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Planning Student Paths to Post-Completion Success: A Guide for Using the Community College Program Mapper

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In our new book, *More Essential Than Ever: Community College Pathways to Educational and Career Success* (Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025), coauthored with Serena C. Klempin and Maggie P. Fay, we argue that if community colleges are to recruit and retain more students, they need to ensure that their programs of study are worth completing in that they enable students to secure good jobs or transfer successfully to bachelor's programs. Colleges must also ensure that students with many competing obligations can complete their programs in as little time and as affordably as possible.

Crucial to accomplishing these aims is helping all entering students explore career and academic interests, choose a program of study, and develop an individualized educational plan aligned to their career and educational goals. As explained in the textbox on the following page, creating an individualized plan is critical for having students develop clarity about their program path and motivating them to complete it. Students and college staff can use these plans to monitor student progress, and colleges can use the plans to schedule classes at times students need them so that students can complete their programs on time, according to their individual timelines.

Yet many colleges have difficulty understanding which or how many of their students have individualized educational plans; they also have difficulty in capturing a bird's eye view of which of their program pathways lead to good jobs and further education for students and which meet local workforce needs. Knowing more about the broad college enrollment picture is critical for thinking about what programs of study should be offered, expanded, and encouraged. It is also helpful in undertaking strategies to help students develop a high-quality, goal-aligned plan.

The Importance of an Individualized Educational Plan

At the majority of colleges we have studied in our guided pathways work, most students do not have an educational plan that clearly maps what courses and other required learning experiences they need to take, in what sequence, and on what timeline, to complete a credential that leads to a good job or successful transfer. This is a key reason why many new students drop out within the first term or two—they cannot see a path to completing their goals or a feasible timeline for doing so. And without a program plan, too many students who do persist end up taking courses not required to secure a good job or transfer to a bachelor's program with no excess credits.

A key initial step in the educational planning process is choosing a program of study aligned with students' interests and goals. Colleges typically record students' intended program major—often the major that students selected on their application—when they enroll so students can be eligible for financial aid. Recording an intended program or major, however, is not the same thing as helping students develop a coherent, actionable plan that aligns coursework to a specific post-completion goal. Moreover, program choice is not usually a one-time decision; it is a process that requires exploration. Yet most colleges do not have a system in place to capture when students want to change their major. As a result, students often change their major without informing an advisor, which means that the college and the student are not on the same page about their goals.

As part of early guided pathways reform efforts, many colleges improved information on their websites about program requirements and outcomes. They displayed program maps created by faculty and staff showing what courses students need to take to complete programs. Such maps are helpful, but they are not sufficient because they show only a generic student pathway through a program. Few students actually follow the course sequences as they are laid out in program maps. To gain real clarity about their program path and to build confidence that they can complete it, students need an individualized plan that lays out what coursework they need to take and when to complete their program—fully adapted to other obligations they may have (such as work or caregiving)—that can be updated if, as commonly happens, their goals change.

In this guide, we provide instruction on how to use a revised data tool we have been developing over the past several years to help colleges classify, understand, and strengthen student paths to post-completion success. Colleges paste a datafile containing their students' program enrollment information and demographics into a prebuilt Excel workbook called the Community College Program Mapper. The tool then uses that information to display interactive treemaps, bar graphs,

and tables (in several different tabs in the Excel workbook) that help colleges visualize and drill down into which of their students are enrolled in which programs. They can, for example, identify how many and what proportion of students are and are not enrolled in a program track that clearly leads to jobs paying at least a living wage or to bachelor's programs with no excess credits in specific major fields. Colleges can use insights from the data tool to modify supports and services to help students to explore, choose, and plan a program of study.

While the Program Mapper emphasizes age-related enrollment patterns, colleges can filter results by other characteristics and pair the results with additional analyses to better understand who is—and is not—enrolling in higher-value pathways. Used in this way, the tool can help motivate improvements in advising, recruitment, and program design so that higher-opportunity programs reflect the full breadth of students the college serves.

Importantly, the new version of the data tool also enables colleges to see how many new and continuing students in each program track have an individualized educational plan, so the tool can be used to track progress and patterns of effort college-wide and at the division- and program-area-level to increase the number of students who are helped to develop such a plan.

