PATHWAYS COACHING GUIDE

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This *Pathways Coaching Guide* is intended as a resource for organizations that provide training and professional development for coaches who may be engaged to serve colleges involved in the work of planning and implementing guided pathways *at scale*—for all of their students. At the same time, it also serves as a resource for individuals—both current and prospective pathways coaches—who wish to explore and learn on their own.

The *Guide* reflects the assumption that people who are or wish to be pathways coaches for colleges are seasoned professionals, typically with extensive experience in institutional settings and/or in consulting roles. While respecting users' experience, the *Coaching Guide* also respects their time, providing succinct, practical information in summary form while also including links to a rich collection of resource materials available through the online Pathways Resource Center (www.pathwaysresources.org). In addition, references are made to the potential need for additional professional development in key coaching functions, depending on the experience and existing skill set of each individual.

The *Pathways Coaching Guide* begins with an overview of "The Pathways Model," using a description originally developed by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The accompanying graphic, depicting essential practices in guided pathways work, is the consensus product of a group of ten national organizations that are deeply engaged in pathways work across the United States: AACC, CCRC, Achieving the Dream, Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, Complete College America, Jobs for the Future, NCII, and SOVA.

A section on "Guidelines for Effective Coaching" briefly presents principles of practice that apply generally to organizational and leadership coaching but are stated in terms specific to the task of assisting colleges in their work on guided pathways reforms.

What follows then is the central content of the *Guide,* a section entitled, "Aligning Coaching with the Pathways Model." A series of subsections closely follows the pathways graphic, which also is the organizing framework for the online Pathways Resource Center. For each topic addressed, the user typically will find the following resources: a brief introductory narrative; discussion questions for coach training/development; observations and advice from experienced pathways coaches; and selected resources and tools related to the topic (print and video).

It is important to note that the online presentation of these materials affords the opportunity to refresh, update, add and delete guidance and resource materials over time.

How to Use This Guide

To progress through the *Pathways Coaching Guide* "from cover to cover," including exploration of linked print and video resources would require an impressive and unusual commitment of time. A more practical approach is to review the introductory sections and then to use the main section, "Aligning Coaching with the Pathways Model," as a flexible resource when addressing particular aspects of work on guided pathways. Provided for each major topic are materials and tools useful in **designing coach training and professional development**, **creating presentations or handouts** for various settings, **structuring on-campus or institute-based coaching sessions**, and so on.

Acknowledgments

The work of designing and implementing guided pathways for students has become a movement, extending across an expanding number of community colleges and universities. Supporting that work is a collection of national organizations that are working collaboratively— sharing experience, intellectual capital, and a wide range of resources aimed at promoting institutional change efforts. For contributions to this *Coaching Guide,* and to the online Pathways Resource Center (www.pathwaysresources.org), acknowledgment and gratitude are particularly due to these organizations:

What is the Pathways Model?

The Pathways Model is an *integrated*, *institution-wide* approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market. The approach involves large-scale institutional change, and the twin goals are dramatically increased **college completion and equity** in outcomes for diverse students.

Central to the pathways model are clear, educationally coherent program maps—including specific course sequences, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes—that are aligned to what will be expected of students upon program completion in the workforce and in education at the next level in a given field. Students are helped from the start to explore academic and career options, choose a program of study, and develop a full-program plan based on the program maps. These plans simplify student decision-making, and they enable colleges to provide predictable schedules, frequent feedback, and targeted support as needed to help students stay on track and complete their programs more efficiently. They also facilitate efforts by faculty to ensure that students are building the skills across their programs that they will need to succeed in employment and further education.

Guided Pathways Essential Practices

The four dimensions of the Pathways Model, together with essential practices under each, are the following (see also the graphic depiction below):

CLARIFY PATHS TO STUDENT END GOALS

▶ Simplify students' choices with default **program maps** developed by faculty and advisors that show students a clear pathway to completion, further education and employment in fields of importance to the region.

▶ Establish **transfer pathways** through alignment of pathway courses and expected learning outcomes with transfer institutions, to optimize applicability of community college credits to university majors.

HELP STUDENTS CHOOSE AND ENTER A PATHWAY

▶ Bridge **K–12 to higher education** by assuring early remediation in the final year of high school through the application of courseware technology in strong K12/higher education partnerships.

