UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF STUDENT SUCCESS TEAMS

#2 IN THE *BREAKING IT ALL DOWN* SERIES

This is a companion to **Student Success Teams: An Implementation Guide for Community Colleges**, which is based on over 80 interviews at nine colleges in three states.

This document draws on examples and composites from our original dataset to illustrate important considerations related to SST design.

Phase Two Advisory believes that reform is adaptive, not adoptive. Institutions should take what is shared here and refine it for their own culture and context.

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STUDENT SUCCESS TEAMS

AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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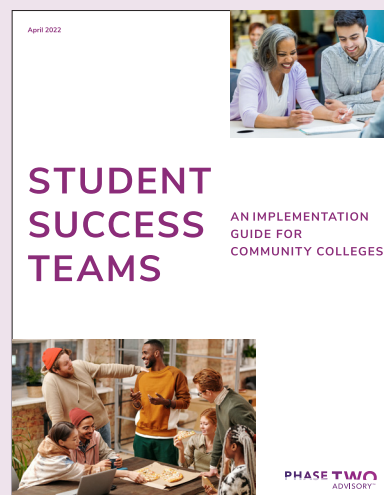
BUILDING YOUR TEAM

As part of the Design Planning Phase, colleges often wrestle with how to structure their team. In speaking with the nine colleges in our study, we found each institution operationalized the SST definition differently depending on their unique campus context, vision, and resources. We identified three different SST designs — each focused on supporting cohorts of students but differing in their structure, workflow, and how they reach the students. **These three designs build on one another, and grow in their sophistication and ability to provide personalized student support.**[1]

During the design process, two main decisions you'll need to make are:

- What type of SST are you building?
- What role will different individuals play on the team?

These decisions influence how students experience holistic support, and how college personnel will provide that support in their respective roles. Clarifying how individuals do their jobs once they are part of an SST is critical, since the team structure is unlikely to shift student experiences — or outcomes — if you don't shift practices.

In this document, **we provide a breakdown of what each type of team looks like in terms of their purpose and what they do** so you can start to envision what it looks like to be on one of these types of teams.
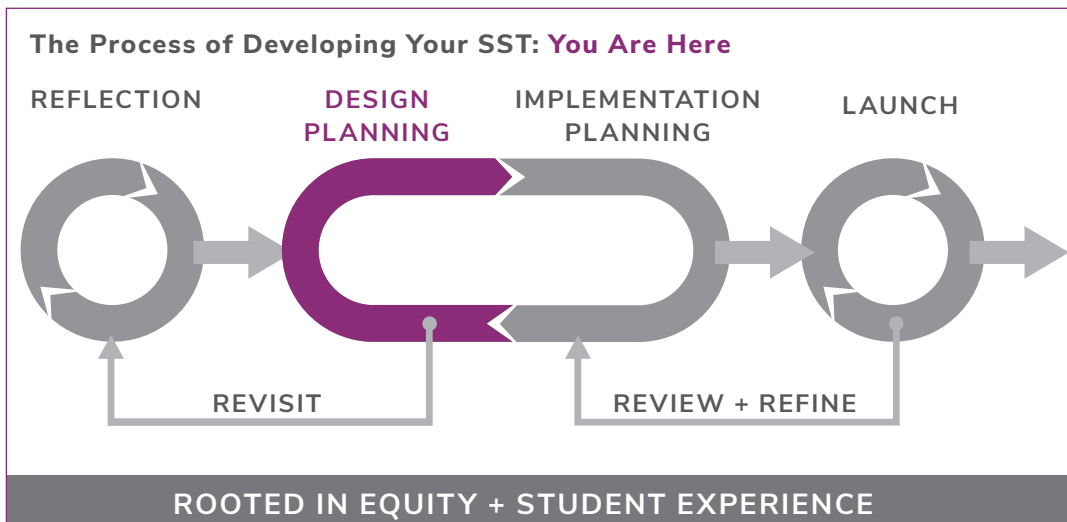
We define cohort-based SSTs as:
Cross-divisional teams of individuals who collaboratively engage in cohort management to support and assist a group of students from entry to completion, with a focus on equitable outcomes.

At its core, this means that a team structure:

- Identifies cohorts of students
- Assigns them to a team, and
- Provides cohort-based case management to meet students' needs in and out of the classroom in proactive and personalized ways.
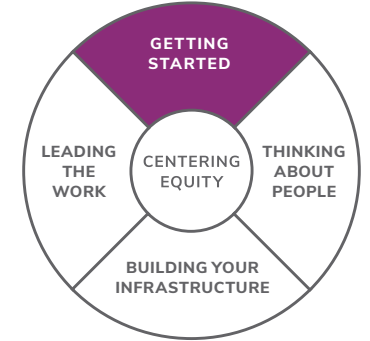
[1] See our *Implementation Guide* (p. 10) for a refresher on the three types of SSTs identified in our study.

