

***STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER:
IMPACT EVALUATION***



Ohio Association of Community Colleges
Student Success Center

Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) exists to advocate for and provide resources to Ohio's 23 community colleges. The Student Success Center, funded by the Kresge Foundation, is a key initiative of the OACC. The Center promotes new and existing practices likely to assist students in achieving their educational objectives and offers a variety of resources to support Ohio's community colleges.

This report analyzes the results of an impact evaluation of the Student Success Center. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the extent to which the Student Success Center has affected individual participants and community colleges in Ohio since the program's inception in September 2012.

Staff from the Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE) at The Ohio State University conducted this evaluation on behalf of OACC in December 2014. With OACC's support, CETE sent survey invitations to 502 individuals from community colleges who had participated in Student Success Center events or had received support from the Center. Of these, 111 individuals responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 22%.

Most survey respondents (77%) accessed the Center through statewide and regional workshops or conferences. The large majority of these respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their experiences with the Center had exposed them to new resources that are helpful to their work (83%) and had connected them to people in their fields from other colleges (81%).

In terms of impact, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their involvement with the Student Success Center had positively impacted their work (83%) and their college departments (69%). Furthermore, 86% agreed or strongly agreed that the Student Success Center had supported community colleges' efforts to reform developmental education in Ohio. Overall, 83% recommended continuing Student Success Center activities beyond the end of its funding cycle in June 2015.

Data collected from the survey respondents support the contention that the Student Success Center has had a positive impact on both the individuals and the institutions that have been involved in Center activities. These data also reflect a high level of support among the respondents for the continuation of Student Success Center activities.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes results of an impact evaluation of the Student Success Center, which is a key initiative of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC). The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the extent to which the Student Success Center has impacted individual participants and community colleges in Ohio since the program's inception in September 2012. Staff from CETE at The Ohio State University conducted this evaluation on behalf of OACC in December 2014.

OACC exists to advocate for and provide resources to Ohio community colleges. It consists of 23 community colleges that collectively serve over 300,000 community college students throughout Ohio. The organization provides leadership to implement strategic initiatives, represents the community college community at the state and national levels, promotes the benefits of community colleges to Ohio residents, and facilitates the exchange of information and ideas.

OACC's Student Success Center is supported by a three-year grant from the Kresge Foundation, which concludes in June 2015. A primary purpose of the Center is to promote new and existing practices likely to assist students in achieving their educational objectives. Such objectives usually include completion of a certificate, degree, or transfer to another institution. The goals of the Student Success Center are threefold:

1. To support community colleges in their efforts to reform developmental education
2. To build institutional capacity for data-driven decision-making
3. To leverage evidence-based practices that have emerged from various initiatives undertaken by Ohio's community colleges

To achieve these goals, the Student Success Center is focused on connecting professionals throughout the state in the effort to develop what might be referred to as a "community of practice." Wing-Trayner (n.d.) defines a community of practice as a group of people who learn to do something better as a result of regular interaction. The Student Success Center supports regular interaction (i.e., college cross talks, focus groups at conferences, listserv, webinars and conference calls). This interaction is structured in a manner that allows members to support each other as they strive to meet the goals defined above.

The Center offers a variety of resources to assist Ohio's community colleges. It does so by supporting a host of statewide professional development and training opportunities. In addition, the Student Success Center awarded small grants to support individual faculty and staff accessing professional development opportunities. Finally, the Student Success Center has functioned to strengthen partnerships between local community colleges and a variety of partners.

Report Organization

The following report is divided into four sections. First, key evaluation questions of the impact survey are presented. Second, the method employed to collect and analyze these data is reviewed. Third, findings that emerged from these data are indicated. Finally, implications of these findings for the Student Success Center are discussed.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Utilizing a logic model that CETE staff had previously developed for the Student Success Center (see Attachment A), the following evaluation questions were created to explore the potential impact of the Student Success Center on its participants and community colleges in Ohio:

1. How did most Student Success Center participants interact with the Center?
2. To what extent did the Student Success Center impact the work of the participants?
3. To what extent did the Student Success Center impact the college departments of the participants?
4. To what extent did the Student Success Center impact community colleges in Ohio?
5. To what extent do Student Success Center participants and their college departments value the Center?
6. After the current funding cycle ends in June 2015, what should be the priorities of the Student Success Center going forward?

