

***Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*** by George D. Kuh, Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, Elizabeth J. Whitt, and Associates. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. (2005) 370 pages.

*By Rhonda M. Gabovitch, Dean of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, Bristol Community College*

*Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* explores policies, practices, and programs at 20 colleges and universities that stand out as high-performing institutions. These institutions have higher-than-predicted six-year college graduation rates and scored higher than predicted on five clusters of effective educational practice identified in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). These clusters include: level of academic challenge; active and collaborative learning; student interaction with faculty members; enriching educational experiences; and supportive campus environment. The 20 institutions provide numerous types of academic and social support that impact large numbers of students.

This book describes the results of a two-year study undertaken by George Kuh, Jillian Kinzie, John Schuh, Elizabeth Whitt and associates of the NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, and the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). The Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) Team conducted two site visits at each institution between 2002 and 2004. The 24 scholars and practitioners comprising the research team employed two regression models to select the 20 colleges and universities from among the 700 that participated in the NSSE from 2000-2002.

Various constraints limited how many institutions could participate in the study, and the number of institutions that met the criteria for inclusion actually exceeded the target. In all, nine private and 11 public colleges and universities participated in the study. They included large research-intensive institutions and small liberal arts colleges; commuter institutions; historically Black colleges and universities; and Hispanic-serving institutions. Among the 20 schools were two women's colleges and one men's college. Far from claiming that the selected institutions are perfect, the authors do believe that, given certain institutional and student characteristics, each of these schools has excelled at fostering "a success-oriented campus culture and learning environment."

The authors identified six conditions common among institutions that have high levels of student engagement and persistence. First, the missions of these colleges and universities, which are clearly stated and shared with their respective communities, inform decisions and affect the day-to-day operations of the institutions.

Second, the institutions place a heavy emphasis on undergraduate education and learning, utilizing active and collaborative learning strategies. They recognize that students possess different learning styles and emphasize assessment of student learning outcomes.

Third, DEEP colleges and universities adapt physical environments for educational enrichment. For some DEEP schools, the natural environment provides valuable educational resources for students. Other schools create internal gathering spaces that include campus residences and areas where students and faculty may naturally come together in ways that promote student engagement. Commuter institutions have created programs such as learning communities and peer educational opportunities that foster engagement.

Fourth, DEEP institutions have created pathways to student success. They instill the values of the institution and teach students how to take advantage of the many opportunities available to them. Many DEEP institutions have instituted early warning systems that identify students at risk and have developed networks of individuals that stand ready to assist them. While academic standards are high at all of these institutions, DEEP colleges and universities serve students at all levels, including those who are academically underprepared. Many DEEP institutions offer extensive training to advisors so that they can provide accurate and timely information to students. Strong advising networks help students become independent and take responsibility for learning.

Fifth, assessment and accountability are hallmarks for DEEP institutions. These schools regularly conduct both internal and external assessments of student performance and satisfaction and rely on data to inform their decision-making. The results of these assessments often are used to change and improve existing policies and practices.

Finally, DEEP institutions demonstrate a shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. Faculty and staff embody the core values of their institutions in their daily activities. For example, leaders at these institutions believe that education and student success is everyone's business.

*Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* provides a set of recommendations that individuals at all levels of an organization can adopt to foster student success. The authors highlight notable programs and policies that can be adapted for use at other institutions. While the book is geared primarily toward practitioners at four-year colleges, many of the practices described can be used in community college settings. The authors note that what makes DEEP schools so successful and sets them apart from other institutions is their ability to provide many different levels of support to large numbers of students.

DEEP schools: Sweet Briar College, University of Kansas, University of Michigan, Fayetteville State University, Winston-Salem State University, California State University at Monterey Bay, University of Texas at El Paso, Alverno College, Wabash College, Miami University, George Mason University, Wofford College, Gonzaga University, The Evergreen State University, Longwood University, Macalester College, Sewanee University of the South, University of Maine at Farmington, Ursinus College, Wheaton College (MA),