



All are Welcome

Creating Statewide Capacity and Structure to Implement
Evidence-Based Reforms across all Colleges



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About the Author

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About Strong Start to Finish

Right now, a first-year student sits in a college classroom being ill-served by remedial math.

And if we fail them, they mostly likely will not earn their degree. There is a persistent trend among students placed in remedial or developmental courses – particularly math and English. They are not completing the courses and, in most cases, should not be taking them in the first place. This should not be their path.

We are a network of like-minded individuals and organizations from the policy, research, and practice spaces who've come together for one reason – to help all students, not just the select few, find success in postsecondary education.

Strong Start to Finish was created to better the chances of low-income students, students of color and returning adult students, to create a fundamental shift in the outcome of their college journey. We have networked higher education leaders, policy entrepreneurs, institutions and technical assistance providers to drive towards an outcome where all students pass their first credit-bearing English and math courses during the first year of study.

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Abstract

Primary Audience:

The primary, though not sole, audience for this publication is a System Chancellor or President of an institution.

Problem Statement:

When considering how to scale reforms across multiple institutions, it is critical to acknowledge the varied capacity and readiness of individual colleges and to structure a staged implementation process that will accommodate these differences.

Action:

The Texas Success Center established the multi-year Texas Pathways strategy with four cadres of colleges to support the staged implementation of the holistic guided pathways reforms across the community colleges in the state.

Context:

Texas Pathways reflects the culmination of more than a decade of reform efforts among the community colleges in the state to fundamentally change students' experiences at their institutions and ensure more students complete a postsecondary credential with labor market value. This project builds on a plethora of state and national student success completion initiatives including the state's Closing the Gaps and 60x30TX strategic plans to improve student outcomes and increase education attainment.

Process:

Leveraging the launch of the Texas Success Center in 2013 to create and sustain organizational capacity to advance reforms, 48 community colleges in the state embarked on Texas Pathways. This 5-year strategy integrates two rounds of institutes with ongoing coaching and technical assistance to support the implementation of Guided Pathways reforms at scale among all the community colleges in the state.

Outcomes:

Across all colleges and within individual institutions, state-level data suggests that trends for improvement are evident on both early momentum metrics (i.e. credit accumulation and passing the first college-level course) as well as longer term outcomes such as credentials awarded.

Sources of Support:

The Texas Success Center has garnered significant financial backing to support Texas Pathways from both foundations and the State of Texas. To support the implementation of this project, TSC has partnered with a number of national organizations that are supporting the pathways movement across the country to provide technical assistance to the colleges in Texas.

Introduction

After 15 years of reform in America’s community colleges, the field has learned much about obstacles students encounter that prevent them from realizing their education goals. Thanks to sustained attention by foundations, states and leading institutions, we have elevated promising practices that can help more students succeed. Through these efforts we have accumulated solid evidence about strategies that work and, yet, the needle has only moved modestly on community college student outcomes overall. Why? One important reason for insufficient improvements is that too few institutions have implemented evidence-based changes. Key impediments to scaling proven reforms are often inadequate knowledge and capacity within institutions about the strategies research suggests will work, as well as inadequate technical assistance and support to implement them. This paper draws on the experience of the Texas Success Center (TSC), which is housed in the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC), to illuminate how state leaders might organize technical assistance and professional development to help colleges at varied levels of readiness to adopt promising practices. More specifically, in this paper we highlight the efforts of Texas community colleges to implement guided pathways reforms through TSC’s Texas Pathways strategy.

Context

Location & Student Population

This paper explores support TSC is providing to 48 of the state’s 50 community colleges as part of Texas Pathways. The colleges participating in Texas Pathways enrolled 738,317 students in the fall of 2017. This number represents 99.3% of all the students enrolled in Texas community colleges. The participating colleges are organized into four groups, or cadres. There is also a fifth group of colleges that were involved in a related national Pathways Project led by the American Association of Community Colleges. These colleges are referred to as the “AACC Cadre” and are separated out in the data below, but this group of colleges is integrated in Cadre 1

activities as part of the Texas Pathways strategy. These cadres, which are described in greater detail later in the paper, reflect the differing capacity and readiness of the colleges to engage in the reform work and the type of supports they will receive as part of Texas Pathways.¹ Table 1 below highlights enrollment and student characteristics by cadre for Fall 2017 and provides a sense of the students impacted by the Pathways work in these different college groupings. (A listing of the colleges in each cadre can be found in the Appendix.)

