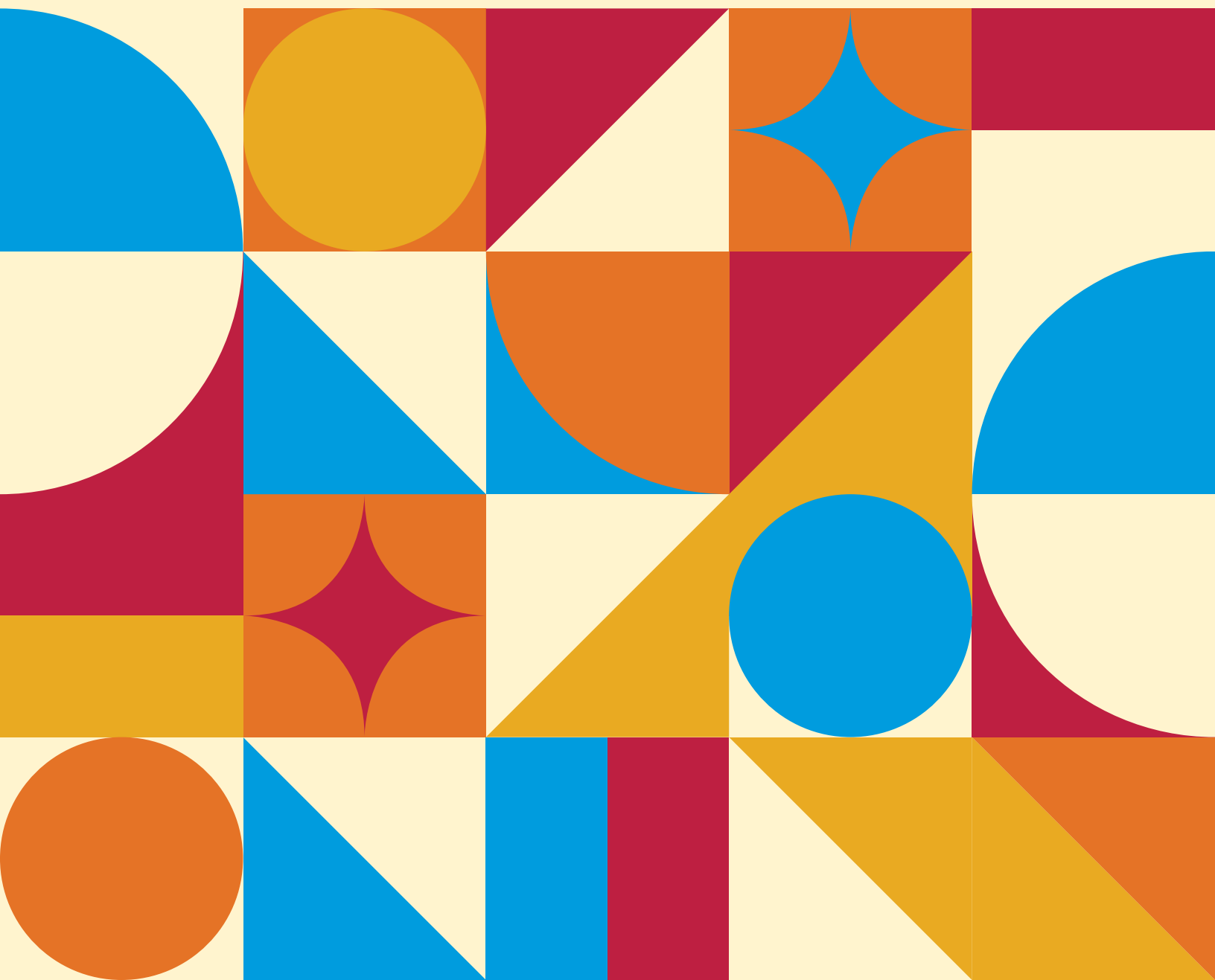
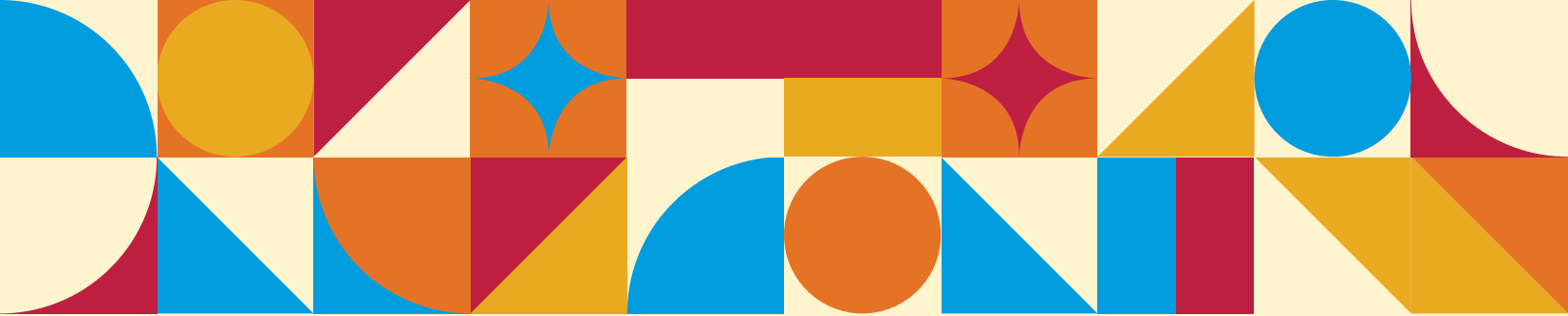




Forging Ahead: Faculty Leadership in Ohio's Guided Pathways

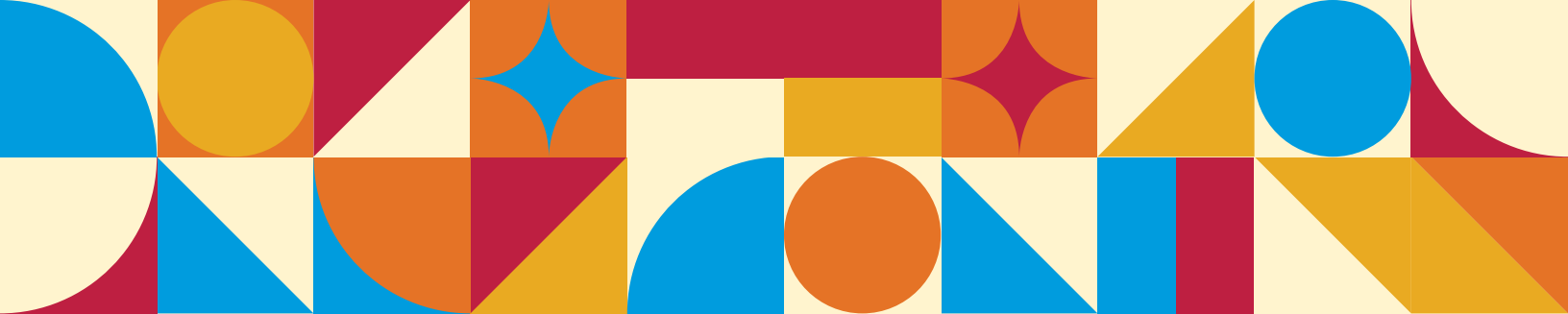
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Executive Summary

Hundreds of colleges nationwide are undertaking reforms across the four pillars of the Community College Research Center's guided pathways model, which reduces costly complexity and streamlines students' experience through structured choices, targeted support and clearer learning outcomes to improve completion, transfer success and competitive employment outcomes. While some were already engaged in foundational reforms, Ohio's community colleges committed to scaling guided pathways in 2016 with the support of OACC's Success Center. The colleges doubled implementation between 2018-2022 and have adopted Jobs for the Future's Guided Career Pathways model, with its more explicit focus on economic mobility and equity, to shape the next phase of pathways innovation in Ohio.

Strategic engagement of faculty—higher education's biggest lever for impact—is vital to the successful scaling of guided pathways to benefit all students. Yet, the extent to which faculty are brought in to the reform process—at stages where they can offer consequential input—varies among colleges and leaders in the guided pathways and student success movement. Colleges must develop an intentional plan for faculty engagement.

Ohio Faculty Engagement in Guided Pathways

In this report, we feature highlights of Ohio colleges' guided pathways progress culled from interviews¹ with faculty and administrators across a diverse cross-section of six OACC member colleges, along with self-assessment surveys completed by the colleges.²

Organized by pillar and representing various stages of scaling, the initiatives profiled demonstrate faculty leadership and initiative in advancing guided pathways—a vital aspect that has received less attention in the reform narrative. *These illustrative examples are not meant to encapsulate the totality of a given college's guided pathways work or necessarily imply a unique approach; other colleges may be doing similar things. Neither do they encompass all key practices of a given pillar.* Rather, the examples are meant to showcase the breadth and depth of important work happening across the state and inspire reflection on opportunities for enhancing the role of faculty in Ohio's guided pathways reform.

