

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Key Influences and Obstacles in Guided Pathways Implementation  
in Community Colleges in a Multi-College District  
According to Community College Leaders

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

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2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Key Influences and Obstacles in Guided Pathways Implementation  
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Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Robert T. Teranishi, Chair

This qualitative study investigated how key constituents (three college presidents and three academic senate presidents) on community college campuses in the Los Angeles Community College District describe the key factors and challenges that influenced the implementation of Guided Pathways reform at their colleges, as well as strategies they used to overcome those challenges and anticipated challenges. The themes I uncovered using semi-structured interviews and document review point to several recommendations for multi-college community college districts and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Key factors influencing Pathways implementation at community colleges were financial support from state, faculty leadership, use of the regional network, and influence of the district academic senate; challenges encountered in implementation included bureaucratic challenges

such as timing and communication gaps from the state Chancellor's Office, district logistical hurdles, and pockets of faculty resistance; and strategies colleges used to overcome challenges in initial implementation included use of regional networks, flexibility/adaptability and relationships. The many anticipated challenges for remaining phases of implementation varied but include difficulties related to mapping metamajors.

Of the three key influential factors and challenges to Pathways implementation my study uncovered, the two most significant are the influence of the district academic senate and the impact of bureaucratic barriers. My findings yield insight on some concrete steps which can streamline implementation of current and future reform in multi-college districts in order to benefit students and contribute to the literature on educational reform implementation in community colleges, as well as the role of the district academic senate in multi-college districts.

The dissertation of Holly Elizabeth Bailey-Hofmann is approved.

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2019

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript and the completion of my doctoral degree to my parents, David B. Bailey and Rosemary Hofmann Bailey; my grandparents, Thelma K. Bailey and Carol Bailey; F. Allan Hofmann and Lulubelle W. Hofmann; and my Uncle Joe, Joseph B. Simonelli.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my dissertation committee members for their interest and participation: Dr. Robert Teranishi, chair, and committee members Dr. Christina Christie, Dr. Katherine Anderson-Levitt, and Dr. Cecilia Rios-Aguilar.

I thank Dr. Mary-Jo Apigo (ELP Cohort 20) for encouraging me and answering my questions throughout my process, Dr. Celena Alcala Burkhardt for her support and research design ideas, Dr. Walter Jones (ELP Cohort 6) for his encouragement and research design input, Dr. Patricia Quiñones (UCLA GSEIS 2015) for input on research design and analysis, Dr. Lisa Sugimoto (ELP Cohort 5) for her support early on in the process, as well as my fellow Cohort 24 classmates Hilary Crocker, Alan-Michael Graves, Matthew Jordan, Lisa Miller, Andee Steinman, and Colin Williams. Not only were my classmates a lifeline for moral support, but many of them reviewed and/or pre-tested countless iterations of my protocols.

I thank Dr. Cindy Kratzer for the excellence of her instruction, Dr. Diane Durkin for her dedication to the program and to getting us all through it, and Shan Boggs and Judy Myoshi for the endless ways they enabled our success. All of these women are incredibly hard workers for whom I have the utmost respect.

Thanks to Dr. Khalid Saeed and Dr. Jerry Flores for encouraging me over the years to pursue this goal, and Rebekah Brandes, Maria Yanez, and Lydia Dong for their assistance in the final stages.

Finally, much thanks to my interview subjects for their gracious participation.

## VITA

### Academic Preparation

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### Selected Professional Experience

- 2017 – Present      Academic Senate President, West Los Angeles College
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study investigated how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence implementation of the educational reform Guided Pathways as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and anticipated challenges. Guided Pathways, a systemic reform to increase community college completion rates, facilitates college restructuring from a “cafeteria model” to in which students choose courses freely to a structured system for students which guides students along well-mapped paths for careers or transfer majors (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). In 2016, the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (hereafter, “Chancellor’s Office”), whose role it is to provide statewide leadership for California’s community colleges, challenged all 114 colleges to implement Guided Pathways.<sup>1</sup>

Because Pathways implementation has the potential to disrupt status-quo practices at institutional, curricular/instructional, and individual (student experience) levels, Guided Pathways is the subject of much debate among academics, between administrators and faculty, and between the California legislature/Chancellor’s Office and community college faculty. The current political climate in the community college arena is fraught with tension; a recent spate of top-down reform initiatives (such as AB705, which will be discussed in Ch. 2) originating from the legislature has aggravated and alienated faculty statewide. On May 10, 2019, the Faculty Association of Community Colleges passed a vote of no confidence in Chancellor Oakley citing “an onslaught of initiatives” and lack of consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> Colleges have been told that if they do not implement Guided Pathways, the Chancellor’s Office will not release California Promise money to colleges’ low-income students.

Because of the many challenges facing community colleges, both in general (such as declining enrollment, poor completion rates, and the contentious political climate described above) and in terms of the complexities involved in Guided Pathways implementation, a study of college leaders' perception of influential factors can illuminate best practices for future reform implementation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Economic changes are transforming the landscape of community colleges. Tax bases are more stagnant than in years past, diminishing educational funding at both the state and federal levels (Amey, Jessup-Anger, & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Legislators increasingly tie monies to specific outcomes. Because political pressure is rising against community colleges for their unfavorable completion rates (Bailey et al., 2015), and legislative bodies such as the California state legislature and the Chancellor's Office are linking funding to success metrics, the urgency for systemic change is accelerating (Amey et al., 2008). This proposed research will investigate key factors that influence the statewide reform process in individual college implementation of Guided Pathways, an initiative designed to decrease long community college completion times. Nationwide around 200 community colleges are experimenting with Pathways reform (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). In 2016 the California Community College Chancellor Eloy Oakley announced a strategic vision for California,<sup>2</sup> challenging the 114 California community college campuses to begin implementation.<sup>3</sup> Large scale Guided Pathways implementation represents

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<sup>2</sup> "Vision for Success" is available at <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/visionforsuccess/Portals/0/Reports/vision-for-success.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of this study, the California Legislature created a 115<sup>th</sup> community college which is entirely online. However, I will use the number 114 to refer to the colleges which are physical campuses and have an academic senate.

major systemic change for the largest community college system in the country (Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016) and is backed by millions of dollars in funding for those colleges willing to participate.

### **Background of the Problem: Poor Completion Rates**

Fifty-seven percent of first-year students are community college students, whereas only 26% are enrolled in four-year schools (Deil-Amen, 2015).<sup>4</sup> Although over 80% of community college students express the goal of earning a bachelor's degree or higher (Bailey et. al, 2015) less than one-fourth of community college students who begin college ages 17-20 transfer or obtain a degree or certificate(Kirst, 2008).<sup>5</sup> Further, the average completion time for community college students hovers around 6 years (Bailey, 2016; Juskiewicz, 2015), an excessive time for both taxpayers and students.

Long college completion times are in part impacted by students' full-time work loads (Deil-Amen, 2015) but also students' lack of academic preparation. Jaggars and Hodara (2011) estimate student placement in remedial levels at over 80%, a statistic echoed in multiple sources. Students that get stuck in the remedial sequence are unlikely to complete a degree (Bailey, 2016; Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Not only are poor completion rates exacerbated by work obligations and remediation limbo, but also by structural flaws inherent in the historic "self-service" college structure in which students choose freely from nearly unlimited options (of courses and majors; Bailey et al., 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> Another 10.6% are enrolled at for-profit schools (Deil-Amen, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> In the context of community colleges, completion means transfer or receipt of degree/certificate.



In an analysis of specific interventions deployed to remedy completion barriers, Bailey (2016) argues that past interventions to shorten completion times were limited by cohort size or focus area, and thus difficult to scale up to benefit all students. For example, an intervention may focus on the first year experience only, or the enrollment process only. In these examples only first year students, and students enrolling during or after the revised enrollment process, would benefit, leaving other factors in long completion times unaddressed. The Puente Program, for example, a feature at many California community colleges, was created to support first generation college students by pairing an English composition class with a personal development class during the student's first two semesters. The program includes a mentor for each student, a dedicated academic counselor, and two trips to a UC campus. However, the cohort nature of the program makes it difficult to scale up because of scheduling realities and a finite number of counselors and funding; at some colleges the Puente program benefits as few as 30 students per semester (F. Leonard, personal communication, October 10, 2017).

President Obama's Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative, which was well structured and well-funded, had a better chance at affecting large-scale change because rather than mandate implementation of particular program ATD worked by shifting existing college practice to a college-wide "culture of evidence" to inform each participating college's analysis of student success and completion metrics. However, follow-up studies showed lasting changes resulting from ATD to be much more modest than expected. Only 31% of ATD interventions affected even one-fourth of target students (Bailey et al., 2015; Rutschow et al., 2011).

