Student Success Program

Best Practices in Measuring the Impact of Student Success Strategies

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Student Success Program

Acknowledgements

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)

GBC's Student Success Program Team

Student Success Program

George Brown College

Student Success Program background

The three pillars

SSP assumptions

SSP evaluation

SSP year one

SSP year two

Lessons learned

Conclusion

George Brown College

SUCCESS FACTORS

- Located in downtown Toronto (2.6 million)
- Over 150 full-time diploma, certificate and degree programs
- Over 1200 part-time and evening courses
- Strong applicant demand and enrolment growth
- Among largest colleges: 17,000 FTE students
- Strategic investments in recent years:
  - ✓ Applied research, innovation and commercialization; waterfront development; investments focusing on teaching and learning, staff development, student experience
- One of Canada's top 100 employers

George Brown College

CHALLENGES

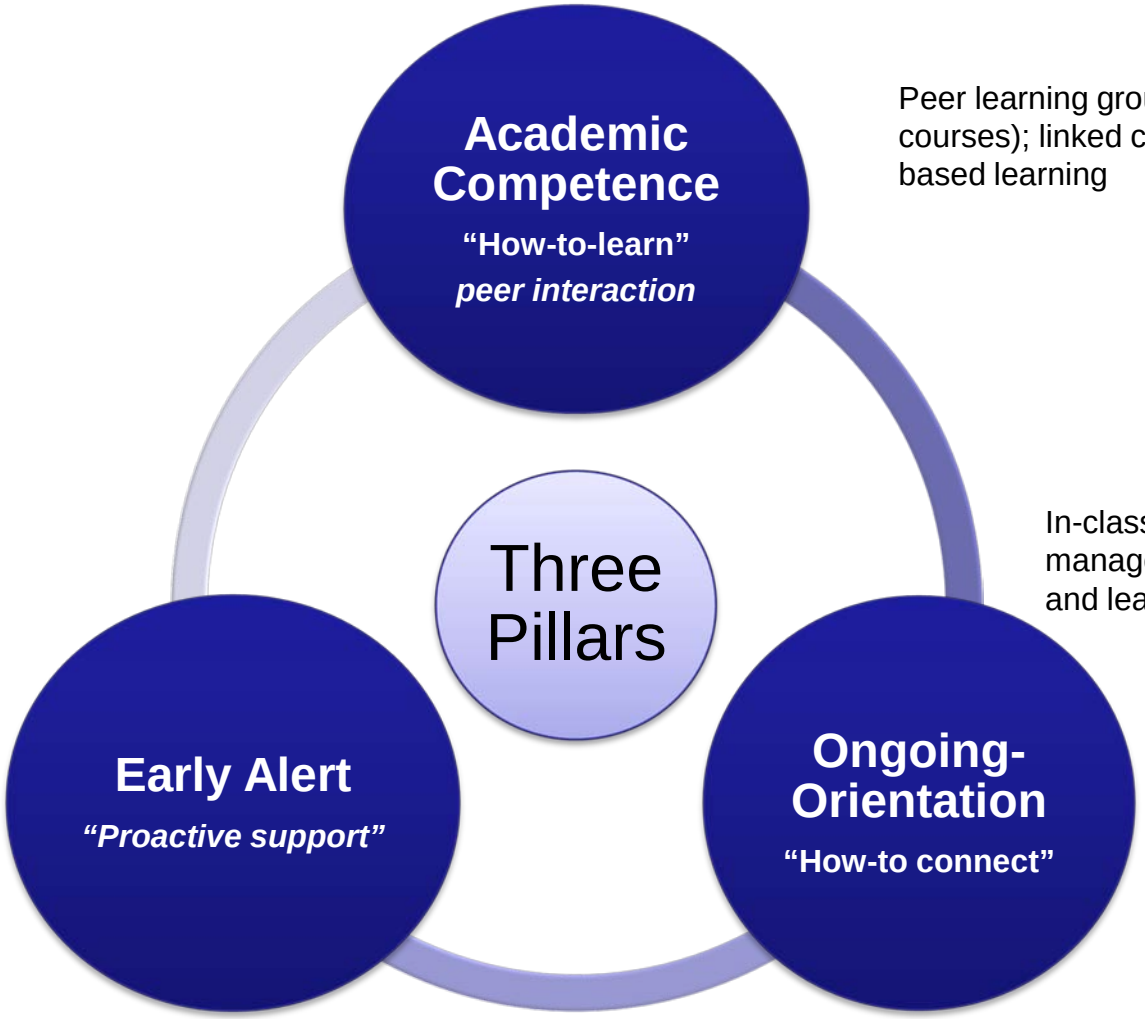
- Diverse student body with varying needs
  - ✓ 43% born outside of Canada
  - ✓ 32% ESL (vs. 21% province)
  - ✓ 16% university degree (vs. 9% province)
  - ✓ 35% placed in foundation English
  - ✓ 40% placed in foundation Math
  - ✓ 10% with disabilities
- Despite on-going investments:
  - ✓ Space constraints continue to put pressure on existing resources and our ability to properly service various student populations
  - ✓ Student satisfaction levels – flat

