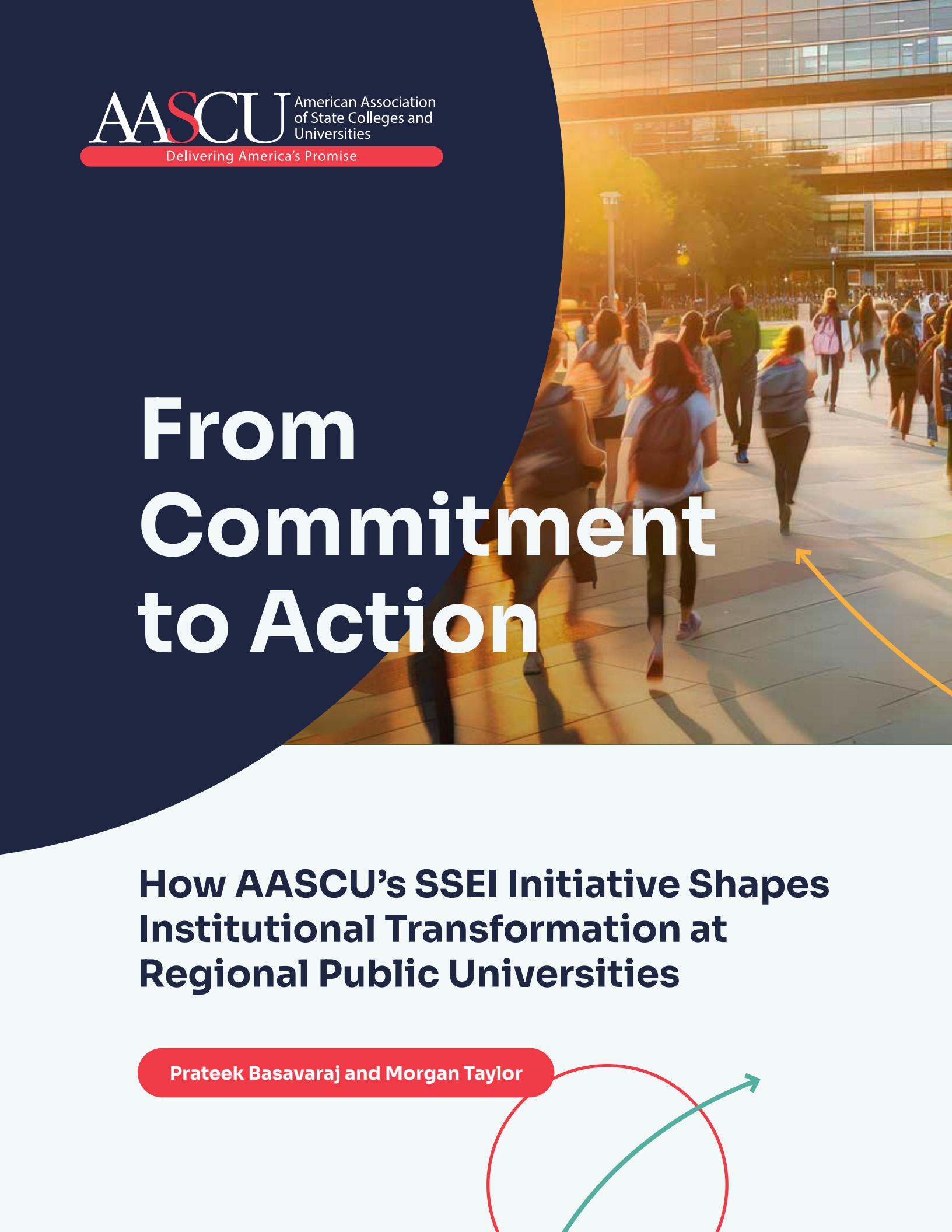


From Commitment to Action



**How AASCU's SSEI Initiative Shapes
Institutional Transformation at
Regional Public Universities**

Prateek Basavaraj and Morgan Taylor

About the American Association of State Colleges and Universities

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is a Washington, D.C.-based higher education association that represents the sector of more than 500 regional public colleges, universities, and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to serving today's students, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development. These are institutions delivering America's promise.