### **Key Educational Reform for Improving Graduation Rates: Guided Pathways**

In a sentence, Guided Pathways is a structural reform to address low completion rates. There is much debate about whether it is an intervention, a program, or what precisely it is and

what its implementation will mean for colleges. Below I explain the components of Guided Pathways and what its rollout will mean operationally, and in the next section, “Evaluating the Effect of Guided Pathways,” as well as in the next chapter, I explore the research from which Guided Pathways emerged.

Guided Pathways is a four-component structural redesign (Bailey et al., 2015) from the traditional organization of majors and course sequences in higher education institutions to something more like the model used by career and technical education programs and executive MBA and doctoral programs—metaphorically, one might say a redesign from a Cheesecake factory menu to a smaller selection of fixed price menus. The Guided Pathways model formalized by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) consists of four specific components, called pillars: structure, intake and supports, instruction, and verification of learning (Bailey et al., 2015). The AACC describes these pillars as (1) mapping pathways to student end goals, (2) helping students choose a pathway, (3) keeping them on the path, and (4) ensuring that learning takes place.

Operationally, Guided Pathways implementation this means a college would restructure (Pillar One) so that degrees that share common preparatory coursework (general educational requirements, e.g., the same Math and English classes) would be combined into pathways called “metamajors.” At intake, a student would be presented (Pillar Two) with a choice of metamajors with accompanying job and market data that correspond to the majors housed within each metamajor. A student would choose a metamajor and be handed an academic plan for classes which, if followed, would result in either an associate degree, certificate, or satisfy transfer requirements at the end of two academic years. A student would not be limited to classes outside the metamajor, but would be counseled that classes “off the list” would extend completion time.

Another critical part of Guided Pathways implementation is Pillar Three: keep students on the path. For a college, this involves supporting students in ways which will allow them to thrive and succeed. For the Community College Research Center (CCRC), the origin of research upon which the four-pillar AACC model is based, this means things as varied as tutoring, wraparound services, and corequisite support. Finally, Pillar Four, ensure that learning takes place, involves a combination of monitoring student progress via institutional data, reflecting as an institution on college practices which don't make sense (if applicable) and creating ones that do, as well as retooling faculty in pedagogical practices such as Reading Apprenticeship and other research-based pedagogical innovations to invigorate or replace outdated pedagogies.

Early reports on colleges implementing Guided Pathways show that implementation falls along a spectrum of adoption from one of the pillars to all four. Different forms of Guided Pathways have been piloted nationwide in colleges like Queensborough Community College, Miami Dade College, and even City University of New York, Arizona State University, and Florida State University (Bailey et. al, 2015). Nationwide the number of colleges experimenting with pathways reform is around 200 (Jenkins et al., 2017).

In California, 20 community colleges selected in 2016 began piloting the AACC Guided Pathways model with the goal of implementing Guided Pathways programming for all incoming students effective Fall 2018. This pilot was called the California Guided Pathways project (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2016). Then, in its 2017–2018 budget, the California Legislature approved 150 million dollars for Guided Pathways implementation (Brown, 2017); as a result, in December 2017, 114 California community colleges submitted Self-Assessments and in March 2018, Work Plans, to the Chancellor's Office in order to qualify for implementation funding released April 2017 (RP Group, 2018). Award of funds was

conditional on submission of (1) attending one IEPI Pathways event sponsored by the Chancellor's Office, (2) completion of a Self-Assessment by December 2017, and (3) completion of a Work Plan by March 30, 2018 (Bruno, 2017).

The implementation of Guided Pathways is not a garden-variety educational reform. As explained in the first part of Chapter 2, its four-pillar structure facilitates a multi-level, systemic approach to supporting students and matriculating them expediently. If it is implemented—and “used as directed,” to borrow the prescribed use of a household product as a metaphor—it will result in large-scale change at institutional, curricular/instructional, and individual (student experience) levels. For this reason, Guided Pathways has been the subject of much debate.

Institutionally, college processes (such as intake and retention) and academic divisions may be restructured, resulting in multiple changes to how numerous employees (e.g., student service staff, counselors, et al.) go about daily routines. For example, an admissions staff person might be transitioned away from inputting forms and instead be directed to phone recent applicants all day, or field hotline calls to facilitate expedient admission or graduation processing. This may not seem significant at a macro level, but to individual employees who have done their jobs the same way for years, it would be a significant change, and for some, worth resisting via formal action with the Classified Staff union.

Changes to curricular configurations and instructional practices would be significant. As colleges analyze enrollment data, intent on offering classes students need to complete their academic goals expediently, “boutique classes” might be archived while other classes are created to serve more students (e.g., replacing a high-level math class that serves an average of

12 students a semester with multiple sections of Statistics for Liberal Arts classes).<sup>6</sup> This might—not that it *will*, but it certainly *could*—result in a schedule change for an instructor who has been teaching 10 advanced students two or three times a week for 90 minutes to a 4-day, multi-hour (if the new course includes a lab corequisite, for example) class to 40 freshmen per section. Such changes would be a jarring disruption for faculty, and therefore any hint of such potential changes (via implementation of Guided Pathways) inspire much resistance.

Instructionally, state Pathways guidance advises re-evaluation of pedagogical practices based on student input about their classroom needs and wants, such as increased use of digital/online tools, more student-centered activities in place of lecture, and so forth. Faculty may interpret such overtures, if advanced by local senates and division chairs, as a direct attack on academic freedom, which they hold sacrosanct.

For students, the changes could be transformative. After choosing a career and its related metamajor at intake, the student would be given a class plan—a schedule for the next four semesters. S/he would know exactly what classes to take without waiting months for an appointment with a counselor at a college where there are 12-15 counselors for 15,000+ students.

Instructors would be familiar with the metamajors and therefore counseling and instructor academic advising would be consistent. Instead of choosing from an unlimited array of what all

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<sup>6</sup> A “boutique class” is a colloquial term for a class that may benefit the instructor as much as the students, since it is rarely required for transfer or even necessary for the local degree or certificate. Such a class is often designed by the instructor that teaches it, related to an area of the instructor’s personal interest or expertise, and more closely resembles an upper-level class in the major of the sort that students will take at the four-year school when they have completed their general education requirements.

seem like interesting choices, students would be invited to choose from a streamlined menu of options which guarantees expedient matriculation to the student's next step. Students would still be allowed, of course, to take any class they wanted, with the knowledge that "shopping outside the pathway" may delay time to completion. Once inside the classroom, students would potentially benefit from instructor use of pedagogical strategies which research has documented produces better outcomes. Students would also be offered support options such as tutoring, academic advising, wraparound services, corequisite support and more *at hours they can actually use them* (which may substantially differ from the hours which the college employees have traditionally worked).

### **Evaluating the Effect of Guided Pathways**

To argue the effectiveness of Guided Pathways on student completion, scholars are collecting data in pieces, one aspect (or more) at a time. For example, CCRC research argues the likelihood of the AACC Guided Pathways' second pillar (intake and supports) succeeding by interpreting data to suggest correlation between career advising and student completion rates (Karp, 2013). Likewise, a 2013 Carnegie Foundation report identified positive preliminary data from its Community College Pathways Program on accelerating students through developmental levels of gateway courses like English and Math,<sup>7</sup> the fourth pillar of the AACC Guided Pathways model. In 2014, Jaggars and Fletcher detailed a suburban community college's implementation of streamlined intake processes (first pillar). Web orientation redesign increased

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<sup>7</sup> According to their figures, 52% of community college Statway students and 74% of CSU Statway students successfully completed the Statway course, one of two redesigned math courses (Quantway is the second) to funnel students through gateway algebra and statistics content.

students' reports of helpfulness by 16% between Fall 2012 and Fall 2013, while catalog redesign seemed to slightly help students more correctly choose appropriate courses (40% to 63%) and programs (76% to 86%) between Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 (Jaggars & Fletcher, 2014). These data suggest that Guided Pathways second pillar (intake and supports) may in fact decrease completion times.

