

South Seattle College 2018 Guided Pathways Evaluation Feedback Memo

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This memo summarizes our observations from our May 2018 Guided Pathways evaluation site visit. (It also takes into account South's 5-year implementation work plan, submitted to College Spark Washington in May; and data reflections report, submitted in January). The memo focuses primarily but not exclusively on those Guided Pathways essential practices where deliverables were due, and notes progress made, work remaining, and outstanding issues and concerns.

District/college issues. The redefining of South Seattle College's role within the broader Seattle College District took up a lot of time and energy in this past year and appeared to have some impact in delaying progress on certain aspects of Guided Pathways elements such as metamajors (areas of study) and technology. By spring 2018, the district and South had agreed on common areas of study as well as a joint technology tool selection process. Other relevant district-level work will include establishing shared practices for common prerequisites, intake/onboarding, and multiple placement methods. Each college now has its own Associate Vice President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and the plan is for them to work as a team on related issues in career discernment, advising, and other Guided Pathways-relevant areas.

Work and negotiation are likely to continue on what elements of Guided Pathways and related policies will be common across the district versus what individual colleges may be able to customize, and it is unclear how this will impact South's pace of change in its Guided Pathways work. One way forward for South could be to, where possible, use its Guided Pathways knowledge to help lead the way in developing and sharing Guided Pathways practices for use throughout the district. In turn, if the district is truly committed to Guided Pathways, such a commitment may help move change at South.

Another major change at South is the naming of Dr. Rosie Rimando-Chareunsap as president and the return of Pete Lortz, who served as interim president, to his role as vice president of instruction. This moves the college out of a temporary leadership situation back into a longer-term, more stable structure.

Organization/structure. Last year, South did not appear to have discrete work groups with clearly assigned tasks, timelines, and deliverables. This year, they have put in place committees for the four pillars, plus some specific issue work groups and task forces. However, the levels of activity and purpose vary considerably from group to group and a number of the groups are not yet operational.

It seems to us that these groups would benefit from strong direction and explicit support from leadership to move forward with their work with the clear knowledge that the work will be used—even if it is amended or adjusted—in the implementation of Guided Pathways policies and practices. One concern we have is that in some areas, previous groups on similar topics have been convened but have not seemed to have a clear path forward to action and have eventually

petered out, which can in turn contribute to initiative fatigue and reluctance to participate in change efforts.

Metamajors/Areas of Study. As of spring 2018, the agreed-upon district-wide areas of study include:

- Art, Design, and Graphics
- Business and Accounting
- Culinary, Hospitality and Wine
- Education and Human Services
- Health and Medical
- Skilled Trades and Technical Training
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
- Social Sciences, Humanities, and Language

Assignment of programs to these areas of study had begun but was not completed. It was not clear who is involved in that work, when it will be completed, or how widespread faculty and staff engagement is—which will be an important factor in college-wide buy-in. Exploratory sequences for areas of study have not yet been created.

Program maps and exploratory sequences. South has made progress on its program maps, with about 20 having been completed at the time of our site visit. Earlier in the year, student services proposed some program maps to faculty. After faculty made it clear they wanted more of a role in program mapping, the Dean of Academic Transfer set up a formal mapping process, with faculty across all divisions and advisors meeting four times for a total of eight hours. The meetings included cross-disciplinary conversations about both required and elective courses that would best fit certain programs of study. The 20 maps that were created have been provided to external partners for feedback.

Across the Cohort I colleges, program mapping proved to be a complex, challenging task. For most, this work continues. Some cross-cutting issues include:

- **Engagement of students in their pathway from the start.** As noted by Davis Jenkins from the Community College Research Center at the Spring 2018 Guided Pathways Student Success Institute, in a student's first quarter it can't just be developmental math, English, and college success – that's "deadly". Students need to be engaged early on in pathway content to capture their interest, help them get to know a pathway, and keep them motivated.

Work remains to be done on this at South. For example, the Business program maps have math, English, and foreign language for their first two quarters, while the third quarter's first pathway-related course is Business Statistics. See also exploratory sequences, below.

