

Cuyahoga Community College

*Student Success
Simulation*

June 2016

The Problem

State funding rules for community colleges in Ohio have recently changed. Previously, a large portion of state funding was granted based on number of students enrolled in the college. Now, that portion has shifted, and funding is based on (among many other factors) **student success outcomes**.

For many community colleges, achieving the new funding goals would require drastically increasing the number of students graduating in 3 years.

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The Goal

For Tri-C, as for many others, success previously meant focusing on enrollment. Now they were facing a massive shift in their culture of practice, one that needed to be reoriented to graduating more students faster.

Given current practices, within the next year Tri-C could expect that only **10%** of their students would graduate in 3 years.

We set a new goal:

Graduate **25%** of your students in 3 years.

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The Simulation

We built an immersive simulation exercise in which participants (counselors, advisors, deans, and faculty) played the roles of “counseling staff” and “students”.

“Students” (played by participants) would present problems to the counselors to solve. They would also submit complaints about what they thought could be improved in the college.

“Counselors” formed success teams, and had to balance their time between between three elements:

1. Seeing scheduled students and performing basic counseling and advising tasks.
2. Performing outreach to “at risk” students to bring them in for counseling and advising.
3. Creating “innovations” – creative methods to use existing resources at the school to service more students and help them accelerate their path to graduation.

The Simulation

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How to Win

Solving student needs would only help them maintain current graduation levels.

Outreaching to at risk students would help them “move the needle” better, but only somewhat.

However, creating unique and impactful innovations helped significantly increase the graduation rate.

Innovations were written up by the staff and submitted to a panel for review. The innovations had to be justified and debated. Impacts and resources had to be calculated and the innovations were scored. This acted as a kind of high pressure “think tank” for generating creative, impactful, practical ideas, where the best innovations rose to the top and moved the rate toward the goal.

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How did they do?

There were 3 Sessions. In each session the teams started over from scratch and had eight 15-minute periods to reach the goal.

In Session 1, they didn't realize the impact of the innovations, and saw their job of "seeing students" as an impediment to creating innovations.

By Session 3, they were able to streamline resources on the team to do more outreach, create more innovations with higher impacts.

