

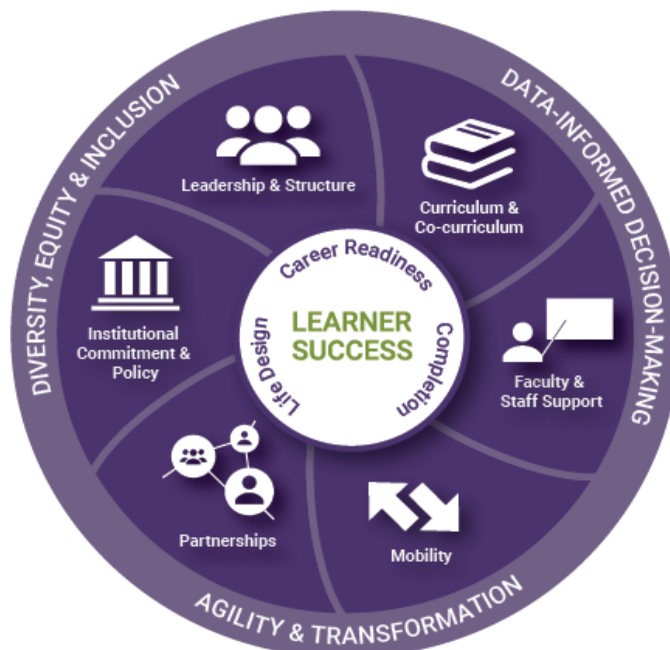
LEARNER SUCCESS LAB

Report on Massasoit Community College By the American Council on Education Virtual Peer Review Visit Team February 2, 4, and 15, 2022

Introduction

In October 2020, at the American Council on Education (ACE) invitation, Massasoit Community College joined the first cohort of ACE’s Learner Success Laboratory (LSL). The LSL engages a diverse group of Colleges and universities in assessing their current learner success activities and considering how they might like to move forward with such work in the future. Institutions review their progress and consider recommendations by applying [ACE’s Model for Comprehensive Learner Success](#):

ACE Model for Comprehensive Learner Success



In addition to Massasoit Community College, other institutions participating in the first cohort were:

- Elon University
- Iowa State University
- Labouré College
- Richard Bland College of William & Mary
- Southeast Missouri State University
- Union Institute & University
- University of Hawaii-West Oahu
- Western Oregon University
- Windward Community College

This report is based on virtual site visits with Massasoit Community College by an ACE virtual peer review team held on February 2, 4, and 15, 2022. This report also draws upon the College's drafted LSL Steering Committee's summary report that was provided to the peer reviewers on December 17, 2021.

The peer review team included:

- Dr. Annette Parker, ACE LSL Advisor and President of South Central College
- Dr. Kimberly Lee, ACE Peer Reviewer and LSL Advisor
- Dr. Narren Brown, ACE Peer Reviewer, and Vice President of Research and Institutional Effectiveness at South Central College

Findings of the Review

Key Strengths

Massasoit Community College quickly formed a strong team to support the Learner Success Lab initiative. The LSL Steering Committee communicated broadly, and as a result, the institution were able to define who are their "learners" and what is to be recognized as "learner

success” on their campuses. They determined that “learner success” is when individuals make consistent progress toward their goals, acquire, and display career readiness skills, and engage in activities that enhance their intellectual curiosity and educational experience.

The LSL Steering Committee then conducted a comprehensive self-assessment using the 200+ questions provided by ACE to assess their institutional capacity to support learner success. As a result of completing this review while viewing learner success through the ACE comprehensive model, Massasoit was able to identify gaps in how they meet their learners’ needs through institutional structures, policies, programs, and services.

The College’s senior leadership team reviewed and approved a draft report in December 2021. This report was also shared with the College community to allow for feedback and to provide guidance on possible recommended actions the College would take to improve and support learner success. During the peer review meetings, stakeholders were asked for recommendations on moving forward (see Appendix I). Following those meetings and including any remaining feedback received, the document will be finalized and shared with ACE and internal stakeholders for further consideration and implementation.

Massasoit Community College had already taken many actions to support learner success before the start of this work. One crucial transition was the redesign of the academic leadership structure to better align student and academic affairs under the leadership of a provost. Other significant changes include the reorganization of enrollment services; the creation of the Center for Employee Enrichment (CEED) to provide professional development in support of preparation of faculty and staff to better serve students, the adoption of a more robust shared governance system, the redesign of the academic program review, and more.

