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## Institutional Transformation Reflected: Administrators' Perceptions of the Fifth Year of Developmental Education Reform in the Florida College System

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Center for  
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# Executive Summary

The Florida legislature passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) in 2013, making three substantial changes to developmental education statewide. The first change was that the majority of students became exempt from placement testing and developmental education courses. Exempt students include those who entered 9th grade in a Florida public school in 2003/04 or thereafter and earned a standard Florida high school diploma, as well as active duty military personnel. The second change was that institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) became required to offer remaining developmental education courses using new instructional strategies which include compressed, co-requisite, contextualized, or modularized formats. The third change was the FCS institutions were required to develop a plan to offer enhanced advising and academic support services to improve student success.

Researchers at the Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) at FSU have been evaluating implementation and impacts of SB 1720 since the reform began in spring 2014. This is the sixth annual report using survey data from lead administrators at FCS institutions statewide to examine institutional progress under SB 1720. The current report focuses on reflections about institutional transformational processes from the initial planning of the reform to implementation to date. We examine the types of challenges encountered by colleges during the planning process, ways in which colleges engaged in sensemaking and organizational learning, and perceptions of the institutional transformation processes and outcomes following the developmental education reform.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Reflections on the Initial Planning Process

- Prior to SB 1720 there were concerns among a broad range of stakeholders about potential harm to student outcomes, changes that were not in the best interest of the institution, and skepticism due to prior unsuccessful attempts at reforming developmental education.
- Respondents from most institutions reported high levels of collaboration during the initial planning process, particularly related to communication among groups across campus and ongoing dialogue among administrators, faculty, and staff.
- There was considerable variation across institutions in the extent to which administrators perceived that institutional staff took ownership of changes during the initial planning process relative to the changes being imposed by the state.

### **Sensemaking and Organizational Learning During Implementation**

- Institutions engaged in a variety of sensemaking processes such as ongoing and widespread campus conversations about implementation, and the emergence of collaborative leadership among a broad range of stakeholders.
- Most institutions engaged in several different organizational learning practices, particularly collecting data to inform decision making and acknowledging areas of low performance to campus stakeholders.

### **Reflections on Institutional Transformation and Outcomes**

- Respondents reported changes at least to “a moderate extent” in advising practices, instructional practices in both developmental and gateway courses, curriculum in both developmental and gateway courses, and student support services. These changes tended to be “mostly” or “somewhat” due to SB 1720.
- When comparing changes made in the most recent year relative to the initial planning process, there was a shift toward institutional staff taking ownership of changes rather than change being imposed by the state.

- Respondents perceive that they are held more accountable to the Division of Florida Colleges and the state legislature than to internal stakeholder groups like institutional staff, students, and the board of trustees.
- Most respondents perceive that various stakeholder groups saw “better” or “somewhat better” performance on student outcomes relative to their initial expectations. They also believe that most stakeholder groups at least “somewhat” changed their perceptions about the most effective ways to help students who are academically underprepared.

# Introduction

Lawmakers in Florida passed Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) in 2013 to address concerns about developmental education across the state. SB 1720 made developmental education optional through an exemption from taking college placement tests and enrolling in developmental education courses for high school 9th graders of a Florida public school in 2003/04 or thereafter who earned a standard Florida high school diploma, as well as active duty military personnel. In addition to the exemption, SB 1720 required Florida College System (FCS) institutions to offer developmental education courses using at least one of four new instructional modalities: co-requisite, contextualized, compressed, and modularized. Co-requisite courses allow students to simultaneously complete a developmental education course and a college credit course in the same subject area. Contextualized courses incorporate content in the course in an applied manner depending on the student's major course pathway, or meta-major. Compressed courses can be completed in fewer weeks by meeting for a greater number of hours per week than a traditional course, which potentially allows students to complete two sequential courses in one semester. Modularized courses provide customized instruction in the areas of a subject where a student has not demonstrated mastery when assessed prior to the course. The last major component of SB 1720 required colleges to enhance advising and support services in order to increase student awareness of the new developmental education options, help students select courses and a meta-major, and provide academic support like tutoring.

After the legislature passed SB 1720, FCS institutions were required to detail by January 2014 how they planned to implement changes under the reform, with full implementation beginning in Fall 2014. FCS institutions were also required to complete an accountability report for the state each year to monitor changes to student outcomes, such as grade distributions and enrollment rates for each of the modalities for developmental education. The data for this report came from the 2018/19 academic year – the fifth year of implementation of the reform.

Since 2014, the Center for Postsecondary Success (CPS) at Florida State University has been conducting an evaluation of SB 1720. A main component of the evaluation is an annual survey of senior administrators at FCS institutions. In spring 2014, the first survey examined administrators' perceptions of the reform and their institutions' plans for implementing the changes to developmental education. The second survey focused on how the reform was being implemented and the initial impressions of the effectiveness of the reform. The third survey explored the changes in implementation over time. The fourth survey added inquiries about the resources required to make changes from the reform, while continuing to monitor the changes in implementation. The fifth survey examined how colleges used data on student outcomes, what types of changes were made in response to data collected, and the perceptions of accountability metrics. The current survey is the sixth survey and focuses on institutional transformation by asking administrators to reflect on institutional change processes at different points in the last five years.

# Literature Review

We use a framework for understanding institutional change based on the work of Kezar (2018). Change is defined as “intentional acts where a particular leader drives or implements a new direction” (p. x). Sometimes change occurs in response to external conditions (e.g. enrollment declines), while other times change is a more deliberate process initiated by change agents within an organization (e.g. implementing a strategic plan). The most common obstacle to organizational change is resistance from other members of the organization. There are three main sources of resistance: 1) a lack of belief in the efficacy of the idea, 2) lack of trustworthiness of the change agent, and 3) the existence of prior change processes that failed, resulting in cynicism.

There are two types of changes that occur within organizations (Kezar, 2018). First-order changes are minor improvements, such as those that occur in response to fluctuations in institutional funding. These types of changes tend to occur more frequently and are easier to accomplish. Second-order changes, which are also referred to as transformational changes, involve a more comprehensive set of changes to operational procedures, underlying values, and the culture of the organization. This type of change is more challenging because postsecondary institutions tend to have long-standing practices and members are not used to making significant changes. It also requires institutions to make larger collective changes instead of only changes among individuals, which is particularly difficult in higher education settings with decentralized organizational structures.

Social cognition theories of change can inform our understanding of why transformational change is challenging and the types of barriers that may be encountered (Kezar, 2018). A primary obstacle is that organizational members often do not understand new initiatives or may have inaccurate assumptions about them. Two common strategies to addressing this obstacle include sensemaking and organizational learning. Sensemaking is a process of changing people’s mindsets by providing ongoing opportunities for social interactions to introduce new ideas and evolve the thinking of organizational members (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Weick, 1995). These opportunities must be widespread, given the decentralized nature of decision making and implementation procedures within postsecondary institutions (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen & March, 1974). The second strategy of organizational learning is an approach driven by rational thinking and data use (Kezar, 2005). Organizational members create mechanisms for trying new approaches to solving a problem, learn from mistakes, and then further modify practices. Additionally, intra-organizational learning can occur when members learn from other groups that have addressed a similar problem.