TABLE 1- STUDENT POPULATION BY TEXAS PATHWAYS CADRE

Texas Pathways Cadre	Community Colleges Statewide	AACC Cadre	Cadre 1	Cadre 2	Cadre 3	Cadre 4
Number of Colleges	50	4	14	8	5	17
Total Fall Enrollment	734,244	125,509	393,504	54,875	45,810	118,619
Percent of Students by Subgroup						
% Receiving Pell	50%	54%	50%	44%	43%	50%
% African American	13%	6%	15%	14%	16%	
% Native American	0.3%	0.04%	0.3%	1%	1%	0.3%
% Asian/ Pacific Islander	5%	3%	7%	3%	3%	4%
% Hispanic	44%	65%	43%	27%	24%	41%
% Multiple Races	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
% White	32%	21%	27%	50%	47%	41%
% Age 24 or Under	72%	74%	69%	74%	72%	77%
Cadre as Percent of State Total						
% Total Fall Enrollment	N/A	17%	53%	7%	6%	16%
% All Pell Receipts	N/A	18%	53%	6%	5%	16%
% All Minority Students	N/A	50%	56%	5%	4%	14%

Policy Factors

Over the past decade (or more), Texas policymakers have sought to improve higher education outcomes by adopting policies that challenged institutions to implement desirable reforms. While there has been deliberation on a range of policy issues such as developmental education, transfer and articulation, and dual enrollment, there have been a few key actions that have risen above the others to help shape the direction of community college reform in Texas.

Closing the Gaps: The Texas Higher Education Plan

In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), which is the state higher education governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor to provide leadership and coordination of higher education in the state, published *Closing the Gaps: The Texas Higher Education Plan*. This

plan offered a series of strategies to meet four goals focused on improving participation, success, excellence and research by 2015. The goal was to increase the number of degrees, certificates and other identifiable student successes from high-quality programs by 50 percent by the year 2015.² In 2015, THECB sought to sustain and extend the focus and attention the Closing the Gaps attainment goal had garnered and set a subsequent benchmark referred to simply as 60x30TX. The new goal is to have 60 percent of young adults (25-34) in Texas attaining some type of postsecondary credential by 2030.³ Taken together, these plans and goals have served as an important “north star” as colleges have worked to implement reforms.

Student Success Points

Closing the Gaps and 60x30TX provide broad goals for colleges and universities to aspire to, but the plans do not spur institutions to action. To establish an incentive for institutions to adopt reforms, in 2013 the Texas Legislature adopted a performance funding model for all community colleges. Referred to as Student Success Points, this funding model includes 11 metrics overall: three on college readiness; three related to success in the first college-level course; two pertaining to progress toward a credential; two for credentials awarded; and one related to transfer to a university.⁴ The adoption of the Student Success Point funding model, coupled with the statewide attainment goals articulated by THECB, have served as significant motivation for colleges to embrace state and national reform efforts that are described in the next section.

Enabling Conditions

This section articulates several key conditions that have helped to enable the reform work of the Texas community colleges. These enabling conditions include: Leveraging national reform initiatives, committing to collective action, creating statewide capacity to advance reforms, and embracing a shared vision.

Leveraging National Reform Initiatives: The Role of Achieving the Dream

In the early 2000s there was a mounting national concern among policymakers, philanthropic leaders, and others that too few students were graduating from college. This trend, which was particularly acute with community colleges across the country, was confirmed by new graduation rate data that were being collected by the U.S. Department of Education and led to a succession of state and national reform initiatives to improve student outcomes. Arguably the most prominent of these was Achieving the Dream (ATD), which was launched in 2004. Texas was one of the original states to join this groundbreaking effort that was designed to close achievement gaps and advance student success nationally through a four-pronged approach that is focused on: 1) guiding evidence-based institutional change, 2) influencing public policy, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public.⁵ Texas was a compelling early choice for this work because of the diversity of the student population and the “achievement gap” between various subgroups.

Thirty-three Texas community colleges have participated in this national network of reform-oriented institutions. Eighteen of these colleges have gone on to attain ATD “Leader College” status, which is granted to colleges that show sustained improvement over time.

In addition to the individual participating colleges, TACC also served as the state policy lead organization for ATD. TACC’s primary focus in this role was to leverage the work of ATD colleges to advance a student success policy agenda, but the association has also pursued strategies to build on the momentum of these reform efforts in the state. For example, building on efforts started by the Community College Leadership Program at University of Texas-Austin, through the TSC, TACC has sustained and expanded the Board of Trustee Institutes (BOTI) that provide professional development to the elected board members at community colleges. The BOTI began as of the early ATD work in Texas in 2006, transitioned to TACC in 2013 as part of the emerging body of work of the TSC, and will be expanded as a component of Texas Pathways. The expansion of BOTI will include board members from all 50 community colleges in the state.

Committing to Collective Action: The Influence of the Dana Center Mathematics Pathways

ATD has served as an important catalyst to continuous improvement efforts in Texas. Other reform-oriented projects like the Developmental Education Initiative⁶, Student Success by the Numbers⁷, and Texas Completes⁸ are examples of subsequent initiatives that have further established a pattern of individual colleges coming together to learn from one another in a learning community and to advance a shared student success agenda with implications for both policy and practice. This trend in Texas toward collective action among the colleges culminated in work that has had perhaps the most influence on current reform efforts in the state—the Dana Center Mathematics Pathways (DCMP).⁹

DCMP, which was launched in 2012 as the New Mathways Project and has since grown to include work outside of Texas, started as a partnership between the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas-Austin and TACC. Recognizing the significant impediment that math courses present to student success and the substantial work of the Dana Center (and others) to build better math pathways, the presidents of all 50 colleges came together through TACC and committed resources to support the development of New Mathways Project statewide. As the name implies, the project was designed to clarify the math course sequences students needed based on their academic major and educational goals. Nine colleges initially worked with the Dana Center to co-develop these new courses, and the other colleges had the opportunity to participate in capacity building activities.¹⁰ Subsequently, all 50 Texas community colleges have implemented the DCMP principles and many are using the curriculum that has been developed.

