



Embedding Career Learning Across the Curriculum

The Ethnographies of Work Initiative at
Bunker Hill Community College

Acknowledgments

JFF thanks Katie Bayerl, our writer/consultant, and the thoughtful and creative faculty, students, and administrators at Bunker Hill Community College who have built the Ethnographies of Work course and the broader career navigation strategy, and have been generous with the time it's taken to get this story told.

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Contents

Introduction	4
National Need: Equitable, Accessible Career Navigation in Two-Year Colleges.....	6
Local Innovation: Bunker Hill Community College Identifies a Scalable Career Navigation Solution.....	9
Bunker Hill’s EoW Design: A “Career Everywhere” Adaptation.....	13
Implementation Considerations: Capacity, Rollout, and Institutional Support	22
Impact: Early Results and Reflections	26
Conclusion: A Model Worth Watching	31
Appendix A	32
Appendix B	33
Appendix C	35
Appendix D	37
Endnotes.....	39

Introduction

How can two-year colleges ensure that *all* students can access quality career navigation opportunities that inform their studies and position them for meaningful, family-sustaining work? That is the challenge being addressed at Boston's Bunker Hill Community College through a college-wide initiative known as Ethnographies of Work (EoW). The initiative was inspired by a related innovation at Guttman College, City University of New York, adapted to Bunker Hill's student population and institutional structure, and is currently being implemented in more than 60 courses serving approximately 900 students.

Through EoW, the Bunker Hill faculty has embedded career exploration and planning directly into students' core coursework, beginning with first-year seminars. This approach ensures that every incoming student has at least one opportunity, eventually multiple, to explore their vocational interests and concepts related to career mobility as a part of their curriculum.

“ *Ethnographies of Work is breaching the boundary between career services and what happens in the classroom. It is an academic way of doing student development that is way more meaningful than doing a careers piece at the end.*

Pam Eddinger, president, Bunker Hill Community College



Bunker Hill Community College

ETHNOGRAPHIES OF WORK INITIATIVE

At a Glance

50 Faculty | 61 Courses | ~900 Students

First-Year Seminar: Required college prep and career exploration seminar for all liberal arts majors and others engaged in Learning Communities. Focus: Explore career interests, identify personal strengths and social capital, conduct a preliminary investigation of a promising career path (e.g., interview, workplace observation, or career advising session).

Embedded Disciplinary Courses: Students explore themes of work, equity, and social mobility more deeply through the lens of specific disciplines, while reflecting on personal strengths and goals.

Open-Invitation Professional Learning: All faculty are invited to join annual learning cohorts where they become acquainted with Ethnographies of Work (EoW) and redesign an assignment or course module, integrating EoW concepts.

Integrated Career Services: Staff from the Division of Workforce Development provide classroom presentations, one-on-one career advising sessions, and support to faculty in integrating labor market information and career navigation tools into coursework.

Long-Term Vision: All students have three or more EoW career exploration touch points along their academic journey: a first-year seminar, a mid-path reflection, and a capstone course.

National Need: Equitable, Accessible Career Navigation in Two-Year Colleges

Career navigation is increasingly viewed as a critical but under-addressed need in community college settings. Career navigation goes beyond typical career advising to expand students' knowledge of the labor market, their own interests, and the skills required to secure desirable jobs and navigate multiple workplaces and career transitions over their lifetime. Policymakers, college administrators, and educators hypothesize that more universal and consistent access to career navigation—beginning early in students' college career—is a means to both promote stronger engagement and persistence in college coursework and to ensure graduates develop the skills, the social capital, and the ability to self-advocate needed to thrive in the job market. The focus on career navigation is an acknowledgment that the end goal of college is a career, not just the degree itself.



High-Quality Career Navigation: A Definition¹



Quality career navigation systems help students make informed, financially sound, and sustainable education and career choices. They leverage expertise of educators, career advisors, employers, and others—often in combination with technology—to guide students to explore their unique vocational interests and aptitudes, explore related high-demand career opportunities, and identify the skills and training required to pursue those careers. Career navigation systems also support learners in building professional networks and the skills and knowledge they need to self-advocate, identify good jobs and employers, and overcome barriers based on race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background.

Best Practices in Career Navigation Systems

- Learner-centered and individualized
- User-friendly, innovative, and interactive
- Equity-driven and supportive of individual choice and agency
- Aligned with current regional labor market needs
- Deliberately cultivates navigational skills and habits, including a growth mindset, decision-making, critical thinking, goal setting, and network building

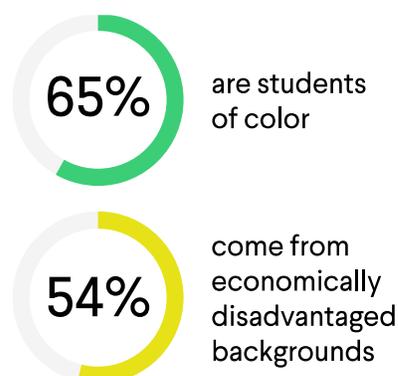
Newly matriculated community college students receive a flood of information about skills for college success, including how to choose a major, at the start of their program. Rarely, though, do they receive the time or support needed to make sense of the information or apply it to their career goals. They are unlikely to receive additional career navigation support until just before graduation when they may meet with a career advisor to prepare for their job search. Participation in pre-graduation career advising occurs outside of the regular curriculum and course schedule. This light-touch approach to career advising is both inadequate and inequitable, typically carried out by an underfunded, understaffed office of a few professionals. Pre-graduation career sessions happen too late to inform students' course selection, career skills development, or participation in network-building opportunities, such as internships or job shadows. And many students never get to this point at all; with public two-year college completion rates hovering under 30% nationally,² too few students who begin a two-year degree program ever reach the point where career advising is offered.

Inadequate career navigation in community colleges exacerbates broader inequities in educational and career access. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students; first-generation college goers; and students experiencing poverty are the least likely to have access to timely and comprehensive career guidance in K–12 education or through their personal networks and, as a result, may pursue occupations that pay low wages without adequate knowledge about their options or make default decisions that limit their long-term prospects for advancement.³ Community college students who select general education or a liberal arts major as a default major because they intend to transfer are another group that may experience disproportionate consequences of an inadequate career navigation system. Only about 15% of community college students who intend to seek a bachelor of arts actually earn one,⁴ and unlike students who choose a two-year technical program or pathway with a specific, career-aligned trajectory, these students are the least likely to access important career-building experiences, like internships, workplace visits, and job fairs.

