

ADVANCING STUDENT SUCCESS ACROSS PUBLIC AND LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

Public and land-grant universities are advancing student success in powerful and innovative ways. Across institutions, this work spans common priorities such as access, affordability, degree completion, and workforce outcomes. Yet these efforts are often distributed across units and initiatives, shaped by varied missions, student populations, and institutional contexts. As a result, it is difficult to see how these efforts connect to form a broader story about student success, both institutionally and nationally.

The APLU Student Success Framework provides a shared way to understand this work with greater coherence. It offers leaders a broad, clear, institution-wide perspective that helps connect and communicate how institutions are advancing student success practice. Developed through engagement with APLU member institutions, the framework reflects how members organize to advance student success in practice.

WHAT WE ARE SEEING ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

Across APLU member institutions, student success is a clear and sustained priority. Institutions are investing in programs, partnerships, and strategies to support students from entry through completion and into the workforce.

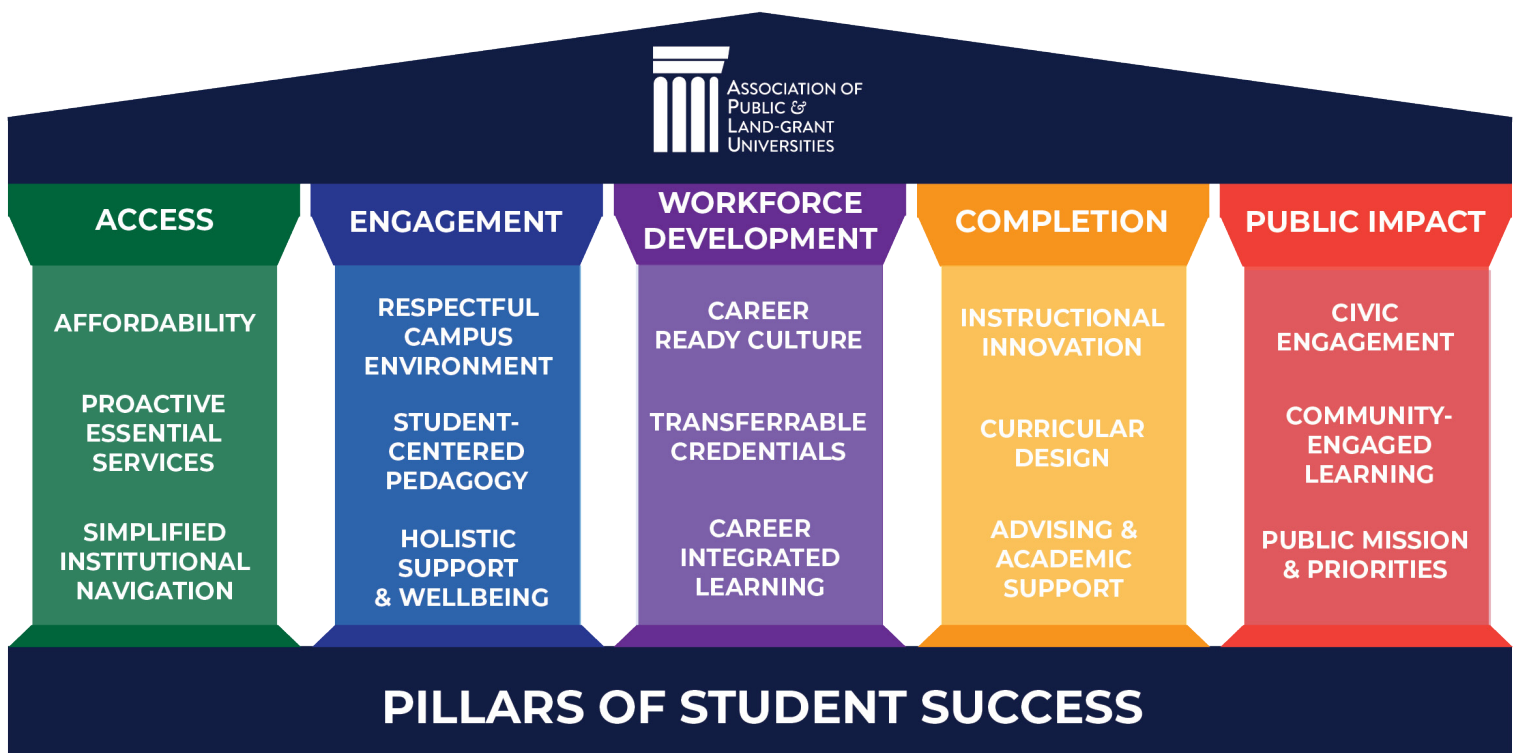
At the same time, several patterns emerged across this work:

- **Student success efforts are widespread across the institution.** Work is taking place across academic affairs, student affairs, and administrative units, often with strong local ownership.
- **Initiatives are often developed to address specific needs.** Many efforts are designed to support particular student populations, academic milestones, or institutional priorities.
- **Data and evidence are playing an increasing role.** Institutions are using data to inform decision-making, improve advising, and better understand student progress.
- **Leadership alignment remains central to sustained impact.** Coordinating efforts across units and scaling effective practices continues to be a key focus for institutional leaders.

