



APLU'S POWERED BY PUBLICS SCALING STUDENT SUCCESS

130 Institutions Scaling Student Success Across the Nation

Powered by Publics Learning Memo: The Evidence Improvement Cluster

Each cluster in [APLU's Powered by Publics initiative](#) is working to refine, implement, and scale innovative practices that address shared challenges among the participating institutions. This Powered by Publics learning memo highlights universities in the High Enrollment Cluster (**a list of institutions in this cluster is included at the end of this memo**).

Led by The University of Texas at Austin, this cluster is working to develop and validate a framework for assessing, testing, and implementing evidence-based practices to increase student success in the entry year. This framework will include new protocols institutions can use to test and evaluate the progress, complexities, successes, and failures of their own student success initiatives.

Cluster members first completed an inventory of the highest priority student success initiatives in entry programs on their campuses. The compiled intervention inventory serves as an invaluable resource for cross-institutional sharing and led to the identification of sub-topics for the cluster to focus its work. Looking ahead, the cluster institutions will convene around two initial topics: 1) first-year learning communities and 2) advising. Other topics identified for potential future collaborative work include: gateway/STEM courses, major pathways, orientation, and financial aid. As cluster members continue to assess current capacities and solutions in these areas, they will develop a theory of action and test their hypotheses on campus.

The cluster inventory identified several key initiatives campuses already have underway, which will inform the cluster's work moving forward. Examples include:

Learning Communities

- The **University of Texas at Austin's** [360 Connections](#) initiative aids students in the transition from high school to college and connects them with people and resources on campus and foster a sense of belonging. Each connection is unique, but students explore academic integrity, leadership, connecting to faculty, university spirit and traditions, and more. Some examples of 360 connections are honors societies, [first-year interest groups](#), or [other success programs](#).

- **Texas A&M's "Hullabaloo U"** is a year-long, zero-credit hour, first-year experience course designed to create a welcoming and affirming environment for each new student. Through this peer learning and mentorship model, students develop self-efficacy, self-awareness, and a sense of purpose; become actively engaged in the learning environment inside and outside of the classroom; and become socially integrated within the university community.

Advising

- **University of Florida's "Gator Done"** Outreach Initiative is a campus-wide collaborative that emphasizes on-time completion. Each student is contacted personally by a coach who assists the student in developing a graduation plan and connecting to relevant resources. A dashboard of academic performance and graduation indicators notify coaches and advisors if a student has any red flags indicating delayed graduation.
- As part of a multi-faceted approach to strengthening advising programs, **University of Utah** developed a new type of advisor—the bridge advisor. The advisor is embedded in a college but is trained, fully informed about general advising concerns, and spends part of their time working in the central advising office or academic advising center.

Other key student success interventions

- **University of California, Davis** developed a "**Know Your Students**" campaign to ensure faculty are better-aware of the students sitting in front of them in the classroom. Faculty are provided a dashboard with specific student compositional information such as first-generation percentage, the share of English as a Second Language students, and many more factors with tips and suggestions on how to maximize teaching opportunities for the given student groups.
- **University of Oregon** is placing students into "**Flight Paths**," which are thematic areas of academic and career interests to encourage intentional exploring and connect student to the right majors earlier. Flight Paths will provide more coordinated services and support for student exploration and on-time graduation.
- **University of Washington's "University 101"** has "flipped" orientation to help students overcome information overload. Self-guided, online modules combine written information with videos of students, faculty and professional staff members to share information on a variety of topics, including academics, registration, finances, wellness, and campus life.

Other Resources:

- [Cluster 10 Intervention Inventory Template](#) and instructions
- Improvement Science
 - The [Six Core Principles of Improvement](#) from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
 - [What is Improvement Science? Do We Need It in Education?](#) (Lewis, 2015)
 - *Harvard Education Review's comprehensive summary of Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better* (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu, 2015)

Institutions in the high enrollment cluster:

- The University of Texas at Austin (lead);
- Texas A&M University;
- University of California, Davis;
- University of Florida;
- University of Oregon;
- University of Utah;
- University of Washington.