META– MAJORS

AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP ON THE PATH TO COLLEGE COMPLETION

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GUIDE

EXPLORE

CONNECT

SUPPORT

PROGRESS

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TRANSFORMING THE CAFETERIA INTO A *PRIX FIXE* MENU

We know that the completion statistics for low-income and underprepared students enrolled in certificate and degree programs at community colleges are dismal.[1] A growing body of evidence reveals that a central factor in these low completion rates is the "cafeteria" style approach to college, which provides entering students with a dizzying array of choices and little guidance on navigating those choices.[2] Recent brain science research demonstrates that people feel anxiety and irritation when faced with too many choices and, as a result, are more likely to make poor choices or avoid the situation entirely.[3] A poor decision on which classes to take can cost community college students a significant amount of time and potentially mean the difference between earning a credential or degree and stopping or dropping out. This scenario is supported by research in the field. In "The Shapeless River," Judith Scott-Clayton concludes that lack of structure and too many academic options inhibit student progress and completion.[4] Meta-majors are a programmatic response to these findings.

Meta-majors are the *prix fixe* alternative to the cafeteria style approach to college. Designed with the end (college completion) in mind, and using student's interests as a starting point, meta-majors provide structure and narrow choices to support student success. They are designed to help students choose a program of study within the first year of attendance, which increases completion rates significantly. Davis Jenkins and Sung-Woo Cho's influential study "Get With the Program," from the Community College Research Center, finds that students entering a program of study within a year of enrollment are far more likely to earn a credential. In fact, more than half of students in the study entering a program within their first year of enrollment earned a certificate or degree, transferred to a four-year institution, or completed a baccalaureate degree at a different institution compared to 37 percent of students entering a program of study in their second year.[5] "Get with the Program" aligns with earlier longitudinal research by Clifford Adelman, which found that credit accumulation in the first year is a key determinant of student success.[6]

Research shows that the design and implementation of strategies for improving student success must be comprehensive and focus on the entirety of a student's experience, integrate programs across the campus, and be implemented at scale to be effective. While the research makes it clear that there is no silver bullet, the insights generated over the past decade have led the field to an evidence-based approach commonly referred to as "structured" or "guided" pathways,[7] leading campuses to redesign how they interact with students from the point of entry through completion.[8]

Sometimes also referred to as "career clusters" or "communities of interest," meta-majors refers to the creation of broad program streams such as allied health or business as a key component of guided pathways reforms. Meta-majors have emerged as a viable way for a student to enter a general major or area of interest and complete coursework in this interest area before deciding on a more specific major or program of study.[9]

Guided Pathways:
The Challenge of Implementing at Scale

Community colleges and their partners have taken action for over a decade to ensure that larger numbers of low-income, underserved students complete postsecondary education. Spurred by Achieving the Dream's emphasis on using data to guide change directed toward strengthening student outcomes, many community colleges introduced myriad interventions and student support reforms, from launching new learning communities and academic advising for first-generation students to linking students and programs more closely to the labor market. Many state and institutional efforts, however, have not been robust enough to yield large-scale outcomes to transform the lives of the millions of students enrolling in our nation's community colleges. In fact, data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center show that the number of students completing community college credentials and degrees has remained flat over the past four years.[10] Stagnant completion rates reflect the many implementation challenges community colleges face in improving student persistence and completion.

Research shows that the design and implementation of strategies for improving student success must be comprehensive and focus on the entirety of a student's experience, integrate programs across the campus, and be implemented at scale to be effective. Implementation of holistic interventions at scale is not easy, and relatively few states or colleges have implemented broad-scale efforts to introduce the transformational change embodied in guided pathways efforts. Many state and college initiatives are implemented as "pilot" projects that touch a small number of students and are often disconnected from the rest of the student experience and other parts of the college. As a result, islands of evidence-based innovations can be seen across the nation, but fully scaled redesigns are few and far between, and significant, measurable improvements in student success have not materialized.

The goals of this brief are to: 1) share information on the benefits of meta-majors for colleges and their students; 2) provide clarity on the concept of meta-majors; 3) provide examples of how two colleges are implementing meta-majors (Miami Dade College in Florida and Lorain County Community College in Ohio); and 4) pose key questions that provide a starting point for implementers and give states a window into the issues colleges must consider to implement meta-majors.

WHAT IS A META-MAJOR?

