**Onondaga Community College Team Interview with Malkiel Choseed, Matt DelConte, & Mike O’Conner.**

Learn about successful developmental education reform in English at Onondaga Community College.

**AS** [00:00:01] Welcome to the Student Success Podcast. I'm Al Solano, founder of the Continuous Learning Institute, or CLI, a higher education online resource focused on providing community college and open access for university educators with practical information on how to get results at their campus. As a resource within CLI, the Students Success Podcast is focused on just that--the challenges, opportunities, failures, and successes of practices intended to improve student success and equity. The goal is to leave you with thought provoking ideas, nuts and bolts, information, and lessons learned from the field so you can consider how you might apply them to your institutional context.

**AS** [00:00:47] For today's podcast. It's a pleasure to have Michael O'Connor, Dean of Business, Arts and Sciences and Doctors Matt DelConte, Professor of English and Chair of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Malkiel Choseed, Professor of English, all from Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York. Welcome to the Student Success Podcast, gentlemen.

**Matt DelConte** [00:01:09] Yeah, thanks. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Malk Choseed** [00:01:12] Thank you. Thank you for having us.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:01:14] Thank you. It's really exciting to be part of this.

**AS** [00:01:17] So this is the first podcast that I have with more than one person. So I'm super excited about this. And like I do with all podcasts, I like to ask my guests if they wouldn't mind sharing a brief, story about maybe, they wouldn't mind sharing a hobby or special talent or whatever. So, love to hear from you. Who would like to get us started?

**Malk Choseed** [00:01:43] I'll go first. I'll, this is Malkiel Choseed. And like a lot of people, during during the pandemic, I sort of got into baking. I've kept doing it, and some of it is actually good. Not all, but some. So. Thank you.

**AS** [00:02:01] What's been your favorite thing to bake?

**Malk Choseed** [00:02:05] Well, this, very soon. I'm actually, I just today got all the ingredients to make a spice cake for my son's birthday, a special request. I've never made one before, but it's going to have cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger with a cream cheese icing, so. I think it'll be a winner. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

**AS** [00:02:29] Nice. Thanks for sharing. Malk.

**Matt DelConte** [00:02:31] Yeah, it's Matt DelConte. For the last, maybe ten, 12 years, I've been in my ever dwindling, free time, building guitars. Maybe a fancy way of saying making a whole lot of sawdust and littering it all over my house. But, after 6 or 8 months, I have something to show for it.

**AS** [00:02:52] Oh, wow, that's really cool. So on average, it takes about 6 to 8 months to put one together.

**Matt DelConte** [00:02:59] Yeah. Especially acoustic guitars. Electrics are, a little bit easier in terms of just overall time and the demand of the craftsmanship, but, yeah, it's, it's oftentimes a full summer project and then, spills into, next summer too.

**AS** [00:03:21] It is and do you, sell them or you give them to friends or are there for friends and family. What what do you normally do with them?

**Matt DelConte** [00:03:29] That's usually one of the first questions people ask me, and I never will admit that I give them to friends or family. Because I make a lot of friends. And at this point, no family. But no, I typically either, will give them to a friend or, there's sort of, I guess pro bono, commission based, projects. So, it's good. It pushes me in different directions when I know I get to build it for somebody else.

**AS** [00:03:57] Nice. Thanks for sharing. And, Mike.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:03:59] Thanks, Al. Yeah, this is Mike O'Connor. I guess the most interesting I can think about is I've pretty much been a bicycle commuter almost exclusively for somewhere in the neighborhood of 25 years now. So I bike back and forth to work every day. And the Syracuse winters, it's, a topic of much, much derision among some of my past students that we seem to remember. We got that guy riding up the hill on a bike, in the winter, it's kind of a topic of discussion. So.

**AS** [00:04:31] Wow. because, Upstate New York, gets heavy snow. So you also do that in the hard winter?

**Mike O'Conner** [00:04:41] Yeah. Yeah, it's about five and a half miles each way. I change my tires out to studded tires in the winter and, yeah. You get used to it. But I kind of love being outside in the weather. It keeps me a little happier. And I get to ride through a lot of different neighborhoods in Syracuse that I feel really connected to and love.

