

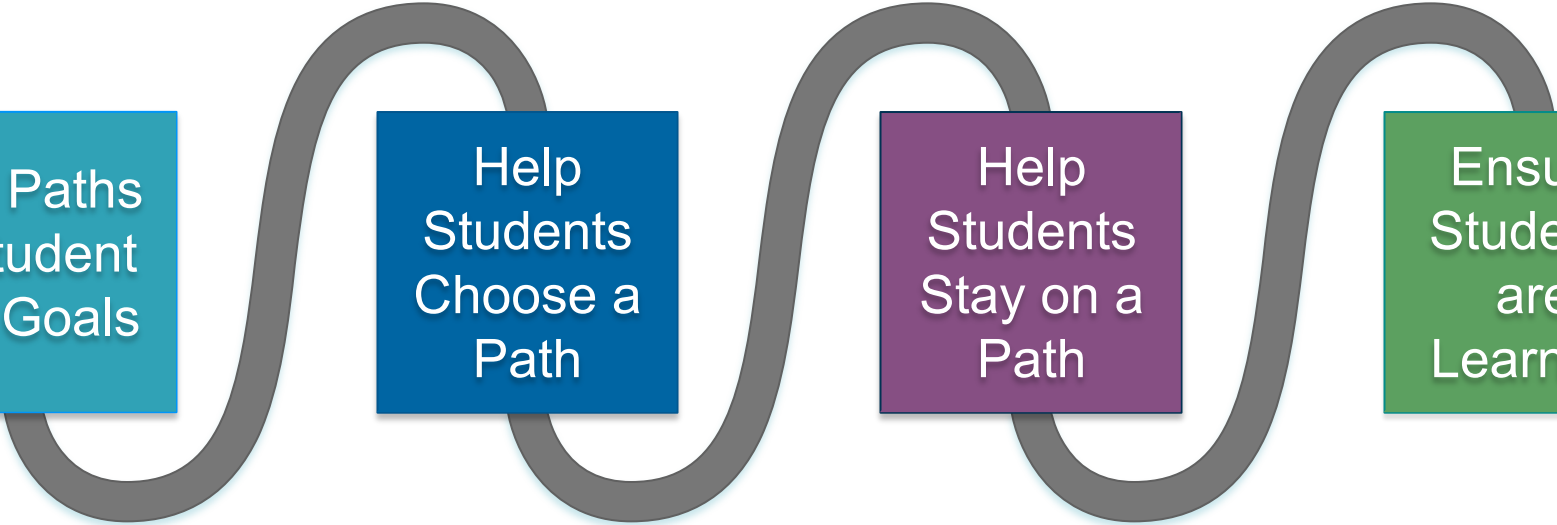
Guided Pathways Implementation: Lessons Learned, Big Bets and Successful Sustainability Structures

Hana Lahr & Davis Jenkins
April 10, 2024

Presentation overview

1. Findings from CCRC's guided pathways evaluations
2. Reviewing key pathways practices
3. Strategies for leading whole-college reforms
4. Table discussion