A key design principle of guided pathways is that academic programs of study be structured to provide students with guidance and clear routes to completion. Guided pathways aim to reduce student meandering caused by an overwhelming array of course options, unclear program requirements and a lack of guidance (see Figure 1). Meta-majors provide this structure from a student's entry to college all the way through completion.

Status Quo	Guided Pathways
Little upfront career and college planning	Default program maps
Requirements confusing; too many choices	"Exploratory" majors for undecided
Paths unclear, poorly aligned with end goals	Requires plans tied to predictable schedules
Developmental diversion	Integrated academic support for program gatekeeper courses
Students' progress not monitored; limited ongoing feedback is provided	Progress tracking, feedback, and support
Poor alignment with high school	Bridges to college programs from high school, ABE, and other feeders

Figure 1: Guided Pathways Principles

Source: Jenkins, Davis & Johnstone, Rob. 2014. "Start with the End in Mind: Building Guided Pathways to Student Success." Presentation at Jobs for the Future's Student Success Summit, Washington, DC. Used with author permission.

Meta-majors are designed to get students on a pathway quickly. To that end, meta-majors create sets of courses that fulfill academic requirements for a broad discipline or program grouping such as STEM, business, or health sciences. Meta-majors are a lever to help provide a foundation for undecided students' decision-making process. They are designed to guide students through the completion of their early academic requirements within their specified broad program area.

Incoming students declare a meta-major and then work on courses that will be applicable to a major within their selected meta-major. For example, a health sciences meta-major leads to several different majors further down the student's pathway, including nursing, clinical lab sciences, respiratory care, and more. Figure 2 includes an example of four meta-majors at Valencia College in Florida—including business, health sciences, industry/

manufacturing and construction, and STEM—and the corresponding certificate and degree programs that fall under each meta-major. Students entering the college with the goal of attaining a specific certificate or degree are able to choose that major rather than first designating a meta-major.

Meta-majors are also a useful tool for aligning general education requirements, including required courses and electives, to broad content areas like business or allied health. Colleges can choose to create default pathways with suggestions for general education courses that align well with each of the broad program areas. For example, colleges can align math requirements to their meta-majors, especially as more colleges experiment with creating differentiated math pathways such as statistics and quantitative reasoning for students whose programs of study do not require algebra.[11] By choosing a meta-major upon entry, the student's math requirements are clear to both the student and their advisor at the beginning of their pathway.

Meta-majors create cohorts of students grouped by their broad area of interest from their point of entry into college. In addition, support services like tutoring, time management coaching, and career services, can be aligned with each meta-major, allowing students to experience a community of students and faculty with similar career interests.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF META-MAJORS:

- Meta-majors are aligned with local labor market demand.

- Each meta-major includes a clear program map.

- General education core courses and electives are aligned with each meta-major.

- Advising and student services are aligned with the student's meta-major.

META-MAJORS	MAJORS / PROGRAMS OF STUDY			
BUSINESS	Accounting A.A.	Human Resources Management A.A.	Office Management Certificate	Medical Office Administrator A.S.
HEALTH SCIENCES	Health Information Technology A.S.	EMT Certificate	Nursing A.S.	Dental Hygiene A.S.
STEM	Computer Information Technology A.S.	Computer Information Technology Specialist Certificate	Biology A.A.	Engineering A.S.
INDUSTRY & CONSTRUCTION	Building Construction Technology A.S.	Building Construction Specialist Certificate	Drafting & Design Technology A.S.	Landscape & Horticulture A.S.

Figure 2: Sample Meta-Majors at Valencia College | Source: "New Student Experience," Valencia College, http://valenciacollege.edu/academic-affairs/new-student-experience/meta-majors.cfm. Accessed January 2016.

CASE STUDIES

This section includes two case studies of colleges in the process of designing and implementing meta-majors. Each case study looks at the planning and design process with a focus on stakeholder engagement and examines some of the key components of meta-majors: academics, connection to the college, advising, and career services. Each of the key components is customized by the college and will likely look different on your campus. These case studies are designed to get campus teams thinking about design and implementation by providing examples of two different colleges in the early stages of implementation.