### **Gap in the Research**

As approximately 114 community colleges in California consider Guided Pathways as a potential reform, early implementers can guide the colleges that have yet to adopt Pathways. Successful implementation of Guided Pathways can also inform the implementations of any future educational reform efforts. Yet because Guided Pathways is relatively new, the research is nascent; though there are no refereed studies yet documenting student success as a direct result of implementation of all four pillars of the Guided Pathways model, research on the individual building blocks, as described in the last section, shows great promise. As of June 2019, only one report, produced by Jenkins and colleagues at the CCRC, is available on what success and obstacles colleges have faced during the implementation process itself. This report on initial Guided Pathways implementation describes the measures some of the first piloting colleges took to lay the groundwork for change. Researchers contacted all 20 AACC colleges and asked college leaders to describe the degree of their college's Pathways implementation,<sup>8</sup> as well as what approaches the college took and what challenges they faced in the process (Jenkins et al.,

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<sup>8</sup> These are the 20 community colleges selected in 2016 to pilot the AACC Guided Pathways model with the goal of implementing Guided Pathways programming for all incoming students effective Fall 2018. This was called the California Guided Pathways project (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2016).

2017). However, the researchers report only selective data, so only small glimpses of obstacles emerge, and none are stated explicitly. Because the report's focus is on successful implementation, the degree of challenge the first 20 colleges faced in Pathways implementation is unclear, and the role of outside influences is not addressed.

### **Statement of Project**

In this study I investigated key factors that key college constituents—college presidents and academic senate presidents, the two most significant college leaders—report as influential in influencing Guided Pathways implementation, as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and challenges anticipated in the remaining phases of Pathways implementation. Uncovering such data benefits the Chancellor's Office and college administrators and faculty leaders throughout the state and the country as they investigate ways to successfully influence and/or implement future educational innovation. I collected data from the same population I report out to (college presidents and academic senate presidents) to strengthen the data's validity.

### **Research Questions**

- (1) How do key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence Guided Pathways implementation?
  - (a) What are the key factors described by college presidents as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?
  - (b) What are the key factors described by academic senate presidents as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?
- (2) What are the primary challenges and barriers in Guided Pathways implementation
  - (a) according to college presidents?



(b) according to academic senate presidents?

(3) In what ways are campuses overcoming challenges to Guided Pathways implementation

(a) according to college presidents?

(b) according to academic senate presidents?

### **Research Design**

I used a qualitative approach to examine how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key influential factors, challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and challenges anticipated in the remaining phases of Pathways implementation, that characterized their college's Guided Pathways implementation. Although quantitative research could generate implementation statistics, it would not allow stories to emerge which illuminate best practice in influencing future innovation implementations.

In the design of my study, I chose open-ended interviews to probe perceptions of key factors that influence the statewide reform process of Guided Pathways implementation; a review of the literature informed my interview protocol. In addition, I compared interview data with key college/district documents to triangulate data and validate my conclusions.

With the aim of understanding key factors that influence the statewide reform process of Guided Pathways implementation, I chose to study three California community college campuses in a multi-college district. An individual community college has three constituent groups: administrators (college president, vice presidents, and deans), college faculty (rank and file faculty, and academic senate leaders, e.g. senate president), and classified staff. My study focused on respondents from the first two constituencies, since administrators and faculty have direct purview over enacting curricular reforms such as Guided Pathways.

## **Site and Population**

My sample population consisted of college leaders—college presidents and academic senate presidents—at three community colleges in California, since California enrolls more community college students than any other state (Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016).

I chose to study the largest multi-college district in California: the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), which comprises nine colleges. Not only did it contain many possible respondents, increasing the chance of participation in my study, but its very size suggested the possibility that influences and obstacles in Guided Pathways implementation would surely comprise a wide spectrum for study.

## **Participation Criteria**

To fit my criteria, respondents had to be college presidents or academic senate presidents employed full-time at a California community college in the LACCD who have held their position for at least one academic year.

## **Site Access**

In my professional role as Academic Senate president at a college in the LACCD, I sit on committees with other academic senate presidents in the LACCD and several of the college presidents and used my network to reach out to other college presidents. I was able to conduct all interviews in person, and code my data within days of collecting it.

## **Methods**

**Interviews.** I interviewed the college president and the academic senate president at each of my three sites (community college campuses in the LACCD) for a total of six respondents.

**Document Analysis.** In addition, I conducted a document analysis of college, district and state materials related to the implementation of Guided Pathways. I examined documents from

each of my three sites (college campuses in the LACCD) such as meeting minutes and/or resolutions of college committees (e.g., academic senate), implementation resources on college website, newsletters, and so forth, as well as documents and web resources produced by the Chancellor's Office to motivate and support Pathways implementation. In these documents I looked for references to Guided Pathways implementation (timelines, events, senate resolutions, etc.). I used this data to validate my interview data of college leader perceptions of the key factors influential to Guided Pathways adoption/implementation at their colleges.

### **Significance of my Research**

I will share my findings with faculty leaders at the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and the AACC. Findings on the perceptions of community college leaders (presidents and academic senate presidents) on factors influencing the implementation of Guided Pathways, as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and anticipated challenges, will be useful to these parties in the future. Multi-college districts will also find my study relevant.

### **Summary**

Student completion is the greatest of many challenges facing community colleges today. Guided Pathways is a recent intervention recently launched statewide in California to remedy the problem of excessive completion times and low completion rates. This study investigated how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on California community college campuses describe the key factors that influenced implementation of the educational reform Guided Pathways as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and challenges anticipated in the remaining phases of Pathways implementation. The

findings inform present and future innovation implementation in California community colleges and beyond.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature on student completion in community colleges, previous interventions to address poor completion, and factors that limited those interventions' success. Then, as context for system-wide reform in the California community colleges, I give an overview of shared governance and the academic senate in California community colleges, the role of the Chancellor's Office, and the roles of college presidents and academic senate presidents. Finally, I review the literature on educational innovation.

In Chapter Three I explain my qualitative study's research design, and in Chapter Four, I discuss my findings. In Chapter Five, I connect my findings to existing literature and outline recommendations I draw from my findings.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Long completion times are a problem for students in California community colleges, whose unique challenges and lack of social and navigational capital prolong their college completion times. Research shows that the longer the time to completion, the smaller the likelihood of completion (Bailey et al., 2010).

Many interventions have been tried to decrease student completion times but have benefitted students on a small scale only. Guided Pathways, a formula for structural reform of the community college, shows promise to decrease college completion times for California community college students in ways that previous interventions have proved unsuccessful. Early data on effect of Guided Pathways shows promising possibilities for increasing degree/goal completion.

In this literature review I first examine the unique challenges and low completion rates of community college students, previous interventions to decrease completion times, and the factors that have limited the success of those interventions. Next, I explore the promise of Guided Pathways and the literature on its early implementation in community colleges. I give an overview of shared governance and the academic senate in California community colleges, the role of the Chancellor's Office, the roles of college presidents and academic senate presidents. Finally, I conclude with the literature on educational innovation.

### **Unique Challenges of Community College Students**

Community college students comprise the majority of college students in the United States. Of first-year students, only 26% are enrolled in four-year schools while 57% percent are

community college students (Deil-Amen, 2015).<sup>9</sup> The California Community College system is the nation's largest college system, serving approximately 2.4 million students from varying ethnic, racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2018a).

Because of community colleges' open admissions policies, community college students face unique challenges as a result of their particular identities. For example, community college students are more likely to be from historically underserved populations and neighborhoods (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014), more likely to be academically unprepared for college work (Alfonso, Bailey, & Scott, 2005; Burns, 2010; Twombly & Townsend, 2008) and therefore in need of remediation, more likely to work part-time to full time (Burns, 2010; Deil-Amen, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Ma & Baum, 2016), more likely to have family obligations (Burns, 2010), and more likely to lack social and navigational capital (Martin et al., 2014) and financial literacy (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Students of color are disproportionately represented at community colleges; for example, 56% of Hispanic students and 44% of black students were enrolled in community colleges in 2014, although they comprised only 29% of the overall population in public four-year colleges (Ma & Baum, 2016). Non-white students are more likely to have been underserved in their high schools, receiving less counseling and less quality instruction (Porter & Polikoff, 2012) and more likely to be the first generation in their families to attend college (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

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<sup>9</sup> Another 15% are enrolled at for-profit schools (Deil-Amen, 2015).

## Poor Completion Rates and Related Factors

Although over 80% of community college students express the goal of earning a bachelor's degree or higher, less than one-fourth of community college students who begin college ages 17-20 transfer or obtain a degree or certificate (Bailey et. al, 2015). The College Board estimates that 46% of current community college students "will not graduate from any institution within 6 years" and 20% will still be enrolled" (Ma & Baum, 2016). The average completion time for community college students that do finish is 6 years (Bailey, 2016; Juskiewicz, 2015). According to IPEDS data, only 19.5% of community college students starting in 2010 finished an associate degree or certificate in 150% of the normal time to completion (Michas, Newberry, Uehling, & Wolford, 2016).