Guided pathways framework



Map Paths
to Student
End Goals

Help
Students
Choose a
Path

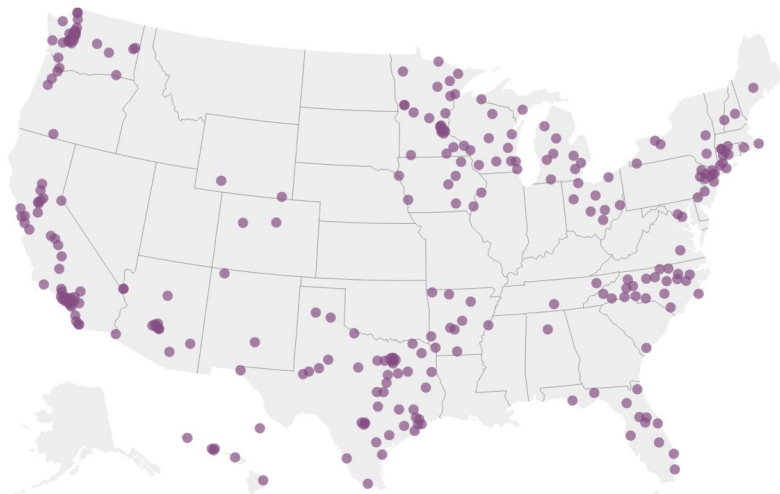
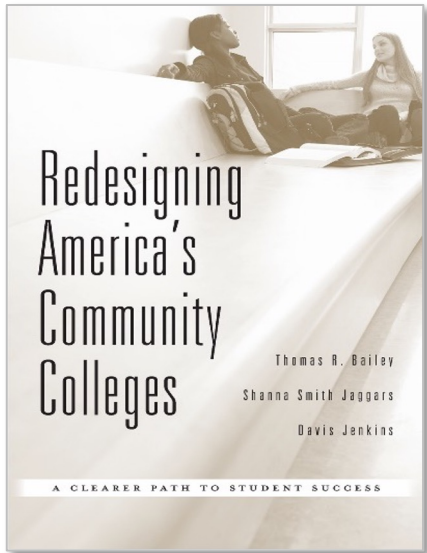
Help
Students
Stay on a
Path

Ensure
Students
are
Learning

2015

2016-2022

2023-2024



Updated January 2022

RESEARCH BRIEF

Community College Research Center | March 2024

Lessons From Two Major Evaluations of Guided Pathways

By Davis Jenkins, Hans Lehr, and Thomas Brock

Community colleges in the United States do a remarkable job of making postsecondary education accessible to students from all backgrounds. Where they do less well is making sure that all degree-seeking students earn a credential or transfer to a four-year institution within a reasonable amount of time. A recent report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that nearly 60% of degree-seeking community college students do not earn a certificate or degree at any postsecondary institution within six years of beginning at a community college. It also shows troubling disparities by race and ethnicity, with Asian and White students who enter community colleges earning credentials at notably higher rates than Black, Hispanic, and Native American students (Lee & Shapiro, 2023).

Numerous programs and initiatives have been launched in recent years to improve student outcomes at community colleges, but perhaps none are as well known or widespread as guided pathways. Guided pathways is a framework for whole-college reform designed to help all students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs aligned with their career and education goals efficiently and affordably. It emerged from years of research by CCRC and others and was introduced to the field in the 2015 book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey et al., 2015). Since then, guided pathways has been supported by national organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and has been used as a model for reform by over 400 community colleges and 18 state systems.

This brief summarizes the results of two recent evaluations conducted by CCRC to examine the scale at which colleges have implemented guided pathways reforms and the association between guided pathways practices and student outcomes. The first is an evaluation of the AACC Pathways Project, which involved 30 colleges from around the country that were committed to making guided pathways reforms. The second is an evaluation of guided pathways implementation in three states—Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington State—that launched initiatives to assist colleges across their systems—70 institutions in total—to adopt the reforms. In brief, we find that:

- Whole-college reform is feasible but takes time—at least five years—to accomplish.
- There is a positive relationship between the scaled implementation of complementary sets of guided pathways practices and some measures of student achievement in AACC Pathways colleges that made the most progress in implementing guided pathways.

Guided pathways is a framework for whole-college reform designed to help all students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs aligned with their education and career goals. It has been used as a model for reform by more than 400 community colleges.

The big questions:



To what extent do colleges adopt a set of guided pathways practices *at scale*?

