Designing an Innovative Ecosystem for Student Success: Kennesaw State University Wellstar College of Health and Human Services' Conceptual Model

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The Wellstar College of Health and Human Services (WCHSS) at Kennesaw State University developed a new theoretical model to understand and impact student success by combining two existing frameworks: Whole School, Whole Community, and Whole Child (WSCC) (Willgerodt and Maloy, 2021) and the Student Success Ecosystem (Millet et al, 2020). The WCHSS Student Success Model also appends novel constructs to produce an innovative holistic student success model with four key domains and two strategic initiatives. This model provides academics and practitioners with a framework to conceptualize student success, develop actionable interventions to drive improvement, and evaluate outcomes that continue the call to define student success more holistically.

Keywords: *student success, retention, conceptual model, outcomes*

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, the topic of student success is becoming increasingly important for institutions, especially as calls for increased operational efficiency, effective spending, and accountability occur. This

should not be surprising. After all, the goal of every institution should, in part, be focused on educating and graduating its students. Yet, the context by which one measures student success, the language used to define it, and the process by which to achieve it is still not agreed upon. There is a multitude of perspectives and approaches to achieving this singular goal. Yet, given the complexity and nuances associated with the intersections of competing variables that impact success, including (but not limited to), socio-economic levels, academic preparedness, access, and historical impediments, more knowledge generation needs to occur. As institutions work to understand how student success works on their respective campuses, it is important to share lessons. However, it is of greater importance to understand how these lessons may or may not work within the context of one's institution. This paper presents the sole case of Kennesaw State University's Wellstar College of Health and Human Services (WCHHS) and its conception of student success. Through the integration of two frameworks (i.e., Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)) (Willgerodt & Maloy, 2021) and the Student Success Ecosystem (Millet, 2020), the WCHHS developed a novel construct for student success for its students entitled, KSU's Wellstar College's Innovative Ecosystem for Student Success. What follows is a discussion of how this model was conceived, how evaluation is occurring, and its implications for future research and practice.

BACKGROUND

A leader in innovative teaching and learning, Kennesaw State University (KSU) is the third-largest public university in Georgia. Classified as a Carnegie-designated doctoral research institution (R2), KSU offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees to over 42,000 students representing 126 countries. The University features 11 colleges (nine of which are degree-granting colleges) on two separate metro Atlanta campuses and is part of the University System of Georgia (USG). The University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The student body is quite diverse (See Table 1-5 for Kennesaw State University Student Enrollment Profiles–Fall 2021). Based on Fall 2021 Enrollment data for combined graduate and undergraduate populations, the demographics for the university show that students, especially undergraduates, primarily range in age from 18-24 (See Table 1). Gender demographics report that the campus population consists of slightly more persons who identify as female (See Table 2) In terms of race and ethnicity, the campus continues to show an increasing number of minority students with 48.1 percent of students identifying as White, non-Hispanic; 24.7 percent as Black/African American, non-Hispanic; 5.4 percent as Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 12.8 percent as Hispanic/Latino (See Table 3). More students are enrolled as full-time (See Table 4) undergraduates (See Table 5).

One of the nine degree-granting colleges is The Wellstar College of Health and Human Services (WCCHS). The WCCHS is comprised of five units with the following academic programs:

- The Academy of Inclusive Learning and Social Growth: Offers a Certificate in Academic, Social, and Career Enrichment (ASCE).
- Exercise Science and Sport Management: Offers a Bachelor of Science with a Major in Exercise Science, Bachelor of Science with a Major in Sport Management, Master of Science with a Major in Exercise Science, Master of Science with a Major in Prosthetics and Orthotics, Nutritional Science Minor.
- Health Promotion and Physical Education: Offers a Bachelor of Science with a Major in Health and Physical Activity Leadership, Bachelor of Science with a Major in Integrated Health Science, Bachelor of Science with a Major in Public Health Education, and Public Health Minor.
- Social Work and Human Services: Offers a Bachelor of Science with a Major in Human Services, Master of Social Work, Certificate in Nonprofit Management and Social Innovation, Child Advocacy Studies Minor, and Nonprofit Management and Social Innovation Minor.
- Wellstar School of Nursing: Offers a traditional and an accelerated option for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a Master of Science in Nursing with a Major in Leadership in Nursing

focusing on Administration or Education, and a Master of Science in Nursing with a Major in Primary Care Nurse Practitioner,

Across KSU, approximately 13.9 percent of students are either participating in academic programs hosted within the Wellstar College of Health and Human Services (WCCHS) or declared academic program interest (See Table 6). The Nursing (n=2,762) and Exercise Science (n=1,141) majors represent two of the largest majors in the University. It is predicted that WCHHS will continue to experience steady growth given that students are interested in high-demand health and human services fields. Retention and graduation rates continue to increase within the college (See Table 7). With the rapid growth of student enrollment across WCHHS, doubling enrollment in about three years, and the new requirements regarding Student Success being mandated by the University System of Georgia, an increased focus on student success is realized at Kennesaw State University.