Source: Institutional Research-special tabulations and Student Satisfaction Key Performance Indicator

SSP BACKGROUND

- 2004: pilots commence (Student Affairs)
- 2007: decision to make a five year commitment
- 2008: Student Success Program launch
  - ✓ $1 million annually over a five year period

THE THREE PILLARS



Peer learning groups (high-risk courses); linked courses; team based learning

In-class quick tips (time management, study tips); lunch and learn, Google groups

Check-in (wks 2-4); Alert George

SSP ASSUMPTIONS

- Focus on first year students
- Decentralized - Deans responsible for SSP implementation in their respective divisions
- Student Success Specialists – faculty positions hired by academic areas
- Student Success Coordinators (Student Affairs) – Advisors; responsible for initial peer leader training
- Centralized funding
- Supports other college-wide initiatives

SSP ASSUMPTIONS (cont'd)

- Selection criteria
  - ✓ High number of students leaving the college,
  - ✓ High failure rates, and/or
  - ✓ High levels of student dissatisfaction
- Expected outcomes
  - Students feel the college 'cares about their success'…in turn, this will contribute to a more positive experience and, ultimately, **higher student satisfaction**
  - The SSP contributes to **increased academic competence and lower attrition rates**
  - **Teaching** staff will **enhance** their **competencies** through their involvement in planning and implementing SSP initiatives

SSP EVALUATION

Objectives

1. Document the implementation of the Student Success Program

2. Evaluate the impact of the initiative against one or more objectives as identified by academic areas:

- Improve retention
- Improve academic performance (course grades, GPA)
- Improve student satisfaction (KPI)

