

# GUIDED PATHWAYS BEGIN IN HIGH SCHOOL: MODELS AND IDEAS

(K12 VERSION)

***“No one is held accountable for issues related to student transitions from high school to college.”***

*(Venezia, Kirst & Antonio)*



*Developed for the  
South Central Coast Regional Consortium*

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# Introduction

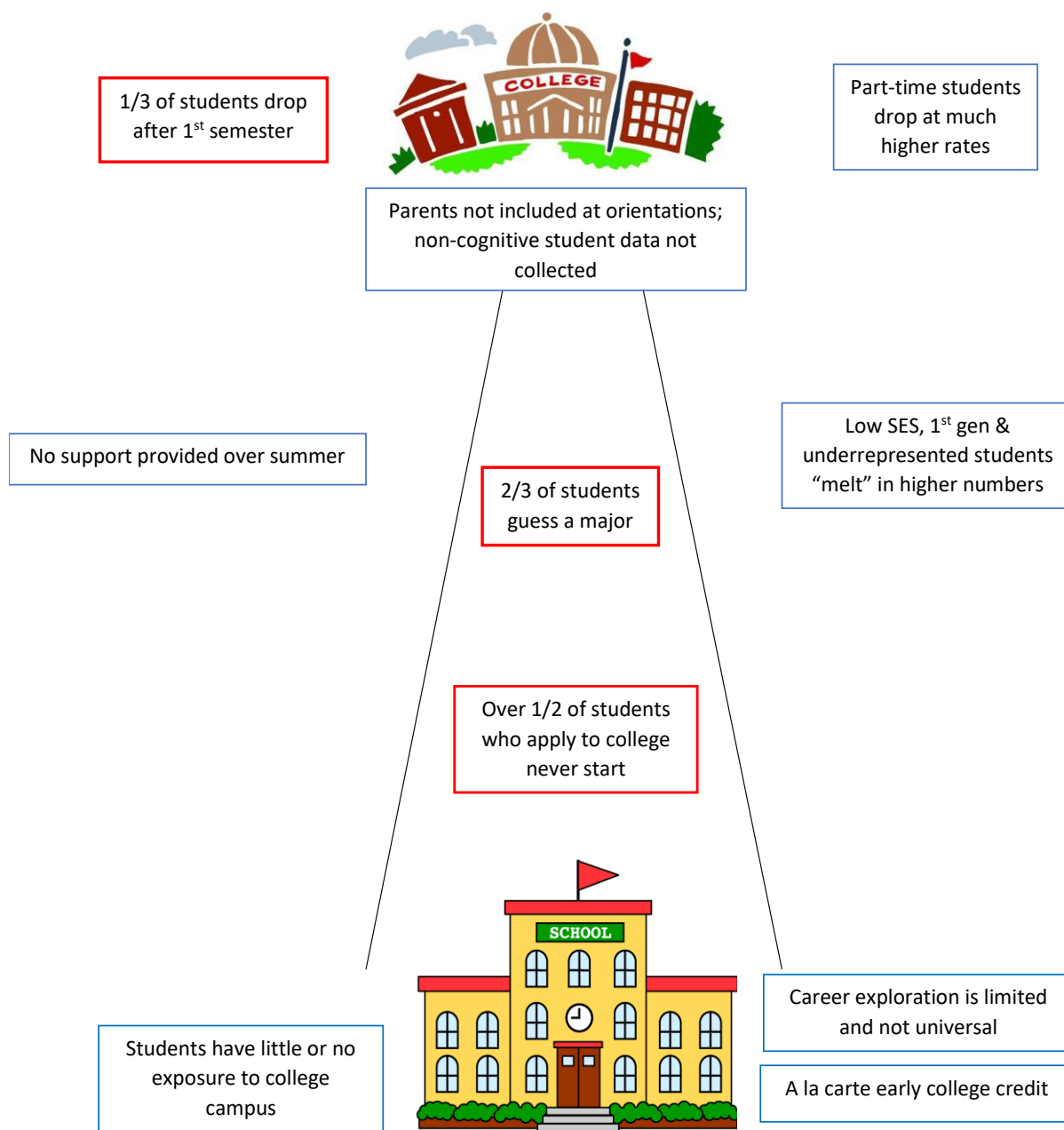
In the last two years, community colleges across the state have been working hard on grouping together their programs into more easily accessible clusters, known by many different names including meta-majors/career clusters/ or areas of interest. Typically a college has 6-10 clusters from which students can choose. Guided pathways lead into these clusters, so that students can take general education classes that work for any of the majors in a cluster, and they will gain extra credits they do not need, losing time or money if they switch majors within a cluster. This process means that students will have a more simplified path at the community college, and they will be able to progress faster and more smoothly.

As work reaches completion on simplifying the college's many programs into guided pathways, colleges are now at the point of focusing on how to get students into their correct meta-major or pathway. This work requires the colleges to connect with their K12 partners in ways they have not done before. We need to build a seamless system for high school seniors to enter the colleges to better help students in the transition.

This toolkit is a collection of ideas from guided pathways teams across the South Central Coast Regional Consortium's eight colleges. Plus, it is a compilation of promising practices from early-implementing guided pathways teams in college and K12 in California and other states that will provide you with models and resources as you rethink your current processes for student transition to post-secondary education in the community colleges. It finishes with a Readiness Self-Assessment for your school or district to reflect on your priorities for moving this work forwards, that you can share with your college partners. A community college version of the toolkit including a Readiness Self-Assessment is available for college teams.

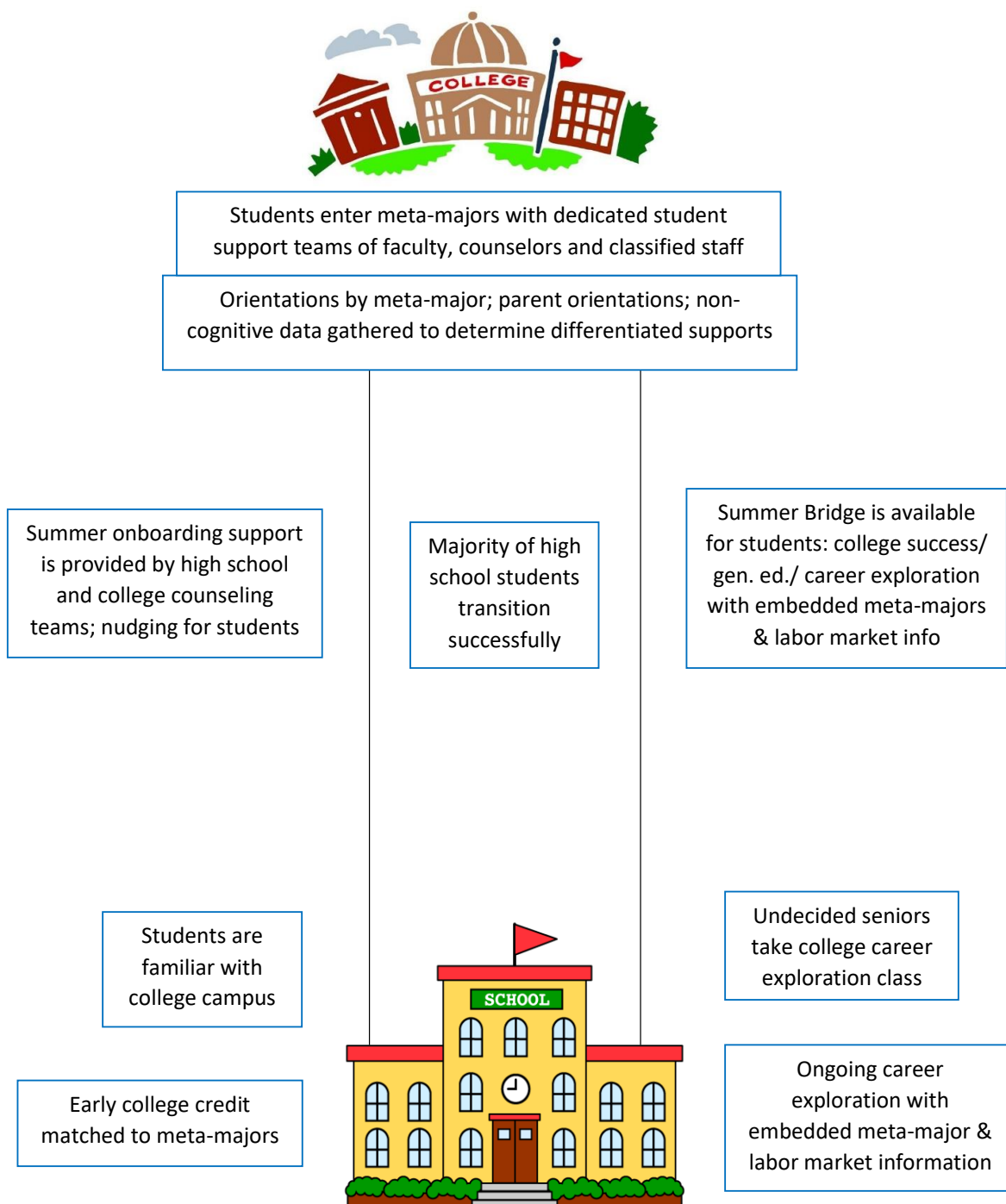
***“The percentage of low-income students who enroll in higher education immediately after graduating from high school has declined from 56% of graduates to just 46% since 2008.” (Completion by Design)***

### Typical onboarding process in California community colleges



Our current methods of transitioning students from high school to college into an informed meta-major are problematic. Many students are lost in the transition; few know what it is they want to study in college or why. Critical supports are missing at times when students most need them. Our students needing the most help do not receive it. Guided pathways development is not only a way to group programs at the colleges – if we do this work thoughtfully, with the colleges working in collaboration with their feeder high schools, it's also an opportunity to build a better onboarding system and build a bridge from K12 to the community colleges.

