LAUNCHING GUIDED PATHWAYS ACROSS CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Preliminary Findings from CCC GP Phase I Work Plans

Prepared by The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges
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Introduction

In 2017-2018, the California Community Colleges (CCC) system embarked on a bold journey to dramatically increase student success and reduce equity gaps through California Community Colleges Guided Pathways (CCC GP). Now, community colleges across the state are in a critical and formative stage of GP development, determining how to respond to and contextualize this movement to drive meaningful change on their local campus. Positively, initial work plans submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) by all 114 CCC demonstrate that the vast majority across the system are using the GP framework to lay the foundation necessary for effective, student-centered institutional transformation.

This summary provides the CCCCCO and its partners key highlights from a preliminary analysis of these work plans conducted by the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group). It offers insight into how CCC intend to advance GP reform between spring 2018 and summer 2019, and what support colleges say they need to succeed as they take steps to initiate this monumental change. The initial findings discussed in this report can inform statewide capacity building and resource development to assist colleges in the 2018-2019 academic year.
Reader’s Guide

This report provides a high-level summary of college priorities in Phase I as they work to advance GP, focusing on the most pressing key elements identified by a high majority of CCC (70% or more). Additionally, the work plan asks CCC to describe their current efforts to include the use of high school grades in their assessment and placement processes in light of the recent passage of AB 705, which we discuss in conjunction with their work on the “Improve Basic Skills” key element, given the inter-relatedness of these two components. We then identify how colleges report how they will allocate their CCC GP funding, and summarize college responses to an inquiry about support the CCC CO could immediately provide to facilitate their GP adoption. We conclude with a summary of the top findings and preliminary implications surfacing from this initial analysis.

College Priorities

To identify which aspects of GP development CCC intend to advance during Phase I, the RP Group reviewed all 114 CCC GP work plans and summarized the predominant key elements that colleges documented in their March submission. To determine areas of focus and the most pressing needs across the system, this report highlights the six key elements that ≥70% of colleges (n ≥ 80) prioritized for the 2018-2019 time period. Figure 1 outlines each of the 14 key elements and the distribution of colleges indicating a given element as an area of focus for their college in 2018-2019.

Figure 1. CCC Areas of Focus for 2018-2019, by GP Key Element
Table 1 presents the operational definition for each key element, and the number and percent of colleges ranking that area of focus as a priority.

**Table 1. Key Elements Prioritized by CCC for Development in 2018-2019, in Rank Order**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>% and n of Colleges indicating Phase 1 Prioritization</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross Functional Inquiry</td>
<td>College staff, faculty, and students examine research on student outcomes, campus practices, and college-wide goals. The college engages in inclusive GP discussions.</td>
<td>90% (n=103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Metrics</td>
<td>College staff, faculty, and students have access to data, and regularly monitor student achievement and institutional effectiveness. Data and benchmarks are shared across key college-wide initiatives.</td>
<td>78% (n=89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Decision-Making Structures</td>
<td>A diverse group of college constituents leads GP implementation. Cross-functional work-teams provide the GP effort with momentum and provide opportunities for broad input.</td>
<td>75% (n=86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Program Requirements</td>
<td>College is clarifying course sequences for programs of study and creating predictable schedules so that students can plan ahead, and easily see how close they are to completion. College offers courses to meet student demand.</td>
<td>72% (n=83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Planning</td>
<td>The GP framework is used as an overarching structure for the college's main planning and resource allocation processes for new and existing initiatives.</td>
<td>71% (n=81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Basic Skills</td>
<td>College is implementing evidence-based practices to increase access and success in college and/or transfer-level math and English.</td>
<td>70% (n=80)</td>
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</table>