The faculty and administrators interviewed identified factors that motivate faculty to engage, including: extra compensation for leadership roles (often preferred over reassignment or release time); facilitation of advance in rank; special invitations to participate; intrinsic leadership qualities;

FEATURED COLLEGES

- 1 | Cuyahoga Community College
- 2 | Lorain County Community College
- 3 | North Central State College
- 4 | Owens Community College
- 5 | Stark State College
- 6 | Zane State College



and opportunities to work on a particular topic they are passionate about while contributing to student success. They also cited challenges to engagement: faculty overextension among those with a heavier teaching load; constraints of collective bargaining agreements; costs for additional compensation or release time; and overall initiative fatigue. Key factors impacting successful faculty engagement include: ongoing, multifaceted communication; leadership from faculty champions and other volunteers; data to build a case for action; change management support; and time to see impact and work through hurdles. The size of an institution, mix of its faculty, and provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, if any, can also impact the level of faculty engagement.

Focus college faculty have demonstrated initiative and leadership in the guided pathways practices noted below.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT IN OHIO'S GUIDED PATHWAYS

Pillar 1: To *clarify the paths to students' academic and career goals*, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Map all program offerings into meta-majors, identifying optimal courses and sequencing to prepare students for their intended careers
- Review and streamline course offerings for relevance and market value

Pillar 2: To *help students get on a path*, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Strengthen student onboarding, providing early connection with faculty, programs and campus life
- Revamp developmental education design and placement so that students requiring extra support gain access to college-level coursework expeditiously
- Increase student success in gateway courses by offering targeted supports such as Writing Centers

Pillar 3: To *help students stay on their path*, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Advise students, offering personalized academic and career guidance
- Test models offering intensive supports and incentives to improve student success
- Support students' non-academic and emergency needs

Pillar 4: To *ensure students are learning*, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Leverage data and assessment for student learning and academic program review
- Develop teaching and learning centers to support faculty
- Expand use of evidence-based teaching practices
- Increase learner engagement through diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives
- Broaden access to experiential learning

Introduction

In 2015, researchers from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) called for a comprehensive redesign of the “cafeteria college” model that left students adrift in a sea of choices, often squandering time and money on their path to a degree and career.³ According to CCRC, “the paths to student end goals were not clear, support for career and college exploration and planning was limited, too many students failed to move beyond prerequisite remediation, students’ progress wasn’t monitored, and instructional innovation was focused on improving teaching in courses rather than ensuring that students were building essential skills across their programs.”⁴ While challenging for all students, the status quo posed particular hurdles for first-generation students and those without strong support systems to help them navigate the complexity.

The researchers advocated a “guided pathways” model to streamline students’ experience through structured choices, targeted support and clearer learning outcomes. According to the Pathways Collaborative, the goals of the model are to “improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market—and to achieve equity in those outcomes.”⁵

Today, hundreds of colleges nationwide are undertaking reforms across the four pillars of CCRC’s guided pathways model:

- Pillar 1: Clarify the paths to students’ academic and career goals;
- Pillar 2: Help students get on a path;
- Pillar 3: Help students stay on their path; and
- Pillar 4: Ensure students are learning.⁶

In studying guided pathways implementation, CCRC notes that the process is neither rapid nor linear. Rather, laying the groundwork and building urgency for institutional transformation can take several years, and once initiated, communication and iteration must be ongoing as reforms are improved, sustained and institutionalized.⁷

Indeed, even the guided pathways model itself is subject to evolution. Released in 2022, Jobs for the Future’s Guided Career Pathways model builds on the four initial pathways, strengthening their explicit connection to economic mobility and equity by incorporating elements of the career pathways model.⁸ The Guided Career Pathways model features three core elements:

- “Labor-market-informed pathways that reflect regional and local economic needs and offer accelerated paths into employment and opportunities to advance;
- Expanded outreach, on-ramps, support strategies, and flexible learning models to better serve adult students and ensure equitable outcomes for learners and workers across racial and socioeconomic lines; and
- Integrated work and experiential learning strategies to improve students’ workforce outcomes, build opportunities to earn income, and receive credit for what’s learned on the job.”⁹

This model will inform the next wave of systemic pathways transformation as colleges adapt to learners’ needs for efficient and flexible reskilling amid economic and technological change.

Guided Pathways in Ohio

Ohio's community colleges have a long history of engagement in innovation and significant reform initiatives, including guided pathways. Together these efforts have contributed to increased achievement and degree completion, with graduation rates nearly doubling over the past decade.¹⁰

Some of these reforms also set the stage for or concurrently supported guided pathways. Said the vice president of enrollment management at one college, "Completion by Design¹¹ was the genesis for our guided pathways work. It really started to give us a lens of an evidence-based approach and got us looking at student success data and graduation rates in ways we hadn't before. ... All this foundational work creates a spirit of continuous improvement. I see it across the college."

Ohio's community colleges have a long history of engagement in innovation and significant reform initiatives, including guided pathways.

Supported by OACC's Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges, the state's community colleges committed in 2016 to the scaling of guided pathways. Through its Student Success Leadership Institutes and a host of other resources, the Center has helped colleges to double guided pathways implementation from 2018-2022, with 94% of colleges reporting being in the process of scaling reforms or at scale according to CCRC-OACC.¹²

In 2022, the Success Center and its member colleges pledged to adopt Jobs for the Future's Guided Career Pathways model to guide the next phase of Ohio's pathways innovation, helping to ensure students are prepared for high-wage, high-demand jobs in the state.

Faculty Engagement in Guided Pathways

An undertaking as extensive and far-reaching as guided pathways must involve leadership among a wide array of stakeholders to be effective. The magnitude of institutional change cannot be overstated. Said one college president to educational

Faculty are the biggest lever for impact in higher education. Their strategic engagement is vital to the sustained success of guided pathways and should be cultivated around each pillar.

technology firm EAB, "With guided pathways reforms, you need to realize that you're trying to reverse about 50 years of practice, ideas and expectations, not to mention daily habit and work. This is a seismic shift in culture."¹³ Such culture change requires careful planning and outreach in the campus community with an emphasis—backed by data—on why change is imperative to maximize student success.

Faculty are the biggest lever for impact in higher education. Their strategic engagement is vital to the sustained success of guided pathways and should be

cultivated around each pillar. Yet, the extent to which faculty are brought in to the reform process—at stages where they can offer consequential input—varies among colleges and leaders in the guided pathways and student success movement. Pockets of faculty—or the “usual suspects”—may be highly involved, while adjuncts and others remain siloed and unconnected to planning and implementation conversations.¹⁴

How to do it

Institutions committed to guided pathways should be looking intentionally for ways to engage more faculty, broadening awareness of—and support for—guided pathways. If faculty do not know how to get involved or are unprepared for guided pathways work as it pertains to their field, students receive an inconsistent experience from course to course. Nearly half of faculty surveyed at guided pathways institutions reported desiring more professional development about their role in guided pathways at their college.¹⁵

Christine Harrington, author of *Engaging Faculty in Guided Pathways: A Practical Resource for College Leaders*, suggests that colleges develop a plan and timeline for engagement from the entire faculty body, inviting a diverse array of faculty to participate—rather than simply calling for volunteers—and paying close attention to the skeptical voices who may offer valuable feedback.¹⁶ Faculty participation on key committees could be paired with surveys, focus groups and other avenues to gather input.

Harrington noted that “colleges will need to carefully evaluate their institutional priorities and determine how current structures can be modified to encourage more faculty engagement.”¹⁷ Instead of tacking on new responsibilities on top of existing duties and procedures, she suggests integrating guided pathways into communications, classes, faculty meetings and other places where faculty already are: “Don’t ask people to do more. Ask them to do it differently.”¹⁸

Strategies to reward and cultivate faculty leadership in guided pathways include: reducing teaching loads and/or course enrollment caps; offering release time or stipends; or revising tenure and elevating the value of proactive student outreach in tenure and promotion policies.¹⁹ Part-time faculty could be compensated through a salary system that rewards teaching expertise over one tied to years of experience, and offered the benefit of stability with priority consideration for course assignments and extended contracts.²⁰ “Guided pathways presents an opportunity for colleges to rethink their contracts to offer faculty more choice in how they’re leveraging their strengths,”

Guided pathways presents an opportunity for colleges to rethink their contracts to offer faculty more choice in how they’re leveraging their strengths,” noted Harrington.

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“Ask faculty: ‘Do you want to be an advisor? Or fulfill your service through course design or assessment?’ Great. But you have to contribute in some way.”²¹

Faculty engagement is impacted by the size of the institution and the mix of its faculty. It is easier to engage a larger proportion of faculty and cultivate deeper levels of awareness at a smaller institution than one with hundreds or even thousands of faculty members. Institutions employing large numbers of adjunct instructors, who often teach the majority of classes, will have to work intentionally to engage them—and will see improved student outcomes in return. And institutions whose faculty interactions are governed by collective bargaining agreements will also have to work within those parameters to engage faculty in different ways.