There are two ways to assess whether transformational change has occurred (Kezar, 2018). The first type of evidence is a change in the attitudes of organizational members, which may be seen in changes to how groups interact with each other, the type of language used, and changes in individuals' perceptions of challenges. The second type of evidence is structural changes to the processes or procedures within an organization, such as the widespread use of innovative pedagogies, substantial changes in curriculum, or new assessment practices. It is important to consider both types of evidence, as changes in institutional processes alone do not necessarily indicate transformational change.

Since true institutional transformation occurs relatively infrequently in higher education, there are few studies that examine how this process occurs (Kezar, 2018). This study will contribute to the literature by providing insight into whether and how institutional transformation occurred within FCS institutions during Florida's developmental education reform. We begin by examining the extent to which different types of resistance were encountered among different groups of stakeholders, and common

obstacles during the initial planning process. Next, we examine the processes that FCS institutions engaged in to promote sensemaking and organizational learning during the implementation of the developmental education reform. Finally, we explore whether institutional transformation was evident in both attitudinal and structural changes, and how this influenced institutional leaders' perceptions of the reform's outcomes.



# Methods

Building on previous CPS surveys of administrator perceptions that have examined institutional change under the developmental education reform, this study aims to further examine the change process. The current survey focuses on institutional transformation while reflecting on the implementation process at different points in the past five years of policy implementation. Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

- 1) What challenges did colleges encounter during the initial planning process for the developmental education reform?
- 2) What processes did colleges engage in to promote sensemaking and organizational learning during the implementation of the developmental education reform?
- 3) How did administrators perceive the institutional transformation process and outcomes following the developmental education reform?

## SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

For each of the 28 FCS institutions, CPS staff searched online for their highest-ranking student affairs and academic affairs administrators. After identifying lead administrators' email addresses, we sent out an email with a link to take the survey. The survey was administered online using Qualtrics software.

## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

There are three major sections in the survey instrument as described below.

- 1) **The first section is a set of questions asking the respondents to reflect on issues at the beginning of SB 1720.**

- *Perceptions of concerns prior to the implementation of SB 1720.*

This section included questions about the extent to which there were concerns regarding potential harm to student outcomes, changes that were not in the best interest of the institution, and skepticism due to prior unsuccessful attempts at reforming developmental education among different stakeholder groups (lead administrators, faculty, academic support staff, and student support services staff) *as perceived by the respondents of the survey.*

- *Perceptions of the initial planning process for SB 1720.*

This section included questions about the extent to which a broad range of stakeholders participated in planning, information was broadly shared, leaders fully disclosed the direction and vision for changes, open communication occurred across campus, leaders acknowledged differing values, ongoing dialogue occurred about changes, leaders considered opposing viewpoints, and stakeholders believed they were treated fairly during the initial planning process for SB 1720 *as perceived by the respondents of the survey.*

- **Description of the initial change process.**

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the initial planning for SB 1720 reflected change imposed by the state versus institutional staff taking ownership of change.

2) **The second section of the instrument asked the respondents to reflect on changes over time related to SB 1720.**

- **Perceptions of ongoing change processes over the past five years.**

This section included questions about the extent of agreement with statements about ongoing implementation of SB 1720, such as the extent to which collaborative leadership occurred or cross-departmental teams developed.

- **Changes in sensemaking and institutional learning practices over the past five years.**

This section asked administrators to identify changes to practices that happened after SB 1720 (e.g. learned about new ideas from other institutions, collected data to inform decision making, and provided opportunities for organization members to suggest new directions).

3) **The third section of the instrument asked the respondents to reflect on outcomes after implementation of SB 1720.**

- **Courses and academic support changes.**

This section asked administrators to identify the extent of changes that have been made over the past five years to instructional practices, curriculum, advising, and student support services. Respondents were also asked whether these

changes were largely brought about by SB 1720 or would have occurred anyway.

- **Description of the change process in the most recent year.**

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the recent change process under SB 1720 reflected changes imposed by the state versus institutional staff taking ownership of changes.

- **Accountability for institutional performance.**

This section asked administrators about the extent to which their institution is perceived to be held accountable to different groups including the state legislature, Division of Florida Colleges, board of trustees, business community, institutional staff, and students.

- **Difference between expected and actual student outcomes from different groups' perspectives.**

This section included administrators' perceptions regarding how actual performance on student outcomes compares to initial expectations about what might happen to student outcomes among lead administrators, faculty, academic support staff, and student support services staff as perceived by the respondents of the survey.

- **Changes in perceptions about supporting academically underprepared students.**

This section asked leaders about whether perceptions changed following SB 1720 about the most effective ways to help academically underprepared students among different groups including lead administrators, faculty, academic support staff, and student support services staff as perceived by the respondents of the survey.

The survey also included several open-ended questions for participants to share their reflections about changes they would make if they had to do it all over again, examples of how perceptions changed among institutional members about the most effective ways to help academically underprepared students, and additional information about the implementation of SB 1720 at their institutions.

### **SAMPLE**

Lead administrators at 21 of the 28 FCS institutions completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 75 percent. There was one response for each institution. Several respondents did not answer every question, so the table and figure notes in the findings section indicate the number of responses for each of the specific questions. The majority of the survey respondents were vice presidents or assistant/associate vice presidents (66 percent), with the remaining survey responses completed by provosts or other administrators such as deans and academic officers (34 percent).

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

We conducted a comprehensive descriptive analysis of the survey data using Stata. We categorized the results into three main areas that correspond with the research questions: 1) initial obstacles to the planning process, 2) sensemaking and organizational learning processes during implementation, and 3) reflections on institutional transformation and outcomes. Most of the questions were on a five-point scale such as “not at all” (1) to “to a great extent” (5), or “much worse than anticipated” (1) to “much better than anticipated” (5). The responses to these questions were tabulated across institutions and the results were presented in figures.

Respondents were also asked to use a sliding bar to indicate the extent to which changes made under the reform were “imposed by the state” (0) versus “institutional staff took ownership of change” (100). These questions were asked for two different points in time – once during the initial planning process and once during the most recent year. Additionally, the survey included open-ended questions about changes leaders would make if they had to start over again with the developmental education reform, examples of ways in which perceptions have changed following the reform, and general feedback about reform implementation. The findings section includes quotes to provide additional evidence to support some of the quantitative findings from the closed-ended survey questions.

# Results

The results of the survey are presented in three sections to reflect the stages of institutional transformation and perceptions of the reform’s outcomes. The first section includes reflections on the initial planning process. Next, the findings examine sensemaking and organizational learning processes during implementation of SB 1720. Following processes in implementation, the findings explore reflections on institutional transformation and outcomes.

