



Pathways

PATHWAYS COACHING GUIDE

PLANNING

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

Leadership for Large-Scale Institutional Change

The leadership and vision provided by the CEO and the institution's governing board establishes essential foundations for the transformational change of guided pathways reform. Added to that, the institution must build leadership throughout the organization; faculty and staff leaders are needed to develop plans for implementing the pillars of the pathways model, and their leadership continues to be important as the plans are put into practice. The CEO and executive team must allocate resources to support the change process, evaluate progress, and provide the professional development necessary for faculty and staff to operate in the newly structured organization.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can the college build a distributed leadership structure that encourages active leadership from all levels of the organization (faculty leadership, advisor leadership, staff leadership, administrative leadership)?
- ▶ What is the role of the local governing board in guided pathways reform?
- ▶ How can the leadership team most effectively make the case for pathways reform to all of the internal and external stakeholder groups?
- ▶ What strategies can coaches share with college leaders to help them create the culture and climate needed to implement guided pathways at scale?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES



- 💬 Leadership is essential at the top of the institution, but cannot rest there; there must be distributed leadership throughout the college. ★ *Darla Cooper*
- 💬 From the start, coaches have to frame guided pathways as transformational work. It is comprehensive. It is at scale. It is the thing, not a thing. Coaches should push successful leaders to settle this fact early on for their trustees, stakeholders and students. Done properly, it doesn't result in an improved institution; rather, it results in a new institution. ★ *Ed Bowling*
- 💬 It all begins and (we hope) never ends here. Branding and marketing are a place to start planning. The governing board and CEO should communicate clearly and continuously that guided pathways (or whatever brand a college chooses) is the sole focus and work for improving student outcomes. Guided pathways reform is not the next shiny object or one among a dozen initiatives. Guided pathways reform is the overarching strategy for what should be a singular overarching goal for students.

College leaders should be relentless in presenting a unified, focused message, with all student success work subsumed under one brand and one overarching goal.

★ *John Nixon*



- In order for guided pathways to be introduced effectively throughout the college, the administration must lead with a collaborative vision. The administration then must integrate pathway discussions into the agenda of all college committees, strategic planning, and professional development opportunities. It is also imperative that administrators step out of their comfort zone and utilize assistance from faculty and staff within the institution. ★ *Michael Poindexter*
- In order to address any initiative successfully, it is vital to identify the change model that will guide the work and then to infuse change strategies across the institution. No matter what change model leaders decide to use, they need to create a sense of urgency and to ground ALL stakeholders in how challenging transformative change can be. The change required in implementing guided pathways is systemic and long-term. Given that, it is even more important to celebrate process “wins” as well as outcomes “wins.” The academic community must understand the need for change and the reason leaders are asking them to invest in this work. ★ *Donna Dare*
- The leadership for scaling guided pathways often falls on the shoulders of a small group of committed leaders. These champions are critical to getting the work started, but they can only carry the torch alone for so long. What I have found most exciting is when unexpected leaders also emerge and have a voice in the transformational change process. All of these leaders, expected and unexpected, need support to help balance the intensity of the work and the risk of feeling overwhelmed. ★ *Laura Rittner*

Print Resources

-  [Learning Module: Defining Qualities of Transformational Leadership \(Aspen Institute College Excellence Program\)](#)
-  [Learning Module: Leading Internal Transformational Change \(Aspen Institute College Excellence Program\)](#)

Video

View videos associated with:

-  [Strong change leadership throughout the institution](#)
-  [Reallocating resources as needed](#)

Faculty and Staff Engagement

Faculty and staff engagement is not an event. It is an ongoing, intentional process. No longer can leaders simply talk about getting the “buy-in” from stakeholders as they make changes to the institution; rather, authentic engagement will build understanding—and then hopefully, ownership and commitment. Faculty and staff engagement in guided pathways reform should start early, occur often, and evolve over time as the work progresses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How is the college defining stakeholder engagement as part of this work? Is the vision for engagement comprehensive and systematic?
- ▶ What can the coach do to help a college develop a continuing, authentic engagement plan that includes internal and external stakeholder groups?
- ▶ How can the coach help college leaders listen as much as they talk about the vision for guided pathways implementation?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 The chance to change an institution is a rare opportunity. Coaches can help faculty and staff see the transformational impact of guided pathways and their unique role in making it happen. Framing the work that way produces a sense of ownership beyond the immediate tasks. ★ *Ed Bowling*
- 💬 It's not possible or required to engage everyone at same level at the same time. Colleges need to have an engagement plan, aligned with the guided pathways implementation plan, whereby appropriate people are engaged at the appropriate time and place. ★ *Darla Cooper*
- 💬 Strongly support the 20% who are early adopters. Over-communicate with the 60% in the middle. And never give up on the 20% who are the resisters. ★ *Donna Dare*
- 💬 Sometimes you have to slow down to move fast. Taking the time to engage the campus community, including faculty and staff, is critical to making the case for change. Process the data in large group meetings to show why the change is necessary. Leverage existing forums and campus meetings to continue the engagement dialogue. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- 💬 Communicating the vision and creating a sense of urgency for change is definitely the first step; but from that point, it's important to make sure the pathways work doesn't come out of the gate feeling like just another new initiative. One way to address this is to conduct a review of the committee structure and the charges for existing committees before creating any new committees to support pathways implementation. Many committees could benefit from a refresh and an updated charge. In addition, progress on scaling guided pathways should become a standing agenda item for every meeting, including the governing board, cabinet, committees, and department meetings. ★ *Laura Rittner*

