



Guided Pathways Liaison Memo

November 2018

Take a Breath, a Deep One

We've been scurrying around to a thousand presentations by legions of experts on guided pathways. We've listened to the California 20 present amazing success stories and precise directions of how to replicate those successes. We've read piles of articles and books. We've created collaborative work groups, and we've plotted out frameworks and buried ourselves in data -- And we panic.

Everyone, it seems, is ahead of our college. We're lagging behind. We've already failed. What are we to do?

Breathe. We are only behind because the California 20 have been working on this for years. Some colleges are pushing ahead with conceptual models and others are getting down to the nuts and bolts and changing systems. Every community college in the state is taking steps—some bold, some tentative. Your college is somewhere in there. We are on track, or soon will be. There is no need for panic. There is a need for first steps and context for those steps.

Guided pathways is a new way of thinking about services and organizing a college so it is more prepared for student success. It was initiated because the data we have proves to us that our best efforts in the old way simply didn't work: Too many students stop out or fail out. Guided pathways principles have proven to increase student success.

Properly initiated, guided pathways will improve student success with a side effect: faculty satisfaction. There are few things better than finishing a semester with a full house of successful students who are ready for whatever comes next.

There are 114 creative ways to accomplish the transformation into a guided pathways school. But the work of guided pathways starts with three fundamentals: (1) student voices that will identify barriers to success, so we can remove those barriers, (2) data that will help us identify problems and help us create solutions, and

(3) an inventory of what we are already doing well so we can build on existing processes.

If you are feeling the panic, stop and listen to the stories students and the stories data tell and begin to identify another barrier that you can address with the processes already in place. These first steps are fundamental – and they will help you identify two things: Why should your college do this? And what shape will your barrier-slaying framework take?

Reforming the way a college works doesn't suggest that a wholesale dislocation of processes is needed. Remove a barrier and then move on to the next one while keeping an eye on the first: is it working? Does it need tweaking?

If you're not sure what to do next, try this:

1. listen to students
2. look at the data
3. identify a barrier from #1 and #2
4. take steps to remove the barrier
5. rinse, repeat.

Some failure is likely because we are trying new things, and failure must be a part of the success: learn from a failure and move forward.

Breathe. There is time to do this right.

Future Webinar:

Guided Pathways Webinar - November 7, 2018 12:30p - 1:30p

"Meta - What? And Why?" - Register [HERE](#)

Before embarking on the development of meta-majors, you should have a clear understanding of why you are developing meta-majors. Why are meta-majors an integral element of guided pathways - and what will meta-majors mean for your college? What do you expect to gain from the development of meta-majors - and how do you ensure that your meta-majors achieve their intended purpose? Join us for an overview of the "why" of meta-majors and design principles to guide your work.

Past Webinars:

[Live Webinar: Defining the Role of a Guided Pathways Liaison \(2018 Academic Academy\)](#)

[September 19, 2018: Using Data to Make the Case I](#)

[September 25, 2018: Using Data to Make the Case II](#)

[September 25, 2018: Live Webinar](#)

[October 9, 2018: Guided Self Placement](#)

[October 18, 2018: Guided Pathways, AB 705, and the New Funding Formula](#)

[October 24, 2018: Guided Self Placement](#)