



The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education
Uniting for America's Future



BEAMS is a partnership between the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education and the National Survey of Student Engagement and is supported by Lumina Foundation for Education.

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A letter from the Director

Dear BEAMS Colleagues:

As the year and the BEAMS grant draw to an end, we have many reasons to celebrate. The Urban Institute evaluation reports significant advances in the implementation of campus plans, as well as satisfaction from participants about the value added by BEAMS to institutional planning and results.

After much hard work on your part—teams, consultants, BEAMS and IHEP staff—we are in the final stages of various publications that will document and interpret key facets of the BEAMS experience. A compilation of promising practices, and a series of issue briefs will highlight the accomplishments of BEAMS institutions and the efficacy of many of their strategies, while also acknowledging the obstacles many of you faced, and the imaginative ways in which you addressed them. We hope this information will be helpful to colleagues at other institutions facing similar challenges, and contribute to a deeper appreciation at your own institutions of how valuable data can be when used systematically for planning, action, and evaluation. Some regional events are scheduled for next year to disseminate the BEAMS findings—hope many of you will be able to participate!

Another reason for celebration is the recent appointment of IHEP President Jamie Merisotis as President of Lumina Foundation for Education. This new platform will expand his work for access and success in higher education for the underrepresented and for the institutions that serve them. While his Washington colleagues are very sorry to see him go, this is an opportunity to advance the access agenda that he could not refuse.

I, too, received an offer that I could not refuse. Twenty state systems of higher education, among them many that house BEAMS institutions, have pledged to improve overall student success and to close by at least half the gaps in both college-going and college completion that separate low-income and minority students from others. They also have pledged to report annually to the public on their progress, and to include in their metrics transfer, part time, and low-income students who are often left out of traditional accountability measures. These are extraordinarily important commitments, and I am honored to have been invited to join this great effort as director for higher education for The Education Trust, which, together with the National Association of System Heads, is coordinating the Access to Success Initiative. Among the participating systems that have MSIs are Louisiana, Mississippi, Cal State, CUNY, Maryland, Florida, and the University of Puerto Rico. I have already begun to tell some of your system CEOs about the good work underway at BEAMS schools.

I will keep my connection with BEAMS folks, with our NSSE partners, and of course with the Institute for Higher Education Policy. First Lacey, and now Melissa, have taken great care of you and of the program. I know you are in good hands. I want to thank you all, not only for your good work, but for your many kindnesses towards me. I have learned much from you, and enjoyed myself greatly. My very best wishes for the coming year.

Margarita Benítez, BEAMS Project Director

Outcomes from the 2004 Cohort's BEAMS Work



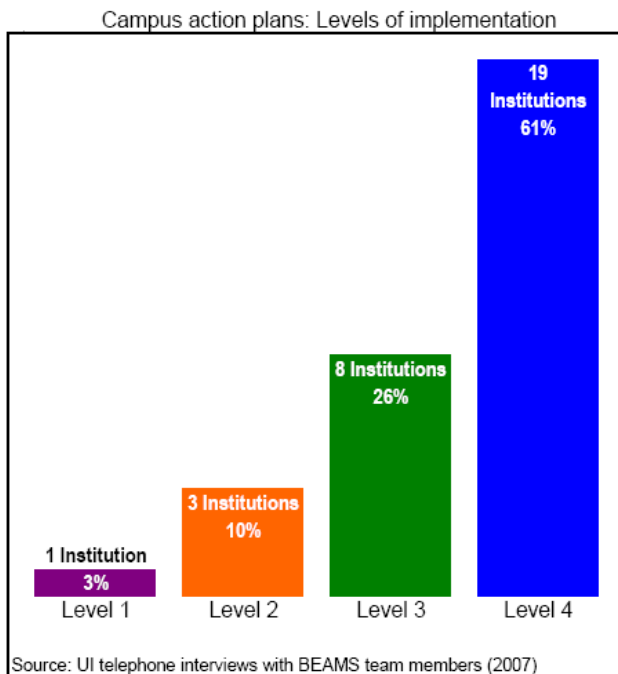
The Urban Institute (UI), external evaluator of the BEAMS project, has been conducting interviews with the 2003 and 2004 cohorts over the years of the project to determine the impact of BEAMS on various campus practices. Recently, UI has submitted two reports on the status of campus projects to Lumina Foundation for Education. The first report mirrors an earlier evaluation by UI, detailing the development of action plans in the 2004 cohort and the benefit of project support systems. The results of the second report—focusing on the longer-term effects BEAMS has had on institutional processes and procedures in 2003 cohort schools—will be shared in the March 2008 *BEAMS Beat*.