### Optimal onboarding system for California community colleges



High schools and colleges working together can better prepare students for life after high school. Career classes for all students with embedded meta-major and labor market exploration help students select appropriate early college credit opportunities. Provision of transitional support over the critical summer time period can mean thousands more students make it into college. Orientations where non-cognitive data is gathered to provide differentiated supports, can also be attended by parents.

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

*“Even the students who say they know what meta-major they want should meet with a counselor to explain how they made that decision, and what career they envision for themselves.”*  
(Counselor, VC)

***“Essentially, the first time two thirds of students choose a major, they are guessing.”*** (EAB)

### Choosing a meta-major

*“According to the ACT, only 32% of high school graduates report being “very sure” about their major. And yet the vast majority of community colleges ask students to select a major on the application for admission without providing any guidance.”*  
(EAB)

Community colleges are in the final stages of clarifying the path for students by simplifying their program options. But are we any closer to successfully transitioning high school students into the correct meta-major? Research on early-implementing guided pathways colleges shows that students are not simply selecting a meta-major and choosing between programs in that meta-major:

***“77% of students reported they were considering majors in more than one broad category - one third were considering all 4 major categories.”*** (Baker, Bettinger, Jacob & Marinescu, 2017)

Simply having meta-majors in place will not ensure that students select the correct one for them. As the Community College Research Center warns: *“Although increasing program structure is likely to reduce the confusion and mistakes students make in course selection, it increases the importance of the choices students make prior to program enrollment”.*

- How can we help students properly explore and choose the right major/meta-major?

Completion by Design suggests that colleges should ask:

- How can we improve understanding among high school students about the programs offered by the college and where they lead in terms of employment and further education?
- How can we motivate and guide students to be prepared to enter a college-level program of study as soon as they graduate high school?
- What guidance and support can we provide to help entering students develop clear goals for college and careers, and choose a program of study in a timely manner?
- How do we know a student is in a program of study? How is that information used?

## How students choose majors *(Baker, Bettinger, Jacob & Marinescu)*

1. Expected course enjoyment
2. Expected grades
3. Expected salary

They are not considering employment outcomes. *Levesque noted: "Evidence suggests a clear need to increase awareness among community college students about outcomes associated with particular programs of study, including information on average earnings and employment opportunities by major and degree".*

*"I think program mapping is falling into the causation/ correlation mistake – having a major doesn't make you more ready to go to college." (Guided Pathways lead faculty, Moorpark College)*

- How can we help students gain access to labor market information so that they are making an informed decision on their choice of major/ meta-major?
- How else can we help students make an informed decision, other than having them choose a meta-major/ major?

## Undecided students

*“The undecided students don’t know their why and that’s why they’re more likely to drop out. When asked “Why are you coming to VC?” they just give a blank stare. The group that has already taken college credit or who have had career exploration exposure is easier. It would be good for them to take an intro to college class to mentally prep them.” (Counselor, Ventura College)*

Some of this meta-major selection work can be done at the college campus, if the college offers undecided students an option to enter a Discovery or Exploration meta-major, and then having them explore and research possible careers, and then linking that career back to the correct major/ meta-major. Ventura College’s model is that students in their first semester take a career exploration class if they are undecided, and they only get priority registration in their second semester.

For colleges that have decided to not offer students an “undecided option” in their meta-majors, research reveals the negative effects for students: **“Making them choose a major creates anxiety and cognitive dissonance: choosing a program becomes a higher stakes decision if opportunities for changing one’s mind or changing course later are fewer.”** (CCRC).

*“Student-reported anxiety levels at the college have doubled in the last 4 years.” (Counselor, Ventura College)*

A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that *“the degree of personal assistance in helping students find suitable programs to apply seems to make a large difference for actual enrollment outcomes”*. They note: *“Better guidance in picking appropriate programs ... is clearly an important condition for providing college transition support directly to low-transition high schools”*.

In other words, high school and college teams reaching out to educate low SES and/or underrepresented high school students about guided pathways, possible careers, salaries and employment outlook makes a difference in how many students attend the institution.

*“We can market to the undecided group: “2 things to help you succeed this week”. We shouldn’t overwhelm them with information if they are in survival mode.” (Guided pathways faculty lead, Moorpark College).*

- Does our college have the capacity to help all undecided students carry out career exploration and decision-making?



## Career exploration and the decision-making process

CCRC warns: “Academic advising in the absence of career advising “builds a bridge to nowhere”.”

“Pre-nursing is our number one major - that is not an informed decision.” (Counselor, Cuesta)

Many colleges are adding an interest inventory linked to their meta-majors to help students pick their pathway, but **career choice is developmental**, just as identity development is developmental - a one-off career inventory provides a snapshot of possibilities for a student at a given moment in time, but it does not provide adequate time for reflection. Students selecting a meta-major without having really thought about it or carried out research will probably lead to them switching majors or even meta-majors. Also, career suggestions leading from such a quiz need to be connected to information on potential salaries and job availability, in order for students to be able to make comparisons between possible careers, not just to link to a meta-major. “*It is not realistic to expect most students to identify a major immediately upon matriculation.*” (Karp, CCRC).

“Critical career conversations need to start in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade with middle school teachers/ counselors and then be continued in the home.” (Counselor, Ventura College)

The Community College Research Center (CCRC) notes that career decision-making is a “*multiphase process that includes guided exploration of self; structured investigation into various career options; and the melding of interests, goals and strengths into a coherent plan for academic and career progress*”. In other

words, it is a process that is developmental and takes place over time.

Developmental career decision-making requires at least a one-semester class, and therefore colleges may not have the capacity to help all of the students needing support in that process.

- Could schools offer career exploration classes over the summer, or even in the student’s senior year instead, so students do not lose momentum when they are able to attend college full-time?

## College-provided career and meta-major information

Colleges are building new platforms to provide information to students on possible job titles and salary information as well as linking to info on meta-majors and certificates/ transfer degrees. Some colleges are following the lead of Bakersfield College which uses Program Mapper, an online outside portal

*“Labor market information (job titles and duties, salary ranges and numbers of jobs available) can be added to syllabi or into Canvas by instructors.” (Counselor, Ventura College)*

<https://programmap.bakersfieldcollege.edu/academics> or Sierra College’s website <https://academics.sierracollege.edu/explore-our-academic-programs> Both provide information on careers and average salaries for meta-majors; Program Mapper also helps students with certificate/ degree templates and scheduling.

The CCRC warns: *“There is significant evidence that simply providing information to students is not sufficient to improve their planning behavior, and many students report finding college-provided information confusing rather than helpful”.*

- How can we provide meta-major and labor market information to students?
- How can we make sure they have understood the information and moved forward in their career decision-making?

*“Our focus for guided pathways is on changing the student experience. The three things we want to change are: helping them find a meta-major, fostering belonging and connections within the meta-major, and them having a full ed. plan by the end of the first year.” (Guided pathways lead faculty, SBCC)*

Imagine if the colleges were the go-to place for local labor market information: Georgia State University has eliminated achievement gaps based on race, ethnicity or income. A new career-related portal allows students to explore live job data, including the number of jobs available in the Atlanta region, starting salaries and correlations to majors and degree programs. The portal also suggests careers students may be unaware of and shares job data about them.

## High school career exploration

***“The opportunity to explore career fields while in high school at no cost to students and their families is invaluable. The high cost of college for students and states makes extensive exploration less feasible and affordable once students graduate from high school and enroll in college.”*** (Jenkins, Lahr and Fink)

*“I have seen a culture change in the last 2 years, with students having had exposure to career exploration in high school.”*  
(Counselor, Ventura College)

With guided pathways in place, we now have an opportunity for career exploration to take place in high school, or even middle school, so students can start by figuring out a career direction early on and changing their minds (at no cost!) and then by senior year, they should have a destination career and an informed decision on why they chose that career. With those pieces in place, their destination career can be linked to the appropriate college meta-major/major, and their transition into their desired guided pathway can happen a lot more smoothly.

Indian River State College in Florida presents a career event, Great Exploration, each fall. The college introduces its 8 meta-majors to seniors, who select programs of interest within their chosen meta-major. On campus, students are put into groups by their selections, and they visit with program faculty, participate in activities associated with their meta-major and hear from regional employers in their chosen field.

