



Enhancing Student Success in the First Year: The ACES Program at Berea College

Chris Lakes

Coordinator of the First Year
Experience
Berea College

Carolyn Newton

Academic Vice-
President/Provost
Berea College

Association of American Colleges & Universities

January 2009



Berea College provides access to students
“who have great promise and limited
economic means.”



Access Without Support Is Not Opportunity

-- Vincent Tinto (2008)

Institutional environments that promote success

Commitment

Expectations

Support

Feedback

Involvement

(Tinto, 2008)

Students whose parents held a bachelor's degree were five times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than were similarly qualified First-Generation students.

Piecing Together the Student Success Puzzle
-- George Kuh, et al., 2007

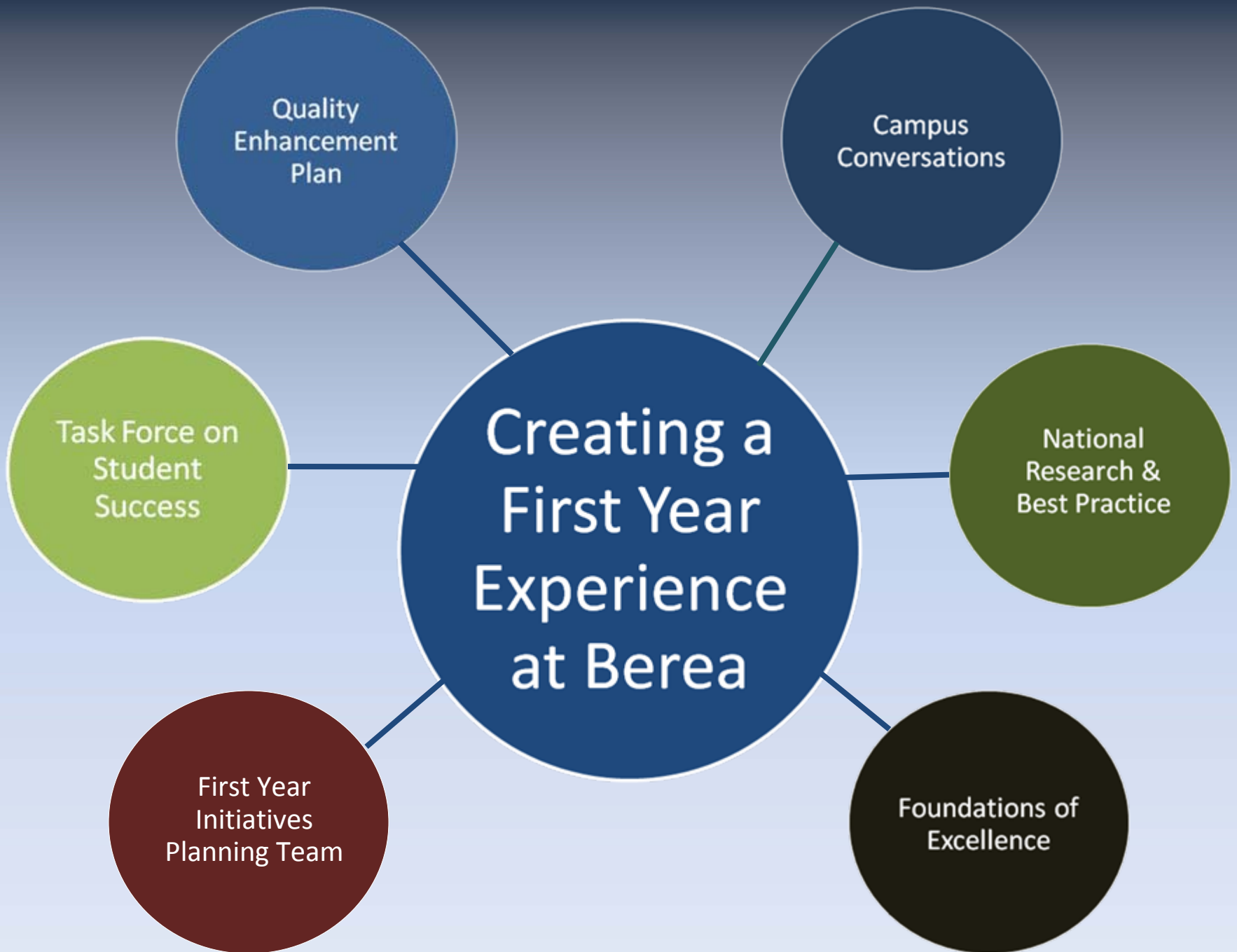
First-Generation Students

- Benefit from early intervention and sustained attention in the first weeks and months
- Are more likely to engage when the classroom is the locus of community
- Benefit from institutions that focus on student success and focus assessment efforts on what matters to student success

