NextGenFirstGen©- Implementing a Cultural Shift and Institutional Change Resulting in Outcomes that Matter

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Abstract: Providing common language for systemic cultural change, branded as *Next Generation for First-Generation student success* (nextgenfirstgen.com), occurred through adoption of the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion (ODMI) by Saint Mary's College of California. The ODMI, developed by Moises Baron and Reuben Mitchell, provides a framework for generating policies and practices to assess and instigate organizational change. ODMI implementation involves a continuously evolving, dynamic strategy ensuring all college divisions are devoted to inclusive excellence. The High Potential Sphere of Success (HPSS)—a strengths-based leadership, retention, and success initiative partially funded by TRiO—embodies institutional dedication to first-generation and/or low-income students to demonstrate a culture of commencement as dynamic goal. Connecting student success to institutional mission through the ODMI has yielded outcomes positively impacting student retention and distinct pathways to graduation. Encouraging a balance of the ideals of collectivist cultures within an individualistic society constitutes a unique approach to cultivating student success. Strategies employed clearly identify how the College's mission/core principles formed the basis of interactions with stakeholders to influence buy-in of significant narrative change from deficit to strengths based perspective-taking. This paper outlines steps taken by HPSS leaders that can be generalized to any institution to activate positive change.

Context

Investigating strategies to identify and extract avenues for activating institutional change requires developing facility with theory-based transformative thinking and focused identification of outcomes. Uncovering existing partnerships to develop and infuse strengths-based resilience thinking (Caruna, 2014) into strategic planning and policy making requires both grass-roots and administrative commitment to positively impact institutional and student success. Combining existing constructs, mission ideals, and retention and graduation targets can shape the formula for lasting and positive transformation. The High Potential Sphere of Success (HPSS)—a strengths-based leadership, retention, and success initiative—embodies institutional dedication to first generation and/or low income students and demonstrates a culture of commencement as a goal in action (Sosa & Pascua Dea, 2015a). See Appendix A. HPSS was developed by the authors through intentional implementation of existing institutional directives and the college's mission combined with faculty/staff collaboration and funding from TRiO to create the foundation on which to launch the program's restructure. The result of this formula is the manifestation of the organization's mission through vigorous, evidence-based, logistically-structured change. In addition, the framework for the next generation of working with first-generation and/or low-income students has been established (Sosa & Pascua Dea, 2015b).

Many institutions are mired in redundant narratives centered on increasing diversity and how those increases might impact student and institutional success. Some institutions work to implement processes aimed at positively impacting campus ecology in order to improve student achievement (Dey, Ott, Antonaros, Barnhardt, & Holsapple, 2010; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). However, constant discourse around how to prompt increases in compositional diversity often result in resurrection of antiquated and often siloed approaches that are confusing and do not promote agency among students. This paper focuses on how incorporating a common language to induce systemic cultural change through adoption of the

Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion (ODMI) (Barón & Mitchell, 1998) provided the framework for HPSS to lead in launching institutional change to positively impact achievement for first generation and low-income students. See Appendix B.

Mission

Opportunity to instigate positive institutional change arose out of the urgency to actively live the mission of the college. Thus, creating a paradigm shift to expand and update a legacy program in concert occurred by coordinating unique partnerships. The HPSS is committed to creating a critical mass of New Majority, *at promise* (Hiss & Franks, 2014; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) students ready for the global workplace and society. *At promise* is terminology in place to eradicate the negative and deficit-based connotation associated with "at risk" and instead, creates a narrative of potential and strengths. The college's social justice mission poised the institution to lead in the area of equitable access and commitment to a liberal education for all. Exploring and dissecting the institutional mission, focusing on positive characteristics of first-generation and low-income students (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007), and encouraging student narratives to foster achievement (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014), has set the stage for refocusing the legacy program featured in this work. Featuring first-generation and low-income student narratives and characteristics as the pathway to retention, improved performance, and graduation has prompted this change in its signature college retention and success initiative. The historical context of elitism in higher education (Gieger, 2015) and who *should* have access to higher education initiates the process of understanding the trepidacious pathways formed that included significant barriers to education for low-income and first-generation students (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007; Tinto, 1982). Forming programming that is directly parallel to institutional mission and requiring the institution uphold that mission provides the impetus for transformation.