- Are we able to offer career exploration classes to all students and to embed college meta-majors in them?

College of the Canyons offers a dual enrollment career exploration class and a student success class at each of its local high schools.

## College career exploration classes in high school

Colleges can help high schools provide these initial exploratory career classes to their students through early college credit mechanisms such as dual enrollment or high school articulation. Many schools already start this process with their 9th grade students using the “Get Focused, Stay Focused” curriculum, but their seniors need to revisit their career plans and update them so that students, high schools and colleges are clear on what their students are planning to study after high school and where.

Several colleges across the state offer a 0.5 or 1 unit class for high school seniors to revise their 9th grade career plans and to complete their college student education plans. (Cuesta, ELAC, Lake Tahoe).

*“Sometimes just helping them to name/ label what they are interested in is the help they need.”*  
(Counselor, Ventura College)

Other colleges offer their career exploration classes to high school seniors, so that students can also learn about the college’s meta-majors. This can be something specifically offered to those students planning on attending the community college. Another model is that students take the career class as a Summer Bridge class.

*“High school counselors were able to conduct exit interviews with seniors in September/ October. They were able to identify which students wanted to go to Allan Hancock College, and the undecided group took a college career planning class during their senior year.”* (Counselor, Allan Hancock College)

- How could we help our undecided students to carry out career exploration and informed decision-making before graduation?

## K12 college- and career-readiness standards for every student

The American School Counselor Association developed mindsets and behaviors for student success, comprising developmental standards for three domains: academic, career and social/emotional development. The career standards are:

***Standard A: Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.***

- C:A1 Develop career awareness
- C:A1.1 Develop skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information
- C:A1.2 Learn about the variety of traditional and nontraditional occupations
- C:A1.3. Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests and motivations
- C:A1.4 Learn how to interact and work cooperatively in teams
- C:A1.5 Learn to make decisions
- C:A1.6 Learn how to set goals
- C:A1.7 Understand the importance of planning
- C:A1.8 Pursue and develop competency in areas of interest
- C:A1.9 Develop hobbies and vocational interests
- C:A1.10 Balance between work and leisure time
- C:A2 Develop employment readiness
- C:A2.1 Acquire employability skills such as working on a team, problem-solving and organizational skills
- C:A2.2 Apply job readiness skills to seek employment opportunities
- C:A2.3 Demonstrate knowledge about the changing workplace
- C:A2.4 Learn about the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees
- C:A2.5 Learn to respect individual uniqueness in the workplace
- C:A2.6 Learn how to write a résumé
- C:A2.7 Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning
- C:A2.8 Understand the importance of responsibility, dependability, punctuality, integrity and effort in the workplace
- C:A2.9 Utilize time- and task-management skills

***Standard B: Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.***

- C:B1 Acquire career information
- C:B1.1 Apply decision-making skills to career planning, course selection and career transition
- C:B1.2 Identify personal skills, interests and abilities and relate them to current career choice
- C:B1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of the career-planning process
- C:B1.4 Know the various ways in which occupations can be classified
- C:B1.5 Use research and information resources to obtain career information
- C:B1.6 Learn to use the Internet to access career-planning information
- C:B1.7 Describe traditional and nontraditional career choices and how they relate to career choice
- C:B1.8 Understand how changing economic and societal needs influence employment trends and future training

**Standard B contd.:**

- C:B2 Identify career goals
- C:B2.1 Demonstrate awareness of the education and training needed to achieve career goals
- C:B2.2 Assess and modify their educational plan to support career
- C:B2.3 Use employability and job readiness skills in internship, mentoring, shadowing and/or other work experience
- C:B2.4 Select course work that is related to career interests
- C:B2.5 Maintain a career-planning portfolio

**Standard C: Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.**

- C:C1 Acquire knowledge to achieve career goals
- C:C1.1 Understand the relationship between educational achievement and career success
- C:C1.2 Explain how work can help to achieve personal success and satisfaction
- C:C1.3 Identify personal preferences and interests influencing career choice and success
- C:C1.4 Understand that the changing workplace requires lifelong learning and acquiring new skills
- C:C1.5 Describe the effect of work on lifestyle
- C:C1.6 Understand the importance of equity and access in career choice
- C:C1.7 Understand that work is an important and satisfying means of personal expression
- C:C2 Apply skills to achieve career goals
- C:C2.1 Demonstrate how interests, abilities and achievement relate to achieving personal, social, educational and career goals
- C:C2.2 Learn how to use conflict management skills with peers and adults
- C:C2.3 Learn to work cooperatively with others as a team member
- C:C2.4 Apply academic and employment readiness skills in work-based learning situations such as internships, shadowing and/or mentoring experiences

K12 counselors are often impacted with many other responsibilities and they may not have time to work on these developmental standards with students, either individually or in groups. For students to be able to develop the mindsets and behaviors necessary to transition successfully into employment, post-secondary education or training after high school, it may be beneficial for them to take a career class, either one provided by the high school or one provided by the community college that also affords the students early college credit.

Many schools now provide a college career class to students prior to them selecting a career academy or majors program, as it provides an opportunity for students to think about careers that may be of interest to them before they commit to a program of study. These classes can also count towards the College and Career Readiness Indicator.

# College connection for early college credit students

## Dual enrollment/ early college credit students

Many colleges in the last seven or eight years began to offer early college credit opportunities to their feeder high school students. Often these students do not fully understand that they are already college students, and they do not transition smoothly into guided pathways.

*“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. They need to understand the value of community college: small classrooms, quality of education etc.” (Dean, Cuesta)*

Indian River State College hosts information and recruitment sessions in spring at all of its campuses and at several high schools. Students and parents are introduced to the benefits of dual enrollment, familiarized with the college’s programs and the articulation agreements the college has with local universities, and shown how the college uses program customization to build degrees around a student’s intended career field and transfer institution.

After being accepted into the dual enrollment program, students must participate in a new student orientation, which places great emphasis on career exploration. In their first semester as dual enrollment students, they are required to take a student success course during which they take a career exploration module to help them decide whether the career they have selected is a good fit based on their interests and goals. They are required to complete a capstone project in which they present on their chosen career and describe why it is a good fit for them. (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, Ganga, Kopko, Brown & Patterson.)

- What can we do to develop a sense of college-belonging in our early college credit students?

Santa Barbara City College created an agreement with their K12 schools to register all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with City College – the process is built in to high school orientation and class selection. The consent form stays on file for the duration of high school unless a parent withdraws approval.

## Early college credit offerings in pathways

As guided pathways are developed, colleges and high schools should begin to take a more planned approach to early college credit offerings. Although college programs are being grouped into meta-major areas for students, the types of early college credit opportunities at high schools still follows the à la carte system, with the decision as to which dual enrollment and high school articulation classes are offered for college credit being based on which high school instructors meet the college's minimum qualifications, or which college departments can be persuaded to offer their classes at the high schools. (Bakersfield Community College calls this "Random Acts of Dual Enrollment".)

*"Dual enrollment needs to be linked to the students' career pathways. Schools want it for College and Career Readiness Indicators, and communication between the high schools and colleges should occur to ensure sensible choices are made for the sake of the students." (Counselor, Oxnard College)*

A more thoughtful approach would require colleges to identify or create one explorer or introductory course for each meta-major area, and offer these classes at the school sites, as part of the career decision-making process. Students could then be offered multiple opportunities for college credit in their chosen pathway, whether for major preparation or for general education, and then guided pathways would truly begin in high school.

Moorpark College suggested that a Holland code inventory linked to its meta-majors could be embedded in DE classes, so that students enjoying the class could see what the corresponding college program looks like.

*"Many programs have one-unit courses that could be used to explore areas of interest." (Faculty, Allan Hancock College)*

Santa Barbara City College is developing a list for department chairs of possible Dual Enrollment classes that meet high school needs i.e. American History. Classes will be scheduled after 3:30pm and in the summer for easier student access. Language classes are popular in the college's 2<sup>nd</sup> summer session.

- [Could the colleges offer explorer/ introductory college classes for each meta-major?](#)

Santa Barbara City College wants to create a unit in the Neo portal used by their high schools. It would help their Dual Enrollment students with mini lessons on how to use Canvas, how to use email, where to find resources, library information etc.



## Campus connection

Offering the college classes at high school campuses helps with greater access by greater numbers of students, but it is a *“missed opportunity”* (Dean, Cuesta) not to have the students visiting the college campus as often as possible.

Allan Hancock College has built a model whereby different campus activities have been designed for different grades of students in K12:

Bulldog Bound for 4th and 5th graders  
 CTE Carnival for 7th and 8th graders  
 CTE presentations for 8th and 9th graders  
 Launch to College for 12th graders

Allan Hancock College also introduced monthly meetings at high schools: with no agenda, just the top 2-3 items people feel are pressing are put on the table, with the schools going first. The team develops action steps - this has led to initiatives such as 2,000 middle school students at a conference and the creation of a migrant parent conference hosted at the college.

*“The more positive experience they have on campus as high school students, the more positive their experience will be as college students”* (Guided Pathway Lead Faculty, Santa Barbara City College)

- What could we do to regularly bring middle and high school students onto the college campus before their senior year?

