

Bakersfield College's Guided Pathways Implementation

Q&A for Laney College Guided Pathways Newsletter

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How would you describe what Guided Pathways is?

Statewide, educational leaders and practitioners have recognized that we have a completion problem and, worse, we face extreme inequities in completion across the system. Throughout the past few years, we have been able to illuminate these problems with a flood of data – course success, completion rates, transfer velocity, multiple measures of assessment criteria, disproportionate impact, unit attainment, scorecards, dashboards, and the list goes on.

With remarkable access to data, we have been able to recognize a need for a structured, clear framework onto which we can thread the many initiatives and funding sources pouring in from the state to create long-term, sustainable change. For BC, the guided pathways framework has made clarity of outcomes the most critical, unifying element of the work.

To ensure that ***more students complete and/or transfer – on time and without excess units*** – we have intentionally designed a formal structure through which integrated, cross-functional teams of faculty and staff are responsible for advancing four key research-based momentum points:

- Attempting 15+ units in the first term
- Completion of transfer-level math and English in the first year
- Attempting 30+ units in the first year
- Completion of 9 core pathway units in the first year

Ultimately, the guided pathways framework creates relentless clarity of outcomes for colleges, thus mandating institutional redesign to align efforts and resources to improve equitable student completion.

What were the main concerns of your constituency when you first began your Guided Pathways transformation? What were/are some of those specifics?

Initiative fatigue and fear of change were significant challenges in the early guided pathways development at BC. Many faculty expressed concern that the guided pathways model would create overly constricted pathways that denied student choice and undermined the value of a well-rounded liberal arts education. These concerns are not unique to BC; common concerns nationally involve development of meta-majors and program alignment.

Meta-major development: Bakersfield College took an all-inclusive approach in the beginning. We decided it was more beneficial to engage in the conversation and allow fluid movement in the development of meta-majors. This meant that there were departments who chose to reside in more than one meta-major, and we allowed it. Although allowing this meant a lack of clarity for students and incongruence in our data, it also allowed for conversation around program alignment and created a culture of understanding on campus for our meta-majors.

Program Alignment: Program alignment is commonly viewed by many as limiting student options and has been known to be a challenging conversation across the nation during this redesign work. Bakersfield College was not interested in limiting options for students but rather in clarifying options.

Bakersfield College’s success in our GP implementation has not been without its setbacks. However, three key elements have been critical in establishing and maintaining momentum, creating an institutional resiliency in times of difficulty, and forward, action-oriented movement:

- **Embrace iteration:** Having an agile-mindset and a willingness to navigate ambiguity is essential in institutional redesign. BC has had tried on several versions of its meta-majors and Completion Coaching Communities.
- **Reject perfection paralysis:** Do not stifle momentum by following a one-size-fits-all guide to implementation. Identify areas of excitement and energy, and build on those. BC’s design of Completion Community Structure came from input from those closest to the students.
- **Commit to transparency and trust building:** Leadership should communicate often and broadly. Publish drafts and progress of your work and decision-making on an accessible website. BC’s biannual institutes helped the college be transparent and built trust.

Could you tell us about two major Guided Pathways efforts your college implemented? How have those efforts “moved the needle”?

Completion Coaching Communities: Bakersfield College’s GP implementation has required a whole college effort to redesign existing structures in order to advance equitable access and completion. This formal structure includes 10 Completion Coaching Communities, organized by meta-major, with an additional eight Affinity-Based Completion Coaching Communities. Each of the Completion Coaching Communities has a designated Data Coach. This organization of BC faculty, staff, and administrators ensures each student is actively helped to pursue the most direct path to his or her educational goal and illuminates barriers to facilitate a swift and at scale response to remove those barriers.

Bakersfield College’s Completion Coaching Community structure has led to whole-college gains in our GP momentum points in the past 12 months. The college has seen the most substantial gains over the 24-month period the Completion Coaching Communities have been active in cohort management with the support of their Data Coaches.

Learning & Career Pathway	15 units in 1st Term	English	Math
Agriculture, Culinary Arts & Nutrition	10.5% to 14.8%	6.9% to 15.8%	3.4% to 3.2%
Arts, Humanities & Communication	9.2% to 16.5%	15.5% to 28.3%	3.0% to 8.3%
Business	13.5% to 17%	16.4% to 21.9%	7% to 10.8%
Education	4.9% to 14.1%	15.4% to 23.8%	2.8% to 4.6%
Health Sciences	11.4% to 16.1%	17.4% to 26.9%	3.4% to 8.1%
Industrial & Transportation Technology	6% to 12%	3.9% to 11.2%	0.7% to 3.3%
Public Safety	12.1% to 18%	8.1% to 18.2%	0.9% to 4.9%
Science, Technology, Engineering & Math	13.6% to 24.1%	26.2% to 32.6%	13.4% to 23.3%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	10.9% to 18.3%	19.6% to 32.6%	4.4% to 11.7%

Notably, BC has made significant progress in our **equity agenda** using the GP framework:

- Closed transfer-level English completion gap for African American Students: from 14% to 44%. African American now students exceed overall rate of 39% for this metric.