Observations & Recommendations

When meeting with students, we found them very supportive of faculty and staff and how they have helped students stay in school and succeed. Students felt that improvements in registration were beneficial. Students also appreciated the multi-lingual student services, and

the opportunities for student employment and mentorships. The students reported feeling a sense of community, especially within student affairs. Students also expressed appreciation for faculty members who demonstrated concern for their academic success and general well-being. However, given the successes of the students we met with, they did say that they know friends who were not aware of the wonderful services of Massasoit and felt that the use of Navigate software could assist more students to take advantage of the services. The students also felt that the recommendations from the study were positive and would help more students succeed. Students especially liked the First Year Experience recommendation, increases in student employment, internship, and mentorship opportunities, and the development of learning communities.

When meeting with faculty and staff, we found consistent support for new strategic academic master plans. As the provost shared strategies for addressing many of the objectives for learner success within the master academic program, it was met with solid approval and assurance that it was the correct approach. There is broad support of a First-Year Experience, and English as a Second Language programming to support newer American and non-traditional students. There was also support for the alignment of non-credit to credit programming and an expressed need to use the same student enrollment software for the non-credit student population. The faculty and staff also had strong support for more training for advisors to include intrusive advising and the use of Navigate software to better support students. Reference was made to add more staff and support for the Brockton campus since that campus has higher numbers of at-risk student populations.

The LSL study has also built more consensus from all stakeholders in becoming a data and evidence-based institution. Through the self-study, the College learned about many promising practices throughout the institution from various departments. They also recognized the challenges they have and how they can address them through strategic and academic planning. Faculty and staff are interested in how they can use data to inform decisions and how to better communicate all the great work going on at the College.

Commentary on the LSL Steering Committee's Report

The peer review team found the committee's report to be comprehensive (see Executive Summary in Appendix II). It effectively captured the current state of the institution's journey, the process they followed to this point, and recommendations for consideration from the assessment. This is important as the College has experienced many leadership changes over the past several years to understand the journey, share the process given the challenges of COVID 19, and ask for recommendations to inform the strategic and master academic plans.

Next Steps

- The institution has learned a lot by doing a comprehensive review and is well-positioned for progress.
- An ongoing commitment to this work has been started. It will be needed to successfully implement the strategies identified, which we find evidence-based and research shows effective if done correctly.
- Critical to success is the acknowledgement of the president that this work is critical to the College's success.
- The institution needs to continue the journey of increased access/use of data and evidence that advances the learner success agenda by using the CEED Center, the redesign of advising, and other critical areas to promote and inform the strategic and master academic plans.
- The strategic plan needs to address learner success through facilities ensuring that the campuses that are experiencing increased diversity of students have the necessary support to increase persistence and completion (e.g., Brockton campus).
- The College has a road map they should consider with the cohort programs and their use of Navigate to support students. They should consider what lessons these programs provide and how much can be addressed through services that impact most students, as the cohort model is small but adequate.
- If possible, utilize the early alert program for all students as it currently only supports approximately 20% of the student body.

- The College should consider how to use Navigate across the institution and track results of student interaction and persistence over time.

Massasoit Community College is well-positioned to continue its efforts to meet learner success goals. It has all the essential ingredients: leadership, energy, and systems for establishing learning goals and assessing their outcomes. They have committed and talented faculty that tirelessly support students. Given the pandemic, it has been challenging to communicate and engage all faculty and staff, which is a challenge that all institutions face. Therefore, as they begin their work on updating their strategic plan and master academic plan, they need to continue conversations about learner success to widen their support base so that the College can effectively reframe its vision and mission in terms of learner success. They should create a culture of evidence in their planning by determining baseline metrics and setting targets for each of their priorities so that faculty and staff can see how they can incrementally advance their shared goals and celebrate accomplishments.

The College's senior leadership has demonstrated that it can engage students, faculty, staff, and the community to support learner success. Following through on the planning, adding Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and targets will successfully create equitable learner success. It is important to recognizing that this is a long-term project that requires commitment from all stakeholders and requires adequate resources and regular evaluation and assessment. By developing and continuing an intentional process, the College will make its learner success goals part of its everyday operation.

APPENDIX I

Site Visit #2 Meeting Schedule, Campus Questions, With Drafted Findings and Proposed Next Steps

MEETING SCHEDULE

- February 2, 2022
 - President's Cabinet
- February 3, 2022
 - Student Conversations
NOTE: Recruitment efforts were campus-wide with an incentive raffle offered for those who attended
 - Senior Academic and Student Affairs Division Leadership Teams
 - LSL Steering Committee
- February 15, 2022
 - Campus Forum for all faculty and staff

FEEDBACK QUESTIONS TO THE CAMPUS

1. Do you agree with the findings and recommended next steps listed below?
2. If no, what further information is needed to be considered in these areas?
3. Considering all listed areas, what should be Massasoit's top 3 priorities?

