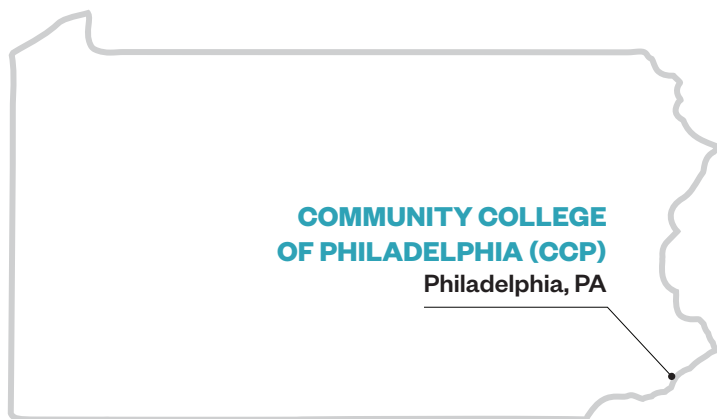


# Balancing Urgency and Patience

## How Community College of Philadelphia Set the Pace for Guided Pathways Reform

By Hana Lahr, Amy E. Brown, and John Fink

SERIES ON CHANGE MANAGEMENT AT AACC PATHWAYS COLLEGES: CASE STUDY 4 OF 5



In fall 2018, CCRC researchers conducted site visits at eight community colleges implementing guided pathways to learn how they are managing the whole-college change process involved. These colleges are among the 30 nationally that were in the first cohort of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project, a national demonstration initiative that was launched in late 2015 to show how community colleges could create clearer pathways to program completion, employment, and further education for all students.

Our full report on this study, *Redesigning Your College Through Guided Pathways: Lessons From Community Colleges in the AACC Pathways Project*, synthesizes lessons from all eight colleges we visited and shares new findings on how long it takes to implement guided pathways at scale. Here, we provide a case study of Community College of Philadelphia (CCP). During a two-day site visit to the college, CCRC researchers conducted one-hour interviews with 29 faculty members, administrators, advisors and counselors, and other staff. Researchers also held hour-long focus groups with 15 additional faculty members, advisors and counselors, and students at the college. Based on the data we collected, in this report we describe the organizational change work that has enabled CCP's exceptional progress in redesigning academic programs, student services, and related support systems using the guided pathways model.

## About CCP

CCP enrolled over 25,000 students in credit-bearing courses across more than 70 degree and certificate programs during the 2016–17 academic year. CCP is the only public two-year institution in Philadelphia, and roughly 90 percent of its students stay in the city after they graduate. Its main campus is located just north of the Center City neighborhood, and three regional campuses are located elsewhere in the city. It is not uncommon for staff members to work at CCP for decades-long stretches. Over the last several years, the college has increased its IPEDS three-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students from 10 percent for the 2011 cohort to 16 percent for the 2015 cohort. CCP has an active faculty union that represents teaching, learning lab, counseling, and advising faculty at the college. Faculty and the college administration were engaged in extended contract negotiations between fall 2016 and spring 2019.

## Overview

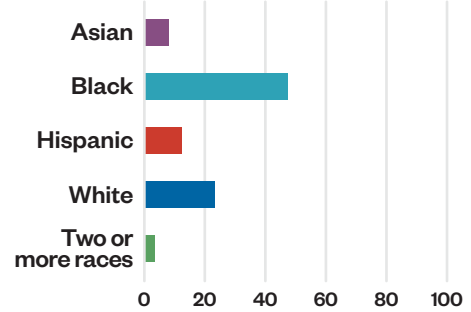
CCP’s story of implementing guided pathways is one of urgency and patience—urgency because members of the college felt an obligation to serve students better, and patience because its leaders understood that to foster meaningful engagement in whole-college reforms from faculty and staff across the college, changes would need to be implemented gradually. Upon joining the AACC Pathways Project in 2015, CCP’s administration rallied around the understanding that reforms could not wait for some perfect moment—the ethical imperative to improve student outcomes was simply too great. Although there was some initial resistance to change, many constituencies at the college were already convinced of the need for advising reforms, so the college undertook those first, and early investments in advising helped lay the groundwork for later guided pathways reforms at CCP. Over time, as dialogue among faculty and staff progressed, there was an increased understanding throughout the college community that adopting guided pathways was ultimately in the best interest of CCP’s students.

CCP’s story offers reassurance that major change is possible, as well as concrete and effective change management strategies for other institutions looking to implement guided pathways in a large urban setting and within a sometimes-contentious collective bargaining environment. Rather than quash initially skeptical faculty voices, CCP’s leaders chose to foster dialogue and balance faculty autonomy with student success

### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS 2016–17

Credit program students enrolled: **25,570**

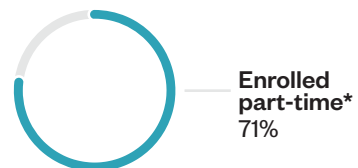
#### Race/ethnicity:



#### Gender:



#### Enrollment status:



\*Fall 2017 only

goals. By promising to phase in changes slowly and making good on that promise, CCP's leaders mitigated the college community's apprehension about "doing too much all at once." Despite their initial reservations, many faculty did choose to begin guided pathways work, devising new curricula that better reach and teach students.

