



# BUILDING MOMENTUM

Using Guided Pathways to Redesign  
the Student Experience



2020  
NATIONAL  
REPORT

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

*Reclaiming the American Dream*, the 2012 report from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, posed the question, “What might such a reimagined community college look like?” To answer this question, the Commission set forth the Three Rs: Redesign students’ educational experiences. Reinvent institutional roles. Reset the system to create incentives for student and institutional success.\*

In 2015, AACC coordinated the first national project focused on guided pathways, which included 30 institutions. These early adopters made a commitment to institutional transformation through redesigning the student experience from connection to completion and to aligning programs more clearly with employment and transfer outcomes. Since that time, many more colleges have committed to this transformational journey.

Even though the development of the guided pathways model is recent, the work undergirding it is not new. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (the Center) and many other partners in the field have long encouraged colleges to identify and implement educational practices that are proven to increase student success. The guided pathways model helps colleges start with students’ end goals in mind so that from the beginning, colleges help students explore career and transfer options and interests.

Now that momentum for guided pathways is building in the field, this report seeks to understand how students are experiencing the movement. Where are we making progress in transforming the student experience, and where is attention still needed?

To make answering questions such as these possible, the Center thanks the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for funding the development of the guided pathways items that were added to the 2018 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*) and the 2019 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*), the Center’s focus group work on guided pathways, and the development of this national report.

The following individuals were instrumental in supporting the Center as staff developed the guided pathways survey items:

- ▶ Laurie Heacock, Senior Advisor, Data and Analytics, Achieving the Dream
- ▶ Dr. Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Scholar, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII)
- ▶ Dr. Kay McClenney, Senior Advisor to the President, AACC
- ▶ Dr. Tonjua Williams, President, St. Petersburg College, and AACC Pathways Coach

The Center also gives very special thanks to Dr. Walter Bumphus, President and CEO of AACC, for spearheading the national guided pathways work. Additionally, we acknowledge Dr. Kay McClenney and Dr. Gretchen Schmidt, Executive Director of the Pathways Project at AACC, for overseeing this project, which guides colleges to design and implement structured academic and career pathways at scale for all students.

The members of the Pathways Collaborative, a group of organizations that came together and were collectively responsible for creating and refining the pathways model, have been the boldest advocates of this work and also deserve recognition.

Finally, we would like to thank the colleges and their faculty, staff, and students for participating in the survey administrations and the focus groups. Without these voices, we would not be able to share how students are experiencing guided pathways on a national level.

This report is dedicated to the many colleges on this transformational journey.

## **Dr. Linda L. García**

*Executive Director*

Center for Community College Student Engagement

\* [www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/21stCenturyReport.pdf](http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/21stCenturyReport.pdf)

Please cite this report as follows: Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2020). *Building momentum: Using guided pathways to redesign the student experience*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, Program in Higher Education Leadership.



# CONTENTS

Foreword: To Improve Outcomes, Colleges Must Change the Student Experience	2
On the Cusp of Transformation	3
Why Guided Pathways?	4
Methodology: Institutional Analyses	5
The Evolution of Guided Pathways	6
Guided Pathways and the Student Experience	7
Findings on Pillar 2: Help Students Get on a Path	8
Findings on Pillar 3: Help Students Stay on Their Path	16
Findings on Pillar 4: Ensure Students Are Learning	19
The Power of Applied Learning	22
Engaging Students Begins With Engaging Faculty	24
Campus Conversation Starters	26

“

Embracing guided pathways calls for reconsideration of our long-held beliefs, deliberate culture change, and evolution of well-established policies and practices—a daunting yet exciting endeavor.

— DR. ROB JOHNSTONE,  
Founder & President,  
National Center for Inquiry  
& Improvement (NCII)

”



# FOREWORD

**Dr. Davis Jenkins**

*Senior Research Scholar, Community College Research Center  
Teachers College, Columbia University*

---

## To Improve Outcomes, Colleges Must Change the Student Experience

As of fall 2019, more than 300 colleges are implementing guided pathways reforms as part of formal national or state initiatives. Many others are attempting to do so on their own. Guided pathways has arguably become the most widespread community college institutional reform movement in decades.

Guided pathways is a whole-college reform model through which institutions change the experience for all students both in and outside the classroom throughout their entire journey through college. Only through this scale of change will colleges be able to substantially increase overall completion rates and post-graduation success for students overall and to close gaps in outcomes for underserved students.

Colleges implementing guided pathways are reviewing and more clearly mapping their programs to ensure that they lead to good jobs and further education. They also are organizing programs into field-focused meta-majors to engage students in academic and career communities. And they are redesigning instruction, student services, business processes, and technology systems to better help all students explore options and interests, create academic plans, and complete programs that will prepare them to successfully transfer and advance in their careers.

My colleagues and I at the Community College Research Center recently published a report on how colleges that were early adopters of guided pathways have managed the large-scale organizational changes involved. We found that, to be effective, college leaders need to:

- ▶ Engage faculty and staff broadly in the institution in identifying barriers to student success created by the college; and
- ▶ Create cross-functional teams to redesign programs, practices, and systems at scale in ways that facilitate program exploration, planning, learning, and completion.

Not surprisingly, this is a complex process that takes several years and requires changing college culture—and specifically mindsets about how best to help students learn and succeed—as much as implementing any particular practices.

*Building Momentum* is an important new report in which the Center for Community College Student Engagement provides a first systematic look at whether students and faculty say they are experiencing guided pathways reforms at their colleges.

The Center's findings indicate that the guided pathways movement still has far to go. Even among colleges already implementing guided pathways reforms, substantial numbers of entering students still do not receive help to develop a full-program academic plan, and many continuing students have not talked with a staff member about the sorts of jobs their program might lead to. Moreover, many faculty in these colleges indicate that they have not been involved in guided pathways reforms and want more professional development—although majorities of both full- and part-time faculty say that the work their college is doing with guided pathways will lead to improved student outcomes.

If they want their guided pathways efforts to produce substantially improved student outcomes, college leaders at all levels need to consider two critical issues: how to increase involvement by faculty and staff and how to ensure that students' experiences are being enriched in desired ways as a result of changes in college policy and practice. Thanks to the Center for providing the field with the metrics—and in this report, the baseline data—to guide their efforts.



# On the Cusp of Transformation

Guided pathways is gaining momentum. There are many pathways efforts, including statewide ones, across the country. Colleges new to the work are learning from early adopters, and the field is beginning an unprecedented attempt at broad-scale change. This report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement provides a first look at whether students across the country are experiencing key elements of this transformational reform.

## Understanding the Student Experience of Pathways

---

Guided pathways is designed to help colleges improve rates of student completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market. Instituting the whole-scale transformation required to implement pathways means rethinking fundamental aspects of the college structure, including onboarding, advising, curriculum, instruction, scheduling, and technology.

Because pathways requires change to so many interconnected systems, colleges typically spend several years planning. During this time, administrators, faculty, and staff dive deeply into change efforts that are not visible to students. These efforts include redesigning programs of study and implementing new policies, systems, and practices for guided pathways.

While this preparation is critical, upgrading policies, practices, and systems is not enough to bring about real improvement. To produce better outcomes, colleges need to change the student experience and, in turn, change student behaviors in ways that lead to increased success. If the student experience does not become more engaging, then these changes in practice are unlikely to lead to measurably better outcomes.

Given the need to change student behaviors, regularly asking students and faculty about their experiences is critical. Center data provide an invaluable window into student and faculty perspectives. These data are a powerful tool for colleges that want to better understand whether their pathways work is reflected in the typical student experience on their campuses.

Data from the Center's three surveys—the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (*SENSE*), the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*), and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (*CCFSSE*)—as well as focus groups provide direct input from students and faculty.

These data also show whether students across the country are experiencing the individual practices and supports that mirror many of the components of guided pathways. The findings in this report are the first national baseline data on student and faculty perceptions of pathways practices.

# WHY GUIDED PATHWAYS?

Guided pathways is an institution-wide approach to student success that is based on giving students clear, coherent, and structured educational experiences that build in a variety of academic and non-academic supports. Pathways puts equity at the center of colleges' educational approach so they can improve outcomes for all students.

Students' pathways guide them from their point of entry to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials, advancement to further education, and/or careers with value in the labor market. Having a clear end goal is expected to improve persistence. Following a clear pathway minimizes excess credit hours, which waste time and money.

Thus, a key focus of guided pathways is helping students start with the end in mind. And one hallmark of pathways is requiring each student to develop a complete program plan in their first academic term.

Of course, having a clear, defined sequence of courses is just the beginning of guided pathways. The model builds a range of proven practices into every student's experience, beginning with their earliest interactions with the college. These practices provide structure, help students identify their educational and career goals, and support students so they stay engaged and on track. They include the following:

- ▶ Academic advising that incorporates in-depth conversations about career goals, degree plans, transfer opportunities, and commitments outside of college.

\* [www.pathwaysresources.org](http://www.pathwaysresources.org)

+ [www.completionbydesign.org/s/cbd-lmf](http://www.completionbydesign.org/s/cbd-lmf)



- ▶ Career exploration in the first academic term supported by detailed information about careers and salaries that can result from each program and credential.
- ▶ Meta-majors—groups of related majors—that provide a structure for career and academic communities.
- ▶ Gateway courses that are aligned with students' programs of study.
- ▶ Corequisites through which underprepared students can earn college credit in their first term while getting the additional academic support they need.

Two tools that may be useful to colleges as they undertake this work are the guided pathways model created by the Pathways Collaborative,\* which outlines the components of pathways, and Completion by Design's Loss/Momentum Framework,+ which illustrates how a student progresses along a pathway.



Recognize that no longer can students afford to just wander through college and not have a clue what it's all about. . . . Just be open. In some cases, throw away your old paradigms and be willing to see the relevance of what we're doing and how it impacts students.