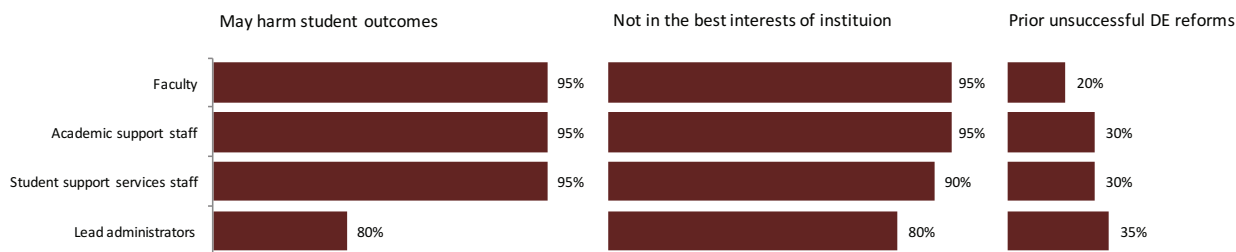
## REFLECTIONS ON THE INITIAL PLANNING PROCESS

Figure 1 displays the extent of initial concerns about SB 1720 among four stakeholder groups: faculty, academic support staff, student support services staff, and lead administrators, as perceived by the respondents of the survey.

Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated that faculty, academic support staff, and student support services staff were concerned that SB 1720 would

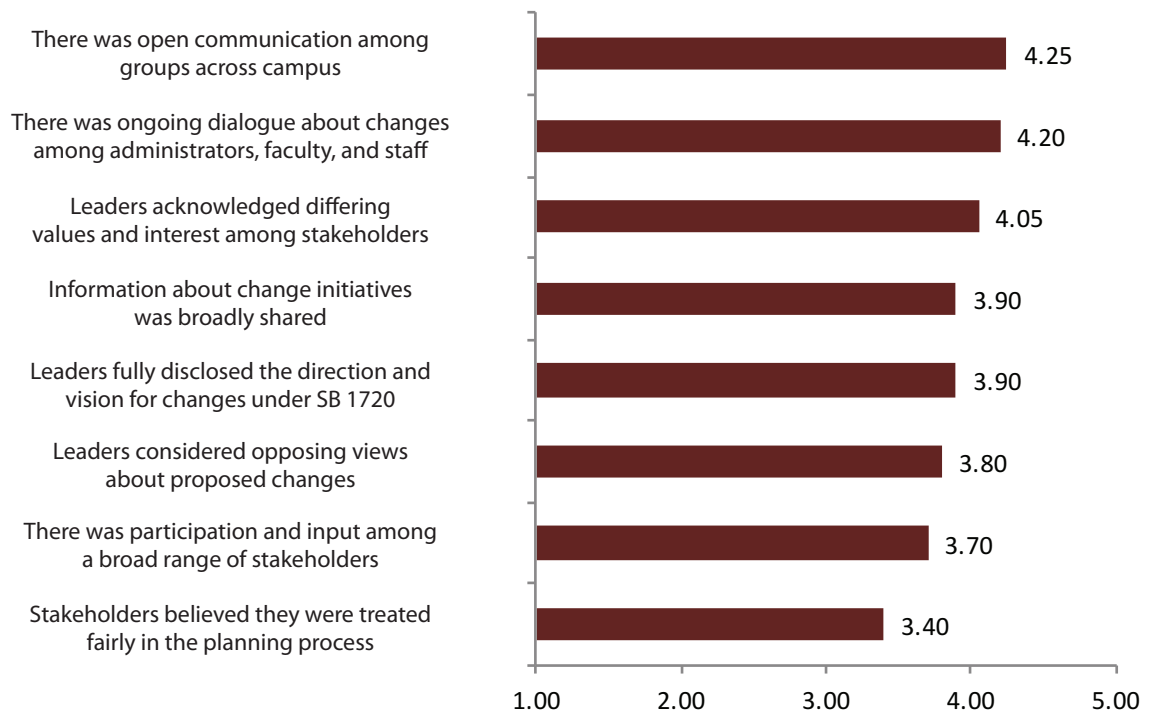
harm student outcomes to a moderate or great extent. Similarly, 95% of respondents indicated that faculty and academic support staff were concerned that developmental education reform was not in the best interests of the institution to a moderate or great extent. Related to the best interests of students and the institution, one respondent stated, “I would say that as thorough as our institutional planning process was, and as many stakeholders that were involved as possible, there was (and remains) a great deal of skepticism that the change was really in the students’ best interests. Perhaps we could have/should have done more with getting larger number of our own staff to participate in the statewide conversations during that initial planning process, rather than relying on a few key emissaries.”

Lead administrators had fewer concerns than the other stakeholders regarding student outcomes and the best interests of the institution; however, they had the highest percentage related to concerns from prior unsuccessful developmental education reform attempts.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of respondents indicating that stakeholder groups expressed initial concerns to a “moderate” or “great” extent as perceived by the respondents.

Note: Scale ranges from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent). N = 20 institutions.

