CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

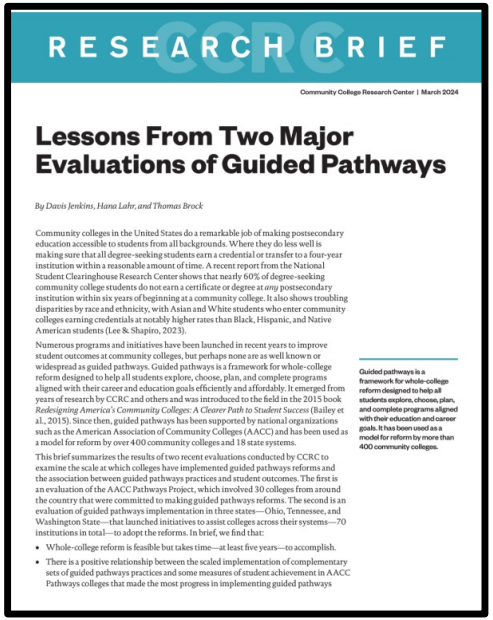
Lessons from Guided Pathways: Removing Obstacles and Clarifying Pathways in the Post-Pandemic Recovery

Tom Brock

March 27, 2024

Today's Webinar

1) What is guided pathways?
2) How did we evaluate guided pathways?
3) What did we learn about implementation?
4) What did we learn about changes in student outcomes?
5) What are the lessons for colleges?



RESEARCH BRIEF

Community College Research Center | March 2024

Lessons From Two Major Evaluations of Guided Pathways

By Davis Jenkins, Hana Lahr, and Thomas Brock

Community colleges in the United States do a remarkable job of making postsecondary education accessible to students from all backgrounds. Where they do less well is making sure that all degree-seeking students earn a credential or transfer to a four-year institution within a reasonable amount of time. A recent report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that nearly 60% of degree-seeking community college students do not earn a certificate or degree at *any* postsecondary institution within six years of beginning at a community college. It also shows troubling disparities by race and ethnicity, with Asian and White students who enter community colleges earning credentials at notably higher rates than Black, Hispanic, and Native American students (Lee & Shapiro, 2023).

Numerous programs and initiatives have been launched in recent years to improve student outcomes at community colleges, but perhaps none are as well known or widespread as guided pathways. Guided pathways is a framework for whole-college reform designed to help all students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs aligned with their career and education goals efficiently and affordably. It emerged from years of research by CCRC and others and was introduced to the field in the 2015 book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey et al., 2015). Since then, guided pathways has been supported by national organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and has been used as a model for reform by over 400 community colleges and 18 state systems.

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This brief summarizes the results of two recent evaluations conducted by CCRC to examine the scale at which colleges have implemented guided pathways reforms and the association between guided pathways practices and student outcomes. The first is an evaluation of the AACC Pathways Project, which involved 30 colleges from around the country that were committed to making guided pathways reforms. The second is an evaluation of guided pathways implementation in three states—Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington State—that launched initiatives to assist colleges across their systems—70 institutions in total—to adopt the reforms. In brief, we find that:

- Whole-college reform is feasible but takes time—at least five years—to accomplish.
- There is a positive relationship between the scaled implementation of complementary sets of guided pathways practices and some measures of student achievement in AACC Pathways colleges that made the most progress in implementing guided pathways