Creating Statewide Capacity to Advance Reforms: The Launch of the Texas Success Center

As noted above, the growing number of community colleges in Texas that have been actively engaged in various state and national student success initiatives has been an important enabling condition in Texas. While all of the college presidents have embraced the need to work collectively, they also recognized that TACC's lacked the organizational capacity to advance a coherent, sustained student success agenda.

2013 marked another important milestone for the colleges in the state. That fall, TACC launched the Texas Student Center with three years of initial funding from partner foundations. The goal was to create "a coherent, statewide framework for action and supports the 50 community college districts in the state as they evaluate, align, and integrate their work to increase student success."¹¹ As one of the first SSCs to emerge nationally, Texas was at the forefront of creating the critical infrastructure to build the capacity of individual colleges to implement evidence-based student success reforms.

Embracing a Shared Vision: Guided Pathways as the Framework for Action

Building on the work of previous initiatives, the willingness of the colleges to work collectively and the launch of the Texas Success Center, the final piece of the puzzle for Texas has been the establishment of guided pathways as the shared long-term vision for improving student success in Texas.

Texas Pathways embraced the growing national movement to implement guided pathways as a means to improve student outcomes through streamlined programs of study and enhanced student support systems. The Texas approach to this work, which is described in detail in the next section, draws on the national Pathways Project managed by AACC, albeit with some important distinctions.

Guided pathways, which emerged from previous reform efforts like ATD and Completion by Design¹², "is an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market."¹³ The Pathways Model is based on CCRC's research and their book—*Redesigning America's Community Colleges*. The model is focused on holistic institutional reform and can be summarized in four straightforward dimensions:

1. Clarify paths to student end goals
2. Help students choose and enter a pathway
3. Help students stay on path
4. Ensure that students are learning¹⁴

Underlying each of these four dimensions is a series of “essential practices” that are designed to clarify and streamline a student’s experience at the community college to help them make informed choices that will get them to their desired educational goal faster.

The national Pathways Project, which has been led by AACC, involves a partnership of 12 national organizations that have come to be known as the Pathways Collaborative (described in “technical assistance support” section below).¹⁵ These organizations, which have been involved in various previous student success initiatives, bring an extensive amount of expertise to this national reform movement and have helped spread these promising practices to nearly 300 colleges across the country. Texas Pathways was one of the earliest and most ambitious efforts to replicate this national model “locally” and bring it to all the colleges in the state.

The Change Process

Texas Pathways, which formally launched in the fall of 2016, is designed to scale guided pathways reforms to all the community colleges in state. Replicating significant aspects of the national Pathways Project, the Texas variant also draws on CCRC’s research and the Pathways Model they developed with AACC. The same four dimensions mentioned above and the corresponding essential practices provide the conceptual framework for Texas Pathways as well.¹⁶

MILESTONE EVENT 1

Placing Colleges in Pathways Cadres

An important distinction of Texas Pathways—and a key lesson for leaders promoting reform in other states—is the approach the TSC took to engage all the community colleges in the state. The colleges participating in this

project are organized into groups, or cadres through a process described below. The intent of TSC’s approach is “to engage Texas community colleges through multi-tiered structured strategy dividing colleges into cadres with tailored services to meet their readiness and commitment to implement pathways reforms at scale.¹⁷” The cadres are designed to meet the colleges where they are and allow them to advance to a more rigorous level as they gain the needed capacities to do so. Below is a brief over of the cadres:¹⁸

- **AACC Cadre** colleges were selected through a nationally competitive process to participate in the national AACC Pathways Project, and as such committed to implement guided pathways at scale.
- **Cadre 1** colleges were selected through a competitive process in-state and demonstrated a commitment (similar to the AACC cadre) to implement guided pathways at scale. Due to funding constraints initially, this cadre was limited to 12 colleges at the start.
- **Cadre 2** colleges applied as part of the competitive process to be part of the first cadre, but were not yet ready to implement pathways at scale. These colleges have started work on aspects of the guided pathways reforms and have begun to scale some portions of the Pathways model, but are still in a mode of building capacity to be in a position to realize full implementation.
- **Cadre 3** colleges have committed to deepening their capacity, particularly in terms of data, to better understand the students’ experience at their institutions and to share this information with faculty and staff to build support for pathways reforms.
- **Cadre 4** colleges have committed to exploring guided pathways reforms on their campuses and to build the case for why they are needed.