**AS** [00:05:02] And do you have a bike that you recommend? This is the bike to have! This is the one. If you're going to live my lifestyle, this is the one to have.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:05:11] What I would encourage people, I ride a fixed gear single speed which means which is a lot of information, but it basically means that if you're pedaling, if the bike's moving, you're pedaling. And I do that because it gives me a little bit more control over the how the bike controls on ice and water. So I would encourage anybody to if they're interested in this, I really encourage them to get a bike with fewer moving parts. And really think about what's in their budget and look at a used bike would be my encouragement, wherever possible.

**AS** [00:05:46] Wonderful. So we got baking, making guitars, and biking. There's got to be some crazy metaphor with those three things and the work that you've done at the college. And so thank you for sharing that. Let's get started about the good work that you've done. The three of you are recipients of the Hacker Award specifically for integrated reading and writing, and the successful elimination of developmental education. That's the title of the award. And congratulations. So let's start from the beginning. What was your why?

**Malk Choseed** [00:06:21] Malkiel here, and I think I can talk about this. OCC was an early adopter of the corequisite style of doing developmental education, at least in New York State. We were the first. If we were one of the first, if not the first, SUNY community college to do the coequisite, often known as ALP or ALP style of dev ed, that was made so famous by Peter Adams and and his colleagues at the Community College of Baltimore County. That's a lot of Bs and Cs, unlike our baking and building and biking. I personally, I believe I saw Peter Adams second public presentation of the initial ALP data. I wasn't there the very first go round, but I've had a chance to talk to him and I was there at the second. So his second public presentation way back in late 2006, I was very interested in that style of developmental education reform through some finagling and pushing and cajoling and hoping, we started a pilot of the ALP style corequisite program here in OCC, like we started with four, actually Mike O'Connor was one of the pilot instructors. Then we went 8 and we went to 16, 32, etc. and we had eventually a thriving scale to 100% corequisite program. I mention this because people who are listening have to understand that we personally here at OCC couldn't have just jumped right into our elimination of dev ed successfully without this initial work and the assessment that went with it. And I have to say that corequisite is 1,000% hands down better than prerequisite dev ed, 100%. And, you know, I study English and not math. That's why I'm like 1,000%, 100%, etc.. There's just no contest. All the national data shows that, and our internal data showed it, too. If you look at the pass rates or, sorry, the completer rates, and Mike or Matt can talk about that distinction in just a minute, because it's a very important one. If you look at the completer rates for corequisite of the first year composition course versus prerequisite first year composition leading into the first year of composition course, that's just hands down corequisite is better. The problem came, though, when Matt and he can speak about this, as part of a larger SUNY wide learning initiative where we were essentially teaching other colleges how to do the corequisite successfully, did some longitudinal analysis and discovered that the increased success in dev ed, and in first year composition was not leading to success down the line. In fact, the short term gains of passing, first year composition and things were eventually being lost over time and by the time students got to their final semester, there are chances of leaving OCC with a degree in hand were almost the same. Slightly more, but almost the same as if we had just done the standard prerequisite dev ed. What we determined was that it was essentially a better way of doing the same old thing. And I just want to say that I want to be very, cautious here. I've met Peter Adams. I consider him, one of the foundational modern dev ed scholars and researchers. But, and I say this only in terms of what we were able to do here at OCC. I can't speak for other campuses. The purpose of prerequisite education, prerequisite and corequisite education for dev ed in English was to get students to pass first year composition. And Carl Requisite is much better at doing that and prerequisite. However. Getting students to completion and graduation. It just wasn't working. And to follow it off, in more of that assessment, as Dean O'Connor can speak to in just a second here, as we looked more into the disaggregated assessment results, we found that by doing all the right things, lowering the threshold for, sorry, raising the threshold for students to get into the dev ed, so that is, you know, only trying to get the most needy students into the dev ed right, opening the doors wider for more people to just go right into first year compositions, trying to really, target the intervention to those groups of students who on paper needed it most. We found through Mike's analysis that we were inadvertently impacting minority students, specifically Black and African-American and Latino students. And our reform was not working equally well for all the different demographic groups that make up our, student body. And I should say, too, that in context, Onondaga County is where the colleges, we are in the city of Syracuse. We have a Syracuse address, and we serve many students who come to us through the Syracuse City School District. I believe the national unemployment rate is of somewhere around 11 or 12% in the county. It's 13 or 14% in the city, it's like 28%. So we have endemic poverty in our city. And we are also in the, unfortunate position of being in one of the American top ten American cities that have the highest concentration of Black and Latinx poverty in the nation. We've actually moved away a little bit in the last couple of years, but we're still in the top ten. When we were with our reform, inadvertently, let's just put it as it is "ghetto-izing" dev ed. We knew that there was a problem. And that was kind of our our why. What was gonna have the biggest impact on students in what was going to do it? On student success and graduation rates and what was going to do it in a way that was truly equitable. That was our why.