- Closed Latinx Gap in Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) attainment: from 61.6% to 67.4% of all ADT earners in two years
- Improved completion rates for Latinx students from 26.8% to 38.6%
- Improved completion rates for African American students from 32% to 39.8%

Transfer Pathways: With intensive focus on strengthening curricular alignment from high school through the ADT to baccalaureate attainment, BC has leveraged our partnership with California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) to improve regional outcomes.

Through an 18-month task force called the Workgroup to Advance Regional Baccalaureate Attainment, faculty leaders from BC and CSUB developed a joint Memorandum of Understanding to clarify pathways from the community college to the four-year university – to be later called the Finish in 4 project. This work has resulted in at-scale improvements:

- Increased ADT offerings by 900%; BC offers 37 Associate Degrees for Transfer
- Grew ADT awards by 4,700% from 31 awards in 2014-15 to 1,497 in 2018-19
- ADT awards increased 67.08% in one year from 2017-18 to 2019-20
- ADTs accounted for 48% of all BC associates awards in 2018-19
- Average unit accumulation for ADT students is 83 compared to 97 for general AA pathway.
- Increased overall transfer rate in the past four years: 57% to the UC and 43% to the CSU
- Increased transfers to CSU Bakersfield by 36.2% in the last 5 years, with a total of 78.82% of all CSU transfers choosing CSUB. The majority of transfers are Latinx.

4) How have you supported students with undeclared majors using a Guided Pathways framework?

As a part of our work to develop meta-majors, Bakersfield College established a “Personal & Career Exploration” Learning and Career Pathway to capture students who have not yet declared a major. Ultimately, our goal is to work this meta-major out of a role. In other words, we are consistently working to reduce the number of students enrolling in that meta-major by getting them on a path leading to a degree or certificate that matches their interests and abilities. Completion Coaches for this meta-major focus on early interventions to help students identify their interests and declare a program of study. The counselor assigned conducts career interest inventories with the students..

From fall 2015 and fall 2019, we massively reduced the number of first time in college students in the Personal & Career Exploration meta-major from 949 to 280, which indicates the students remaining in this meta-major are declaring their programs of study earlier.

5) What does being a first-year student at Bakersfield Community College entail? How do you meld instruction, student services, support and mentoring together?

Onboarding: BC on-boards new students in six-steps:

1. Application via CCCApply
2. Orientation (in person and online)
3. Placement (automated using transcript and/or CCCApply data)
4. Comprehensive Educational Plan via Starfish or in-person meeting
5. Registration via Banner
6. Bridge to BC: a one-day first year student success course

The Office of Outreach & School Relations coordinates across multiple departments to deliver each of these services in over 55 feeder high schools and at many community organizations. Additionally, the department offers one-day registration events throughout the year during which new students may complete the first five steps in one day.

Bridge to BC: Bridge to BC is an intensive one-day First-Year Experience course for incoming freshmen and returning students. During this interactive day, students engage with faculty one-on-one and in group settings, tour the BC campus with experienced and knowledgeable student mentors, and participate in hands-on activities that help them be successful in college and overcome barriers. In this way, students learn first-hand about the academic and student services resources that BC offers.

Momentum Points: Through the onboarding of new student, BC messages clearly to students the importance of the momentum points. Through the Completion Coaching Community structure, BC faculty and staff strongly encourage first year students to

- Attempt 15+ units in the first term
- Complete of transfer-level math and English in the first year
- Attempt 30+ units in the first year
- Complete of 9 core pathway units in the first year

Completion of Transfer-Level English & Math in the First Year: With evolving changes in placement practices since 2015, BC has achieved significant improvements in completion of transfer-level English and transfer-level math in the first year among our largest disproportionately impacted populations: Latinx and Black students. Since 2015, BC has increased first-time student completion of transfer-level English in the first year by 6.9 percentage points from 15.3% to 22.2%, and completion of transfer-level math by 5.1 percentage points from 4.7% to 9.8%. We have also made major strides for our largest disproportionately impacted student populations.

Latinx Student Completion of Transfer-Level English & Math:

- English: 7.9 percentage point increase – a 79% increase in successful students.
- Math: 5.6 percentage point increase – a 190% increase in successful students.

Black Student Completion of Transfer-Level English & Math:

- English: 6.5 percentage point increase - a 133% increase in successful students.
- Math: 2.7 percentage point increase - a 142% increase in successful students.

Attempting 15+ Units in the First Term and 30+ in the First Year : Since adopting the Guided Pathways framework, BC has altered our messaging to students about what it will take to complete an associate's degree in two years, emphasizing that full-time enrollment is 15 units per term, not 12. Since 2015, BC has increased first-time students who attempt 15+ units in their first term by 5 percentage points from 9.5% to 14.5% since 2015. We have increased first-time students who attempt 30+ units in the first year by 2 percentage points from 9.7 to 11.7% since 2015.

Latinx Student Full-Time Unit Attempts

- 15+ Units: 5.9 percentage point increase – a 95% increase in successful students.
- 30+ Units: 2.7 percentage point increase – a 51% increase in successful students.

Black Student Full-Time Unit Attempts

- 15+ Units: a 0.3 percentage point increase – a 33% increase in successful students.
- 30+ Units: First time Black students have remained steady in this metric. In 2018-19, four BC saw a 17% increase in successful students.