## Guided Pathways Practices CCP Has Implemented at Scale

### Meta-majors

Early in CCP's guided pathways redesign, college leaders tasked faculty with creating meta-majors, which the college calls "academic pathways." Seven meta-majors now encompass all programs of study and provide a useful structure for academic advising and counseling and first-year experience courses. In spring 2019, the college implemented a meta-major community model to integrate and tailor supports for students in each field. The college has organized program descriptions on its website by meta-major to help students explore options and interests.

### Program Maps

Program mapping at CCP was an iterative process that began in 2016. In 2017, college leaders created a cross-divisional curriculum planning committee made up of faculty to refine the program maps. All program maps were completed by spring 2018, and redesigned program webpages display the maps, along with information on related baccalaureate transfer and career opportunities.

### First-Year Experience Courses Aligned to Meta-majors

In fall 2016, faculty began to develop first-year experience courses with a common curriculum to support students' program and career exploration along with specialized content for each meta-major. Students in health care, liberal arts and communications, and business programs are required to take a three-credit course contextualized to their meta-major. Students in other programs take a first-year experience course without meta-major-specific content.

### Strengthened Academic Advising

Beginning in 2015, the college began rethinking its approach to advising and making large investments in this area. As of fall 2018, the college has hired 12 full-time academic advisors who are embedded in specific meta-majors. Advisors carry out new student onboarding, collaborate with faculty and counselors, and serve as teaching assistants for first-year experience courses. Before this, academic advising was performed by counselors and faculty, who each had myriad other responsibilities.

# Laying the Groundwork for Whole-College Redesign

## Urgency to Address Inequitable Outcomes

The messages that work to convey that change is urgently needed differ depending on the college. At CCP, there was a broad consensus that change was necessary due to graduation rates that were well below the national average for community colleges. Even more compelling were data showing that success rates for the college's Black male students were far below those of other students. This gap in outcomes was especially troubling in a city where over a quarter of families are living in poverty. As one administrator explained, "Any way you sliced the data, these gaps remained."

The release in 2015 of a Pew Center report that highlighted lower-than-average rates of degree completion and transfer to four-year colleges at CCP (Ginsberg, 2015) prompted members of the college community to begin having deeper and more frequent conversations about equity. Dr. Samuel Hirsch, CCP's vice president for academic and student success, articulated the consensus that faculty, staff, and administrators came to as a result of these conversations: "We can't afford to lose another generation of students." This consensus marked the beginning of CCP's shift away from boutique programs designed to help small numbers of students. To make a real difference, the college would have to implement reforms at scale.

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**We can't afford to lose another generation of students.**

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## Data-Informed Practice

This sense of urgency and growing familiarity with student outcomes can be attributed in large part to the college's participation in Achieving the Dream (ATD). Joining ATD in 2008 helped members of the college learn to use data to inform decisions and practices, and CCP's subsequent improvements in student achievement metrics resulted in the college being designated an ATD Leader College, a status it has held since 2011. A few years later, as the college community began rallying around the need to address inequitable student outcomes through institution-wide change, CCP was able to draw on data gathered with help from ATD to identify and begin to act on several points of concern. For example, an early analysis of developmental education outcomes showed that some students were repeating developmental education courses up to five times. While the college was still years away from making substantive changes to its developmental education sequences, this analysis helped raise awareness of a serious barrier to student success. Another issue the data revealed was that students perceived CCP's support services as scattered and disconnected. In response, staff redesigned CCP's new student orientation to increase awareness of the supports available and developed an early-alert system to identify struggling students and connect them to targeted services.

Dr. Hirsch told us these experiences with ATD created a strong foundation for guided pathways because they demonstrated that while the college's student

success efforts were yielding small improvements, more significant reform was needed. Further, participating in ATD taught members of the college not to be afraid of data indicating that reforms are not having an impact but to use that data to inform future action.

## A Collective Responsibility for Student Success

In 2014, Dr. Donald Guy Generals was hired as CCP's president. Early in his tenure, he combined the college's academic affairs and student affairs divisions and created the role of vice president of academic and student success, appointing Dr. Hirsch to fill the role and oversee the new division. The college's leaders, with support from CCP's board of trustees, wanted to signal that they were "not going to tinker around the edges ... or just develop another program" to improve student success. They also wanted to convey that academic and student affairs were not independent from each other. CCP's leaders began reframing faculty members' role as essential to students' program completion, encouraging them to take responsibility for the success of students in their programs and support them beyond the classroom walls. The restructuring also led to the redistribution of people who were part of college governance at the vice president, dean, and director levels. These changes were instrumental in breaking down the silos between different departments, as taking on guided pathways reforms would soon require.

