



# Accountability in and for Community colleges

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# Accountability – a bit of History

- Perceived or real questions of institutional responsibility
  - Waste and abuse of Federal Financial aid money
  - Tuition and fees rising faster than inflation
  - Students (and athletes) not completing their education
  - Consumers unable to get “useful” information
  - Inability to compare the “quality” of educational experiences

# Accountability – a bit of History

- Federal efforts
  - State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPRE)
  - Student Right to Know
  - Unit Record System
  - Spellings Commission
  - Higher Education and Opportunity Act (HEOA)
  - American Graduation Initiative

# Accountability – a bit of History

- National, nonfederal efforts
  - Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (JCAR)
  - Re-affirmation of Accreditation process and role of accrediting agencies
  - Sector specific accountability models
    - Voluntary System of Accountability
    - University and College Accountability Network (U-CAN)



# Community College Accountability

# Hospital Accountability

- Hospital Death Rates (deaths that occurred within 30 days of admission)

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-08-20-hospital-death-rates\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-08-20-hospital-death-rates_N.htm)

# An Analogy

- Community Colleges are like hospitals
  - They serve a local community.
  - They admit everyone and don't turn anyone away.
  - They treat you no matter what shape you arrive in.
  - Their goal is to make you better.
  - Some of the staff there are doctors.

# Hospital Accountability

- Death Rates:
  - Hospital A: 17%
  - Hospital B: 28%
  
- So...which one is the better hospital?

# Hospital Accountability

- Hospital A:
  - Serves affluent, educated neighborhoods
  - Patients have low rates of tobacco, drug usage
  - Lots of available beds

# Hospital Accountability

- Hospital B:
  - Serves lower-income neighborhoods
  - Patients have a high rate of tobacco/drug usage
  - Is the local Trauma Center and ER
- So...which one is the better hospital?

# Higher Ed Accountability Systems

- Volume Metrics
  - Grads and transfers: useful to show size, annual output
- Outcome Rates: cohort analysis
  - Grad and transfer rates, remedial success rates, persistence rates, etc
  - Used for institutional comparison
  - IPEDS-GRS struggles to capture this well

# CC Accountability is Unique

- K-12: Everyone is “diploma-seeking”.
- 4-yr colleges: Everyone is “degree-seeking”.
- CC’s: Some seek degrees. Some just want to explore. Some take a single class. Some have no clue.
- Over counting degree-seekers is a killer.

# Student Intent: Unique to CC's

- Determining who is at a CC for what is the #1 question.
- Degree-seekers vs non-degree-seekers
  - By what they say?
  - By what they do?
    - Program enrollment
    - Key courses of degree intent: math, English: not taken for fun

# *Separating Collegiate vs Non-Collegiate (remedial) students*

- College A: 35% remedial
- College B: 85% remedial
  
- Remedial students are “non-collegiate” in aptitude; measure progress of remediation separately, then
- Measure grad/transfer rates on a common bar of “collegiate aptitude” students
  - Attempted deg-appl/xfer math OR English

# Setting a Common Bar

- Hospitals:
  - Measure pneumonia vs pneumonia
- Colleges:
  - Measure common aptitude vs common aptitude
    - Remedial vs remedial
    - Collegiate vs collegiate
  - The lack of distinction & adjustment for remedial students is a major problem in CC metrics

# Separating on Units

- Many students came for a single course or for a single term
  - Some had that intent; others started and dropped out
  - What is the value-add point?
    - Common: 12-18 units attempted in some time period

# Outcomes

- For a degree-seeking cohort, the prime outcomes are:
  - Degree or certificate
  - Transfer to 4-yr institution
  - “Prepared to Transfer” equivalent
- Others:
  - Other valued unit threshold (30?)
  - Still enrolled anywhere

# Outcomes

- Separating “degree-seeking” and “transfer-seeking” is difficult
- Many students transfer + get degree or get degree then realize transfer is possible
- It pays to treat outcomes as an “OR” and create a hybrid “success + achievement” rate
  - But no double-counting allowed

# What Affects CC Grad/Transfer Rates?

- Variables that affect rates:
  - Bachelor Plus Index, or the % of the population in your service area that has a bachelor's degree or higher
    - A proxy for income/SES, first-gen status, proximity to 4-yr college
  - % of older students (>24) in your degree-seeking cohort
- Regression:  $r^2=.7$

# Valid Institutional Comparison

- Rates to mitigate size
- Common bar of aptitude
- Common unit threshold
- Adjust for exogenous factors: create peers based on factors out of control of the campus
- Result: variance within peer groups should be “institutional” factors

# Toolbox for CC Accountability

- Participation Rates: who/how many you serve
- Annual Volume of Outputs
- Progress/Achievement Rates
  - Measuring same students, adjusted for comparison
- Wage Gains
  - Of degree and non-degree recipients



# Voluntary Framework of Accountability

**For Community Colleges  
By Community Colleges**

# What is the VFA (History)

- The VFA is a multi-year initiative to develop accountability measures that are most appropriate for community colleges.
- A 3-phase process to develop Accountability Framework

# What is the VFA (Phases)

- Phase I – Planning
- Phase II - Current, including:
  - Development of all the measures and metrics
  - Pilot test measures
  - Development of the data collection and display tool concept
  - Market research
  - Marketing and buy-in plan
- Phase III - Full-scale deployment

# What is the VFA (History)

- The VFA is a project to develop accountability measures that are most appropriate for community colleges.
- Phase I
  - *Principles and Plans*
  - *Performance and Accountability for Community Colleges*
- Phase II was developed using Phase I documents as guides

# What is the VFA (Goals)

- The goals for Phase II of the initiative:
  - a framework that defines institutional success
    - Defines measures
    - Provides instructions to institutions on how to calculate
    - Refines concept for tools to collect, display, and analyze measures and contextual information about colleges
  - a strategic plan to ensure college participation in the VFA.

# Structure of the VFA (cont.)

- Working Group I:

## Student Persistence and Outcomes

- Develop specific criteria that colleges can use to report student persistence and completion metrics;
- Investigate student learning outcomes (SLOs) and how they can be meaningfully integrated into the VFA;
- Provide detailed instructions on how each metric will be calculated;
- Give guidance on how student cohorts will be defined for purposes of reporting these metrics;
- Decide on the appropriate level of disaggregation for report data.

# Structure of the VFA (cont.)

- Working Group 2:  
Workforce, Economic, and Community Development
  - Develop community college outcome metrics that are related to the missions of workforce, economic, and community development;
  - Provide a template that colleges may use to further refine their own data collection and analysis to report these outcomes in a consistent and comparable way;
  - Refine and finalize the metrics based on steering committee and pilot site feedback – acknowledging that not all colleges may have the data at present to calculate measures;
  - Contribute to the development of a technical manual that will include all the information required for a college to report data for the VFA.

# Structure of the VFA (cont.)

- Working Group 3:

## Communications and College Engagement

- Develop and guide the communications and “marketing” efforts to insure community buy-in and use of the tool;
- Identify tactical strategies and activities for building wider consensus for the VFA;
- Shape the messaging and develop guidelines and directions for focus group sessions (market research); and
- Provide input into the development of the wireframe/template that will be used to demonstrate what a finished product will look like and how colleges will benefit by using it in Phase III.

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- Questions or comments?