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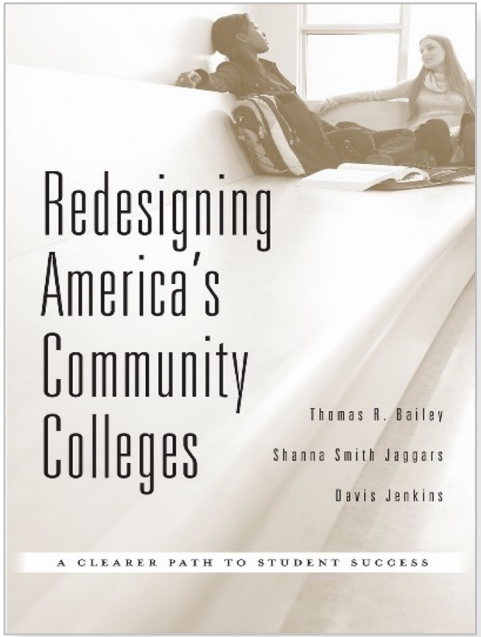
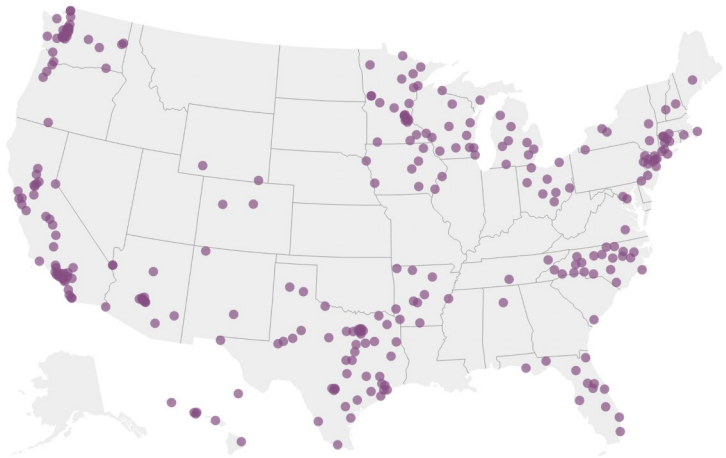
A National Movement to Improve Community College Outcomes *at Scale*





Updated January 2022

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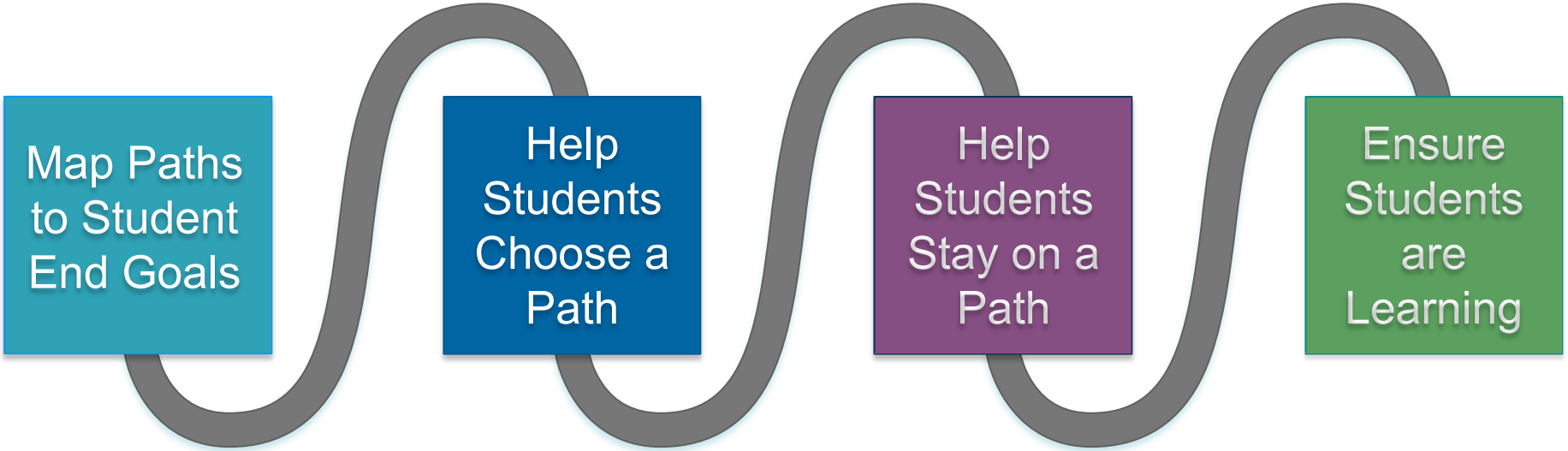
Guided pathways framework



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The big questions:

To what extent do colleges adopt a set of guided pathways practices *at scale*?