-- George Kuh, et al., 2007

Where We Began

- **The Strategic Plan (2005):**
 - What population of students does Berea College seek to serve and how can the College best serve them?
- **The Quality Enhancement Plan (2006):**
 - “The intention is to develop and implement a program (primarily aimed at first-year students) to enhance students’ learning success before they go on probation... Implementing a proactive initiative to assist first-year students to become active, engaged, and effective learners.”
- **Task Force on Student Success (2007):**
 - “...the development and long-term support of a comprehensive and intentional program that addresses the various policies, practices, and services designed to engage and assist first-year students in making a successful transition to college.”



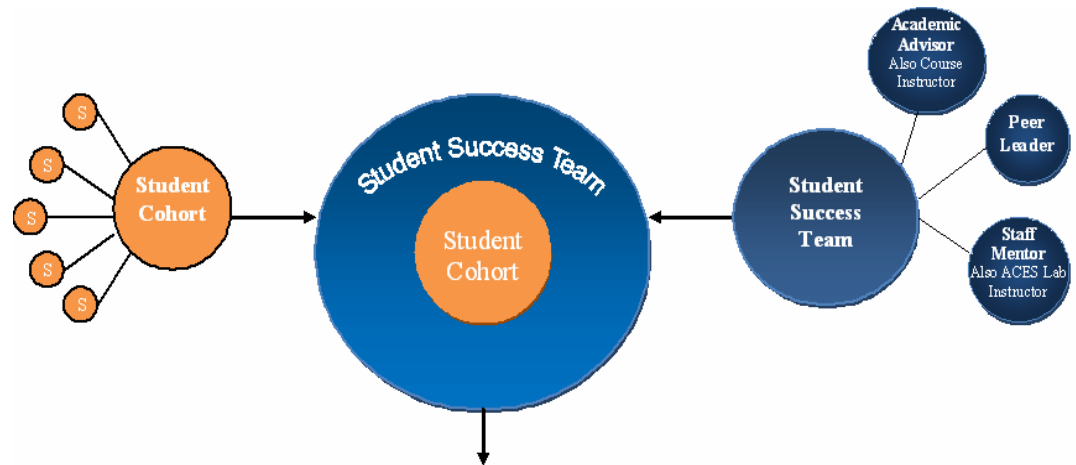
Six objectives around which all institutions should base their first year programs and activities:

- Increasing student-to-student interaction
- Increasing faculty-to-student interaction, especially out of class
- Increasing student involvement and time on campus
- Linking the curriculum and the co-curriculum
- Increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement
- Assisting students who have insufficient preparation for college

The First Year Experience: Are we making it any better?

Barefoot, 2000

First Year Initiatives Pilot

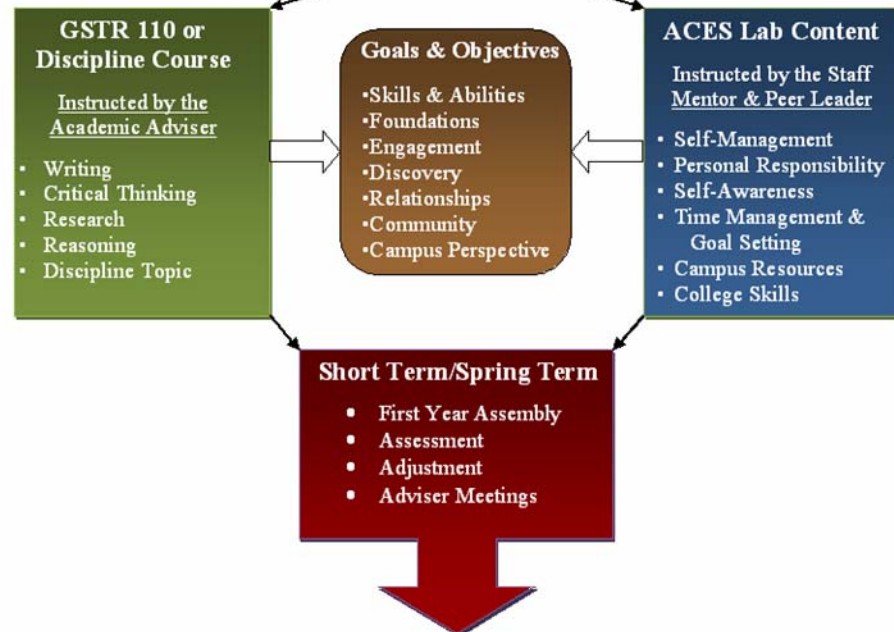


- Student Cohorts
 - Peer Connections
- Student Success Teams
 - Advising
 - Faculty/Staff Mentoring
 - Upper-class Peer Contact
 - Support System
- Expanded Orientation
 - Familiarity, Bonding
- ACES Lab
 - Transitional Skill Development

