Texas Success Center

Guided Pathways Essential Practices:
Baseline Scale of Adoption Assessment of Cadre 1 and AACC 2.0 Colleges

April 2018

OVERVIEW

Each of the 13 community colleges in Texas Pathways cadre 1 (including one AACC Pathways 2.0 institution) is engaged in redesigning the student experience using the essential guided pathways practices. The Texas Success Center adapted the AACC and CCRC *Scale of Adoption Assessment* based on research presented in the Community College Research Center's book, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015)[1]. The 13 colleges completed the assessment in October 2017 and provided updates to plans for processes and practices in March 2018.

The following summarizes the analysis of the colleges' self-assessment responses. The assessment used a five-level scale for each college to indicate the extent to which it has implemented a given practice. These levels are defined as follows:

Not Occurring	Not Systematic	Planning for Scale Implementation	Systematic Implementation in Progress	At Scale
College is not currently engaging in this practice	Practice is incomplete, inconsistent, informal, optional	College is planning to systematically implement the practice or to expand on existing practices	Implementation of the practice is in progress for all students in all programs of study	Practice is implemented at scale (or very nearly at scale) for all students in all programs of study

Overall, the colleges have implemented practices that are building blocks for guided pathways in each of the four essential practice areas. The following report summarizes their progress. At the end of the document is a brief description of common shared challenges.

1. MAPPING PATHWAYS TO STUDENT END GOALS

Colleges have focused on identifying meta-majors by grouping programs into broad fields to assist students select an area of interest. Program maps are an important guided pathways reform foundation. Meta-majors can become student communities and the basis for common entering courses, contextualizing curriculum, project-based applied learning experiences, and cocurricular activities. Program maps within each meta-major are the foundation for giving students accurate information about program content and a clear sense of jobs available and university programs into which they will be prepared to transfer upon program completion. Each map should include the math pathway appropriate for a given program. Aligning Texas high school endorsements and baccalaureate degree requirements at regional universities will assist students as they transition from high school through the community college to their chosen university or employment. It is important that information on meta-majors and program maps is easily accessible to students and advisors.

[1]Bailey, T.R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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Meta-Majors

Colleges have made significant progress defining meta-majors, and each college classifies programs into five to 10 clusters. At all colleges, faculty and advising staff were involved in defining pathways. Colleges use various titles for these groups of programs, including *career interest areas*, *career pathways*, *areas of study*, *meta-majors*, or *career and academic pathways*. Most are aligned with groups of disciplines such as social and behavioral sciences, health careers, and liberal arts; some are a combination of discipline areas and career areas such as chemical and refining industry or public service. In most cases, meta-majors include a combination of transfer areas and workforce programs. Colleges are either actively using the pathways this spring or will begin to use the structure with entering fall 2018 students. A few are still finalizing meta-majors and program maps.

Examples:

- South Texas used four criteria to define the meta-major categories finalized this spring: 1) student end goals, 2) shared curriculum, 3) student interest, 4) shared advising.
- Brazosport began discussions with faculty based on meta-major learning outcomes with a focus on sequencing learning rather than courses.

Challenges:

- Institutions with multiple campuses or colleges expressed the difficulty in bringing together faculty to develop meta-majors and program maps.
- Some colleges shared there is discussion of reviewing meta-major categories and perhaps reducing the number originally identified.
- This is a cultural shift and it takes time to have faculty and staff fully understand the pathways intent.
- Faculty fear they may lose their job, courses may be removed from the catalog, or decisions will result in reorganization.

Program Maps

Colleges have grouped programs in meta-majors. For years, all colleges have had detailed program plans for workforce certificates and AAS degrees. Most transfer program map development has been undertaken during the last year and will continue during the coming year. Program maps for transfer requirements have been developed in various ways—analyzing university catalog information, conducting discussions with faculty, or determining common requirements across multiple local transfer institutions. Colleges have included advisors and faculty in discussions, and they indicate transfer maps are a work in progress and difficult to accomplish, especially when universities have different requirements.