**AS** [00:14:18] Thanks, Malk, for that. And. Yeah. You're not alone. This is this is a national issue where the data is very clear. That developmental ed just doesn't work for students. They go through this developmental ed wilderness and never get out of that wilderness. And then we change to co-req, things where yes, finally something. But when you do the math again, the throughput rates and getting them to completion is not really helping our disproportionately impacted students. So you have your why and you have faculty such as yourselves who are passionate. You see this is also an equity issue. How did you move from the why to, cecause at the end of the day, it's all about implementation, how did you move from that why to implementation?

**Mike O'Conner** [00:15:17] That's a great question, Al. Thanks. This is Mike O'Connor. I'll take this one. Malk and I, at the beginning, we had a really long conversations about, how we could roll this out. We had some spaces in our department of people who were hesitant to even think about the corequisite model. And then once we got the corequisite model up and running and stable, we had some faculty who were equally hesitant about doing away with developmental ed. And so we kind of developed these long range implementation plans that went into it. A lot of it had to do with sharing some of that data that we found in legible ways for everybody in the community to see what was happening, what was the impact of developmental education, and what was this? What did this mean to students? What did this mean to the college and our mission? And then how was it that what we proposed and what we were actually doing was addressing that? And I raised that. We were very interested in using the data in a way to tell a story. That was in concert with what we saw as our college's mission and how we imagined ourselves doing our best work. In here, I'll defer to Matt for a moment. Or I'll reference Matt's work in a moment. One of the things we did was we held a lot of workshops across the campus for our college, and Matt developed a really fantastic slide that took our largest lecture hall on campus. And we noted how many students would have graduated if developmental ed hadn't been a problem. And so we're able to look at these numbers of students and say, okay, these are the students who were failing. These are the students who are walking away from OCC without anything but that. I remember that being a really powerful image for all of us. It told that story in a tangible way. Let us know the individual numbers of students impacted. And a lot of that when you have a developmental ed pipeline that gets lost a lot of times because you don't see the throughput rate, you don't see the students who are lost. You only see the students who get through in those later courses. You can have fairly decent success rates in the courses, but have really poor throughput rates and completion rates. Being able to clarify that visually was really important, and it got a lot of people on board. We brought a lot of the folks who saw themselves as resistors or questioners, bringing them in and having them trained and having them take part in it was really essential. It built some of that momentum. People would have good experiences in these courses. It was really, really useful. We also were careful to assess these students after they got out of our class. And 103, which is our first year composition, assessing their success rates in later courses. So we assumed what some of the critiques might be, and one of those was going to be, boy, you're just lowering standards in those freshman composition courses and you're getting students through who aren't prepared. But we had we presumed what those concerns were going to be, and we addressed those from the very beginning beforehand. And, finally, we did more professional development than I think a lot of people realize. And part of that professional development was to give people the training to do this methodology in their courses, this form of pedagogy. We thought it was very important to change how we did what we did in the course. And so a lot of it was to train faculty in those different kind of, ways of approaching developmental writing, ways of approaching freshman composition from where the students are so they can get where they need to be in one semester by supporting them in class, integrating reading and using active pedagogy. And we're able to offer that to nearly all of our faculty. We had some support from the administration to provide compensation for faculty going through those professional development things. I believe firmly that when we had those faculty, those folks in the room and we had open dialog and conversations about what these classrooms look like and the impact it had on students, we ended up really creating a lot of, converting a lot of people who might have been resistant. And we figured out ways we were fortunate enough to work with our HR. So some of the concerns about work, the implications it might have on the actual labor of our faculty. We're able to at least mitigate some of that by a conversation with HR about how we could make sure people had had pathways into maintaining their teaching load, even when our developmental ed was was phased out.

**AS** [00:20:14] I want to take the student perspective for a moment. I'm a student, and now I'm going to a class with faculty that went through all of this PD. They went through all this training. How do I from a student see the changes in their practice that's going to help me. Can you unpack some specifics of what they were trained on? What did they change? And as a student, what do I see? What do I feel? What do I experience because of that?

