Can a Coach be a Student Success Game-Changer?

A Case Study on a Title V Success Coaching Program

Dr. Lisa Richardson

Student Retention Manager
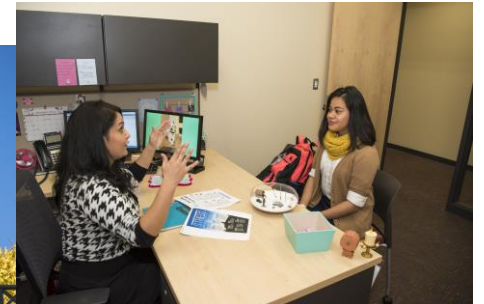
Waubonsee Community College, Sugar Grove, Illinois

WAUBONSEE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Presentation Overview

- Success coaching context
  - Literature
  - WCC program creation
- Program background
- Program results (quantitative data)
- Key findings on the student experience
- Implications for practice

College and Title V Grant Context

WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Waubonsee Community College, Sugar Grove, Illinois
- 11,795 credit students enrolled across 4 campuses
- 37% full-time, 63% part-time

Hispanic-Serving Institution designation since 2009
- 2010 "Removing Barriers to Success" Title V Grant recipient
- 2015 "Improving Student Success, Completion and Time to Degree" Title V Grant recipient
- 2020 "Strengthening a Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to Increase Latinx Student Retention and Completion"

The Connect4Success program was a subset of the 2015-2021 Title V grant to increase retention and completion of identified "high opportunity" students.

Student Ethnicity

- **56.0%** Caucasian
- **31.4%** Hispanic or Latino
- **7.7%** Black or African American
- **4.5%** Asian
- **0.2%** American Indian/Alaskan Native
- **0.2%** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Sources: ICCB/IPEDS and internal reports for FY2020

Success Coaching in the Literature

- Supplement to nonacademic support services to increase retention
  - Student need
  - Nonacademic support structure in community colleges
- Holistic and relationship-based
  - Identification of and connection to resources and support with follow-up
- Research and Waubonsee Community College (WCC) internal data indicate coaching may positively influence student retention
  - Little is known about the student experience with coaching and if students perceive coaching as influencing persistence

Success Coaching at WCC

- Title V-funded Connect4Success (C4S) coaching program

- Degree-seeking WCC Students could opt in to C4S if they met one of three qualifiers

- C4S paired opted-in students with a coach (250:1) for:

Student Success Coaches Supplement Other WCC Programs and Services

Through...	With...
E-mail: sending additional program information, weekly WCC updates and tips, links to helpful resources, following up on previous communication	Navigating WCC processes (financial aid awards/requirements, Bursar, Blackboard)
Phone: texting important reminders (WCC deadlines, coaching meetings, check ins), responding to student questions	Semester planning and time management (mapping out schedules, how to buy books, scheduling work)
In-Person meetings: scheduled coaching meetings, drop-in support	Study skills and identifying resources for support; referrals to campus services
	Communicating with instructors, WCC departments, and how to word questions

Success Coaching at WCC

Software

- Data warehouse (Zogotech)
- Student information system (Banner)
- Advising software (Civitas Inspire) for predictive analytics, LMS data, and notes
- Google Voice (text) and campus alert system

Structure

- Targeted outreach to eligible students
- Emphasis on supporting students based on their modality preference
- Meeting maps
- Program goals and anticipated outcomes
  - Goals: empowering participants, goal-setting, navigating WCC
- Assessment map
- Post-appointment and annual survey

Ongoing Support

- Weekly E-mail
- Mass Reminders
- Responding to Students

App-informed Nudges

- Last Point of Contact
- Early Alert/Progress Reports
- Dropped Classes
- Holds
- Shift Changes
- Blackboard Engagement
- Registration Checks

C4S Participant Profile

- 1,450 historic participants
    - 864 Hispanic / Latino, ~60% of participants
    - 261 participants matched all three qualifiers, 18% of participants
    - Average participant age: 20.6 years old
    - 812 participants were female, 56%

