

Strategy 1: SLCC Pathways Reform

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Executive Summary

SLCC Pathways is now in its sixth year as a completion strategy at Salt Lake Community College. In that time, guided pathways reform produced several changes at the college. We reorganized academics into eight areas of study, introduced a variety of intrusive student supports, engaged in significant curricular and course redesigns, reinvigorated program review and prioritization, and invested heavily in faculty instructional development.¹

Because of pathways work, we now look at our work through a different lens. We are more likely to focus on areas and programs over courses. We understand students need help making life and career choices, not just assistance in selecting specific courses. We see structured choice as instrumental in helping a student develop intentionality and make decisions that build toward realizing their goals. We are also more likely to see the connection between providing a more structured experience for students and achieving equitable outcomes.² We also appreciate that student support and opportunities for development must also be embedded in the curriculum. Finally, guided pathways reform has supported greater collaboration between academic and student affairs on a variety of fronts.³

There are core lessons that college leadership should take away from our work doing guided pathways reform:

- **Program prioritization:** Effective choice architecture begins with examining the college's overall portfolio of programs and credentials. SLCC currently offers 239 credentials. We have more work to do when it comes to evaluating under-enrolled certificates and AAS programs and consolidating transfer options.
- **General Education:** General education is where choice proliferates in our curriculum. In other words, unstructured choice (the enemy of guided pathways reform) is not a universal challenge at the college. It is localized in a few general education distribution areas and

¹ To date, over 160 SLCC faculty have earned the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Effective Teaching Practices credential.

² This is the main takeaway from several of the latest instructional development and pedagogy scholars working today. Viji Sathy and Kelly Hogan in their SLCC Inclusive Teaching workshop made structure the foundational component of their argument about inclusivity and equity. See ["How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive," Chronicle of Higher Education](#).

³ Several faculty have commented that the area of study groups helped them form better relationships with their student affairs counterparts in advising and career services.

institutional requirements. The new general education governance structures should help the college curate choice more effectively and improve quality in some distribution areas.

- **Teaching:** Quality instruction matters. Investing in instructional development has helped create a common framework and vocabulary around quality instruction at SLCC. We should continue to invest in high quality instructional development at SLCC. This includes the ACUE Effective Teaching course but also includes our own development credentials.⁴
- **Assessment:** We are asking students to focus on programs; we need a similar focus when it comes to learning outcomes assessment. This was, of course, the NWCCU recommendation that led to the reorganization of assessment at the college and the creation of the new Director of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment position. A focus on program level assessment should support program review and help continue to drive areas to build more structure in their programs.
- **Student support and connection:** Students need support and a sense of belonging within their areas and programs. Centering student support around the emerging community councils and fully leveraging the MySuccess platform ought to be major goals going forward.

The Pathways CWT recommends retiring guided pathways as a lead strategy at SLCC and focusing on operationalizing some of the core elements.

Let general education governance reforms unfold, continue our investments in instructional development and course redesigns, and work on the challenge of creating community in areas of study. Most importantly, we need to continue to improve our processes of program review and prioritization with the goal of redistributing resources to our best programs. Finally, the college needs another bout of strategic thinking when it comes to online education.

Charge and Background

Pathways Strategy 1 Charge: Area of Study (AOS) Design Teams will take the lead in developing their areas of study and their specific programs within the framework of guided pathways reform. AOS teams will be asked to focus on composing program maps and forming area of study councils. AOS Design teams will also continue to develop their proposals from last academic year.

⁴ To my knowledge, we are one of the only institutions in the country that have a system for compensating adjunct faculty for professional development. We have more work to do to structure those development opportunities across an adjunct faculty member's career and link that development to some form of advancement.

Charge	Progress/Recommendation
<p>Area of Study Councils—Area of study design teams will coordinate on creating area of study councils focused on the student experience</p>	<p>Provost of Academic Affairs leading effort to organize area councils.</p>
<p>Maps—Area of study design teams will produce program maps.</p>	<p>Each area has engaged in the work of mapping support and extra-curricular activities alongside the existing graduation maps. Frankly, the mapping process has been hampered by some shared confusion about the purpose and audience for these maps and what new maps would offer that our existing graduation maps do not.</p> <p>In addition, the CWT lead and Provost office is working with marketing on a redesign of the area of study landing page and a redesigned template for program/department pages.</p>
<p>General Transfer degrees—Explore within your areas the creation of a general transfer degree option.</p>	<p>The Humanities and Social Sciences AOS leads have each drafted a general transfer degree option that is poised to go through the curriculum approval process. These two general transfer degree options will be live by Fall 2023.</p>

Pathways Strategy 1.2 Charge: While the area of study (AOS) design teams will take the lead this year on SLCC Pathways work, there is still a need for centralized oversight and support. Several SLCC strategies and initiatives overlap with SLCC Pathways, including the academic-to-technical credit transition, instructional program review, reforming general education governance, the English co-requisite pilot, and continuing to improve our placement processes.