Print Resources

- [Pathways Engagement 101: A Handbook](#) (American Association of Community Colleges and SOVA)
- [Engaging Adjunct And Full-Time Faculty In Student Success Innovation](#) (Achieving the Dream and Public Agenda)
- [Engagement for Pathways Implementation: Basic Concepts and Practices](#) (SOVA)
Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.
- [Internal Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Toolkit](#) (Public Agenda for Completion by Design)
- [Engaging Faculty During Student Pathways Implementation](#) (Public Agenda for Completion by Design)

Video

View videos associated with:

- [Faculty and staff engagement](#)
- [Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change](#)

Commitment and Capacity for Using Data

Colleges need to use both quantitative and qualitative data to make the case for guided pathways reform. It is not enough to know what the data are; part of the planning and case making process for guided pathways is digging deep, asking why the data are what they are—and discussing what action steps can most powerfully change the current picture. Quantitative data must be disaggregated by student demographics, including income, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status, so that the outcomes of those students are transparent.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can colleges create the time and space to explore key student success data?
- ▶ How can the college create urgency for guided pathways reforms by focusing on disaggregated data and supporting discussions about equity?
- ▶ How can colleges effectively make the point that equity gaps are the result of systemic issues and not the fault of students?
- ▶ How can coaches emphasize the importance of the CCRC/AACC early momentum metrics to establish baseline data for guided pathways reforms?

OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- Colleges should use quantitative and qualitative data to make the case for change. Key points include the percentage of students who start the 9th grade in high-poverty high schools, and what percentage complete college in 10 years. These data make the case that this is about social justice, not just bean counting. Quotes from students in surveys and focus groups can be equally motivating. ★ *Kathleen Cleary*
- Sometimes the commitment and the capacity for using data don't go hand in hand. Some colleges have large and well-established institutional research departments that are still primarily focused on compliance and routine reporting. In other cases, the pathways work has been made a priority while institutional research capacity is minimal. What I hear most from IR leads is that they want to be at the table to understand the research and data questions and to bring data into the discussion at the moment it is needed. Finding the IR leader on campus who has the time and skill set to play this role may require some restructuring of the IR function in terms of both capacity and focus. ★ *Laura Rittner*
- The journey begins with data. If the overarching goal is 20K (completers) by 2020, one begins with today's data. Completion is a lagging indicator, and the more important data for pursuing the work are leading indicators. Maintaining a concise set of pertinent data tied to the appropriate leading indicators is key. ★ *John Nixon*
- Coaches can help colleges build equity gaps into the sense of urgency and purpose from the beginning. Begin by looking at disaggregated program data and use that to help define equity gaps and goals, along with overall student success goals.
★ *Diane Troyer*

Video

View videos associated with:

- ▶ [Commitment to using data](#)
- ▶ [Capacity to use data](#)

Technology Infrastructure

There will be a point in the change process when purchasing technology to create efficiencies in the implementation will be desirable. However, it is critical to recognize that technology purchased without *first* redesigning the student experience and the back-office business processes that must support that experience will not create efficiencies for students or staff. Rather, premature technology decisions will potentially waste both staff time and institutional money. Further, many colleges find that existing technology, when “turned on” or appropriately upgraded, can handle well the needs for supporting pathways.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ What advice should be provided to colleges about the business process redesign that needs to precede technology purchases?
- ▶ What can be done to help colleges focus on the student experience as technology is evaluated, purchased, and implemented? How can coaches steer colleges away from technology decisions that prioritize efficiencies for the institution over efficiencies for students?
- ▶ Based on designs for the student experience and related business processes, how can colleges determine their existing technology gaps?


🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 For colleges: Figure out what you want the technology to do and how you will implement it before you buy it. Homegrown technology has the advantage of being custom fit to your business processes, but it may not stretch you. Externally developed tools can be a mess to implement, but will force you to examine your processes through the lens of, “Are we doing this to make our jobs easier or to help students succeed?” ★ *Kathleen Cleary*
- 💬 Colleges should (1) identify (from students) what students want in their college experience; (2) review the student’s college life cycle; and then (3) identify what the college wants from a particular technology. A review of students’ actual college life cycle is important in vetting technology vendors’ assurances that their products will mirror that life cycle. New technology should be vetted and beta tested throughout the college to assure that it will be used as intended. It is always a good rule of thumb to visit other colleges that are using the technology that a college is interested in purchasing. ★ *Michael Poindexter*

- Many of the colleges are struggling with the integration of technology that has already been purchased as well as trying to maximize the potential benefits of student information systems and the plethora of supposedly complementary tools. Some colleges have decided to slow down or even pause investment in new technology, at least during the planning phase of the pathways work. During this planning time, mapping the available and required technology along with the student experience flowcharting can be very enlightening. Often students are asked to interface with too many different systems, and they don't necessarily understand the value of each.



★ *Laura Rittner*

Print Resources

-  [Key Considerations for Choosing Technology Solutions to Support Guided Pathways: A Guide for Colleges \(Pathways Partners\)](#)

Video

View videos associated with:

-  [Technology infrastructure](#)
-  [Revamping technology to support the redesigned student experience](#)

Professional Development

Roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff will change as guided pathways are implemented at scale. That shift in roles may understandably cause anxiety across the organization, particularly if not addressed transparently by the college's leadership. Meaningful, ongoing professional development is a necessary investment throughout the implementation process. Faculty and staff need to see how they fit in the new environment and to develop the knowledge and skills requisite to their own success as well as the success of their students.





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can coaches help colleges analyze their existing professional development activities and structures to identify gaps and future needs?
- ▶ What are examples of ongoing professional development structures for guided pathways that include all parts of the organization, including student services staff and adjuncts?
- ▶ What can be done to leverage existing professional development activities to communicate progress and advance the work of guided pathways implementation?
- ▶ How do effective coaches conduct the difficult conversations with the colleges about what they are going to *stop doing* as this works moves forward?

OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- For colleges: Support your student success work by providing professional development for your team. Go back to basics and work on stellar customer service to create a welcoming and safe environment for students. Provide sensitivity training like Bridges Out of Poverty or a poverty simulation so your team better understands the under-resourced student. Bring in speakers and/or faculty from other institutions so guided pathways is not merely a top-down initiative but involves learning from others out there doing the work. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- Sensitizing the whole organization to the pathways initiative becomes an important first step in professional development. Using the same terminology throughout, holding town hall meetings to inform, educate and hopefully excite folks about the possibilities is the first step. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*
- Professional development is the most critical need in implementing guided pathways. But it has to be principle-based, strategic, and supportive of both the overall mission of the college and the specific goals related to guided pathways. ★ *Donna Dare*

Print Resources

-  [San Jacinto College \(TX\): Pathways Education](#)
-  [San Jacinto College \(TX\): Discussion Questions](#)
-  [San Jacinto College \(TX\): Participant Feedback Form](#)
-  [Jackson College \(MI\) Commitment to Student Success](#)

Video

View videos associated with:

-  [Professional development](#)
-  [Identifying needs for professional development and technical assistance](#)




Policy to Support Pathways

Policy for pathways comes in two forms: institutional policy and state policy/regulations. Institutions should examine policies and practices within their own organization, through the lens of the student experience. When policies and practices emerge as barriers to student persistence and completion, there needs to be a process in place for revising or removing those policies and practices. State policy and advocacy work, particularly in regard to transfer and economic development, should be framed through the guided pathways model when possible. Ideally, the aim of policy at the board and state level is to *create the conditions* within which the work of designing and implementing guided pathways at scale can be accomplished, with fidelity and with quality, at scale.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


- ▶ How should institutions approach the task of identifying institutional policies and practices that create barriers to student persistence and completion?
- ▶ Once the barriers are identified, how can coaches help colleges prioritize what needs to be changed and discern what the new policies and procedures should look like?
- ▶ What particular policies might the coach recommend that all institutions should examine in order to support pathways implementation and sustainability?
- ▶ Has the structure of the institution changed through the pathways work? Have roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff been revised? Are there plans for future structural changes? Through what process can a college identify potential needs for policy change in light of these changes in the ways the college will work?