THE APLU STUDENT SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

The APLU Student Success Framework provides a shared way to understand how student success efforts come together across the institution. It organizes this work across key areas of focus, supported by institutional practices that enable coordination, scale, and long-term impact.

The framework is designed to reflect how public universities are advancing student success in practice. It does not prescribe a single approach but instead offers a structure to connect and align efforts across units, initiatives, and strategies.



HOW TO READ THE FRAMEWORK

The APLU Student Success Framework is organized around two connected dimensions. The Pillars describe core areas of student success across the institutions, while the institutional practices reflect the practices, structures, and conditions that help those efforts succeed over time. Together, the framework provides a way to understand both “what” institutions are working to achieve and “how” institutions organize those efforts in practice.

Institutions may emphasize different pillars or approaches depending on mission, student population, institutional structure, and regional contexts. Rather than presenting student success as a single initiative or office, the framework is intended to help leaders view student success as a coordinated, institution-wide effort.

PILLARS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

The APLU Student Success Framework organizes institutional efforts across five interconnected pillars. Each pillar reflects a core dimension of the student experience and is accompanied by a guiding question to help define the pillar in practice.

ACCESS

Institutions expand opportunity and reduce financial barriers to support student entry and persistence. This includes strengthening pathways into the institutions, aligning admissions, financial, and other support processes, while also ensuring students have access to the resources, programs, and support needed to enroll and remain enrolled through graduation. Access extends beyond admission to include the conditions that enable students to successfully begin and continue their educational journey.

Guiding Question: *Can a student enter, navigate, and remain enrolled without avoidable roadblocks?*

ENGAGEMENT

Institutions create environments that support student connection, participation, and success. Through advising, co-curricular experience, mentoring, health and wellbeing, and pedagogical redesign that strengthen students' connection to their learning, campus community, and goals.

Guiding Question: *Is this an institution where all students are actively supported to succeed?*

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Institutions prepare students for careers through integrated learning, applied experiences, and sustained engagement with employers and industry. Career preparation is embedded across the student experience, connecting academic learning with knowledge, skills, and experiences needed for long-term career success.

Guiding Question: *Are students gaining the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to pursue meaningful careers?*

COMPLETION

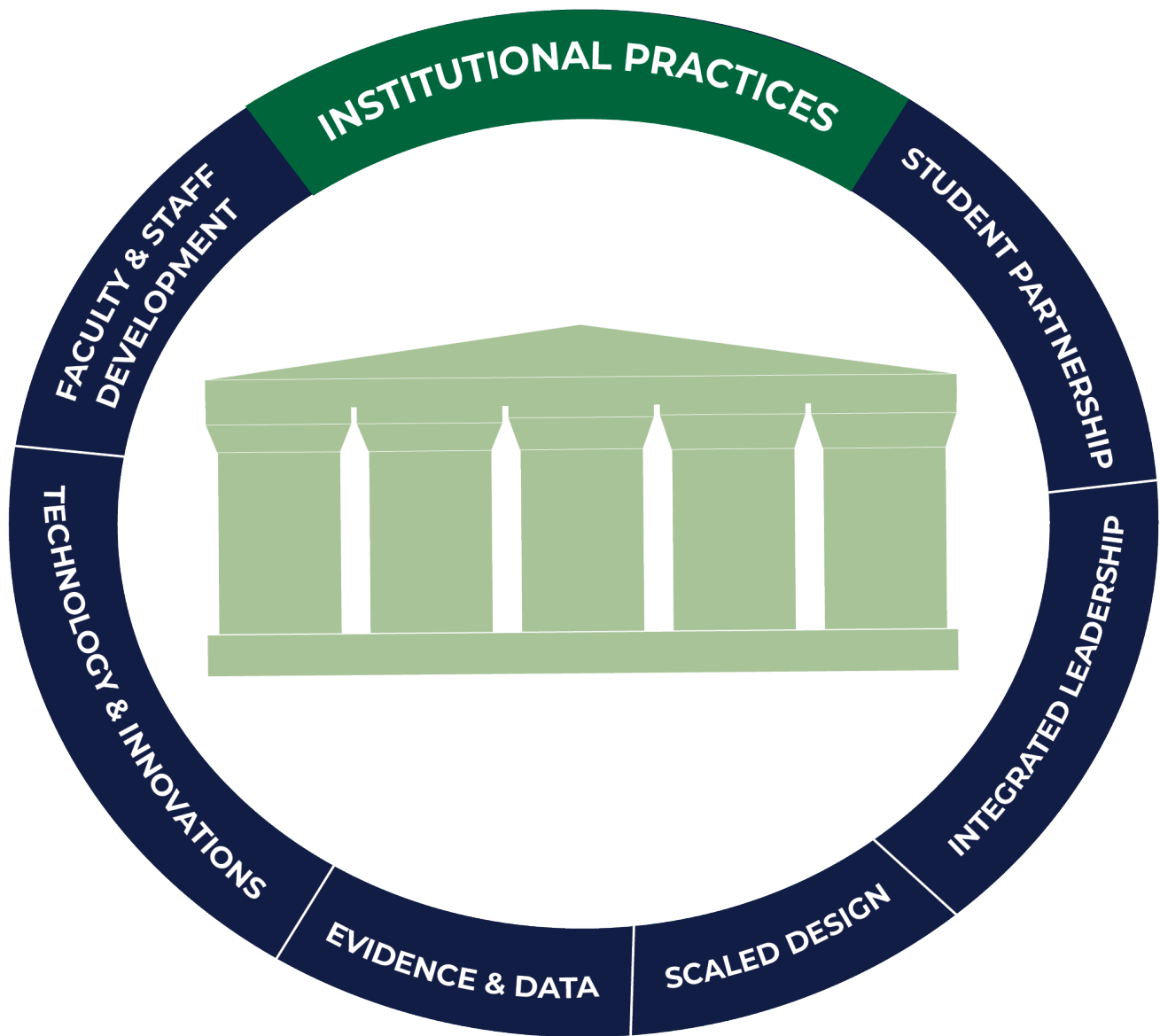
Institutions support timely progress through intentionally designed academic pathways, coordinated advising, aligned practices, and intentionally designed services. Completion reflects the institutions' ability to help students make timely progress towards their educational goals.