We begin this guide by introducing the data tool and showing how its features can be broadly useful to colleges. Then, based on common patterns of enrollment we have seen from scores of colleges nationally that we have worked with using earlier versions of the tool, we identify five high-leverage program value areas where students typically do not have an individualized educational plan and would benefit from having one. We discuss five corresponding strategies examined in more depth in More Essential Than Ever to help such students in each program value area develop a plan. We also examine program enrollments by age range, as older students tend to enroll in different types of programs than younger ones, and because the process of helping students make career and education plans can differ between younger and older students. We conclude by outlining action steps colleges can take to use results from the data tool to prioritize, plan, and implement efforts to help students choose a program and develop and follow a plan for post-completion success.

The Updated Program Mapper: What It Does and How It Works

The new version of the Community College Program Mapper builds on the framework and data tool we developed and published in collaboration with Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program (CEP) as part of the Unlocking Opportunity initiative (Jenkins et al., 2024), which in turn built on an earlier version created by CCRC (Fink & Jenkins, 2020). As with those earlier versions, colleges enter into the current data tool de-identified unit record data on all students, including the program they are enrolled in and key demographic characteristics, for particular terms. To help practitioners make the most of the tool, this new version provides clearer classification guidance, improved reporting options, and more actionable program-level insights. These enhancements allow colleges to identify:

- How many students are enrolled in high-, medium-, or low-value workforce or transfer program tracks.
- How many students generally and by program have been helped to develop an educational plan, and how many have not.

- Where misalignment exists between student goals, enrollment patterns, and high-opportunity, high-demand pathways.

These improvements make the tool more effective as both a diagnostic instrument and a guide for program improvement.

Mapping Program Enrollment by Post-Completion Value

The new data tool uses a taxonomy (developed with Aspen CEP for Unlocking Opportunity) for classifying program tracks by whether they are likely to prepare students for post-completion success in employment or baccalaureate transfer. As shown in Table 1, the taxonomy distinguishes between those workforce programs designed to enable students to enter an occupational field and those intended to "upskill" students already in a field so they can advance to better jobs. Workforce programs designed to prepare students to enter a field are classified into high-, medium-, and low-value based on whether they:

(1) prepare students for jobs paying at or above a living wage,

(2) offer opportunities for advancement, and

(3) align with high-demand jobs in local labor markets.

The taxonomy also distinguishes between high-value baccalaureate transfer program tracks, where students are following a structured path specific to their intended major field of interest, and the more common low-value tracks, where students take general education coursework that may or may not be accepted for credit toward a bachelor's degree in their major field and that increases chances students will take courses they do not need.

Students seeking to be admitted to competitive admission programs in healthcare and other fields are classified separately because many of them will not be accepted into these programs, which often have limited enrollment capacity, making it essential to help all such students develop a "Plan B."

Students taking dual enrollment courses are classified separately, too. They are still in high school, and with few exceptions, such as those in Early College High Schools, dual enrollment students have not yet enrolled in a postsecondary program of study. The taxonomy also includes a category for students in noncredit workforce and adult basic skills programs, since many colleges offer these programs but often do not think of them as potential pathways to credit workforce or transfer programs. Students who have not decided on a program or are just taking individual courses without a plan to earn a credential are classified as undecided/unclassified.

To use the data tool, a college should classify its own programs based on local labor market data, transfer outcomes, and input from employers and four-year institutions to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Table 1.

