On-Time and Debt-Free:
A Data-Driven Holistic Coaching Model for Low-Income Student Success at Purdue

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"The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) allows institutions to mutually share successes and benchmark proven strategies impacting post-secondary student success, persistence, and completion in dramatic and tangible ways. CSRDE facilitates a network where individual administrators of all backgrounds and levels can share and leverage knowledge that will yield positive results in student success. As members of a partner institution, we have found tremendous value in the annual National Symposium on Student Retention (NSSR), both for the chance to share our efforts and the opportunity to bring back research that can shape our day-to-day work and strategic planning."

> **~ Michelle Ashcraft**
> Director of Purdue Promise, Purdue University

> **~ Dan Carpenter**
> Executive Director of Student Success Programs, Purdue University

> **~ Monal Patel**
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Abstract

Purdue University has narrowed the graduation gap for low-income Indiana 21st Century Scholars eligible to enroll in an access and support program called Purdue Promise. The program combines full financial need assistance with four years of student success coaching. Purdue Promise is designed to graduate students on-time and debt-free, and assist students in strengthening self-efficacy, self-advocacy, help-seeking skills, and grit. Cohort-based programming designed on best practices did not lead to increased retention and graduation rates from 2009 to 2012. However, the implementation of an individualized coaching program in 2013 has contributed to increasing the program's four-year graduation rate from 37.4% for the 2009 cohort to 53.7% for the 2012 cohort. The fall 2013 cohort is the first in program history to receive coaching all four years and is projected to exceed the University's four-year graduation rate (currently 55.9%) at Census in September 2017. The Purdue Promise four-year coaching model—including individual meetings, online modules, freshman and senior seminar classes, and at-risk data mining—has contributed to the increased retention and graduation of low-income Purdue Promise students, with more than half the population being first-generation and up to 40% identifying as underrepresented minorities (URM).

Introduction

Purdue Promise was created in 2009 as Purdue University West Lafayette's campus (Purdue-WL) support program for Indiana 21st Century Scholars (TFCS). At that time, TFCS at Purdue-WL had a graduation gap approximately 10% behind the all-undergraduate, four-year graduation rate. The TFCS award is a need-based scholarship that covers full-tuition and fees for eligible students based on family income in the 7th or 8th grade and achievement of certain metrics in high school. Thus, all Purdue Promise scholars are low-income Indiana residents. Many institutions offer financial aid *or* specialized programming for students with low-income status. Purdue Promise combines both intentionally for four years, making the program one of the strongest TFCS support mechanisms in Indiana. The total family income eligibility requirement for the Purdue Promise Award was initially capped at $40,000 in 2009. It was increased to $50,000 in 2013, with the average entering total family income across all cohorts at $24,245. For qualifying students, Purdue Promise automatically combines the TFCS award with federal, state, and institutional grants and Federal Work Study to cover full financial need for eight semesters.

Purdue Promise is both an access and success program. The population of students served by the program are under-resourced and historically considered as "at-risk" for low retention and degree attainment. Compared to all Indiana financial aid filers, during the first 25 years of the program, TFCS were "1.4 times more likely to be the first in their family to go to college … over 2.5 times more likely to be raised by single parents … [and their] reported family income was 65% lower than the average student who applies for financial aid" (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, November 2015). Purdue Promise participants are historically more diverse than the Purdue-WL all-undergraduate population, and represent populations that are often marginalized in higher education (Table 1). As a result of income eligibility requirements, Purdue Promise has served approximately 60.2% of the 21st Century Scholars who have enrolled at Purdue-WL between 2009 and 2016. Early positive outcomes garnered university-wide attention which led to the fall 2010 addition of Emerging Urban Leaders (EUL). EULs were high-merit underrepresented minorities (URM) from Indianapolis Public Schools and select schools near and in Chicago, IL. Purdue defines URM as domestic students who indicate they are American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders, including students who selected multiple races. Asian students are not included. The last cohort of EUL enrolled in fall 2012 when resources were reallocated to the Division of Diversity and Inclusion. Purdue Promise has enrolled 2,117 students to date, including 2004 TFCS, 106 EUL, and seven Purdue Opportunity Awards (POA) Scholars.

Table 1: *Demographics*

	Purdue Undergraduate 2009-2016 Cohorts (N = 52319)		Purdue Promise 2009-2016 Cohorts (N = 2117)	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
URM	4491	8.58%	598	28.25%
First Generation	8368	15.99%	1123	53.05%
Pell-Eligible	9635	18.42%	2038	96.27%
Female	22527	43.06%	1171	55.31%

Background

Purdue Promise evolved from the Purdue Opportunity Awards (POA) program, which awarded donor-funded first-year scholarships via a nomination and application process that covered full financial need for

one year for low-income students representing the 92 counties in Indiana, and offered a first-year mentoring program with monthly first-year workshops. Purdue-WL awarded POA cohorts from 2004 through 2008, granting access to 452 students who otherwise may not have enrolled based on affordability. It quickly became apparent, both through data and student stories, that affordability continued to be a concern. While first-year retention rates for POA scholars were not far behind the university rates, and in some cases exceeded the university rates, persistence declined after the first-year. The program began offering smaller scholarships for second- and third-year students, but by 2008 it was clear that partial funding for high-need students who were given full-need scholarships their first year was not enough, as the first cohort's four-year graduation rate was only 29.07%—far behind the university rate of 40.20% (Table 2).

