

Guided Pathways Evaluation Proposal

Rio Hondo College began planning for Guided Pathways (GP) in 2017 and established the Guided Pathways Steering Committee (GPSC) in 2018. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered GP planning and implementation since March 2020, 2020-21 was a productive year for the GPSC. Accomplishments included updating the college website to be more student friendly, implementing *Career Coach* as a tool to help students choose and enter a pathway, and the creation and use of a Tableau dashboard to track student progress.

There were significant accomplishments in terms of the Areas of Interest (AOIs). The GPSC established the Pathways website (<https://pathways.riohondo.edu/>) with program exploration tools for all 12 AOIs. Each AOI has a Student Success Team (SST), providing students with a “home base” of support. Most SSTs have hired at least one Success Coach (SC). As of summer 2021, GP is in a much more concrete and accessible form than it was in summer 2020.

Guided Pathways is an organizational-change effort designed to have outcomes in the lives of individual students. As such, an evaluation of GP must respond to both the organizational and individual aspects of the initiative. The present document, an evaluation proposal, offers a balance between attention to organizational aspects (e.g., program component implementation, organizational structure, institutional change) and individual student outcomes (e.g., persistence, units earned, degree completion, transfer). This document will address the evaluation questions, evaluation components, research methods, and schedule of deliverables.

Evaluation Questions

Reflecting the dual focus on individual outcomes and organizational dynamics, the evaluation will have two guiding questions. The first question addresses the goal of the program, which is to graduate and transfer more students.

- EQ1: To what extent has student program completion increased after implementation of Guided Pathways at Rio Hondo College?

While the first question addresses student outcomes, the second addresses the process. It will focus on implementation by RHC employees.

- EQ2: How are Guided Pathways components implemented at Rio Hondo College?

Additional, more specific evaluation questions will emanate from the two guiding questions.

Evaluation Components

The evaluation will have three broad components: (1) annual-formative, (2) annual-summative, and (3) longitudinal-summative. The formative component will provide information that can be used for decision making and improvement. While results will become available at various times during the academic year, this component is labelled “annual” because the focus will change from year to year in response to the developmental needs of the GP initiative and the GPSC. Important topics to explore during 2021-22 appear to be student perceptions of the website, student use of the SSTs, function of the SSTs, and role of the Success Coach.

The focus of the annual-summative component will be the progress of each year’s new student cohort. This cohort will consist of first-time, transfer-directed students in the fall semester. Although the data collection will include student behavior (e.g., services used, units attempted), the emphasis will be

on student outcomes (e.g. units earned, fall-spring persistence, second year persistence). This component will be conducted on an annual basis with each academic year's new student cohort and include comparison to previous years' new student cohorts.

The longitudinal-summative component will follow the 2021-22 new student cohort for three years. In addition to the outcomes for the one-year analysis, this component will include graduation and transfer. The comparison group will be an appropriate new student cohort from a previous year.

Methods

Annual-formative component. Data collection for this component will occur at points throughout the academic year. The specifics of the data collection will be based on the developmental needs of the GP initiative as identified by the GPSC. Data collection activities projected at this time include a fall survey of students, student focus groups, and self-report data from employees in spring.

Pending approval, a survey of new, transfer-directed students would take place in October 2021. One purpose will be to solicit student feedback that the GPSC can use for decision making and improvement. A second purpose will be determine the status of the new student cohort on the affective and behavioral outcomes that lead to course success and programs completion (e.g., sense of belonging, use of campus services). Survey topics will be developed in collaboration between the GPSC and Institutional Research & Planning (IRP). Potential topics include student use of the Pathways website, student use of *Career Coach*, interaction with SSTs, and experiences related to the RP Group's success factors: Directed/Focused, Nurtured, Engaged/Connected, and Valued. The survey will include open-ended questions that students can answer in their own words, addressing the GPSC's desire to incorporate student voice.

The GPSC is tentatively planning to have the RP Group conduct four focus groups during the fall semester. Should the GPSC decide to pursue this option, IRP recommends re-visiting the RP Group proposal after identifying what the GPSC wants to learn from students through the focus groups. The focus group composition and interview protocol should flow from the GPSC's information needs. IRP will add items to the student survey to recruit students to participate in the focus groups. Based on what the GPSC wants to learn from the focus groups, IRP will include items to place students into appropriate groups. For example, if the focus groups are about student use of the Pathways website, students could be placed into groups according to their level of use. Students who have never used the website would be in a separate group from those who have used the website on multiple occasions. Also, groups could be formed based on common experiences such as full-time versus part-time students or career-technical versus transfer-oriented students.