If the two-year degree is to be a more reliable route to economic security, colleges need to do a better and more systematic job of preparing students for work. To date, few examples demonstrate how community colleges can integrate career study institution-wide; a major shortage of qualified career coaches and counselors exacerbates the challenge in many settings. This is why Bunker Hill's *Ethnographies of Work* approach—which integrates career learning directly into the curriculum under the leadership of faculty—offers a promising solution for providing more equitable and meaningful career navigation for all students.

Local Innovation: Bunker Hill Community College Identifies a Scalable Career Navigation Solution

A mid-sized urban institution with campuses in Boston and Chelsea, Massachusetts, Bunker Hill Community College serves a highly diverse population of 16,000 students: 54% come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and 65% are students of color. A significant portion of Bunker Hill students are first-generation immigrants, representing more than 550 nations of origin, and 29% of Bunker Hill students identify as Latinx.⁵ (Bunker Hill is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution.) Bunker Hill serves a large number of nontraditional college students (average age 26); four in five students are employed, and three in five are parents—factors that can complicate the path to a degree and require flexibility and accessibility in program design.



Four in five students are employed



Three in five students are parents

Like most community college students, Bunker Hill students enroll with a drive to better themselves and their work prospects, and the college has received considerable national attention for several initiatives to improve student success rates. These include the college's Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth, which works to provide a student-friendly learning environment. A successful and growing Learn and Earn program provides internships and other co-curricular supports via a robust network of workforce and community partners. The college has also invested in the Learning Communities model through which incoming students co-enroll in two or more courses organized around a theme of interest, such as human rights or sustainability. This cohort model has proven effective in improving persistence and success rates in multiple national studies.⁶

A core component of Bunker Hill's Learning Communities is a first-year seminar that engages students in thematic study designed to build foundational academic habits (e.g., communication, inquiry, teamwork) that prepare them for success in college and beyond. The Office of Learning Communities team made career exploration an expected student learning outcome in 2013, hypothesizing that students who clarified their career goals early in their college experience would select courses more strategically and be more likely to persist to a degree and secure desirable jobs. The course's career exploration component was largely aspirational at first; seminar faculty selected from available career exploration tools and developed one-off assignments through which students completed career interest surveys and the like. Faculty and administrators were not satisfied with the light-touch approach and were actively seeking a more robust way to introduce career exploration to incoming students. Arlene Vallie, who served as the director of Learning Communities at the time (and now is dean of academic affairs, research, assessment and planning), says, "We had started having internal conversations, thinking about how to better support *all* of our students because we were hearing about challenges that students were having in the workplace." The associate provost tasked Vallie and her team with piloting a different kind of experience for first-year students via the Learning Communities structure.

A turning point came in the spring of 2018, when Bunker Hill's president, Pam Eddinger, in an informal conversation with Nancy Hoffman of Jobs for the Future, learned of an initiative developed at Guttman Community College that embedded the study of "vocation" into a first-year course they called Ethnographies of Work (EoW). Eddinger recalls telling Hoffman that, while she was proud of Bunker Hill's Learn and Earn program, there was no way to provide work-based learning experiences for all 16,000 students. Hoffman suggested that Guttman College's model could offer a way to make career learning more broadly accessible.

First launched in 2011, Guttman's EoW is a yearlong social science course in which students study theories of work and visit a range of worksites, using the lens of anthropology to carry out ethnographic observations of each site and to reflect on the alignment with their own vocational values and aspirations. The required first-year course gives students both a theoretical and applied context for exploring their career interests by putting the subject of "work" at the center of learning. Through a combination of individualized reflection and work-based experience, the course helps students identify and begin to build a pathway toward a "vocation" of their choosing.⁷





In June 2018, Guttman invited teams from other colleges to visit the campus and learn from EoW faculty and students. At the urging of Eddinger and James Caniff, the vice president for academic affairs and student services, Vallie assembled a team of eight faculty and administrators to attend the one-day seminar. Vallie says, “We were just blown away with the thinking behind it, but also what was appealing for us was the identification of some of the core pieces of EoW that already existed at Bunker Hill.”

In particular, the group was struck by the thoughtful integration of academic study with career services and experiential learning. This wasn’t another isolated career exploration activity but would allow Bunker Hill faculty to embed meaningful career exploration into existing courses, while remaining true to their academic disciplines and course themes. Sociology professor Carlos Maynard was impressed by the use of theoretical frameworks to anchor students’ worksite experiences: “As a sociologist, I gravitate towards theory as a way of understanding the social world. So that was another selling point for me.”

Vallie was also excited to see how Guttman invited career advisors and success coaches into the classroom. Bunker Hill was already integrating academic coaches into first-year seminars and had a strong career services team in place, connected with a large slate of employer partners. EoW presented a way to leverage the college’s existing career navigation resources in a more accessible format for students. “We really just had to think of a way to build on what we already had,” Vallie says.

Importantly, in the model observed at Guttman, students were largely young, recent high school graduates and just beginning their working lives. Few had families or the years of work experience typical of Bunker Hill students. An adaptation of the Guttman model at Bunker Hill could leverage students’ own work experience as a subject of study. Rather than having a stand-alone social science course as at Guttman, career exploration would be embedded into the general education curriculum. This would be a more practical and equitable approach to providing work-based learning for Bunker Hill’s more typical community college population. “It doesn’t make sense to say quit your job, abandon family obligations, and go get experience as an intern,” explains Eddinger. “Our students are already working. We need to leverage what they’re doing and layer in the competencies we want them to get—a way to reflect about what is important about their experience in their journey toward a career.”

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Upon returning from New York, the Bunker Hill team discussed how they could extend Guttman’s approach, carrying the EoW concept across multiple disciplines and engaging the college’s most important resource: its faculty. As a first step, the three faculty who had visited Guttman began discussing how they could integrate career exploration and knowledge in their own courses: Professor Aurora Bautista in her first-year Learning Communities Seminar as well as Cultural Anthropology, Professors Carlos Maynard and Alison Ruch into their introductory courses in English and Sociology. As they prepared to pilot EoW in their own classrooms, they invited Guttman faculty to visit Bunker Hill that summer so they and their peers could learn more.

