



# Guided Pathways Begin in High School: Models & Ideas

## Executive Summary

*Research carried out by Karen Miles, Ed.D. for SCCRC April 2020*

Community colleges in California have been working on “Clarifying the path” for students for the last couple of years, and are now getting ready to move into the Guided Pathways phase “Enter the path”. The focus is now on getting students into their correct pathway or meta-major. This work requires us to connect with our K12 partners in ways we have not done before. Over half of the students who apply to community colleges never start – 129,024 were lost in transition to the SCCRC colleges in Fall 2017 (CalPassplus). We need to build a seamless system for high school seniors to enter our colleges.

A toolkit of models and ideas to do this was developed based on research with 28 interviewees from the 8 SCCRC colleges (Deans, faculty, counselors, Guided Pathways team members, enrollment services, institutional researchers & many others); plus best practice research from early implementing colleges across California and other states. Here are some of the highlighted findings and recommendations:

### How to get students into the right meta-major

*“Essentially, the first time 2/3 students choose a major they are guessing” (EAB)*

- Undecided students need time to choose a major, as career decision-making is a multi-phase developmental process
- Colleges need to provide labor market information to high school students, parents, counselors and teachers for their meta-major areas
- We need high school students to take career exploration classes with our meta-majors embedded in them

### Connecting with “our” students who are in high school

*“We need better communication/ clearer messaging to dual enrollment students so they understand they are taking Cuesta courses, and that they can easily finish in 2 years” (Dean, Cuesta.)*

- New student orientations prior to college credit classes
- Student success/ career exploration classes prior to college credit classes
- No more “random acts of dual enrollment”
- Introductory classes for each meta-major area
- Multiple student visits and activities at the college campus throughout K12
- Hybrid counselors

### College (and career) knowledge

*“By age 25, only 29% of US youth from the lowest income quartile have entered higher education, compared with 80% of their peers from the highest income quartile” (Aud et al.)*

- Only 61% California parents had received college information from their high school, and they were disproportionately low SES families
- Part-time students are disproportionately underrepresented populations and it is hard for them to understand course sequencing using academic plans designed for full-time students

- Work with high school teachers, not just counselors, as they are the greatest influence on whether students attend college or not after parents – they do not currently get their information from institutional sources
- Team up with high school counselors to tackle parent college literacy to shift the mindset
- Develop parent resource guides, parent orientations, parent college
- Having students apply together to the college and for financial aid is helpful for students who are indecisive, lack confidence or motivation, were otherwise disadvantaged, or who did not have parents urging them to apply

## Onboarding

*“No one is held accountable for issues related to student transitions from high school to college”*  
(Venezia, Kirst & Antonio)

- It is the lower SES and underrepresented students who fall out of the pipeline
- Students need individualized guidance through each of the matriculation steps
- Nudging is a low-cost, scalable strategy
- Colleges and K12 should share responsibility to ensure fall enrollment (support that straddles the two systems)
- High schools “stay late” and colleges “start early”
- Stagger the matriculation steps
- Non-cognitive assessments of academic engagement & self-efficacy, campus engagement, educational commitment, resiliency and social comfort help identify students at-risk of dropping out
- Thematic counseling by meta-major including faculty
- Summer bridge
- Differentiated student services
- Ongoing support

The toolkit ends with a Readiness Self-Assessment based on reflective questions asked throughout the toolkit, and an Action Planning Guide to move towards next steps. A companion toolkit for K12 has also been developed in order for the high schools/ districts to have the same information and opportunity to assess their systems before joining in action planning meetings with their community college partners.

## Next steps reported by SCCRC colleges:

- Bring K12 to the table for Guided Pathways development – also 4-year universities & employers
- Share the toolkit across the college – administrators, deans, outreach etc.
- Look at campus goals and the strategic plan for outreach and marketing
- Workshops for families and parents
- Career classes for undecided seniors
- Non-cognitive assessments as part of early alert system
- Ask students what they need instead of designing services for them, without them
- Early college credit options must link with Guided Pathways

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