**Why Pathways?**

**March 2020 Update**

Since the mid-twentieth century, most community colleges have adopted “cafeteria” education models, which offer broad, complex and self-guided pathways through college. By nature of their sheer multiplicity, these complex pathways could theoretically support the goals of any given student. And yet in practice, without intentional guidance and overwhelmed by choices, students often end up “checking boxes” locally rather than working intentionally toward more global, long-term goals. Nationally, in fact, fewer than four of every ten students complete any type of degree or certificate within six years.

Guided Pathways at SLCC aims to clearly tie *course* learning outcomes to *program* learning outcomes—meaningful employment or seamless transfer—and to shift the student decision-making process from local, short-term thinking to global, long-term-oriented reflection. Because our student body is the most diverse in all of Utah, this shift requires proactive, engaged support from a system of faculty, advisors and staff who honor our students’ unique range of life circumstances.

As the college’s most comprehensive completion effort to date, we began the planning and implementation of the SLCC Pathways initiative in 2016 to guide student choice, enhance learning, and help clarify a student’s route to program completion. The effort also ensures that all students, no matter their income or social capital, receive proactive guidance to achieve their goals at equitable rates.

There are two grounding tenets of the work: 1) Guiding student choice and 2) Enhancing learning. (<https://i.slcc.edu/plan/pathways.aspx>)

Throughout 2019, there was noteworthy implementation progress and several key components of the initiative are now operational. Organized under the two tenets—guiding student choice and enhancing learning—these key components are further outlined below.

**Guiding Student Choice**

SLCC Pathways has relied on research-based design principles to re-engineer the student intake, advising and support experience (guiding student choice), and develop eight new Areas of Study with first-year course sequences that lead to associate’s degrees in each area (enhancing learning). Instructors and faculty in these Areas of Study will integrate high-impact practices to engage students and support the overall goals of Pathways. Research-based messaging strategies and proactive advising models further guide student choice.

**Areas of Study**

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| *Arts, Communication and Digital Media* | *Health Sciences* |
| *Business* | *Humanities* |
| *Computer Science and Information Technology* | *Science, Engineering and Mathematics* |
| *Construction, Manufacturing and Applied Technologies* | *Social & Behavorial Sciences, Education and Human Services* |

**Guiding Students**

***Student Intake***

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| Pathways Component | Status |
| Students will be required to select a program of study as part of the intake experience (prior to first-term registration). The intake experience will guide students to select one of the eight areas of study, but if a student knows the more specific program they wish to take, he or she will be able to select any currently existing degree or certificate program. | *Phase I Complete. We are assessing results and will look to improve design in future iterations. An Area of Study selection was required on the application starting Fall 2019.* |
| Recruiting materials, intake processes, and web site communication will be redesigned to present the college through the lens of the eight areas of study. This will be integrated with the recommendations from the 2017 strategic enrollment management recommendations. | *Complete. Evaluating effectiveness of current approach. The general catalog was also re-arranged along areas of study.*  *Pathways presentations are made at the annual High School Counselor Conference, the USHE Statewide Counseling Conference, and annual High School Principals’ luncheon. In presentations, counselors and principals are introduced to the general Pathways model, Area of Study web pages and other college Pathways materials.*  *The new Area of Study landing pages function as one component of the decision-making tools for exploring students. In addition to outlining simplified steps to degree or credential completion, the pages provide an overview of the college’s offerings, prompt personal reflection and clarify the outcomes associated with particular areas and majors. Further guidance appears in the form of AoS-specific “First Five” class lists, contact information for AoS advisors and career coaches, and online career exploration tools.*  *Students with declared majors typically bypass these pages en route to their program/major pages.*  *To complement the Pathways-specific application, follow-up automated email messages are sent to students who have completed an application and students who have started, but not completed, an application. These messages track the student along their enrollment path and automatically send reminders about completing the enrollment steps.*  *To support ongoing and coordinated enrollment message campaigns, a new system for event registration has been implemented. Events Rx adds event registrants’ contact information to a common database. A new texting platform also allows for follow-up messaging to students, which cuts texting costs by more than half.* |

**Guiding Students**

***Academic Advising***

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| Pathways Component | Status |
| General academic advising at SLCC will be phased out. Academic advising will be organized to support the eight new areas of study and their associated more specific degree programs. | *In Progress.* |
| We will implement a case-management, intrusive advising model where students are supported through the use of developmental advising[[1]](#footnote-1) towards the common goal of choosing and advancing through a program of study. The tool used for this will be MySuccess (Starfish) & DegreeWorks. | *In Progress. Model has been developed and piloted in a few instances. Results have been mixed. There have been challenges in changing college systems to support new design.* |
| Students will lock in an academic plan in the first calendar year or before completing the first fifteen credits (whichever comes first). The student advising experience must be designed so that the student repeatedly reaffirms the plan or makes the necessary changes. | *In Progress* |
| Career advising will be embedded within the pathway.  . | *In Progress*  *Academic Advising and Career Services are building an online dashboard to track engagement and re-enrollment status. They are also exploring other ways to present the First Five, including digital campaigns, tear sheets and embedding the class sequences into the digital catalog* |