Is adoption of guided pathways associated with improvements in student outcomes?

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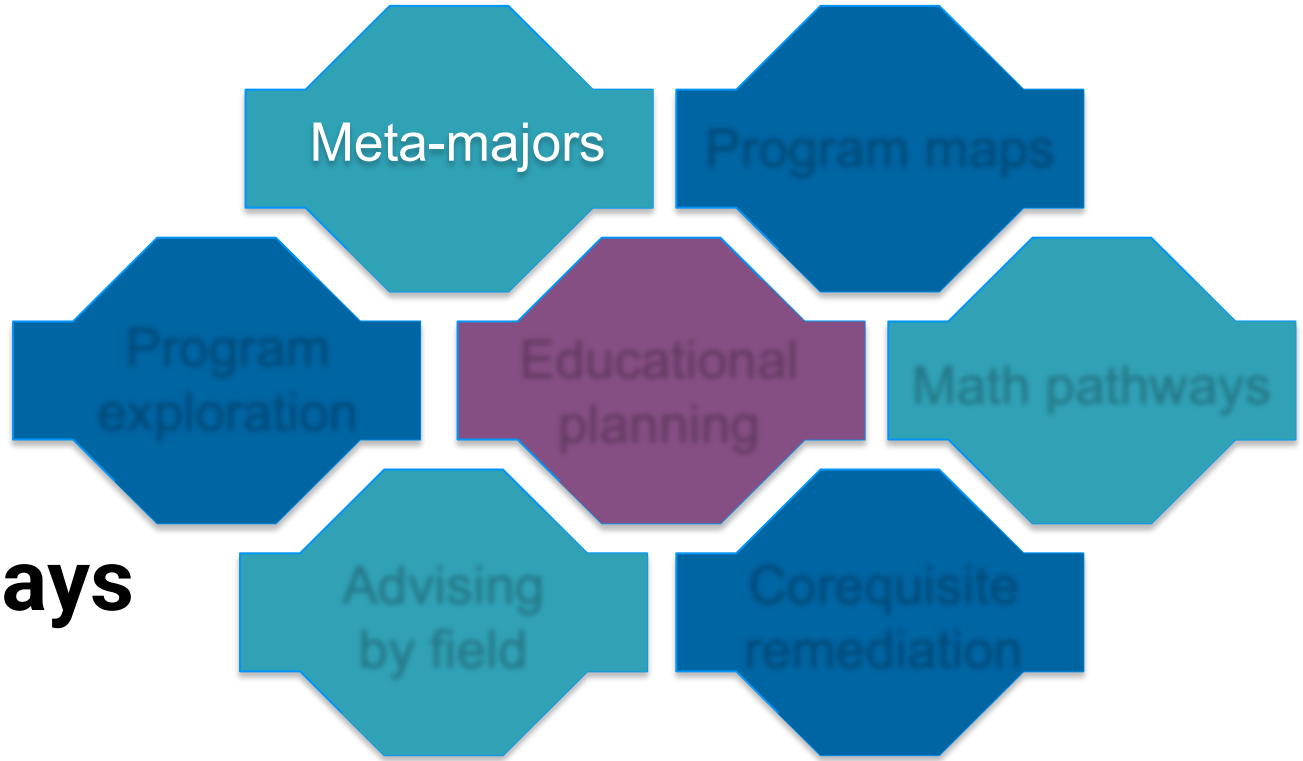
Two Evaluations:

1) 30 colleges participating in **the AACC Pathways Project**

2) Statewide adoption of guided pathways in Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington **(The NSF Evaluation)**

We used an institutional survey to measure adoption of guided pathways practices.



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We used "Early Momentum Metrics" to capture student outcomes.

EMM Examples:

- 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

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We took a multi-year perspective to measure improvements in EMMs over time (pre- and post-guided pathways).

