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

**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

**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
- Reallocation of 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.

Contributors to this model for Guided Pathways are: American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Achieving the Dream (ATD), The Aspen Institute, Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSE), Community College Research Center (CCRC), Complete College America, The Charles A. Dana Center, Jobs for the Future (JFF), National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII), and Public Agenda.