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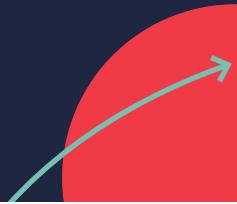
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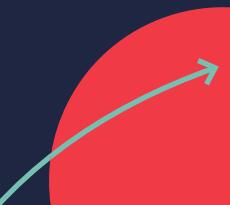
Introduction

For the millions of students enrolled in postsecondary education within the United States, attaining a college degree holds the promise of getting a higher-paying job and improving their family's socioeconomic status after graduation. Research shows that regional public universities (RPUs), in particular, have contributed to the upward economic mobility of their students. In fact, RPUs do a better job than other higher education sectors of propelling their students up the income ladder (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.; Klor de Alva, 2019; Klor de Alva & Christensen, 2020; Orphan & Wetherbee, 2025). Creating a campus community where all students can thrive and succeed requires intentionality on the part of the institution. This is reflective among institutions that examine their policies and practices and undergo institutional transformation to dismantle any potential barriers students may face throughout their educational journey.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) represents the sector of more than 500 RPUs across the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Collectively, RPUs enroll nearly 4.9 million undergraduate students, many of whom live in rural areas, come from low-income backgrounds, are first-generation students, and are students of color. RPUs play a critical role in postsecondary education, enrolling 70% of all students enrolled at public four-year institutions and awarding 66% of all bachelor's degrees earned at public four-year institutions.

In 2020, AASCU began its Student Success Equity Intensive (SSEI) Initiative, with the support of the Gates Foundation. SSEI is a multiyear initiative in which a cohort of institutions participates in a structured five-step process that aims to support institutions in serving each student through to success. To date, AASCU has guided 55 institutions, including two state systems, through this transformational journey by providing tools, facilitation, and connections to experts in the field.





The SSEI Initiative holds promise in uplifting students, families, and communities. Research shows that graduates who attend participating institutions are better off financially having gone to college than not having gone at all. This research also highlights the institutional capacity areas critical to increasing success for each student: institutional leadership and culture, institutional research, and institutional policy (Basavaraj & Taylor, 2024). Building on this research, AASCU sought to understand how SSEI-participating institutions have begun to lay the groundwork for institutional transformation on their campus, the barriers they may have faced on this journey, and the ways in which participation in the SSEI Initiative influenced institutional understanding toward student success.

To this end, this paper seeks to explore how the SSEI institutions are working toward institutional transformation, and it seeks to examine two research questions. The first question focuses on conditions for transformation and second question focuses on program impact:

1. *What were some institutional barriers perceived by institutions in their transformation journey toward student success?*
2. *In what ways did the SSEI Initiative impact institutional teams in terms of improved understanding (knowledge gain) and attitude (or mindset shift) toward student success?*

Background

AASCU's SSEI Initiative

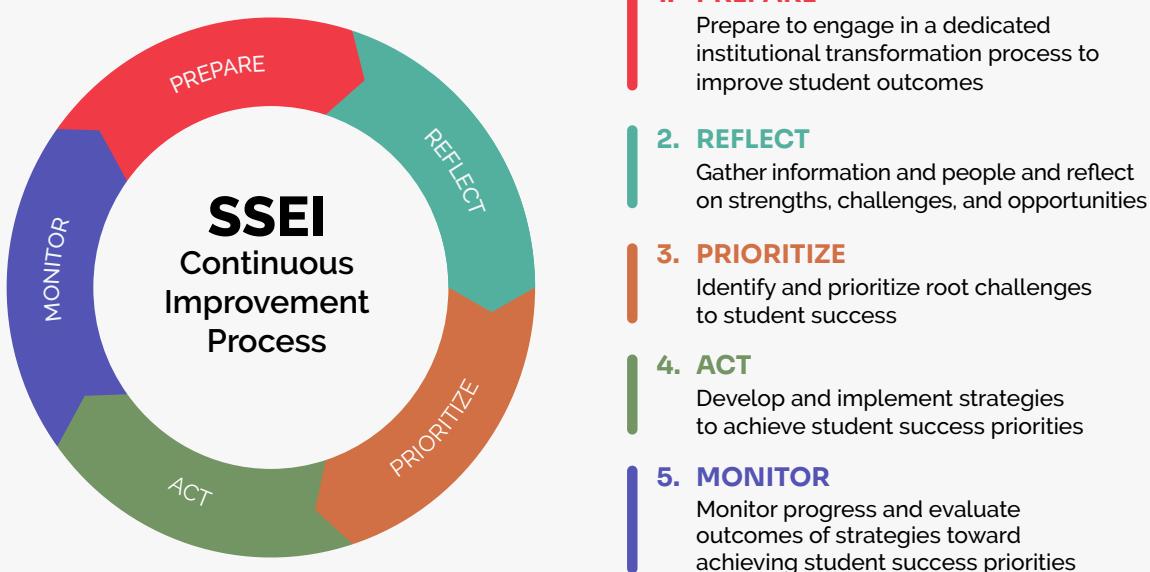
The SSEI Initiative is a multiyear initiative designed for public four-year institutions that aims to enhance student success and, consequently, improve postsecondary value. This cohort-based experience accelerates transformation by offering tailored support, enabling institutions to make data-driven decisions to increase opportunities for success for each student. Participating institutions set their own student success goals, ensuring that each institution's transformation journey is customized to achieve the goals through personalized support.

