



## **LCCC GUIDED PATHWAYS *MUST HAVES***

What is a ***Must Have?*** – They are those things LCCC must have in place to successfully implement guided pathways at scale (for all students) by Fall 2020.

Organized under the four pillars of the AACC Guided Pathways model, these include:

### **(A.) CLARIFY THE PATH**

- 1. Eagles Academies (Meta-Majors)**
- 2. Program Maps**
- 3. General Education v2.0**

### **(B.) HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH and (C.) STAY ON A PATH**

- 4. Streamlined, Effective Entry (Eliminate barriers to enrollment and advisement.)**
- 5. Advising Model (Case Management)**
- 6. Co-Requisite Developmental Math & English**

### **(D.) ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING**

- 7. Course & Program Competencies (Outcomes Assessment)**
- 8. Essential Student Experiences**
- 9. Excellence in Instruction**

Although most of the Must Haves represent general best or high-impact practices that are the underpinnings of the Guided Pathways model, the actual design and implementation of these things will have to be unique to our culture, structure, and environment here at LCCC. However, there are some basic expectations for what each of these should include. Those are explained further in the following.

#### **1. Eagles Academies (Meta-Majors)**

A central tenant of the Guided Pathways model is to ensure students enter a program of study as soon as possible. When students are uncertain or undecided, they should be placed into programs designed to help them decide. Program offerings at LCCC are numerous, and thus they can be intimidating. To help move students forward, give them choice, yet allow for some exploration, colleges and universities have found success through meta-majors.

Meta-majors, sometimes referred to as career clusters or communities of interest, are essentially collections of programs/majors that fall within a broader academic umbrella (Haskins, 2016). Meta-majors not only group programs but also provide “sets of courses that fulfill academic requirements for a broad discipline or program grouping” (Waugh, 2016). These courses include purposefully selected General Education classes, common classes across multiple programs within the meta-major, and classes that help students build relationships, communities, and eventually decide on a specific program.

According to Jobs for the Future (Waugh, 2016), meta-majors should:

- Be aligned with local/regional labor market demands and needs, specifically with those careers students are likely to end up in;
- Be designed with clear course maps, both for initial semesters within the meta-major and to onboard students into specific program maps;
- Include purposefully selected General Education core courses and electives that align with the meta-major and the programs falling within; and
- Include co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and student services intended to build community, foster collaboration, and ensure students stay on path.

At LCCC, meta-majors will be called “Eagles Academies.” They should incorporate both transfer-oriented (e.g., AA and AS) and applied (e.g., certificates, AAS, etc.) programs. They should be clearly aligned to careers, occupations, and/or industries that are of importance to the LCCC service area and broader region.

Each academy may incorporate an academy-tailored COLS 1000 course, and have a purposeful, yet limited, selection of relevant General Education courses and electives. Eagle’s Academies should be flexible enough for students to explore various majors in the first two semesters and move between them early on as much as possible without adding time and credits to their paths. Finally, these academies should have collaborative oversight and management by both academic and student services representatives and be developed, reviewed, and modified as necessary under the direction of a comprehensive advisory committee/board.

## **2. Program Maps**

The first pillar of the AACC Guided Pathways model is to clarify the paths. The primary mechanism through which institutions do this is by designing comprehensive program maps (also called academic or degree maps). Program maps are intended to clearly map out a coherent pathway through a program, or from a meta-major to a specific program, that includes articulated learning outcomes that are aligned to further education or success in a career (Jenkins, 2014).

According to Abele (2018), program maps have four essential elements. These include: (1) the narrative about the program, (2) sample/default schedule, (3) critical milestones, and (4) alignment with employment or further education in employment. Program maps become the foundational starting point for the development of individual academic plans or individualized pathways for students. Thus, they help get students on a path and provide the framework for monitoring if students are “on path” or “off path.”

