THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Siyaphumelela: We Succeed

A Request for Proposals

June 2014

Summary

To enhance the effectiveness of programs and policies designed to improve South African university student success, The Kresge Foundation, with program support from its partner, Inyathelo, invites South Africa's public universities to apply to participate in an initiative, *Siyaphumelela* ("We Succeed") to strengthen their data analytics capacity. Applicants will propose to the Foundation a plan to improve their institutional capacity to collect and analyze student data and integrate it with institutional research, information technology, academic development, planning and academic divisions within their institutions to increase student success. The Foundation will provide four years of institutional support, plus potential bonus grants, to between three and five universities. Funded universities will join the *Siyaphumelela* network and agree to abide by shared goals to help improve the nation's ability to use evidence to drive student success.

Introduction

South African academic development programs emerged in the 1980s as the first significant wave of black students began to arrive on formerly all-white university campuses. Many of these pioneering students, who had to get special government approval to attend white institutions, were gifted intellectually but floundered in the classroom. Often these students came from radically different social and economic backgrounds, which hampered their success on affluent white campuses. But at least as challenging was the impact of Apartheid's Bantu Education, which was designed to ensure that black students had weak academic preparation and inadequate English skills so that they would not succeed in competitive higher education settings.

To support these students, South Africa's universities introduced a variety of interventions, including mentoring, specialized orientation, bridging courses, tutoring, extended degrees, stronger financial aid packages and other services. Although many of these programs had a positive effect, they were often isolated from the mainstream of academic life and not applied systematically across university departments or in academic fields of study. Some observers have also asserted these programs sometimes stigmatized or infantilized the students they sought to serve.

Unfortunately, however, while student access to universities has improved dramatically, and campuses are much more diverse, student success at South African universities has not improved to a similar degree. At best, black persistence and graduation rates are no better than under Apartheid and, in many cases, graduation rates appear to have fallen. Moreover, many employers complain that South African students are not equipped to flourish in the 21st century workplace.

A long-term solution, of course, is to strengthen the quality of the primary and high school system so that more high school graduates are ready to compete successfully in South African universities. But while South African universities might engage high schools to better support their students, what can they do on their own campuses to improve student success? What might South African universities themselves do to enhance student success? Indeed, over two years of

engagement and dialogue with vice chancellors and academic development specialists, improving student success was named as their highest priority.

The obvious answer to improving student success is to focus on those interventions that best serve the largest number of students. The question, however, is: which programs should be supported? And, given the different contexts and circumstances that universities face in South Africa, what initiatives best serve a specific university's students?

Traditionally, universities have looked to academic development programs to support students. Within universities, Academic Development(AD) professionals, who often have great insights into the challenges faced by first generation or under-prepared students, may have very limited relationships with Institutional Research (IR) staff, who typically focus on government compliance or university technology needs rather than analysis of student successes and failures. Similarly, both IR and AD staff may be disconnected from academic departments.

Not surprisingly, even vice chancellors who cite the important need for academic development feel unable to identify interventions with strong proof points. This, in turn, makes it difficult for vice-chancellors to focus their energy on the most effective programs for their students – and to push recalcitrant elements of the institution to become more student focused. Similarly, many of the organizations that support individual parts of the student success agenda in South Africa are not well-connected with each other, limiting the ability to learn from different disciplines or institutions about new ideas.

Finally, the South African higher education system, while recognizing that the type of students they now admit are very different from the type admitted three decades ago, remains concerned about changes that might undermine the quality and effectiveness of its graduates. For its part, the CHE, through its Quality Enhancement Project, is embracing a significant effort to ensure that South Africa can increase graduation numbers while enhancing the quality of its graduates. The Department of Higher Education's 2013 White Paper outlines similar goals.

The Kresge Foundation is committed to improving student outcomes in South Africa – and to working with like-minded institutions and people within the higher education system. Through *Siyaphumelela*, the Kresge Foundation hopes to energize existing and emerging interest in student success with a focus on stronger and better integrated data analytics.