Table 2: *Purdue Opportunity Awards retention and graduation rates*

Cohort Year	Cohort	Original Cohort	One-Year Retention	Two-Year Retention	Three-Year Retention	Four-Year Graduation	Five- Year Graduation	Six-Year Graduation
2004	POA	86	84.88%	66.28%	61.63%	29.07%	51.16%	58.14%
	All-Purdue	6607	85.30%	76.70%	71.10%	40.20%	64.40%	69.70%
2005	POA	90	**84.44%**	72.22%	68.89%	34.44%	54.44%	62.22%
	All-Purdue	7056	84.30%	76.00%	71.70%	39.20%	63.40%	68.70%
2006	POA	94	**86.17%**	74.47%	64.89%	36.17%	53.19%	60.64%
	All-Purdue	7322	85.00%	77.70%	72.80%	40.30%	65.10%	70.20%
2007	POA	84	85.71%	70.24%	69.05%	**44.05%**	58.33%	67.86%
	All-Purdue	6700	86.50%	77.20%	73.10%	42.40%	64.80%	70.70%
2008	POA	89	**91.01%**	**85.39%**	**85.39%**	44.94%	**70.79%**	**76.40%**
	All-Purdue	6920	87.30%	80.60%	76.60%	45.70%	68.50%	73.80%

Note: Bolded font represents where POA retention and graduation rates are higher than the All-Purdue rates.

In 2008, conversations began regarding the transformation of the POA program into Purdue Promise with four key differences: scholarship funding would cover full financial need all four years, non-financial support would be offered all four years, the program would be tied to TFCS eligibility, and students who met eligibility would be automatically awarded rather than selected from nominations and applications. It was believed these changes would increase access, retention, and graduation for low-income students, specifically TFCS. The *Strategic Planning Committee Tiger Team Student Success / Student Experience White Paper* (Jimerson et al., 2009) helped spur this idea into action, citing Purdue Promise as part of the strategy for increasing access and success of qualified first-generation and low-income students at Purdue-WL.

A Case for the Purdue Promise Coaching Model

Before the program was remodeled in fall 2013, Purdue Promise students were required to participate in extensive cohort-based programming, and first-year students received far more support than upperclass students. This included freshman orientation, a two-credit first-year experience seminar, monthly social events, a freshman financial aid workshop, a mandated relationship with an upperclass mentor, a one-credit sophomore-year experience course, kickoff and/or welcome back events for each cohort, a junior career development Saturday institute, a one-credit senior seminar, tutoring and/or mandated academic recovery peer mentoring, and an end-of-year celebration. Focus groups held with seniors in fall 2012 indicated students felt staff spent the majority of their time focusing on students not meeting requirements, and if they were making good grades and meeting requirements they were not supported, especially after freshman year. Most

felt staff did not know their names, and that events were either redundant with support they were getting elsewhere on Purdue-WL's campus or took up time that could have been better spent studying or working. Students were grateful for Purdue Promise funding creating opportunities for them to attend Purdue-WL, but did not feel they got much out of the program.

In response, to customize support for individual students, the staff piloted the coaching model during spring 2013 with the juniors of the fall 2010 cohort. When designing the coaching model, there was not relevant current research on student success coaching models, as coaching was predominately being used in higher education for career coaching and academic success coaching. Therefore, the Purdue Promise coaching model was custom-designed for Purdue Promise, with intentional thought toward low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority students. The model is rooted in Maslow's hierarcy of needs (1943), appreciative advising (Bloom, Huston, & He, 2008), intrusive advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Miller & Murray, 2005; Varney, 2007; Cannon, 2013), self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Baxter Magolda & King, 2008), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and self-advocacy, and more recently Bridges Out of Poverty (Payne, DeVol, & Smith, 2009). The pilot was intentional for juniors because the program historically retained students through junior year and then lost them over the summer before senior year. The pilot was an attempt to get more students to return for their senior year and to individually address barriers preventing or delaying graduation, in addition to assessing whether coaching would result in a better return-on-investment than the social events and student leaders.

Methods and Data

As indicated above, Purdue-WL identified a need to better support the TFCS in order to improve graduation and retention rates and advance the university's mission. The POA program and early structure of Purdue Promise were not seeing significant impact in student performance, and in fall 2013, after the success of the coaching pilot, the program was restructured to become what it is today.

To prepare for assessing the new coaching model, an internal database for Student Success Programs was created to track scholarship status and requirements and log every interaction with students in a contact log. Module completion and feedback was logged in Blackboard. Caseload spreadsheets were created for each success coach, so pre-semester and post-semester data could be assessed (change in GPA, academic standing, classification, Satisfactory Academic Progress, enrollment, scholarship status).