All Texas community colleges were invited to participate in Texas Pathways Project and they were placed in the cadres through a combination of self-assessment and a competitive selection process. All colleges received a packet of materials to apply to be a part of Texas Pathways. This application packet included a description of the project (including the expectations of the different cadres), a college readiness assessment, and a participation agreement. All colleges intending to participate in Texas Pathways (regardless of their

planned cadre) were required to complete the readiness assessment, and college CEO's were required to sign the participation agreement. Only those colleges that aspired to be in Cadre 1 were required to complete the longer application. TSC created a committee that include the TSC and TACC staff as well as a number of national experts to review the submissions.

As a first step in the application process, colleges were encouraged to use the readiness assessment to candidly gauge their own capacity to commit to a multi-year process of implementing guided pathways at scale. The assessment included basic institutional information and background on current student success efforts (i.e. success goals, student learning outcomes, completion and transfer outcomes, labor mark information, efforts to promote equity, and changes to institutional policy and/or reallocation of resources). The assessment also included a detailed appraisal of the institution's capacity to design and implement pathways. The attributes evaluated in this portion of the assessment included:

- Leadership commitment to reform.
- Support and buy-in from faculty to support and adopt reforms.
- Capacity to collect, analyze and use the key data.
- Adoption/integration of technology to support institutional changes.
- Status of external partnership critical to implementation.¹⁹

The final component of the application was a statement of institutional aspiration and commitment. This statement was an opportunity for the college to indicate which cadre they would prefer, what they hoped to accomplish through their participation, and why adopting guided pathways would help their institution go to the next level. It was expected that this statement would also include an indication of support from both the college board or trustees as well as the faculty Senate/association.

As noted above, the colleges in the AACC Cadre and Cadre 1 were selected through a competitive process and, as such, there was a clear expectation that they fully implement guided pathways, share data on Key Performance Indicators (described below), and serve as

leaders in a regional outreach strategy to support other colleges (described below). The AACC Cadre colleges went through a similar approach to be selected for the national project and, as a result, they were automatically included with Cadre 1 for the Texas project. Cadre 1 colleges were selected by the review committee based on their demonstrated commitment and capacity through the application process.

Cadre 2 colleges were primarily those institutions that exhibited considerable capacity and a strong commitment to implement Pathways at scale, but fell short of the readiness for Cadre 1. The colleges that were placed in Cadre 3 and 4 had self-selected to be in one of those two groupings. While the colleges in one of these final cadres expressed a commitment to implementing guided pathways, they also recognized their own challenges and saw Texas Pathways as an opportunity to build further awareness and capacity before launching an institution-wide reform effort.

By creating this tiered approach, Texas colleges were able to gauge their own situation and determine how to get involved. This inclusive approach to cadres in Texas acknowledges institutional differences in capacity and readiness, but provides a means for those less prepared colleges to begin the reform work. The next two sections describe the support and technical assistance the colleges receive as part of Texas Pathways.

MILESTONE EVENT 2

Organizing Pathways Institutes

The work of Texas Pathways is primarily operationalized through convenings of college teams. Mirroring the national Pathways Project, the main focus is on a series of Pathways Institutes. There are six Institutes between November 2016 and March 2019 with a second round occurring from November 2019 through March 2022. Each Institute is 2.5 days in length and participating colleges send a team to attend these robust professional development opportunities. The TSC covers all the meeting and lodging costs for a team of seven college representatives and colleges are responsible for the travel costs for the teams to get to the Institutes.²⁰

The content for the Institutes is focused on the Pathways Model described above and is delivered as a combination of presentations from national pathways experts, breakouts with Texas college practitioners to create peer learning, and strategy sessions for the college teams. The precise themes of the first round of Pathways Institutes are as follows:²¹

1. Leadership for Transformational Change: Implementing Pathways at Scale (Nov. 2016)
2. Mapping Pathways through the Institution (Mar. 2017)
3. Pathways to Transfer and Employment (Nov. 2017)
4. Front Door Academic Success: High School Endorsements, Dual Credit, Developmental Education and Adult Education (Apr. 2018)
5. Supporting Students on the Path (Nov. 2018)
6. Ensuring Students Are Learning and Progress along the Path (Apr. 2019)

All college teams participate in the plenary sessions at the Institute and receive the same content; however, there are opportunities for colleges to tailor their experience through the concurrent breakout sessions. While the plenary and concurrent sessions for these Institutes are similar to traditional conferences, a key aspect of the Pathway Institutes is the dedicated team strategy time.

