Texas Playbook for Scaling Eight-Week Terms for Pathways Transformation

A Guide for College Implementation Teams

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Texas Success Center

Talent Strong Texas Pathways

Introduction

The role of community colleges as a driver of community prosperity and socioeconomic mobility has never been so valued—and so crucial. Yet data from the National Student Clearinghouse indicates just 42% of students enrolled in community colleges complete a credential within six years. Part-time students, who are more likely to be juggling multiple competing priorities, are half as likely to complete a credential—only 19% of part-time students earn a credential within six years (Complete College America [CCA], December 2022).

As a result of the recent pandemic, researchers and As a result of the recent pandemic, researchers and practitioners have started paying better attention to the needs of adult learners wanting to reskill or upskill independently or through a postsecondary institution. Researchers at Complete College America estimate that adult learners, ages 25 and older, make up 37% of the student body at community colleges. Moreover, they calculate that 64% of college students are working while enrolled at community colleges, with approximately 40% working full time (CCA, 2022). Researchers have also become much more aware of the types of supports—and the comprehensive approach to offering supports—that learners of all ages need in order to promote inclusive access to higher education. Latinx and Black students are attending community colleges as part-time students at rates that exceed their peers (83% and 79%, respectively), thereby highlighting the need for community colleges to develop a strategic approach to address enrollment and retention concerns (CCA, 2022).

On average, student enrollment in Texas community colleges dropped 14% during the pandemic, with student enrollment at community colleges declining from 748,478 students in Fall 2019 to 639,549 students in Fall 2021 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], n.d.). However, several colleges that had implemented 8-week terms prior to the onset of the pandemic noted that their institutions were less affected by the steep enrollment declines that other community colleges and universities across the nation faced (The Washington Post, 2022). Leaders at these colleges began to informally collect outcomes data and share how 8-week terms provided greater exibility and additional on-ramps back into college for students struggling during the crisis. Over the past two years, the Texas Success Center (i.e., the Center) has coordinated efforts to enable colleges to learn from each other and developed a structured mentorship approach for additional colleges planning to transition to 8-week terms. *The Texas Playbook for Scaling 8-Week Terms* for Pathways Transformation organizes our shared learning to date and serves as a primary resource to capture the wide array of artifacts and professional development tools that have been created to date to support this work. It provides a structured approach which can be utilized as a guidepost for colleges to promote and encourage further cross-systems conversations—which are needed to institutionalize the changes underway within the context of existing Talent Strong Texas Pathways (i.e. Pathways) reform efforts.

With gratitude, the Center acknowledges three Leader Colleges that have been instrumental in building and supporting Texas' 8-week terms learning community and the development of the *Texas Playbook*: Grayson College, Kilgore College, and Odessa College.

Talent Strong Texas Pathways Strategy

The Center, with financial support provided by the Trellis Foundation, has been working alongside Texas community colleges since 2021 to implement, scale, and institutionalize 8-week terms within the context of the Center's comprehensive Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy (Texas Success Center [TSC], n.d.). The Center supports college leaders in achieving their goals to build new systems that are more responsive to students' needs. Learn more about the statewide strategy in the Preface, "Talent Strong Texas Pathways Strategy" (pages 6-8).

The Talent Strong Texas Pathways theory of change posits that efforts to scale guided pathways practices correlate with growth in student success metrics. As colleges redesign systems to implement and scale 8-week terms, the Center anticipates improvements in the following early momentum metrics: (a) percentage of students earning six or more credits in Term 1, (b) percentage of students persisting from Term 1 to Term 2, and (c) percentage of students completing college-level courses (mathematics, reading, writing, all three subjects) in Year 1. Research suggests that growth in these metrics is correlated with improved long-term outcomes including credential completion and transfer to a four-year institution (Belfield, Jenkins, & Fink, 2019).

Overview of Statewide Efforts to Implement and Scale 8-Week Terms

Leader Colleges Grayson College, Kilgore College, and Odessa College have mentored two cohorts of colleges in 2022 and 2023 which made a commitment to launch and scale 8-week terms (see Appendix E for a list of the 16 colleges which were members of these cohorts). Presidents and chancellors at these colleges committed to a fall semester launch of new 8-week terms for the year following recruitment into the cohort. This provided a planning year, which included CEO-to-CEO executive coaching focused on institutional vision, scale, success metrics, and lessons learned. The chief academic officers organized professional development opportunities, which included topic-based webinars with in-depth conversations facilitated by topical experts (e.g., administrators, staff, and faculty), and site visits to provide customized

technical assistance to the Implementation Teams of participating colleges. The community of practice provided an invaluable networking opportunity and enabled cross-institutional collaboration and the sharing of lessons learned. Each college participating in the 2022 cohort provided capstone presentations to their peers and determined next steps for their institution, including data collection to evaluate the impact of their activities. Their priority to focus on the sustainability of institutional change efforts led to the development of the *Texas Playbook.*

It is important to clearly articulate that launching programs as 8-week terms is not a stand-alone strategy or pilot program intending to support a limited group of students in a haphazard way. Rather, Texas community colleges are implementing and scaling 8-week terms with an intentional focus on improving program design and learning outcomes as an agent for whole-college redesign and to accelerate the scaling of the essential practices associated with the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy.

Using the Texas Playbook

Creating a Vision. Colleges that are newly starting the work of launching and scaling 8-week terms should first create a vision for how redesigning curricular programs into 8-week terms is aligned with fulfilling the mission of the institution, the college's commitment to Talent Strong Texas Pathways, and the role of staff, faculty, and administrators in transformative change efforts to address long-standing institutional barriers to access and success.

Developing an Implementation Team. College presidents and chancellors should identify a team lead for this work and create a cross-systems Implementation Team whose members will be responsible for coordinating change management practices, including building buy-in from faculty and staff. The Implementation Team should determine a set of action-oriented goals and activities that focus on reaching scale for 8-week terms. Implementing a reform at scale means 80% or more first-time-in-college students benefit from the practice or 80% of programs have been transformed. See the Glossary of Terms for detailed definition of "scale" (page 5). Initial

key decisions include: (a) identifying which programs (career and technical, academic, or both) will utilize 8-week terms, (b) selecting a target "launch" date that allows a sufficient planning period (in general, participating Texas colleges have selected the following fall semester to enable a full year of planning and coordination of systems change), and (c) identifying student outcomes metrics to evaluate the impact of changes on student learning.

Getting to Work. The Implementation Team should determine a timeline of meetings to work through Chapters 1–4 of this playbook. Then, the team should determine the appropriate stakeholders to convene for each meeting to discuss specific changes in *Policy, Practice, Process, and People* that need to be made to reach their goals. See the Glossary of Terms to learn more about the "Four P's of Transformative Change" (page 3). To fully explore the questions provided in each chapter, the Center recommends scheduling four separate 90-minute meetings early in the first semester of the planning year to build momentum for the changes across the institution that are required to support new 8-week terms.

