



# Examining the Impact of the Open SUNY+ Signature Elements





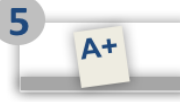


Kristyn Muller, Ph.D.

Peter Shea, Ph.D.

# Agenda

- Review Open SUNY+ Signature Elements
- Project Description
- Research Methodology
- Preliminary Findings
- Limitations & Implications
- Discussion

# Open SUNY+ Signature Elements

Students and faculty	 1	<b>Personalized student services</b> to minimize time to degree and promote student success
	 2	<b>Engaging learning experiences</b> based on <b>industry-relevant content</b> in “High Needs” or “High Demand” areas
	 3	<b>Comprehensive faculty support</b> to ensure quality in course design, development, and delivery
Institution and infrastructure	 4	<b>Robust technology environment</b> for online learning and <b>effective/innovative uses of technology</b> in all aspects of the online program
	 5	<b>Institutional commitment to quality assurance</b> for online learning
	 6	<b>Assessment of program effectiveness</b> to enable continuous quality improvement
	 7	<b>Strategic commitment to growth</b> supported by <b>robust financial model</b> to ensure scalability of resources as enrollments grow

# OS+ Signature Elements Project

The goal of this research project was to see if there is a relationship between Open SUNY+ Signature Elements and student outcomes in online courses/programs.

More specifically, this project evaluated quality of the following OS+ elements:

- student technology support
- concierge/advising
- tutoring
- faculty development
- course review processes

*on degree completion rates*



# Open SUNY Team

- Kristyn Muller, Impact Analyst
- Alexandra Pickett, Director of Open SUNY Online Teaching
- Dan Feinberg, Manager of Campus Partnerships
- Michele Forte, Manager of Student Supports
- Rachel Sullivan, Impact Analysis Student Assistant
- Lisa Stephens, Academic Innovations Senior Strategist



# Guiding Questions

- Can quality of the Open SUNY+ Signature Elements be measured? How?
- Do the Open SUNY+ Signature Elements matter? Do they impact student outcomes?
  - For example – might these supports enhance degree completion?

# Research Methodology: Defining Quality

## Rubrics (Instrument)

- the team developed a list of indicators and an accompanying rubric for each OS+ element
- these rubrics allow for cross campus or cross program comparisons of element quality
- indicators were assigned weights based on hypothesized importance of their relationship to student outcomes, within that element

## Campuses (Participants)

- the team selected 9 SUNY community colleges to serve as pilot campuses for data collection
- intentionally selected OS+ and non-OS+ campuses so there would be variation in the elements scores

**OS+ Element: Student Technology Support**

Hours Covered (.3)

Avg. Years of Experience of HelpDesk Staff (.15)

Method(s) of Requesting HelpDesk Assistance (.1)

Self-Support Available (.1)

Number of Technologies Supported (.1)

Navigation/Information on Help Desk Website (.05)

ADA Website Compliance (.05)

Mobile Friendly Website (.05)

Department/campus has a plan for continuous improvement of student tech support services (.1)

**OS+ Element: Concierge/Online Advising**

The institution has individuals dedicated to assisting and guiding online students through various phases of academic planning (.4)

Students can easily identify and reach their online concierge (.2)

The institution provides training for individuals serving as online concierges (.2)

Online concierge average years of experience (.1)

Department has a plan for continuous improvement of concierge services (.1)

**OS+ Element: Online Tutoring**

Online academic tutoring is provided (.6)

Tutoring services are well publicized for online students (.2)

Tutoring Staff Average Years of Experience (.05)

Department/campus has online tutor training (.05)

Department/campus has a plan for continuous improvement of online tutoring services (.1)





**OS+ Element: Faculty Development Process**

The institution has a strategic view of online teaching and learning at the institutional level and allocated resources to the efforts (.07)

Online course quality is systematically and consistently addressed (.1)

Online teaching and learning effective practices are systematically and consistently addressed. (.1)

Online faculty development and online course design programs are provided for new online faculty (.1)

Online faculty development and online course design programs are provided for blended online faculty (.05)

Online faculty development and online course design programs are provided for adjunct online faculty (.1)

A culture of online course continuous improvements for mature online courses is supported and exists among experienced Blended and Online faculty (.1)