**Mike O'Conner** [00:20:46] I think the biggest thing you would see from a student perspective, particularly if you were a student who would have been placed into developmental ed before, is first what you wouldn't have seen, which is that affective experience of showing up at a college thinking you're ready and being told, welcome, but you're not ready. So that experience with developmental ed, it really, really challenges students ability to conceptualize themselves as a prepared student or as a successful student. So we immediately shift that narrative at the beginning. That would be the first thing. You're welcome. You have something to offer this class and we're looking forward to it. That would have been one of the big changes you would experience around that moment. The other thing, one of the other big things you would have experienced in the classes was a real focus on, or at least an expectation that the faculty member would recognize the impact of the experiences outside of class. So there used to be a presumption amongst some faculty that I even heard faculty say things like, yes, I just tell my students, you have baggage. I know you have baggage. Just leave it at the door. In this in this class, we're not going to worry about that. I'm going to treat everybody the same. And you keep your baggage outside. And we're all students in this class. And there was a recognition we had that that was not helping students. That was actually really putting barriers in those students way. So we believed firmly that the barriers that were impacting students and getting in their way of success were barriers we wanted to know about, and we had pathways to support those students through that. And here's where we think about things as a college wide level. So we leaned in to our student support services. We leaned into our food pantry. So regardless of what concerns a student might have, we had either someone we could plug them in with or we would able to use the other students in the class a lot of times as a shared experience to triage concerns that might be arising that students might have, that they wish to share. One other thing that I really should mention from a student perspective, as well as faculty for that matter, was the use and the transition to labor based grading in a lot of our courses. In here, for a student, you shift the mindset from the what you produce being graded to the process you use to produce that material being graded, the effort that goes into labor, that goes into it. In here of course, Dr. Asao Inoue is the figure that we worked with to develop this model. I was fortunate enough to see him at a conference a few years back, and then we brought him on to campus specifically to, provide us with some support and some ideas around this. And here it was really revolutionary for us and revolutionary for our students to really focus on the process of producing it. We always talk about process based writing anyway, but having, the grading reflect that was really an essential transition from a student based perspective. It lowered the anxiety students have about grammar and structure and things like that, and allowed them to actually work on those things more productively without being anxious about the impact it would have on their grade. Here, I'm going to take a moment to throw this over to Matt, my colleague Matt. He's got two other things to add I'm sure.

**Matt DelConte** [00:24:23] Yeah. Thanks, Mike. I think one of the things that is important to recognize as we were implementing this is that, I say, for better or worse, because in many ways there was some better of it. There were some faculty across campus and other disciplines that were, with good reason, at the time, hesitant to see us, making such massive, significant structural, changes that, we're we're certainly going to impact the course of a student, outside of, freshman composition or, English in general. And I think one of the things that we did well, to, address those concerns is to make this a larger pedagogical shift and not a composition shift. We did make some changes to our curriculum that I think were necessary. As far as the college community and our colleagues in other disciplines were concerned, we introduced things like labor base grading that might explain, an emphasis on students non-cognitive struggles and how we might support those in the classroom. We introduced those in a way that were relevant and I think meaningful to faculty outside of the English department, to the faculty who were teaching courses other than writing, and to see it not as a structural shift that was isolated to our program, but to see it as a different way to engage with students in any classroom, in any discipline, I think was an important way to make this clearly a a campus wide effort, and not simply one that that a few of us, in one discipline, were attempting.

**AS** [00:26:10] How did you handle faculty who, they just said, look, this is, this is crazy. No way. I'm never going to be on board with this. Or maybe they don't say it like that, but they sure act like it, right? They they go to meetings, they don't say much, but their actions speak louder than words because they keep doing what they they keep. Those antiquated practices that create barriers for students. They don't really continually improve their craft. So I'm wondering if any of those colleagues, if you experienced that and if you did, what did you do to eventually bring them over? Or maybe the reality is, sometimes you just can't bring up 100% of people over, and that's just reality. Can you speak to that a little bit?

