

Mapping Programs and Meta-Majors

Mt. San Antonio College

Their Approach

Mt. San Antonio College approached designing and implementing meta-majors as an iterative process with the goal of easing students' struggles in finding and choosing a major. Instructional and counseling faculty started the process, ensuring that program maps accounted for the curricular needs of students in a particular major and reflected the courses and course pairings that work well for students. Mt. SAC is now revising their meta-majors after testing them for a year.

What They Did

They started with a collegewide summit where faculty, staff, and administrators learned about the difficulty that Mt. SAC students have making educational and career decisions early in their college experience. The summit energized the participants to streamline students' decision-making process. First, counseling and instructional faculty sorted all of Mt. SAC's degrees and certificates into eight meta-major buckets. The following summer, students in college success classes were asked to do the sort again—with the requirements that they produce eight buckets and name them. Then, administrators were asked to review the students' sorting and approve or revise the names of the buckets. Guided Pathways leaders made some adjustments to the students' sort, based on what the counseling and instructional faculty learned and discussed in their earlier sorting process. After using the eight meta-majors for a year, faculty leaders felt there was some misalignment. They're now making minor changes to align the meta-majors with Holland Codes and career skills assessments and to support strong connections to careers.

What They Learned

Be flexible! The college's flexibility has fostered open and honest dialogue among students, faculty, staff, and administrators, which has enabled everyone to continue to learn. The team found that meta-majors must be re-assessed regularly and that engaging counseling faculty deeply in all of the work brought the extra benefit of immediate feedback on students' experiences with the new meta-majors. The team also realized that they want to know more about how to support undecided students. To follow up, they are asking undecided students this year how they make decisions about majors and career paths, and how the college is supporting them.

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