Scholars have identified many possible factors that increase time to completion. One of the most frequently cited factors is the length of remediation sequences.<sup>10</sup> An estimated 80% of community college students place into remedial classes (Jaggars & Hodara, 2011). Remediation delays completion because it can involve several required classes prior to transfer-level credit in the subject, for example, English composition (Hern & Snell, 2014; Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, & Xu, 2015). A math remediation sequence can comprise as many as four or five courses prior to the required, credit-bearing class (Ngo & Kosiewicz, 2017). Students placed in the remedial sequence are less likely to complete a degree (Bailey, 2016; Bailey et al., 2010). According to The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges only 19% of students

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<sup>10</sup> A typical Math or English remediation sequence involves two or three classes, depending on the college, prior to the transfer level class. Research shows that for every class a student must take prior to the transfer level, the chance they will graduate decreases (Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey & Jenkins, 2006).

from the remedial levels of English and 7% of students placed lowest in remedial Math progress to a transfer-level English or Math course within 3 years (Hayward, Willett, & Harrington, 2014). This number is especially troubling given the 80% rate of placement into college remediation cited above in the Jaggars and Hodara (2011) study.

Many states are taking action to compress remediation sequences. Both Connecticut and Florida passed legislation mandating acceleration (Jaggars et al., 2015). Texas, Virginia, New York (CUNY), and Baltimore County all undertook large experiments at scale to compress their remediation sequences, producing better outcomes (Booth et al., 2014; Edgecombe, 2016; Jaggars et al., 2015). In California, Assembly Bill 705 was recently passed in 2017 requiring colleges to place students directly into transfer level English and Math in order to increase their chances at graduation. As a result, community colleges in California are currently working to overhaul their Math and English sequences. (See Academic Interventions.)

The completion agenda is further undermined by the nature of community college funding, has historically been allocated by per capita enrollment (head count of full-time equivalent students; Goldrick-Rab, 2010) and therefore unpredictable. Thus the rise and fall of funding over the years has precluded a more stable revenue stream to support vital interventions. Furthermore, state and federal funding for community colleges is more modest than K12 and 4-year college spending. Spending at four-year public institutions is at least double, often more, than spending on community colleges; in Maryland, lawmakers decided community college students should be funded at 25% of the level of four-year college students (Kahlenberg, 2015). As an increasing number of states turn in full or in part to performance-based funding models, the completion problem is likely to be further compounded. The California budget ratified by the California legislature in May 2018 shifted the funding for California community colleges from



100% enrollment-based to 70%, then 65%, and then 60% over the next three fiscal years;<sup>11</sup> the remaining funding amounts are defined by (1) a college's number of low SES students, and (2) completion of degrees and certificates (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2018b).

Scholars have argued that community college's inherent characteristics sabotage the completion agenda by means of several "institutional obstacles" (Dougherty, 2001). Dougherty (2001) argues one reason community colleges enjoy lawmaker support is that commuter schools are cheaper than four-year colleges, yet this very aspect of the community college keeps students more attached to local family and employment connections than to academic pursuits, negatively affecting completion. Likewise, the career and technical education programs in community colleges so vaunted by state politicians courting big business have been shown to actually cool off transfer aspirations since they provide a more immediate payoff.<sup>12</sup> Research shows that community college students receive less financial aid than 4 year students.<sup>13</sup> Brint and Karabel (1989) among others found that many community college faculty take a more deficit thinking approach to their students (i.e., focusing on students' academic unpreparedness) than enthusiasm

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<sup>11</sup> Because of a shortfall in tax revenue collected April 2019, this funding formula is expected to change yet again, but the sentence above denotes the formula as legislated May 2018.

<sup>12</sup> The necessity of transferring from the community college to the four-year college or university is another level of challenge that takes significant energy to effect. This involves not only applying and being accepted, applying for and securing sufficient financial aid for food and housing accommodations, but integrating into a whole new institutional culture and trying to socially integrate in with university students who formed their friendships as freshman. Often there is a grade shock as well that some transferred community college students never recover from (Dougherty, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> And not only when they are still attending the two-year school, but even after transferring to a four-year institution (Dougherty, 2001).

to encourage transfer (Cohen & Brawer, 1987; Zwerling, 1976). Dougherty (2001) finds it so unlikely that community colleges can overcome institutional challenges to complete students at higher rates that the only reform solution he finds viable is to transform community colleges into branches of four-year universities, though he recognizes the inherent challenges and therefore acknowledges the idea's unlikely fruition.

### **Previous Interventions to Increase Community College Completion**

In response to the many factors complicating student completion explored in this chapter, myriad interventions have been developed to increase college completion for community college students. I categorize these as wraparound interventions, academic interventions, affective interventions, and institutional interventions.

Wraparound interventions are non-academic interventions that service the student as a whole person, meeting human needs that can interfere with academic concentration. This includes services to increase students' navigational capital such as early academic advising (Hatch & Garcia, 2017), "bridge" programs such as First Year Experience or Digital Bridge Academy (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Hagedorn et al. 2016; Jenkins, Zeidenberg, Wachen, & Hayward, 2009), college success classes (Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Hagedorn et al. 2016) and student success courses (Kimbark, Peters, & Richardson, 2017; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007).<sup>14</sup> Many variations of financial aid interventions have been tried to support students, such as automatic FAFSA completion tied to tax document completion (Bettinger, Long, & Oreopoulos, 2009), and financial aid workshops and counseling (Hatch & Garcia,

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<sup>14</sup> College Success courses and Student Success courses are essentially the same thing but differentiated in the literature. The studies cited above show these classes to improve outcomes when other factors are controlled.

2017). An increasing number of colleges are even creating food pantries (Maroto, Snelling, & Linck, 2015).

Academic support is the most familiar and longstanding intervention to accelerate student success; tutoring, library workshops, and in-class supplemental instruction enjoy wide support and funding. Another historic strategy to support student success in remedial classes has been to lengthen classes, allowing more time for mastery; empirical research found this approach to be more successful for middle school and high school students than for community college students (Ngo & Kosiewicz, 2017). Recent technologies have provided more sophisticated configurations of academic support, such as online tutoring and supplemental course management systems that house class notes and resources (Karp, 2011), though these interventions are not unique to community colleges.

Preceding AB705,<sup>15</sup> a state law passed in 2017, which allows incoming students to enroll directly into transfer level English, acceleration (usually meaning accelerated remedial English, or accelerated remedial math) was becoming popular in many community colleges (Hayward et al., 2014; Hern & Snell, 2014; Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2014) as a solution to long remediation sequences. In the accelerated model, a supplemental course is often attached to the content class as a corequisite. This corequisite might be an online module, or a lab session meeting after the content portion of an on-campus class or at another time (Hayward et al., 2014; Michas et al., 2016). Models for the accelerated classes vary, but one example is the English 100 class created by the California Acceleration Project (Avni & Finn, 2017). English 100 and many accelerated models like it combine a content composition course with a corequisite session and

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<sup>15</sup> <https://assessment.cccco.edu/ab-705-implementation>

supplemental instructional tutors in the classroom for both sessions (Jaggars et al., 2014; Michas et al., 2016). The California Acceleration Project is an organization devoted to supporting the acceleration of remediation in California community colleges (California Acceleration Project, 2018). In addition to academic interventions like these to decrease completion times, an increasing number of educators are discovering how critical a role the affective domain plays in student achievement.

Affective interventions in higher education originate in discoveries in the fields of psychology and neuroscience. Psychological research has foregrounded the importance of self-efficacy to learning and motivation (Ngo & Kosiewicz, 2017). Dweck (1986, 2014) showed that students' perceptions of their capabilities affect their academic performance, as with stereotype threat. She found that once students were taught how brains adapt and learn from challenges, their academic performance increased (Dweck, 2014; Yaeger & Dweck, 2012). Community colleges have used growth mindset interventions to improve student performance (Auten, 2013; Silva & White, 2013). Multiple studies demonstrate the affective value of mentoring (Crisp, 2010) and learner-centered pedagogies such as project-based learning in increasing completion rates by fostering student engagement (Kogan & Laursen, 2014). Many types of learning communities have been formed to promote a sense of connection and engagement (Burns 2010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Whereas wraparound, academic, and affective interventions usually focus on one aspect of student experience, some interventions have attempted to affect change at a more macro level by combining one or more wraparound, affective, or academic interventions and/or changes to the institutional structure. Typically these institutional interventions are initiated by a state or local system (e.g., Baltimore County community colleges, State of Illinois) or by a non-profit

organization (e.g., Gates Foundation). The institution must formally apply to participate and is resourced by millions of dollars of state funding or grant money.