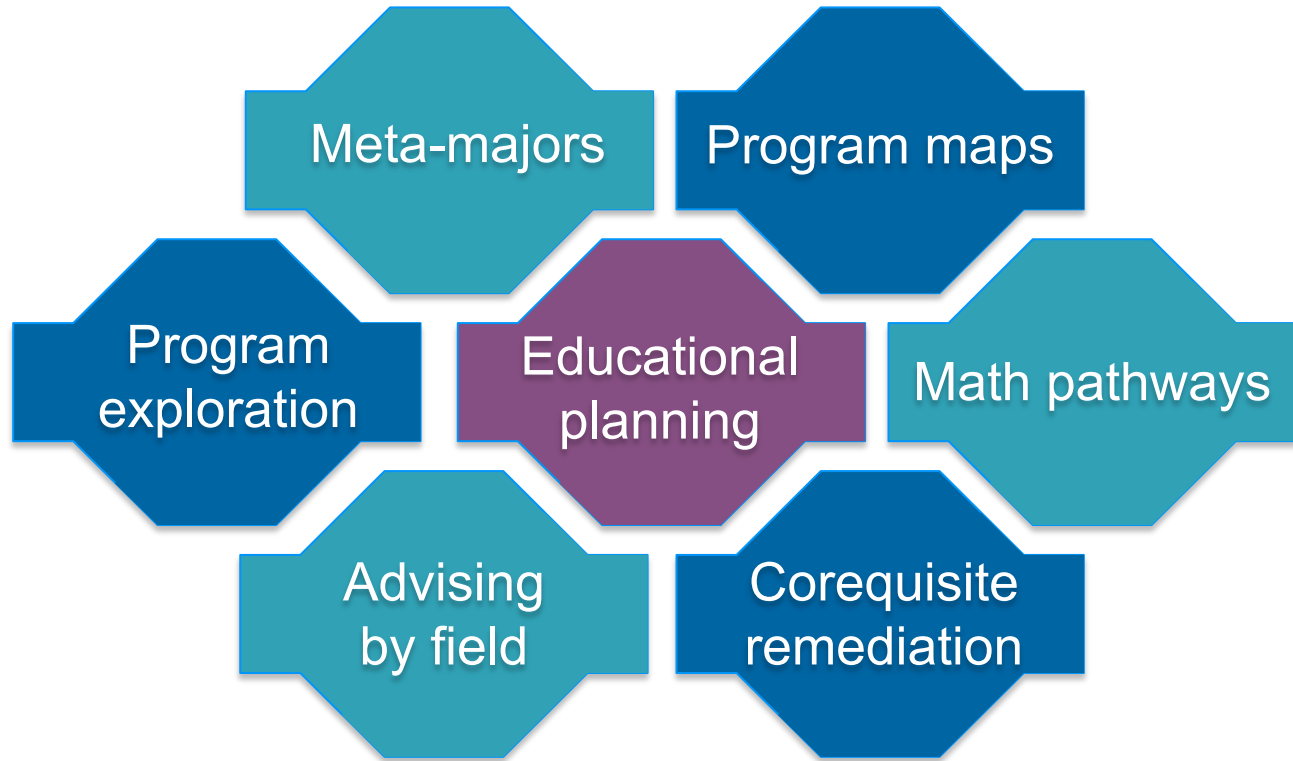


Is adoption of guided pathways associated with improvements in student outcomes?

We conducted two evaluations:

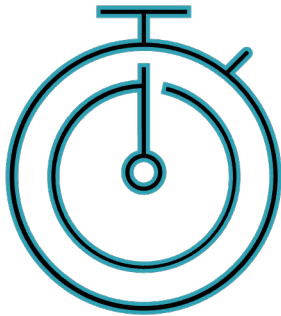
- 1) 30 colleges participating in **the AACCC Pathways Project**
- 2) Statewide adoption of guided pathways in Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington (**The NSF Evaluation**)

**We examined
the scale of
adoption of
guided
pathways
practices**



We used early momentum metrics to capture student outcomes for FTIC students

- College-level credit accumulation in term 1 and year 1
- Completing college-level math and English/college-level math credits completed in year 1
- Persistence from term 1 to term 2



We took a multi-year perspective to measure improvements in EMMs over 8-10 year (pre- and post-guided pathways)

AACC Pathways Project



- 30 colleges from 17 states selected through a competitive process
- 6 intensive institutes + coaching in 2016 and 2017
- 8 years of student data (2012 – 2020)