Each Institute integrates four team strategy sessions ranging from 60 to 90 minutes in length where individual college teams meet to discuss the implications from the convening content for their institution. The goal of the first of these sessions is to ensure the teams understand the foundational aspects of the content for that particular Institute. The subsequent team sessions focus on identifying the gaps that exist at individual colleges (strategy time #2), making sense of the problems and obstacles for moving the work forward and synthesizing relevant lessons from what they are learning from the institute sessions (strategy time #3), and, finally, focusing on next steps when they get back to campus (strategy time #4).²²

Two key features of the Institutes that help colleges fully leverage content from the convenings and translate

the lessons into action on campus are: 1) The pre-work leading up to the Institutes and, 2) The coaching support provided on-site. Prior to each convening, the TSC staff arranges pre-work for the colleges to complete as a team before they arrive at the Institute. This pre-work varies depending on the content focus of the Institute and the TSC staff hosts a planning webinar to help prepare the colleges. These webinars include the Pathway Leads at each participating college, who were identified as part of the college's participation agreement, as well as the Pathways Coaches. In these webinars, the TSC staff outline the expectations for the Institute and describes the pre-work to be completed by the college Pathways Leads in coordination with their full team.

The coaching model of the Pathways Project is described in the next section, but it is important to note that the team strategy sessions, the Pathways Coaches, and the pre-work for the Institutes are all geared toward providing support for the varying needs of the different Pathways Cadres. This thoughtful alignment allows colleges to receive content and support that meets them where they are and to interact with their peers that are in similar stages of pathways implementation.

MILESTONE EVENT 3

Establishing the Pathways Coaching Model

Texas Pathways integrates a set of coaches to work with the colleges throughout their participation. The college teams' interactions with coaches occur primarily during the strategic team time at the six Institutes, but there is also virtual support (calls and emails) between these events. The individuals recruited as coaches have considerable institutional and/or system-level experience. They all have significant experience with institutional reform efforts.

The coaches are expected to be familiar with the Texas Pathways purpose and approach and to participate in preparatory activities such as the webinar with college leads described above as well as the pre-Institute orientation on-site before the start of each Institute. The TSC staff have also added opportunities for the coaches to check in with each other once or twice a day as the institute progresses. Finally, coaches are expected to participate in a debrief session at the conclusion of each Institute.²³

More specifically, the Pathways Coaches receive pre-work colleges complete prior to each Institute and are expected to connect remotely with the college team lead before the convenings. In advance of the Institutes, coaches also receive all the relevant materials including the agenda, the goals and objectives of the specific convening. Coaches are generally assigned to 3 or 4 colleges, which are all in the same Pathways Cadre and they are expected to understand and plan for the interactions with the colleges based on the objectives for specific team strategy time during the Institutes. The coaches also receive guides specific to each cadre for each Institute.

Overall, the coaching model for Texas Pathways effectively maximizes the value of face-to-face interaction of the coaches and their assigned colleges at the Institutes and supplements those in-person touch points with virtual connections in between the convenings. With a limited budget for coaching, this is the most effective approach to helping to support the colleges initially. Starting in the spring/summer of 2019 the TSC staff will expand their coaching model to include site visits to colleges moving forward. The purpose of the on-site visits will be to extend the support and influence of the coach to further advance institutional transformation. To help ensure consistency across college site visits, the TSC staff is also creating coaching guides that align with the Institutes.

MILESTONE EVENT 4

Developing Knowledge and Gauging College Progress

Another important aspect of Texas Pathways is to develop a robust knowledge development and research strategy. Working with key partners—most prominently the Community College Research Center—TSC is developing a research strategy that is both rigorous and action-oriented. Two important tools that are being used as part of this project, which were both developed by CCRC, are the Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment and Key Performance Indicators for pathways implementation. Each of these serves an important near-term role to help inform the colleges, coaches and TSC about the progress the institutions are making, but they also provide invaluable data for longer-term research. Each is briefly described below.

Utilizing the CCRC Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment - Assessment tools are a valuable way to support institutional transformation. The Texas Success Center

has also made use of a tool developed by CCRC to gauge colleges' progress on implementing the Guided Pathways Essential Practices. This tool—*Guided Pathways Essential Practices: Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment*—is organized around the practices and provides a scale to allow the colleges to indicate to what extent they have implemented the specific items.²⁴ The tool is primarily intended as a rubric for individual colleges to understand their own progress, but TSC (through Pathways Coaches) has also used it as a mechanism to help them plan their individual work. TSC has also utilized the information from the Scale of Adoption to aggregate progress that has been made across institutions and cadres and common challenges that have emerged.²⁵

Adopting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – One of the challenges with large reform movements is the challenge of getting timely information on the impact of changes colleges make. While the ultimate goal of guided pathways is to get more students through college to graduation, it is problematic to wait several years for metrics that gauge degree completion to understand the effect of reforms. To address this timing issue, CCRC developed a set of early momentum metrics that are predictive of ultimate student success and provide institutions sooner with indication of how students are performing. The early momentum metrics, which are outlined in CCRC's brief *Early Momentum Metrics: Why They Matter for College Improvement*, fall into three areas:²⁶

1. *Credit momentum*—defined as attempting at least 15 semester credits in the first term or at least 30 semester credits in the first academic year.
2. *Gateway momentum*—defined as taking and passing pathway-appropriate college-level math and college-level English in the first academic year.
3. *Program momentum*—defined as taking and passing at least nine semester credits (three courses) in the student's field of study in the first academic year.