Bunker Hill's EoW Design: A “Career Everywhere” Adaptation

Since the first visit to Guttman College in 2018, Bunker Hill faculty and staff have adapted and expanded the original Ethnographies of Work design to meet the needs of their students and institution. As of fall 2022, more than 60 Bunker Hill faculty (including full-time and adjunct) are teaching courses with an EoW component, with the three original faculty serving as the initiative's co-coordinators.

Eddinger attributes the rapid uptake to the early decision to make EoW voluntary and faculty-led. Rather than establish a new course (a cumbersome process made impractical by the lack of unassigned credits in most programs) or mandate the use of EoW methods across a department or cluster of courses (tricky in a culture that values academic freedom), the Bunker Hill EoW team opted to make the initiative as inclusive and flexible as possible. This decision would also ensure that EoW didn't become siloed. Each summer, they have issued an open invitation to Bunker Hill faculty to participate in baseline professional development in EoW methods, with increasingly larger cohorts responding. “We invited any faculty member who was interested,” Vallie explains, “...to see the points of intersection that already exist, to explore where in their curriculum EoW can actually happen, and to give them time to redesign their curriculum...embedding career exploration into their content.”

The rollout to this point has been what Vallie describes as “organic.” Faculty are encouraged to interpret EoW within the lens of their own disciplines, innovate, and embed EoW ideas where they make the most sense. They may decide to reframe a single assignment or course module around one of the shared EoW concepts (see [Appendix B](#)), or they might thread EoW concepts and assignments across an entire semester.

While EoW participation is open to all, in 2022 Vallie and the faculty coordinators focused on recruiting faculty from within the college's Learning Communities' structure, offering EoW as a pedagogical tool they can use to meaningfully address the career exploration learning outcome that all Learning Communities faculty are required to meet in first-year seminars. Embedding EoW within the Learning Communities ensures that the initiative reaches the largest possible number of students early in their college experience.

Bunker Hill’s highly flexible, “many flowers bloom” approach to scaling EoW has led, as might be expected, to a wide range of approaches to implementation. Depth of integration varies considerably, and the most committed faculty are constantly retooling their approach as they discover new resources or see what works best for their students. It is worth noting that the first three EoW faculty cohorts launched their revised courses remotely during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Some classes remain remote as of fall 2022.) Many of the original assignments were thus tailored to make the most of online career navigation tools and virtual learning formats and will likely evolve in time.

While Bunker Hill’s EoW courses are varied, what they share is a common theoretical framing of work and economic mobility that emphasizes student exploration of their own assets (social capital, cultural capital, aspirations, agency) and explorations of diversity, equity, and social mobility in the workforce. (See [Appendix B.](#))

The initiative is still very much in development and likely to evolve in the coming years. In the following sections, we describe two types of courses that are currently integrating EoW: first-year seminars and embedded discipline-based courses.

	# Faculty	# Courses	# Students
Cohort 1: Fall 2020	8	8	~100
Cohort 2: Spring 2021	24	38	554
Cohort 3: Fall 2021	36	47	880
Cohort 4: Fall 2022 <i>Focus: First-year seminars</i>	50	61	~900

EoW Student Learning Outcomes⁸

(based on Bunker Hill's Institutional Learning Outcomes, see [Appendix A](#))



Inquire

Engage in career exploration through an equity lens by analyzing the interrelationship between social mobility and work.



Communicate

Showcase representations of theories of work, equity, and social mobility



Act

Participate in field experience, informational interviews, job shadows, or internship experiences that are informed by equity, social mobility, and work issues.



Grow

Engage in collaborative teamwork to develop and present observations of workplace experiences to stakeholders that are informed by equity, social mobility, and work issues.

EoW in the First-Year Seminar

The Humanities 120 seminar Self, Culture, and Society engages all incoming liberal arts majors in guided self-reflection and career exploration. Previously named Learning Communities Seminar 101, a version of the course has been in place for more than a decade. In 2020, the course was relaunched as Humanities 120 to better align with the needs of Bunker Hill's largest cohort—liberal arts majors—and to ensure credit transferability. (LCS 101 suffered from declining enrollments because many four-year colleges won't accept credits that aren't aligned with a specific academic discipline.) Today, every student enrolled in an associate of arts degree program or another program using the Learning Communities structure must take Humanities 120 or an equivalent gateway seminar (e.g., Business 101, Creative Writing 1) that addresses similar learning outcomes within specific majors.

Students taking Humanities 120 choose from a range of seminar sections based on their interests. Each section is taught by a humanities or social science faculty member who applies the tools of their discipline (e.g., history, sociology) to the shared theme. So, for example, a section of Humanities 120 taught by an anthropology professor elaborates on the “self, culture, society” theme as Finding Your Future by Peering into the Past.

In the past, LCS 101 instructors typically addressed the career exploration outcome by asking students to complete an online career inventory or another one-off assignment. With the advent of EoW, participating Humanities 120 faculty have developed a series of academically rigorous, linked assignments that build toward a final semester project or reflection where students integrate what they’ve learned about themselves and make a case for a possible future path. Assignments might include taking inventory of one’s aptitudes and cultural capital, completing an online career alignment survey, writing a family work history, conducting an interview with a professional working in a field of interest or a campus career services specialist, conducting a virtual or in-person observation of a workplace, or imagining one’s own future resume. The emphasis across these assignments is self-reflection; students are tasked with finding connections and alignment (or misalignment) between their values, interests, capacities, and various career options.

The idea is that students completing the seminar will have had a chance to reflect deeply on their career interests—an important exploratory step that can serve as grounding for further coursework, including additional EoW experiences. Bautista explains, “Instead of just saying, let’s do a career inventory—one and done, check it off—we’re saying this is a good grounding... It’s not just this little box, but it’s a process that’s iterative. We’re constantly creating opportunities for them to keep thinking about work, exposing them to different people who have their own career paths. It’s not linear.”

Of the twenty-four course sections offered in fall 2022, fifteen were taught by faculty participating in the EoW initiative. Assignments vary across sections, according to the section’s theme and discipline and the specific innovations of each instructor. Individual syllabi have evolved as faculty have tested new career exploration tools, shared their best assignments with each other, and adjusted to changing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, instructors got creative with workplace observations, offering students the option to sit in on Zoom office meetings in their desired field (arranged by a campus career services specialists) or conduct observations of pre-recorded job shadows.