BEAMS Projects One-and-a-Half Years Later

Similar to the evaluation UI did regarding action plan implementation with the 2003 cohort (synopsis in the September 2006 *BEAMS Beat*) this follow-up with the 2004 cohort sought to determine whether minority-serving institutions (MSIs) were able to acquire the insight of institutional problems from analyzing their NSSE data, if they were able to develop appropriate campus action plans (CAP) based on the analyzed data, and if those plans were implemented effectively. The results strongly indicate that campuses developed appropriate action plans and are on track to implementation success.

Development and implementation of action plans: After initial survey administration institutions in the 2004 cohort identified one of five NSSE benchmarks (student-faculty interaction, active and collaborative learning, enriching educational experiences, supportive campus environment, or level of academic challenge) as the area of focus for their CAP. Through the identification of a focus area, teams moved forward to develop action plans that would improve the scores of the identified NSSE benchmark. Development of their CAP was mainly the responsibility of the campus BEAMS team, typically receiving approval from senior administration. Eighty-four percent of the 2004 cohort institutions incorporated their CAP with a larger campus-wide or system-wide initiative, aiding implementation.

One-and-a-half years since the 2004 cohort institutions began participation in the BEAMS project a large majority (87%) have made considerable progress in implementing their CAP, and are pleased (68%) with the progress they have made. The chart below shows the number of institutions at each implementation level:



Level 1: No CAP developed, or CAP developed but no implementation has begun or been scheduled;

Level 2: Plan developed and implementation date scheduled and imminent, or in initial stages of implementation;

Level 3: Plan developed and some parts of the plan are being implemented, or the full plan is halfway implemented; or

Level 4: Plan developed; project fully established and more than half completed.

Barriers to implementation: Though a large majority of BEAMS institutions have made marked progress on project implementation, almost all institutions faced similar barriers that have impacted how they went about the process of implementation. Consistent with the 2003 cohort, the second cohort's four major barriers to implementation were: time constraints, team and senior administrator turnover, limited resources, and lack of buy-in.

Facilitating factors: The 2004 cohort also closely reflected the first cohort by identifying the following factors as main facilitators to project implementation:

1. Support of senior administration and other campus constituents— involving various stakeholders in the planning process increases the likelihood of success;
2. Link the BEAMS project to a larger, campus-wide effort – this increases buy-in and access to resources;
3. Availability of human and financial resources—the action plan needs to be feasible in terms of current funding and accessible resources; and
4. Use of support systems such as consultants and participation in the Summer Academy—institutions should avail themselves of the assistance and support provided by the project.

Preliminary thoughts on effects: Preliminary evidence from UI interviews suggest that the campuses in the 2004 cohort are moving toward more use of data and collaboration in the decision-making and planning process. A few other institutions noted that since their involvement in BEAMS there has been increased awareness of student needs on campus.

Final Follow-up Interviews with the 2004 Cohort Institutions

UI is currently contacting 2004 cohort schools to arrange for their final follow-up phone interview to be conducted December 2007-January 2008. Please respond to their scheduling request if you haven't already done so. This interview will focus on how schools may have been influenced by BEAMS in using data for decision-making, and will take about 15 to 20 minutes. We encourage you to share insights and results that have emerged from the fruitful efforts of your project work.

Update on BEAMS Dissemination Activities

As BEAMS enters its final months, various publications will be released highlighting the hard work of the minority-serving institutions (MSIs) in the project. The BEAMS monograph, *Increasing Student Success at Minority-Serving Institutions: Findings from the BEAMS Project*, will be released in March 2008. Shortly thereafter, 10 practice briefs will also be shared with a national audience focused specifically on the topics teams addressed during their involvement in the project and what strategies they used to carry out a successful plan implementation. The 10 practice briefs, along with the institutions highlighted in each, are listed below:

Aligning Campus Initiatives: authored by Betty Overton-Adkins, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Spring Arbor University
Highlighting Institute of American Indian Arts, Norfolk State University, North Carolina Central University, and University of Houston-Downtown

Co-curricular Activities: authored by Camille Hazeur, Assistant to the President and Director of University Equity and Diversity Services, George Mason University
Highlighting Alcorn State University, California State University-Monterey Bay, Claflin University, and Morris College

Faculty Development: authored by Gillies Malnarich, Co-Director, The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College
Highlighting Bethune Cookman College, California State University-Dominguez Hills, and University of the District of Columbia

First Year Experience: authored by Scott Evenbeck, Dean of the University College, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Highlighting California State University-Northridge, Jarvis Christian College, University of Texas-Pan American, and University of the Incarnate Word