- **Students starting below college level.** How do program maps take into account the needs of students who are not starting at college level?
- **Part time and full time students.** How do program maps accommodate part time students? For example, are maps based on quarters or credits? The latter may be helpful for part time students.

- **Academic transfer and professional technical programs.** Are maps being developed for both? At most Cohort I colleges, much of the initial mapping has focused on academic transfer programs, due at least in part to the fact that professional-technical programs already have long-established course sequences and schedules. But there is work to be done on the professional technical side as well—for example, incorporation of general education requirements; consideration of connections to four year degrees, etc.
- **Exploratory sequences.** How do maps provide students the opportunity to explore different programs of study, certificates, and degrees within a pathway? Or is this exploration to be provided through other means, and if so, what are those? South's plan is for the instructional deans to convene cross-department faculty meetings and to complete this process by spring 2019.

Intake and advising. No plan for intake and advising has been completed. A new advising redesign work group met for the first time several weeks before our visit. It has a work template with members, goals, guiding principles, outcomes, and a timeline. During our recent site visit, we heard that they have begun an inventory of all the various pieces of intake and advising that occur in different places and programs across the colleges.

People who work in various aspects of intake and advising have met before and continue to meet in various configurations to discuss their interests and ideas in improving the system, but these meetings have resulted in little forward motion, and there are pockets of resistance to change. There is some hope that this summer's guiding team retreat will provide direction for committee work. There is leadership interest in seeking out technical assistance from the state-level Career and Employment Services Council on developing an equity-minded career discernment model. Overall, at the time of our site visit, there was much discussion but no clear draft plan for intake and advising redesign.

The people at South who are leading the work in this area are asking good questions about intake and advising redesign, and thinking about a wide variety of possible best practices, including college success teams (advisors, financial aid, faculty contacts), different levels of advising based on student needs, building connections between advising and interested/willing faculty and deans by area of study (the current contract does not include faculty advising), etc.

Our questions and concerns about this area include:

- How does South plan to catch up on this work, which is significantly delayed?
- How will South take their good questions and best practices knowledge and translate it into action? This is as much an organizational question as it is an advising redesign question. With respect to the latter, one approach could be to design an overall plan that fits student needs in a Guided Pathways model, and only afterwards talk about assigning resources and people. The organizational challenge, however, is a critical one: how to move from good ideas to effective mechanisms to make change happen. We talk a little more about this below.

Math. South's plan for implementing Guided Pathways essential practices related to math includes expanding Statway, continuing to look at multiple measures, and considering a corequisite model for Math 141.

- To date, Statway has remained small, with two 25-student cohorts a year that have been difficult to fill, in part because they were not comfortable with encouraging students to take it until all of the four year universities accepted it. It is not clear how South will be able to expand Statway to cover a significant number of students, which we understood to be part of their Guided Pathways plan.
- Discussion continues on improving placement methods and on collecting data that will inform this, although we did not hear about any specific timeline for this. Other than Statway, their current structure includes several quarters of precollege math before college math. Their dean also mentioned an interest in creating a bridge course from Statway to STEM math. Their work plan includes finalizing math recommendations for areas of study by fall 2018.

Much work remains to be done in this area in order for South to be able to achieve the Guided Pathways goal of having a majority of students earn degree math in their first year.

Technology and communications. These plans were due to be completed this spring but are significantly delayed. We heard during our site visit that plans for technology tool selection and communications materials, including website updates, have been deemed district level decisions. Some of the Guided Pathways practices affected by this delay include student progress monitoring, early alert, and how to ensure that all students end up in areas of study and programs of study that are guided by program maps.

A general observation

South has talented individuals across the institution and in its leadership who are asking good questions and discussing ideal practices. One question we have is how those individuals will be able to move from good ideas to actual practice and in time institution-wide implementation. The organizational infrastructure to make this happen may need to be intentionally strengthened. Some elements of this include recognizing and empowering changemakers at all levels of the organization to plan and implement change, and to assess, improve, and expand the change; a commitment from the top down to executing work plans with timelines and outcomes and carrying that work further into the institution; and the will to recognize barriers and plan and execute effective workarounds to those barriers.