The SSEI model includes six key learning experiences: (1) cross-departmental collaboration, (2) data discussions, (3) connecting with other institutions to address real-time challenges, (4) learning and sharing best practices, (5) crafting compelling narratives to support action, and (6) engaging with subject matter experts who provide technical assistance as institutions work toward their goals.

AASCU guides institutional teams participating in SSEI through a five-stage continuous improvement process (see Figure 1). This model allows institutions to use data and reflection to inform their processes and make adjustments throughout their transformational journey to meet their overall goals. The five stages are:

1. **Prepare:** AASCU prepares institutions by helping create and onboard transformation teams, providing necessary training and equipping teams to participate in a dedicated institutional transformation process to improve student outcomes.
2. **Reflect:** Institutions gather information and key staff involved in student success work and reflect on strengths, challenges, and opportunities through AASCU-hosted sensemaking sessions.
3. **Prioritize:** Institutions identify and prioritize root challenges to student success on their campus.
4. **Act:** Institutions develop and implement strategies to achieve student success priorities.
5. **Monitor:** Institutions monitor progress and evaluate outcomes of strategies toward achieving student success priorities.

Figure 1: SSEI Continuous Improvement Process



Source: American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Institutional Transformation

The overarching goal of AASCU's SSEI Initiative is institutional transformation that leads to greater student success for all students. Institutional transformation is when campuswide changes occur in structures, culture, and processes to address institutional and student needs (Clery & Miller, 2023; Kadlec et al., 2021; Parrott et al., 2022). Each campus is unique; they serve different student groups and operate under different contexts. However, the overall goal and definition of institutional transformation remain the same across all institutions in the initiative. Successful institutional transformation requires three main components: institutional leadership, stakeholder buy-in from across campus, and the use of data to drive decision-making efforts.

Institutional leaders set the tone and expectations for their institution, making them a critical player in any transformation effort. When institutional leaders focus on student success, they can prime the institution to identify ways to improve student success and better align institutional resources and personnel to achieve this goal (Kezar, 2019). Senior leaders establish the institution's strategic priorities and policies, which can center student success as a goal of the institution. Senior leaders can provide varying resources, including financial resources needed for transformation (Clery & Miller, 2023; Kezar, 2019; Kezar & Eckel, 2000; Parrott et al., 2022). While institutional transformation requires collaboration from across the entire campus, these efforts will not succeed without senior leaders' buy-in.



Faculty and staff also play a critical role in the institutional transformation process, as they are often the closest to students. Engaging faculty and staff in the effort also creates a network of supporters across campus and departments. It also increases success, expanding the sense of ownership and accountability in achieving the end goal (Clery & Miller, 2023; Kadlac et al., 2021; Kezar & Eckel, 2000). When challenges or barriers arise, having a cross-campus team dedicated to the end goal provides space for better problem-solving and a more adaptive approach to institutional change, one that is nimble enough to pivot when needed (Kadlec et al., 2021). Faculty want their students to succeed. Involving them in the institutional transformation process can also help institutions find areas where students hit roadblocks to success. In turn, institutions can utilize these data to target interventions and inform the institution's transformation efforts.