Kresge Foundation Education funding in context

Based in metropolitan Detroit, Michigan, United States, The Kresge Foundation is a \$3 billion private foundation dedicated to expanding opportunities in cities through its support of nonprofit organizations working seven program areas: Arts & Culture, Community Development, Detroit, Education, the Environment, Health, and Human Services. Kresge's Education grant making seeks to propel more low-income, first generation, under-represented students into postsecondary education – and to ensure that they have the skills to persist successfully to graduation.

In South Africa, Kresge's sole international program area, the Foundation believes that increasing the number of university graduates is one of the best ways to enhance democracy and

promote economic growth and global competitiveness. Since 2005, Kresge has provided more than R270 million to strengthen South African higher education. This has included developing high-quality university advancement operations at eight universities, diversifying academic faculty, building quantitative skills for social science graduate students, and the construction of new science facilities.

Kresge renewed its grantmaking in 2012 with a focus on postsecondary student success. Over the past two years, Kresge has commissioned *Student Access and Success: Issues and Interventions in South African Universities*, funded refinement and expansion of the South African Survey of Student Engagement, and supported visits to the United States by South African policymakers, vice chancellors, faculty, and institutional research and academic development specialists to learn about efforts to improve student success.

For more information on Kresge's education grantmaking, please visit <u>www.kresge.org</u> or follow @kresgedu.

What are we looking for – and what do we hope to achieve – through Siyaphumelela

Low graduation rates, especially among previously disadvantaged, first generation and low-income students, are not unique to South Africa. In the United States, low-income, first generation and under-represented students (particularly African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders) complete postsecondary degrees at much lower rates that the mainstream. A number of U.S. groups, including Achieving the Dream and the nascent University Innovation Alliance, are trying to improve outcomes for students attempting to earn Associate's and Bachelor's degrees, respectively. As public entities responsible to their communities, they seek, as their ultimate goal, equity with excellence.

The critical factor in this work is the creation of evidence-based decision-making that relies on robust data collection and analysis to find the most effective solutions to student success. By changing institutional practices, several institutions, including Arizona State University (America's largest research university by enrollment) and Georgia State University (a large public university located in Atlanta), have seen positive improvements. Georgia State, in particular, has managed to erase race-based differences in student outcomes. For more information about U.S. universities that are altering practices to improve student success, please see *The Next Generation University* by the New America Foundation. It can be found at the following link:

http://education.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Next_Generation_University_FINAL_FOR_RELEASE.pdf.

South Africa is blessed with a good national student database, the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) and a number of institutions have very strong IR capacity. Nevertheless, even at the country's strongest institutions, South African IR experts mention that there is room for improvement, particularly as it relates to coordinating data analytics on student outcomes and performance with academic development programs, student services, and individual academic departments.

Through this Request for Proposals, we hope to select a cohort of three to five universities to help them strengthen their internal capacity to collect student data and address student success issues on their campus. By creating a cohort working on similar issues, we can learn lessons that can help to strengthen the South African higher education system as a whole learn how to better use data analytics for student success.

Specifically, we hope the Siyaphumelela initiative will:

- 1. Improve capacity to collect student data and integrate it with IR, ICT, academic development, student services, planning and academic divisions
- 2. Create South African models of universities using successful data analytics to improve student outcomes
- 3. Create a greater awareness and support for evidence to improve student success in South Africa
- 4. Create and highlight a shared vocabulary and consensus on especially effective practices to improve student success
- 5. Enlarge the cadre of experienced institutional researchers versed in data analytics to support student success

Applicants will propose to the Foundation a plan to improve their institutional capacity to collect and analyze student data and integrate it with institutional research, information technology, academic development, student services, planning and academic divisions within their institutions to increase student success. This might include funds to restructure internal institutional relationships around data analytics, staffing, training, and other components of a successful integrated data analytics system focused on student success. ¹ Universities will also discuss how they intend to scale-up student success strategies (including High Impact Practices² or other effective interventions) within their institutions and how their efforts could be used to disseminate their innovations and lessons learned throughout the nation.

