Student success has always been an implicit goal for higher education. Over the past two decades it has become a more explicit goal.

Of course, one of the first challenges is to define what “student success” is. There isn’t a single answer, because there isn’t just one type of student. A critical starting point for student success is understanding our students. Our students are always changing, as are the circumstances around them, so understanding the student, before defining “success” is an evergreen quest. And, of course, a student’s definition of success may not be the same one you or I would choose. Understanding your student is critical.

To define “student success” one must also understand the process of education, advising and “academic operations.” There is a lot to get done at our colleges and universities. The first generation of “innovation” in student services was largely operational, with variations in the type of technology we used. For example:

- In 2000, the technology behind student success was space. Remember one-stop centers? Instead of offices being scattered all over campus, and open at different hours, we put all of the functions in the same space, adjusted office hours to the times students could come, and created a one-stop center.
- The web became the next technology of student success. Instead of having separate websites for each office we began to integrate information on a single website and organize the information based on what needed to happen, not the name of the office.
- Less than 10 years ago analytics began to emerge as a student success technology. Today, innovations in analytics are a foundation of student success initiatives. Of course, technology alone is not sufficient. To use an old phrase, it is people, process and technology.

Today there are many products to support student success and processes to help institutions adopt the approaches that best meet their needs. You will explore some of those today, have read about them in Deloitte’s background paper and the work EDUCAUSE and the Gates Foundation have done.

Rather than repeating what you might already know, I would like to think with you about where the future innovations in student success may come from. Past, present and future may be based on a set of principles.

If we were to abstract the principles behind student success initiatives, it seems there are four:

- **Student-centeredness.** Understand your students and provide support where they need it, in ways that work for them.
- **Integration.** There are a lot of steps from recruitment to completion. There is a lot we can do to integrate steps and feed students forward to the next one.
- **Transparency.** For many students, higher education is a black box. They may not know where they are, where they are going, what the risks are, what the returns will be.
• **Understand the job-to-be-done.** The first generation of student success initiatives have focused on the “operational” side of things. Tomorrow’s “job” may be more complicated. For example, OECD recently released a report that asserts that mindsets are highly predictive of student performance—twice as predictive as their home environment or demographics.

So, what might come next? Here are a five ideas to seed your explorations.

• What if you redefine the timeline for success? We don’t expect student success to be a one-time event—just as it cannot be a one-size fits all proposition. Earning a diploma or getting your first job is a significant accomplishment, but today’s greater expectation is of career success—success through multiple jobs and perhaps multiple careers. In an upskilling economy, society is increasingly counting on higher education to provide career success. While there is more to education than getting a job, workforce preparedness is students’ #1 reason for going to college. What if your institution focuses on career success not just student success. We know that students will change jobs—even careers—multiple times. We know that education must be continuous. What if your systems don’t end at graduation but embody re-education throughout a lifetime?

• What if you expand the degree of integration? Most of today’s systems focus on a single institution or a state system. What if you design a system that explicitly includes the labor market? While there is more return on an education than measured by a job, reliable, rewarding work is what students and their families want. Today the labor market may be a black-box to them. Can our institutions help? What about integration between K-12 and higher education?

• What if you expand the extent of transparency, placing additional focus on employers? What if employers had a better understanding of what a credit means, such as translating it into a competency? The last two years have seen an increased discussion of hiring and higher education. Many institutions are now offering bootcamps, in areas like analytics or coding, to give students a leg-up in the job market. Much of the focus is on skills that employers need. Should skills be a more explicit focus of student success initiatives?

• What are the outcomes our students should achieve to “future-proof” themselves? The literacies of my generation were language and mathematics. In recent decades we added information literacy. Futurists are talking about students needing to know how to make their own job. Will student success in the future hinge on things like creativity, problem solving, project delivery, design thinking and collaboration? (20 years ago ITESM taught their students that it was their job to create jobs—entrepreneurism was a major focus.)

• What does student success mean as our professions are being reconfigured by artificial intelligence and robotics? We are all being challenged to move from a mindset based on data processing to a world designed around knowledge processing. The “traditional professional” will no longer be the dominant interface between people and expertise. Alexa talks to you. Watson helps researchers mine scientific literature to formulate promising hypotheses or to help with a cancer diagnosis. Computers are developing new knowledge by feeding on data. Non-professional lay people are an emerging sources of expertise through crowdsourcing and online collaboration. The future holds a new division of labor between people and machines. It is a rich topic for exploration with many questions, such as:
  - How might problem-solving change with artificial intelligence?
Do collaborative platforms have a role in how we develop and deploy expertise?

How do we best allocate tasks between humans and machines?

What are the ethical considerations?

How we define success is constantly being redefined by the context we find ourselves in. Most futurists believe AI and robotics will be hugely significant—to our disciplines and what it means to be a professional. How might student success be defined in that future? The answer to that question goes well beyond the first generation of “operational” student success initiatives to much deeper questions.

I hope you will enjoy your explorations today and that those 4 principles

- Student-centeredness
- Integration
- Transparency
- Understanding the job-to-be-done

will help you think about today’s solutions.

And that innovating around

- Timelines
- Degree of integration
- Extent of transparency (e.g., employers)
- Outcomes
- The reconfiguration of our disciplines due to AI and robotics

will provide much thought for the future.

Enjoy the Forum.