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COMMUNITY COLLEGES
SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES
CAREER EDUCATION

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Integrated Career Planning and Education Planning

Career planning helps students frame their academic classes and experiences from the perspective of their career goals, which research[1] shows enhances their rates of success, persistence, and completion.

What is career planning?

Career planning is part of a lifelong career development process. Ideally, career planning begins in middle school with career exposure and early exploration, carries on through high school, continues into postsecondary education with developmentally appropriate career exploration, and is revisited throughout one's career. For community college students, career planning is an iterative process that may involve career exploration, goal-setting, and pathway selection — best carried out in tandem with education planning.

Career planning is informed by a range of career exploration activities that help students identify their career interests and goals. These activities may include completing interest inventories and career assessments as well as meeting with college faculty, counselors, and other staff to learn about possible occupations to help select a pathway to match their interests. As students journey along their career development continuum, they may participate in informational interviews and job shadowing to deepen their understanding about a career, engage in co-curricular activities linked to their career interests, and intern to gain work-based learning experience before launching a career. Students may not need to engage in all activities if they feel confident in their strengths, preferences, and interests.

Why is integrated career planning and education planning important?

Community college students benefit from integrated career planning and education planning (see Figure 1). State policy requires that colleges provide education planning, and research about Guided Pathways[2] suggests that career planning and education planning are complementary as well as that students' career goals should drive education planning.[3] Additionally, according to Guided Pathways research, students need experiential opportunities for career exploration.[4]

Developed in partnership with WestEd, this report is part of a series about the collaborative efforts of the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium to strengthen education and workforce opportunities and to increase economic mobility in the region. For more information, visit https://myworkforceconnection.org/.

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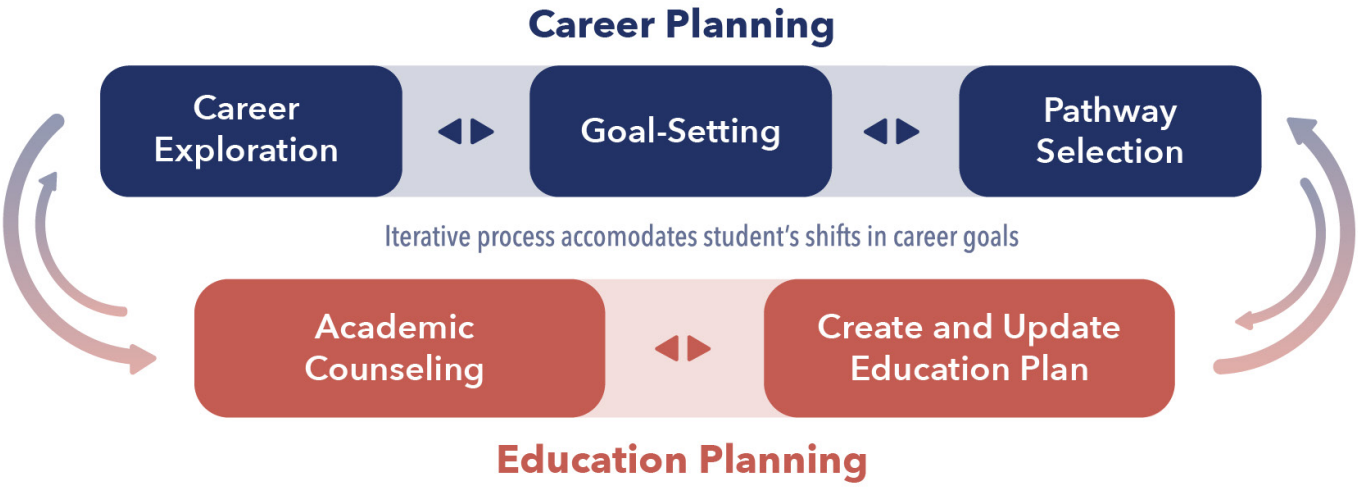
Figure 1. Integrated Career Planning and Education Planning



When career exploration and goal-setting precedes education planning, students are able to make informed and intentional decisions about a program of study or preferred pathway along with the courses within those pathways.[5] Furthermore, research shows that when students are supported with comprehensive guidance over time, they are more likely to persist and complete.[6] It's important that colleges implement a sustained and iterative approach to integrated career and education planning throughout a student's tenure in college.

How does it help students?

When students engage in career planning — career exploration, understanding of labor market information, goal-setting, pathway selection, ongoing review of goals, and reflection — coupled with education planning, students set out on the right path with a clear plan of study. These intentional planning activities save students time, frustration, and money while advancing them toward their career and education goals. Students develop important decision-making and metacognitive skills as they learn to align their strengths and interests to potential careers and to make important data-informed decisions for themselves.[7] Students develop agency as the iterative process allows for students to reassess their goals, adjust their career and education plans, and change their trajectory. Integrated career and education planning permits documentation of such changes and allows for adjustments to students' interests and career goals. It facilitates productive conversations with faculty, counselors, and other staff, helping students to persist toward their goals. Career planning assists all students by providing information about careers with high earning potential, and, for disproportionately impacted students, it can reduce equity gaps and help support economic and social mobility.