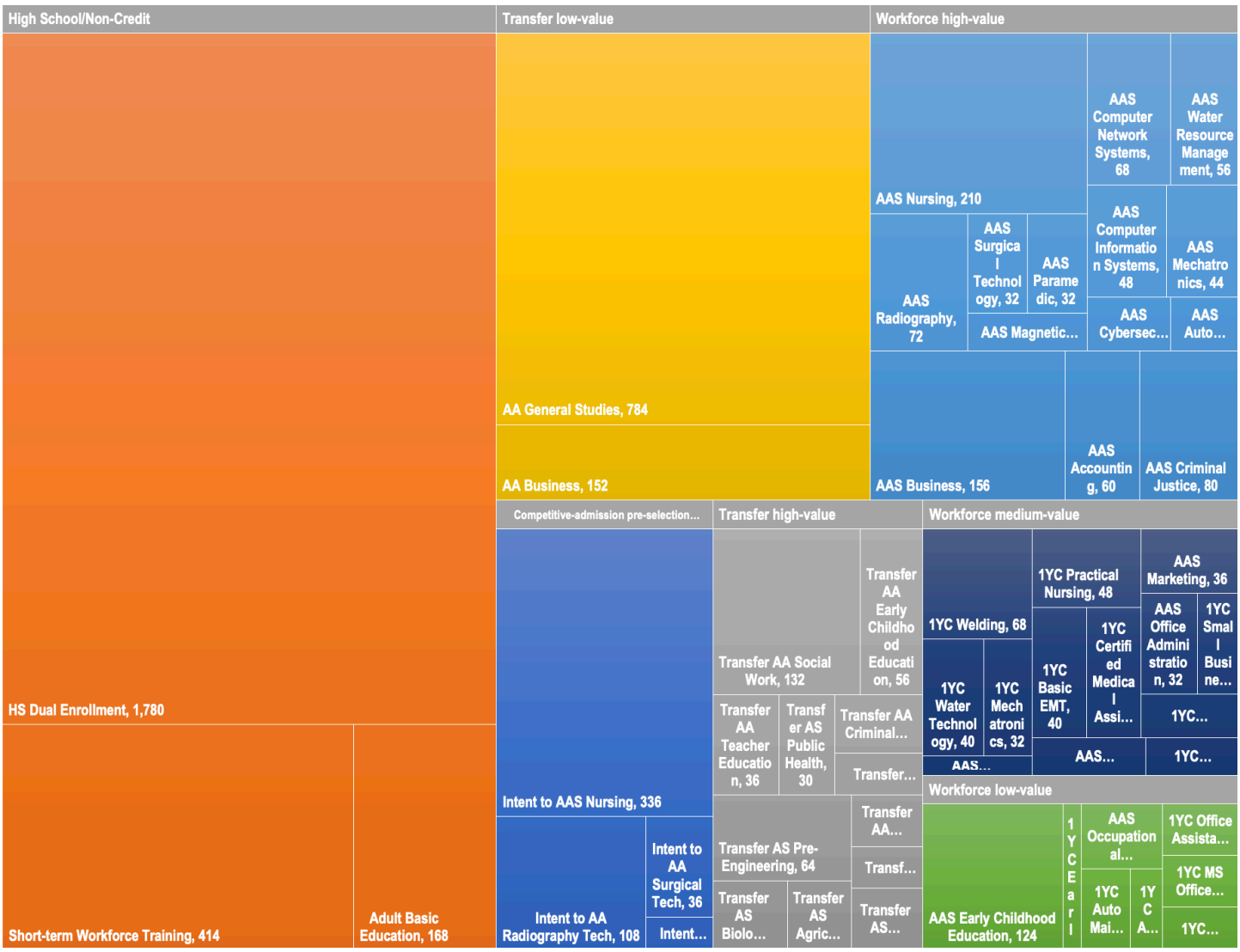
Post-Completion Value Taxonomy of Programs

Program value category	Definition	Common examples
Workforce high-value	Programs that enable completers to secure jobs that pay above a living wage as defined by a college for its service area.	• Associate Degree in Nursing • AAS-Industrial Mechanics/Maintenance Technology • Most community college bachelor's degrees in career fields
Workforce medium-value	Programs leading to credentials that enable completers to secure jobs that pay near a living wage but require further education and training to advance to jobs that pay well above a living wage and provide strong opportunities for career advancement in the given field.	• Advanced Certificate-Licensed Practical Nurse • Advanced Certificate-WeldingAdvanced Certificate-Emergency Medical Technician • "Fast-start" short-term, career-ladder training programs in high-demand, high-paying fields like construction, energy technology, advanced manufacturing
Workforce low-value	Programs leading to credentials that generally enable completers to secure only jobs that pay well below a living wage and provide limited opportunities for advancement in the same field without extensive further education or training.	• Certified Nurse Assistant; AAS/Certificate-Culinary • AAS/Certificate-Cosmetology • AAS/Certificate-Veterinary Tech • AAS/Certificate-Early Childhood Education
Workforce, upskilling	Programs that help completers enhance and document marketable skills but do not, by themselves, enable substantial wage gains without further education or training.	• Short Certificate-MS Office • Short Certificate-Project Management • Micro-credentials or badges
Transfer high-value	Associate degree programs that enable students to transfer most credits toward a bachelor's degree in their desired major field. Students are classified here if they have an individualized plan aligned to major-specific transfer guides.	• Statewide pre-major transfer associate degrees, such as California's Associate Degrees for Transfer, Ohio's Guaranteed Transfer Pathways, and Washington's Associate in Science-Transfer • Field-specific Direct Transfer Agreements (but not the general studies DTA)
Transfer low-value	Associate degree programs whose completers are often unable to transfer many credits to a bachelor's program in their intended major field because they lack a major-specific plan.	• AA-General Studies • AA-General Business • Certificate-Liberal or General Studies
Competitive-admission pre-selection	Program tracks in which students are seeking admission to selective, capacity-limited programs.	• Pre-Nursing • Pre-Respiratory Therapy • Pre-Surgical Technology
High school dual enrollment	Offerings that enable high school students to take college courses in high school for college credit.	• Dual enrollment, dual credit, Early or Middle College High Schools, P-TECHS
Noncredit	Adult basic skills and noncredit workforce programs	• Workforce programs not eligible for federal financial aid • Adult basic skills (ABE, GED, ESL) programs eligible under Title II
Undecided/Unclassified	Students who are not classified into a program or program track leading to a postsecondary credential.	• Degree-seeking students who have not yet decided on a program or major • Transient students who enroll just to take individual courses