Continually Improving. Colleges that have already implemented 8-week terms and are now shifting the focus to institutionalization may use the *Texas Playbook* similarly, with the goal of institutionalizing the changes underway with new or broader changes to Policy, Practice, Process, and People. Conversations should focus on (a) addressing emerging challenges in implementation, (b) reflecting on the successes/challenges of scaling and institutionalizing 8-week terms, and (c) identifying next steps for aligning reform efforts within their Talent Strong Texas Pathways College Action Plans. The Center recommends that Implementation Teams convene appropriate stakeholders regularly (at least annually) to revisit Chapters 1–4 of the *Texas Playbook* and discuss improvements in outcomes data to establish a cycle of ongoing continuous improvement. Presentations regarding student impact and next steps should be provided to the CEO and trustees regularly.

Note: The framing of *Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms: A Guide and Workbook* (Achieving the Dream, 2021a, 2021b) informed the organization of the Texas Playbook within the context of the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy.

Four P's of Transformative Change:

Adapted from research on transformative change from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) regarding the components of change that must occur across multiple dimensions of an institution (CCRC, 2017), the Center recommends that Implementation Teams evaluate each essential practice in terms of the following types of institutional changes (which are likely needed):

Policy – Changes in the design of systems or to organizational policies developed to guide actions that result in structural changes (e.g., new policies may include enrollment policies or financial aid policies to increase access and continuous enrollment in 8-week courses).

Process – Changes to rules and procedures that influence a set of human interactions with systems and business practices (e.g., new business processes may enable a student to enroll in a year's worth of coursework that is aligned with a specific credential in order to mitigate historical barriers).

Practice – Activities or essential practices adopted by the college intended to serve a broad population of students (e.g., co-requisite courses are organized in 8-week terms with contextualized supports provided to help students placed into developmental courses to succeed in the first college-level math course in their first semester).

People – Changes in the underlying attitudes, beliefs, or values of individuals that result in new behaviors (e.g., data collection and data-sharing practices enable faculty to understand the positive impact of 8-week terms on academic achievement gaps and thus build buy-in to scale and institutionalize 8-week terms).

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The chapters of the *Texas Playbook* are organized to align with existing efforts underway at Texas community colleges to scale the essential practices associated with the four pillars of the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy. The appendix includes resources and professional development materials created by the Leader Colleges to support Texas community colleges in launching new 8-week terms, as well as example products associated with the types of policy changes and system changes that have been developed as the work has shifted from implementing to scaling and institutionalizing 8-week terms.

Participating Colleges

The following colleges participated in this Texas initiative and contributed to the body of knowledge developed and shared in the *Texas Playbook.*

Austin Community College	**Laredo College**
Alamo College	**Lamar State College Orange**
Alvin Community College	**Odessa College**
Angelina College	**Paris Junior College**
College of the Mainland	**Ranger College**
Del Mar College	**San Jacinto College**
El Paso Community College	**Temple College**
Grayson College	**Texarkana College**
Howard College	**Trinity Valley Community College**
Kilgore College	

Talent Strong Texas Pathways Strategy

Preface

The Texas Success Center (i.e., the Center), launched in 2013 and housed at the Texas Association of Community Colleges, is dedicated to enabling social and economic mobility of Texans—focusing on learners as early as middle and high school—who are served by Texas community colleges. The Center serves as a hub for Texas community colleges and leads the state's community college reform efforts through Talent Strong Texas Pathways—a comprehensive statewide strategy for whole-college transformation aimed at dramatically improving the student experience so that all learners may succeed in achieving their post-completion goals.

Talent Strong Texas Pathways Strategy

The Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy (i.e. Pathways) is fundamentally grounded in addressing systemic educational problems impeding student success and economic mobility caused by incoherent and misaligned structures that have resulted in far too few Texans being prepared for meaningful careers (TSC, n.d.). Between 2016 and 2022, Texas community colleges scaled the dramatically successful set of core practices outlined by the research-based guided pathways strategy. These efforts have resulted in the redesign of the student experience and improved outcomes. In fact, Texas community colleges have made great strides in the growth of early momentum metrics associated with future credential completion in college, transfer to four-year institutions, and eventual baccalaureate completion. Upon this solid foundation, Texas community colleges continue to innovate with the goal of dismantling barriers to student access and success. Looking ahead, the Center's ve-year Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy will: (a) build workforce ecosystems that create accessible and inclusive talent pipelines leading students from multiple entry points to high-demand careers with living wages and on-going employment success, and (b) develop cultural conditions necessary for colleges to create new patterns of social mobility and economic empowerment for all students.

Talent Strong Texas Pathways supports community college reform aimed at redesigning institutional systems to reduce disparities in student outcomes and empower Texans to rise out of poverty and achieve their highest potential. Accordingly, and in alignment with House Bill 8 recently passed by the 88th Texas Legislature, the goal of the Center's strategy is to increase credentials and skills of Texans, with an intentional focus on adults and students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to ensure their success along clear workforce and education pathways to social and economic strength. The Center seeks to increase credential and degree completion rates by improving the disproportionality of postsecondary completion between such student subgroups.

