



Stories from the Field

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Ladders
Project

Crafton Hills College

Piloting New Practices and Programs

Equitable Counseling Approach

The Crafton Hills College counseling team noticed that students who were midway through their educational plan were disengaging and stopping out. They also observed that students from historically underserved groups were disproportionately represented in the student groups stopping out. The majority of Crafton Hills College students are students of color who attend college part-time while managing work, family, and other responsibilities. The data on students' enrollment patterns galvanized the counseling team to dig deeper into what might support students to stay engaged and meet their educational goals.

As part of the guided pathways redesign work, the counseling team learned about the success team model that had worked for other community colleges to better support students. As a small counseling team with just nine

full-time counselors, dividing the work by caseload according to meta-major seemed to splinter their team in a way that made the workload uneven, so they got creative to think about how they might build from the traditional success team model but organize the work differently.

Engaging the counseling department, counseling dean, instructional faculty, and students, the counseling team came up with a unit-based milestone approach focused on moving from a reactive counseling model, where they were responding to students after they were already struggling to stay enrolled, to a proactive model that keeps students supported and engaged. The team first identified milestones in the students' journey from entry into college to completion of a degree or transfer. Then they explored including the role of success coach.

The Transformational Practices

- **Unit-based milestone counseling approach:** Each counselor and completion coach is assigned a caseload of students working on 0 to 29-unit milestones or 30 to 60-unit milestones.
- **Single point of contact:** Completion coaches are students' single point of contact throughout their journey at the college.
- **Sustained student engagement:** The team leverages social media, peer mentors, and completion celebrations to keep students involved.

Crafton Hills College Networked Single Point of Contact Approach

Every incoming student is assigned a completion coach who serves as their single point of contact, connecting students to the network of academic and student services at the college. The students are also assigned a counselor who works closely with the coach to support students through every milestone on their journey.

Unit Load	Milestone
0-14 units	Successful onboarding, academic planning, and career exploration
15-29 units	Declare a major, complete an educational plan, and stay engaged through workshops and touchpoints
30-44 units	Plan for completion, start on transfer application, understand graduation process and application
45-60+ units	Final preparation for graduation and transfer or the workforce

Crafton Hills counselors recognized that the success coach model was critical for them to maintain consistent contact with students and to ensure that every student had an easily accessible point of contact. They loved the idea of peer or near-peer mentors and wanted to design a model that supported the student mentors with work experience as well as pique their interest in returning to Crafton Hills College as a counselor or instructor. To support these goals, they built a completion coach position for recent graduates of the college. Many of the coaches graduated, transferred to a local university, and returned to Crafton Hills in the professional expert position of completion coach while finishing their bachelor's degree. The counseling team works closely with the completion coaches, contributing to their training and partnering with them to support students.

Crafton Hills College launched this effort in a small pilot to work through challenges. The team engaged the IT and Institutional Research teams to streamline data collection, ensuring accurate tracking of student milestones. To support early iteration of the success teams, the dean secured a \$400,000 Kresge Foundation grant that

funded the first two years of implementation. For ongoing funding, the college braids Student Equity & Achievement Program (SEAP) funding and College Promise (AB 19) funding.

Call to Action for the Field

- “Transforming counseling isn’t just about strategy. It’s about creating a culture where every student feels supported and empowered to succeed.” Every student at the college knows they have a team of people invested in their success.
- “Every institution can customize this approach to fit their unique culture.” Leveraging the collective wisdom of the college team and students’ insights about what they need is critical to designing an approach that works.