ID experience (.07)

Online Faculty Resources (.05)

Faculty Satisfaction (.08)

Faculty Participation (.1)

Online teaching is Included in faculty evaluation process/ tenure (.08)

**OS+ Element: Course Quality Review Process**

Online course quality is systematically and consistently addressed (.3)

A systematic comprehensive new online course review and refresh program is provided (.3)

A process is provided for online course review and refresh for all mature online courses (.25)

Effectiveness and improvement (.15)



# Research Methodology: Defining Quality

## Procedure

- an introductory email was sent to each pilot campus prior to data collection
- a member of the research team interviewed one online learning leader at each campus in order to evaluate the quality of each OS+ element
  - interview questions for each indicator were created, but data was collected in a semi-structured interview format, which allowed for respondents to provide more information about the resources available on their campus
- each indicator was evaluated and given a score between 1 and 5 (1 indicates that the indicator is either not present on the campus or being offered minimally, while a 5 indicates that it is being offered at the highest quality)
- the indicator scores were calculated to arrive at the overall element score.
- quality scores were then compared to rates of degree completion using regression analysis.

# Preliminary Findings: Defining Quality

Variability of quality across the sample

Student Tech Support	2.25	4.9
Advising/Concierge	1.8	4.9
Tutoring	2.2	5
Faculty Development Process	2.37	4.68
Course Review Process	1	4.85

# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes

The sample included 211 online Associate degree programs in 8 of the Community Colleges rated for quality of the Open SUNY+ Signature Elements. The majority of these programs were fully online with 100% of the required coursework being online.

The sample represented a mixture of programs leading to an AA, AS, or AAS degree in five different discipline areas – Humanities, Social Sciences, Stem fields, Professional, and other fields

# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes

- The ***dependent variable*** in all analyses was number of degrees conferred per program at the end of each of the major terms (Spring s the and Fall) between Spring 2014 and Spring 2017.
- The ***focal predictor variables*** included the quality ratings of each of the five Open SUNY+ Signature Elements at the campus level. Since campuses were rated globally, programs within a campus shared the same rating of quality.
- The ***control variables*** were the average age of students, percent of female students, percent of minority students, and percent of economically disadvantaged students (operationalized as percent of Pell grant recipients).

# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes

## Results:

- For a one-point increase in ratings of student technology support the rate of degree conferral increases significantly with the remaining predictors held constant.
- For a one-point increase in ratings concierge/advising, the rate of degree conferral increases significantly with the remaining predictors held constant.

# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes

## Results:

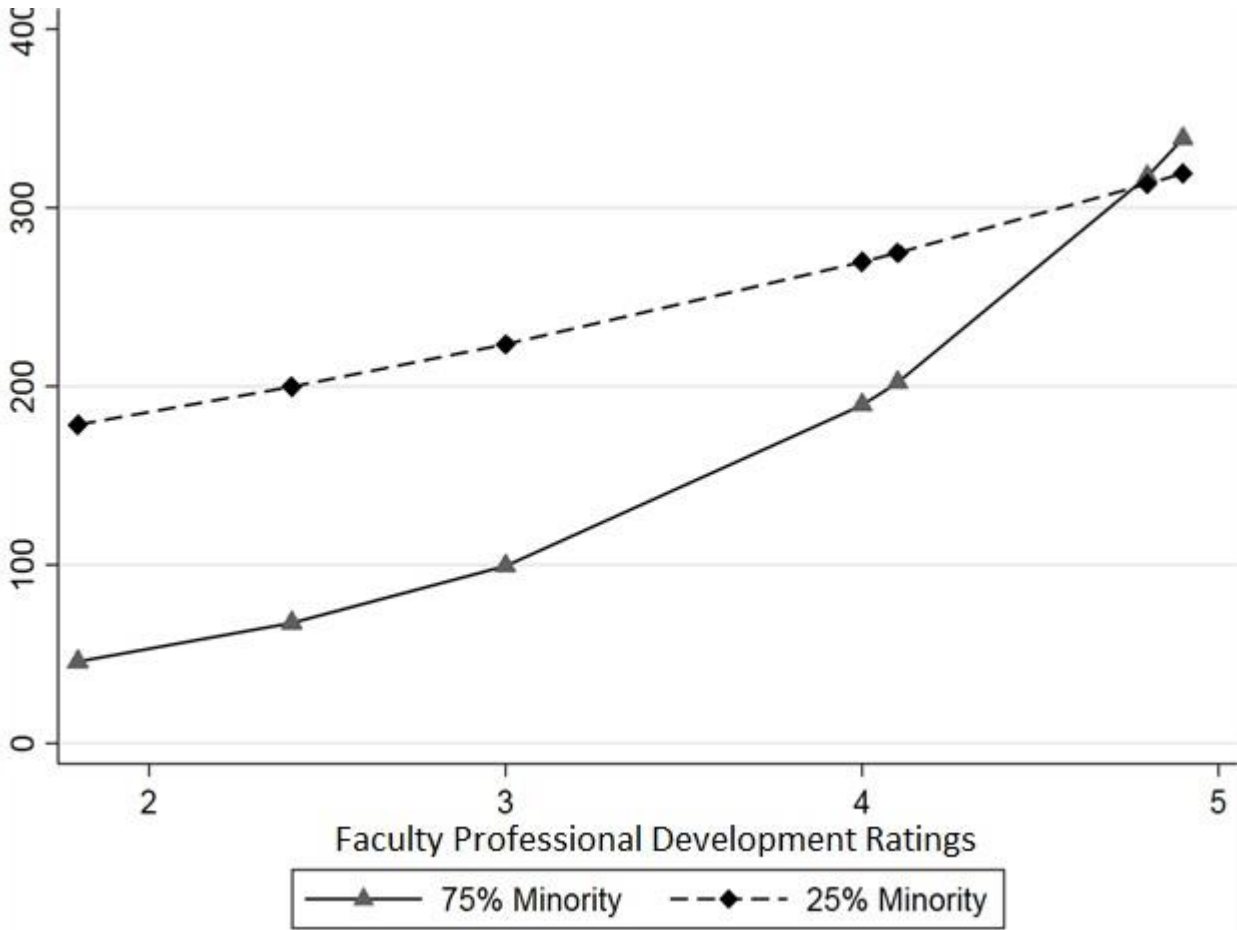
- Complex relationships exist with regard to course review process and tutoring.
- More highly rated efforts in these areas were associated with lower rates of degree conferral.
- These results may signal that where campuses are focused on revising coursework, issues may exist prompting these revisions.
- Similarly, where campuses are applying additional effort for ensuring tutoring quality, there may be additional needs for tutoring.
- However, additional research is needed to explain these results.

# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes

- Ratings of faculty professional development initially had no bearing on degree completion rates in this analysis.
- However, exploration of interactions indicate a more complex relationship.
- When faculty professional development is of lower quality, there is a large difference in rates of degree completion between programs where students are predominantly Caucasian and programs where students are mostly minority.
- Higher quality faculty professional development correlates with program completion rates that are about the same across demographic groups formed based on race/ethnicity.
- The same relationship was observed when it comes to course review process.



# Preliminary Findings: Assessing Outcomes



# Limitations

- Assumptions about factors that lead to quality
- One rater per campus
- Services change/evolve over time and as staff/policies/procedures change
- When interviewed campus reps had a tendency to want to talk about what they are planning to do, not necessary what they are currently doing
- Campus rep may not know about policies/procedures when the campus has a distributed model
- The campus ratings did not account for differences in supports by program
- Student online data relies on accurate SIRIS course section submission

# Implications

- Refined understanding of what contributes to high quality OS+ Signature Elements
- Gained insight into the variability of OS+ Signature Elements across campuses
- Preliminary results support the positive impact of the OS+ Signature Elements
- Need further research to learn more about the impact of OS+ Signature Elements

# Discussion

- What do the OS+ Signature Elements look like on your campus?
- How do you assess the impact of these elements on your campus?
- What else can SUNY System Admin do to glean insights into this topic?



# OPEN SUNY

Kristyn Muller, Ph.D.  
[kristyn.muller@suny.edu](mailto:kristyn.muller@suny.edu)

Peter Shea, Ph.D.  
[pshea@albany.edu](mailto:pshea@albany.edu)