The Foundation will provide four years of institutional support, plus potential bonus grants, to between three and five universities. Funded universities will join the *Siyaphumelela* network and agree to abide by shared goals and commitments to help improve the nation's ability to use data to drive student success.

Services provided to Successful Applicants

Universities selected through this RFP to improve institutional research and data analytics for student success will receive support to plan and implement their own strategies within the broader *Siyaphumulela* Network to build collective impact around evidence-based innovations for student support.

² The term High Impact Practices is most strongly associated with research by George Kuh and the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). For a brief introduction, see: http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm.

¹ Grant funds cannot be used for hardware or software purchases.

The *Siyaphumelela* Coordinating Body will support each grantee and its Vice Chancellor to build on existing organizational capacity and efforts to use integrated data analytics for a vision for student success. Specifically, grantees will receive:

- US\$400,000 in institutional support over four years to plan and implement strategies to use integrated data analytics to enhance student success. Grants should be designed to decrease over time to help institutions transition from Kresge funding to internal support.
- An opportunity to earn an additional \$100,000 bonus for successfully meeting internal student success goals by the end of year three of the initiative.
- Opportunities for a shared research project with the other grantees, and a shared focus on strengthening High Impact Practices (such as First Year Experiences, Tutorials, etc., in Years Two and Three of the initiative.
- Coaching from international and local data coaches on how best to manage and use data analytics for student success.
- Opportunities for IR, AD and other staff to participate as Kresge Fellows in international conferences on student success, such as Achieving the Dream.
- Opportunities to meet as a group on a semester basis to compare notes and experiences.
- Opportunities to participate in an annual conference on student success that brings together IR, AD, ICT and university leadership to discuss innovations and challenges in South Africa and worldwide on student success.
- Opportunities to participate in a study tour on student success in the United States.
- Preference for any additional Kresge support for initiatives designed to improve student success on their campuses.
- Opportunities for IR staff training and professional development.

The *Siyaphumelela* Network, comprised of the grantees plus other South African organization and initiative service providers, creates connective tissue for improving student success through better data analytics. Grantees are expected to be active and collaborative participants in the Network to continue to receive funding. Likely members of the *Siyaphumelela* Network may include:

- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)
- Council on Higher Education (CHE)
- Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (HELTASA)
- Inyathelo
- Southern African Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR)
- Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State, home of the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE)
- South African Labour Development Research Unit of the University of Cape Town (SALDRU)
- South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE)
- Southern African Federation for Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education (SAFSAS)
- South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF)
- Others as they emerge

In addition to the services provided directly to the grantees, the Network will support:

- A web site clearinghouse on student success issues, research, conferences, and news.
- Commissioned research on South African student success issues.
- A conference focusing on South African student access initiatives in year two.
- Identification of opportunities for non-grantees to send staff to international student success conferences.
- An Advisory Committee, which will provide input and thought leadership on issues relating to student success.
- The promotion of a national discussion and examination of best practices for effective First Year Experience.
- Other opportunities to promote student success in South Africa.

Applicant Commitments

To be eligible to apply under the RFP, and to ensure that the cohort of grantees are reinforcing broader student success efforts, respondents must:

Be a public university headquartered in South Africa that is not under administrative review or oversight.
Be committed to strengthening and integrating data analytics among Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development,
Planning and Academic divisions. Pagin to actablish a broadly representative student suggests committee or task force (if not
Begin to establish a broadly representative student success committee or task force (if not already in-place) comprising representatives of Institutional Research, Information and Communications Technology, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning,
Academic divisions, students, and a senior member of the university's executive team.
Agree that the institution's Vice-Chancellor will attend the annual student success conference.
Plan to scale-up student success efforts across the university.
Plan to develop annual goals for improving student success, such as 1^{st} year retention to 2^{nd} year based on entering cohort.
Commit to reducing student outcomes differences based on race, gender, class and first generation status, while maintaining quality.
Commit to fully participating in activities of the network, including sharing data and experiences with other grantees on student success, attending twice annual meetings, attending the annual conference, and participating in training, trips to international conferences and the study tour on student success.
Agree that any bonus grant earned will be applied to support carefully focused
professional development for faculty.
Agree that the university will use data analytics to review the top 10 classes in which
students fail, withdraw, or receive otherwise unsatisfactory grades to see if there are
opportunities to improve student success.

