

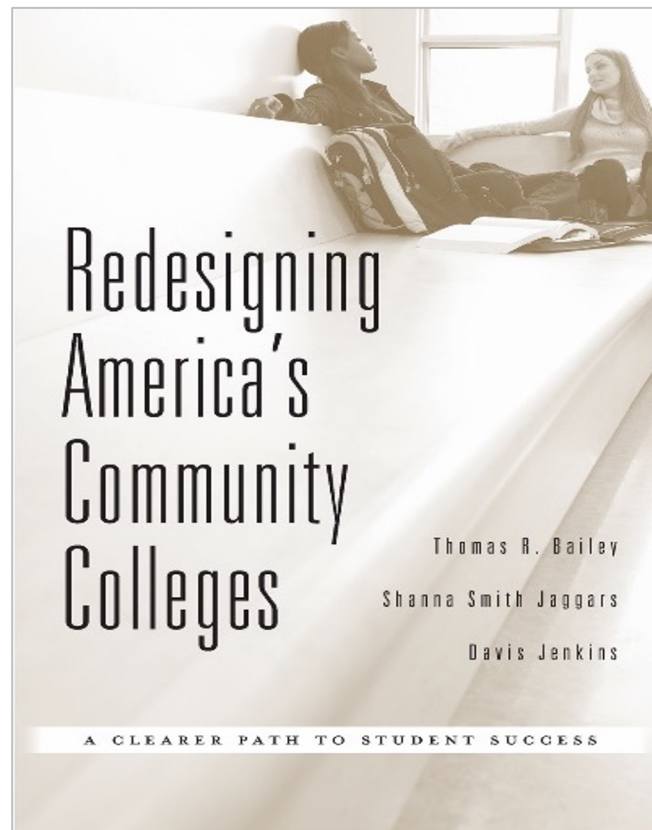
# *Innovating at Scale*

## **Guided Pathways Adoption and Early Momentum at AACCC Pathways Colleges**

Hana Lahr and Davis Jenkins, CCRC  
Laurel Williamson, San Jacinto College

CCRC's 2015 book argued that to move the needle on student success, **scaling discrete interventions is not enough**; rather, community colleges must **redesign at scale**.

*Redesigning America's Community Colleges* presented **"guided pathways"** as an outcomes-focused alternative to the **access-oriented "cafeteria college" model** that predominated since the 1970s.



# Guided Pathways “Pillars” and Key Practices

## 1. Map paths to student end goals

- Meta-majors
- Program maps
- Career and transfer information
- Math pathways

## 2. Help students get on a path

- Early career/transfer exploration
- Academic and financial plan
- Integrated and contextualized academic support

## 3. Keep students on path

- Monitoring progress on plan
- Intrusive support
- Frequent feedback
- Predictable scheduling

## 4. Ensure students are learning

- Field-specific learning outcomes
- Active learning throughout
- Field-relevant experiential learning

# Findings from CCRC's Evaluation of the AACC Pathways Project

REPORT | SEPTEMBER 2023

## Innovating at Scale

Guided Pathways  
Among the

Hana Lahr |

## RESEARCH BRIEF

Community College Research Center | September 2023

### Engaging the College Community in Guided Pathways Reforms

Advice From Project Leaders at AACC Pathways Colleges

By Hana Lahr

Implementing guided pathways to improve the college experience for all students, not just selected groups, requires new ways of thinking about leading large-scale reform efforts at community colleges. Colleges that have fully embraced the guided pathways model approach the associated reforms not as a set of discrete interventions targeted at particular groups of students or one aspect of the student experience, but as a framework and a set of principles for redesigning practices across the college that enrich the entire student experience—from onboarding to completion—in and beyond the classroom.

This attention to the change management process and to the need for faculty, staff, and administrators to shift their mindsets to embrace whole-college reforms is as important as the specific implementation practices that are undertaken. But how do college leaders help people within the institution make these mindset shifts? What follows in this brief is advice from project leaders—including college presidents, senior administrators, faculty, and staff—who were involved in planning, overseeing, or coordinating guided pathways reforms at the 30 colleges that participated in the AACC Pathways Project. The colleges joined this national initiative in 2016 and have since sought to transform their institutions using the guided pathways model. We interviewed the project leaders at all 30 colleges in spring and summer of 2022—more than six years after the colleges launched their guided pathways efforts—to learn what has worked best for them in building a college-wide commitment to adopting whole-college student success reforms at scale.

