

# Research Briefs

## KEY FINDINGS

- Money barrier #1 comes in 7th.
- Lack of Information barrier #2 comes in 8th.
- Work/Job Time Management barrier #3 drops to 5th place.
- Facilities/Equipment barrier #4 drops drastically to 14th place.
- Technology barrier #8 drops off the charts to 24th
- Motivation barrier #10 drops to 12th place in 2007.
- Instructor Issues rises to #1 barrier in 2007.
- Child/Family rises to #2 barrier in 2007.
- Course Offerings rises to 3rd in 2007.
- Developmental / THEA (TSI) rises to #4 barrier in 2007.

## IMPLICATIONS

### For Practice:

- Celebrate faculty/staff accomplishments
- Establish new taskforces to address rising barriers
- Develop plans to sustain progress

### For Policy:

- Review and revise policies as indicated by findings from Barriers II

### For Research:

- Conduct further investigation into factors related to 2007 barriers



## A Comparative Study of Shifting of Barriers to Student Success: 2005 Barriers I and 2007 Barriers II

### An Achieving the Dream Research Brief

South Texas College researchers conducted a comparative analysis of the (STC) Barriers I (2005) and II (2007) research studies which suggests that the prevalence of specific barriers as perceived and identified by students in focus groups and essays has shifted as documented in the Top Ten Barriers lists from 2005 and 2007. Barriers at the top of the 2005 list were addressed through courageous dialogue about the data by faculty, staff and administrators in order to strategize and develop a variety of interventions targeted to impact a specific barrier. The top 4 barriers dropped significantly in students' rank order of prevalence by 2007.

### Background

During its first year with Achieving the Dream (ATD), South Texas College (STC) questioned students regarding barriers they had confronted. The study was designed to be replicated at a later point in time in order to investigate progress in the reduction or elimination of barriers to student success. Comparative analyses between the findings from the two studies are presented in this brief.

### Purpose of Study

Based on Barriers I results and other related institutional data (i.e. Fact Book), taskforces were established to develop interventions to address specific barriers. In addition to separate evaluation plans for each of these interventions, this study was designed to document observable changes in the level of intensity of specific barriers as indicated by the perception of students regarding how prevalent a specific barrier is at STC.

### Methodology and Research Questions

Both Barriers I and Barriers II utilized qualitative data collection methods (i.e. focus groups and student essays) in which students were asked to identify barriers, or

stated that 'money' was a barrier, the follow-up question would be, "What percentage of students do you think have to deal with or experience money as a barrier (i.e. 20%,40%, 60%)?" Based on student responses to this question and the number of groups or essays in which a specific barrier was mentioned, a rank order of barriers was developed. The Top Ten Barriers Lists were then communicated to the College as high priority items for development of interventions or for further investigation to ensure that the student perceptions were understood. Multiple faculty/staff taskforces were established to address these barriers with immediate improvements.

Initially, the College responded to the Barriers lists triangulated with findings from other data such as student records, consultant reports, and other historical data