**Overall Themes**

Overall, the six areas of focus (Table 1) prioritized by colleges reflect the nascent stage of GP development across the CCC system. They demonstrate that colleges understand that they are engaged in more than implementation of an isolated initiative, rather they are building the foundation necessary for effective, student-centered institutional change, both culturally and structurally. In many cases, the way colleges are approaching these priorities is synergistic and interrelated, with many overlapping activities and approaches.
Looking across these areas of focus, colleges indicate they are revamping and aligning institutional structures, while concurrently soliciting student input and bolstering GP awareness and endorsement. At this stage of development, the majority of colleges resoundingly document work in progress or planned activities designed to fundamentally shift four primary campus structures: (1) college governance; (2) institutional research; (3) campus-wide programs and initiatives, and (4) college planning and resource allocation. Across these four areas, colleges are disrupting the status quo through the following cross-cutting activities:

- Gathering and collecting student equity and student perspectives data
- Examining persistent barriers to student equity and achievement
- Developing a campus-wide, shared understanding of GP
- Employing new and existing metrics to drive student access, success, and completion

Colleges are pursuing broad communication and engagement strategies to increase awareness of GP among all stakeholders, promote involvement in GP inquiry and design, and ensure ongoing feedback loops. Furthermore, colleges indicate they are creating campus-wide momentum through the development of program maps and meta-majors, taking a phased approach to address the needs of different student groups and including student-centered scheduling and enhanced technology solutions for tracking student performance. A significant majority of colleges are also leveraging their ongoing work to reform basic skills to propel GP development; notably, AB 705 has served as an impetus for further improving basic skills, with the majority of colleges now reporting use of high school transcript data in student assessment and placement.

Themes by Area of Focus

To provide a glimpse into how colleges intend to advance the specific key elements of GP development they prioritized for Phase I, we summarize themes that surfaced across the work plans below.

Pursuing Cross-Functional Inquiry

Work plans overwhelmingly demonstrate that across the system, colleges understand that initiating cultural and institutional change starts with involving all campus constituents in the collective examination of persistent barriers to student equity and success. Encouragingly, colleges indicate they have already made progress with revamping and aligning their structures for inquiry since their first self-assessment in fall 2017, and the vast majority of colleges will continue focusing on developing this engagement in Phase I.

Colleges are forming and will continue to develop new cross-functional groups to inform, coordinate, and design their guided pathways efforts (e.g., steering committees, task forces, work groups). Colleges indicate they are taking a broad, diverse, and inclusive approach to establishing these teams, including faculty, classified staff, student, and administrator representation.
In some cases, colleges are overhauling existing inquiry structures and processes, integrating a focus on GP inquiry and development into current student success efforts and/or shared governance committees (see Establishing Inclusive Decision Making Structures below for further discussion).

At this stage, the primary focus of these cross-functional groups is two-fold: (1) gathering and examining student data (e.g., enrollment, persistence, transfer data, disaggregated data, and including student perspectives), and (2) developing broad understanding of GP across the campus community (see Establishing Inclusive Decision-Making Structures below for further discussion). In terms of data exploration, the majority expressed an understanding that investigating existing data and integrating student voices were foundational to GP inquiry (see Identifying Shared Metrics below for further discussion). Some colleges aim to increase their capacity to collect and explore data in Phase I, while others plan to research additional data sources and conduct further analyses to understand how improve student success. Several colleges intend to engage students in their ongoing GP inquiry.

### Identifying Shared Metrics

Encouragingly, the vast majority of colleges indicates they will prioritize identification of shared metrics for measuring the advancement of student achievement and institutional effectiveness in the context of GP over the next 18 months. As discussed above, colleges indicate a critical aspect of this process will be the overall development of stakeholder capacity for using data in GP inquiry and design. These priorities reflect the nascent development of GP across the CCC system at this moment in time, and positively imply that colleges understand this step is essential for making effective progress along the scale of adoption.

Some colleges report they will use this initial phase to broadly and meaningfully engage the campus community with student data, identify the specific student success problems and opportunities they aim to address, and make the case for GP adoption. Colleges also indicate they will identify metrics to both inspire and track increases in student success, decreases in equity gaps, and improvements in institutional effectiveness as they move toward GP implementation.

