

## *COMMUNITY COLLEGE INVENTORY:* FOCUS ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

The following inventory provides descriptions of eleven characteristics of colleges that are strongly focused on student success – that is, student persistence, learning and attainment. Related to each characteristic is a set of indicators that more fully describe observable institutional practices. The inventory is intended not as a test and not as a checklist, but rather as a tool for prompting institutional review, reflection, discussion – and, ultimately, action aimed at improvement.

### NOTE ON INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Level and scope of institutional effort and accomplishment with regard to these characteristics and indicators may be rated in terms of the response scale provided below. Use of the numeric scale might be augmented with narrative examples (provided by the institution) describing institutional practices and student behavior, as well as reporting pertinent data. And finally, campus observers may be trained to conduct interviews, focus groups and document review as part of either an internal review or a third-party process to verify and provide feedback on institutional practices.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Base your responses to the inventory on the following response scale:

#### RESPONSE SCALE

*[Adapted from Renate Krakauer, Criteria for a Learning College, 2000]*

- 0 *No implementation.* There is no evidence that this practice has been implemented in the institution.
- 1 *Under discussion.* This practice is being discussed or is in the planning stages.
- 2 *Marginal implementation.* There are isolated examples of this practice in the institution.
- 3 *Partial implementation.* This practice is being implemented in some areas of the institution in a visible and substantial way.
- 4 *Full implementation.* This practice has been fully implemented across the institution.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This inventory of the characteristics of a college focused on student persistence, learning and attainment explicitly honors the “seven principles of good practice” in undergraduate education described by Chickering and Gamson (1987), as well as related research on student engagement (see, for example, Kuh, 2001; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2002 and 2003; Kuh, et al, 2005; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). The inventory also incorporates items paraphrased or drawn directly from work of Byron McClenney and Kay McClenney (1988), Kay McClenney (2003), Cindy Miles and others at the League for Innovation in the Community College (2000) and Renate Krakauer (2000). Special acknowledgment is due to Austin Doherty and Tim Riordan of Alverno College, to other members of the Alverno-sponsored Student Learning Initiative, and to participants in The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning.

## PART I – VISION, VALUES AND CULTURE

### Characteristic #1: Institution-wide commitment to promoting student persistence, learning, and attainment and to equity in educational outcomes for all students

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. The college has clearly defined its mission, values, and vision, with a central emphasis on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.86
b. A shared sense of the mission, values and vision is held by individuals and groups across the college community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
c. The institution has made an explicit, public commitment to achieve equity in educational persistence and attainment across all student groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.43
d. The college community consistently enacts the high value placed on diversity and cultural competence among students, faculty, staff, administrators and governing board members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.86
e. In pursuit of its mission, the institution has developed a strong culture of evidence. (See Part II)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.14
f. The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the college community in processes for planning and priority-setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
g. The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the broader community in processes for planning and priority-setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.86
h. Individuals and groups within the institution demonstrate a collective sense of responsibility for student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.57

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.58**

## PART II – THE CULTURE OF EVIDENCE

### Characteristic #2: Institutional and individual reflection and action typically prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. Institutional research and information systems provide systematic, timely, useful, and user-friendly information about student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.86
b. The institutional culture promotes willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding:						
• student persistence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.71
• student learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
• student attainment (certificates, degrees, transfer)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
c. The institution is committed to cohort tracking of entering students to determine rates of attainment and to identify areas for improvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.83
d. The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to the following:						
• successful completion of remedial/developmental courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.14
• developmental students' success in entry-level college courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
• successful completion of selected gatekeeper courses (e.g., high-enrollment/high failure-rate courses such as college algebra, freshman composition, anatomy and physiology, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.71
• rate of successful course completion for all courses (C or better)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.57
• student persistence – re-enrollment from one term to the next	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.14
• completion of certificates and associate degrees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.29
e. Data depicting student persistence, learning, and attainment are routinely disaggregated and reported by student characteristics including:						
• gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.29
• race/ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.57
• income level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.29
f. The institution regularly assesses its performance and progress in implementing educational practices which evidence shows will contribute to higher levels of student persistence and learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.71
g. The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding:						
• strategic priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
• resource allocation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.29
• faculty and staff development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
• improvements in programs and services for learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.14
h. Beliefs and assertions about “what works” in promoting student learning and attainment are evidence-based.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.29**