Talent Strong Texas Pathways Framework

The Talent Strong Texas Pathways framework considers students' multiple points of entry and re-entry into career-focused talent pathways leading to the achievement of their end goals with ongoing trajectories into meaningful careers with living wages and opportunities for lifelong learning within the education-workforce cycle (Figure 1). This asset-based framework recognizes the attributes that each learner brings with them and builds upon throughout their educational journey. Importantly, it understands that all kinds of learners contribute to the larger regional and state economic engine and emerging and evolving career opportunities in Texas. It
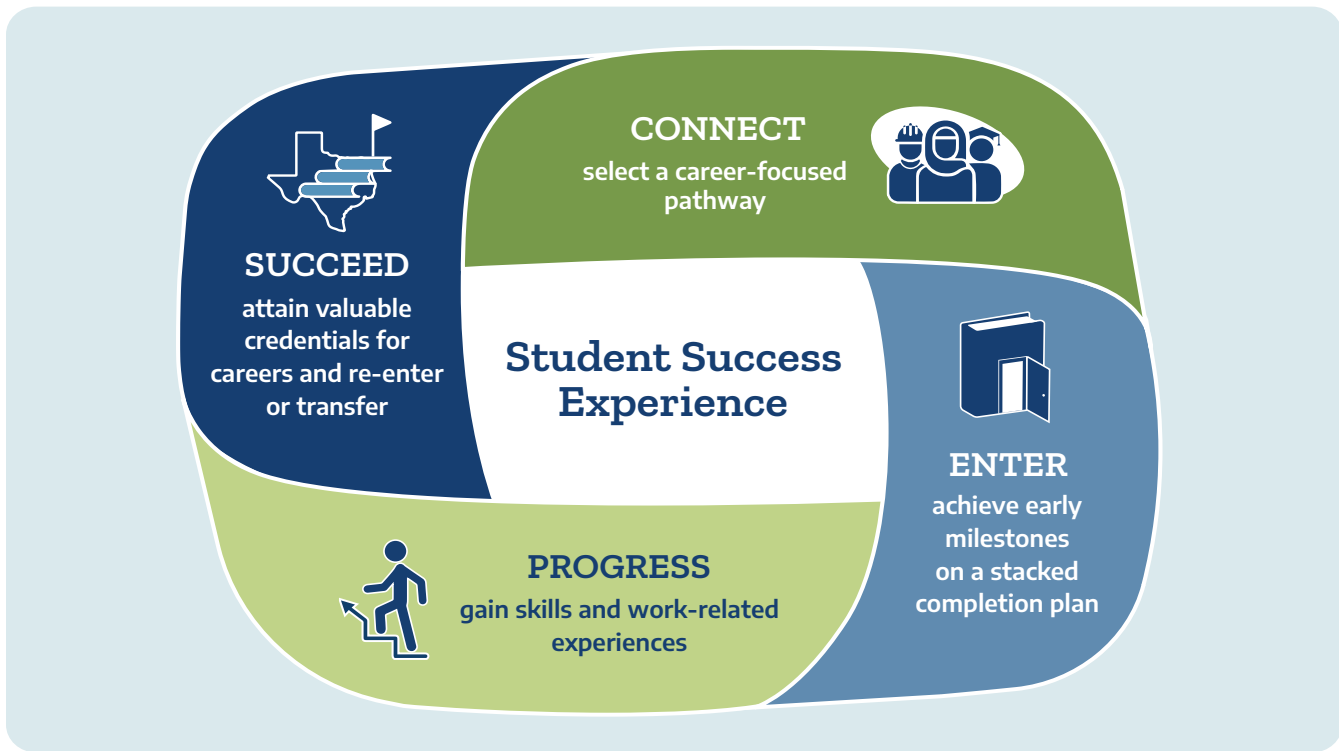
Figure 1. The Student Success Experience Life Cycle Within Texas Community Colleges

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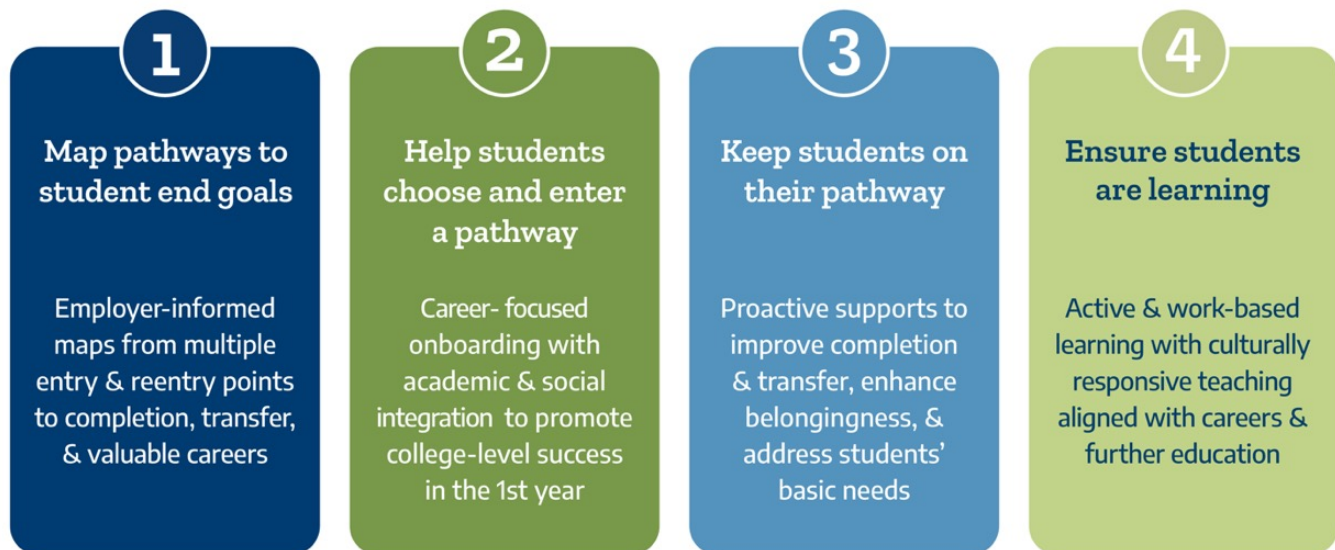   ?
                         Figure

Figure 2. The Four Pillars of Essential Practices

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The Center strives to build institutional capacity to accelerate and institutionalize the essential practices to grow student success in enrollment, persistence, credential completion, career entry, and further education. Over the past five years, Texas community colleges have made significant progress in scaling the essential practices associated with the strategy. During this time, the Center has been able to utilize a robust external evaluation process to link college engagement with this strategy to improved student outcomes.

The Center believes that colleges working to scale and institutionalize 8-week terms will accelerate the scaling of these essential practices, and as such, advance institutional systems change efforts and realize growth in student success outcomes. The implementation of 8-week terms should not be viewed by college leadership as a pilot program or disjointed project intended to serve a select population; it should be embedded within the college's broader Pathways strategy to support the college's strategic plan.

In recognition of the inherent hierarchy of fundamental needs of all humans, the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy will address issues of student wellness, belongingness, and success (Figure 3), with the goal of cultivating an inclusive campus culture. Recognizing the need to provide holistic supports for the various needs of all students to learn and complete programs, the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy is also built on the scholarly theories describing the hierarchy of human needs, with the understanding that once the more basic needs are fulfilled, it is easier to fulfill higher-order needs. The Center has designed the Talent Strong Texas Pathways strategy to holistically support the needs of a diverse population of students, including high school students, adults, and economically and educationally disadvantaged students. By addressing wellness and belongingness (e.g., food, housing, mental health, a sense of campus safety and inclusion), which are requisite to learning and thriving, colleges will create a learning experience that builds momentum toward self-actualization, furthers success, and cultivates meaningful workforce connections to advance new patterns of economic empowerment.

Success — Texas community colleges enable economic empowerment by supporting students' accomplishments and self-fulfillment needs to succeed in career and mobility goals.