Lorain County Community College

Planning and Review of Programs: In fall 2014, Lorain County Community College (LCCC) in Ohio began a process of examining strategies to increase student success on campus, including the development and implementation of guided pathways and meta-majors. Driven by the college's strategic plan, Vision 2020, campus leaders developing a comprehensive approach to guided pathways and student success. Vision 2020 seeks to accomplish goals of improved student success using guided pathways approaches, including the following:

- Reduce time and cost to completion
- Coach every student for success
- Improve college readiness
- Enhance student learning
- Develop structured pathways to in-demand careers and employers
- Engage more adult learners
- Close achievement gaps of under-resourced learners[12]

Developing meta-majors is a key strategy in this work. In 2014, the Transfer and Applied Team, a subgroup of LCCC's Completion Core Team that includes college faculty, staff, and administrators, was charged with investigating the design of guided pathways and meta-majors. Over the course of the academic year, the team met 12 times to identify meta-major program areas to pursue and to develop a process for designing pathways. The Transfer and Applied Team performed a detailed analysis to identify overlapping courses across all programs. The result was a list of major program areas clustered around common courses (e.g., health care, business, and education). The team worked with additional faculty members and program coordinators to map all programs across the college. Additionally, the team used local labor market information to align programs with local labor market need.

Initial results yielded 20 major areas of interest. Over the course of the year, the team worked to narrow this to 9 areas of interest, including engineering and manufacturing, information technology, human and social services, and more. The 9 meta-major areas listed below will be known as Program and Career Pathways.

Academics: In the next implementation step for 2016, the Transfer and Applied Team will work with program coordinators and faculty to create default program maps for each of the nine Program and Career Pathways. Program maps illustrate the default course sequence for a student's first year in a Program and Career Pathway, including recommended electives for each pathway. Figure 3 illustrates Lorain County Community College's Business and Entrepreneurship Program and Career Pathway.

PROGRAM AND CAREER PATHWAYS AT LCCC

Business & Entrepreneurship

Computer & Information Technology

Culinary & Hospitality

Education

Engineering & Manufacturing

Health & Wellness

Human / Social Services & Public Safety

Liberal & Creative Arts

Science & Math

WHICH PATH?

Not sure which business/entrepreneurship career to pursue? Begin with these classes:
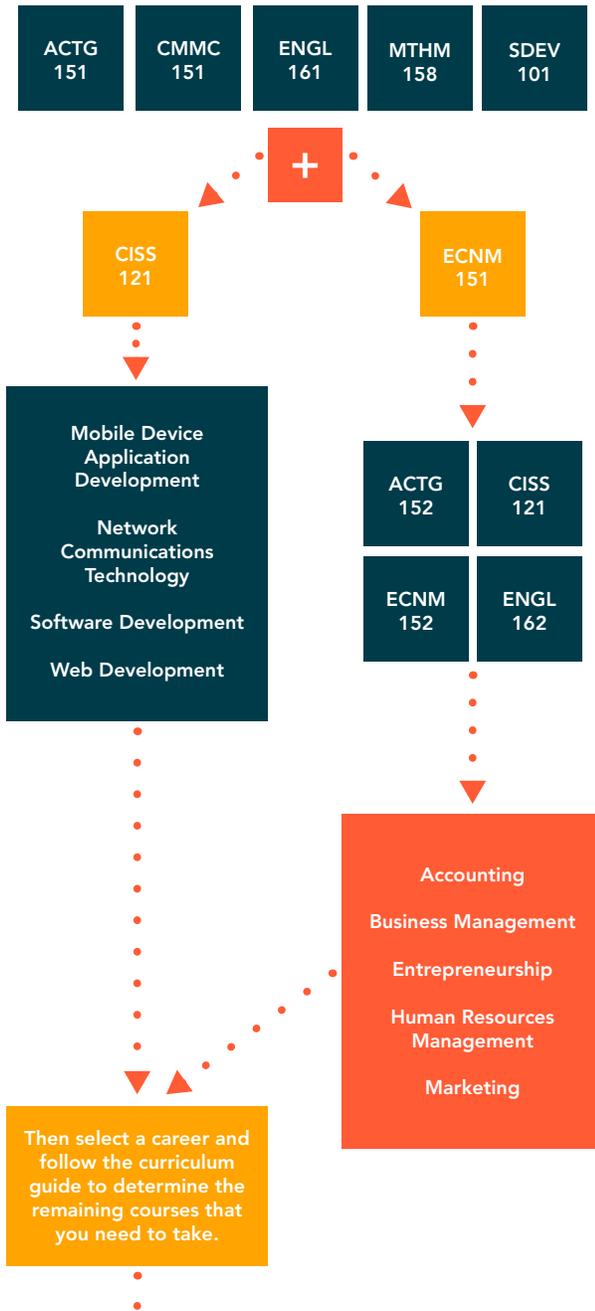
Figure 3: Business/Entrepreneurship Meta-Major
Source: Sutton, Stephanie. "How to Design Meta-Majors: Advice for Colleges and States." Presentation at the 96th AACC Annual Convention, Chicago, IL. April 11, 2016.