*“There should be crossover: the high school students should come to the college campus to see plays and sports, and vice versa for the college students. We held a Black History month event at the Performing Arts Center and the high school students competed.”* (Dean, Antelope Valley College)

## Hybrid counselors

Some colleges have a model where college counselors or college representatives are based at the high schools part of the time in order to do academic planning (College of the Canyons; Oxnard College). Others pay a stipend to the high school counselors to use part of their time specifically to do college counseling.

*“Underrepresented students are especially likely to be hampered by.. a lack of early and high-quality college counseling.” (Venezia, Kirst and Antonio)*

*“The college can help by getting counselors into the high schools. Also by offering in-services/ professional development.*

*We offered a professional development on high school articulation and dual enrollment – it dispelled a lot of myths and I got a lot of interest and requests.” (Counselor, Oxnard College)*

To keep dual enrollment students on-plan, Indian River State College has established a shared advising tool with local high schools that connects a high school counselor with a student’s college advisor. This tool, referred as the DEAN system (Dual Enrollment Advising Network) enables the high school counsellor to view the student’s guided pathway, current term schedule, college transcript, and comments from the college advisor. Any changes to the student’s schedule trigger an email to the high school counselor alerting him or her to the change. (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, Ganga, Kopko, Brown & Patterson.)

*“AVC has a bridge program. 16 counselors from K12 were hired and trained as adjuncts to be college counselors. They have been doing the program for 3 years. They assist with ed. plans and providing information about programs, and they are critical to disseminating information to the high schools.” (Dean, Antelope Valley College)*

*“We have allowed a communication breakdown to happen. We need to share data with the high school counselors. We need a coalition workgroup. The perception now is that we are not true partners, that we are trying to force our agenda on them.” (Counselor, College of the Canyons)*

- Could we develop a hybrid counselor team between our college and our feeder high schools?

# College (and career) knowledge

## Equity issues

*“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.)*

A study by Venezia, Kirst and Antonio found that only 61% of California parents had received college preparation information from their high schools; when disaggregated by SES level, disparities emerged, with much lower levels of economically disadvantaged parents reporting that they had received college information. Counselors had many responsibilities and could not focus on college preparation issues. *“We found large differences in college knowledge, and in understanding what it takes to succeed in college, among students within schools by academic tracks and between schools by SES.” (Venezia, Kirst & Antonio)*

- Are some students in our high schools receiving more comprehensive advising services than others?
- Is this based on counselor skills/ levels of knowledge? Or do advisors need bias avoidance training to ensure minority students are being guided to careers with high earnings potential?

*“Closing equity gaps is a goal of guided pathways - equity is a consideration in self-assessment.” (Cuesta)*

*“AP tests typically cost \$150-200 each. Dual enrollment classes offer a way to bring early college credit to all students, solving an equity problem.” (Guided Pathways Lead Faculty, Santa Barbara City College)*

EAB noted that if we focus on closing the achievement gap among part-time populations, the gap between black and white students would close by 13 points - a difference of 62% - and the gap between Hispanic and white students would improve by 7 points - closing the gap by 58%. They note that in an effort to encourage full-time enrollment, colleges often present academic plans in term-by-term formats designed for full-time students. They warn: *“Part-time students find it difficult to figure out how to make sense of course sequences on their own... plans exclude information about requisite course combinations, which makes it difficult for part-time students to interpret essential sequences”.*

*“Given the typical composition of part-time students, which are disproportionately underrepresented populations, our ability to serve part-time students is inextricably linked to our equity challenge.” (EAB)*

- What are we doing to make college more accessible for our students who will be attending part-time?

## Labor market information

The Center for Community College Student Engagement proposed: *“With the changing landscape of community colleges, new challenges require advisors to have broader skill sets. Advisors increasingly must, for example, have in-depth conversations with students not only about degree plans and transfer opportunities, but also about current job markets, specific career opportunities and their earning potential, and career decisions based on those data points”* - and that goes for high school counselors too.

*“Business/ industry summits would be helpful, combining K12, community college, 4 year universities, together with other agencies and community members such as CalWORKs, Department of Rehab and Workforce folks.”  
(Counselor, Ventura College)*

- [How can we ensure our college and high school counselors and instructors gain more knowledge of the local labor market?](#)

## High school teachers

A study by Canché, D’Amico, Rios-Aguilar and Salas found that after parents, high school teachers were the greatest influence on students as to whether they attend college or not. However Venezia, Kirst and Antonio report that *“Teachers... reported that they get college information from graduates who are now in college, student teachers, newspapers, their own college experiences and their children - not from institutional sources”*.

Guided pathways work offers opportunities for colleges to work differently with their high school partners. Traditionally, college outreach teams have carried out presentations or registration assistance for high school seniors, while high school counselors have attended one or two meetings at the college per year for updates. Very few high school teachers are looped in on community college information, unless they happen to teach a CTE class that is offered for early college credit, in which case they usually know something about the corresponding college program. For more students to have equitable access to information about post-secondary education, we need to change the culture in high school, so that community colleges are not seen as second best.

*“We strongly encourage community college representatives to find ways to network with high school teachers”*. (Canché, D’Amico, Rios-Aguilar & Salas)

- [How can our high school teachers learn more about community college programs and the value of community college?](#)

## Parents

*“K12 systems...often do not have the time and resources to provide college counseling for each student.” (Venezia, Kirst & Antonio)*

*“There are many myths to debunk with many people - parents, counselors and students!” (Dean, Cuesta)*

*“Parents need both career exploration and college knowledge, and they need to understand grit and growth mindset; conversations with parents need to start in middle school to change parent mindsets about community college.” (Dean, Cuesta).*

A Ventura College survey of freshmen showed 40% of students reported getting information on college from their parents – but 60% of the students are first generation, so that means they have no-one helping them to navigate the institution.

*“Bringing in the families – it’s a part that’s missing from the community college experience.” (Dean, Oxnard College)*

Some colleges are offering college orientations, or College 101 for parents. Typical topics include information on what their students will be experiencing, financial aid, the study time students will need, differences between high school and college, resources etc. Pierce College offered a parent orientation at the same time as their students were attending their orientation. However, in order to reach more parents earlier, some colleges are talking about different types of parent outreach - to high school PTAs or in parent newsletters (MC).

- Could our college offer parent orientations?
- What other information could they provide to parents?

Santa Barbara City College have developed a Parent Resource Guide

*“Parents are allies - don’t isolate them.” (Dean, Antelope Valley College)*

*“We need to team up with high school counselors to tackle parent college literacy to shift the mindset. The expectation of parents is that the students work.” (Counselor, Allan Hancock College)*

Santa Barbara City College are creating a workshop to pilot at their high schools: 2 evening sessions of 2 ½ hours for 1<sup>st</sup> gen. families with dinner and childcare provided. The goal is to teach them about what the college does: the parents don’t understand what 2 year college is, or how it connects to 4 year university. They don’t understand the cost savings. Current parents of Promise students will come and present. They will discuss how to support their students. Students who attend with families will get volunteer hours credit. They will target seniors in the fall and juniors in the spring.

## Students

*“In a survey of students in six states, over 80% of prospective college students believed that community colleges had no academic standards.” (Kirst et al, Stanford University)*

With a view to getting the word out to students about the new meta-majors and guided pathways, some colleges are bringing together all of their student services teams (counseling, first year experience, outreach etc.) and planning a new system for connecting K12 and the colleges. Moorpark College, for example, are launching the following model:

1. Senior assembly @ high schools Jan - April: Explain guided pathways, give dates of upcoming application, registration & FAFSA workshops
2. Application workshops @ high schools Jan - May: Apply to Moorpark College and for financial aid. Set up MC portal. Have to choose an area of interest (could be Exploration major for undecided students). Explain how what the students are doing in school maps to pathways.
3. Senior orientation day at college March – batch enroll
4. Registration – workshops @ high schools
5. Post-high school calendar of ongoing orientations/ registration at the college
6. New student welcome

Research from the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that this methodology of having students apply together to the college and for financial aid is very helpful, especially for students who are *“indecisive, lack the confidence or motivation to engage in the application process, were otherwise disadvantaged,... and for those who don’t have parents urging them to apply”*.

*“A local high school visibly celebrates students who go to 4-year universities by putting their photo on a university flag. There is nothing for alternative paths. I want to sneak on campus and put up a student photo on a community college welding flag.” (Counselor, College of the Canyons)*

Holzer and Baum note: *“Students have... too little insight into their skills and preferences when choosing courses or majors... instead of gathering sufficient information to make sensible choices, students defer difficult choices like choosing a major and fall back on default options, taking the path of least resistance”*. This is why, prior to a new system for onboarding such as this beginning, high school students should have had time to reflect on their interests and abilities, explore related careers, and only then they can make an informed choice on their guided pathway.

- How can we work with our community college to improve the student onboarding processes with the advent of guided pathways?

