

Guided Pathways Synopsis: Centralia College

Purpose: This guide is a synopsis of the invaluable conversation that staff members of the State Board for Community and Technical College Education Division and Project Management Office had with leaders and key staff at Centralia College around how their college is succeeding with Guided Pathways work. It also includes what Centralia College needs from the system to continue their success.

Audience: College Subject Matter Experts (SME) interested in Guided Pathways.

 **When did we meet?** SBCTC and Centralia College met on Tuesday, November 1, 2022.

Key Success Points

- **Equity Centered Mindset in Strategic Planning:** Centralia College established what they refer to as the "JEDI Council" a group whose focus is Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This is a cross-campus group that helps to orchestrate the work. The Co-Chairs of this council are on the Guided Pathways Steering Committee and are heavily involved in that work to ensure a direct connection. Additionally, they hired a Vice President of Equity and Human Resources, which is a cabinet level position.
- **Welcome Center:** Centralia College implemented a designated location on their campus in the Summer 2022 that they refer to as the "Welcome Center" and has been remarkable improvement to the student experience. The Welcome Center includes a welcome desk, staffed by personnel that have a broad range of experience in student services, such as enrollment, financial aid and advising and is instrumental for new students who have ctcLink questions. This includes a multi-cultural, bilingual outreach specialist. The welcome desk gives students a place to start, without giving students the feeling that they are being passed around campus to find their answers. Centralia College believes more can be done to enhance the on-boarding process and is seeking to continuously improve this part of the student experience. The ultimate dream is for a student to walk onto campus and by the time they leave they have been admitted to the college, registered and walk off campus with their books in their hands ready to start their classes.
- **Program Selection:** Centralia College is working to identify how students view and select programs and advisors in ctcLink. The college has established multi-department meetings to solve student focused issues that create barriers in other areas, such as Financial Aid. Engaging Faculty in the discussions on student placements, understanding the intentions for program admission. Centralia has 'Navigators' for Trio and Basic Education, but is in the

process of discussing the most effective on-boarding advising processes for students to enable Faculty to focus on program support.

- **Fee Removal & Placement Testing Improvements:** Removed costs for placement testing, allowed students to simply walk-in and test. Also added remote testing option and self-guided math placement which have removed many barriers, with English self-guided placement in discussion for the future. The college is also evaluating removing applications fees for BAS degrees and graduation.
- **Bi-Lingual Efforts to Serve Latino Student Population:** Centralia College serves a large Latino population in their community and has made a concerted effort both to hire bilingual staff, particularly in the Transitional Education area and ensure all materials are made available in Spanish.
- **EAB Navigate:** Tool will be launching soon and using EAB Navigate the college will:
 - House the Educational Planning documents that are currently being re-designed with the goal of having it finalized for Spring 2023.
 - Provide communication channels to students via text that aren't currently available in ctcLink, since email is the least efficient method for communicating to students, especially those most underserved.
 - Enable students to have a 'success team' assigned to them that goes beyond a traditional advisor, to include faculty and other college staff.
- **Program Maps:** College has been highly focused in their Guided Pathways work developing program maps over the last 18 months and redesigning their Educational Planner documents and are at the stage of finalizing for Spring/Fall 2023 roll out. Their next focus area will be:
 - Improving ability to predict where the college can guarantee course availability and provide students options for when they can take necessary courses.
- **Partnerships Built Between Financial Aid and Advising:** This partnership supports students who have selected majors that have unintended consequences with financial aid. For example, students who have, by default, self-selected 'pre-nursing,' are guided to explore education that opens them up to the health care industry options.
- **Exploratory Courses:** Centralia has built introductory sequences for each of their 8 areas of study. Their next focus area will be:
 - Find ways to better guide students through those introductory sequences and the exploratory courses to focus more on career exploration to test out their ideas and find a solid path within the first two terms.

Key Desired Improvements in ctcLink

- **Mechanism for Advisor Re-Assignments and Tracking Changes to Program of Study:** Once students have identified their program and enrolled in a plan, then students are moved to faculty for their program advisement. Currently, there is not a good way to identify students who change paths. The Academic Requirements Report does not meet Centralia College's

needs, they would like a more effective tool and would like a more effective tool for managing degree audits in ctcLink.

- Centralia has built a system where they are required to verify an area of study, program. The student is considered exploratory until they formally determine their degree pursuit and are ready to be assigned an faculty program advisor, but ctcLink does not have an effective way to alert advising of that change in their program pursuit so that advising transfer can be effectively made.
 - **SBCTC Comment:** This could potentially be solutioned with a query that looks at advisor assignments and program/plan changes made within a specified date range. CS_SR_PROG_PLAN_CHANGES_AUDIT is listed in metaLink as a query used to audit or review program plan changes (does not include advisor data).
 - There is also the issues of students drifting into taking classes outside their program and equally concerning is those students who are sticking with an advisor whose area of expertise is outside of the student's program.
 - **SBCTC Comment:** This information could likely be tracked in a query but would be dependent on AARs being built.
 - Building in a checkpoint after the first two quarters to easily facilitate advisor changes or program of study changes.
- **Student Degree/Certificate Evaluation:** Difficult evaluating successful enrollment and degree completion in ctcLink. Need an effective report of students who are near completion or have taken all the necessary courses to earn a certification or degree, but has not applied for graduation.
 - **SBCTC Comment:** This information could likely be tracked in a query (similar to QCS_AA_DEGREE_BOOST but would need to account for enrolled students). This would be dependent on AARs being built.
- **Pre-Bachelor's or Transfers:** Pre-Baccalaureate students or transfer students within community colleges are pushed into a box that they do not belong with. These two categories are difficult to quantify, as a system we don't have a way to acknowledge these students. The system needs a way to identify a student who is pursuing a two year degree at the institution, but also intend to complete their Bachelor's degree at Centralia. There currently is not an effective way to identify those students who are not yet in a BAS, but are also not intending to transfer out of the college with an AA DTA.
 - **SBCTC Clarification:** Needed for the identification aspect of this - is this captured by advisors when talking with students and Centralia is looking for a way to "flag" that student in the system somehow?
- **Test Scores & Milestones:** For colleges that have BOTH placement *Test Scores* (for example in English) and use a form of Guided Self-Placement, which results in the student is competent to a specific level in (for example in Math) and is 'ready' for that next level of Math, that is stored as a Milestone. The Test Score lives in one area of ctcLink and the Milestone lives in another area in ctcLink, but both data points are needed by the advisor to properly advise the student. A possible solution would be to provide a custom page that consolidated both the placement scores and milestones into a single page as attached to the student, or a custom navigation college to easily click to these two places to display the data for a single student during the advising process.