METHODOLOGY

In preparation for this study, CETE staff conducted personal interviews with faculty and staff from community colleges who had participated in Student Success Center activities. The purpose of these interviews was to identify topics and questions that could be utilized in surveying a larger audience of participants on the impact of the Student Success Center. OACC staff provided CETE with the names and contact information of potential interviewees. Using this information, CETE staff conducted 10 interviews between October 30 and November 17, 2014.

In these discussions, the interviewees identified the types of interactions they had with the Student Success Center. They also provided their opinions on how the Center had impacted them and their colleges as a whole. CETE staff used this information to craft an online survey instrument for conducting the impact study.

OACC staff provided the CETE evaluation team with 502 email addresses of potential survey respondents. These were individuals who had participated in Student Success Center activities since the Center's inception in 2012. On December 1, 2014, CETE staff invited these individuals to complete the impact survey. The survey remained open for 35 days and was closed on January 5, 2015.

Of the 502 Student Success Center participants who were invited to complete the survey, 111 did so. Among these, three indicated on the survey that they had no interaction with the Center; therefore, their responses were removed from the analysis. This resulted in 108 valid responses and a 22% response rate. As such, please note that conclusions drawn from the analysis in this report pertain to the 22% of Student Success Center participants who responded to this survey.

For this report, quantitative data collected from the survey's rating items have been analyzed to show both frequency distributions and average ratings. Tables illustrating frequency distributions are color coded to indicate the most frequently cited answer for each item. In addition, qualitative data generated from open-ended questions have been analyzed to identify common themes among the comments. Where applicable, select comments are provided verbatim in the report.

FINDINGS

Interactions with the Student Success Center

The Student Success Center has a number of methods for interacting with Ohio's community colleges to provide them support. These include regional conferences, targeted workshops at colleges, data coaching, and mini-grants. To better understand the survey respondents' connections to the Center, the survey prompted respondents to identify the types of interactions that they had had with the Center over the past 12 months. To do so, the survey presented respondents with a list of 10 of the most common types of interactions and instructed them to select all that applied to them.

As shown in Table 1, 77% of the respondents indicated that they had participated in statewide or regional workshops or conferences, which makes this the most common type of interaction with the Center among the respondents. All other types of interactions were cited by less than half of the respondents.

Table 1. Most frequently cited types of interactions with the Student Success Center among survey respondents over the past 12 months

Types of interactions with the Student Success Center	Frequency	Percent (N=108)
Participating in statewide/regional workshops or conferences	83	77%
Participating in webinars or phone conferences	46	43%
Participating in Student Success Center meetings at the Ohio Association for Community Colleges	38	35%
Contacting Student Success Center staff for guidance or assistance	32	30%
Participating in workshops or conferences at my college	29	27%
Applying for a mini-grant	20	19%
Implementing a mini-grant	16	15%
Other*	9	8%
Evaluating a mini-grant	8	7%
Working with a data coach	6	6%
Participating in data coaching sessions	5	5%

*Among those who indicated that they had other interactions with the Student Success Center, three described these as being opportunities to present at Center conferences and workshops.

As a follow-up, the survey prompted respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements regarding the quality of their experiences with the Student Success Center. Using a Likert scale format, most (83%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Student Success Center had exposed them to new resources that are helpful to their work. A similar proportion (81%) also agreed or strongly agreed that the Center had connected them to people in their fields from other colleges. These results are summarized in Table 2. Note that the shading indicates the most frequently cited response for each item.

Table 2: Number of responses and average ratings regarding the quality of respondents' experiences with the Student Success Center

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
The Student Success Center exposed me to new resources that are helpful to my work.	7 7%	1 1%	10 9%	46 43%	42 40%	4.08	106
The Student Success Center connected me to people in my field from other colleges.	5 5%	7 7%	8 8%	38 36%	47 45%	4.10	105
The Student Success Center has been responsive to my professional needs.	6 6%	3 3%	25 24%	36 34%	36 34%	3.88	106

*SD = *Strongly Disagree*; D = *Disagree*; N = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*; A = *Agree*; SA = *Strongly Agree*

Impact of the Student Success Center

To explore the impact of the Student Success Center, the survey prompted respondents to provide feedback on the Center's impact on Ohio's community colleges at the individual level, the department level, and the state level. In addition, the survey solicited feedback on the impact of the Student Success Center's mini-grants from those whose colleges had received them.

