

Project Two: Completion-based Course Scheduling to Support the Guided Pathways Implementation at Scale

Introduction and Rationale

After a year of College-wide data inquiry and planning, MiraCosta College embarked on implementing the Guided Pathways framework (known as Redesigning the Student Experience) to address equity and student success gaps. A fundamental goal of Guided Pathways is to increase the rate at which underrepresented students earn college credentials, particularly degrees and credentials in fields of high economic value, while also closing gaps for low-income students, students of color, returning adults, students with disabilities, and other groups with inequitable outcomes.

In November 2016, the College began developing meta-majors and course sequence guides as part of the implementation effort. In spring 2017, the initial meta-major planning group sought input from the entire college community about the formation of meta-majors at MiraCosta. Four consultation activities, including student focus groups and a student survey with 1850 participants, concluded there was wide support for the six proposed meta-major groupings and a preference to name them Academic and Career Pathways (ACPs). In fall 2017, the College's primary governance groups reviewed and endorsed the planning group's final report and recommendations. The College Council subsequently adopted the proposed ACP model. The 2018/19 College catalog presented the six ACPs publicly for the first time and introduced the ACP concept as a communal opportunity for students to receive support and guidance as they work with their like-minded peers toward their academic and career goals. ACPs focus on targeted outreach, engagement, and intervention in three of the College's disproportionately impacted student groups: Latinx, Black/African American, and adult students over 25 years old.

MiraCosta also committed to developing course sequence guides, later named academic maps, for all credit programs to provide students who do not have an individualized education plan with a suggested term-by-term pathway to their educational goal. In spring 2017, discipline and counseling faculty began collaborating on each map's design to ensure the suggested sequences and detailed notes would help students achieve their educational goals in a timely manner. Recognizing the need to ensure each program's official outline and its corresponding academic map communicate the same information, the College developed a faculty-led process for developing maps as new programs are approved and modifying maps as programs are updated. Currently, the College has at least one academic map for 86 percent of its degree programs and 67 percent of its certificate programs. All maps are available to students on the College website.

In 2019/20, the College spent a year in collaborative discussions through the “Design Community” and landed on a strategy to operationalize ACP success teams that would scale holistic support for all first-time-to-college students, with a specific focus on the disproportionately impacted populations. The model of the design community allowed input from all areas of the institution, resulting in a student success team model that incorporates various student and instructional services. In fall 2020, the College launched ACP success teams.

One of the main charges for these teams is to connect students to career and education planning services early on with the goal to increase the number of comprehensive student education plans (CSEPs) that are completed in each student’s first year. The pre-pandemic baseline metric for education plan development is 46 percent. ACP success team members are proactively reaching out to students without CSEPs and connecting them to counselors specialized in programs by ACP. The first two semesters of the success team operations further highlighted the need for dedicated personnel, sustainable funding, and appropriate case management technology.

In spring 2021, the College’s top leadership and Board of Trustees (BOT) made the development of the five-year Guided Pathways implementation plan a key priority. The plan was to include significant structural changes to the budget, technology, and staffing needed for institutionalizing Guided Pathways efforts. The College used the scale of adoption assessment (SOAA) to prioritize the work of redesigning the student experience and align the strategies and tactics with the new mission, vision, values, commitment, and institutional goals. Input was also gathered from ACP success team members and other high-touch programs to understand specific resources needed for effective implementation of the success team approach.

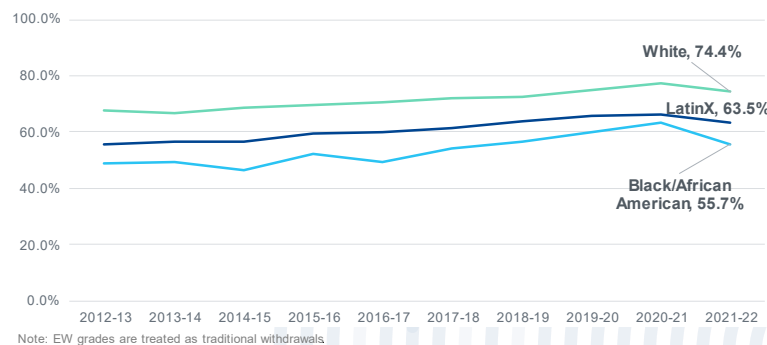
The BOT approved the plan in late spring 2021. Since then, the College has completed a comprehensive process mapping and selected a customer relationship management (CRM) system to provide a robust technology infrastructure for the case management of students in ACPs. New permanent positions have been created or repurposed and onboarded:

- ACP program manager
- CRM business systems analyst
- ACP-specific counselors
- Associate career counselors.

The College has also implemented an ongoing advisory committee that incorporates student success, equity, and Guided Pathways priorities. This committee will be responsible for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the student success and equity reforms across the District through the redesign of the student experience.

While academic maps and education planning efforts through ACP success teams have provided opportunities for “clarifying the path,” so students know what courses to take to complete a selected program of study within a reasonable time, these efforts alone do not ensure students can access the courses they need for completion. In addition, academic maps are often too generic and do not provide recommendations for students on specific general education (GE) courses or electives. As a result, the College continues to see low persistence and completion rates, especially among students of color and adult learners. Out of 2,156 first-time-to-college students entering MiraCosta in 2018/19, only 60 percent persisted to the second year (fall-to-fall), and only 27 percent earned a certificate, degree, or transfer units by the end of their third year. Latinx and Black students experienced even lower success rates compared to White students, with only 21 percent of Latinx and 16 percent of Black students completing degrees/certificates or transferring within three years.

MiraCosta DE Equity Data– Success Credit Only



Importantly, the College’s incoming student cohorts and overall full-time-equivalent student (FTES) are both in decline: over the past five years, FTES has declined more than 23 percent and the cohort of matriculated students has declined more than 5 percent. These declines started prior to the pandemic but were

exacerbated during academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. Disproportionate impact in the success rates of online courses has a direct correlation to the overall retention and completion rates for the College’s historically underserved populations (see Standard II.A.7).

Leading and lagging indicator data from academic year 2021/22 demonstrate the negative impact the pandemic has had on gateway course completion, persistence, and four-year completion:

Overall (Cohort Min = 369)	Start	Finish	1-Yr Change	3-Year Change
Gateway Courses (Math)	28.2%	28.1%	-5	0
Gateway Courses (English)	49.5%	45.9%	-4	-4
Gateway Courses (Both)	24.0%	22.6%	-5	-1
Fall-to-Fall Persistence	60.0%	56.9%	0	-3
Credit Completion Ratio	67.4%	57.5%	-7	-10
Four-Year Completion	19.7%	22.9%	0	3

The California Community Colleges Scale of Adoption Assessment lists the following as one of the essential practices of Guided Pathways:

3e. 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.

The current practice at MiraCosta College is semester-by-semester course scheduling that needs to

- better respond to student program completion needs;
- improve cross-departmental collaboration; and,
- move beyond historic rollover schedules.

This project proposes to improve program completion by redesigning the schedule development and enrollment management process to include innovative completion-based, student-centered scheduling practices and intrusive advising/supports to guide students through program onboarding and course registration. This project also addresses the improvement plan connected to Standard II.A.6.

Anticipated Impact on Student Learning and Achievement

The College's Guided Pathways (Redesigning the Student Experience) implementation will impact student outcomes measured as part of the College's leading and lagging indicators, including increases in goal completion, shortened time to completion, increases in course access, success, retention, and goal completion for disproportionately impacted groups and students historically under-served and under-represented, increased career awareness and job placement, increased transfer to four-year universities and colleges, and increased sense of support and belonging at the College.

Students will achieve an increased sense of stability and support when they can know their class schedule more than a semester at a time; student well-being will increase as adult students and working students can plan work and home schedules around a consistent and predictable class schedule. Additionally, more efficient scheduling will positively impact College operations and fiscal stability.