Colleges report that existing metrics defined by current initiatives and accountability efforts will provide direction for measuring student access, success, and completion, with a focus on equitable outcomes. Many colleges will endeavor to align and integrate these numerous measurements as part of their GP design in 2018-2019. Positively, a few institutions report they have already taken this critical step in the time period between submitting their fall 2017 self-assessment and completing their Phase I work plan. At the same time, this identification and alignment work presents a significant undertaking given the numerous data reporting requirements across the CCC system. A few colleges report that they are participating in the CCCC0 Metrics Simplification Initiative to help manage this reporting complexity.
Establishing Inclusive Decision-Making Structures

Positively, college work plans also suggest general awareness that cultural change requires a shift in how decisions are made and shared. CCC are developing new and revamping participatory governance structures to inform and lead GP implementation, and will continue this effort over the next 18 months. Colleges indicate they will use this first phase to assess existing committee structures to identify needs and gaps, ensure inclusive and diverse members on decision-making committees, and offer training to prepare committee members.

Additionally, colleges indicate they will attempt to align GP planning and implementation with existing initiatives and efforts. The Integrated Plan (SSSP, Equity, BSI) may provide a model for colleges to bring existing student success initiatives and funding streams under a single framework as required by CCC Guided Pathways (see Integrating Planning below for further information). Colleges report they will take steps to bring together representatives from various academic and CTE departments and programs, including support services, to identify opportunities for alignment and integration.

In terms of engagement, colleges indicate they are taking formal and informal, one-time and ongoing approaches to informing the campus community, sparking interest in GP, and gathering input. These activities include retreats, presentations, websites, and standing agenda items for shared governance committees, as well as communication plans to share inquiry results, inform the community of progress, and provide feedback loops.

Integrating Planning

To shift toward using the guided pathways framework as the organizing principle for college planning and decision-making, the majority of colleges indicate that they will prioritize the alignment and integration of planning documents, committees, and protocols with the four pillars of GP over the next 18 months. Colleges indicate they will take different approaches to drive this shift. As noted above, colleges generally indicate they will intentionally and systematically incorporate GP inquiry, design, and decision-making into existing committee work. In many cases, colleges will further incorporate categorical programs and services with their existing efforts to address Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), Student Equity (SE), and Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) Integrated Planning, with dozens of colleges stating they will draw on the experience and expertise of Integrated Planning teams and leverage their work products and decision-making processes. Other colleges detail intended efforts to integrate the four pillars into program review.

Institutions in the early stage of their GP development indicate they will conduct an institutional inventory to identify which current initiatives can support GP development, who else needs to be included, and/or what new entities need to be formed. Some colleges are hiring personnel to lead their integrated planning efforts--both those in progress and those just getting off the ground.
Notably, several colleges are taking steps towards incorporating student voices into decision-making structures and building consensus across all campus constituents about the integration of GP in planning practices and protocols. For many colleges, professional development opportunities will provide a platform for including the entire college community in this GP planning.

Developing Clear Program Requirements

To move toward concrete development of student-centered pathways from entry to completion, the vast majority of colleges will prioritize establishing program maps and meta-majors that include a clear and coherent set of requirements, sequence of courses, and key milestones. Some colleges will also identify gateway courses as well as recommended math and English courses. To avoid creating them from scratch, many colleges are already leveraging existing materials such as degree checklists, major sheets, and curriculum guides.

The majority of colleges plan to implement a phased approach in developing program maps, beginning with groups of programs (e.g., CTE, ADTs, programs with the highest enrollments), eventually addressing all programs. While most colleges are focused on building default maps for full-time students (i.e., two-year maps), some colleges state additional intentions to build maps to suit various student subpopulations (e.g., part-time and basic skills students). Plus, many colleges intend to connect these materials to students’ educational plans and determine the best method of empowering students to track their own progress towards completion. As program maps and meta-majors are finalized, colleges plan to engage in marketing efforts to communicate clear and up-to-date information primarily via the website and the catalog.