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AACC Pathways Project

- **30 colleges from 17 states** selected through a competitive process
- **6 intensive institutes** + coaching in 2016 and 2017
- **8 years of student data** (2012 – 2020)

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Implementation findings

11 Colleges adopted all or most practices at scale

12 Colleges were in the process of scaling

6 Colleges did not scale corequisite math

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Student outcomes

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

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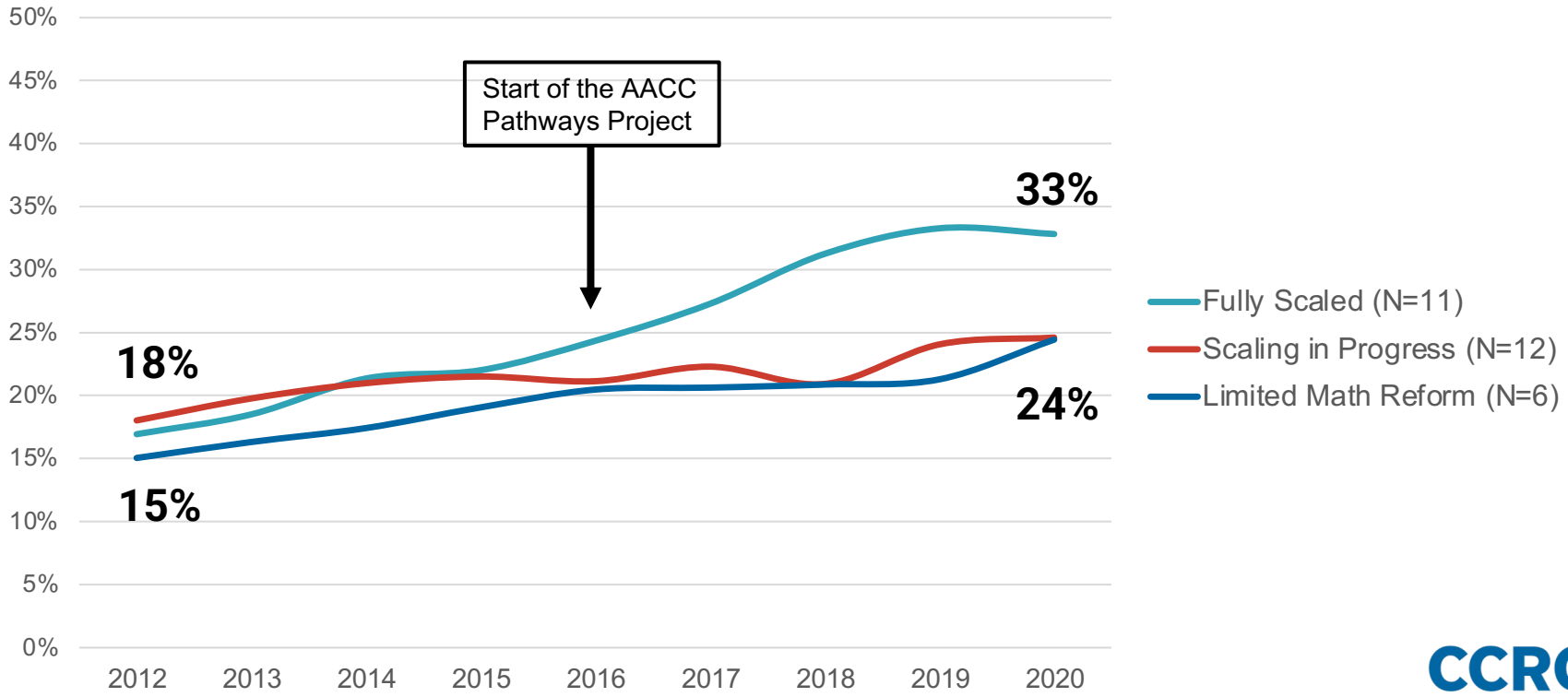
Completion of 12+ college-level credits in term 1



