November 17, 2022

Findings and Recommendations Related to Student Support and Wraparound Services

Note: For the below numbered items, Task Force Findings are in regular font, **followed by Recommendations in bold font.**

Listed below Findings and Recommendations are *Examples of related policies*, policy ideas submitted by work group participants or Task Force Members that relate to the findings.

1. Oregon's students are increasingly diverse, and report that institutional bureaucracy regarding advising and other services can be difficult to navigate, particularly for students who are first-generation or members of a racial-ethnic minority. Students themselves often do not know if they are making navigation errors or encountering difficulties that make it less likely they will successfully complete. The task force finds that students from underrepresented backgrounds face additional challenges in higher education settings due to the "hidden curriculum" that prevents them from confidently navigating the system and completing their education at comparable rates to their peers. **The task force recommends that the legislature enact policies that allow institutions flexibility in adapting to the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Institutions should develop proactive, systematic, and data-driven approaches to identifying students who are academically or financially at risk, and affirmatively connect those students to advisors and other campus services before students' difficulties evolve into non-completion.**

Examples of related policies: WS-5, Effective Student Support and Wraparound Services Policy Priorities, Block Grant; WS-7, Scaling Oregon Guided Pathways

2. Relatedly, when students do understand what their needs are, program and service offerings on campus can be difficult to find, even when they exist on campus. The task force finds that underrepresented students report experiencing food and housing insecurity, barriers to accessing mental and behavioral health services, and challenges securing adequate transportation, child care, and internet access. **The task force recommends that knowledge and information about program and service availability should be better centralized and coordinated, helping students navigate services easier by searching fewer places and inquiring with fewer people.**

Examples of related policies: WS-4, Single Point Entry; WS2, Campus Coordinated Care;

3. The task force finds that the benefits navigator program has been successful in steering students toward available resources to assist with meeting their basic needs. **The task force recommends that the legislature continue to fund benefits navigator positions at each public institution of higher education in the state, and evaluate the benefits of expanding funding to increase these positions and/or expand funding and resources for their work.**

Examples of related policies: WS-3, Equity Achievement Act

4. It's not enough to change how students can be identified for and seek out services. As state investment has not kept pace with higher education inflation factors, institutions have not only increased tuition, but increased reliance on part time employees and decreased service levels. These cuts, necessary to balance the books, affect underrepresented students significantly. In recent history, the legislature has provided just enough funding to buy down tuition increases. But these tuition guarantees do not leave room for institutional reinvestment. The task force finds that many successful programs and models exist at Oregon's higher education institutions that provide valuable wraparound support to underrepresented students. The task force finds that students from underrepresented backgrounds benefit greatly from supplemental support services that are comprehensive and culturally responsive. **Academic and student supports must see greater levels of state investment that directly result in greater service levels, including by creating more full-time lines that can help institutions diversify campuses. The task force recommends that the legislature enact policies that ensure greater access and resources to wraparound services and support programs for underrepresented students that have been demonstrated to promote positive outcomes.**

Examples of related policies: WS-3, Equity Achievement Act

5. Following national trends, students increasingly list mental health concerns as impediments to college completion and full-participation at institutions. While mental health challenges are increasingly a factor, quality, culturally competent remote health and counseling services are more available today than at any prior point. **Such mental health services should be made available and affordable to students. Institutions and the state should partner to make such services accessible, regardless of where a student enrolls.**

Examples of related policies: FA-6, Promoting Healthy Campuses

6. Federal laws and rules on the subject of students with disabilities in higher education are less prescriptive than those governing the K-12 system, and students often must be aggressive self-advocates for determinations and services. Students with disabilities report challenges in accessing appropriate supports and accommodations at institutions of higher education. **A workgroup should be formed to investigate whether statutory changes, policy changes, or investments would improve the experience and outcomes of students with disabilities in higher education, recommending such ideas to the legislature.**

Examples of related policies: WS-9, Disability Justice Action Plan for Oregon Higher Ed