AACC Adoption Findings



11

Colleges adopted all or most practices at scale

12

Colleges were in the process of scaling

6

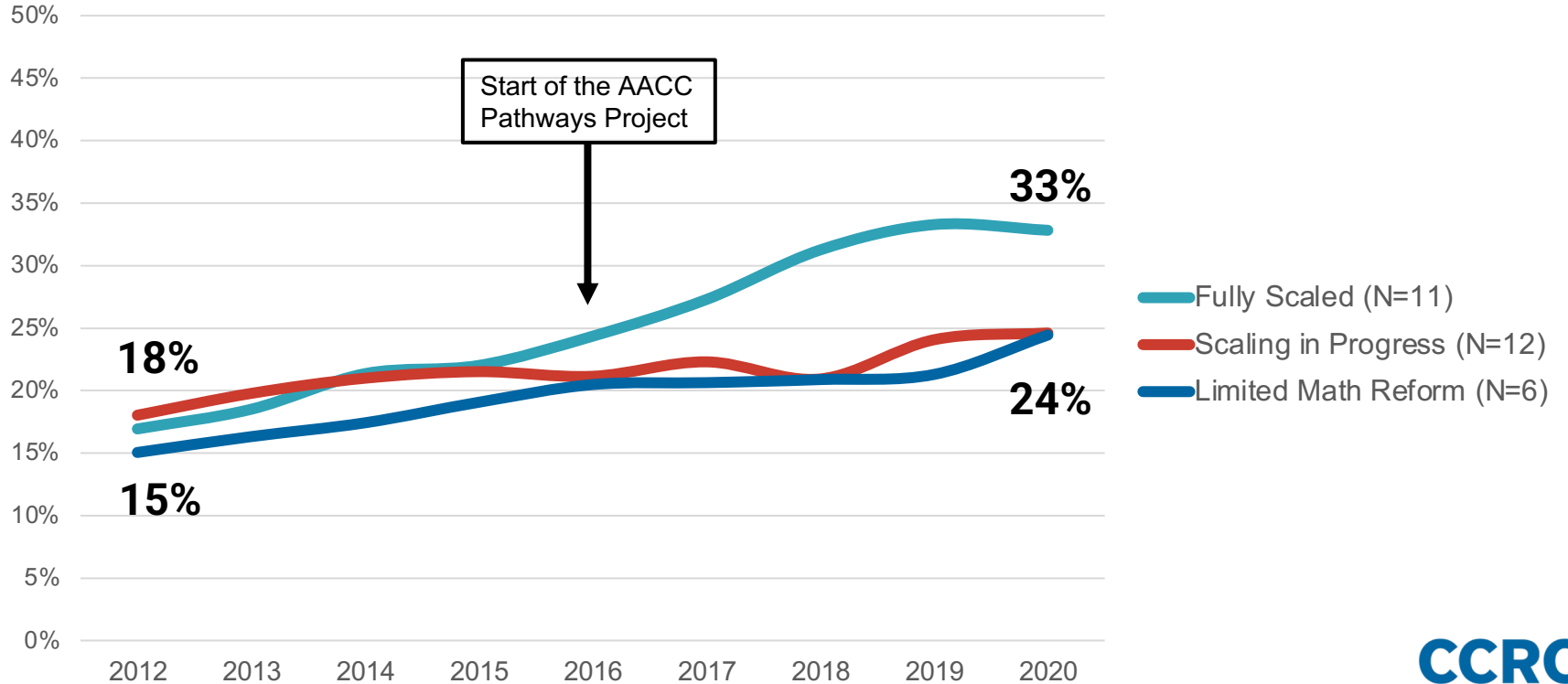
Colleges did not scale corequisite math

AACC student outcomes

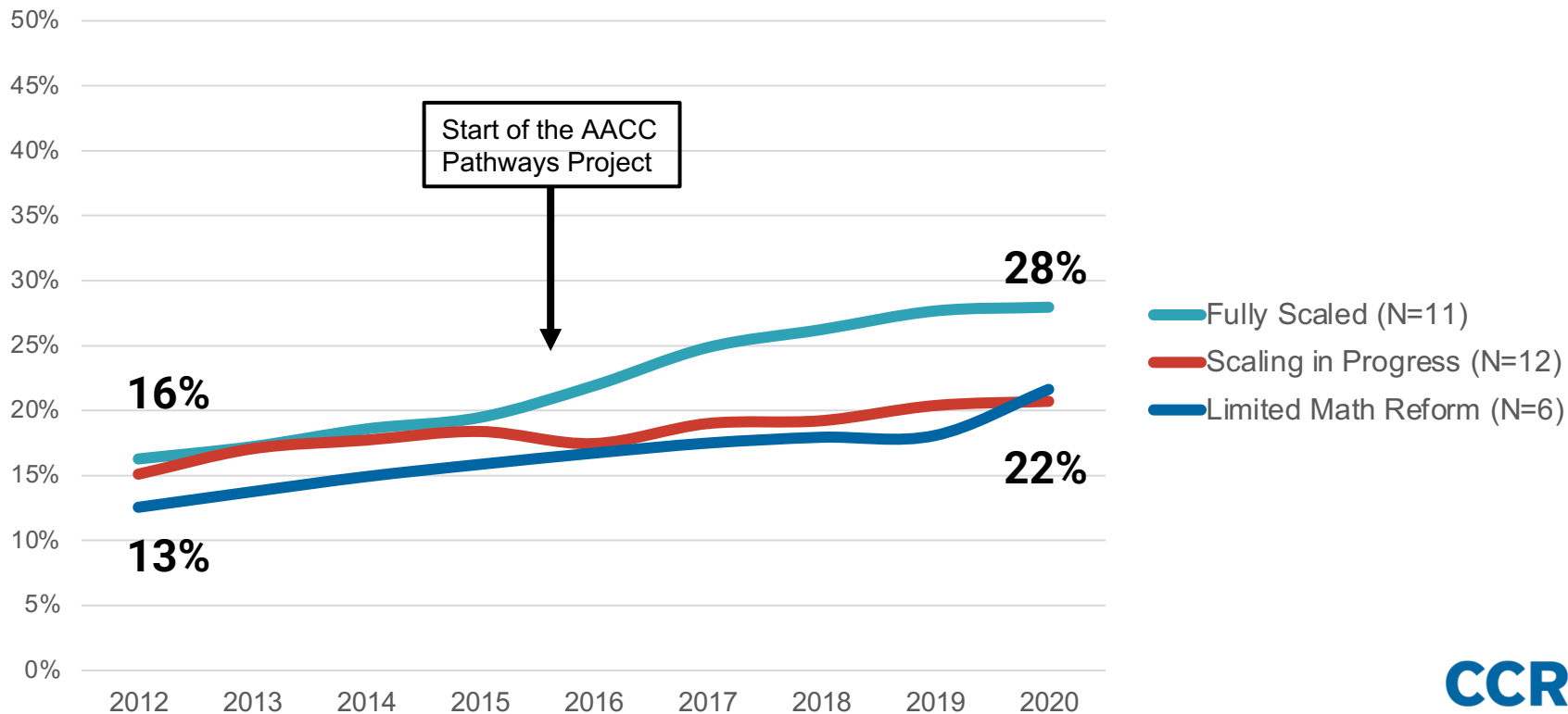


- Generally, all colleges saw improvements
- Colleges that made more progress in scaling guided pathways reforms showed greater improvements on credit accumulation
- Term-to-term persistence declined, likely due to Covid
- All racial/ethnic groups benefited, but equity gaps did not close