## Onboarding

*“Policy accountability levers are weak or absent in the post-high school summer: most high schools can count their students as college-bound graduates, and colleges do not have to count a non-matriculated student in retention statistics. The organizational decoupling of K12 and higher education...and the disincentives for either high schools or colleges to provide summer support are ... factors that may thus contribute to high levels of melt.” (Arnold, Chewning, Castleman & Page)*

## Summer melt

*“For college-intending students, successfully navigating the post-high school summer requires a level of financial and college literacy that may be unrelated to their ability to succeed in the classroom. As a result, students who have already surmounted many obstacles to college enrollment and who would potentially earn high returns to post-secondary education may fail to matriculate.” (Castleman & Page)*

*“We’re bringing on board a marketing team to reach out to the community at large and ask why they didn’t attend AHC.” (Guided pathways lead faculty, Allan Hancock College)*

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education projects the number of high school graduates to remain flat from now until 2023, with a slight increase, followed by a dramatic decrease, after 2025 from about 3.5 million high school graduates per year to about 3 million (Inside Higher Ed). In the not-too-distant future, colleges will not have the luxury of only serving the students who show up at the college.

This means that colleges and high schools need to do a better job at transitioning high school students successfully into their college programs - currently: **“Of 100 students who apply to a two-year college, 56 are lost during onboarding, 23 drop out, and only 9 of the 100 complete an Associate degree and 7 complete a Bachelor’s degree”**(EAB).

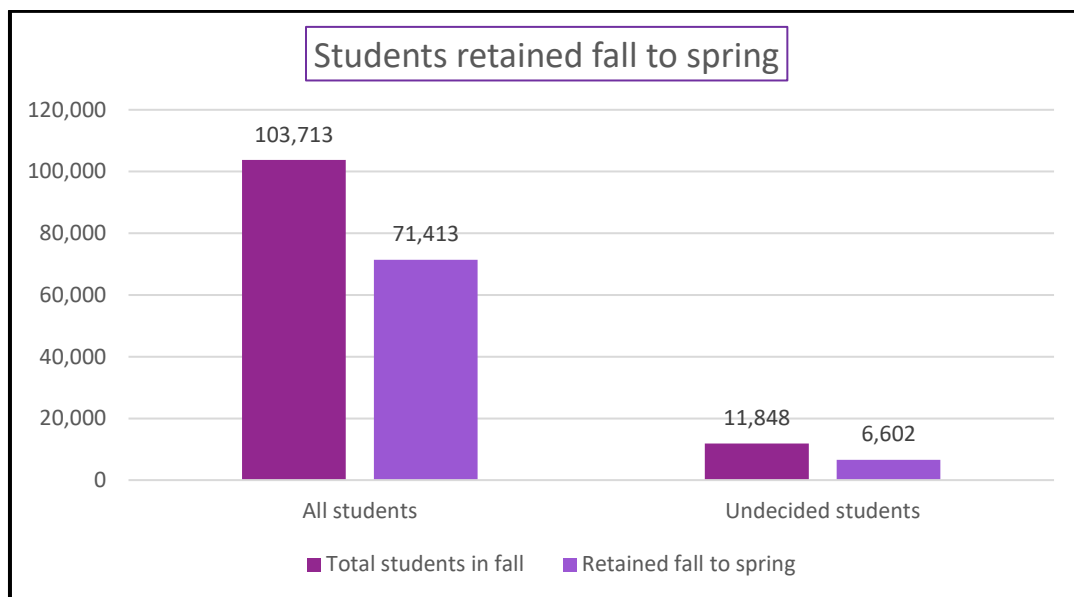
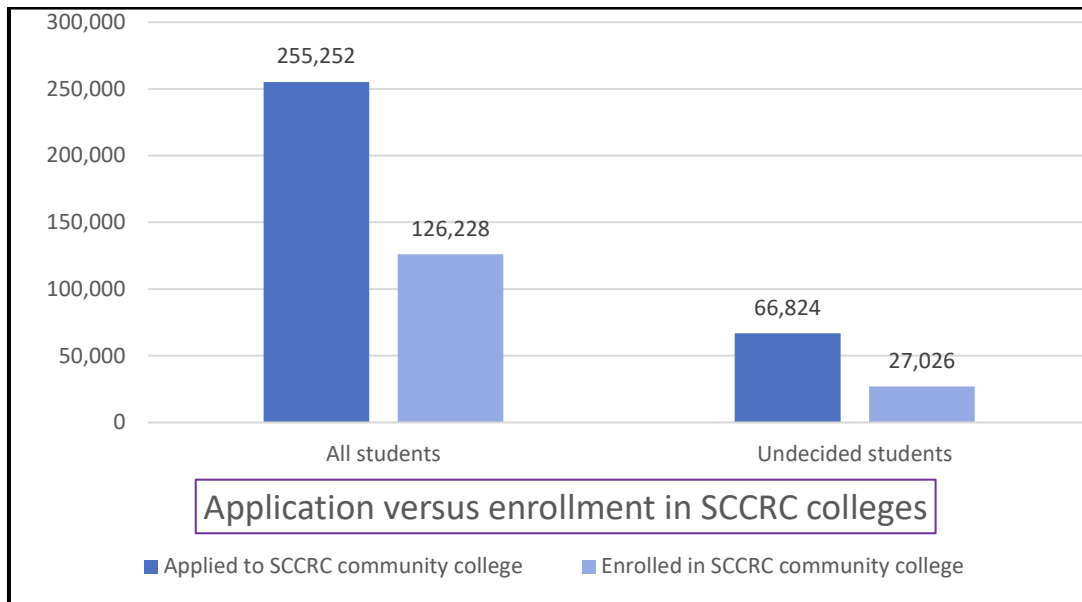
Completion by Design recommends enrollment directly from high school as a momentum strategy

Another study found that Latino males are less likely to enroll and minority males have higher melt rates than others (Cited by the National Association for College Admission Counseling). The study also found that academic ability did not improve melt rates for low-income students.

*“If a student comes here after having applied to a 4 year school, how do they feel about themselves? How do we address that?” (Dean, Antelope Valley College)*

*“Many students respond to the withdrawal of high school supports and the emergence of post-high school challenges by reopening the entire college decision-making process.” (Arnold, Fleming, DeAnda, Castleman & Wartman)*

## Onboarding data SCCRC community colleges 2017-2018



\*All data drawn from <https://www.calpassplus.org/launchboard/student-success-metrics>

Community colleges typically focus on retention between semesters when students arrive at the campus, but there are far greater losses in student numbers between application and enrollment. (**129,024 students lost from application to enrollment versus 32,300 lost from fall to spring semesters in 2017-2018 for SCCRC colleges.**) This is an overlooked area of the educational pipeline that is critical for both access and success for students, and is the responsibility of both high schools and colleges.



There are many tasks students are required to complete to onboard: (American School Counselor Association; Arnold, Chewing, Castleman & Page)

- Determine the cost of attendance
- Make sense of financial award letters
- Understand tuition bills
- Identify and budget for expenses such as health insurance, textbooks, meals
- Register for and attend orientation
- Apply to the college
- Receive required immunizations
- Find housing
- Find and use campus resources
- Connect with future classmates
- Deal with academic weaknesses
- Select a meta-major/ major
- Choose classes
- Plan schedule
- Arrange work around schedule
- Register for classes
- Arrange for transportation
- Access and navigate online portal
- Submit required documentation

At College of the Canyons, student peer advisors follow up with new students after they have completed the college application to check that they have registered, and help answer questions

- Who is responsible for providing reminders to students? Is it our college or our high schools, or both? What is our process?
- Who makes sure they stay on top of their onboarding tasks?

*“Schools with greater proportions of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch tend to have higher rates of summer melt”. (American School Counselor Association)*

With the advent of guided pathways, colleges and K12 have the opportunity to close this transition gap by working together on a bridge process that works better for their students. As stated previously, it is the lower SES underrepresented students who are falling out of this pipeline from high school to college - resolving this problem is an equity issue. Many of these are students who enroll as part-time in college, owing to their need to work to support themselves. *“70% of part-time students work more than 20 hours per week, and time spent on campus is limited - for part-time students, and especially those who are first-generation and low-income, the process can be overwhelming.”* (EAB).

- Have we calculated our current student numbers to find out how many students are lost during onboarding?
- Have we disaggregated the data to determine if some groups are melting at higher rates than others?
- Do we intentionally reach out to those students who had intended to go to a 4-year university and who have changed their minds?

## Nudges

*“To successfully navigate these challenges, students - part-time students, in particular - need individualized guidance throughout matriculation, nudging them as they move through each step of the onboarding process.”* (EAB) They warn of:

- ⚠ Unexplained delays - slow movement from step to step
- ⚠ Generic information - given to students with diverse needs
- ⚠ Confusing terminology - makes intake even more intimidating
- ⚠ Countless transfers - between departments to answer queries

Students are used to receiving frequent reminders in high school to ensure task completion. Nudging can provide both personalized and timely messages to urge students to complete tasks and navigate processes, and provide access to resources and one-on-one counseling through key decision-making moments.