The meta-major map will link to a narrower program-specific map once the student chooses a specific program of study. For example, Figure 3 shows how a student might start in the business and entrepreneurship meta-major, refine their interests based on their first semester or two of coursework, and then declare a major in accounting.

In creating meta-majors, Lorain County Community College established the following guidelines for Program and Career Pathways:

- Gateway courses, including College Composition I, math, and College 101, should be included in the first semester of the curriculum

- The common meta-major courses should be included in the first two semesters of the curriculum

- One discipline-specific course from the student's eventual program should be included in each semester. This can be a technical course or a career-related general education course (e.g., Anatomy and Physiology can serve as a "majors" course in the health care meta-major).

Connection to the College: By presenting students with a meta-major map from their first point of contact with the college, LCCC is taking significant steps to make program requirements well defined, visible, and unavoidable. LCCC embeds the designation of a Program and Career Pathway in the online application, which reduces student choices from 120 different certificates and degrees to the 9 meta-majors. This gives students a clear understanding of their default pathway from their first point of contact and encourages undecided students to connect to an area of interest upon their entry into the college. The box on page 12 includes LCCC's new language on Program and Career Pathways in the college's course catalogue.

Description of Pathways in LCCC's Catalogue

"Program and Career Pathways are designed for regularly admitted, degree-seeking students who have an associate degree focus in mind but haven't narrowed it down to a specific major. This affords these students the opportunity to explore within defined areas of study such as Business and Entrepreneurship; Education; Health Wellness and Safety; Science and Math; etc. While in the Program and Career Pathway, students are required to meet with their Career and Academic Advisement Professional, Student Success Coach, or Academic Counselor every semester to ensure proper course selection. Additionally, students are encouraged to engage in career exploration activities either through their Academic Counselor or with a Career Development Specialist in the Counseling and Career Services area. Students may remain in the Program and Career Pathway for up to 24 college-level credit hours. Upon achieving 24 college-level credit hours, the student will then be required to select a specific major."[13]

Advising: In addition to creating default pathway maps, LCCC is implementing changes in advising, career counseling, and student support services to provide comprehensive supports for students in each Program and Career Pathway. For example, new students are now required to meet with an advisor upon entry into a Program and Career Pathway. This initial meeting includes the development of the student's default program map, known as MyCAP (Career Advantage Plan), that lists their course sequence. Students are then encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per semester prior to registering for the next semester. LCCC is also using behavioral nudges to encourage student progress and success. These nudges include sharing information about career programs and exploration opportunities

around students' pathways; reminders of class start dates, which are especially important for early registrants; positive messaging for successful midterm grades; encouragement to seek assistance based on C or below midterm grades; FAFSA completion reminders; and reminders of completion milestones to encourage continued progress.

Career Services: LCCC incorporates a number of existing career services tools into the Program and Career Pathways framework. For example, students have access to career workshops aligned with each Program and Career Pathway and to a comprehensive suite of online career planning resources through MyPlan, an interactive tool used to assess occupations based on career interests, personality and personal interests, and work values.[14] Students also have access to local labor market information through LCCC's Career Coach website, which provides data on wages, employment, job postings, and the related education and training necessary to enter these positions.[15]

LCCC continues to work with its large team of administrators, program coordinators, and faculty members to implement Program and Career Pathways in the 2016-17 academic year. In the coming year, LCCC is moving from a generalist to a specialist advising approach in each of nine Program and Career Pathways. Advisors will work proactively with their cohorts of students during the registration period and afterward to reinforce career selection and to ensure students persist on their pathway to completion. Faculty members will actively support the advising teams clustered around the Program and Career Pathways.