The Process of Developing Your SST: You Are Here

REFLECTION   DESIGN PLANNING   IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING   LAUNCH

REVISIT   REVIEW + REFINE

ROOTED IN EQUITY + STUDENT EXPERIENCE

2

COHORT-BASED SSTs: PURPOSE & PEOPLE

Different SST designs and purposes influence who is on the team, as well as what they do.[2] The chart below illustrates what we observed across the three types of team designs. It is important to remember that SSTs are not committees or working groups. They are intended to substantively change the way student supports are delivered, and thus influence the activities and workflow of team members. Clarifying what you expect the team to do — its purpose — will drive who is on the team and what work gets done during and in between meetings in order to support cohorts of students on their paths to completion.

	PURPOSE	WHO
BACKEND COORDINATING	Work behind the scenes to assess and address cohort-based system and structure-level issues through multiple lenses; help streamline and improve programming and policies	Cross-functional/divisional team (e.g., counselor,[3] faculty liaison, data representative, and supports such as admissions, financial aid)
NETWORKED SUPPORT	Create an easily identifiable network of people students can go to for a variety of instructional and non-instructional supports; build communication channels across team members to streamline and integrate their activities as they provide cohort management	Cross-functional/divisional team, anchored by the counselor, faculty liaison, and often a student success coach and/or (near) peer mentor
NETWORKED SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT (SPOC)	Provide personalized, holistic case management through a single point of contact for students supported by a network of colleagues; leverage data and resources to reduce student bounce-arounds and enable follow-up across offices	Cross-functional/divisional team, anchored by an academic dean, coach, and counselor, with the dean leveraging the coach for project management and triage support to maximize counselor time with students

[2] See our *Designing Your Student Success Team* document for insights on how to intentionally design a team that works for your college's context and needs.

[3] The terms "advisor" and "counselor" take on slightly different meanings depending on the state and local context. We use the terms interchangeably to refer to individuals who are responsible for working with students around academic planning, progression, and completion.

At their core:

- The transition to SSTs required interviewees in our study to not only change structures but also processes and the way team members interact with students and colleagues.

- The Backend Coordinating Team, with its focus on structural-level issues facing the cohort, is the foundation for all other supports and is subsequently essential to the work of any team design. **Backend Coordinating Teams** break down silos, learn to leverage data, and streamline policies for their cohort. They do not interface directly with students. Other team designs rely on these structures to provide more sophisticated, individualized student support.

- Networked Support and Networked Single Point of Contact (SPOC) team designs build on the practices and systems of Backend Coordinating Teams to provide identifiable contacts for students. In the **Networked Support** design, students are provided with a full list of team members to contact as needed, whereas the **Networked SPOC** streamlines communication through a single contact who then "tags in" key people from the team network.
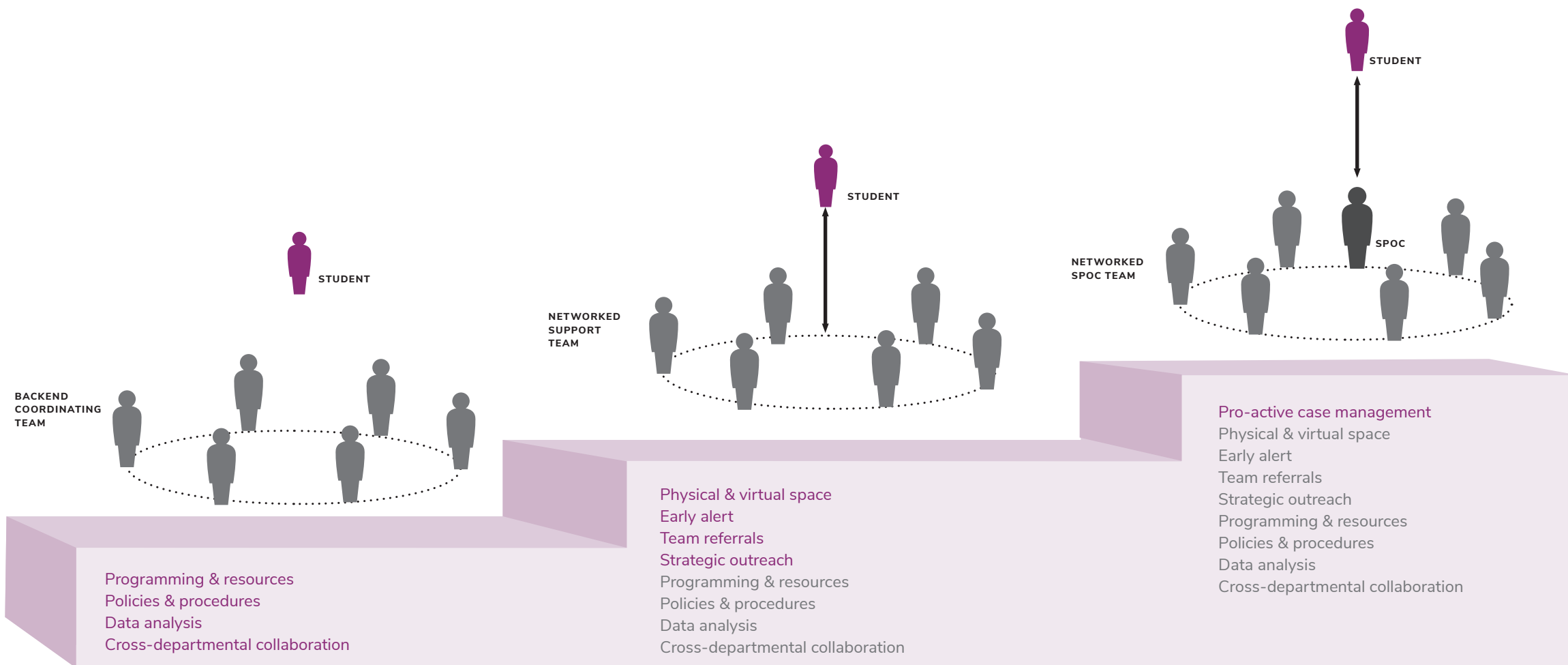
As you may notice, the team designs evolve in their focus from cohort-wide to individual attention. This evolutionary approach isn't unique to SSTs, nor is the concept of case management or tiered cohort management. We also see it in social work's case management service coordination (*Standard 8*, p. 40 and in *K12's Tiered PBIS Framework* — also known as the multi-tiered systems of support — MTSS). These models might also help you envision what it looks like to work within an SST structure.