The Pew Research Center found out that 6% of teens use email; 39% talk on the phone; but 63% send texts. NACAC cites an 11% increase in matriculation, a 20% increase in persistence, a 20% decline in student loan borrowing, and a 60% reduction in administrative burden by using texting. Another research project on the effectiveness of texting students reminders cost \$7 per student (Castleman & Page). Student responses to text message reminders: (Arnold, Chewning, Castleman & Page)

- Got me to complete a task I hadn't yet done (86%)
- Informed me about something I hadn't realized I needed to do (86%)
- Helped me manage my time better, like planning better or meeting my college deadlines (75%)
- Helped make the summer tasks less overwhelming or less stressful (70%)
- Helped make summer tasks for college clearer or more understandable (67%)

Georgia State University have instituted a combination of a new student portal to guide students through the onboarding steps, plus an artificial-intelligence chatbot “Pounce”, to answer questions from incoming students 24/7 via text messages on their smart devices. The first summer of implementation, Pounce delivered more than 200,000 answers to questions asked by incoming freshmen, reducing summer melt by 22% (324 extra students sitting in their seats for the first day of classes rather than sitting out the college experience).

Santa Barbara City College bought Enrollment RX – a “Constant Contact” system for enrollment management. It sends automatic messages, runs reports, and sends reminders to students if they fall off track with the onboarding process.

Nudging is a low-cost, scalable strategy. A thoughtful texting campaign can result in hundreds more students attending a college. An effective nudging campaign follows these guidelines (EAB):

1. **Send messages around key enrollment milestones** - near application & financial aid deadlines and before course registration opens. Focus on one milestone at a time so as not to overwhelm students.
2. **Content is important - and less is always more.** Texts should be short (one key point and no more than a few short sentences); open with the student's name and sign off with a contact name to keep the message personalized.
3. **Adjust the frequency of messages and provide an opt-out.** Send between 2-5 programmed messages per month.
4. **Leave room for "What's next?"** Provide concrete and actionable next steps, and links to the appropriate resource or function when clicked. Innovative schools have even prepared responses for the most common or anticipated student questions, saving staff time to deal with more nuanced inquiries.

Data analyzed by the Rhode Island Pipelines to College and Career Research Partnership revealed that text message nudges led to 73% of low-income students enrolling in college compared to 66% who did not receive nudges, and 71% of first-generation students who received nudges enrolled versus 63% who did not receive them. Arapahoe Community College in Colorado found that students were 50% more likely to keep an appointment with an advisor when they received a text reminder (EAB).

- What measures could we and our community college partner take to ensure fewer of the students get lost in the process?
- Are we identifying and reaching out to first-generation students who may lack social capital for navigating post-secondary education?

Miami-Dade's pre-college advisors support students in the majority of county public high schools after they have been admitted to college until mandatory orientation. They provide information on admission, financial aid, scholarships, enrollment requirements, program guidance and early college credit, provide a variety of career-themed workshops and information sessions, host FAFSA marathons for students and their parents, and build enthusiasm for attending college. College student ambassadors share their experiences with the high school students and guide them through the onboarding process. The advisors use an electronic case management system to target communications to students and which provides information on the demographics and needs of their students. In the past 3 years, enrollment increased 10%, equal to about \$500,000 in additional revenue for the college.

## Summer transition support

***“Share responsibility to ensure fall enrollment”*** (NACAC)

*“Aligning the complex hand-off of students from high school to college requires the consistent presence of all parties.”* (Arnold, Fleming, DeAnda, Castleman & Wartman)

*“First generation students need validating outside agents, i.e. they need to be together with their parents at orientation, so we need to work with the family schedule to get them on campus at the same time.”* (Guided pathways lead faculty, Moorpark College).

One model suggested in the literature is that high schools “stay late” and colleges “start early” (Castleman, Arnold & Wartman). High schools in the study provide counseling and automatic, electronic reminders during the summer to help with college preparation while colleges provide summer bridge programs to help students acclimate to college life socially and academically.

ASCA notes that most school counseling offices and the schools themselves shut down during the crucial summer months. The counselors with extended-year contracts often find their extra summer time allocated to registration, master scheduling and more administrative tasks, limiting the opportunity they have to help students navigate additional college onboarding steps over the summer. Building a K12 and college system to better support students through this process would require extending school counselor contracts to include the summer months to specifically support students in this process. Workshops and office hours should be at varied times to accommodate parent schedules. The college’s responsibilities would be to ensure that the high school counselors were well-versed in financial aid and the college admission process. One study showed that low SES students offered a few hours of additional counseling assistance were 14 percentage points more likely to enroll in college and 19 percentage points more likely to keep the postsecondary plans they developed during senior year.

*“We need to provide students with support that straddles the two systems. They need high touch relationships. They should not be let go by the schools until they have really transitioned.”* (Dean, Antelope Valley College)

*“This population of students needs considerable time and attention [over the summer] from someone with whom they already have a relationship.”* (Arnold, Fleming, DeAnda, Castleman & Wartman)

- What pre-college advising services should we and our community college partner be offering over the summer months?

A fundamental component of Guided Pathways is helping all students explore careers and programs early on. Jackson College in Michigan, an early-implementing Guided Pathways college, starts the process before students enroll. New students are called before orientation to welcome them to the college and find out more about their goals, (asking, for instance, “Do you plan to transfer? If so, to which university?”); their timeline for completion; if the students have any credits from Advanced Placement programs, dual enrollment, or prior study at another college; and what they want to study. (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, Ganga, Kopko, Brown & Patterson)

*“Student-family programs and initiatives can dispel fears and promote community and a sense of belonging in meaningful ways: summer bridge, family orientations, freshmen camps, alumni-student send-offs, phone and texting outreach.”* (NACAC).

*“It would help if there were overlapping support from the high school – hold their hands step A to step B.”* (Guided pathways lead faculty, Moorpark College)

*“We need to increase and improve collaboration between K12 and the CCC. There have been some pockets here and there, but nothing as systematic as we really need to make lasting changes. This will require strong leadership willing to build systems instead of holding isolated meetings.”* (Counselor, Ventura College)

*“Students ...were particularly positive about “to-do”lists that advisors assisted in customizing to the tasks and deadlines of their intended college.”* (Arnold, Chewning, Castleman & Page)

Moorpark College is considering an idea called “100 mentors for 1,000 students” - college freshmen would mentor high school seniors to successfully onboard them to the college and make sure they were thriving during their first year. College seniors would mentor college freshmen on how to successfully transfer to 4-year universities.

*“In the summer after high school, students are largely or entirely separated from previous microsystems of school, teachers, counselors, and college access program staff. College microsystems are typically absent in the summer, as most high school graduates are not yet connected directly to particular college settings or people.”* (Arnold, Chewning, Castleman & Page)

Santa Barbara City College has introduced live chats with students for many of its offices – enrollment, academic counseling, admissions & records, EOPS etc. After hours the messages convert to emails.

## Orientations by pathway/ non-cognitive data

Several colleges are moving to a model of orientations and advising by meta-major area. Ventura College used the model last year for the first time: *“Thematic counseling was super successful”*. (Counselor, Ventura College). Obviously this is setting the students on the path for a particular meta-major or major, and so we would want to make sure that their meta-major/ major choice was the result of considered research and decision-making, otherwise students are unlikely to stay in that guided pathway area, and they may change to a different meta-major.

Pasadena City College use a Career Confidence Scale, allowing for interventions by career center staff to help undecided students

*“The challenge is to meet students where they are and deliver the right amount of services to the right students at the right time.”* (Sinclair Community College)

Lorain and Miami Dade community colleges use non-cognitive assessments to help identify students at risk of failing and/or dropping out in the first year. These assessments measure factors like academic engagement and self-efficacy, campus engagement, educational commitment, resiliency and social comfort. Miami Dade developed “crosswalks” that match student scores in each of the assessment categories with resources at each campus.  
(Completion by Design)

*“Students reported that the amount of information provided at pre-college or orientation sessions was overwhelming. They found it challenging to process the information, and, more importantly, to remember it when they needed to use it.”*  
(Completion by Design)

*“We should explore a different approach – stagger the matriculation steps. When they come to campus, it shouldn’t be first time they’ve heard that information.”* Dean, Oxnard College

- How do we not overwhelm our incoming freshmen with information?
- Could the college orientation be used as an opportunity to gather data from incoming freshmen that could be used to determine the level of support services they need?

## Summer Bridge

*“Major expansion of summer bridge programs would be another useful systems-level change” (Arnold, Chewning, Castleman & Page)*

Several colleges talked about developing or reviving Summer Bridge programs - one counselor cited Pierce College’s model where they offered a Summer Bridge with a college success course plus English or Math. Another was thinking of combining a student success class and career exploration class for students and offering it in the summer.

*“We used to do a pilot bridge English course with librarians embedded and a pilot bridge math course with counselors embedded.” (Guided pathways lead faculty, Allan Hancock College)*

### Bakersfield College Summer Bridge program

Bakersfield College has seen outcomes at about double/ more than double in the following areas for its Bridge students: units attempted/ units passed; transfer level English & math attempted/ passed; college-level English & math attempted/ passed. They have been scaling the program over the last 5 years.