These early momentum metrics have been integrated as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as part of the Guided Pathways movement and they help colleges to understand if reform efforts they are implementing are leading to improved student outcomes.²⁷ All Texas community colleges submit KPIs to the TSC. These data are not publicly available, but many data points mirror Student Success Points metrics and are discussed in the next section.

Outcomes from Change in Practice

Overall Changes

Given the relative newness of Texas Pathways it is premature to draw hard conclusions about its impact on student outcomes. That said, there is a promising trend in statewide data for all Texas community colleges. As part of the Student Success Points funding model, THECB has collected data on credit accumulation metrics since 2014. As indicated in Table 2 below, between 2014 and 2017 there was a 6 percent increase in the number of points colleges received for getting more students to complete 15 credits in the first term and a 7 percent increase in points earned for students completing 30 credits in the first year.²⁸ What we know from research on student success is that momentum matters and each point a college earned for these metrics represents one student crossing these important credit accumulation milestones.

These same trends hold when we are looking at the metrics for students passing their first college-level math, reading, writing, and math courses in the first year. Statewide, colleges increased the number of points they earned on these metrics by 10 percent, 9 percent, and 8 percent respectively between 2014 and 2017. It is important to note on the metrics that colleges only receive half a point for each student reaching the milestones in college-level reading and writing courses, but the colleges receive a full point for each student passing their college-level math course.²⁹

TABLE 2- STATEWIDE STUDENT SUCCESS POINTS EARNED

Metric	2014 Points Awarded	2017 Points Awarded	% Change 2014 to 2017
Students who completed 15 credit hours in term 1	199,566	211,206	6% increase
Students who completed 30 credit hours in year 1	120,314	128,744	7% increase
Students who passed 1 st college level math course	114,599	125,953	10% increase
Students who passed 1 st college level reading course	95,450	103,737	9% increase
Students who passed 1 st college level writing course	77,953	84,150	8% increase

This paper is focused on how state leaders might organize technical assistance and professional development to help colleges at varied levels of readiness to adopt promising practices. Given this focus, it is difficult to point to a direct relationship between statewide actions and changes in student outcomes. While it is inappropriate to attribute improvements on these early momentum metrics exclusively to the activities of the TSC and Texas Pathways, the technical assistance and professional development provided to colleges is undoubtedly a contributing factor.

Equity-focused Changes

One of the shortcomings in the Student Success Points data cited above is that the public interface does not allow for disaggregation by race and ethnicity or income status. However, the data in Table 3 below outlines the credentials awarded by community colleges that illuminates trends by among these subgroups. Looking first at economically disadvantaged students, which THECB defines as students who have received a Pell Grant at any time, there has been a statewide increase of 22 percent in the number of credentials earned by these individuals between 2014 and 2017.³⁰

During the same period there has also been an increase in the number of credentials awarded to students from underrepresented minority groups. More specifically, the number of African American and Hispanic students receiving a credential increased by 21 percent and 38 percent respectively between 2014 and 2017. What is even more impressive is not only was the percentage increase of Hispanic students receiving a credential nearly the highest (second only to international students), but the absolute number of Hispanic students receiving a credential in 2017 was the highest among all subgroups.³¹ Overall the needle appears to be moving in the right direction across all the colleges.

TABLE 3- STATEWIDE CREDENTIALS EARNED

Student Subgroup	2014	2017	% Change 2014 to 2017
All community college student	123,061	151,367	23% increase
Economically disadvantage	47,481	58,115	22% increase
African American students	14,957	18,034	21% increase
Hispanic students	47,314	65,314	38% increase
Asian students	5,052	6,663	32% increase
White students	48,442	53,580	9% increase

Sources of Support

Technical Assistance Support

As noted above, the national organizations that constitute the Pathways Collaborative have served as key technical assistance providers for Texas Pathways. These 12 organizations include AACC, ATD, Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program, WestEd’s Carnegie Math Pathways, Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), CCRC, Complete College America (CCA), Dana Center, JFF, National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII), Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL), and Sova Solutions.³²

For the most part, the organizations in this collaborative have been long-standing partners going back to the early days of ATD and they bring varying strengths to the guided pathways movement. Some bring experience in deep institutional reform (ATD and NCII), while others focus on state policy and system change (CCA and JFF). A number of the partners provide the critical research capacity (CCCSE, CCRC, and OCCRL) on a range of topics as others delve deeply into reforming math pathways (Carnegie and Dana Center). Other partners focus on leadership development, stakeholder engagement and advocacy (AACC, Aspen and Sova Solutions).

There are areas where the competencies of these partners overlap, but as a whole the group of organizations in this collaborative complement each other well. Some of these organizations have been more deeply involved in the Texas Pathways Project than others, but all of these partners provide a deep and broad wealth of knowledge to state and institutional efforts to improve student success. JFF also played a unique role among these partners as the manager of the Student Success Center Network, which is described in more detail in the “Other Resources” section below.