**Matt DelConte** [00:27:03] Yeah, thanks. I think the reality is that when during our first year of of not having to balance developmental reading, writing, there were some faculty members who were either explicitly or certainly, not well disguised, not necessarily pleased with that shift. And, from my perspective at least, I think that first year was sort of just gutting through resistance and knowing, certainly being confident, but but being very confident that once we were able to to crunch the numbers and get some assessment on how the program was working and once we were able, and we have been very good on our campus about publicizing and promoting, assessment when we have it. And I think that's been one of our strengths, we don't hide our numbers. And they're good numbers to share. But once we were able to share that with faculty across the campus, I think it was growingly, increasingly difficult for other faculty members to resist the shifts, and especially when we couched things in terms of of equity and student success. And we had numbers to suggest that, that this was working and working rather well. It was hard to, you know, to maintain that hesitation.

**Malk Choseed** [00:28:24] And if I may, Malkiel Choseed it here, from a very practical standpoint within the English discipline at the time, we were big enough. And even though we have had many faculty retire and things in the last couple of years, our department is smaller. And it has been at the time, we were big enough that if people really didn't want any part of it, most of them who didn't want any part of it could take other courses. It became as centrally an opt out system within English. It wasn't a lot. There was 3 or 4. Now it's maybe down to 1 or 2 of people who just said, this isn't for me. I don't understand it or I don't trust it. And they can sort of take refuge in other courses, if they so chose. But I will say that we built up, pretty quickly within English, a lot of excitement and a lot of interest, because once you start digging into it, the problem is real. It's just how do you solve it and everyone was pretty quick to say, well, during more of the same isn't going to help. So let's try something different. And we said, and this is where our sort of push came through. Well, let's try this it. So people were like okay let's try this.

**AS** [00:29:56] Want to go back to the student perspective about process versus product. So historically, when I went to, I remember I was a former community college student, a reentry student. And in my English class, I remember it was about the product I had a produce. I remember it was like a 15, 20 page paper. Could you unpack a little bit more what it means then to have a pedagogy where you're more focused on the process, how as a student, having been through that experience of having to produce a product, how would that look like for me when when you're really assessing a process. Can you give an example or two?

**Matt DelConte** [00:30:40] One of the things that we have emphasized in the curriculum is, different drafting stages. And, one of the ways I think you can communicate to students, other than very explicitly saying it's really important that we spend a lot of time on drafting in the process is much bigger than simply writing, a final paper and turning in a final paper is, is to to privilege those moves in the classroom with the amount of time that we spend on it, the amount of, even in a labor based grading system, the amount of labor that they know will go into different steps in a process and, and to weight those final steps that ultimately sort of reveal that it will end the product to weight those, rather insignificantly compared to earlier stages of the writing process. And in some ways that helps students. I think it helps students even quantify the value of a process along the way, rather than what gets turned in and at the end of the three week unit.

**Malk Choseed** [00:31:47] And this is Malkiel again, just to follow up. That in and of itself is not revolutionary to OCC. That's a pretty standard approach to teaching English. In fact, it's the preferred approach in NCTE, National Council of Teachers of English and College Conference on composition and all these different things. That's really the kind of way to, quote unquote, to do it, quote unquote. But, I think it fits so well with these kind of student centered assessment practices, and it's sort of a natural fit. And, often I think, again, at least at OCC, it was easy to sort of say, yes, of course, process is important, but you know, that you're going to get, you know, a B on the final paper or C on the final paper or something like that, to sort of really say, okay, everybody, at the heart of good composition, pedagogy is a dedication to process. How do we make that really visible, not just sort of in a lecture at the start of the term, but visible to students in a very practical, hands on way? And I'd like to sort of go on record here of saying, of course, the final product is important, right? Of course. In a workplace or in another class, students are going to have to write with certain expectations. But 30 plus years of research has shown that by emphasizing process, you come to that better product. And so whereas that is not sort of unique to OCC, by any means. Really layering that into our training, into our PD was something that that we attempted to emphasize again and again and again.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:33:46] Thanks, Malk. I just wanted to add one small piece to that because I think another part in here, something I think I'm very proud of, that we did was when we were moving away from corequisite. We really were very thoughtful about integrating our reading into the writing practice and process and then reflecting that as part of the requirements to produce those essays. So a lot of times you'll see integrated reading and writing courses where you read something and then you write about it, and there's not as much support for the reading. We worked very tightly with our ILS colleagues, that's integrated and learning strategies. They were our, there were a reading, they renamed themselves that. They were our reading department originally, and we worked very closely with them on strategies to help support our students in reading. And then we tried to build a structure where students were reading, and then they were writing about their reading from the viewpoint of a reader and a writer. And then they were producing from that writing from that reading in a way that forced them to think about the two together in a recursive cycle. And so by working on those in concert at this, as you work through into, a project and then forcing yourself to think about how they interrelate, we ended up shortening some of that learning curve in both reading and writing.