Miami Dade College

Planning and Review of Programs: In 2011, Miami Dade College (MDC) embarked on a yearlong planning process to redesign the student experience by reducing barriers to student success. MDC President, Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, charged college leadership with identifying obstacles to student persistence and completion, with the goal of identifying strategies for systemic change across the college. Led by the academic and student deans, the college organized forums with faculty, staff, and students across the eight campuses to gather feedback on student experiences at the college. Feedback from the forums and additional research led to the development of a college implementation plan that outlined strategies, including best practices and policies, to reduce barriers to student success.[16]

Five major recommendations emerged from the yearlong planning process:

- Develop and implement guided pathways with clear maps for students to transfer or enter the workforce

- Develop a comprehensive structured intake process

- Integrate academic and student supports

- Increase transition assistance into college-level programs

- Strengthen student engagement through the creation of communities of interest[17]

These recommendations make up what is now known as the Student Achievement Initiatives at Miami Dade College. The college prioritized the first three recommendations, and in 2012 MDC began implementing strategies to enact systemic change to enhance student success.[18]

In 2013, just after this process began at MDC, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1720, which included a provision for the development of meta-majors. All students enrolling in a Florida college must now choose a State Board of Education-approved meta-major, which are called Communities of Interest at MDC. This case study looks at the Community of Interest in health care on MDC's Medical Campus.

The Community of Interest at the Medical Campus, known as The NETWORK, seeks to create a community of students with similar academic and career goals by aligning faculty, staff, and student services across common areas of interest within health care fields. Specifically, The NETWORK works to accomplish the following goals:

- Increase the percentage of students persisting term-to-term

- Increase the percentage of students earning benchmarked college credits

- Increase the percentage of students entering a program of study

- Increase percentage of students receiving credentials within five years

- Decrease the percentage of students earning excess credits

- Decrease the average number of excess credits[19]

The NETWORK supports the foundational Student Achievement Initiatives by creating a structure for student outreach, advising, academics, and career services with the goal of enhancing student progress and completion.

Connection to the College: The NETWORK targets "pre-select students" across MDC's campuses, students who have expressed an interest in health care but not yet been selected into a health care program on the Medical Campus. Staff at the Medical Campus work across all MDC campuses to identify these students and connect them with the Medical Campus. Once pre-select students are identified,

they must attend a kickoff event with The NETWORK before registering for courses. The kickoff provides general descriptions of all programs and information on admissions requirements for each. Once students complete the kickoff, their registration hold is removed and each student is assigned a senior academic advisor, known as a coach, who will guide the student through the process of identifying a program on the Medical Campus.

Advising: The student's coach is assigned to them for the duration of their program. Upon entry into the NETWORK, students work with their coach to develop a term-by-term educational plan known as My Academic Plan. MAP includes all requirements for general education and major courses and is used to create a roadmap for the student's entire program. In addition to traditional academic advising, coaches also provide general guidance, connections to supportive services if needed, and planning throughout the student's program. Students are required to meet with their coach at least twice per month. Once students complete 25 percent of their program of study, advising becomes more intensive and is designed to support students' progress throughout the remainder of their program of study. As students move along in their programs, coaches provide information on internships and other work-based learning opportunities and help develop plans for transitioning to the workforce and/or further education.

Academics: The NETWORK also incorporates changes to the academic learning environment for students on the Medical Campus that include the development of contextualized courses and the addition of peer-learning opportunities. The Medical Campus has identified 10 common gateway courses that will be contextualized for health care programs,

including English, mathematics, reading, writing, communications, and critical thinking/ethics. Faculty members are currently working on developing contextualized curricula. The NETWORK is also integrating peer-led team learning into students' pathways. Students will be trained as lead tutors and will work with small groups of students to solve specially developed exercises that provide additional opportunities for students to build their health care knowledge and skills.

Career Services: The NETWORK builds in a number of opportunities to build connections with likeminded faculty, staff, and students. Students have the option to participate in Community of Interest workshops focused on different health care fields, which include topics like "A Day in the Life of a Patient," "Legal Aspects of a Health Care Professional," and "Workplace Professionalism in Health-Related Careers." Students also participate in professional speaker series and networking opportunities throughout their program. Additionally, advisors or coaches work with MDC's workforce development and Medical Campus clinical coordinators to provide internship and service learning experiences for students.

The Medical Campus is actively scaling the NETWORK by building connections to Miami Dade College's seven additional campuses to engage more pre-select students who are interested in health careers. For the current phase of implementation, the Medical Campus is focusing on strengthening the pipeline with the larger campuses. In the next phase, the Medical Campus will work to engage pre-select students from across all campuses.