▶ Redesign traditional remediation as an **"on-ramp" to a program of study**, which helps students explore academic and career options from the beginning of their college experience, aligns math and other foundation skills coursework with a student's program of study, and integrates and contextualizes instruction to build academic and non-academic foundation skills throughout the college-level curriculum, particularly in program "gateway" courses.

▶ Provide **accelerated remediation** to help the least prepared students succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible.

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON PATH

▶ Support students through a strong **advising** process, embedded and ongoing in the pathway experience and supported by appropriate technology, to help students make informed choices, strengthen clarity about transfer and career opportunities at the end of their chosen college path, ensure they develop an academic plan with predictable schedules, monitor their progress, and intervene when they go off track.

▶ Embed **academic and non-academic supports** throughout students' programs to promote student learning and persistence.

ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

▶ Establish program-level **learning outcomes** aligned with the requirements for success in employment and further education in a given field and apply the results of learning outcomes assessment to improve the effectiveness of instruction across programs.

▶ Integrate **group projects, internships, and other applied learning experiences** to enhance instruction and student success in courses across programs of study.

▶ Align pathways with **co-curricular experiences** appropriate to the program.

▶ Ensure incorporation of **effective teaching practice** throughout the pathways.

Essential Capacities for Guided Pathways Reforms

Research and experience in the field indicate that the following capacities are essential for motivating and supporting higher education institutions and systems to undertake the broad-scale institutional reforms involved in implementing guided pathways effectively and at scale.

▶ **Leadership** demonstrating skills for managing and sustaining large-scale transformational change.

▶ Broad and authentic **engagement** of college faculty and staff—particularly advisors—in the design, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement of pathways for students.

▶ **Institutional will and capacity to use data and evidence** to design academic and career pathways, monitor student progress, and implement needed improvements over time.

▶ **Technological tools and infrastructure** appropriate to support student progress through guided pathways.

▶ Commitment to the level of **strategically targeted professional development** that will be required to design and implement pathways at scale.

▶ **Policy conditions** established at the state, governing board, system, and institutional level that provide incentives, structures and supports for pathway design and implementation at scale, while removing barriers.

▶ A **continuing action research agenda** that examines the efficacy of guided pathways and develops practical knowledge and tools to support effective implementation at scale.