**AS** [00:35:09] Thank you for sharing that. I want to go back to professional development for a moment, because PD, it's so difficult to close the loop on people who participate, right. There's a session, here's the PD. How are you able to navigate closing that loop to know that we provided the PD and faculty actually did what we taught them in PD. I seen some campuses do that through a community of practice where they meet almost weekly. They do what they learned in PD, come back, talk about how it went, whether bad or good--there's no pointing fingers, there's no evaluation. It's just about how did it go? That's how they closed the loop. How were you able to follow up on the PD?

**Matt DelConte** [00:35:55] Al, we were really fortunate at OCC to be the lead campus on a statewide, initiative to, either implement, introduce or enhance corequisite programs across the SUNY system, the State University of New York system. And we worked with 27 community colleges across the state, to create a community of practice. And the project ran for five years. And we had a lot of opportunity to work not only with colleagues on campus, but colleagues across the state. So, in the process of developing those relationships and the networking and the collaborative work that took place during that entire project, we had a number of professional development opportunities. And Mike had already mentioned, labor based grading, but we also, organized, faculty training on, universal design for learning and trauma informed, pedagogies and some real large scale pedagogical approaches to students that certainly benefited our instruction in these corequisite classrooms. And this really was a way there was an expectation, that the people you saw, in fall will be the people that you will see again in spring. And, the people you will be emailing when something worked well in class and, and also the people you'd be emailing, and maybe even calling when, when something didn't work so well. So, there was a lot of opportunity for us to have extended, conversations. And, like I said, we were really fortunate to have, the opportunity to facilitate this on a statewide, and we're talking 400 plus faculty members across New York State that participated in some sort of professional development and the ongoing conversations that resulted from it. It was really sort of, a humbling and inspiring experience to be part of something that lasted that long that was, included so many, so many dedicated faculty members.

**Malk Choseed** [00:38:11] And if I can jump down here, this is Malkiel. I want to say, Al, and for anybody listening that it's always a double approach. It's always going to be structural and pedagogical. We know both from our own experience, and I think there are some new studies published through CCRC that pedagogical interventions, changing the way people approach their classrooms can make lasting impacts on like success rates. But we it also has to be linked with structural changes that are not idiosyncratic, that I are not tied to certain individuals. One without the other is probably not going to be as effective. Let me just give you an example of this. We got rid of placement in English completely. That was one of our big, and it sounds simple, but it was one of our big innovations. So we were not categorizing students anymore. So when students came into that first year composition classroom, there was no way to tell, oh, this is a student who would have been in or this is a student who who is, from some of our more resistant colleagues, not really supposed to be here, you know, and I'm doing air quotes here. Like we we just got rid of that. So really faculty members, who were teaching these first year composition courses and this goes from tenured full professor is down to first year adjuncts. Didn't know who was who. So they sort of had to deal with all the students equally. That's a big deal. Then when you give those instructors certain pedagogical tools, which are really ultimately focused on equity, then the ability to do that well goes up like we think labor based grading, for example. And not everyone has to do at OCC, for various, contractual and academic freedom reasons, people sort of have to opt into that. But if you're new to the college to if you're new to teaching here, it is the default syllabus that you'll be given. It has that structure in it. We think that is about equity. It's not just about, you know, yes, it's a different way to grade. And it does emphasize process, but really it does it in a way that really emphasizes equity, right? When you have students coming from a school district that has, such high poverty numbers that they just decided to give everyone in Syracuse City School District a free lunch, because frankly, it was easier, than just sort of having the 2 or 3% who who didn't qualify was cheaper just to give it to everybody because you eliminated some paperwork and things, sitting next to students in a class who are from a wealthy suburb. It's one of the top 100 schools in the state. Top 100 high schools in the state of New York. Their lives are going to be different. And what they bring to the, their preparation and things is going to be different. So giving them both a chance to do their best work and not penalizing one bit because of their background is an important tool. Again, not that people would be necessarily consciously penalizing these students because of their high school preparation background, or because of what school they graduated from. But but it has that impact all the same.