During our curriculum rEvolution work a few years back, LCCC made a significant leap forward in developing effective program maps. That initiative has led to published course sequences online and in our catalog. These provide a solid starting point for developing student’s academic plans. Like many of our other efforts, there are still some changes that will need to take place for program maps at LCCC to be ready for Guided Pathways at scale. When successfully completed, program maps at LCCC should include the following:

- Eagles Academies will each have coherent maps that align with specific programs within each respective academy;

- Semester course sequences will be realistic for college-ready LCCC students to complete a program on-time and encourage full-time attendance;
- Critical courses/gateway courses and milestones will be clearly identified on maps;
- Utilization of summer semesters will be more purposefully integrated into programs (especially those with more than 64 credits) to clearly map a path to timely completion of the program;
- Opportunity to enroll a student into at least nine credits of their chosen path within the first year;
- Opportunity for completion of gateway courses, especially college-level English and Math, in the first year of a program for all students;
- General Education offerings that are purposefully designed and aligned to Eagle's Academies and academic programs, including a math pathway/course most appropriate for developing the skills students will need post-graduation; and
- Identification of the most likely opportunities for further education and/or employment for students upon completion.

It will be expected that program maps are viewed and considered by Eagle's Academies and program advisory committees. It is also likely that technology will have to be leveraged to allow for clear communication of employment and transfer opportunities, as well as to allow students, faculty, and advisors to build individualized academic plans based on default program maps and monitor student progress as they proceed along the path.

### **3. General Education v2.0**

In 2014, LCCC made sweeping changes in the structure of its General Education Program. Much of this work centered on the refinement of the College's Institutional Competencies and their alignment with efforts, such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Essential Learning Outcomes (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2017) and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) Passport Project (see <http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/>). At the core of this reform was the establishment of learning competencies and their accompanying outcomes and proficiency level definitions. These were intended to guide General Education course development, selection, and review to ensure all LCCC graduates could demonstrate proficiency in the institutional learning competencies through a rigorous assessment of student learning.

Although LCCC's General Education v1.0 provided a solid foundation upon which to build, it also led to some unanticipated consequences. The first is the over-proliferation of course offerings touted as satisfying the expectation of the development of these competencies and related outcomes. For example, LCCC offers more than 50 courses purported as meeting the Cultural Awareness Competency; however, 78% of all enrollments in the Cultural Awareness area reside in just 12 of these courses (Source: LCCC IR Office). Other areas have similar distributions.

Because of the expanse of these offerings, three other challenges have arisen. The first is the impact on providing clear pathways within programs of studies. While giving some flexibility, students may struggle in determining which course to choose when multiple options exist to satisfy a program's General Education requirements. Also called into question is the alignment of General Education course content within the program itself.

Second, as a result of having numerous options, the College has experienced a splintering of student populations across General Education, increasing cost while having to address perpetual low enrollments in course sections.

Finally, the breadth of offerings in LCCC's General Education courses has created in and of itself a challenge in actually assessing whether or not students are developing proficiency in the very competencies the LCCC General Education curriculum is intended to develop. The College faces coming accreditation activities with the expectation to demonstrate the assessment of these learning outcomes and the use of the data from this assessment to improve instruction and student learning. However, the large number of offerings has hampered the College's ability to ensure validity and reliability in the assessment process, let alone assure the quality of individual assessments and the management of data collection activities.

LCCC General Education v1.0 has also stopped somewhat short of truly fulfilling the expectations of a General Education curriculum. Although it is rightfully guided by essential student learning outcomes, it unfortunately lacks coherence as a program. Rather, it appears as a collection of stand-alone courses students must complete as they work through a program of study.

This shortcoming presents two opportunities. The first is an opportunity to provide greater coherence as a collection of coursework that is intended to purposefully align with the program's learning competencies and outcomes of specific Eagle's Academies (meta-majors) or individual programs. Addressing this will be essential for implementation of Guided Pathways at scale.

The second opportunity is for the College to bring coherence to the General Education curriculum by integrating themes throughout all General Education courses across the entire General Education Program. Whereby each approved course would not only meet the expectation to introduce, reinforce, or master specific institutional competencies, it would also integrate activities leading to specific competencies the College desires in all of its graduates.

