



**Student Success Center
NETWORK**

Student Success Center Network

TEXAS: TAKING THE AACC PATHWAYS MODEL AND MAKING IT THEIR OWN

Texas Pathways is a statewide guided pathways implementation effort designed to scale pathways across Texas to dramatically boost college completion and improve the social and economic mobility of graduates. The Texas Success Center leads Texas Pathways, which is modeled on the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project. The Center is committed to engaging all 50 Texas community colleges as well as K–12 institutions, universities, and employers in the Texas Pathways initiative.

“At this point, 99 percent of community college students in Texas attend a college that is on the path to doing this work,” says Cynthia Ferrell, executive director of the Texas Success Center. “We now have legislators talking about guided pathways. It’s very exciting, and ultimately, the impact will be considerable.”

Texas Pathways: Scaling Throughout the State with Targeted Support

To create Texas Pathways, the Center adapted AACC’s six-institute curriculum, using the AACC content to create Texas Pathways institutes with four tracks. With differentiated curricula, the Center can support every college, whatever its level of readiness and capacity. Through this multi-level approach, all colleges can accelerate their pathways efforts.

“We wanted to provide support to all colleges, from those in advanced stages of implementation to those just exploring the guided pathways approach,” Ferrell says. “In the Texas model, every participating college has a coach, does advance work, and attends the institutes. And they all do work that is aligned with their current capacity and needs.”

Before the first institute, the Center held an application process to identify each college’s readiness and capacity. Then the Center organized the colleges into four cadres that align with the four institute tracks.

Cadre 1 colleges are ready to implement pathways at scale and participate in work that replicates the AACC Pathways institutes. The other three cadres are in tracks designed to prepare colleges for cadre 1 work at future institutes. When the first round of institutes is complete, the Center will ask all colleges to apply for the second round of institutes and will assign colleges to cadres based on their readiness and capacity at that time.



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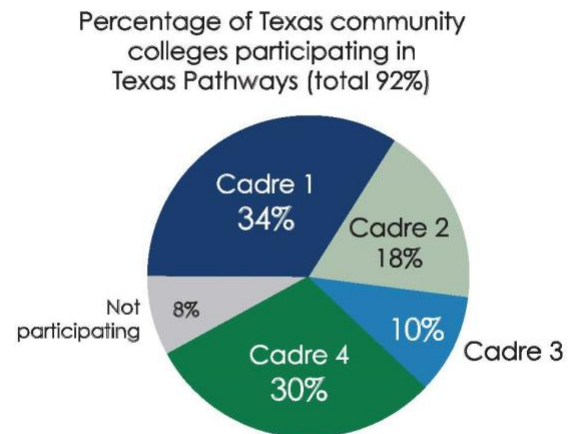
With initial funding from the Greater Texas Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, and TG, the Center launched Texas Pathways in summer 2016, and as of fall 2017, 46 of 50 Texas community colleges have begun pathways work. The Center holds two institutes per year, in November and March. The first round of six institutes will be completed in May 2019, and the second round will begin in November 2019.

Through additional funding provided by the Greater Texas Foundation, the TLL Temple Foundation, and the Teagle Foundation, the Center is able to support all colleges through the first two rounds of institutes. The Center provides institutes at no cost to college teams, with the exception of expenses for travel to and from the institute location.

Texas Pathways

Ninety-nine percent of Texas community college students attend a college that is doing pathways work. Participating colleges are at different stages of implementation, and all receive guidance and support based on their current needs.

Cadre	Readiness/capacity identified in 2016	Number of colleges
Cadre 1*	Implementing guided pathways at scale	17
Cadre 2	Building capacity to implement guided pathways	9
Cadre 3	Building data capacity	5
Cadre 4	Building the case and foundations for pathways	15
TOTAL		46



*Includes 5 AACC Pathways colleges and 12 Texas Pathways colleges

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A four-pronged strategy

The institutes are just one component of the Center's six-year strategy to scale guided pathways statewide. The comprehensive strategy includes four elements:

- **College support, including institutes and coaching.** In addition to developing and hosting the institutes, the Center is helping colleges use data and develop strategic plans.
- **Regional meetings.** Between institutes, the Center convenes colleges in local groups to work on issues best addressed with a regional approach. For example, colleges might engage university partners in discussions of regional pathways issues, such as transfer, high school college-readiness courses, and dual credit.
- **Research and knowledge development.** The Center and a steering committee are identifying research projects that will help the Center and colleges synthesize information to create white papers, policy briefs, and practitioner tools.
- **Boards of Trustees Institutes (BOTI).** Each year the Center asks each college CEO to invite two trustees to the BOTI. These events, which address how trustees can support pathways implementation, typically focus on policy and strategic planning.

Data drives partnerships

As part of its support, the Center helps colleges use data to design meta majors, develop wraparound services, and make large-scale changes to benefit students. The Center and the community colleges also incorporate data in their effort to extend pathways across educational and employment sectors.

“Our paths go from 8th graders choosing high school programs based on interest or skill set all the way through preparing for and having a meaningful career,” Ferrell explains. “The community colleges are the anchor with K–12, universities, and employers as partners.”

Texas tracks students' progress from 8th grade through employment, including the percentage of students graduating from a public high school, entering higher education, and earning a credential. Among students enrolled in 8th grade in 2004, for example, 20 percent received a higher education certificate or degree in 11 years (the students' 8th to 12th grade years plus six years). Statewide data also include a broad range of information about college readiness, time to degree, and transfer rates.

“Our colleges are working with K–12 partners to make sure high school students are choosing the courses and dual credit options that lead to meta majors,” Ferrell says. “We are developing partnerships with universities to align transfers, and we are collaborating with industry to align job skills.”



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Building on a strong foundation

The current efforts grew from initiatives Texas colleges have undertaken in the past decade, including work with Achieving the Dream (28 of Texas' 50 community colleges have participated), the Center for Community College Student Engagement, and Mathematics Pathways from The Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

"All of our earlier initiatives were part of our collective evolution," Ferrell explains. "And they all led us to the same place. They prepared us for the work we are doing now."

For instance, the Center has hosted an BOTI for the past 11 years. These institutes, funded by Houston Endowment and the Greater Texas Foundation, are a central part of the current six-year strategy.

"When trustees understand their role and support reform initiatives, they can change a policy, update a funding structure, or in other ways have the president's back," Ferrell says. "In that way, institutions are empowered to get things done."

Ferrell reports that institutional data can be a game changer for trustees. During the BOTI, trustees engage in discussions and planning informed by data, and the data typically show lower-than-desired student success rates. Trustees see lower-than-expected rates of developmental education completion, success in first college courses, accumulation of credits toward a credential, transfer, and employment. College presidents have told Ferrell, "This all changed when our trustees went to the institute, saw the data, and said, 'Not on my watch. What can I do?'"

For example, after data analysis and planning at the BOTI, Alamo College trustees approved a new tuition incentive for fall 2016 and spring 2017. Under the newly enacted Summer Momentum Plan, Alamo students can take free courses during the summer if they earn enough credits during the fall and spring semesters. For students who earn a total of 18–23 credits during the fall and spring semesters, the college will waive tuition for three credits in the summer. For students who earn 24 or more credits, the college will waive tuition for six summer credits. This imaginative tuition structure gives students an incentive to stay on the path and complete 60 hours in two years, saving them both time and money.

Follow our lead

Ferrell believes that if Texas can undertake this effort, any state should be able to do it. "We are huge and decentralized. Every one of our community colleges has its own elected board," she says. "Our colleges are choosing to do this one institution at a time. And then they are working together so that every college benefits from what each college learns."