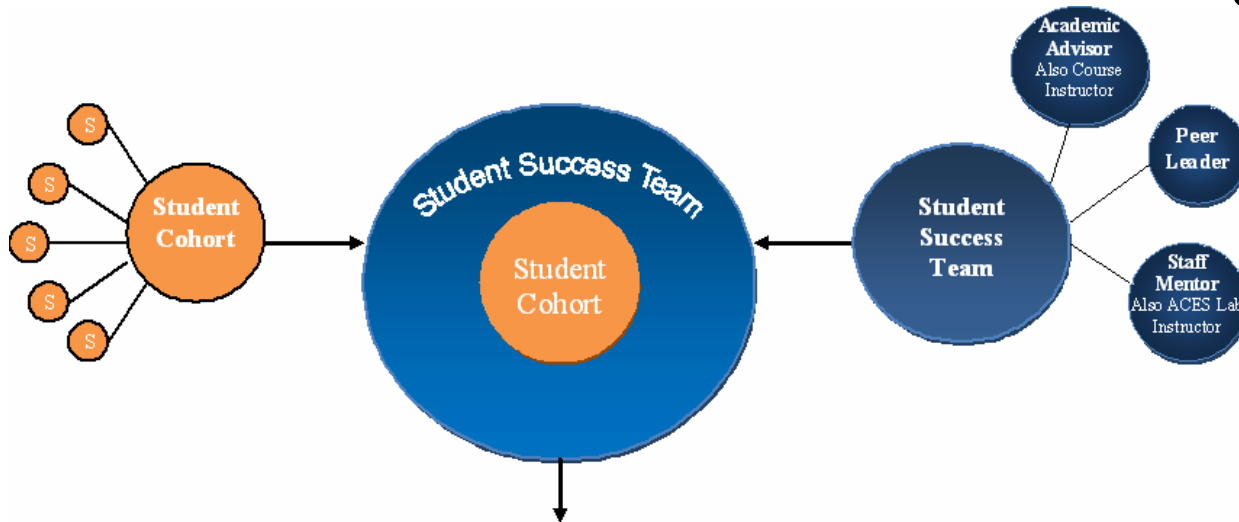
Orientation Week

Student Cohorts meet with their Student Success Team 4-5 times during Orientation Week with opportunities for discussion, community building and activities.

- Dinner & meetings with Student Success Teams focusing on:
 - Fears, Anxieties, Expectations, Unique Contribution
- Group Program Processing (Diversity, Skill Building, etc.)
- Discovering Berea Tour
 - Diversity, Sustainability, Service, Appalachia



Student Cohorts & Advising



- Students were placed in cohorts based on their selection of a GSTR 110/Discipline Course. The most effective programs for first-year students...provide a family-like social and academic support system...including
- Selected GSTR 110 Sections were assigned a "Student Success Team" comprised of:
 - Faculty – GSTR 110 Instructor and Academic Adviser
 - Staff Mentor – Orientation Facilitator and Lab Instructor
 - Peer Leader – Attend both Lab & GSTR 110, provide out of class support, present engagement opportunities, activities

(Hrabowski, 2005)

Orientation Activities & Contacts

Orientation Week

Student Cohorts met with their Student Success Team 4-5 times during the week-long orientation period with opportunities for discussion, community building and activities.

- Dinner and meetings with Student Success Team
 - Fears, Anxieties, Expectations, Unique Contribution
- Group Program Processing
- Discovering Berea Tour
 - Diversity – Sustainability – Service – Appalachia



ACES Course Descriptions



Principle Course

Instructed by the
Academic Adviser

3-4 Hours

- Writing
- Critical Thinking
- Research
- Reasoning
- Discipline Topic



Goals & Objectives

- Skills & Abilities
- Foundations
- Engagement
- Discovery
- Relationships
- Community
- Campus Perspective



ACES Lab

Instructed by the Staff
Mentor & Peer Leader

1 Hour

- Self-Management
- Personal Responsibility
- Self-Awareness
- Time Management &
Goal Setting
- College Skills

Assessment of our Pilot

Some Preliminary Results

General comments regarding the ACES Program:

ACES Students...