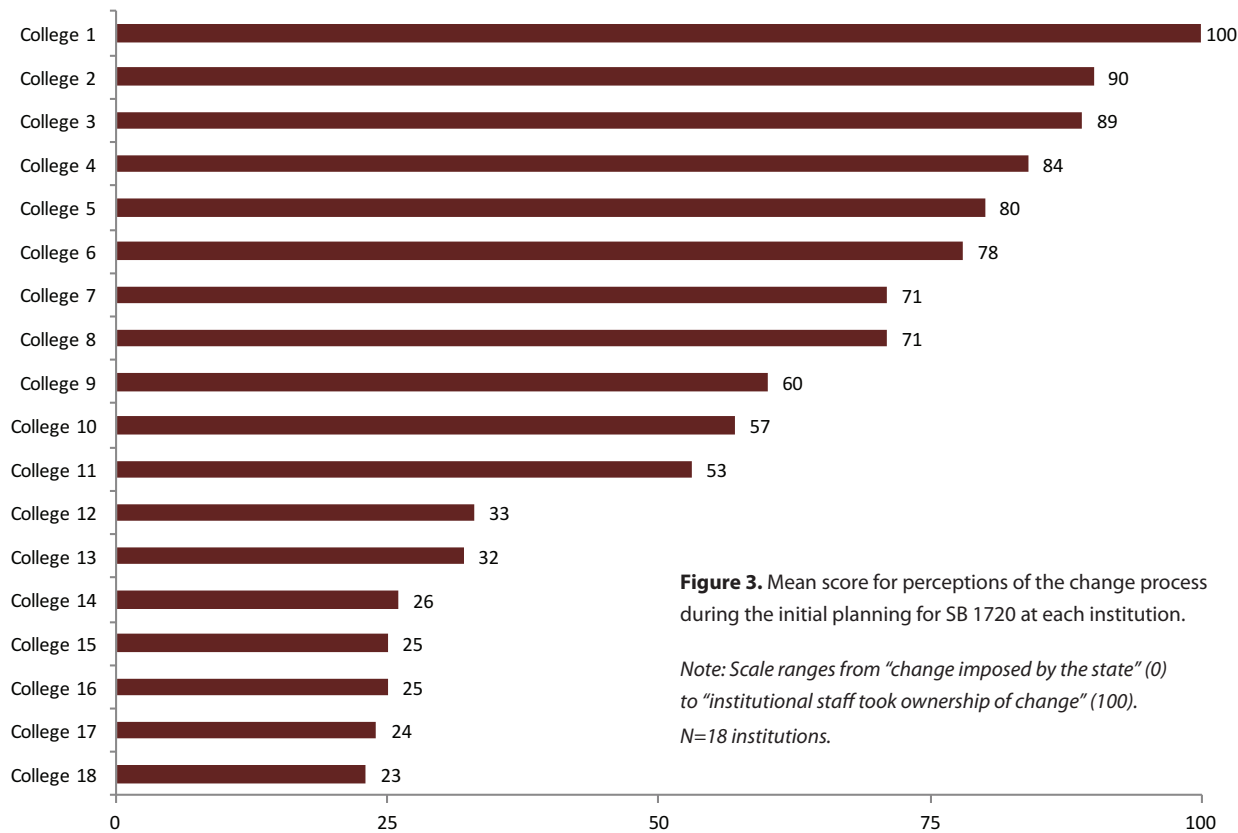


**Figure 2.** Mean score for agreement with statements about collaboration in the initial planning process for SB 1720.

*Note: Scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). N=20 institutions.*

Figure 2 displays the agreement with statements regarding the extent of collaboration during the initial planning process on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Overall, the mean scores indicate that there was little disagreement with the statements below, with means ranging from 3.40 to 4.25, indicating that respondents perceived the change process to be very collaborative. The levels of highest agreement were with statements related to communication among groups across campus and ongoing dialogue among administrators, faculty, and staff (mean of 4.25 and 4.20, respectively). The statements with the lowest agreement mean scores were related to participation and input among a

broad range of stakeholders (mean=3.70) and that stakeholders believed they were treated fairly in the planning process (mean=3.40). As one administrator noted, “Over the past six years, we have worked collaboratively with faculty and other stakeholders in implementing the requirements of Senate Bill 1720. Our Developmental Education Council, which meets twice per semester, has been an especially helpful voice for discussing and improving policies and procedures related to developmental education curriculum, instruction, assessment, as well as academic and student support services.”



**Figure 3.** Mean score for perceptions of the change process during the initial planning for SB 1720 at each institution.

*Note: Scale ranges from “change imposed by the state” (0) to “institutional staff took ownership of change” (100). N=18 institutions.*

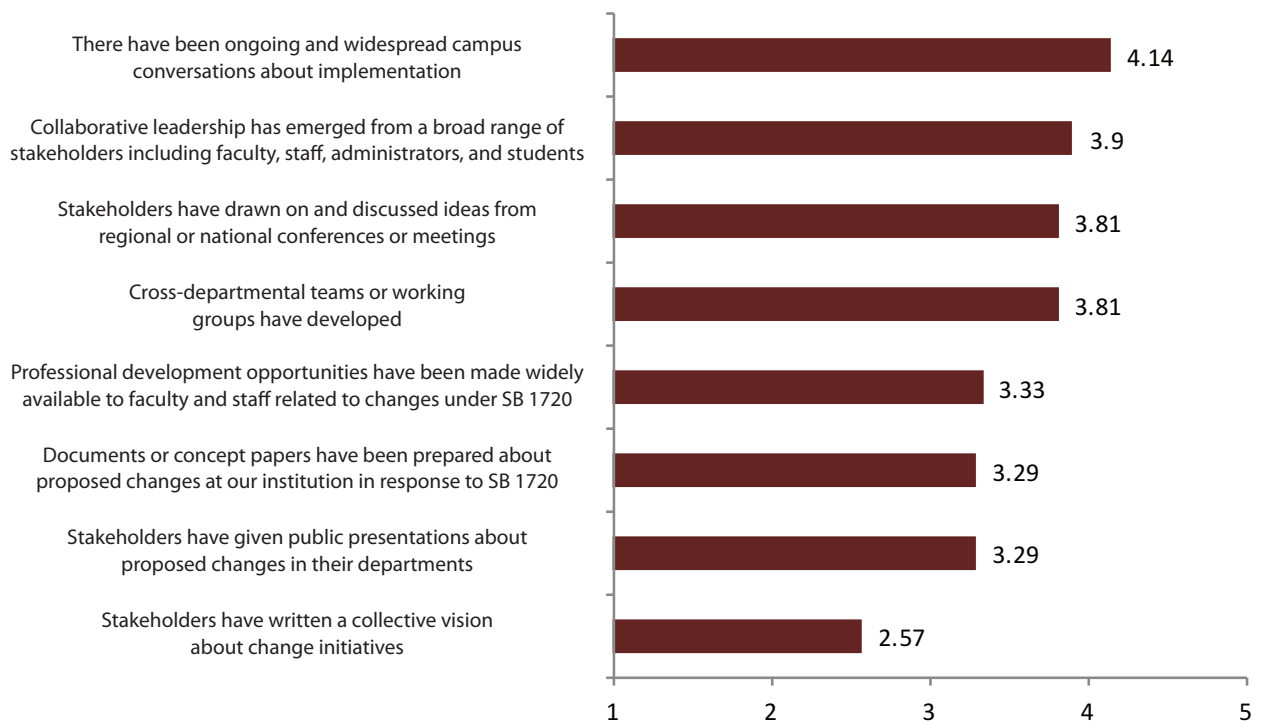
Figure 3 displays each institutional leader’s perception of the change process during the initial planning for SB 1720. The responses are displayed on a continuum that indicates the extent to which the change process was “imposed by the state” (0) versus “institutional staff took ownership of change” (100). Eleven of the 18 respondents (61 percent) perceived that their institutional staff took ownership of change more than it was imposed by the state (mean score greater than 50 out of 100). Among the 7 respondents that perceived the change to be imposed by the state, the scores ranged from 23 to 33 on a 100-point scale. This indicates that there was considerable variation in the extent to which institutions took ownership of the change process during the initial planning for SB 1720.

### **SENSEMAKING AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING PROCESSES DURING IMPLEMENTATION**

Reflections about sensemaking during the ongoing change process over the past five years at the colleges are displayed in Figure 4. Communication and collaboration continue to be a large part of the change process following SB 1720, with ongoing and widespread conversations about implementation happening to a moderate extent (mean=4.14) and collaborative leadership emerging from faculty, staff, administrators, and students happening to a moderate extent (mean=3.9). Sharing information

also appears to be occurring at the colleges, with professional development and public presentations happening somewhat (mean=3.33 and mean=3.29, respectively). The creation of a written collective vision about change initiatives appears to be happening to a lesser extent than other aspects of the ongoing change process (mean=2.57). As one respondent stated, “Looking back, we exceeded our own expectations in planning for, and implementing SB 1720. Doing it all over again, we may have done more to carefully document our work and publish our successes and challenges in this initiative for wider public consumption.”