Using a datafile from a college, the tool produces a tree map (in Tab 2 of the Excel workbook) like that displayed in Figure 1 showing the distribution of students by program value category. The size of each rectangle is proportional to total enrollment in each program, allowing colleges to visualize where students are concentrated and where intervention is most needed to help students who are not on a clear path to a good job or transfer in a major to get on one. The treemap shown in Figure 1 is based on fictionalized data from a hypothetical college. Nonetheless, what is shown is broadly typical: The program enrollment patterns that appear here are common across many colleges we have studied.

Figure 1.

Program Enrollment by Post-Completion Value (Data Tool, Tab 2): Hypothetical Community College



As shown in the figure, in this hypothetical college, many students are enrolled in low-value transfer programs (e.g., general studies), competitive-admission pre-selection tracks, dual enrollment, and noncredit workforce and adult basic skills tracks—groups of programs that often lack clear pathways and structured plans to high-opportunity job and transfer outcomes.

This misalignment with high-value outcomes represents both a challenge and an opportunity: These students are already connected to the college, and targeted supports can help them choose, plan, and progress into and through higher-value programs in fields of interest to them.

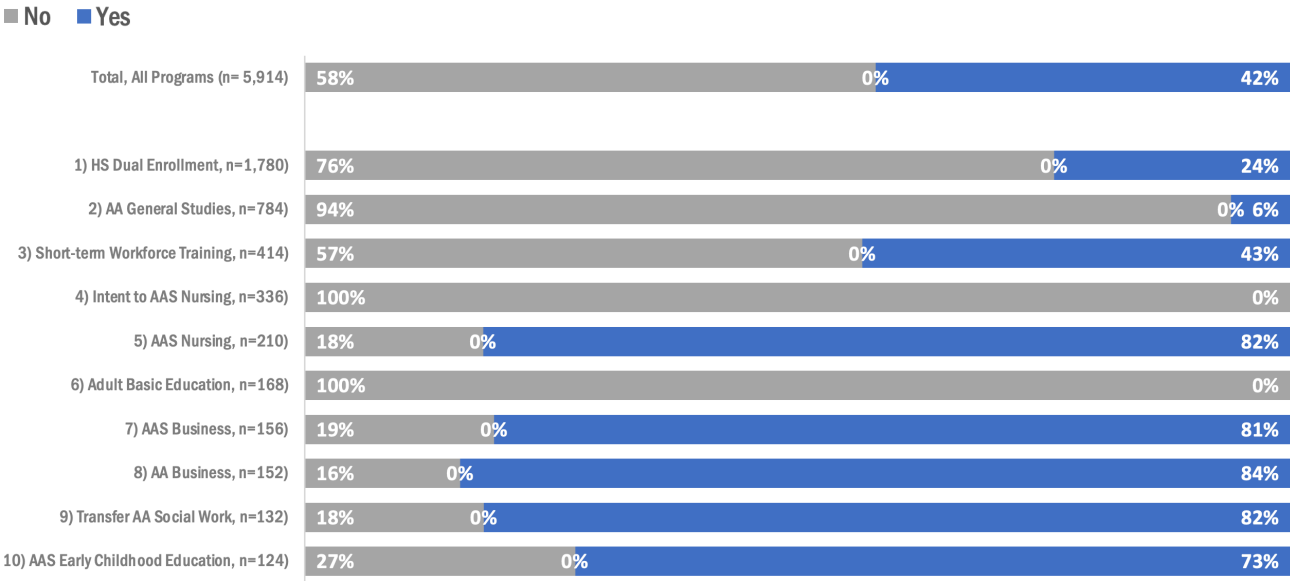
Working with faculty to create clearer maps of program pathways aligned to employment and transfer opportunities will help inform students and advisors as they develop individualized plans. Clearer program maps as well as a better understanding of current college enrollments will also help college faculty and staff strengthen program marketing, recruitment, and onboarding in higher-value program areas.