## PART III – STRATEGIC FOCUS, PLANNING, AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

### Characteristic #3: Fully integrated processes for institutional evaluation, planning, and resource allocation

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. The institution has a strategic plan that clearly and succinctly states its goals for future development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.14
b. The strategic plan is used to guide operational planning for each fiscal year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.14
c. Strategic focus is created through the identification of a small number of clear priorities for institutional action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.71
d. The college demonstrates its ability to stop doing things that are off-mission, low-priority, and/or ineffective in promoting student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
e. The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform plans for improvement in programs and services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.71
f. Members of the campus community participate extensively in the planning and priority-setting processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
g. Resources are consistently allocated and re-allocated to address priorities identified through the planning process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.29

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.71**

## PART IV – STUDENT LEARNING

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Characteristic #4: Clearly defined outcomes for student learning

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. The institution has clearly defined <b>required</b> student learning outcomes...						
• for core abilities/ general education (degree level)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.14
• for each program/major area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.14
• for each course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.86
b. Statements of required learning outcomes reflect consensus achieved by teaching faculty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.86
c. Statements of required learning outcomes are congruent with the mission and values of the institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.33
d. Statements of required learning outcomes are prominently and publicly displayed and communicated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.83

### LEARNING ASSESSMENT

#### Characteristic #5: Systematic assessment and documentation of student learning

	0	1	2	3	4	
a. Faculty members have designed and/or identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning...						
• in all credit courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.83
• in the program/major area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
• in core abilities/general education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
b. Faculty members have developed common criteria or rubrics that are used in ascertaining and documenting each student's level of attainment of required learning outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.17
c. Third-party judgment or validation is routinely incorporated in assessment approaches.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.67

### LEARNING PROCESS

#### Characteristic #6: Student participation in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with “good educational practice”

	0	1	2	3	4	
a. Faculty design curriculum and teaching strategies to ensure alignment with required student learning outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
b. The college has designed and implemented across-the-curriculum teaching/learning strategies in areas such as:						
• writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00

						Mean
• quantitative reasoning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.50
• technology /computing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.50
• other (specify: _____)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.50
c. Faculty members clearly articulate learning outcomes at different levels of the curriculum; consequently, prerequisites are clear and rational, and sequential levels are appropriately aligned with one another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.50
d. Faculty members implement diverse approaches to learning that address and challenge the variety of learning styles among their students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
e. Faculty members document their teaching approaches, and students use the information in their selection of courses and other learning options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
f. The college has built partnerships with employers and community-based organizations leading to hands-on experiential learning experiences for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.83
g. Students typically participate in opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., service learning, internships, cooperative learning).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
h. Students frequently engage in other active and collaborative learning experiences (e.g., learning communities, team learning, problem-based learning, mentoring, peer tutoring, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.33