For example, at a time when Wyoming is grappling with the challenges of a homogenous economy, an economy that holds the State captive by the boom and bust cycle of the energy industry, there is a need for institutions of higher learning to respond. In a state of small populations, and vast distances between its cities and towns, it is unlikely that Wyoming's economy will successfully diversify through the recruitment of major, new employers. Rather, Wyoming must look to produce individuals who are naturally innovative with business inclinations that would help current industries expand or create new industries and jobs altogether. Thus, it may be imperative that institutions like LCCC find ways to create entrepreneurs. This goal could be accomplished through the integration of entrepreneurship competencies within the General Education curriculum.

While the integration of entrepreneurial learning across the General Education curriculum will be important, so, too, will be the consideration of cultural competencies. At a time when things such as diversity, free speech, inclusiveness, and civil discourse are being challenged across the nation, there may very well be a need to integrate elements in the General Education curriculum that prepares students for a life centered on tolerance. Or perhaps it will be the integration of some of the most enduring questions with which humankind has grappled that will develop culturally adept individuals, as well as those who will economically succeed.

For those reasons stated above, and others, LCCC must engage in an effort to further improve its General Education Program. In General Education v2.0, the following must be addressed and incorporated.

- General Education offerings must be scaled back in number, especially in competency areas that have expansive options with lower student demand.
- The primary purpose of courses identified as meeting a General Education competency, should be to develop that competency (e.g., the preponderance of a course's competencies and learning outcomes should be aligned with an institutional competency).
- General Education v2.0 should ensure that all degree and certificate-seeking students upon graduation will possess proficiency in foundational entrepreneurship and/or innovation competencies.
- General Education offerings are purposefully designed and aligned to Eagle's Academies and academic programs, including a math pathway/course most appropriate for developing the skills students will need post-graduation.

#### **4. Streamlined, Effective Entry (Eliminate barriers to enrollment and advisement)**

One of the four pillars of the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Guided Pathways model is to help students get on a path. Research has shown that the traditional "cafeteria" model of higher education may lead to decision paralysis for students as they face overwhelming numbers and complexities of choices with little guidance early on in their educational journey (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015).

Through purposeful redesign of intake and information provision processes, and as part of implementing guided pathways, community colleges have had success in helping students make better, informed choices that save them time and money, help them get on a program path more quickly, and ultimately succeed at higher rates (Jaggars & Fletcher, 2014). Fortunately for LCCC, part of this redesign includes things that have already been accomplished and in place for a few years. These include the implementation of a Customer Relations Management (CRM) tool (Ellucian Recruit) and the requirement for mandatory orientation and initial intake advising.

Unfortunately, if these things are not implemented to perfection, and in sync with each other, the implementation can lead to perceived and actual barriers to an effective, streamlined entry process for our students. As part of the Guided Pathways work at LCCC, we must engage in a thorough assessment of the current intake process and make improvements where necessary to improve student outcomes. Specific attention needs to be given to:

- Providing career exploration up-front or early on in the student's intake process to help them choose a program of study or an Eagle's Academy;
- Connecting program faculty and if appropriate, Academy representatives, to students early in the intake process to help students make informed decisions about programs and/or Academies;
- Reducing the "melt away" of applicants, who have completed significant steps in the enrollment process and are accepted by LCCC but never enroll; and
- Accelerating access and completion of initial intake advising and enrollment.

## 5. Advising Model (Case Management)

LCCC has invested in a case management, or “holistic” model for student advising with the majority of early work focused on the establishment of an advising center staffed with professional advisors. In a holistic model of student advising, we recognize that students need different types of “advice” at different times in their educational journey at LCCC. The holistic model’s goal is to help them make informed decisions and access critical resources to ensure they stay on path to completion. This advice will naturally come from different sources—an academic advisor, their program faculty, other students, or electronic resources.

There are certain expectations of LCCC’s advising model that must be met to ensure successful contributions to the Guided Pathways model. These include:

- The College should provide a single advisor to be assigned to each student, who will be with them throughout their time at LCCC;
- The advising model, in collaboration with other functions (e.g., new student orientation, career exploration, COLS 1000, etc.) should ensure that every student have an individualized academic plan (based on program maps) by the end of their first semester;
- Academic advisors will work closely with program faculty, with a clear division of labor for monitoring student progress on their academic plans, and with appropriate individuals for providing frequent advice, feedback, and support;
- Students at LCCC can easily see how far they have progressed on their plan and what they need to do to complete their program;
- Technology is leveraged to allow for effective case-management of students with priority attention given to those identified with factors predictive of attrition or failure; and
- Early warning systems are in place to identify students at risk of failing critical courses or missing key milestones, and timely interventions are initiated.