DEFINING STUDENT SUCCESS

Student success in higher education is a long-standing priority for leaders, advisors, staff, and faculty across the globe with a growing body of literature chronicling best practices. Researchers do acknowledge that efforts promoting student retention, progression, and graduation vary widely. Studies consider a myriad of criteria, with results identifying that student success is contextually limited based on population, socioeconomic status, inherent and learned capabilities, as well as holistic variables that often are challenging to control (Cui et al., 2019; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Lane et al., 2019; McCallen & Johnson, 2019; Sneyers & DeWitte, 2019). Still, dimensions for student success can be considered and bolstered in universities. The following review summarizes several studies and frameworks that supported the development of the innovative ecosystem for student success being presented.

Cui et al (2019) considered 121 articles using predictive learning analytics to identify the best factors associated with student success at the course and program levels. Both the course and program success were associated with holistic predictor variables. Predictor variables for courses included student performance on quizzes and midterms, student-associated interface with learning management systems, socio-emotional perspectives, previous academic and demographic records, key course features, and instructor variability. Program predictor variables were narrow and included previous academic and demographic records, college admission essays, and social networking, although the extent of this variable impact was not yet clear.

A synthesized framework was presented by Kahu and Nelson (2018) that considered three contributions to student success. The three elements contributing to student success included education theory, psychosocial constructs, and demographic characteristics of students. They asserted a first-year focus may be too limiting and prioritized student engagement as an essential element throughout the collegiate experience. Still, the term student engagement was broadly utilized without clear recommendations for specific implementation guidelines for co-curricular activities to enhance student success.

Another student success framework was presented by an Australian university team that incorporated dimensions of support such as connectedness, curious mindsets, self-management, professional identity, and academic capabilities (Lane et al, 2019). While a goal for the team was to create a usable and simple framework, the five noted dimensions created a need for multiple and complex support systems. Evaluating support systems posed challenges, too, with an identified need to evaluate each element. The team recommended the creation of survey questions specific to the support systems offered. Collaboration and refinement were the next steps for the team.

McCallen and Johnson (2019) focused on the success of first-generation college students attending a public and urban universities with mixed methods study. Their hypothesis was student success is "shaped by access to campus actors who convey institutional resources" (p.323). The findings revealed college faculty are important contributors to student success through their "transmission of aspirational, intellectual, emotional, and navigational capital" (p.329). Involving faculty in developing and implementing student success initiatives was imperative recommendation.

A meta-analysis of literature related to academic probation, student-faculty mentoring, and needs-based financial scholarships on student success was conducted by Sneyers and De Witte (2019). They reviewed

25 quasi-experimental published and non-published studies with reported effect sizes or data from the studies that could be utilized to calculate effect size impacting student success defined as enrollment, retention, and graduation. The researchers acknowledged that student-faculty mentoring held the largest influence on student success.

While an abundance of literature focusing on student success was surveyed, only recently published articles were included in this review. Overwhelmingly, the researchers noted the multifaceted nature associated with student success. In designing the presented innovative ecosystem for student success, the authors recognized a need to incorporate robust and holistic elements that researchers suggest foster student success.

CONCEPTUAL THINKING & THEORY ADAPTATION

As an academic college focused on health-related and service professions, the Wellstar College Student Success Ecosystem framework incorporated two similarly dedicated holistic approaches to student success. The first student success framework was the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model most utilized in p-12 public school environments (Lewallen et al., 2015). There has long been a recognition that health and education are interrelated. Healthy students are better learners, and educational attainment is one of the strongest predictors of future health status (Michael et al., 2015). Critical links exist between academic achievement and health behaviors among adolescents (Basch, 2011, Busch et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2008; Pucher, et al., 2013; Rasberry et al., 2017). Despite the strong connection between health and academic success, health and education sectors historically operated in silos despite often serving the same child, in the same location, and, at times, attempting to address the same issues.

