



## Definition

# Student Success

*Student success is defined as “academic achievement, satisfaction, and productive post-college performance.”*

A student offered the definition above at one of the early Student Success Cornerstone group meetings. Student success, in each of these senses, is paramount for Youngstown State University; and thus the structure, policies, and practices of the institution must facilitate the success of students and graduates. The University offers countless avenues through which individuals can progress toward their educational, personal, and career goals. Strengthening those opportunities will remain a central driver for everything we do at YSU.

The profile of YSU students will change considerably over this planning cycle and beyond, reflecting state and national trends, demographic shifts, decreasing numbers of high school graduates, growth of the new community college, and characteristics of the “Millennial Generation.” Given these shifts, the range of student characteristics and needs will be broad. **The shifts represent an important opportunity to strengthen YSU’s infrastructure and resources to enhance the quality of the educational experience for a dynamic and diverse student body.**

Students from many backgrounds—including first-generation students, returning adults, students with disabilities, and international students—bring varied perspectives and skill sets to the institution. Regardless of their individual abilities and aspirations, undergraduate and graduate students who come to YSU need support to achieve their goals and be successful. They may require **differing types and amounts of support during different stages of their academic careers.** This is especially true for undergraduates. Addressing diverse student needs and providing multiple entry points for programs and services are key factors in supporting student success. In large part, student achievements depend on how well YSU’s mission, vision, goals, policies, and practices advocate for and adhere to basic tenets of student learning and development.

Specific measures to facilitate student success are outlined on succeeding pages.

**The first Student Success theme is Academic Achievement.** Experiencing success in the classroom reinforces students’ efforts to learn and master educational fundamentals, and this success leads to graduation. The Board Metric for this theme is the “6-year graduation rate” (i.e., the percentage of students who graduate within 6 years)—a standard state and national measure of student success.

**The second Student Success theme is Student Satisfaction with Academic and Non-Academic Experiences.** Students who are satisfied are likely to experience greater student and post-graduation success. The Board Metric for this theme is an index derived from satisfaction-measuring instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (or NSSE, known as the “Nessie”).

**The third Student Success theme is Readiness for Post-College Success.** The Board Metric for this theme is an index of test and licensing-examination scores (e.g., Graduate Record Examination and Praxis scores).



*To summarize, the Board Metrics are* **Academic Achievement: 6-year graduation rate**

**Student Satisfaction: Index of satisfaction measurements**

**Post-College Success: Index of pertinent educational testing and licensing scores**

## INITIATIVES

- Implement a University College or similar idea—e.g., a freshman boot camp or seminar.
- Align systems of advising.
- Improve orientation processes and programs.
- Examine and revise admissions and retention requirements.
- Tighten and improve enforcement of academic-progress policies and procedures (esp. conditional admission).
- Implement dual enrollment with EGCC.
- Coordinate academic programming with EGCC.
- Develop a major marketing campaign to position YSU as a University of choice (e.g., YSU Success Stories). Recruit under-represented students, the best students, and students outside the immediate area.
- Create an Enrollment Management Team.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with PK-12.
- Create early-warning processes to improve student success.
- Improve course-completion rates.
- Enhance learning-assessment endeavors.
- Support faculty development in teaching and learning.

## Theme 1:

### Academic Achievement

Institution/Board Metric: 6-Year Graduation Rate

#### Priorities/Rationale

At YSU, students have access to a rigorous academic experience marked by high-quality teaching, research, and creative activity that prepare students to become responsible and engaged local and global citizens. Yet, for all students to achieve their potential while members of our campus community, certain priorities must be strengthened and initiatives must be undertaken.

#### 1a. Exceptional academic advising and student-progress support systems

#### 1b. Teaching-and-learning focused professional development

#### 1c. Collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs

It is well known that the quality of academic advising is critical to academic achievement and student success. The divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs must collaborate to ensure that all advisors, whether professional college advisors or faculty members, provide the best guidance for all students, regardless of a student's ability level or entry point into YSU.

This collaboration must extend beyond the area of advising to explore and enhance the direct connection between effective teaching and student academic achievement. Student success is based on productive partnerships between the student and an array of faculty members, advisors, mentors, tutors, and representatives of similar student-progress support systems who collaboratively provide direction and counseling both *in* and *outside* the classroom.

#### 2. Collaboration between Eastern Gateway Community College and Youngstown State University

The connection between Eastern Gateway Community College and YSU must be strengthened to facilitate easy movement between the two

institutions without unnecessary loss of credit or course duplication. The growth of EGCC will enhance YSU's ability to migrate from an open-access university to an urban research university. Close collaboration between EGCC and YSU will ensure that the students of our region are served seamlessly by both institutions.

#### 3. More aggressive recruiting/marketing of YSU as a destination university

The quality of the educational opportunities at YSU tends to be undervalued or unknown, even locally. As discussions continue about establishing higher or more selective admissions requirements for YSU, initiatives must be undertaken to aggressively recruit students of diverse demographics, both regionally and outside our traditional recruiting area. *National and international* recruiting, featuring *selected exemplary programs*, will produce a more dynamic and diverse student body. Similarly, aggressive marketing will supplement recruiting efforts. Such marketing initiatives must feature YSU as a *university of first choice*, rather than as a fall-back position—especially for local students.