Data use in decision-making is integral to institutional transformation targeted at increasing student success. A campuswide understanding of data and how to use it to drive institutional policy and practice allows institutions to find areas where improvements can be made to enhance student success. It also creates accountability, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, can be successful in postsecondary education (Dowd et al., 2018; Gagliardi & Turk, 2017; Parrott et al., 2022). However, developing a data-savvy culture or one in which data are used across campus and not just within the institutional research (IR) office requires buy-in from leadership (Gagliardi & Turk, 2017). Creating a culture around data takes time, and it also requires that structures are in place to provide faculty and staff access to data. Institutions can build buy-in by utilizing their institutional research office to increase data literacy and help inform faculty and staff about the importance of driving change through data. The IR office can also provide disaggregated data, allowing institutions to discover areas where some students may fall behind their peers and where structural changes can be made to improve student success. Dowd et al. (2018) argue that finding the "actionable N" or humanizing data brings data closer to institutional practice, which allows faculty and staff to see all students as their students and increases accountability toward student success.

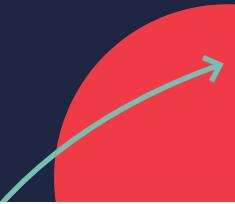


Methodology

This study employed semi-structured interviews with representatives from SSEI-participating institutions to explore how they have begun laying the groundwork for institutional transformation. The project team sent invitations to institutions that participated in the first three cohorts of the SSEI Initiative to take part in this study. A total of 13 institutions expressed interest, and 21 interviews were conducted. The interviewees represent institutions that serve a wide range of students and multiple regions throughout the United States.

Virtual interviews took place via Zoom from November 2024 to March 2025 and lasted 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. The project team asked the participants questions regarding their (a) institutional SSEI strategic goals and how they were implemented and (b) conditions for transformation—the ways in which their institutional context influenced their team's journey toward transformation. Responses were coded into two main categories reflecting the research questions: institutional barriers and program impact. Data were analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis of the responses, along with illustrative quotes from participants.





Results

Institutional Characteristics

The survey participants in this analysis represent 13 RPUs in three cohorts participating in AASCU's SSEI Initiative. Five out of the 13 institutions are rural-serving institutions. There were several Minority-Serving Institutions, including three Hispanic-Serving Institutions, one Historically Black College and University, and one Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution. On average, 41% of students enrolled at the 13 institutions received Pell Grants.

SSEI Participation and Strategic Student Success Goals

Institutions chose to participate in AASCU's SSEI Initiative for a host of reasons.

For some, participation in the initiative provided them with assistance in improving student retention and persistence. The initiative was also seen as a way to reexamine what student success meant on their campus, helped institutional teams gain support and access to resources to accomplish their student success goals, and helped facilitate cultural change at the institution.

Institutions identified student success goals across seven key areas that reflect both structural and cultural dimensions of the student experience: student voice and inclusion, advising, financial literacy, admissions, emergency fund, shared definitions and understandings, and academic policies. Each institution tailored its approach to address the unique needs of its student population, focusing on removing barriers and strengthening systems that support persistence and completion.



Conditions for Transformation

"Conditions for transformation" refers to how the institution's context influences a team's journey toward institutional transformation. This includes the ways in which institutions are primed for transformation and the barriers that institutions have faced (or are facing) related to student success, including the challenges regarding their engagement in the SSEI Initiative. The section below introduces some of the main sticking points that emerged from interviews.