— ADMINISTRATOR



## Early Data and the Potential for Change

Guided pathways is intended to change the way colleges conduct their day-to-day work. Implementing this institution-wide change takes time, as illustrated in a recent report about guided pathways from the Community College Research Center.\*

Guided pathways has many components, and addressing all of them concurrently would be difficult. Thus, each college is likely to show progress primarily in the areas where it focused its initial efforts. Moreover, given the timeline of even the earliest pathways adopters, it is not surprising that it is too early to see evidence of students' experiencing pathways at scale.

- ▶ Among colleges that participated in *SENSE*, on average, 67% of entering students report that they are required to follow an academic plan that specifies required courses.†
- ▶ Among colleges that participated in *CCSSE*, on average, 39% of students in at least their second term report that a staff member did not talk with them about the types of jobs their program of study might lead to. In addition, on average, 75% of these respondents report that they did not visit an employer or a worksite, nor did they shadow someone working in their field of interest.†
- ▶ *CCFSSE* findings indicate that 45% of faculty know *very little* or *nothing* about guided pathways. When colleges begin implementing pathways, a small number of people tend to be

engaged with the work. A key challenge with pathways is to better involve a broad cross section of faculty and staff.

While colleges implementing guided pathways have seen improvements in some areas, it will take time for new policies and practices to spread within and across institutions. Then those shifts must become part of the student experience. As the typical student experience becomes more engaging, it is expected that student behaviors will change, leading to improved outcomes.

In the meantime, colleges that were early adopters of pathways are receiving positive feedback from students, faculty, and staff participating in focus groups. The Center is encouraged by this feedback and by the commitment to pathways that is visible across the country.



Guided pathway means a direction . . . to take your classes and not get confused or jumbled up and not sure what to do next semester, and then be stuck . . . so you're not lost.

— STUDENT



## METHODOLOGY INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSES

*SENSE* and *CCSSE* results presented in this report are aggregated at the institution level and reported as the average percentage of students within colleges who selected the reported responses. For example, if at three colleges 43%, 51%, and 62% of students, respectively, reported that they met with an advisor one or more times, the value presented in the report would be the average of these three institution-level scores, or 52%.

Data are presented in this way because guided pathways is an institution-level movement, and this method of analysis ensures that all participating colleges have equal weighting in the national average.

The report also presents the top quartile range of the findings (75th percentile to 100th percentile) to further illustrate how effectively some colleges have instituted individual components of guided pathways.

*SENSE* and *CCSSE* results presented in this report will not be directly comparable to results presented in *SENSE* and *CCSSE* standard reports

and online custom analyses. **For more details as well as the full methodology used in this report, visit [www.cccse.org/NR2020](http://www.cccse.org/NR2020).**

Data in the report are based on the following survey administrations:

- ▶ *SENSE* 2018 data include responses from 48,778 entering students from 117 colleges that administered a 12-item set on guided pathways. Thus, the *N* for all *SENSE* results in this report is 117.
- ▶ *CCSSE* 2019 data include responses from 76,700 returning students from 166 colleges that administered a 20-item set on guided pathways. Thus, the *N* for all *CCSSE* results in this report is 166.
- ▶ Faculty data include responses from 7,534 faculty members from 73 colleges that administered *CCFSSE* 2019, which included 10 items on guided pathways. Some colleges participating in *CCFSSE* did not administer the *CCSSE* item set on guided pathways to students. Faculty data are not institutional averages.

\* [ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/redesigning-your-college-guided-pathways.pdf](http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/redesigning-your-college-guided-pathways.pdf)

† These are institutional averages, not averages of individual student responses. See Methodology on this page.



## THE EVOLUTION OF GUIDED PATHWAYS

In 2012, AACC's 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges released *Reclaiming the American Dream*, galvanizing the community college field to undertake transformational work in an effort to increase student success. The Commission's mandate to improve completion rates spurred a patchwork of colleges across the country to implement pathways-related initiatives on their campuses.

In 2015, the Community College Research Center published *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*.<sup>\*</sup> That same year, AACC, along with the Center and other organizations, launched a formal project to help community colleges design and implement guided pathways. The group selected 30 colleges from 17 states to participate in intensive guided pathways work, much of which was conducted through a series of pathways institutes.

<sup>\*</sup> This book by Thomas R. Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center synthesized years of research and made the case for transformational change. Many colleges interested in pathways distributed copies and organized reading groups to launch campus conversations.

<sup>+</sup> To see which Pathways 1.0 colleges administered *SENSE*, *CCSSE*, and *CCFSSE*, visit [www.cccse.org/NR2020](http://www.cccse.org/NR2020).

These 30 colleges ultimately became known as the Pathways 1.0 colleges.<sup>+</sup> Since then, many more colleges have joined this movement. Some have undertaken pathways work as part of AACC's second round of the Pathways Project, state-level student success centers, or other statewide efforts. Others have done so without being part of an organized group.

For the Pathways 1.0 colleges, the pathways institutes concluded in October 2017, and most of these colleges began rolling out student-facing pathways elements in fall 2018. Data for the *SENSE*, *CCSSE*, and *CCFSSE* findings in this report were collected a short time later—fall 2018 for *SENSE* and spring 2019 for *CCSSE* and *CCFSSE*.





# Guided Pathways and the Student Experience

The pathways model has four pillars of implementation:

1. Clarify the Paths
2. Help Students Get on a Path
3. Help Students Stay on Their Path
4. Ensure Students Are Learning

The Center's surveys evaluate distinct practices as a window into understanding the full picture of the student experience. The student experience and the Center's *SENSE*, *CCSSE*, and *CCFSSE* survey data are most clearly aligned with Pillars 2, 3, and 4. Thus, findings in this report focus on those parts of the pathways model.

At the time data presented in this report were collected, student-facing pathways implementation was just beginning at many colleges. Thus, *Building Momentum* presents baseline data that colleges can use as a starting point as they evaluate their own practices. Data from the AACC Pathways 1.0 colleges show the potential impact of pathways once the work is underway. The top quartile range of the findings (75th percentile to 100th percentile) further illustrate how effectively some colleges have instituted individual components of guided pathways.

The Center also analyzed individual student responses by characteristics such as race and ethnicity, gender identity, and age. For survey items related to pathways, there were no meaningful differences based on these characteristics. As not many students are yet exposed to all components of guided pathways, the Center plans to conduct analyses such as these again in the future to explore how pathways implementation and equity intersect.



# FINDINGS ON PILLAR 2 Help Students Get on a Path

Among colleges that participated in *SENSE*, on average, 44% of entering student respondents report that friends, family, or other students are their main source of advising. And 74% say they chose a job or career before registering for their first classes.\*

While starting with the end in mind—choosing a job or career at the beginning of college—is a pathways goal, some students make career decisions based on incomplete or inaccurate information. They may not be aware of potential career options that align with their interests. They also may not be considering transfer and additional educational options that can lead to career advancement and a higher salary.

Academic advising and career exploration guided by the institution play three critical roles for students. First, they ensure that students understand their options for programs of study and careers. Second, and perhaps more important, these

practices raise students’ aspirations by encouraging them to pursue opportunities they may not have considered. Broadening students’ opportunities in this way is an essential element of closing equity gaps.

Finally, advisors can help ensure that students have realistic academic plans. Among colleges that participated in *SENSE*, 39% of respondents, on average, report that no one at their college talked with them about how long it will take to complete their degree. And 59% on average say that no one at their college talked with them about the total cost of completing their certificate or degree.\* Even when students know what classes they need for a credential, if they do not have a specific timeline and an accurate understanding of their financial cost, they do not have a clear pathway.+

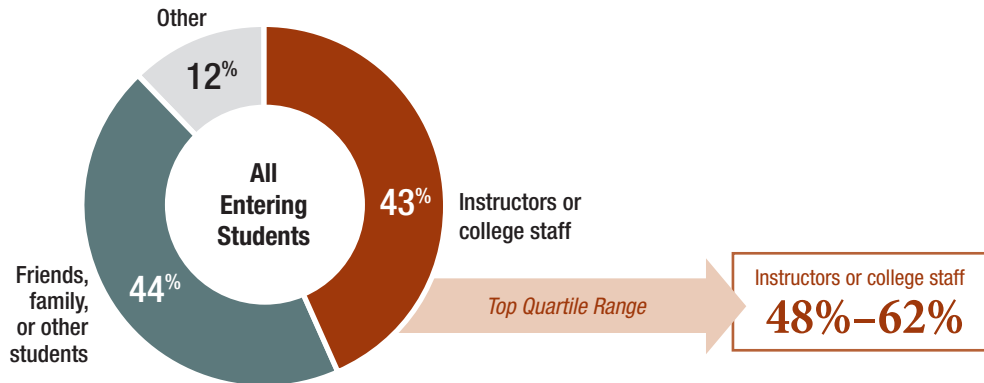
“ In our old system, you had probably 50 different courses that you could choose from, and you had to pick and choose to put those together. We’ve really streamlined that process. — FACULTY MEMBER ”



\* These are institutional averages, not averages of individual student responses. See Methodology on page 5.

+ For more information about the connection between advising and student engagement, see the Center’s 2018 report, *Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges*, [www.ccsse.org/nr2018/Show\\_Me\\_The\\_Way.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/nr2018/Show_Me_The_Way.pdf).

What has been your main source of academic advising (help with academic goal-setting, planning, course recommendations, graduation requirements, etc.)?