IRP will solicit self-report data from SST members in spring 2022. This round of data collection will focus on SSTs because Student Success Teams are the embodiment of Guided Pathways at Rio Hondo College. The SSTs are the primary entity where students encounter GP. Many organizational dynamics influence the development and implementation of SSTs. They are a new structure to the college, both interdisciplinary and inter-constituency, administered through 11 different units of the college. It is vital for the GPSC to understand how these teams function.

The GPSC has the option of data collection focusing on the SC role. The Success Coach, as the initial contact for new students and source of various services to students, is the linchpin between the SST and students. Although the SC is a well-established position in Student Services, the AOI SC is a new

position in a new organizational structure (the SST). It is potentially of great value to the GPSC to understand how SCs and their supervisors perceive the SC role and how SCs enact the role.

There are many appropriate options for collecting data about SSTs and SCs. The following list provides some initial examples. Final decisions on data collection methods will be based on the information needs of the GPSC.

- **SST Member Survey:** Each SST member would receive a link to an online questionnaire in April 2022. Topics would include questions about the SST in general and role-specific questions (e.g., for counselors, SCs, classified, etc.). Each SST would receive a summary of its results, which could be used for the planning the 2022-23 academic year. The GPSC would receive an overall report addressing how the SSTs function, including differences across SSTs.
- **SST Group Survey:** During April or May 2022, each SST would complete a questionnaire together. It would be similar the CCCCO's Scale of Adoption in that it would have a rubric for the team to identify its progress on key components of SST functions. The source of these functions would be the *RHC Student Success Team Roles (Spring 2021)* document and the GPSC. The purpose would be to promote reflective practice for each SST, and to provide the GPSC with information on how and how well the SSTs are functioning.
- **SC Interviews:** During April or May 2022, each SC would participate in a semi-structured individual interview to explore their perceptions and performance of the SC role. The analysis would compare and contrast responses to identify commonality and divergence in the SC role. Based on the reporting, the GPSC could explore the extent to which role understanding meets the design for the initiative. To add context and depth, similar interviews could also be conducted with each SC's supervisor or the counselor who works most closely with the SC.
- **SC Focus Group:** In April or May of 2022, IRP would invite each SC to participate in a focus group on the SC role. Potential questions would address what SCs do in the position, the most satisfying and difficult parts of the role, what they want students to know about SCs, what they want counselors and supervisors to know about SCs, and changes they would like to see in the future. The purpose would be for the GPSC to gain insight into the SC role.

Annual-summative component. Summative analysis of student progress will be based on student record data accessed from Cognos, the RHC data warehouse, and/or MIS. The primary type of data for the annual analysis will be course enrollments. The first step will be to establish the cohort of first-time, transfer-directed students. This will be followed by a mid-fall 2021 profile report addressing such characteristics as demographics, AOIs, and courses taken.

After census in fall 2022, there will an annual report on the progress of the 2021-22 new student cohort. It will compare the cohort to previous cohorts in terms of student performance (e.g., units earned, transfer-level English and math/quantitative reasoning completed, fall-spring persistence, second year persistence, GPA). To the extent that service-use data will be available through SARS, the analysis will address the relationship between service use and program outcomes. The results will be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and special populations.

Longitudinal-summative component. The longitudinal product is scheduled for the winter of 2024-25. This report will follow the 2021-22 new student cohort through three years. It will use data similar to those for the annual-summative component. The primary outcomes will be degree completion (including ADT versus AA/AS) and transfer to four-year schools. Secondary outcomes will be certificate completion, GPA at graduation, and units completed at graduation.

Analysis of transfer will require data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Because transfers to schools on a quarter system might not populate to NSC until late fall, the analysis will be conducted during winter. The report will be available in time for the February 2025 GPSC meeting.

The identification of a comparison group (or groups) will be challenging. Any new student cohort after 2016-17 would have the pandemic within its three years. Preliminary analysis will be necessary to examine appropriate pre-pandemic and pandemic-era cohorts.

IRP Deliverables for Year One

The following schedule of deliverables provides timely feedback throughout the year.

October 2021	Profile of 2021-22 new student cohort
November 2021	Brief on results of student survey
January 2022	Report on results of student survey
May 2022	Brief on SST/SC formative data
September 2022	Report on SST/SC formative data
November 2022	Report on progress of new student cohort



Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

Creating guided pathways requires managing and sustaining large-scale transformational change. The work begins with thorough planning, continues through consistent implementation, and depends on ongoing evaluation. **The goals are to improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market — and to achieve equity in those outcomes.**

PLANNING

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

Make sure the following conditions are in place – prepared, mobilized, and adequately resourced – to support the college's large-scale transformational change:

- Strong change leadership throughout the institution
- Faculty and staff engagement
- Commitment to using data
- Capacity to use data
- Technology infrastructure
- Professional development
- Favorable policy (state, system, and institutional levels) and board support
- Commitment to student success and equity

PREPARATION/AWARENESS

Understand where you are, prepare for change, and build awareness by:

- Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change
- Establishing a baseline for key performance indicators
- Building partnerships with K-12, universities, and employers
- Developing flowcharts of how students choose, enter, and complete programs
- Developing an implementation plan with roles and deadlines

SUSTAINABILITY

Commit to pathways for the long term and make sure they are implemented for all students by:

- Determining barriers to sustainability (state, system, and institutional levels)
- Redefining the roles of faculty, staff, and administrators as needed
- Identifying needs for professional development and technical assistance
- Revamping technology to support the redesigned student experience
- Reallocating resources as needed
- Continuing to engage key stakeholders, especially students
- Integrating pathways into hiring and evaluation practices

IMPLEMENTATION

CLARIFY THE PATHS

Map all programs to transfer and career and include these features:

- Detailed information on target career and transfer outcomes
- Course sequences, critical courses, embedded credentials, and progress milestones
- Math and other core coursework aligned to each program of study

HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH

Require these supports to make sure students get the best start:

- Use of multiple measures to assess students' needs
- First-year experiences to help students explore the field and choose a major
- Full program plans based on required career/transfer exploration
- Contextualized, integrated academic support to help students pass program gateway courses
- K-12 partnerships focused on career/college program exploration

HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATH

Keep students on track with these supports:

- Ongoing, intrusive advising
- Systems for students to easily track their progress
- Systems/procedures to identify students at risk and provide needed supports
- A structure to redirect students who are not progressing in a program to a more viable path

ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING

Use these practices to assess and enrich student learning:

- Program-specific learning outcomes
- Project-based, collaborative learning
- Applied learning experiences
- Inescapable student engagement
- Faculty-led improvement of teaching practices
- Systems/procedures for the college and students to track mastery of learning outcomes that lead to credentials, transfer, and/or employment

EARLY OUTCOMES

Measure key performance indicators, including:

- Number of college credits earned in first term
- Number of college credits earned in first year
- Completion of gateway math and English courses in the student's first year
- Number of college credits earned in the program of study in first year
 - Persistence from term 1 to term 2
 - Rates of college-level course completion in students' first academic year
 - Equity in outcomes

Revisit conditions, sustainability, and implementation. Continuously improve pathways by building on elements that work and adjusting or discarding elements that are not serving all students well.

EVALUATION

IMPLEMENTING GUIDED PATHWAYS: *Defining Roles with a Focus on Collaboration*

Faculty & Staff

- Engage in all stages of Guided Pathways: inquiry, design, implementation and ongoing improvement.
- Work collectively toward common goals and commit to a structured, open process.
- Collaborate to design clearly structured, coherent academic program maps that: reflect curriculum aligned with university transfer programs and labor market needs; provide detailed course sequences and progress milestones; and represent the most efficient path for students to complete academic programs while maintaining the quality of these programs.
- Partner to guide, monitor and support students.
- Collaborate to help students build skills as they explore and progress through curricula and programs.

Students

- Share thoughts on how the institution as a whole can better meet student needs. Share obstacles, challenges and successes experienced in college.
- Engage in all stages of Guided Pathways: inquiry, design, implementation and ongoing improvement.

The Entire College

- Work collectively toward common goals and commit to a structured, open process.
- Think and talk about the unique planning and resource needs at the college.
- Participate in the self-assessment process.
- Solicit input from students, community members, alumni, employers and industry to assist in informing your Guided Pathways efforts.

Administrators

- Provide vision for college restructuring and initiative integration.
- Build a diverse steering team from all college constituencies, including administration, counseling and instructional faculty, staff and students from across the college.
- Offer support and guidance for collaboration and inclusive decision-making.
- Participate in all stages of Guided Pathways: inquiry, design and implementation.
- With faculty and staff, collaborate to design clearly structured, coherent academic program maps that: reflect curriculum aligned with university transfer programs and labor market needs; provide detailed course sequences and progress milestones; and represent the most efficient path for students to complete academic programs while maintaining the quality of these programs.
- Invest in professional development that supports reform efforts.
- Build organizational capability for ongoing innovation and improvement.

Institutional Researchers and Planners

- Support administrators, faculty and staff in inquiry by providing enrollment, persistence and retention data disaggregated by program, cohort and student equity categories.
- Provide support in understanding student throughput and identifying bottlenecks and loss points.
- Help steering team and others use data to examine barriers to student completion.
- Engage in all stages of Guided Pathways: inquiry, design, implementation and ongoing improvement.
- Help in making the case for Pathways through data.
- Assist with locating and interpreting data related to designing and implementing Pathways.
- Assist in providing students a voice through research activities such as surveys and focus groups.
- Provide leadership and support with the integrated planning that is required for Pathways.
- Conduct formative and summative evaluations to help inform and guide Pathways efforts, with a focus on continuous improvement.

09.21.17