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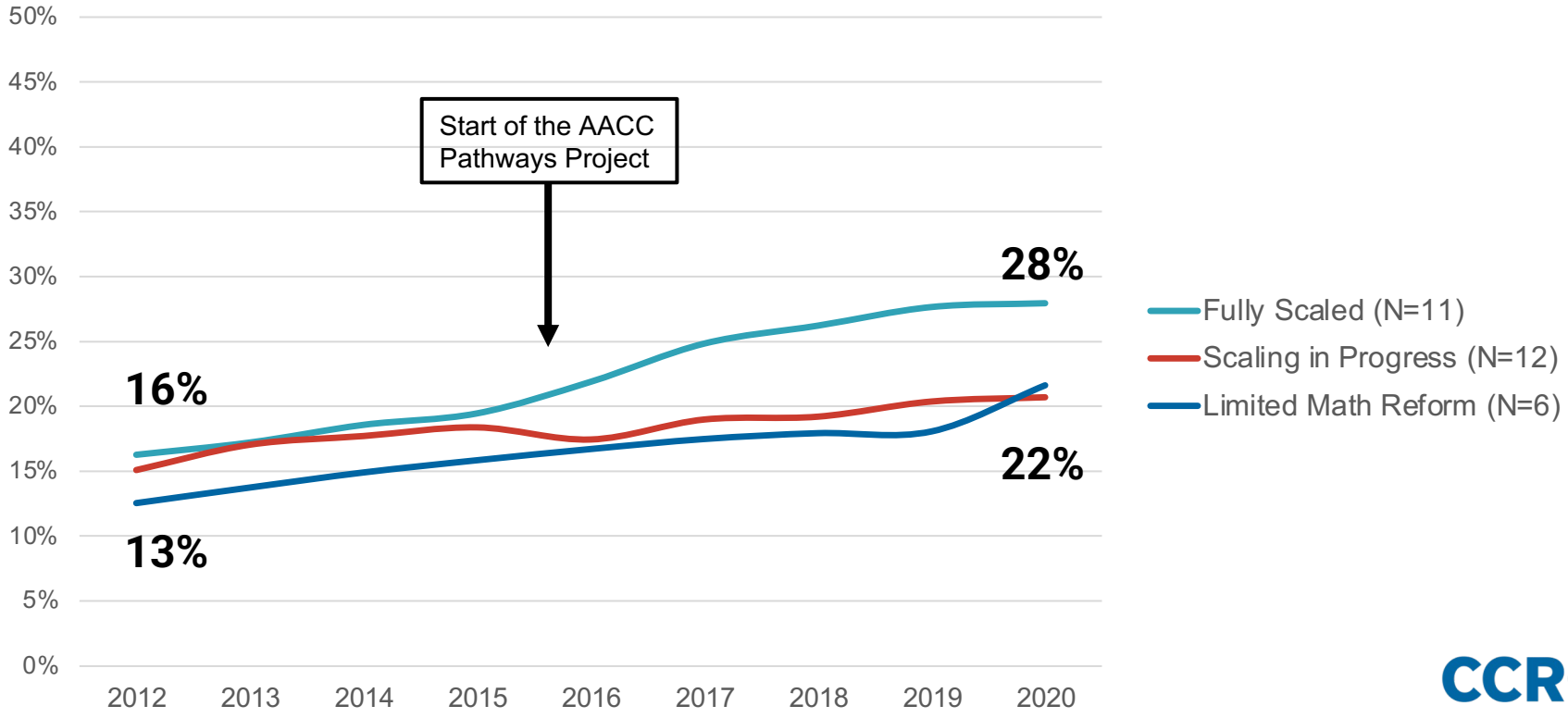
Completion of 24+ college-level credits in year 1