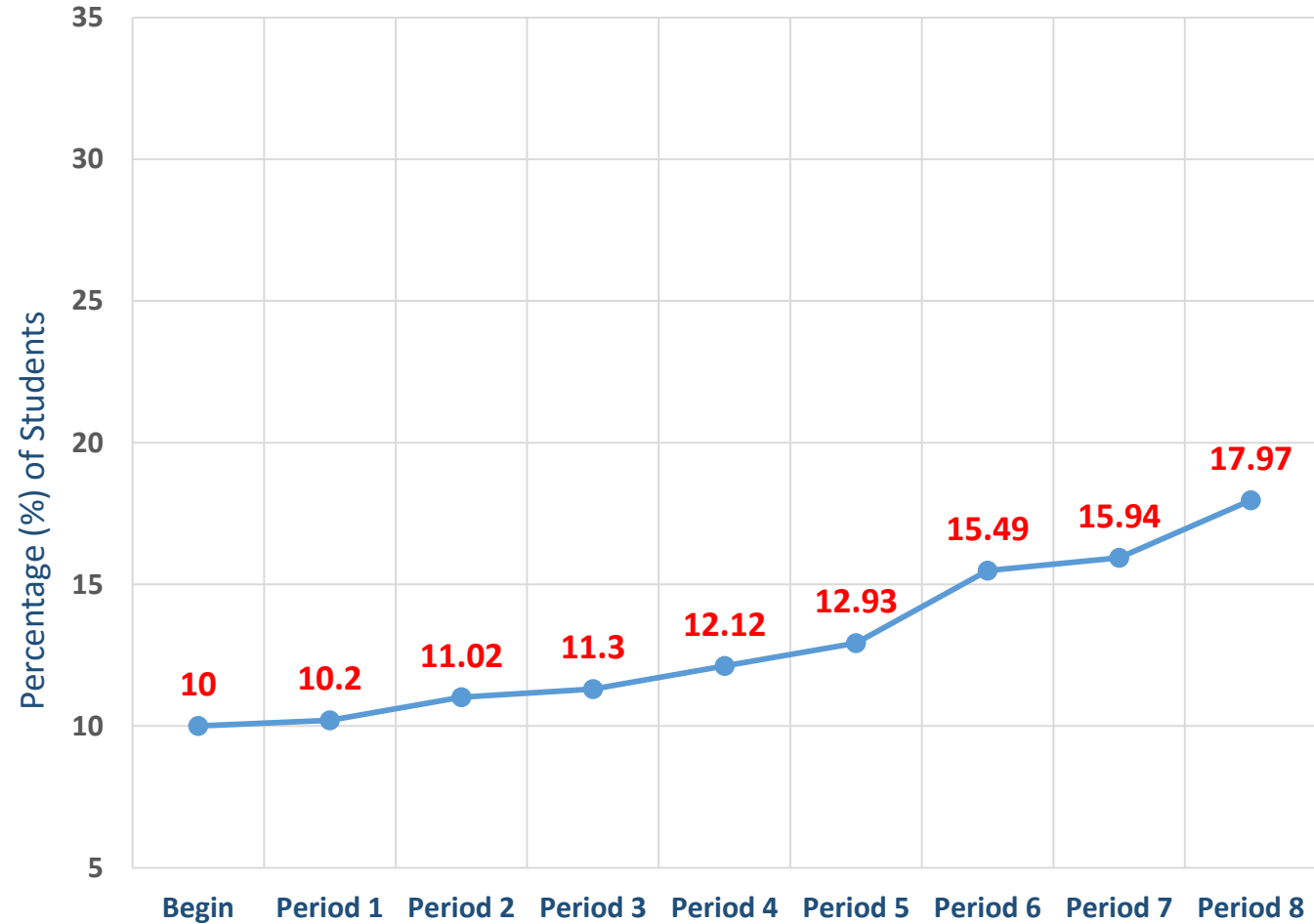
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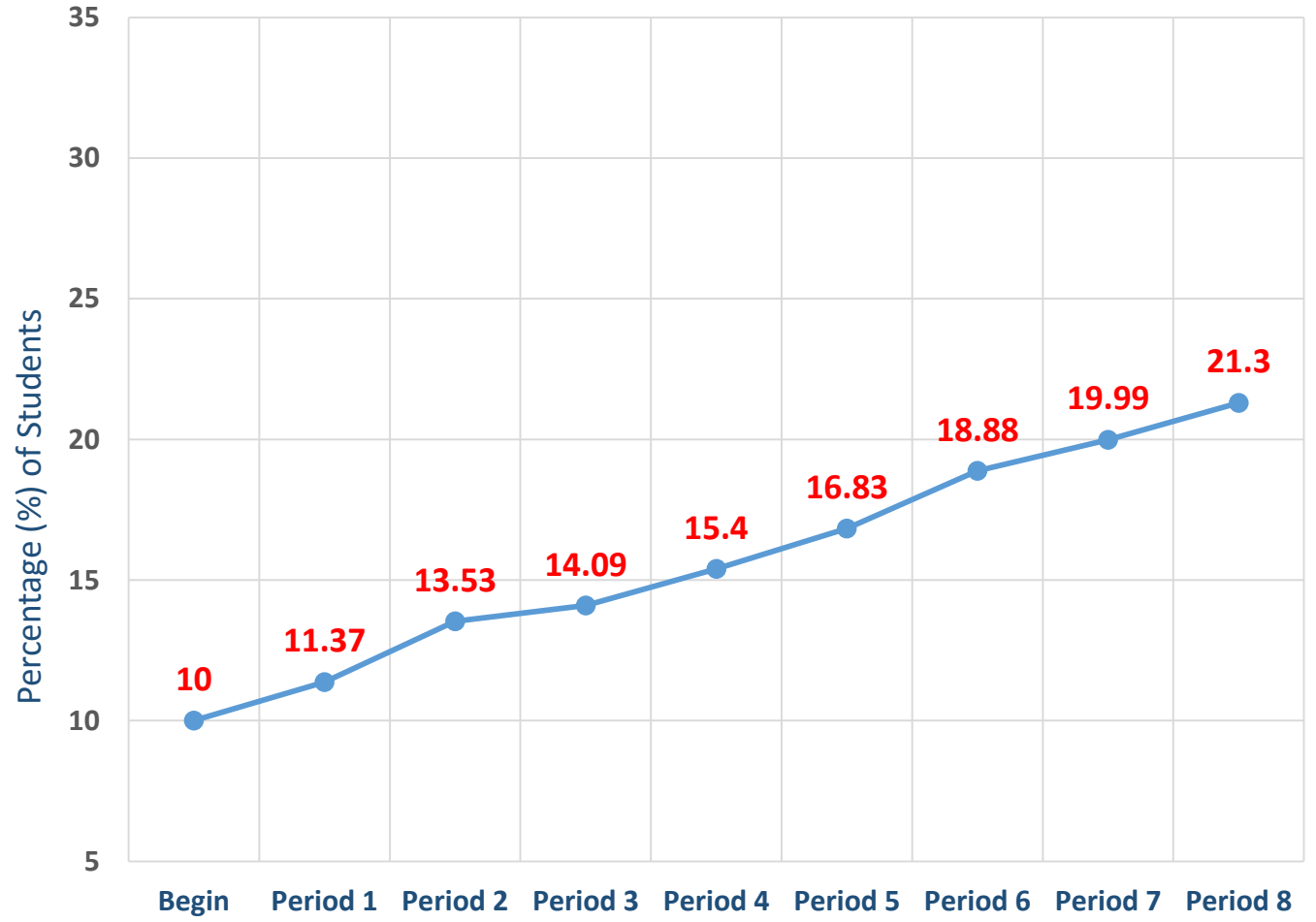
Team's Performance **Session 1**