Faculty Engagement at Ohio's Community Colleges

According to institutional priorities and capacity, Ohio's community colleges have continued to make progress on scaling the adoption of key practices across all four guided pathways pillars, while infusing a focus on careers. Here we present highlights of that progress culled from interviews²² with faculty and administrators across a diverse cross-section of six OACC member colleges, along with self-assessment surveys completed by the colleges.²³

Organized by pillar and representing various stages of scaling, the initiatives profiled demonstrate faculty leadership and initiative in advancing guided pathways—a vital aspect that has received less attention in the reform narrative. *These illustrative examples are not meant to encapsulate the totality of a given college's guided pathways work or necessarily imply a unique approach; other colleges may be doing similar things. Neither do they encompass all key practices of a given pillar.* Rather, the examples are meant to showcase the breadth and depth of important work happening across the state and inspire reflection on opportunities for enhancing the role of faculty in Ohio's guided pathways reform.

The faculty and administrators interviewed identified factors that motivate faculty to engage, including: extra compensation for leadership roles (often preferred over release time); facilitation of advance in rank; special invitations to participate; intrinsic leadership qualities; and opportunities to work on a particular topic they are passionate about while contributing to student success. They also cited challenges to engagement: faculty overextension; constraints of collective bargaining agreements; costs for additional compensation or release time; and overall initiative fatigue.

Comments from the college teams highlight the importance of several factors for faculty engagement:

Ongoing, multifaceted communication.

- “Communication is key. Our small size helped us to have casual hallway conversations and call department meetings to get everyone's thoughts.”
- “Input comes in every way... email, phone, meetings with the entire college, the President's Cabinet. We also do surveys and focus groups. No one is shy about bringing forward concerns to whomever—it's part of our campus culture.”

Faculty champions to lead the way—along with other volunteers.

- “We experienced some resistance in our English and math departments, but faculty champions have consistently stepped up and set the bar for their colleagues. Strong relationships can overcome resistance.”
- “There are green, yellow and red light people. The green light people can motivate the yellows, and can sometimes reengage red light faculty who have been disconnected by asking them to do something related to their passion. Work with that passion and where it can help the institution.”
- “If it’s about the faculty, it has to come from the faculty. You can’t mandate it—you have to convince people.”
- “Don’t assume that the usual suspects and champions will do everything. They can burn out. Ask for different volunteers sometimes.”

Data to make the case.

- “We saw some data and thought, ‘Maybe we’re not putting students first.’”
- “When there’s data from other places that show it makes a difference, there’s more likelihood that faculty will buy in and jump on.”
- “Explain the why. We told our advisors, ‘If a student starts in basic math here, they’re not graduating.’”

Change management support.

- “We went through the Kotter model of change training. You have to appeal to both the heart and mind to reach different types of people.”

“There are green, yellow and red light people. The green light people can motivate the yellows, and can sometimes reengage red light faculty who have been disconnected by asking them to do something related to their passion. Work with that passion and where it can help the institution.”

-- faculty member

Time to see impact and work through hurdles.

- “Results take a while to see. Talk to the practitioners—don’t just look at the numbers.”
- “We were fortunate to be small. We don’t have tons of red tape bureaucracy. Still, you need to set a realistic timing goal and stick to it.”
- “We’re a bigger ship to turn [than a smaller, nonunionized college]. We get there; we just need more time to do it.”
- “At a non-unionized college, leadership can engage faculty in just the value of the work. In my environment, faculty want to do that, but they also have to work within the constraints of the contract. ... But we’ve been able to get creative and get things done.”
- “Build reflection into your process. Learn from what didn’t work, too.”

Pillar 1: Clarify the Paths to Students' Academic and Career Goals

As part of their initial foray into guided pathways, many colleges inventoried their course offerings and organized them into groups or “meta-majors,” sometimes known as career clusters, career pathways and similar nomenclature. Intended to bring structure to student decision-making, meta-majors help students more clearly understand their options and the requirements and opportunities inherent in each curricular and career choice. These focused options can help students select a program of study in their first year, increasing their likelihood of completion.²⁴

Harrington notes that faculty are uniquely poised to lead and guide the adoption of meta-majors:

“Any professional on campus can review the current curriculum requirements and determine what courses are required for all or most majors. ... However, this process is much more complex and requires faculty expertise to engage in deeper conversations about the need and rationale for different course requirements and the importance of sequences in the curriculum. ... As experts in the discipline, they know what knowledge or skills would be necessary versus helpful in coursework.”²⁵

Colleges should involve both full-time and part-time faculty in this effort, leveraging their unique expertise, from institutional and discipline knowledge to experience in the field or teaching at other colleges.²⁶

This process of sorting out curricular pathways can sometimes be contentious, however. “Faculty own the curriculum,” said Harrington. “They have to help reimagine it, but there are so many territorial issues about people who need to make their teaching load, or ‘what happens to my class if it doesn’t become a gen ed or a core part of the path?’”²⁷ Leveraging Institutional Research data on course demand and student outcomes, faculty should challenge each other to “really think about the why behind curriculum requirements” and what is best for students.²⁸

Once determined, colleges must engage faculty to regularly review curricular sequences to assure continued market relevance, modifying or replacing courses and curricula as necessary.

PILLAR 1

To clarify the paths, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Map all program offerings into meta-majors, identifying optimal courses and sequencing to prepare students for their intended careers
- Review and streamline course offerings for relevance and market value

- **Map all program offerings into meta-majors, identifying optimal courses and sequencing to prepare students for their intended careers**

When **Stark State College** decided to adopt meta-majors, it was able to draw upon work its faculty had already done through Completion by Design to group courses into programs and plans on the college’s website. Supportive faculty teams

examined and formalized these groupings into ten “career communities” and developed and vetted default career pathways.

These groupings now organize the college’s intentional approach to marketing, course selection and career services. Stark State’s admissions application was revised to ask students to select from among the college’s more than 230 degrees and certificate programs. Students unsure of their desired major are encouraged to select one of the ten career communities and are immediately assigned to an experienced advisor to facilitate career exploration and pursuit of an exploratory major allowing the student 15 credit hours of exposure to multiple fields in their community. The college’s viewbooks listing program offerings are also designed around the ten core pathways, into which all students are placed. And the First Year Experience course required of all incoming students also facilitates students’ career exploration within their chosen career community.

A video on the college’s academics webpage clearly communicates the career communities’ value to students:

“In your career community, you can benefit from: programming; events and hands-on learning; networking opportunities with students in the same career community; advisors who specialize in your area of interest and who will help you stay on track to graduation; emails with jobs, internships, professional development opportunities and industry advice; and connections with alumni and employers in your chosen field or industry. ... Whether you’re coming to Stark State with a career path in mind or you want to examine all your options, career communities will help you get connected, provide support, and launch you toward career success.”²⁹

Noted the provost, “We focus on the end goal at the beginning of the process: a rewarding career. We have mapped out the labor market data in our service areas so students can understand what they can expect to earn for each major and career community.” A dedicated page for each career community presents:

- Required critical skills, abilities, technical skills and knowledge;
- A list of local employers with jobs in the career community;
- Sample job titles and descriptions with their entry-level annual wage alongside the average annual wage in the college’s service areas; and
- Links to the college’s program offerings, exploratory majors and career services

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-- college provost

Led by a faculty member in each academic division, the college regularly reviews the execution of its pathways and career communities, making adjustments where needed. Labor market data are refreshed periodically by Career Services staff. Continually seeking to incorporate best practices, a faculty team implemented a CCRC recommendation to engage students in “light the fire of learning” courses in their field of interest as quickly as possible. The faculty members identified the most engaging courses within each program and meta-major and worked with advisors to enroll students in them.

- **Review and streamline course offerings for relevance and market value**

The team at **Zane State College** had long prided itself on taking a students-first approach. But a hard look at data showing graduating students had accumulated substantial excess credits—costing them time and money—motivated the college to make some difficult changes on their behalf.

To facilitate students' timely progression, the college reduced the number of credit hours to a degree and streamlined pathways by eliminating under-enrolled courses and those not essential to degree programs or employment in a program-related field. The effort was aided by an AACC grant supporting historical and predictive analytics on course enrollment, allowing the college to develop a more efficient schedule rather than defaulting to established course-offering patterns. Faculty developed block schedules to match with technical course availability.

Faculty were asked to whittle down a multitude of electives to a set of core, program-essential selections from which students could choose. While some faculty

"How could we let our associate degree students leave with 81 credit hours? It just smacked us in the face. Everyone rallied around that. We can't keep courses just because they suit us."

— college dean

resisted letting go of favorite courses, the data could not be ignored. Recalled a dean, "How could we let our associate degree students leave with 81 credit hours? It just smacked us in the face. Everyone rallied around that. We can't keep courses just because they suit us."

The reforms saved the college \$1 million dollars in adjunct compensation for eliminated course sections, offsetting lost tuition and state funding previously generated by students' excess credit hours.³⁰

Pillar 2: Help Students Get on a Path

As colleges retool their approach to student orientation and onboarding, faculty can help students develop a connection to their campus and begin to identify the academic pathway that best fits their interests and goals. Some faculty may engage or advise students at registration or orientation events, while others may design or lead a First Year Experience course to help students transition to college, begin envisioning their academic and career prospects, and cultivate habits to support their success.