## Introducing Guided Pathways to the College Community

### The What, Why, and How of Pathways

To build on the college's ongoing student success work and move it forward in the guided pathways model, senior leaders at CCP needed to explain why the college was adopting guided pathways and how it would be more effective than past reforms. To begin, college leaders communicated that guided pathways would be more than an effort to improve specific programs and practices. Guided pathways would require faculty and staff in all areas of the college to ask, "What are we going to do differently, and how are we going to do better for students?"

College leaders capitalized on faculty and staff members' awareness of the challenges facing students and emphasized that the redesign was about finding ways to help more students reach their goals. In keeping with this argument, senior leaders at CCP sought to dismantle the long-standing idea that students are in either academic or career-technical programs, instead describing the college's work as defining paths for students to reach their goals. As Dr. Generals said, "Students come with a purpose, so what is that? How are we helping students reach that goal?" Faculty and staff joined together in their common call to help students develop a sense of purpose for their time at CCP and gain clarity about how their goals could be achieved.

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As at many colleges, early on, faculty and staff at CCP were concerned about what guided pathways would mean for them and their work. To help introduce guided pathways to the college, senior leaders held multiple meetings with deans and faculty to review retention and graduation data and reiterate the need for college-wide change. Dr. Hirsch led the creation of a dedicated space on CCP's website for information on guided pathways and updates from the president and vice president of the college (Community College of Philadelphia, n.d.). College leaders also made pathways the focus of summer faculty institutes; encouraged departments to participate in book club discussions on *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015); and asked members of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning to lead briefings on guided pathways, which engaged dozens of adjunct faculty members in discussion.

## Making Guided Pathways CCP-Specific

CCP's administration recognized that guided pathways reforms would be more likely to take root if they emerged and developed in a CCP-specific way. As one dean at the college explained, if people saw guided pathways as a prepackaged reform, they may have been more likely to resist it.

Part of the need to make guided pathways CCP-specific stems from the college's culture. Employees who have been there for 10 or even 20 years often joke about being newcomers because many at the college have been there much longer. This level of commitment from faculty and staff is an institutional strength, but it can also present challenges when implementing a reform model like guided pathways that requires members of the college community to look critically at long-standing and deeply ingrained practices.

Accordingly, in introducing guided pathways to the college, CCP's leaders tailored their approach to the college community in three ways:

1. In the earliest stages of reform, they focused on areas where there was already broad consensus that change was necessary.
2. Instead of making multiple dramatic changes early on, they decided that pathways practices should be phased in gradually.
3. They used the guided pathways model to build on student success work the college was already doing.

Looking back, several senior leaders told us that taking this approach to reform helped to build confidence and trust in the college's plan for implementing guided pathways.

**If people saw guided pathways as a prepackaged reform, they may have been more likely to resist it.**

## Starting With Agreed-Upon Problem Areas

For years before adopting guided pathways, CCP's faculty union, senior leaders, and others had agreed that advising was ineffective because it was conducted on a drop-in basis, meaning that students had little continuity in their advising experience. At the time, counselors managed a wide range of tasks, including onboarding new students, supporting students through the transfer process, providing career guidance, teaching the college's one-credit student success course, and supporting students

on academic probation. Counselors worked alongside but often not in coordination with instructional faculty, who conducted six hours of advising each semester. By focusing on strengthening advising in their early guided pathways reform efforts, college leaders sought to avoid conflict with reform-averse community members and demonstrate their commitment to addressing agreed-upon problems.

In its first year of pathways work, CCP hired seven full-time advisors and later assigned them to the college's largest meta-majors—health care and liberal arts and communications. Their role is to serve as the primary academic advisors for individual students during their first year, carry out new student onboarding, and serve as teaching assistants for first-year experience courses. Faculty now serve as secondary advisors, and counselors focus on supporting students on academic probation and offering career guidance. Counselors' role in the first-year experience was also reduced. They now teach a class session on career exploration in first-year experience courses and continue to teach a small number of sections of the college's one-credit student success course. They also present on college skills and resources during orientation. Over the next few years, the college hired more academic advisors, bringing the total to 12.

### **Phasing in Pathways Practices**

Crucial to increasing broad commitment to pathways was the decision to phase in the reforms. Rather than going all in, as some other colleges have done, CCP made focused, well-planned changes over several years. The first phase of reform chiefly entailed changes to advising structures and roles. Then, in fall 2016, college leaders tasked faculty with developing meta-majors and redesigning first-year experience courses and contextualizing them within the health care and liberal arts and communications meta-majors. Over the past several years, the college has built on its pathways work by steadily increasing the number of advisors and introducing a first-year experience course contextualized within the business, entrepreneurship, and law meta-major.

### **Identifying Strengths and Building on Existing Practices**

College leaders emphasized that, in many respects, guided pathways practices were not new and would build on work already underway at the college. Dr. Generals described guided pathways as “provid[ing] structure around things we were already doing.” For example, he and Dr. Hirsch noted that the college already offered a first-semester course for new students but that under the college's guided pathways work, the course would be three credits instead of one; would align with the college's meta-majors; and would include assignments on educational, career, and financial planning. Some faculty members also remarked that guided pathways was not a wholly new reform but rather a recommitment to efforts already underway.

