
  – Gives students agency
  – Validation-rich classroom context
  – Provision for deep, reflective learning experiences and the emergence of a critically aware, socially responsible person
  – Inviting and engaging—active learning