



California
Guided Pathways

Demystifying Guided Pathways at Rio Hondo College:

A Snapshot of Commonly Asked Questions by Rio Hondo Faculty, Staff, and Administration

Written by Rio Hondo College Planning and Fiscal Council Members

1. What is Guided Pathways and why are we involved?

Guided Pathways is a way of looking at institutional structures, including services and instruction, to facilitate completion of student educational goals. This is done to assist students in making choices earlier and to provide students with a “guided structure” upon entering college, along with checks to ensure learning throughout their journey to educational success. Ultimately, this more streamlined process removes the guesswork for students in making choices.

Rio Hondo College (RHC) began this work this year after being accepted as one of the 20 pilot colleges in the California Guided Pathways Project. A cross-representational implementation team composed of faculty, deans, VPs, and the president have been attending Guided Pathways institutes with other community colleges to learn how the framework can be brought to RHC.

2. Is this just another educational “flavor of the month”?

Guided Pathways is about structural change of the community college system, not just programmatic “tweaks.” It is not a flavor of the month, but rather an overhaul of an educational system that is in need of reform, and one that will probably soon be tied to permanent funding sources.

3. What is the funding, who will get it, and for what will it be used?

The California Community College Chancellor’s Office is providing an estimated 1.4 million-dollar allocation to Rio Hondo College over the next five years, and it will be used to assist the college in providing professional development, curricular re-design, student services, and supplemental instruction that will contribute to the improvement of student success beginning with the application and registration process all the way through graduation, transfer, or certificate achievement.

4. Doesn’t Guided Pathways limit our academic freedom?

Faculty serve as content experts in the development and implementation of curriculum at Rio Hondo College, where we recognize the importance of academic freedom as the faculty’s ability to express thoughts freely without professional consequences. Within the Guided Pathways framework, the academic freedom to change curriculum still does not change, nor does it impede student progress in curricular programs. As courses and programs evolve under the Guided Pathway framework, faculty will be key facilitators in the alignment of courses and programs with exit outcomes that promote student success.

5. Why can’t students just follow the catalog for a pathway?

Although taught in Counseling 101 and other more isolated instances, students do not always know how to use the catalog to inform their choices. Looking up requirements for majors and courses to fulfill educational goals assumes that the pages in the catalog become the student’s personal counselor. Guided Pathways helps students learn “how to be a student” by guiding them in making informed choices that focus the many course listings in the catalog.

6. Why do people keep telling me to read that book?

As the discussion of Guided Pathways at Rio Hondo College begins, the answer some may be giving to the question of what is Guided Pathways has initiated the response, “Read the book.” However, this answer may seem to have a way of alienating individuals from the conversation instead of engaging them into one, as if only those with knowledge from the book *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges* can be part of the discussion.

The book discusses the research on the Guided Pathways framework, showing the success of the Guided Pathways model at other institutions and providing examples of how to implement Guided Pathways successfully. Ultimately, it aims to help those who are wary of the concept to see its value and success.

7. How are Guided Pathways and Student Equity related?

Even though the funding sources of Guided Pathways and Student Equity are different, equity is at the core of Guided Pathways as this framework focuses on completion and success for all students, as it seeks to eliminate equity gaps.