Meeting Students' Needs With Institutional Resources

Interview data reveal that institutions are grappling with how best to meet students' evolving needs in a post-pandemic world. For example, today's students have needs and required support that differ from previous generations:

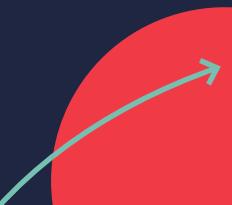
"[O]ur housing insecurity has increased significantly. And I think all of those [contextual factors] are playing a role in why we didn't see our retention rate continuing to increase. I think we just need to revisit who our students are because they're changing all the time, and I think that that's impacting us."
-Provost

"We contracted a bit as an institution [after the pandemic], but where we had needs—tutoring, success coaching, mental health counseling, wellness-related activities—there is more need for that probably than at any time in our past." -Associate Provost

Participants noted that it can be challenging for institutions to provide their students with support when budgets and other resources do not grow with demand. Budget constraints emerged as a contextual factor across many interviews, with participants noting that it is difficult to serve students under their current financial conditions. Resources, however, stretch beyond budgets, and limited time and personnel often impact the institution's ability to support transformation:

"Our biggest thing is we don't have any money. We used to have this motto 'we'll do more with less.' And we're just cutting and cutting. And we're finally at the point of saying, 'we've got to do less with less.' And that's the reality. We don't have resources for everything. And so we're really needing to be much more strategic with what we do with those limited resources." -Dean

"How can we phase things in and direct resources to those areas? We've written several grants and some of them have not been funded. Some smaller ones have. We've redirected funds internally to support some of this work. Our biggest challenges remain having enough people and then the funding to support the expansion of people." -Provost



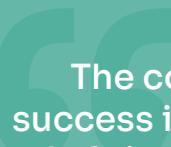
Leadership and Institutional Commitment

Creating a culture that fosters student success demands commitment and communication from leadership. Interview participants verified this notion, stating that leadership buy-in was critical to fulfilling the commitments of the SSEI Initiative:

"The commitment starts at the top with the president. Student success is our number one goal. I think the gap is around culture and helping folks understand that it's all of our role, regardless of the position we have at the university, to advance student success. [T]hat is what we're working on, and that's what the SSEI is helping us do—bridge the commitment that leadership has." –Chancellor

True institutional transformation also requires a mindset shift across the entire campus, where every person plays a role in advancing student success. Interviewees spoke to the need to have a dedicated staff member serve as chair for the project and to the importance of getting the right people involved to ensure a broad cross-section of viewpoints, such as the president's office, faculty, student affairs, academic affairs, enrollment management, and institutional research:

"I think that having at least one person whose core concern is educational excellence and interacting with the students and at least one person whose core mission is enrollment and belongingness, and that aspect of it I think that's a really key partnership. And if every campus kind of had that together, I think we would have had a really powerful team." –Assistant Vice President



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Once institutional teams were built, interviewees emphasized the importance of communication, accountability, expectation setting, and role clarity within the SSEI institutional team. These are critical details to help ensure the entire team works toward the institutional transformation goals rather than just a few individuals. It can also help offset any inherent challenges that arise if and when turnover occurs among leadership, faculty, or staff:

"[W]hoever is chairing or co-chairing the committee is considered the person doing the work. [Y]ou have different sets of assignments for everyone on the committee so that there's accountability for everybody. I think that's really important." –Vice Chancellor

After teams were established, interviewees noted two areas that proved challenging along their journey toward transformation: uneven cultural shifts and "initiative fatigue." Some participants shared that there was an unevenness across campus regarding culture shifts, with some departments experiencing faster changes in culture than others. Participants also shared that there was concern of initiative fatigue among faculty and staff, which they tried to remedy by integrating the SSEI work into existing priorities. This can help build buy-in, as individuals who may be reluctant to change can see how the SSEI goals fit in with the institution's existing overarching goals:

"[T]here is still one area where we haven't been able to fully change the culture, so we haven't seen as many changes in the area of our math placement, for example. We've started to change some of the culture, but we haven't seen the results we've seen in some of the other areas that we wanted to address. I think the reason is ... the culture hasn't changed." –Provost

"The biggest challenge was how do you integrate this initiative into what you're doing and not have it seen as an add-on. What we've really tried to stress is that SSEI is not more. It's about integration. It's a way to achieve the goals you have for student success on your campus." –Chancellor

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Areas of Impact

Institutional teams were asked about the ways in which their institution's participation in the SSEI Initiative has improved understanding and attitudes toward student success on their campus. Major themes that emerged include increased collaboration, data maturity, and increased ability to advance institutional goals and priorities.