The last two decades produced several other prominent and well-funded institutional interventions: Gateways to Completion begun in 2006, Pathways to Results, begun in 2009, Completion by Design, begun in 2011, and Complete College America, begun in 2009. Table 1 shows the sponsorship, length, and focus of each. These initiatives involved millions of dollars of grant money, but their effects were limited to only one aspect of a student's experience, limiting the scope of their transformative impact for the community college system (Bailey, 2016; Bailey et al. 2015).

The most significant and well-known institutional intervention was the Obama-era ATD. The ATD initiative began in 2004, and over time grew from colleges in six to 16 states. The ATD seemed capable of producing large-scale change because it emphasized shifting existing college practice to a college-wide "culture of evidence" rather than mandating particular program components (Bailey et al., 2015; Burns, 2010). Each college established a Data Team to collect and review student success data, supporting the effort with "Data Coaches" that visited the group several times a semester. The Core Team would reflect on the Data Team's findings and brainstorm and create corresponding college interventions. Colleges that showed improved student outcomes by ATD's established metrics would become "ATD Leader Colleges" and be encouraged to share their story with other ATD colleges.

However, follow-up studies showed lasting changes resulting from ATD were more modest than anticipated (Bailey et al., 2015; Bragg & Durham, 2012). Only 31% of ATD interventions affected even one-fourth of target students (Bailey et al., 2015; Rutschow et al.,

2011). More disappointing was the lack of progress on equity gaps in ATD colleges (Rutschow et al. 2011).

Numerous other interventions implemented to increase student completion evade these categories, or span several. For example, many scholars are urging a “K16” conversation between high schools and two-year and four-year colleges to clarify and align articulation requirements (Dougherty, 2001) since studies have found that high school students arrive at the community college unclear about expected course requirements. Informed students might forgo, for example, a “year off” from math if they understand the importance of math completion as a gateway to completion. Various interventions relating to timing of registration have been deployed to buttress persistence and completion (Goldrick-Rabb, 2010). Professional development initiatives have been organized to foster faculty inquiry and self-awareness of best pedagogical practices and enhance cultural competence (Hinson & LaPrairie, 2005) in order to improve student experience in classrooms and thereby support learning.

In sum, a staggering amount of thoughtful and intricate interventions as described above have been used across the country to empower community college students and ensure their timely completion. Promising research conducted by researchers at the CCRC at Columbia University suggests that the application of a structural redesign called Guided Pathways could be a solution that effects permanent change at scale.

Table 1. *Community College Institutional Initiatives from the 2000s*

Intervention	Component	Sponsor	Date	Reference
Completion by Design	Identify and mitigate exit points or “loss momentum.”	Gates & Lumina Foundations	2011–2016	Bailey et al., 2015; Karp, 2013
Gateways to Completion	Use evidence to increase success in courses with a historic high failure rate.	Gardner Institute	2006	Gardner Institute, 2018; Prystowsky, Koch, and Baldwin, 2015
Pathways to Results	Create/streamline academic pathways from K12 to higher education.	University of Illinois, Office of Community College Research Leadership	2009–present	Bragg & Durham, 2012; Office of Community College Research Leadership, 2018
Complete College America	Increase the graduation number and rate of community college students by providing co-requisite support courses and encouraging 15 credit hours per semester.	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Kresge Foundation, among others	2009–present	<a href="http://completecollegeamerica.org">http://completecollegeamerica.org</a>
ATD: Community Colleges Count	To increase the community college student success rate, especially among historically disadvantaged populations, ATD helped colleges foster a culture of evidence and inquiry to identify systemic barriers.	The Heinz Endowments, Houston Endowment Inc., Kresge Foundation, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others	2004- present	Rutschow et al., 2011

## **Guided Pathways: The Non-Intervention Intervention**

Completion is a concern for four-year colleges and universities as well. Some of the completion literature mentions the sheer volume of choice available to American college students: two-year public, four-year public or private, or for-profit. Community college students are less likely than their four-year peers to have the requisite social and navigational capital to interpret these choices. Thus, the structural complexity of higher education hinders community college students disproportionately more (Bailey, 2016; Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003; Scott-Clayton, 2011). Studies show that without sufficient knowledge or advising on how to navigate the system (Karp, 2013; Scott-Clayton, 2011) students can be paralyzed and stop out or drop out (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Scott-Clayton, 2011). The higher number of possible exit points in a college, the higher the attrition (Bailey et al., 2010).

It is these arguments that have been marshaled by researchers at the CCRC and others (Ngo & Kosiewicz, 2017), to propose the use of Guided Pathways as a structural intervention to address the completion problem. In a book devoted to the subject, CCRC researchers Thomas Bailey, Shanna Jaggars, and Davis Jenkins (2015) argue that only by changing—specifically, streamlining and defining—the structure of community colleges can large scale, sustainable change affect completion rates. They posit that Guided Pathways is not simply an “intervention” but a structural or institutional reconfiguration of an anachronistic higher education system that evolved from very different circumstances (privilege) for very different students.

Originating in the career pathway/cohort model, and also used by some four-year colleges (Jenkins & Cho, 2013) the most recent and most nationally used AACC Guided Pathways model has four specific components, or pillars: structure, intake and supports, instruction, and verification of learning (Bailey et al., 2015). These pillars transform institutions



by mapping pathways to student end goals, helping students choose a pathway, keeping them on it, and ensuring that learning takes place.

While different forms of Guided Pathways have been piloted nationwide (Bailey et al., 2015) by an estimated 200-some colleges (Jenkins et al., 2017),<sup>16</sup> and increasingly more are community colleges located in California,<sup>17</sup> at this time there are no refereed studies documenting student success as a direct result of implementation of all four pillars of the AACC Guided Pathways model. Early reports on colleges implementing Guided Pathways show that implementation varies from one to four of the pillars.

However, there is research on the effectiveness of the individual pillars of Guided Pathways. To argue the effectiveness of Guided Pathways on student completion, pro-Pathways scholars are collecting data in pieces, one pillar (or more) at a time, since to date very few colleges have actually implemented all four pillars of Guided Pathways. Much of the early research on the effect of one or more pillars of Guided Pathways. is linked in some way to the researchers at the CCRC headed by Thomas Bailey. Karp (2013), a CCRC researcher, argues the likelihood of Guided Pathways' second pillar (intake and supports) succeeding based on her interpretation of data showing a correlation between career advising and student completion rates. In 2014 Jaggars and Fletcher (both affiliated with CCRC) detailed a suburban community college's implementation of streamlined intake processes (first pillar). They found that web orientation redesign increased students' reports of helpfulness by 16% between Fall 2012 and

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<sup>16</sup> For example, Queensborough Community College, Miami Dade College, City University of New York, Arizona State University, and Florida State University (Bailey et. al, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Twenty California community colleges began an AACC pilot called the California Guided Pathways Project in 2016 with the goal of implementing Guided Pathways programming for all incoming students effective fall 2018.

Fall 2013, while catalog redesign seemed to slightly help students more correctly choose appropriate courses (40% to 63%) and programs (76% to 86%) between Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 (Jaggars & Fletcher, 2014). These data suggest that Guided Pathways' second pillar (intake and supports) may in fact decrease completion times. In addition, a 2013 Carnegie Foundation report identified positive preliminary data from its Community College Pathways Program on accelerating students through developmental levels of gateway courses like English and Math,<sup>18</sup> corresponding to the Guided Pathways model's third pillar which purposes to "keep students on the path."

Because widespread implementation of Guided Pathways is so new, little research is available on aspects of implementation; for example, only one report is available on what success and obstacles colleges have faced during the implementation process itself. This report on initial Guided Pathways implementation describes the measures pathways colleges took to lay the groundwork for change. Researchers contacted the first 20 California community colleges to pilot Guided Pathways as a part of the California Guided Pathways Project and asked college leaders to describe the degree of their college's pathways implementation, as well as what approaches the college took and what challenges they faced in the process. However, the researchers report only selective data, so only small glimpses of obstacles emerge and none are stated explicitly. Because the focus is on successful implementation, it is very difficult to discern the degree of challenge the first 20 colleges faced in pathways implementation, or the role of

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<sup>18</sup> According to their figures, 52% of community college Statway students and 74% of CSU Statway students successfully completed the Statway course, one of two redesigned math courses (Quantway is the second) to funnel students through gateway algebra and statistics content.

outside influences (Jenkins et al., 2017).

In addition to the Jenkins, Lahr, and Fink (2017) report, Ashby (2018) researched the use of strategic governance by college presidents in implementing Guided Pathways in the California Guided Pathways Project in 2016. In a qualitative study of 15 college leaders at three California community colleges, she found that inclusiveness, intentional alignment, interdependent leadership, and internal/external synergy were the elements of strategic governance that were key to leaders during Guided Pathways implementation. But Ashby's study focused on leadership, not on pathways implementation itself.