Agree to participate in a Siyaphumelela-sponsored national discussion of High Impact
Practices such as the First Year Experience and share evidence on how the creation of
these practices contributed to student success.
Agree to administer the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) on a regular basis (as recommended by the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State).
Provide required reports and participate in evaluation and dissemination activities within the Network

Selection Criteria

Final selection will be based on the quality of concept papers submitted, how realistic the plans outlined are, and the demonstrated commitment of university leadership to the goal of improving student success using integrated data analytics. Consideration will also be given to assembling a cohort that includes a broad cross-section of South African higher education institutions to gain insights to the unique challenges that face the system as a whole.

Successful concept papers must include a narrative that addresses the organization's capacity in the five areas listed below. While we do not expect that existing Institutional capacity will have an integrated and coherent approach to student success in all five priorities below, the concept paper narrative should clearly describe the existing university infrastructure for Institutional Research, the plans to use data to improve student success, and how this effort complements existing national efforts to improve quality and teaching and learning by the Council for Higher Education and the Department of Higher Education and Teaching.

1. Institutional Profile: A summary of the institution within the South African higher education system and its responses to the challenges surrounding student success. The applicant should give a brief introduction to the university and a candid assessment of the challenges it faces regarding student success given its own unique context in a differentiated higher education system. **Recommended length:** One to two pages.

Selection Criteria: Concept papers should discuss how the university fits into the South African higher education system, including:

A brief history, any history of mergers, current institutional profile (research
university, university of technology, comprehensive university, etc.), number of
faculties or schools, whether any programs are non-contact (and what percentage
of students are in such programs), and notable programs, institutional distinctions
or challenges.
A discussion of the average students admitted, the percentage of students from
traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds (and how that is defined), the percentage
of first generation university students, and the percentage of students in
university-sponsored residence halls.
A discussion of how the university evaluates student engagement for success

through tools like the South African Survey of Student Engagement.

student success at its institution, and how these challenges have been identified, including a discussion and analysis of student cohort success data.
2. Strategic Vision and Leadership Commitment: Applicant vision for building a coherent and institution-wide agenda and strategy for student success. In addition to a cover letter from the institution's Vice-Chancellor requesting support, this section should describe what the vice chancellor has done to date to try to improve student success and what his or her strategic vision is for improving student success in the future. Recommended length: One to two pages.
 Selection Criteria: The applicant should have a clearly and publicly articulated vision for student success and offer a candid discussion of existing or previous responses to student success challenges, including what has been tried and what seems to work and what seem not to work − and why. It should: □ Outline the Vice-Chancellor's overall institutional goals for the university (and how student success fits into this broader vision), and discuss how much time the
vice chancellor is likely to have and be able to commit to implement this vision. Discuss what institutional barriers may be in-place to prevent student success and efforts the Vice-Chancellor has taken to address them, and whether there are any existing internal goals for improving student success.
Discuss how participating in this initiative could benefit the institution, how this institution is emblematic of its type of South African university, and what specifi steps this institution would take to use this opportunity to strengthen the South African student success movement nationally.
☐ Because a strong commitment to student success, and continuity in championing it, are important for this initiative to be effective, a proposal should discuss the duration of the current vice chancellor's contract.
3. Institutional Research Capacity and Data Infrastructure : Applicant data analytics profile Typically, Information and Communications Technology, Institutional Research, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning and individual Academic units within South African universities are not well integrated, and these departments rarely collaborate to inform interventions to improve student success. Recommended length: One to two pages.
 Selection Criteria: This should discuss the current organizational structure of the university's student data collection and analysis systems, including: How well it functions, whether it is used to improve student success currently, and what improvements the university would make to this system if it is selected as a grantee. A discussion of the structure of the current Institutional Research department, who it reports to, the number of staff and their titles, its budget, the software it uses, and how, if at all, it is integrated with ICT, Academic Development, Planning, Student Services, and/or individual Academic units. It should discuss what this functionality's strengths and weaknesses are.