Collaboration

Collaboration emerged as a pivotal theme for most institutions. The SSEI Initiative not only allows for cross-campus collaboration, as institutional teams consist of individuals representing various departments across campus, but it also helps foster collaboration across or between institutions due to the structure of the initiative.

Cross-Campus Collaboration

Cross-campus collaboration centers on breaking down silos within institutions to foster interdisciplinary work, sharing resources, co-creating programs, and building shared ownership across departments. Interview data reinforce the importance of bringing in and having buy-in from institutional leadership. Strong support from leadership can help ensure that there are structures in place to guide teams through the SSEI model. Institutions also shared that they experienced a breakdown of silos within their institutions, because the initiative helped facilitate communication and cooperation between departments that usually did not work together. This, in turn, fostered interdisciplinary approaches to achieving student success:

"I and the VP for what was student affairs led a team for a really deep dive into everything student success over the last year and a half. We had collaborative agreements and working relationships before, but now we really are closely tied. She now has a dotted line, reporting to me, and we've rebranded that entire area as student engagement and success." –Provost

"The idea of coming together as a functional council on student success and academic affairs has been critical to change. Many of these barriers to student success are discussed within that council, and different perspectives are acquired, which informs the solution. That kind of team approach or team effort breaks down the silos and increases the communications and leads to a better ability to lift difficult initiatives and scale initiatives." –Vice Provost

Interviewees also discussed how participating in the initiative helped create a sense of shared ownership and buy-in toward institutional goals. This sense of collective responsibility encourages engagement across the institutional teams as they work toward collective goals. It also provided space for the co-creation of processes and procedures to achieve those goals through interdisciplinary design:

"We've really involved a lot of people in the process, so they've also been committed to the process more and also even bringing things forward to us. ... Because we're getting more buy-in collectively within our team, they were looking at things we didn't even think about." –Provost

Lastly, cross-campus collaboration allows for the leveraging of resources, including expertise, funding, physical space, and technology, all for the purpose of helping all students achieve success. Utilizing combined resources not only increases efficiency, but also allows institutions to bring student success to scale.

Collaboration Across or Between Institutions

Collaboration across or between institutions focuses on exchanging knowledge, sustaining efforts by learning from and working with peer institutions, and supporting collective impact. Through the SSEI Initiative, participants can learn from their peers about challenges they have faced and areas in which they've had great success. It also allows institutions to share proven strategies and best practices from institutions that may have similar or different student demographics and institutional types:

"I think one of the huge benefits in participating in this process and having it led by AASCU is the fact that you do have conversations with other members of the cohort across the whole country, and you learn best practices from them and how they are wrestling with different issues." –Provost

Participants also shared that their institution's involvement in SSEI helped them stay motivated as they were able to support one another within their cohort. This built a sense of camaraderie and shared mission and also allowed participants to feel like they were making a positive change in the higher education ecosystem. The cohort model also created an environment in which institutions could hold each other accountable as they worked toward their student success goals:

"[It gave us a lens [so] we could move forward ourselves and see ourselves differently, see similarities and differences to the other campuses that maybe we didn't know about. I think [the campus cohort model] brought a lot of value for our group." –Assistant Vice President



That kind of team approach or team effort breaks down the silos and increases the communications and leads to a better ability to lift difficult initiatives and scale initiatives.

Data Maturity

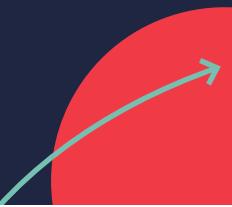
Data play a critical role in institutional transformation. Unsurprisingly, data and data maturity came up as themes when interviewees shared the impacts the SSEI Initiative has had on their campus. Multiple institutions noted that they entered the SSEI Initiative with existing data-rich environments, making them well-poised to participate. Other institutions shared that data use and data literacy were less developed across their campus and remained siloed within particular units. Wherever institutions were on their path to data maturity when they entered the initiative, SSEI provided them with the ability to understand how to analyze, interpret, and act on their data.