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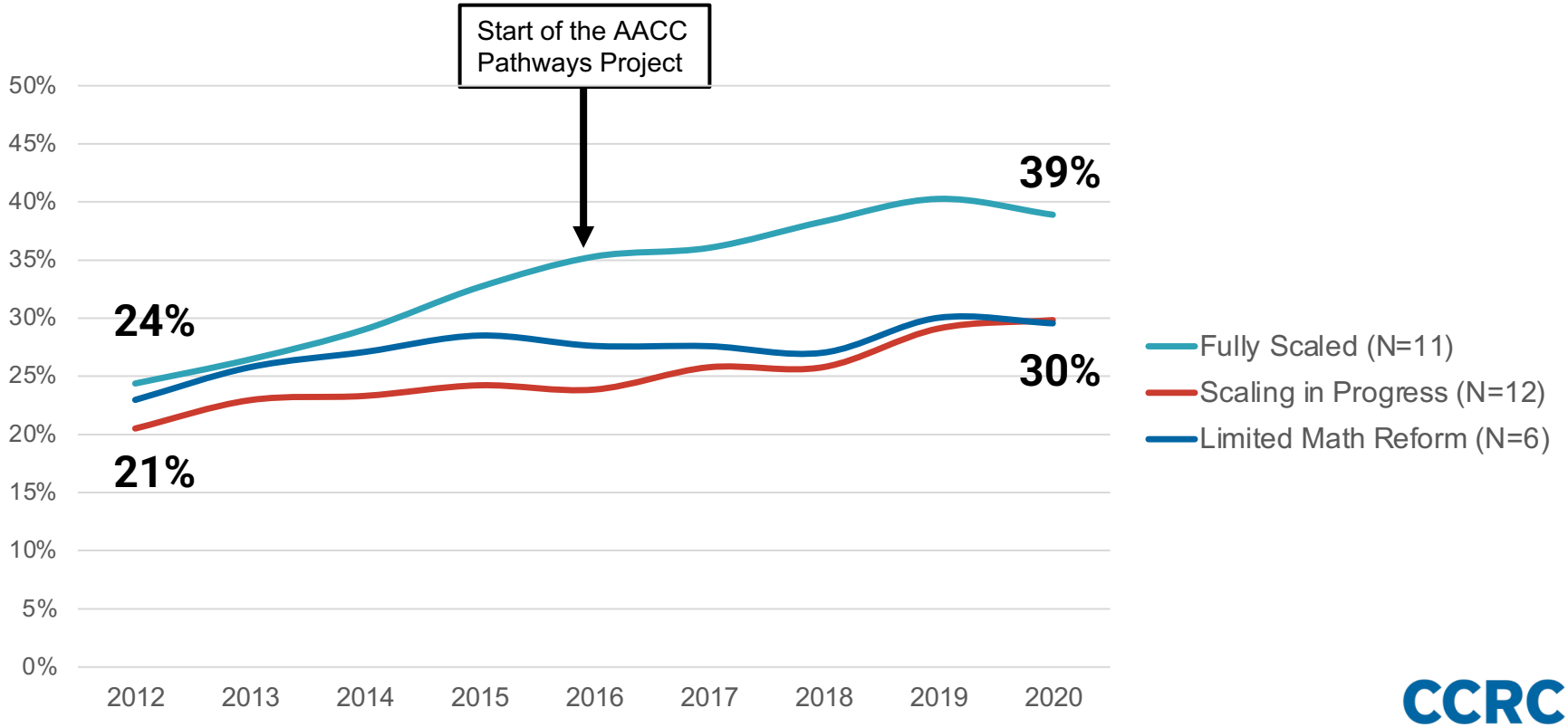
Completion of college-level math in year 1