Print Resources

-  [Policy Meets Pathways: A State Policy Agenda For Transformational Change \(JFF\)](#)
-  [Guided Pathways State Policy Assessment \(JFF\)](#)
-  [Institutional Policies to Support Guided Pathways: Self-Assessment for Governing Boards \(American Association of Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream\)](#)

Video

View videos associated with:

-  [Favorable policy \(state, system, and institutional levels\) and board support](#)

Commitment to Student Success and Equity

The goal of producing equitable outcomes across all student groups—particularly students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students—is fundamental in guided pathways work. The equity goal is central in case making for transformational change and is a driving value that informs every decision about design and implementation of pathways for students.

To have equity at the core of the work, it certainly is necessary for the people of the institution to recognize and be able to openly discuss data depicting gaps in student access, persistence, and completion. Once those data are on the table, institutional leaders at all levels must be willing to lead the sometimes tough work of identifying and addressing the ways that institutional policy and practice, as well as individual human beings—even when working hard and with good intentions—may perpetuate disproportionate outcomes rather than eradicating unacceptable social and economic divides.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ What kind of professional development might the individual coach seek in order to develop further the necessary skill set for helping colleges deal with issues involving disproportionate student outcomes, unconscious bias, and institutional racism?
- ▶ How can coaches reinforce for colleges the necessary discipline of routine student cohort tracking, with data disaggregated to reveal gaps that may exist across student groups—as well as progress in closing those gaps?
- ▶ How can coaches most effectively help colleges identify and address equity gaps in student outcomes? Where are the equity disparities greatest in the data? How can the college target those areas in the context of their overall reform effort?
- ▶ Beyond examination of the data, what strategies may be employed to help a college dig deeper, to understand *why* the data are what they are, and to embrace responsibility for institutional policy and practice that may contribute to persistent inequities?
- ▶ To what extent do the demographics of the faculty and leadership of the college reflect the demographics of the students to be served? How would an effective coach help the college address disparities?
- ▶ What resources might coaches recommend to colleges engaged in this important work?
- ▶ What kinds of professional development—for faculty, advisors, front-line staff, administrative leaders, and others—might the coach recommend to help the college strengthen culturally responsive teaching, address unconscious bias in interactions with students, and the like?

OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES


- For colleges: Be courageous in disaggregating your data to ensure that all students are succeeding and completing at similar rates. Understand what programs your under-resourced and minority students are pursuing. Are they in high-wage fields where their degrees will provide them a living wage? Boldly share the data with your campus community so everyone is aware where attention is needed and where progress is achieved. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- Begin with disaggregated program enrollment data, and examine the highest and lowest wage-producing programs. How can the college alter stereotypical enrollment patterns? How does equity drive the college's work to support informed student choice in meta-major and program decisions? What professional development and rethinking of advising does that require? ★ *Diane Troyer*
- For colleges: Every single strategy and every single data point should be viewed through an equity lens. No matter how much we are committed to student success and equity, it is never enough. As you review all data points, be sure to disaggregate data by gender, race, and ethnicity to determine where there are significant gaps in performance. Plan strategies and professional development to address those gaps. ★ *Donna Dare*
- The commitment to student success and equity has to be a goal that colleges are willing to bring forth for college-wide discussions. These discussions will be aimed at clearing up any misunderstandings about the importance and potential of all students being successful both in and outside the classroom, while promoting a stronger institutional and individual commitment to student success, equity, and economic mobility. ★ *Michael Poindexter*

Print Resources

-  [The Economic Value of College Majors](#) (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce)
-  [Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege](#) (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce)

Video

View videos associated with:

-  [Commitment to student success and equity](#)

PLANNING

PREPARATION/AWARENESS

Making the Case for Change

Every college embarking on guided pathways reform should articulate a clear, concise statement that conveys a sense of urgency about why the institution is taking on this large-scale transformational change. The statement should be compelling and should be used in discussions with both internal and external stakeholder groups.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ What is the succinct answer to the pervasive (and legitimate) question: Why pathways?
- ▶ Guided pathways reform requires colleges to fundamentally redesign students' educational experiences. What can coaches offer as advice about how to prioritize and sequence that work?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 A case for change is evident in the number of students who are stopping out, failing, and enrolled indefinitely at our colleges. Recently, two California higher education institutions, a community college and a university, analyzed their combined data. The objective of their data analysis was to measure how long it would take a student who started at a community college in lower-level developmental education courses to complete a Bachelor's degree. Both institutions were amazed and alarmed that the outcome of the analysis indicated that it could take up to 10-12 years for a student to complete a Bachelor's degree. ★ *Michael Poindexter*
- 💬 Let the data and the student voice make the case for change. This work is life changing for our students, and every data point is an individual dream. Tell the student story and the impact education has on their lives. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- 💬 Developing the case statement for bringing guided pathways to scale is a really critical exercise and it's not something that should be completed at the beginning and then set aside. The case making work goes on for many years as additional stakeholders are engaged on campus. Having a clear vision also ensures the work will weather turnover and changes in leadership. After the case statement and vision are developed, a strategic, multi-year communications plan is well worth the investment of staff time and resources. ★ *Laura Rittner*
- 💬 For colleges: Effectively communicating the reasons you are doing what you are doing is more important than the how when you are making the case. Use data to educate as a starting point. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*