Belonging & Wellness — Texas community colleges enable economic empowerment by supporting students' psychological needs, including mental health, through a campus culture that nurtures a sense of belonging.
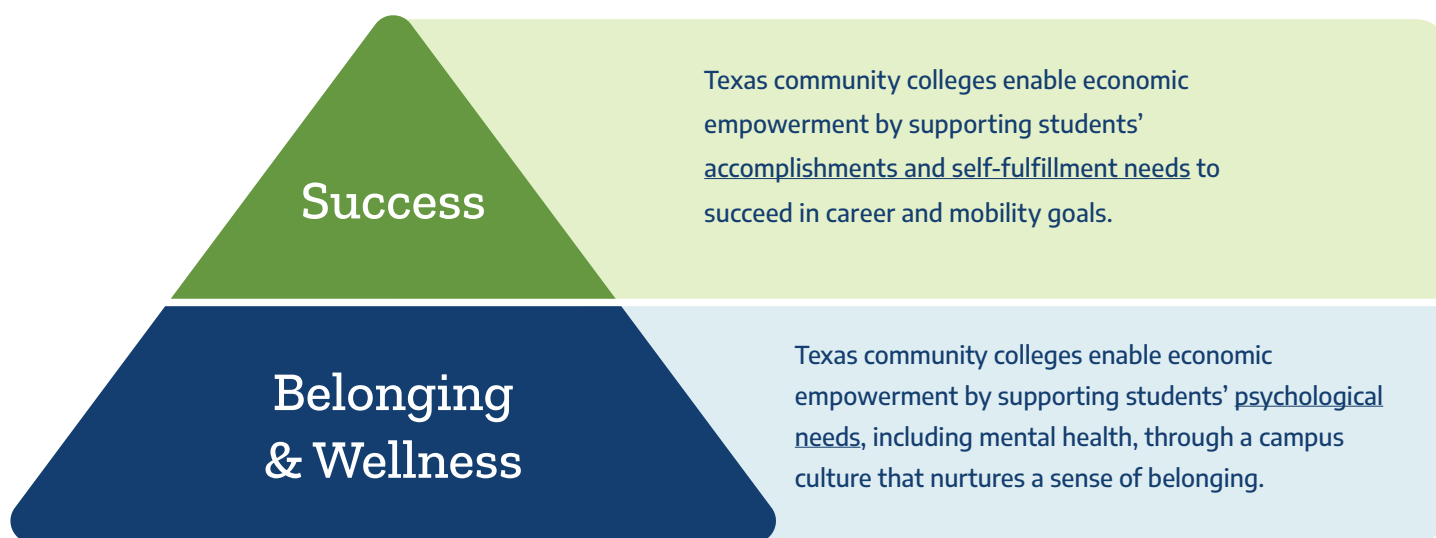
Figure 3. Social and Economic Mobility Strategy

The *Texas Playbook* is designed to support new cross-systems conversations that will, in turn, lead to a culture of change and a culture of student success.

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Map Pathways to Student End Goals

Chapter 1

The table below reflects the essential practices associated with Pillar 1 of the Texas Pathways strategy. The Implementation Team, along other invited key shareholders related to Pillar 1, should set aside enough time to reflect on each practice as they relate to the implementation and scaling of 8-week terms. The discussion should be solutions-oriented and focus on the changes needed in Policy, Process, Practice, and People across all systems and levels within the college to scale 8-week terms to a broader group of students and to improve student outcomes, including early momentum metrics and credential completion. Refer to the Glossary of Terms as needed for questions related to the definition of words used in the essential practices.

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
1A. Programs are organized and marketed in broad career-focused academic and communities or "meta-majors."	Which meta-majors should be considered for transformation to 8-week structures? Which programs in these meta-majors will be changed to the 8-week format? Which programs will not? How will these decisions be made?	What waiver process will the college develop to determine which meta majors and/or courses will be able to opt out of 8-week format? How will the waiver process be improved?	How will change management be handled to ensure a smooth transition?	How will leadership communicate changes underway to build early buy-in of faculty? Who will implement the waiver process?
1B. Every program is well designed to guide and prepare students to enter employment and further education in fields of importance to the college's service area.	How will the implementation and scaling of 8-week terms be evaluated? What data elements will be used to measure success?	Will students be able to complete all courses within their program of study in terms designed in the 8-week format? In what ways will the college improve the transfer and applicability of college credits to the student's major at 4-year institutions?	In what ways does changing to 8-week terms impact the guidance and preparation for students aiming for transfer? For students aiming to enter the workforce?	What feedback from workforce partners and universities should be collected as the college considers transforming programs to the 8-week format?

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Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
1C. Detailed information is provided on the college's website on the employment and further education opportunities targeted by each program.	What percentage of your academic and career technical programs have detailed information about employment opportunities on the college website targeted for each program? What percentage of your academic and career technical programs have detailed information about opportunities for further education (including transfer) opportunities targeted for each program?	What information will students need in order to make decisions about their future? How will this be communicated on the website? Will students be able to enroll in a year's worth of coursework aligned with a specific credential?	What changes to student communications will need to occur for programs and meta-majors transforming to the 8-week structure?	How will the college communicate to the community and families about programs organized in 8-week terms?
1D. Programs are clearly mapped out with clear guidance for students on which courses to take and in what sequence. Critical courses for program success and other key progress milestones are clearly identified. All info is easily accessible on the college's website.	How will program leaders determine the sequencing of courses for programs transformed to 8-week terms? Will dual credit pathways be impacted by changes in programs to 8-week terms?	On the college's website (or other public facing material), what programs are clearly mapped out with clear guidance for students on which course to take and in what sequence? How will program maps and credential maps need to evolve to communicate the transformation to 8-week terms to key stakeholders? Do program maps and credential maps include the critical courses for student success in the program? Are other key progress milestones clearly identified (examples include, occupational skills awards or certificates earned while pursuing associate program) on program maps and credential maps?	What considerations do we need to take for developmental and corequisite support courses that prepare students for programs organized in 8-week terms? What considerations do we need to make for hybrid, online, and hy-flex courses offered in 8-week models?	What feedback from students should be collected to inform continuous improvement efforts? How will students needing corequisite courses be advised and supported?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
1E. Required math courses are appropriately aligned with the student's meta-major/pathway or field f study.	For each program that requires a math course, has the college appropriately aligned with the student's meta major/pathway or field of study? What is the optimal placement for math courses in the sequence of 8-week programs?	How will math pathway courses align in 8-week models?	What considerations do we need to make for high-credit and high-contact-hour corequisite math courses required for entry into programs?	How does the college utilize business partnerships to validate which math course(s) should be required for each career technical program?