7. Students often enter higher education with a need for further development of math and English skills. Traditionally, this development has occurred in courses that a student must complete prior to entry into the introductory college level course. But recent studies show that corequisite models, where students complete the college level course with additional, parallel academic support, better help students prepare for and complete their college program, without such students spending significant additional time and money. **Institutions must complete the transition to corequisite delivery of developmental education in math and English.**

Examples of related policies: WS-8, Corequisite Course Implementation at Oregon Community Colleges

Policy Proposals Submitted by Work Group Members

Members of the Work Group on Student Support and Wraparound Services submitted the following proposals:

Proposal WS-1: Retention Grants – Extending the Last Mile

This proposal would fund grants to cover modest outstanding balances for Pell-eligible students ahead of class registration.

Timeline for implementation: Could be implemented quickly after passage

Implementation responsibility: Maximum grant size set by HECC, funds awarded and distributed by universities

Proposal WS-2: Campus Coordinated Care

This proposal would create a network at each university that includes all student support offices (financial aid, undergraduate advising and counseling, registration, housing and financial advising) and assign each student a liaison to help them navigate the system.

Timeline for implementation: 2-3 years

Implementation responsibility: Best practices and models identified by HECC, implementation by universities

Proposal WS-3: Equity Achievement Act

This proposal would provide targeted funding to support services, with the goal of scaling programs and increasing FTE.

Timeline for implementation: Minimum one year

Implementation responsibility: University leadership

Proposal WS-4: Single Point Entry and Engagement for Continuous Integrated Service Provision

This proposal would develop a structure and process for post-secondary institutions to begin providing services and outreach to students at the high school level, to ensure a smooth transition and help students identify and leverage resources.

Timeline for implementation: 4-6 years

Implementation responsibility: Collaboration between ODE, HECC, and post-secondary institutions.

Proposal WS-5: Effective Student Support and Wraparound Services Policy Priorities

This proposal would create a block grant that universities could apply to specified programs of their choice, such as programs for first-generation and underserved students, academic coaching, mentoring, career pathways, and ABE/GED/ESOL programs.

Timeline for implementation: 2-5 years to measure impact

Implementation responsibility: Post-secondary institutions

Proposal WS-6: College Access Sustainability and Growth

This proposal would create an annual state investment in the Oregon TRIO Association of $500,000, which would represent a 10-20% increase in the number of TRIO grants in Oregon.

Timeline for implementation: Next biennium, 2023-2025

Implementation responsibility: Oregon TRIO Association and OSAC

Proposal WS-7: Oregon Guided Pathways

This proposal would scale the implementation of Guided Pathways programs at Oregon community colleges, which have been in development since 2018.

Timeline for implementation: Minimum 10 years

Implementation responsibility: Community colleges with the assistance of the OSSC

Proposal WS-8: Corequisite Course Implementation at Oregon Community Colleges

This proposal would expand corequisite course offerings currently under development at 11 community colleges and implement the system at the remaining six. Corequisite courses replace traditional remedial courses with parallel support and review sessions, with the goal of keeping students on track to earn credit for prerequisite math and English courses.

Timeline for implementation: Not specified; current corequisite courses have been in development for two years.

Implementation responsibility: Community colleges with the coordination of the OSSC

Proposal WS-9: Disability Justice Action Plan for Oregon Higher Education

This proposal would establish a Committee on Disability Justice in Higher Education. The committee, with staff support from the HECC, would be responsible for developing a state-wide action plan and issuing policy recommendations for colleges and universities to improve access and support for students with disabilities.

Timeline for implementation: 1 year

Implementation responsibility: HECC

Proposal WS-10: Higher Education Excused Absence Act

This proposal would require every public university to publish a university-wide excused absence policy that provides students with a baseline of excused absences for sickness, mental health issues, and other emergencies.

Timeline for implementation: 1 year

Implementation responsibility: Public universities, with reporting requirements to HECC