 \square A discussion of what the university feels are the most significant challenges to

	A discussion of how the Institutional Research departments has collected, maintained and analyzed HEMIS and other data systems, both for compliance purposes and, perhaps, for analytical purposes to improve student success.							
	A discussion of any specific steps taken to improve functionality already, including whether department members have received training in South Africa or							
	abroad (and from whom) on how to use data analytics to improve student success, and whether staff regularly participate in SAAIR, HELTASA or other professional organizations that grapple with student success issues.							
	A discussion (ideally, based on a specific action plan) for how the institution seeks to build its own institutional research capacity to create the next generation of institutional researchers.							
opportunity to	4. Integration Plan and Stakeholder Agreement : How an institution would use this grant opportunity to make improvements to its data collection for student success. Recommended length: One to two pages.							
capital	ion Criteria: A strong concept paper would discuss how the university would ize on this grant opportunity to strengthen data analytics capacity to improve							
	t success, including initial thoughts on how it might restructure, reimagine,							
	te or redeploy its current approach or staff. Ideally, it should discuss: How it might encourage typically disconnected Information and Communications							
L	Technology, Institutional Research, Academic Development, Student Services, Planning and Academic units to work together to improve student success and what incentives it might employ.							
	Whether it has created a student success task force, who is on it, how often it meets, what it has accomplished to date, and what it would hope to accomplish with this grant support.							
	How the university would sustain changes that might occur during the life of the grant after it has been completed.							
	Evidence of senior academic leadership's commitment to student success, including agreement that the university would use data analytics to review its own top-10 high failure rate courses to see if there are opportunities to better enhance student success.							
	How the university might incorporate student views and voices into this work (this might include participation on a university student success task force, focus groups with students when evaluating high failure courses, etc.).							
5. Strategy in	Context : Discussion of how the institution's efforts under the Kresge							
-	<i>i</i> initiative would complement and build upon similar and parallel efforts by the							
Council on Hi	gher Education, the Department of Education and Training, the university itself,							
and others, to pages.	improve student success and enhance quality. Recommended length: One to two							
Solocti	ion Criteria: A strong concept paper would discuss existing or forthcoming							
	programs or initiatives that the university is participating in, or hopes to							

participate in, that complement the Siyaphumelela initiative. It would discuss:

I	The amount and duration of support the university is seeking for the DHET's
	Learning and Teaching grants, and the specific activities the university is
	undertaking to meet the requirements of other funding entities, such as CHE,
	private foundations, and the university itself, to support student success.
I	How the funding being sought from Kresge would not duplicate existing efforts
	and support, and how the university would use Kresge support, if provided, to
	complement and strengthen existing and parallel efforts. For example, if an
	institution is experimenting with online education, extended degrees, improved
	classroom teaching, or a new High Impact Practice, a concept paper could discuss
	how the university would use improved data analytics in these experiments.
I	Initial thoughts on how the university would conduct third-party evaluation of
	annual efforts (types of criteria to be used, who would engage with outside
	evaluators, etc.). Draft budgets should include approximately 5 percent to 10
	percent dedicated to evaluation.