Help Students Choose and Enter a Pathways

The table below reflects the essential practices associated with Pillar 2 of the Texas Pathways strategy. The Implementation Team, along other invited key shareholders related to Pillar 2, should set aside enough time to reflect on each practice as they relate to the implementation and scaling of 8-week terms. The discussion should be solutions-oriented and focus on the changes needed in Policy, Process, Practice, and People across all systems and levels within the college to scale 8-week terms to a broader group of students and to improve student outcomes, including early momentum metrics and credential completion. Refer to the Glossary of Terms as needed for questions related to the definition of words used in the essential practices.

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
2A. Every new student is helped to explore career/college options, choose a program of study, and develop a full-program plan as soon as possible.	Is it standard policy at the college to provide every new student the following: (a) explore career/college options, (b) choose a program of study, and (c) and develop a full program plan as soon as possible?	Where/when do each of the three occur at your college? During orientation? During "Zero Week"? Does the onboarding process look different for students opting to enter a program organized in 8-week terms? Why?	Does every student have the opportunity to enroll in 8-week terms? If not, why? What activities are required to support a broader group of students being served in 8-week terms?	What information do students need in order to believe that they can be academically successful in accelerated course work?
2B. Contextualized supports are provided to help all students to succeed in the "gateway" courses for the college's major program areas.	Is it standard policy at the college to offer contextualized supports to help ALL students to succeed in the 'gateway' courses for your institution's major program areas?	What are the college's methods of providing contextualized supports? How are these communicated to students? What kinds of changes would provide the supports in a way that makes them less optional, or less stigmatized? What process has been set up as an early alert to help students who may be struggling? Is it effective?	Are there standardized and contextualized supports embedded within gateway courses across all programs? What steps has the college taken to make supports less optional? Less stigmatized? What still needs to occur?	How does the college cultivate a sense of belonging in the first week(s) of an accelerated course?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
2C. Contextualized supports are provided to help students placed into developmental math to succeed in the fi st college-level math course by the end of their fi st year.	Is it standard policy at the college to provide every new student the following: contextualized supports to help students placed into developmental/co-req math to succeed in their first college-level math course by the end of their first year?	What are your methods of supporting students in developmental mathematics? Which continuous improvement efforts have been most impactful in improving student completion rates in college-level mathematics? Are some specifically effective for students enrolled in 8-week terms?	What activities are required to support a broader group of students being served in developmental/co-requisite math courses organized in 8-week terms?	How will the college communicate student success with math faculty for students enrolled in 8-week math courses? Does the college share key performance indicator data relating to the percentage of students successfully completing college level math in Year 1? To whom (e.g., board, cabinet, dean, faculty)? How often?
2D. Contextualized supports are provided to help students placed into developmental reading or writing to succeed in the fi st college-level English course by the end of their fir t year.	Is it standard policy at the college to provide every new student the following: contextualized supports to help students placed into developmental/co-req English to succeed in their first college-level English course by the end of their first year?	What are your methods of supporting students in developmental reading and writing? Which continuous improvement efforts have been most impactful in improving student completion rates in college-level reading and writing? Are some specifically effective for students enrolled in 8-week terms?	What activities are required to support a broader group of students being served in developmental/co-requisite reading and writing courses organized in 8-week terms?	How will the college communicate student success with English faculty for students enrolled in 8-week reading or writing courses? Does the college share key performance indicator data relating to the percentage of students successfully completing college level reading and writing in Year 1? To whom (e.g., board, cabinet, dean, faculty)? How often?
2E. Intensive support is provided to help students placed into adult basic education (ABE) to enter and succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible.	What types of intensive supports are provided to help students placed into adult education and literacy (AEL) to both enter and succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible?	Which continuous improvement efforts have been most impactful at improving an AEL student's transition into college-level courses?	What specific challenges might AEL students have in the accelerated 8-week format? How will these challenges be mitigated?	What steps will be taken to change the college culture to encourage more individuals to seek opportunities to break down institutional barriers for AEL students?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
2F. The college works with high schools and other feeders to motivate and prepare students to enter college-level coursework in a program of study when they enroll in college.	How does the college work with feeder high schools (public, private, and charter) to motivate and prepare students to enter college-level coursework in a program of study when they enroll in college? How does policy differ among K-12 partners within the college district's service area, versus K-12 partners outside of the college district's service area? Why? What kinds of policy changes would likely promote growth in the percentage of high school graduates directly enrolling at the college who are ready for college-level course work?	What are your methods for improving collaboration and alignment across the K-12 and college systems? What changes to dual credit MOUs are still needed? What processes or cross-systems structures have been developed that improve collaboration with district partners? What are the college's next steps for building a regional infrastructure that can be leveraged to grow Talent	How does the college evaluate the success of college and career readiness efforts? What changes to the dual credit offerings provided by the college will best prepare potential students for a successful transition into programs organized as 8 week-terms? What specific events (e.g., advising, 8th grade career fair, college signing day, etc.) are most effective? What efforts are underway to grow a culture of belongingness at the college?	Which activities promote a college-going identity for key student populations?

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Help Students Choose and Enter a Pathways

Chapter 3

The table below reﬂects the essential practices associated with Pillar 3 of the Texas Pathways strategy. The Implementation Team, along other invited key shareholders related to Pillar 3, should set aside enough time to reﬂect on each practice as they relate to the implementation and scaling of 8-week terms. The discussion should be solutions-oriented and focus on the changes needed in Policy, Process, Practice, and People across all systems and levels within the college to scale 8-week terms to a broader group of students and to improve student outcomes, including early momentum metrics and credential completion. Refer to the Glossary of Terms as needed for questions related to the deﬁition of words used in the essential practices.

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
3A. The college's advisors have accurate information to monitor which program every student is in and how far along the student is toward completing the program requirements.	How does the college ensure that advisors have accurate information to monitor which program every student is in and the student's progress toward completing the program requirements? What types of policy changes should be considered in order to best serve students opting into programs organized in 8-week terms?	What advising checkpoints need to be adjusted to case manage students in 8-week term programs?	How will existing student advising requirements adjust for students in programs organized in 8-week terms? Does the college need to create new advising guidelines to better support students enrolled in programs organized in 8-week terms?	What training does the college need to provide to advisors to case manage students in programs organized in 8-week terms?
3B. The college provides students with accurate information so students can easily see the progress they are making toward their program, life, and career goals.	How does the college ensure that students are provided with accurate information so they can easily see the progress they are making toward their program, life, and career goals?	What types of IT integration are needed to help students stay on track to accomplish their long-term goals? Does the college need to reprogram online program completion software (e.g., Degree Works) to reflect programs organized into 8-week terms?	How will faculty and advisors guide students on the use of their online program completion information? How will the Learning Frameworks curriculum be updated to support students in programs organized in 8-week terms?	How will the college ensure IT staff fully understand the implications of the adjustment to 8-week terms, in order to make appropriate changes in program software? What training do faculty and advisors need to guide students through program progress?