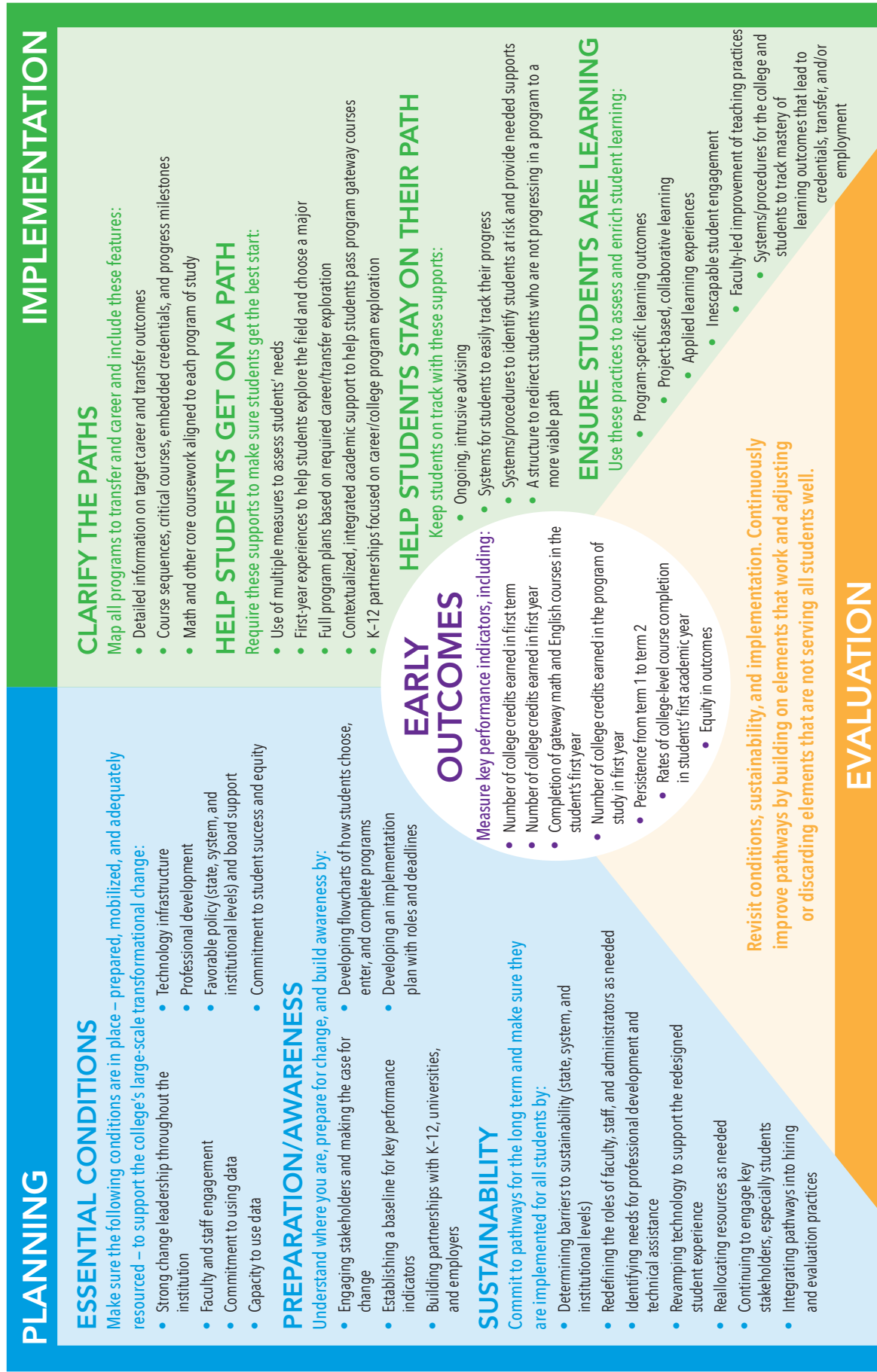## Print Resources

⧉ <u>What Is the Pathways Model?</u> (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)

⧉ <u>The Movement Toward Pathways</u> (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)

⧉ <u>*Redesigning America's Community Colleges*</u> (Community College Research Center)

⧉ <u>The Pathways Model</u>

Pathways

Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

Creating guided pathways requires managing and sustaining large-scale transformational change. The work begins with thorough planning, continues through consistent implementation, and depends on ongoing evaluation. **The goals are to improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market — and to achieve equity in those outcomes.**

PLANNING

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

Make sure the following conditions are in place – prepared, mobilized, and adequately resourced – to support the college's large-scale transformational change:

- Strong change leadership throughout the institution
- Faculty and staff engagement
- Commitment to using data
- Capacity to use data
- Technology infrastructure
- Professional development
- Favorable policy (state, system, and institutional levels) and board support
- Commitment to student success and equity

PREPARATION/AWARENESS

Understand where you are, prepare for change, and build awareness by:

- Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change
- Establishing a baseline for key performance indicators
- Building partnerships with K-12, universities, and employers
- Developing flowcharts of how students choose, enter, and complete programs
- Developing an implementation plan with roles and deadlines

SUSTAINABILITY

Commit to pathways for the long term and make sure they are implemented for all students by:

- Determining barriers to sustainability (state, system, and institutional levels)
- Redefining the roles of faculty, staff, and administrators as needed
- Identifying needs for professional development and technical assistance
- Revamping technology to support the redesigned student experience
- Reallocating resources as needed
- Continuing to engage key stakeholders, especially students
- Integrating pathways into hiring and evaluation practices

IMPLEMENTATION

CLARIFY THE PATHS

Map all programs to transfer and career and include these features:

- Detailed information on target career and transfer outcomes
- Course sequences, critical courses, embedded credentials, and progress milestones
- Math and other core coursework aligned to each program of study

HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH

Require these supports to make sure students get the best start:

- Use of multiple measures to assess students' needs
- First-year experiences to help students explore the field and choose a major
- Full program plans based on required career/transfer exploration
- Contextualized, integrated academic support to help students pass program gateway courses
- K-12 partnerships focused on career/college program exploration

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATH

Keep students on track with these supports:

- Ongoing, intrusive advising
- Systems for students to easily track their progress
- Systems/procedures to identify students at risk and provide needed supports
- A structure to redirect students who are not progressing in a program to a more viable path

ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

Use these practices to assess and enrich student learning:

- Program-specific learning outcomes
- Project-based, collaborative learning
- Applied learning experiences
- Inescapable student engagement
- Faculty-led improvement of teaching practices
- Systems/procedures for the college and students to track mastery of learning outcomes that lead to credentials, transfer, and/or employment

EARLY OUTCOMES

Measure key performance indicators, including:

- Number of college credits earned in first term
- Number of college credits earned in first year
- Completion of gateway math and English courses in the student's first year
- Number of college credits earned in the program of study in first year
- Persistence from term 1 to term 2
- Rates of college-level course completion in students' first academic year
- Equity in outcomes

EVALUATION

Revisit conditions, sustainability, and implementation. Continuously improve pathways by building on elements that work and adjusting or discarding elements that are not serving all students well.