- Beginning with the Board and CEO, and citing data, the case for change should be the message that sets guided pathways as the singular focus for college planning and action. All grants, initiatives, and strategic planning should be subsumed by the guided pathways work. Data validate the case, but college leaders have to sell it via a vis continuous, focused messaging and actions (often financial) backing up the words.

★ *John Nixon*

Print Resources

- [The Movement Toward Pathways](#) (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)
- [Template for Creating an Institutional Case Statement for Guided Pathways at Scale](#) (American Association of Community Colleges)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

Establishing a Baseline for KPIs

The guided pathways Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were developed by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) to define short-term student “momentum” measures that have been correlated with student completion. These KPIs are now used in state-based guided pathways initiatives across the country in states including California, Texas, Ohio, Michigan, Washington, New York and Connecticut. The indicators are:

- ▶ Number of college credits earned in students’ first term
- ▶ Number of college credits earned in students’ first year
- ▶ Completion of college-level math and English courses in students’ first year
- ▶ Number of college credits earned in students’ programs of study in the first year
- ▶ Persistence rate from term 1 to term 2
- ▶ Rate of college-level course completion in students’ first academic year

To monitor progress toward equity in student progress and outcomes, all of these data should be routinely disaggregated by student race, ethnicity, gender, and (if possible) economic status.


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can coaches help colleges explore their student data in a productive way? What are the challenges involved in exploring uncomfortable data with college teams?
- ▶ What are some strategies for using the data to make the case for change at the institution?
- ▶ How can coaches help colleges communicate the data effectively with their stakeholder groups to create a sense of urgency for large-scale reform?

OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- ...[E]stablishing baselines, assessing actions that impact outcomes, and settling on target goals for each measure can help the college see that there is ‘silver buckshot’ for improving student success. ★ *Ed Bowling*

Print Resources

-  [Key Performance Indicator \(KPI\) Reporting Template](#) (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)
Note: Click the link and a .xlsx file will automatically download.

Using the Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment

The Scale of Adoption Assessment (SOAA) was developed by CCRC to support qualitative monitoring of a college’s progress toward the implementation of guided pathways at scale. Colleges should use the instrument to assess progress in relation to their own baseline; it is not designed to make comparisons across institutions. The SOAA is intended to help colleges to identify their implementation gaps, their strengths, and their weaknesses and then to develop an action plan to bring essential pathways practices to scale for all students. [Note: the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has developed an online version of the SOAA and will make it available for colleges to use in their self-assessment of institutional readiness for guided pathways reforms. When available, the online instrument may be accessed through the online Pathways Resource Center at www.pathwaysresources.org]. Experience indicates that optimal use of the SOAA involves expert third-party facilitation of work to refine and discuss institutional results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


- ▶ Based on findings from the Scale of Adoption Assessment, how might coaches help colleges to identify strengths and gaps in their existing work?
- ▶ Once those are identified, how might coaches help colleges turn the gaps into a set of priorities with actionable next steps?
- ▶ How might coaches help the colleges prioritize and stage implementation, knowing it’s not a linear process and that they cannot take everything on at once?

OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- Recommendation to colleges: Do this work with a group of personnel in diverse roles. Be as honest as you can be; question assumptions and be prepared to explain your assessment. Create a safe environment for people to respectfully express their concerns or doubts. Be careful of groupthink and of succumbing to the tedious nature of the task assessing your progress. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*