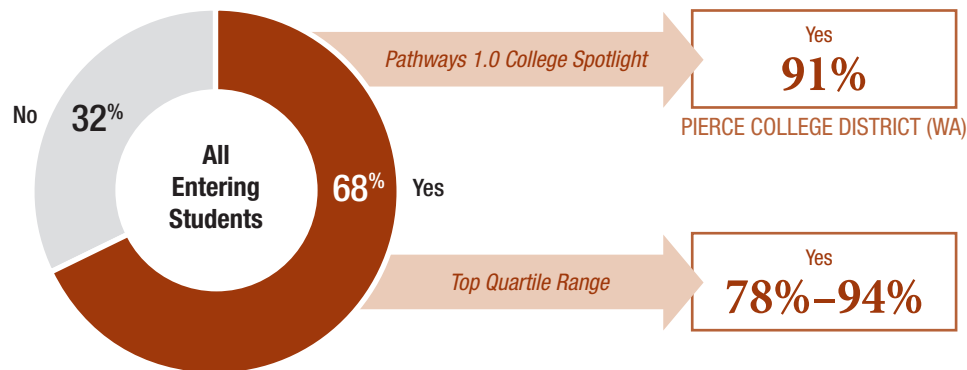
Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data



“ It’s pretty hard to waiver from the plan. . . . You really have to try hard to enroll in something that isn’t part of your program. — STUDENT ”

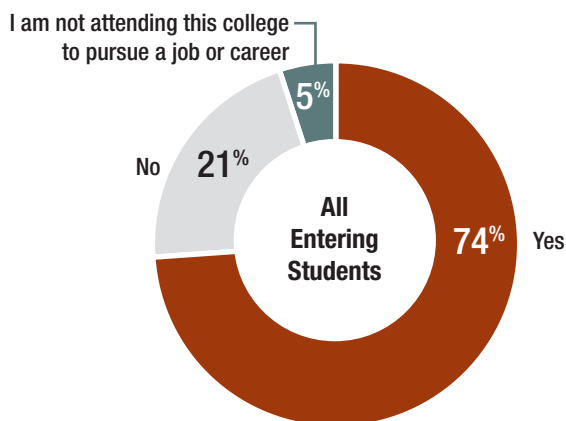
Were you required to meet (in person or online) with an academic advisor before registering for classes this academic term at this college?



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data

Prior to registering for classes your first academic term at this college, had you decided on a job or career that you wanted to pursue?



The top quartile range is not included here because this survey item reports on students' behavior before they arrive at college.

Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data

“

We want [students] to really start thinking about their purpose beyond the degree.

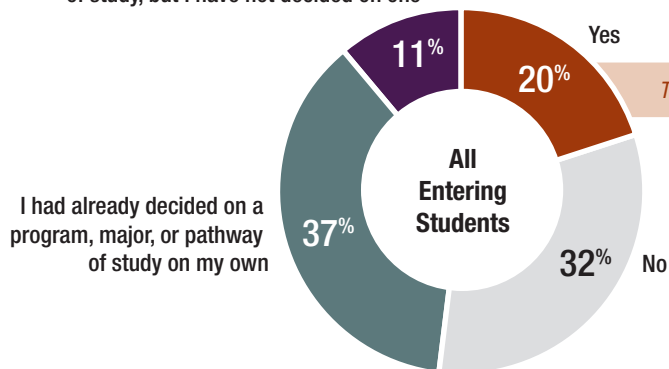
— ADMINISTRATOR

”



Did a staff member at this college help you decide on a program, major, or pathway of study?

I talked with a college staff member about possible programs, majors, or pathways of study, but I have not decided on one

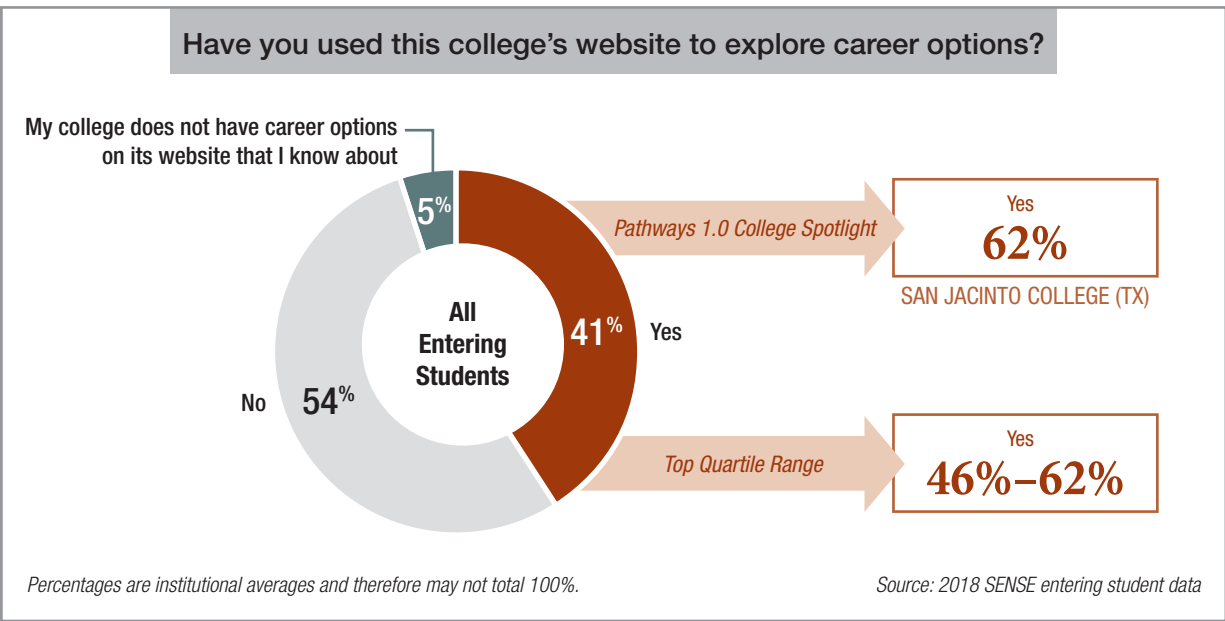
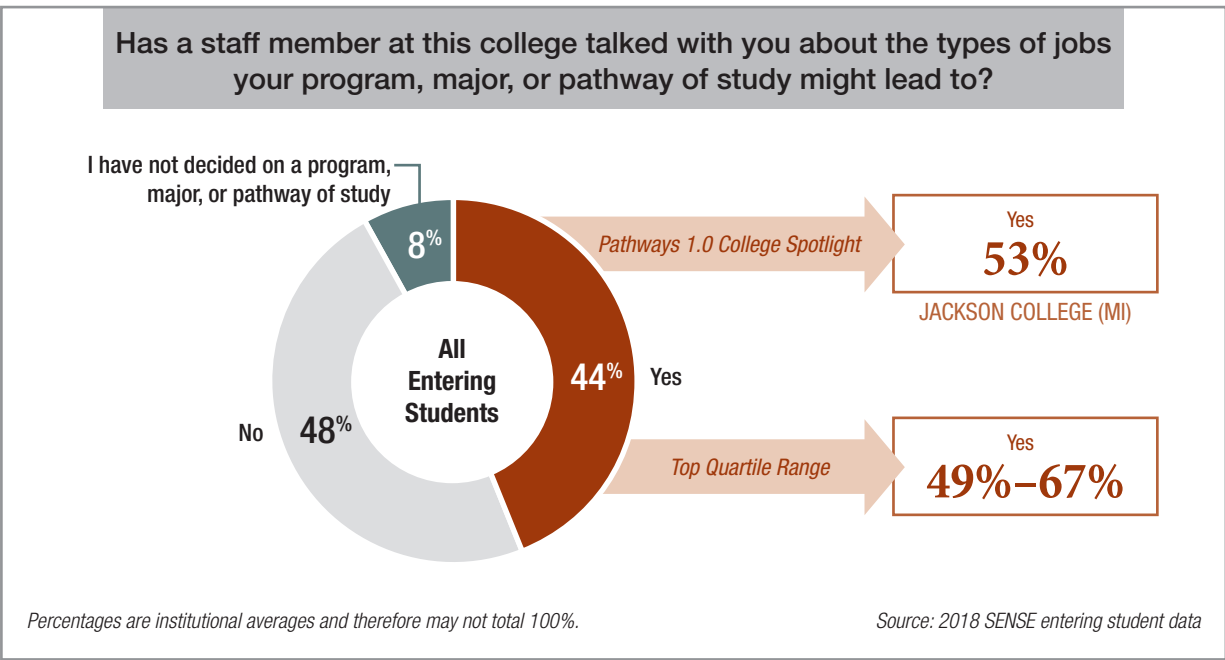