KEY META-MAJOR QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Jobs for the Future, in partnership with Lorain County Community College and Miami Dade College's Medical Campus, developed the following set of key questions to consider at five critical decision points for designing and implementing meta-majors: planning, review of programs, student intake, kickoff, and progress. Each of the five areas includes a robust set of questions designed to guide college teams through key decisions as they consider whether and how to develop and implement meta-majors. These questions can be used to facilitate conversations with key stakeholders and are meant to provide a starting point for the critical ongoing design and implementation processes. Additionally, the questions give states a window into the issues the colleges must consider to implement meta-majors, which could help states align state policy so that it accelerates and supports the colleges efforts. The list below is an abbreviated version of the questions, which are available in full on jff.org/meta-majors

KEY META-MAJOR QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

PLANNING	REVIEW OF PROGRAMS	STUDENT INTAKE	KICKOFF	PROGRESS
Does the college want to implement meta-majors?	What is the full scope of programmatic offerings at this college?	How will the college place students into meta-majors?	What happens once a student has chosen a meta-major?	How does the meta-major infrastructure facilitate improved student progress and persistence in their pathway?

PLANNING

Does the college want to implement meta-majors?

What are the college's goals? Or what problem is the college trying to solve?

What building blocks are already in place (e.g., first-year experience, orientation, mapped pathways)?

What related technical software and hardware infrastructure is currently in place (e.g., SIS, LMS, early alert, course dev, placement and scheduling)?

Who will lead this implementation?

Which other stakeholders need to know about this?

What is the communications strategy?

How much will it cost to implement? Examples of costs include faculty release time, purchasing new advising software, etc.

How does the college's broader environment (e.g., state or college policy) support or inhibit meta-majors?

REVIEW OF PROGRAMS

What is the full scope of program-matic offerings at this college?

Do the college's programs align to the local labor market and/or four year transfer partner? Has the college validated its program offerings with employers?

What are the high-level program groupings?

Which general education courses align best to each meta-major?

How can the college integrate developmental education to ensure it serves as an on-ramp into meta-majors for students?

What type of curriculum governance model is required to guide decisions about meta-majors, course sequences, and future revisions?

STUDENT INTAKE

How will the college place students into meta-majors?

How does the college communicate meta-majors to prospective students?

How does the college communicate meta-majors to entering and matriculated students?

How does the college help students make informed choices about meta-majors?

How does meta-majors placement align with developmental education placement?

Are there self-serve resources for students that are aligned with and compliment advising services?

What type of staff education, training, and documentation is required to ensure consistency?

KICKOFF

What happens once students choose a meta-major

Do orientations, first-year experience courses, and student success courses align to the meta-major?

Does the advising infrastructure align to the meta-major?

What types of early career counseling experiences are aligned to the meta-major?

How will the colleges enforce pathway requirements to ensure progress?

PROGRESS

How does the meta-major infrastructure facilitate improved student progress and persistence in their pathway?

What support services can improve retention for this meta-major?

What work-based learning opportunities are relevant for each meta-major?

At what point in their academic career will students choose their major?

Are industry-recognized credentials built into the major?

Design Principles

Though colleges that are implementing meta-majors are doing so in different ways, the field is beginning to converge on a set of principles for designing and implementing meta-majors. JFF identified the following design principles as a result of our work with colleges, states, and other key partners.

Leadership commitment is clear. Transformative change is not easy, but the impact on student success is worth the effort. Commitment from all levels of leadership—from the president to faculty and administrators—is critical to successful implementation. Involve all stakeholders across the college in the process of exploring, designing, and implementing meta-majors. Implementation teams that work to develop buy-in from the top down and the bottom up are the most successful.

Faculty-driven leadership. Faculty buy-in is crucial to the process of analyzing and mapping program areas for meta-majors. Involve faculty from the beginning so they can play a strong leadership role throughout the process.

Design with the end in mind. Meta-majors are a key component of guided or structured pathways, and it is important to think through the complete pathway from connection all the way through to completion and into employment. Consider the institutional context—what courses and credentials have to be aligned within the college to create a coherent pathway with stackable certificates and degrees that students can move in and out of?