Developmental education and gateway course faculty are often among the most involved with guided pathways efforts. These faculty are instrumental in reforming the traditional developmental education approach to one that reduces the time lower-performing students spend taking noncredit courses before gaining access to credit-bearing gateway English and math, offering them a shorter path to a credential and career. The resultant corequisite remediation model, which offers students structured, concurrent academic support while enrolled in gateway courses, has yielded substantial increases in gateway pass rates.³¹

Faculty have played a leading role in reforming developmental education placement practices, ensuring that only the most underprepared students are placed into noncredit remedial courses. Students placed in college-level courses based on multiple

measures are more likely to complete those classes than students placed solely via testing.³² Faculty have also led and supported a variety of strategies to increase gateway course success.

PILLAR 2

To help students get on a path, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Strengthen student onboarding, providing early connection with faculty, programs and campus life
- Revamp developmental education design and placement so that students requiring extra support gain access to college-level coursework expeditiously
- Increase student success in gateway courses by offering targeted supports such as Writing Centers

- **Strengthen student onboarding, providing early connection with faculty, programs and campus life**

Revamping the initial experience of prospective and enrolled students has been a priority for **Zane State College**. To strengthen early engagement, the college replaced its traditional orientation focused on registration logistics with more interactive registration events that foster connections with success coaches and faculty, who partner to support students. At the events, success coaches share the breadth of resources available on the college's student web portal and how to navigate course materials on the learning management platform. Faculty representing attendees' indicated fields of interest then meet with students to begin the advising and registration process. These faculty members review in advance accepted students' assessment scores, transcripts and any previous college credits, enabling them to offer targeted guidance at these sessions. Zane State requires all faculty to advise students, so there is no added cost for faculty participating in the advising and registration process.

A group of Zane State faculty and several administrators also redesigned the college's required one-credit First Year Experience³³ (FYEX), moving from a course held during the first week of the semester to a semester-long format led by a full-time faculty member. (Online students continue to have a one-week option.) Student retention and satisfaction are higher with the lengthened format, whose measured pace allows more connection opportunities for students and avoids information overload.

In contemplating the FYEX redesign, the team was careful to begin with the end in mind: a mission to increase student engagement, re-enrollment and sense of belonging. The course now supports students in three primary areas: academic planning, career exploration and financial planning.

As part of the academic planning and transition to college, all students complete a "welcome survey" to help Zane State faculty and advisors get to know students' backgrounds, perceived strengths and risk factors. Questions probe students' employment status, previous higher education or transfer history, family dynamics, support system, and post-college goals. Students are asked to rate their academic

strengths and identify how they will deal with obstacles that may arise, such as those due to finances, mental health, childcare or previous academic struggles. The college encourages student candor, noting that, “It is completely normal for students to experience challenges as they begin college. Successful students are those who can identify those challenges and take full advantage of available resources. By providing honest answers to this survey, we will be able to help connect you with resources you may need.”³⁴

An FYEX assignment requires all new students to meet with their success coach—assigned by meta-major—at least once. These coaches review the results of the welcome survey and coordinate with FYEX faculty to monitor student progress, warning signs and the potential need for intervention through an early alert system. The college is working to build out the capacity of its new student information system, which features a student planning module to guide creation of an academic plan, a new requirement that will help students get and stay on a path to graduation.

To support career exploration, students take an assessment in their first semester to guide their selection of program, career and faculty advisor. These decisions are explored in individual appointments with a career coach, and students also have access to an online career exploration platform. This early initial exposure to career planning is sustained through subsequent faculty advising (see Pillar 3) and experiential learning (see Pillar 4). Students’ financial skills are developed through a focus on financial aid, personal finance and budgeting.

- **Revamp developmental education design and placement so that students requiring extra support gain access to college-level coursework expeditiously**

Colleges’ journey toward developmental education reform varies in impetus. At **North Central State College**, the spark was lit by a full-time math faculty member who left a national guided pathways conference enthused about the corequisite model’s potential to minimize the path from developmental education to college-level math and English. With support from the college’s administration, she put together a proposal to pilot a corequisite support model for statistics, the math course most students would take on their pathway. She generated full support from her math department colleagues, a feat that peers attribute to her strong planning, communication skills and personal relationships formed as the department’s coordinator. The college’s vice president of academic services noted that this faculty leader “has a strong record of participating in new things on campus. Because she championed the idea, it brought credibility that helped engage the rest of the faculty.”

The college at first saw a steady increase in student success with the new model, but the switch to online instruction in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic proved challenging. The college has pivoted back to in-person courses for corequisite students and will monitor changes in student performance and retention.

The English department followed the math department’s lead, with two longtime adjunct faculty eagerly piloting the corequisite model, buoyed by enthusiastic full-

time faculty who engaged them in regular training and implementation meetings. The adjuncts tested the model in their classrooms, offering recommendations to smooth out any issues before the model was formalized.

In both departments, full-time faculty exercise leadership by developing and sharing strategic goals for each term with part-time faculty. Faculty are expected to maintain a high level of student engagement, checking in with students early and often through various channels, from emails and texts to online discussion boards. The college has also embedded tutors in all math and English courses for additional student support beyond the extra contact hours offered in the corequisite courses.

At **Owens Community College**, the push for a corequisite model came after the Institutional Research department informed administrators and faculty that the data failed to show that traditional developmental education courses were making students more successful. The college had already worked to minimize the number of developmental education courses it offered, but leaders knew a different option was needed.

After training, English faculty began offering a corequisite Composition I course that is now taken by most incoming students. The all-credit course includes an extra contact hour with support and scaffolding for all students in that section, rather than a subset of students attending a separate support course, thereby reducing any perceived stigma and preventing students from passing one course and not the other. Faculty report that the “flipped classroom” approach—with class time spent on higher-order thinking instead of lectures—has been particularly fruitful for this corequisite course, with faculty more active and invigorated.

The math department followed suit, offering corequisite support sections of statistics, algebra and quantitative reasoning. As with English, the courses include real-time remediation and more contact with the instructor. Placement decisions are based on test scores, with multiple measures considered in cases of borderline achievement scores.

Student focus groups conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement confirm the positive impact of the corequisite model. Students reported feeling less fearful about math and English and that the course content was more useful than subject matter they had encountered in high school.

As with Owens Community College, the decision to revamp developmental education at **Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)** was data-driven. Said one English faculty member, “We looked at students getting certain grades in English 980 [the second-level developmental course prior to redesign] and thought, ‘What is their likelihood of going into English 1010 [Composition] and being successful?’” The faculty discovered that grades earned in developmental education courses were predictive of their success at the next level.

Building on the success of the college’s Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) model and two-week bridge courses implemented years prior, faculty explored a new corequisite model, focusing on providing enhanced support for students transitioning into college-level courses and minimizing time spent in developmental

courses. “We looked at things we were already doing well at the college and how we could make more connections for students to utilize that as they progressed through the sequence,” noted the faculty member.

Despite some rollout hurdles driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, the transition to corequisite courses has been relatively smooth and is at full scale, thanks in part to careful faculty planning. Faculty created a Blackboard page with corequisite assignments, shared curriculum ideas and progress, and met with adjunct instructors who might teach the courses along with representatives of key campus offices to ensure everyone understood the new design. Full-time faculty further supported their part-time colleagues by producing, with input from longtime adjuncts, an English 1010 toolkit with resources to improve student learning and completion in gateway English. It includes sample syllabi, assignments, classroom activities, suggested course management tactics and more.

“We looked at things we were already doing well at the college and how we could make more connections for students to utilize that as they progressed through the sequence.”

-- faculty member

The pandemic also prompted Tri-C faculty to reexamine their approach to developmental education and gateway English placement. A proctored, algorithm-scored placement test was no longer practicable during quarantine and campus closures—and it had the added disadvantage of placing disadvantaged students and students of color in developmental education at a high rate. With support from Tri-C’s administration and testing center, an all-faculty placement team leveraged its expertise to quickly design and implement a multiple-measures approach that considers high school GPA, ACT/SAT scores and writing samples scored by expert English faculty compensated for the role.³⁵ Faculty are now “extremely careful” about placing a student into a developmental course, requiring at least two faculty readers to agree upon a placement. Periodic faculty norming sessions allow faculty to revisit how and why such decisions are being made to ensure consistency over time. These norming sessions count as service credits, but also draw faculty truly interested in the work.

English faculty who helped develop the multiple-measures placement and associated writing sample scoring and norming system credit it with prompting an “unprecedented” level of faculty engagement.³⁶ Fully scaled in Fall 2020, the system has also spurred healthy new faculty dialogue about course approaches, support services and student success. Said one full-time faculty member, “The

“The conversations we’ve been able to have as a faculty, we weren’t having before.”