### **Convergence between Collegiate Reform Scholarship and Guided Pathways Elements**

As explored earlier in this chapter, over the last 60 years many reforms have targeted the problem of community college completion. Interestingly, some of the reform elements suggested by community college scholars as early as the 1980's and 1990's converge with the elements of Guided Pathways. Table 2 shows them mapped to the four pillars of the 2016 AACCC Guided Pathways model adopted by California Community Colleges.

Table 2. *Convergence Between Collegiate Reform Scholarship and Guided Pathways Pillars*

Suggested community college reform from the literature	AACC Guided Pathways model
[No suggested reforms correspond]	Pillar 1: Create/map a path
<p>“Warm up” students’ baccalaureate aspirations with career exploration, in high school if possible (Donovan, 1987; Illinois Community College Board, 1989; Palmer, 1986; Rendon &amp; Taylor, 1990).            Provide dual enrollment in high school to expose students to collegiate expectations (Donovan, 1987)            Early transfer advising (Cohen &amp; Brawer, 1987; Donovan, 1987; Richardson &amp; Bender, 1987)            Establish transfer centers with transfer officers (i.e., center directors; Bender, 1994; Cohen, 1988; Donovan, 1987; Howard, 1990)            Reinvigorate faculty role in advising (Donovan, 1987)            Reinvigorate liberal arts programs. (Donovan, 1987; Dougherty, 2001; Richardson &amp; Bender, 1987)            Offer remediation boot camps and summer bridge intensives (Dougherty, 2001).</p>	Pillar 2: Get students on the path
<p>Provide intensive counseling (Nora &amp; Rendon, 1990; Williams, 1990)            Establish support programs (Dougherty, 2001)            Foster student-led group study (Dougherty, 2001)            Establish cohort programs (Dougherty, 2001)</p>	Pillar 3: Keep students on the path
<p>Provide monitoring (Donovan, 1987; Richardson &amp; Bender, 1987)            Teach students post-transfer attrition strategies (Dougherty, 2001)</p>	Pillar 4: Ensure learning is taking place

## **Overview of College Presidents, Academic Senates, and Academic Senate Presidents in the Community College**

College presidents and academic senate presidents are key actors in community college governance, and key to my research design. College presidents are the chief executive officers of the organization; academic senate presidents represent the interests of the faculty on curriculum matters and share governance in many aspects of college decision-making. Because faculty have purview in academic matters, faculty must embrace Guided Pathways in order for implementation to succeed. Faculty senates can influence change by advancing or delaying it (Birnbaum, 1989; Jones, 2012). As a foundation for my choice of research population, in the following sections I give an overview of college presidents, shared governance, academic senate and academic senate presidents.

### **Role of Community College Presidents**

College presidents play a significant role in leading change (Ashby, 2018; McNair, 2015). The leadership of community college presidents influences a college's atmosphere, culture, and governance (Dossett, 2005). Community college presidents must be agile in order to manage "financial matters, enrollment management, politics and public safety, personnel management and staffing, competition from other institutions, and educational matters" (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017, p. 12). College presidents must manage personnel issues, college finances, state regulations and reforms, enrollment concerns; they must facilitate the collection, analysis, and reporting to the state student success and college performance data; they must liaise with the trustees, community members, business partners and foundation donors; in a multi-college district, they also liaise with their fellow college presidents, the district chancellor, and periodically their regional counterparts. In the California community college shared governance

model, the college president must consult the academic senate president and the faculty guild on matters that fall within the purview of academic matters and matters that concern the collective bargaining agreement, respectively. At many colleges the college president visits the Academic Senate meetings and /or college council meetings, council of chairs, and various other college and district committees.

Achieving the Dream and The Aspen Institute (2013) identified five key qualities needed in college presidents: deep commitment to student access and success, willingness to take risks to advance student success, ability to create lasting change, have a strong vision for the college that is reflected in external partnerships, and raise and allocate resources in ways aligned to student success. The five American Association of Community Colleges (2013) core leadership competencies are similar;<sup>19</sup> they include organizational strategy, resource management and fundraising, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy. Gerald (2014) studied how a college's size and location impacted which of these competencies were most significant for a college president; she found that for multi-campus colleges, especially those within multi-college districts, advocacy was the particularly critical skill because mid-level managers had to effectively compete with sister campuses for resources. This is relevant to presidents of multi-college districts.

### **Overview of Academic Senates and Shared Governance**

Shared governance is an organizational feature of many institutions of higher education, particularly in California, in which administrators and faculty (in the form of faculty senates)

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<sup>19</sup> In its first iteration there were six core competencies: the five described above as well as professionalism (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005).

together with other vital stakeholders (such as the faculty union, students, classified staff, trustees, community members, and so forth) share decision making. Title V §53200(b) of the California Educational Code specifies faculty purview for the Academic Senate over “academic and professional matters” such as curriculum, degree requirements, grading, etcetera.<sup>20</sup> California State Assembly Bill 1725 passed in 1988 underscored the provisions of Title V (Livingston, 1998).

Faculty governance rights evolved over the decades of the twentieth century. The American Association of University Professors, founded in 1915, published a statement in 1940 (revised in 1966) asserting the rights of faculty to participate in college governance. The term “participatory governance” was coined by Parsons (1947) shortly thereafter to refer to contributions faculty could make to governance. Over time faculty advocated for a model of shared governance with senior administrators. With advocacy from the AACC and other groups, in California, AB 1725 (1988) enshrined the right of academic senates to consultation on college governance matters (Morse, 2017).

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<sup>20</sup> Referred to colloquially as “the 10+1,” academic and professional matters under faculty purview by law include (1) Curriculum including establishing prerequisites and placing courses within disciplines, (2) Degree and certificate requirements, (3) Grading policies, (4) Educational program development, (5) Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success (6) District and college governance structures, as related to faculty roles, (7) Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes, including self-study and annual reports, (8) Policies for faculty professional development activities, (9) Processes for program review, (10) Processes for institutional planning and budget development, and (+1) Other academic and professional matters as are mutually agreed upon between the governing board and the academic senate.

While the faculty union focuses on tenure rights and workload issues, workplace conditions, and compensation, the academic senate works to actively represent faculty interests in “academic and professional matters” per California Education Code Title V (§53200 bcd). This includes the work of internal deliberation (in committees, work groups, senate meetings at state, district, and campus levels) as well as maintenance of connections among critical parties such as state and campus faculty senates, campus senate and college administrators, and faculty leaders and teaching faculty.

### **Academic Senate Presidents in the Community College**

Because of California’s unique shared governance model described above, the academic senate president is an important actor in a college and central to driving or resisting change. At the campus level, the academic senate president represents faculty concerns to college administration; controls faculty appointments to hiring and tenure committees as well as academic senate committees at the campus, district, and state levels; participates in critical campus, district, and state committees such as curriculum and institutional effectiveness committees; assists in faculty personality conflicts that arise within disciplines, committees or between faculty and administrators; provides leadership in advancing curricular or institutional priorities; leads the bi-monthly senate meetings; supervises senate officers in keeping record of senate policies, agendas and minutes, managing senate funds, processing faculty requests for conference attendance and tuition reimbursement, observes all laws governing public meetings (e.g., Brown Act) as well as campus constitution and by-laws; liaises with the faculty union and other campus governance bodies such as the classified staff union and student union; participates in various local ceremonial roles such as speaking at graduation, and in-service days, and often also plans or facilitates the planning of professional development activities (Bruno, 2017).



Furthermore, the academic senate president at a California community college liaises between the campus faculty senate and the state academic senate, communicating information both ways (Bruno, 2017). In a multi-college district, the senate president also liaises at the district level, participating in district Senate committees and consulting with the district chancellor and the Board of Trustees. The larger the district, the larger the responsibility.

The influence of individual academic senate presidents varies, but the potential for influence is great. Miller and Pope (2003) argue that a senate's leadership determines its strength. Adams (2011) analyzed the personal characteristics of faculty senate presidents and found that the most effective faculty senate presidents exhibited transformational leadership traits. Effective faculty senate presidents use a combination of what Birnbaum (2004) calls hard and soft governance—a mixture of authority and social capital. In his/her choice of faculty to serve in key committee roles, especially hiring committees, in the leadership he/she shows in mobilizing faculty to meet challenges, and in multi-college districts, the academic senate president's contributions at the district level can considerably affect campus and district change.

