



The Pathways Project

With generous funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the American Association of Community Colleges recently launched a national project focused on building capacity for community colleges to design and implement structured academic and career pathways at scale, for all of their students. Building on emerging research and experience in the field, the project reflects AACC's commitments to follow through on recommendations set forth in the 2012 report of the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, Reclaiming the American Dream, and the 2014 implementation guide, Empowering Community Colleges to Build the Nation's Future.



The Pathways Project is a resource of the AACC

AACC will serve as the lead organization and fiscal agent for the multi-year grant.

Thirty diverse institutions from seventeen states have been selected to participate in intensive Pathways Project work over the next three years. The selection criteria were intentionally rigorous, as the project is designed to help colleges already progressing on a student success agenda to advance that work to the next level.

The Pathways Project provides a continuously expanding collection of resources for colleges — selected readings, tools for pathways design and implementation, key exercises for collaborative work by college groups, and links to other resources and organizations.



1100 N. Grand Ave., Walnut, CA 91789
www.mtsac.edu

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Mt. SAC in participation with aacc pathways project American Association of Community Colleges



guiding students to success



The Pathways Project encourages our college to build and develop those connections in support of our students, so that Freshman-now-Senior English student can say,

“Mt. San Antonio College prepared me for what is to come in my future world!”





As a comprehensive reimagining of the student experience, it also requires commitment, creativity, and innovation from all on campus – faculty, staff, and managers – to change the way students experience the college.



We frequently discuss whether students are prepared for college, but the Pathways Project asks us to evaluate whether the college is prepared for our students. We have already made great progress in strengthening the linkages between Student Services and Instruction. The connections among learning, learning support, and achievement of educational goals are more apparent than ever.

aacc pathways project

American Association
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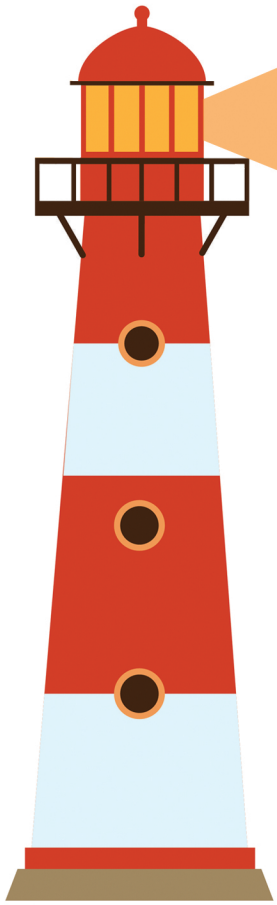
SUCCESS!



The vision of guided pathways is not simple or easy to achieve. It requires us to take what we know about student success, student behavior, learning theory, and student support strategies and integrate them into a coherent, directive program that guides and supports students throughout their college experience until they reach their goals.

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Our vision is that students who test into developmental education will move to contextualized developmental pathways, focused on their career or academic area of interest.

Critical interventions will be developed to ensure developmental level students receive necessary support to advance successfully to college-level work. Students will learn the skills they need to succeed in college courses without losing sight of the path towards their chosen careers.

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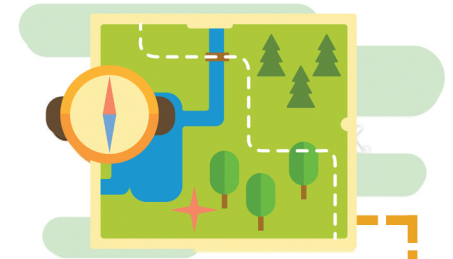
Case Statement

A first semester community college student, responding to a Freshman English essay question, wrote

“High schools do not properly prepare students for what is to come in the college world.”

“When we were in high school, we were taught how to do tasks step-by-step, but once we get to college, things are thrown at us, and we are expected to figure everything out!” Mt. San Antonio College will provide students clearly marked pathways and the decision-making tools for students to start and successfully finish their journey to a college degree.

As perceived by that Freshman English student and many others, too many choices lead to indecision and stalled forward movement. The “cafeteria model” of selecting courses and services at random until



a student finds their way through a program is no longer tenable. Clear, well-articulated pathways provide a foundation that enables students to make more informed choices and guide them to achieve their goals. Our role is to provide the structure of the pathways and equip and empower our students to make those good choices.

The Pathways Project allows us to build on the great work we have already begun at Mt. SAC. The Student Success and Support Program and our Student Equity Plan have established a powerful direction to support students in new ways. Programs such as Bridge, Pathways to Transfer, EOPS, Arise, and others contribute to student achievement daily. The Pathways Project gives us an opportunity to take what is working in these powerful student interventions and scale them up to impact all our students.

So...where do we start?

Again learning from our Freshman English student, we start with a student's first experience on campus—on-boarding. Our students already receive orientation, assessment, advising, and initial educational planning services as they matriculate into college.

This first step operationalizes our responsibility to move students into an initial educational path.

To make that an informed choice, we must provide greater guidance to students as they weigh their career interests and options. Mt. SAC will identify a number of career clusters from which students will select, each leading to a program of study. The college will define the clusters over this next year, anticipating that they may include STEM, Business, Arts, Helping Professions, CTE, and Health Professions. Our commitment is to guide, or MAP, students into a structured sequence of courses that moves them towards their goal. All along their journey, support services will be integrated into the programs of study—bringing the support right into the classroom instead of expecting students to choose—and find—the right support service on campus.



The Pathways Project will also require us to critically examine developmental education.

Placement data reveals that 52% of students place into developmental English and 60% into developmental Math. Of those, two-year transfer level completion rates are 7% for Math and 17% for English. An average student takes six years to complete a degree or certificate. Research repeatedly demonstrates that longer completion times mean a greater chance of dropping out.