-- faculty member

conversations we’ve been able to have as a faculty, we weren’t having before. We’re considering, ‘What does writing look like for a student beginning [gateway English]? Can I work with this student in that course?’ As a reader who also teaches these courses, you’re seeing who your students are, where they are the beginning of a college-level English course and where they are at the end. You’re able to hone placement to that standard.”

Another faculty member emphasized the value of these conversations as “a form of faculty development that happens organically,” adding that “our readers have ongoing engagement in that process of assessment.” Shared

another faculty member, “We so often have to talk about issues, policies and ‘stuff.’ In these norming sessions, we share what we think, how we assess, how we approach a piece of writing. ... That has informed the way I have approached my own classes since then. It’s been a very rewarding process.”

- **Increase student success in gateway courses by offering targeted supports such as writing centers**

To boost success in gateway English and other courses, **Tri-C** has long offered students targeted support through writing centers at three of its campuses. At the recommendation of a faculty committee, the college opened a writing center at its fourth and newest campus in Fall 2022. Each center is run by a faculty coordinator with reassigned time given the managerial responsibility inherent in the role. The centers are staffed by adjuncts or contractors—sometimes retired faculty—who are qualified to teach at the college. Noted a center coordinator, “We use the term ‘consultant’ because we’re working with you [the student]—you have this investment. It’s not ‘tutoring,’ which suggests a deficiency.”

Students schedule one-on-one consultation appointments conducted in-person or virtually, receiving guidance on writing for all courses, from brainstorming topics to technical aspects of the writing process. Students can also receive written email feedback and support for professional, creative and personal writing. While participation has not fully recovered from a drop during the pandemic, the centers see a variety of students across disciplines, from those in developmental education to honors students looking to polish their work.

Writing center coordinators encourage faculty to publicize the opportunity with their students. While some instructors choose to mandate participation, the centers are not yet an engrained part of institutional curricula. One English professor who requires her students to visit the writing center mitigates a perfunctory “box-checking” mentality by asking students to reflect on and articulate their experience: “I ask them: ‘What did you learn and how will you apply it in the revision of your work?’ It helps them think more like a writer and less like a student engaging in a transaction.”

Data show that students who used the writing center are much more likely to pass gateway English 1010. Over five consecutive academic terms, there was an average difference in English 1010 A-C pass rates of 20.2% for students at Tri-C’s East campus writing center, and an increase of 13.8% for West campus students.³⁷ The college is working toward a uniform data collection approach across all four campus writing centers that will improve data comparability moving forward.

Pillar 3: Help Students Stay on Their Path

Given the significant time they engage with students, faculty can play a pivotal role in helping students to stay on their path to graduation and careers. Harrington noted that “research shows that faculty are more likely to influence a student’s career choice than a career counselor or advisor (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008).”³⁸ Ohio community college student and staff interviews conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement confirm this finding. “It was a faculty member that helped me go in the direction that I went as far as my degree when I came to this institution,” said one.³⁹ “Our faculty play a big part, even if they don’t always notice it, in helping students pick a trajectory or direction,” offered another.⁴⁰

Institutions should help faculty to recognize their potential for influence on students’ academic and career journeys, suggests Harrington, emphasizing that colleges often grapple with how to leverage faculty as advisors.⁴¹ Advising and career development are often seen by faculty as a “student services task,” and the complexity of advising—with the multitude of pathways and articulation agreements—may confound faculty who are not engaged in the work daily.⁴²

While many faculty offer countless hours of informal guidance, some faculty are required to advise. They may do it well—or they may offer minimal guidance without repercussion.⁴³ Limited time also poses a hurdle for many full-time faculty. Nonetheless, there is opportunity to further engage faculty—including part-time faculty, with the right training—in advising students, whether directly or in close collaboration with professional advisors and success coaches, as demonstrated in the focus colleges’ varied approaches discussed below.

Faculty also play a role in supporting students whose personal challenges jeopardize their academic success. They may be the first to know when a student is struggling and can offer support, issue an alert triggering advisor intervention, or direct the student to available campus and community resources that can help them stay on track.

PILLAR 3

To help students stay on their path, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Advise students, offering personalized academic and career guidance
- Test models offering intensive supports and incentives to improve student success
- Support students’ non-academic and emergency needs

• Advise students, offering personalized academic and career guidance

Colleges have worked to redesign and strengthen their advising in recent years, generally shifting from a heavy focus on course registration logistics to a more personalized, intrusive case management approach. Though models differ, most rely on faculty advisors to guide students, often after a coordinated handoff from the professional advisors or success coaches who support students at the start.

Zane State College and **Stark State College** adopted a two-tiered approach, with faculty advisors partnering with success coaches and professional advisors, respectively. Assigned by meta-major, Zane State's success coaches help students adapt to college life, select an academic path and get back on track if they fall behind. Once a path is chosen, faculty—who are required to advise—guide students toward graduation and placement, facilitating connections with employers and career opportunities. With no official handoff between them, both coaches and faculty advisors collaborate to monitor student status in a case management approach; the college's new student information system will enable them to seamlessly share alerts and notes about student progress.

Similarly, Stark State's professional advising is centered around the college's meta-majors. Each meta-major has its own "success team" composed of dedicated advisors and representatives from the financial aid and career services offices. The advisors who anchor these teams coordinate closely with their assigned academic department chairs, with a faculty member in each division overseeing the interactions. Frequent access to department chairs offers the advisors insight that helps them steer students toward programs that best match their interests, skills and career goals and redirect students who may be mismatched, particularly in the health fields.

The college aims to increase advising in the first 15 credit hours to ensure students are placed in the major in which they are most likely to succeed. After 15 completed hours, students transition to full-time faculty for applied advising in their chosen field. While not engaged in a formal capacity, some experienced adjuncts also work with students at Stark State's drop-in advising center under the leadership of a full-time faculty coordinator, particularly during times that full-time faculty are off contract.

North Central State College adds an additional layer: an academic liaison position that serves as a bridge between the success coaches who onboard students and the full-time faculty who provide in-field guidance. The college communicates its holistic, team-based model to students early on, so they know what to expect and whom to contact.

Success coaches aligned with academic divisions provide personalized support in academic planning, career advising and connections to campus supports, while monitoring students' momentum in their first year. The coaches meet biweekly with the academic liaisons, who serve as an ongoing presence in each academic building. Every full-time faculty member is assigned an advising caseload, with students added on a rotating basis as they enroll in programs. Interactions between the three tiers of advisors are documented through a software platform for continuity, with a variety of automatic and manual alert functions to flag student milestones or risk factors.

By contrast, **Tri-C** employs full-time licensed faculty counselors to provide academic advising. These faculty counselors help students develop academic goals, schedule classes, create an academic plan and monitor progress toward program requirements. Adjunct faculty counselors offer student support during school breaks and between academic terms. The college is working to expand the case management approach it has successfully deployed for certain cohorts

of underserved students such as students of color and low-income students, ultimately aiming for systemic implementation and improved graduation rates.

While not required to advise students, faculty collaborate with full-time professional advisors at **Owens Community College** and **Lorain County Community College**. Owens advisors are cross-trained to offer support within their assigned schools, aided by formal and informal consultation with department chairs. Advisors incorporate this program-level knowledge to direct students into the pathways that align with their interests. Faculty invite advisors for classroom visits to communicate the benefits of advising and issue early alert flags to trigger advisor outreach and intervention. A new software platform will help to automate academic planning for all students, rather than only those who seek advising.

The shift to proactive advising at Lorain County Community College came with a requirement that students attend orientation and pre-enrollment meetings with the college's professional advisors.⁴⁴ Advisors use non-cognitive assessments to identify students who require early intervention based on their responses about college mindset and hurdles.⁴⁵ A layered approach with success coaches, advisors and counselors was replaced by holistic case management, with a progress dashboard, degree mapping, behavior-based text alerts and other tools.⁴⁶

Under this model, professional advisors specialize in one of five career pathways (condensed from the college's nine meta-majors), attending academic division meetings to engage with faculty and program coordinators, who also tend to provide informal advising. Support for the redesign replaced initial hesitance after the campus community came to appreciate the stronger relationships advisors were able to forge with students along their entire academic journey. Lorain's provost credits the redesign—alongside developmental education reform—with driving substantial increases in the college's graduation rate, transfer student success and increase in credentials awarded.