Historical Context

Narratives designed to increase diversity on college campuses have been circulating for decades. When considering that American higher education was initially designed for military training in the 1700's (Gieger, 2015; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2010) and later, to provide a home away from home for affluent white Christian males in the1800's (Gieger, 2015), it seems the institution has come a very long way towards generating a diverse environment. However, the most dynamic modifications have occurred in the last 40 years. The G.I. Bill (Greenberg, 1997) and desegregation as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (General Records of the United States Government, 1776-2006) initiated some changes resulting in diversity prior to that time, though sustained attention to positive increases in campus diversity with supports to preserve the influx of women, people of color, first generation students, and all populations began in the early 1990's (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Further, modifications to institutional mission statements to include valuing and naming the importance of diversity as an institutional goal began to take shape and become the standard for most colleges after opposition to affirmative action in higher education began to take shape in the courts (Schuh et al., 2010). The landmark case, Grutter v Bollinger (2003), paved the way for colleges to institute policies that would circumvent challenges to race-based admissions policies, which resulted in many institutions including diversity statements and diversity plans as part of their strategic initiatives.

Backlash from college admissions initiatives and policies designed to create a more inclusive environment resulted in legal actions at the state level like Proposition 209 in California (1996). In some cases, challenges to race-based admissions policies prompted institutions to review their mission and vision statements to bypass law and policy and create opportunities for institutional diversification of the student body. However, enrollment for Blacks in particular decreased largely as a result of the laws enacted to negate the advances made while affirmative action in admissions was the law (Colburn, Young, & Yellen, 2008; Morris, 2014).

Still, the question remains, even if statements endorsing the importance of diversity exist in the college mission or strategic plans, are they being employed by college administrators and faculty to demand policies that positively impact student success for first-generation, low-income, and all marginalized populations? If college personnel examine their institution's demonstrated actions over time, overwhelmingly institutions exhibit the mission and any diversity plan for accreditation and marketing. However, students recognize very quickly that the brochures flaunting diverse groups are mythical displays of an ideal, rather than a reality.

External Motivating Factors

Human behavior is often guided and activated by external factors, and intrinsic elements to drive change are often the most difficult to launch. The same can be true for organizations, whereby the status quo, if generating results, can remain so long as no challenges to existing practices occur. In fact, organizational leaders may reject alterations to practice out of fear or concern over damaging existing relationships with donors and consumers, or be concerned over other intangibles that change can bring about (Cramer, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Sirkin, Keenan, & Jackson, 2005). Thus, external motivations are often at play when change occurs, and that holds true for colleges.

For example, while in some extraordinary circumstances Black students were admitted to non-Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (see Gieger, 2015; Schuh et al., 2010), it was not until the brave leaders who worked for civil rights demanded desegregation that reluctant and deadly modifications to admissions policies in higher education began to take shape (Eckel & King, 2004; Gieger, 2015). Though Jim Crow and non-adherence to laws that would have allowed for educational access were the rule, it left most without an education. The same type of marginalization continues to occur for first-generation and low-income students as well as for other underrepresented racial and ethnic groups; though the increase in educational access continues, attainment does not match those increases, leaving large gaps between underrepresented student success and graduation (Kim, 2011). Further, community colleges and baccalaureate institutions alike refrain from implementing broad-based services to support these students, leaving many to leave college without a degree and with significant debt (Kezar, 2011; Rosenbaum, Person, & Deil-Amen, 2006).

Other motivating factors that stimulate change in higher education include accreditation recommendations after site reviews occur, student-led protests (see Inside Higher Education, 2016), and in some cases, faculty and staff—usually in concert with student leaders—who demand the institution address disparities and continued disenrollment of Black and Brown students. Arguably, external factors are necessary to instigate change, and those external factors must begin with someone at the institution paying attention to what is happening externally, and then incorporating the changes necessary to hold the institution to its stated mission.

Cultural Shift and Narrative Change

Over the years, the program to be presented in this paper had garnered many champions and many skeptics. For some time, it had been evident to faculty and administrators that the program needed to be altered, restructured, and perhaps even dismantled and renamed; at the very least it had to demonstrate outcomes beyond positive first to second year retention rates. The program, which started in 1973, had been modeled on initial U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs (see http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html) designed to increase diversity by granting college admission to students who had grade point averages below what the college required; students were non-regularly admitted or provisionally admitted. The goal of the Saint Mary's program at the time was to provide a summer "bridge" program designed to introduce students to the college environment.