Outcome Measures

The College anticipates that a completion-based course scheduling will likely take three-to-four years to implement. The outcome measures targeted by this project include the following:

- An increase in fill rates and efficiency metrics in courses offered from overall fill rate of 80 percent (fall 2022) to 86 percent (fall 2025).
- An increase in percentage of students completing their educational goal (degree, certificate, or transfer) in the first three years.
- A decrease in the average number of accumulated units at the time of graduation per guided pathways metrics.
- A decrease in identified equity gaps for all DI populations (identified via Student Equity Plan and ACP groups).
- An increase in key momentum points:
 - First year completion of college-level math and English (2020/21 data showed 31.6 percent of cohort meeting this metric; 2021/22 shows 22.6 percent)
 - Completed comprehensive education plan in year one (currently 27.7 percent)
 - Year one persisted fall to spring (currently 69.8 percent)
 - Year one to year two persistence (fall-to-fall; currently at 58.6 percent)
 - Year three earned certificate, degree, or transfer (currently at 27 percent)

Project Action Plan

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Required	Timeline
Form a strategic enrollment management (SEM) task force to conduct data inquiry and develop a SEM plan for the institution, which would include specific scheduling tactics to address the needs of various student populations.	VPIS VPSS	Time of staff and faculty participating on the committee Data/RPIE Budget for convenings	Spring 2023 to fall 2023: formation of the task force and initial data inquiry phase. Spring 2024 to fall 2024: SEM plan development.
Revise academic maps to include a suggested list of GE courses and align them with two-year program schedules developed. Include development of part-time student maps for certificates of achievement as well as degrees.	Guided Pathways counseling faculty co-lead Dean of Counseling	Office of Instruction and Student Services staff Department chairs' time Budget for convenings	Spring 2023 to spring 2024
Implement REACH and Adult SEM learnings and disseminate as part of	Dean of IS	Time/FLEX presentations	Fall 2023

enrollment management outreach and education.	VPSS VPIS	Budget for convenings	
Utilize the academic maps and education plan data to develop two-year scheduling plans that support student progress toward completion. These plans will incorporate specific GE and major course recommendations.	Dean of Counseling Dean of IS Enrollment database specialist	Department chairs' time Counselors' time BSA	By end of fall 2023
Develop and pilot all eight-week course schedules for most popular degrees in each ACP (at least one per ACP), including GE and major courses. Explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully asynchronous online schedules. On ground schedules with coordinated time blocks. 	Dean of IS Enrollment database specialist ACP instructional faculty liaisons (IFLs)	Department chairs' time Counselors' time Instructional deans Marketing budget PIO time	Develop (by end of Spring 2023) Pilot (AY 2023/24, 2024/25)
Transition to an annual schedule planning process rather than semester-by-semester. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a new timeline for schedule development. Develop scheduling and enrollment management guidelines and resources for department chairs. Create an incentive program encouraging students to plan and enroll in courses up to a year in advance. 	Dean of IS VPIS Enrollment database specialist Department chairs	Consultant Scheduling software TBD	Spring 2024

Establish additional venues for collaboration between different academic departments and between academic departments and counseling to create more linear paths for student completion. Also, establish a mechanism to provide feedback to the Office of Instruction on scheduling that is most beneficial to students concerning modality, length of term, and time blocks.	VPIS Dean of IS Department chairs and faculty leads Enrollment database specialist	Budget for convenings Consultant from Sierra College RPIE data dashboards	Spring 2023
Using statewide data and tools, redesign curriculum to streamline pathway and conform with AB 1111 and AB 928. Streamlined curriculum will improve program maps and eliminate excess student units.	Articulation officer CPC chair/committee Curriculum specialist Department chairs	TBD statewide tools Budget for convenings	Summer 2024
Using the data from the CRM system and the ACP success team structure, provide supports and guidance to students through program onboarding and course registration.	ACP program manager Dean of IS	CRM BSA time CRM senior applications developer time Instructional Services BSA time Target X/salesforce CRM licensing fees Staffing for ACP success teams (e.g., success coaches) Marketing and outreach budget	Spring 2023 to fall 2025