Led by a cross-departmental committee under the college's strategic plan, Lorain is partnering with a northeast Ohio regional development organization to offer Career by Design, a training program for the college's outreach, career development and academic advising professionals. Program completers can earn an advanced "career designer" badge signifying mastery of the regional workforce landscape, including talent gaps, high-growth sectors of work and the strongest opportunities for family-sustaining wages.⁴⁷ The initiative was inspired by Lorain's work to develop a student career design experience focused on: connection; entry—including "finalizing a pathway and getting connected with faculty, pathway-based opportunities, and ways to earn while learning"; progress; and completion on the path to a career or transfer experience.⁴⁸

- **Test intensive-support and incentive models to improve student success**

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education, two focus colleges are part of a demonstration program aimed at closing equity gaps and significantly improving graduation rates for low-income students and those of color. Led by MDRC, the Scaling Up College Completion Efforts for Student Success (SUCCESS)

initiative supports colleges in five states in implementing research-based components including: “frequent proactive advising; financial incentives tied to service usage; strategies focused on increasing academic momentum (like requiring full-time enrollment or encouraging summer/winter enrollment); and the use of real-time data to support student progress.”⁴⁹

The “Fast Track” SUCCESS program at **Owens Community College** connects eligible students with a success coach mentor for encouragement, academic help and support in strengthening life skills.⁵¹ Along with tailored activities and resources, participants receive a \$50 monthly financial incentive if they meet program requirements, such as maintaining a full-time status and meeting with their coach at least twice per month. The faculty role has been largely limited to assisting with student recruitment and supporting program advisors.⁵²

Thus far, the college’s internal data has not shown a discernible impact on participants given the level of support the college already offers to students in need.⁵³ Said the provost, “Part of it goes to the strength of our advising team.

“They’re already intrusive, immersed in each school and department. And for many years we’ve had a strong safety net, providing a food pantry, clothing closet, transportation assistance, and connections to campus and community resources.”

-- college provost

They’re already intrusive, immersed in each school and department. And for many years we’ve had a strong safety net, providing a food pantry, clothing closet, transportation assistance, and connections to campus and community resources.” Faculty and staff regularly contribute to those offerings, ensuring the college can meet a variety of student needs.

Stark State College’s “Destination Degree” SUCCESS program offers eligible students at its Akron campus—which has a larger population of underserved students—a success coach, skill development programming and a variety of specialized activities.⁵⁴ Along with a sign-up bonus, participants can earn \$50 gift cards three times per semester if they meet program requirements.⁵⁵ Faculty primarily aid in recruitment and reengaging students who have drifted from the program.⁵⁶

The college appreciates the program’s intensive case-management approach advising and relationship-building support, and its focus on working closely with advisors and faculty to connect students with resources. But the pandemic created unique challenges that administrators believe dampened its potential impact. One recalled, “We had just gotten the program off the ground when the pandemic hit. Many of our most underserved students were forced to go online, and some did not return.” The hot job market and notable increase in wages available to students after the pandemic has made it difficult for the college to compete for students, with many opting to attend part-time—rendering them ineligible for the financial incentives—or not at all. With employers now more likely to provide on-the-job training to meet labor demands, “some of our students are taking our skills and getting the job, but not the degree,” said the provost. “Maybe that’s their goal, but we’re not measured for success that way.”

The program grants continue until 2025. Both colleges will continue to analyze student results and incorporate findings and lessons learned into their overall student support approach.

- **Support students' non-academic and emergency needs**

While faculty are often approached about or can detect signs of students' non-academic needs, some colleges formally survey students and direct them to helpful resources such as those described above. The intake survey for new students at **Lorain County Community College** “opens conversations about holistic needs such as childcare support, career counseling and resources to address financial strains.”⁵⁷ And **Zane State College**’s welcome survey (see Pillar 2) helps advisors broach sensitive topics as students identify potential challenges that may impact their ability to complete their academic program. Along with other colleges, Zane State awards emergency grants to help students overcome barriers that disrupt their studies.

Pillar 4: Ensure Students Are Learning

Teaching and learning strategies are receiving increasing attention nationally as institutions broaden their efforts beyond the first three pillars of guided pathways⁵⁸, a welcome trend mirrored in the focus colleges. The opportunity for faculty engagement in Pillar 4 work is particularly strong, given their paramount role in this domain.

Notes a former pathways leader with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): “While institutions often begin their guided pathways journey with structural, process, and mechanical considerations, it is once they shift to engaging broadly on the teaching and learning pillar that faculty can truly make the connection between what they do in the classroom and the larger panoply of institutional transformations that is guided pathways.”⁵⁹

Harrington identifies two primary areas in which to engage faculty: assessment of learning outcomes at both the program and course levels, and adoption of evidence-based practices to improve instruction.⁶⁰ Colleges may encounter resistance to each task and need to communicate their value as tools for improving student success—the ultimate goal of all stakeholders.

Faculty leadership is essential in identifying and regularly evaluating program and course learning outcomes for continued relevance to program objectives, transfer institutions and employers.⁶¹ Faculty must also determine appropriate mechanisms to

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-- former pathways leader with AACC

assess whether course completers and program graduates have mastered the learning outcomes, with support from assessment experts if needed.⁶² Once assessments are administered, however, it is critical that faculty receive timely results—yet most faculty responding to a national survey reported that this does not happen.⁶³ Only with such data can faculty determine any necessary programmatic and course-level adjustments that may better serve students.

Supporting faculty in the science of teaching is vital, according to Harrington. Instructors have expertise in their respective disciplines, but varying levels of familiarity with pedagogy and practices shown to improve learning. A key strategy for expanding exposure to and adoption of evidence-based teaching and learning practices is to support faculty participation in intensive, action-oriented coursework on these topics, such as that offered by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) and described below.

Another strategy is to create and promote a teaching and learning center at each institution, with faculty participation rewarded in the promotion process and reflected in program review.⁶⁴ Such centers must be well-resourced with dedicated staff to promote sustainability and offer the greatest benefit. Harrington cautions that it can be hard to attract faculty to center resources for two reasons: time constraints and hesitancy to seek support. “It can be very hard for faculty to acknowledge they don’t know everything. They think, ‘If I’ve been doing this for years, how can I raise my hand saying I don’t know what I’m doing or could be doing better?’” she said.⁶⁵

Involving faculty champions to design and develop the teaching and learning center will expand its appeal. Its content offerings should entail more than just one-time workshops. “Start there to generate enthusiasm and demonstrate value to encourage faculty to make a bigger time commitment—but grow your offerings,” Harrington said. “You need to tackle bigger issues like course design in a sustained way... many faculty do not have training in how to design courses.”⁶⁶

Faculty should also work to expand learner engagement. Participation in diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives may aid instructors in creating learning environments suited to all students. They can also embed active and applied learning in their courses through various forms of experiential learning to build student enthusiasm, persistence and practical, real-world experience.

PILLAR 4

To ensure students are learning, Ohio focus colleges engage faculty to:

- Leverage data and assessment for student learning and academic program review
- Develop teaching and learning centers to support faculty
- Expand use of evidence-based teaching practices
- Increase learner engagement through diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives
- Broaden access to experiential learning

- **Leverage data and assessment for student learning and academic program review**

Of the data-informed, learner-centered approach it has intentionally cultivated, the team at **Lorain County Community College** (LCCC) likes to say, “We are data-driven but heart-led.” Indeed, data is at the core of the college’s guided pathways approach, from its early focus on momentum metrics and identifying equity gaps to the expanded analytics of disaggregated data and integrated system of assessment processes undertaken as the college increases its focus on Pillar 4 priorities.

In response to faculty and other campus stakeholders’ requests for more timely access to performance data, the college’s Institutional Research (IR) office has developed a growing suite of interactive dashboards, including specialized displays for student success, learning outcomes assessment, academic program review, course completion, dual enrollment and others. Designed to make data actionable, all dashboards are available on demand to campus employees through LCCC’s intranet. The college’s leadership reports that the dashboards are a product of interdepartmental, cross-unit collaboration among faculty, LCCC’s Student Learning Assessment Council, and the college’s IR and e-learning teams. The IR team stresses that the dashboards were customized for LCCC’s purposes—and that other institutions should consider their unique mission, priorities and culture in developing their own data tools.

The college’s *student success dashboard* aggregates institutional, program and course-level data on research-based key performance indicators linked to the campus completion plan. Data for each indicator is disaggregated by age, gender, race/ethnicity, Pell eligibility and first-generation college student status. Campus stakeholders can use the rich visual display of data to inform strategy and interventions to better support students in need of additional assistance, particularly those from underserved populations.

LCCC’s *learning outcomes assessment dashboard* leverages a business intelligence software platform to link its curriculum management, learning management and student data systems into one interface. Users can view student achievement—including through an equity lens—by individual course, course-level or gen ed outcomes, modality, course length, demographics and other dimensions. The dashboard also includes qualitative data provided by faculty through an end-of-semester “closing the loop” analysis. This analysis prompts faculty reflection and action planning on course-level disaggregated student performance data—to which faculty previously did not have access—along with learning gaps and course effectiveness. Faculty are encouraged to consider how the dashboard data can help them improve course structure, teaching methods, assessment strategies, student supports and other factors impacting student learning. Decisions about such changes are made by committees composed of faculty, program coordinators and assessment coordinators, who create course assessment plans and select learning outcomes to assess.

Faculty volunteers piloted the system, which has now scaled to include nearly universal full-time faculty participation and a growing majority of part-time adjuncts and College Credit Plus faculty. Deans are responsible for communicating to faculty the priority importance of this assessment process to improving student

success and equity in student learning in alignment with the college's mission and vision.