## 6. Co-Requisite Developmental Math & English

Few things have been debated more when discussing community college student success than the perceived preparedness of students in Math and English and the effectiveness of developmental education programs at community colleges (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2014). Evidence has suggested that traditional placement models for determining college readiness do not work (Scott-Clayton, 2012), and the most common approaches to remediating the perceived academic deficiencies in Math and English have not worked either (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Thus, completion of college-level Math and English within the first year at a community college has become a foundational metric for whether students will persist and complete, or ultimately fail.

Yet, research suggests that there are practices community colleges can implement that ensure more students complete their college-level gateway Math and English courses in their first year. For example, the use of High School GPA for determining student readiness and placement into Math and English courses has proven to be more predictive of success than traditional placement tests (Belfield & Crosta, 2012). Our use of High School GPA at LCCC has also produced similar results (visit the Institutional Research Office to see the reports) where we have placed more students directly into college-level courses, and as a result, more students have successfully completed.

The other area of redesign of developmental education that has shown great promise is the use of co-requisite supports or coursework (Complete College America, 2016). Co-requisite remediation essentially is the enrollment of underprepared students directly into college-level courses with additional academic support to help them build the necessary knowledge needed to succeed in the college-level course. This is especially powerful for those who are “on the cusp” of being deemed college-ready but fall slightly below our assessment threshold (e.g., ACT score, High School GPA, etc.).

We have had some early success at LCCC using co-requisite developmental education in our English coursework. In 2013, English faculty at LCCC were given an innovation grant to research how to improve student success in the developmental English sequence. This led to the implementation of three best practices in developmental education redesign—the integration of reading and writing, acceleration of a course, and the use of co-requisite education. The results are impressive with a more than 30 percent increase in the number of developmental students who completed college-level English (from 55.05% to 89.70%).

There is still some work to do in English, and while we have had some history with redesign efforts in mathematics, it is time to double-down on the co-requisite model and implement it at scale in both English and Math. Our goal and expectation is the vast majority of students will complete college-level Math and English in their first year at LCCC (in 2016 it was just over 25 percent).

## **7. Course & Program Competencies (Outcomes Assessment)**

For years, accreditors, employers and policy makers have asked higher education to ensure that students are developing proficiency in the knowledge, skills, and abilities we have touted our curricula produces. This expectation has not slipped the Guided Pathways movement either, as one of the four pillars of the AACC model is to ensure students are learning. The literature on what results in effective teaching and learning supports the importance of establishing clear, learning goals at all levels of instruction (e.g., the course, the program, and General Education). The Guided Pathways model moves institutions from “conceptualizing each individual course as a standalone experience” to conceptualizing “each course as a step along a coherent path” (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). Teaching and learning then must focus on developing proficiency in the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in subsequent courses and for culminating success in program and General Education competencies required to succeed after completion/graduation.

According to Jenkins, Lahr, and Fink (2017), page 36:

In the pathways model, faculty assess whether students are mastering learning outcomes and building skills as they progress through a program. Program learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements for success in further education and employment in a related field. Faculty use the results of learning outcomes assessments to improve the effectiveness of instruction in their programs. Colleges track mastery of learning outcomes by individual students, and the information is easily accessible to students and faculty.

Here at LCCC, we established some strong foundational elements pertaining to the assessment of student learning. These include our institutional competencies and accompanying rubrics, annual assessment planning through AQUILLA, our Academic Standards’ processes and

documents such as the MCORs (Master Course Outline of Record), our General Education competency framework, etc. However, significant work still lies ahead. To move toward the full Guided Pathways model, our curricula must include the following elements to ensure students are learning, and more importantly, to assure we are learning where students are and are not succeeding to improve our instructional effectiveness.