- “I loved being a part of ACES! I hope you continue to offer it to New Students! ”
- “ACES has surprisingly helped me. It has been beneficial in many personal skills that I lacked. It helped tremendously.”
- “Having my GSTR110 professor be my advisor has been priceless. It has helped immensely.”
- “I love ACES. It has helped me to be more confident, motivated, and focused. I had a hard time entering college. I couldn't tell my friends no. Now I prioritize my schedule and it definitely reduced my stress. Every freshman should have this experience!”
- “Amazing :) ”

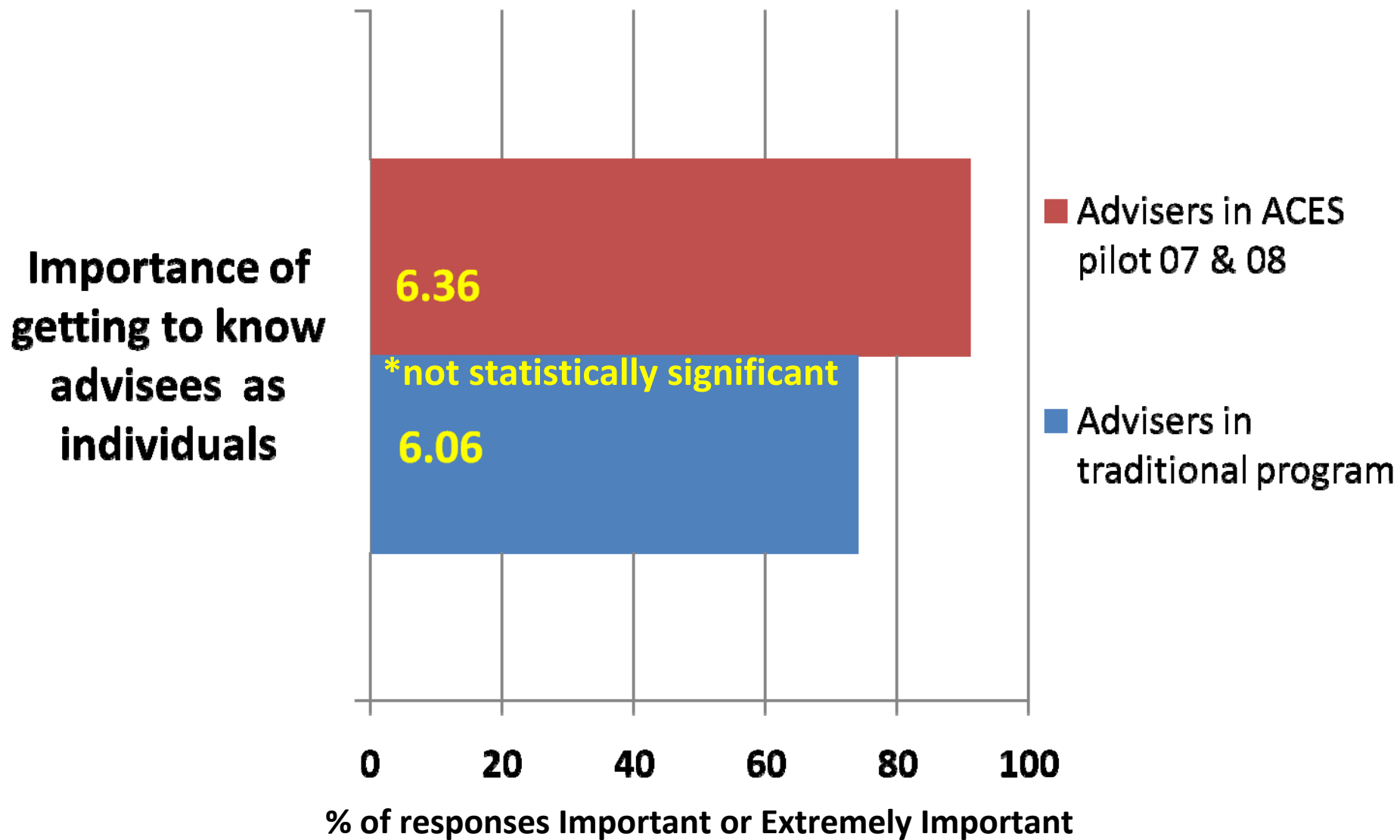
Student Outcomes

Academic Indicators of Student Success	1 st Generation Students ACES	1 st Generation Students Non-ACES
Midterm Course Grade	3.03	2.76
Final Course Grade	3.11	2.88
Overall GPA	2.81	2.63
Deans List	34.7%	24.8%

