**Common Challenge Areas for Colleges Implementing Guided Pathways**

**(and some sample follow-up questions)**

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The following are practices that colleges often find challenging when trying to implement guided pathways at scale. They are listed under each of the four main guided pathways practice areas along with sample questions you can use in phone interviews with colleges on their Scale of Adoption Assessment reports. These questions will be useful to probe how a college is approaching a particular practice and whether they are truly implementing as envisioned by the ideal model we are both advocating and testing in the guided pathways reform work.

1. **Mapping Pathways to Student End Goals**

*Challenge areas: Mapping transfer pathways, connecting programs of study to employment opportunities, identifying critical courses and program milestones, ensuring that program maps are readily accessible and actually being used in advising and guiding students.*

Sample follow-up questions:

* 1. You say that you have pathways in place for your CTE pathways, but what about transfer pathways?
  2. Are your academic programs and faculty actively working with universities to map out transfer programs? Are they doing this by meta-major or just mapping out general education transfer requirements? What are their plans to do so?
  3. In what ways is the college showing or planning to show the connection of all programs—both CTE and arts/sciences--to employment opportunities?
  4. What is the status of the course sequencing, identification of critical courses, milestones, and co-curricular learning activities for all programs? Has this program mapping work been a collaborative effort involving both academics and student services colleagues?
  5. How accessible are the program maps to students and to what extent are they being used to help all entering students build an educational plan?

1. **Helping Students Choose and Enter a Path**

*Challenge areas: Providing career and program exploration from the start for all new students, ensuring that every student has a full-program plan, aligning math pathways to program metamajors and pathways, moving from prerequisite to integrated academic support for all college-level critical program courses, pushing pathways down into the high schools.*

Sample follow-up questions:

* 1. Are all entering students helped to explore career and college options and choose a direction? Is this process required of all entering students who have not decided on a field or program of interest? Are all students helped to develop a full-program plan (i.e. to program completion and for transfer students to bachelor’s programs in the students’ major field of interest?) How are these plans used? Is students’ progress on the plans monitored after the plans are set?
  2. What is the scale of your dev ed reforms, and are they aligned with the guided pathways work? How are poorly prepared students helped to pass critical program gateway courses?
  3. What determines what math pathway students follow when they enter? How are the college’s math pathways aligned with the guided pathway work?
  4. Approximately what percentage of entering students take non-algebra/calculus math courses? How many sections are available in these other pathways (i.e. is this practice at scale)?
  5. Do all students take a college-level course in their field of interest in their first term?
  6. In what ways is the college helping very poorly prepared students take and pass college-level courses within their first year? Are these students helped to explore and choose part of the guided pathways intake redesign, or do students have to go through multiple levels of pre-req dev ed before they are considered to be in meta-major or on a program path?
  7. Does the college actively use its pathways to recruit high school students and ensure that they are prepared not only for college but to enter specific college fields after high school? Are dual enrollment students exposed to the metamajors and pathways?

1. **Keeping Student on their Path**

*Challenge areas: Ensuring that every student is monitored along her/his plan, helping student revise their plans when needed, responding to early alerts, redirecting students who are unlikely to be accepted to selective programs, ensuring that scheduling and registration are linked to students’ plans.*

Sample follow-up questions:

* 1. Who monitors the progress of students along their plans? Is every degree-seeking student’s progress monitored? When a student needs to adjust her/his plan (if they change their mind or are not making good progress), what does this process look like? Who identifies these students, reaches out to them, and ensures that they meet with someone to help revise the plan?
  2. Can students easily see how far they are on their plan, what courses they’ve completed, what courses they still need to take, and how long it will take to complete their degree? Is this information kept up to date?
  3. Does the college have an early alert system to identify students struggling in critical courses in place? If so, how many courses or sections are involved? What’s the process for following up once an alert is triggered? Do advisors/faculty actively identify and redirect students who aren’t likely to be accepted into limited access program early in their program?
  4. Are students able to schedule their next semester courses based on their customized educational plan? And is the scheduling process tied to registration? Can students register for courses that are NOT on their plan? What happens when they try to do this?
  5. Is the college creating class schedules based on the courses in students’ plans (as opposed to courses that were rolled over from the previous year’s schedule)? During a given semester, can students pre-register for classes in the next semester based on the courses they will need to take next on their plans?

1. **Ensuring that Students are Learning**

*Challenge areas: Ensuring that program learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements of employers and university major programs, providing experiential learning opportunities for students in all programs (not just in select occupational/CTE programs), ensuring that faculty use the results of learning outcomes assessment for professional and program improvement.*

Sample follow-up questions:

* 1. Are program learning outcomes more than just aggregated course learning outcomes? That is, are they aligned with the requirements of employers and universities? To what extent are employers and university colleagues actively involved in defining program learning outcomes?
  2. What is the scale of the internships, clinicals, coops, etc. and other experiential learning opportunities available to students? In which programs are they required? Are these activities identified on the program maps?
  3. How do faculty assess whether students are mastering *program* learning outcomes, and how is this information used for program improvement purposes?
  4. In what ways are assessments of student learning outcomes used to improve teaching and learning practices?
  5. In what ways is the college helping students develop portfolios and other means of demonstrating their learning outcomes?