The Pathways Coaching Role: What It Is, What It Is Not

The pathways coach serves as a credible, trustworthy, and supportive resource for the colleges with which she/he works. The coach asks probing questions, challenges assumptions, facilitates discussions, questions the *status quo*, helps the college attain clarity, offers substantive knowledge, provides resources (such as references, links, college examples, referrals), celebrates progress, and occasionally, when appropriate, provides guidance or advice.

On the other hand, the pathways coach is not a consultant, not an expert on every topic, not a therapist, and not ever to be confused with the college CEO. The coach refrains from attempting to set the college's agenda, specify the college's priorities, or solve the college's problems, opting instead to help the people of the college do those things for themselves.

Guidelines

The following guidelines for effective coaching are experience-based and intentionally succinct. Additional guidance and resources are provided in subsequent sections of this *Coaching Guide*.

DO THE APPROPRIATE HOMEWORK.

Prior to initial meetings with college leaders and others, review key print and digital materials: the institution's strategic plan, website, catalogue, and documents describing both foundational and advanced work on guided pathways. Continue review of pertinent materials throughout the coaching engagement.

BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS.

Time spent with key individuals and small groups in the college pays important dividends in terms of earned trust and strong relationships. Building informal time into coaching engagements—as well as occasional unstructured conversations—is helpful, as are efforts to explicitly acknowledge the college's work, achievements, and challenges. Confidential communications will always remain confidential, even as the coach encourages openness and candor.

LISTEN AND OBSERVE ACTIVELY.

Effective coaching typically involves more listening than talking.

Astute listening and observation can produce insights for the coach regarding college culture, as well as about particular factors that may strongly affect approaches to and

progress on large-scale institutional change: role definitions, communication and leadership styles, competing priorities, decision-making processes, relationships, and so on. Thoughtful and timely reflection of these insights, delivered with care and in the appropriate setting, may help college personnel recognize aspects of their culture and their organizational behavior and processes that have not always been made explicit.

ASK STRONG QUESTIONS.

Central to effective coaching is the art of asking good questions—that is, questions that produce information important to the coach's understanding of the college, and also questions that help to illuminate (for the coach *and* for the client) college values, achievements, challenges, policies, processes, strategic decisions, and operational choices. Worth noting is that "why" questions often communicate an implied critique, so coaches will be aware of the difference in tone, for example, between "Why would you do that?" and "Please elaborate on your thinking in regard to that decision."

REQUEST, REVIEW, AND REFER TO DATA ABOUT STUDENT PROGRESS, OUTCOMES, AND EQUITY.

In particular, pathways coaches will strongly encourage colleges to collect, disseminate, and discuss key performance indicators that reflect early momentum of students in guided pathways. KPIs typically should include the following:

- ▶ Number of college credits earned in students' first term
- ▶ Number of college credits earned in students' first year
- ▶ Completion of college-level gateway 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 will be routinely disaggregated by student race, ethnicity, gender, and (if possible) economic status. Further, colleges should track each entering first-time-in-college student cohort through these early momentum points and then on to completion (or not) of certificates, degrees, and transfer. Ultimately, the efficacy of guided pathways also will be reflected through strengthened tracking of post-transfer and post-graduation outcomes in transfer institutions and in the labor market.

Coaches will seize the opportunity to model good questions and observations about the data— to understand data definitions and denominators, to commend clear and uncluttered data presentations, to encourage use of short, plain-English explanations of data, and so on. Often coaches will also model facilitation of data discussions, beginning with structured questions about what the data say and progressing to questions about "what else do we need to know?" and "so what?" and "what now?"