Identifying Programs in Which Many Students Have Individualized Educational Plans

Importantly, the data tool also shows the number of students in each program who have been helped to develop an individualized educational plan, and data tool users can compare the number of first-time students with a plan to the number of continuing students with a plan. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of a bar graph that the tool produces (in Tab 3) for our hypothetical college that has begun to help students develop plans, showing the percentage of students who have a plan in each of the top 10 largest programs at the college (the tool can also show the same data for first-time and continuing students). A key takeaway from this graph is that students in AA General Studies and those in Intent to AAS Nursing are very unlikely to have plans. This is problematic given that these are two of the more amorphous or unstructured programs in community colleges and also two of the most highly enrolled programs.

Figure 2.

Percentage of Students With an Educational Plan (Data Tool, Tab 3): Hypothetical Community College



A table accompanying the bar graph shows for each program the share of all, first-time, or continuing students who have an individualized educational plan. The graph and table can be filtered by program value category as well as by program area since the division that oversees particular programs should be integrally involved in (1) working with admissions, advising,

recruitment, marketing, and other staff to recruit students to their programs, and in (2) providing program maps to help students and advisors develop individualized educational plans. (Using a treemap, Tab 1 of the data tool also shows programs associated with each academic division.)

Program Mapper Strategies: Putting More Students on a Plan to Post-Completion Success

In working with scores of colleges across the country to use earlier versions of the data tool, we identified five common program value areas for focusing efforts to help students who are not on a strong program path to explore, choose, plan, and pursue a higher-value program. These program value areas correspond to lower-value or unclear-value categories in the taxonomy shown in Table 1. They align with enrollment patterns evident in many colleges that have conducted this analysis and represent high-leverage opportunities for improving student outcomes.

Using data from the same hypothetical college represented in Figure 1, Figure 3 shows the programs categorized by post-completion value that correspond to each of the five strategies described below.

Figure 3.
Program Value Areas Corresponding to the Five Strategies: Hypothetical Community College

1. Transfer low-value

Help students seeking a bachelor's degree develop a pre-major plan aligned with the requirements of their intended transfer program.

Community college students who are seeking a bachelor's degree but have not decided on a major are often advised to take general studies courses leading to an associate of arts in liberal or general studies. Yet, research by CCRC and others indicates that this is ineffective and often harmful, since students in general or liberal studies tracks frequently do not take the lower-division coursework needed to transfer into a major field. As a result, many must take additional credits after transfer or switch majors entirely (Fink et al., 2018; Schudde & Jabbar, 2024).

The associate of arts in liberal studies represents nearly 60% of the 500,000 transfer associate degrees community colleges awarded in 2022-23. Besides poorly preparing students to transfer in a major, these degrees have limited labor market value, with median earnings for completers significantly below a living wage (Jenkins, Fink, & Velasco, 2025). Another 12% of students complete an associate degree in general business—an award that also does not often align well with specific business majors and is also associated with earnings below a living wage. These patterns indicate that the primary value of these degrees is as a gateway to a bachelor's degree, not as a terminal workforce credential.

Therefore, it is imperative that colleges help transfer-intending students—who account for a substantial share of enrollments in most colleges—to explore interests early, identify a likely major, and develop an individualized, major-specific educational plan aligned to the requirements of their intended transfer institution. These plans should be based on major-specific transfer guides created in partnership with four-year institutions, as major requirements often vary across universities. Without such plans, students risk unnecessary credits, reduced financial aid eligibility, and delayed graduation. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, pp. 43–51 and 63–67 for more details.)

2. Workforce low- and medium-value

Help students in lower-wage, often short-term workforce training programs develop a plan to pursue further education needed for advancement to living-wage, career-path jobs.