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What can it look like?

Best practices for integrated career and education planning emphasize "front-loading" career planning during orientation with planned opportunities for ongoing review. Following are examples:

- During onboarding, leverage intake processes to include multiple measures, such as career assessments and interest inventories, and share the results with students to help them explore careers, set goals, and identify a program of study.[8]
- Present different pathway options for students to consider, including career education programs that may lead to skills-based certificates and courses of study that can lead to transfer opportunities, as they review and reflect on their immediate and long-term goals.[9, 10]
- As part of the student experience, students engage in systematically reviewing their education plans to see that plans are still aligned to current career and education goals.[11]

What supports are needed?

Collaboration between academic counseling, career centers, career education programs, and academic departments — with support of college leadership — can bridge the chasm that traditionally has required students to be the ones to "connect the dots" and to take initiative to leverage student services and opportunities available to them. Through an integrated career and education planning approach, the responsibilities of helping students recognize their strengths, understand their career and education options, and develop an education plan are coordinated and shared so that students can be ensured coherent and continuous support from staff and faculty across the college.

Leadership support for operational changes

- Institutionalize a mandatory credit-bearing course that focuses on first-year student experiences and needs such as student success skills, social and emotional learning, financial literacy, career exploration, and career advising.
- Fund new instructional faculty roles to teach mandatory credit-bearing course.
- Establish processes to coordinate responsibilities and communication among career advisors, career and academic counselors, instructional faculty, and special program staff who provide advising service.

Leadership support for capacity building

- Provide and incentivize professional learning about career planning and experiential learning.
- Encourage participation in cross-functional planning teams and communities of practice for continuous improvement of the integrated processes.

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Helpful Resources for Integrated Career and Education Planning

- The practice brief, K14 Applied and Work-Based Learning, is the first in this series developed by the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges Regional Consortium.
- A multi-part resource, Redesigning Community College Student Onboarding Through Guided Pathways[12] includes research on why conventional onboarding practices are ineffective, profiles of community colleges and districts implementing redesigned onboarding practices, student perspectives, and planning exercises for cross-functional planning teams.
- These Opportunity Maps reflect ten common meta-majors, including essential skills, local certificate and degree programs, jobs, and earnings tailored to the San Diego-Imperial Counties region. These WestEd tools are free and can help facilitate conversations with students about career exploration and program selection.
- A recorded presentation of Leroy Johnson, chair of counseling at San Diego Mesa College, describes career planning before education planning as an equitable practice. SAWUBONA "I See You": Promising Practices Serving African-American and Latinx Students. (8 min.)
- An archived webinar, "New Student Experience – Valencia College," focuses on how this college transformed its onboarding experience through its New Student Experience course. (49 min.)

1 Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., Pellegrino, L., Kopko, E. M., & Griffin, S. (2020). *Redesigning community college student onboarding through Guided Pathways*. New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/redesigning-community-college-onboarding-guided-pathways.html

2 Guided Pathways is a postsecondary reform movement to improve student success by providing an intentional and coherent plan that integrates academic and student services and that guides students *into* and *through* community college to successful *completion,* leading to a credential, a transfer to a four-year college, or the labor market.

3 Karp, M. M. (2013). *Entering a program: Helping students make academic and career decisions.* New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8CJ8BGD

4 Ibid.

5 Karp, M. M., & Stacey, G. W. (2013). *Designing a system for strategic advising*. New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/designing-a-system-for-strategic-advising.pdf

6 Scrivener, S., Weiss, M. J., Ratledge, A., Rudd, T., Sommo, C., & Fresques, H. (2015). *Doubling graduation rates: Three-Year effects of CUNY'S Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for developmental education students.* New York: MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/publication/doubling-graduation-rates

7 Karp, M. M. (2013). *Entering a program: Helping students make academic and career decisions.* New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8CJ8BGD

8 Completion by Design. (2016). *Building Guided Pathways: Practical lessons from Completion by Design colleges*. New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://www.completionbydesign.org/s/article/Building-Guided-Pathways-Practical-Lessons-from-Completion-by-Design-Colleges

9 Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., & Fink, J. (2017). *Implementing guided pathways: Early insights from the AACC pathways colleges*. New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/implementing-guided-pathways-aacc.html

10 Jenkins, D., Lahr, H., Pellegrino, L., Kopko, E. M., & Griffin, S. (2020). *Redesigning community college student onboarding through Guided Pathways*. New York: Community College Research Center, Columbia University. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/redesigning-community-college-onboarding-guided-pathways.html

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.