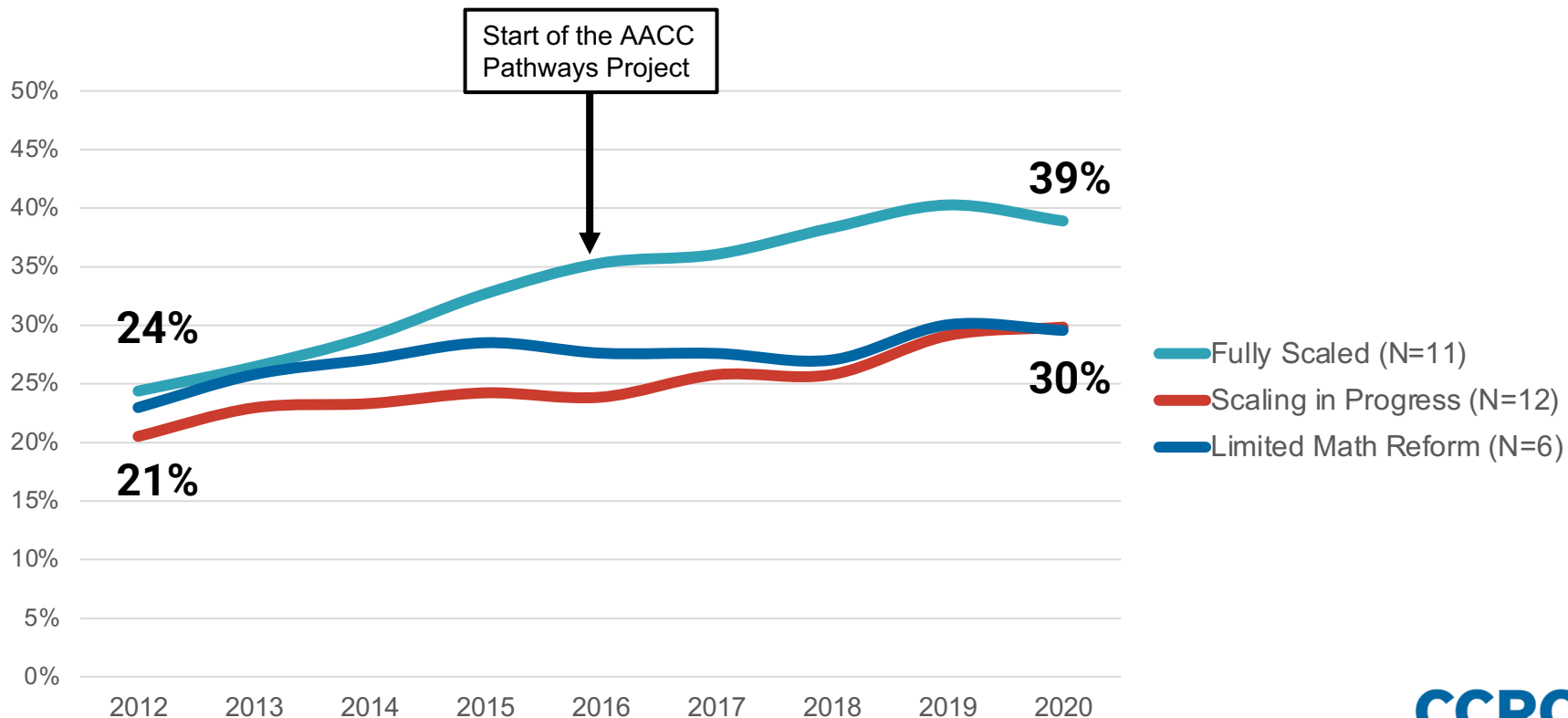
Completion of 12+ college-level credits in term 1