In the open-response questions, many respondents noted different areas of collaboration and communication with stakeholders; however, many also noted that time constraints during implementation made this process more difficult. One respondent stated, “[The] timeline for implementation was unrealistic and created a lot of stress during implementation.” Others were more optimistic, with one respondent noting, “We actually did a good job, given the aggressive timeline from the state, including campus stakeholders once SB 1720 became law.”

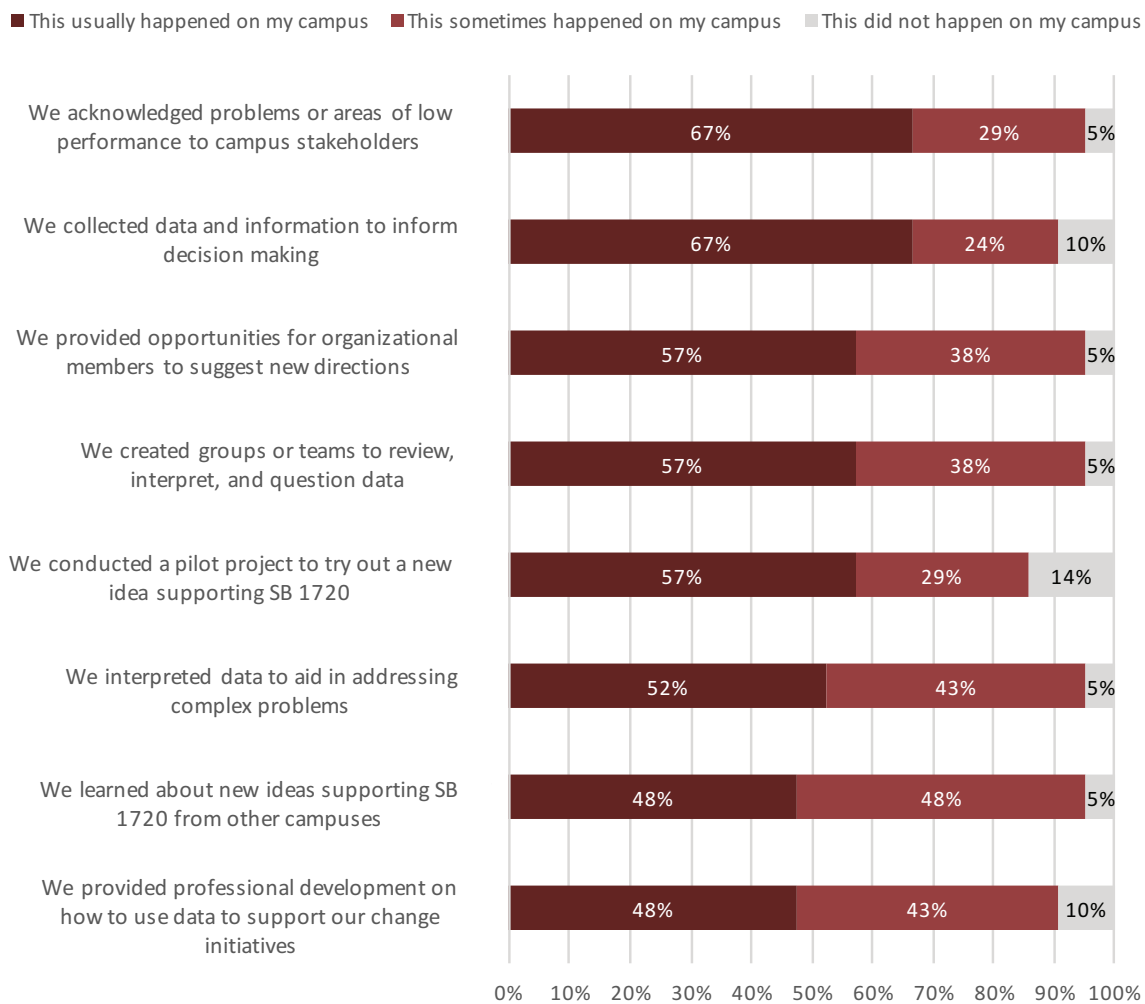


**Figure 4.** Mean score for reflections on sensemaking during the ongoing change process over the past five years at your institution following SB 1720.

*Note:* Scale from “not at all” (1) to “to a great extent” (5). N=21 institutions.

Figure 5 displays the percentage of respondents indicating that different organizational learning practices associated with the ongoing change process occurred at their institutions over the past five years following implementation of SB 1720. All eight of the organizational learning practices occurred at most institutions at least “sometimes” over the last five years. The practices occurring most often were acknowledging problems or areas of low performance and collecting data and information to

inform decision making (67% for both). The practice that occurred least frequently was conducting a pilot project to try out a new idea supporting SB 1720 (14%). Other organizational learning practices were only reported as never occurring among 5% or 10% of the colleges. Some administrators later came to regret not engaging in these practices, as one respondent noted, “We adopted compressed classes only. I wish we had experimented with co-req or contextualized options.”



**Figure 5.** Percentage of respondents indicating that their institution engaged in organizational learning practices occurring over the last 5 years after SB 1720 implementation.

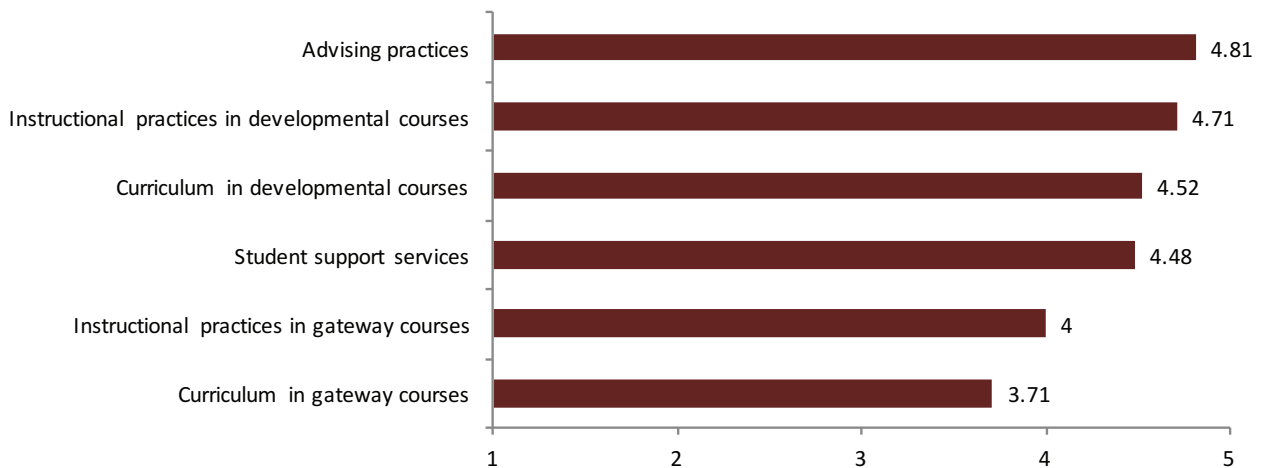
*Note: Scale ranges from “this usually happened on my campus” to “this sometimes happened on my campus” to “this did not happen on my campus.” N=21 institutions. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*



## REFLECTIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND OUTCOMES

Figure 6 displays the extent to which changes have been made in six areas of student services practices and courses over the past five years, on a five-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “to a great extent.” All areas experienced changes to at least a moderate extent following the implementation of SB 1720, with a mean score of 3 or higher. Since changes to advising

and developmental education instructional strategies were required by the legislation, it is not surprising to see that these two areas saw changes to the greatest extent (mean=4.81 and mean=4.71, respectively). The legislation did not mandate changes to gateway courses, and institutions reported the lowest levels of change related to instructional practices and curriculum in gateway courses (mean=4.00 and mean=3.71, respectively).