The New Model

During fall 2013, the four-year, holistic, customized coaching model was adopted for all students in Purdue Promise, replacing the one-size-fits-all best practices framework previously used. The Program Coordinator and five Assistant Directors took on added coaching responsibilities in addition to maintaining some programmatic responsibilities (coordinating mentoring, academic recovery, and curriculum) until the team could demonstrate that coaching was worthwhile. Assessment feedback from students and academic advisors also led to some programmatic changes, covered in detail below.

The Purdue Promise four-year experience begins with summer orientation, where students sign their first scholarship contracts and agree to participate in the support program. Throughout their experience, students receive personalized success coaching consisting of two to eight individual meetings per semester with a success coach—depending on risk level—to assist them in overcoming barriers. GS 197 and GS 405, the

program's first-year and senior-year seminar courses, provide bookend classroom experiences on the transition to college and life after college, respectively. Additionally, scholarship recipients are required to complete a series of online personal and professional development assignments, referred to as the coaching modules.

Coaching Meetings

The next phase of restructuring Purdue Promise occurred in 2014, and involved reclassifying several Assistant Director positions to be Student Success Coaches. This newly-designed model emphasizes holistic coaching, rooted in the dimensions of wellness (SAMHSA, 2016), and building one-on-one relationships with students. Therefore, the budget was reallocated from programming and student leadership to primarily fund staff. The annual program budget is $151,523, while the costs of staffing (with benefits and professional development funding) are $538,004. The overall cost per student averages $578 based on enrollment numbers for 2016-2017. As previously noted, scholarship recipients are required to meet with their coach two to eight times per semester, based on risk factors. Purdue Promise uses a color-coding model to determine this, based on academic standing, term GPA, cumulative GPA, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) status, etc. Green students are essentially on-track, likely to graduate, and can benefit more from assistance with career and graduate school planning than from academic guidance. Yellow students are generally part of the murky middle—the "sizeable but often overlooked group of students" with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0 that "still stand a good chance of dropping out before completing their degree" (EAB, 2014, para. 2). Red students are those in obvious danger of being academically dropped, losing financial aid, or other similar concerns. Generally, Student Success Coaches meet with yellow and green students two to three times per semester, while Assistant Directors meet with red students four to eight times per semester to provide more instrusive support.

One noticeable benefit of the switch to a more relationship-based model was that the number of students on academic probation fell from around 17.5% of the Purdue Promise student population to 10%. Purdue Promise historically had an academic recovery program called MAPS (Meetings for Academic Planning and Success) led by Purdue Promise student-leaders, called Academic Resource Guides. The program consisted of 10 mandated meetings with prescribed agendas, but student feedback indicated the topics did not address their individual circumstances. Thus, MAPS responsibilities were shifted to professional staff coaches who were more highly trained and could consistently serve the students. In order to most effectively serve students, Purdue Promise staff undergo numerous trainings including, but not limited to: Bridges Out of Poverty, Safe Zone, Trans Inclusion, Green Zone, QPR (suicide prevention), financial aid, and Title IX. In 2016, Purdue Promise staff completed an average of 117.6 hours of professional development per staff member.

During the pilot semester of coaching meetings in spring 2013 with the then juniors (2010 cohort), Purdue Promise staff members logged 1,155 personal contacts and interactions with 179 students the program would otherwise only have seen at a partial-day Saturday Junior Institute (career development workshop). Staff members also logged 1,631 personal contacts with 455 other Purdue Promise students.

According to the 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index, which surveyed more than 30,000 college graduates across the United States, "if an employed graduate recalls having a professor who cared about them as a person, one who made them excited about learning, and having a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their dreams, the graduate's odds of being engaged at work more than double" (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014, p.10). These results, in addition to early assessment of the coaching pilot in 2013 encouraged Purdue Promise to continue with its holistic four-year coaching model. Since then, contact from the program has grown tremendously, totaling more than 158,350 meetings, e-mails, phone calls, text messages, and social media exchanges with more than 1,985 unique enrolled students starting with implementation of the coaching model in August

2013 through the end of the fall 2016 semester. In addition to serving current students, Purdue Promise has also recorded 4,043 phone and e-mail interactions with 1,918 prospective scholars in order to increase yield of low-income and URM students.

One other change in 2012-13 was extending the success coaching even if the student did not maintain their scholarship. This decision was made because in previous years, students who lost their scholarship were very rarely retained by the university. Now, with the "Once Purdue Promise, Always Purdue Promise" mindset, coaching support does not end just because financial support does.

GS Classes

In the initial years of the program, students expressed concerns that they were accumulating too much General Studies (GS) credit through their Purdue Promise course requirements, and for many of those students the credits did not count towards graduation. As a result, the mandatory first-year seminar was reduced to one-credit, the sophomore-year seminar was removed, and all seniors were required to take the same "Life after College" one-credit seminar. The curriculum that was formerly covered in the other courses was converted to an online medium and became a part of the coaching modules.