Sample Humanities 120 Assignments

Finding Your Future

Essay #1: Auto-ethnography

Students reflect on multiple class sessions, including conversations about cultural wealth, asking how does my family, history, community, and culture shape my identity?

Essay #2: Connecting Career Exploration to Educational Goals

Students reflect on a series of educational and career planning exercises, including a career genogram, a career exploration activity using the Pathful Explore website, an educational planning worksheet, and an informational interview with a campus staff member in a related profession or a campus LifeMap advisor.

Essay #3: Passion Project

Students conduct a virtual job shadow and ask themselves how their intended career can make a positive impact on the world, addressing an identified familial, community, or social need.

Final ePortfolio Presentation

Students compile a digital portfolio of their semester's work, complete a final reflection, and create a personal elevator pitch describing their education and career goals.

EoW Across the Disciplines

A second, more diverse set of EoW courses are scattered across Bunker Hill's 100 academic departments and programs. These include a range of gateway classes, like Business 101 and BioTech 120, which tend to focus on self-exploration and early career exploration themes similar to Humanities 120. They also include courses like English 111 (College Writing 1) and Sociology 227 (Race and Ethnicity) that ask students to dig more deeply into a work-related theme via the study of literature or more extended sociological observations of a worksite. More advanced classes may also include career panels or other opportunities for students to engage directly with employers.

In discipline-embedded EoW courses, faculty are encouraged to introduce the same theoretical frameworks of work described previously ([Appendix B](#)), but they may pick and choose among the concepts or recast them in language relevant to their field or discipline.

Some EoW courses are “clustered” within the college’s Learning Communities structure, which means that students may take two EoW classes (taught by different professors) that explore linked concepts. Sociology 227 and Literature 204 (American Literature 2) are an example: In the sociology course, students conduct three separate workplace observations (typically wherever they are currently employed), applying a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens to explore the makeup of the workplace, its culture, and its formal and informal power dynamics. Meanwhile, in their literature course, students explore related themes in stories and poetry by diverse authors, making connections between their personal experience, the literature, and nonfiction texts that introduce concepts like alienated labor. (See [Appendix C](#) for Lit 204 reading list.)

EoW Across the Curriculum *



Professor Belinda Kadambi began integrating EoW into her introductory biotech course as a part of the third cohort. “I already had experience incorporating jobs skills and what to do,” she says. “I wanted to see how I could improve my own courses.” Kadambi had already integrated career exploration tools and worksite experiences, but she hadn’t delved explicitly into the theory. The course had a packed curriculum already, so instead of trying to add more content, she chose to introduce a key set of EoW terms in one of her first lectures and retool a four-part assignment in which students reflect on their career interests and “capital wealth.” Students also carry out other creative assignments: a virtual job shadow using an online career navigation tool, a guided interview with a recent Bunker Hill alum working in biotech, and a final reflection in which they create a “bioblurb” or elevator pitch to describe their career goals and accomplishments in a networking situation. (See [Appendix D](#) for complete assignment.)

Across these experiences, students gain a clearer sense of their own assets and whether biotech careers are the right fit. “I see great value in finding out sooner rather than later that you love or dislike something before you spend too much time and money,” Kadambi says. As the primary instructor in the biotech department, Kadambi is able to build on the discoveries made in the first semester, asking students to expand upon their first-semester reflections with new skills they’ve acquired and prepare to create a LinkedIn profile in a later course. That’s where she sees the

greatest power in the EoW's asset-based frameworks. "It's difficult to write your strengths," she notes. "Everybody is very good at saying 'I don't know this, and I don't know that,' but not so many people are good at saying yeah, 'Actually, can I bring this to the table?' For my students, that's what I'm looking for: to get the confidence level up."



English 111: The Voyage Narrative

Alison Ruch

Unit 1: Voyage

What are elements intrinsic to voyage narratives? How can we compose voyage stories of our own? What is **cultural wealth**, and how can we show our own cultural wealth within a voyage narrative?

Unit 2: Navigation

How do we find our way in the world? What tools do we use? How do we navigate not just through space but also time? How can we find narratives to inform our navigation and to find fulfilling and sustaining **work**? In what ways are lives and goals *navigable*? How can I employ **cultural wealth** to get where I want to go?

Unit 3: Exploration

How do we choose topics we'd like to explore when we don't know much about them (yet)? How do we research, learn about, explain, and make claims about a topic? How can we explore with both open-mindedness and purpose, and how can we give proper credit to our sources of information? How do topics of interest intersect with issues of **equity and/or employing cultural wealth**? How can we present logical arguments to an audience with diverse viewpoints?

Unit 4: Destination

How do we decide, aim for, and arrive at where we are going? How do we know when we've arrived? What is *home*, and what is *community* and what is a *successful voyage or arrival*? How has your thinking about **equity and cultural wealth** been influenced, challenged, or changed over the course of the semester?

Next Step: An EoW Continuum

After four years of experimentation and open-ended innovation, the Bunker Hill EoW coordinators are shifting their strategy. Now, they are looking at what it will take to build a multi-semester EoW continuum with at least three touch points that support students through the iterative process of exploring career interests, examining the world of work, and preparing for their next steps upon graduation.

This next stage for EoW coincides with Bunker Hill's relatively recent adoption of "guided pathways."⁹ In 2020, the college received a large federal grant to organize its hundred programs and majors into seven guided pathways or meta-majors. The EoW coordinators see an opportunity to build on this new institutional structure to craft more intentional EoW sequences. They have begun by conducting a "heat map" across each of the college's pathways to identify programs that have multiple EoW courses already in place and where strategic recruitment of one or two more faculty members would complete the continuum.

Vallie explains, "Without intentional integration into pathways, EoW remains an ad hoc, one-off piece. Now that we have a substantial amount of faculty across each discipline engaged in EoW, the strategy is to really target the programs, to start going deep as we expand and broaden."

Vallie and the faculty coordinators envision three points in the sequence: the first-year seminar (Humanities 120 or equivalent), a capstone experience near graduation, and one or more interim courses that provide reflective moments along the way for students to revisit and refine their career ambitions.