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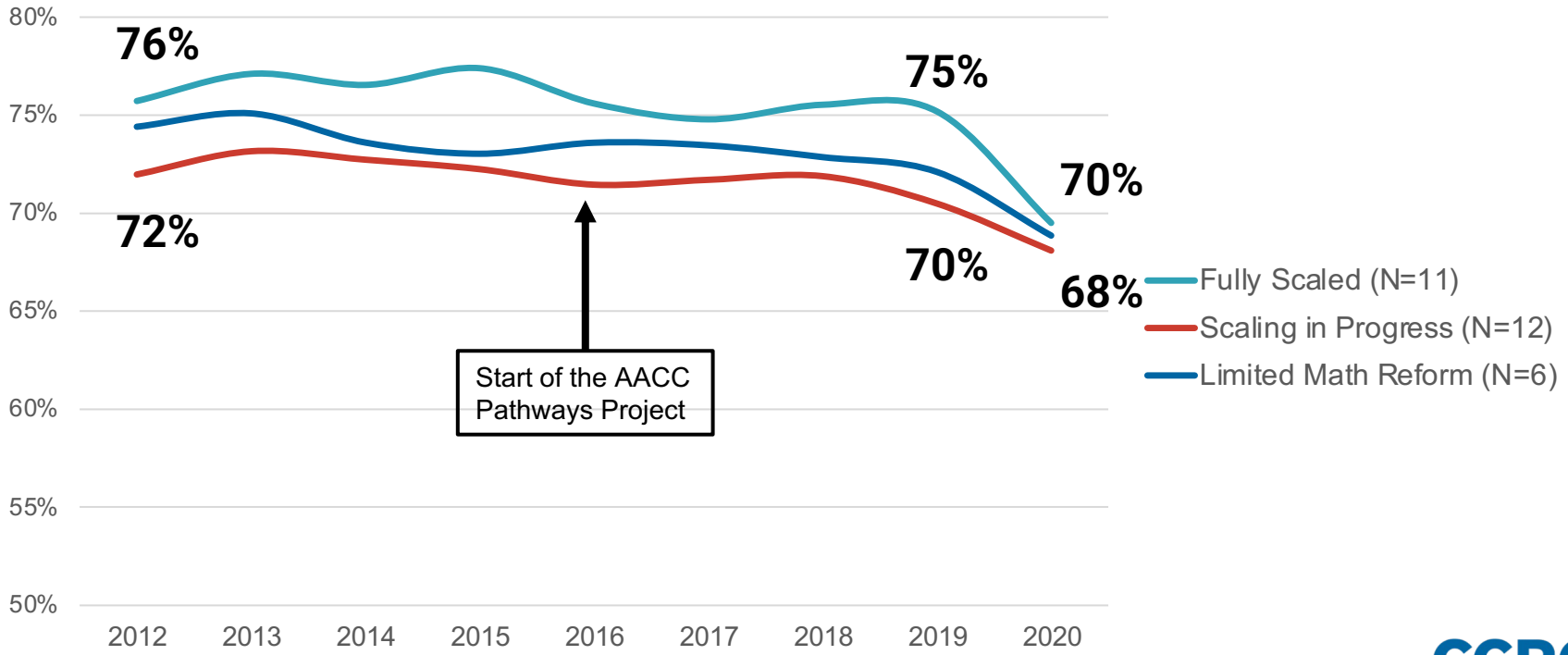
Persisted From term 1 to term 2



