Pathways

TOOLS FOR LEADERS

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Introduction and Overview

The vision, leadership, and support provided by the institution's governing body and CEO establish essential foundations for the transformational change of guided pathways reform. Added to that, the institution must build leadership throughout the organization; faculty and staff leaders are needed to develop plans for implementing the pillars of the pathways model, and their leadership continues to be important as the plans are put into practice and pathways are continuously improved. The CEO and executive team, with governing board support, must allocate resources to support the change process, evaluate progress, and provide the professional development necessary for faculty and staff to operate in the newly structured organization.

This selected set of tools is offered as a resource for leaders in colleges either prospectively or currently engaged in the work of planning and implementing guided pathways *at scale*—for all of their students. The primary purpose is to provide support for leaders as they undertake specific tasks in leading the large-scale institutional change involved in pathways reforms, particularly in the early stages of that work. *Tools for Leaders* provides selected, practical information in summary form while also including links to a rich collection of resource materials available through the online Pathways Resource Center (www.pathwaysresources.org). For each topic addressed, the tools may include brief readings, exercises, PowerPoint slides, and video clips featuring national Pathways partners, coaches, presidents, and practitioners.

A separate but important challenge is *leadership development* throughout the institution. To support that work, this collection includes links to leadership curriculum modules developed by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program through AACC's Pathways Project.

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

Leadership Tasks

Provided below is a list of key leadership tasks involved in guided pathways reform. The list will evolve over time, of course; but for now it serves as a practical guide. The first six items are briefly addressed, with linked tools, in the following pages.

- Describing the Pathways model
- Making the case for guided pathways/large-scale institutional change
- Supporting creation and execution of a systematic, ongoing plan for broad and genuine engagement of college constituent groups
- Investing in data capacity and demonstrating the will to use the data in decision-making
- Focusing the institution on equity as a critically important outcome and on equity-related issues in design and implementation of guided pathways
- Fostering development of distributed leadership at all levels of the organization
- Securing governing board/ system support
- Articulating a vision for scaled pathways reform
- Establishing a challenging target date for scaled launch of guided pathways for *all* students; building and promulgating a work plan and timeline for the array of design tasks involved in pathways reform
- Rethinking, strengthening, and leveraging external partnerships, particularly with transfer universities, K-12 systems, and the employer community
- Reviewing governing board and academic policies to ensure that they support rather than thwart effective implementation of pathways at scale
- Creating time and space for people of the college to do the work of large-scale change
- Celebrating progress and maintaining momentum through an extended change process
- For a multi-college system, in consultation with the colleges, determining common design principles for the pathways work
- Ensuring ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the efficacy of the institution's guided pathways and establishing mechanisms for continuous improvement

Acknowledgments

The work of designing and implementing guided pathways for students has become a movement, extending across an expanding number of community colleges and universities. Supporting that work is a collection of organizations that are working collaboratively, sharing experience, intellectual capital, and a variety of resources aimed at supporting institutional change efforts. For contributions to the work, to knowledge development, to these *Tools for Leaders,* and to the online Pathways Resource Center (www.pathwaysresources.org), acknowledgment and gratitude are particularly due to these organizations in the Pathways Collaborative:

Describing the Pathways Model

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

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

Guided Pathways Essential Practices

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

CLARIFY PATHS TO STUDENT END GOALS

- Simplify students' choices with default **program maps** developed by faculty and advisors that show students a clear pathway to completion, further education and employment in fields of importance to the region.
- Establish **transfer pathways** through alignment of pathway courses and expected learning outcomes with transfer institutions, to optimize applicability of community college credits to university majors.

HELP STUDENTS CHOOSE AND ENTER A PATHWAY

- Bridge **K–12 to higher education** by assuring early remediation in the final year of high school through the application of courseware technology in strong K12/higher education partnerships.
- Redesign traditional remediation as an **on-ramp to a program of study**, which helps students explore academic and career options from the beginning of their college experience, aligns math and other foundation skills coursework with a student's program of study, and integrates and contextualizes instruction to build academic and non-academic foundation skills throughout the college-level curriculum, particularly in program gateway courses.
- Provide **accelerated remediation** to help the least prepared students succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible.