Bridge content includes:

- College culture, grit, growth mindset, time management
- Cross-discipline peer/ faculty mentoring
- Cross-training professional development
- Real-time interaction with campus resources
- Introduction to Guided Pathways
- Intrusive academic and financial aid advising
- High touch, online technology training

*“We should offer as a summer bridge: transition into college (1 unit). The students need to understand the differences between high school and college: the expectations of professors, what is a syllabus and how to read it. They need to know it’s ok to go to mental health counselors, and they should take drafts to the writing center. That absences affect grades. They need to learn about school and discuss what they’re struggling with. It would be a safe space where they could discuss issues with other classes etc. Faculty would visit. Other students would ask the questions they wanted to ask”. Counselor, Ventura College.*

- What would a summer bridge program look like in the guided pathways world?
- How would the college incorporate career exploration, labor market information, and student success?

College of the Canyons offers a summer bridge program for its Promise students

## Differentiated student services

*“Today’s students vary greatly, not only from the past, but from institution to institution. Understanding an institution’s own highly variable and distinct student population is key to providing personalized support services. Perhaps even more essential is building internal capacity to regularly review what comprises your student population, and continuously and iteratively improving the services impacting outcomes.” (Civitas Learning)*

Predictive analytics, and indeed any kind of data gathering and forecasting, can help us to provide services where needed, instead of using a blanket approach. Not all students need the same level of support. In colleges we have finite resources, and we need to refocus resources on our students that need most guidance. Moorpark College is piloting some questions to be added to the portal to identify their neediest students.

*“The risk of guided pathways is that we continue helping those who don’t need help”. (Guided pathways faculty lead, Moorpark College)*

*“Colleges should provide services to students based on their level of need. Some students have clearly identified goals and can move quickly to a program of study, some need just a little guidance, and others need significant time and assistance to determine their goals and related program plans.” (CCRC)*

### Developmental advising model with differentiated levels of service/ intensity

	Interests/ career goals survey & level of certainty (from intake forms/ career inventory/ e- advising)	E-advising activities	Academic advisor (give advice on programs using inventory results; develop ed.plan)	Career exploration with labor market information/ student success course	Developmental advising (over course of semester)	Embedded advising (specific discipline/ area of study)
Undecided student	x		x	x	x	x
Explorers within a meta-major	x		x	x		x
Student with declared major	x	x				x

\*Cleveland State Community College offers 15 minute advising sessions for students with academic plans in place and advising sessions of more than an hour for undecided students

- How will the college provide differentiated levels of support based on students’ informed career-decidedness?



## Ongoing support

*"We know that low-income, first generation students are 4 times more likely to drop out after their first year as their peers without either risk factor". (EAB)*

Community colleges need to gather data on failing/ struggling students as well as drop-outs. This information should be shared with the high schools so that they can embed student success strategies such as an additional math class, or self-advocacy training.

*"Where do students go when they drop out? We don't have information on drop-outs."(Guided pathways lead faculty, Moorpark College)*

Moorpark College is developing student success teams with faculty, counselors, and classified staff for each of its areas of interest (meta-majors).

The next step for Antelope Valley College has been to add a Second Year Experience program, a model that other colleges in the region are considering.

*"I think the college should look at success rates in declared majors - I think students failing in these classes are the students that need extra support." (Guided pathways faculty lead, Moorpark College)*

*"While technologies can automate the modification of academic maps, they do not solve failure rate issues." (Completion by Design)*

Wake Technical Community College changed the content of its First Year Experience course from hard skills such as time management and study strategies as students were not able to use them appropriately. Instead they now focus on skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, advocacy and goal-identification, reinforcing personal responsibility for goals and decision-making. (Completion by Design)

- What information is the college gathering on failing students during their first semester/ year?
- What information is the college gathering on students who drop out during their first semester/ year?
- What support is the college providing to struggling/ at-risk students after their first year?

## Next steps

This toolkit is a compilation of models and emerging ideas from colleges in the South Central Coast Regional Consortium and across America, on ways to build a system that helps high school students transition more successfully into Guided Pathways.

There is a mindset shift happening with Guided Pathways from the traditional to transformative ways of making the college ready for students, and it calls upon both colleges and high schools to support students in ways we have not done yet. It's time to build a bridge from the high schools into the colleges, with Guided Pathways beginning in high school.

The models and ideas throughout this document and the Readiness Self-Assessment at the end of the toolkit will provide the next steps for collaborative partnerships. It will give you an opportunity to take an inventory of all the ways you currently help students through this process, and to ask – What are we doing well? What can we do differently to better help our high school students transitioning into the community colleges? What systems can we put in place or adapt to make this easier for them?

At the end of this toolkit is a Readiness Self-Assessment, framed by the reflective questions asked throughout the document. School/ district teams are encouraged to:

1. Share the toolkit with colleagues in other areas of the school or district
2. Complete the Readiness Self-Assessment either individually or together as a team, asking other colleagues to participate when helpful
3. Decide on the top 3 priorities for your school/ district for this work
4. Schedule a meeting with your community college partner to debrief (they will also be completing their own Readiness Self-Assessment and deciding their top 3 priorities)
5. Plan your collaborative next steps

## Interviewees

### Allan Hancock College

*Dave Degroot (Articulation Officer/ Faculty)*  
*Tom Lamica (Project Director: Career Center & K-12 Partnerships)*  
*Antonio Ramirez (Counselor/ Guided Pathways Lead)*  
*Jennifer Schroeder (Faculty/ Guided Pathways Communication Lead)*

### Antelope Valley College

*Nate Dillon (Faculty/ Guided Pathways Lead)*  
*Gary Roggenstein (Dean, Counseling & Matriculation)*  
*LaDonna Trimble (Dean, Enrollment Services)*

### College of the Canyons

*Garrett Hooper (Counselor/ Guided Pathways Co-coordinator)*  
*Erika Torgeson Counselor/ Department co-chair/ Former Guided Pathways co-coordinator)*  
*Preeta Saxena (Senior Research Analyst, IRPIE)*  
*Tara Williams (Faculty/ Guided Pathways Co-coordinator)*

### Cuesta College

*Madeline Medeiros (Dean/ Guided Pathways Implementation Team Co-chair)*  
*Heidi Webber (Counselor/ Faculty Co-coordinator, Guided Pathways Implementation Team)*

### Moorpark College

*Traci Allen (Counseling/ Guided Pathways Lead)*  
*Oleg Bespalov (Dean, Division of Institutional Effectiveness, Grants and Planning)*  
*Krushnur Dadabhoy (Dean, Student Support)*  
*Jodi Dickey (Counseling Chair)*  
*Alejandra Martinez Castillo (Student Outreach Specialist)*  
*Matt Morgan (Faculty/ Guided Pathways Lead)*  
*Claudia Sitlington (Student Support Supervisor)*  
*Claudia Wilroy (Director of International Students/ Outreach)*

### Oxnard College

*Leah Alarcon (Dean, Student Success/ Guided Pathways Lead Administrator)*  
*Shannon Trefts (Counseling/ Guided Pathways Lead)*

### Ventura College

*Gema Sanchez (Counseling Lead)*  
*Corey Wendt (Counseling/ Guided Pathways Lead)*

### Santa Barbara City College

*Claudia Johnson (Dual Enrollment Director)*  
*Vanessa Pelton (Director of Enrollment and Retention Services)*  
*Margaret Prothero (Faculty/ Guided Pathways Lead)*  
*Z Reiz (Senior Director, Institutional Assessment, Research and Planning)*

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## Building a guided pathways system starting in high school Readiness Self-Assessment

Guided pathways processes	Readiness of college/ high schools	Reflection questions	Next steps
<p><b>How to get students into the right meta-major</b></p> <p>a. Access to career classes</p> <p>Our students are able to access college career exploration classes at their school or at the college</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Are we able to offer career exploration classes and to embed college meta-majors in them?</p> <p>Could schools offer career exploration classes over the summer, or even in the student's senior year instead, so students do not lose momentum when they are able to attend college full-time?</p>	
<p>b. Undecided students</p> <p>Undecided high school students are identified in their senior year and offered a college career class</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Does our college have the capacity to help all undecided students carry out career exploration and decision-making?</p> <p>How could we help our undecided students to carry out career exploration and informed decision-making before graduation?</p>	
<p>c. Labor market information</p> <p>High school students are able to access information on job projections and salaries for college meta-majors and use the information in their decision-making</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>How can we help students properly explore and choose the right major/meta-major?</p> <p>How can we help students gain access to labor market information so that they are making an informed decision on their choice of major/ meta-major?</p> <p>How else can we help students make an informed decision, other than having them choose a meta-major/ major?</p>	
<p>d. Choosing a meta-major</p> <p>High school students are able to explore and choose an informed meta-major as part of a career class</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>How can we provide meta-major and labor market information to students?</p> <p>How can we make sure they have understood the information and moved forward in their career decision-making?</p>	