GS 197, the Purdue Promise First-Year Experience, focuses on strategies necessary for success in the transition from high school to college. Topics covered in this course include: stress management, study skills, time management, financial aid, budgeting, campus safety, diversity, and maintaining healthy relationships, among others. GS 405, Advancing Tomorrow's Leaders: Preparing for Employment and Life after College, covers everything that students need to know about transitioning to life as a young professional, such as personal branding, negotiating salaries, funding graduate school, understanding taxes, navigating benefits packages, planning for retirement, and more. Each of these classes features a pre- and post-assessment which provides Purdue Promise staff with the data necessary to verify that the course objectives were met, in addition to informing choices on curriculum alteration.

Based on the data collected, the GS 197 and GS 405 course requirements benefit student success. Figure 1 outlines the correlation between GS 197 grade and first-year GPA based on an analysis of GS 197 grades from fall semesters between 2013 and 2015. A higher grade in GS 197 is correlated to a higher first-year GPA. This is important because Purdue-WL has an algorithm that predicts students who will receive a GPA at or below 2.5 at the end of their first semester. Students who participate in Purdue Promise support programming, including GS 197, often perform better than predicted rates.
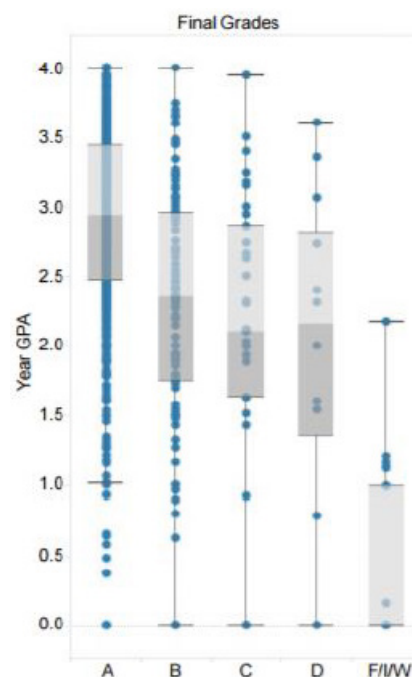

Figure 1: *GS 197 grade and first-year GPA*

Modules

In addition to coaching meetings, Purdue Promise students are required to complete a series of online personal and professional development modules through Blackboard. When established, the curriculum was very structured; each student completed three to four assignments which were based on their cohort. However, this prescriptive model was not customizable for students who were often ahead of, or sometimes behind, the expected developmental level. Therefore, in fall 2015 the modules were re-designed to focus on the dimensions of wellness (SAMHSA, 2016). Each semester, students complete a self-assessment to analyze areas of strength and weakness, and choose assignments they find the most beneficial outside of required coaching meetings. This customizable curriculum more effectively engages students, and increases buy-in from students who are more self-directed rather than being forced to do something they feel is irrelevant. So far, the data gathered by the university supports this conclusion, as noted in Figure 2.
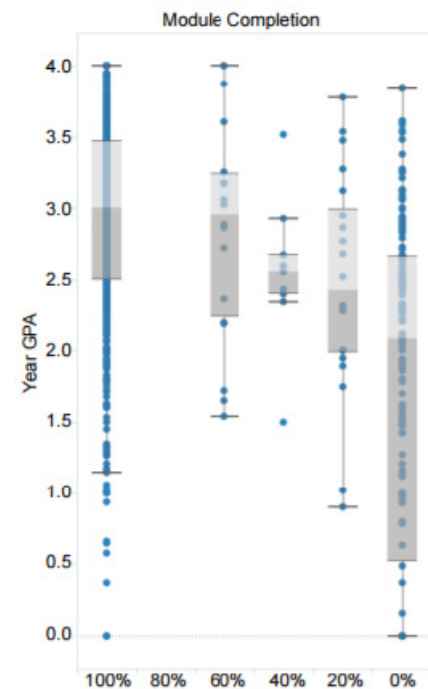
Figure 2: *Module completion and first-year GPA*

Data Mining

The program staff regularly tracks and addresses 51 issues/concerns that affect Purdue Promise students' ability to graduate on time, as well as 12 risk factors that lead to academic probation status, which in turn can lead to a loss of their scholarship (see details in Appendix A).

A crucial factor that contributed to the success of building the current Purdue Promise model was the Student Success database, particularly the contact log. Staff could demonstrate that students were responding positively to the opportunity to be coached based on the immense traffic to the office and contact with coaches (55,868 entries logged in 2015-16). Armed with stories about student meetings, the staff could articulate to stakeholders what was really impacting students' success. This led to tracking the aforementioned 51 issues/concerns that impact on-time graduation. Additionally, department Directors over time have continued to advocate for Purdue Promise staff to gain full access to student records for Purdue Promise students. Staff have willingly participated in hours of training on financial aid, bursar, registrar, admissions, and advising systems to be able to serve as a one-stop shop for students, allowing them be more proactive in addressing barriers that may derail a student's success. The Program Coordinator aggressively mines data to identify issues or concerns that the coaches follow up with via e-mail, phone calls, or texting. Research on low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students over time has led many to assume if students are not successful it is due to lack of academic preparation (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006; Aronson, 2008; Engle & Tinto, 2008). However, Purdue-WL has not traditionally offered conditional admission nor offered remedial education. Thus, we have concluded that the factors really affecting student success most often involve non-academic life circumstances, which are best supported by success coaching.