**AS** [00:42:22] All right. So as we begin to wind down, one of the things that I tell colleges, I work with them throughout the country is to remind them that our institutions are not only places of learning for students. They're places of learning for us. And as we continually learn how to improve our craft, there's going to be ups and downs. Just like our students feel ups and downs. We're in a learning process. And when we continually learn, we really see our place of institutions as a place of learning for us. Then that helps to nurture a culture of continuous improvement. And you might have heard of that saying, that culture eats strategy for breakfast. And it sounds like what you were able to do here with this strategy of really changing the way we place students into English, the way we teach English to be more student centered, more equity minded. That the strategy seems to have, won out the culture. And that isn't always the case. So I want to congratulate you for that. That said, like I said, it is about continuous improvement. So, what's kind of some early data here that you wouldn't mind sharing on some of the outcomes as a result of all your the learning that you're doing, the changes that you're continually doing. All this continuous improvement. Where are you at right now? Do you have a few data points you would mind sharing?

**Matt DelConte** [00:43:59] Yeah. Thanks, Al. One of the biggest successes that this program has revealed to us is that our overall success rate for students, receiving a C or better in our first year composition course, which is what we, the metric we use, we think of transferable grades, and we've sliced it and disaggregated in a lot of different ways, and the story is always the same--that the success rates have remained, for the first few semesters of the after eliminating developmental reading and writing, have remained, within 1 or 2 points, and usually 1 or 2 points higher than they were before. But, the early success was was more noticeable in what we what the program was saving students, and saving, a high percentage of our students between 3 and 11 credits, of course, work and, you know, probably on the average, about $1,500 of tuition dollars that students were saving because they weren't required to take these courses.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:45:05] This is Mike. I've got access to a little bit of the data right in front of me, so I can give some numbers to that and give a better sense of, a little more focus. What I would say is, that's absolutely right. And in the last year, we're actually bumping up even more. So we stayed pretty stable from 2017 to 2022. With success rates, if we look at with success rates right in our our enrollees success, the students who come into our class, we had success rates that were right around 60 to 62%, which put us kind of standard where we were in the last semester, we've jumped up and we're seeing a about a 66% in the fall, which is a really nice jump up. It's important to notice within this, if we start disaggregating those enroll, those success rate numbers by different classes in different groups, we've seen within that period where we saw our successes either be stable or incrementally jump up. That same period, we saw an increase for our underrepresented minority students of 10%, ten raw percentage points from a 45%, in 2017 to recently a 55, and in the most recent and most recent fall. So these are our initial numbers. We have to vet them through in our our institutional planning and research before we'd want to really publish them. But no matter how we start cutting them and looking at them and careful, it always shows that for all groups in our courses, these changes have been better because their cost them less in both in time and money and resources, and the success rate keeps increasing for those students. And what's exceptionally important for us is for, our neediest students who have the highest numbers of barriers, the successes are high, as this is true for our Pell Grant eligible students, as well as our underrepresented represented minority students, as well as our first generation students. We're seeing the increase at a higher rate in those populations.

**AS** [00:47:10] That's wonderful. Thank you for sharing. And it's worth noting that you began these major changes during the height of the pandemic. This was something you were doing in 2020. And it's also important to note that 10% for some people may not seem like much when you're we're really getting off the ground and you're continually improving, but it is significant. 10%, those are actual human beings, right? They're actual human beings. The raw number, I don't know what it is, but even if it's just one to make that kind of positive difference. Right. So I'd like to end with something that I hope is a little fun. I'm going to put you on the spot. I'd like to end with, Malk, you talked about your baking, Matt, about the guitar making, and Mike, the biking. I'd like for each of you, if you could please give me a metaphor for that activity that you have as it relates to your experience, your journey with change any aspect of the change or all of it? So, Malk, would you like to get us started?

**Malk Choseed** [00:48:20] You know, if I had to compare this sort of, as you call it, a journey of change to baking, I'd say there are similar in that sometimes you have a recipe, sometimes you don't. But once you've done it enough and spend enough time, so have experimenting and practicing. Even if you don't have a recipe, if you have a sense of what you want it to look like, you can start to either build something from scratch or more like we did, take something that was, working and then change it to make it have a different outcome. And I should say that, just to sort of as we close up here, we didn't get rid of the ALP. We ALP-ified everything about English. We took all that built in support and an understanding of pedagogy and differences of students and how they impact students, and just built them into everything that we did.