Guided pathways processes	Readiness of college/ high school partnerships	Reflection questions	Next steps
<p><b>Connecting with “our” students who are still in high school</b></p> <p>a. Identity as college students</p> <p>Early college credit students see themselves as college students and have a sense of belonging to the college</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>What can we do to develop a sense of college-belonging in our early college credit students?</p>	
<p>b. Pathways early college credit offerings</p> <p>Schools offer introductory classes from meta-majors for college credit that align with their high school pathways instead of à la carte electives</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Could the colleges offer explorer/ introductory classes for each meta-major?</p>	
<p>c. Campus connection</p> <p>Middle and high school students go to the college campus for college and career events multiple times</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>What could we do to regularly bring middle and high school students onto the college campus before their senior year?</p>	
<p>d. Hybrid counselors</p> <p>College counselors are housed at the high schools/ high school counselors receive stipends to provide college counseling</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Could we develop a hybrid counselor team between our college and our high schools?</p>	



Guided pathways processes	Readiness of college/ high school partnerships	Reflection questions	Next steps
<p><b>College (and career) knowledge</b></p> <p>a. Equity issues</p> <p>Under-represented, low SES, 1<sup>st</sup> gen. and future part-time students receive the information and access they need in order to transition successfully to college</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Are some students in our high schools receiving more comprehensive advising services than others?</p> <p>Is this based on counselor skills/ levels of knowledge? Or do advisors need bias avoidance training to ensure minority students are being guided to careers with high earnings potential?</p> <p>What are we doing to make college more accessible for our students who will be attending part-time?</p>	
<p>b. High school teachers</p> <p>The high school teachers are knowledgeable about the community college, its meta-majors and programs</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>How can we ensure our college and high school counselors and instructors gain more knowledge of the local labor market?</p> <p>How can our high school teachers learn more about community college programs and the value of community college?</p>	
<p>c. Parents</p> <p>High school parents are knowledgeable about the community college, its meta-majors and programs; they know how to support their students</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Could our college offer parent orientations?</p> <p>What other information could they provide to parents?</p>	
<p>d. Students</p> <p>We have a system in place to ensure all high school students transition successfully to the college</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>How can we work with our community college to improve the student onboarding processes with the advent of guided pathways?</p>	

Guided pathways processes	Readiness of college/ high school partnerships	Reflection questions	Next steps
<p><b>Onboarding</b></p> <p>a. Transition from high school to college</p> <p>We have a system in place with task completion reminders and individual follow-up for all transitioning high school students</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>Who is responsible for providing reminders to students? Is it our college or our high schools, or both? What is our process?</p> <p>Who makes sure they stay on top of their onboarding tasks?</p> <p>Have we calculated our current student numbers to find out how many students are lost during onboarding?</p> <p>Have we disaggregated the data to determine if some groups are melting at higher rates than others?</p>	
<p>b. Counseling support</p> <p>We have counseling support in place that straddles the high school and the college so that no student has unanswered questions in the transition process</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development <input type="checkbox"/> Some schools <input type="checkbox"/> All schools	<p>What pre-college advising services should we and our community college partner be offering over the summer months?</p> <p>What measures could we and our community college partner take to ensure fewer of the students get lost in the process?</p> <p>Are we identifying and reaching out to first-generation students who may lack social capital for navigating post-secondary education?</p> <p>Do we intentionally reach out to those students who had intended to go to a 4-year university and who have changed their minds?</p>	
<p>c. Orientations by pathway</p> <p>Incoming students attend orientations by meta-major area</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development	<p>How do we not overwhelm our incoming freshmen with information?</p>	
<p>d. Non-cognitive data</p> <p>The college gathers non-cognitive data from our incoming students so that it can provide them with the best level of support for their success</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development	<p>Could the college orientation be used as an opportunity to gather data from our incoming freshmen that could be used to determine the level of support services they need?</p>	

<p><b>Onboarding contd.</b></p> <p>e. Summer Bridge</p> <p>The college offers students a summer class combining career exploration, labor market information and student success in addition to introductory classes in their chosen meta-majors/ general education classes</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development	<p>What would a summer bridge program look like in the guided pathways world?</p> <p>How would the college incorporate career exploration, labor market information, and student success?</p>	
<p>f. Differentiated career-focused student services</p> <p>Students receive different levels of services based on their informed career-decidedness</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development	<p>How will the college provide differentiated levels of career support at our college based on students' informed career-decidedness?</p>	
<p>g. Ongoing support</p> <p>The college gathers information on failing/struggling students and provides them with extra support; information is shared with the high schools so they can embed strategies for college student success</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not discussed yet <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy in development	<p>What information is the college gathering on failing students during their first semester/ year?</p> <p>What information is the college gathering on students who drop out during their first semester/ year?</p> <p>What support is the college providing to struggling/ at-risk students after their first year?</p>	

## Action planning for K12/ community college teams

### How to do your action planning

Your action plan for “Guided Pathways Begin in High School” needs to be built together with your college partners. The college has also received a toolkit and has been asked to complete the Readiness Self-Assessment and identify its top 3 priorities for moving forward. The college may have selected different priorities for different schools/ districts, depending on the current processes/ systems in place at each. These may be different priorities than your school/ district has selected, and so the first step will be to discuss and select the priorities for your partnership. You may decide to try to incorporate all of the priorities, or you may decide to narrow them down.

### Selecting your partnership priorities

You will need to hold a series of partnership meetings with the high school and college team members to go through the following steps:

#### 1. *Where are we now and where do we want to be? (Vision)*

It’s helpful to start with each partner explaining its overall vision, so everyone understands how the chosen priorities fit within that vision. Each team explains its priorities one by one and why they were chosen.

#### 2. *What are our current problems?*

Analyze each priority area and explore possible solutions before ranking the order in which they should be tackled – teams might want to use a fishbone diagram, or a similar diagnostic tool, to identify cause and effect for each priority area.

#### 3. *What does the partnership team want to focus on?*

- a) Each priority area is written on a separate sheet of paper and pinned up on the wall (if it’s a virtual meeting, create a google document with separate sheets in a folder with a priority activity on each sheet). If the college and school teams have identified the same priority area, just use one sheet instead of two.
- b) Each team member gets colored dots (if face-to-face) to add to each priority sheet – red for high priority, yellow for medium priority, green for lower priority (if there are 6 sheets, each team member should have 6 of each color of dots to add to the sheets). In the google drive, team members can just post letters – A for high priority, B for medium priority or C for low priority.
- c) After all team members have voted, rank the sheets in order of which have the highest number of red dots through yellow to green, or take a tally of which sheets in the google drive have more As through Bs to Cs.

#### 4. *What are our short-term versus long-term goals?*

The partnership team now has to decide how many of the priorities they want to work on this academic year (just the red dots/As, or some/ all of the yellow dots/ Bs, or some/ all of the green dots/Cs as well). Some priorities may fall together into broader categories. Some may be “low hanging fruit” that can be tackled fairly swiftly for high impact. When the decision has been made on which priorities should be tackled this semester/ year, the team needs to create an action plan.

#### **Creating your action plan**

1. List however many goals your partnership team has chosen to focus on this academic year.
2. List the steps or tasks that need to happen in order for each goal to be achieved. Make sure the team is setting SMART goals:
  - Specific – well-defined and clear
  - Measurable – include measurable indicators to track progress
  - Attainable – realistic and achievable within the resources, time, money, experience, etc. you have available
  - Relevant – align with your other goals
  - Timely – has a finishing date
3. Prioritize the steps/ tasks. Larger and more complex tasks should be broken down into smaller ones that are easier to execute and manage. During this process, identify potential challenges. Make a note of them, and brainstorm ways to tackle them.
4. Assess available resources – time, funding, access. If resources are missing, add a plan to acquire them as an additional task for that goal.
5. Obtain the group’s agreement as to who gets assigned each step/ task.
6. Set a due date for each step/ task. Consult with the person responsible for carrying it out to understand his or her capacity before deciding on deadlines.
7. Backwards map from the due dates for the steps/ tasks and set 2-week milestones for each. Check-in on progress can then be tied to these smaller milestones, and due dates can be revised if needed.
8. Visualize your action plan: the partnership team should next develop an editable Gantt chart or use another type of tracking chart to track progress.

### How to implement your action plan

1. Onboard team to the tracking tool.
2. Task owners check off completed tasks and flag late tasks.
3. Meet every 2 weeks to discuss progress, using tool.
4. Discuss pending or late tasks (the team needs to figure out why a task is pending or late, and how to move ahead with an appropriate solution).
5. Update tracker by adding, changing or canceling tasks as needed.
6. Determine how activity completion will be evaluated and the extent to which the new process is working well.

*What data need to be gathered? Who will collect it? Over what time period?*

7. After all or the majority of the tasks are completed, the team should move ahead into a second round of action planning. There may be some tasks that were lower priority that were not included in round 1 of the action plan, that can now be addressed in round 2. Or new priorities may have arisen owing to new legislation, policies, funding, or new team members coming on board. The goal is to work together as an ongoing high school/ community college team to ensure that student transition from high school to the college is working extremely well and that the student is supported throughout the process.

### Sample tracking chart

Goal	Steps/ tasks (prioritized)	Assigned to	Due date	Milestones (next meeting)	Resources	Evaluation
1						
2						
3						

For further information or for assistance with your next steps, contact:

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