



## Why Guided Pathways at LCCC?

We are committed to the following principles:

1. Community colleges are a vehicle for social and economic mobility and growth for our students that is personal and financial;
2. We strive to be stewards of our community assets; and
3. We are responsible to our students, each other, and our communities to offer an attainable, affordable opportunity towards social mobility and personal growth.

When students enroll at a community college, those colleges, including LCCC, promise students three things.

1. Students can earn a quality credential at a low cost in a reasonable amount of time.
2. Those credentials will lead to opportunities that would not be accessible to them otherwise.
3. Colleges will guide students through this process and inform their choices with support.

However, evidence indicates that often LCCC is not living up to those promises.

1. In seven of the past eight years, LCCC has had the lowest graduation rate of all seven Wyoming community colleges.
2. Only 25 out of every 100 full-time degree-seeking students will earn ANY credential in a three-year period at LCCC.
3. Fewer than two out of every ten students at LCCC will be on track to complete a credential after one year, making it statistically unlikely that they will ever get a credential or transfer to another institution.

People at this institution have worked for years to improve these outcomes, and we've seen some success. These successes are obviously a move in the right direction, but we must do better. Our student success rates are not acceptable.

### **The Higher Education System is Broken**

Through exhaustive research, experts from across the country came to one fundamental conclusion: the people aren't the problem; the system is the problem. Our previous work here at LCCC (e.g. developing MCORs, general education, advising, developmental redesign, program review, orientation, program mapping, etc.) led us in the right direction, but we need help if we are going to significantly improve student success. The Guided Pathways project was created for colleges who were also experiencing unacceptable student success rates despite well-intentioned faculty, staff, and administrators. The structure of post-secondary education was designed over hundreds of years to educate people who had an abundance of time and money. Our students have neither. We have to change the system if we have any hope of significantly changing the outcomes for our students.

## **What Does that Mean: Change the System?**

In 2013, English faculty at LCCC were given an innovation grant to research how to improve student success in the developmental English sequence. Previously, the system of developmental reading and writing courses were based on the premise that the lower students placed in reading and writing the more credits and time students would need before they could take college-level courses. This seemed logical, but research proved that the more layers of classes students were required to take before their program classes, the less likely they were to persist. Despite the best of intentions, the design of the developmental English program was the most significant impediment to the outcomes faculty were trying desperately to achieve. We had to change the system. It wasn't easy, but this example illustrates several components that are essential to our success with the Pathway's Project.

1. We must give up long-held myths and narratives about why students are not successful.
2. We must be willing to change ourselves and our day-to-day work to make an impact for students and their upward mobility. We must stop blaming our students, the K-12 system, faculty, advisors, administrators, the government, technology, and everyone else for our lack of results and refocus our attention on the underlying systems and processes that are impeding our students.
3. We must re-engage with the reasons that initially drew us to this work and be willing to re-open lines of communication, re-define our relationships, and re-create the culture at the college.