Examples:

- Dallas, Tarrant, and Grayson shared the work with the North Texas Consortium on AAS to BAAS collaboration on map development. Some are using the template to help with other transfer program maps.
- Midland reviewed the most common programs for the top five transfer institutions and developed maps based on requirements for specific majors. Advisors are using these as a guide but refer to university requirements for specifics.
- Austin has gone through three phases of program mapping and asked faculty to make "contextualized choices" for suggestions of course options.
- Temple divided health professions into two areas—nursing (intend to transfer for a BSN) and Health Professions with a defined basic set of courses for other programs.
- Colleges indicate this work is time consuming and would like regional discussions to facilitate the work.

Challenges:

- Difficulty in developing clear, complete maps with university requirements to ensure courses will transfer and count.
- Core courses specified in some baccalaureate requirements.
- Resources required to complete the maps.
- Scheduling regional meetings with universities to maximize conversations across multiple colleges.

Math Pathways

Colleges are in varying stages determining math requirements for programs within meta-majors. Most have worked with the Dana Center on multiple college-level entry courses but may be in the process of determining the number of sections required. Several colleges expressed difficulty with ensuring the right math has been identified for each major for each university. Some have asked faculty to identify the appropriate math for meta-majors but there is no assurance it actually can be applied to the specific university major. Some institutions are just beginning these discussions, which are an ongoing at most colleges.

Examples:

- At Lone Star, curriculum teams are identifying appropriate math.
- Brazosport worked with the Dana Center to examine algebra and non-algebra areas and determined courses based on learning requirements.
- Houston has identified College Algebra for STEM/Health Sciences meta-majors; Contemporary Math for Liberal Arts, Humanities and Education meta-majors; and Statistics for Social and Behavioral Sciences meta-majors.
- Several colleges are having students determine meta-major and program choice during first term, which may delay starting math pathway.

Challenges:

- Advising to help students identify the appropriate math pathway.
- Cultural change from a focus on what faculty teach to supporting students across programs.
- Determining the number of sections needed for various math choices.
- Some universities still use College Algebra as the default course.
- Work is complicated by corequisites discussions and decisions.

Website Redesign

Most colleges have redesigned or are redesigning the institution's website to include meta-majors and program information. Website redesign requires resources and expertise. Some colleges expressed staffing changes or openings in this area. Colleges are exploring various ways to improve websites to provide information to potential and current students. Colleges in the process of finalizing meta-majors are planning website redesign.

Challenges:

- Career/job information is typically available through Career Coach, O*Net, or other online resources.
- Some colleges have specific job information on workforce programs but most have not yet included information on the transfer programs.

2. HELPING STUDENTS CHOOSE AND ENTER A PATHWAY

Under guided pathways, colleges review and redesign the student intake process, helping all students choose a meta-major and program as quickly as possible and create a personalized full-program education plan in the first term. The

process includes students exploring college and career options to make an informed choice and the college assisting each student develop a comprehensive plan. Colleges determine how to ensure all new students complete the process, which may include orientation, required advising, and a student success course. Students may change the plan as they progress but a plan will guide the student and help the college monitor students' progress toward their goals. A common set of gateway courses in each meta-major will help students get started on a path as they develop a plan.

Facilitated Onboarding With Career And Program Exploration

Examples:

- Colleges are reviewing and redesigning the onboard structure to include career exploration.
- South Texas includes employment opportunities and jobs in New Student Orientation.
- Amarillo, Temple, and Brazosport use a "zero" week for engaging students in career exploration, orientation, etc.
- Colleges are using various tools including Colleague Student Planning, PeopleSoft, Career Coach, or Career Navigator to assist with processes.
- Colleges are requiring activities prior to enrollment to better prepare students for choosing a pathway.
- Colleges offer a Learning Frameworks course or another student success course, with some requiring it of all first time in college students and others strongly suggesting students take the course.

Challenges:

- Utilizing available tools to implement new processes with existing resources.
- Time constraints and scheduling – Austin has students take a two-hour information session based on area of study and students see an advisor six times in the first semester.
- Some colleges are redefining staff roles for advisors, career coaches, navigators, etc.