The WSCC model unified both health and education sectors to address the relationship between education and health directly. WSCC was an integration of the Coordinated School Health Program (Allensworth & Kolbe, 1987), a long-standing public health framework for school health that followed a systems-based approach, with tenets of the Whole Child approach from ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). The Whole Child approach challenged the education community to focus attention on ensuring that all students are healthy and feel supported, challenged, engaged, and safe (ASCD, 2007). The WSCC model (See Figure 1) reflects the alignment of health and education priorities by incorporating the eight components of the Coordinated School Health approach, emphasizing the school as an integral part of the community, and placing students at the center to promote a student-based approach. Woven throughout WSCC is a focus on the importance of coordination of policy, process, and practice.

Although the education and health sectors have always been interested in similar outcomes, the creation of the WSCC model provided a framework for working together by identifying the sectors, stakeholders, contexts, and elements that need to be considered when fully integrating health and education priorities. This type of collaborative initiative allows schools and districts to better integrate and align services to provide greater efficiencies and better health and education outcomes for students (Chiang et al., 2015). School programs that account for individual, family, school, and community can positively influence both student health behaviors and learning outcomes (Bradley & Greene, 2017; National Academies, 2020). WSCC's student-centered and community-grounded approach is intended to create a culture of health to support student success in the p-12 environment. Building on this model for higher education, the Wellstar College Student Success Ecosystem prioritized student health and wellbeing, along with traditional student success measures, such as graduation and retention rates. The vision was to place students as the focal point utilizing a student-centered approach that through coordination of services, policy creation, and enhanced communication was able to create a safety net to ensure all students were supported. The model also incorporated evidence-based practices such as hiring a coordinator, instituting collaborative teams addressing both health and learning, and making data-informed decisions. This growing body of research and studies examining key factors that advanced successful implementation provided keys to the development of our conceptual ecosystem model (Murray et al., 2015).

The second framework is rooted in the work of Ortiz and Morales (2019) who recognized the need to "reframe the narrative of Hispanic and Student Success" by focusing on the responsibility that public four-year universities have for student success. They write "if we think of our educational institutions as a microcosm of the communities we live in, then our institutions of higher education, specifically, Hispanic-Serving Institutions have physically and methodically become an embedded and trusted anchor institution by building civil infrastructure to enable lasting social infrastructure" (2019, p.1H). This same logic can be adapted to all student populations regardless of race and ethnicity, especially given the role public higher education institutions have within communities as generators of our workforce, producers of technology and innovation, and creators of knowledge/research.

The concept of the ecosystem is further extended to the school itself. Elias (2016) writes "a school is an ecosystem. One dictionary definition of [an] ecosystem is a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.' If we believe that a school is an ecosystem, it has tremendous implications for how we organize schools and conduct ourselves within them" (Elias, 2016). Conceptually, the idea of the University as an ecosystem calls for students, faculty, and staff to understand the interconnectedness that exists and contributes to the overall ability of the ecosystem to maintain itself if the organisms are to thrive within. Thus, institutions of higher learning "cannot produce proficiency, let alone excellence, without attending to the climate...and the social-emotional competence and character of everyone in the school" (Ibid). Policies and programs must be holistic and be based on the relationships people have with one another. For example, Slade (2019) applies this concept to that of the whole child by asserting that "knowledge acquisition interplays with the development of skills and competencies, which in turn interplays with how we learn, and how we use our learning. Social and emotional well-being, whether it is related to empathy or self-worth, can affect the student's ability to collaborate, communicate, co-construct learning, understand differing perspectives, and create new values. The environment we create in the institution impacts the type of growth and learning that occurs" (Slade, 2019). Thus, it is important to unpackage the types of internal bureaucracies, systems, supports, and services that exist within the university from the student's perspective to realize when we create too much complexity that it impacts the student's ability to thrive and achieve success. Wellstar College students echo the existence of complexity and lack of understanding of how to navigate the "Kennesaw State" ecosystem. Thus, our model seeks ways to reduce this burden and simplify unnecessary interactions that can further exacerbate stress and lead to meaningless or frustrating experiences.

Lastly, many view student success from a deficit perspective. One in which institutions only examine student success by focusing on retention, progression, and graduation rates and focus on students who are experiencing barriers. Elaine Cox (2018) challenges this perspective by examining students who are doing well and are achieving. Cox states that a new definition of student success is one that "incorporates research on self-efficacy and adds a new concept of mutual evolution between a student and their ecosystem" (Cox, 2018). She asserts it is imperative to collect data on high-thriving students to have a better definition of student success. A student is "thriving when (s)he experiences the maximum benefits from his or her specific ecosystem and demonstrates this through heightened social and academic engagement for a deeper sense of happiness" (ibid). What becomes tricky for researchers utilizing this perspective is finding ways to measure this. A point Cox acknowledges. She continues by highlighting the 2013 work of Greenwald and Associates on the College Optimizer Index (COI). The COI identifies 21 variables that fall under three dimensions of thriving: social, academic, and personal happiness. These variables drive our conceptual model of student success.

