CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER
Teachers College, Columbia University

Guided Pathways Next Frontiers: Scale of Adoption Assessment

PATHWAYS FRONTIER PRACTICES: INDICATORS OF ADOPTION AT SCALE

WORKING DRAFT August 2026

This guide is intended to help interpret responses from community colleges to a preliminary version of CCRC's *Guided Pathways Next Frontiers: Scale of Adoption Assessment* (Frontiers SOAA). The assessment is designed to measure the extent to which colleges have implemented at scale (that is, for all students or across all programs) the key practices associated with the five pathways frontiers described in *More Essential Than Ever: Community College Pathways to Educational and Career Success*—practices that research suggests enable students to complete programs that lead to good jobs and further education.

The following table shows the practices measured by the survey and defines the indicators CCRC recommends using to determine whether a college has adopted each frontier practice at scale based on responses to the Frontiers SOAA. In general, a practice is considered adopted at scale when it has been implemented for at least 80% of students or programs, unless otherwise noted. Some indicators use alternative thresholds or combinations of survey items because the underlying practices are inherently institutional rather than student- or program-level. These measures are intended to guide colleges and other organizations that administer the Frontiers SOAA in interpreting survey responses consistently while recognizing that the measures may need to be adapted as survey items are modified for different purposes.

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Frontier Practice	Item Indicators of Scale	Comments
1. Ensuring Programs Lead to Good Jobs and Further Education		
Aligning workforce programs to demand		
Web info provided on jobs program graduates might expect to secure, including demand and earnings.	1.1 = A (≥ 80%)	
Web info provided on program requirements and course sequences AND certificates embedded in degree programs.	1.2 = A (≥ 80%) AND 1.3 = A (≥ 80%)	
Programs reviewed using labor market data to ensure they lead to in-demand, living-wage jobs.	1.4 = A (≥ 80%) AND 1.5 = At least one from: A, B, C, D, F, or H (Systematic sources of labor-market or graduate outcome data)	Exclude E because not systematic and G because every college has employer advisory boards for CTE programs.
Aligning transfer pathways to bachelor's degrees.		
Up-to-date web info provided on requirements and course sequences for bachelor's at specific institutions and specific majors.	1.6 = A (≥ 80%) AND 1.7 = A or B (Every year or every other year)	
Transfer students enrolled in pre-major pathways.	1.8 = A (≥ 80%)	Indicator would be stronger if students are also helped to developed full-program plans (3.3 = A (≥ 80%)), since students are more likely to actually follow a program path if they have an individualized education plan.
Transfer programs regularly reviewed using outcome data.	1.9 = A (≥ 80%) AND 1.10 = At least one from: A, B, C, or D	Excludes E because not systematic.
2. Teaching Students Versatile Skills to Thrive in Careers and Further Education		
Versatile or transferable skills		
Students' attainment of durable or transferable skills formally assessed.	2.1 = A (≥ 80%)	This indicator reflects whether programs have moved beyond simply stating learning outcomes to systematically assessing durable skills as part of program review.
Math redesign		
Students take math courses aligned with their program.	2.2 = A (≥ 80%)	The combination reflects both widespread use of corequisite support and elimination of lengthy prerequisite developmental sequences.
Students needing support are placed into accelerated math with embedded (vs. prerequisite) academic support.	2.3 = A (≥ 80%) AND 2.4 ≤ 1	
Gateway math course instruction redesigned to improve student engagement, learning and success.	2.5 = A (≥ 80%)	
Program foundation course redesign		
Formal efforts to redesign program gateway courses to improve student engagement, learning, and success.	2.6 = A (Yes)	No numeric threshold is recommended because colleges vary substantially in size and number of gateway courses. The intent is to distinguish institution-wide redesign efforts from isolated course improvements.