"Summer bridge" programs generally familiarize students to the academic rigor required, the study methods needed, the difficulties of living in the residence halls, and to the challenges associated with college attendance for all students, but particularly for those who might have attended underresourced high schools (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Saenz et al., 2007). The Saint Mary's College summer program was structured, had institutional commitment, included a peer mentoring program and faculty interaction through abbreviated course instruction, and resulted in a group of students who were, at least psychosocially, ready to start college. However, there were complications that negatively impacted the program. After conditional acceptance was removed and the college began regularly admitting first-generation and low-income students to the college, the participation was primarily voluntary, and the required peer mentoring and directed faculty involvement ceased after the bridge program ended in the summer. These factors, among others, hindered positive outcomes. Though strong relationships were fostered between students and staff who worked tirelessly to support them, the institutional commitment necessary to sustain a structured program demonstrating consistently positive retention, performance, and graduation rates for this student population was simply not present.

Initial transformations to this signature retention and student success program began in 2013 and included increasing targeted faculty involvement, transforming the Summer Bridge (SBP) Program into the Summer Academic Institute for Leaders and Scholars (SAILS), expanding and requiring peer mentoring beyond SAILS and into subsequent years, and creating ongoing leadership development opportunities for all participants.

The idea that resiliency and grit can supersede other factors to attain success and persevere to graduation is tantamount to the experience of many first-generation and low-income students who rely on these factors to gain access to and matriculate in institutions of higher education (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Duckworth et al., 2007). By instigating program transformation through resilience thinking (Caruna, 2014; Duckworth & Gross, 2014), strengths-based perspectives (Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013; Saleebey, 1996), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), stereotype threat theory (Steele, 2010), and attention to *imposter syndrome* (Vera, Vasquez, & Corona, 2006), program co-directors and staff could demonstrate how students have an active role in their own success, and how the institution's role is to foster connection and independence (Kezar, 2011; Tinto, 1982, 1993) through positive, asset-based action, narrative change, and advocacy.

Framework

One of the first steps in orienting the work of the campus studied here was for administration to provide a common language (narrative) for cultural change in the adoption of the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion (ODMI) (Barón & Mitchell, 1998). The college committed to the implementation of the ODMI as a foundation for a continuously evolving and dynamic plan to ensure that the college is devoted to inclusive excellence. The ODMI was developed by diversity consultants Moises Barón and Reuben Mitchell (1998), and provides a framework for identifying an institution's level of inclusion on a continuum that begins with *Exclusion* and moves toward inclusion with *Symbolic* and *Prescribed* inclusion as movements toward *Inclusion*. The ODMI consists of four levels of descriptors on a continuum to move an organization from externally motivated factors to internally motivated factors in order to implement institutional change. Thus, resulting in targeted and effective efforts that demonstrate outcomes leading to inclusive excellence. Specifically, the ODMI allows for a review of the institution's policies and practices while assessing and implementing organizational changes that support inclusive excellence and institutional transformation at all levels.

HPSS is the model for the process of integrating external motivating factors, the ODMI, and best practices in higher education to impact institutional change. Encouraging a balance of the ideals of collectivist cultures within an individualistic society constitutes a unique approach to cultivating student success. Freedom and independence are certainly critical to student achievement and are valued in the program and at the college. Yet, a robust narrative built on collectivist values of harmony, team building, altruism, social justice, and working together to attain academic and psychosocial goals is also foundational to creating lasting connections leading to graduation. Recognition of collectivist narratives can break down feelings of inadequacy, racial battle fatigue (Franklin, Smith, & Hung, 2014), and resistance to microaggressions that negatively impact first-generation and low-income students (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2008). These varied yet interrelated tenets are fostered and provide the configuration for HPSS. Clearly identifying how the college's mission and core principles needed to be integrated into each component of the program formed the basis of every interaction with all stakeholders and influence buy-in of this significant narrative change from deficit to strengths-based thinking. Rendón (2006) highlighted how validating the experience of underrepresented students can positively impact how students see themselves and provide the motivation and drive to self-actualize. By transforming philosophies to place first-generation and low-income students in a category of *potency* rather than *need*, stakeholders may be activated to see possibility and potential for positive outcomes.

Action Plan

In 2013, the newly hired director of the program was partnered with a faculty co-director in an effort to begin the rebranding and transformation of the program. This step commenced the necessary narrative change described above. This change has moved the program from its place as a "beloved" platform designed to "help" a deficient group attain academic opportunities to its rightful place as a premier academic and leadership initiative featuring strengths-based leadership, personal and professional exploration, and promotion of collectivist narratives designed to engage participants and foster academic and psychosocial interdependence.