**Matt DelConte** [00:49:33] How does guitar building serve as a metaphor for what we did? Some of the questions you've asked today, I could have easily anticipated. And then there's this. I'll tell you, though, the very first time I built a guitar, I had some woodworking experiences, but really no, I guess luthier experience. I got a book out of the library and used some wood that I had left over from whatever project in my garage. A lot of faith that, whatever the book told me to do that I did, was going to, lead to something in the end. And, I can remember the very first time stringing it up and putting, 100 pounds of pressure, on this newly built thing and wondering if I was going to, in a few minutes, just have a lot of, firewood, you know, being I guess, surprised, and looking back and recognizing that the anxiety in the anticipation of something bad happening or the potential of something not going, as planned, maybe it wasn't all that founded. And I think a lot of that, kind of response to success, was the same sort of response to success that I had, and maybe Malk and Mike as well, when numbers started coming in and you start seeing the way in which the changes that we facilitated improve the lives of students. You remind yourself that you shouldn't be surprised that that things work out.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:51:08] Well, thanks, Al. I guess what I would say about it is any time you're on the road, on a bike, things happen. Sometimes good things, sometimes bad things. You know, you never really know what's going to happen. I get asked all the time, how do you deal with cold weather? How do you deal with flats? How do you with this and that? And, there bumps there. There are things that you don't anticipate, but if you have a commitment to doing it and getting getting there. And, you know, the end point is what the goal is. And you sometimes you have to improvise sometimes you have to make changes. You have to occasionally, I've even had to rely on other people for help. Bring me a tube or whatever. Those things, I think were part of what we were, we had bumps, we had mistakes. We had a lot of things that occurred in our journey. And no one journey was the same. It's always different on a bike, and it was always different for us. Every college is going through this differently. You're going to get things that are going to rise that you didn't expect. We had registration issues that we did not expect, and we had to figure out how to way to how do we to get through it in the fly. And we did. And ultimately it was our commitment to this process that we knew was going to get us to an end point. Ultimately, even if it meant we might have to change some more goals, change some of our approaches. It was that constant, focus on what our goals are. And I think this kind of like that, you know, you just commit to it, you go into it and you realize that you can get through it. Whatever bump arises, you can figure it out.

**AS** [00:52:43] So, gentlemen, congratulations on winning the award. Very well deserved. I want to thank you so much for unpacking this experience. And just continue to do what you do and put students first, put them at the center. And I really appreciate all the hard work. Thank you for participating in the Student Success Podcast.

**Malk Choseed** [00:53:07] Thank you all. Thank you for having us. And I just wanted to sort of say, in closing, that if this were a video format rather than just audio, you would see that we're three middle aged white guys with glasses. And I want to point that out because I think it's fair to to say this project started out as a pedagogy focused project, but it turned into an equity focused project. And I think I speak for all of us when I say that we feel honored and privileged to have been in a position to do this work. And we know that we are, as they say, standing on the shoulders of giants. And we would just like to hope that other people can hear this, we would love to answer questions that people have. Share our resources. If we can do it, you can do it too. And we encourage you to think about it and try it.

**Matt DelConte** [00:54:11] Yeah. Thanks, Malk. Really well said. And yeah, thanks, Al, for this opportunity to share, our experiences and, thanks for your continued commitment to student success.

**Mike O'Conner** [00:54:23] Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Matt. And thanks, Al, for giving us this opportunity to unpack our experiences and talk a little bit more detail. And thanks for the work you do on this podcast. And in all of your, all your endeavors. I think it's really important. Yeah, this has been so much fun. It's great to unpack this experience and to think about it. And the only thing we didn't really get a chance to mention that I'd like to mention is the amount of work that everybody else on campus did to help support this. While we talked about the three of us involved. It really did take an entire effort of everyone in the campus. Everyone was involved from administration all the way through, people you wouldn't have expected, like our registration and records folks, like our HR group. It really was a campus wide community, and we were so fortunate to have a campus with everybody so focused, laser focused, as it were, on our student success.

**AS** [00:55:23] [Outro] Thank you for listening to the Student Success Podcast. Each episode has shownotes, which include helpful links and necessary follow up information to help you get results. Please consider subscribing to the Continuous Learning Institute website. There are no advertisements. It simply updates about articles, tools, resources, podcasts, etc. all tailored for you to practitioner. Thank you.