HELP THE COLLEGE AFFIRM, CELEBRATE, AND BUILD ON PRIOR WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

Guided pathways reform involves institution-wide change and thus extensive work by many people within the college. The tasks of embarking and progressing on that work benefit greatly from frequent messages about the college's prior work, achievements gained in terms of improved student success and equity, and the ways such work can serve as building blocks for the next level of improvement effort. An important step in planning for pathways is in fact to ask cross-functional college groups to map their previous and current initiatives in terms of the pathways model—that is, appropriately categorizing work that helps the college to (1) CLARIFY THE PATHS, (2) HELP STUDENTS CHOOSE AND ENTER A PATH, (3) HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATHS, and (4) ENSURE LEARNING through the pathways. Thus can committed people see both the fruits of their labor and also how disparate initiatives might be integrated into a clearer and more coherent educational experience for the college's students.

PROMOTE CAMPUS-WIDE ENGAGEMENT.

There can be no substitute for broad, authentic engagement of the college's constituent groups, first in informational and case-making discussions about guided pathways, and then in sessions wherein the work of designing and implementing pathways actually gets done. Good intentions notwithstanding, effective engagement does not happen by itself, but must be intentional and systematic. Further, engagement is not an event, but a continuing and multi-faceted process, and the topical focus will evolve as the work proceeds. The pathways coach can provide valuable assistance in prompting development and frequent updating of an explicit engagement plan.

FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS.

Prospective pathways coaches typically will bring considerable experience in facilitation of discussions and will bear in mind key techniques for these tasks: making clear the purpose of the discussion and the desired outcomes (information sharing? input on a decision? setting an agenda? solving a problem? developing a proposal? planning an event? making a final decision? etc.); ensuring that all voices are heard and welcomed; keeping discussions on task, on topic, and on time; summarizing the discussion clearly and succinctly; helping the group identify conclusions, decisions, and next steps; and managing emotion and conflict in ways that preserve civility and personal dignity while encouraging openness and candor. These are learned skills, honed through observation and practice; and training/professional development opportunities are available from a variety of sources.

SUPPORT DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS.

A special kind of facilitation involves the difficult discussions that almost inevitably will need to occur when a college takes on the work of large-scale institutional change—change that involves questioning long-held assumptions, beliefs, and practices; potential shifts in role definitions and daily work; perceived threats to cherished traditions, jobs, teaching load, position power, and/or territory; and so on. The experience of colleges that have worked through these conversations suggests the need to expect a certain amount of genuine and understandable *grief* as people see that they must let go of past practice in order to emerge better and stronger and ever more student-centered. The grieving process should be recognized, respected, and supported.

Pointedly, most colleges will need also to consider head-on both unacceptably poor student outcomes across the board and the persistent equity gaps that separate groups of students by race, ethnicity, income level, and first-generation status. Helping colleges to identify disproportionate outcomes for certain student groups and then to address potential causes—including unconscious bias and institutional racism—is a central challenge for coaches.

These conversations are critical and not to be under-estimated or taken on without serious thought and a respectful, non-judgmental approach. Coaches without extensive experience may well wish to seek expert assistance, mentoring, role-playing opportunities, and additional training.

PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CHANGE LEADERSHIP.

This explicitly includes leadership at all levels of the college organization—governing boards, CEOs and their leadership groups, mid-level administrators, faculty, and staff. In each instance, current and prospective leaders will need to understand critical roles that they can play in promoting transformational change with students at the center. Across the institution, leaders will need to be equipped with strategies and tools for key tasks: describing the pathways approach; making the case for large-scale change and creating a sense of urgency; developing systematic plans for continuing and authentic campus-wide engagement in pathways planning and implementation; constructive uses of data depicting the student experience; resource allocation and reallocation aligned with the pathways work; policy review and modification; and effective communication regarding the work, how people can be involved, the timeline, who makes what decisions, and what is being accomplished.

LIFT UP STUDENT VOICES.

The work of designing and implementing guided pathways is, above all, about *students.* It is about ensuring effective, efficient, and coherent educational experiences for *students.* It is not about us (the college, the faculty, the advisors, the administrators, the coach). To keep students at the center of the work requires that colleges listen *systematically* to students. That is to say, while there may be value in having student representatives on work groups or committees, the greater value is in work that helps faculty, staff and administrators gain understanding of the *typical* student experience, as contrasted with *one* student's experience or *the best* student experience. Thus, the pathways coach will encourage the college to elicit students' perspectives on their experience through well-designed surveys and focus groups.

REMEMBER ALWAYS WHO IS THE COLLEGE CEO.