Top Quartile Range

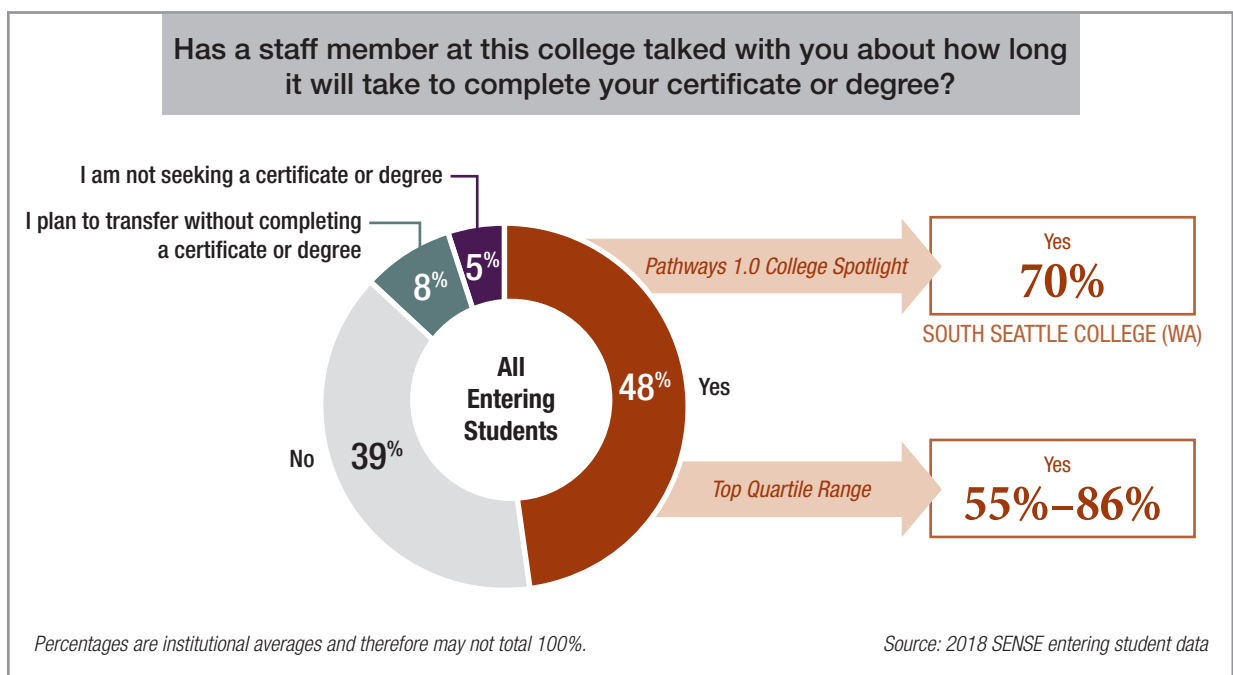
Yes  
23%–50%

Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

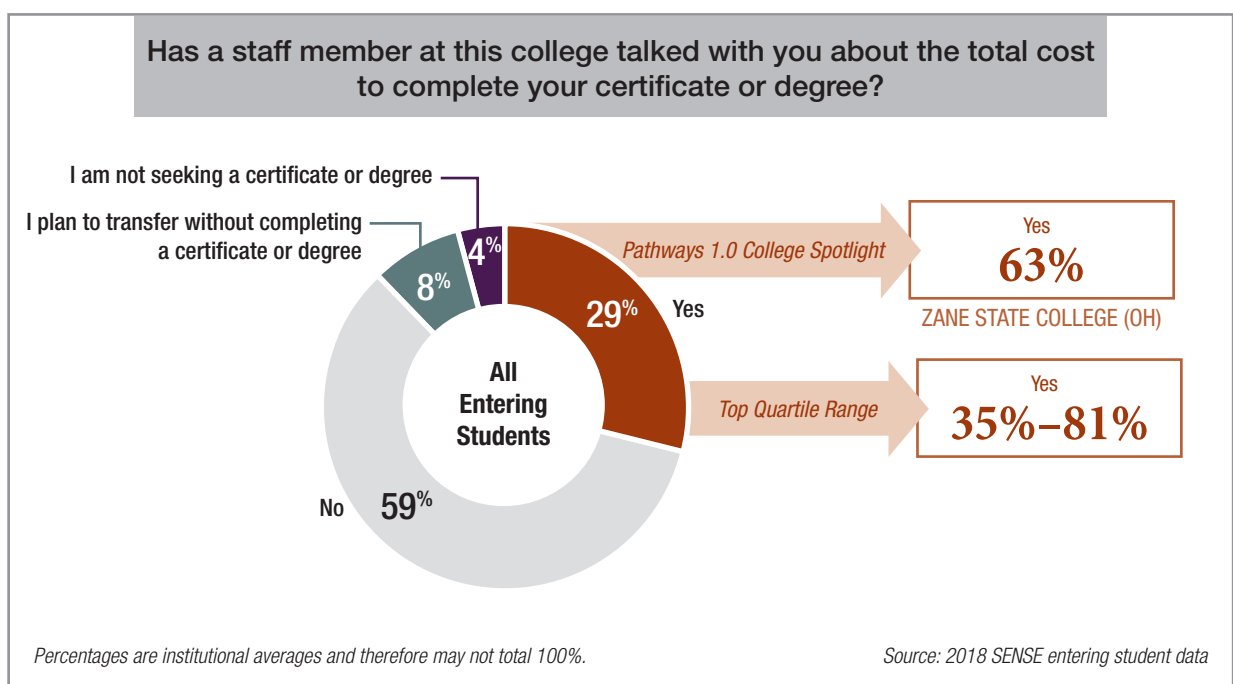
Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data



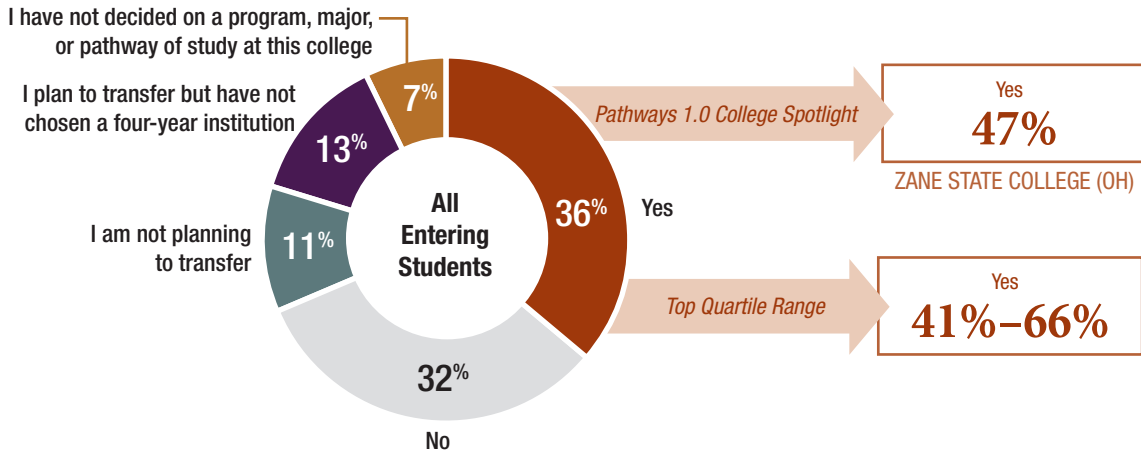
“ My instructors talk to me about career plans all the time. They talk about what to put on resumes. They talk to us about different employers. We actually go on field trips to different facilities. . . . Because it is a tech trade that I’m in . . . it has a direct application. — STUDENT ”



“ Now that I have a feel of how it works with my guided pathway and scheduling classes, I’m probably going to finish my BS a lot sooner than I thought I would, so I’m really excited. — STUDENT ”



**Has a staff member at this college talked with you about which credits will transfer toward your intended program or major at the four-year institution of your choice?**



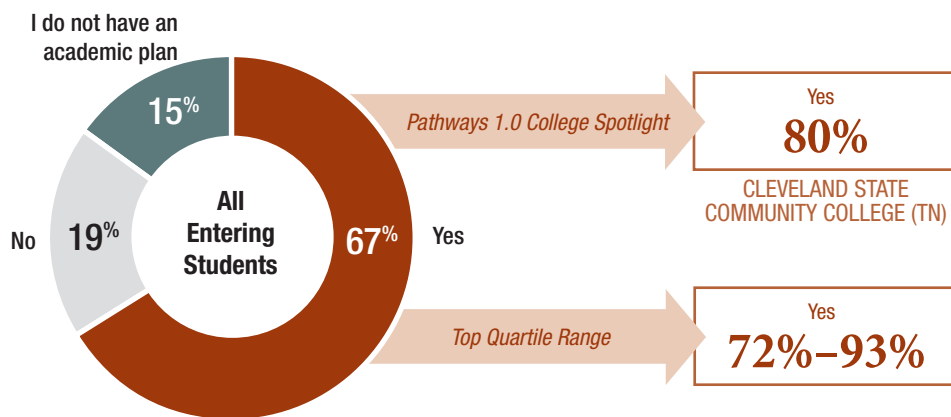
Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data



“ I get . . . flagged, and I get a call from my advisor. ‘You’re off track. Do you know you’re off track? . . . Okay. Come see me.’ . . . The advisor really is the one who checks on me. — STUDENT ”

**At this college, are you required to follow an academic plan that specifies which courses you are required to take?**



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2018 SENSE entering student data

PRESIDENTS OF  
PATHWAYS 1.0  
COLLEGES  
DESCRIBE

# Transformational Change

Our work has no finish line, but every single student that comes to us has one.

— DR. JIM MURDAUGH,  
President, Tallahassee  
Community College (FL)

Guided pathways enabled us to develop a student-centered, career-guided academic experience that led our institution to record-breaking enrollment and student program completion.

— DR. ADENA WILLIAMS LOSTON,  
President, St. Philip's College, Alamo Colleges District (TX)

Guided pathways is not something you do. It is something you become.

— DR. GREG HAMANN, President,  
Linn-Benton Community College (OR)

The total institutional transformation required by guided pathways reform continues daily and ensures that we are creating a student-ready college.

— DR. WILLIAM SERRATA, President,  
El Paso Community College (TX)

Guided pathways provides a single focus that impacts *all aspects* of the student's college experience.

— DR. EDWIN MASSEY,  
President, Indian River State  
College (FL)

Something like guided pathways is essential. Students need to take courses that readily transfer.

— DR. BRENT KNIGHT, President,  
Lansing Community College (MI)



Authentic implementation of guided pathways calls institutions to the difficult work of addressing historical inequities.

— DR. ANDREA C. WADE, Provost and Vice President, Academic Services, Monroe Community College (NY)

Through guided pathways, we have been able to create clear transfer pathways to keep students on track to graduation. Since 2014–15, the percentage of Associate of Arts graduates who do not exceed 72 hours upon graduation has increased 25%.

— DR. TONJUA WILLIAMS, President, St. Petersburg College (FL)

A crucial element of guided pathways is scale—it has moved us from smaller innovations to college-wide initiatives that touch almost every student.