Community colleges award more than 500,000 workforce credit program certificates annually, which does not include the many workforce awards colleges confer through noncredit programs (Jenkins, Fink, & Velasco, 2025). Enrollment in workforce credit programs has been growing in recent years (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2025).

Many students in these programs are incumbent workers seeking to upgrade their skills. While short-term training in some fields (e.g., truck driving, welding, construction, EMT, etc.) can help students obtain living-wage jobs quickly, these jobs tend to be physically demanding and often offer only limited long-term career mobility. Longer certificate training programs (e.g., LPN, public safety, machining, industrial maintenance) provide entry into higher-paying jobs but typically require an associate or bachelor's degree to secure jobs that pay well above a living wage and provide strong career advancement opportunities.

Although many certificate programs are designed on paper to be "stackable," in practice relatively few students move from certificates into associate degree programs. Most students who stack credentials are already experienced workers with prior degrees. This underscores the need for colleges to help students in short-term certificate training programs develop a plan based on career-ladder maps developed with employers that embed certificates in degree programs that students can pursue while they are working.

Each year, community colleges award over 100,000 certificates and more than 60,000 associate degrees in fields such as early childhood education, cosmetology, and culinary services, credentials that are associated with earnings well below a living wage (Jenkins, Fink, & Velasco, 2025). As with graduates of short-term training programs generally, colleges need to help these students develop an educational plan that includes skills training and further education needed to advance to better-paying jobs in the given area. For example, some colleges have incorporated entrepreneurship training into cosmetology and early childhood education programs to prepare graduates to own their own businesses. Other colleges have mapped AAS programs in culinary and early childhood to bachelor's programs in hospitality management and education or social services, respectively, to provide a path to living-wage, career-path jobs in these fields. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, pp. 51–67 for more details.)

3. Competitive-admission pre-selection

Help students seeking entry to competitive-admission programs develop a "Plan B" in case they are not accepted.

Community colleges each year award over 90,000 associate degrees in nursing and allied health—programs that lead to jobs with strong wages, robust advancement opportunities, and opportunities for employer-sponsored training and further education (Jenkins, Fink, & Velasco, 2025). Yet these programs typically have limited capacity, constrained by clinical placement availability, faculty shortages, and costly equipment. As a result, many more students seek admission than there are seats. Indeed, students often continue taking courses while waiting for admission, and many ultimately are not admitted, despite their relatively strong academic performance.

Traditionally, colleges have not systematically identified or advised students seeking admission in these healthcare programs. Some students have only a limited understanding of the steps required to be formally admitted into a competitive program, and many end up in general education tracks without awareness of alternative career paths in healthcare. Colleges increasingly recognize the need to help these students develop a structured "Plan B" to jobs that do not require clinical training—through programs such as health office administration, medical billing and coding, health IT, public health, as well as through paths to bachelor's degrees in healthcare management or related fields. Early identification of these students, with early advising and program planning assistance, will lead to more of these students earning awards that prepare them for good jobs in the healthcare field. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, pp. 105–107 for more details.)

4. High school dual enrollment

Help dual enrollment students develop a plan for pursuing a high-opportunity postsecondary pathway after high school.

Dual enrollment has been the only major area of community college enrollment growth over the past 15 years. These students now represent more than one in five community college students nationally (Fink, 2025a, 2025b). Yet the number of high school graduates enrolling directly in community college has declined, and more than one in five dual enrollment students (including over one in four from low-income families) do not enroll in any postsecondary institution directly after high school (Velasco et al., 2024).

The conventional "random acts" model of dual enrollment—where course offerings are not intentionally aligned to programs of study and where advising depends on student-initiated contact—may work for students with strong networks of support, but it falls short for many first-generation students and those in under-resourced schools.

CCRC research on colleges that have not only broadened access to dual enrollment by underrepresented groups but have also been effective in guiding more of these students to pursue postsecondary education after high school shows that such colleges take a more intentional approach. This involves active outreach and engagement with students from underserved schools and communities, alignment of dual enrollment offerings to career-connected postsecondary programs, and career and college advising and planning assistance for all students to prepare them to pursue postsecondary programs of study in high-opportunity fields.