### Student Barriers Shift to Lower Rank from 2005 to 2007

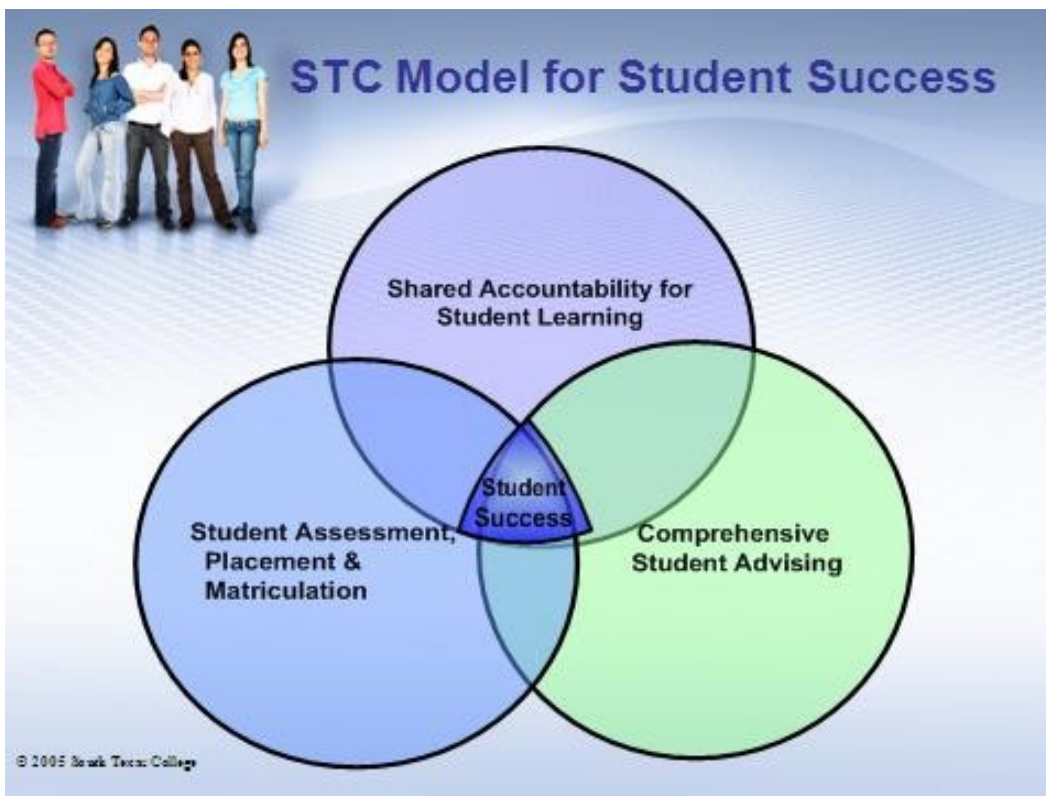
2005 Barriers Study	2007 Barriers Study Replication
Money	Instructor Issues
Lack of Information	Child / Family
Work/Job Time Management	Course Offerings
Facilities / Equipment	Developmental / THEA
Child / Daycare / Family	Work / Job Time Management
Course Offerings	Personnel
Developmental THEA	Money
Technology	Lack of Information

challenges that may cause them to withdraw or drop out. Barriers I included 25 focus groups (n=200) and 387 essays. Barriers II included 27 focus groups (n=234) and 333 essays. The same question protocol was used for both studies resulting in a list of barriers with an assigned frequency based on students' perceptions of how prevalent a barrier might be. For example, if a student

## A Comparative Study of Shifting of Barriers to Student Success: 2005 Barriers I and 2007 Barriers II (cont.)

collections by forming three major taskforces to address barriers. The taskforces were made up of cross-functional teams of faculty, administrators and staff members. Each taskforce was given a specific charge from the President to conduct literature reviews of educational research and existing practices, and institutional data and used this information to develop strategies that they believed would address specific student barriers. The purpose for the Shared Accountability for Student Learning Taskforce was to establish shared responsibility among faculty, staff, and students to set and achieve high expectations for student learning. The Student Assessment, Placement and Matriculation Taskforce was established to promote college readiness for all students and provide seamless systems and processes from prospective student through successful matriculation into college-level courses. The third initial taskforce, the Comprehensive Student Advising Taskforce was to promote a personalized, student-centered environment that provides an integrated system of quality educational information and planning services for addressing students' needs from initial contact through graduation, transfer and/or job placement.

From these initial taskforces alone (many others have been created since then) a



host of interventions were designed and presented to the President's Planning and Development Council for approval, advice and support for implementation. Some of the following interventions were developed by these faculty and staff taskforces:

- Mandatory Orientation
- Case Management Advising

- Student Learning Outcome Development and Assessment
- Student Success Centers
- Welcome Centers

### Findings

After the Barriers II Top Ten List was developed, a comparison was made between it and the previous list. Barriers 1-4, 8 and 10 were much less prevalent in students' discussions in 2007. Conversely, Barriers 5-7 and 9 were found to be higher on the list in 2007: Child/Family rose from 5th to 2nd place, Course Offerings rose from 6th to 3rd place and Instructor Issues rose from 9th to 1st place.

### Implications

New taskforces should be and at

- Faculty Advising
- Qualitative Study on Students Dropped for Non-Payment
- Elimination of Late Registration
- Plasma Screens to Provide Information to Students
- Learning Communities
- Financial Aid Labs for FAFSA
- Established Payment Deadlines
- Faculty Notification of Student Payment Issues
- Curriculum Alignment and Assessment of Pre-Requisites
- Credit Smart Training
- Linked Courses
- Supplemental Instruction

the time of this writing some have already been developed to address the shifts in student barriers as identified in this study. For example a new Instructor Issues Taskforce has been established and is triangulating the student comments underlying the instructor issues barrier with Student Evaluations of Faculty, Student Complaints, and CCSSE data related to faculty to develop immediate strategies to address student concerns. Continued evaluation and institutionalization as appropriate of earlier interventions should be continued. Expanded literature review of new practices or strategies under consideration should be carried out by taskforces including triangulation of data or collection of new data to ensure understanding of each barrier.