SSP EVALUATION

Questions

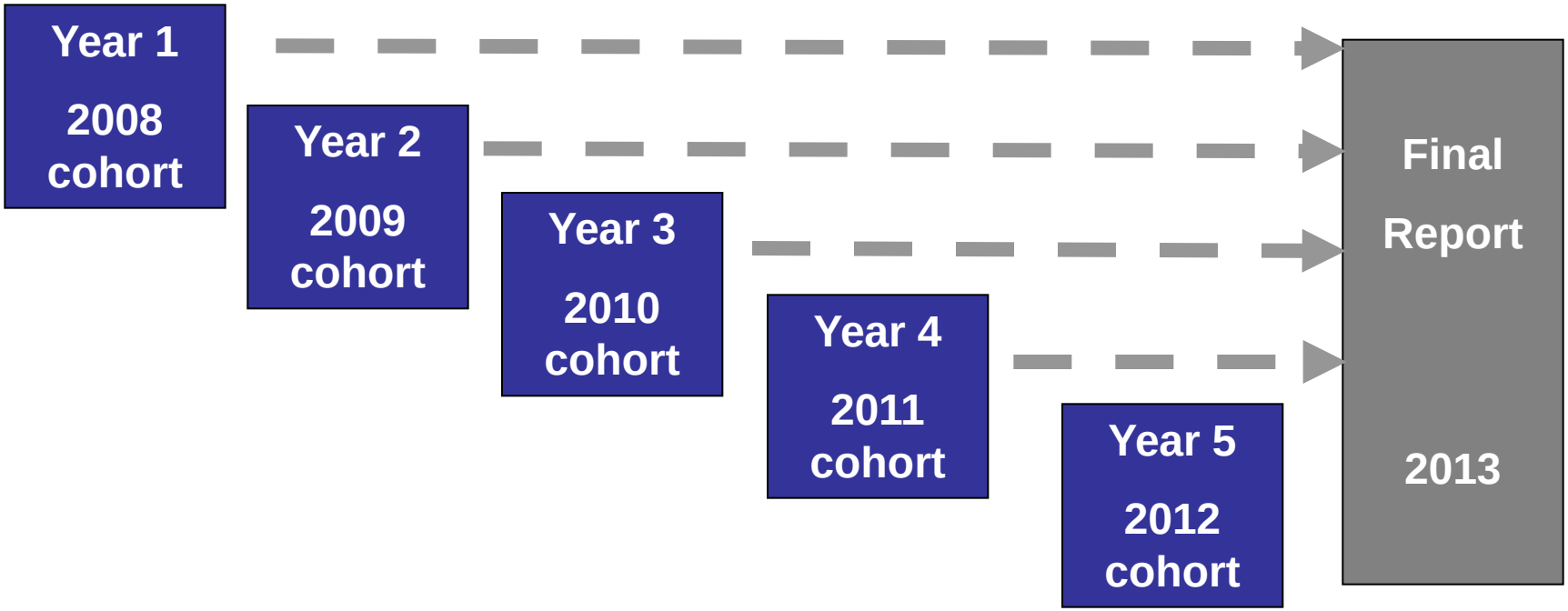
- Do Student Success Program interventions assist students to become better learners?
- Does the Student Success Program influence faculty behaviour?
- Do student success strategies have a long term effect on students beyond first year?

Limitations

- Lack of readily available data
- ‘Interventions’ subject to local adaptations
- Subjects: self-selection
- Only 2 programs consistently evaluated (funded by HEQCO)
- Evaluation of other (same/different) programs subject to available funds