Providing advising and planning assistance to all dual enrollment students can be challenging given that most colleges serve students in numerous, often far-flung high schools. Colleges have sought to address this by, for example, requiring all students to take a college success course with integrated career and education planning support, or by offering group advising to students at their high school or to groups invited to the college to explore programs in fields of interest. When dual enrollment is structured intentionally in these ways, it becomes a powerful on-ramp—not a random sampling of courses—for students who might not otherwise pursue further education after high school. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, pp. 138–152 for more details.)

5. Noncredit

Help students in noncredit workforce and adult basic skills programs develop a plan for pursuing a workforce or transfer program in a high-opportunity field.

Many colleges serve significant numbers of students in noncredit workforce and adult basic skills (ABE, GED, ESL) programs. These students often aspire to better jobs and higher levels of education but lack structured guidance for transitioning into credit-bearing programs. Previous research by CCRC and others suggests that colleges that are effective in helping such students advance to credit workforce or transfer programs create strong partnerships between basic skills and credit program departments, provide proactive advising that helps students understand options and develop concrete next-step plans, and use bridge programming aligned to high-value workforce and transfer pathways (Institute of Education Sciences, 2020).

Customizing Educational Planning Assistance Based on Student Age

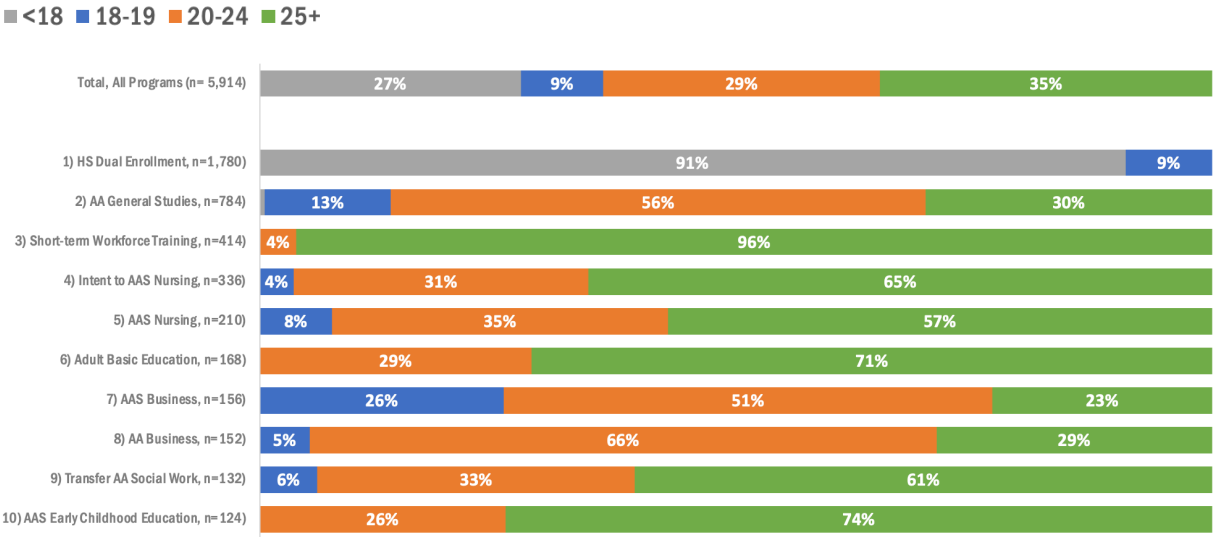
Recent CCRC research indicates that students often arrive at community colleges with interests and possible goals in multiple academic and career fields but with only limited knowledge about the educational paths that lead to those goals (Lahr et al., 2025). To ensure that students are not placed by default into a low-opportunity program path they might have little motivation to complete, colleges need to do more upfront work to help students explore, choose, and plan a program of study. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, chapter 3 for details on how to do this.)

Colleges should tailor program choice and educational planning supports to students based on their particular circumstances and goals. The data tool provides information on program enrollment by age, as older students often choose different program paths and have different planning needs than younger students. Because older students are more likely to have work and family obligations and often have some kind of work experience that can be leveraged, planning for these students should typically prioritize mapping the shortest path to living-wage advancement. Recent high school graduates, on the other hand, often need more support to explore academic and career interests, understand the implications of different program choices, and identify major-specific requirements early on. Planning assistance for students still in high school should emphasize broad exploration and early awareness of differences among program pathways and requirements. (See Jenkins, Lahr, et al., 2025, chapter 4 for more details.)