The college is analyzing faculty reflection responses to identify common themes and potential professional development offerings targeted to faculty needs. Over time, LCCC will incorporate quantitative data to increase the dashboard's utility and track the effectiveness of interventions that faculty implement in their courses. Already, administrators report that the student learning dashboard is "changing conversations that faculty are having about their courses, student learning and equity," surfacing inquiries ranging from tactical issues and course redesign to generating transformative change in student learning.

As LCCC's *academic program review dashboard* takes hold, the college's faculty are increasingly seeing the value of assessment and evaluation in generating positive change at the program level. Overcoming cultural resistance to program review, the institution's programs are now assessed on a three-year cycle. The dashboard offers insight into program curricula, enrollment demographics and gaps, partnerships and course success. Users can study trends in grade distribution, time to completion, employment outcomes including graduates' wage data one, five and ten years after completion, and more. Advisors receive training on the dashboard to help them better counsel students on the differences among programs and how their graduates fare.

The college's nursing division has been at the forefront of the shift from assessment skepticism to advocacy as it harnesses the power of program data. Noted the program administrator—herself a faculty member—"We love the numbers because they help us know where students are and what they need. They're useful for accreditation purposes. And they're changing our faculty thought process. Learning equity is part of how we talk now, which wasn't the case before. We're more of a 'just' culture as we seek to support each other in helping our students."

After studying program results, nursing faculty noticed that the science courses supporting nursing posed a barrier for students, prompting a course redesign.

The program dashboard also highlighted a need for changes to the nursing orientation process and more retention services, including a retention specialist and nursing tutors. "All of this came from the dashboard and program review," noted the nursing administrator. "Originally we thought we were being forced to do one more thing, but this has turned out to have so many positive outcomes."

"All of (these improvements) came from the dashboard and program review. Originally we thought we were being forced to do one more thing, but this has turned out to have so many positive outcomes."

-- nursing administrator

- **Develop teaching and learning centers to support faculty**

Several colleges are reinvigorating or reimagining existing teaching and learning centers to better serve current faculty needs. During renovation of its primary student hub, leaders at **Owens Community College** spotted an opportunity to

boost faculty engagement by making campus spaces more inviting—particularly important after the Covid-19 pandemic drove many to spend less time on campus. Faculty worked with architects to custom design a flexible, modern gathering space for its faculty-led *Center for Teaching and Innovation* to accommodate a wide range of changing instructional and collaboration needs. The plan worked: faculty report palpable excitement among their peers, with higher attendance at faculty meetings, trainings and other center events.

According to the college's intranet, the center's mission is to serve as an “educator-driven resource encouraging collaboration to increase expertise and confidence, fostering student success.” The center will “host sessions, presentations and events highlighting ideas, concepts and innovations important to enhance the classroom experience; inspire an interdisciplinary faculty community to explore innovative pedagogy, supporting equity and inclusion in the classroom; and provide resources and materials to support faculty experimentation and innovation in the classroom.”⁶⁷

The center invites faculty engagement in several ways. Faculty can: submit a proposal for a workshop and/or seminar on teaching and learning, earning a stipend upon session delivery; provide feedback on a session attended; submit ideas for future sessions; submit requests for professional development and training sessions; and access past session recordings. The center also includes a committee of faculty and staff that distributes professional development funds. To broaden awareness of best practices, faculty that receive these funds are required to share their learnings with colleagues through the center.

At **Stark State College**, the *BRIDGE Committee* (Building Relationships, Integrating Divisions, and Generating Excellence) has supported faculty and staff for over 20 years with targeted content and team-building activities addressing the most pressing topics facing the college and its students. The cross-divisional team engages faculty in developing and conducting professional development that addresses faculty concerns, identified gaps and other priorities. Committee members are compensated for this role.

A newly launched, faculty-led *Teaching and Learning Council* coordinates with BRIDGE but focuses solely on faculty support. The council hosts sessions on best practices for teaching and learning and works to align faculty offerings across campus. As part of the new faculty orientation programming, the council leads presentations on pedagogy—such as how to engage and assess students—and connects the faculty with ongoing support. The council is developing a college-wide faculty mentoring program to enhance existing, but uneven departmental mentoring efforts so that all new faculty—full-time and adjunct—have a colleague to guide them through their transition to the college.

The **Lorain County Community College** *Teaching and Learning Center*⁶⁸ replaces an earlier effort run by faculty volunteers and lacking a physical space. The evolution was an outgrowth of the college's development and adoption of a set of ten “Principles of Effective Teaching”⁶⁹ after faculty learned of a similar effort at another college in the Achieving the Dream⁷⁰ network. An ad-hoc committee composed of LCCC faculty representing each division met frequently to debate and draft the principles.

"This was one of my favorite things to be involved in. Our core group was very passionate about this work. The principles really came from us—they were ours."

-- faculty member

The aspirational principles reflect faculty members' collective philosophy of what good instruction and pedagogy entails; for example, "Effective teaching fosters both collaboration and shared responsibility between teacher and students for learning" (Principle #5).⁷¹

Recalled one faculty member, "This was one of my favorite things to be involved in. Our core group was very passionate about this work. The principles really came from us—they were ours." Designated committee members presented the principles to the Faculty Senate, overcoming skepticism regarding the true motivation behind the faculty-led effort and securing a vote of approval.

Another faculty committee, formed to determine how to bring the Senate-endorsed principles to life, developed what became an internal campus proposal to create the Teaching and Learning Center. While LCCC administrators were supportive, they looked to these faculty champions to develop and communicate the plan to their peers, soliciting input from all faculty. With widespread support, the center was launched to offer evidence-based professional development aligned with the effective teaching principles and organized into five broad pathways. The center "works to cultivate learner-centered teaching and a culture that attends to diversity, equity and inclusion...[and] support faculty as they cultivate engagement, equity and learning in their courses."⁷²

The college hired a full-time faculty member to additionally serve as part-time center director in 2021; she has since transitioned to supporting the center full-time, enabling the expansion of program offerings and paving the way for additional hires. The first center programming focused on active learning after student engagement survey results revealed that LCCC students reported lower levels of active learning in class compared to other colleges. Early center programming was not well attended beyond required professional development days, echoing national trends in lower faculty engagement. Yet, the director expects that the forthcoming availability of renovated physical space—the need for which faculty expressed in focus groups—will serve as a draw, allowing the center to expand its impact.

Greater faculty participation would be beneficial given the center's current focus on expanding awareness and scaling implementation of high-impact practices⁷³ that improve student achievement and equity. Despite their strong research basis, the college does not mandate faculty to adopt such practices. Rather, "Our approach is to say, 'This is what evidence shows us we should be doing, because it's more equitable, more engaging and has been shown to improve student learning,'" shared the provost. "We should be doing this because we want to."

"Our approach is to say, 'This is what evidence shows us we should be doing, because it's more equitable, more engaging and has been shown to improve student learning'. We should be doing this because we want to."

-- college provost

- **Expand use of evidence-based teaching practices**

To foster wider adoption of practices shown to improve teaching and learning, OACC's Success Center has sponsored cohorts of faculty from all 23 member colleges to complete in-depth, online courses developed by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE).⁷⁴ Since fall 2020, nearly 700 Ohio community college faculty have participated in the 25-module "Effective Online Teaching Practices" course, which flexibly delivers actionable, research-based content and encourages active learning by prompting faculty to implement what they are learning each session. Colleges were especially receptive to the course focus as they navigated a rapid shift to online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Results to date are exceptional⁷⁵: among OACC cohort members, 96% would recommend the course to a colleague and 97% found course content helpful and relevant in refining their teaching practice.⁷⁶ On average, course completers learned 45 new practices and implemented 15, while planning to implement dozens more, reporting greater use of research to inform their practice.⁷⁷ Notably, faculty also reported significant increases in their confidence using evidence-based practices to: design an effective course and class; establish a productive learning environment; use active learning techniques; promote higher-order thinking; and assess student understanding and progress to inform instruction and promote learning.⁷⁸

To continue developing a cadre of educators equipped to drive stronger student outcomes and learning experiences, OACC will sponsor additional faculty to join an 8-week microcredential course this fall on promoting active learning. Participants who complete such ACUE courses earn stackable microcredentials that count toward a full ACUE certificate in effective college instruction endorsed by the American Council on Education.⁷⁹

Based on overwhelmingly positive faculty feedback, several colleges are dedicating additional resources to support greater faculty access to ACUE content. Approximately one-third of the full-time faculty at **Tri-C** have participated in an ACUE course, and the college is beginning to extend the opportunity to its adjunct instructors. The institution pays not only ACUE tuition, but also release time under the faculty collective bargaining agreement—a costly investment the college undertakes to increase the likelihood that faculty will devote the time needed to complete the course and thoughtfully implement its research-based practices. Noted Tri-C's chief academic officer, "I'm a huge fan of ACUE because it's a peer-facilitated, reflective professional development experience. It certainly goes beyond the 90-minute workshop where you never know if it impacted teaching practice." Added a faculty proponent, "ACUE's framework is grounded in actively implementing as you learn. You can't just check a box and move on."