- Some colleges automatically assume they are being judged by the answers they share on the Scale of Adoption Assessment. They tend to think, or at least hope others think, that they are further along than they really are. Diffuse the perception that an honest self-assessment—warts and all—will reflect badly on the college. Reinforce the notion that the SOAA a beneficial tool if used effectively. Encourage the college to deploy it broadly and assess the areas where there are wide disparities in perceptions about institutional capability. An important component of successful pathways work is the institutional discussions around policies, processes and practices. This tool can help kick-start those discussions. ★ *Ed Bowling*
- One of the most important tools in the college’s arsenal of information on guided pathways is the Scale of Adoption Assessment. An analysis of this tool in conjunction with a careful analysis of the pathways KPIs can provide a clear road map for how to develop strategies for implementing guided pathways. The key to success in using the Scale of Adoption Assessment is to use a strong evidence-based approach to institutional analysis. As college personnel consider the developing maturity of the four pillars of guided pathways for their own institution, they should always base the analysis on the changes in evidence that validate the assessment. ★ *Donna Dare*
- For colleges: Don’t be afraid to call out your strengths or weaknesses. You will be a leader in some areas and a follower in others. Avoid the trap of assuming that because your college gets a lot of attention for its excellent work, that you don’t have a lot of areas that need attention. The sign of a great college is one that will call out its weakest areas and make a public commitment to changing outcomes.
★ *Kathleen Cleary*
- The process of completing the Scale of Adoption Assessment is a great way to engage a larger team and increase comfort with the pathways framework. It also pushes teams and leaders to think about what they mean by scale and what it takes to bring practices to scale for all students. It would be a huge missed opportunity for a small group of administrators to complete the SOAA without consulting a broader group of faculty and staff. ★ *Laura Rittner*
- For colleges: Leveraging the Scale of Adoption Assessment will provide the framework for implementing guided pathways and your student success plan. Being thoughtful and processing the questions and framework will help you better understand your system and what is needed for improvement. It is the blueprint for what you are doing and where you need to go. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*

Print Resources

 [Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment](#) (Community College Research Center)

Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

Building Partnerships: K-12, Universities, Employers

Ideally, guided pathways will not exist in isolation within the community college. Pathways are most robust when students enter into broad programs of study in high school as part of a career exploration process and then continue through the community college either to a transfer institution with junior standing in a major or into a career with value in the labor market. Colleges need to maintain strong partnerships with high schools, transfer institutions, and employers so that students can move efficiently and seamlessly through a cross-sector pathway and obtain credentials that lead to living wage careers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can coaches help colleges critically examine their existing partnerships with K–12 systems, universities, and employers through a guided pathways lens?
- ▶ What steps can coaches take to help colleges avoid cross-sector finger pointing—and instead focus on strengthening those connections for the benefit of students?
- ▶ What are the implications of transfer policies and practices for pathways implementation?
- ▶ What are examples of strategies for colleges as they work to strengthen transfer relationships with their partner baccalaureate institutions?
- ▶ What are examples of strategies for colleges as they work to develop relationships with employers that go beyond traditional advisory councils?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 For colleges: Assess where you stand now. How strong are those relationships? Identify opportunities that create win-wins for all partners in the work. Build on your strengths and work together to bolster areas of weakness. Identify champions who are passionate, and you can work with to strengthen the pipeline. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*
- 💬 It is imperative that colleges expand their reach into K-12, universities, and the workforce. Administrators, staff, and faculty often are hungry for engagement, not only with each other, but also with other college departments, educational institutions, and employers—all with the intention to help students be successful. ★ *Michael Poindexter*
- 💬 For colleges: Try to map out milestones from Pre-K to universities and employment. What is required for kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading milestones, math in junior high, college prep, college and career readiness, etc.? Aim for a public commitment to sharing these data among all partners and set aside at least one day a year to review data relative to your goals as a community. ★ *Kathleen Cleary*
- 💬 For colleges: Share your mission, vision and priorities with your partners and involve them in your student success work. Build pathways from high school dual enrollment to the bachelor's degree. Start with the end in mind in building programs; identify what your employers need, and let them be a partner in the work. ★ *Stephanie Sutton*

- Beginning with the end in mind, colleges should start with assessment of viable careers and how those careers articulate with university degrees, both steps leading to backward program mapping at the community college. In addition, colleges should work with K-12 to put students on paths through dual enrollment. ★ *John Nixon*

Print Resources

- [📄 The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges](#) (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and Community College Research Center)
- [📄 The Transfer Playbook: Tool for Assessing Progress toward Adoption of Essential Transfer Practices for Community Colleges](#) (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and Community College Research Center)
- [📄 Template for Measuring Your College's Effectiveness in Serving Transfer Students](#) (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and Community College Research Center)

Video

View videos associated with:

- 🎥 [Building partnerships with K–12, universities, and employers](#)

Flowcharting the Student Experience

Colleges have developed complex processes for students that cause them to interact with multiple people and offices at the institution as part of the intake, advising and registration process. These processes are often not transparent to students and may result in students receiving different information from different sources. Equally frustrating, they often have to return to campus multiple times to complete the intake process. Once colleges have mapped and analyzed the current processes, the college team should develop an ideal process for students and ways to make the process streamlined and transparent for both students and staff.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When examining the college's student experience flowcharts, coaches will ask colleges to consider the following:

- ▶ How many steps does it take for the typical student to progress from the point of contact to first day of class? Is the process reasonable and easy?
- ▶ Are the steps for continued enrollment (into second and subsequent academic terms) clearly communicated to students? What are the mechanisms for communication? Can any of the steps be eliminated?