Results of the Initiative

Purdue Promise was designed to close the four-year graduation achievement gap for 21st Century Scholars, and the ultimate goal of the program is to graduate students on-time and debt-free. The fall 2013 cohort is the first to participate in the "new" Purdue Promise. This cohort is also the first projected to not just meet, but exceed, the university four-year graduation rate. The most recent four-year rate of all students is 55.8%, and it has been climbing for the past few years. The forecast for the four-year graduation rate for the fall 2013 cohort for all students is 53.9%. Based on retention rates and internal analysis by Purdue Promise Staff, at present the 2013 Purdue Promise cohort's four-year rate is projected to be 57.0%. Table 3 shows the Purdue Promise retention and graduation rates for the 2009 through 2015 cohorts compared to the overall university rates. A more detailed version of this table is available in Appendix B, and shows rates compared to TFCS not in Purdue Promise, as well as to Pell-Eligible students not served by Purdue Promise nor TFCS. Notably, Purdue Promise excels at retaining and graduating low-income and underrepresented minority (URM) populations. Table 4 shows the comparison of Purdue Promise Pell-Eligible student performance and that of those not served by the program. Table 5 illustrates the increased success of Purdue Promise URM students compared to their non-Purdue Promise peers.

Table 3: *Purdue Promise vs. all Purdue graduation and retention rates*

Cohort Year	Cohort	Original Cohort	1Yr Retention	2Yr Retention	3Yr Retention	4Yr Grad Rate	5Yr Grad Rate	6Yr Grad Rate
2009	Purdue Promise	171	87.13%	82.46%	72.51%	37.43%	64.91%	69.59%
	All Purdue	6166	88.97%	82.50%	78.61%	46.76%	70.60%	75.43%
2010	Purdue Promise	223	**91.93%**	82.06%	72.65%	42.60%	66.37%	69.51%
	All Purdue	6353	90.23%	83.69%	79.19%	49.22%	72.61%	76.97%
2011	Purdue Promise	252	90.08%	81.75%	77.78%	43.25%	65.48%	
	All Purdue	6660	90.57%	84.34%	80.95%	51.49%	74.19%	
2012	Purdue Promise	244	88.93%	81.15%	77.46%	53.69%		
	All Purdue	6329	91.01%	86.10%	82.92%	55.85%		
2013	Purdue Promise	276	92.39%	87.32%	77.90%			
	All Purdue	6319	92.63%	87.69%	83.49%			
2014	Purdue Promise	292	**92.81%**	85.27%				
	All Purdue	6408	92.76%	88.03%				
2015	Purdue Promise	348	90.23%					
	All Purdue	6855	91.76%					

Note: Bolded font represents where Purdue Promise retention and graduation rates are higher than the All-Purdue rates.

Table 4: *Retention and graduation comparison for Pell-Eligible students*

Cohort	1-Year Retention		2-Year Retention		4-Year Graduation		6-Year Graduation	
	Purdue Promise Pell	Non-Purdue Promise Pell	Purdue Promise Pell	Non-Purdue Promise Pell	Purdue Promise Pell	Non-Purdue Promise Pell	Purdue Promise Pell	Non-Purdue Promise Pell
2009	**87.1%**	83.4%	**82.5%**	75.7%	37.4%	38.1%	**69.6%**	66.5%
2010	**91.9%**	87.0%	**82.1%**	79.1%	**42.6%**	41.6%	69.5%	70.3%
2011	**90.1%**	86.0%	**81.8%**	79.6%	43.3%	44.1%		
2012	**88.9%**	86.8%	**81.2%**	80.6%	**53.7%**	50.4%		
2013	**92.4%**	87.2%	**87.3%**	80.6%				
2014	**92.8%**	90.5%	**85.3%**	84.7%				
2015	**90.2%**	88.2%						

Note: Bolded font represents where Purdue Promise retention and graduation rates are higher than non-Purdue Promise rates.

Table 5: *Graduation and retention comparison for URM students*

Cohort	1-Year Retention		2-Year Retention		4-Year Graduation		6-Year Graduation	
	Purdue Promise URM	Non-Purdue Promise URM	Purdue Promise URM	Non-Purdue Promise URM	Purdue Promise URM	Non-Purdue Promise URM	Purdue Promise URM	Non-Purdue Promise URM
2009	**91.5%**	86.5%	**89.4%**	76.9%	29.8%	31.0%	**72.3%**	64.5%
2010	**94.0%**	86.8%	**88.1%**	80.4%	**41.8%**	37.7%	**73.1%**	69.9%
2011	**90.1%**	86.8%	**81.3%**	79.1%	30.8%	39.5%		
2012	**90.1%**	87.4%	**82.7%**	79.6%	**48.2%**	47.7%		
2013	**92.2%**	89.7%	**87.5%**	82.5%				
2014	**94.5%**	89.0%	**88.3%**	82.1%				
2015	**91.0%**	90.9%						

Note: Bolded font represents where Purdue Promise retention and graduation rates are higher than non-Purdue Promise rates.