Eddinger, lamenting the tendency of colleges to front load planning into the first and then the final semesters, explains that:

“ *with EoW, we have a module you can deliver to students along their studies. The first time they take the module, they think about what the future of work can be for me...where I want to hitch my star. Through that experience [over multiple semesters], they pick up the language and philosophy so that as they prepare for the last phase—career services, interviews, resumes—they sound different because they’ve done all of that processing.*

Pam Eddinger, president, Bunker Hill Community College

As they consider which programs to target, the coordinators are looking at programs with strong capstone experiences already in place, such as an internship or employer showcase event. The challenge, according to Bautista, is enormous variety in how programs are currently organized. “There isn’t a set structure for how students exit at the college. Not all degree programs have an internship. Not every degree program has a final capstone or signature work experience.”

Even as they focus their design energies on a few select programs, the coordinators will keep professional development open to all faculty, allowing for continued innovation to spread college-wide.

Implementation Considerations: Capacity, Rollout, and Institutional Support

Bunker Hill's EoW initiative benefits from the support of several key champions, including Eddinger, the college's provost, and the vice president for academic affairs and student services. Vallie, whose role has shifted since the initiative began, continues to serve as a connector to the administration, while also providing leadership on strategy and fundraising.

The initiative has been grant funded to this point, with funding quantities and priorities varying from year to year. They began with the \$50,000 granted from the Deval Patrick Prize for Community Colleges, in recognition of the college's Learn and Earn experiential education and internship program. That first year, funds were used to support faculty stipends for professional development and release time for the co-coordinators. Since then, the college has leveraged funding through the college's Offices of Learning Communities, Community Engagement, and Workforce Development, including two grants from JP Morgan Chase awarded to the Division of Workforce and Economic Development. These funds have supported ongoing professional development, stipends for the co-coordinators (who dedicate 20–30 hours per semester to their roles), and a half-time administrative position located in the Division of Workforce Development that has provided logistical support to the initiative as well as targeted technical assistance and classroom support to its faculty.

The fluctuating budget has been a challenge. The part-time administrator position provided crucial backend support for two years; the coordinator helped to codify key parts of the program, support its strategic spread across departments, and collect survey data from faculty and students to guide expansion. The college is currently in the process of filling that position through an existing grant but has lost important backend functions in the interim. Recognizing the importance of this role, Vallie is now making the case for consistent administrative coordination.

The eventual goal is to embed EoW into the core work (and budget) of the college, so it is self-sustaining. The most likely long-term institutional home for the initiative is the Office of Learning Communities.

Professional Development

A primary drive of Bunker Hill's EoW initiative is its highly inclusive professional development for faculty. Each August, the co-coordinators offer a multi-day kickoff institute for new and returning faculty interested in exploring or deepening their understanding of EoW's central concepts. Initially, Guttman faculty came to Boston to serve as the EoW experts, but as Bunker Hill's own model has developed its unique spin, the three faculty coordinators have taken the lead on guiding their peers.

Faculty receive a stipend for their participation in the summer institute and an additional stipend for presenting evidence of curriculum redesign later in this semester; this includes a redesigned course assignment, three examples of student work, and a reflection. Virtually all faculty who have participated in the summer institute have stayed with the initiative, although some wait a semester or more before beginning the course integration.

At the end of the summer institute, the co-coordinators offer small group question-and-answer sessions and then may subdivide to further discuss topics of expressed interest or need. They hold open office hours during the semester for one-on-one consultations with faculty, where they review draft assignments, brainstorm ideas, share examples from their own courses, and provide referrals to helpful resources on campus, including services from the Division of Workforce Development. A mid-semester check-in session is open to all participants as well.

For some faculty, including those familiar with the sociological framing and those who already have a strong career component in their classes, the integration isn't a heavy lift. For others, the initiative requires a more significant shift in thinking and course preparation.



Carlos Maynard, one of the co-coordinators, explains, “We are very intentional in communicating that the goal here is not for you to change your curriculum or do additional work, but it’s for you to look at what you already do and see where’s the best fit for career exploration within the curriculum. For some faculty, it’s a matter of how do I take this new lens and tweak or adjust, and [for] others who have not started to integrate career learning, we try to make it as simple as we can.”

Still, it hasn’t been easy for everyone. “It’s been a journey for a number of the faculty members,” Vallie says. “The challenge with EoW is that it is grounded in sociology. Faculty in computer sciences, business, and humanities still need to bring it alive in their discipline, and they need the time to figure that out...For some, reframing career conversations around a social mobility/equity lens is new. That takes a different level of comfort, and it takes some time to get to that space.”

Kadambi had several conversations with Bautista as she tried to understand how she could fit EoW theory into her biotech curriculum. “It’s very difficult for me to say, go read this paper on the theory of ethnographies of work,” she explains. “That’s not what my students signed up for. I had to simplify it and do more of the application of the theory...Aurora and I talked about this a fair amount, and she said, ‘Just take what you need.’”

“It’s the art of teaching,” explains Bautista. “How can I be creatively integrating it in whatever course I’m teaching? It’s, like, let’s make you comfortable being aware of the theory first, and you pick which aspects you think line up well with your course. And that’s a starting point.”

Similar to the approach with students, faculty professional development is designed to be iterative. Faculty can opt into additional institutes or one-on-one support as they deepen their understanding of EoW. All have access to an online resource board where the coordinators share best practices and templates. Faculty may begin by redesigning just one assignment and then be inspired by peers to go further the next semester. “The hope is that people’s understanding of it gets broader and deeper over time,” says Bautista.

Career Services Connections

While the faculty co-coordinators take the lead on curriculum and pedagogy, they have relied on complementary support from the college's Division of Workforce Development for employer connections, labor market information, and career navigation tools. In the winter of 2020, the college hired a new workforce development staff person, Denise Mytko, whose time was 50% dedicated to the EoW initiative. For the next two years, Mytko provided important logistical support, helping track and analyze participation data, conduct student and faculty surveys and interviews, and create the infrastructure and materials needed to support campus-wide growth. Mytko also served as a labor market expert for participating classes, providing in-class presentations about high-demand fields and the career navigation process, helping faculty build career navigation programs (e.g., Career Coach and Pathful Explore) into their curricula, providing one-on-one career advising sessions with students, and setting up employer connections for worksite visits and interviews. Finally, Mytko provided an additional layer of feedback and support to faculty in developing assignments involving career research. "We built tools and I built explainers for things that faculty might want to try in their class," Mytko says. "Like, 'This is a twenty-minute lesson that you could just try and see how you feel about integrating career research into your class.'"