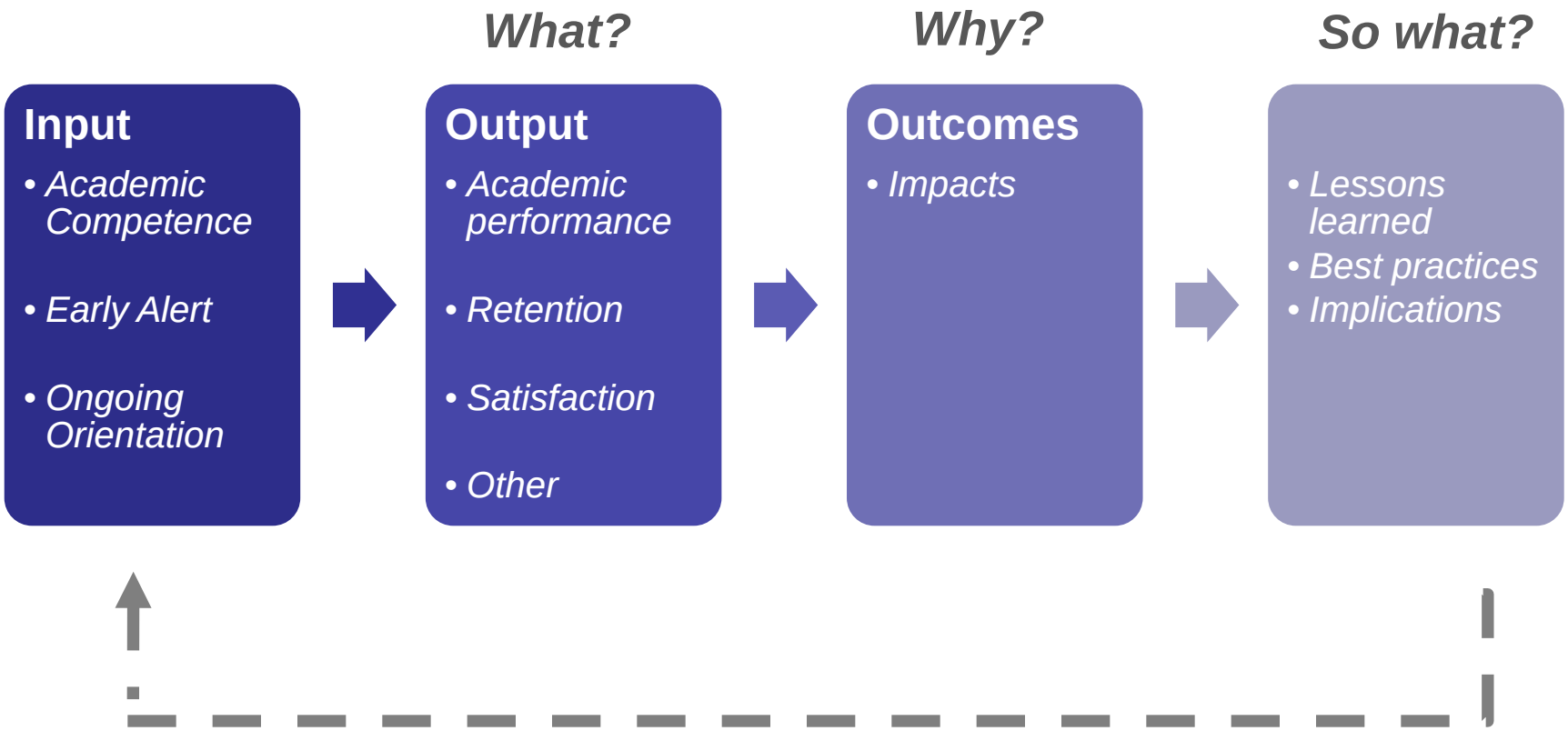
SSP EVALUATION

Evaluation Framework (partially funded by HEQCO)