— ANDREW DORSEY, President, Front Range Community College (CO)

It's imperative for students to have a roadmap because without it, they can never take off and succeed. The guided pathways model supports student success by saving students both time and money on their road to degree attainment.

— DR. RIC BASER, President, Northwest Vista College, Alamo Colleges District (TX)

The academic and cultural buy-in necessary for school-wide reform required a commitment and courage to develop and implement the changes.

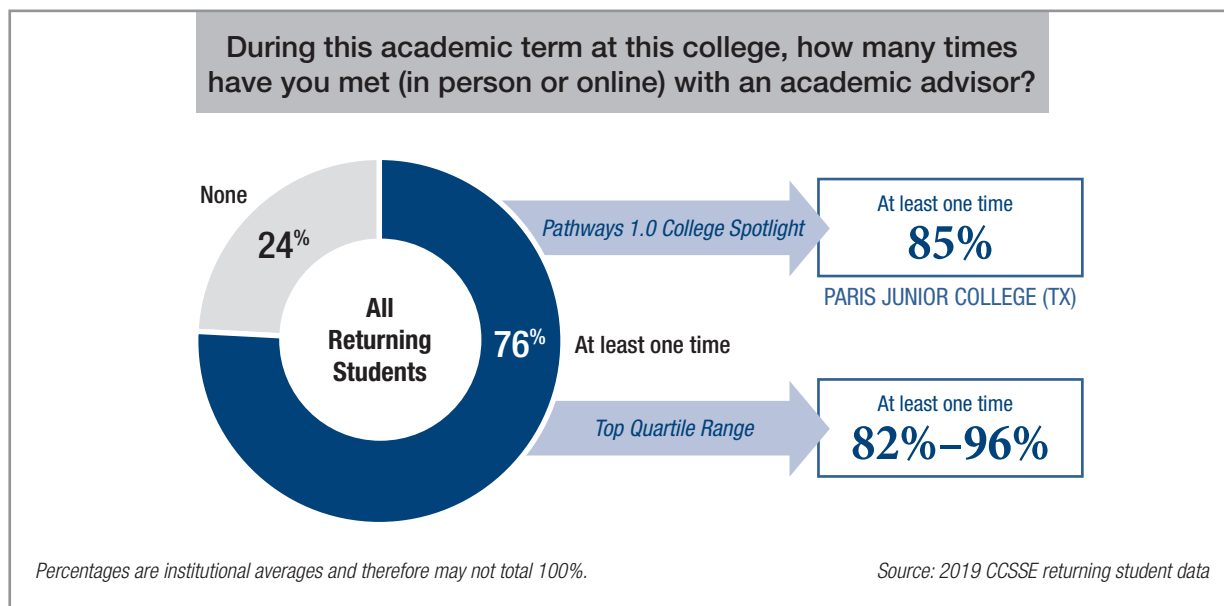
— DR. DONALD GUY GENERALS, President, Community College of Philadelphia (PA)

Guided pathways is about creating an airtight, coordinated care network around our students to ensure that we accelerate their progression and, if necessary, catch them before they fall.

— GREGORY ADAM HAILE, Esq., President, Broward College (FL)

# FINDINGS ON PILLAR 3 Help Students Stay on Their Path

The initial advising that helps students get on a path is crucial for their success. And advising continues to be important throughout a student’s academic experience. Advisors can support students throughout their academic journeys by tracking their progress through their academic plans and helping them adapt their plans if their goals change. Regular student-advisor meetings also present opportunities to build relationships and check in on a range of academic and life issues.



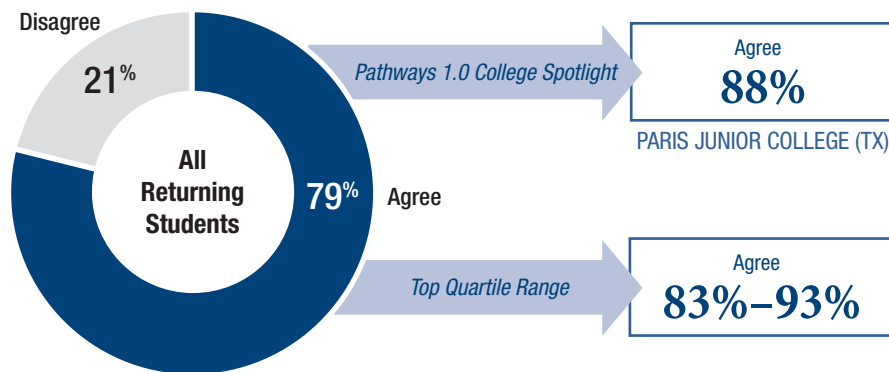
“

The constant, ‘Hey, talk to your advisor to make sure that you need this class’—as frustrating as it is at times, it is almost reassuring because you know that you’re not going to be one of those people who took like 12 elective credits that you didn’t need because they will stop you.

— STUDENT

”

At this college, all the courses I have needed to take have been available when and where I needed them.

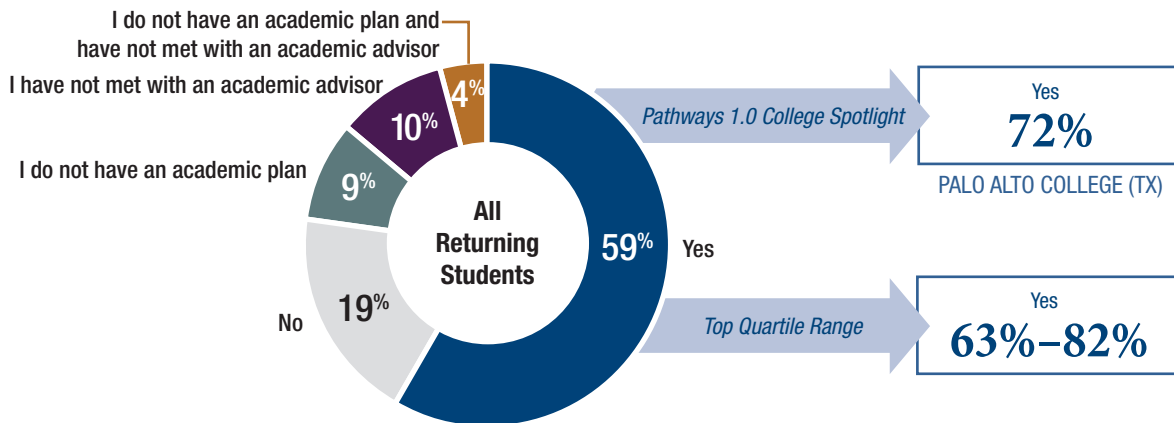


Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

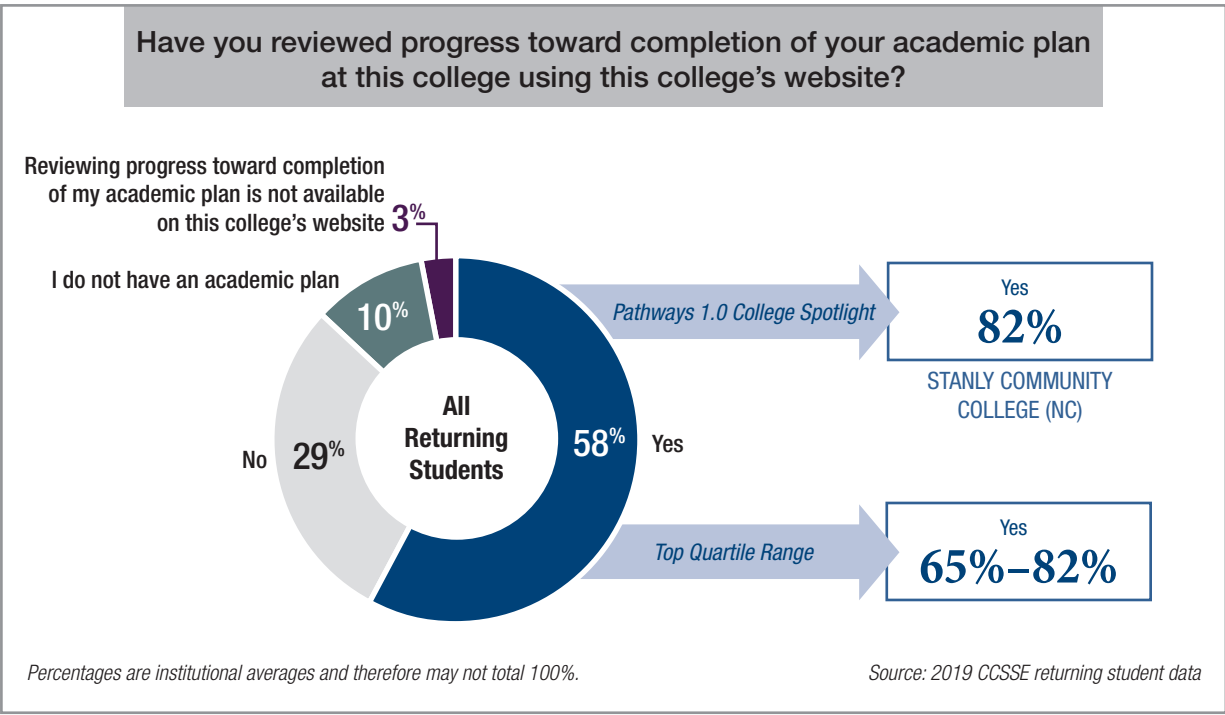


Have you reviewed progress on your academic plan at this college each time you have met in person with an academic advisor?