- **Desktop vs. Mobile Version:** The desktop version is harder to use versus the mobile version. For example, the traditional desktop site to search and register for classes is just remarkably slow and clumsy and not user-friendly, whereas the mobile, friendly site is so much nicer to use and has and makes so much more sense and just looks nice. The ctcLink desktop student experience should be updated to align to mirror the ease of use found in the mobile version.
- **Improve the Student Advising Experience:** Combine the page content available from the Student Services Tile with the page content available from the Advisor Homepage. A more seamless experience would make it much easier for advisors to support the students.
- **Exploring Solution Approach:** During the discussion the following concept was mutually discussed - Create a custom navigation collection that would provide relevant pages for advisors to see and interact with all the necessary data points for advising a student without having that advisor be forced to navigate around the system or have elevated privileges to unnecessary pages. Should be convenient and intuitive and include access to notes about that student and communications sent to that student.
- **Text Based Communications with Students:** Email is not the best method for communicating with students and any process that is cumbersome will not draw faculty to use it. A text or SMS messaging capability that is easy to use and keeps track of the messaging back and forth so other staff can be made aware of what was said would be ideal.
- **Transcripts:** The system is capable of would be nice for colleges to be able to easily share transcripts. How can we easily share transcripts?

Key Risk Points – Please Don't Disrupt This Process

The college did not specifically identify any areas of the system they felt would be disruptive to their current guided pathways work.

Professional Development Opportunities

- **Sub Plans Workshop:** Conduct a college sharing workshop for how to best adopt the usage of sub plans and better understand the impacts that it might have to other areas within the system that would be of benefit. This is especially critical in the AA DTA where the use of sub-plans would really help connect that student to an area of student, rather than simply a general AA DTA.
 - SBCTC Comment - The State Board needs to determine a standardized coding schema and approval process for sub-plans before any workshop is offered to the colleges.
- **Improve Coding Schema Information in MetaLink and Guidance:** There are a number of variables the college may want to use, we lack information to isolate what that code would mean for different categories, especially as it relates to tracking students.
 - Centralia College acknowledges that the State Board is establishing a Work Group for modalities, and this is great, as creating that definition around "Hybrid" is key. As a

system we should know that "Hybrid" equates to, for example, 5 hours a week or 2 or 3 days a week. What does that look like across our system?

- **SBCTC Comment:** Data Services will take these questions and comments to the course modality subcommittee for discussion.

Review of the Set of Questions SBCTC Asked All Colleges

Questions for Overall College Perspective:

1. What is your college most proud of in the work you are doing to make your college more equity-centered/student-centered? How is this shaping your strategic plans for process improvement over the next two years?
2. What has your office done successfully to remove barriers for students who are wanting to attend?
3. How successful do you feel your college has been developing program maps and providing opportunities for exploratory courses? Is there anything within the ctcLink system you wish could be improved to help with this work?
4. What changes have you made in your business practices to improve progress monitoring of students? What are you most proud of in your process for ensuring staff are involved in identifying students who are struggling? Is there anything within the ctcLink system you wish could be improved to help with this work?
5. Does your college currently use a Third Party Product (Starfish, EAB Navigate, Civitas, Watermark Aviso, etc.)? If your college is using any tertiary systems (external products, business intelligence systems, and/or locally developed solutions) to support Guided Pathways, what benefits are being provided that are not currently available in ctcLink?
6. How do you feel your college is doing in evaluating student enrollments and their alignment to completing a degree in two years? What changes have you made across student services to support this work? Is there anything within the ctcLink system you wish could be improved to help with this work?
7. What elements of the Guided Pathways framework is your institution currently prioritizing? How are you currently documenting your work? Is there anything within the ctcLink system you wish could be improved to help with this work?

Questions for Specific Offices/Teams:

1. From each office (IT, Financial Aid, Admissions, etc.), what has been your greatest improvement to support Guided Pathways?
2. From each office, if you could improve the system in one small way to help your office significantly to support GP, what would you change in ctcLink?
3. From a data perspective-
 - a. How are you tracking a student's journey through their programs on your campus?
 - b. How are you currently reporting student enrollments by meta-major? Are you using locally developed Plan Code to Meta-Major crosswalks?
 - c. What data points are you finding it difficult to track in the system today and what would you learn from tracking that data?
 - d. Is there anything within the ctcLink system you wish could be improved to help with this work?

4. From your area's perspective, what key enhancements could you envision that would support your college's Guided Pathways work?