Updating Antiquated Student Dynamics

Too often, stereotypes and obsolete paradigms that portray first-generation and/or low-income students as needing the "help" of the wise patriarchal figures (in this case, the institution's faculty, staff, and administrators) in order to succeed actually serve to negate any progress made when students are accepted to college and are the first to represent their families and perhaps their communities to attend college (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Saenz et al., 2007).

HPSS advances academic excellence and leadership development by focusing on student strengths (Saleebey, 1996, 2009; Schmidt, Piontkowski, Raque-Bogdan, & Schaefer Ziemer, 2014) and resiliency (Duckworth & Gross, 2014) to develop intercultural understanding and communication skills necessary to function effectively in a global economy and society. Faculty and staff offer a broad range of academic and community-building interactions based on high impact practices (Kuh, 2008) so core academic experiences are reinforced through commitment to inclusivity and social justice advocacy. This approach, supported by the institutional mission and the ODMI, serves to revolutionize retention and graduation of first-generation and low-income students.

HPSS transformations represent a paradigm shift from the traditional approach of serving first-generation students by keeping them tied academically and socially to their racial or ethnic peer group to a progressive approach that creates inclusive excellence. Targeted faculty, staff, and peer mentor interaction beginning in the Summer Academic and Leadership Institute (SAILS), academic supports, financial literacy, and directed career exploration geared towards sustaining a racially and culturally diverse critical mass of high-achieving student leaders round out HPSS. And the program, while just implemented in 2015, is demonstrating early outcomes indicating the changes being implemented will be effective. Retention of peer mentors to the program from fall 2014 to fall 2015 increased from years past, as did applications for becoming an HPSS peer mentor—by 50%. Peer mentor evaluations from 2014-15 highlighted their observance of the positive changes in the program and that its categorization as a leadership initiative caused them to return and apply. In addition, projected graduation rates of the HPSS student population are tangible in that best practices on which HPSS is based have demonstrated results, as has the Oakland University Trustee Academic Success program (OUTAS) over the last 20 years (Sosa, 2009) on which HPSS is based. A less initially tangible measure is the way students, faculty, and staff articulate information about first-generation and low-income students. Public documents, speeches by administration, and the new strategic plan mention strengths of first-generation and low-income students. Deficit-based exchanges have shifted to become more about students' strengths and resiliency to overcome and achieve through the characteristics they possess upon entering college and continue to hone through HPSS (Schmidt et al., 2014), demonstrating a new outlook that can certainly translate into well-being and belongingness. That the program is explicitly grounded in theory and best practices has transformed skeptics and those who would show concern over changing the program so profoundly. Finally, institutional commitment of financial and human resources over the long term is an outcome of the way the program has been structured.

Updating Antiquated Engagement

Rosenbaum et al. (2006) characterized structured supports and direct, accurate information-giving as crucial to student success. Rosenbaum and his colleagues outlined areas after admission that an institution could focus on to support students through to graduation. Those areas included directly defined developmental education devoid of stigma, intrusive (Abelman & Molina, 2001) and strengths-based (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005) advising, and specific career pathways tiered to reflect the goals and input of the student. Rosenbaum et al.'s (2006) work negated the idea that an institution and its agents must replicate services to support first generation students. Instead, connecting students to existing resources fosters independence and a sense of maturity the student can use to benefit psychosocial, academic, and personal growth while developing agency (Astin, 1997; Dey et al., 2010; Freire, 1970). The key aspect to this shift, and the foci on student strengths and their resilience (Caruna, 2014) form the foundation of the redesigned program discussed in this work.

Cultural Shift in Action: Mission, History, and Context Combined

Implementation of institutional directives resulting in faculty/staff collaboration is the unique cornerstone of the restructure of the program model outlined here that embodies the college mission through active organizational change. Uncovering existing partnerships and allies who can work together to develop and infuse strengths-based resilience thinking (Caruna, 2014) into strategic planning is a primary tenet of this process. Partnerships have been fostered at the institution to promote positive characteristics of first generation and/or low-income students. In addition, HPSS staff use the opportunity to foster a sense of understanding among faculty, staff, and students that the program is a model that could benefit not only first-generation and low-income students, but all students through understanding the benefits of inclusion in the context of personal resiliency and its relationship to perseverance, cultural self-awareness, and persistence to graduation.