- ▶ What is missing from the process (both entering and continuing) that would help ensure that students are informed and aware about what they need to do next?
- ▶ Do faculty and staff fully understand the intake process, and do they provide students consistent answers to questions about onboarding and enrollment? How do they know?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 This is one of the most valuable ways coaching can engage college personnel—helping groups engage in the development of student flow (and auditing existing flows to identify unintended barriers). ★ *Diane Troyer*
- 💬 Flowcharting the student experience will provide a visual diagram and elucidate the complicated maze of steps colleges require students to complete to start courses. Each should ask: Would you be able to navigate your process with ease?
★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- 💬 Colleges need to know what the actual student experience is, not the process the college thinks it has developed. They need to understand nuances, pitfalls, and springboards within the student journey. ★ *Darla Cooper*
- 💬 Having a college president or other members of executive leadership “walk through” the process is one of the most eye-opening experiences for colleges. What does it really take to get from being a prospective student to actually being enrolled in a program and sitting in a classroom? Identify every barrier that provides an excuse for a student to walk away, give up, or go somewhere else. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*
- 💬 As we research our processes on how students apply to and enter our colleges, it has been found that the applications at some institutions are over-complicated. Data also reveal that a number of students do not complete the intake process simply because it is too much for them to handle. So it is imperative that we have a system that students flow through, as we are tracking each action step and providing multiple communications. It is through these multiple communications that we ensure that the student is connected not only to the institution but also with a live person.
★ *Michael Poindexter*

Print Resources

- 📄 [Exercise: Flowcharting the Student Experience](#) (American Association of Community Colleges)
- 📄 [Program Path on St. Petersburg College \(FL\) Website](#) (St. Petersburg College)

Developing an Implementation Plan

The college needs to pick a point in time when the newly designed program maps for guided pathways will be available for all newly entering students. Once that implementation date is established, a comprehensive work plan should be developed, including short-term deliverables, project milestones, timelines, and responsible parties. From this overall implementation plan, smaller action plans with deliverables and timelines can be created to prioritize the work and include a widely inclusive set of stakeholders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ We are asking colleges to fundamentally redesign students' educational experiences. What can coaches offer as advice about how to plan, prioritize and sequence that work?
- ▶ How might coaches help college leverage student success/completion work already underway at the institution?
- ▶ How can coaches help colleges develop a long-term implementation plan that includes shorter-term deliverables and milestones?

🗨️ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

- 💬 When smart people with great ideas gather to discuss a strategy, it's not uncommon for them to bubble up ideas without filling in the details. Good coaches nudge the team to add specificity to an action: Who will be in charge of that part? Are there committees that have to approve the action? When do those committees meet? Are there milestones that mark progress, and what's the target date for that deliverable? Those guiding questions help the team develop an action PLAN. Help them be realistic about their target dates, but also make sure they build in some quick wins to generate energy. ★ *Ed Bowling*
- 💬 Because guided pathways is a long-term change process, institutions must be able to set manageable and realistic short-term goals that can be realized and celebrated. Without an understanding of the importance of both process and outcomes goals, it will be difficult develop an effective implementation plan. Thus, it is really important to have a coach and/or a project manager who is able to think systemically—i.e., in ways that enable the institution to set long-term goals that can be achieved in a multi-step process. ★ *Donna Dare*
- 💬 For colleges: Culture trumps strategy, so make sure you plan for how you will create the culture change before you launch the implementation plan. Get broad input—this will take time, but it is important that faculty and staff have a genuine opportunity to help build the plan. Faculty and advisor “buy-in” is a myth. Faculty and advisor “builds” will stand the test of time. If they create it, they will implement it. ★ *Kathleen Cleary*

- 🗨 Developing the vision for what new students will experience at some point in the future (e.g. the fall semester in two years' time) really helps the teams to focus and feel like the work is more manageable. Even so, one of the challenges seems to be the sequencing of the work and helping implementation leads understand that it's not a linear process. Phasing in some of the practices prior to the target date and/or launching in the summer term with fewer students can be very helpful.
★ *Laura Rittner*
- 🗨 For colleges: Start to chart your action plan, identifying initiatives you want to undertake. Be intentional on what the goal and intended outcome for each initiative should be. Don't keep your implementation plan a secret; rather, broadly share the plan with the campus community. Be patient and understand that changing the culture takes time but results will come. Take the time to celebrate the early wins!
★ *Stephanie Sutton*
- 🗨 The guided pathways implementation plan is the plan for a college. It cannot be one of a dozen plans. Clearly, colleges are responsible for different plans and reports—for grants, state initiatives, and so forth. However, all of the plans attendant to other initiatives should be back facing to most college constituents. The guided pathways plan should be the front-facing plan. ★ *John Nixon*
- 🗨 Sometimes a person or a group may find it easy to develop a plan in a vacuum. Unfortunately, you are asking for trouble, and the plan will not have the bandwidth to spread throughout the college. The best way to create a plan is by bringing a selected representative group of people together. This group will be the conduit for relaying information back to different constituent committees and groups throughout the college. ★ *Michael Poindexter*