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# Supporting Collaborative Planning and Implementation

## Productive Advisor–Faculty Relationships

In retrospect, CCP’s decision to start its pathways work in an area that was already a priority was a good strategy. As a result of the college’s work on advising, advisors and faculty now have a close working relationship. Advisors attend academic department meetings and are kept up to date on program changes; faculty, meanwhile, know exactly where and to whom they should refer students if they are struggling.

Because faculty continue to provide six hours of academic advising each term as part of their contract, CCP’s advising team developed an online training program for them based on NACADA’s advising principles. The program approaches advising as a form of teaching, with readings and assignments on topics such as advising as a shared responsibility, advising learning outcomes, and how to prepare for advising appointments. In addition to completing the training program, new faculty members are required to shadow an academic advisor during their second semester.

According to advisors and others we interviewed, the changes to CCP’s advising model transformed how advising is perceived at the college. Not only is there widespread respect for and confidence in the advisors themselves, but there is also a new understanding that advisors cannot operate independently from faculty and that these roles overlap and support each other.

## Faculty Leadership in Designing Meta-majors

CCP’s leaders sought faculty members’ input and leadership early on in the college’s guided pathways redesign. Ensuring faculty members’ engagement in these reforms from the beginning was particularly important because early parts of the pathways redesign would focus on changes to program structures, curricula, and instruction, including developing meta-majors, mapping programs of study, and reforming developmental education.

In 2016, the administration involved faculty in guided pathways reforms through multiday summer institutes led by deans, department heads, and program coordinators. At the institutes, faculty were charged with developing meta-majors and aligning programs within them. By encouraging deans to step back from the process, CCP’s leaders enabled faculty to develop meta-majors through an iterative process and determine which programs best aligned with each. Faculty ultimately decided on seven meta-majors, which CCP refers to as “academic pathways”:

**By encouraging deans to step back from the process, CCP’s leaders enabled faculty to develop meta-majors through an iterative process and determine which programs best aligned with each.**



- health care;
- science and technology;
- design, construction, and transportation;
- business, entrepreneurship, and law;
- creative arts;
- liberal arts and communications; and
- education and human services.

## Faculty Ownership of Program Curricula

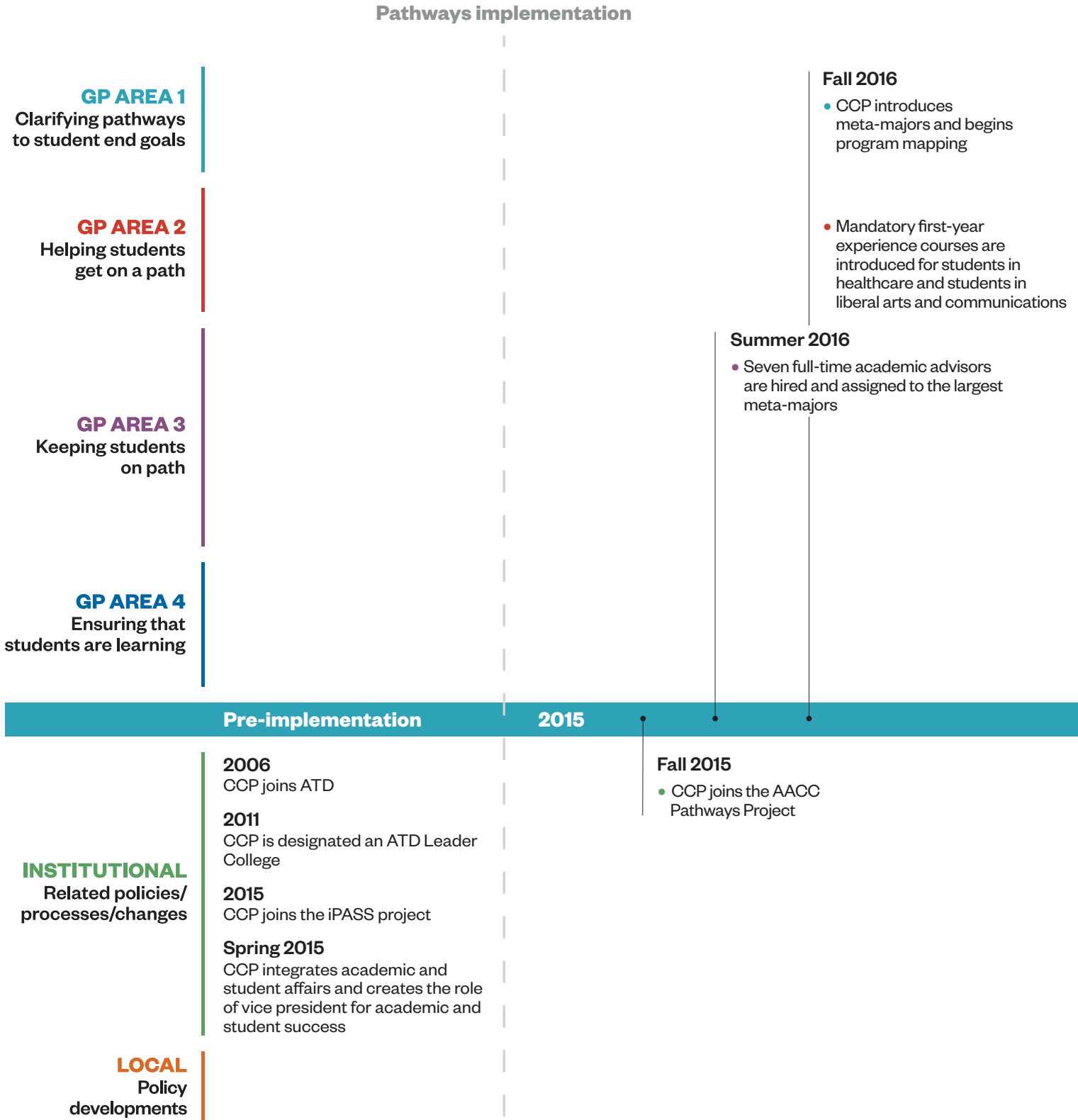
In addition to developing meta-majors, faculty were tasked with mapping programs of study in fall 2016. Initially, this request from the administration was not well received. Faculty expressed concerns that they were being told to make curricular changes without a clear understanding of why and without a say in what those changes would be. College leaders emphasized that enhancing the quality and integrity of academic programs and maintaining faculty ownership of program curricula were not mutually exclusive priorities. After faculty made their first attempt at drafting program maps, a department head proposed that program chairs and faculty have a forum to discuss their concerns and develop a strategy for implementing pathways reforms that was collaborative and inclusive. This proposal led to the development of CCP's cross-divisional curriculum planning committee in summer 2017.