Further, colleges indicate they will also use the program maps and course sequences to inform student-centric scheduling decisions about how to offer courses when students need them and to minimize class cancellations. To promote stability for students and faculty, many colleges are also considering enabling students to register for multiple terms at once, enrolling cohorts together, posting the class schedules one full year early, or coordinating and streamlining course offerings across departments.

To support this planning, the majority of colleges intend to leverage existing technology solutions and explore new options that can help students stay on track. Many colleges plan to engage in broad communication and engagement efforts as well as offer relevant professional development to build awareness, invite input, and enable diverse stakeholders to better understand their roles in helping students select a program of study and complete it in a timely fashion.

Continuing Improvements to Basic Skills

College efforts to improve their basic skills offerings to ensure students complete transfer-level English and math coursework in a timely manner increased in momentum since colleges submitted their GP CCC Self-Assessment in December 2017. The passage of AB 705 in October 2017 and the subsequent deadline to implement its provisions by fall 2019 have prompted colleges to make
substantial changes to their basic skills curricula. In the work plan, colleges described their activities and plans to meet the requirements of AB 705 and provide support to students who need basic skills instruction.

One provision of AB 705 requires CCC to develop curricula, where students can complete their transfer-level English and math coursework within a one-year timeframe. In Phase I, CCC will continue examining and refining their current basic skills course sequences, and scaling student support mechanisms to ensure that their students’ succeed. Colleges are eliminating basic skills courses within their sequence and/or utilizing a non-credit-to-credit pathway to save students the cost of credit coursework. A high majority of colleges indicate they have implemented or are planning accelerated coursework, whereby a student can complete a single semester basic skills course that is highly aligned with a transfer-level English or math course, and is therefore prepared for transfer-level coursework after one basic skills course. Colleges are also establishing co-requisite coursework, so that students can enroll directly into transfer-level English and math courses and receive additional support in terms of a support course that can provide just-in-time remedial instruction to students within the context of the transfer-level course curriculum.

INCLUSION OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADES IN THE ASSESSMENT/PLACEMENT PROCESS

Notably, all colleges report they are actively working toward use of high school transcript data in their assessment and placement processes—showing full-scale movement toward realization of AB 705 across the CCC system. The majority of colleges/districts indicate in their work plans that they have already incorporated high school coursework and grade point average (GPA) in student assessment and placement, with many adopting the rules and guidelines developed through the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP). Several MMAP colleges report efforts to further adjust these rules to comply with AB 705 and maximize students’ probability of completing transfer-level work within a one-year timeframe.

Colleges/districts that have yet to incorporate the use of high school transcript data in student assessment and placement describe AB 705 as an impetus for launching this reform. These institutions report establishing AB 705 leads and task forces, inclusive of counseling, math, and English faculty as well as directors of assessment and of institutional research and planning. Positively, several colleges in the early stages of adopting multiple measures report they are already collaborating with their high school partners on assessment and curriculum alignment and evaluating the impact of proposed assessment changes on student placement and success. While these colleges indicate they embrace multiple measures and are exploring how to pursue this reform in their local context, their work plans commonly indicate that they are waiting for additional guidelines from the CCCCO.
Allocation of Funds

The State of California allocated a one-time, $150M investment for CCC GP. For 2018-2019, the CCCC0 allocated a total of $33,954,284 to college districts to conduct their transformation work (see Figure 2). Colleges then determined how to distribute these funds locally, which they report in their work plans. Across the system, colleges allocated the largest share of 2018-2019 funding to Instructional Salaries ($11,547,508), followed by Other Operating Expenses and Services ($8,417,213), Non-instructional Salaries ($6,422,236), and Employee Benefits ($3,466,361). These four expense categories total almost $30 million dollars and represent 88% of the close to $34M allocated in 2018-2019. The high proportion of funds allocated to human capital or personnel-related costs reflects colleges’ early stage of development and their effort to both staff up their GP work and engage all stakeholders—specifically faculty, staff, and administrators—with one another in GP inquiry, design and implementation.