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON PATH

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

ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

- Establish program-level **learning outcomes** aligned with the requirements for success in employment and further education in a given field and apply the results of learning outcomes assessment to improve the effectiveness of instruction across programs.
- Integrate **group projects, internships, and other applied learning experiences** to enhance instruction and student success in courses across programs of study.
- Align pathways with **co-curricular experiences** appropriate to the program.
- Ensure incorporation of **effective teaching practice** throughout the pathways.

Essential Capacities for Guided Pathways Reforms

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

- **Leadership** demonstrating skills for managing and sustaining large-scale transformational change.
- Broad and authentic **engagement** of college faculty and staff—particularly advisors—in the design, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement of pathways for students.
- **Institutional will and capacity to use data and evidence** to design academic and career pathways, monitor student progress, and implement needed improvements over time.
- **Technological tools and infrastructure** appropriate to support student progress through guided pathways.
- Commitment to the level of **strategically targeted professional development** that will be required to design and implement pathways at scale.
- **Policy conditions** established at the state, governing board, system, and institutional level that provide incentives, structures and supports for pathway design and implementation at scale, while removing barriers.
- A **continuing action research agenda** that examines the efficacy of guided pathways and develops practical knowledge and tools to support effective implementation at scale.

Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

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

PLANNING

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

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

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

PREPARATION/AWARENESS

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

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

SUSTAINABILITY

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

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

IMPLEMENTATION

CLARIFY THE PATHS

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

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

HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH

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

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

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATH

Keep students on track with these supports:

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

ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

Use these practices to assess and enrich student learning:

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

EARLY OUTCOMES

Measure key performance indicators, including:

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

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

EVALUATION

Contributors to this model for Guided Pathways are: American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Achieving the Dream (ATD), The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), Community College Research Center (CCRC), Complete College America (CCA), The Charles A. Dana Center, Jobs for the Future (JFF), National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII), and Public Agenda (PA). MAY 2017

Print Resources

- What Is the Pathways Model? (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)
- *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Community College Research Center)
- The Pathways Model

Video

View videos associated with:

- Why Pathways

PowerPoint Slides

- The Pathways Model PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Making the Case for Guided Pathways & Large-Scale Institutional Change

Because scaled implementation of guided pathways reform will ultimately affect the way everyone in the college does their work, and because external partners—K12 systems, transfer institutions, and employers—also will be called to heightened collaboration, it is critical to take the time to articulate a clear and concise case for pathways. What are the foundational achievements that the college can build upon, and what has the college learned about their strengths and limits? What are the data about student success and equity that prompt aspirations for further effort? How can the college better fulfill the mission of ensuring social and economic mobility for students?

Print Resources

- The Movement Toward Pathways (American Association of Community Colleges and Community College Research Center)
- Template for Creating an Institutional Case Statement for Guided Pathways at Scale (American Association of Community Colleges)
  Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

PowerPoint Slides

- Casemaking PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Promoting Faculty and Staff Engagement

Faculty and staff engagement is not an event. It is an ongoing, intentional process that must start early in the change process, happen often, and evolve over time as the work progresses. Engagement above all must be authentic. Ensuring that there is an explicit plan for campus engagement is a key leadership task.

Print Resources

- Pathways Engagement 101: A Handbook (American Association of Community Colleges and SOVA)
- Engagement for Pathways Implementation: Basic Concepts and Practices (SOVA)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.
- Internal Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Toolkit (Public Agenda for Completion by Design)

Video

View videos associated with:

- Faculty and staff engagement
- Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change

PowerPoint Slides

- Engagement PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Commitment and Capacity for Using Data

Colleges need to use both quantitative and qualitative data to make the case for guided pathways reform. It is not enough to know what the data are; part of the planning and case making process for guided pathways is digging deep, asking why the data are what they are— and discussing what action steps can most powerfully change the current picture. Quantitative data must be disaggregated by student demographics, including income, race/ethnicity, and first-generation students, so that the outcomes of those students are transparent.

