

Matador Momentum: Re-imagining the First Year of College

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Why Re-imagine the First Year of College?

We Can Do Better!

- ◆ Data: the CSU System's Graduation Initiative 2025 expects us to meet a variety of new goals, starting with the 2019 entering cohort of freshmen:
- Increase the six-year graduation rate for first time freshmen from 50 percent (2009 cohort—our most recent available and our highest to date) to 60 percent (CSUN IR)
- Close the achievement gap for historically underrepresented students to 7 percent or less. Currently the gap seems to be holding steady at a dismal 15.6 percent ("The Rising Tide") although the CSU Student Success Dashboard pegs it at 13.7 percentage points (2004-2008).

Northridge Fact

Over the past five years, the average gap between Northridge URM and non-URM 6-year graduation rates is 13.7 percentage points.

This is the second largest gap in the CSU system.

(Yes, you read that right: the CSU Chancellor's Office wants us to know that ours is "the second largest gap in the CSU system." We can and must and will do better!)

- ◆ The California *Governor's Budget Summary* 2016-2017 show us fourth from the bottom for "Four-Year Graduation Rates at CSU Campuses": 10 percent graduate in 4 years.
- ◆ Freshman persistence (fall to fall) at CSUN: we have recently edged upwards by a few percentage points to an all-time high of 78.4 percent. We're still losing nearly 1 in 4.
- ◆ It's on us." (Tim Renick, Georgia State U, speaking in Austin, TX at the RFY kick-off, 5 Feb. 2016): The problem is not the students; the problem is the institution. We need to take responsibility for what's not working instead of blaming the students.
- ◆ How can we afford it? How can we afford NOT to do support student success? (Tim Renick again.)

What is Matador Momentum?

Who

- ◆ A 20-member campus innovation team (see names listed above)
- ◆ Leadership team:
 - Patrick Bailey, Student Involvement & Development
 - Susanna Eng-Ziskin, Oviatt Library
 - Helen Heinrich, Information Technology
 - Cheryl Spector, Academic First Year Experiences (chair)
- ◆ Cross-divisional & cross-campus representation:
 - Academic Affairs
 - Information Technology
 - Student Affairs
 - Students
- ◆ You: synergy drives Matador Momentum

What

- ◆ Matador Momentum is part of Re-Imagining the First Year of College, a nationwide initiative sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges & Universities (AASCU). CSUN is one of forty-four campuses chosen to participate.
- ◆ Goal: to increase persistence rates, close the achievement gap, and enhance success for first-year students. Guiding principles:
 - Proven strategies
 - Cross-campus collaboration
 - Use of analytics ("bespoke education")
 - "Nothing is written..."
 - Small changes can lead to big results
 - "This is not a drill."

How

- ◆ Three-year timeline beginning in February 2016
- ◆ National and regional meetings with other participating institutions (including 6 other CSU campuses)
- ◆ Strategies that target four areas for change:
 1. Institutional intentionality ("a culture of obligation")
 2. Curriculum
 3. Faculty and staff
 4. Students
- ◆ Learn more at *Matador Momentum*:
<http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/academic-first-year-experiences/matador-momentum-re-imagining-first-year>

Reaching More CSUN Students

How Could This Be Scaled?

- ◆ We're proposing a campus-wide student success campaign to permeate the culture with resources to provide support, welcoming, and belonging.
- ◆ All of us—faculty, staff, students, administration—can and should participate.
- ◆ Start with the voicemail greeting on your campus phone—in your own office or at the unit/department level. Take a page from CSUN's Educational Opportunity Programs office: the greeting should make it clear that you are smiling (whether it's live or a recording). We're not a cable company and we're not a health insurance provider.
- ◆ Call a colleague's office. Check out that voicemail greeting. If it's better than yours, learn from it (and share!). If it could be improved, offer a communications makeover.

What Can Faculty Do Now?

- ◆ Teach your students how to "do" office hours. Faculty are not monstrous dragons lurking in their offices to chew up students. (See Credits & Sources.)



Impact: Success for All Students

Real Student Impact

- ◆ Letters to students on probation: a campus communication makeover.
- The problem: in Feb. 2016 at AASCU Austin, David Yeager (UT Austin) characterizes the typical probation letter as "pretty terrifying." Students are "stressed, disappointed, ashamed, and depressed."
- Solution: the campus revised the letter to frame probation as a process, not a label. CSUN adopts this solution.
- Before: "Your academic performance during the past semester did not meet the minimum standards of California State University, Northridge."
- After: "Placement on academic probation is an opportunity for you to reflect on the areas where you may be experiencing challenges and determine how best to address them."

Markers of Positive Impact

- ◆ We expect that the new letter will (as Yeager put it) reduce institutional signals that tell students, "You don't belong here and can't cut it."
- ◆ Working together, all of us can and will make it possible for our students to build forward momentum.
- ◆ We'll know we're succeeding when freshman persistence data (year 1 fall to year 2 fall) moves up.
- ◆ In the longer term, we'll look for higher graduation rates for all students.
- ◆ Choosing strategies that help everyone will help close the achievement gap.

Credits & Sources

- ◆ American Association of State Colleges and Universities. *Re-imagining the First Year of College*. 2016, <http://www.aascu.org/RFY/>
- ◆ Eberle-Sudreé, Kimberlee, et al. "Rising Tide: Do College Grad Rate Gains Benefit All Students?" The Education Trust, December 2015.
- ◆ Kempf, Damien. "Dragon. Autun, 12th c." *Twitter*, 16 Mar. 2016.
- ◆ "Northridge Fact." *CSU Student Success Dashboard*. 5 May 2016, <http://www.calstatela.edu/associateprovost/csu-student-success-dashboard>
- ◆ Office of Institutional Research, California State University, Northridge. <http://www.csun.edu/institutional-research>

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