Figure 2. Phase I CCC GP Funding Allocations across CCC
Support Needs

Across work plans, colleges consistently identified four areas of support that the CCCCO could offer to advance their next steps, promote a deeper understanding of GP, and strengthen their likelihood for success. These four areas include:

- Professional development workshops focused on: managing organizational change, developing teams, effective communication strategies, designing meta-majors and program maps, and integrated planning and evaluation
- Effective and promising practices among existing guided pathways efforts
- Opportunities for institutional peer learning
- Technical assistance and coaching

These support needs generally align with the foundational stakeholder engagement and coordination, student-centered inquiry and decision-making, and structural redesign work most CCC will pursue in Phase I.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOCUSED ON SKILL-BUILDING

Colleges commended the regional GP workshops provided by Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative in 2017-2018 and stated that the information was helpful in completing their inaugural self-assessment and in the initial planning stages of GP. As college leaders continue on their respective journeys with GP design and implementation, they are seeking no/low-cost skill-building professional development opportunities that take a deep dive into building capacity across a range of topic areas that include:

- Managing organizational change, with an emphasis on preparing and supporting college teams and personnel
- Developing teams, with an emphasis on cross-functional teams and effective collaboration and inquiry
- Communicating effectively, with an emphasis on articulating the value of GP, establishing urgency, and getting broad buy-in across campus stakeholders
- Designing meta-majors and program mapping
- Goal setting and evaluation

Colleges preferred method of delivery for professional development includes face-to-face options (e.g., regional workshops, conferences, replication of the California Guided Pathways Project institute model, year-long training) and online support (e.g., webinars, podcasts, case studies, research articles).
EFFECTIVE AND PROMISING PRACTICES AMONG EXISTING GUIDED PATHWAYS EFFORTS

Work plans indicate that colleges recognize that learning from and connecting directly with institutions that are more advanced in their implementation of guided pathways could go a long way in preventing duplication of effort. Colleges are interested in better understanding practices and approaches emerging from the American Association for Community Colleges Pathways Project and California Guided Pathways Project, as well as learning from numerous CCC that have successfully implemented components of the GP framework, long before the official launch of the guided pathways movement. Some colleges detailed specific approaches and practices they would like to better understand, including examples that support part-time, non-traditional, working, and/or CTE students; pathways that support students with disabilities; ways colleges have connected student equity planning with enrollment management and scheduling; and strategies other colleges have used to integrate and strategically leverage various funding sources and streams.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL PEER LEARNING

Colleges indicate it would be beneficial for the CCCCO to facilitate opportunities to connect and network with peers from colleges both in similar stages of GP development and at more advanced stages, as well as with institutions that are similar in size and student population (especially small and rural colleges). Additionally, colleges suggest online forums, inquiry groups, and regional workgroups to encourage peer-to-peer connections.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COACHING

A number of third-party organizations are providing site-based support to individual colleges, such as the Career Ladders Project; similarly, college teams are receiving support through specific programs like the California Guided Pathways Project and the Leading from the Middle Academy (a program of the RP Group). Colleges and individuals receiving this type of support underscore its value and indicate they would like the CCCCO to increase and continue this type of assistance.

Conclusion

Work plans demonstrate that colleges are building the foundation necessary for transformational institutional change and will continue on this trajectory during Phase I of CCC GP funding. Colleges are revamping and aligning institutional structures, while concurrently soliciting student input and bolstering GP awareness and endorsement. They are clarifying end goals for students by prioritizing the establishment of program maps and meta-majors that include student-centered scheduling and enhanced technology solutions for tracking student achievement. CCC are using evidenced-based practices to improve basic skills enrollment and completion, making high school coursework and GPA central to student placement. While colleges have participated in numerous professional development opportunities, they continue to seek no/low-cost training, particularly in the area of organizational change, cross-functional team building, communication, program mapping, and research and evaluation.
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