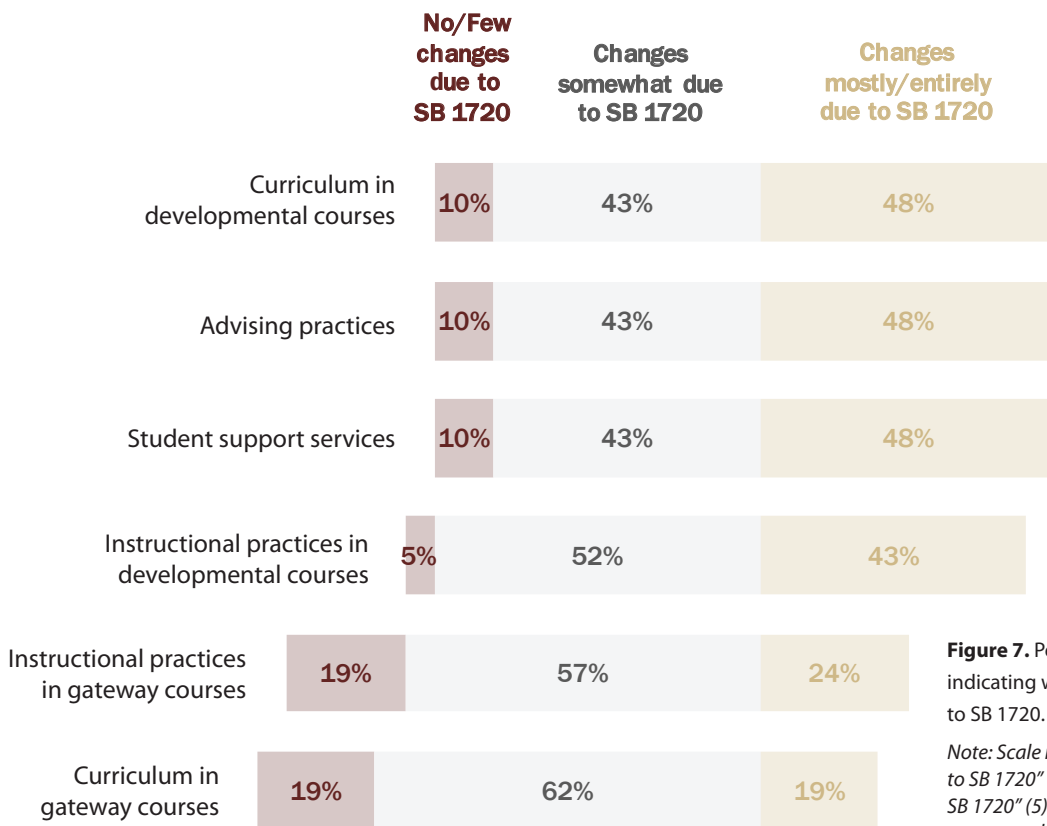
**Figure 6.** Mean score for perceptions of extent of changes made over the past five years under SB 1720.

*Note: Scale from “not at all” (1) to “to a great extent” (5). N=21 institutions.*

Figure 7 displays administrators’ perceptions of the extent to which the changes described above may be attributed to SB 1720 versus changes that the institution would have made anyway. Changes in the areas of curriculum in developmental education courses (48%), advising practices (48%), and student support services (48%) tended to be mostly or entirely due to SB 1720. Again, these services and courses were directly impacted by the legislation, so it is not surprising to see these results. Changes to gateway

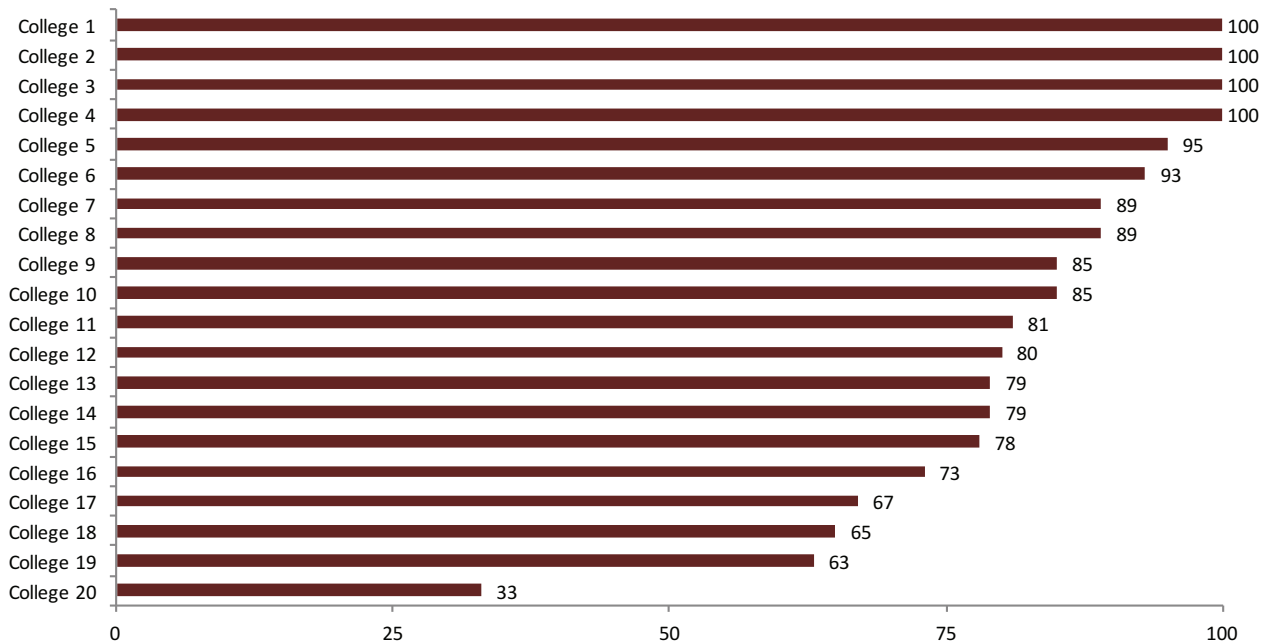
courses’ curriculum and instructional practices were perceived to be less influenced by SB 1720 than the changes to developmental education and student support services.