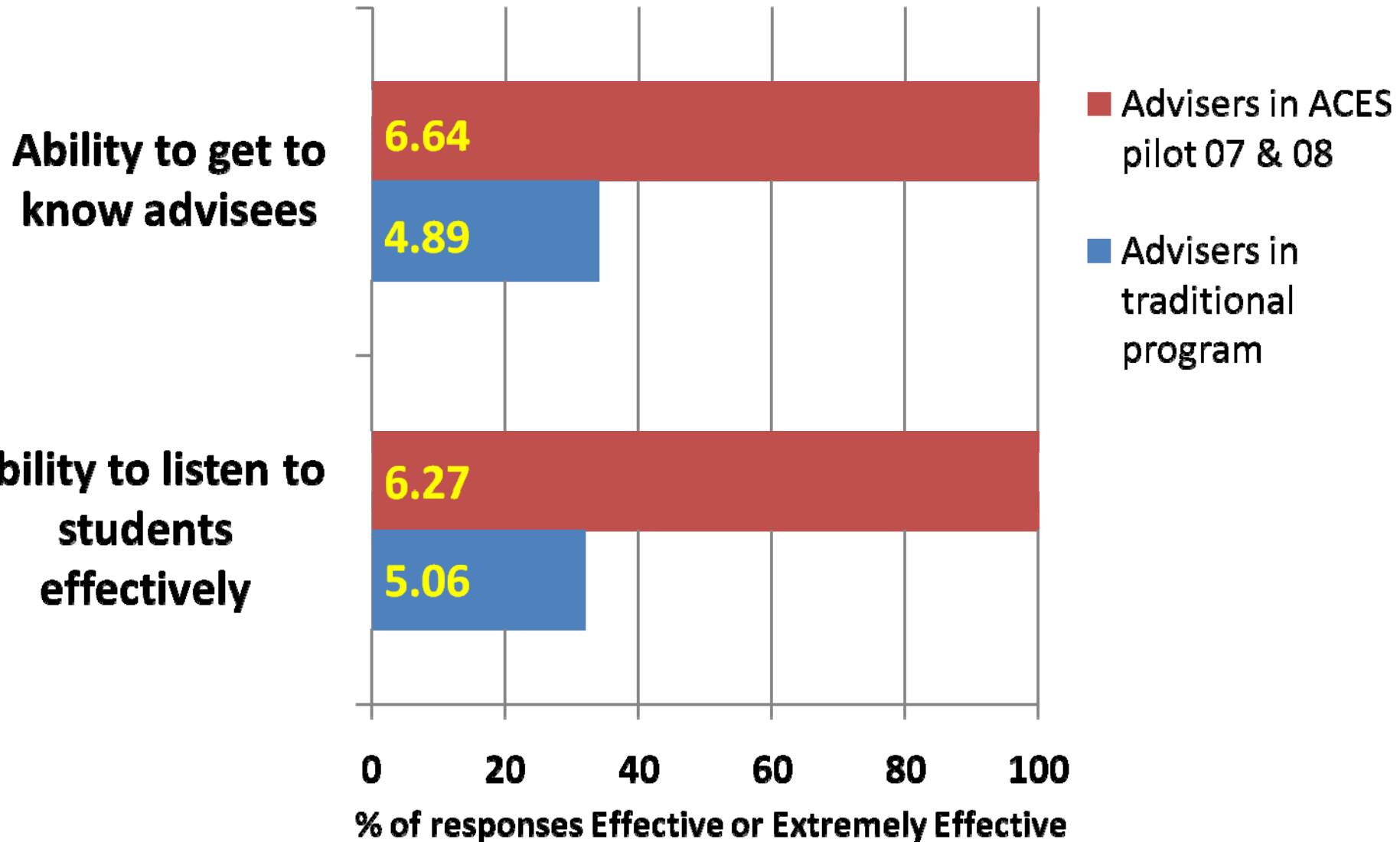
Faculty Survey of First-Year Student Advising