Grant Support

In 2013, Greater Texas Foundation, Houston Endowment, The Kresge Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, and Trellis Foundation (formerly TG) came together to provide TACC with three years of funding to create the Texas Success Center. As noted above, the intent of the TSC was to establish the missing organizational capacity that would truly leverage the lessons learned from a decade or more of reform efforts and to lay out an ambitious vision to move all the community colleges forward.

The creation of the TSC led directly to the launch of Texas Pathways, which was described in detail above. With a total budget of \$11.5 million over five years, the estimated expenditures for Texas Pathways are as follows: 34 percent for staff and operational costs, 32 percent for convening costs, 15 percent for coaches, 6 percent for research and knowledge development, 5 percent for consultants and partnerships, and 8 percent in overhead costs to TACC. The funding for this project comes from a variety of sources including several philanthropic organizations (including the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Greater Texas Foundation, Houston Endowment, The Meadows Foundation, The Teagle Foundation, T.L.L Temple Foundation, and Trellis Foundation) as well as an investment from the Texas Workforce Commission.³³

Other Resources

Since its launch, the TSC has been part of a growing national network of Student Success Centers (SSCs) that share a primary objective of supporting the community colleges in their respective states to improve student outcomes. The concept of SSCs emerged initially in

Arkansas in 2010, followed quickly by similar entities being formed in Michigan and Ohio.

Texas, along with the other early adopters of the SSC concept, had been part of the Postsecondary State Policy Network, which is an outgrowth of the policy component of ATD and supported by Jobs for the Future (JFF). As the early Centers were emerging, JFF was tasked with codifying the SSC model and subsequently leading two separate competitions to create additional SSCs.³⁴ JFF continues to manage the network of SSCs that has grown to 15 across the country and has been greatly influenced by the work in Texas.³⁵

While JFF has long-standing partnerships with the organizations in the Pathways collaborative, their role as manager of the Student Success Centers Network (SSCN) has helped to create a powerful venue where the Executive Directors of the 15 SSCs can interact with each other as well as national organizations involved in the reform efforts. As noted previously, a critical feature of SSCs is their ability to serve as an intermediary between the colleges they support and national expertise, research, and technical assistance.

Moving Forward

Lessons Learned

Based on conversations with the TSC staff, a key lesson they have learned through this process is the usefulness of the cadre approach for engaging more colleges. Moving away from previous success efforts which did not include all colleges, the cadre approach has provided an opportunity for all colleges to be involved, share with colleagues, and be recognized for their progress. The fact that they have more colleges participating in Texas Pathways, including many that had never participated in the past, is indicative of the value the colleges see in cadre structure. The perceived hierarchy of cadres has also motivated colleges to advance to the next cadre. College teams are eager to move to a higher cadre in the next round (described below) to demonstrate their progress.

The cadre approach has been helpful to tailoring support and has allowed for adjustments based on the needs of the colleges with different groups. For example, the TSC staff learned that Cadres 1 and 2 have thrived and more effectively advanced the work when they have a team comprised of a couple of core members (i.e. Pathways lead/college CAO and CEO) but then rotating other individuals on from campus based on the institute topic. This contrasts with colleges in Cadres 3 and 4, that have been better served by a consistent core team that attend all of the institutes together as they work to build momentum at their institutions.

Another key learning is that there is wide variety of capacity within cadres, not just between them. Because of differences in college needs within cadres, the TSC staff learned programming cannot be a one-size-fits-all. For example, some Cadre 4 colleges are just beginning to grasp what Guided Pathways means for their institution, while others have a good conceptual understanding but are encountering significant implementation challenges. Within the model, the TSC staff is building more Cadre-specific coaching tools to address varied college needs. Furthermore, the planned expansion of the coaching model to include on-campus site visits will allow for more customized support to individual colleges.

Next Steps

There are several key next steps for the reform efforts in Texas. Each of the following items will take place in the near future as envisioned in the original 5-year plan for the Texas Pathways strategy.

- **Second Round of Texas Pathways Institutes** – As noted in the description of the Institutes above, there will be a second set of Pathway Institutes that will begin in November 2019 and run through March 2022. As part of this process the TSC staff will facilitate a second application process over the summer and all colleges cadre assignments will be re-evaluated. It is expected that most if not all of the colleges will move to the next cadre.
- **Expansion of the Texas Pathways Coaching Model** – Beginning in Spring/Summer 2019 the TSC staff will augment the existing coaching model of face-to-face institute support to include campus site visits. The strategy from the beginning was for there to be year-round coaching if statewide institutional

transformation was to become a reality. By adding site campus visits, the coaches can become more knowledgeable about the college context and supportive of institutional change.