Impact on Respondents

The survey prompted respondents to rate how their involvement with the Student Success Center had impacted their work. Most respondents (83%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their involvement with the Center resulted in a positive impact on their work. These results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of responses and average ratings regarding the impact of the Student Success Center on respondents' work

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
My involvement with the Student Success Center has had a positive impact on the work that I do.	3 3%	5 5%	10 10%	47 46%	38 37%	4.09	103

*SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The survey provided respondents an opportunity to describe how the Student Success Center had impacted their work. Table 4 summarizes the most frequently cited comments by theme.

Table 4: Common themes from comments describing the Student Success Center's Impact on respondents' work

Common Themes
The Student Success Center helped me make contact with people at other colleges across the State.
The Student Success Center provided insight into what other people and/or colleges are doing.
The Student Success Center encouraged me to try different ideas in my classroom/college.
The Student Success Center helped me understand how to use data in my decision making.

The following are notable comments that respondents offered for this item:

- *The [Student Success Center] has connected me with colleagues around the state who do similar work. It has provided the opportunity for collaboration beyond the walls of my institution.*
- *I have learned about many best practices from other colleges and that has been the most helpful. When attending a conference the best part about it is talking to*

other representatives from other colleges and find[ing] out what is working well for them.

- *I've worked with colleagues around the state and shared ideas. That is always greatly impactful.*
- *The Student Success Center has given me the opportunity to meet with colleagues from across the state, share learning strategies and techniques, discuss state initiatives, and stay more current in developmental education. Without the Center, we faculty are like separate "islands," existing on our individual campuses but with no state collegiality to strengthen or support our efforts to best meet the needs of our students. We need the Student Success Center as a very important, cohesive, professional hub/resource for higher education here in Ohio.*

Impact on Respondents' College Departments

The survey prompted respondents to rate how their involvement with the Student Success Center had impacted their college departments. Most respondents (69%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their involvement with the Center had positively impacted their college departments. These results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Number of responses and average ratings regarding the Student Success Center's impact on respondents' college departments

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
My involvement with the Student Success Center has had a positive impact on my college department.	3 3%	5 5%	24 23%	44 43%	27 26%	3.84	103

*SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The survey provided respondents the opportunity to describe how the Student Success Center has impacted their community colleges. Table 6 summarizes the most frequently cited comments by theme.

Table 6: Common themes from comments describing the Student Success Center’s impact on respondents’ college departments

Common Themes
The Student Success Center provided us with knowledge to help re-design classes.
The Student Success Center introduced us to new programs.
The Student Success Center gave us information on “best practices.”
The Student Success Center connected us to other programs across the state.

The following are notable comments that respondents offered for this item:

- *The Center has encouraged me and my colleagues to try different classroom teaching techniques to help my students.*
- *We continue to refine our redesigns of developmental education to accelerate student to college level work, and the Success Center webinars and workshops informed this work. We have also benefitted from the work on contextualization and strengthening our GED partnerships.*
- *The [Student Success Center] has promoted conversations about retention and student success and has provided new ideas about acceleration that we have been able to adapt/adopt.*
- *My college is now in contact with many other colleges and their faculty, enabling us to share ideas. The conferences on student writing, collaborative learning, ALP, etc., have given us many, many new pedagogies that my colleagues and I have directly implemented in our classrooms. We love the Student Success Center.*

Statewide Impact

The survey prompted respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements regarding the Student Success Center’s impact on community colleges throughout the state. Most respondents (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Student Success Center had supported community colleges’ efforts to reform developmental education in Ohio. Most (69%) also agreed or strongly agreed that the Center had been successful in leveraging evidence-based practices that have emerged

from community college initiatives. When considering whether the Student Success Center had built institutional capacity in community colleges for data-based decision-making, a majority (55%) of those who provided responses agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. These data are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Number of responses and average ratings regarding the Student Success Center’s impact on Ohio’s community colleges