BACKEND COORDINATING TEAM

STUDENT

Programming & resources
Policies & procedures
Data analysis
Cross-departmental collaboration

NETWORKED SUPPORT TEAM

STUDENT

Physical & virtual space
Early alert
Team referrals
Strategic outreach
Programming & resources
Policies & procedures
Data analysis
Cross-departmental collaboration

NETWORKED SPOC TEAM

STUDENT

SPOC

Pro-active case management
Physical & virtual space
Early alert
Team referrals
Strategic outreach
Programming & resources
Policies & procedures
Data analysis
Cross-departmental collaboration

4

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES BY TEAM TYPE

	During Meetings	In-Between Meetings
Backend Coordinating (typically meet monthly)	• Review policies, processes, and cohort-specific data (quantitative and qualitative) • Identify themes, trends, and pressure points they are seeing within a given cohort (e.g., course substitution obstacles, gateway courses) • Develop strategies (e.g., policies, procedures, programming) to address identified pressure points • Meet regularly to provide status updates and continue surfacing ways to improve student experience • Provide consultation on student issues within the cohort to determine if it is reflective of larger, structural issues • Delegate responsibilities for in-between meetings to further the work	• Note common pressure points seen across students and/or subgroups • Work individually or in working groups to implement strategies and programming decided upon during meetings • Provide consultations to SST teammates on student issues (e.g., financial aid, transfer pathway info) • Continue working in traditional capacities in support of the assigned cohort
Networked Support (typically meet weekly or bi-weekly)	Builds on activities above to: • Establish student communication plan around milestones and identified needs based on data (e.g. high touch and low touch outreach plans) • Develop and plan events for cohort (e.g. orientation, monthly workshops) • Establish triage response hierarchy for early alert	Builds on activities above to: • Develop communication processes, templates, and documentation • Connect with faculty in the pathway to partner on events and disseminate information • Provide consultations on student issues and discuss student challenges and success strategies for cohort members in need of additional support • Maintain physical/virtual space to build community • Continue working in traditional capacities with an emphasis on integrating student-facing holistic support via team referrals and/or early alerts
Networked SPOC (SPOC & team lead typically meet weekly; broader team meeting frequency varies)	Builds on activities above to: • Review data to identify need for intensive support (e.g., look at students with GPA under 2.0 with less than 30 credits; field early alerts) • Provide updates on interventions, successes, and challenges to date to iterate strategies • Establish communication plan and cohort events, similar to networked support	Builds on activities above to: • SPOC conducts student-level interventions and case management • Provide consultations to SST teammates on student issues • Team members, other than SPOC, continue working in traditional capacities in support of the assigned cohort

New members often want to understand how to translate their team responsibilities into concrete steps to support students. The reality is that the work varies based on each college's unique context, who is on the team, and what skill sets they bring. Moreover, team activities evolve over time, just as the team itself evolves. What is important, however, is for each college to determine the set of functions the SST will play and then decide how to use existing human capital to fulfill the list of roles and re-balance responsibilities within the college context of human resources and collective bargaining.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES BY TEAM MEMBER

Though each team member contributes to the responsibilities on the previous page, their role within the broader college may inform their specific role on the team. For example:

The list of roles by team member are based on resources from Northern CA Large CC and Southern CA Medium-Large CC9.