Their advice fell into two categories: (1) how to facilitate commitment to and engagement in implementing whole-college reforms at the start of the work and (2) how to sustain momentum in the work over several years. Much of this advice reaffirms what CCRC learned through interviews with eight of the colleges in fall 2018—two years into the AACC Pathways Project—about how leaders were managing the guided pathways reforms at their colleges (Jenkins et al., 2019). Four years later, college leaders involved in guided pathways, including some

#### Guided Pathways Change Management Advice From College Reform Leaders

1. Initiate a sense of urgency around how the college has fallen short of helping students achieve their goals.
2. Keep the focus on students, especially those from underserved populations.
3. Listen to students' perspectives and get their input on proposed reforms.
4. Give faculty an integral role in the planning and implementation work.
5. Develop a communications strategy and share out often about reform plans and progress.
6. Be ready for difficult conversations with faculty and staff.
7. Aim for stable presidential and project leadership.
8. Develop and support guided pathways leaders across the institution.
9. Establish cross-functional teams that include academic and student affairs staff.
10. Be patient and accept that progress is often nonlinear.



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# Key Questions

- What changes in practices are colleges making as part of guided pathways and at what scale?
- Is adoption of guided pathways associated with improvements in student outcomes?
- How can colleges approach guided pathways adoption?

# Our Student Outcomes Analysis Focuses on Early Momentum Metrics (EMMs)

- Key indicators:
  - Credit accumulation in term 1 and year 1
  - Completing college-level math and English/college-level math credits completed in year 1
  - Persistence from term 1 to term 2
- Sample includes all students entering college for the first time
- We examine EMMs for successive cohorts of students to capture change over time

# AACC Pathways Project

- 30 colleges from 17 states participated
- College teams attended 6 intensive workshops in 2016 and 2017 to examine institutional data, learn about guided pathways, and make implementation plans
- CCRC collected data on adoption of guided pathways practices between 2016 - 2022
- CCRC analyzed changes in EMMs between 2012 and 2020 (capturing four years before and four years after the project start)



# Guided Pathways Essential Practices

- ✓ Organizing programs into meta-majors
- ✓ Mapping transfer and workforce programs, including course sequences
- ✓ Enabling all entering students to explore career and program options
- ✓ Assisting students to create a full-program educational plan by the end of their first term
- ✓ Replacing prerequisite remediation with a corequisite approach for most students
- ✓ Developing field-aligned math pathways
- ✓ Implementing case management advising with advisors assigned to particular fields or meta-majors