At the onset of the coaching model pilot, the completion rate of meetings and modules ranged from 63% to 67%. Data after the fall 2013 semester of coaching for the entire program demonstrated that staff could get most students in for meetings, but struggled to get scholarship recipients to complete modules. Thus when the Student Success Coaches were hired, Purdue Promise set a goal for 2014-15 to have 90% of the students complete meetings and modules. In the fall 2014 semester, the program met or exceeded this goal in every category, and in fall 2015 rates increased in every category, with many coaches achieving 100% completion.

Additionally, Purdue's Enrollment Management Analysis and Reporting (EMAR) developed an algorithm that predicts first-semester grade point averages and identifies at-risk students based on pre-college characteristics. The algorithm was piloted in fall 2013 and has been utilized for all cohorts since fall 2014. The 2014 and 2015 reports demonstrated that Purdue Promise participants outperformed their predicted grade point averages. The 2016 report will not be published until fall 2017.

Financial Aid Support and Debt Study

As mentioned previously, in addition to retaining and graduating students, helping students graduate with little-to-no debt is a crucial part of the program's mission. Figure 3 represents the distribution of aid for the 2014-15 academic year, the most recently closed out year for the Division of Financial Aid. In 2014-15, $17,362,451 in funds was gifted to 867 Purdue Promise recipients. Institutional aid is need-based aid the student would have received regardless of Purdue Promise. Promise and the Purdue Opportunity Award (POA) total the expense amount that is specifically related to Purdue Promise. State, Federal and Private is money that the students brought with them such as Pell Grants, 21st Century scholars, and private scholarships.
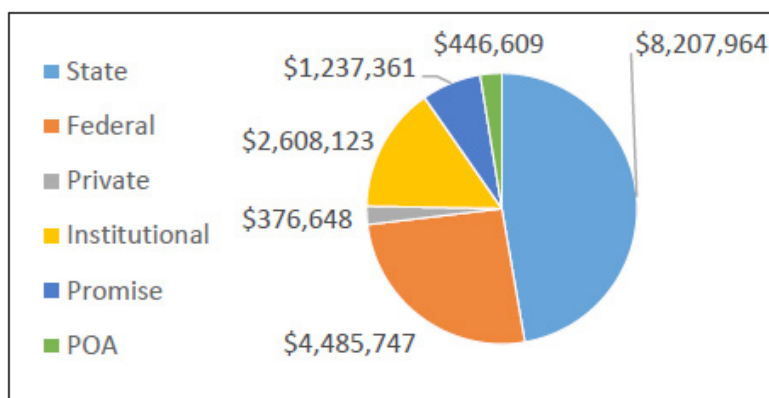

Figure 3: *Gift aid to Purdue Promise recipients (2014-2015)*

The Division of Financial Aid at Purdue-WL conducted a debt study for graduates of the Purdue Promise program, and found that the combination of funding and support is indeed impacting scholarship recipients' ability to graduate with less debt (Table 6). For comparison, the average debt of all Purdue graduating undergraduates was $27,530 in 2015-16.

Table 6: *Average student loan debt of Purdue Promise graduates*

	Graduation Year			
	2012-2013	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**
# with Debt	24	92	99	94
Total Debt	$215,529	$1,221,630	$1,172,765	$1,364,741
Average Debt	$8,980	$13,279	$11,846	$14,519

Future Implications for Purdue-WL and Purdue Promise

Going forward, Purdue Promise has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Provost Office that the program will expand while maintaining a ratio of 150 students per Student Success Coach, and one Assistant Director for every three to four Student Success Coaches. Purdue Promise works because of the high-touch, intrusive coaching and support. Expansion of the student population served would require an expansion in staffing to maintain the personal relations central to the success of the student coaching model.

The Purdue Promise Program Coordinator maintains a very close working relationship with state agencies such as the 21st Century Scholars Support Center and staff members for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE). As Purdue Promise is the only program of its kind in Indiana, the State recognizes that Purdue-WL knows a lot about its 21st Century Scholars and takes advocacy from Purdue Promise staff seriously. Purdue Promise has been instrumental in legislation and policy change for 21st Century Scholars, particularly for the scholarship appeals process. The program's success has led Purdue-WL to be recognized statewide in reports and presentations, thereby reinforcing support for the program from campus leadership.

A 2015 ICHE press release showed Purdue leading all state institutions in three categories measured for enrollment and completion, and placing second in a fourth category (Indiana Commision for Higher Education, January 2015). Table 7 presents data that recognized Purdue-WL in the press release.