- Attachments: Please provide three attachments to your Initial Concept Paper:
 - ☐ A Cover Letter from your Vice-Chancellor confirming his or her commitment to the Siyaphumelela initiative and its requirements, and availability for site visits between August 4 and 13, 2014.
 - ☐ A draft budget for your grant covering r2014-205, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2016-2017.
 - ☐ A Summary Form compiling basic institutional and Initial Concept Paper data:
 - Name of institution and mailing address
 - o Primary contact person's name, title, email and telephone number
 - o Name of person who prepared the concept paper, plus his or her title, email and telephone number
 - o Name of institution's Vice-Chancellor, his or her email, telephone number, and his or her Assistant's name and email
 - o Current value of Endowment (Rands)
 - o Current value of other reserves (Rands)
 - o Current fiscal year institutional budget (Rands)
 - o Total number of undergraduate students/Total number of graduate students
 - o Diversity profile for Students, Faculty and Council:
 - African, Coloured, Asian, White (percentage)
 - Men/Women

Proposal Process and Instructions

Initial Concept Paper due July 14, 2014

In no more than eight to 10 pages (plus attachments), using 12-point font and 2.5cm margins, applicants should notify Kresge of their intention to respond to the RFP by14 July 2014. In this Initial Concept Paper, applicants should provide a short summary overview of their eligibility for responding to this RFP and readiness to commit to the initiative's requirements. The Initial Concept Papers should touch upon each of the selection criteria, focusing on areas of strength and areas where capacity needs to be expanded.

This is not a long document for what is obviously a complex set of issues and finalists will be asked to provide a longer discussion in the full proposals. In short, why does your institution want and need this grant?

Please submit any questions about Siyaphumelela and/or this RFP, as well as your initial concept paper, to Siyaphumelela@Kresge.org. When submitting the letter of intent, indicate "Siyaphumelela Kresge Initial Concept Paper Submission" in the subject line of your email.

Finalist Proposals due September 1, 2014

On or about July 21, 2014, Kresge will select four to seven finalist candidates from the Initial Concept Papers and will invite full proposals via an online application portal. For the universities invited to move forward to the full proposal stage, Kresge will make site visits in early August (probably between four and eight hours, occurring between August 4 and August 13, 2014; specific itineraries will depend on finalists selected) and provide specific feedback on the initial concept papers, including questions and recommendations for submitting a strong, competitive, full proposal. Final proposals will be due on September 1, 2014.

For the final Proposals, finalists will be asked to write, in no more than 15 pages, using 12-point font and 2.5cm margins, full proposal applicants should describe their eligibility, respond to the best of their ability to each of the specific selection criteria, elaborate on questions raised during the site visit, and further describe their plans for third-party evaluation. Any attachments (e.g., letters of commitment) should be compiled and submitted in one document.

Resources

Successful concept papers would be well-served by building from relevant insights taken from the following documents:

"Building Institutional Capacity for Data-Informed Decision Making," Public Agenda/Achieving the Dream, posted January 2012: http://achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/ATD_CuttingEdge_No3.pdf

High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter, American Association of Colleges & Universities, George Kuh, 2008: http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm

"Next Generation University," New America Foundation, May 2013: http://higheredwatch.newamerica.net/blogposts/2013/the-next-generation-university-84378

"Student Access and Success: Issues and Interventions in South African Universities," Inyathelo, January 2014.

http://www.inyathelo.org.za/free-downloads-1/1953-student-access-and-success-issues-and-interventions-in-south-african-universities.html

"White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System," DHET, November 2013: http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/papers/2014/post_school.pdf

"Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance," Council on Higher Education, Institutional Audits Directorate, January 2014: http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/QEP%20Framework%20Feb%202014.pdf

RFP Timeline

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•	RFP Released	June 23, 2014					
•	Webinar for Potential Applicants:	June 27, 2014					
•	Initial Concept Papers Submitted:	July 14, 2014					
•	Invitations sent for full proposals:	July21, 2014					
•	Site visits to Finalists:	August 4-13, 2014					
•	Proposals submitted:	September 1, 2014					
•	Grant recommendations made:	September 15, 2014					
•	Funding Decisions Announced:	October 15, 2014					