As we thought about what it means to thrive, we turned our attention to self-determination. Self-determination theory (SDT) was developed by Deci and Ryan in 1985 and is based upon the assumptions that the need for growth drives behavior and that autonomous motivation is important. Psychological growth is thereby achieved when people feel autonomy, competence, and connection or relatedness. Social support through relationships and interactions is key for people to become either proactive or passive in their approach to well-being and personal growth. Self-determination theory has "maintained that a full understanding not only of goal-directed behavior but also of psychological development and well-being,

cannot be achieved without addressing the needs that give goals their psychological potency and that influence which regulatory processes direct people's goal pursuits" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.228).

WCHHS affords our students many opportunities to take an active role in policy, processes, and practice. In return, we offer students increased responsibilities, constructive feedback, support, and encouragement. Based on the ecosystem literature, belongingness, and relationships become key and we find that this is also important when improving one's self-determination. Thus, a key takeaway is based on the work of Lord et al. (2019) who support,

> adopt, and endorse the perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness of an ecosystem and the hidden aspects of student agency within such a complex system. ...In an ecosystem, students have agency, and while historical inequities influence access and inclusion, they do not necessarily predetermine student trajectories. Traditional retention analytics can obscure student agency, while institutional variation further confounds these patterns. In addition, systemic conditions predispose some groups of students to thrive in a timely fashion and in the same ecosystem where success for others requires more time (p.33).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL BUILDING: TOWARDS A NEW FRAMEWORK

WCCHS utilized learnings from the literature to construct a new framework for student success. Additionally, data from previous studies regarding student success were also incorporated into the framework. For example, the Department of Education's First in the World Program provided funding to KSU between 2014-2018 to conduct an impact evaluation for Transfer Students. Solutions tested to improve Retention, Progression, and Graduation (RPG) included the use of a Graduation Coach for intrusive advising, transfer advising guides for advising clarity, and predictive analytics (Terrell et. al, 2019). In Fall of 2019, a Human Designed Centered Study was launched in the Wellstar College specifically to identify barriers to student success and to determine possible solutions for improving RPG rates. Four action-oriented themes emerged: (a) advisement; (b) scheduling (i.e., meeting student demand for courses); (c) course communication; and (d) knowledge and availability of resources (Ramos et. al, 2022). The findings of both studies corroborate each other and helped to drive concepts presented in this model.

The new model has four domains and two strategic initiatives where all WCHHS faculty and staff collaboratively build connections and networks between various college and university resources (See Figure 2). We acknowledge that several resources exist within the college and the university that contributes to the student's ecosystem (See Figure 3). We sought to understand our Wellstar College ecosystem similar to what Millet et al. (2020) did when they sought to enhance Five College Promise Populations. WCHHS faculty and staff are now working more intentionally, collaboratively, and strategically, through the four domains and initiatives, to build linkages that lead to the creation of a seamless delivery system and a safety net to support all WCHHS students. Embedded within the domains are scalable strategies such as the *Taking Student Success to Scale Initiative* (TS^3) that the University System of Georgia is a part of (i.e., use of high-impact practices, predictive analytics, and reimaged math pathways).

Domain #1

The first domain in the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem focuses on academic advising and surveillance, as well as the development of seamless transfer processes. These efforts will be conducted in consultation and coordination with existing KSU resources such as the Owl Advising Center, Orientation and Transitions Programs, Digital Learning Innovations, and AVP for Student Success. Domain one of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem model includes the following strategies:

- Identifying students interested in careers in WCHHS fields as soon as possible to begin the orientation and education of majors and provide opportunities within the college for increased student engagement.
- Creating a Multi-channel Panel consisting of a representative from each program in the College to engage with prospective majors on questions, career options, etc.

- Providing proactive high-touch advising support early in the student's career with an emphasis on transfer students.
- Creating a transfer specialist position to enhance the timeliness and quality of advising for this segment.
- Using predictive data analytics to identify and provide support services to students.
- Creating a data code through the registrar's office to track Wellstar College transfer students upon entry into an associated program major.

Domain #2

The second domain of our WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem addresses the need for additional resources for WCHHS students to assist with the skills necessary for a timely graduation and advancing their academic and/or professional careers. Working in collaboration with the Office of Alumni Relations, the Wellstar Advising Center, and the Department of Career Planning and Development, this domain focuses on the use of a graduation coach and enhancing WCHHS Career Planning initiatives. Domain two of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem model includes the following strategies:

- Graduation Coaching: The graduation coach will provide professional counseling and additional referral and resolution to students on an individual and group basis for those with personal, social, academic, educational, and career concerns.
- Field/Internship Coordination: Work across department units to establish and increase coordination among field/internship sites where multiple majors may be placed and provide support to site supervisors.

