Using Data in Guided Pathways Reform

Santa Rosa Junior College

Their Approach

Santa Rosa Junior College's Office of Institutional Research set out to create a self-service data culture across the college in order to democratize data-driven decision-making. College researchers worked with students, faculty, and staff to build a cadre of "citizen researchers." They are not data professionals, but SRJC's citizen researchers are now trained to ask questions, find data, and use data in making decisions. "Our model is grassroots because that's what fit on our campus," says KC Greaney, director of institutional research. She contrasted it with the more formal data coaching model at Bakersfield College.

What They Did

The IR staff created an interactive online tool that lets citizen researchers extract the data they need, customize reports, and create visualizations. So that researchers and other faculty, staff, and administrators can use information that is not public, the IR staff established a ticket system for requesting reports. To launch the system, IR conducted workshops for the president's cabinet, in new faculty trainings, at various committee meetings, and at Student Success Coach meetings, adapting the content to each group's needs. Following the launch, the first coordinated effort to retrieve and analyze data and then make data-driven decisions focused on diagnosing enrollment problems and finding creative solutions. Citizen researchers also worked with Student Success Coaches and faculty to design activities and curriculum to gather qualitative data about elements of the student experience at SRJC that may affect retention and success. One faculty member developed a course assignment where students studied persistence and completion rates and proposed improvements.

What They Learned

• Data can feel threatening especially in times of budget and class cuts.

• It is important to make the case for how data can support the growth and development of strong programs and services.

• Making meaning from data requires training. When faculty, staff, and students are trained on building a narrative with data, they are empowered to explore problems in ways that lead to more productive discussion and more creative solutions.

CLP | Career Ladders Project

SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE