Leading Guided Pathways Reform: The Role of the Board

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The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
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Who We Are

The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership in ways that help institutions of higher education make the choices that matter most to improving student outcomes in four areas:

1. **Completion**
2. **Equity**
3. **Labor Market**
4. **Learning**
Our Work

Eight major initiatives, including:

- Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence
- Frontier Set
- Presidential Fellowship

- American Talent Initiative
- Tackling Transfer
- AACC Pathways Project partner
Why Guided Pathways?

Clarify paths to student end goals

Help students choose and enter a path

Help students stay on their path

Ensure student learning
California: Vision for Success

1. Over five years, increase by at least 20 percent the number of CCC students annually who acquire associates degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.

2. Over five years, increase by 35 percent the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU.

3. Over five years, decrease the average number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate’s degrees.

4. Over five years, increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study.

5. Reduce equity gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups.

6. Over five years, reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults.
Guided Pathways is the **strategy** to support the system-wide **goals**.
Why Guided Pathways?

Over five years, increase by at least 20 percent the number of CCC students annually who acquire associates degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.

- Do all pathways lead to an in-demand job with good wages (or transfer)?
- Are students staying on their pathways and completing?
Why Guided Pathways?

Over five years, increase by 35 percent the number of CCC students **transferring annually** to a UC or CSU.

- Are pathways aligned with transfer destinations?
- Are students staying on their pathways and transferring to a UC or CSU?
- Are students being successful after transfer?
Why Guided Pathways?

Over five years, decrease the **average number of units accumulated** by CCC students earning associate’s degrees.

- Are pathways being designed to eliminate excess credit accumulation?
- Are students being advised well during onboarding so that they choose a path that is aligned to their goals and are less likely to change pathways?
Why Guided Pathways?

Over five years, increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study.

- Do all pathways lead to an in-demand job with good wages?
- Are students learning what they need to learn in order to be employable and successful in the workforce?
Why Guided Pathways?

Reduce equity gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among **traditionally underrepresented student groups**.

- Are students of color/low-income students choosing pathways that lead to transfer/good jobs?
- Is developmental education enabling rapid/equitable entry into a pathway?
Why Guided Pathways?

Over five years, reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults.

- Are those colleges’ pathways resulting in transfer/BA attainment and/or good jobs?
- Are students staying on their pathways and graduating?
Guided Pathways is the **strategy** to support the system-wide **goals**.

Presidents need **board support** to make this a reality.
Trustee involvement in student success reform: Why is it essential?

- Continuation of student success agenda if the president changes institutions or retires
- Sustainability of reform even through financial crisis
- Board comprehension of the “why,” “what,” and “how” of reform when allocating and reallocating resources
Understand the “why”

• Understand why guided pathways are being implemented:
  • Community data (educational attainment, high-need jobs, etc.)
  • Institutional student success data
  • Student voice
Understand the “what” and “how”

• Know enough about the “what” and “how” of guided pathways implementation to be able to:
  • Respond to stakeholders upset by the systemic change
  • Appropriately allocate and reallocate resources to support implementation (for example, funds for additional advisers)
  • Change policies when needed (for example, changing front-door policies)
  • Support the college in continuing implementation when there is presidential turnover
• Conversation between board and president about annual goals
• Embed goals in evaluation
• Review attainment of goals with board as part of evaluation

President & Senior Team

Set student success goals
Standardize and share data reports
Align president’s evaluation with organizational mission
Hiring and Transition

Does the new president being hired have the capacities needed to enact institution-wide reform (like guided pathways implementation)?

Has the board built sufficient support into the presidential transition process?
Hiring and Transition

• Tools to utilize when there is retirement or turnover
Our Work: *Crisis and Opportunity*

In partnership with Achieving the Dream, Aspen explored three core questions:

• What are the qualities of excellent community college presidents?

• What qualities do trustees value in hiring?

• What skills do education and professional development programs emphasize?
Our Work: Hiring Exceptional Community College Presidents

Ten qualities of exceptional presidents
The Ten Qualities of Exceptional Presidents

- Committed to Student Success
- Takes Strategic Risks
- Builds Strong Teams
- Establishes Urgency
- Plans Lasting Internal Change
- Results-Oriented
- Communicates Effectively
- Financial and Operational Ability
- Entrepreneurial Fundraiser
- Develops Effective External Partnerships
Hiring an Exceptional President

Set Strategic Priorities & Hiring Criteria

Recruit Candidates

Assess Candidates

Confirm the Choice

Tool #1
Align Priorities to Hiring Criteria

Tool #2
Announce Job

Tool #3
Writing Exercise

Tool #4
Interview Questions

Tool #5
Evaluation Rubric

Tool #6
Assessment Aggregation

Tool #7
Reference Checks
• Conversation between board and president about annual goals
• Embed goals in evaluation
• Review attainment of goals with board as part of evaluation

President & Senior Team

Set student success goals
Standardize and share data reports
Align president’s evaluation with organizational mission
How can boards engage in and support institution-wide reform?