- **Expansion of Board of Trustee Institutes (BOTI)**
 - While the BOTI is a well-established aspect of the support TACC and TSC has provided to the community colleges in the state, participation has been limited to those institutions that have historically participated in Achieving the Dream. A key component of Texas Pathways is to ensure that members of the board of trustees of community colleges understand their important role in supporting and promoting these pathways reforms. To accomplish this, the annual BOTI will be expanded to include trustees from all 50 community colleges.
- **Rollout of Texas Pathways Knowledge Development Strategy** – In the next phase of the Texas Pathways work, the TSC staff will focus more intently on telling the story of the work of the colleges in the state and sharing the lessons learned. These efforts will include convening a knowledge development steering committee; hiring community college research fellows and a part-time research associate; establishing a statewide knowledge development research agenda, and executing on that agenda to produce guided pathways-related reports, presentations, white papers, and tools.

Notes

¹ It is important to note that two of the college districts—Alamo and Dallas—are treated as a single college by the Texas Success Center, but the individual campuses within these districts submit their data to IPEDS separately.

² Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2001) Closing the Gaps

³ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2015) 60 x 30 TX

⁴ Texas Association of Community Colleges (2018a) Performance Based Funding for Texas Community Colleges

⁵ Achieving the Dream website - <https://www.achievingthedream.org/about-us/history>

⁶ Development Education Initiative - <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resources/initiatives/developmental-education-initiative>

⁷ Student Success by the Numbers - <http://www.ccsse.org/center/ssbtn/>

⁸ Texas Completes - <http://www.texascompletes.com/>

⁹ Dana Center (2018) - <http://www.dcmathpathways.org/>

¹⁰ Dana Center (2014) The New Mathways Project: Implementation Guide

¹¹ Texas Success Center website - <https://tacc.org/tsc>

¹² Pathways Collaborative (2018a) The Movement toward Pathways

¹³ Pathways Collaborative (2018b) What is the Pathways Model?

¹⁴ Ibid, Page 1.

¹⁵ Pathways Collaborative website - <https://www.pathwaysresources.org/pathways-collaborative/>

¹⁶ Texas Success Center (2018) Texas Pathways Model

¹⁷ Ibid, Page 19.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Texas Pathways Coaching Model (2018)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Community College Research Center (2018) Guided Pathways Essential Practices: Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment

²⁵ Texas Success Center (2018) Guided Pathways Essential Practices: Baseline Scale of Adoption Assessment of Cadre 1 and AACC 2.0 Colleges

²⁶ Community College Research Center (2017) Early Momentum Metrics

²⁷ Pathways Collaborative. (2018c). Early Outcomes.

²⁸ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2018) Texas Higher Education Accountability System

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Pathways Collaborative website - <https://www.pathwaysresources.org/pathways-collaborative/>

³³ Texas Success Center (2018) Texas Pathways Model

³⁴ Jobs for the Future (2013) Joining Forces

³⁵ Jobs for the Future (2018) Student Success Center Network

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Resources

Guided Pathways Resource Center

<https://www.pathwaysresources.org/>

Texas Success Center – Texas Pathways Institutes and Events

<https://tacc.org/tsc/events>

Appendix A:

Site Context

What is the name of the institution(s), and if appropriate system, where the changes in practice took place?

48 of the 50 Texas community colleges

In which state(s) is/are your institution/system located?

Texas

At which type of institution(s) did this change in practice take place?

2-year public

What is the total, undergraduate (headcount) enrollment for the institution(s) where the change in practice took place?

See Table 1 for the the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of full-time, beginning undergraduate students received a Pell Grant?

See Table 1 for the the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are African American/Black?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are American Indian/Alaskan Native?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are Asian/Pacific Islander?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are Hispanic or Latinx?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are More than One Race?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are White?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are aged 24 or under?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

What percentage of students are aged 25 or older?

See Table 1 for the breakdown of the colleges in each Pathways cadre.

Appendix C:

Texas Community Colleges by Pathways Cadre

Institution	Cadre
Alamo Colleges	AACC
El Paso Community College	AACC
Paris Junior College	AACC
San Jacinto College	AACC
Amarillo College	1
Austin Community College	1
Brazosport College	1
Dallas County Community College	1
Grayson College	1
Houston Community College	1
Lone Star College System	1
McLennan Community College	1
Midland College	1
Odessa College	1
South Texas College	1
Southwest Texas Junior College	1
Tarrant County College	1
Temple College	1
Hill College	2
Kilgore College	2
Lee College	2
North Central Texas College	2
Texarkana College	2
Tyler Junior College	2
Victoria College	2
Wharton County Junior College	2
Alvin Community College	3
Blinn College	3
Central Texas College	3
Panola College	3
Ranger College	3

Institution	Cadre
Angelina College	4
Coastal Bend College	4
College of the Mainland	4
Collin County Community College	4
Del Mar College	4
Frank Phillips College	4
Galveston College	4
Howard College	4
Laredo Community College	4
Navarro College	4
Northeast Texas Community College	4
South Plains College	4
Texas Southmost College	4
Trinity Valley Community College	4
Vernon College	4
Weatherford College	4
Western Texas College	4
Cisco College	Not Participating
Clarendon College	Not Participating