**Enhancing Learning**

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| Pathways Component | Status |
| The general studies degree will phase out. In its place, students will select among the eight areas of study. Each area of study will have a default first-year course sequence (equaling between 28 to 34 credits). | *Phase I Complete. General studies students are now organized into eight areas of study (using current GS degree placeholders) and advised into a first set of courses (first 15).* |
| Redesign existing degree programs to the new first-year course sequences to provide efficient curricular routes to completion and transfer. Students will have the option of creating an intentional interdisciplinary studies degree but they would need to do so with an advisor. | *In Progress. This work is just beginning with the area of study design teams. Interdisciplinary degree has been created and has first students.* |
| Faculty and academic leadership will advance the conversation about ways we build the knowledge and skills to design course and program curricula that motivate more students to persist longer at academic tasks alongside academic content.  We encourage the “learner facilitation” models of instruction, where appropriate, be a key part of curriculum redesign.[[2]](#footnote-2) | *In Progress. Faculty and academic administrators have adopted the key principles to guide this effort with the* [*“Engagement by Design” principles*](https://i.slcc.edu/plan/docs/pathways-phase-ii-sub-committee-report.pdf)*. The CWT is working on integrating this into an initial course first and then into the larger area of study.* |
| Each area of study will collaboratively design a guiding framework detailing the area of study’s approach to curriculum, instruction, learning climate, and assessment. The framework includes the following elements for both the common first-year sequence and the program-specific coursework:  1. The skills, concepts, and habits of mind attained by each program’s graduates aligned with transfer and/or industry partner expectations;  2. Where and how each skill, concept, and habit of mind is first introduced as well as how each will be developed throughout the area of study and program;  3. How related supporting services, high-impact and inclusive teaching practices, co-curricular opportunities, and the case management intrusive advising milestones are integrated into area of study and program design to support and promote the integrated learning of the identified skills, concepts, and habits of mind;  4. How the area of study and programs will cultivate a positive learning climate including specific practices and behaviors that faculty and staff will adopt to support the identified skills, concepts, and habits of mind; and  5. How faculty assess student learning, instructor teaching, and overall learning climate to ensure students are learning and are well prepared for transfer or employment. | *In Progress. The framework has been designed by a group of faculty. The current CWT, comprised of subcommittees across the college and led by Katerina Salini, Faculty Senate President and Professor of Psychology and Kathryn Kay Coquemont, AVP for Student Success, is developing a process of taking this to scale across the college.* |
| Each area of study will have a default set of courses and sequencing. The design will need to accommodate students who only take a single course in a semester. | *Initial Complete with more work in progress. Currently assessing the first 15 and how better communicate it to students. We will be looking at requiring courses moving forward.* |
| In addition to a default area of study and program course sequence, general education will also have a defaulted sequence and timing for each first-year area of study. Students, however, will retain full autonomy to opt-out of this default general education sequence and may elect to fulfill the college’s general education requirements through any qualifying course. | *In Progress* |
| Faculty and academic administration will be encouraged to critically examine the continued viability and need for existing degree and certificate programs.  Academic departments are encouraged to redesign the existing programs using the engagement by design principles and to create meaningful linkages between the existing programs and the first-year area of study sequences. “Program maps” will need to be developed showing the linkages between the program and the first-year pathway. Under an ideal design, students would enter the specific program through the first-year pathway introductory material. | *In Progress. Program evaluation and elimination is underway.* |
| The success of pathways depends upon improvement of program-level articulation. We are working to advance program-level, USHE-wide articulation. Faculty and administration from other USHE institutions will be involved in program development. State-level policy specifying the requirements for junior status upon transfer may need to be explored. | *In Progress. Have successfully worked to create a state-level body that can have authority of articulation at the system level. Working with this group to develop better linkages and using policies to improve the movement of degrees and awards with full credit across the system.* |

As a multiyear college redesign effort, SLCC Pathways will be realized through incremental achievements every academic year through 2023. Review and assessment of the ongoing work will require modifications as we continue to monitor the effectiveness of our work. New elements of the total SLCC Pathways initiative will be added until it is fully implemented.

**Further Updates and Highlights**

Further updates on the Pathways Initiative can be found here: <https://i.slcc.edu/plan/pathways.aspx>  
[SLCC.edu/academics](https://www.slcc.edu/academics/)

1. See Karp, Melinda Mchur. "Entering a Program: Helping Students Make Academic and Career Decisions." Community College Research Center Working Paper No. 59, May 2013, pg.6: “In essence, developmental theories implicitly support a ‘pedagogy’ of counseling and advising—a set of activities and orientations that lead to *teaching* students how to develop self-awareness, identify options, weigh information, set goals, and make realistic plans.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information on this see *How Learning Works* by Dr. Susan Ambrose (and colleagues) and *Learner-Centered Teaching* by Dr. Maryellen Weimer. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)