Appendix D

CSUS Case Study – Pulling It All Together

At California State University Sacramento, institutional researchers have worked closely with campus leaders to support student success. The following briefly describes recent work at Sacramento State.

1. In its current Strategic Plan the university established as its first priority “…a strategically focused, campus-wide effort to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates…” and a specific target of an increase (of five percentage points) over five years in its graduation rate for first-time freshmen (p. 5).

2. In order to provide research to support this crucial priority, researchers invested time and effort in building a comprehensive database with information on over ten freshman cohorts that would form the basis for future studies.

3. Sacramento State researchers provide reports that include trend analyses and peer comparisons. These reports not only present current retention and graduation rates, but more importantly put those numbers in context. By comparing the latest rates with those for previous years and other peer institutions, their initial reports served as a “wake-up call” to the campus.

4. As the faculty and staff became more aware and focused on helping students persist and graduate from college, they collaborated with campus researchers to investigate and identify the most problematic obstacles to student success. Statistical analyses identified several factors which had negative effects on retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, they zoomed in on the most at-risk group (students placed on academic probation at the end of their first semester) and defined the issue as a “bleeding spot.” As a result, a Retention Work Team has been working on a short-term campus-wide strategy to reduce the number of students on academic probation.

5. Together this research and subsequent discourse have been used to prioritize the allocation of university resources in order to improve student success.

This research has been summarized in a separate report and presented at the annual conference of the Association of Institutional Research. For readers who may be interested in further details, the report is provided in its original form on the following pages.