Table 7: *Indiana colleges leading the pack in 2013-14 (ICHE, 2015)*

21st Century Scholars Enrolled in 30+ Credits	21st Century Scholars Completing 30+ Credits
1. Ball State University (92.8%)	**1. Purdue University West Lafayette (69.1%)**
2. Purdue University West Lafayette (89.5%)	2. Ball State University (55.1%)
3. University of Southern Indiana (79.3%)	3. Indiana State University (41.1%)
Frank O'Bannon Recipients Enrolled in 30+ Credits	**Frank O'Bannon Recipients Completing 30+ Credits**
1. Purdue University West Lafayette (80.5%)	**1. Purdue University West Lafayette (58.0%)**
2. Ball State University (80.0%)	2. Ball State University (49.2%)
3. Indiana State University (61.9%)	3. Indiana University Bloomington (31.7%)

In November 2015, ICHE recognized Purdue Promise with the Champion Award for outstanding impact and contributions to the 21st Century Scholars program. Purdue-WL and the award were showcased in *21st Century Scholars: 25 Years of Supporting Student Success*, a publication distributed at a December 2015 celebration during the inaugural Student Advocates Conference. Based on this data from ICHE, Purdue-WL 21st Century Scholars outperformed [all] other Indiana public institutions in the categories of College Performance, College Retention, and College Completion in the 2015-16 academic year. Purdue-WL also matched four other institutions (including two Purdue regional campuses) in achieving a score of 100% in College Readiness for enrolled 21st Century Scholars. Table 8 is recreated from the *2016 21st Century Scholar Scorecard (States & Colleges)* for 2015-16 and shows comparison to main campuses or systems.

Table 8: *ICHE 21st Century Scholars 2016 college scorecard data for 2015-16*

	College Readiness	College Performance	College Retention	College Completion (On-Time)	College Completion (150% Time)
All Indiana Public Colleges	79%	60%	72%	22%	37%
Ball State University	100%	65%	88%	39%	51%
Indiana State University	79%	59%	79%	18%	29%
Indiana University - Bloomington	88%	71%	94%	48%	66%
Ivy Tech Community College	61%	43%	48%	8%	12%
Purdue University - West Lafayette	100%	77%	95%	50%	72%
University of Southern Indiana	84%	64%	81%	18%	31%
Vincennes University	30%	48%	60%	10%	26%

Due to the success of the program thus far, the university has chosen to use the coaching model from Purdue Promise as the basis of support for Summer Start, Purdue-WL's first conditional admittance program. Summer 2016 was the inaugural year of Summer Start coaching, and was supported primarily by a graduate assistant. For summer 2017, two professional staff coaches have been hired so that students can receive the continued support that Purdue Promise has demonstrated to be valueable for at-risk student populations.

Other implications of the success of Purdue Promise include approved funding for a two-year pilot study abroad program and an "in-house" Financial Aid Administrator. The study abroad pilot opens access to study abroad to the low-income Indiana residents served by Purdue Promise by helping subsidize students' out-of-pocket costs. It also advances Purdue's land grant mission, by helping scholarship recipients develop intercultural competence and become global citizens ready for careers in a diverse workforce.

Discussion and Conclusion

The greatest challenge to changing the Purdue Promise program to a coaching model was convincing the Program Coordinator's supervisor and some partners it was ok to get rid of "best practices" for all students and move to a model to support coaching. The ultimate measure of student success at Purdue-WL is retention and on-time graduation. Purdue Promise will continue to strive for students to graduate on time and debt-free. When Purdue-WL reports graduation rates to the Board of Trustees it also reports a "+X%" to represent the percentage of students who graduated through other institutions as seen through National Student Clearinghouse data. Purdue Promise tracks causes of attrition and transfer destinations, and will consider students' graduation from other institutions to be part of the program's success, particularly if coaches helped students successfully transfer using their state awards. Retention and graduation rates are evaluated annually after Census in September.

The 2013 cohort is projected to be the first cohort to exceed the university's four-year graduation rate and will be the fifth Purdue Promise cohort to graduate. Thus, the program will begin to assess longer-term impact, including five- and six-year graduation rates, first destination data (job placement, graduation/ professional school enrollment, military enlistment, and starting salaries), and student loan debt compared to Purdue University and national averages. In addition to this limitation, the data we used relied largely on institutional research data. Future studies need to incorporate more formalized student-centered analysis, making use of their feedback and perceptions on programming and support so that the program can be more informed to more effectively serve the students. Nevertheless, the data that guided the program development and decisions would bear great significance to other universities as they try to improve the retention and graduation rates of their own low-income students.

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Appendix A

51 Issues/Concerns that Affect Students' Ability to Graduate on Time

1. personal medical issue
2. family medical issue
3. death of a family member
4. death of a friend or other close relationship
5. entering into a marriage
6. having custody of your own child
7. supporting a child (do not have custody)
8. previously in the foster care system
9. homelessness
10. having a family member in prison
11. personal legal concerns
12. family legal concerns
13. personal substance abuse issues
14. family substance abuse issues
15. personal mental health concerns
16. family mental health concerns
17. personal financial concerns
18. family financial concerns
19. feeling like you do not belong at Purdue
20. lack of social connections at Purdue
21. campus issue: hate speech
22. campus issue: violence
23. campus issue: discrimination or prejudice
24. campus issue: other (please explain)
25. withdrawal from one or more semesters
26. withdrawal from one or more classes
27. number of times changed major
28. semester internship
29. participation in the co-op program
30. working while going to school
31. study abroad (where and when)
32. academic program takes longer than 4 years
33. academic drop
34. difficulty getting in courses to stay on track
35. financial aid warning for GPA
36. financial aid warning for credit completion
37. financial aid denial for GPA
38. financial aid denial for credit completion
39. military duties
40. participation in Purdue varsity athletics
41. motivational issues
42. not being academically prepared for college
43. difficulty with study strategies
44. courses too difficult
45. retaking courses
46. lack of tutoring / academic support available
47. difficulty connecting with professors / TAs
48. taking summer courses
49. living off campus
50. participation in Greek Life
51. Purdue Promise scholarship requirements

