

# DRIVING

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## TOWARD A DEGREE

2020

### COLLABORATION IS CRUCIAL TO HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS

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RESEARCH BRIEF #1

MAY 21, 2020



# COLLABORATION IS CRUCIAL TO HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS

For years, education reform conversations have centered on the notion of “college readiness.” Key questions have included: Are students prepared to be successful? Will they have what it takes to persist to graduation? Now many are shifting the conversation toward a new perspective and asking the question, “Are colleges and universities ready for *students*?” This orientation includes undertaking the redesign of student supports and shifting away from traditional functional silos to structures, policies, practices, and technologies that work in concert to foster a holistic student experience.

Over the coming months, Tyton Partners will publish a series of research briefs highlighting findings from the 2020 *Driving Toward a Degree* initiative, which captures the perspectives of over 2,500 administrators, advisors, counselors, and faculty from nearly 1,000 institutions. These research briefs will be published on a bi-weekly basis and cover topics ranging from collaboration across student supports to the use of technologies that facilitate holistic student supports.

Based on this year’s study, institutions fall in to three distinct clusters based on respondents’ sentiments regarding **1)** lines of responsibility, **2)** communication channels between stakeholders, and **3)** integration of student supports. These clusters of collaboration help answer two essential questions in the conversation about “student-ready colleges”: **(1)** are more collaborative institutions actually improving student outcomes?; and **(2)** what practices, policy, structures, and technologies are these most collaborative institutions employing to make holistic student supports more than just another change initiative?

## CLUSTERS OF COLLABORATION

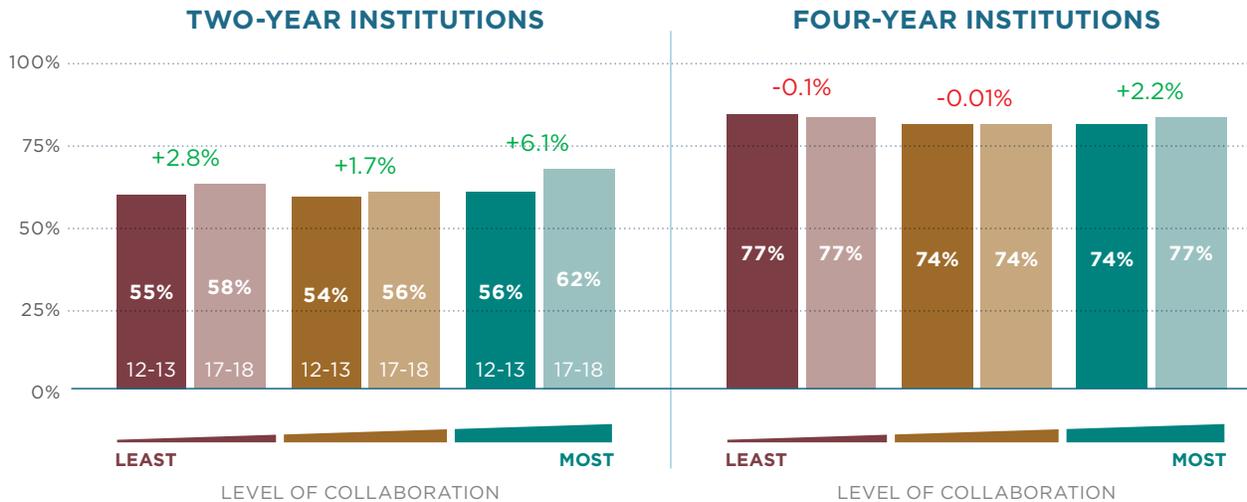
	CLEAR LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY	+	STRONG CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION	=	INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT
<b>Most collaborative agree that...</b> n=494	85%		86%		64%
<b>Somewhat collaborative agree that...</b> n=218	0%		10%		4%
<b>Least collaborative agree that...</b> n=160	61%		34%		0%

Evident in the figure above, the most collaborative institutions report the highest levels of agreement across the three practices integral to achieving and maintaining holistic student supports. Of even more interest, are the positive outcomes these most collaborative institutions demonstrate.

# CHANGES IN RETENTION RATES ACROSS CLUSTERS OF COLLABORATION, 2012-13 TO 2017-18

## RETENTION RATE

Difference in retention rates for first-time, full-time students at two-year / four-year institutions between academic years 2012-13 and 2017-18



Source: College Scorecard- Academic Years 2012-13 through 2017-18

For both two-year and four-year institutions, the most collaborative institutions have seen the largest increases in retention rates when comparing the 2012-13 and 2017-18 academic years. We selected a time period of five years because the effects of these collaborative practices are not immediately experienced due to the inherent complexity of implementation.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. While the student success movement has most often highlighted individual institutions for their work to improve outcomes, for the first time, we are now able to look across hundreds of diverse institutions and see a statistically significant improvement—indicated by p-values less than 0.05—in outcomes.
2. Gains in retention rates become incrementally more difficult to achieve as those rates increase. These results show the impact of collaboration at institutions across the clusters starting at a similar level. In other words, an institution looking to move the needle on student retention may see drastic gains from interventions if they are at a 50% rate, but once they achieve 70+% retention, the needle is harder to move. These results suggest collaboration is critical for achieving the hardest improvements.

In upcoming research briefs, we will share findings on reported barriers to achieving holistic student supports and unpack how some institutions have adopted collaborative policies, practices, and technologies to overcome these barriers and, ultimately, improve student outcomes.

# HOW CAN YOUR INSTITUTION REDESIGN ITS STUDENT SUPPORTS TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS?

Driving Toward a Degree is a data-driven resource designed to help institutions pursue integrated student supports. Since 2016, data has been collected and analyzed via longitudinal primary research studies by Tyton Partners, with the support of the Bay View Analytics and in partnership with NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, Achieving the Dream (ATD), and the Reinvention Collaborative. Contact Tyton Partners ([drivetodegree@tytonpartners.com](mailto:drivetodegree@tytonpartners.com)) to take advantage of the Driving Toward a Degree initiative as a data-driven resource for improved student success through supports redesign. To learn more about our organization, visit [tytonpartners.com](http://tytonpartners.com).

We welcome the opportunity to help institutions and suppliers alike address the gaps in their policies, practices, and technological products, and to assess current capabilities and identify future needs. To learn more and access other research briefs in this series or prior year studies, visit [drivetodegree.org](http://drivetodegree.org)

We also invite you to share this series and your perspective on holistic student supports via the Twitter hashtag [#drivetodegree](https://twitter.com/drivetodegree).

This publication was created with feedback from the Advising Success Network (ASN). The ASN is a collection of five partner organizations working to transform higher education advising structures and systems to improve graduation rates and advance socioeconomic and racial equity. Led by NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, partners include The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (ASSCU), Achieving the Dream (ATD), EDUCAUSE, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, and The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. For more information about the ASN, please visit [advisingsuccessnetwork.org](http://advisingsuccessnetwork.org).

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