Making An Educational Plan

Examples:

- Grayson has developed an in-house Student Planner to capture the student's academic plan.
- Several colleges are currently using general program maps until specific transfer maps can be completed.
- Colleges are providing training for advisors and faculty on meta-majors and maps as they provide career exploration tools to students and ask them to choose a program within the first term.

Challenges:

- Several colleges are determining how to record the student's choice of pathway and education plan.
- Colleges are finalizing meta-majors and program maps and are currently using general maps to guide students.
- Colleges are concerned about utilizing current resources available and adding new resources.

Embedding Support Into Gateway Courses

Examples:

- Some colleges have identified gateway courses in program maps.
- Lone Star is reviewing course success data to identify critical courses.
- Colleges described labs, supplemental instruction, and tutoring as examples for support in gateway courses.
- Colleges have focused on developing the corequisite plan for math and reading/writing as required by HB2223; some are or may be using the math and writing developmental education portion of corequisites with other gateway courses.

- Austin will have faculty in a small number of gateway courses meeting with students individually during the first three weeks, giving an assessment during the first three weeks, helping students understand challenges they face, and discussing support options available, and in some cases, assigning student services to students.
- Tarrant has a robust supplemental instruction program with many sections in a variety of courses.

Challenges:

- Some colleges shared that discussions are ongoing to determine the definition of *gateway courses*.
- Several have not identified gateway courses in meta-majors and program maps.

Intensive Support for Poorly Prepared and Adult Education and Literacy Students

Colleges focus on Basic Academic Skills Education (BASE) students who score eighth grade or below on the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) toward college readiness. Colleges have focused on developing a corequisite model for math and reading/writing to be implemented in fall 2018 as required and defined by the Texas legislature. While each of the colleges had redefined their developmental education program, all had to review their courses and advising processes to meet the legislature's requirements. Conversations about plans for BASE students evidence the significance of providing targeted assistance for this group. Colleges indicated they will be addressing this area during the coming year.

Colleges are working with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) students in various ways. Some colleges have organized AEL within the college's academic area while others keep it as a separate unit. In some instances, the AEL division has advisors, but colleges indicated they need to ensure information is available on pathways work and a seamless process is in place for directing students into college-level programs. Colleges are reviewing organizational structures and some have added a dedicated AEL director or coordinator. All institutions indicated this is an area to strengthen.

Examples:

- To reduce silos, Tarrant created an instructor counselor position on the credit side to work with students placed in BASE levels.
- Southwest Texas has added an AEL director in the last year to and will be aligning the program more closely with the academic area of the college.

Challenges

- Smooth transition from AEL program to college-level program—requires alignment with college-level SLOs and getting the students on the college campus if AEL is located elsewhere.
- Access for AEL and low-level developmental education students so they do not pay for courses but have opportunity to move into college-level programs.

Extending Pathways Into High Schools

Colleges are partnering with area high schools in guided pathways work. Colleges have considered Texas endorsement decisions of local high schools as they developed and aligned programs within meta-majors. Dual credit is an increasingly significant proportion of college enrollment, and colleges have been working for many years with area independent school districts to offer dual credit options and initiate early college high schools. Colleges are adding activities to help students and parents make decisions based on career exploration in the high school.

Examples:

- Austin is starting academies to expand understanding and attitudes about workforce programs in high schools.
- Colleges host career nights and parent sessions to provide information about meta-majors and program requirements.

- Some colleges expressed concern with high schools using the interdisciplinary endorsement that will be difficult to align with college programs.
- Most colleges expressed there is much work to be done in this area to help students understand the implications of decisions.

Challenges:

- Several colleges began mega-major discussions with a focus on high school endorsements but had difficulty with initial alignment; now they are aligning endorsements with the meta-majors identified.
- Identifying which endorsements and high school classes are available at each high school.
- Aligning courses in early college high schools with program maps.
- Difficulty communicating with high school leadership about guided pathways work.