- Every course at LCCC will have well-defined, course-level competencies that include measurable learning outcomes.
- These course competencies should be clearly mapped across the program curriculum to demonstrate how they “scaffold” upon each other so students can succeed in mastering competencies in subsequent coursework and their program of choice.
- All degree and certificate programs will have well-defined program competencies and assessable outcomes aligned to careers/occupations and/or transfer requirements at partner four-year institutions.
- Plans for assessing student achievement/proficiency on these are deployed to include common, summative assessments at the course level (common across all sections, modalities, locations, etc.) and at the program level.

Additional information regarding the expected structure of course and program competencies at LCCC is included in Appendix A.

## **8. Essential Student Experiences**

Arguably, one of the greatest benefits of the community college is the similarity students will find from one institution to another. Thus, the fact that LCCC provides an experience and environment similar to that of the other Wyoming community colleges, or even those situated across the West, may be seen as a good thing. However, the lack of differentiation from other colleges in the region may make it more challenging to recruit students. More importantly, LCCC has the opportunity to provide aspects of the student experience that will differentiate the student experience at LCCC from that at other institutions while at the same time offering a more well-rounded and all-encompassing education that will ultimately ensure our students, as our vision states, “become the most sought after individuals.”

To that end, we must focus on differentiating the student experience. More specifically, the College will ensure students in degree and certificate programs will be provided the opportunity to benefit from three essential experiences (potentially through curricular, co-curricular, and/or extra-curricular activities at LCCC).

**A. Collaboration/Developing Relationships** – Research, such as that provided through the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), suggests one of the most powerful influences on student persistence, completion, and success is that of meaningful relationships and collaborative learning. Hoping students have these opportunities with faculty, with staff, and with each other is one option. Purposefully designing experiences where they happen for all students is another. Fortunately, LCCC has a good start on this work with things such as the COLS 1000 course, extra-curricular activities, and residence halls. However, more can be done to ensure the development of relationships and to assess this as an intended outcome.

- B. Immersion Experience** – It is said that we do our greatest learning and develop our most lasting memories when we are pushed beyond the boundaries of our comfort zone. For many of LCCC’s students, it would be a rare opportunity to find or be required to participate in this type of experience. Study abroad is a commonly identified experience when thinking of immersion; however, this may be challenging for many of the College’s students. Therefore, considerable thought and careful design will be required to create immersion experiences for all students. If that challenge can be met at LCCC, this experience alone will produce a more successful, well-rounded graduate than those at any other community college in the nation.
- C. Synthesis and Application** – It is increasingly important for students to have the opportunity to synthesize and apply all they learn as a result of their higher education. First, for students to be successful in life they need to find meaning in their interests, activities, and work. Second, for students to successfully enter the workforce, experience is now a requirement of many employers, even in high-demand fields. Creating the opportunity for students to take all they have learned, synthesize it, and ultimately apply it toward solving a real social or business challenge, would accomplish both goals of demonstrating meaning and establishing a significant threshold of experience to help graduates with their job search.

The challenge before LCCC is significant. We must find a way to build each of these experiential opportunities for all of the College’s degree and certificate students. To do this, we must ensure these opportunities are closely integrated with each other, that the student’s curriculum is aligned with the Guided Pathways and General Education work discussed previously, and that the opportunities are doable given the constraints of the fiscal and cultural environment. That challenge can be overcome, and in doing so, will clearly set apart a student’s experience at LCCC, thereby developing them as the institution’s vision statement espouses.

## **9. Excellence in Instruction**

Community colleges are teaching institutions whose primary mission is ensuring students learn what is essential for them to be successful post-graduation. We do this through the establishment of clear competencies and learning outcomes, aligned with what we believe is necessary for success in an occupation and/or to further education. Similarly then, we should be focused on developing our primary teaching and learning resource—our faculty—in a likewise fashion. LCCC’s vision further guides us here in our belief that we will have world-class community college faculty.

Therefore, LCCC must focus on improving its instructional effectiveness, including the quality of instructional materials, facilitation of instructional activities, and the assessment of student learning. Fortunately, we have some solid work on which to build—the establishment of the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) and the new faculty academy and drafts of a faculty competency model to guide continuous professional development. Quality must be assured in our instructional effectiveness across all modalities, locations, and faculty.

