

# How Are Colleges Funding and Sustaining Guided Pathways Reforms?

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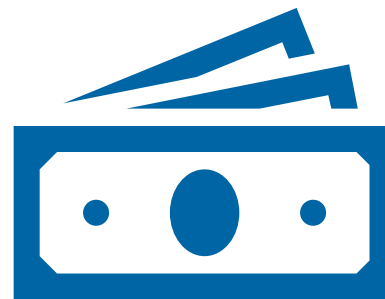
NCII Rural Pathways  
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**What are your concerns  
(big or small!) about  
expanding and  
sustaining this work  
over the next few  
years?**



## Most “funding” comes from reorganizing and reassigning roles and using technology to facilitate collaboration and improve productivity

- GP colleges use grant funding for start-up engagement, planning, and capacity building
- GP colleges rely as much or more on reorganization, reassignment, and reallocation of roles and using technology to improve communication and productivity as on raising new income to fund ongoing costs
- GP colleges redirect resources from numerous small, often disconnected interventions to large-scale changes in roles, practices, and systems focused on helping all students enter and complete high-value programs



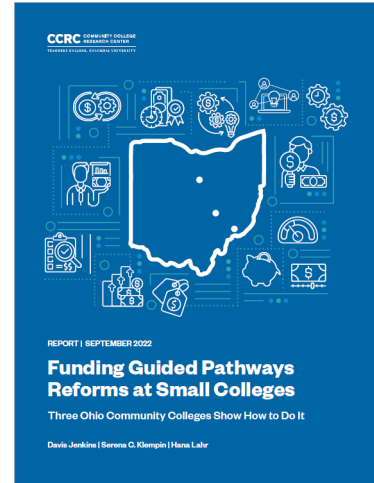
# Scaled reform requires new cc business model and approach to college finance

- GP represents a new community college business model focused on attracting and retaining students with affordable, high-value programs and strong student supports
- GP requires moving to cooperative budgeting that supports cross-department collaboration in recruiting and supporting students into and through high-value programs
- By shifting resources from disconnected interventions and reinvesting gains from efficiency and improved performance, even small colleges can free up considerable resources.



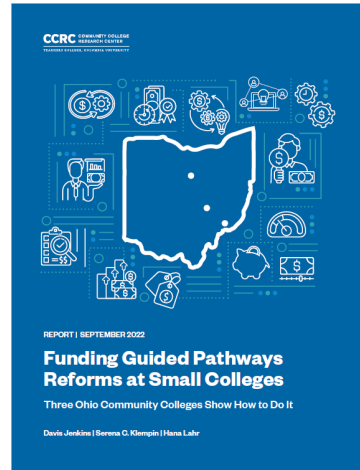
## Three Small Ohio CCs: GP Innovations

- ✓ Improved program mapping to jobs and transfer
- ✓ Strengthened program onboarding
- ✓ Eliminated prerequisite remediation
- ✓ Moved from generalist advising to case-managed advising by field
- ✓ Built onramps to college programs for high school students
- ✓ Launched new programs in high-demand fields delivered for busy working students