LSL STEERING COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

1. New shared governance structure and processes are under review; consider recommendations as well as the proposal to pay faculty (and possibly students) for governance work during breaks to limit delays and disruptions of ongoing work.
2. Create an action plan, a timeline, and a budget for updating the strategic plan. Incorporate equity outcomes and assessments into the plan.
3. Assess the effectiveness of academic and administrative departments (in collaboration with the unions).
4. Create dedicated public and internal portal learner success webpages to promote student success to prospective and current students as well as faculty and staff.
5. Audit all forms, policies, and publications to replace all outdated terms and ensure written materials are forward-thinking, culturally responsive, and incorporate growth-minded language.
6. Share department and program strategic plans with the College to promote better communication and institutional knowledge.

7. Create additional non-credit to credit transitional support (particularly ESL/ESOL) for all learners.
8. Increase adult learner support (transitioning from recent high school equivalency credential and for those returning to the academic environment after time away or first time to college).
9. Provide additional support for transition from incarceration to higher education.
10. Expand international student and ESL/ESOL student support/mentoring programs.
11. Create a First Year Experience Program as a way to ensure that all students have the comprehensive skills needed to succeed in college.
12. Employ more multilingual staff to support and facilitate verbal and written communication with non-native English speakers, particularly in the Haitian and Cape Verdean Creole languages (two widely spoken languages within our service area).

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AND POLICIES

1. Create institutional goals for learner success and metrics.
2. Establish a consistent approach to assessment across divisions, programs, and departments.
3. Implement a more standardized structure and a timeline for information sharing.
4. Complete curriculum maps.
5. Recommend a path and timeline for all faculty and staff to take advisee training.
6. Formalize an enrollment plan.
7. Create one space for policies.
8. Assess student services and policies.
9. Improve transparency and communication of ongoing and planned initiatives collegewide.
10. Increase participation of faculty, staff, and students in providing feedback and working on campus initiatives.
11. Improve tracking of student success.

FACULTY AND SUPPORT

1. Create an equity-minded hiring and succession plan.
2. Embed learner success into the reward system used.
3. Assess the quality and quantity of employee professional development to create a baseline of data and its connection to learner success.

ACADEMIC AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Update the core curriculum.
1. Update course and program outcomes to better reflect the *Vision Statement* and include a cultural competency component.
2. Assess (voluntarily) teaching methodology to create a baseline of data.
3. Implement a process to effectively assess project design and outcomes.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. Increase the number of paid internship opportunities for students.
2. Work with faculty to provide consistent, meaningful objectives for internships.

3. Increase the number of job placements for students.
4. Increase student awareness of and participation in Handshake to take advantage of this new career development tool.

APPENDIX II

MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEARNER SUCCESS LABORATORY INITIATIVE DRAFTED SUMMARY REPORT December 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early Spring 2020, the American Council on Education (ACE) announced its inaugural Learner Success Laboratory (LSL) initiative and invited applications for its first cohort. The goal of this initiative was to provide participating institutions with a structured strategic planning process to advance critical institutional priorities around learner success, with a particular focus on post-traditional and other underserved learners.

Beginning in Fall 2020, the Massasoit LSL Lab Committee co-chairs recruited members for the LSL Steering Committee by extending a campus-wide invitation asking for interested faculty and staff to participate in the project. Individuals were selected based on their teaching and work experience and expertise related to learner success. ACE also assigned a lab advisor who was tasked with meeting with the LSL co-chairs regularly to share her guidance, insights, and other resources. Dr. Annette Parker, President of South Central College in Minnesota, was appointed as Massasoit's LSL Lab Advisor.

ACE requires all participating cohorts to fulfill two tasks for their work on this project. The first goal is for each institution to define who are "learners" and what is to be recognized as "learner success" on their campuses. ACE also noted that cohorts should focus on their attention on "new majority learners" – people who were once thought to be non-traditional students (e.g., older, part-time, persons of color (specifically Black, indigenous, or Latinx)) and other demographic categories (see [Education Design Lab](#) for further details). The Massasoit community primarily consists of new majority learners as shown in the College's [2021-2022 Fact Sheet](#).