The division of labor among the faculty coordinators and Mytko has been important. It has meant that the faculty can focus on pedagogy and content specific to their discipline, without needing to become experts in the range of career paths their students might pursue, a daunting prospect in many liberal arts fields especially.

Maynard explains: "We see ourselves as the educational arm... We try to capitalize on other spaces that do career-oriented work, so we become more like a bridge. We want to be able to work in community with others who [offer different expertise] that faculty may need."

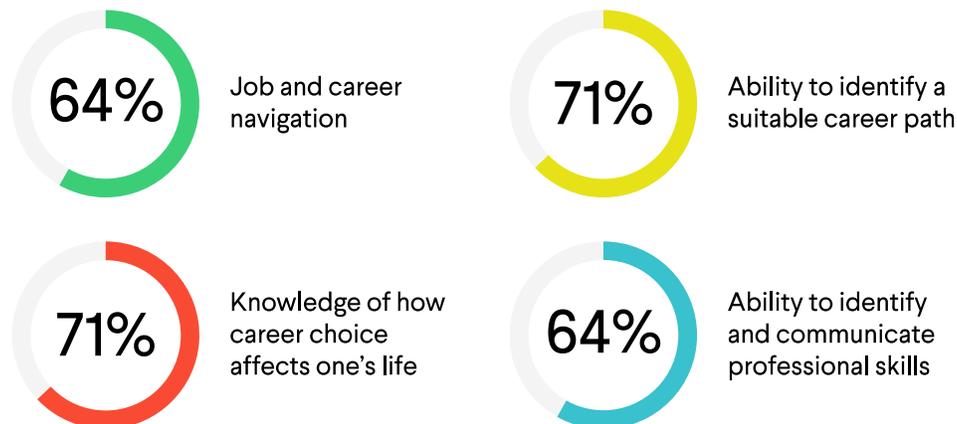
Learning has gone both ways. In 2021, Mytko and the faculty coordinators led a special professional development retreat for staff in Bunker Hill's Advising and LifeMap Department, building their capacity to understand and support EoW development campus-wide.



Impact: Early Results and Reflections

Now in its fourth year, the Bunker Hill EoW initiative is still too new to assess long-term impacts on college completion and employment. Fluctuating administrative capacity has made it difficult to gather reliable interim data. The faculty co-coordinators have assembled a large trove of student work examples, which they use to guide professional development with their peers, and Mytko conducted hundreds of interviews and surveys of participating students to understand their experience. She also distributed surveys among students and faculty to capture both participation numbers and experiential input. Most of these data have been used for internal purposes due to limited sample size.

In 2021, Mytko administered a Career Decision Self-Efficacy survey to all participating students. While a relatively low response rate means the data can't be considered conclusive, the feedback is encouraging. Survey respondents reported both an increase in confidence and in self-appraisal and in problem-solving after participating in EoW coursework. In addition, EoW participants reported being more confident or much more confident in the following areas:



These survey results align with more anecdotal feedback from students and from faculty and administrators close to the initiative.

Student Perspectives on Ethnographies of Work



Joana¹⁰

A recent high school graduate, Joana transferred to Bunker Hill in 2022 from a nursing program at a four-year college. She says that the EoW assignments in her English 112 course (College Writing 2) helped her reflect on her interests and consider alternatives to the career paths she'd been considering in psychiatric nursing. Now, she believes social work or child psychology may be a better fit.

An interview with a psychology professor—part of a “career superhero” assignment—was especially impactful. She says, “As I was talking to him, I realized, oh, he likes to help people. The way that I felt about what I wanted to do was kind of how he felt, so I connected with him, and it made me realize what I wanted to do.”

Joana was simultaneously enrolled in a section of Sociology 101 with a similar focus on the future; in that class, she used an educational planning assignment to set up an appointment with a campus advisor and select classes for the next two semesters and summer. She now has a clear plan toward graduation related to her career ambitions.



Melany

Melany, also a psychology major, found the online career navigation assignment in her Sociology 101 class to be especially helpful. “At the time, I was entertaining a lot of things. I was kind of indecisive...I was like, ‘Oh, I’m just gonna just pick [counseling]. It sounds interesting. And I’ll just write about it. And then that’ll be that.’ But then as I was doing the research, I was like, ‘Oh, wow, this [art therapy] has a lot of the things that I want.’ For example, I want to work in underserved communities. I have a little brother that has autism....It was like, like, a lot of things are just coming full circle with this assignment. And I was like, wow, this is something that I could really see myself doing and enjoying.”

She used the site to rule out other options, including child psychology, which required more years of schooling than she was prepared to invest in and appeared too clinical for someone who prefers to be active and engaged in the community.

She reflects on the value of EoW to students like her, “I think in high school, a lot of us are sold this very unrealistic expectation of how the college experience is supposed to look—like, you're supposed to graduate from high school and already know what you're gonna do for the rest of your life. And you're supposed to take all the courses, graduate, and then boom, you get your job, and you live your life. And that's just not true, especially for first gen students...We need resources.”

“I think it's so helpful when classes integrate career exploration into their curriculum. Because sometimes we have one thing in our mind...but I don't actually know the ins and outs of what the career actually entails...The curriculum puts us in a space where we have to think introspectively, like, what qualities do I have that would naturally transition over to the job needs? What do they have that would fulfill the needs that I'm looking for? I think if I had not had that experience with Professor Bautista, then I might have still been entertaining the liberal arts. Like, only one pathway. And then I would transfer and then figure out, oh, actually, this is what I want to do. And then maybe I have to retake classes, and I'm not in a position financially to do that.”

The faculty interviewed for this case study noticed three types of impacts on students enrolled in their classes.

1. Revised or confirmed career goals.



Assignments like the ones described by Joana and Melany have a clarifying effect for incoming students. Alison Ruch says that the most common pattern she's witnessed in her introductory English classes is students confirming or more clearly pinpointing a vocational passion. "I think that it was an opportunity to articulate that as opposed to just kind of going through school saying, 'I'm going to do this, and I know I need to take these classes,' but not really looking at the why. So that was powerful."

She observed a smaller number of students revising their ambitions after discovering a mismatch. "A few people sort of found themselves shifting gears and [were] able to tell the story of how they used to really want to go into a health field, realized that actually they were disgusted by blood, and wanted to pursue something a little bit different or maybe adjacent but not dealing so much with the body."