12 At-Risk Factors that Lead to Academic Probation Status and/or Loss of Scholarship

1. academic standing (probation or re-admit on probation)

2. classification (year in school)

3. semester GPA

4. cumulative GPA

5. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

6. still undecided/exploratory or enrolled in a "pre" major after second year

7. on Purdue's "at-risk student" list in first semester based on the predicted at-risk algorithm

8. Purdue Promise MAPS (academic recovery) program eligibility

9. registration – below 12 credits, between 12-15 credits, over 19 credits

10. anticipated credit completion deficit

11. scholarship status

12. candidate status vs. anticipated graduation date

Note: These lists were developed over three years of the coaching model by tracking the challenges most commonly discussed in coaching meetings (via contact log notes) and issues most commonly referenced in scholarship appeals. Ongoing data-mining and retention assessment determine the at-risk factors.

Appendix B

Purdue Promise vs TFCS vs Pell-Eligible vs university retention and graduation rates

Cohort Year	Cohort	Original Cohort	1Yr Retention	2Yr Retention	3Yr Retention	4Yr Grad Rate	5Yr Grad Rate	6Yr Grad Rate
2009	Purdue Promise	171	**87.13%**	**82.46%**	72.51%	37.43%	64.91%	**69.59%**
	TFCS only	163	84.05%	77.30%	73.01%	38.04%	61.96%	66.26%
	Pell-Eligible only	855	83.86%	76.73%	72.05%	38.83%	61.29%	67.60%
	All Purdue	6166	88.97%	82.50%	78.61%	46.76%	70.60%	75.43%
2010	Purdue Promise	223	**91.93%**	**82.06%**	72.65%	42.60%	66.37%	69.51%
	TFCS only	122	85.25%	77.05%	72.95%	45.90%	68.85%	72.13%
	Pell-Eligible only	935	86.84%	79.36%	75.40%	42.89%	66.95%	71.34%
	All Purdue	6353	90.23%	83.69%	79.19%	49.22%	72.61%	76.97%
2011	Purdue Promise	252	**90.08%**	81.75%	77.78%	43.25%	65.48%	
	TFCS only	125	88.00%	86.40%	82.40%	57.60%	79.20%	
	Pell-Eligible only	886	84.99%	78.67%	74.15%	43.45%	68.28%	
	All Purdue	6660	90.57%	84.34%	80.95%	51.49%	74.19%	
2012	Purdue Promise	244	**88.93%**	**81.15%**	**77.46%**	**53.69%**		
	TFCS only	137	87.59%	78.83%	74.45%	45.26%		
	Pell-Eligible only	800	86.25%	80.63%	76.75%	51.38%		
	All Purdue	6329	91.01%	86.10%	82.92%	55.85%		
2013	Purdue Promise	276	**92.39%**	**87.32%**	**77.90%**			
	TFCS only	126	86.51%	75.40%	73.81%			
	Pell-Eligible only	782	87.21%	81.07%	76.47%			
	All Purdue	6319	92.63%	87.69%	83.49%			
2014	Purdue Promise	292	92.81%	85.27%				
	TFCS only	160	93.13%	88.75%				
	Pell-Eligible only	688	90.26%	84.16%				
	All Purdue	6408	92.76%	88.03%				
2015	Purdue Promise	347	**90.20%**					
	TFCS only	215	87.44%					
	Pell-Eligible only	730	88.36%					
	All Purdue	6855	91.76%					

Note: "TFCS only" includes students who are TFCS but not served by Purdue Promise. "Pell-Eligible only" includes students who are Pell-eligible but not served by Purdue Promise or TFCS. Purdue Promise piloted the coaching model in spring 2013, and implemented the model for all cohorts in fall 2013. Rates in bolded font represent Purdue Promise rates that exceed the TFCS only rates.

About the Consortium

The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) is an association of two-year and four-year institutions with the common goal of achieving the highest possible levels of student success through collaboratively sharing data, knowledge and innovation. Founded in 1994 by a small group of Institutional Research directors as a data exchange of college retention and graduation data, our first report was published in May of 1995.

The Consortium has broadened its mission to include sharing not only data, but knowledge and innovation. We now have a diverse membership of about 400 colleges and universities and compile four retention reports each year. As well as hosting the annual National Symposium on Student Success and Retention, we host a webinar series and have created a dynamic electronic book called *Building Bridges for Student Success: A Sourcebook for Colleges and Universities*.

CSRDE is coordinated by the Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis (C-IDEA) at the University of Oklahoma. C-IDEA is also the program evaluator for the Oklahoma Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (OK-LSAMP) program, which is funded by the National Science Foundation.

The mission of the University of Oklahoma is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research and creative activity, and service to the state and society.