

Pioneers for HOPE Learning Framework Program Project Brief - August 2018

What is the Learning Framework?

The Pioneers for HOPE Learning Framework (Learning Framework) is a two-year project funded by the Stupski Foundation to investigate and identify strategies that support underserved and under-resourced students to make academic progress and complete their degrees. The brief provides an overview of the project; for more detailed information, check out our [website](#).

The Team

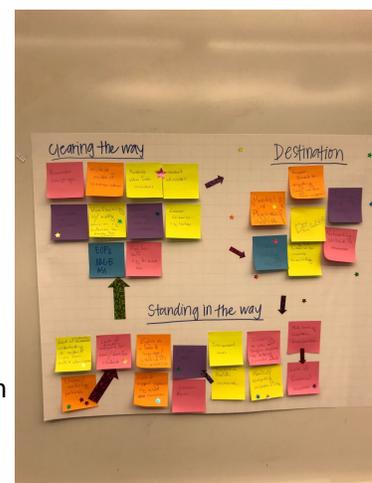


Team Training and Kick-Off Session on December 4, 2017. From left: Research Assistant (RA) Victor Washington, Collaborator Dr. Ryan Gamba, Student Project Adviser Charles Watkins, Project Coordinator Ali Jones-Bey, Collaborator Dr. Lael Adediji, Collaborator Dr. Alina Engelman, RA Kiki Vo, and Co-Investigator Dr. Sarah Taylor.

The [team](#) is co-led by Dr. Edward Inch, Provost and Principal Investigator and Dr. Sarah Taylor, Co-Investigator and Associate Professor in Social Work. Ms. Ali Jones-Bey serves as the full-time Project Coordinator and works closely with 6 undergraduate and graduate Student Research Assistants, an undergraduate student adviser, and 12 faculty, staff, and administrator collaborators representing 10 different offices and academic departments on campus.

Participatory, Collaborative Approach

In the first year, we built a diverse team of stakeholders to conduct a needs assessment of barriers and facilitators of student success. We employ a learning collaborative approach through which we share and discuss literature, lived experiences, and professional expertise in developing and implementing all project activities. The official project kick-off in November 2017 was a day of [Strategy Sessions](#) that were open to the entire campus community. Twenty-four people participated, including faculty, staff, administrators, and students. The sessions contributed to the development of our needs assessment, which was an exploratory, longitudinal, mixed methods study. The study consisted of four waves of open-ended, semi-structured interviews and surveys



Example brainstorm of barriers and facilitators of student success from the November 2017 strategy sessions.

conducted between January-June 2018. This study design was informed by a desire to gather rich stories from participants and observe their trajectories over time.

Participants ($n=53$ at Wave 1 and $n=48$ at Wave 4) were purposively recruited to include individuals who may be experiencing personal and/or academic challenges. One way we did this was through in-person recruitment in the financial aid and registration line on the first day of Winter Quarter 2018. Since most financial aid and registration transactions can be completed online, we guessed that if students were seeking in-person support, it might be because they were experiencing some difficulty. We also sent recruitment emails to the list of students on academic probation and asked coordinators of relevant student services programs, such as the tutoring center, advising center, Accessibility Services, and food pantry to distribute flyers and/or emails to students accessing these services.



Students wait in the financial aid and registration line on the first day of winter quarter 2018.



A centerpiece of our method was Goal Attainment Scaling¹, a method used to gather both qualitative data about people’s individual goals, as well as quantitative data about achievement of goals that can be aggregated for a group. We used this method to ask participants to identify an academic goal they would like to achieve by the end of the study period. They were asked to scale this goal by describing “wonderful,” “good,” and “undesirable” outcomes. We used a mountain as a metaphor and research aid. At the end of the study, we asked participants where they arrived at on the mountain, and then asked them about barriers and facilitators of their journey. We

also asked participants to describe something outside of school that they were also working on, and scaled this in a similar way. In addition to these goal-related questions, we asked other questions related to student needs, strengths, interests, and experiences on campus.

Interviewer: What do you think are the barriers that could get in your way?

Student: Money. That's a main one.

¹ Kiresuk, T. (Ed.), Smith, A. (Ed.), Cardillo, J. (Ed.). (1994). Goal Attainment Scaling. New York: Psychology Press.