No one other than that individual understands so intimately the expectations of the governing board and/or system leader, the political pressures of the job, the competing priorities for limited attention and resources, the array of disparate challenges that need to be addressed. An effective coach can serve as a sounding board, help to clarify options and priorities, encourage focus, provide examples, and aid in delineating the path forward; but it is the CEO who was appointed to the leadership position and who is accountable for decisions made and actions taken. That position warrants respect and support.

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 perseverate 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 Intergeneration Reproduction of White Racial Privilege (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce)

Video

View videos associated with:

▶ Commitment to student success and equity

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 vis 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?

> 💬 …[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 main 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

📑 <u>Exercise: Flowcharting the Student Experience</u> (American Association of Community Colleges)

📑 <u>Program Path on St. Petersburg College</u> (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

📑 <u>Mapping Action Plan Template</u> (American Association of Community Colleges)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

📑 <u>Workplan Template</u> (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

IMPLEMENTATION

CLARIFY THE PATHS

Mapping all Programs of Study

The program mapping process, central to the implementation of guided pathways at scale, involves creating a coherent sequence of courses that a student will move through to complete a program. Maps will indicate term-by-term course schedules, and faculty will ensure that course-level student learning outcomes are clear and aligned through the sequence, accruing ultimately to program-level learning outcomes.

Colleges should be encouraged to begin their guided pathways journey with the program mapping process, **starting with the end in mind**, whether that is direct employment following completion of a credential or transfer with junior level standing in the major. Colleges should establish mapping teams with a timeline for completion of maps, inclusive of an internal review process before the maps are finalized.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

▶ To learn from colleges that have undertaken program mapping, ask this question: What do you know now that you wish you had known when you launched this work?

▶ As a pathways coach, what would be your advice to a college that has mapped all of its programs through the efforts of a small working group but without broad faculty engagement? Concretely, how might a coach recommend the college organize broad engagement in the work?

▶ What specific kinds of roadblocks and resistance should colleges expect as they undertake and progress through this mapping work? What proactive steps can they take to address those issues?

▶ Once programs are mapped, how can coaches effectively guide colleges to the next-level work on fleshing out pathways (choosing the right math, recommending core curriculum courses and electives, integrating discipline-appropriate academic supports, etc.)?

✑ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

💬 Reinforce the importance of building clear articulation with the college's 3-4 best transfer partners and then aligning the mapping to that articulation. Yes, there are multiple transfer institutions, but most colleges will find that 75-80% of their transfers go to the four institutions. Make sure that the college gets the biggest possible impact with the efforts they dedicate to mapping. ★ *Ed Bowling*

💬 One potentially unanticipated challenge in engaging faculty in mapping programs of study is recognizing that faculty members typically are more course-focused than program-focused…It is important to put program-level data and outcomes in front of faculty routinely and ask them to identify ways to streamline delivery of programs for both full-and part-time students. Even giving credence to the reality that students do not always do what is prescribed for them, faculty need to become more engaged with how to think more broadly than THEIR course(s) and THEIR discipline(s). One method of approaching the program mapping process is to do a retrospective look at how courses have actually been delivered over the past several years. What courses were cancelled due to low enrollment or other reasons? What courses were never scheduled? Where are the gaps between what students need to complete a program and what was actually delivered? If there are discrepancies between the program requirements and program delivery, it is a good place to begin looking at the program of study and addressing its requirements first. Once that step has been accomplished, there is a clearer path to discussing alternatives for how the program should be delivered for both full- and part-time students. Do not make the assumption that just because a course is in a program of study that it has been delivered in a consistent manner that supports completion. ★ *Donna Dare*

Print Resources

📑 <u>Mapping Action Plan Template</u> (American Association of Community Colleges)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

📑 <u>Transfer and Employment Program Mapping Template from AACC Institute 5</u>
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

📑 <u>Program Map from Broward College</u> (FL)

📑 <u>Program Map from Cleveland State Community College (TN)</u>

📑 <u>Program Map from Lorain County Community College (OH)</u>

📑 <u>Program Map from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (WI)</u>

📑 <u>Program Map from Pierce College District (WA)</u>

Video

View videos associated with:

▶ <u>Course sequences, critical courses, embedded credentials, and progress milestones</u>

HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH

Required Supports to Ensure Students Get the Best Start

Pathways colleges will need to redesign the intake process for students, connecting them early to career exploration and related programs of study. The goals are to help students get connected to a chosen program of study as soon as possible and to ensure that every student has a full program plan by the end of the first academic term. There has been much success with case management approaches to advising, through which students are assigned to an individual who (with the student) monitors student progress and supports both academic and non-academic aspects of the student journey.