## Three Small Ohio CCs: GP Funding Strategies

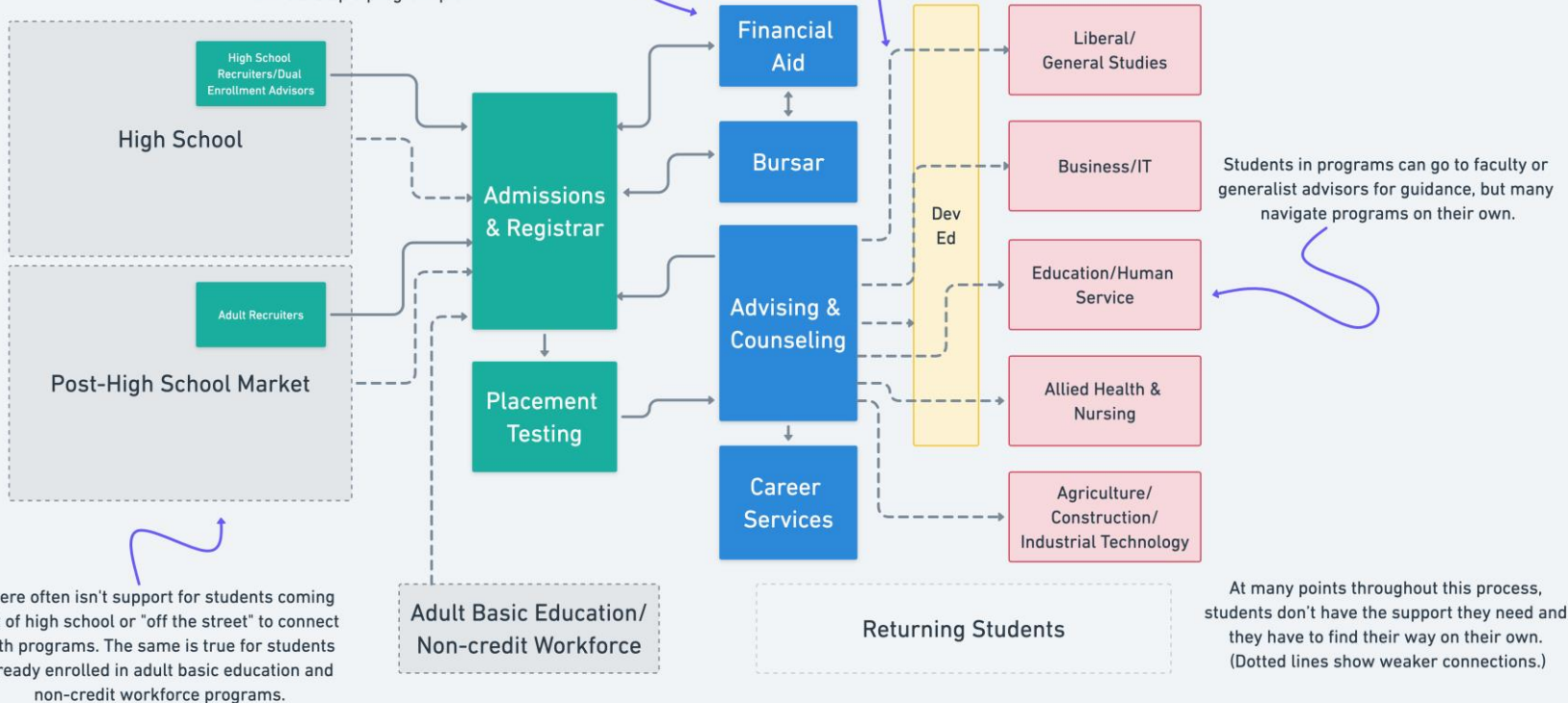
- 1) Redefine roles, cross-train staff to work as teams focused on helping students explore, plan, and complete programs
- 2) Increase instructional productivity
- 3) Use technology to facilitate monitoring of student progress and information sharing
- 4) Invest in strategic training and professional development
- 6) Use grant funding strategically to build capacity, not cover expenses
- 7) Use ROI assessment and institutional and individual metrics to prioritize investments



# The Runaround

The onboarding process is typically focused on orienting students to the college and registering for first-term classes, not on helping students explore and connect with programs and people in fields of interest and develop a program plan.

Onboarding functions have tended to be in separate offices with poor communication and coordination among them.

