



Vernon College
Site Visit 7 Report
January 2014

Submitted by
Luzelma G. Canales

Scope of Visit

Prior to last fall's site visit (Visit 6), the consultant worked with the SSBTN liaison, Betsy Harkey, through email and conference calls to build the agenda for the visit. The site visit included a presentation to the entire college outlining the history of the college to develop a student success agenda with a focus on the work accomplished through participation in SSBTN (see Appendix A). All employees of the college participated in this session and were given an opportunity to engage in a dialogue thereafter. The session ended with a description of the structure that was put in place by the leadership to ensure sustainability of the work.

The President followed the session with a college-wide presentation with his reflections on the SSBTN work and expectations for the future. Dr. Johnston outlined the college's commitment to continue to strengthen the use of data to inform decisions.

The visit also included additional focus group training for faculty/staff who did not have an opportunity to participate during the previous site visit. The training included a review of the materials provided by CCCSE for conducting focus groups and reporting the results.

Persons Contacted

The final site visit included a session with all college employees including the President.

Current Status of SSBTN Work & Observations

President Johnston continues to be committed to building a student success agenda based on a culture of evidence. I am impressed with the level of commitment of the President and his leadership team to ensure sustainability beyond the project. The President's commitment to the work is demonstrated through the institutionalization of the Student Success by the Numbers Phase II Team to continue beyond the project. This team will continue to be responsible for working with Betsy to ensure high levels of engagement in use of data for informing decisions.

Meetings with this cross-functional team reveal a strong understanding of their role in continuing to strengthen the college's culture of evidence. The college has done a nice job of ensuring integration of planning and accreditation processes in the SSBTN work. The college also integrated the new Texas Success Points into the Key Performance Indicators.

The college prepared a synthesis of the work conducted prior to and during its participation in SSBTN including a review of the college's SSBTN goals. As indicated in the report from the previous site visit, the survey administered to the college employees clearly reflects a shift in the institution's culture to one that has a greater understanding of the role of data to inform

decisions. I believe that Vernon College leveraged participation in SSBTN to accelerate their journey to building a stronger culture of evidence and to build consensus throughout the college for increased focus on student success.

I have no doubt that Vernon College will continue to strengthen their use of data to inform decisions. It was truly an honor to work with Dr. Johnston, Betsy, and the entire Vernon College community in facilitating the SSBTN work.

Beyond SSBTN

1. *What are the college's next steps in sustaining the work accomplished during the SSBTN grant period to build a culture of inquiry and evidence? Specifically, how will the college build upon the use of data and continue to build data capacity? Include these steps in the revised template.*

Vernon College has taken steps to institutionalize the structure implemented during SSBTN to continue to strengthen the culture of inquiry and evidence in the college. The college will utilize the cross-functional team to continue to lead the data discussions. The President will continue to utilize the college-wide events to create opportunities to share and discuss student success data. The college continues to look for technology solutions that are within the college's financial capacity to supplement the data tools available so that data become more accessible to faculty and staff.

2. *What are the college's goals related to the use of data and building data capacity during the first year after the grant ends? During the second and third years? Which groups or individuals will be responsible for moving forward with this work?*

As indicated earlier, Vernon College is committed to the structure developed during participation in SSBTN. The committee will continue to work with Betsy in reviewing the data that are currently available, identifying new data required (including future focus groups and surveys), and analyzing the data to make recommendations on next steps. The President's goal is to continue to align planning and accreditation processes to capitalize on the learning from SSBTN.

3. *How will the college integrate the work begun and built upon during SSBTN with the college's other strategic initiatives?*

The integration of the SSBTN work into other strategic initiatives was planned from the beginning. Vernon College was very purposeful in ensuring alignment of the planning process and accreditation process with SSBTN in addition to aligning the Key Performance Indicators to ensure inclusion of the Texas Success Points. Participation in SSBTN facilitated a greater understanding of using *CCSSE* and *SENSE* results to better understand the student experience and processes that could be improved.

4. *From the college's perspective, reflecting upon the scope of work during the SSBTN project and the college's progress during the grant period: What has worked well for the college? What has not worked well for the college? What aspects of the SSBTN work have been particularly challenging for the college? What, if any, additional support from the SSBTN consultant and/or the SSBTN leadership team would have been helpful?*

During my work with Vernon College, the ability for the consultant to work closely with Betsy and President Johnston to ensure that the site visits and support during the visits were aligned with the needs of the college was critical. Constant and honest communication between the consultant, Betsy, and the President was key to successful implementation of the SSBTN work. The ability to understand where the college was prior to SSBTN was also a critical step in working with the leadership team to develop the initial plan for rolling out the work and sustaining it beyond participation in SSBTN. In debriefings with the college's leadership, participation in SSBTN was value added in building a stronger culture of evidence at the college. Vernon College was appreciative of the partnership with the consultant before, during and after site visits.

Notable Updates to College's Planning Template, if applicable (Please attach updated version of the template.)

The college continues to utilize the planning template as a guide. Betsy and the SSBTN team utilize the template to stay on course.

Recommendations

The college should continue to engage the college community in the dialogue about institutionalizing the culture of evidence and alignment of all initiatives. The President should continue to leverage the college's fall and spring college-wide events to engage all of the college in the student success work.

I'd like to end the report with a big THANK YOU to Dr. Johnston, Betsy, and the Vernon College community for their commitment to improving the student experience and focus on student success.