In the pathways approach, developmental education shifts from the traditional stand-alone sequence of pre-collegiate courses to an accelerated on-ramp to a program of study, often with support for academic skill building embedded in college-level courses. The pathways college connects students as early as possible to their college-level program pathway and aims to ensure that they complete college-level English and math in their first year. This can be done effectively only if faculty and student services professionals work together to redesign the student experience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

▶ How do the roles and responsibilities for front-line student services staff need to change? How can the college provide professional development and support for those staff members?

▶ How can coaches help colleges differentiate between implementing a technology tool versus developing structures and business processes to support integrated advising and student services?

▶ What data and strategies can coaches use with colleges to help them shift their developmental education models from a stand-alone sequence of courses (or other isolated structure) to an extreme acceleration model aligned with the *Core Principles for Transforming Remediation*?

▶ What examples can coaches provide of colleges that have well-designed "onramps" to programs of study or have integrated academic skill building into college-level programs?

⊘ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

💬 Make the supports an obvious next step by giving students checklists with activities like "apply, fill out FAFSA, go to orientation, go to advising, register for classes, pay for classes." If students skip a step, it is everyone's job to back them up to the step they missed. This can be as effective as putting a hold on a student's record and will allow staff to spend their time serving students rather than trying to remove holds.
★ *Kathleen Cleary*

💬 Impress upon your college the benefit of having external experts facilitate discussions about process and practice changes. If the college is at a crossroad about the best advising model, encourage them to draw on the expertise of NACADA or other national experts. The relatively nominal cost to engage experts is a fraction of the time and resource cost when the institution gets bogged down in disagreements.
★ *Ed Bowling*

Print Resources

📑 Core Principles for Transforming Remediation within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy: A Joint Statement (Achieving the Dream, American Association of Community Colleges, Charles A. Dana Center, Complete College America, Education Commission of the States, and JFF)

📑 Core Principles Survey (American Association of Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

📑 Even One Semester: Full-Time Enrollment and Student Success (Center for Community College Student Engagement)

Video

View videos associated with:

▶ Math and other core coursework aligned to each program of study

▶ Help Students Get On A Path (under Materials, view "Advising and Multiple Math Pathways" (Charles A. Dana Center)

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATH

Supports to Keep Students on Track

It is not enough to get students engaged with the institution and into a program upon intake. Colleges have to build ongoing, inescapable advising that helps students see where they are on their program path; and there also must be a reliable process for intervention and inquiry when students make choices that take them off path. Further, faculty and student services staff will work together to design discipline-appropriate academic supports— supplemental instruction, tutoring, required study groups, lab time, etc.—that will be embedded in pathway courses. All of this work is accomplished through strong collaboration between instruction and student services, with student success understood as the shared responsibility.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

▶ What process might coaches recommend for collaborative work involving faculty and student services staff in designing academic supports embedded in guided pathways?

▶ How might colleges monitor student use of student services interventions?

▶ To learn from colleges that have a holistic student support structure, ask this question: What do you know now that you wish you had known as you implemented student interventions and changed institutional structures?

💬 OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

💬 Early alert is useful but only if it is full circle; is there communication regarding follow up to the faculty member who initiated the alert? Faculty engagement in the classroom is key to developing stronger ties to individual students. Sometimes all it takes is one dedicated faculty member following up with a student who is absent, struggling or confused. Careful and consistent case management is critical on the part of academic advisors. Intrusive advising helps students know you are aware and that you care. Milestones along the path provide students with encouragement and foster a sense of accomplishment. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*

💬 Academic and non-academic supports pro-actively provided to students (not just available) are essential. Colleges should blow up existing advising and counseling structures and practices and start over to design a guided pathways structure of supports. ★ *John Nixon*

Print Resources

- iPASS Readiness Assessment
  Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

- Integrated Student Support Redesign: A Toolkit For Redesigning Advising And Student Services to Effectively Support Every Student (Achieving the Dream)

- Planning for Rollout and Adoption: A Guide for iPASS Institutions (Achieving the Dream and Educause)

- Beyond Financial Aid: How Colleges Can Strengthen the Financial Stability of Low-Income Students and Improve Student Outcomes (Lumina Foundation)