### **Literature on Academic Senates and Shared Governance in the Community College**

The scholarship on faculty senates in community colleges is scant, and much of what exists was written before 2000. The seminal pieces on the subject (Armstrong, 1999; Birnbaum, 1989, Trow, 1975) reflect a view of community college and its faculty senate as it existed 20-30 years ago, before many of the changes that have transformed community colleges in the early 21st century. Although Birnbaum's (1989) work recognized certain vital functions served by faculty senates, for him, neither efficiency, effectiveness, nor influence were among them. More recently, Minor (2003) identified specific functions of the faculty senate along a continuum of

effectiveness, characterizing senates as either functional, influential, ceremonial, and subverted; however, Minor's study did not include community college senates.

Minor (2003) and Miller and Pope (2003) are two of a small, dedicated number of researchers who have used quantitative methods to research community college shared governance and faculty senates, but overall little empirical work exists and the area needs additional study (Minor, 2003; Thompson, 2014). Kater (2017) notes that more research on the efficacy of community college shared governance is needed, as well as if/how community college faculty are guided into roles in shared governance.

Pope and Miller (2005) surveyed 83 community college leaders of faculty governance units and produced descriptive statistics on common gender, rank, discipline, and reaction to governance-related stressors. Their findings indicate that faculty senate leaders should have sound judgment and be capable of providing direction.

Minor (2003) recommends study on the effect of senate leadership on campus governance. Though Jones (2012) cites a lack of study of the impact of faculty governance on the performance of the institution, no research has examined the effectiveness of faculty senate presidents in impacting change. Little research on community college shared governance has been done by community college educators themselves, leaving the picture incomplete of community college shared governance until very recently (Adams, 2011).

### **Implementation of Educational Reform**

In a review of the literature on organizational innovation implementation, Klein and Knight (2005) found that a number of factors impede change. Innovations themselves are sometimes "imperfectly designed" (p. 244) and not fully ready when deployed, especially in terms of technological innovations or technology related to an innovation. An educational

innovation may succeed or fail not relative to its own qualities, but relative to organizational factors like bad prior experiences, organizational dynamics, bureaucratic challenges, and so on.

Even when new, more transformative and authentic leaders arrive, a history of broken promises, poor communication, a lack of respect for employees, and low commitment to or support for past initiatives (beyond a few speeches or memos) leave some faculty with little to no desire to disrupt their professional lives and classrooms for another reinvention of procedures. (McBride, 2010, n.p.)

Further, innovations often involve learning new skills, complicating implementation. Often innovations are decided on at the management level and thus resented or resisted by subordinates. Organizational norms often perpetuate the status quo (Klein & Knight, 2005). And finally, because implementation involves time and money, it often negatively impacts performance outcomes, at least in the short term, which is referred to as an implementation dip.

Much literature acknowledges the phenomenon of the implementation dip, wherein performance temporarily falls right after initial implementation (Ansah & Johnson, 2003); other literature addresses the qualities needed in leaders who can lead out through the implementation dip (Fullan 1991, 1996; Hall & Hord, 2014; Painter & Clark, 2014). “Leaders must be prepared to hold firm when faculty suggestions to return to previous practices are sparked by the struggle to master new skills and strategies” and steer through the implementation dip (Painter & Clark, 2014, p. 194).

Faculty are key to innovation implementation, because in higher education, instructors are king in the classroom. Once tenure is earned, instructional innovation is typically not incentivized or rewarded. In a study of perceived barriers of online education, Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy (2012) found a relationship between age and perception of institutional barriers to

change: the older and more highly-ranked the faculty member, the greater his/her perception of cost/benefit barriers to making a change. More than a few faculty members are “satisfied with the skills they had when hired or only interested in maintaining current status” (McBride, 2010, n.p.)

The quality and climate of innovation implementation, as well as managerial support and patience, financial support, and an organizational learning orientation are factors found to be key to the effectiveness of innovation implementation (Klein & Knight, 2005).

In a longitudinal project with the American Council on Education, Eckel and Kezar (2003) investigated 23 diverse institutions undergoing institutional change.<sup>21</sup> They were motivated by a dearth of empirical data on change in higher education, finding in their review of the organizational change literature that there are many anecdotal, experience-based reflections by formal college leaders but little scholarship with specific strategies for meaningful long-term change. Eckel and Kezar found that transforming institutions rely on five strategies: senior administrative support, collaborative leadership, flexible vision, staff development, and visible action.

### **Context for Educational Reform in California Community Colleges**

California’s unique tripartite educational system established under its historic Master Plan (Douglass, 2000) relegates the governance of the community college system to local control, with guidance from the Board of Governors. In this local control model, community college governance is assigned by the state legislature to a locally-elected board of trustees, an

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<sup>21</sup> These institutions included six universities, four community colleges, and five liberal arts colleges, six doctoral universities and five research universities (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, p. 19).

arrangement which has become a fiercely guarded value of community college stakeholders (Darin, 2013). Two bodies were established to provide guidance and support to the state's now 114 community colleges: the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office.

The mission of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office is "to empower the community colleges through leadership, advocacy and support" (California Community Colleges, 2019, n.p.). The Board of Governors, a 17-member board of governor-appointed members, chooses the chancellor, who serves as the chief executive officer of the California community colleges along with various vice-chancellors.<sup>22</sup> However, the California Education Code is clear that neither body is invested with legal authority to enforce mandates or control funding decisions (Darin, 2013). Therefore, the Chancellor's Office's role has historically been one of leveraging funding to incentivize participation in its initiatives.

A series of reports commissioned over approximately the last 30 years by various governance bodies recommended that the Chancellor's Office be strengthened and given central control and legal authority over the state's community colleges in order to empower it to better effect student success initiatives around the state.<sup>23</sup> Interested in uncovering the reasons these and similar recommendations over a 25-year span have not been enacted, Darin (2013) interviewed community college stakeholders to probe their perceptions of the recommendations

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<sup>22</sup> The number of vice-chancellors has changed over time. As of early 2019 the Chancellor's Office consists of nine departments, each headed by a vice-chancellor: Student Services, Academic Affairs, Governmental Relations, Finance and Facilities, Institutional Effectiveness, System-wide Surveys, Technology and Research, Workforce and Economics, and Guided Pathways (California Community Colleges, 2019)

<sup>23</sup> I date this from the 1987 Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Education. See Darin, 2013, p. 115 for a list of all reports that recommended more authority for the Chancellor's Office.

and their ideas of obstacles to the actualization of the recommendations. Using a survey, interviews, and a historical document analysis, Darin examined the governance structure for California community colleges, the relationship between the Board of Governors and the Chancellor, the relationship of the Chancellor's Office to the colleges, and the perceptions of stakeholders as regards the potential to increase the Chancellor's authority in the future.

Darin's (2013) historical analysis uncovered reports by several policy groups recommending a more central administration of California community colleges. The California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force (2012), for example, instituted per Senate Bill 1143 (passed in 2010), met for 12 months beginning in 2010. The Task Force produced 22 recommendations to increase student success for California community colleges, several of which specifically addressed the authority (or lack thereof) of the Chancellor's Office.

Recommendation 7.1 was pointed, stating:

The state should develop and support a strong community college system office with commensurate authority, appropriate staffing, and adequate resources to provide leadership, oversight, technical assistance and dissemination of best practices. Further, the state should grant the CCC Chancellor's Office the authority to implement policy consistent with state law. (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2012, p. 59)

The report further recommended making the Chancellor's Office independent of state civil service and shifting from an oversight role to an operational and supervisory one.

Darin (2013) uncovered definite resistance to the idea of central governance at a state level. Although his respondents did acknowledge that California community colleges would

benefit from more coordination (p. 87), they overwhelmingly valued the current decentralized governance model.

### **Summary**

The unique challenges facing many community college students have exacerbated the phenomenon of low completion rates overall and long average completion times. Over the years, numerous wrap-around, academic, affective, and institutional interventions have been deployed to remedy this, but various factors that have limited their success at scale. The early research on individual components (or pillars) of Guided Pathways shows promise and corresponds with reforms suggested in the literature. College presidents and academic senate presidents are key constituents to advancing any reforms in California community colleges; they work together along with other campus constituents in a system of shared governance that is counter-balanced by a board of trustees. The state Chancellor's Office plays a key role in advancing reforms.