# Findings on Adoption of Guided Pathways Practices

11

colleges adopted guided pathways practices at scale

12

colleges were in the process of scaling guided pathways practices

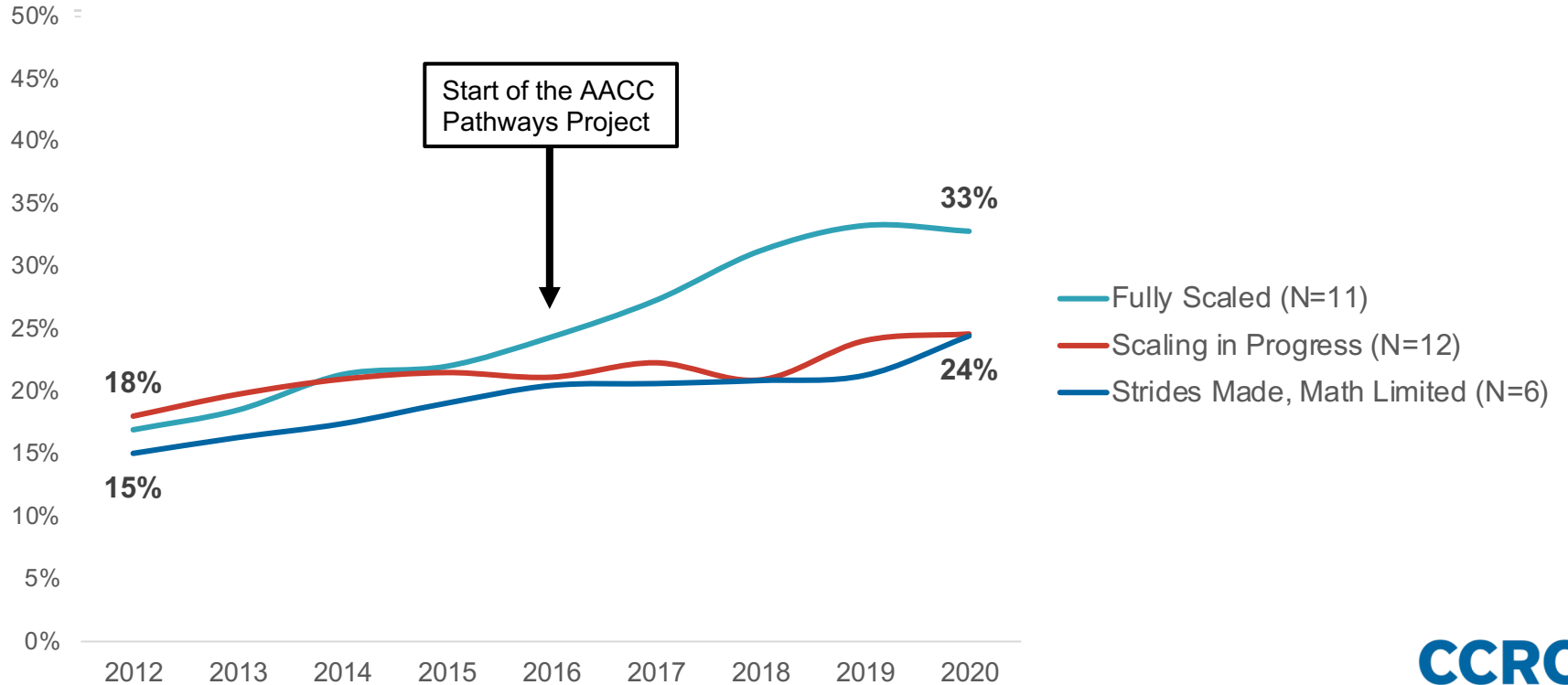
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colleges adopted some pathways practices but did not scale corequisite math

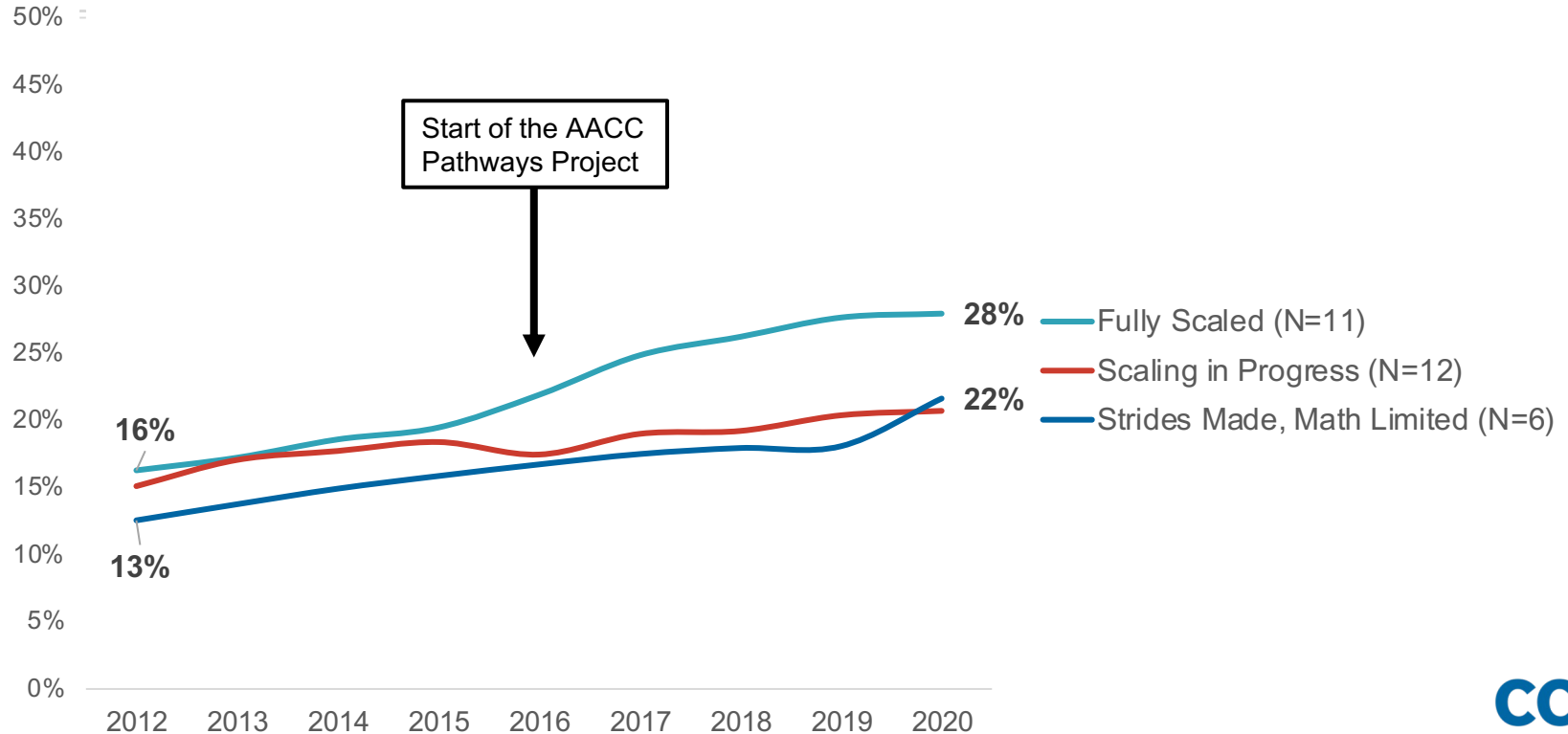
# Findings on Changes in Early Momentum Metrics (EMMs)