SSP EVALUATION

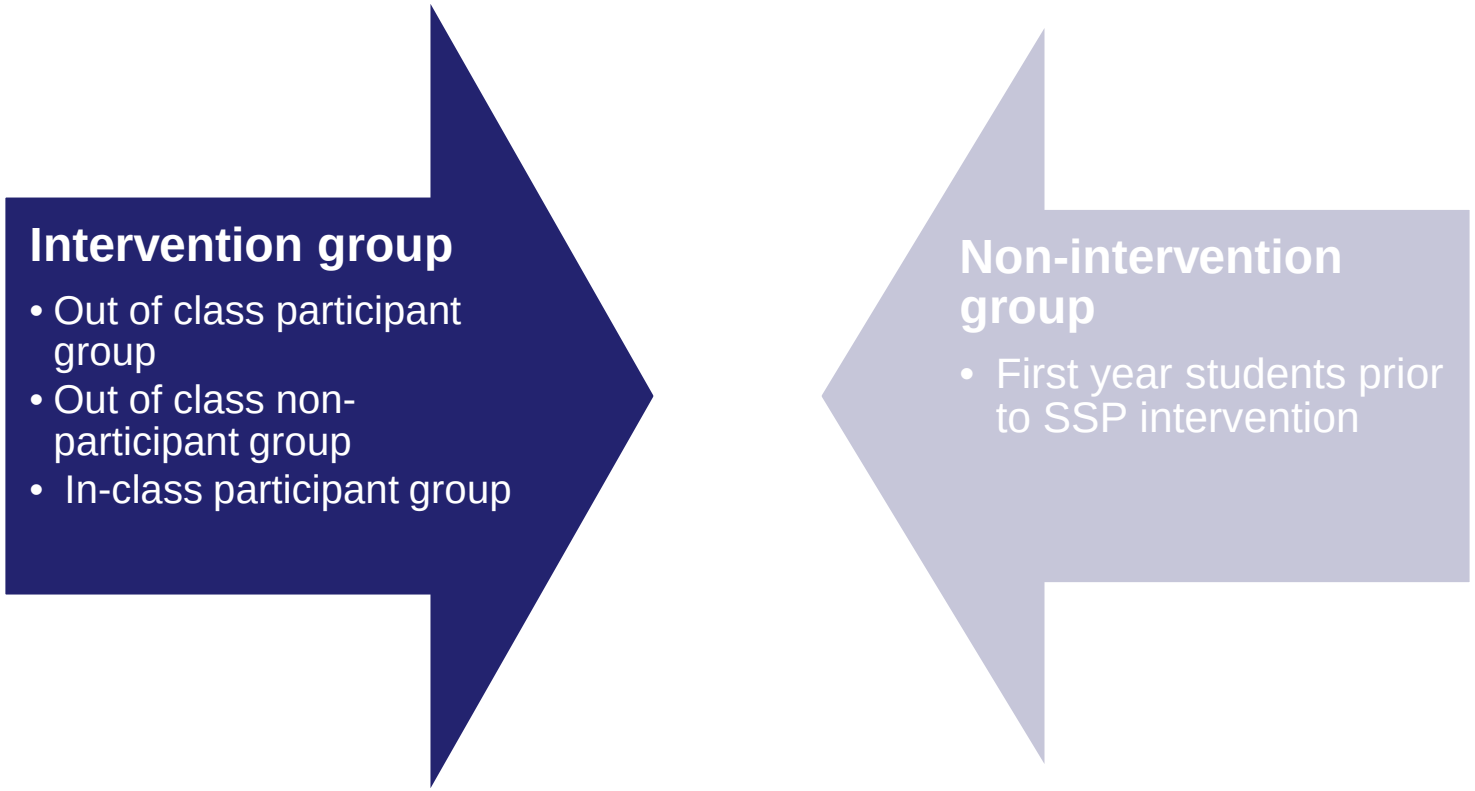
Evaluation Framework (Cont'd)
Mixed methods



SSP EVALUATION

Proposed Evaluation Framework (Cont'd)

- Pre and post introduction of the initiative
- Participants and non-participants



SSP EVALUATION

Data Collection

- Administrative data (gender, high school, placement, etc.)
- 10 evaluation instruments: qualitative, quantitative:
  - ✓ Student characteristics
  - ✓ Student satisfaction Key Performance Indicator
  - ✓ College leavers
  - ✓ Student in-class evaluation (semester 1 and 2)
  - ✓ [QL] Follow-up focus groups, telephone
  - ✓ [QL] Peer leaders evaluation
  - ✓ [QL] Peer liaisons evaluation
  - ✓ [QL] Student Success Specialist, Coordinators
  - ✓ [QL] Administrators
  - ✓ [QL] Faculty