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Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
3C. The college has policies and practices in place so that advisors, faculty, and staff intervene in ways that help students continue to build momentum to program completion.	What policies and practices are utilized at the college so advisors, faculty, and staff have the ability to intervene in ways that help students continue to build momentum toward their program completion?	How will the college adjust advising case management practices to connect with students in 8-week terms effectively? If there is not a case management system in place for advising, how will the college systematically identify when students need support in programs organized in 8-week terms?	What professional development is necessary for faculty, advisors, and learning support staff to understand how to effectively serve students in programs organized in 8-week terms? In what ways will stakeholders throughout the college community (e.g., advisors, faculty, staff, etc.) ensure that students taking 8-week courses will experience a meaningful connection early in the term (i.e., within the first 2 weeks)?	Has the college identified a set of core values that guide individual and communal behavior? Do the values of the college reflect a student-centered approach for serving students? Do they support a culture of student success where all students have equal opportunity to achieve their academic goals?
3D. The college provides early and accurate advising to students selecting into limited-access programs, such as nursing or culinary arts, to engage them with available options for credentials that align with their goals.	How does the college provide early and accurate advising to students selecting into limited-access programs (e.g., nursing) to engage them with available options for credentials that align with their goals?	What processes need to be in place to provide students interested in limited access programs organized in 8-week terms to learn about other programs (possibly in different semester formats)?	How will advising materials and processes outlining alternative program options be redesigned to include key information and entry dates for programs in multiple semester formats?	What do faculty advisors and academic advisors need to know about programs organized in multiple semester formats to communicate options to students?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
3E. The college schedules courses based on student educational plans to ensure students can take the courses they need when they need them, can plan their lives around school from one term to the next, and can effi iently complete their programs.	How does the college provide year-long course schedules to ensure students can take the courses they need when they need them (e.g., students are able to plan their lives around school from one term to the next and can efficiently complete their program)? What kinds of new enrollment policies are needed to increase access and continuous enrollment in programs organized in 8-week terms? What kinds of new financial aid policies are needed to increase access and continuous enrollment in programs organized in 8-week terms?	What new business processes are needed to enable students in 8-week programs to enroll in all courses within a semester at the same time? To enroll in all courses across multiple semesters at the same time? What data will be collected to understand enrollment and completion patterns for students in programs in 8-week terms? How will this data be shared to improve processes and policy? When will data be collected and analyzed to understand student scheduling needs? How will this data be shared to improve processes and policy?	How will scheduling practices evolve to manage programs organized into 8-week terms? How will online scheduling tools be updated to reflect programs organized into 8-week terms? Will a flag or indicator be added to scheduling systems to ensure only students enrolled in programs organized in 8-week terms have access to the 8-week courses they need to progress? What practices need to be created around prerequisite course completion with the short turnaround time from one 8-week term to the next?	What do registrars and schedulers need to understand about programs organized in 8-week terms? What training for add/drop periods and census date data collection do faculty and advisors need to manage students in programs organized in 8-week terms? What information do program faculty need to ensure they are offering and staffing courses when students need them for programs organized in 8-week terms? How will faculty loads need to be adjusted to accommodate programs organized in 8-week terms?

Ensure Students are Learning

The table below reflects the essential practices associated with Pillar 4 of the Texas Pathways strategy. The Implementation Team, along other invited key shareholders related to Pillar 4, should set aside enough time to reflect on each practice as they relate to the implementation and scaling of 8-week terms. The discussion should be solutions-oriented and focus on the changes needed in Policy, Process, Practice, and People across all systems and levels within the college to scale 8-week terms to a broader group of students and to improve student outcomes, including early momentum metrics and credential completion. Refer to the Glossary of Terms as needed for questions related to the definition of words used in the essential practices.

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
4A. Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are aligned with the requirements for success in the further education and employment outcomes targeted by each program.	Does the college have an effective strategy for securing the engagement and input of key stakeholders in the development/ revision of PLOs? Which programs will be the first to be converted to 8-week terms? How can the strategy of program conversion and the policies adopted to scale 8-week courses assist the college in better aligning program learning outcomes with postsecondary success? What skills, knowledge, and abilities will be gained in each program that are relevant to the workplace and or transfer institution?	How might the process of converting a program to 8-week terms assist the college in identifying/ revising program learning outcomes to ensure students are successful in post-completion outcomes? How will the college better communicate with transfer university partners to ensure learning outcomes are aligned with future education? How will the college better communicate with workforce partners to ensure learning outcomes are aligned with employer needs?	How are program learning outcomes aligned with the requirements targeted by each program (e.g., to pursue a BAAS or to secure employment in the field of interest)? What activities should be planned for in the coming year to ensure that program learning outcomes are better aligned with corresponding programs at transfer university partners? What activities should be planned for in the coming year to better utilize business advisory councils in the co-creation and validation of program learning outcomes?	How will the college guide faculty in programs organized in 8-week terms to review and revise PLOs? How will students understand where and when they will meet PLO milestones during programs organized into 8-week terms? How will the college support faculty to strengthen connections between Student Learning Outcomes at the course level and PLOs at the program level? How does the college partner with employers to validate the skills and credentials that a student gains through their program?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
4B. Faculty provide instruction across programs (especially in program introductory courses) that engages students in active and applied learning, encouraging them to think critically, solve meaningful problems, and work and communicate effectively with others.	What kind of policies has the college adopted to promote active and applied learning? How will the college continue to promote active and applied learning in the accelerated course format? What barriers and challenges still need to be addressed? What new policies are recommended to support students' academic success in 8-week terms?	What constructive evaluation processes need to be created to learn how faculty are providing active and applied learning opportunities in programs organized into 8-week terms?	How are faculty providing instruction across programs that (a) engages students in active and applied learning; (b) encourages them to think critically; (c) to solve meaningful problems; and (d) and requires them to work and communicate effectively with others? Does this practice (and the student experience) vary across 8-week and 16-week terms?	How will the college collect student voice data relating to their learning experiences to assist in continuous improvement efforts? How frequently is this type of information sought? Who is this type of data shared with? What professional development opportunities need to be created to provide faculty opportunities for professional growth in active and applied learning, particularly as it relates to instruction in the 8-week format?
4C. Experiential learning activities are embedded in every program that allow all students to apply and deepen knowledge and skills through projects, internships, co-ops, clinical placements, group projects outside of class, service learning, study abroad and other active learning activities.	In what programs has the college embedded experiential learning activities that allow all students to apply and deepen their knowledge? What policy changes are needed to ensure that all students have access to experiential learning opportunities?	How does the college improve and offer consistent, high-quality experiential learning across all sections of a course? Of a program?	How will the college build experiential learning into programs organized as 8-week terms? How does the college collaborate with local employers to expand workplace experiential learning opportunities? How does the college collaborate with university transfer partners to expand academic experiential learning opportunities?	How will the college provide support to faculty and program leads to design and embed experiential learning in programs organized into 8-week terms? What information should be collected to better understand the barriers that exist for students in getting experiential learning in accelerated courses?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
4D. Faculty/ programs assess whether students are mastering program learning outcomes (PLOs) and building skills across each program, in both academic and workforce programs.	How will the college's established policy to assess whether students are mastering PLOs for all programs need to adjust for programs organized into 8-week terms?	How will the college assess whether students are mastering PLOs in programs organized in 8-week terms? In what ways will PLO assessment policy need to adjust to accommodate programs organized into 8-week terms? What types of changes to program design are most likely to positively impact student growth in mastering PLOs?	What practices exist for faculty and program leads to assess PLOs in programs organized into 8-week terms? Will the practice of PLO assessment need to vary for programs organized in 8-week terms? Why?	What training for faculty is necessary to understand how 8-week terms impact PLO data collection, timeline, and analysis processes? How will the college increase faculty engagement in data collection and data sharing to ensure that students achieve PLOs which are aligned with their future aspirations? How will the college increase buy-in from faculty most resistant to program re-design work?
4E. Results of learning outcomes assessments are used to improve teaching and learning through program review, professional development, and other intentional campus efforts.	How is the priority to provide high quality learning experiences portrayed in the college's mission? In the 5-year strategic plan?	How will PLO assessment data be used to support an increasingly diverse body of students? What changes to the assessment process are needed to make timely improvements to support students enrolled in 8-week terms? What capacity-building efforts need to occur to support identified changes needed from the PLO assessment process?	How will the college set expectations that all programs organized into 8-week terms develop program review processes that include timebound action steps for improvement? How will the college support all programs to use the results of learning outcomes assessments to improve teaching and learning through professional development? Are there other intentional campus efforts that support the college's continuous improvement efforts?	How will the college better communicate the value of post-secondary education and the completion of a specific program for each student? What strategies for data sharing would increase trust among staff and faculty to promote the use of data sharing and assessment as beneficial tools for continuous improvement?