Bautista has seen a similar pattern with her Humanities 120 students. "That self-exploration is so important at the beginning of the process," she says, "because a lot of students do come in with kind of conceptions of, 'Well, this is what my parents want me to do.' Or 'I know I'm good at math, but I hate it.' We're really giving them the opportunity to both realize that if you embark on something you hate, it probably won't go so well, and also, to think about what skills and assets do they have that they might not even realize could be part of a career pathway."

2. A clearer sense of their own career assets.



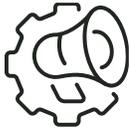
This was another theme that came up again and again. The assignments that ask students to take stock of their own cultural capital can be a game changer.

Bautista says, "Just as one example, I have so many students who are bilingual, trilingual, or speak four, five, six languages, not realizing that that's going to be beneficial in the workforce. And that's been an eye-opening moment for some students like, 'Wow, I could really use this.'" Through these early reflections, she hopes to shift the career exploration conversation from the skills that employers want to "What do you want? And how can you bring both what you want and what skills and talents you have to these employers?"

Kadambi has also noticed an impact in asking students to assess their strengths and assets. "Previous to *Ethnographies of Work*, I had an assignment in my advanced class with biotech,

and the question would just be, ‘What makes you unique?’ Because that is the paragraph that goes into their cover letters. For me, that was the biggest jump. EOW pushed me from saying, ‘What makes you unique?’ to ‘What are your strengths? What drives you?’...If I ask my students, ‘What makes you unique?’ they would just tell me, ‘I came from India, and I worked in Dunkin Donuts.’...Now, they actually will say, ‘I speak five languages.’ When they have that terminology to begin with, I think they'd start to use it and to think about all the different strengths that they have.”

3. The ability to self-advocate.



In their more advanced EoW coursework, students explore theories of equity and exploitation in the workplace, with a goal, Bautista says, “that they can really become not just job applicants but advocates for themselves in the workforce as they move forward.”

Maynard has seen individual students develop action plans to address inequities in their workplace and others reconsider these long-term career goals once they become more aware of inequitable patterns in a current workplace.

“I think our [student learning] outcomes about social mobility, equity, inclusion...help to frame where they're at and where they could be. They almost see that as, ‘Now I know what I don't want to do forever. So I will finish what I'm finishing here because I gotta still take care of my bills. But this is just in the interim. Once I'm in a better position to obtain other opportunities, which my education could afford me, then I'll be in a better place to move on.’”

Importantly, when students begin to notice problematic patterns in their current workplaces, Maynard uses class time to allow them to unpack what they've seen and consider their next steps. “Students are not only able to hear from me,” Maynard says, “but also from their peers. What are they seeing? What are they observing? As a way of either confirming that there are some dynamics that we have to navigate, but also affirming the fact that your learning can be a catalyst for better. The experience is a learning experience. How can we leverage that for better opportunities?”

Conclusion: A Model Worth Watching

Bunker Hill Community College's Ethnographies of Work Initiative holds great promise as an equitable way to provide all community college students with meaningful career exploration opportunities. While the initiative is still in a developmental stage, with long-term outcomes to be seen, students appear to be gaining more clarity and confidence in their career ambitions and the approach has garnered strong support across the administration and among faculty in every academic department. As Bunker Hill rolls out its guided pathways structure, EoW has even greater potential to provide students with a thoughtful sequence of learning opportunities that move them from early career exploration to job readiness.

For two-year colleges seeking a method of introducing career navigation for all students, this is an approach worth considering.



Appendix A

Bunker Hill Community College Institutional Learning Outcomes

INQUIRE with intention:

- Reflect and think critically
- Explore and define compelling questions
- Locate and integrate information from diverse contexts
- Think creatively
- Synthesize findings

COMMUNICATE with purpose:

- Listen actively
- Express ideas and arguments with intention
- Consider audience, situation, and intercultural context
- Engage diverse forms of media
- Facilitate inclusive dialogue

ACT to integrate knowledge and practice:

- Collaborate in diverse teams
- Facilitate reciprocal and sustainable partnerships
- Enact innovative solutions to significant problems
- Contribute to community and civic wellness
- Advance justice and equity

GROW through continuous learning:

- Identify and leverage individual and collective strengths
- Cultivate resilience and agency
- Develop intercultural competence and critical consciousness
- Form personal and global identities
- Empower oneself and others

Appendix B

Ethnographies of Work Theoretical Frameworks

EoW courses ask students to investigate their own assets, resources, and aptitudes as they explore possible future career pathways, often using a sociological lens. Instructors introduce the following shared concepts across many EoW courses.

Cultural Wealth Framework

(connected to both cultural and social capital)

- Aspirational: maintain hope, admits challenges
- Linguistic: able to connect in various languages
- Familial: able to rely on core/extended family
- Resistance: able to challenge inequities
- Social: access to network & community resource
- Navigational: maneuvers multiple social contexts

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS: Identify pattern of inequity, take responsibility for student's success, race-ethnic conscious/aware of socio-historical exclusionary practices in higher ed.

CULTURAL CAPITAL: the sense of group consciousness and collective identity that benefits or advances the entire group with whom we identify.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: networks of relationships of people who live or work together, including the resources that individuals and families are able to access through their social ties.

SOCIAL NETWORK: relationships of people that link and connect people indirectly to more relationships.

EMOTIONAL LABOR: job requirement used to regulate/manage worker feelings, emotions, and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirement of a job.

VOCATIONAL INTEGRATION: accessing work or vocational training opportunities that match one's educational or professional background and experience; learning how to market one's skills in these industries.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE: proper prioritizing among work and lifestyle that reduces stress and prevents burnout in the workplace, an important aspect of a healthy work environment.

SOCIAL MOBILITY: upward, lateral, downward, and inter-generational movement of individuals or groups from one position in a society's stratification system to another.

Appendix C

Lit 204: Literature in America II, Stories of Work

Instructor Alison Ruch

[*Syllabus excerpt*]

In Literature in America II, we'll read and study, discuss and respond to written works created in the late 19th century and into the 20th century. We will explore the relationship between these narratives and the ways these narratives shed light on ideas of national identity—the nature of the United States. Our guiding question will be: **What can stories do?** We will apply this question to fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

The theme for our study of American literature is WORK. We'll employ analytical and sociological approaches to thinking about the approaches American writers have taken to writing on this topic. Why do American stories so often address people working, workplaces, and work policies? How do different writers use the mode of literature to express ideas and concerns about work? What *work* do the published stories, poems, and essays do?