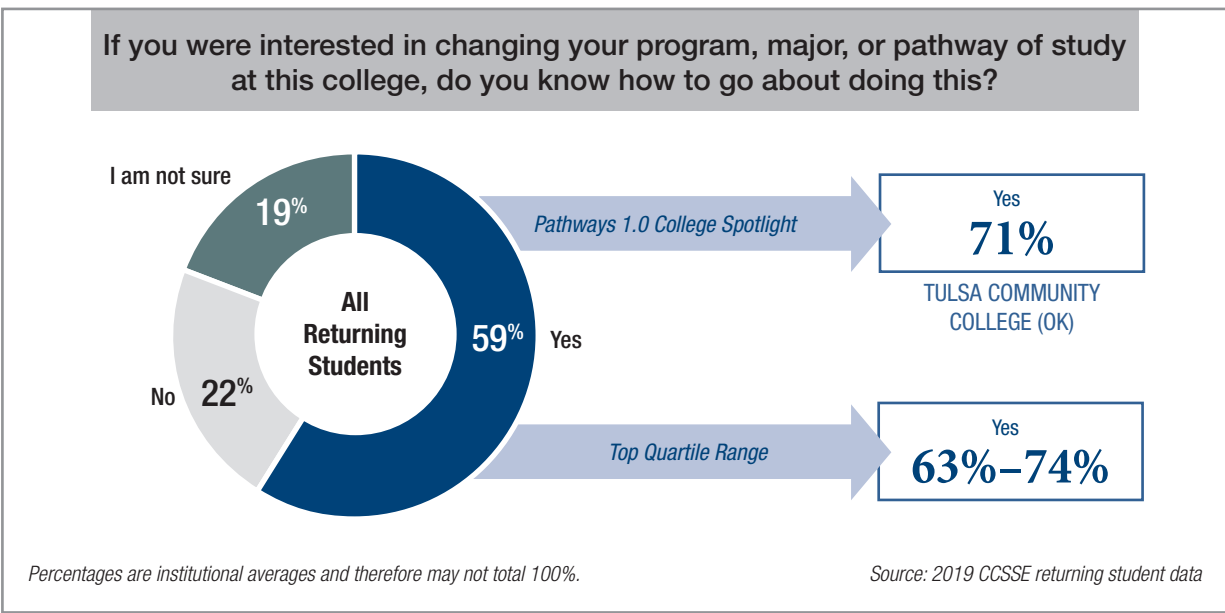


Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data



“ I think the advisors should be specialized in the degree program that you're in. . . . I've just lucked out that my advisor is more knowledgeable because of her personal experiences, but not everyone has that same experience. — STUDENT ”

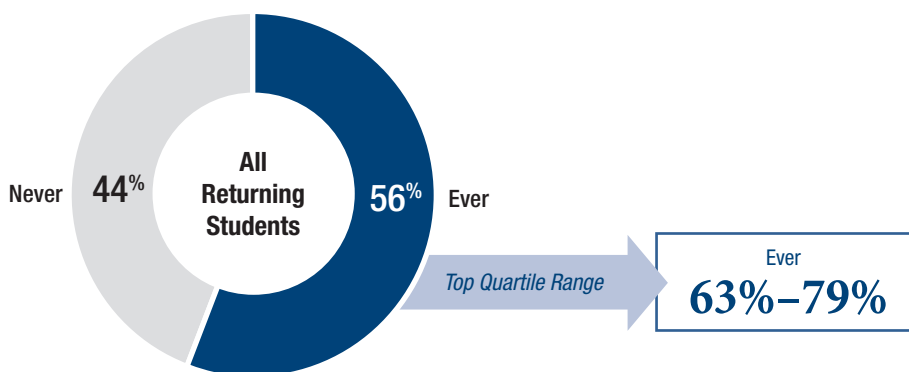




# FINDINGS ON PILLAR 4 Ensure Students Are Learning

Since its inception, the Center has been surveying students about practices that are now part of the Ensure Students Are Learning pillar. While active and collaborative learning, service learning, and regular interactions with faculty members are proven to increase student engagement, too few students have these experiences.

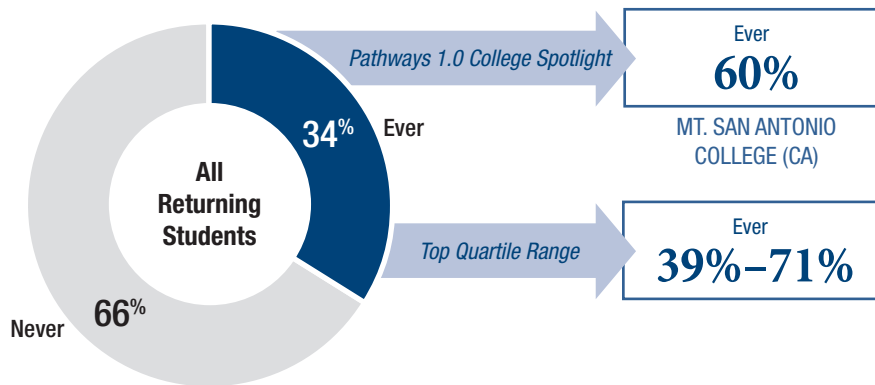
During the current academic year at this college, how often have your instructors required you to participate in study groups?



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

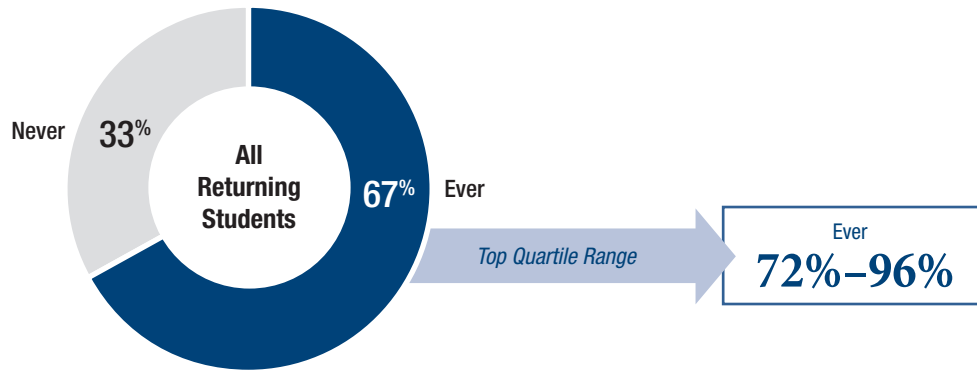
During the current academic year at this college, how often have your instructors required you to participate in tutoring?



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

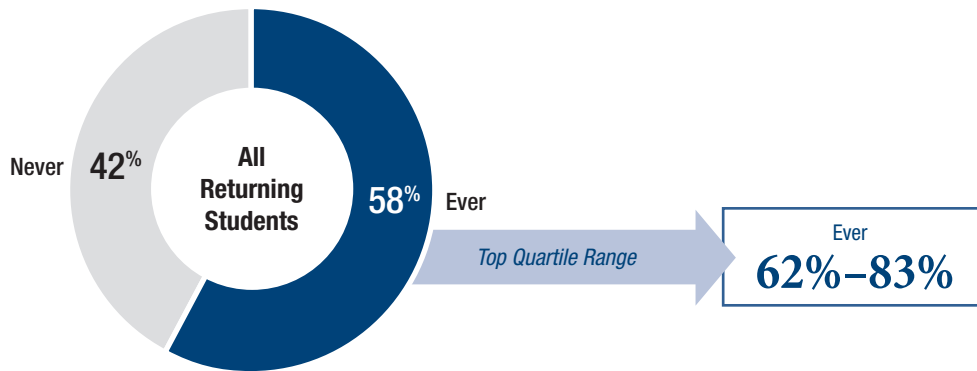
During the current academic year at this college, how often have you worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments?



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

During the current academic year at this college, how often have you discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class?

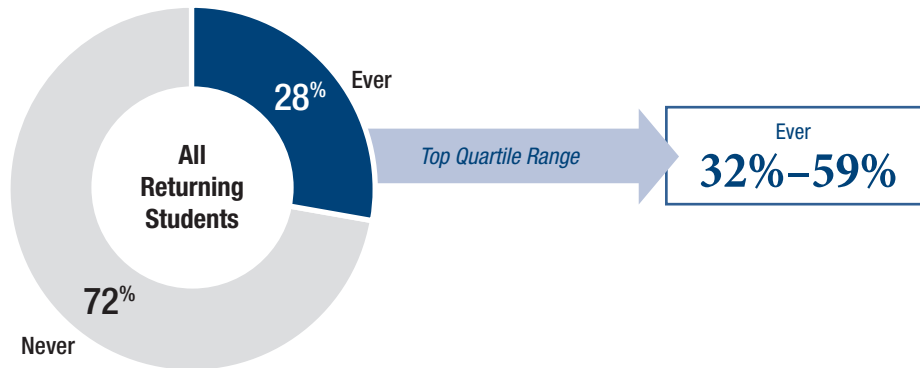


Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data



During the current academic year at this college, how often have you participated in a community-based project (service-learning activity) as part of a regular course?



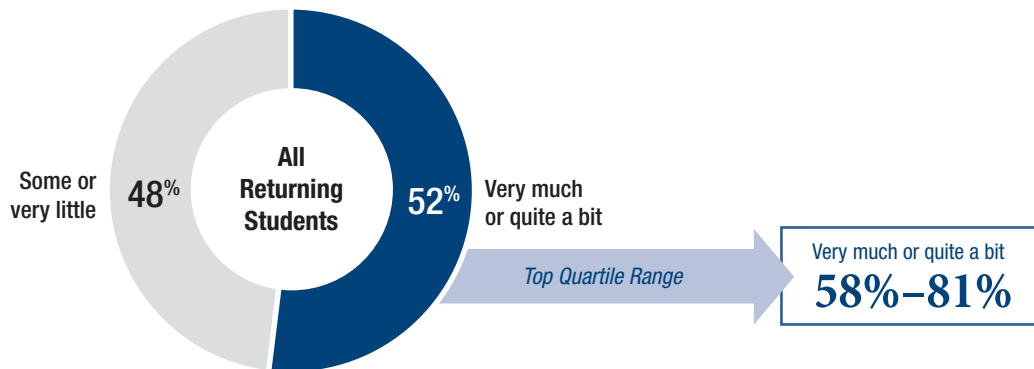
Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data



“ We do job shadowing. We visit hospitals. We visit nursing homes. We visit jails. We visit so many other facilities, and that’s going to help us decide what it is we want to do when we graduate. — STUDENT ”

How much has your experience at this college contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills?