- Have conversations with the president about annual institutional goals.
How can boards engage in and support institution-wide reform?

- Have conversations with the president about annual institutional goals.
- Embed goals in the presidential evaluation.

- Long-term goals: completion and post-graduation success.
- Early indicators of progress to goals: college-level Math and English completion in the first year, number of students on pathways.
- Operational goals: finance, retention, student to advisor ratio.
How can boards engage in and support institution-wide reform?

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<td>• Have conversations with the president about annual institutional goals.</td>
<td>• Focus on a few high level metrics.</td>
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<td>• Embed goals in the presidential evaluation.</td>
<td>• Consider progress to goals over time.</td>
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<td>• Review attainment of goals with the president as part of the annual evaluation.</td>
<td>• Set goals for the next year.</td>
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• Conversation between board and president about annual goals
• Embed goals in evaluation
• Review attainment of goals with board as part of evaluation

Set student success goals

Standardize and share data reports

Align president’s evaluation with organizational mission
Looking at Data: The Board’s Role

• What routines can be used for data examination in partnership with the president?
• Are your board committees actually set up to enable real, deep, consideration of these data? If not, what can be streamlined to make space for this work?
• What might be the result of this kind of data sharing and examination?
  • Reallocation of resources
  • Policy decisions
Why might reforms fail at the institutional level or state level?

What actions can the board take to pre-empt these potential roadblocks?
California: Vision for Success

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With one or two people sitting close by, choose one of the six goals from the statewide Vision for Success that best aligns with your college’s current work and priorities.

Strategy – Guided Pathways

- Build clear pathways
- Get students on a pathway
- Help students stay on the pathway
- Ensure students are learning

- Take 30 minutes with your partner or small group. Assume that, by 2022, the state has failed to achieve that goal.
- Identify the likely major causes of that “mortality.”
- What specifically might happen at your college that could derail the effort? Consider specifically the role of successful implementation of guided pathways as part of the strategy for reaching your chosen goal.
- For each cause, what actions can trustees and presidents take to pre-empt the identified roadblocks to success? If the board fails to act, what might happen?
Debrief:

What reflections do you have about the role of the board in achieving these goals? In using guided pathways implementation as a strategy?
Pay attention to why reforms fail.

Reasons Initiatives Fail

People blame the student.

What can be done?

Repeatedly activate the student voice.

What specifically can trustees do?
Pay attention to why reforms fail.

**Reasons Initiatives Fail**

People don’t believe this is going to get done—they think it will “blow over” and the college or state will move on to the next thing.

**What can be done?**

Persistently repeat the message about *why and what*, using every possible vehicle.

**What specifically can trustees do?**
Reasons Initiatives Fail

The college is suffering from a failure to focus and from initiative fatigue.

What can be done?

Maintain discipline for multiple years before taking on major new state-wide initiatives.

What specifically can trustees do?

Pay attention to why reforms fail.
Pay attention to why reforms fail.

Reasons Initiatives Fail

The college fails to engage external partners to ensure equitable access and success.

What can be done?

Collect and discuss data on
- Transfer and workforce outcomes
- Community dynamics

Consider whether adequate partnerships exist: key universities, employers, K-12, CBOs.

What specifically can trustees do?
Pay attention to why reforms fail.

Reasons Initiatives Fail

Leadership commitment and capacity is lacking after transitions.

What can be done?

Use student success-oriented hiring tools to get the right people into presidencies.

What specifically can trustees do?
Pay attention to why reforms fail.

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<th>What can be done</th>
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<td>Lack of infrastructure to know what is working and what isn’t. Goals and measurements are not defined clearly at the outset; outcomes are not being regularly tracked.</td>
<td>• Use common data definitions and collect baseline data.</td>
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<td>• Set a schedule for considering outcomes, setting the conditions for honest reflection.</td>
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<td>• Reflect institutional goals in presidential evaluation.</td>
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What specifically can trustees do?
Next steps:

What follow-up and support do boards need to do their part to enable guided pathways reforms to succeed?
THANK YOU

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