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
The Student Success Center has supported community colleges in their efforts to reform developmental education.	4 4%	1 1%	9 9%	46 47%	38 39%	4.15	98
The Student Success Center has built institutional capacity in community colleges for data-driven decision making.	4 4%	5 5%	35 36%	37 38%	17 17%	3.59	98
The Student Success Center has leveraged evidence-based practices that have emerged from various initiatives undertaken by Ohio's community colleges.	3 3%	4 4%	23 24%	43 44%	24 25%	3.84	97

*SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The survey prompted respondents to consider what they would do to increase the Center’s impact on student success in community colleges throughout the state. The following are notable comments that respondents offered for this item:

- *We might use the collective nature of the institutions to leverage vendor agreements that might reduce larger costs (when possible) for expensive services or software. Also, if resources were available, following up with regional groups after a central symposium might be effective for continued discussion, especially after attempted implementation. Finally, it might be useful, especially when considering faculty development, to be more in tune with the academic schedules and providing training when faculty are more available.*
- *Perhaps hold more meetings regionally so that wider attendance from institutions within the region could be realized. However, I realize that if you bring in a*

speaker, it is hard to pay the speaker to travel to 4-5 regions vs. inviting 2 or 3 representatives from each region to come to Columbus.

- *One solution might be to create a database where colleges can submit their success and retention data.*
- *I would have a representative of OACC meet individually with the deans in charge of Dev. Ed. at each college and provide a summary of what the Center has done and is doing. Then listen to what they think are the issues and see if any common threads can be drawn and then be addressed.*

Impact of Mini-grants¹

The survey also explored the impact that Student Success Center's mini-grants have had on the community college departments that received them. Since the spring of 2014, the Center has issued 18 mini-grant awards of \$500 each to support professional development efforts that addressed the specific needs of individual colleges.

To collect data on the impact of these mini-grants, the survey first identified the respondents who were associated with the community colleges that had received this funding. It did so by asking the respondents to indicate whether their college had received a mini-grant. The results are shown in Figure 1.

¹ In addition to the data collected for this survey, note that OACC staff administered an earlier survey to explore the impact of mini-grants on community colleges (2014). Fourteen individuals from institutions that received mini-grants responded to this survey between June 2014 and January 2015. Most (79%) rated the mini-grants funds as being *extremely valuable* to their colleges. In addition, all respondents indicated that they would be interested in applying for additional mini-grants in the future. Overall, these data provide some evidence to suggest that the mini-grants were well perceived by the 14 individuals who responded to the survey.

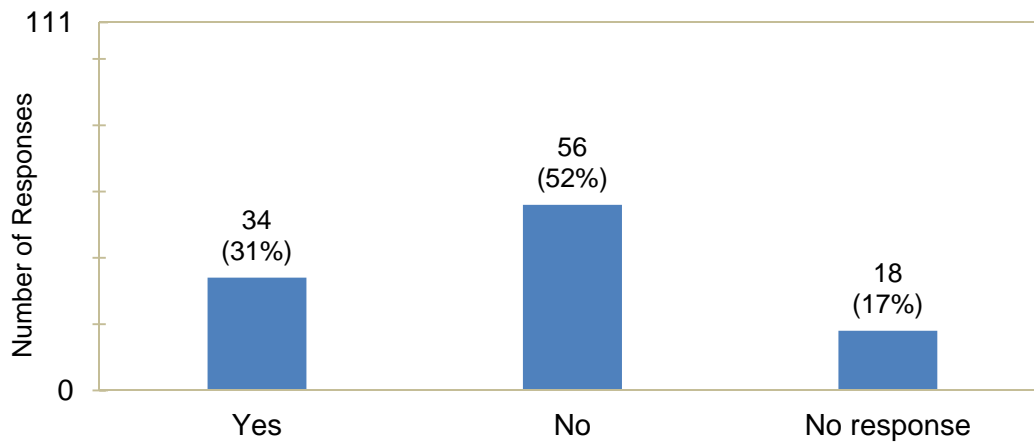


Figure 1: Number of survey respondents whose colleges received a mini-grant from the Student Success Center