## PART IV – STUDENT LEARNING (continued)

### LEARNING PROCESS (continued)

						Mean
i. Frequent student interaction with peers, faculty, and academic/student support staff is purposefully incorporated into the design of learning experiences and course requirements.	○	○	○	○	○	2.33
j. Course requirements are purposefully designed to promote out-of-classroom learning experiences for students (e.g., group projects, faculty conferences, related community service, etc.).	○	○	○	○	○	2.67
k. Faculty members routinely identify high-failure-rate courses and undertake collaborative re-design of those courses to promote student success while maintaining high quality standards.	○	○	○	○	○	1.50
l. The college has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature:						
• articulation with secondary school programs	○	○	○	○	○	2.50
• strong links between basic skills/ ESL/ developmental courses and college-level courses	○	○	○	○	○	2.50
• certificate programs providing the first step to the A.A.S. degree	○	○	○	○	○	3.00
• articulation with related baccalaureate programs	○	○	○	○	○	3.17
m. Expectations regarding students' responsibilities in the learning process are explicitly stated and are communicated to all students by faculty, counselors, and fellow students.	○	○	○	○	○	3.00
n. Students frequently engage in self-assessment and reflection on their learning processes and goals.	○	○	○	○	○	2.33
o. Faculty members provide students with frequent and timely feedback on their progress in learning.	○	○	○	○	○	3.00
<b>Characteristic #7: Effective developmental/remedial education, tutoring, and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work</b>	0	1	2	3	4	
a. The institution conducts thorough reviews of current programs for under-prepared students to determine student success rates and identify needs for improvement.	○	○	○	○	○	2.17
b. Mandatory assessment and course placement policies have been implemented for entering students.	○	○	○	○	○	3.33
c. Exit competencies for developmental education and ESL courses are fully aligned with competencies required for success in entry-level college courses.	○	○	○	○	○	2.17
d. Faculty who teach developmental courses do so voluntarily and have undergone training in appropriate teaching strategies.	○	○	○	○	○	2.33
e. The college has created learning communities that link developmental courses to courses in other disciplines.	○	○	○	○	○	2.50

## PART V – STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

**Characteristic #8: A planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning, and attainment**

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. All college processes (financial aid application, registration, etc.) are student-friendly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
b. A strong and systematic advising system ensures that each student develops an academic plan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
c. The advising process stresses steps toward degree attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
d. The institution employs informational and instructional technology in ways specifically targeted to improve student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
e. Fundraising efforts are focused on providing financial aid to low-income students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
f. Student needs drive class schedule development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67
g. Strong partnerships with K-12 systems ease the transition for high school graduates coming to the community college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.50
h. Strong articulation agreements with senior colleges promote smooth transfer without inappropriate loss of credit for community college students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.67

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.65**



## PART VI – THE PEOPLE OF THE COLLEGE

### Characteristic #9: Emphasis on student persistence, learning, and attainment in processes for recruitment, hiring, orientation, deployment, evaluation, and development of personnel

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. The roles of faculty, staff, and administrators are defined in terms of functions and behaviors that contribute to student success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.43
b. Staffing patterns and workload arrangements reflect a focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.14
c. Employment practices reflect high value placed on diversity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.29
d. Personnel recruitment, selection, and orientation processes explicitly reflect the focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.25
e. Systematic evaluation of teaching effectiveness includes evaluation by both peers and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.57
f. At all levels of the institution, personnel evaluation criteria and processes reflect a focus on activities and behaviors that contribute to student learning – and promote learning by the person being evaluated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
g. Reward systems recognize and reward outstanding contributions to improving student persistence, learning, and attainment and creating more effective learning environments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.71
h. Faculty and staff development opportunities are focused on improvement of student persistence, learning, and attainment and informed by the results of student and institutional assessments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.14

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.45**

## PART VII – LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

**Characteristic #10: Leadership behavior consistently reflects the focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment, as well as equity in student outcomes.**

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. Institutional leaders demonstrate a commitment to strengthening student persistence, learning, and attainment – a commitment that extends beyond rhetoric to actions in resource allocation, policymaking, and data-driven decision making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.71
b. The CEO and other institutional leaders frequently use data about student persistence and learning to drive decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.00
<b>SUMMARY MEAN = 2.86</b>						

## PART VIII – INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

**Characteristic #11: Key institutional policies promoting focus on and accountability for student persistence, learning, and attainment.**

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
a. Key institutional documents (e.g., mission and vision statements, college catalogue, program descriptions) reflect the focus on student success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3.43
b. Academic policies (e.g., provisions for registration, assessment and course placement upon entry, class changes, college orientation, first-year experience, feedback on academic progress, etc.) reflect priority placed on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.86
c. The governing board has established an explicit policy that calls for closing the gap in educational attainment between low-income students and students of color in comparison with their peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1.50
d. The governing board regularly examines key performance indicators of student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.00
e. The governing board supports resource allocation and re-allocation to promote improvement in student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2.29

**SUMMARY MEAN = 2.44**