Garnering Buy-In from Campus Constituencies: authored by Hazel Symonette, Senior Policy and Program Development Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin System Administration
Highlighting Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Haskell Indian Nations University, University of Puerto Rico-Humacao, and University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Garnering Campus Administration Buy-In: authored by Estela Lopez, Former Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Connecticut State University and Senior Fellow, *Excelencia* in Education
Highlighting Albany State University, California State University-Fresno, Inter American University of Puerto Rico-San Germán, and Tennessee State University

Leveraging Technology in Campus Change Initiatives: authored by Alex Chough, Associate Director, Policy, Research and Evaluation Services, National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
Highlighting Coppin State University, Florida International University, New Jersey City University, and Western New Mexico University

Student Support Services: authored by Brian Bridges, Associate Director, Center of Advancement on Racial and Ethnic Equity, American Council on Education
Highlighting Jackson State University, Kentucky State University, St. Mary's College, and University of New Mexico

Writing Across the Curriculum: authored by Emily Lardner, Co-Director, The Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College
Highlighting Inter American University of Puerto Rico-Ponce, Southern University-Baton Rouge, Spelman College, and Texas A&M International University

Various Approaches to Assessment – authored by Jillian Kinzie, Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research and National Survey of Student Engagement Institute, Indiana University-Bloomington
The institutions in this practice brief will be determined by the author.

Project staff are also planning dissemination gatherings across the country at various BEAMS institutions. Please look for more information via the WebCenter and the March 2008 *BEAMS Beat* as we hope that you will be able to join us in your region's meeting.

BEAMS Team Hosts Virtual Student Center Replication Workshop

The work and relationships begun at the 2007 Summer Academy in New Mexico continued this past October in Florida, as Florida International University (FIU) hosted BEAMS participants from institutions in its Summer Academy institutional learning community (ILCs)—the Inter American University of Puerto Rico-San Germán, University of New Mexico (UNM), and New Jersey City University (NJCU), along with a group from Miami-Dade Community College. Building on the concept of ILCs, discussed in Albuquerque, this visit supported each institution's efforts in replicating the Virtual Student Center (VSC) Web site developed by FIU as its BEAMS project. The VSC offers information and links to information on students' majors, requirements, online tutorials and tutoring assistance, and forums for students to communicate with each other.

The two-day training was an intensive hands-on experience that included discussions on developing VSC organizational structures, which were tailored to the needs of each individual institution. In addition, participants were provided training on utilizing CMS—Made Simple, the open source software used by FIU to build their VSC. Examples of tools and services, currently in place on FIU's VSC include career decision and development tools, academic assistance, e-Mentoring, model student projects, online interactive tests, ESL support, online advising and orientation, and vital information and resources to keep students on track towards timely graduation. Below are descriptions of how each BEAMS institution utilized its experience at the VSC workshop:

Florida International University: In hosting the VSC workshop FIU continued helping other institutions build on the success they have experienced. Since its inception in 2006, FIU's VSC has had a total of 32,272 page loads and currently have over 325 registered users. Through an online survey students indicated that average satisfaction, on a 1-to-5 scale where 5 equaled "very satisfied" was 4.

Inter American University of Puerto Rico–San Germán: The VSC will add a valuable tool for all students at this university. With the knowledge and experience gained at FIU, they are now in a position to offer students another technological tool to support and assist them on their path to success. One of the main goals of the BEAMS project was the development of a *Campus Learning Center (CLC)*, which recently opened its doors. The VSC will assist CLC staff, as well as other campus stakeholders in their endeavors with students who seek assistance in academic counseling, career development, and overall general assistance. The VSC will enhance the enrollment services on campus, by giving the savvy student another needed option of online information mentoring and enrollment. After the excellent FIU training, the team continued in the elaboration of VSC, with FIU assistance. They will go live by mid-February 2008 with the English version, and in March 2008 with the Spanish version for their 96th year anniversary.

New Jersey City University: A major component of NJCU's BEAMS project was the development of an online student support tool. This visit served to advance the university's efforts in developing a Web-based student support tool designed to promote significantly increased levels of student success, particularly among students characterized as underrepresented, nontraditional, low-income,

Campus-To-Campus Visits

Project funds are available for campus-to-campus visits, providing teams the opportunity to visit other schools in the BEAMS project to observe the structures and practices implemented, participate in a campus-based meeting or conference, or exchange drafts of plans for feedback. If your team is interested in visiting a fellow BEAMS campus or would like guidance as to an institution that your team would benefit from visiting, contact Melissa Del Rios at mdelrios@ihep.org for further information.

transfer, and first-generation students. Currently, NJCU is moving forward with leveraging the design and organizational efforts developed in Miami, and hope to "go-live" with their VSC by mid-January 2008. Except for utilizing a campus supported content management system, the NJCU site will be a very close replication of the excellent model developed by FIU.