Essential Practice	Policy	Process	Practice	People
4F. The college helps students document their learning for employers and universities through portfolios, badging, sharing of micro-credentials, and other means beyond transcripts.	How would the process of developing credential maps assist the college in developing new policies to support the documentation of learning? Has the college developed student-facing credential maps for the programs organized in 8-week terms?	Has the college created a process for documenting the skills gained through a program (e.g., badging)? Has the college created a process for documenting the skills already acquired (e.g., credit for prior learning)? What are the next steps the college should take in recognizing and assessment what students already know, and to expand the credentialing of prior learning?	At what level does your institution help students document their learning for employers or universities through (a) portfolios (what programs?), (b) badging (what courses/programs?), (c) sharing of micro-credentials (what courses/programs?) What additional opportunities need to be developed for specific programs organized as 8-week terms?	How do students use various tools intended to document their learning? Which forms of documented learning most successfully communicate the knowledge, abilities, and skills of a student to a potential employer?
4G. The college collects quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness of educational practice (e.g., using CCSSE or SENSE, etc.) and uses the results to create targeted professional development for faculty and program leads.	Has the college established a policy regarding the strategic and routine administrations of national assessments? Does the college analyze disaggregated data (e.g., low-income, academically underprepared, adult learners, first generation, race/ethnicity) to identify institutional.	How is data collected and utilized such that it cultivates a culture of student success? A culture of caring and belongingness?	How does the college ensure that the voices of all types of students are included in quantitative data? In qualitative data?	What kind of data collections are needed "closer to the learner" that would provide high quality learning experiences and the supports needed to be successful in rigorous college-level courses? What kinds of data collections are needed "closer to the learner" that would support students enrolled in 8-week terms?

Appendix A:
Professional Development and Presentations

Professional Development Created for College Implementation Teams

- Pre-Institute Workshop: **Transforming Culture and Adopting 8-Week Terms to Improve Student Success** (presentation slides), Odessa College, November 2021

- Pre-Institute Workshop: **Implementing and Scaling 8-Week Terms** (presentation slides), Odessa College, Kilgore College, and Grayson College, April 2022

- Concurrent Session: **Scaling 8-Week Terms** (presentation slides), Odessa College, April 2022

- Concurrent Session: **Focus to Finish: Implementing 8-Week Course Scheduling** (presentation slides), Kilgore College, April 2022

- Webinar: **Financial Aid** (presentation slides & recording), Odessa College, Kilgore College, and Grayson College, July 2022

- Webinar: **Faculty Buy-In** (presentation slides & recording), Odessa College, Kilgore College, and Grayson College, September 2022

- Site Visit: **8-Week Courses: Student Success Data** (presentation slides), Kilgore College, September 2022

- Webinar: **Dual Credit/Early College Programs** (presentation slides & recording), Odessa College, Kilgore College, and Grayson College, October 2022

State and National Presentations & Recognition

- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: **Odessa College Receives Star Award for 8-Week Courses** (video), Odessa College, December 2017

- Achieving the Dream: **Odessa College Receives 2018 Leah Meyer Austin Award** (document), Odessa College, 2018

- American Association of Community Colleges 2022 Annual: **Scaling 8-Week Terms to Increase Enrollment and Retention** (presentation slides), Odessa College, April 2022

- American Association of Community Colleges 2023 Annual: **Scaling 8-Week Terms to Increase Enrollment and Retention** (presentation slides), Odessa College, April 2023

- American Association of Community Colleges 2023 Annual: **Scaling 8-Week Terms for Institutional Transformation** (presentation slides), Grayson College and Kilgore College, April 2023

- Wrangler Waves Podcast: **Lessons Learned - 10 Years of 8-Week Courses**, Odessa College, October 2023

Appendix B:
Texas Resources and Samples

Transitioning Steps

- National Junior College Athletic Association: **Letter of Notification - Change to 8-Week Terms and Academic Calendar Revisions** (document), Odessa College, April 2014
- **Institutional Commitments for Students, Employees, and Faculty** (presentation slides), Odessa College, February 2015
- Sample Waiver: **8-Week Course Waiver Form** (document), Grayson College, Fall 2017
- Sample Waver: **Request for Exception to 8-Week Course Format** (document), Kilgore College, March 2022