Figure 8 displays the perceptions of the change process for each college in the most recent year of implementation on a continuum ranging from “imposed by the state” (0) to “institutional staff took ownership of change” (100). Compared to the initial



**Figure 7.** Percentage of respondents indicating whether changes were due to SB 1720.

Note: Scale ranges from “no changes due to SB 1720” (1) to “changes entirely due to SB 1720” (5). N=21 institutions. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



**Figure 8.** Mean score for perceptions of the change process during the most recent year for SB 1720 at each institution.

Note: Scale from “imposed by the state” (0) to “institutional staff took ownership of change” (100). N=20 institutions

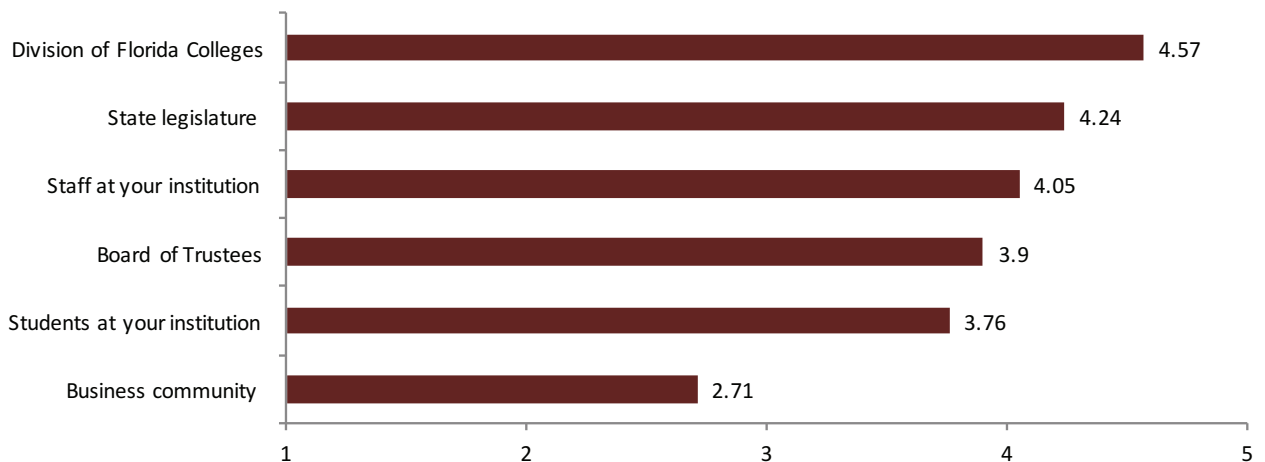
planning process (Figure 3), many more colleges appear to perceive the change process as institutional staff taking ownership of the change, with all but 1 college indicating a rating above 50. Additionally, four respondents rated their institutions at 100 (changes completely driven by institutional staff), with 2 more respondents rating their institutions higher than 90. The change process in the most recent year of implementation appears to shift towards institutional staff taking ownership of change rather than change being imposed by the state.

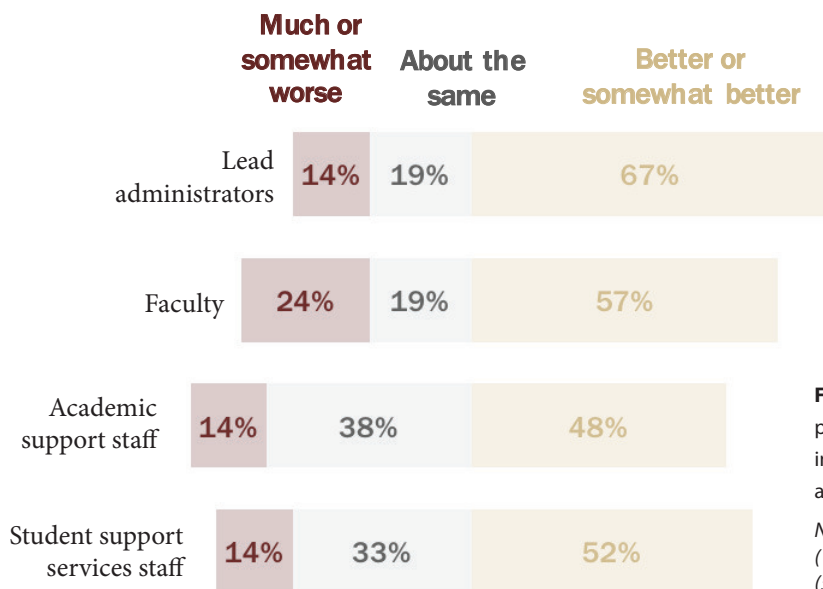
Figure 9 displays the extent to which respondents perceive that their institutions are held accountable by the Division of Florida Colleges, state legislature, institutional staff, board of trustees, students, and the business community. The results indicate that respondents perceive that their institutions are held accountable to a great extent by the Division of

Florida Colleges (mean=4.57) and the state legislature (mean=4.24). Additionally, institutions perceive institutional staff, board of trustees, and students to hold them accountable to a moderate extent (average values between 3 and 4). The business community is perceived to only somewhat hold institutions accountable (mean=2.71).

Respondents were also asked to rate how they believe the perceptions of performance on actual student outcomes compared to initial expectations at the beginning of SB 1720 among the groups of lead administrators, faculty, academic support staff, and student support services staff (Figure 10). Among all groups, approximately half to three-fourths of respondents indicated that actual outcomes were “better” or “somewhat better” than anticipated. As one respondent noted, “This was a tremendous example of how large-scale change can be made in

**Figure 9.** Mean score for perceptions of the extent institutions are held accountable by different stakeholders.  
*Note: Scale from “not at all” (1) to “to a great extent” (5). N=21 institutions.*





**Figure 10.** Mean scores for perceptions of performance on student outcomes compare to initial expectations at the beginning of SB 1720 as perceived by the survey respondents.

*Note: Scale from “much worse than anticipated” (1) to “much better than anticipated” (5). N=21 institutions. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

the state and within an institution. Ultimately, the changes to our curriculum have been beneficial. Large-scale change can take effect in a year or so. It needs to be monitored closely using data and the voices of stakeholders. It is an interesting example of initiating large-scale, statewide change within very specific guidelines given to the state colleges. This holds out hope that large-scale change can occur and pretty quickly if the parameters are clear.”

