

## Big Bend Community College - Student Success, Closing the Achievement Gap National Agenda

Numerous initiatives such as Achieving the Dream, Guided Pathways, Voluntary Framework for Accountability, focus on increasing completions, closing achievement gaps, and putting students on a pathway to a major at a baccalaureate or train students for an in-demand workforce career.

Furthermore, much of the national agenda comes to us through the Department of Education regulations which governs how we award federal funds and our reporting. The Department of Education also influences regional accreditation as seen in the 2020 NWCCU (Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities) accreditation standards requiring institutions to disaggregate their data, identify achievement gaps, and develop and implement strategies to reduce the gaps. Institutions must also compare themselves against peer institutions. In addition, the new standards provide a framework for talking about equity gap efforts – retention, persistence, completion, post-graduate success.

### Washington Community and Technical Colleges Equity Focus

Washington State Community and Technical Colleges have taken the student success and closing achievement gaps focus and implemented the Student Achievement Initiative, Guided Pathways, and Applied Baccalaureates.

The **Student Achievement Initiative (SAI)** is a performance-based funding model that began in 2006 and was updated in 2012 and 2016 to keep the focus on student success and closing equity gaps by awarding a college points for the number of students that reach key milestones leading to completion and giving extra points for students who began in Basic Education for Adults (BEAdA), were low income, or were historically underserved students of color (American Indian, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander). A portion of each college's state funding allocation is based on SAI point accumulation. BBCC has consistently ranked highly among Washington State colleges in SAI points earned per student.

**Guided Pathways** is a student-centered framework that engages students as they enter college and puts them on a structured educational experience to the completion of a degree to a transfer major/college or train for a workforce career. Key elements of Guided Pathways include:

- Campus wide engagement & communication with employees
- Develop meta-majors and program maps
- Use meta-majors to redesign course offerings (e.g. math) & new student intake process
- Robust advising practices including predictable class schedules that allow a student to complete in two years
- Improve student success in key gatekeeper courses
- Ensure that students take program relevant college-level math and English in their first year
- Identification, support, & redirecting (if needed) of students who are struggling
- Robust program monitoring, evaluation, & assessment practices
- Use of technology tools to support implementation of other guided pathways strategies

Big Bend Community College (BBCC) was working on many of the strategies called for in the Guided Pathways literature since before Guided Pathways was a buzzword nationally or a statewide focus.

**Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degrees** - Washington CTCs were authorized to award applied baccalaureate degrees during the 2008 Great Recession. The BAS provides educational opportunities for Workforce and place bound students. The Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment 2020 stated that often rural student do not pursue transfer. Similar data for BBCC has led the college to develop a BAS degree.

### BBCC Student Success Efforts

Student Success has always been important at BBCC. We looked at the number of graduates, enrollment, program offerings, and student services and asked students how we could improve. However, when BBCC joined Achieving the Dream in 2006 a whole new world opened up and we began looking at success in gatekeeper courses, retention, and graduation disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

BBCC adopted strategies to improve the new student experience and developmental math Success as part of the Achieving the Dream. While initial strategies in math did not produce desired results, they led the college to secure Title V and III Hispanic Serving Grants. BBCC used grant funds to design and implement a variety of innovations over the past eight years.

1. Introduction & expansion of supports for students  
BBCC expanded developed a STEM Center, Career Services Center, Testing Center, Food Pantry, and expanded Workforce Education Services. The success of students served by the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) Grant program and elimination of the achievement gap between students from HUG (Historically Underrepresented Groups) and A/W (Asian/White) groups illustrates the effectiveness of support services in helping address equity gaps.
2. Comprehensive advising  
BBCC is revising its advising process, implemented a mandatory advising requirement for new students until they earn 30 credits, developed academic program maps, grouped academic programs into Areas of Interest, assigned students to Areas of Interest, and worked on developing an annual schedule. Additionally, BBCC purchased Starfish, a computer application that helps college staff track student progress through college processes, raise alerts on struggling students, connect students with college resources, provide case management services, and communicate with students.
3. Transition BEdA students to college  
BBCC adopted multiple curricular innovations initiated at the state level (I-BEST, HS+, and project I-DEA) that were designed to improve academic success and facilitate transitioning into college. The BEdA program has also adopted a standardized instructional and student support approach for all program students regardless of the location or time of day when the student is taking classes.
4. Accelerated math and English  
Faculty developed and implemented an Emporium Math program that drastically improving developmental math success. Faculty and staff also developed applied math classes contextualized for different workforce education programs. Developmental English faculty piloted an accelerated English class that gives students who place into developmental English the opportunity to earn college level English in their first quarter of English enrollment.
5. Revisions to the new student intake process

BBCC staff make multiple changes to the new student intake process including an online new student orientation, revised acceptance letter, and a process for connecting new students to BBCC support services prior to enrolling in classes.

6. Expansion of online & hybrid instruction and support services  
BBCC has dramatically increased the number of courses taught in online and hybrid modalities. Ongoing professional development offerings around teaching online helped faculty develop their skills in using technology. BBCC staff adapted all student services to online delivery as well.
7. Addition of men's & women's wrestling  
The students on the men's and women's wrestling teams are predominantly first-generation (over 90%) and HUG (over 60%) students. The engagement in wrestling gives them an opportunity to earn a college degree that they otherwise may not have.
8. Preparing to offer BAS degree  
BBCC data shows that many students, especially those from historically underrepresented groups, do not complete a bachelor's degree. The college is preparing to offer a BAS degree in an effort to give place-bound students the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree.
9. University partnerships to provide bachelor degree access  
BBCC has established multiple partnerships and articulations with universities in an effort to provide students access to bachelor's degrees. The college has also collaborated with different universities to offer degrees at the BBCC campus.

### BBCC's Success in Closing Achievement Gaps

The most successful BBCC efforts were in the areas of developmental math, hybrid instruction, and providing a variety of support services, including advising, to students. This work has led to a narrowing of the achievement gap in

- Fall-to-fall retention
- Graduation rates
- Success in developmental and college level math
- Online & hybrid course success rates

In addition, according to a recently released SBCTC Equity Report, BBCC is one of the higher performing Washington colleges in SAI equity measures

### Moving Forward

During the 2020-21 year, BBCC will continue to offer instruction and support services for students in the COVID-19 environment however that unfolds. BBCC will work to **sustain and refine current innovations** including academic advising services and fully implementing Starfish. Additionally, the college will continue to develop and implement contextualized math classes, support accelerated math and English pilots, and refine online & hybrid instruction & support services.

BBCC will also work to improve practices for **measuring the success of current and future innovations**. The college will **expand the focus of its current efforts to include** not just new students, but also **continuing and completing students**. Specific efforts currently underway include the addition of a BAS degree and implementing the recently awarded TRIO STEM grant.

**BBCC will also broaden its focus on equity in instruction.** BBCC's equity related instructional efforts have largely focused on improving developmental math and English success. However, the majority of all student interaction with the college is in the classroom. Instruction is at the heart of what we do. If

we cannot produce equitable results in the classroom all the support services in the world will not close the achievement gap. If awarded, the recently submitted Title V Grant will provide ESCALA professional development for faculty. The ESCALA professional development program is designed for faculty teaching at Hispanic Serving Institutions and leads faculty through a process of analyzing student performance in their classes (disaggregating data) and identifying strategies to address achievement gaps within their courses.

BBCC will also **review and update its data collection and analysis practices** including an in-depth analysis of the data disaggregations now required by the 2020 NWCCU Standards, determining how to better collect data on the success of interventions, and examining what institutional indicators to continue using.

Supporting Documents: [Research Briefs](#)