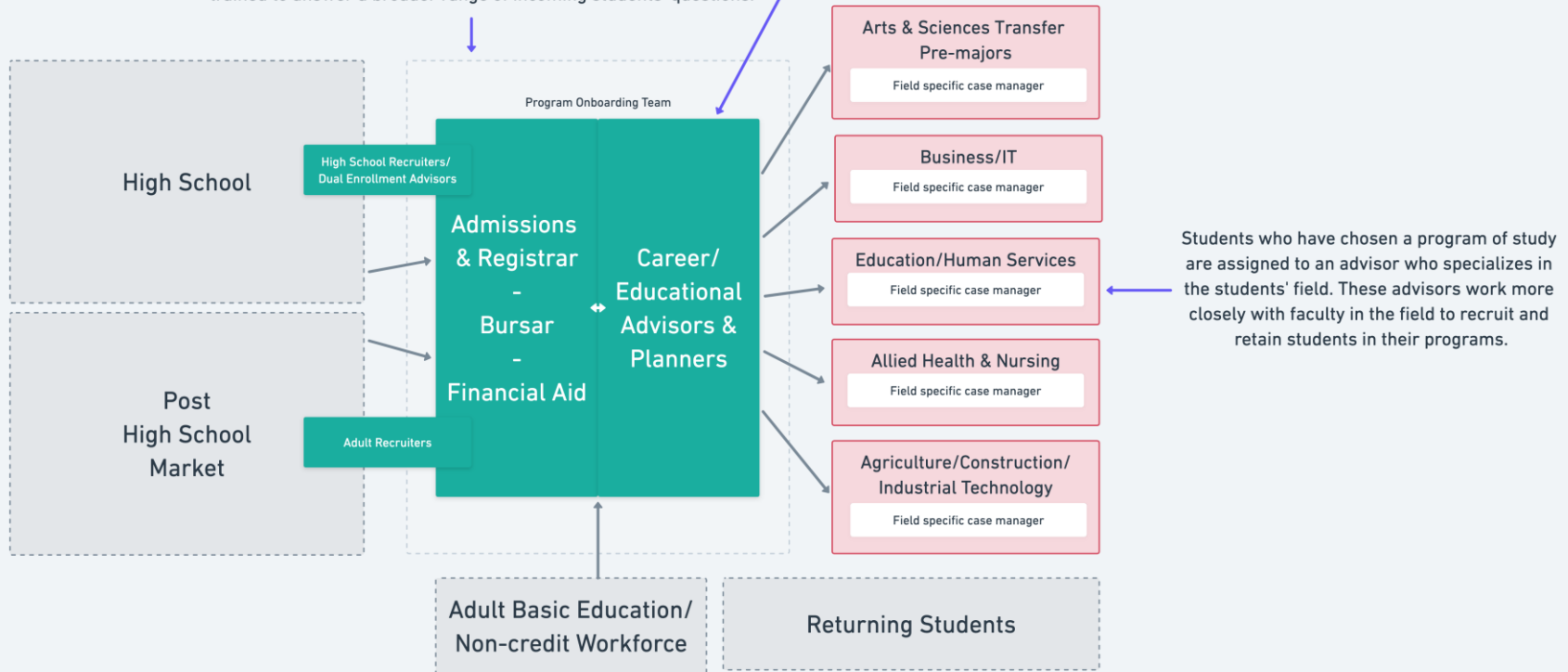




# The Redesign

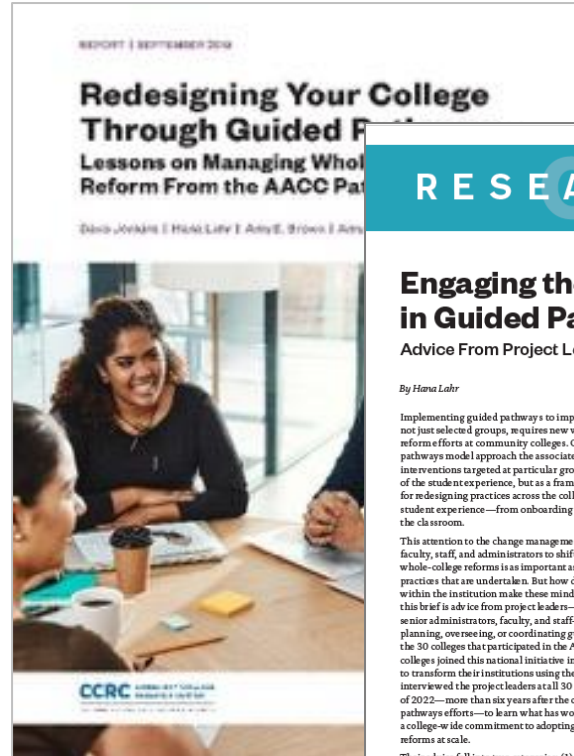
Onboarding functions are consolidated into an in-person/virtual "one-stop" onboarding center and staff from recruitment, admissions, registrar, bursar, financial aid, and advising are cross-trained to answer a broader range of incoming students' questions.

Focus of intake advising is broadened to help students explore interests, connect with people and programs in fields of interest, and develop a full program plan.