Many participants noted increases in data literacy, which helped drive more intentional and informed decision-making. Some institutions moved from simply having data to using it in more strategic and less fragmented ways. For example, some interviewees explained that through their participation in the initiative, their institutional team was able to come together to standardize definitions of terms and data collection. Others noted that their institution invested in data dashboards that allowed them to see student retention and progress across disciplines in real time. This allows institutions to better align their data indicators and metrics with student success goals:

"I think SSEI has been very important in terms of helping to advance some of our other efforts related to data literacy and building a culture around assessment and research-based interventions, not [to] just do things and see what sticks." –Associate Provost

Another area in which participants reported a cultural shift focused on disaggregation of data to understand how students from different backgrounds access and progress through college. Research shows that students have different journeys into and through college based on varying characteristics, such as their race, gender, income, whether they are first generation, and whether they are student parents (Dundar, 2024; Kim et al., 2024). Understanding these differences can help institutions target interventions to ensure students do not fall behind. Interview data reveal that the shift toward disaggregating institutional data to better see and understand differences among students based on their background was a key step in their journey through institutional transformation:

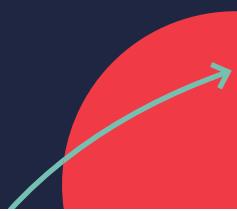
"I think the way that the SSEI has really helped that is in the ways that we disaggregate data, acknowledging that, for example, with IPEDS [the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System] and some of the other big reports, you report one number. But when you break that number down by race, by ethnicity, by gender, by degree ... sometimes the one number hides a whole lot of variation within it." –Associate Provost



A few institutions acknowledged that data limitations remain. Some noted that they are still working toward having a framework for student success with agreed-upon metrics. Others shared that the use of a data dashboard to inform decision-making is only being done within certain levels of the institution and not across the full campus. Another area that participants brought up related to limited data was a lack of student voice and data around their experience on campus. Participants believed that incorporating students' voices would help institutions better understand how policy and other changes could impact students. They also shared that creating a student-centered approach to institutional transformation that incorporates student voices into policies and procedures could lead to greater student success:

"One of the things that the SSEI has done ... is thinking about the student experience, going beyond what you can see as equity gaps and metrics and outcomes, but actually thinking about what is happening on the campus that's resulting in those gaps. What's the student experience? And are we actually getting at what that student experience is? We typically hear from students that are heavily involved in campus already, and many campuses like ours are commuter campuses. How do we talk to those students that we're not hearing from?" -Professor

I think SSEI has been very important in terms of helping to advance some of our other efforts related to data literacy and building a culture around assessment and research-based interventions, not [to] just do things and see what sticks.



Leadership and Institutional Priorities

Another major theme that emerged related to the impact of the initiative was the role of institutional leadership in setting and accomplishing institutional goals in an efficient way. The majority of participants indicated that their senior leadership demonstrated a strong commitment to the SSEI Initiative. They spoke to the ways in which leadership helped align their institution's SSEI efforts with existing strategic plans related to student success. This alignment ensured that SSEI was not treated as a stand-alone project, but rather as a strategic extension of already existing institutional priorities. This helps create clear, consistent messaging that access and success for all students are top institutional goals for which the entire campus is accountable and should be involved:

"I think we were very lucky to have a lot of leadership support, thinking back to the institutional culture and the role of institutional leadership. I think we were very lucky that we had that support and were able to make the time. I also think that we tried to be very strategic so the work we did on SSEI complemented work that was already being done and so we were very much able to say, 'it's not just about doing the SSEI thing.'" –Associate Provost

Furthermore, there was widespread consensus across interviews that the initiative aligned well with their institution's existing or emerging strategic plans, particularly as it related to ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity and support to be successful. Participation in the initiative also provided an opportunity for institutions to review their policies and procedures with a more strategic lens on student success for all students.



Advice for Other Institutions

Participants were asked what advice they would provide to other institutions that were considering similar student success initiatives on their campus. Underpinning all the advice was the importance of understanding your institutional context and the key challenges to address, as well as the need to prioritize campus involvement and introspection. Most advice fell into one of four areas: (1) team composition, (2) buy-in, (3) the cohort model, and (4) data.