For the 34 respondents identified as being associated with colleges that received mini-grants, the survey presented them with a unique rating item that the other survey respondents did not see. This item prompted them to rate the extent to which they agreed that the mini-grants had had a positive impact on their college departments. Nearly all of the respondents (91%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this assertion. These results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Number of responses and average ratings regarding the impact of mini-grants on respondents' college departments

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
The mini-grant from the Student Success Center has had a positive impact on my college department.	-	-	3 9%	14 41%	17 50%	4.41	34

*SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The survey provided respondents the opportunity to describe how the Center's mini-grants had impacted their college departments. While most comments described the specific resources that the grants had provided, a few respondents did articulate the grants overall impact on their college departments. These comments include the following:

- ... [The mini-grant] served to strengthen the assessment process and clarify common goals and standards for writing projects.
- Allowed me to share training I had received at a conference with other colleagues in a very cost effective manner.
- The grant helped us develop a stronger relationship with adjunct faculty.

Perceived Value of the Student Success Center

In addition to collecting information on the impact of the Student Success Center, the survey also collected data on the perceived value of the Center. Specifically, the survey prompted respondents to indicate how much they valued the Center and how much they believed their college departments valued the Center.

As shown in Table 9, respondents expressed high agreement with both statements. However, as reflected in the average scores, respondents were slightly more positive about their own perceptions of the Center (4.38) than they attributed to their college departments (3.97).

Table 9: Number of responses and average ratings on the perceived value of the Student Success Center among respondents and their colleges

Rating Items	Rating Scale*					Average	Responses
	SD (1)	D	N	A	SA (5)		
I value the work of the Student Success Center	3 3%	-	6 6%	39 38%	54 53%	4.38	102
My college department values the work of the Student Success Center	4 4%	1 1%	21 21%	44 43%	32 31%	3.97	102

*SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The survey prompted respondents to consider what could be done to increase the perceived value of the Students Success Center among community colleges. The following are notable comments that respondents offered for this item:

- I believe the professional development opportunities provided by the Student Success Center have been exceptional and have played a significant role in

helping the community colleges to advance the student success agenda. The work of the Student Success needs to continue to maintain the current momentum and to support future progress.

- *The excellent, high quality trainings are very beneficial, but I wish they got more PR.*
- *Continue to tie together the completion plan with conferences to share what people are doing on their completion plan.*
- *Pushing a statewide agenda for student success. Statewide agreements (requirements) on placement test, cut score, maybe even student information system and common course numbering systems. Statewide understanding of career pathways (what they are and how and when students opt into them).*
- *One thing that would REALLY be helpful is if notifications went to FACULTY in addition to the Dean's. I recently learned that this is where the emails were going and I only found out about some seminars by chance. Info did not come directly to me from the center.*

PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD

The survey informed respondents that the Kresge Foundation's three-year grant for the Student Success Center will come to an end in June 2015. It then asked respondents whether they would recommend continuing Student Success Center activities beyond the funding period based on their own experiences with the Center. A large majority of respondents (83%) recommended a continuation of Center activities. These results are shown in Figure 2.