**What are some ways that you've better reorganized and aligned your human and technology resources to strengthen your pathways reforms?**

# How can colleges effectively lead, manage and sustain guided pathways reforms?



## RESEARCH BRIEF

Community College Research Center | September 2023

### Engaging the College Community in Guided Pathways Reforms

Advice From Project Leaders at AACC Pathways Colleges

By Hana Lahr

Implementing guided pathways to improve the college experience for all students, not just selected groups, requires new ways of thinking about leading large-scale reform efforts at community colleges. Colleges that have fully embraced the guided pathways model approach the associated reforms not as a set of discrete interventions targeted at particular groups of students or one aspect of the student experience, but as a framework and a set of principles for redesigning practices across the college that enrich the entire student experience—from onboarding to completion—in and beyond the classroom.

This attention to the change management process and to the need for faculty, staff, and administrators to shift their mindsets to embrace whole-college reforms is as important as the specific implementation practices that are undertaken. But how do college leaders help people within the institution make these mindset shifts? What follows in this brief is advice from project leaders—including college presidents, senior administrators, faculty, and staff—who were involved in planning, overseeing, or coordinating guided pathways reforms at the 30 colleges that participated in the AACC Pathways Project. The colleges joined this national initiative in 2016 and have since sought to transform their institutions using the guided pathways model. We interviewed the project leaders at all 30 colleges in spring and summer of 2022—more than six years after the colleges launched their guided pathways efforts—to learn what has worked best for them in building a college-wide commitment to adopting whole-college student success reforms at scale.

Their advice fell into two categories: (1) how to facilitate commitment and engagement in implementing whole-college reforms at the start of the work and (2) how to sustain momentum in the work over several years. Much of this advice reaffirms what CCRC learned through interviews with eight of the colleges in fall 2018—two years into the AACC Pathways Project—about how leaders were managing the guided pathways reforms at their colleges (Jenkins et al., 2019). Four years later, college leaders involved in guided pathways, including some

#### Guided Pathways Change Management Advice From College Reform Leaders

1. Initiate a sense of urgency around how the college has fallen short of helping students achieve their goals.
2. Keep the focus on students, especially those from underserved populations.
3. Listen to students' perspectives and get their input on proposed reforms.
4. Give faculty an integral role in the planning and implementation work.
5. Develop a communications strategy and share out often about reform plans and progress.
6. Be ready for outreach conversations with faculty and staff.
7. Aim for stable presidential and project leadership.
8. Develop and support guided pathways leaders across the institution.
9. Establish cross-functional teams that include academic and student affairs staff.
10. Be patient and accept that progress is often nonlinear.

## Pathways implementation

### Laying the Groundwork for Whole-College Redesign

2+ Years Prior to Pathways

- Build awareness that college creates barriers to student success and that only large-scale, cross-college reforms will remove them
- Build a culture of data-informed practice
- Reorganize decision-making roles and structures to facilitate broad engagement in planning and implementing improvements
- Foster individual accountability for contributing to the college's goals for student success
- Encourage creativity and experimentation in developing strategies to improve student success
- Provide time and support for collaborative planning and professional development

### Introducing Guided Pathways to the College Community

Starting in Year 1

- Make the case for guided pathways by showing how a lack of clear program paths and supports hurts students
- Communicate a guiding vision for the reforms
- Cultivate a shared understanding of guided pathways through college-wide in-person meetings and virtual communication
- Allow time for reflection and deliberation
- Present guided pathways as a framework for aligning and enhancing existing student success efforts

### Supporting Collaborative Planning and Implementation

Starting in Years 2 – 3

- Support cross-functional leadership and collaboration to plan and implement pathways
- Engage faculty and staff from across divisions in mapping program pathways to good jobs and transfer in a major
- Ask staff and faculty to map the entire student experience—both the status quo and what it should be
- Identify and support change leaders throughout the college

### Sustaining and Institutionalizing Student Success Reforms

Starting in Years 4+

- Take time to celebrate wins, reflect on progress, and plan next steps
- Reallocate and align resources to help scale and sustain effective practices
- Ensure that employee hiring, onboarding, and promotion practices support a culture focused on improving success for all students

# How can colleges effectively lead, manage and sustain guided 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

# Thanks!

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