SSP – YEAR ONE

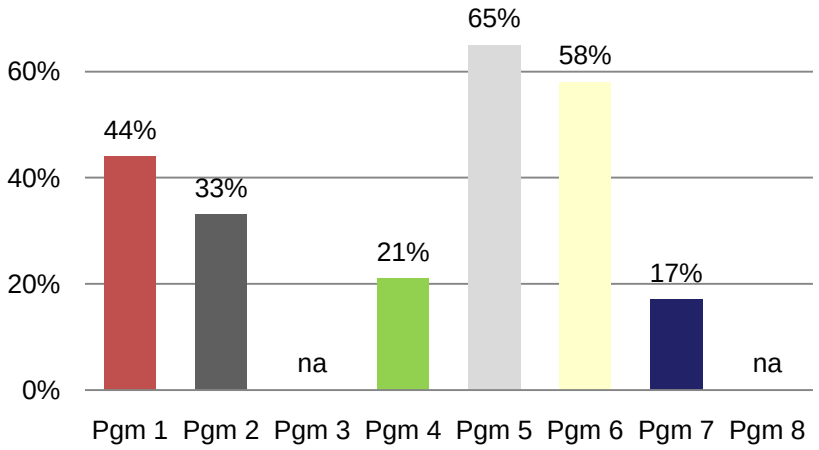
2008 COHORT

- 8 programs
- 860 first year students
- 1-3 year certificate/diplomas (7) and a collaborative degree (1)
- Community services and health sciences (7); Construction and engineering technologies (1)

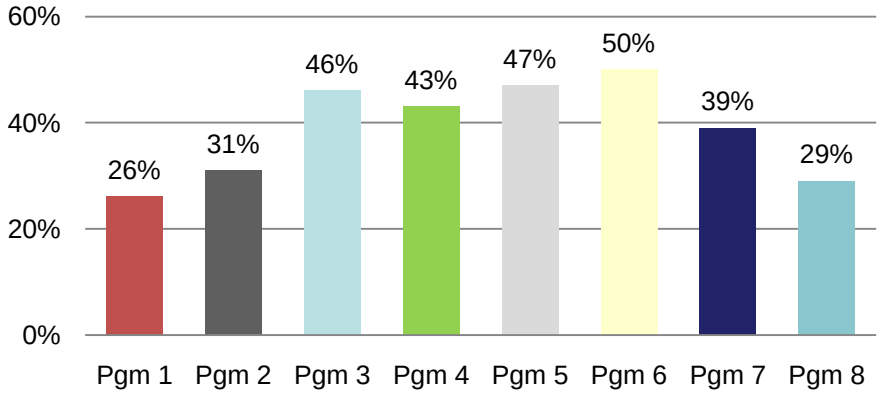
SSP – YEAR ONE

2008 COHORT

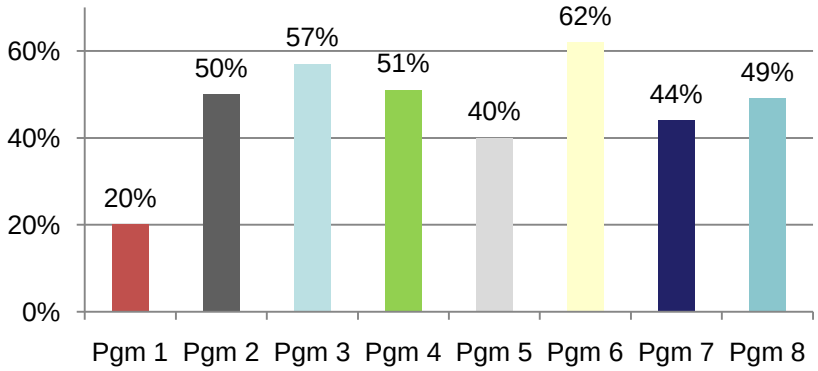
Foundation English (%)



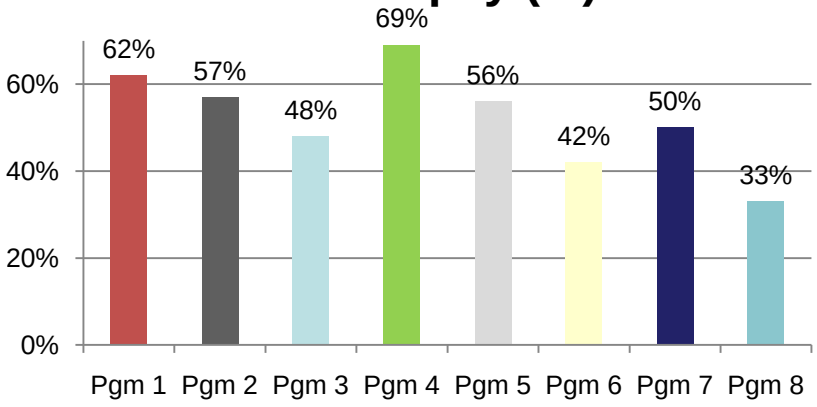
Immigrants (%)



OSAP (%)



Work for pay (%)



SSP YEAR ONE

What?

