

Using Data in Guided Pathways Reform

Bakersfield College

Their Approach

Knowing that careful data analysis can inform decisions and help improve equity, Bakersfield College took the step, early in its Guided Pathways work, of creating and assigning data-driven completion-coaching teams to each of its nine Learning and Career Pathways. Each team includes counselors, peer mentors, academic faculty, educational advisors, financial aid staff, a dean, and a data coach who fetches and interprets data for use by the rest of the team.

What They Did

The teams check on students at “momentum points”—key milestones in the journey to a certificate, degree, or transfer—such as completion of 15 units or completion of college-level math and English, and they tailor direct and proactive services to address concerns that arise. Completion teams pull and analyze data every two weeks, drilling down to specific students. Matching a group—say, first-time students who are African American males—against enrollment in specific targeted supports can reveal exactly who is missing out on significant support. Then the team can contact individuals, ensuring that everyone who qualifies is aware of a support. Or, instead of sending a blanket reminder to all students to clear their financial aid, focused data reports enable the team to identify the 100 students who have not done so and get in touch directly with each one. Each completion team meets monthly over breakfast to discuss data and develop outreach and support plans for students in its pathway.

What They Learned

- Including data-savvy advisors in each pathway is changing the structure of the whole college. Integrating student supports into Guided Pathways reforms became easier when the team had data clearly indicating how effective student supports can be and how to connect students as directly as possible with appropriate supports. Now, advisors can get a good sense of a specific student’s needs before they ever meet.
- Anyone who knows how to ask fruitful questions can obtain helpful data. For example, asking about attempted units instead of completed units enables more timely and effective interventions because attempted units can be tracked while in progress, whereas completed units can’t be measured until a semester ends.

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