Fall 2022 Reading List:

“Bartleby, the Scrivener” by Herman Melville

“I Stand Here Ironing” by Tillie Olsen

“In the American Society” by Gish Jen

“A Real Durwan” by Jhumpa Lahiri

excerpts from *White Space* by Jennifer de Leon

“Romero’s Shirt” by Dagoberto Gilb

“Dolores Dante, waitress” by Studs Terkel

excerpt from *Nickle and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich

“The Waitress Angels Speak to Me in a Vision” by Jan Beatty

“Mike Lefevre, steelworker” by Studs Terkel

“Lullaby” by Leslie Marmon Silko

“Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper” and “The Toolmaker Unemployed” by Martín Espada

“El Olor de Cansancio” by Melida Rodas

Excerpts from Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*

“The Cariboo Café” by Helena María Viramontes

“Blue Collar Goodbyes” by Sue Doro

“Chicago” by Carl Sandburg

“First Day on a New Jobsite” by Susan Eisenberg

“Metamorphosis into Bureaucrat” by Marge Piercy

Los Vendidos by Luis Valdez

“The Atlanta Exposition Address” by Booker T. Washington

Excerpts from “The Souls of Black Folk” by W.E.B. DuBois

“Sweat” by Zora Neale Hurston

“The Work You Do, the Person you Are” and “Recitatif” by Toni Morrison

“To Be of Use” by Marge Piercy

“Perhaps the World Ends Here” by Joy Harjo

“If you Want to Know What We Are” by Carlos Bulosan

Appendix D

BIO 120: Introduction to Biotechnology

Topic 1. – Personal Reflection Essay (10 points)

Students will be required to submit a one-page personal reflection essay. Anyone reading this essay should feel connected to you as a person. Here are a few (optional) prompts to get you started:

- I. Introduce yourself? Why are you interested in the biotechnology field?
- II. Who is your role model that drives you/encourages you to pursue biotechnology?
- III. YOU bring so much to the table. What are your strengths? This is your cultural capital! Be proud, share your positive personality traits, work/life experience.
- IV. What do you see as potential stumbling blocks to success? Have you tried to apply for a job/internship, only to be turned away? How did you cope?
- V. What are your short-term and long-term goals? Think beyond your immediate education and career goals to your life goals (social mobility, cultural wealth, social capital, cultural capital, work life balance).
- VI. If you had ONE idea about what is needed to be successful, what would that be?
- VII. What EoW theories (social mobility, cultural wealth, social capital, cultural capital, aspirational, etc.) do you feel connected to? Look back to the EoW PowerPoint slides and see how you can relate to the EoW concepts.

Topic 2. – Career Exploration: Moodle discussion board (5 points)

Students will be given access to a virtual job shadow website. Additional resources that are specific to opportunities in biotechnology will also be provided. Students will be required to post their thoughts/opinions on a class discussion board.

Topic 3. – Career Conversations with BHCC Alumni: One-page summary (20 points)

Students will submit a one-page summary that outlines what they learned, and how they contributed to the conversation. Answer each of the following:

- Before the meeting: (6 points): Please bring a minimum of three questions to the meeting. Are there specific things that you would like to learn through this mentor experience?
- After the meeting: (14 points)
 - Who was at the meeting (name the mentors, if there are breakout rooms, who is in your group etc.)?
 - What were the main issues or themes that struck you?
 - Were there specific issues that you picked up from your observations that you might want to explore further?
 - Do you plan to contact this mentor in the future? If YES, how do you plan to reach out?

Topic 4. – Final Reflection Essay, Bioblurb/Elevator Pitch, Qualtrics Survey (15 points)

1. Final Reflection Essay (10 points): The paper should be a minimum of 1 page and a maximum of 2 pages long, typed, double-spaced, 12 size font. The essay must speak about your overall learning experience (independent research, conversations with peers and alumni/mentors). Here are some prompts to help you:
 - Do your fellow students have similar aspirations/challenges? Can they be part of your network and support system as you continue your education?
 - What resonated with you about an alumni/mentor’s path to success or a challenge they faced?
 - Describe the workplace environment in a biotechnology company (review what the alumni/mentors said about their personal journey). Do you think you would like to work in the biotechnology industry?
 - What did you learn about the different employment opportunities in the field (either from the alumni/mentors or the virtual job shadow site or your independent research)?
 - Are you still interested in the field of biotechnology, or have you discovered a different interest?
2. Bioblurb/Elevator Pitch: (3 points)

Write out a personal “Bioblurb” or an “Elevator Pitch” that summarizes your accomplishments and goals. If you had 1–2 minutes to network, what would you say about yourself? What type of position are you looking for?
3. EoW Qualtrics Survey (2 points)

Fill out the EoW Qualtrics survey. Did you learn from this assignment? What additional resources would you like to have access to?

Endnotes

¹ “Modernizing Career Navigation in the U.S,” JFF Practitioner Task Force on Modernizing Career Navigation Policy, 2022; “Pathways to Prosperity Levers: Career Navigation System,” Jobs for the Future website, accessed December 2022.

² <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ctr/undergrad-retention-graduation>

³ “Modernizing Career Navigation in the U.S,” JFF Practitioner Task Force on Modernizing Career Navigation Policy, 2022.

⁴ “Tracking Transfer: Measures of Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students to Complete Bachelor’s Degrees,” updated September 23, 2021, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Community College Research Center (CCRC), Columbia University, and the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/tracking-transfer/>

⁵ <https://www.bhcc.edu/about/institutionaleffectiveness/fastfacts/>

⁶ “Achieving the Dream, <https://www.bhcc.edu/about/achievingthedream/>

⁷ <https://guttman.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/first-year-experience/requirements/#1581358712501-5cb963cd-eadc>

⁸ Student learning outcomes are used by faculty to guide course development, including individual lessons and activities and the assignments used to assess student learning.

⁹ Guided pathways is a whole-college redesign model designed to help all students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs aligned with their career and education goals more efficiently and affordably (Community College Research Center, Columbia University)

¹⁰ Pseudonyms used for students.