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.

Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data



# THE POWER OF APPLIED LEARNING

CCSSE data illustrate that students who participate in internships or other applied learning experiences are more likely to be exposed to a range of practices that improve their engagement and are aligned with the pathways pillars.

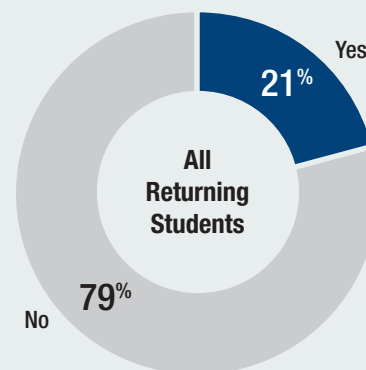
Across institutions, roughly a third of students in programs that lead to specific jobs or careers—such as nursing, allied health, technology, agriculture, and trade technical—report participating in internships or other field experiences, compared to an average of about 10% of students in liberal arts programs.\*

Obviously, participation in an internship or a clinical assignment is a more natural fit for students in programs such as nursing than for students in liberal arts programs. And it may be challenging to develop internships and other applied learning experiences for certain programs. Therefore, colleges should actively seek other ways to elevate the engagement of students in programs without these hands-on experiences.

For the data reported on the next page, *Internship Students* refers to students who have experienced hands-on learning through internships, field experiences, co-op experiences, or clinical assignments.



**Have you done or are you currently doing an internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment at this college?**



*Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data*



“

[Advising] would be better if it was program specific. As soon as you declare a meta-major, you are now transferred to an advisor that knows all about that meta-major.

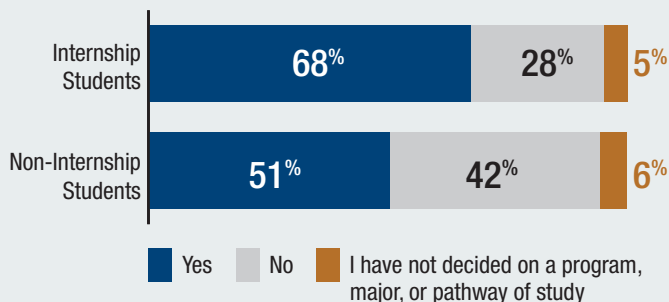
— STUDENT

”

\* These are institutional averages, not averages of individual student responses. See Methodology on page 5.

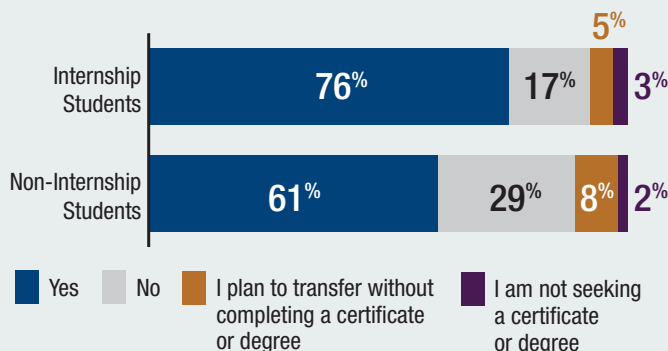


**Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the types of jobs your program, major, or pathway of study might lead to?**



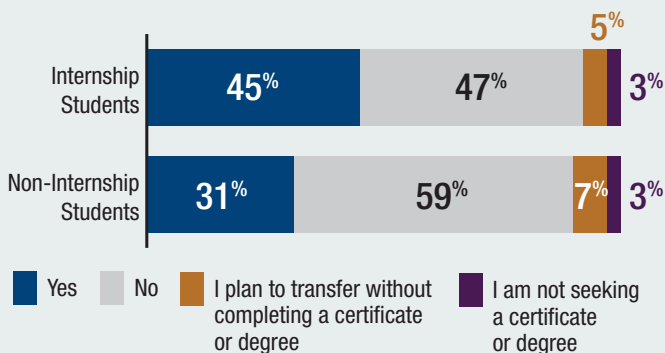
Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

**Has a staff member at this college talked with you about how long it will take to complete your certificate or degree?**



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

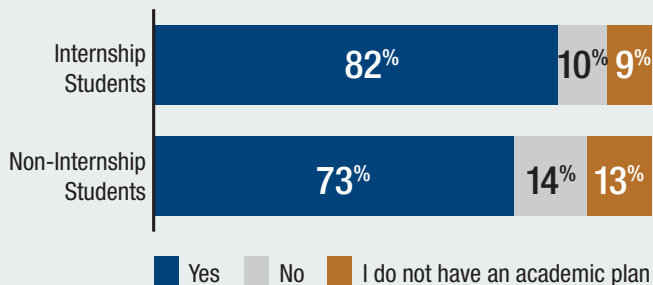
**Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the total cost to complete your certificate or degree?**



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

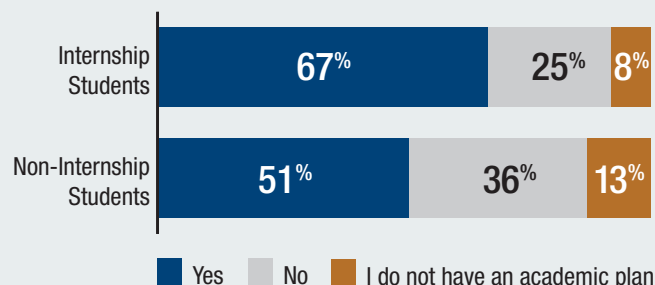
“ My seminar teacher [and I] had really intense talks about what I wanted to do in my future or where I would see myself. Those conversations really, really helped a lot. — STUDENT ”

**At this college, are you required to follow an academic plan that specifies which courses you are required to take?**



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

**At this college, are you required to follow an academic plan that specifies the order in which you should take your required courses?**



Percentages are institutional averages and therefore may not total 100%.  
Source: 2019 CCSSE returning student data

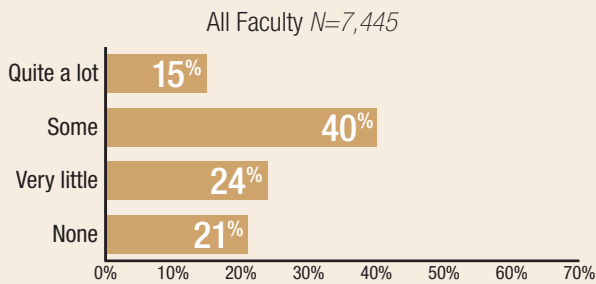
# ENGAGING STUDENTS BEGINS WITH ENGAGING FACULTY

From designing pathways and advising students to rethinking curricula and instructional practices, faculty members are critical in implementing guided pathways.

A majority (58%) of faculty respondents who report that their colleges are implementing guided pathways believe that pathways will improve student outcomes. That said, CCFSSSE findings indicate that colleges have opportunities to better engage faculty members across the board. Even though the results are not displayed here, part-time faculty respondents are less involved in the work of guided pathways than their full-time colleagues. This gap presents a challenge because part-time faculty typically teach the majority of classes at most colleges.

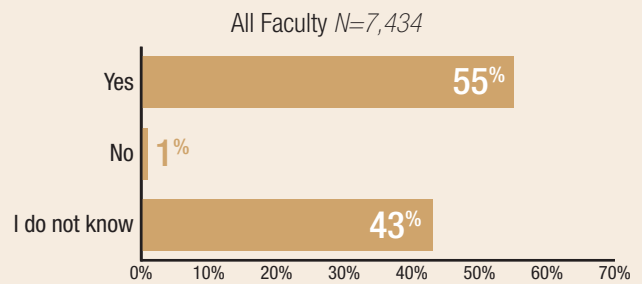


## How much do you know about guided pathways?



Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

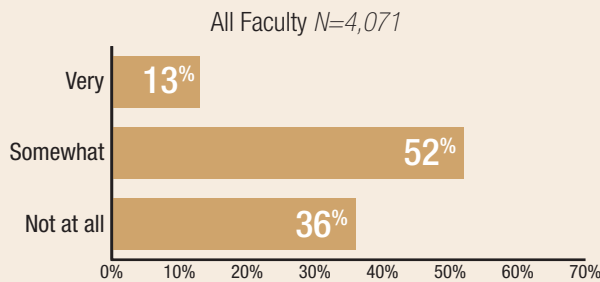
## Is this college in the process of implementing guided pathways?



Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

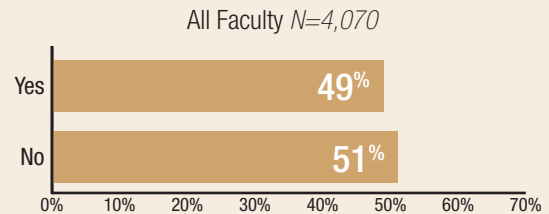
Subsequent CCFSSSE data include responses only from the 55% of faculty members who report that their colleges are implementing guided pathways.