Map out existing building blocks. Use an asset mapping and gap analysis process to determine which program components you can build on and enhance as part of the meta-major design process.

Dissect and map out courses. Begin by mapping out existing courses to identify degree requirements and common courses shared across programs. This will help to identify potential areas of interest for creating meta-majors. Once areas of interest are identified, start mapping out the flow of courses beginning with the common courses across the meta-major; think of this like a funnel that starts very broad and narrows over time as students refine their area of interest.

Involve employers, community partners, alumni, and other key stakeholders. Consider the community context—which external stakeholders need to know about the college's pathway efforts? How are educational opportunities aligned with key stakeholders so that an individual can access next steps in a pathway at multiple places, including the workplace?

Align to high-demand jobs. Community colleges are for the most part educating students who want career opportunities in their town or their region. Use local labor market information on in-demand industries and occupations to shape meta-majors and support students in training for available careers.

Clear communication to students. Clear communication is essential! Make information about meta-majors and their course progressions into specific programs of study accessible to students from the point of entry in the college all the way to completion. Information on advising, student services, and career counseling, including labor market information on earnings data and career ladders, can be linked to each meta-major and easily accessible to students.

Data transparency. Collecting and using data is critical to the development and implementation of meta-majors and guided pathways more broadly. Data allows colleges to examine student progress and success and whether programs are able to meet local labor market needs. Analyzing data allows colleges to assess performance, set goals for improvement, and examine the impact of interventions to determine if adjustments need to be made.
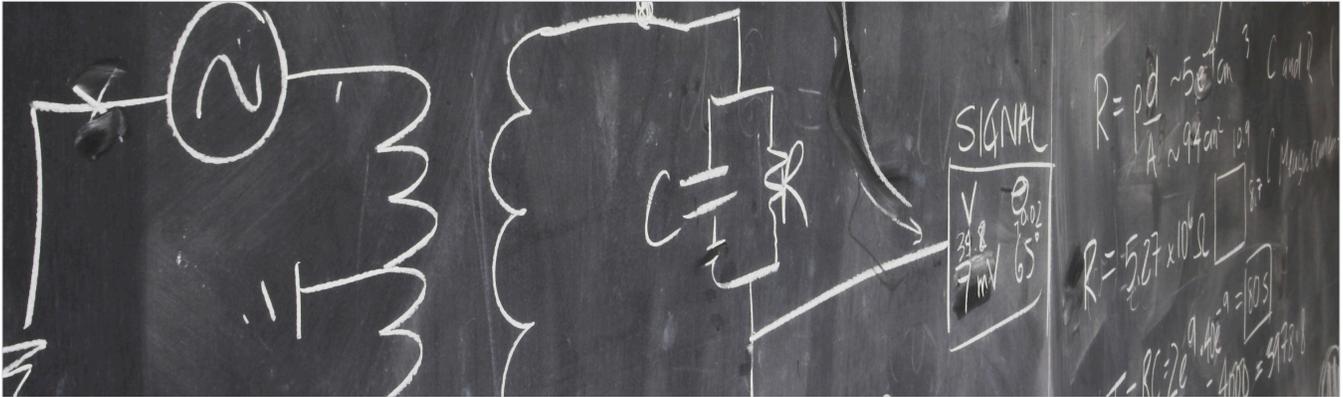
CONCLUSION

As the field moves toward an understanding of the importance of guided pathways, we turn our attention to the challenges of developing systems and structures that fulfill the promise of improving persistence and completion rates for low-income students. Structures and policies that narrow the overwhelming choices incoming students face and help them get on a clear path toward their goal of earning a credential or a degree are essential to effective guided pathways. Meta-majors are one such structure, replacing the overwhelming "cafeteria" of choices students face with sets of thoughtfully designed menus of options that allow students to complete a set of courses that fulfill basic requirements even before they are ready to settle on a specific career track. Meta-majors and similar programmatic approaches address a fundamental structural barrier that contributed to producing the abysmally low rates of college completion over the past decades. This paper seeks to scale the meta-majors conversation in the field by exploring the concept, looking at two in-depth examples from colleges in Ohio and Florida, offering a set of design principles, and posing key questions to help guide your thinking. Now it's up to you! We encourage colleges to use this information and the key questions to begin design conversations.

