



News Release

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Century College GPS LifePlan Receives High Marks

Century College's award-winning GPS LifePlan, a campus-wide program that includes an online planning tool that helps students connect their educational goals with their career goals, is "extraordinary," University of Minnesota Prof. David Arendale told campus leaders this week.

"In my professional opinion – and I have studied student retention for over 20 years - this is the biggest, fastest, most comprehensive rollout of an intervention program that I have ever seen," said Arendale. "It is extraordinary. GPS works."

In his written evaluation of the GPS LifePlan, Arendale concluded that most Century students are aware of the plan, it is being used and it has resulted in a culture change on campus. "If there is one word that captures that culture change it is planfulness," said Arendale. "Students are starting to see that planning makes a difference."

Arendale said preliminary data indicates that student persistence rates – the rate at which students continue on in college – have increased by several percentage points among students who used the GPS LifePlan. In one group of students who took Reading 80 together, persistence rates climbed 12 points.

Their grades also improved. “You have taken students most at-risk for dropping out of school and made some real differences,” said Arendale. “You are embedding this plan into the culture of the institution.”

Century faculty and staff told Arendale that campus conversations are changing as a result of the GPS LifePlan and its five components: EducationPlan, CareerPlan, FinancePlan, LeadershipPlan and PersonalPlan. The holistic approach helps students look at multiple aspects of their lives and consider how the parts all fit together. Research shows that good planning often leads to greater success.

The GPS LifePlan, which stands for Goals + Plans = Success, was launched three years ago by President Larry Litecky after he learned how similar models affected student success at institutions such as Valencia Community College in Florida. Since it was first introduced, involvement in the GPS LifePlan has spread across campus, and it is embedded in the curriculum of many Century courses. The college also has assigned student experience directors to help students connect with the GPS LifePlan at orientation, campus events and through a mentoring program.

In addition to Century, three other MnSCU institutions have launched GPS LifePlan initiatives.

“The GPS LifePlan is not only a program, web site or a set of activities, but more importantly, a culture and commitment that permeates the institution at all levels,” said Arendale.

The GPS LifePlan has attracted attention and dollars from funding sources outside of Century College. The Otto Bremer Foundation gave Century \$120,000 over three years to help fund the project, and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system supported enhancements of the initiative with a \$125,000 grant.

Students who want to use the GPS LifePlan simply go to www.gpslifeplan.org/century. When they have answered questions and filled out various surveys such as the interest inventory survey, for example, the results can be stored in an electronic portfolio (eFolio) that can stay with them even beyond their time at Century. The eFolio acts as an electronic three-ring binder that can be used as a personal archive and also

as a professional portfolio to show future employers.