At **North Central State College**, "excitement exploded" from the college's OACC cohort participants, according to the academic services dean overseeing the effort, now herself a champion of the ACUE approach. The college committed to using its own professional development funding to sponsor a North Central faculty cohort, later receiving a federal Higher Education Act Title III grant to support additional trainings. The college identified both a full-time and part-time adjunct faculty member to facilitate its cohort to solicit stronger participation and engagement

“There’s almost an overwhelming amount of useful classroom info that you gain in going through the ACUE 25-module course. Even if every instructor implements one or two things, their teaching practices improve.”

-- faculty member

from each group—the first significant adjunct professional development opportunity in recent years. Among the college’s cohort was an entire academic department that worked through the program concurrently, with the manager and team members dedicating a common time each week to complete the training.

North Central faculty appreciate the course structure and hands-on, practical approach. Said one faculty member, “There’s almost an overwhelming amount of useful classroom info that you gain in going through the ACUE 25-module course. Even if every instructor implements one or two things, their teaching practices improve. Everything is useful—there’s no fluff, in my experience.” Another noted that the course enables faculty to capture practices

they do not have time to try now but would like to explore later. “As part of our yearly reviews in Health Sciences, our deans are looking at that: ‘You wanted to implement these things when you took ACUE; have you done that?’ It’s built-in accountability.”

The college invites its ACUE participants to share new teaching practices with their peers at in-service trainings, generating interest and enthusiasm. While administrators believe that faculty ACUE participation has improved student interaction and success, faculty are working to analyze data from course changes.

Based on its success with the in-depth online teaching practices course, North Central opted to sponsor participation in a newer training on inclusivity, “Fostering a Culture of Belonging.” While not mandatory, administrators have set the expectation that all staff—not just faculty—will complete the 8-week course. Participants benefit from content adapted to their role, whether faculty, advisor, human resources, or another position, enabling them to appreciate how they can foster success for all students and contribute to a supportive campus culture. As participation grows, the academic services dean has noticed an impact at the college: a more relaxed conversational climate. “As an African-American professional, it’s nice that people have approached me with outside-the-box questions that I’m really confident they wouldn’t have felt comfortable enough asking me a few years ago. Those are great steps in the right direction.”

- **Increase learner engagement through diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives**

Many colleges are intentionally focused on cultivating a campus atmosphere and learning environment that is aware of and responsive to the needs of students, particularly those from underserved groups. **Owens Community College** is working to challenge longstanding notions of what it means to treat students equally—versus equitably. Campus leaders host a variety of activities centered around a yearly theme to create stakeholder dialogue and awareness of different perspectives. A voluntary campus “Big Read” encourages the Owens community to engage around a common text related to diversity, equity and inclusion with

topics such as implicit bias, mental health and ableism. Every semester, faculty discussion groups tackle these thematic issues, considering how they impact teaching practice and students' experience at the college. The campus discussion has even filtered into the community with discussion sessions at the local library.

At **Tri-C**, the faculty composing the Strong Start to Finish (SStF) committee are currently examining the impact of trauma on student success. Faculty note that trauma often shapes the performance, behaviors and habits of at-risk students, factors they are analyzing to determine appropriate supports to help these students be more successful in gateway English. They are working to engage their colleagues around committee findings and ideas, with plans to carry the topic forward to fall convocation. Notably, participating faculty receive service credits, but not compensation or reassigned time for this work, opting to continue their mission-driven focus on student success in gateway English after SStF state grant funding ended.

- **Broaden access to experiential learning**

Over 80% of courses at **Zane State College** have some form of experiential learning in place, and the college's career coach is working to embed work-based learning for all students in all programs. Students benefit from industry contacts and knowledge gained through internships, external research projects, clinical experience, service learning and part-time jobs, among other avenues.

Through its Teaching and Learning Center, **Lorain County Community College** is highlighting the benefits of scaling experiential learning—and other high-impact practices—to enhance equity in students' academic experience and path to employment.

Conclusion

Today's students expect programs to help them achieve their academic and career goals as efficiently and affordably as possible. Guided pathways can help colleges deliver on these objectives, but the work of implementation is neither easy nor quick. While cultivating change to longstanding practice is challenging, faculty can lead the way, as our focus colleges have shown.

Among these colleges—and others across the state—none has comprehensively scaled the guided pathways key practices, but all are engaging faculty in varying ways to advance promising strategies around the guided pathways pillars. The challenge now is to assess which of these faculty engagement approaches and pathways strategies are most effective in increasing student success—and then work to expand their reach to all learners for a more consistent and equitable student experience.

Our hope is that this report will inspire college leaders to further leverage faculty initiative and expertise, among both full-time faculty and adjuncts, to maximize the power of guided pathways—and now guided career pathways. We owe our students no less.

Notes

¹ OACC approached each participating college with one or more initiatives of focus and invited each to share related work. Quotes from faculty and administrators are interspersed throughout.

² OACC colleges periodically complete a “Guided Pathways Essential Practices: Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment” survey designed by the Community College Research Center and available at <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-are-learning-guided-pathways.html>

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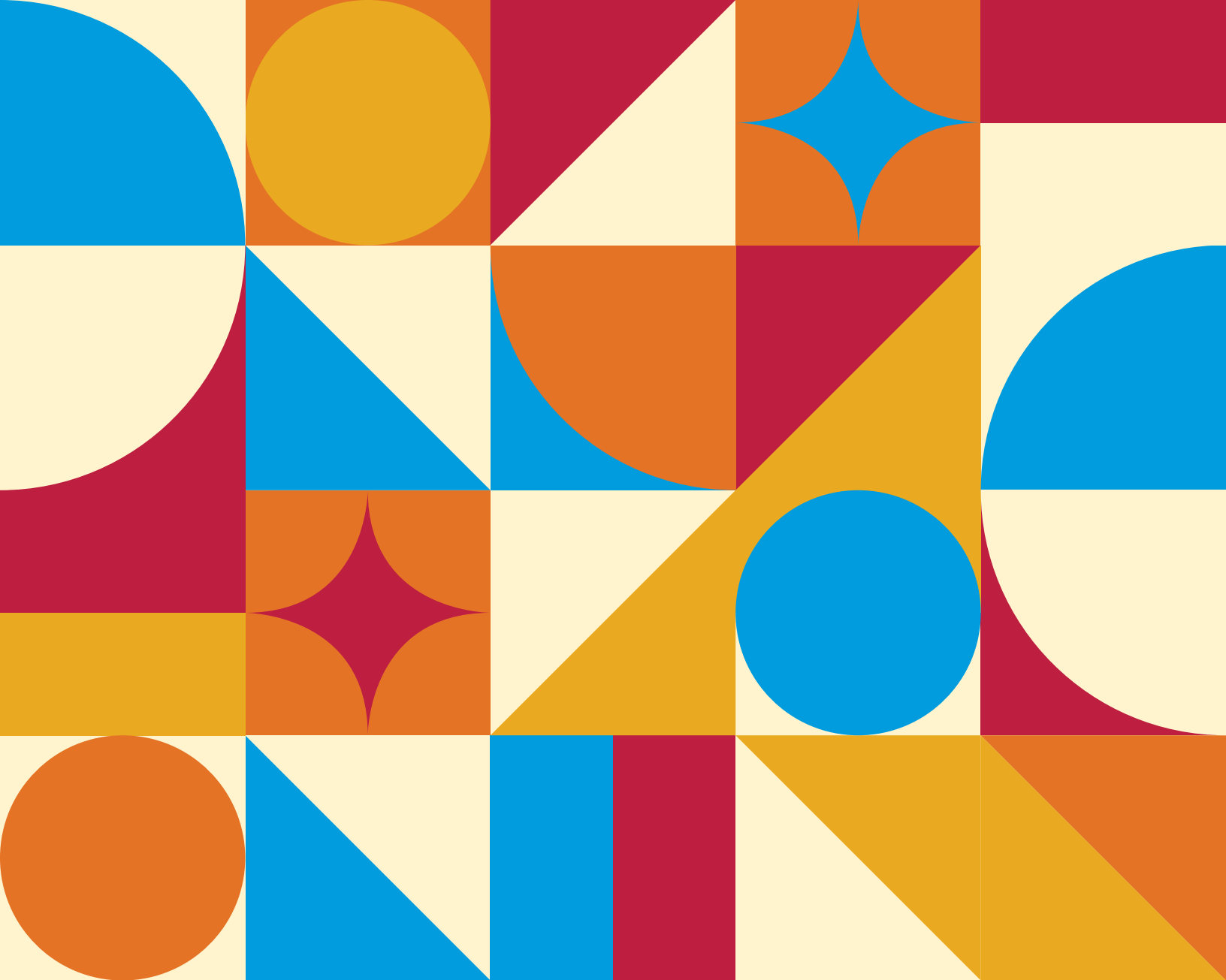
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- ²³ OACC colleges periodically complete a “Guided Pathways Essential Practices: Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment” survey designed by the Community College Research Center and available at <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-are-learning-guided-pathways.html>

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