All team members
- Connect students to resources to support pathway completion, with an emphasis on supporting populations historically excluded from higher education
- Develop collaborative working relationships across traditionally silo-ed functions to provide holistic support to students
- Build communication processes and events calendar
- Identify opportunities for professional learning based on SST discussions

Advisors/counselors
- Meet with cohort students regarding registration, transcript and graduation audits, and career and/or transfer planning
- Communicate with faculty colleagues around program updates
- Identify students for proactive outreach/holistic support
- Partner with coaches to respond to early alert, based on college's triage hierarchy

Academic faculty
- Serve as team resource and department liaison regarding broader pathways and coursework requirements
- Communicate with departmental colleagues to raise awareness of resources and encourage student participation in SST-sponsored events
- Guide students to team members as needed, with warm hand-off
- Develop co-curricular events in collaboration with team members

Success coaches and/ or peer mentors
- Facilitate SST events and workshops
- Serve as a resource broker for students, providing them with holistic supports (academic, social, personal) and/or warm hand-offs to colleagues
- Coordinate communications outreach to students via selected tools/ technology
- Partner with counselors to respond to early alert, based on college's triage hierarchy

It is also important that SSTs determine who will fill the following project management roles:

- Convene meetings and set agendas
- Provide real-time data that can be disaggregated to identify students with specific needs and monitor progress
- Anchor all conversations in the identified purpose of the SSTs, equity, and the student experience
- Document critical discussions and decisions made during meetings
- Track delegated responsibilities, deadlines and ensure follow-up to report progress in subsequent meetings
- Communicate across SSTs to share best practices, identify common challenges, and ensure balance between structure and flexibility
- Liaise with college leadership when issues/decisions extend beyond the scope of the SST

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Hopefully the preceding charts help you develop a better understanding of the purpose and responsibilities of the three team designs. Some of you may still be left wondering — "Ok, so that is what it looks like on paper. But what does it actually look like in action?!"

These composite sketches, based on the colleges in our study, provide examples of how SSTs might play out in different contexts.[4]

[4] Remember, team composition varies depending on each college's SST purpose and resources.

Backend Coordinating

Joe is a counselor on a backend team assigned to the STEM cohort. He attends monthly meetings of the SST, where he and his colleagues raise obstacles they've seen students encounter on the pathway to completion — from confusion over degree requirements to course substitution headaches. Because the team includes a faculty liaison and registrar's office representative, they are able to collectively brainstorm root causes and potential solutions to support all students in the pathway. The team then identifies someone to follow up on this insight between meetings to address the challenges, and report back at the next meeting. The team also has an IR rep who presents quantitative and qualitative data to help the team identify equity issues. The team is run by another mid-level leader, so in-between meetings, Joe focuses on serving his students as usual and leverages the relationships he's built through being on the team to address individual student concerns.

Networked Support

Yvette is a counselor on a networked team assigned to the Human Services cohort. She plays a central role in convening bi-weekly meetings with her colleagues Sarah, who is a success coach, and Lisette, who is a faculty member. Together with their teammates from IR and student services, they use their meeting time to establish a communication and event schedule targeted to the students in their cohort. Using their experiences with students, the team realizes that the cohort would benefit from semesterly town hall meetings on topics such as degree requirements and transfer options (low-touch interventions). They also rely on Dan in IR to help them identify which students would benefit from weekly texts with encouragement and resources (a high-touch intervention). In between meetings, Sarah the success coach takes the lead on events and communications, while Yvette holds counseling sessions with students in her cohort, prioritizing students at different milestones at different times of the year. Both Sarah and Yvette are also responsible for maintaining the Canvas shell which they use to communicate important information with students.

Networked Single Point of Contact

Louis is a SPOC for the Arts cohort, supported by financial specialist Jane and dean Jesenia. Louis and Dean Jesenia meet weekly to review which students have under a 2.0, have dropped a class, or have yet to register for the following semester. Based on this information, Louis coordinates the communication plan for student outreach leveraging email, targeted text messaging, and old school phone calls. They also identify which students may be eligible for a scholarship or on track to graduation to provide targeted financial aid and transition information. Additionally, students come to Louis whenever they have questions, want to check their course plans, or need assistance. Louis says "no day is the same" because he is constantly prioritizing and reprioritizing his student outreach based on the information at his fingertips.

#2 IN THE *BREAKING IT ALL DOWN* SERIES

This project was generously funded by The College Futures Foundation.

Want to learn more? Visit **www.phasetwoadvisory.com/sst-guide**

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