Domain #3

The third domain of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem addresses student supports that complements coursework in our various majors. We are proposing three types of support: Supplemental Instructors (SIs) or Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who offer support in specific classes with high DFWI percentages; Peer Learning Assistants (LAs); and Peer Tutors (PTs) who offer individualized help to WCHHS students. This domain includes supplemental instructors, workshops, and training that support student learning, and connect students with peer and alumni mentors. Domain three of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem model includes the following strategies:

- Deployment of supplemental instruction, learning supports, and peer and alumni mentors through early outreach and intervention with perspective and declared WCHHS students.
- Nurtures, Encourages, Supports, and Tutors (N.E.S.T.): This will be like "athletic academic tutoring" but will be available to all students on a "drop-in" basis.
- Study Buddies: Incorporating peer learning assistants in courses to assist students with time management, study skills, and course content understanding. These assistants can also act as tutors.

Domain #4

Since WCHHS focuses on health-related and holistic service professions and as noted in the literature, it is important to address self-care proactively, so our students do not fall victim to compassion fatigue early in their careers. This also builds off the WSCC model, where an important goal is for all students to feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. While all domains within the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem support these efforts, the fourth domain reflects an essential element that is unique to our college. Currently, there is no dearth of student resources at KSU; yet ironically many students are not aware of these services and how they relate to each other. Consequently, in the current context, there are many services and resources at KSU that can be leveraged and better coordinated to truly support student life within WCHHS. Domain four of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem model includes the following strategies:

- Hoot and Reboot: The College offers a monthly event for some type of social and emotional reboot. Students enjoy the company of their classmates and comradery is developed across cohorts/under and upper-class persons. This is also a time when advising staff and instructors can mingle with their students, play board games, participate in activities, etc.
- Identifying additional areas in the curriculum and in co-curricular activities where the promotion of self-care strategies can occur.
- Creating a one-stop clearinghouse of targeted information and activities calendar that can be accessed readily.
- Incorporating "on-time" Student Engagement Activities focused on belongingness activities that highlight cultural competence and critical dialogues.
- Designing advising service variation, especially during high-need times within the academic calendar.
- Linking students to wellness, readiness, and belonging information and activities accessed readily through technology.

The design of the WCHHS Student Success Ecosystem intentionally connects the various resources that exist for students through strategic initiatives and continuous improvement. To accomplish this, we recognize the need to:

1. Expand the capacity of the Wellstar College Advising Center through the hiring of two cross-trained personnel and further realignment of current advisor responsibilities.
2. Create a new position at the college level to coordinate and implement the student ecosystem success model.
3. Identify and hire students, graduate, and undergraduate, to provide course assistance in the form of supplemental instruction.
4. Re-examine how we collect and utilize data to make informed decisions about student success and incorporate predictive analytics to inform practices and coaching strategies for students.
5. Continue to incorporate the student, faculty, and staff voice through the development of advisory groups and teamwork groups on key components linked to each domain.
6. Develop accountability measures to ensure progress is being made and communication strategies to share successes and setbacks.

METHODOLOGOY

To test this conceptual framework, we developed an evaluation model to occur at the individual goal level as well as to assess the efficacy of the ecosystem built for student success. Some of the constructs associated with our evaluation are based on the work of Davidson and Beck's (2018) *The Basic Psychological Needs Questionnaire: College Context.* This survey is rooted in the three basic needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy derived from SDT. Davidson and Beck contend that "the assessment of needs is important to those who build models for understanding the crucial factors in college students' commitment, performance, and retention" (2018, p.1161). The results of their study indicate that there are significant associations between the three needs and institutional commitment and degree commitment further encouraging universities to include motivational factors in comprehensive models of student outcomes.

A mixed-methods approach will be used that consists of collecting data for each metric to establish a baseline to build benchmarks. Every year thereafter, we hope to improve each outcome. The data collected will be analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. How effective is the ecosystem in enhancing students' satisfaction with student success initiatives each year?
2. What are the benchmarks for key metrics in each goal for WCHHS Student Success Domains and Initiatives?

3. What is the quality of experiences of key stakeholders (students, alumni, mentors, coaches, faculty, and staff) involved in the WCHHS Student Success ecosystem project?