Figure 4 shows a screen shot of a bar graph from Tab 4 of the data tool showing the share of enrollment in the hypothetical college's 10 largest programs by student age. In this college—as with many colleges we have studied—students under 18 are overwhelmingly dual enrollment students. And in this college—as with many colleges we have studied—traditional-age students (18–19) are most likely to pursue baccalaureate transfer pathways, whereas older students (20+) are concentrated in workforce programs such as nursing, public safety, and the trades.

Figure 4.

Enrollment by Student Age in 10 Largest Programs (Data Tool, Tab 4): Hypothetical Community College



Associated with this bar graph in Tab 4 of the data tool is a table showing, for every program at the college, the distribution of students by age and the share of students with an educational plan. The listed programs in this table are (like in our discussion of the prior table) filterable by both program value category and by program area since the division that oversees particular programs should be integrally involved in (1) working with admissions, advising, recruitment, marketing and other staff to recruit students to their programs, and in (2) providing program maps to help students and advisors develop individualized educational plans.

As mentioned, dual enrollment represents the only growing segment of community college students over the past 15 years (Fink, 2025a, 2025b). Enrollment by recent high school graduates has declined, and enrollment by students aged 22 and older is at historic lows. Understanding age-related enrollment patterns can help colleges identify where recruitment and onboarding efforts need strengthening, tailor communication to different age groups, design program maps that meet the needs of both younger and older learners, and target individualized plan development outreach to populations least likely to have a plan.

Conclusion: Taking Action

Using the Community College Program Mapper effectively requires treating it as part of a structured, cross-functional improvement process—not simply as a one-time analysis. Below we recommend steps colleges can take to use the tool to motivate, prioritize, and guide efforts to ensure that far more students develop and follow an individualized plan aligned to a high-opportunity pathway.

1. Prepare and validate your data.

- Work with IR to load the most recent term's student-level program enrollment data into the data tool.
- Adjust program value classifications using local labor market and transfer outcome data and input from employers and university transfer partners.
- Work with academic program and student services administrators to verify the accuracy of:
  - Program value categories.
  - Program enrollment assignments.
  - Educational-plan status of students.

2. Convene a cross-functional review team.

- Bring together leaders from academic affairs, advising, workforce development, marketing/recruitment, enrollment management, and IR.
- Have the team review three key outputs:
  1. Program enrollment by post-completion value.
  2. Share of students with/without individualized educational plans aligned to high-value workforce or transfer programs, by program.
  3. Enrollment and planning patterns by student age.

- Identify high-priority program areas where large numbers of students lack clear pathways or plans to high-value outcomes (e.g., general studies, short-term or low-earning workforce programs, competitive-admission pre-health, dual enrollment, noncredit workforce/ABE) and where helping more students develop individualized plans would likely lead to improved persistence, completion, and post-completion success.

3. Launch program-area working groups.

- For each high-priority program area, form a group of faculty, program leads, advisors, and marketing/recruitment staff.
- Charge each group to:
  - » Refine or build clear program maps (aligned to employer expectations and major-specific transfer requirements).
  - » Define what every student's educational plan must include, including Plan B options where applicable.
  - » Develop advising supports and communication to help new and continuing students and their advisors and faculty understand pathways and build plans early.

4. Strengthen collegewide planning processes.

- Use insights from program-area work to improve collegewide systems:
  - » Integrate individualized plan development into onboarding, student success courses, and advising performance metrics.
  - » Enhance early career and program exploration for undecided and general education students.
  - » Align class schedules so students can follow their plans and complete on schedule.

5. Monitor and share progress each term.

- Use the Program Mapper—and student information system-based reports—to track:
  - » Growth in the share of students with individualized plans.
  - » Alignment of plans to high-value paths.
  - » Enrollment shifts from low-opportunity to high-opportunity program tracks.
  - » Representation in low- and high-opportunity programs by student gender, race/ethnicity, income, and age group to identify gaps and inform actions to ensure that higher-value programs are accessible to the full range of students the college serves.
- Share results with program areas and leadership to celebrate gains, diagnose barriers, and refine maps, advising processes, and recruitment/onboarding strategies.

By using the Community College Program Mapper not merely as a diagnostic tool but as the backbone of a structured, cross-functional improvement cycle, colleges can help every student—regardless of background, age, or educational starting point—develop and follow a clear, individualized plan leading to program completion and strong post-completion success in employment and further education.

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