## How involved are you in guided pathways at this college?



Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

## Do you feel like you need more professional development about your role in guided pathways at this college?



Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

“

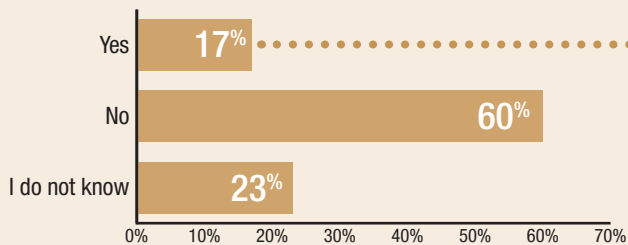
One of the keys to our culture . . . is the sense of openness and the collaborative nature that . . . pathways brought. I have a much better sense for what goes on in student services and what goes on in advising and what career services is all about.

— FACULTY MEMBER

”

**Have the learning outcomes for the courses you teach at this college changed because of guided pathways?**

All Faculty N=4,078

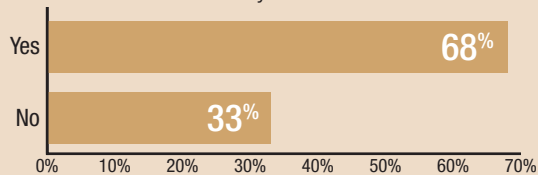


Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

Among faculty who report that the learning outcomes for the courses they teach have changed due to guided pathways:

**Have you been involved in updating course-level learning outcomes at this college for guided pathways?**

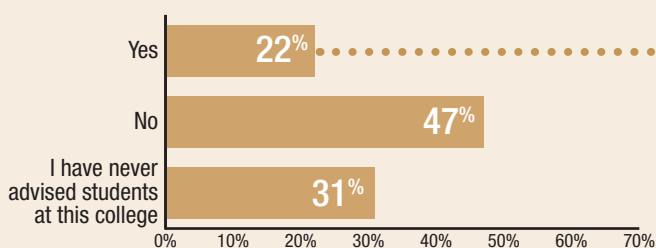
All Faculty N=677



Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

**Has your role in advising students at this college changed because of guided pathways?**

All Faculty N=4,043

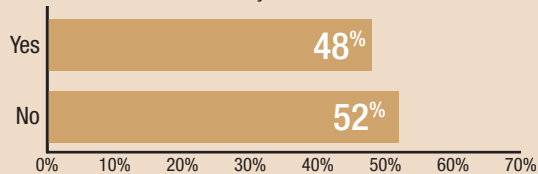


Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

Among faculty who report that their role in advising has changed due to guided pathways:

**Do you only advise students enrolled in the pathway area(s) in which you teach at this college?**

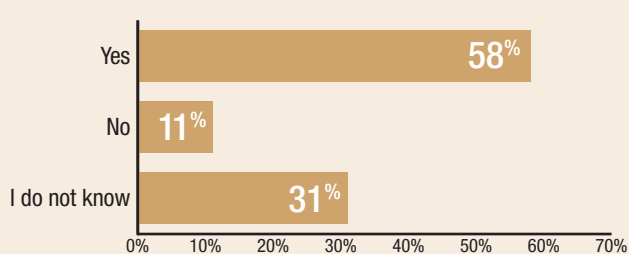
All Faculty N=883



Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.  
Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data

**From your perspective as a faculty member at this college, do you think the work the college is doing with guided pathways will improve student outcomes such as persistence and completion?**

All Faculty N=4,054



Source: 2019 CCFSSSE data



Clearly articulate from the top down that this is an institutional responsibility. . . . Pathways doesn't just land in advising. It doesn't just land in the classroom. Every part of the college organization is involved in it.

— ADMINISTRATOR





# Campus Conversation Starters

While guided pathways work is underway on a growing number of campuses, it is too early in this work for most colleges to see significant change. That said, improvement in engagement is one early indicator. Thus, when more colleges are deeply involved in the work of guided pathways, the Center anticipates that student engagement will increase—and improvements in outcomes will follow.

The work of guided pathways takes time and coordinated effort among administrators, faculty, and staff. Colleges interested in starting to implement pathways or furthering existing efforts should use data to determine their next steps.

For every pillar and every aspect of implementing guided pathways, campus conversations can shed light on needs, expand understanding, and inspire people to take action and continue this challenging work. The following questions can be used to spur such conversations.

## Pillar 2: Help Students Get on a Path

- ▶ Are we building an environment in which all students feel welcome and validated prior to their first day of class?\*
- ▶ Are we talking to every student about how long it will take them to complete their degree?
- ▶ Are new students taking a course that ignites their learning in their first term?+
- ▶ Does every student in every program have a clear plan for program completion and employment or transfer?+
- ▶ Are we talking to every student about how much it will cost to complete their degree?
- ▶ How are we identifying and then serving underprepared students? Are we using corequisite support rather than stand-alone developmental courses?
- ▶ Are all first-time students required to develop a complete program plan in their first term?+
- ▶ Are we advising students with equity in mind? Are we giving all students information about programs of study that can increase their economic mobility?
- ▶ Do our pathways systems work for students who are not first-time-in-college students when they start at our college?
- ▶ Are all students meeting with an advisor before registering for classes the first time?
- ▶ Are all students required to explore career interests and options?

\* Source: Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII)

+ Source: Dr. Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Scholar, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University

### Pillar 3: Help Students Stay on Their Path

- ▶ Are we working from an assumption of what students can do with the right support, rather than what they cannot do?\*
- ▶ Are students meeting with an advisor every term they are enrolled?
- ▶ Do we schedule classes so that students can take the courses they need to advance when they need them?+
- ▶ Have we embedded non-academic supports along the student journey?\*
- ▶ Are we helping students review progress on their academic plans each time they meet with an advisor?
- ▶ Do we (and students) know how far along students are in their programs, in terms of both time and money?+
- ▶ Do we have a clear process for students who want to change their paths? If so, do all students know about it?

### Pillar 4: Ensure Students Are Learning

- ▶ What kind of professional development opportunities are we offering our faculty for teaching within a guided pathways framework?
- ▶ Are we training faculty to incorporate cultural awareness and inclusivity into their courses?
- ▶ Are we encouraging faculty to use asset-based teaching approaches that leverage students' strengths?
- ▶ Are we helping faculty integrate active and applied learning experiences into their courses?
- ▶ Are we requiring practices that help students build key skills and develop strong academic habits (e.g., study groups and collaborating with other students)?
- ▶ Are we requiring students who could benefit from tutoring and other supports to use those supports?
- ▶ How do we encourage students to interact with faculty members outside the classroom?
- ▶ How do we help students gain program-relevant experience?+



If they always keep on front and center what's in the best interest of the student, it's going to be the right decision for that institution.

— ADMINISTRATOR



## TOOLS & RESOURCES



Visit [www.cccse.org/NR2020](http://www.cccse.org/NR2020) for additional tools, including *SENSE*, *CCSSE*, and *CCFSSE* toolkits that can help colleges assess their pathways efforts to date and evaluate how students are experiencing key practices. This site also includes protocols that colleges can use for pathways focus groups with students as well as with faculty and staff working on guided pathways efforts.

\* Source: Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII)

+ Source: Dr. Davis Jenkins, Senior Research Scholar, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University

# NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

---

**Dr. Daniel J. Phelan, Chair**

*President/CEO*  
Jackson College (MI)

**Dr. Michael A. Baston**

*President*  
Rockland Community College  
(NY)

**Cathy Bio**

*Director of Student Success*  
University of Hawaii Community  
College System Office

**Dr. Beverly L. Bower**

*Don A. Buchholz Endowed Chair  
Emeritus & Professor Emeritus of  
Higher Education*  
University of North Texas

**Dr. Walter G. Bumphus**

*President and CEO*  
American Association of  
Community Colleges (AACC)

**Dr. Sunita V. Cooke**

*Superintendent/President*  
MiraCosta Community College  
District (CA)

**Dr. Rufus Glasper**

*President and CEO*  
League for Innovation in the  
Community College

**Dr. Steven R. Gonzales**

*Interim Chancellor*  
Maricopa Community Colleges  
(AZ)

**Dr. Leigh Goodson**

*President and CEO*  
Tulsa Community College (OK)

**Dr. Rob Johnstone**

*Founder & President*  
National Center for Inquiry &  
Improvement (NCII)

**Dr. Jane A. Karas**

*President*  
Flathead Valley Community  
College (MT)

**Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart**

*President*  
Amarillo College (TX)

**Dr. Alexander C. McCormick**

*Associate Professor of Educational  
Leadership and Policy Studies*  
*Director, National Survey of  
Student Engagement*  
Indiana University Bloomington

**Dr. Steven B. Robbins**

*Principal Research Scientist*  
Educational Testing Service

**Dr. John E. Roueche**

*Professor and Director, John E.  
Roueche Center for Community  
College Leadership, College of  
Education*  
Kansas State University

**Dr. Joe Schaeffer**

*President*  
Laramie County Community  
College (WY)

**Dr. Lynn Tincher-Ladner**

*President and CEO*  
Phi Theta Kappa

**Dr. Vincent Tinto**

*Distinguished University Professor  
Emeritus*  
Syracuse University

**Dr. Philip Uri Treisman**

*University Distinguished Teaching  
Professor*  
*Executive Director, The Charles A.  
Dana Center*  
The University of Texas at Austin

**Jan Yoshiwara**

*Executive Director*  
Washington State Board for  
Community and Technical  
Colleges

# Center Member Colleges and Center Staff

For lists of Center member colleges and Center staff, visit [www.cccse.org](http://www.cccse.org).










# BUILDING MOMENTUM

Using Guided Pathways to Redesign  
the Student Experience



*Center for  
Community College  
Student Engagement*

Program in Higher Education Leadership  
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy  
College of Education  
The University of Texas at Austin  
3316 Grandview Street  
Austin, TX 78705

 512.471.6807  
 [info@cccse.org](mailto:info@cccse.org)  
 [www.cccse.org](http://www.cccse.org)  
 @CommCollSurveys  
 @CCCSEVideo