In our Guided Pathways work we must focus on engaging and developing faculty. Thus, our efforts to ensure excellence in instruction will include:

- Finalization and implementation of the LCCC faculty competencies into the faculty development, continuing contract process, and compensation model;

- Development and implementation of proficiency rubrics and authentic assessments to allow faculty to provide evidence of faculty competencies (either as they progress through development or when they are hired);
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive faculty development institute for new faculty;
- Alignment of the faculty observation, assessment & promotion process with the faculty competencies; and
- Establishment of consistency and high-quality standards/expectations for the delivery of online courses, programs and instruction at LCCC.

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## Appendix A

### Framework for Student Learning Assessment at LCCC

At Laramie County Community College (LCCC) curricula is intended to be purposeful. That is, purposeful in a manner that the engagement in the curriculum, with excellent facilitation of learning and student effort, results in the attainment of proficiency within the subject matter. In other words, by successfully completing a course, program, or as a graduate of LCCC, students are able to demonstrate proficiency of competencies the curriculum is intended to produce.

The only true way to assure the effectiveness LCCC's curricula and instruction is to frequently and rigorously assess the rate at which students achieve proficiency on these competencies—the intended outcomes of the curriculum.

At LCCC, quality is defined as the setting of high standards that are continuously met. Thus, LCCC's quality assurance is accomplished through a purposeful approach to student learning assessment that answers the question, "Are students demonstrating proficiency on the competencies for which the curriculum is designed to produce?"

To be able to answer this question at all levels of the curriculum, a common framework for student learning assessment is necessary. Demonstrating progress on the assessment of student learning and using the results of that assessment to improve our instruction must be a priority. The place to begin is with the framework that provides the infrastructure for the College's curriculum, as well as the guidance for the development of competencies and assessments and the collection and analysis of student learning outcomes data. The following components are necessary for this framework.

1. **Competencies** – Competencies are general statements describing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors in which students can demonstrate proficiency upon completion of a specific educational activity. Competencies clearly state the skills and knowledge that are required for individuals to successfully perform in identified professional, educational, and life contexts. These shall exist for all courses, programs, and institutional General Education expectations.
  - a. Every course at LCCC has well-defined competencies. These will be listed within the MCOR and on course syllabi.
  - b. Every degree/certificate program has well-defined competencies aligned with the skills and abilities needed for the most common occupations that graduates will pursue.
  - c. The College has well-defined General Education competencies that illustrate what graduates of LCCC should be able to do.
  
2. **Rubrics** – For the purpose of assessing student learning, rubrics or scoring matrices are tools used to set expectations for and determination of the degree of proficiency students demonstrate against expected competencies and outcomes. Rubrics, when paired with common assessments, ensure consistency in the evaluation of academic ability across all students, all modalities, all faculty, and all courses. Rubrics should exist for every competency and their accompanying learning outcomes, at every level (e.g., course, program, and institution). Rubrics include:

- a. Outcomes – Learning outcomes are very specific statements that describe exactly what a student will be able to do in a measurable way. Outcomes further delineate the specific abilities in which students must demonstrate proficiency to be deemed proficient in a competency. It is common for competencies to have multiple learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are written so they can be measured or assessed and collectively assure students possess proficiency in the given competency.
  - b. Proficiency Levels – Proficiency levels are clear, measurable, or assessable statements of observable student behaviors in relation to specific learning outcomes. They set the levels of proficiency and provide the structure through which faculty can assign units of measurement to student performance.
- 3. Common, Summative Assessments** – To assure quality is met in LCCC’s teaching and learning, across all modalities, all faculty, and all locations, common, summative assessments shall exist for each course, program, and institutional competency and their accompanying learning outcomes.
- a. Assessment (n) – An assessment is a tool that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the proficiency of students on educational competencies or learning outcomes.
  - b. Summative Assessments (n) – Summative assessments are used at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a course, program, or upon graduation. What is the definition of a Summative Assessment?