Data will be collected annually and will consist of a quantitative measurement model analysis, a quantitative growth analysis, and a qualitative analysis of feedback through surveys, interviews, and focus groups representing various stakeholders. Using a quantitative analysis measurement model based upon the previous literature and data collection, the researchers believe that the nature of student satisfaction is intrinsically related to the nature of the following seven indicator variables: (1) orientation experience; (2) academic supports; (3) graduation coaching; (4) supplemental instructional supports and co-curricular activities; (5) wellness supports; (6) communication timeliness and clarity; and (7) dashboards, policies, and practices surrounding student success, which we hypothesize will have positive effects on students' satisfaction. Evaluation of each independent variable will be assessed annually using Likert-based student questionnaires. Using a measurement model of the latent variable (student satisfaction) with the above seven effect indicators, the researchers will run a regression with latent variable outcomes by first running a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to check discriminant validity and verify the measurement quality of student satisfaction. The set of the seven observable variables listed above will serve as the indicators that will be weighted based on their variance/covariance structure. Our first step in this process will be to calculate the factor loadings of the indicators. This measurement model will be repeated annually, and based on the findings, changes and/or future directives related to our proposed activities may be modified to continue improving student satisfaction.

In addition to collecting data on student satisfaction through student questionnaires, the researchers will collect annual growth rates relating to each of our six goals. The researchers will comparatively analyze student satisfaction with activities initiated under each goal. Based upon annual student questionnaires, initiatives will be further developed to enhance student satisfaction and thereby student success. In addition to the quantitative measures described above, the researchers will collect qualitative data through alumni and mentor surveys, student surveys, and faculty/staff surveys regarding the quality and effectiveness of the activities implemented for goals one through six.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND APPLICATION TO PRACTICE

As we move through this modeling and implement it, implications for research and the application to practice are becoming evident. First, regarding the practical application, faculty, and administrators should develop intentional, interdisciplinary teams to foster cooperation and an integrated approach to student success. From our perspective, this collaborative team includes key individuals from Academic Affairs, the Dean and Associate Deans, faculty from each academic unit within our college, Advising, and students. These individuals are augmented by persons from other campus support offices. The need for collaboration and communication is key as we are finding that across our college, parity does not exist when it comes to student success. For example, some units have student clubs/organizations that can foster belonging within units, while other units are still developing clubs/organizations; some units may have graduate assistants or undergraduate student researchers who can assist with tracking metrics, while others do not. Understanding the shared and varied experiences across units has been a cornerstone of this team's early successes and will help foster continued growth moving forward. We have learned from each other during consistent meetings, and consistent email communication, and facilitated data and practice sharing on how to realign existing resources and build upon best practices to create greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

Second, the Dean (and other administrators) should be actively involved in student success efforts. The WCHHS Dean and Associate Deans have been active members and supporters of the student success task force along with a student-focused advisory group. This sort of engagement from the Dean's Office ignited and sustained consistent involvement by faculty. Student success is not an afterthought in this college; it is at the forefront and everyone's priority. Although metrics are forthcoming, we suggest other university administrators also consider centering student success to prompt engagement and sustainability. In addition, as administrators are centering student success, look to what others have accomplished (successes and shortcomings), and develop/modify a framework and approach best suiting the needs of their university.

Third, administrators should set aside specific funding to support student success initiatives. Notice of potential funding by KSU Academic Affairs galvanized the WCHHS Student Success Task Force, which sparked the development of this conceptual model, and subsequent student success efforts. Although each of our units had siloed efforts, this funding helped us to bridge the gap between units to foster a more unified effort throughout the college.

Regarding research, faculty, and administrators should actively plan and conduct evaluation efforts related to student success. Without appropriate metrics highlighting what went well and what can be improved, the student success efforts would be potentially wasting resources; this is a disservice to the university and academia. There is a persistent need for more published evaluation efforts to address student success, so we are not reinventing the wheel. Specifically, for our team, our next steps focus on the evaluation of the ecosystem. The evaluation of the ecosystem to be implemented in Wellstar College will occur at the individual goal level as well as assess the efficacy of the ecosystem built for student success. In our conceptual approach, we have proposed a mixed-methods approach consisting of baseline data to build benchmarks for future years. Also, the research questions embedded in the evaluation include the following: 1. How effective is the ecosystem in enhancing students' satisfaction with student success initiatives each year? 2. What are the benchmarks for key metrics in each goal for WCHHS Student Success Domains and Initiatives? 3. What is the quality of experiences of key stakeholders (students, alumni, mentors, coaches, faculty, and staff) involved in the WCHHS Student Success ecosystem project? Data will be collected annually and will consist of a quantitative measurement model analysis, a quantitative growth analysis, and a qualitative analysis of feedback through surveys, interviews, and focus groups representing various stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