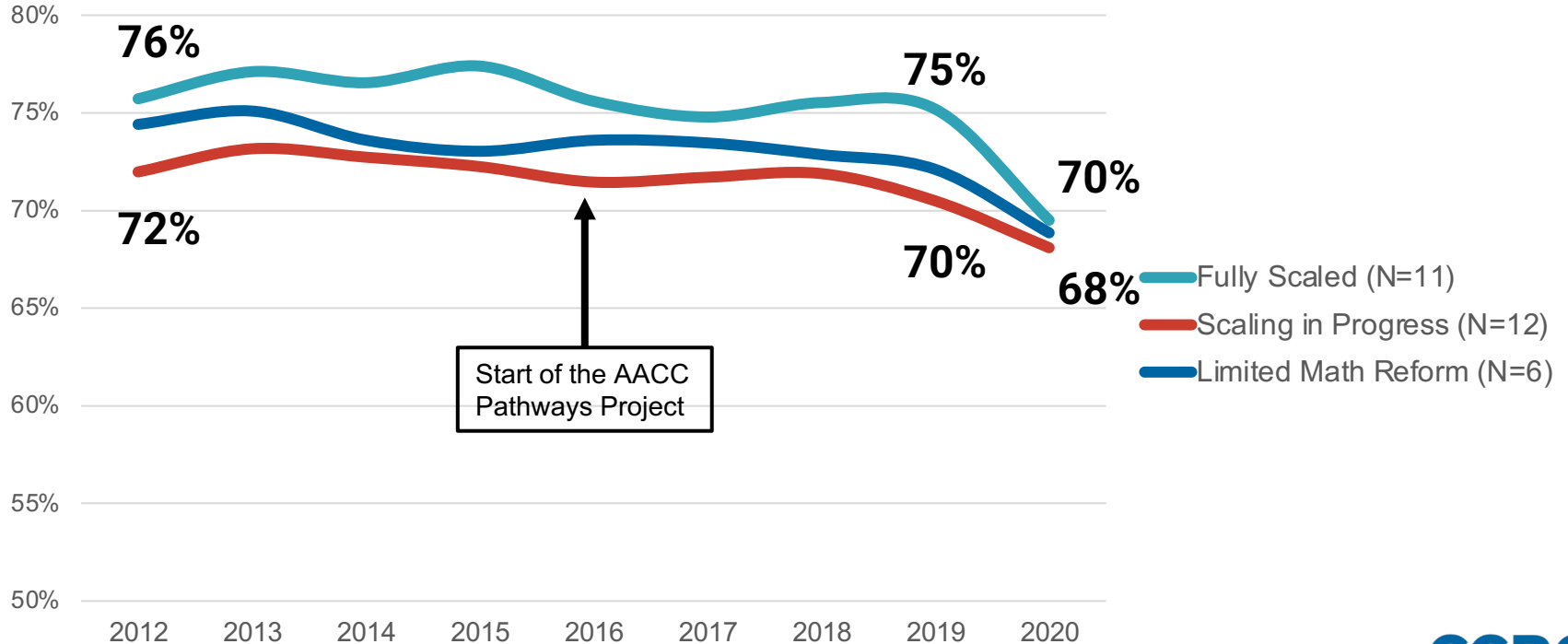
Completion of 24+ college-level credits in year 1



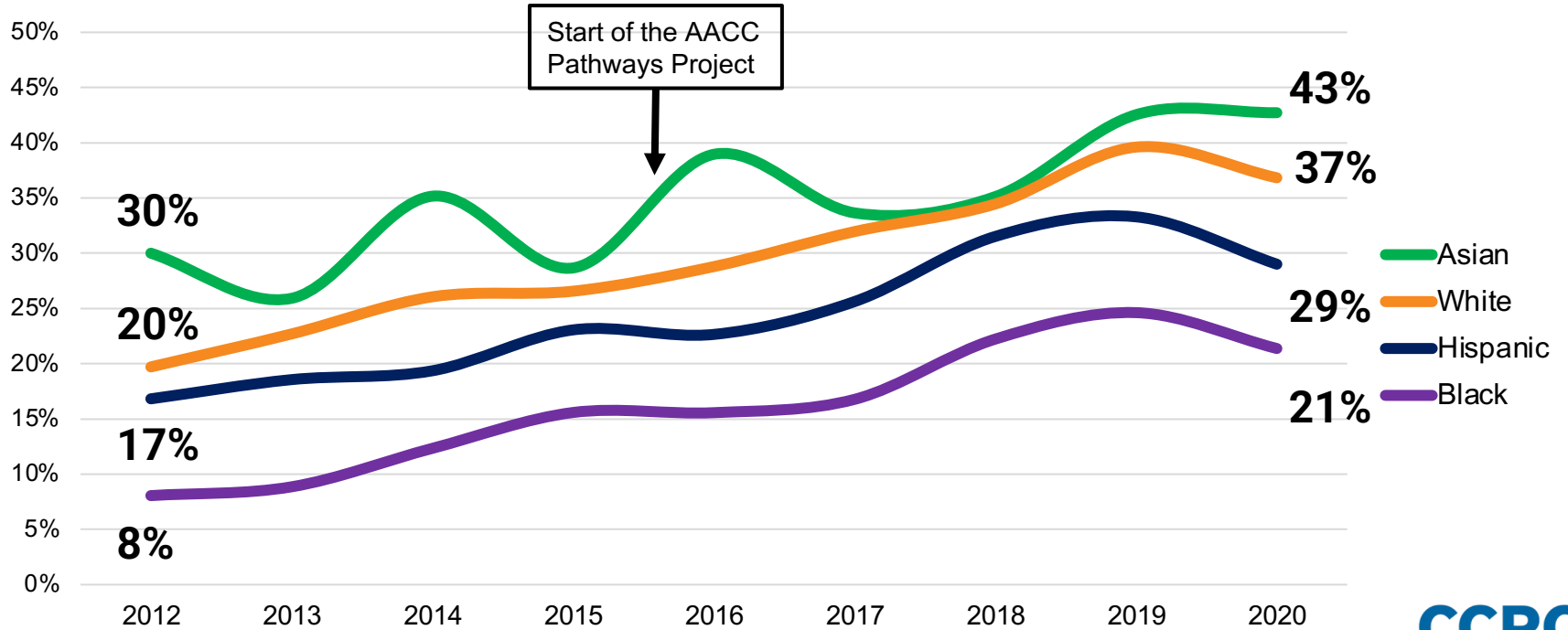
Completion of college-level math in year 1