**Creating a space for faculty to have in-depth discussions about guided pathways led to productive interdisciplinary decision-making about program curricula.**

The initial goal of the committee was relatively straightforward: to bring faculty together to discuss guided pathways reforms and fully develop the program maps. When the committee was created, some faculty were still wondering how guided pathways reforms—such as the development of meta-majors and program maps—would affect their classroom roles. To help address these and other questions, the committee held a four-week summer institute that was open to all faculty and attended by more than 40 program coordinators, chairs, and interested faculty members. Meeting formats included presentations, breakout sessions, and weekly check-ins, as well as a dedicated space in the college's online learning platform to share updates and information. After the summer institute, the committee held regular meetings to determine how to integrate relevant math coursework into program maps and how to shorten developmental education sequences. Currently, the committee is leading the development of meta-major learning outcomes.

Faculty reported that participating in the committee helped to dispel misunderstandings around the reforms and facilitated commitment and readiness to engage in redesign work. Further, creating a space for faculty to have in-depth discussions about guided pathways led to productive interdisciplinary decision-making about program curricula. The committee also facilitated conversations among faculty from different disciplines more broadly. According to several faculty members we interviewed, CCP's faculty were not typically aware of what was happening in other programs before the committee was created.

# Timeline of Guided Pathways Implementation



**Fall 2017**

- Program maps are completed and added to CCP's website with related career and transfer information
- CCP introduces a first-year experience course for business students and pilots the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) in English
- Two additional full-time academic advisors are hired, bringing the total to nine

**Summer 2017**

- College faculty organize the cross-divisional curriculum planning committee
- CCP establishes the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership

**Fall 2018**

- ALP is scaled to 22 sections
- CCP begins using high school grades for placement and recalibrates its placement test cut scores
- Two additional full-time academic advisors are hired, bringing the total to 11
- CCP begins using Starfish to implement student course scheduling preferences
- CCP begins developing academic pathway communities aligned to its meta-majors
- The cross-divisional curriculum planning committee begins developing meta-major learning outcomes

**Spring 2019**

- CCP publishes detailed transfer guides for select programs of study
- CCP begins offering online orientation
- One additional full-time academic advisor is hired, bringing the total to 12

**Fall 2019**

- CCP introduces a first-year experience course for science and technology students

**2020**

- CCP's administration and the union representing its faculty and staff reach a contract agreement after three years of ongoing negotiations

Since 2016, CCP has completed program maps for all of its programs. It has also made progress generally in getting faculty on board with guided pathways reforms despite contract negotiations that began in fall 2016 and were not resolved until spring 2019. During our interviews, many faculty members spoke about the importance of the reforms, and the college's work on guided pathways continues and seems to be largely insulated from other challenges at the college. By keeping the reforms focused on students and allowing faculty to maintain ownership of curricula, college leaders and faculty were able to rise above the contract negotiations and advance the college's student success agenda.