Charge	Progress/Recommendation
<p>English co-requisite-- Support the English co-requisite support project out of the provost office with the goal of implementation of Fall 2022.</p>	<p>Curriculum work complete. Pilot begins Spring 2023. The English co-requisite program will reduce the developmental education footprint at SLCC.</p>

General Education Reform	The General Education Design Team’s proposed changes to general education governance were approved by the Provost office and accepted by the Executive Cabinet. The proposal is now being translated into a new General Education Handbook, which is slated to go into effect Fall 2022.
Placement	The new Canvas-based placement process started in Spring 2022. We need to continue to assess the new placement processes to make sure we are placing students in the right courses.
Create AA/AS distinction at the catalog level	Not completed.

Progress: Affiliated work relevant to Guided Pathways reform

Program review and program prioritization	<p>We are now caught up with our program reviews and are focusing our higher-level conversations on program viability.</p> <p>When it comes to program prioritization, more work needs to be done to evaluate low-performing programs.</p>
Academic to technical credit	Three programs have transitioned with more programs poised to move over next academic year.
Concurrent enrollment	Exploring career and technical concurrent enrollment options with the goal of using concurrent enrollment as a program-specific enrollment strategy.

Recommendations

Pathways should recede as the lead strategy at SLCC. We should operationalize what we have learned from these last six years. Deans should lead on developing their areas and affiliated programs and building area councils.

- **Program prioritization:** Shrink the college's portfolio of credentials. It is time for SLCC to consolidate some credentials and discontinue low performing programs.⁵
 - Certificates should mostly live in Salt Lake Technical College.
 - AAS degrees with low enrollment and completion should be discontinued.
 - Consolidate some of our transfer degrees.
- **Program review:** Focus on program quality. A recent CCRC piece argues that for community colleges to build back enrollment, they must have programs worth completing.⁶ Programs must lead to successful transfer or meaningful employment. To accomplish this goal, we need to take another step in improving the rigor of our program review process. We need to bolster the external reviewer component and build in a structure of internal peer review.⁷
- **Scale MySuccess:** Sufficiently resource and scale MySuccess. The power of tools like MySuccess depend upon the network effect.⁸ The value of MySuccess does not inhere in the tool; instead, it is a function of the number of users participating in the platform. A critical mass of SLCC employees must be in the tool for it to really work. Put together a working group of student and academic affairs personnel with the goal of increasing the use of MySuccess. We need to either fully leverage MySuccess or scrap it and find another solution.
- **Online pathways:** We need another round of strategic thinking when it comes to the role online programs play at the college. We can be both a place-based institution and be more aggressive when it comes to online programming and marketing those programs. The Provost's office is re-forming an online program advisory group made up of academic administrators and faculty from current and next round online programs. We will review what we have learned from offering online programs in a more intentional way and consider the next two to three programs we should build and market as available online.
- **Area community:** The Provost is leading efforts to build area councils.

⁵ We have over [100 credentials with five or fewer declared majors](#).

⁶ Davis Jenkins and John Fink. "To Build Back Enrollment, Community Colleges Must Ensure That Their Programs Are Worth Completing." *The Mixed Methods Blog*. September 29th, 2021. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/community-college-enrollment-value.html>

⁷ Some community colleges have a program review committee charged with evaluating program reviews before sending them on to the Provost and Senior Leadership. See Bellevue College.

⁸ Tim Stobierski, "What Are Network Effects?": "the term network effect refers to any situation in which the value of a product, service, or platform depends on the number of buyers, sellers, or users who leverage it."

- **Mapping:** Let program assessments and program reviews drive mapping efforts. In other words, situate the mapping work within processes where there is a built-in schedule and accountability. We are now poised as an institution to improve our focus on program quality and outcomes. These processes should yield actionable insights when it comes to revising and mapping curriculum. Revised graduation maps can be one expected outcome of program assessment.
- **Site-Based Pathways and Transfer:** The Herriman campus has the potential to be a laboratory for pathways and transfer. Facilitating transfer at a specific site will make the workings (and dysfunctions) of transfer more visible to both institutions. Locating transfer at a specific site with space limitations also forces the issue of curating choice for students. We are hopeful as well that Herriman can be a campus where we initial pilot general transfer.
- **Continue to iterate on AOS and academic affairs structure**
 - Create new AOS in Public Safety and Justice
 - Consolidate and clarify Salt Lake Technical College
 - Eliminate duplication: we continue to present students with confusing choices by offering similar or overlapping programs across different areas.⁹

Conclusion

The recommendation that guided pathways reform recede as a lead strategy is not a recommendation that we cease doing pathways. But we will make more progress going forward if we situate the work within areas and create clarity by revising existing operations (assessment, program review and prioritization) to account for pathways goals.

⁹ Fun exercise: type “web design” into the SLCC search bar and see where you are directed. You can begin web design at SLCC through Workforce, or the School of Arts and Communication; or maybe you want to begin web design through the SAT (now Salt Lake Technical College).