Projected Percentage (%) Graduate in 3 Years



Team's Performance **Session 2**

Projected Percentage (%) Graduate in 3 Years



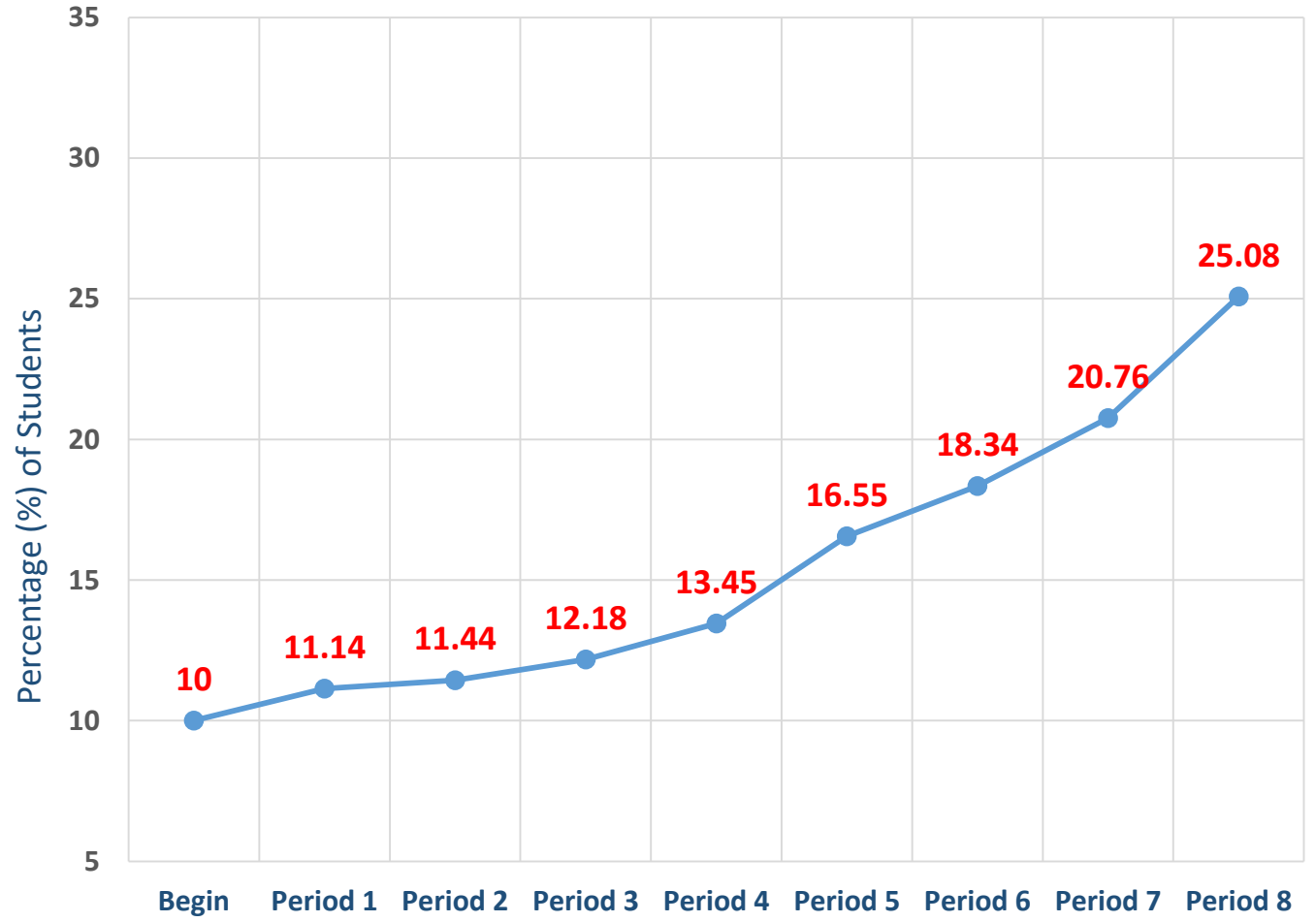
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Team's Performance **Session 3**

Projected Percentage (%) Graduate in 3 Years



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Session One

11 Innovations

increased the graduation rate by **5.9%**

4 Outreach Sessions

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Session Two

18 Innovations

increased the graduation rate by **8.9%**

10 Outreach Sessions

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Session Three

17 Innovations

increased the graduation rate by **9.4%**

19 Outreach Sessions

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What was the outcome?

It is hard to describe the impact of the simulation developed for us by WTRI. As a large community college we have a lot to offer our students. What we needed was a way to streamline our processes to make them more student-focused and to shift our culture from one of access (take a class) to one of access and completion (get a certificate or degree).

Our challenge was to increase student graduation rates. Team members participating in the simulation had the opportunity to play the roles of both students and counselors. After the first two sessions participants were actively requesting additional on the spot training!

As a result of the simulation we now have an enthusiastic cohort advocating the use of new software tools and methods for student outreach. Working in the simulation accelerated the realization of the need for change and training. Two of the innovations developed during the simulation have already been approved for College-wide implementation.

In a word AMAZING!

T. Pope Ph.D. Campus President, Cuyahoga Community College