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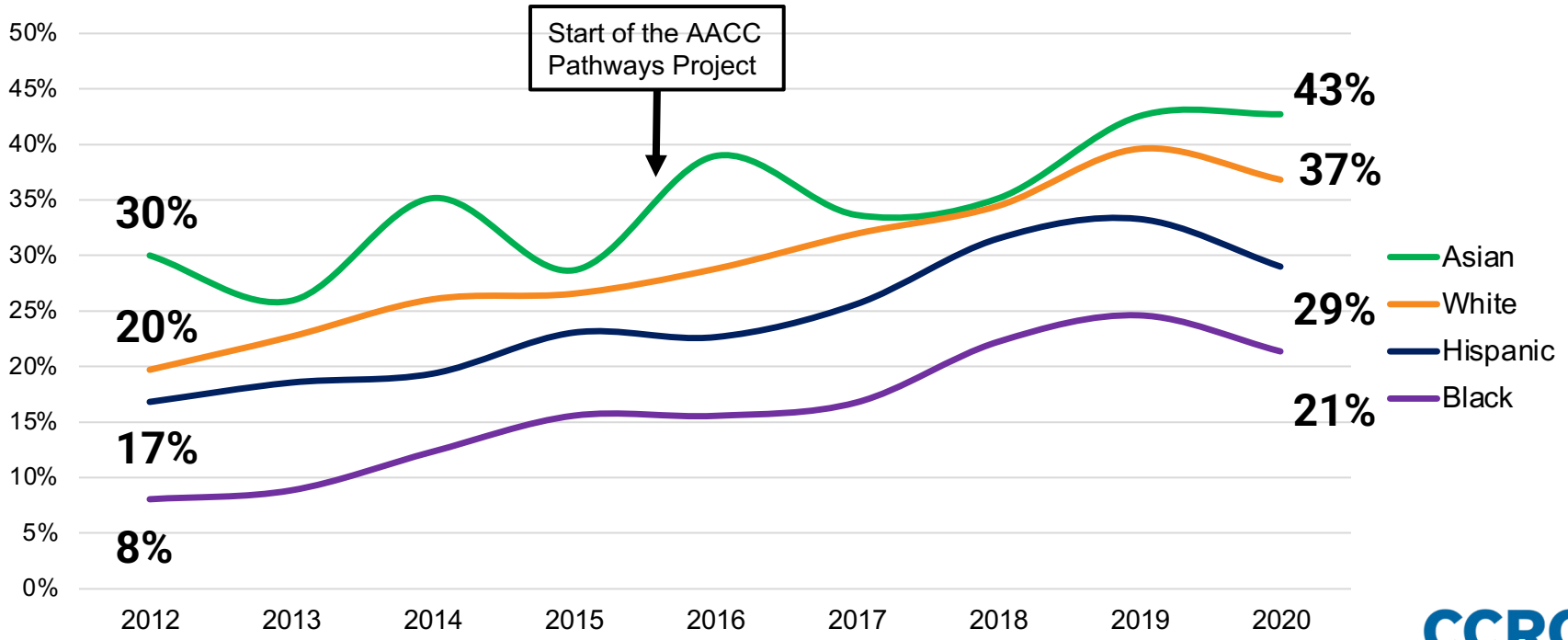
Completion of 12+ college credits by race/ethnicity (fully-scaled colleges only)



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NSF Evaluation

- **70 colleges from 3 states**
- **State-sponsored guided pathways institutes and workshops**
- **10 years of student data** (2010 – 2020)

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Statewide pathways launch dates

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THE COLLEGE SYSTEM of TENNESSEE

SUCCESS CENTER FOR OHIO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES
Washington State Board

2014

2016

2018

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Implementation findings by state

	High Adopters	Medium Adopters	Low Adopters
Ohio	7	9	3
Tennessee	6	7	0
Washington	5	13	12

Student outcomes

- In Tennessee, we observed positive changes in the following student outcomes:
  - college credits earned in the first year
  - college-level math credits earned in the first year
  - STEM credits earned in the first year
  - fall-to-fall persistence

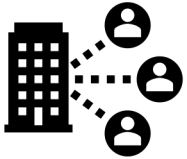
- No consistently positive trends in Ohio and Washington

Why didn’t more colleges adopt more practices at scale?

- Making fundamental changes to how community colleges operate takes several years.
- Leadership turnover can halt or significantly slow reform.
- Many colleges were on track to implement GP at scale by fall 2020 or 2021 but put their efforts on hold during Covid.

Reflections on the AACC and NSF Studies

Improving outcomes at scale requires **college-wide** changes in practice.



Statewide agencies and associations play an important role in catalyzing and spreading reforms.

Whole-college change requires dedicated, consistent **leadership** and **college-wide** involvement.

Sustaining reforms requires **a culture of continuous learning** and improvements.

To pay for costs, some colleges have **reorganized existing staff and resources** and used technology.

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Five next frontiers based on what we learned from these two evaluations.

Facilitate case management advising by field, predictable schedules, and other supports to help students complete their plans on schedule.

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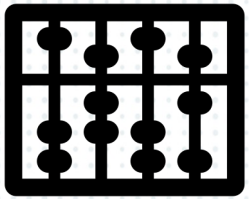

Remove the obstacle to student success created by prerequisite remediation, particularly in math.

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Get students into program gateway courses outside of math and English composition.

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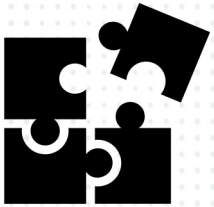

Implement tailored guided pathways practices for students from underserved groups.

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Build on-ramps to career-path degree programs for K-12 students after high school.

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Thank you!

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