HPSS: High Impact Practices Generating Outcomes that Matter

High Potential Sphere of Success (HPSS) (see Appendix A) is organized into six vectors that parallel student development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Initiative components are designed to foster full participation in the curricular and co-curricular life of the institution and help students take advantage of available academic and psychosocial support structures. HPSS draws out personal assets that first generation and/or low-income students bring to the institution and capitalize on those strengths to promote self-efficacy and decrease stereotype threat (Steele, 2010). Increasing self-efficacy and decreasing stereotype threat can positively affect persistence, academic performance, and graduation (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Saenz et al, 2007).

Grounded in evidence-based practices that highlight student development theory, vectors are designed to meet students where they are and to increase their motivation and capitalize on their innate resilience. In addition, coordinated programs and support services that already exist on campus, as opposed to isolated and underresourced replications, provide students with the most direct possible pathway toward graduation. HPSS components represent interventions first-generation and low-income students benefit from the most, and which are highlighted in the literature to demonstrate success and persistence to graduation among this population (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Saenz et al, 2007). HPSS's operating principle is to begin with the end in mind and contemplate solution-oriented interventions to enhance student success. The end, of course, is degree attainment, achieved as a result of campus-wide interventions that ensure HPSS students will establish a strong foundation through participation. Organizing the components as a Sphere of Success presents a comprehensive, directed, holistic initiative.

The Sphere of Success

HPSS vectors are designed to directly address student retention, academic standing, and persistence to graduation. Each vector corresponds roughly to a specific year, and interventions are made where developmentally appropriate. Each vector draws on newly developed as well as existing services to tailor evidence-based interventions to enhance each HPSS participant's success and meet program objectives and make short-, intermediate-, and long-term impact (see Appendix A). Full implementation of the Sphere Vectors began with the HPSS Peer Mentor application and selection process in March, 2016; the 50% increase in applications to be a part of the HPSS Peer Mentor program demonstrates an initial outcome of program changes.

Vector 1: Resilience and Sustainability

Vector 1 includes four-year financial aid packaging, early financial aid review, financial literacy training, early course registration and family outreach. In this instance, the institution has also made a substantial financial commitment that parallels the stated mission to support first generation and low-income students. If HPSS participants maintain good academic standing, students will benefit from early course registration. By enrolling in their first choice of courses, students and their advisors create a balanced academic schedule that allows more study time and time to participate in co-curricular activities to increase student engagement and sense of belonging (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Family involvement is key to sustainable success for the participants. Therefore, parents/guardians and families will be connected to HPSS from the beginning through family outreach, which will include mailings, an online community, events and celebrations.

Vector 2: Psychosocial Development and Engagement

HPSS students are required to meet bi-weekly with a dedicated Peer Mentor (PM) in years one and two, and also in year three if the student is struggling academically or psychosocially. Students will also be required to meet with an assigned Graduate Counseling Intern (GCI) twice per month in year one, and once per month in year two. Students may continue to meet with a GCI beyond year two if they request to do so or if the student has not met requirements of the program: maintaining good academic standing, academic progress toward graduation by passing courses, meeting with a dedicated Peer Mentor, and participation in Sphere of Success components as prescribed.

HPSS students also have an assigned academic advisor to ensure they are following their academic plan. Participants engage in cultural activities each semester to broaden environmental exposure to history, the arts and other cultures. In years three and four, HPSS students who maintain above a 2.5 GPA and who have met all other HPSS requirements may apply for residence in a living-learning community and will receive preferential housing.

Vector 3: Academic Resources and Technology

Block scheduling (Rosenbaum et al., 2006) of HPSS students will include placing students together in math, English, science, and first year experience (Kuh, 2008) courses in years one and two to support learning communities and connection to each other and to the institution. Tutoring is required; PMs will expose HPSS students to campus resources that provide tutoring services. Students who enter the college with SATs and ACTs scores that fall below thresholds established by the English and Math Departments will be required to attend supplemental instruction to support academic success in those courses. Students will be exposed to navigating library resources by library staff in their first year course as well as through an assigned relationship with a subject-specialist librarian who will be their contact for all four years of their college career. That librarian will provide individual assistance and tutoring in information research and analysis skills. PMs will be required to take their mentees to technology support workshops to ensure students have mastered software necessary to succeed in college. A creation of an online community through the College's learning management platform includes resources, announcements, events, and a chat space for participants to get to know one another and other HPSS-eligible upper division students.

