

Guided Pathways Messaging for Institutional Practitioners

Core Messages

What is Guided Pathways?

Guided Pathways is an institution-wide approach to student success and equity that provides all students with a clear roadmap, guidance, and support to find the right program of study, complete a degree without spending excessive money and time, and successfully advance their career and/or at their next level of education. Guided Pathways is not an initiative, it is a way for colleges & universities to become truly, comprehensively student-focused.

It creates a set of guideposts that empower & support students to make more informed choices that match their goals and interests; connects colleges & universities to K-12 to support early exploration of college and career fields; and seeks to make transfer seamless.

It streamlines the choices students face by organizing the myriad of majors into broad areas of study under which there are clearly outlined programs with carefully constructed course sequences and opportunities for exploration.

It is an institution-wide effort to better connect high-quality teaching & learning with the various student services offered by a college to ensure all students get the support they need to be successful in their programs.

It provides students with integrated academic and career advising, while monitoring their progress to boost their confidence and help them stay on course and achieve their goals.

Core Messages

The Challenge

Despite long-standing efforts to enhance student success, the challenge remains that colleges & universities are not organized to provide students with a coherent and sufficiently supported educational experience. This results in far too many students failing to achieve their goals of advancing their lives through education.

Fewer than 4 in 10 community college and open-access university students earn a degree within 6 years. First-generation, low-income and minority students are disproportionately impacted by the experience of college as a confusing maze.

Too many underprepared students who may need only targeted, supplemental support to succeed, are placed into long remedial course sequences that cost time and money, and that don't connect to a broader educational plan. Most of these students never complete their degrees.

An overwhelming array of choices and lack of coordinated, integrated advising leads students to make uninformed decisions - selecting courses with credits that don't apply toward a degree or don't transfer.


For students receiving financial aid, taking classes that don't count toward a program makes it harder to finance and complete a credential or transfer. These students are at greatest risk of depleting their financial aid or incurring debt with no credential to show for it.

Core Messages


Solutions

When colleges & universities bring coherence to students' educational experience, and ensure they are well-supported throughout, students are successful at higher rates. Empowering students to effectively navigate their educational journey by providing clear paths, coherent curriculum, and integrated advising and support helps them achieve their educational goals without excessive credits, time, and money.

Here is what leads to higher rates of student success:



Strong leadership, with true partnership from faculty & staff, focused on better understanding the student experience and making systematic changes that result in all students having equitable opportunity for success




Identification of the educational paths and career options for students through thoughtfully structured programs of study that work collaboratively across the institution and allow students to explore responsibly while navigating effectively to their chosen degree and a career


Core Messages

Solutions (continued)


Here's what leads to higher rates of student success:



Help for students to explore college and careers early, and to create a degree plan in the first semester that allows for exploration and that lets students start taking courses in their field of interest from the start



Inclusion of active learning experiences embedded in rich curriculum, supported with integrated advising and embedded academic supports, that helps students develop confidence as learners and persist in the face of challenges



Alignment between community colleges and 4-year institutions so that baccalaureate seeking community college students can successfully transfer with their credits applying toward their major and stay on the path to a timely completion of their degree

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What Can We Do?

Asks directed at specific audiences:

Colleges (2- and 4-year)

Colleges need to create a more coherent experience for students, beginning with helping them find the right program of study early on and helping them stay on the path to a degree.

Redesign the student experience to allow students to explore areas of interest, choose a direction, and develop a full program plan early that shows a clear path.

Guide students on their path with integrated advising, closely monitor student progress on their plans, help students monitor their own progress, and intervene with guidance when they veer off-path or need to change course.

Ensure that programs of study are embedded with high-quality active and experiential learning opportunities that make learning relevant and that boost students' confidence as learners.


Create clear, efficient curricular paths between 2- and 4-year institutions by aligning programs so students can successfully apply their credits to their transfer program and graduate on time.

Guided Pathways Messaging for Policymakers


Core Messages

What is Guided Pathways?


Guided Pathways is a comprehensive approach for colleges & universities to make efficient use of resources while helping many more students earn a degree/credential and stay on the path to a good job with less time, excess credits, and cost to students and taxpayers.



It is an institution-wide approach to reform that provides students with clear roadmaps and effective advising to help boost their rates of on-time college completion and efficient transfer. It helps students achieve their goals and our nation develop the talent it needs for economic growth.



It streamlines student choices by organizing the myriad of majors into broad areas of study with clearly outlined programs and course sequences that align with careers or further education.



It provides students with integrated academic and career advising and monitors their progress to help them stay on track to graduate on time, get a good job and/or transfer without losing time and money.

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The Problem

Far too many students are not completing their degrees on time or at all because colleges are not organized to help students succeed. This costs taxpayers and students money, limits opportunity for these students, and deprives our nation of the talent it needs for a thriving economy.

Fewer than 4 in 10 community college students earn a degree within six years.

While 80 percent of community college students say they want to earn a bachelor's degree, fewer than 15 percent of them transfer and complete a bachelor's degree within 6 years.

The overwhelming array of courses to choose from and lack of coordinated advising leads students to make uninformed decisions that end up costing them extra time and money, and in many cases prevents them from completing.


When students accumulate credits that don't lead to a degree, they burn through their own money and financial aid, making it harder to finish college, pay off their loans, and advance in their careers.

Core Messages


Solutions

When colleges & universities equip students with clear and coherent paths, as well as integrated advising, career exploration, and academic support, students graduate at higher rates, on time with degrees and credentials that lead to good jobs and further education without losing credits, time, and money.


Here's what we know contributes to student success:



Strong institutional leadership that includes faculty & staff expertise to make the broad changes needed to establish clear and coherent programs of study that align with career options



Integrated academic and professional advising and monitoring of student progress



Alignment between high schools, community colleges, 4-year institutions, and employers so that students can successfully transfer with their credits applying toward their major and stay on the path to complete a degree on time.

Core Messages

What Can We Do?

Asks directed at specific audiences:

Policy Makers

Guided Pathways is a solution for getting students to complete college on time, reducing college costs and debt, and better preparing more students for good jobs. Here is what you can do:

Provide resources and funding to higher education institutions to expand their Guided Pathways implementation and increase their use of approaches that research shows get and keep students on track.

Require and incentivize institutions in your state to make relevant data on postsecondary completion rates and labor-market advancement of students available for assessment, and provide resources and infrastructure to facilitate effective use of data among institutions.

Incentivize opportunities for higher education institutions and employers to work together to advance student success goals.

Set priorities and create conditions that require 2- and 4-year institutions to genuinely collaborate on an ongoing basis to refine program maps, transfer agreements and advising processes to help students reach their goals.