Previous research indicated that more knowledge generation is needed about the intersections of competing variables that impact student success. Through the integration of two frameworks (WSCC and Student Success Ecosystem) and the acknowledgment on the importance of data collection and metrics, the WCHHS developed a novel construct for student success for its students entitled, KSU's Wellstar College's Innovative Ecosystem for Student Success. The WCHHS model was created with students as the focal point and set forth to create a one-stop shop of integrated services aimed at reducing the complexity of the student's ecosystem. Students and staff collaboratively build connections and networks between various college and university resources. Through the collection of quantitative data, and an iterative process used to analyze qualitative data, new accountability strategies may be developed to provide a more holistic view of the school culture and student experience and inform the implementation of policies, programs, and practices. The WCHHS model is proposed as a "mutual evolution" between students and their ecosystem that Cox (2018) contends will lead students into a state of happiness, represented by their thriving through heightened social and academic engagement. Future findings based on our evaluation model are forthcoming.

TABLE 1
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
AGE RANGE BY STUDENT LEVEL

	<17	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-61	>62	Grand Total
Undergraduate Semester	1,074	20,031	12,399	3,007	1,091	564	551	150	106	**38,973**
Graduate Semester		3	612	1,016	725	581	723	309	41	**4,010**
Grand Total	**1,074**	**20,034**	**13,011**	**4,023**	**1,816**	**1,145**	**1,274**	**459**	**147**	**42,983**

TABLE 2
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
STUDENT GENDER

	Graduate	Undergraduate	Total
Female	2,402	19,630	22,032
Male	1,608	19,343	20,951

TABLE 3
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
STUDENT RACE - ETHNICITY

Race & Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
American Indian/Alaskan Native	25	63	88
Asian	1,189	1050	2,239
Black/African American	4,590	6,014	10,604
Hispanic/Latino	2,576	2,842	5,518
International	506	408	914
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	55	26	81
Not Reported	454	422	876
Two or More	940	1,088	2,028
White	10,629	10,057	20,686

TABLE 4
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
REGISTRATION STATUS (FULL-TIME/PART-TIME)

	Full-Time	Part-Time
Undergraduate	28,679	10,294
Graduate	1,369	2,641

TABLE 5
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
STUDENT CLASSIFICIATION

Student Classification	Number of Students
Dual Enrollment	1.033
First-year student/Freshman	11,650
Sophomore	8,385
Junior	7,808
Senior	9,912
Undergraduate Other	185
Graduate	4,010

Source: KSU Factbook Enrollment Profile See: https://ir.kennesaw.edu/facts-figures/enrollment_profile.php

TABLE 6
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROFILE – FALL 2021
BY MAJOR AND DEPARTMENT

Department	Major	Undergraduate Semester	Graduate Semester	Total
Undeclared	Undeclared – Health Professional	71		71
Academy of Inclusive Learning	Certificate	48		48
Department of Exercise Science and Sport Management	M.S. Exercise Science		26	26
	Exercise Science	290		290
	Exercise Science-Interest	851		851
	Prosthetics and Orthotics		24	24
	Sport Management	597		597
	Sport Management - Interest	3		3
	Department Total	**1,741**	**50**	**1,791**
Department of Health Promotion and Physical Education	Health and Physical Education (P-12)	24		24
	Health and Physical Education (P-12) Interest	67		67
	Integrated Health Science	312		312
	Public Health Education	29		29
	Public Health Education – Interest	96		96
	Department Total	**528**		**528**
Department of Social Work and Human Services	Human Services	119		119
	Human Services - Interest	143		143
	Social Work		107	
	Department Total	**262**	**107**	**369**
Wellstar School of Nursing	Nursing (Traditional)	447		447
	Nursing (Accelerated)	128		128
	Nursing (Interest)	2,187		2,187
	Nursing (D.S.N.)		2	2
	M.S. Nursing – Practitioner Program		67	67
	M.S. Nursing - Leadership		47	47
	Department Total	**2,762**	**116**	**2,878**
College Total		**5,412**	**273**	**5,685**