Print Resources

- 📎 [Mapping Action Plan Template](#) (American Association of Community Colleges)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.
- 📎 [Workplan Template](#) (American Association of Community Colleges)
Note: Click the link and a .xlsm file will automatically download.

PLANNING

SUSTAINABILITY

Determining Barriers to Sustainability

Guided pathways implementation touches all parts of the organization. College leadership will need to plan for sustainability from the onset of the work and then refine sustainability plans as components of the model are put into practice. An essential part of successful implementation is a continuous improvement structure that addresses institutional barriers as they arise.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can coaches help colleges understand that the work really is just beginning when they roll out version 1.0 of pathways?
- ▶ What internal-to-the-college feedback loops can the coach suggest institutions implement to improve their pathways over time?
- ▶ What student feedback mechanisms can the coach suggest colleges implement to include student voices and student reactions to the changes, so that pathways can be optimized over time?
- ▶ How can colleges celebrate early wins after pathways roll out in version 1.0?
- ▶ How do colleges transition from the energy required to roll out version 1.0 of pathways to sustaining the level of inquiry and effort needed to improve pathways over time?

Video

View videos associated with:

- ▶ [Determining barriers to sustainability \(state, system, and institutional levels\)](#)

Reallocating Resources

There are very few places in the country where colleges receive new funding to implement guided pathways. In most cases, colleges are reorganizing around the guided pathways framework at a time of increasingly limited resources and declining enrollments. College leaders have to be transparent with their stakeholders about how fiscal and human resources will need to be reallocated to support the implementation process and sustain the new way of operating.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ How can colleges ensure that their resource allocation processes and structures align with the goals of guided pathways?
- ▶ How can coaches help colleges think about reallocating human resources (job positions and people who fill them) to support the newly designed student experience?
- ▶ How can coaches help colleges apply a return-on-investment mentality to potential guided pathways costs?

Video

View videos associated with:

- ▶ [Redefining the roles of faculty, staff, and administrators as needed](#)
- ▶ [Reallocating resources as needed](#)


Integrating Pathways into Hiring and Evaluation Practices

At any college, the most important assets are the people who work at the institution on behalf of students. Ideally, college leadership will set forth the vision for what it will be like to work at the newly restructured institution, indicating how roles, relationships, and expectations may need to be reshaped to support effective pathways for students. Then the hiring and evaluation processes for all faculty, administrators, and staff should be aligned to that vision.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


- ▶ How might colleges adjust hiring practices to support guided pathways reforms?
- ▶ How can colleges ensure that their business and human resources offices support guided pathways reforms?
- ▶ How can colleges build their evaluation processes to provide incentives and rewards for the positive impact of faculty and staff on guided pathways transformations?

Print Resources

 [Jackson College \(MI\) Commitment to Student Success](#)

Video

View videos associated with:

 [Integrating pathways into hiring and evaluation practices](#)

Additional Pathways Resources

A larger collection of selected resources for the work of planning and implementing guided pathways is provided in the online Pathways Resource Center at www.pathwaysresources.org. There the user may click on the graphic model of pathways work to find additional information.

View Full Pathways Model Why Pathways? Toolkits Pathways Collaborative

GUIDED PATHWAYS RESOURCE CENTER

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR COLLEGES

Bringing **guided pathways** to scale involves substantial redesign of students' educational experience and touches every aspect of college operations. The **guided pathways model** introduced below describes the critical steps colleges take as they do this challenging, complex work.

This resource center is organized around the guided pathways model. Click any section — **planning**, **implementation**, **early outcomes**, or **evaluation** — to see details of the model and to find relevant tools and resources. Or visit **toolkits** for collections of materials on key topics.

PLANNING

IMPLEMENTATION

EARLY
OUTCOMES

EVALUATION

Why Guided Pathways?

View or download the full guided pathways model

Toolkits

Pathways Institutes

Engagement Toolkit

Tools for Leaders

Pathways Coaching Guide

PATHWAYS COLLABORATIVE

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