Vector 4: Leadership Development

Summer Academic Institute for Leaders and Scholars (SAILS) imposes leadership development before students attend their first semester. Summer bridge initiatives have long demonstrated success in connecting students to their new academic home. More than 30 years of research highlight the positive outcomes of such initiatives (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Saenz et al., 2007). SAILS is designed to motivate students to surface their inner fortitude and resiliency to thrive in the college environment. The key to SAILS is to involve all aspects of the campus community to familiarize HPSS students to the many resources on campus, and to connect them with staff and faculty who are available for support. Residential Experience, tutoring centers, Student Life, New Student and Family Programs, Counseling and Psychological Services, and the Intercultural Center contribute to aspects of SAILS, fostering ties to engage students at multiple levels and to create personal and academic links students can rely on while at the College. GCIs and PMs participate in SAILS to provide additional student support. PMs are adequately trained through monthly training sessions including an extensive session with an external consultant, an initial retreat and a week-long training period. PMs receive ongoing training and development throughout their tenure as well as 1:1 feedback and review.

In year one, HPSS students participate in a first-year experience course taught by faculty. The year-long course is designed to continue the connections made during SAILS, present workshops and resource information, and most importantly, keep a student-faculty connection initiated during SAILS. Students also participate in a series of residence hall-based, student-led intergroup dialogue sessions in year one, which continues the process of self-awareness en route to developing leadership skills to enhance the student experience and student success. Leadership involvement endures in years three and four through student participation in student organizations; HPSS students represent a critical mass of low-income and/or first-generation students who have a unique opportunity to generate and maintain diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the campus community.

The Sphere of Success is holistic, and community engagement is featured throughout the program and the four-year student life cycle. HPSS students are required to participate in a curricular or co-curricular service opportunities at least twice per year. Students begin by engaging with the campus community through SAILS. Then, they move beyond the campus through curricular and co-curricular service activities such as a community-based service days or intensive community engagement courses coordinated by faculty.

Vector 5: Research and Scholarship

In years three and four, the HPSS Director collaborates with faculty to encourage HPSS participants to engage in faculty-student research. Undergraduate research via independent study, summer research, and within courses takes place. HPSS students have the opportunity to work on HPSS research with the Faculty Co-Director who mentors students to investigate best practices in higher education and prepare articles and presentations for local, regional, and national conferences and journals. The HPSS Director draws on this network to promote participant engagement in all of these research opportunities. These experiences prepare HPSS participants—soon to be HPSS alumni—to compete at a high level for post-baccalaureate graduate study and/or employment.

The *HPSS Narrative Project* is a partnership with Graduate Instructors from the college's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. It is designed to cultivate low-income and/or first generation student dignity and honor in sharing their personal stories of resilience and triumph along with the challenges and barriers faced as they worked toward attaining access to college. The Narrative Project begins with students journaling and writing creative stories about their lives, and result in an annual reading and publication addressing student experiences throughout their paths before, during, and beyond the college experience. HPSS staff request that excerpts from the narratives be included in college publications to inform the campus community about the progress of the HPSS initiative and provide a vehicle for HPSS participants to publish their work. The Narrative Project is directly supported by Stephens et al.'s, (2014) difference-education intervention.

Academic monitoring of all participants in years one through four and midterm grade reports are required from all faculty who work with HPSS students so academic support can be immediately put into place. Interventions to support student achievement such as tutoring, connection to the Writing Center, and to math and science supports are required for HPSS students based on academic performance and ascribed individual needs. PMs are required to sustain “study tables” whereby meetings are held with other mentors and their mentees in the Library, thus developing a group study process. Creating an atmosphere of academic passion and consistent attention to studying as a community activity will foster a mindset of academic dedication and determination to succeed. PMs are required to introduce students to writing coaches. Familiarization with students who work in areas of academic support fosters connection and sense of belonging that can positively impact student awareness around their academic needs without increasing stereotype threat (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Steele, 2010).

Vector 6: Career/Graduate Exploration

The ultimate goal of the HPSS initiative is to prepare students for the global workplace and society. In years three and four students are fully connected with the campus community and the HPSS staff serve as their touch point. Students are required to participate in workshops offered via the Career Center. These include resume reviews, exploration panels, workshops, and consultation on how best to approach potential employers, with specific attention placed on a student's academic and service profiles. Students will be required to attend job fairs and on-campus career events and panels throughout their time at the college to develop leadership and self-efficacy with respect to interacting with potential employers. Via connections to alumni as well as business and community leaders, opportunities for HPSS students are presented to gain internships and shadowing opportunities, providing hands-on experience in the workplace.

Third- and fourth-year participants are required to attend the college's Graduate and Professional School Fair. Students attend the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education, which provides workshops and testimonials from first generation graduates who have attained advanced degrees or career excellence. These motivational events can give students the impetus necessary to internalize that success is possible, and the road is not necessarily laden with insurmountable barriers.