- Generally, all colleges made improvements on EMMs
- Colleges that made more progress in scaling guided pathways reforms made greater improvements on the EMMs
- All racial/ethnic groups benefited, but equity gaps did not close
- Term-to-term persistence declined, mainly due to Covid

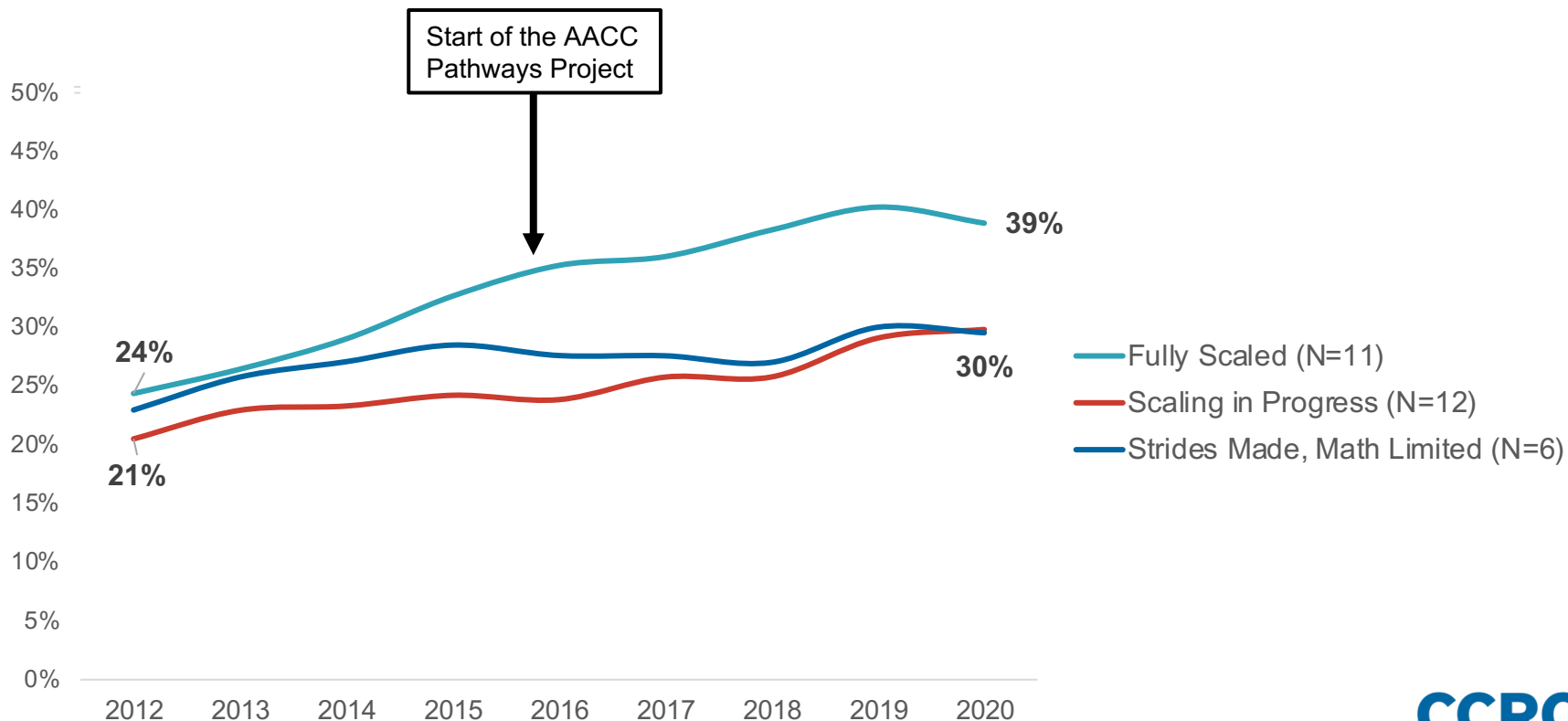
# Completion of 12+ College-Level Credits in Term 1



