

MICHIGAN CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

An Initiative of the Michigan Community College Association



Guided Pathways Cohort I: Progress and Success

Fall 2016

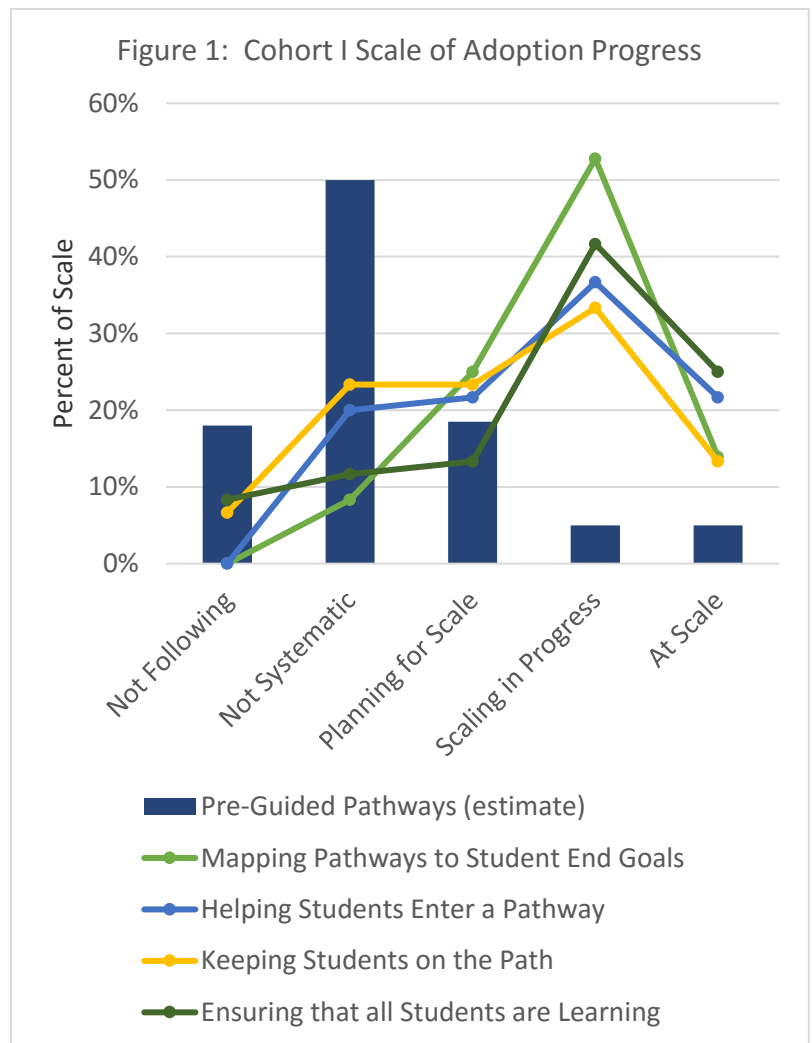
Beginning in 2014, the Michigan Center for Student Success launched the Michigan Guided Pathways Institute. In Fall 2014, 26 Michigan community colleges attended a convening to learn more about the Guided Pathways model and the extent to which their college was ready to participate. Ultimately, 23 colleges participated in two cohorts. The first cohort of 12 colleges, Cohort I, began their work in early 2015 and continued through summer 2016.

[Guided Pathways](#) is a comprehensive approach to community college reform. For colleges that seek to improve completion rates, the guided pathways framework presents a model which adopts a systematic redesign of the student experience. Academic programs are structured and mapped from beginning to end. Students are required to choose a major to enter an exploratory pathway, student progress toward completion is monitored and early warning systems alert faculty and advisors if students are off-track or not performing well in courses. Finally, faculty collaborate to develop program-level learning outcomes and assess progress toward achieving those outcomes for students all programs.

During 2015 and the first six months of 2016, the [Michigan Guided Pathways Institute](#) provided support to colleges through several one- and two-day institutes hosted at colleges across the state, through conference calls, and strategic webinars. Institute and webinar topics included facilitator training and stakeholder engagement, designing program maps, serving underprepared students, and monitoring student progress.

Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment

In June 2016, all 12 Cohort I colleges completed the [Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment](#) to report the extent to which the college is implementing the essential practices of guided pathways at scale. Figure 1 summarizes the progress of Cohort I colleges. Colleges completed a self-assessment tool developed by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University (CCRC), reporting the scale of adoption for each of the guided pathways essential practices. Prior to participating in the Michigan Guided Pathways Institute, colleges estimated that they were not systematic on most practices. After participating in the Institute, colleges made significant progress toward adopting the essential practices at scale as reflected in Figure 1.



The Michigan Guided Pathways Institute colleges that participated in Cohort I adopted the essential practices at varying level across institutions and colleges continue their work to implement guided pathways at scale. In June 2016, colleges were asked to identify the extent to which the essential practices were adopted at scale at their institution. As described in Figure 2, the scale ranged from *not following* through *at scale*. Colleges reported their scale of adoption for each essential practice with responses ranging across the scale.

Figure 2: Self-Assessment Adoption Scale

Scale of Adoption	Definition
<i>Not following</i>	College is currently not following or planning to follow this practice
<i>Not systematic</i>	Practice is incomplete, inconsistent, informal, and/or optional
<i>Planning to scale</i>	College is planning to implement the practice at scale
<i>Scaling in progress</i>	Implementation of the practice is in progress for all students
<i>At scale</i>	Practice is implemented at scale—that is, for all degree-seeking students

The following analysis prepared by CCRC researchers describes the implementation of the essential practices in each of the four main categories and summarizes areas of progress and areas requiring further development among the Cohort I colleges.

Mapping pathways to student end goals

Essential Practices

- Every program is well-designed to guide and prepare students to enter employment and further education in fields of importance to the college’s service area.
- Detailed information is provided on the college’s website on the employment and further education opportunities targeted by each program.
- Programs are clearly mapped out for students. Students know which courses they should take and in what sequence. Courses critical for success in each program and other key progress milestones are clearly identified. This information is easily accessible on the college’s website.

Progress in Michigan

Colleges have made progress mapping programs of study, ensuring that programs are aligned with employment opportunities and transfer destinations, and providing detailed information about employment opportunities. Most colleges are in the process of scaling this practice. Several colleges reported that they will have program maps available by the fall 2016 semester for all programs. However, most colleges are still in the process of identifying critical courses and other progress milestones for each program. Most colleges are in the process of redesigning their websites to include information on program maps and their connection to specific employment and further education outcomes.

Participating Colleges in the Guided Pathways Institute Cohort I

Delta College
Jackson College
Macomb Community College
Montcalm Community College
Muskegon Community College
St. Clair County Community College

Henry Ford College
Lansing Community College
Mid Michigan Community College
Mott Community College
Northwestern Michigan College
West Shore Community College

Essential Practices

- Every new student is helped to explore career/college options, choose a program of study and develop a full-program plan as soon as possible.
- Special supports are provided to help academically unprepared students to succeed in the “gateway” courses for the college’s major program areas—not just in college-level math and English.
- Required math courses are appropriately aligned with the student’s field of study
- Intensive support is provided to help very poorly prepared students to succeed in college-level courses as soon as possible
- College works with high schools and other feeders to motivate and prepare students to enter college-level coursework in a program of study when they enroll in college.

Progress in Michigan

Some colleges indicated that they include career and college planning as part of new student orientation and first-year student success courses, but not all entering students participate. Few colleges have integrated academic supports with college-level offerings in math, English, and other program-area gateway courses, though most are planning to do so. Several colleges indicated that the first step will be to identify the gateway courses in each program of study. Colleges also highlighted their commitment to offering tutoring and supplemental instruction, but these services are often optional for students. Most colleges currently offer multiple math pathways, while others are in the process of scaling math pathways. It is not clear, however, whether program maps include a default math pathway as several colleges indicated that they are still in the process of developing rules for placing students into the math courses for their program of study. Several colleges appear to be planning how to best serve very poorly prepared students in a systematic and targeted way. One college has an assigned staff member who provides individual advising to students who place in the lowest levels of preparation for college. Most colleges have partnerships with local high schools and offer dual enrollment programs. However, few seem to be focused on helping students explore options for careers and college and motivating and preparing them to enter particular fields of study.