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE FOR KPIs.

The guided pathways Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were used in the AACC Pathways Project were developed by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) as short-term momentum measures that have been correlated with student completion. These KPIs are now used in state-based guided pathways projects across the country in states including California, Texas, Ohio, Michigan, Washington, New York and Connecticut. The indicators are:

- Number of college credits earned in students' first term
- Number of college credits earned in students' first year
- Completion of college-level math and English courses in students' first year
- Number of college credits earned in students' programs of study in the first year
- Persistence rate from term 1 to term 2
- Rate of college-level course completion in students' first academic year

USING THE PATHWAYS SCALE OF ADOPTION ASSESSMENT.

The Scale of Adoption Assessment (SOAA) was developed by CCRC to support qualitative monitoring of a college's progress toward the implementation of scaled guided pathways reform. Colleges should use the instrument to assess progress in relation to their own baseline; it is not designed to make comparisons across institutions. The SOAA is intended to help colleges to identify their implementation gaps, their strengths, and their weakness and then to develop an action plan to bring reforms to scale for all students. [Note: the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has developed an online version of the SOAA and will make it available for colleges to use in their self-assessment of institutional readiness for guided pathways reforms. When available, the online instrument may be accessed through the online Pathways Resource Center at www.pathwaysresources.org]. Experience indicates that optimal use of the SOAA involves expert third-party facilitation of work to refine and discuss institutional results.

Print Resources

- Early Momentum Metrics: Why They Matter for College Improvement (Community College Research Center)
- Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Assessment (Community College Research Center)
  Note: Click the link and a .docx file will automatically download.

Video

View videos associated with:

- Commitment to using data
- Capacity to use data

PowerPoint Slides

- Scale of Adoption Assessment PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Focusing on Equity

The goal of producing equitable outcomes across all student groups, particularly students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students, is fundamental in guided pathways work. The equity goal is central in case making for transformational change and a driving value that informs every decision about design and implementation of pathways for students. To have equity at the core of the work, it certainly is necessary for the people of the institution to recognize and be able to openly discuss the data depicting gaps in student access, persistence, and completion. Once those data are on the table, institutional leaders at all levels must be willing to lead the sometimes tough work of identifying and addressing the ways that institutional policy and practice, as well as individual human beings—even when working hard and with good intentions—may perseverate disproportionate outcomes rather than eradicating unacceptable social and economic divides.

Print Resources

- The Economic Value of College Majors (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce)
- Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergeneration Reproduction of White Racial Privilege (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce)

Video

View videos associated with:

- Commitment to student success and equity

PowerPoint Slides

- Pathways to Equity PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Fostering Leadership Development

An ongoing task in large-scale institutional change is a concerted approach to development of distributed leadership throughout the institution. There will likely be multiple elements in this strategy, including in-house opportunities as well as support for faculty, staff and administrator participation in leadership development programs offered by pathways partner organizations and others. Highlighted here are leadership curriculum modules developed by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program as part of its work in the AACC Pathways Project.

Print Resources

- Defining Qualities of Transformational Leadership (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program)
- Leading Internal Transformational Change (Aspen Institute College Excellence Program)

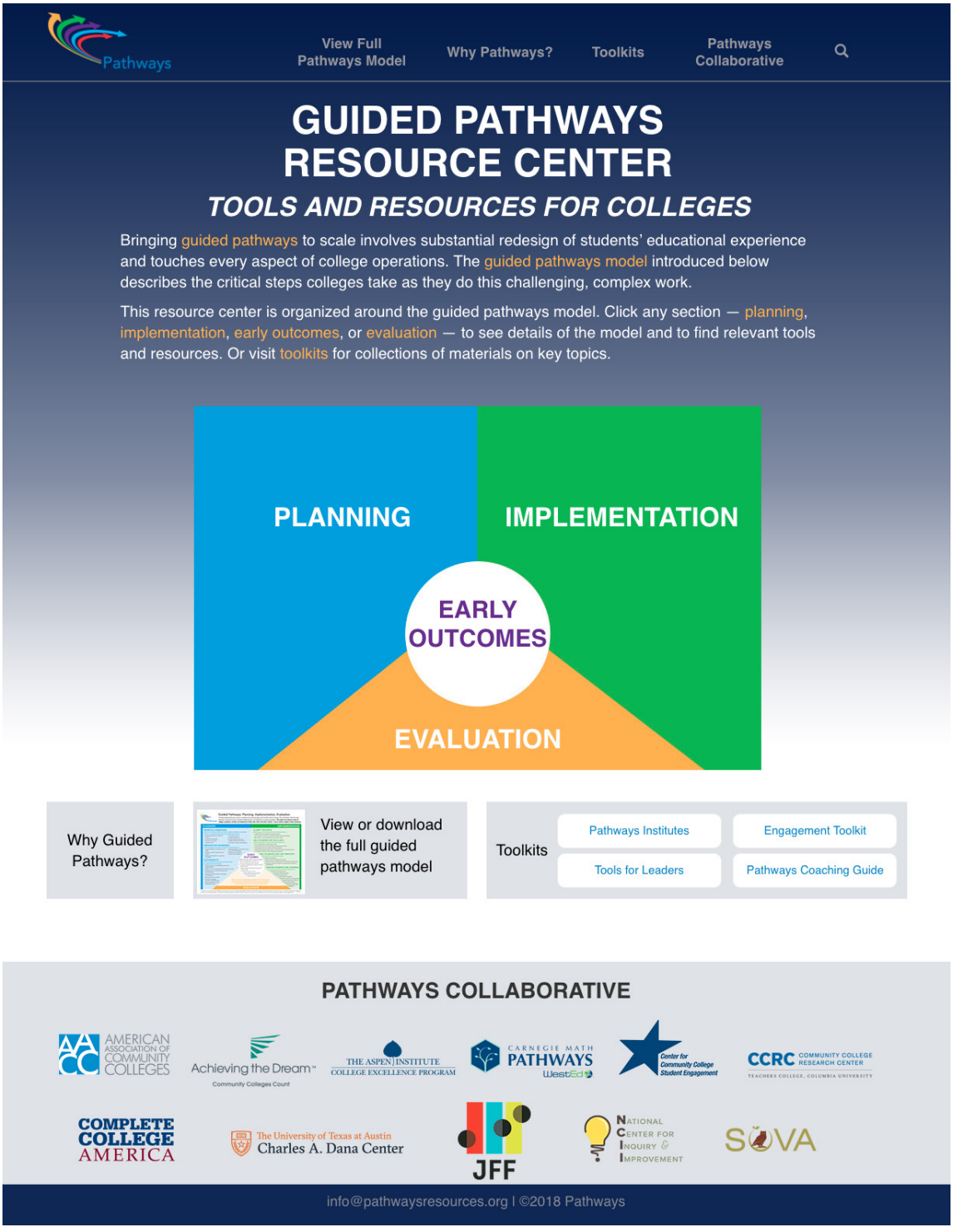
Video

View videos associated with:

- Strong change leadership throughout the institution
- Reallocating resources as needed

PowerPoint Slides

- Leadership PowerPoint Slides from Pathways Collaborative Organizations (Pathways Collaborative)
  Note: Click the link and a .pptx file will automatically download.

Additional Pathways Resources

A larger collection of resources on the work of planning, implementing, and evaluating guided pathways is provided in the online Pathways Resource Center at www.pathwaysresources.org. There the user may click on the graphic model of pathways work to find additional information.