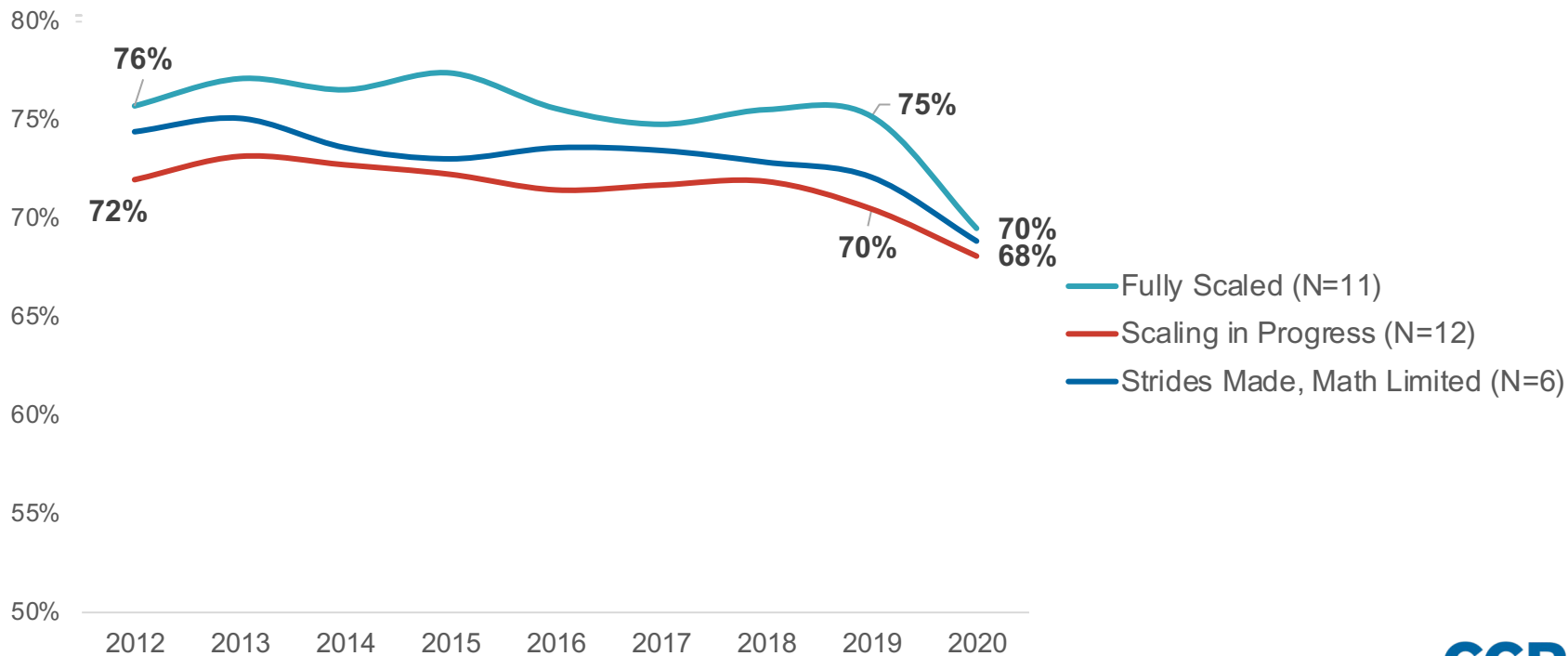
# Completion of 24+ College-Level Credits in Year 1