- **MIXED RESULTS WITH PROMISING OUTCOMES**

SSP YEAR ONE

What?

- **Consistent across 8 programs**
  - Awareness of Student Success Specialist
  - Positive views of Peer Leaders' competency in facilitating sessions
  - General consensus that the SSP is a good initiative to have
  - Awareness of college services
  - Peer leaders – personal gains

SSP YEAR ONE

What?

- **Usefulness Mean scores** (1 least; 5 most)
- Ongoing orientation initiatives: from 2.8 to 4.1
- Academic competence: from 3.0 to 4.5

SSP YEAR ONE

What?	• **Academic Performance**
	  • 8 courses targeted; 4 considered non high risk
	  • No significant differences in grade distribution were observed in 7 courses
	  • Analysis was not possible in 1 course
	  • 1 program was excluded from the analysis

What?	• **Student Retention**
	  • No significant improvements in retention were observed
	  • Semester 1 to 2: Remained relatively high (78%-97%)
	  • Semester 1 to 3: Three of seven programs continued to experience below average retention (70%)

What?	• **Student Satisfaction**
	  • One program experienced a significant improvement in its student satisfaction KPI composite score (70% vs. 84%)
	  • Two programs experienced a decline
	  • Four programs experienced no change

SSP YEAR ONE

Why?

- **Several confounding factors**

SSP YEAR ONE

Communication

"It would have been beneficial to have more communication about the Student Success Program – what the initiatives and the pillars were…"

faculty

SSP YEAR ONE

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

"Early alert – faculty are on top of it. They get in touch with other faculty. SSP has enhanced everyone's awareness [of students]*. It has given everyone the okay to share information."* **faculty**

"*We are not being careful about who we take in …they do not come in prepared, they do not have the skills, or the motivation, or the commitment…..is it our intention to keep everyone here? There is a sense that we are working at cross-purposes."* **faculty**

SSP YEAR ONE

Planning/Implementation

While most programs were interested in improving students' academic performance….over 60% of the SSP initiatives fell under the on-going orientation pillar

"I worry about the impact of expansion on SSP. The [Student Success Specialist] is already stretched" faculty

SSP YEAR ONE

So what?

- **REALIGNMENT**

SSP YEAR ONE

So what?

- **Planning**
  - Determine optimal number of programs assigned to specialists
  - Align SSP initiatives with stated objectives
  - Set realistic targets/goals

So what?

- **Implementation**
  - Ongoing monitoring of SSP delivery
  - Clear roles and responsibilities
  - Ongoing training and mentoring of peer leaders and peer liaisons

So what?

- **Communication**
  - Develop a communication plan
  - Develop consistent naming conventions

SSP YEAR TWO

2009-10

- **Governance**
  - General oversight and funding responsibilities were transferred to Deans of Students
  - The SSP Working Group Committee (IR membership) was created to provide input into key operational issues
- **Research recommendations**
  - SSP Working Group recommendations to senior management aligned with IR's recommendations

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned

- **Student Success Specialist**
  - Multiple roles
  - Programs: How many is too many?
- **Faculty & Administrators**
  - Champions
- **Institutional Research**
  - Culture shift from anecdotal to evidence based decision making
  - External or internal? Building capacity

CONCLUSION

Why this is important

- Access, quality, institutional responsibility to ensure completion
- Multi-year accountability
- Completion
  - ✓ At GBC
  - ✓ In college system
  - ✓ In PSE system

Student Success Program

"[SSP] *brings motivation…you want to keep going… want to succeed, because the student success program provides help, so it makes you feel that you are not by yourself, that you are part of a community of learners."* ***Student***

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