

PATHWAYS TO RESULTS

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY BRIEF

SEPTEMBER
2016

Office of Community College Research and Leadership

Ready and Interested: Harry S Truman College's Multipronged Approach to Improving Retention and Completion Among Males of Color

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Harry S Truman College (Truman), one of the seven City Colleges of Chicago, has participated in Pathways to Results (PTR) for the last three years. In each of its projects Truman has successfully improved institutional processes and academic pathway practices, resulting in improved outcomes for its students. Truman has truly been a leader, under both current and past college leadership, in the area of critical analysis and meaningful transformation to strive for equitable outcomes across issues of race, income, gender, and special populations. With each project the Truman team has successfully worked with a large group of administrators and program faculty to create a common vision that places equity at the center of their improvement efforts. As a result, they have been an exemplar in designing and implementing targeted improvements that reach the students who need them most, while also addressing broad pathway needs that improve the experience for all students.

In their most recent Year One PTR project, the Truman team focused on their cosmetology program, based on their observation that men of color were not experiencing the same level of success as other student populations in this and other programs of study due to lower levels of readiness.

Identifying the Problem at Truman

Truman's data collection and analysis indeed revealed that Black and Latino males in the cosmetology program were not persisting or completing at a rate equal to that of their White or female counterparts. Black men made up nearly 75% of the males enrolled but only represented 67% of graduates in the cosmetology program. Truman also uncovered gaps in reading readiness between men of color and other student populations--for example, Black males scored 10%–15% lower on the COMPASS reading assessment when compared to other student populations. Moreover, faculty felt these reading barriers were at the root of some of the early academic struggles for men of color in the cosmetology coursework. Finally, a survey of men of color at Truman revealed that there was also a curriculum issue at play; male cosmetology students were interested in barbering, a topic not covered in the Truman curriculum.

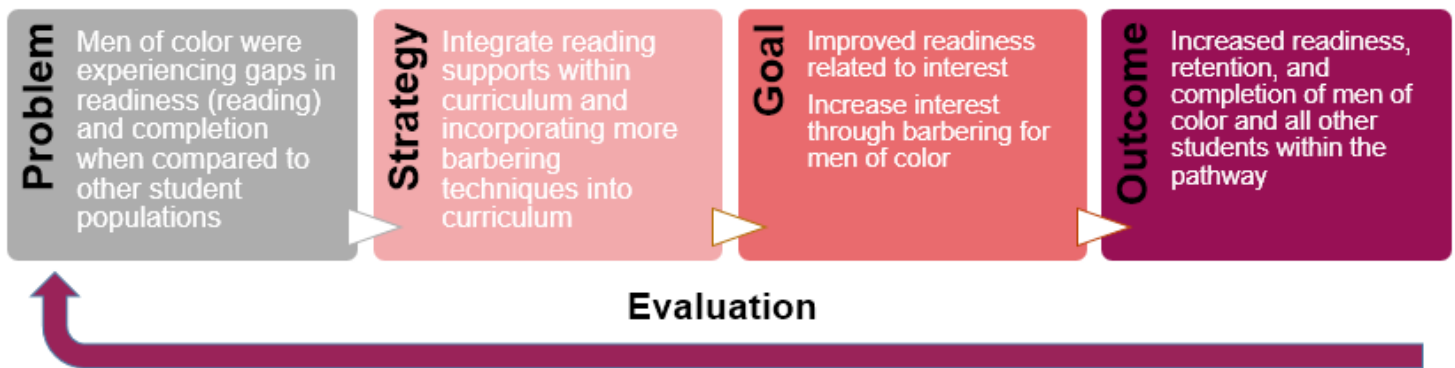
Truman's Improvement

In light of the findings relative to the experiences of men of color in the cosmetology pathway, the Truman team determined the most appropriate improvements would be to provide additional, integrated, and proactive reading supports for black males (and all other students) and to incorporate barbering-specific content for interested males within the program.

Truman's reading intervention is a multipronged approach including pre- and post-course assessments, integrated reading center supports, and reading tutoring support. A key theme for Truman's reading intervention has been to "bring the reading center to the students" rather than just refer students passively to the reading center. At the beginning of the semester the cosmetology program connected with the reading center to assess reading level. Throughout the course of

About Pathways to Results: Implementation Partnerships

PTR is an outcomes-focused, equity-guided process to improve student transition to and through postsecondary education and into employment. The process engages community college practitioners and their partners to identify and understand the problematic aspects of systemic design--whether processes, practices, policies, or pedagogies--and to find sustainable solutions that will support equitable student outcomes. In 2016, a second project year was added to the Pathways to Results model, titled PTR: Implementation Partnerships. Teams who participated in an Implementation Partnership, or "Year Two," project work to implement, evaluate, and scale their work in a network of other colleges striving to improve equitable student outcomes in innovative ways.



Harry S Truman College's Intervention Logic Model

the semester, the reading center is allotted time for integrated reading interventions are connected to the curriculum. Students receive tutoring as needed throughout the course of the semester and reading is again assessed at the end of the semester. The success of the reading improvement is predicated on the collaboration between cosmetology faculty and staff and sharing of institutional resources.

An effort to introduce a barbering certificate is underway. To inform the implementation of a barbering certificate, the Truman team has visited another college in the state with a barbering certificate. Throughout the implementation of improvement efforts, the Truman team is constantly assessing persistence rates, student satisfaction and performance, academic self-efficacy, and overall experience within the program to make necessary adjustments as needed.

What We Know from the Field

The literature on what is most effective in reducing the need for remediation is mixed. Institutions are trying to identify ways to improve outcomes for themselves and the students they serve, but there is not one silver bullet approach to doing so just yet. What we find in our work at OCCRL is that reducing remediation is a multipronged approach that should include collaboration between faculty and student support services to create a student-centered and wraparound approach to meeting student needs.

There is some evidence that students who experience integrated curricula tend to have a higher likelihood of completing and moving beyond developmental courses than those just taking independent developmental courses (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). Additionally, Bettinger and colleagues (2013) suggest that those experiencing integrated curricula are more likely to complete coursework and transfer on to four-year institutions. Both of these observations, and more, are integrated into Truman's approach to a proactive reading intervention that helps students develop the skills needed to succeed in the curriculum and in the workplace.

Notes on Scaling

In OCCRL's work with community colleges across the state, it has become clear that many CTE programs struggle to help students who are not perceived to be "college ready" to succeed. Few programs have taken Truman's strong, contextualized, and collaborative (including a united coalition of student support services and faculty) approach to solving this readiness issue. Moreover, their evaluation plan, which is tied to closing identified achievement gaps for men of color, also has the potential for adoption by any college looking to implement an intervention for all students that has the dual purpose of closing an achievement gap for a particular student group.

Lessons can also be adopted from Truman's success with braiding resources to sustain and scale this project. In addition to the PTR grant, Truman has braided in resources from institutional professional development funds and a Title V grant that provides funding and support for developing Hispanic-serving institutions. These funds supported the team to increase the number of clinicians in their cosmetology pathway.

The deep engagement of program faculty in the entire project, including this notion of equity and improvement, has also situated this team in an ideal place for scaling within their own institution. The team is preparing the evidence needed to show other academic leaders the efficacy of the intervention and the buy-in from faculty willing to advocate for the value of this reading intervention.

References

- Bettinger, E., Boatman, A., & Long, B. (2013). Student supports: Developmental education and other academic programs. *The Future of Children*, 23(1), 93-115.