

INTRODUCTION **Getting Institutional Buy-in and Establishing Strong Leadership**

The success of an initiative at a community college depends on strong buy-in from an engaged college leadership team. Depending on the institutional structure of the college, that usually will be the president. In some institutions, it is the energy and passion of the president that drives initiatives from the beginning. In others, presidents have to be “sold” on the vision of another individual or team. In either case, the institutional leader will need to have confidence that the WFS strategy meets the following criteria:

- 1) *Is a part of the mission of the college:* How does expanding services through an integrated service delivery system meet the college’s goals?
- 2) *Can be paid at the outset:* How will changes to the college’s programs be paid for?
- 3) *Is sustainable:* If this program is to be part of the institutional mission of the program, how will it be sustained?
- 4) *Can be measured:* If there is a sustainability plan, how will success be measured?

Establishing a leadership group for the team

Colleges that have successfully implemented WFS programs get buy-in from the leadership and have individuals with direct responsibility for ensuring the strategy’s success. The first step in staffing a WFS approach is deciding who will have overall responsibility for implementing the WFS strategy. There are several choices that can be made about what a management structure might look like:

- 1) *Full-time dedicated staff:* In this case, one individual would have full responsibility for supervising the direction of the program with limited other responsibilities. While perhaps the most desirable in terms of focus, dedicating cost to this person may tie up funds that could be used for service delivery.
- 2) *Part-time staff:* In this case, an individual’s responsibility might be divided between directing the WFS activities and performing other important tasks at the college. Most colleges take this approach, which frees up funding for implementation but can create challenges in focus.
- 3) *Team of leaders:* In this approach, a group of individuals at the college are charged with running the WFS strategy, each with shared responsibilities. This could include staff who are full-time financial coaches or counselors, deans overseeing student services and individuals from career counseling centers, to name a few. If this option is chosen, colleges must make sure a clear decision-making framework is established, especially regarding resource allocation.



Key Takeaways

- The three most important considerations for a college to discuss before pursuing a WFS strategy are: 1) whether the effort will have strong leadership in the right places to work across departments and divisions; 2) the existing culture related to student success and whether the WFS strategy will support and expand that focus, and 3) whether the goals of the WFS strategy are aligned with the college's goals.
- The most important activities during planning are to: 1) identify the target population most in need of services; 2) develop a mix of low- and high-touch services to meet the identified needs, and 3) engage a range of stakeholders within the college to build buy-in, identify needed culture changes, and lay the groundwork for infusion of the approach throughout the college.
- It is critical the three pillars of the WFS approach are not thought of as separate activities, but rather as components of bundled delivery.
- Bundling is not as effective without some one-on-one attention paid to students to help them navigate the process
- Developing partnerships with organizations that can offer services is critical.
- Planning for the strategy's sustainability and its eventual growth should happen at the very beginning of WFS implementation.



Tools, Materials, and Resources

- Stakeholder analysis *MDC created tool*
- Message Box *MDC created tool*
- In October of 2012, a group of presidents from schools with WFS initiatives talked about their role in ensuring success. The video can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eMqgVCKyvE>. *Multiple WFS institutions*