5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation

(CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.13)

(Additional CFRs associated with prompts 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.14, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

Student success includes not only strong retention and degree completion rates, but also high-quality learning. It means that students are prepared for success in their personal, civic, and professional lives, and that they embody the values and behaviors that make their institution distinctive. Institutions’ definitions of success will differ, given their unique missions, traditions, programs, and the characteristics of the students served.

One metric for this component is WSCUC’s Graduation Rate Dashboard (GRD), which uses six data points to estimate the institution’s absolute graduation rate over time and accounts for all graduates regardless of how students matriculate (first-time or transfer, lower or upper division) or enroll (part-time, full-time, swirling), or what programs they pursue.

The GRD does not track specific cohorts of students. Institutions should also calculate direct measures of retention and graduation.

This component needs to address, explicitly, the learning and personal development dimensions of student success. Since aggregate data can mask disparities among student subpopulations, institutions are advised to disaggregate their data, going beyond demographic characteristics. For example, analysis using several variables (such as students’ choice of major, participation in research, study abroad, leadership roles, admission to honor societies, pass rates on licensure examinations, and admission to graduate programs) may yield useful information.

While student success is the responsibility of the entire institution, student affairs and academic support can play a particularly critical role. Here, too, a well-developed assessment infrastructure can provide the data to document and improve student success.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How is student success defined (accounting for both completion and learning), given the distinctive mission, values, and programs offered, and the characteristics of the students being served? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
- How is student success promoted, including both completion and learning? What has been learned about different student subpopulations as a result of disaggregating data? (CFRs 2.3, 2.10-2.14)
- What role does program review play in assessing and improving student success? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
• Which programs are particularly effective in retaining and graduating their majors? What can be learned from them? What is the students’ experience like? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)

• How well do students meet the institution’s definition of student success? In what ways does the institution need to improve so that more students are successful? What is the timeline for improvement? How will these goals be achieved? (CFRs 2.6, 4.1-4.4)