Projected Outcomes

Cognitive outcomes include increasing student's positive academic strategies (e.g., positive attendance, completion of homework, decrease in number of students on probation after the first year), academic performance, retention and graduation. Non-cognitive outcomes include development of self-confidence, cultural capital, and a positive academic mindset resulting in a sense of belonging and community while increasing academic strengths and progress; determination to persist through barriers that arise; and psychosocial qualities and tactics to hone learning schemes (e.g., critical thinking, self-authorship, shared inquiry, interpersonal interaction). The framework presented integrates institutional mission, strengths-based and collectivist narratives, and higher education best practices and has the potential to result in significant increases in retention, graduation, and performance rates of low-income and first-generation students. This unique pathway to demand institutional change to align with institutional mission is just the beginning of a revolution designed to support the most vulnerable students who have the potential to truly diversify colleges. Access and retention initiatives have been modified to skirt the challenges to race-based admission policies, however retention beyond the second year has lagged behind for low-income and first-generation students. Implementation of targeted, comprehensive supports for all years coupled with assessment and institutional commitment can add the missing pieces to discovering if graduation rates can also increase. If higher education best practices backed by decades of research are actually implemented, true inclusion and academic success can follow. Table 1 summarizes these outcomes that matter.

Table 1: *Outcomes that matter.*

Systemic/Institution	Program	Staff/Faculty	Students
Diversity Inclusion Focus on strengths Living the mission Elimination of silos Institutional distinction	Campus-wide support Funding Signature program Data-driven decisions	Buy-in/commitment Collectivist perspective Partnerships Multicultural competence	*Cognitive* Academic strategies Academic performance Retention Graduation Employment/graduate school *Non-cognitive* Self-confidence Cultural capital Sense of belonging Scholar identity Leadership

Conclusion

In just 30 months, a dedicated, albeit small, team of professionals have succeeded in instigating positive and potentially long-lasting institutional narrative change. While the program is newly launched as of September, 2015, the emerging outcomes seem promising. Applying collectivist principles, higher education best practices, and capitalizing on the positive aspects of an existing program have strengthened a foundation for a future of increasing retention, performance, and graduation of first generation and low-income students. The magnitude and merit of the work over this short time has focused the administration to not only be on board, but to commit institutional dollars to support HPSS. In effect, there is evidence that, when aligning mission and core values to service implementation and best practices, the administration must act or consider crafting responses as to why it is not adhering to its own philosophies.

The processes outlined in this work signify the next generation of first-generation student success—in other words, combining *at promise* students with collectivist values and strengths based narratives can engender institutional support and student achievement. The single most significant outcome thus far is the commitment of the institution beyond the recently funded federal TRIO grant. HPSS is set to replicate one of the most successful programs nationally, the Oakland University Trustee Academic Success (OUTAS) program on which is it modeled; in fact, one of the authors of the TRiO grant served as co-creator of OUTAS, a program that has demonstrated over 20 years of increased retention, performance, and graduation of a diverse group of students (Sosa, 2009; https://wwwp.oakland.edu/cmi/OUTAS/).