- The BFA Self-Assessment Guide (National Center for Inquiry and Improvement)

Video

View videos associated with:

- Ongoing, intrusive advising

IMPLEMENTATION

ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

Using Effective Practices to Assess and Enrich Student Learning

The real success of guided pathways will come when teaching and learning practices support students through their programs of study at the same time the structural changes in the institution take hold. Faculty need to work within and across disciplines to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities students should have upon completion of their programs of study. Course-level learning outcomes should roll up to program learning outcomes and connect to employability skills and transfer programs. Learning assessment should provide a strong basis for continuing work to strengthen students' educational experiences in pathways. Active, experiential and applied learning opportunities should be integrated into students' programs, and faculty should work with student life professionals to align classroom and co-curricular learning within pathways.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

▶ How can colleges leverage their existing student learning outcomes assessment approach to support student learning within pathways?

▶ How can colleges evolve their focus on assessment from course-level learning to achievement of program-level and general education/ liberal arts outcomes?

▶ How can colleges more broadly adopt the portfolio approach to demonstrating student learning?

▶ How can coaches encourage colleges to ensure that experiential/applied and other active learning approaches are systematically incorporated into courses within pathways?

▶ What examples might a coach provide to a college where faculty members are working to align appropriate co-curricular experiences to their pathways?

▶ How can colleges integrate feedback on gaps in student learning from employers and transfer institutions?

▶ What professional development is necessary for colleges to strengthen teaching and learning within meta-majors and pathways?

ⵌ OBSERVATIONS FROM PATHWAYS COACHES

💬 Unless the pathways work includes the student experience in the classroom, real transformation will be difficult to achieve. Pedagogy is very important, as is regular assessment of learning outcomes. ★ *John Nixon*

💬 Because approaches to assessment vary so widely across institutions, one important role coaches can play in assisting institutions with guided pathways is to ask them to articulate clearly the differences among institution-level learning outcomes, program-level learning outcomes, and course-level learning outcomes—and what assessment strategies are used at each of those levels. ★ *Donna Dare*

💬 All programs and courses need to be on a regular review cycle to include current practice and expectations. If outcomes are no longer relevant, they should be eliminated. Faculty should be encouraged to share artifacts and techniques for assessing student learning, both formative and summative. As new faculty members come on board, pairing them with seasoned mentors in the discipline helps develop expertise in assessment. Helping faculty (and staff) understand the difference between grades and the process of assessment is vital. Professional development should be ongoing and include current practices in assessment. ★ *Joyce Walsh Portillo*

Print Resources

📑 Learning Module: Improving Teaching and Learning (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program)

📑 Rising to the LEAP Challenge: Case Studies of Integrative Pathways to Student Signature Work (Association of American Colleges and Universities)

📑 A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success (A First Look) (Center for Community College Student Engagement)

📑 A Matter of Degrees: Engaging Practices, Engaging Students (High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Engagement) (Center for Community College Student Engagement)

📑 A Matter of Degrees: Practices to Pathways (High-Impact Practices for Community College Student Success) (Center for Community College Student Engagement)

📑 Pathways Focus Group Manual (Center for Community College Student Engagement)

Video

View videos associated with:

▶ Ensure Students Are Learning

EARLY OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Measuring Key Performance Indicators

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 work 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.

Further, colleges should track each entering first-time-in-college student cohort through these early momentum points and then on to completion (or not) of certificates, degrees, and transfer. Ultimately, the efficacy of guided pathways also will be reflected through strengthened tracking of post-transfer and post-graduation outcomes in transfer institutions and in the labor market.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

▶ How can coaches help colleges explore their data in a productive way? What are the challenges involved in exploring uncomfortable data with college teams, and how can the coach help them surmount those challenges?

▶ How can coaches help colleges communicate the data effectively with their stakeholder groups, both to celebrate progress and to maintain a sense of urgency for large-scale change?

Using the Guided 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 scaled guided pathways reform. 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 reforms 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 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 do coaches help the colleges prioritize and stage implementation, knowing it's not a linear process and that they cannot take everything on at once?

Print Resources

⧉ Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment (Community College Research Center)
Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

Continuously Improving Pathways

Cross-functional teams of program faculty, advisors and administrators affiliated with particular meta-majors and pathways will meet each academic term to review student progress and learning, assess what is working for students and what is not, and make or recommend changes accordingly.

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.