### **Program Mapping 101**

Program mapping is an important guided pathways process, but its purpose can easily be misunderstood. In a typical mapping process, program faculty and advisors outline the optimal course sequences in consultation with university transfer partners, employers in relevant fields, advisory boards, and partner organizations. The goal is not to dictate student course-taking but rather to provide expert guidance on the most applicable courses for each program and their optimal sequencing. Ideally, program maps not only lay out the courses in a major but also include experiential learning opportunities, key milestones, and semester-by-semester action steps for students, preparing them for direct entry into program-relevant, well-paying jobs (with clear opportunities for further education) or transfer with junior standing in their field of interest. Importantly, as many colleges have learned, program mapping clarifies and supports educational planning processes. Every student creates an individualized educational plan—a customized version of a program map—that accounts for the student's timeline to completion, prior credits, learning support needs, and elective choices.

## **Contextualized First-Year Experience Curricula**

CCP's first-year experience courses emerged as a foundational strategy in its broader guided pathways work, both by building on existing structures and by facilitating an introduction to the college's meta-majors. For years, counselors had taught a one-credit student success course that focused on navigating college and developing academic and personal skills. However, when adopting guided pathways, college leaders saw an opportunity to redesign the course to align with meta-majors and provide structured support for students as they explore their interests; clarify their expectations across programs and within career fields; and create educational, career, and financial plans.

The new three-credit first-year experience courses are contextualized within specific meta-majors and taught by faculty with advanced degrees in those fields who have completed course-specific professional development. CCP's academic advisors serve as teaching assistants for the course, visit their assigned classes during the semester, grade certain class assignments, and help students create their plans. Currently, CCP offers first-year experience courses in the health care; business, entrepreneurship, and law; and liberal arts and communications meta-majors, with course curricula evolving in response to feedback from program directors and faculty within each meta-major. Many students are in meta-majors with the new courses, but those who are not take a course without meta-major-specific content.

While there was some initial resistance to adding more course requirements to degree programs, faculty have noticed the benefits of the first-year experience courses for students. For example, some health care faculty initially resisted requiring a first-year experience course for students in high-credit-load programs such as nursing, but many changed their minds after seeing that students who took the course were entering these programs better prepared and were taking fewer courses that are not needed for the degree, suggesting that the course and other institutional reforms were directing students to take the right courses from the start. Additionally, health care faculty who previously taught mostly students in upper level courses said that teaching the first-year experience course has offered them a window into the needs of entry-level students and has led to faculty learning and strategizing on ways to improve student success. Currently, faculty are working to refine course content and sharing course materials with instructors in other meta-majors who are interested in developing a first-year experience course for their students.

### Key Features of the First-Year Experience Course for Health Care Students

- Learning outcomes include an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of health care professionals; effective communication with respect to sociocultural and ethnic differences in health care environments; knowledge of medical terminology, math, and procedures to take vital signs; and creation of educational, career, and financial plans.
- Medical math, which used to be a single unit of the course, is now integrated throughout the entire course as a result of feedback from faculty that students were struggling to pass early exams in program courses due to their math content.
- The course's financial planning curriculum focuses on helping students understand their financial aid eligibility and limits, the difference between loans and grants, college billing cycles, anticipated school and home expenses, costs at transfer institutions, and projected salaries in their field. Students write a reflection piece to capture their personal considerations and their plans to pay for college.
- The course includes virtual job shadowing and success plan assignments to support students' decisions about their career path and their educational plan.

## An Informed and Involved IT Department

CCP's chief information officer (CIO) and information technology (IT) department have been involved in the college's pathways work from the start and have made critical contributions to its redesigns. With an interest in using technology to support the college's initiatives and knowledge of the academic side of the college from experience as a faculty member, the CIO approached the college's guided pathways work from a systems perspective. This entails giving serious thought to the architecture of the IT system; logically implementing new systems to support the college's pathways work; and integrating educational plans, degree audits, and other new applications.

Early in the implementation process, the CIO recognized that members of her department needed to understand guided pathways so that they could see how IT processes and structures contribute integrally to the reforms. To facilitate their learning, she gave staff a one-page document with a paragraph written by Dr. Hirsch summarizing the goals

of CCP's reforms, and then she quizzed them on the content. The CIO believes that developers need to understand the "why" behind the early alerts triggered when an allied health student, for example, steps off a pre-established educational plan. Further, because keeping curricula up to date throughout the college's systems often requires significant IT department involvement, she participates in the college's curriculum review committee.

**The CIO believes that developers need to understand the "why" behind the early alerts triggered when an allied health student, for example, steps off a pre-established educational plan.**

## Academic and Student Support Through Meta-majors

The latest phase of CCP's pathways work centers on developing its meta-major community model, which was launched in January 2019 to create a network of shared support for students in each meta-major. The model builds on the relationships between advisors, faculty members, counselors, administrators, and staff that have developed to support CCP's guided pathways redesigns. The goal, the dean of students said, is to "wrap our arms around everything so that it's an effective and efficient way of addressing students' needs—academically, personally, and professionally."