Preliminary Findings

We were pleased to recruit a diverse sample ($n=53$). In addition to the characteristics shown in the table below, over half (54.7%) of participants identify as having a learning difference, mental health condition, or other disability. Many students in the sample have substantial paid work and caregiving commitments in addition to their coursework. For example, the average hours per week for the following activities were as follows: 9.95 in class, 10.80 caregiving, and 15.76 paid work. The standard deviations for caregiving and paid work were quite high, indicating that some students spend many more hours engaging in these activities than in class.

| Gender | Race/Ethnicity |
|---|--|
| Female 83% (44) Male 11% (6) Non-binary 2% (1) Not reported 4% (2) | Black/African American 23% (12) Latinx 19% (10) Multiracial 17% (9) White/European American 13% (7) Asian/Pacific Islander 13% (7) Native American 4% (2) Middle Eastern/Arab 2% (1) Not reported 14% (7) |
| Sexual Orientation | Age |
| Heterosexual 62% (33) Bisexual 8% (4) Lesbian 4% (2) Other LGBTQ+ identity 4% (2) Not reported 23% (12) | 17-25: 53% (28) 26-35: 23% (12) Over 35: 19% (10) Not reported: 6% (3) |

Financial issues are a significant struggle for the students involved in our study. In the first survey sent out the study participants ($n=53$), 59% identified housing as a challenge that impacts their academic progress, 75% identified paying tuition as a challenge, and 94% said they had other financial issues. In the second survey ($n=44$), we asked some more specific questions about food insecurity. Of those who responded, approximately 66% ($n=29$) worried they would run out of food in the past month, and 50% ($n=22$) actually did run out of food. Eight students in the study were currently participating in the CalFresh program, and three had participated in the past. Three additional students applied in the past and did not qualify for benefits.

Interviewer: Outside of school, how do you spend most of your time?

Participant: I work part time on weekends at [store] and I help take care of my father who has dementia along with my mom and my son. The three of us helped take care of my dad in the home.

We are continuing to analyze Wave 1 interviews and are moving into Wave 2. We will be able to share more information once we have finished cleaning and coding all of the interviews, but here are some key takeaways from our analysis to date:

- Many of our students have extraordinary stories of challenge and resilience; we think the campus community will benefit from hearing these stories.
- Students express a desire for more hands-on, personalized advising and mentoring.
- Barriers to accessing existing supports include lack of awareness about services, stigma associated with accessing services, and hours in which services are available.
- Students' academic goals vary widely; some students are striving to get all As, while others are trying to pass their remedial classes or remove their academic probation status.
- Close to 40% of participants reached their "wonderful achievement" goal on the mountain. We are still analyzing data to understand the factors that may have contributed to the success of these students.
- In addition to challenges with food and housing, students struggle with the cost of books, computers, and other supplies, and many have long commutes that not only take time but also add to the cost of attendance.
- Students vary widely in their sense of belonging on campus; involvement in a student organization and/or campus support program appears to be a key factor.
- For more preliminary findings, see our [presentation slides](#) from CSU East Bay's Faculty Development event, *Back to the Bay*, in August 2018.

Next Steps

Six intervention ideas emerged from the [Student Success Hackathon](#) sessions held in June 2018 with our campus community and community partners:

Concierge Advisory System/Mentorship

One person assigned to a student who would act as their "everything" advisor/coach, and provide warm handoffs as an ambassador/navigator for the student.

Culture of Yes

Implementation a "culture of yes" by training all staff and faculty to be able to help a student in distress and encouraging proactive problem solving to facilitate student success.

One-Unit Support Courses

1-unit support courses to provide transition and support for incoming freshmen, transfer students, and/or students on academic probation.

Interviewer: What made you not drop out?...

Student: I think it's the people you have watching you...whatever I need she's there..they have gone above and beyond the college's duties for me and having support makes a world of difference

One-Stop Shop/Hub

Students would be able to access all campus services in one office. An employee would serve as an advisor, coach, ambassador, and navigator for students.

Universal basic income/meal swipes/daily fruit at the library

Identification of 15 locations for students to access baskets of fruit and granola bars, possible free lunch for all students, providing a Universal Basic Income scholarship or stipend. It would be a trailblazing project, and require setting a floor for funds.

Chat/Phone/Online Support with Extended Hours

Online chat, zoom, email, in-person, and/or phone support with extended hours, including a drop-in session during the university hour we will have as part of the new semester schedule.

Next steps for the Learning Framework Project will incorporate ideas gathered from the data collected in the study, the hackathon, as well as from the Learning Framework team. Ideally, the intervention for year two will address a majority of the barriers identified by the students in the study, while also being cost-effective and scalable.