Guiding Question: *Is the path to completion clearly and intentionally designed and supported?*

PUBLIC IMPACT

Institutions connect student learning to communities, economic mobility, and broader societal contributions. Through partnerships, service, and applied learning, public and land-grant universities extend their value beyond the campus and prepare students to contribute to their communities, economies, and civic life.

Guiding Question: *Does student learning extend beyond the institution?*



INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

While the pillars describe what institutions are working toward, foundational conditions reflect how that work is advanced. These represent the conditions and capabilities that enable student success efforts to take hold, scale, and produce change over time. Each lever accompanied by a guiding question to support reflection and leadership dialogue.

INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT

Coordinated leadership aligns priorities, resources, and strategy across the institution. This includes shared ownership of student success across academic and student affairs, and administrative units, supported by clear governance structures and aligned decision making.

Guiding Question: *Do leadership priorities, resources, and decisions support a shared approach to student success?*

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE FOR DATA-INFORMED DECISIONS-MAKING

Institutions use data to inform decisions, improve practice, and track progress. This includes the use of both quantitative and qualitative insights to guide strategy and assess effects.

Guiding Question: *Is data used to improve practice over time?*

FACULTY AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Faculty and staff are supported and engaged in advancing student success. This includes professional development, clear expectations, and structures that enable faculty and staff to integrate student success easily into their roles.

Guiding Question: *How are faculty and staff equipped and supported to advance student success?*

STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

Institutions incorporate student perspectives into design and improvement efforts. Students are engaged not only as participants, but as contributors to institutional planning, learning, and improvement

Guiding Question: *How are students meaningfully engaged in improvement processes?*

SCALE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Effective practices are expanded and sustained across the institution. This includes moving beyond pilots or isolated initiatives to approaches that reach broad populations and endure through leadership and funding changes.

Guiding Question: *How are effective practices scaled and institutionalized?*

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Institutions deploy technology to enhance learning, support, and operational effectiveness. This includes the use of artificial intelligence, digital tools, platforms, or other emerging technologies to better serve students.

Guiding Question: *Is technology used in an aligned and strategic way to improve outcomes and institutional effectiveness?*

WHAT THE FRAMEWORK ENABLES

The Student Success Framework is designed to help institutions better understand and communicate their student success efforts. It does not prescribe specific models, initiatives, or interventions. Instead, the framework offers a structured way to understand how efforts across the institution relate to one another and contribute to shared goals.

By organizing student success across core areas and institutional approaches, the framework provides a cleaner view of work that is often distributed across units, departments, colleges, and divisions. It helps institutions connect efforts across academic affairs, student affairs, and administrative functions so that leadership may be more comprehensive in their success strategies.

The Framework also strengthens how institutions articulate their approach to student success. It provides a shared language that may be used to describe priorities and progress to campus leadership, governing boards, policymakers, and external parties. In this way, the framework supports not only internal understanding but also a more coherent and accessible institutional narrative about how student success is advanced through practice.

ADVANCING STUDENT SUCCESS ACROSS APLU INSTITUTIONS

The APLU Student Success Framework provides a shared foundation for understanding and advancing student success across public universities. It reflects the work already underway across member institutions and offers a way to better connect, align, and sustain these efforts over time. As institutions continue to refine and strengthen their approaches, the framework can support ongoing collaboration, learning, and exchange across the APLU network. APLU will continue to build on this work through convenings, recognition efforts, and future resources designed to support institutional student success efforts.

ABOUT APLU

APLU is a membership organization that fosters a community of university leaders collectively working to advance the mission of public research universities. The association's membership consists of more than 250 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations spanning across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, six U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. Annually, member campuses enroll 5.4 million undergraduates and 1.5 million graduate students, award 1.5 million degrees, employ 1.4 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$73 billion in university-based research.