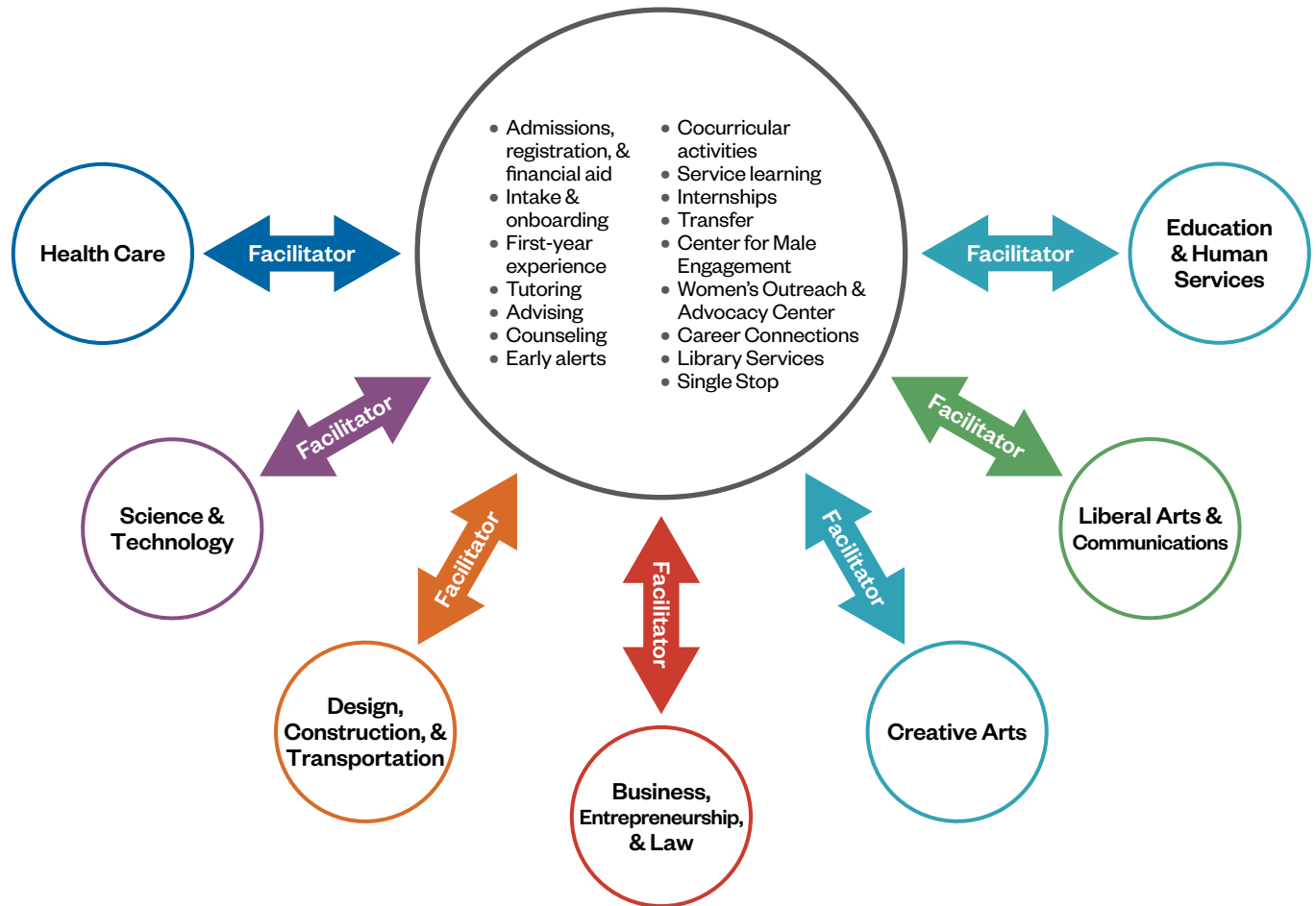
In this model, a faculty facilitator functions as a conduit between the academic and student support units, identifying and conveying the needs of students in the meta-major. Support services units then tailor their services to better address those needs. For faculty in the facilitator position, the role presents an opportunity for professional development and leadership as well as additional compensation.

Faculty and staff in CCP's seven meta-majors are working with offices throughout the college to offer more robust supports for their students. For example, they are:

- making recommendations for tailoring student support services to the needs of students in the meta-major;
- facilitating the implementation of strategies to identify and meet students' needs;
- exploring internship and job opportunities for students in partnership with the Career Connections Department;
- cultivating effective transfer opportunities in partnership with transfer and articulation staff;
- developing information for current and prospective students, including recruitment and onboarding materials;
- supporting innovative teaching, learning, and academic support within the meta-major; and
- disseminating information to all stakeholders within the meta-major and gathering their feedback.

**Figure 1.**

CCP's Pathway Community Student Experience



Note. Adapted with permission from Community College of Philadelphia.

## Sustaining and Institutionalizing Student Success Reforms

### Attitudes of Optimism and Possibility

In introducing guided pathways to the college community, CCP's leaders sought to motivate action by focusing on the importance of improving the student experience. Interviewees—including deans, senior leaders, advisors, and faculty—stated that the college has clearly “refocus[ed] around students.” But equally important and oft-cited is a refocus of the college’s *attitude* toward its institutional effectiveness and integrity. According to one senior leader, CCP’s guided pathways work has “fueled people to say, ‘Wow, look what’s possible.’”