3. KEEPING STUDENTS ON THE PATH

Most colleges are considering how to redesign, and in some instances reorganize, counseling and advising structures and processes for documenting each student's program map and monitoring progress to completion. Several have made significant changes and are implementing processes for students and advisors to monitor progress. Some colleges shared they are engaging in discussions to redefine the intent of ongoing advising. Roles are changing and faculty are now included in conversations with students as they move through program requirements. Monitoring student progress has been evident in workforce programs and is now expanding to transfer programs. Some colleges are reviewing the support provided to special student populations and determining how to extend that support to all students.

Monitoring Student Progress

Examples:

- Colleges have moved to a case management model and are assigning students to advisors as they enter the college and/or determine a meta-major.
- Grayson included in Student Planner sequenced program requirements. Students can shift courses within a designated term but must contact an advisor if they want to take courses defined in a different term.
- McLennan uses a Pharos 360 software system to tie advisors, admissions staff, faculty, and financial aid representatives to monitor student progress.
- Midland, as well as several other colleges, has focused on training for advisors and faculty about monitoring student progress.
- Colleges uses various tools to help students monitor progress. Some institutions require students to see someone if they attempt to register for courses outside their plan. Examples of tools include Civitas, Ellucian Student Planning, and Jenzabar.

Challenges:

- Capturing individual program plans instead of relying on generic program plans.
- Redefining advisor roles and adding additional advisors.
- Separating early alert activities within courses and monitoring the student's progress through program requirements.
- Some colleges have identified specific milestones and have a systematic process for reaching out to students; others have not yet addressed milestones.
- Some colleges are encouraging students to reach out to an advisor instead of assigning the limited number of advisors available to specific students.

Course Scheduling

Colleges want to plan schedules for multiple terms but few are addressing it since most are just now implementing meta-majors and building multiple maps. A few colleges mentioned the opportunity to expand the block schedule requirement of workforce programs.

Example:

- Grayson is moving to an eight-week schedule for most of their offerings.
- Colleges are aware of need to schedule courses required for completion of program requirements.

Challenges:

- Lack of data from new program maps that would inform faculty and other leadership to build multiple-term schedules.
- Recent implementation of new tools to capture program maps and limited impact of use of maps in registration practices.

4. ENSURING STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

Colleges identify learning outcomes as required by accreditors to include workforce programs and core curriculum requirements for AA and AS degrees. Some colleges have specific processes for aligning course outcomes assessments with program learning outcomes. Colleges are discussing approaches to align program learning outcomes with success in further education and employment outcomes. Workforce programs include a capstone experience such as co-ops or internships and some specific programs, such as an honors program or a business program, include opportunities for students to apply learning in a program or career area. Several have processes but they may not be systematic. Some colleges have a few programs that provide opportunities for students to document their learning to share with employers and universities but they are currently limited to a small number of students. Some are exploring the use of portfolios or other means of documentation of learning beyond transcripts but the practice is limited. Most expressed this is an area for further discussion and development.

Examples:

- Colleges have program learning outcomes in workforce programs.
- Most colleges are using course evaluations as foundation for assessment and are gathering the results to assess core outcomes.

Challenges:

- Colleges have identified meta-majors and specific transfer program maps in the last year or are finalizing them now and are currently addressing jobs and specific baccalaureate requirements.

NEXT STEPS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING PATHWAY REFORMS

Colleges have focused on identifying meta-majors, aligning programs within meta-majors, reviewing workforce program maps, and developing transfer program maps. Much has been accomplished in the months since colleges joined Texas Pathways. The work involves changing the way faculty and staff think about the student experience and impacts everyone in the college. These colleges have demonstrated the commitment to ensure reforms benefit students equitably and are tailored for each college's community.

Colleges expressed the intensity of the work and the need to make multiple changes at the same time while involving everyone in the college. Colleges are making changes at scale, which is a challenge to surmount while utilizing the resources available or planning to add personnel where needed and possible.

Colleges are encouraged to continue to use data to inform decisions and always view possibilities through the student's viewpoint. Colleges are planning corequisites and processes to help students complete a college-level course in math and writing during the first year of enrollment. Foundations are in place to help students make informed choices around their interests and readiness.

The Texas Success Center will continue to support guided pathways reforms in the state's community colleges. These 13 colleges are setting the path for the other Texas community colleges.