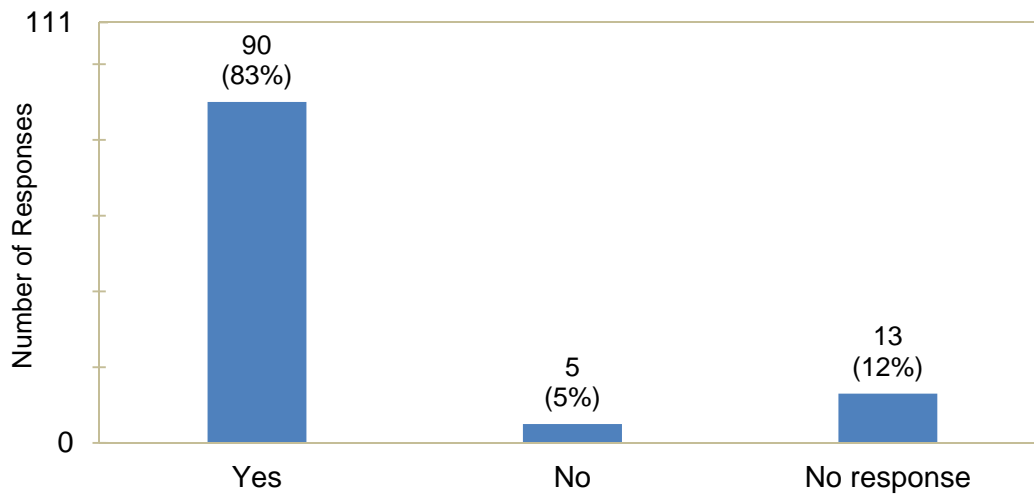


Figure 2: Number of survey respondents who recommend continuing the Student Success Center beyond July 2015

For the 90 respondents who recommended continuing Center activities beyond the three-year funding cycle, the survey prompted them to consider the future priorities of the Center. Specifically, the survey provided respondents with a list of six potential priorities and instructed them to select all that applied.

As shown in Table 10, most respondents identified the highest priorities as being the continuation of the Center’s support to statewide faculty engagement (83%) and the provision of statewide professional development on evidence-based student success practices (79%). The only priority that was cited by less than half of the respondents was the creation of virtual learning communities (31%).

Table 10: Most frequently cited priorities for the Student Success Center after July 2015

Focus of the Student Success Center going forward	Frequency	Percent (n=90)
Continue to support statewide faculty engagement.	75	83%
Provide statewide, regional, or cross-campus professional development on evidence-based student success practices.	71	79%
Assist colleges with implementing and evaluating their completion plans.	53	59%
Continue to support statewide administrator and staff engagement.	46	51%
Develop a Student Success Learning Institute (SSLI) to provide year-long professional development for cohort-based college teams.	45	50%
Create virtual learning communities online.	28	31%
Other	6	7%

IMPLICATIONS

On February 17, 2015, three OACC representatives met with three evaluation specialists from CETE to discuss the results of the Student Success Center impact evaluation. The three OACC representatives were Jack Hershey, OACC President and CEO, Ruth Silon, former Executive Director, OACC Student Success Center, and Laura Rittner, OACC Director of Research and Data Analysis. CETE staff members included David Mullins, Scott Renshaw, and Melissa Ross. The purpose of this meeting was to consider the implications of the impact study from the perspective of OACC. This section summarizes key insights that emerged from the conversation.

Please note that these conclusions were made in context of survey's low response rate, which is a limitation of this study. Therefore, it is important to note that the results of this study only apply to those who responded to the survey and cannot be generalized to others who have participated in Student Success Center activities or events.

Progress with Developmental Education Reform

The large majority of respondents (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Student Success Center had supported community colleges in their efforts to reform developmental education (Table 7). As this is one of the Center's primary goals, these results are affirming to OACC's efforts in this area.

Connections to Colleagues and Resources

Most respondents provided very high ratings regarding the quality of their experiences with the Student Success Center (Table 2). Specifically, most either agreed or strongly agreed that the Student Success Center had connected them to people in their fields from other colleges (81%) and had exposed them to new resources that are helpful to their work (83%). These responses support OACC's efforts in connecting community college professionals to national resources as well as colleagues throughout the state.

Priorities Going Forward

Most respondents (83%) recommended that Student Success Center activities should continue beyond the end of its funding period in June 2015. As shown in Table 10, these respondents identified the top priorities for the Center going forward as follows:

- Continue to support to statewide faculty engagement (83%)
- Provide statewide, regional, cross-campus professional development on evidence-based student success practices (79%)

From the perspectives of the OACC representatives who reviewed these results, the top two priorities identified in the survey suggest that the Student Success Center maintain its statewide approach for supporting community college professionals. The Center's broad reach has allowed it to address the needs of administrators, faculty, and staff working at various levels within their institutions. In particular, the Center's focus on faculty will be critical moving forward, as these individuals have a direct impact on student success.

REFERENCES

Ohio Association of Community Colleges. (2014). *OACC Student Success Center Mini-Grant Follow-up Survey: Spring and Fall 2014*. Unpublished raw data.

Wing-Traynor, E. (n.d.). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

ATTACHMENT A

The organizational logic model for the Student Success Center is included on the following page.

**STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER
LOGIC MODEL**