Work-based and other experiential learning		
College has dedicated staff responsible for developing and managing.	2.7 = A (Yes) AND FTE staff ≥ 1.0	Having at least one FTE staff with primary responsibility for coordinating experiential learning indicates institutional commitment to this role.
Credit workforce program students participate in structured experiential learning for which they receive credit.	2.8 = A or B (≥ 50%)	Relatively few colleges currently provide experiential learning opportunities to 80% students—even in workforce programs. Using 50% distinguishes institutions where experiential learning is becoming a defining feature of programs.
Transfer track students participate in structured experiential learning for which they receive credit.	2.9 = A or B (≥ 50%)	
Faculty professional development		
Formal processes where faculty meet to assess student learning and plan improvements to teaching and learning.	2.10 = A (Yes)	
Full-time faculty have participated in formal training on effective teaching practices.	2.11 = A (≥ 80%)	
Part-time faculty compensated to participate in formal training on effective teaching practices.	2.12 = A (Usually)	
Online instructors required to complete formal training in effective online teaching.	2.13 = A (≥ 80%)	
3. Creating a More Engaging Program Onboarding Experience		
Career and academic exploration		
Students helped to explore career and academic interests.	3.1 = C or E	C and E are stronger indicators because they are required processes that ensure most entering students engage in structured career and academic exploration. Optional workshops and events are valuable but do not constitute adoption at scale.
First-time students take at least one course in a field of interest in term 1.	3.2 = A (≥ 80%)	This measure reflects the extent to which colleges move students quickly into exploration of a field of interest rather than delaying entry into program coursework.
Educational planning		
First-time students helped to develop a full-program plan by end of term 1 and students can see their plans online.	3.3 = A (≥ 80%) AND 3.4 = A (Yes)	Adoption at scale requires both widespread development of educational plans and technology that allows students and advisors to use and update those plans over time.
Students seeking admission to selective healthcare programs helped to develop alternative program plan in case they are not selected.	3.5 = A (≥ 80%)	
4. Helping Students Complete Their Programs on Schedule and Affordably		
On-going student advising and progress monitoring		
Student's progress in programs is monitored.	4.1 = B or C (Mandatory advising in subsequent terms)	

Students are assigned to specific advisor (caseload advising) (ideally one in their program area).	4.2 = A (≥ 80%)	This indicator would be stronger if 4.3 = A or B also, which would indicate caseload advising by field.
Advising on the cost of college attendance		
New students receive information on the estimated total cost of completing their program.	4.4 = A (≥ 80%)	Providing cost information and helping students develop financial plans are complementary practices that together enable informed educational decision-making.
New students helped to develop a financial plan for covering the cost of completing their program.	4.5 = A (≥ 80%)	
Class scheduling and design for on-time completion		
College offers class schedules to facilitate timely completion.	4.6 = A, B, C, OR D	We consider the following to be core scheduling reforms, since they have greater potential to affect scheduling for all students • Registration tied to educational plans (A) • Schedules based on educational plans (B) • Year-long registration (C) • Schedules released 1+ years in advance (D) The following are supporting reforms • Block scheduling (E) • Inter-term courses (F) • Late-start classes (G) • Summer incentives (H) • Shortened academic terms (I)
College programs offered in compressed terms.	4.7 = A or B (≥ 50%)	Not all programs are well suited to compressed terms. We suggest a threshold of 50% as evidence that compressed terms have been adopted at scale across the institution.
5. Creating Postsecondary On-Ramps for High School Dual Enrollment Students		
Expanding access		
Students can participate in dual enrollment free of charge.	5.1 = A (≥ 80%)	
College conducts outreach to encourage participation in dual enrollment by students from underserved groups.	5.2 = At least two from: A, B, C, D, or E	Adoption at scale requires a deliberate, multifaceted outreach strategy rather than reliance on a single event, communication channel, or recruitment activity.
Alignment to postsecondary bachelor's and career-technical pathways		
Information on website on how dual enrollment courses map to college's career-technical and bachelor's transfer programs.	5.3 = A (Yes)	The information should show how dual enrollment coursework advances students toward specific college career-technical or bachelor's transfer pathways, not merely identify courses available to high school students. We provide separate measures here because a college may map dual enrollment well into its own career-technical programs yet provide little guidance about applicability to particular bachelor's majors.
Information on website on how dual enrollment courses map to field- or major-specific transfer pathways offered by the college (not just AA in general studies).	5.4 = A (Yes)	

College-provided advising and planning assistance		
College advisors available at least monthly in partner high schools to provided advising to dual enrollment students.	5.5 = A (≥ 80%)	
Dual enrollment students receive mandatory college advising.	5.6 = At least one from: C, D, E, or G	Responses C, D, E, and G represent arrangements in which college advising is required for dual enrollment students at one or more consequential points in their participation. Required advising at entry (B) constitutes adoption; required advising both at entry and during continued enrollment is a stronger indicator.
Dual enrollment students meet with a college advisor at least once per term of enrollment in college courses.	5.7 = A (≥ 80%)	
Dual enrollment students helped to develop an individualized college program plan.	5.8 = A (≥ 80%)	Ideally, students' plans should extend beyond selection of dual enrollment courses to show how those courses apply toward a specific postsecondary program or pathway.
High-quality instruction and academic support		
College has procedures to ensure quality of instruction in high-school-based dual enrollment classes.	5.9 = At least two from: A, B, C, D, E, or F	Adoption at scale requires an ongoing quality-assurance system involving more than a one-time faculty approval or course authorization process. Requiring at least two practices distinguishes a systematic approach from minimal compliance.
Instructional and other academic support provided to dual enrollment students who need it.	5.10 = At least two from: B, C, D, E, or F	Requiring at least two forms of support indicates that dual enrollment students have access to a coordinated academic support system rather than a single resource. Option A is excluded because it is left to students to seek out academic support, rather than proactively offering it to students who need it.