Therefore, "learner success" at Massasoit is defined as when individuals make consistent progress toward their goals, acquire, and display career readiness skills, and engage in activities that enhance their intellectual curiosity and educational experience. With this definition in mind, the Steering Committee then focused on the next task of conducting a comprehensive self-assessment using the 200+ questions given to all cohorts. These questions were answered according to the ACE Comprehensive Learner Success Model. This model expanded the traditional measures of persistence, retention, and completion rates and included six core areas of institutional practice and interrelated elements that have an impact on learner success. By viewing learner success through this model, Massasoit will be able to identify gaps in how they meet their learners' needs through institutional structures, policies, programs, and services.

In May 2021, an English faculty member was invited to join the team to be the lead writer and worked with the committee to draft the report from August through the Fall 2021 semester. In early December, a final draft was sent to the College's leadership team for their review and approval to share with the community for feedback. Their feedback will be incorporated into a penultimate version which will be shared with the LSL advisor and two peer reviewers who will conduct a final virtual site visit including meetings with interested stakeholders in February 2022. Once these meetings are completed and the remaining feedback received, the document will be finalized and sent to ACE by March 2022 as well as to internal stakeholders for further consideration and implementation.

This model expanded the traditional measures of persistence, retention, and completion rates and included five core areas of institutional practice and interrelated elements that have an impact on learner success. The following information highlights how the College supports learner success in these areas.

Leadership and Structure

The College has made several structural changes to better support students and to facilitate communication. The College transitioned to a new provost model that included hiring a new provost and associate provost. The Student Affairs Office expanded and aligned with the Academic Affairs Office under the new provost model, bringing academic support and cohort-based programs, student services, and advocacy under one umbrella to better focus on retention efforts. New cross-campus groups and councils were formed to problem solve and facilitate communication. Although these efforts have been well-intentioned and they have done well to support students, they have not gone far enough to support faculty and staff who need timely and clear information to support students every day.

Another impactful structural change at the College has been the reorganization of enrollment services. Now, upon arrival, new students will find a fully integrated enrollment service center, Student Central, that has streamlined the enrollment experience and will help guide students through this process. Students will now encounter a more robust, flexible, and culturally responsive onboarding program that recognizes and honors students' lived experiences. They no longer must travel from office to office but can get all their needs met in one location. While organizationally, support services areas are separated across multiple divisions, cross-functional teams collaborate to provide a holistic approach to student service planning and implementation.

Institutional Commitment and Policy

Massasoit illustrates its commitment to learner success and minoritized students through its [Mission Statement, Statement of Values](#), professional development programming, the *Strategic Plan*, and its full support of the Department of Higher Education's *Equity Agenda*. Although there is momentum here, statistics still show that there is more work to be done to ensure that minoritized students graduate at the same rate as their white peers.

Faculty and Staff Support

Additionally, the College has created the Center for Employee Enrichment (CEED) to better prepare faculty and staff to serve students. CEED offers professional development on various topics aimed at increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities in support of learner success.

Faculty and staff also, for the first time, have a shared governance system. Historically, academic governance only included faculty and academic support staff, but it has been revised to be more inclusive of all staff and students. This increased communication helps bridge the gap between the academic and the non-academic sides of the College to better identify and resolve student issues.

Academic and Community Education Programs

Although the College has made great strides in revising the program review process, implementing maps, and working to complete ISLO's, the College still does not have a consistent approach to the assessment of all departments and ongoing policies. It lacks a shared language and expectations around assessment. The College also does not have resources or structural assistance with building and implementing successful assessment metrics. More professional development, support, leadership, and momentum in this area are necessary to not only identify learning gaps but to be able to revise the curriculum to shrink those gaps.

Partnerships and Community Outreach

Massasoit partners with more than 100 companies and agencies in the area, tailored to assess and meet the individual needs of each organization. The College is devoting resources towards internships which aligns with the fourth Strategic Plan priority of "aligning academic programs to better meet workforce demands, student needs for transfer, and to promote inquiry and scholarship at all levels." Internships are an important opportunity for students to engage in practical experience to further their academic and career goals.

Through advisory boards, Massasoit builds and maintains relationships with employers and faculty. In 2021, there were twenty-two (22) advisory boards composed of local employers and industry experts, and two non-credit advisory boards which are made up of employers, community partners, faculty, Massasoit Grants, and other internal staff. Advisory boards for career programs are instrumental in supporting learners in translating classroom knowledge into marketable career skills.

Next Steps

By viewing learner success through the Learner Success Lab model, Massasoit will be able to identify gaps in how they meet their learners' needs through institutional structures, policies, programs, and services. The findings shared in this report will be the foundation of the

data-informed recommendations on how to improve learner experiences and identify the systems that support them. In addition to the August 2021 five-year Interim NECHE Accreditation Report and the Equity Agenda, the full ACE report is a valuable institutional planning resource.