Course Syllabi/Calendar Samples

- **Biology 2401: 8-Weeks Course Calendar** (document), Kilgore College, Fall 2023
- **College Algebra 1314: 8-Weeks Course Syllabus** (document), Grayson College, Fall 2023
- **College Algebra 1314: 16-Weeks Course Syllabus** (document), Grayson College, Fall 2023
- **English 1301: 8-Weeks Course Calendar** (document), San Jacinto College, Fall 2023
- **English 1301: 16-Weeks Course Calendar** (document), San Jacinto College, Fall 2023
- **English 1302: 8-Weeks Course Calendar** (document), San Jacinto College, Fall 2023
- **English 1302: 16-Weeks Course Calendar** (document), San Jacinto College, Fall 2023
- **History 1301: 8-Weeks Course Syllabus** (document), Grayson College, Fall 2023
- **History 1301: 16-Weeks Course Syllabus** (document), Grayson College, Fall 2023

Faculty Buy-in

- **Drop Rate Improvement Program: What's Your Superpower?** (presentation slides), Odessa College, January 2022
- **Faculty Data Summit Questions** (document), Grayson College, Spring 2023

Data Analysis for Student Impact

- **Texas Pathways 8-Week Transformation Data Report** (document), San Jacinto College, December 2023

Implementing Year-Round Registration

- **Alamo Together: Full Academic Year Registration Project Overview** (presentation slides), Alamo Colleges, December 2023
- Inside Higher Education: **Registering for Classes—3 Semesters at a Time** (article), September 21, 2023

Appendix C:
Helpful URLs

Academic Calendars and Course Enrollment

- 8-Week Classes at ACC | Austin Community College
- 2023-2024 Academic Calendar | El Paso Community College
- 2023-2024 Academic Calendar | Odessa College
- 2023-2024 Official College Calendar | Kilgore College
- Fall 2023 Academic Calendar | Grayson College
- Fall 2023 Schedule for the 1st 8-Week Session | Austin Community College
- Fall 2023 Schedule for the 2nd 8-Week Session | Austin Community College
- Spring 2024 Academic Calendar | Grayson College
- Registration Guide: Summer and Fall 2023 | Laredo College
- Full Academic Year Registration | Alamo Colleges

Student Recruitment into 8-Week Programs

- 8-Week Classes | Texarkana College
- 8-Week College at the Mission del Paso Campus | El Paso Community College
- 8-Week Courses: FAQ | Alvin Community College
- 8-Week Terms: FAQ | Del Mar College
- 8-Week FAQ | Paris Junior College
- 8-Week Sessions: Put Completing Studies on the Fast Track | Del Mar College
- Cre8 Your Future | Howard College
- PJC's 8-Week Courses | Paris Junior College
- PJC Empowers Students With Move to 8-Week Classes | Paris Junior College

Career & Academic Advising

- [Pathways | Grayson College](#)
- [Career Center | Grayson College](#)
- [New Student Advising | Grayson College](#)
- [2022-2023 Advising Guide | Del Mar College](#)

Financial Assistance

- [Office of Financial Aid | Grayson College](#)
- [Promise Programs | Grayson College](#)
- [Scholarships | Grayson College](#)

External Communications for Community

- [Texarkana College Trustees Approve 8-Week Format for Academic Courses Beginning Fall 2023 | Texarkana College](#)

Appendix D:
Studies and Research on 8-Week Model

Implementing 8-Week Terms

- Achieving the Dream:**Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms: A Guide** (document), May 2021
- Achieving the Dream:**Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms: Workbook** (document), May 2021
- Community College Executive Forum:**Closing the Part-Time Student Success Gap** (presentation slides), February 13, 2020

Case Studies

- Achieving the Dream: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms College Spotlight: **Amarillo College: Big Goals for Student Success** (document), May 2021
- Achieving the Dream: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms College Spotlight: **Northeast Wisconsin Technical College: Big Jump to Close Equity Gaps** (document), May 2021
- Achieving the Dream: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms College Spotlight: **Odessa College: An Overnight Success Several Years in the Making** (document), May 2021
- Achieving the Dream: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms College Spotlight: **Trident Technical College: Bold Strategy for Student Success** (document), May 2021
- Achieving the Dream: Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms College Spotlight: **Waukesha County Technical College: More Students Complete a Credential in a Timely Manner** (document), May 2021
- Community College Executive Forum: **Preventing Early Attrition: Pathing Students to Success from Application Through the First Year** (document), Practice 12: Compressed Mini-Semesters, pp. 61-63, 2015

Research

- **2024 Benchmark report: Analysis of the Relationship Between Scheduling Effectiveness, Student Progress, and Completion** (2024). Section 2: Rethinking Flexible schedules, pp. 12-16. Ad Astra.
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- Burn, H., Thrill, C., Mesa, V., Zamani-Gallaher, E., Wood, J. L. (2023). **Promoting Racial Equity in the STEM Math Pathway in Community Colleges**. Justice Through the Lens of Calculus: Framing New Possibilities for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (pp. 175-183). MAA Press.
- **From Practice to Policy: How Institutions Accelerate Adult Completion and Fuel Prosperity** (February 2020). California Competes.

- **From Setback to Success: Meeting Combacker Students Where They Are** (February 2024). California Completes

- Redl, T. (December 2020). **Accelerating Students Successfully through Developmental and College-Level Mathematics and Embracing Co-Requisite Models: An 8-week + 8-week Model.** Journal of Education and Social Development (4-2).

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Visit the **Scottsdale Community College Library** to further explore their curated set of articles, thesis and dissertation studies, and research relating to the topic of 8-week terms. With gratitude, several of these resources have been included in this section of the *Texas Playbook.*

Appendix E:
Leader College Pairings with Mentee Colleges

Cohort 2022 and Cohort 2023

Odessa College	Kilgore College	Grayson College
Austin Community College Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)	**Alvin Community College** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)	**Howard College** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)
El Paso Community College Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)	**Del Mar College** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)	**Paris Junior College** Cohort 2022 (Implementation in Fall 2022)
Alamo Colleges Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)	**Laredo College** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)	**Texarkana College** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2023)
Angelina College Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)	**Lamar State College Orange** Cohort 2022 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)	**Trinity Valley Community College** Cohort 2022 (Transition through Fall 2024)
	College of the Mainland Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)	**Ranger College** Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)
	San Jacinto College Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)	**Temple College** Cohort 2023 (Scaled Implementation in Fall 2024)

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Achieving the Dream. (2021b): *Preparing for shortened academic terms: Workbook.*
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The Texas Success Center supports the Texas Association of Community Colleges members' efforts to improve student success and directs Talent Strong Texas Pathways — a statewide strategy focused on building capacity for community colleges to design and implement structured academic and career pathways at scale, for all students. For more information, visit tacc.org/tsc.