#### Engaged assessment of student learning

YSU must continue its efforts to make assessment of student learning outcomes a priority. Assessment must engage everyone involved in the educational process, rather than being perceived as a nagging chore to be endured. The results of assessments are critical for strengthening programs and ultimately for ensuring student success, both in the classroom and in the post-college worlds our students will enter. Furthermore, as we develop non-traditional course-delivery systems and flexible credit options, assessment of learning becomes the critical barometer for measuring the effectiveness of such options, as well as their comparability to traditional systems.



## 2020 Metrics

1. 6-year graduation rate
2. Graduation rates of minority and first-generation college students
3. Student-athlete graduation rate
4. Number of STEM graduates (a component of state funding formula)
5. Degrees awarded
6. Retention rates
7. Average ACT of entering freshmen (a component of state funding formula)
8. Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) scores
9. Enrollees age 25 and older
10. Course-completion rates (a component of state funding formula)
11. % of students on warning, probation, and suspension
12. Number of study-abroad students
13. Number of international students

Formalize exit interviews.

- Use data to make improvements.
- Raise more money for scholarships.
- Expand service-learning initiatives.
- Ensure that courses are available when needed.
- Reduce cost to students by improving time to completion of degree.
- Streamline academic experiences—e.g., 3-yr degrees, credit for prior learning.
- Offer flexibly scheduled, alternative delivery, and distance-education courses and programs.

## Theme 2:

# Student Satisfaction with Academic and Non-Academic Experiences

Institution/Board Metric: Index of Student Satisfaction Measures

### Priorities/Rationale

#### 1. Satisfaction with academic experiences related to

- *Teaching and learning*
- *advising*
- *facilities*
- *technology*
- *learning outcomes*
- *engagement*

Academic achievement and satisfaction are inextricably linked. Academic achievement exerts a major influence on the college experience and ultimately on student satisfaction. The content knowledge that students acquire and their accompanying perception of preparedness to enter their chosen profession contribute to an overall sense of confidence, pride, and satisfaction. At the same time, satisfaction with the academic experience can lead to higher achievement. Engaged and satisfied learners are often more successful learners.

#### 2. Satisfaction with non-academic experiences and campus life

While academic achievement is an important component of student satisfaction, alone it cannot yield the degree of satisfaction that we hope our students attain upon program completion. In addition to intellectual needs, we seek to meet the affective needs of our students.

Providing a variety of student organizations, sports events, artistic performances, wellness experiences, and other extracurricular activities that meet a myriad of interests encourages students to become involved in university life beyond the classroom. Such involvement promotes feelings of connectedness and a sense of belonging to our campus community. Participation in service learning and in community activities yields a sense of self-fulfillment and promotes the development of well-rounded individuals who better understand and are ready to assume their place in our diverse society.

As we provide experiences that engage the whole student, we offer opportunities for our students to grow, to reach their full potential,

and to enhance the quality of their lives. And as students feel an overall satisfaction with their YSU experience, they become both natural ambassadors for recruiting new students to YSU and supportive alumni who encourage the University's future growth and development.

#### 3. Affordable programs

The "cost value" of a YSU education, particularly in comparison to the cost of education at peer institutions that offer programs of equal quality, has always been and continues to be a priority at YSU. As we constantly strive to increase private funds for scholarships, we ensure that higher education is affordable and within reach for all students—particularly first-generation college students—who desire to attend YSU.

A critical part of affordability that has received insufficient attention is the amount of time it takes students to complete a degree. We must take steps to improve students' ability to complete their degrees more quickly.

#### 4. Flexible course and program delivery

Strategically developed alternative course and program delivery (e.g., online courses, 3-year baccalaureate programs) based on "best practices" provides greater flexibility for students who must juggle multiple responsibilities. Flexible delivery can help students graduate in a more timely manner, leading to savings of money and time and ultimately to greater satisfaction.

### 2020 Metrics

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| 1. Index of student satisfaction survey results related to academic and non-academic experiences | 3. Exit-interview results  |
| 2. Students' average out-of-pocket costs   | 4. Number of courses and programs that are online, flexibly scheduled, or distance education |



## Theme 3:

### Readiness for Post-College Success

Institution/Board Metric: Index of Pertinent Educational Testing and Licensing Scores

#### Priorities/Rationale

#### 1. Preparation for work or further education in a diverse, global, and technological world

Public higher education in the twenty-first century is challenged by ever greater demands for both inclusion and accountability. The stakes are high for students and institutions alike.

Youngstown State University provides education of life-long value. Particularly to leverage the institution's impact on economic development, YSU seeks to prepare graduates for further education or for work in diverse, global, and technological environments.

YSU students will have access to appropriate resources to enable them to graduate with skills and experiences that make them competitive for employment or for higher study, and students will benefit from assistance in seeking post-college opportunities and making effective applications. Particularly important are the opportunities to explore careers through internships, cooperative-education experiences, service-learning experiences, and study-abroad experiences. Through such activities, students will additionally form relationships with mentors who will enhance the students' post-college success.

Recognizing the value that experience plays in the job market and other applicant pools, YSU will strive to increase opportunities for students to amass practical experience while they study.



#### 2020 Metrics

1. Job placements
2. Graduate-school placements
3. GRE, MCAT, LSAT scores
4. License and certification scores

theme 3

#### INITIATIVES

- Increase internship, cooperative-education, service-learning, and study-abroad opportunities.
- Enhance job fairs and professional days—e.g., Press Day.
- Provide interview training and preparation.
- Publish lists of companies, agencies that recruit on campus.