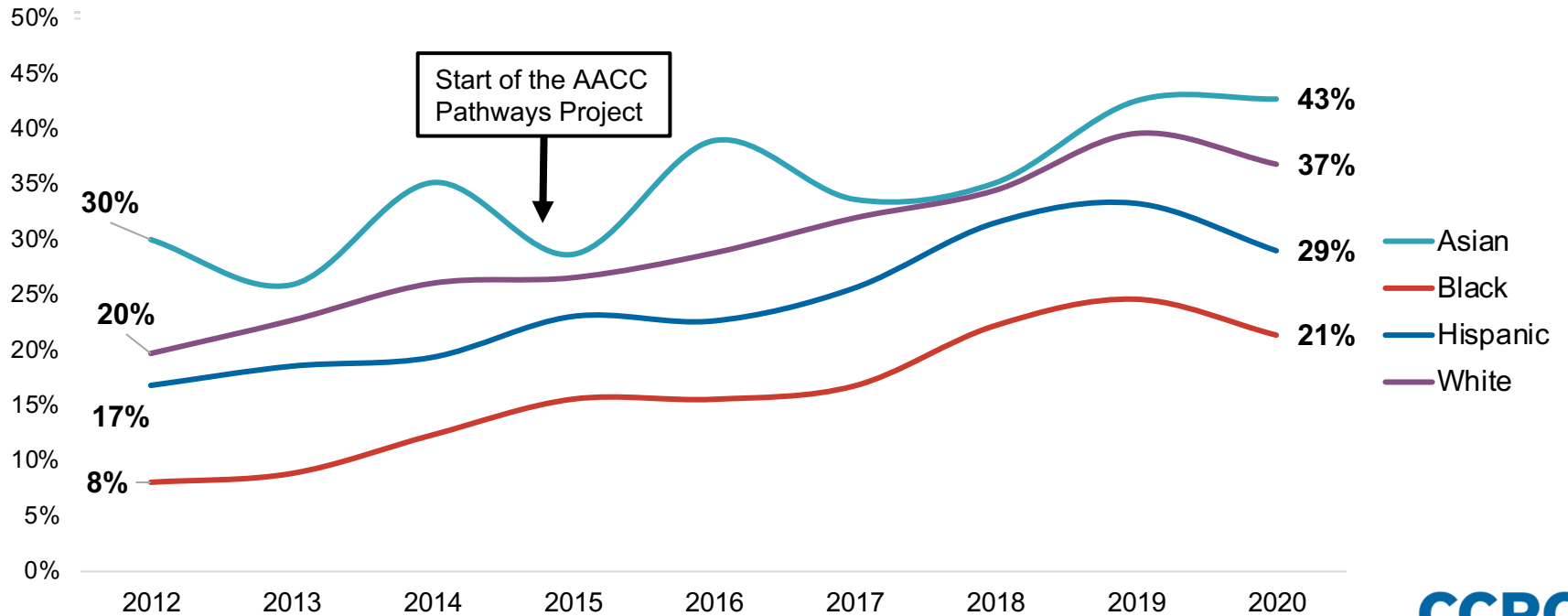
# Completion of College-Level Math in Year 1



# Persisted From Term 1 to Term 2



# Disaggregated Trends, Completion of 12+ College Credits: Fully Scaled Colleges



# Takeaways from CCRC Research on Guided Pathways Adoption and Student Outcomes

- EMM findings are consistent with key GP premise that improving outcomes at scale requires college-wide changes in practice
- Key practices focus on choosing, entering, planning, and completing a program of study
- Whole-college change requires dedicated, consistent leadership; broad college-wide involvement; and skilled implementation over multiple years
- Sustaining reforms requires cultivating mindsets and a culture of continuous learning and improvements



# Laurel Williamson

Deputy Chancellor and President  
San Jacinto College

# **Guided Pathways: Next Frontiers of Community College Redesign**

# Gaps in the *Redesigning* model and early GP implementation

Too Much Focus

Mapping programs



Not Enough Focus



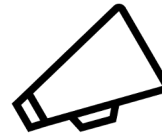
Teaching



Program outcome alignment



Customizing onboarding



Recruitment and onramps



Scheduling

# Thank you!

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