ENDNOTES

1. Nearly 4 out of 10 (38 percent) of those who enroll in occupational certificate programs and 6 out of 10 (58 percent) of those enrolling in occupational associate's degree programs do not earn a credential of any type within 6 years. Demos, Graduated Success report, February 2010 (sponsored by Gates). At public community colleges, only 20 percent of students earn a 2-year credential within 3 years. National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics, Table 341: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_341.asp. For students who start college requiring developmental education, fewer than 1 in 10 graduate within 3 years. National Center for Education Statistics. 2010. Digest of Education Statistics. Table 241.

2. Thomas Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Davis Jenkins coin this term and describe the "cafeteria-style self-service model" of college in "Redesigning America's Community Colleges," Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, p. 3.

3. Begley, Sharon. "I Can't Think! The Science of Making Decisions." *Newsweek*: March 7, 2011, p. 28-33.

4. Scott-Clayton, Judith. 2011. "The Shapeless River: Does a Lack of Structure Inhibit Students' Progress at Community Colleges?" CCRC Working Paper No. 25, Assessment of Evidence Series. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University (CCRC).

5. Jenkins, Davis & Sung-Woo Cho. 2012. "Get With the Program: Accelerating Community College Students' Entry into and Completion of Programs of Study." CCRC Working Paper No. 32. New York, NY: CCRC.

6. Adelman, Clifford. 2006. "The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

7. The terms "structured pathways" and "guided pathways" are often used interchangeably. Though the interventions colleges are undertaking are very similar, there are slight differences in meaning. "Guided" is sometimes used to emphasize that students are receiving more guidance, which some prefer to the notion of making education more structured. Jenkins, Davis. 2014. "Redesigning Community Colleges for Student Success: Overview of the Guided Pathways Approach." New York, NY: CCRC.

8. Couturier, Lara K. 2014. "Policy Meets Pathways." Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.

9. Scott-Clayton, Judith. "The Dark Side of Choice in Higher Education." *New York Times*, March 25, 2011; Scott-Clayton, 2011; Karp, Melinda Mechur. 2011. "Toward a New Understanding of Non-Academic Student Support: Four Mechanisms Encouraging Positive Student Outcomes in the Community College." CCRC Working Paper No. 28, Assessment of Evidence Series. New York, NY: CCRC; Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE). "A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success (A First Look)." Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program, 2012; Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

10. National Student Clearinghouse. 2015. "2014-15 Undergraduate Degree Earners Report: First-time Graduates and Graduates with Prior Awards." https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014-15UndergradDegreeEarnersRpt.pdf

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Jobs for the Future (JFF) is a national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations in the United States. We develop innovative career and educational programs and public policies that increase college readiness and career success, and build a more highly skilled workforce. With over 30 years of experience, JFF is the national leader in bridging education and work to increase economic mobility and strengthen our economy.

The Middle-Skill STEM Pathways Initiative increases the number of underrepresented college students who succeed in STEM education that leads to well-paying middle-skill jobs. JFF helps states and community colleges collaborate with local employers, public schools, and other community partners to align policies and practices to develop highly structured academic pathways, with comprehensive student supports, into STEM careers that require less than a four-year degree.

The Postsecondary State Policy team at Jobs for the Future advances policies to increase community college student success. They advise states and community college systems on the development of accelerated academic and career pathways—and the necessary supportive policies—to help more students graduate with credentials of high value to local employers.

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional nonprofits and other mission-aligned organizations in the U.S. and around the world in health, selected place-based initiatives, and education and human services.

We strive to make a meaningful impact in these areas, employing not only our significant financial assets, but also a rigorous and results-oriented approach and a keen understanding of the relevant issues, needs and opportunities.
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Completion by Design works with community colleges and their state partners to significantly increase credential completion and graduation rates for low-income students.

The initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, takes a new approach to an old problem, aiming at comprehensive institutional transformation to create permanent improvement. CBD collaborates with faculty and staff at a group of colleges to make systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices that strengthen pathways to completion while maintaining access and quality without increasing cost. The initiative also aligns state policy to support the colleges' work, and builds knowledge about how to succeed in this work at a large scale, with the goal of spreading CBD principles to other colleges in the state.
COMPLETIONBYDESIGN.ORG

Achieving the Dream, Inc. is a national nonprofit that is dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by: 1) guiding evidence-based institutional improvement, 2) leading policy change, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is leading the most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history. With over 200 institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams—working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia—the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network helps nearly 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.
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