Comparing Traditional Advising Model
&
ACES Advising Model

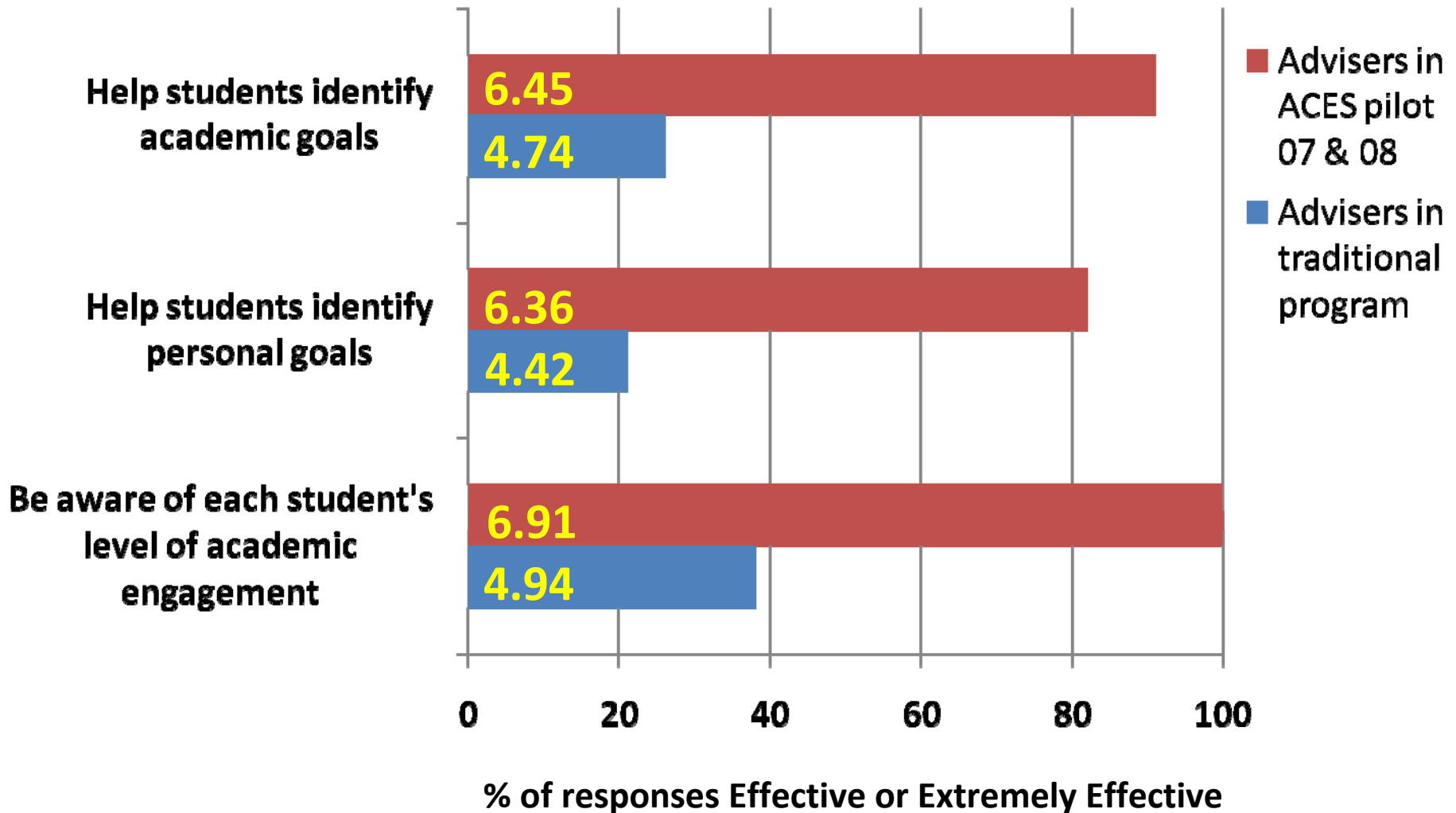
Importance of getting to know advisees



Understanding and Communication



Ability to encourage students to take responsibility for defining goals



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Carolyn Newton

Academic Vice-President/ Provost
carolyn_newton@berea.edu
859-985-3000

Christopher Lakes

Coordinator of the First- Year Experience
Co-Chair, First Year Initiatives Planning Team
chris_lakes@berea.edu
859-985-3371

Robert Smith

Assistant Professor, Psychology
Co-Chair, First Year Initiatives Planning Team
robert_smith@berea.edu
859-985-3330