

Integrating Student Supports

Bakersfield College

Their Approach

Bakersfield College started its Guided Pathways redesign with a recognition that “our systems were broken,” says Jennifer Johnson, chair of the college’s nursing department and a member and former co-leader of its Guided Pathways implementation team. “I could press a button saying, ‘Send Early Alert’ and list financial services and make a referral to the food pantry.... Sometimes the message got to them, and sometimes it didn’t. And the student would say, ‘Nobody contacted me, but it’s OK; I worked it out.’ That was not OK.”

After determining that major changes were required for the college to accomplish its goals under Guided Pathways, Bakersfield formed “high-tech, high-touch” completion coaching teams following the model of its successful affinity groups.

What They Did

The completion team for each discipline includes a counselor, an educational advisor, a student mentor, a learning support person, a discipline faculty, a data coach, and a dean. And, as affinity groups do, the teams gather and analyze data from sources across campus and then reach out to and follows up with students in response to each student’s progress and particular needs. Interventions include intrusive counseling, proactive case management, targeted tutoring, and engagement in learning communities.

By integrating programs already serving special populations—such as veterans, students with disabilities, or African American students—Bakersfield now addresses the needs of all students campuswide, including those in special populations. The work of Bakersfield’s affinity groups has informed a layered, campuswide, wrap-around support structure that serves all students.

What They Learned

The ability to weave multiple technologies together in a sustainable way has been essential to Bakersfield’s approach. Here are some of its big-picture lessons:

- Students benefit from having an immediate point of contact, a one-stop shop.
- Colleges can identify and deploy existing resources to make implementation less expensive and to smooth the process of scaling redesign across campus.
- Students raise their expectations of themselves when the college raises its expectations.

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