Funding Guided Pathways Reforms at Small Colleges

Three Ohio Community Colleges Show How to Do It
College leaders have questions about funding guided pathways

- How much will guided pathways cost?
- What are initial and ongoing costs?
- Are colleges funding pathways reforms with new money? How are they reallocating funds?
- What reforms should we prioritize?
- Is pathways a good value for students and the college?
What are the costs of implementing guided pathways at an “average” community college?
Main takeaways from 2020 report

Average costs
- GP is more costly to implement than maintain.
- Advising is by far the most costly element of the reform.
- GP requires +3% extra resources (price-adjusted).
- Some economies of scale exist.

Value
- GP offers clear economic value for students that offset tuition increases.

Funding strategies
- Almost half of GP costs are covered by resource reallocation and efficiency gains; extra public funding and external grants are not enough.
- Tuition/fee increases are necessary but modest, delayed until after implementation begins, and temporary; they do not need to cover the entire resource requirement.
How can small colleges implement and fund guided pathways reforms?
Three Case Study Institutions

Access the report and case studies here!
Challenges for smaller colleges

- Small colleges often lack economies of scale that can generate revenue to support investments in technology, staff training, and release time for staff to participate in reforms.

- Taking on a multi-year systemic change process means that faculty and staff, who already wear many hats, have to take on even more roles and responsibilities to plan and manage the process.

- Small colleges may have less access to grants that can support professional development and consultants that can assist with the change process.
Redesigning the student experience into and through programs

- Improved program information
- Strengthened program onboarding
- Eliminated prerequisite remediation
- Moved from generalist advising to case management advising by field
- Built on-ramps to college and career pathways for high school students
- And more!
How colleges funded these reforms

- Redefined roles and cross-trained staff to work as teams to help students explore, enter, and complete programs.
- Used technology to facilitate both monitoring of student progress and information sharing on efforts to provide students with needed supports.
- Invested in strategic training and professional development.
- Used grant funding to build capacity, not to cover operating expenses.
- Capitalized on free knowledge-sharing, professional development, and coaching from Ohio Success Center.
How did the small colleges compare to the larger colleges in the 2020 report?

Funding:
- No increases in tuition (4/5 of medium to large college increased tuition)
- Not as much reliance on grants and fundraising
- Large and small colleges relied heavily on reassignment and reallocation

Costs
- Smaller colleges spent less money on all-college convening, faculty stipends, and outside technical assistance
- Smaller colleges did not hire new staff to coordinate GP implementation
Thanks!

Hana Lahr, lahr@tc.columbia.edu
Vicky Wood, vwood@wscce.edu