Guided Pathways Demystified 2: A Newer Set of Questions About Operationalizing Guided Pathways Reforms

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JFF Webinar
November 2017
Demystifying Guided Pathways One: Exploring Ten Commonly Asked Questions about Implementing Pathways
Demystifying Guided Pathways Paper

• Released November 2015 by NCII

• Companion to excellent CCRC Book

• Available at http://www.inquiry2improvement.com/publications-resources

• Designed to address questions NCII, CCRC, JFF, and Public Agenda have heard in hundreds of guided pathways sessions with faculty, student services professionals and administrators

• Not the defining word – just food for thought!
Mel Brooks’ *History of the World Part 2: I give You These 10...No...20 Questions...*

• But wait, are there more?

• Collected questions for a sequel, given my profit margin on the first paper...

• Title - *Guided Pathways Demystified II: Addressing New Questions as the Movement Gains Momentum*

• Explored starting in Aug 2016 in CBD Blog posts

• Paper Released October 2017
What are Practitioners Top Questions about Guided Pathways?
First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

• Q1 - Isn’t college a meritocracy, where the strong / smart succeed, and the weak / underprepared don’t succeed?

• Q2 - Isn’t “free choice” the cornerstone of American higher education?

• Q3 – Won’t we sacrifice quality when we move to guided pathways?

• Q4 – Won’t we lose the heart of a liberal arts education when we make students’ journeys more structured?

• Q5 – Won’t faculty lose control over what is taught in their discipline?
First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

• Q6 – Won’t we lose enrollment if we decrease swirl with increased structure or by making things mandatory?
• Q7 – Isn’t all of this “hand-holding” going to create graduates that can’t navigate the workplace / real world?
• Q8 – Don’t students benefit when they “find themselves” by what looks like wandering to an observer?
• Q9 – How can students be expected to make career decisions at age 18?
• Q10 – Don’t students change careers 4 to 7 times – why then guided pathways?
The Next 10 Questions about Guided Pathways

• Q11 - Isn't guided pathways just the next educational fad?
• Q12 - How do we further emphasize equity and inclusion in the pathways approach?
• Q13 - How do we build effective guided pathways for part-time students?
• Q14 - What happens when students are below transferrable English and Math?
• Q15 - What happens if students change their minds? Do they have to start over?
The Next 10 Questions about Guided Pathways

• Q16 - What should the institution do when students fall off their guided pathway?

• Q17 - How does a focus on teaching & learning need to evolve / shift under a guided pathways approach?

• Q18 - Doesn't faculty workload go up under a guided pathways model? Aren't we already overworked enough?

• Q19 - How do we best use technology to keep students on the pathways?

• Q20 - How can we get all the work necessary to plan and execute guided pathways done by (insert date here)?
GPDM 2
Exploration Slides
Next 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q11 – What makes guided pathways different (from other educational fads)?

• Movement, not an initiative

• Thinking of it as a framework that
  • (a) brings together existing approaches
  • (b) inspires bolder, more substantive change

• Use as an umbrella between series of disconnected initiatives

• 4 ”Big Ideas” serving as pillars over time
Next 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q12- How do we further emphasize equity and inclusion in the guided pathways approach?

• Guided pathways is fundamentally about ensuring equity of substantially improved student outcomes

• Georgia State story – equity; changing the college rather than changing the student; student lives affected

• Focus on a livable wage and a career path that enables students to sustain early economic gains

• Direct GP efforts towards improving success of middle 2/3 of students (transfers and cohort-based CTE)
Q13 - How do we build effective guided pathways for part-time students?

• 60%+ of students enroll part-time, but completion rate is abysmal

• Full-time enrollment = higher completion rate, but why are students not enrolling full-time?

✓ Value proposition problem, students are unsure of what they are getting for their investment

✓ Student financial stability focus (tying to public benefits, emergency assistance, nutrition, transportation, childcare) would help increase full-time enrollment

• Part-time students need structured pathways and support even more
Q14 - What happens when students are below transferrable English and/or math upon entry?

- Consider acceleration and “co-requisite” programs

- Need to make sure students are taking the right math and English classes for their pathway

- Think strategically about what skills students truly need to develop in alignment with those goals and select coursework accordingly

- For students who do need development, focus on what courses they can take to make forward progress
Q15 - What happens if students change their minds about their program of study? Do they have to start over?

• Simply put, if students change their mind, they do not have to start over

• Students and advisors would need to figure out which of their completed courses follow them as completed GE requirements for their new program of study

• Meta-majors and career-focus areas allow students to explore interests earlier while meeting requirements

• GP are designed to help students make more informed decisions from day one
Q16 - What should our college do when students fall off their guided pathway?