TABLE 7
WELLSTAR COLLEGE GRADUATION AND RETENTION RATES

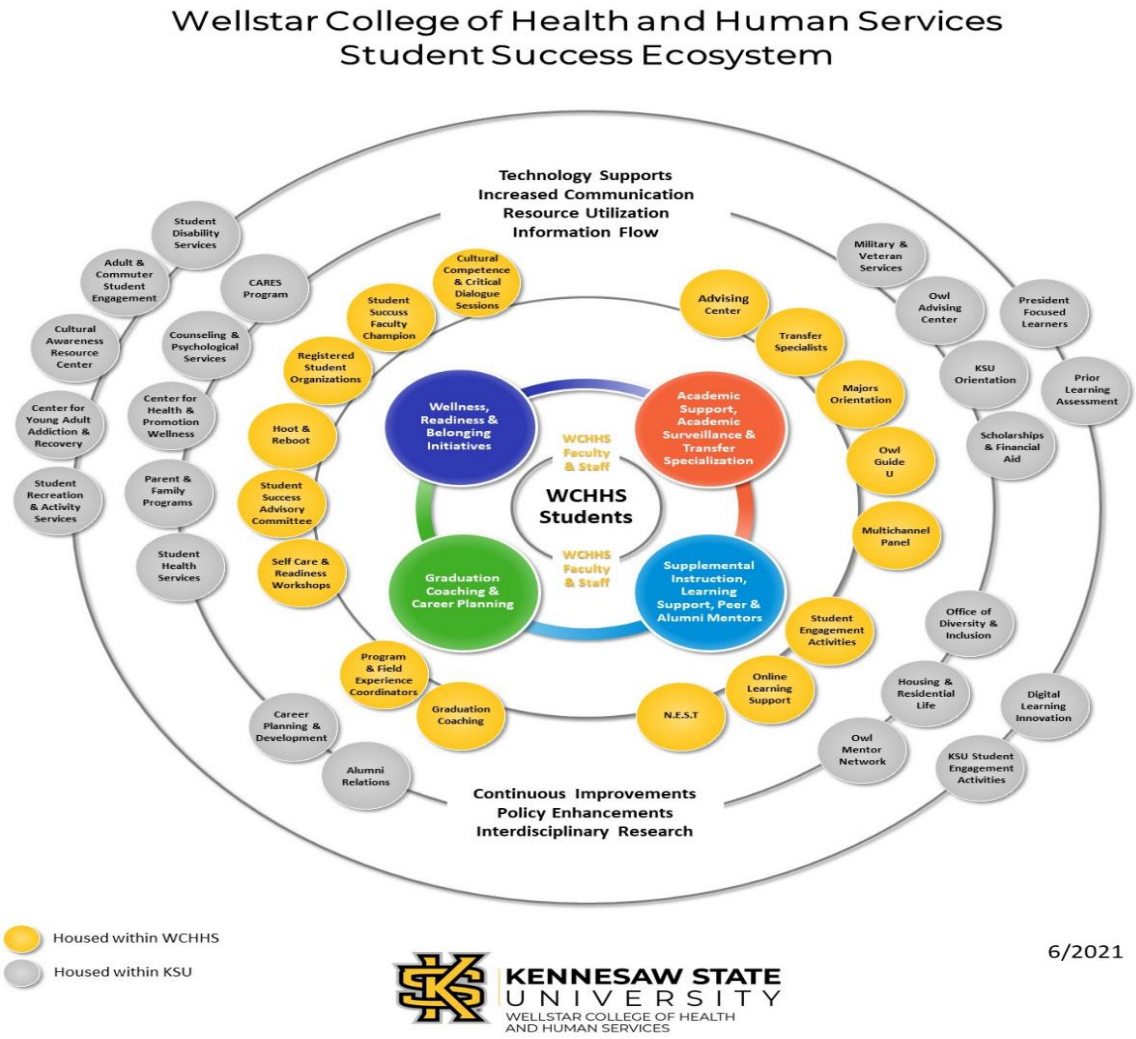
Program	1st Year Retention (2019 cohort)	4-year Graduation (2016 cohort)	5-year Graduation (2015 cohort)	6-year Graduation (2014 cohort)
Exercise Science	78.7%	23.6%	47.6%	48.1%
Health and Physical Education	66.7%	15.4%	66.7%	61.9%
Human Services	82.6%	23.8%	45.5%	60%
Integrated Health Science	No data			
Nursing	82.5%	10.5%	34.7%	42%
Public Health Education	76.9%	50%	No data	
Sport Management	80.2%	27.6%	51.5%	48.5%

Source: KSU Institutional Research
Note: Retention and Graduation Rates are calculated using First-Time, Full-Time Students and include summer starts.

FIGURE 1
WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD (WSCC) MODEL

FIGURE 2
WCHHS STUDENT SUCCESS ECOSYSTEM – THE DOMAINS

FIGURE 3
WCHHS ECOSYSTEM – SUPPORT MAPPING



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