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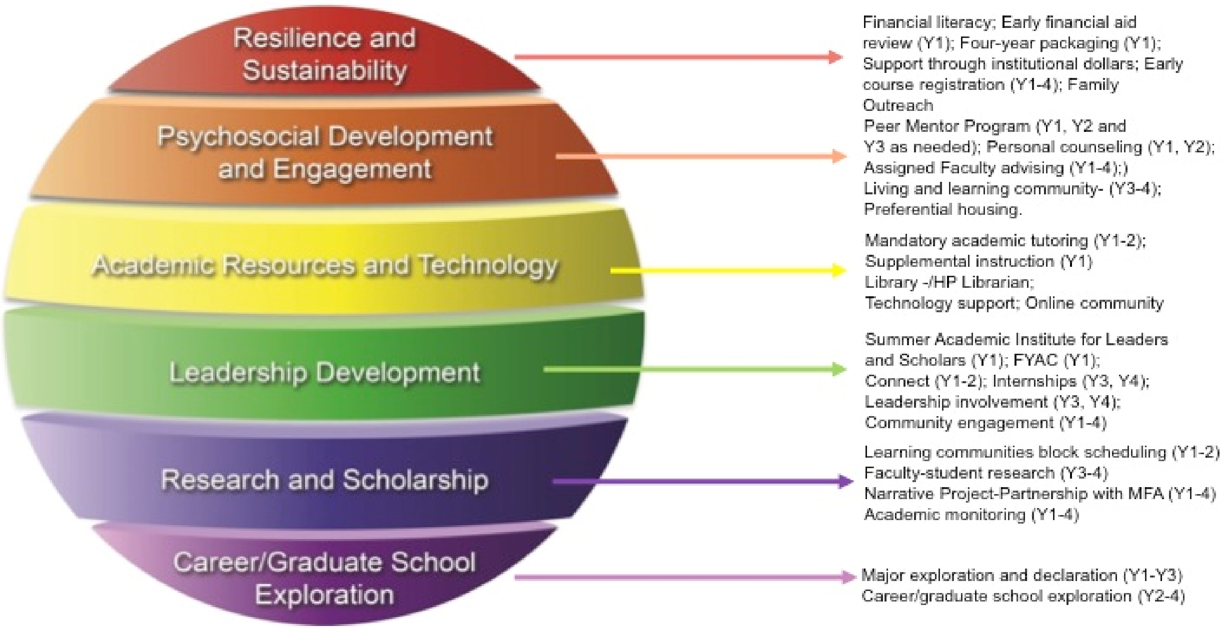
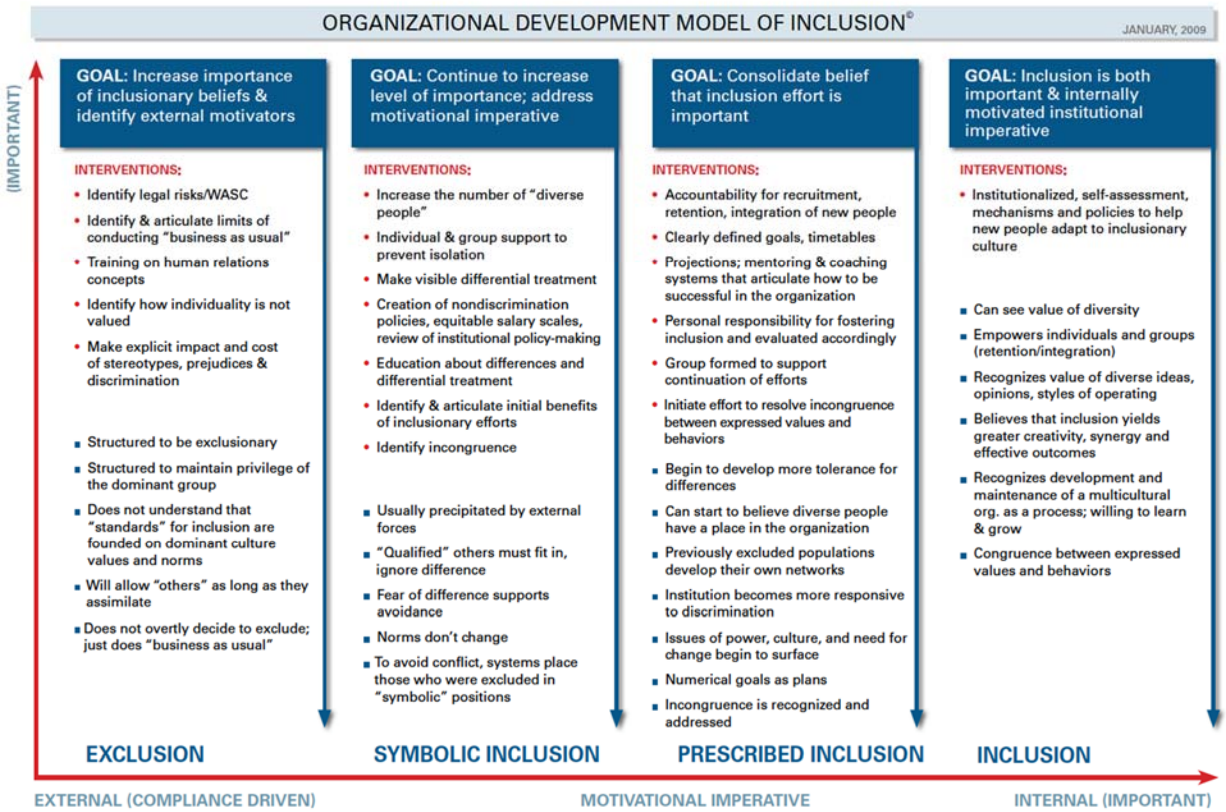
Appendix A: Sphere of Success



Appendix B: Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion



Appendix B: