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. Colleges should assess their readiness for intensive, broad-based change before beginning this work.

**PLANNING**

**ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS**
Make sure the following conditions are in place — prepared, mobilized, and adequately resourced — to support the college’s pathways effort:
- Strong leadership throughout the institution
- Faculty, staff, and student engagement
- Commitment to using data
- Capacity to use data

**PLANNING/PREPARATION**
Understand where you are and prepare for change by:
- Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change
- Establishing a baseline for key performance indicators
- 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:
- 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
- Faculty-led improvement of teaching practices
- Systems/procedures for the college and students to track mastery of learning outcomes

**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
- Persistence from term 1 to term 2
- Rates of college-level course completion in students’ first academic year

**EVALUATION**

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.

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