Program Results

Cohort retention	Fall 2016-Fall 2017		Fall 2017-Fall 2018		Fall 2018-Fall 2019		Fall 2019-Fall 2020	
College-wide retention rate	55%		54%		56%		46%	
					C4S	Non-C4S	C4S	Non-C4S
C4S compared to non-C4S	65.7%	47.4%	62.5%	45.5%	71%	51%	59%	46%
Pell-Eligible					71%	55%	55%	52%
Tested Developmental					72%	61%	64%	60%
Title V-eligible					67%	47%	59%	35%

Case Study on the C4S Student Experience

Participants and Criteria for Inclusion

- Purposeful sampling:
  - WCC Spring 2021 enrollees
  - Participated in C4S 1+ semester before Spring 2021
- 11 students responded and participated

Interview Structure

- Semi-structured individual interviews
- Pre-established, open-ended questions
- Recorded and transcribed
- Member checking

Findings: Main Themes

- Success Coach as point person

- Success Coach as navigator

- Importance of deep coach-student relationship

- Coach's belief in students fostering motivation and mindset shift

Success Coach as Point Person

Participants viewed their coach as the as starting point to field questions and connect to resources

"I feel like I can go back and I can have someone I can ask questions to, like a reliable person that's always there for me." –Juliana

"I didn't really know and have that support that I needed until I actually got involved and started talking to my coach." -Yazmin

Success Coach as Navigator

Participants viewed their coach as helping navigate college processes

"There's a lot of information that's like out there, but you just don't know where to find it or what it means, so I think having a relationship with somebody that works with the school and knows the process can help you know about things that are there to help students." -Alejandra

Importance of a Deep Coach-Student Relationship

Participants were willing to seek help knowing they would receive personalized support

"…now my goals are more about myself. Like I said, my coach helped me realize that along the way. She would ask me questions. But as time went on, she started learning more of how I worked in how I thought about certain things like my perception. She really learned how I am as a person and it helped greatly." -Juliana

Coach's Belief in Students as Fostering Motivation and Mindset Shifts

Participants received motivation and experienced a mindset shift when the coach leveraged the knowledge from their relationship

"Sometimes I feel like I'm not doing enough, but I am and my coach encourages me and tells me that I'm resilient and it helps me because there's someone that believes in me and I feel like that is the most important thing that will keep me going." -Alejandra

Discussion

- Personalized support positively influenced WCC experience

- Findings support previous literature highlighting the importance of a coach's support given the unique context of community colleges and their students

- External environment was most challenging to persistence

- Internal environment helped alleviate these challenges
  - Cost and commitment
  - Individual relationship

Implications

- Limitations
  - Exclusion of C4S participants not retained and non-participants
  - Were those interviewed the most connected and supported?

- Findings are informative for practice
  - Serving student population of adult, academically-underprepared, first gen, and Latinx learners
  - Informing how to design staffing, training, and development of student-facing roles
  - Campus culture shift from transactional to relational, one-off to ongoing

Q&A

Pseudonym	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Start Term	Full- or Part-Time	Degree Program	Goal
Alejandra	Woman	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2018	Part-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year
Anastasia	Woman	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2018	Part-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year
Carly	Woman	White/ Caucasian	Fall 2019	Part-time	AGS	Enter workforce
David	Man	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2018	Part-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year
Eddie	Man	Black/African American	Fall 2016	Part-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year
Emma	Woman	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2019	Full-time	AES	Transfer to 4-year
Henry	Man	Hispanic/Latinx	Spring 2019	Full-time	AA	Enter workforce
Jenny	Woman	Bi- or Multiracial	Fall 2019	Full-time	AA	Enter Workforce
Juliana	Woman	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2018	Part-time	AS	Transfer to 4-year
Serena	Woman	White/ Caucasian	Fall 2019	Full-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year
Yazmin	Woman	Hispanic/Latinx	Fall 2019	Full-time	AA	Transfer to 4-year