University of New Mexico: The FIU Virtual Student Center workshop added a critical piece to further development of two major campus initiatives, Multiple Academic Pathways for Students (MAPS) and One Stop. At FIU, UNM team members, created a triad model that will be implemented in February 2008. The triad consists of the following components: 1. MAPS offers a one stop for student connection to academic, social, and cultural resources. These programs and services are key to aiding students in finding the resources that can help them succeed in school. 2. One Stop provides efficient online services that are represented by enrollment management. 3. Academics represent the direct access for students to learn about majors, minors, and graduation requirements. The Provost Committee on Advisement will facilitate the academics portion of the triad. This UNM triad is built on the foundation to organize pertinent information that can guide a student to the appropriate programs and services. Currently, all three components are virtual online support. However, the goal is to eventually have a physical presence to offer a person-to-person option for students, staff, and faculty.

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

We continue to encourage campuses to independently submit BEAMS-related proposals to national and regional conferences. Disseminating your work highlights campus successes, provides a platform to mentor and/or collaborate with other institutions, and emphasizes the broader importance of the BEAMS project. If you have submitted or are considering submitting a BEAMS related proposal at an upcoming conference, contact Melissa Del Rios, BEAMS program manager, (mdelrios@ihep.org) to apply for a one time \$500 travel grant to support session presentation.

Conferences Accepting Proposals

The College Board is hosting a conference devoted to bringing together educators and community leaders to discuss and explore models of excellence that address the most critical educational issues for Latinos. The conference, "Preparate: Educating Latinos for the Future of America" will be held in Chicago from May 22-23, 2008. The College Board is currently accepting proposals that showcase trends, new initiatives, effective strategies, and best practices in any academic, admissions, enrollment management, guidance, college advising, financial aid, or student service area that affect Latino/Hispanic students. For more information, please visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/preparate/index.html>.

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' (HACU) 22nd Annual Conference is a forum for sharing information, ideas and best practices in the education of Hispanics. This year's conference, "Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success: Strengthening the Nation's Prosperity and Opportunity," will be held October 11-13, 2008 in Denver, Colorado. HACU is currently accepting proposals on how efforts have promoted academic excellence, enhanced access and collaborative opportunities for Hispanic-Serving Institutions. For more information, please visit http://www.hacu.net/hacu/Annual_Conference1_EN.asp?SnID=1115642117.

Other Upcoming Conferences

The American Council on Education's 90th Annual Meeting will be held February 9-12, 2008 in San Diego, Calif. The forum's theme is "Taking Charge of Our Future" and will address highlight topics such as the impact of the higher education on the 2008 election and fostering environments for student success. For more information, please visit <http://www.aceannualmeeting.org/home.cfm>.

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators will hold it's Annual Conference "Chart a Course for Student Success" in March 8-12, 2008 in Boston, Mass. Guest speakers will include NBC's Soledad O'Brien and Zenobia Lawrence Hikes, vice President of student affairs at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. For more information, please visit <http://www.naspa.org/conference/index.cfm>.

News from NSSE

Forty-four BEAMS institutions, primarily from the 2003 cohort, are signed on to conduct a NSSE administration in 2008.



Any BEAMS institution needing support in data interpretation, linking data to institutional action, and using NSSE to assess project impact should contact Jillian Kinzie, associate director of the NSSE Institute, 812-856-1430 or jjkinzie@indiana.edu

The Newest Member of BEAMS Arrives

On October 26 Lacey and her husband welcomed Abigail Ria into the world. The newest member of BEAMS weighed 8 pounds and 12 ounces and was 20.5 inches long. Both parents and baby are doing well. Lacey will be back in the office part-time starting in the new year. Please join us in congratulating the Leegwater family!



The BEAMS Beat

December 2007

About BEAMS

BEAMS is a five-year initiative fostering the ways in which Historically Black, Hispanic-serving, and Tribal colleges and universities using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) can develop data-based decision making and increase student engagement and learning.

BEAMS serves over 100 four-year colleges and universities from the Alliance for Equity in Higher Education. Each institution commits to analyzing the scope and character of their students' engagement in learning and to implementing well-designed action plans for improvement of engagement, learning, persistence, and success. The project offers five primary ways for campuses to move toward these institutional goals.

- Data on the student experience from the National Survey of Student Engagement
- Design of action plans at the Summer Academy for initiatives to enhance student engagement and learning
- Collegial support for implementing action plans
- Web-based support throughout Project participation
- Opportunities to report nationally on campus initiatives and successes

Campuses administer the NSSE at least twice during the project. Consortia of BEAMS campuses generate action plans based on NSSE data at the 2004, 2005, and 2006 Summer Academies. They interact and disseminate their learning throughout the project.

BEAMS

Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students

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For more information about BEAMS, visit the WebCenter at <http://webcenter.msi-alliance.org>.