• Consider the reasons why – is a student still going within a pathway or exploring changing pathways

• Clear intervention strategies for when students do fall off the pathway

  ✓ Ongoing advising and integrated support

  ✓ Use of summer terms, incomplete grades, independent study, online courses for catch-up

• Learn strategies from cohort-based CTE programs
Q17 - How does teaching and learning need to evolve under a guided pathways approach?

• Primary focus is the shift from focus on courses to focus on programs

• Create more alignment between program-level, liberal arts, and GE outcomes

• Integration of experiences into coursework

• Authentic assessment of students’ achievement of program-level outcomes
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Q18 - How much will faculty workload increase under a guided pathways model?

• Workload in development vs. workload when GP is in place

• Early GP pioneers report no workload changes once the pathway is in place

• Some increased emphasis on traditionally “outside of the classroom” discussions and activities

• Faculty advisors have an easier time working with a GP map than current student transcripts
Next 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q19 - How do we best use technology to keep students on their pathways?

• Colleges need to have an idea of how to use technology before buying it

• Simple modifications in technology use could serve as a catalyst for improvement

• Cuyahoga (OH) – Year-long enrollment codes

• Assessment of local needs

• AACC Pathways Partners Paper – also on NCII website
Next 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q20 - How can we get all the work necessary to plan and execute guided pathways done by *(insert date here)*?

- Scale of Adoption Assessment- establish a baseline for each of the four domains

- Critical to create a project plan for each domain

  ✓ Workgroup / taskforce structure with clear goals

- When changes are made, they are version 1.0 and will continue to adapt over time
Find Out More

• NCII website with GPDM2 and other publications:
  www.ncii-improve.com/publications

• Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President, NCII
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First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q1 - Isn’t college a meritocracy, where the strong / smart succeed, and the weak / underprepared / unmotivated don’t succeed?

• Model of higher education relatively unchanged

• Income quartile and college graduation rates of similarly high-achieving students

• Haven’t tested the limits of potential changes such as guided pathways – CUNY, Georgia State data
First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q2 – Isn’t “free choice” the cornerstone of American higher education?

• Behavioral economics and social psychology research on number of choices and rationality

• Existence of degree audit programs

• Choice architecture / career interest areas – Queensborough, City College Chicago, ASU, Lorain

• Picking courses vs. picking programs
Q3 – Won’t we sacrifice quality when we move to guided pathways?

- Foothill’s Four C’s as a model for GE / liberal arts outcomes
- Assessment paradigms challenged to establish current quality
- Employer feedback surveys suggest issues exist
- 10 to 14 GE courses under both models
- Random assignment of GE package vs. “fit”
Q4 – Won’t we lose the heart of a liberal arts education when we make students’ journeys more structured?

- Argument that liberal arts outcomes more imp. now

- 10 to 14 GE Courses break down into areas – business, natural science, humanities, social sciences, mathematics, English

- Same number of humanities (or any other area) under guided pathways vs. cafeteria model

- Program faculty identify GE electives for best alignment for students in their programs
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Q5 – Won’t faculty lose control over what is taught in their discipline?

• Faculty control already shifting with transfer pathways and articulation agreements

• Ownership over what is taught in programs vs. individual courses

• Faculty teaching preferences vs. ensuring courses will be applicable / keep students on path
Q6 – Won’t we lose enrollment at our college if we decrease swirl with increased structure or by making things mandatory?

- CC enrollments largely down since 2011-12
- No drops at MDC, GTCC & others implementing guided pathways / mandatory features
- Changes can only be opposed by current students
- Potential to increase units / student significantly
Q7 – Isn’t all of this “hand-holding” going to create graduates that can’t navigate the workplace / real world?

• Value of systems that those who work in higher education have trouble navigating

• Complexity dissuades students – especially students of color / first time in college students – that data shows us could succeed under right conditions

• Potential to exacerbate race, class and income equality – issues of social capital
First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q8 – Don’t students benefit when they “find themselves” by what looks like wandering to an observer?

- Most students don’t want to wander – research studies by RP (CA), Public Agenda (IN), and CBD
- Works for some who can afford to – not as often for low-income students and FTIC
- Taking courses as way of finding oneself inefficient
- Those who “found themselves” tend to be us
First 10 FAQs - Redesigning for Completion

Q9 – How can students be expected to make career decisions at age 18? and Q10 – Don’t students change careers 4 to 7 times – why then guided pathways?

• Common coursework leading into multiple options

• GP provides more clarity on career selection

• GP can focus attention on GE skills that will help students navigate careers and career changes

• Most importantly, let’s get students into and prepared for careers vs. dropping out and taking jobs by getting them to complete / transfer at higher rates