Keeping students on a path

Essential Practices

- Advisors monitor which program every student is in and how far along he/she is toward completing their program plan.
- Students can easily see how far they have come and what they need to do to complete their program
- Advisors are alerted when students are at risk of falling off their program plans and has policies and supports in place to intervene in ways that help students get back on track.
- Assistance is provided to students who are unlikely to be accepted into limited access programs such as nursing to redirect to another more viable path to credentials and a career.
- The college schedules courses to ensure students can take the courses they need when they need them, can plan their lives around school from one term to the next, and can complete their programs in as short a time as possible.

Progress in Michigan

At most colleges, advisors do not systematically monitor students’ progress on individual program plans. Several colleges are exploring technology solutions to help with monitoring students’ progress. While several colleges indicated that students are able to monitor their progress towards completion of their program, others stated that they need to implement new systems or upgrade current technologies and then train students to use the applications. Many colleges are exploring technology solutions to help identify students who are at risk of falling off their plan, and others are planning to start implementation by fall 2016. Currently, this practice is not widespread among the colleges. Note that CCRC research indicates that to fully exploit the potential of e-advising technologies to improve student outcomes, colleges need to rethink and reorganize advising roles and practices across the student pathway through college. Similarly, most colleges have not yet systematically implemented policies and processes for identifying students who are unlikely to be accepted into limited access programs and may need help “redirecting” to a more viable path. Most colleges discussed improving their scheduling processes. Several colleges indicated that they publish full-year schedules and are considering block scheduling or other strategies for improving predictability of schedules. However, the biggest barrier to more predictable scheduling is that students are not consistently on program plans.

Essential Practices

- Learning outcomes are clearly defined for each of our programs (not just courses).
- Learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements for success in the further education and employment outcomes targeted by each program.
- Faculty assess whether students are mastering learning outcomes and building skills across each program
- Faculty use the results of learning outcomes assessment to improve the effectiveness of instruction in their programs.
- The college tracks mastery of learning outcomes by individual students and that information is easily accessible to students and faculty.

Progress in Michigan

Most of the colleges are either at scale or currently scaling program learning outcomes. It is not clear, however, whether these SLOs are readily accessible on the colleges' websites. The majority of colleges are either at scale or are currently scaling processes related to how faculty assess whether students are achieving learning outcomes and use the results of these assessments to improve instruction. Few college currently tracks mastery of program learning outcomes or competencies by individual student, although they are planning to do so.

Looking Forward

The Michigan Center for Student Success launched a second cohort of eleven Michigan colleges who are participating in the Guided Pathways Institute. They include Bay College, Glen Oaks Community College, Grand Rapids Community College, Kellogg Community College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Lake Michigan College, Monroe County Community College, North Central Michigan College, Oakland Community College, Schoolcraft College, and Washtenaw Community College. These eleven colleges began their engagement in December 2015 and will continue to participate through June 2017. Much like their peers in Cohort I, the Cohort II colleges are making significant progress toward adopting the essential practices at scale.

The MCSS continues to evaluate how it can leverage the significant progress of the Cohort I colleges and provide additional support. As the MCSS regularly assesses colleges' needs and solicits feedback from participating institutions, improving advising practices and monitoring student progress toward completion have emerged as an important aspect of the guided pathways framework in which colleges are eagerly seeking additional support.

Resources

[CCRC Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment](#)

[Michigan Center for Student Success Guided Pathways Institute materials and webinars](#)

Acknowledgements

The Michigan Center for Student Success recognizes the generous support of The Kresge Foundation which provided a grant to fund this and many other initiatives of the MCSS. The MCSS receives technical assistance from the Community College Research Center, Public Agenda, and the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement. The MCSS would like to thank all of our technical assistance specialists and specifically Maggie Fay, Davis Jenkins and Hana Lahr from the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University for the use of their Scale of Adoption Assessment and for the analysis of the feedback from the colleges that appears in this publication.

Michigan Center for Student Success

The Michigan Center for Student Success is an initiative of the Michigan Community College Association. The Center was founded in 2011 with a generous grant from the The Kresge Foundation. The Michigan Center for Student Success provides state-level support to Michigan's 28 community colleges by serving as a hub connecting leadership, administrators, faculty, and staff in their emerging and ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes, emphasizing linkages between practice, research, and policy. Visit our website at www.mcca.org for additional information about the Center, our initiatives, and to access publications, webinars, and materials from events hosted by the MCSS.