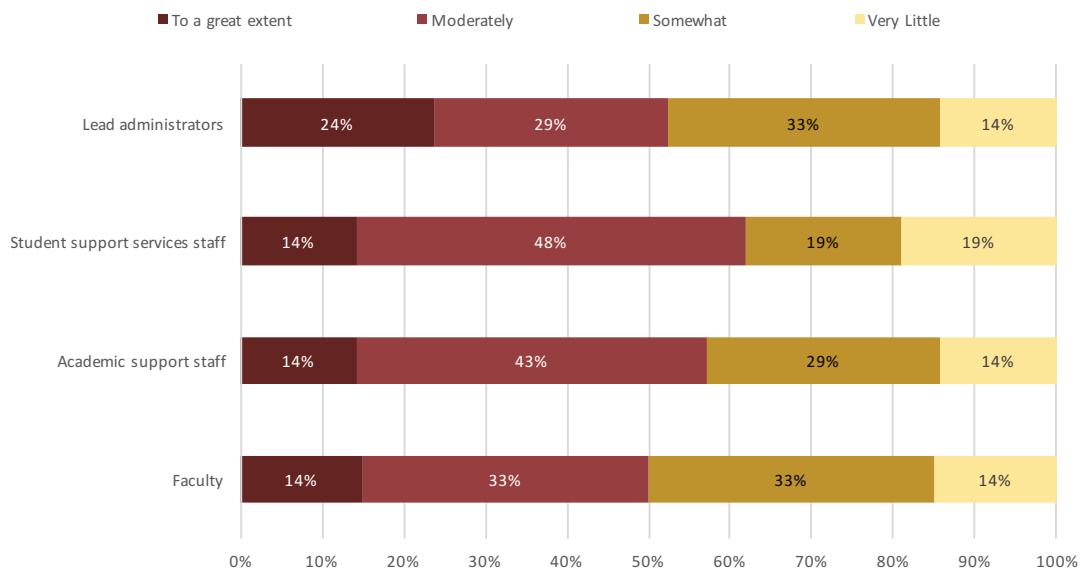
However, there were still some who perceived that performance on student outcomes were “somewhat” or “much” worse than anticipated (14% among lead administrators, academic support staff, and student support services staff). One respondent

indicated, “We see a persistent gap in course completion rates in gateway courses between exempt students and non-exempt students; exempt students continue to struggle in their first year in gateway courses and require extra outreach and support.” Administrators perceived that faculty saw somewhat or much worse performance on student outcomes the most (24%) compared to initial expectations. When respondents were asked if they would change anything about their planning or implementation process, one responded, “At all levels, the college as a whole should have taken more proactive steps that would help (not hurt) the students affected by the bill.”

Figure 11 displays respondents' perceptions about the extent to which perceptions changed following SB 1720 among different stakeholder groups about the most effective ways to help students who are underprepared academically. The results are disaggregated to reflect changes among student support services staff, academic support staff, faculty, and lead administrators. As shown in the figure, at least some change occurred for every group, but there were some differences in the extent of change. Among all four groups of stakeholders, the majority of responses indicate perceptions changed at least "somewhat", with fewer than 20 percent of respondents indicating that there was "very little change." The greatest changes were among lead administrators, with 24% of respondents indicating that this group changed their perceptions "to a great extent." In the open-ended questions, respondents indicated that some of the ways in which the perceptions of lead administrators have changed include switching from a focus on extensive remediation to just-in-time intervention, increasing

alignment with best practices within FCS and other national organizations, using a trial and error approach to provide support systems to understand the myriad of methods that are necessary to meet students where they are, and understanding that testing may not have been as connected to student ability as initially perceived.

Despite the majority of positive responses, there were still some respondents who noted that stakeholder groups experienced little change in perceptions for supporting academically underprepared students. The open-ended responses indicated that this may be due to insufficient time or resources to implement all of the desired changes. One respondent indicated that instructors had experienced little change because "for math, there is still a feeling that it is a race against time to get the content mastered in the current forms." Another respondent indicated that "the [student support services] staff understand that students need even more support now, but there are challenges with lack of resources."



**Figure 11.** Percentage of respondents indicating changed perceptions following SB 1720 among different groups of stakeholders about the most effective ways to help students who are underprepared academically as perceived by the respondents of the survey.

*Note: Responses ranged from "not at all" (1) to "to a great extent" (5). N=21 institutions.*

# Discussion and Conclusions

This study explored lead administrators' reflections on institutional transformation processes from the initial planning process through the fifth year of implementation of SB 1720. Survey data were used to examine the types of challenges encountered by colleges during the planning process, ways in which colleges engaged in sensemaking and organizational learning, and perceptions of the institutional transformation processes and outcomes following the developmental education reform. Below is a summary of key findings.

- **While FCS institutions faced a variety of challenges during the initial planning process for SB 1720, collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders was an area of strength.**

Survey respondents reported that prior to SB 1720, a variety of different groups (administrators, faculty, and academic/student support staff) expressed concerns that the reform may harm student outcomes, may not be designed in the best interests of their institutions, or may face a similar fate to prior unsuccessful reform attempts. Yet despite these concerns, stakeholders came together to work collaboratively toward institutional changes. Most respondents reported open communication among groups across campus and ongoing dialogue about changes among administrators, faculty, and staff.

- **Over time there were changes in perceptions about the institution's role in the change process, with an increase in ownership among institutional staff.**

During the initial planning period there was considerable variation among respondents in their perceptions of the extent to which changes were imposed by the state relative to institutional staff taking ownership of the change process. Yet by

the most recent year, all but one FCS institution reported that changes were driven more by their own institutional staff than by the state.

- **Institutions engaged in sensemaking and organizational learning processes in a variety of different ways during implementation of the reform.**

Most institutions used a variety of different approaches to sensemaking; the most common ones were having ongoing campus conversations about implementation, engaging in collaborative leadership among a broad range of stakeholders, and discussing ideas from regional or national conferences or meetings. Similarly, most institutions tried numerous organizational learning practices, with the most common ones being acknowledgement of areas of low performance and collection of data to inform decision making.

- **Institutions made extensive changes to student services practices and courses over the past five years, most of which were at least "somewhat" due to SB 1720.**

Respondents reported that the greatest areas of change were in advising, developmental education instructional practices, developmental education curriculum, and student support services. This is not surprising, given that the legislation mandated changes in these areas. Yet there were also at least "moderate" changes to instructional practices and curriculum in gateway courses even though these types of changes were not required by the legislation. In each of these areas of change, over 80 percent of respondents indicated that these changes were at least "somewhat" due to SB 1720.

- **For the most part, respondents indicated that various stakeholder groups saw “better” or “somewhat better” performance on student outcomes compared to initial expectations, and there were at least “moderate” changes in perceptions about the most effective ways to help students who are underprepared academically.**

Lead administrators were the most optimistic about the outcomes of SB 1720, with two-thirds of respondents indicating that this groups saw “better or somewhat” better performance than expected. Yet there were some who perceived that performance was “somewhat” or “much worse” than anticipated; respondents reported that this was most common among faculty. Similarly, respondents reported that changes in perceptions about the most effective ways to help academically underprepared students were greatest among lead administrators and least among faculty.

## CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, these findings suggest that FCS institutions have engaged in institutional transformation by making comprehensive changes to operational procedures, as well as demonstrating changes to underlying values and beliefs among broad groups of stakeholders. The presence of both structural and attitudinal evidence is important for ensuring that institutions move beyond first order changes to higher-level second order, or transformational, changes. In line with our social cognition theory of change, we found that institutions engaged in numerous different types of sensemaking and organizational learning practices to promote change. We also found that despite different approaches taken to the institutional transformation process, almost all respondents reported that the change process was highly collaborative and involved a broad range of stakeholders at their institutions. This is also important for ensuring that change becomes institutionalized throughout the organization rather than remaining isolated within departments or among individuals.

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