Guided pathways has also given the college a framework for ongoing collaboration to strengthen students’ learning. As described by the coordinator of curriculum development (currently a faculty-held position), conversations about learning

outcomes for general education courses and meta-majors were revitalized through the cross-divisional curriculum planning committee because they were no longer viewed as just “a box to check.” Instead, learning outcomes were recognized as a meaningful articulation of the core competencies students need to develop in their field. The chair of the English department also noted increased optimism among faculty regarding the success of students in developmental education. The early positive results of CCP’s Accelerated Learning Program—a corequisite reform in English—are building faculty members’ confidence that students assigned to developmental education are capable of success beyond their initial placement when the right supports are in place.

Finally, CCP’s redesign efforts have created opportunities for the college to engage with the surrounding community. Philadelphia is making a significant push to promote workforce development, so Dr. Generals is working to ensure that this emphasis for the city does not result in a narrow discussion about training for occupational certificates only. Instead, he uses it as an opportunity to highlight how guided pathways facilitates students’ progress toward *careers*, framing the reforms as strongly linked to shared community goals and uplift.

**CCP’s redesign efforts have created opportunities for the college to engage with the surrounding community.**

## Responsiveness to New Challenges

For CCP’s guided pathways work to remain relevant and responsive, college leaders recognize that they cannot rest on the college’s initial improvements but must continue to assess and address ongoing challenges. As Dr. Hirsch explained, guided pathways at CCP is “not just about building it for the next couple years but for the next 50 years.”

Thus, it remains important to senior leaders not only to showcase accomplishments but also to transparently work through the inevitably “messy” reality of implementation. When adopting an educational planning tool, for example, CCP tried to use the planning tool that was part of the existing student information system. After receiving feedback from advisors and faculty that the tool was not working as intended, Dr. Hirsch sat in on advising sessions to see the planning tool in use. Based on what he observed, he reached out to the campus community to affirm that CCP needed to “scrap the current tool” and that “we can do better.” In communicating this message, he offered reassurance that the college’s work with guided pathways will continue, and “this is just one blip.” Although the need to implement a different tool set back the college’s progress in helping every student develop a customized educational plan online, CCP’s leaders prioritized quality and user experience over speed of implementation.

Some challenges in guided pathways implementation at CCP remain difficult to address, including:

- identifying and addressing policies and processes that deter new students’ enrollment,
- reducing courses that do not count toward programs,
- enrolling all students in first-year experience courses,
- scheduling English faculty to teach Accelerated Learning Program courses,
- implementing block scheduling and cohort structures within a large college,



- adequately supporting students who bring prior credits to the college and who attend part-time, and
- aligning the college's schedule with students' course needs each term.

By being honest about what is not working and being willing to revise reforms, CCP models an important lesson for institutions as well as students—that challenges and setbacks are inevitable and should be treated as a natural part of learning and progress.

## Plans for Building on Improvements to Date

CCP is planning to build upon and expand its pathways work in the coming year, with a focus on improving and scaling practices related to educational planning, advising, and helping students succeed in gateway math and English courses in their first year.

### Helping All Students Build Educational, Career, and Financial Plans

Educational planning is a core part of the student onboarding experience at CCP, but due to issues with the college's degree planning tool, in spring 2019 students were still making their plans on paper. The college is planning to use a new online degree planning tool with all new students in fall 2019. Once students can build their educational plans online, advisors will be better able to monitor their progress, and academic departments will be able to build schedules based on the courses in students' plans.

**Once students' educational plans are accessible online, CCP will have opportunities to develop new protocols to strengthen advising.**

### Extending Advising Beyond the First Year

Another important next step for CCP will be ensuring that students receive consistent academic advising beyond their first year. Given the size of the college and its current number of advisors, this will be a challenge. However, once students' educational plans are accessible online, CCP will have opportunities to develop new protocols to strengthen advising. Advisors will be able to check students' progress throughout their time at the college by strategically using checkpoints (commonly at 15, 30, 45, and 50 credits) to ensure that students are on track and making progress toward their degrees.

### Expanding Accelerated Approaches to Developmental Math

CCP has made progress in transforming developmental writing education by adopting the Accelerated Learning Program model in English, and now the college is exploring ways to accelerate students' progress through developmental math and enable them to pass college-level math in their first year. As part of this effort, CCP has developed and implemented accelerated developmental math courses in seven- and 10-week formats. Students can complete two math courses in one semester if they take two seven-week

courses back-to-back. The 10-week course enables late registrants to start working toward college-level math completion that same semester.

## **Improving Math Placement and Pathways**

CCP has undertaken reforms to math placement by switching placement tests, recalibrating cut scores for college-level placement, and more recently incorporating high school grades into the placement process. It will be important for CCP to connect its current work on math acceleration to future work on math contextualization, adapting college-level math courses for other meta-majors as it has already done for health care.

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