Persisted From term 1 to term 2



Completion of 12+ college credits by race/ethnicity (fully-scaled colleges only)



NSF evaluation background

- 70 colleges from Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington
- State-sponsored guided pathways institutes and workshops
- 10 years of student data (2010 – 2020)

Statewide pathways launch dates



2014

2016

2018

CCRC

Implementation findings by state

	High Adopters	Medium Adopters	Low Adopters
Ohio	7	9	3
Tennessee	6	7	0
Washington	5	13	12

CCRC

NSF evaluation outcomes

- In Tennessee, we observed positive changes in the following student outcomes:
 - college credits earned in the first year
 - college-level math credits earned in the first year
 - STEM credits earned in the first year
 - fall-to-fall persistence
- No consistently positive trends in Ohio and Washington

NSF Evaluation Findings

Next, we examined whether the adoption of any five practices was associated with increases in student outcomes.

- Focused on medium and high adopters pre- and post- adoption
- We did not find that adopting five practices was associated with increases in student outcomes in any state

NSF evaluation outcomes

Finally, we looked at the effect of specific practices and the combination of multiple guided pathways practices.

- We find positive associations when practices in multiple areas are adopted together.
 - **TN:** combination of practices in areas 1, 2 and 3 are associated with increases in college-level credits, STEM, and math credits earned.
 - **WA:** practices from areas 1, 2, and 3 are associated with increases in math and STEM credits and persistence.
 - **OH:** adoption of multiple area 3 practices is associated with increased in college credits earned.

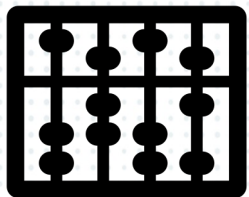
Key takeaways

- Whole-college reform is possible, but it requires 5-7 years and consistent leadership.
- Positive outcomes are associated with the scaled adoption of a complementary set of practices.
- Positive outcomes are associated with the adoption of practices across multiple pathways areas, including area 3 (keeping students on the path).
- We observe improvements in outcomes across student groups, but no closing of the gaps between groups.

Key pathways practices



Facilitate case management advising by field, predictable schedules, and other supports to help students complete their plans on schedule.



Remove the obstacle to student success created by prerequisite remediation, particularly in math.



**Strengthen teaching in
program gateway
courses outside of math
and English composition.**



Build on-ramps to career-path degree programs for K-12 students after high school.

Q&A



Strategies for leading whole-college reforms

Advice on leading pathways reforms

- ❑ Keep the focus on students and get their input on proposed reforms
- ❑ Give faculty an integral role in planning and implementing reforms
- ❑ Share out often about reform plans and progress
- ❑ Be ready for difficult conversations with faculty and staff
- ❑ Develop and support pathways leaders throughout the institution
- ❑ Establish cross-functional teams that include academic and student affairs
- ❑ Be patient and accept that progress may be slow and non-linear

Table Discussion

**What is the
typical
onboarding
experience at
your college?**





Pathways redesign challenge

Challenge 1: What changes in practice have you made in your guided pathways work under the NCII Rural Pathways Project that enrich the experience of students exploring and entering a program of study? How is the experience for incoming students different now than it was for their peers 4 years ago?

Challenge 2: What can you implement by the 2025-2026 academic year to further improve the student onboarding experience?

Thank you!

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