Team composition. Participants stressed that institutions should first think about who will lead the effort and build out the rest of the SSEI team, including staff, administrators, and faculty. Some suggested that including "student success champions," along with people who may be a bit more skeptical can help move the work along and build a diverse group that is inclusive of the campus community. A broad reach encourages broad perspectives that can benefit the institution in grappling with big-picture transformational questions:

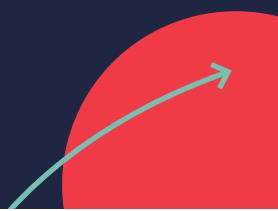
"[I]t is an amazing process. ... But they really need to make sure they have the right people on board, people that have the bandwidth and have the goal of going forward with it. [T]hen I think it can really transform your institution." –Associate Provost

Buy-in. Commitment and encouragement from leadership at the outset are key. It is critical that the SSEI institutional team and campus community understand the intentionality and scope of the institution's goals. This can help leverage available resources to move the needle and engage as many people as possible:

"We're better together. ... I would say do it. But I would also say that it does take leadership. And if the leader is not committed to it, then it's not the right time. And it does take resources. And that means that maybe some of the things that you were going to do may not be done. And it takes an open mind to partner with folks that are not sort of in your inner circle every day." –Chancellor



[I]t is an amazing process. ... But they really need to make sure they have the right people on board, people that have the bandwidth and have the goal of going forward with it.



Cohort model. Participants shared that the cohort model of the SSEI Initiative was very helpful as they have worked through their transformational journeys. The cohort model provides a structure to ask and share, to build one's network, and to enhance existing work. This format provides institutions with the opportunity to learn the context of other institutions, including their successes and their challenges, which can help shape one's own narrative and find appropriate solutions for one's institution. Greater awareness of similar struggles other institutions or campuses face can also lessen feelings of isolation:

"I would say do it. I so appreciate organizations like AASCU or others that are bringing groups together. We can learn together [and] not repeat some of the same mistakes. We can enhance what we're doing, not reinvent the wheel." -Chancellor

Data. SSEI participants encouraged institutions that are looking to start their own journeys to first look at their data and get their institution's data people involved and invested early in the process. The data will help identify problems specific to your institution or campus and can be utilized to inform solutions or strategies moving forward. Data can also be used to assess whether the initiative has helped make a difference across specified metrics:

"I believe it's important to look at the data and see what the numbers are saying. [T]hat can help your campus address the issues that are appropriate for the campus because each campus is different. I believe SSEI definitely can help articulate what those numbers look like and how best to approach it." -Vice Chancellor



Conclusion

The institutions participating in AASCU's SSEI Initiative joined with the goal of advancing student success for every student on their campus. Previous research on the initiative highlighted the importance of leadership commitment, data utilization, and institutional culture as key areas for transformation (Basavaraj & Taylor, 2024). Interview data outlined in this paper reinforce these as components crucial for institutions to successfully transform.

As we learned through interviews, SSEI institutions faced a myriad of challenges in their journey toward transformation for student success, ranging from students' evolving needs to limited resources. Some institutions also faced additional obstacles, such as leadership turnover and reduced staff capacity. All of this is in addition to what we know from research—that RPUs operate at lower capacity and receive fewer federal dollars compared with other sectors (Gardner, 2024). All these factors influence how institutions transform. And yet, clear commitment and the structure of the initiative helped guide participants as they overcame some of these challenges.

The SSEI Initiative supported institutions by fostering collaboration across campus and with the rest of their cohort, resulting in the breakdown of silos and an increased collective impact. The initiative also helped institutions understand the need for data disaggregation, improved data literacy among staff, and made progress in data utilization and the evolution of data infrastructure and tools. Finally, SSEI has both reinforced and advanced existing institutional priorities for student success.

Many factors affect institutional transformation. It is evident from this study that cohort initiatives such as SSEI enhance institutional collaboration, data use for decision-making, and leadership's ability to accomplish institutional priorities and goals. The SSEI Initiative has helped improve the capacity and knowledge required for transformation. It is our hope that this initiative and the participating RPUs serve as examples of how to thoughtfully and intentionally reexamine existing policies and procedures and create new ones with the goal of student success.

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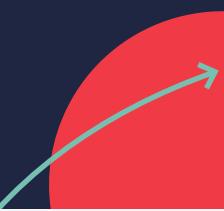
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