While there is extensive scholarship on historic interventions to improve completion rates, as well as abundant literature on educational innovation and its complicating factors,

there is currently little research on Guided Pathways implementation, as well as the role of the community college academic senate in educational innovation. The next chapter will describe the study I designed to investigate those gaps.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study investigated how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence Guided Pathways implementation, as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and anticipated challenges. Guided Pathways, a system redesign to increase community college completion rates, restructures college from a “cafeteria model,” in which students choose courses freely, to a routing system which guides students along well-mapped paths for careers or transfer majors (Bailey et al., 2015). Findings benefit college administrators, college academic senate leaders, and the Chancellor’s Office as these groups investigate ways to successfully implement future student success-driven reforms. In this chapter I describe my methodology, ethical considerations, and issues of credibility and trustworthiness.

### Research Questions

- (1) How do key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence Guided Pathways implementation?
  - (a) What are the key factors described by college presidents as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?
  - (b) What are the key factors described by academic senate presidents as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?
- (2) What are the primary challenges and barriers in Guided Pathways implementation
  - (a) according to college presidents?
  - (b) according to academic senate presidents?
- (3) In what ways are campuses overcoming challenges to Guided Pathways implementation



(a) according to college presidents?

(b) according to academic senate presidents?

### **Research Design**

I conducted a qualitative study to examine how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence their colleges' implementation of Guided Pathways as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and challenges anticipated in the remaining phases of Pathways implementation. Because I wanted to know how key constituents in community colleges understand and interpret their experience of educational innovation implementation, I chose qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Not only was it important to me to conduct the research personally so that I could probe responses for additional data, but the inductive process of qualitative research allows for hypotheses to emerge iteratively (rather than being inadvertently led by the researcher. Quantitative research could produce Pathways implementation statistics, but it cannot illuminate the perceptions of college presidents and senate presidents about what concepts like “key influence,” “challenge,” and the like mean to them, and perceptions of these concepts certainly differ among respondents. Qualitative research allows stories to emerge from participant perceptions which can illuminate best practice in future program implementations.

### **Sample and Population**

My sample population consisted of college leaders—college presidents and academic senate presidents—at three community colleges in California, since California enrolls more most community college students than any other state (Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016). I studied the largest multi-college district in California and in the United States, the LACCD, which

comprises nine colleges, and therefore provides many administrators and faculty to study. Because of the time constraints of my study, I felt a limited amount of sites would allow me to cultivate depth over breadth.

To select my three sites, I generated a list of all nine colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District. To qualify for my study, the college must have had a college president and an academic senate president in place for at least one academic year. Furthermore, respondents had to have been employed full-time at one of the nine colleges in the LACCD and have held their position as college president or academic senate president for at least one academic year.

Using purposive sampling (Maxwell, 2013) I interviewed the college president and the academic senate president at each college that met my criteria who indicated willingness. If none of these senior leaders had been available at a site, I would have chosen an alternate site. When I contacted the college presidents and academic senate presidents, I stressed my role as a graduate researcher over my role as an academic senate president at a college implementing Pathways.

I solicited interview respondents at each site by collecting presidents' and academic senate presidents' email addresses from the district website and emailing them with an invitation and an offer of a \$20 Amazon gift card for participation. Through my role as Academic Senate president I have regular professional contact with many of my potential respondents, which likely influenced their agreement to participate.

## **Interviews**

Self-report is vital to studying perceptions of college faculty and leaders concerning the role of the Chancellor's Office in Guided Pathways implementation as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and anticipated challenges. Therefore,

because interviews reveal respondent perceptions and allow for follow-up questions, at each of my three sites, I conducted a semi-structured 60-90-minute interview of both college presidents and academic senate presidents, for a total of two interviews per site, probing respondent perceptions with follow up questions as needed.

I used the same interview protocol with all respondents, with only one question differing to ask the influence of the other constituent (e.g., to ask the college president about the role of the senate president and vice versa). The protocol included questions about influences, challenges, and solutions in each respondent's college implementation of Guided Pathways. I also asked about each participant's role as either college or senate president, the role of his/her college president and senate president, the role of the LACCD District Office and the Chancellor's Office in Guided Pathways implementation at the respondents' colleges.

In devising my interview protocol, I used open questions. Although several questions had a range of options, they included an "other" option. Furthermore, I included one final open question allowing respondents to add any additional input, allowing respondents to offer feedback that did not fit the constraints of my protocol.

To increase reliability, I first piloted my interview protocol with two members of my doctoral cohort, both of whom are employed at community colleges, one as faculty and one as an administrator, and made changes per the feedback before administering it.

In total, I conducted six interviews: three of senate presidents at community colleges and three of college presidents within the LACCD. Each semi-structured interview lasted for approximately 60 to 90 minutes and Table 3 describes the sample population of my interview participants and their professional capacities. I did not collect demographic data on my

participants in order protect identities,<sup>24</sup> but I did inquire of the college presidents whether or not they had a faculty background and two of the three did.

Table 3. *Interview Participant Profiles*

Professional Profile of Interview Participant	College of Respondents 1 & 6	College of Respondents 2 & 3	College of Respondents 4 & 5
College President	1	1	1
Senate President	1	1	1

I conducted my interviews in person in private settings and recorded them with my iPhone Rev.com recording app with an analog recording device as a backup. I did not send the interview questions prior to the interview but provided a print copy for the participant during the interview. Before beginning, I reminded my respondents that their answers were confidential, and obtained verbal consent for participation.

I reviewed the professional transcriptions within 24 hours of their return and checked them against my recordings and my notes. In review, I was able to catch many transcription errors attributable to the transcriptionist’s lack of insider terms (usually acronyms).

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<sup>24</sup> Gender, age, and length of time in position would reveal identities to district insiders.

## **Document Review**

In order to collect data against which to contrast and triangulate interview data, I also conducted a document review using the themes derived from the interview data (related to Guided Pathways implementation). The documents I examined included: college & district (if applicable) calendars, websites, documents/artifacts articulating college's social system and shared governance structure; college council/ academic senate resolutions concerning implementation of Guided Pathways; meeting minutes, college and district faculty senate newsletters, website, and emails, calendars; district/chancellor newsletters, emails, websites and calendars; board of trustee documents (minutes, meeting minutes, resolutions); and document models and visual maps created by college in Guided Pathways implementation process.

I conducted my document review simultaneously to my interview process, but also went back after my interviews, looking for additional documents referenced by respondents. This step augmented the data provided by my respondents. In some cases, respondents mentioned documents that they then provided after the interview.

My document review was straightforward and, in most cases,, I was able to find information quickly from the websites of the three colleges. Documents varied a bit by college (i.e., committees have different names but I could usually find the analogous committee at the other colleges. One college had a series of posted town hall videos and the other colleges didn't).

Tables 4 to 6 show the documents I investigated. In some cases, I emailed either participants or other college personnel (e.g., the chair of a committee whose name was listed online) and asked them for documents referenced in the data that was not posted online yet. As a district insider I knew that the documents did exist but that busy schedules contribute to a lag time between document production and online posting.

Table 4. *Documents Reviewed, Colleges A, B, and C*

Document type	College		
	A	B	C
College mission statement	x	x	x
Academic senate minutes 2017–present	x	x	x
Academic senate resolutions 2017–present	x	x	x
Curriculum committee minutes 2017–present	x	x	x
Institutional effectiveness committee minutes 2017–present	x	x	x
Pathways steering committee minutes 2017–present	x	x	x
Pathways self-assessment (November 2017)	x	x	x
Pathways work plan (April 2018)	x	x	x
Town hall documents 2017–present	x	NA	NA
Town hall videos 2017–present	x	NA	NA
Letters from college president 2017–present	x	NA	NA
Videos from college president 2017–present	x	NA	NA
College website, pathways page	x	x	x
College website, academic programs page	x	x	x
College website, overall	x	x	x

Table 5. *Documents Reviewed, Los Angeles Community College District*

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Document type
LACCD website
District-wide emails
LACCD Chancellor's communications to employees 2017–present

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Table 6. *Documents Reviewed, California Community College Chancellor's Office*

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Document type
Vision for Success website
Vision for Success toolkit

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### **Data Analysis Methods**

After downloading my interview data into Microsoft Word documents, I substituted pseudonyms for respondent names and college site identities using the Control-F find and replace feature. None of the data in my stored files contains any identifying information.

I used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2017) of open coding as I coded my interview and document review data. I coded inductively, looking for emerging themes (e.g., “faculty leadership,”) as I coded, and checking for those themes in still-to-code data as well as perceiving additional unique themes still emerging. Because my research questions informed my interview questions, themes related to my research questions organically emerged. After filing my data in individual spreadsheets, one for each interview, as well as filing them by

codes and themes, I combined all codes into one master Microsoft Excel file with a separate sheet for each code. This clarified the dominant codes. As a result of this process, four major themes emerged within the overall categories within my research questions (challenges, successes, strategies, and anticipated challenges) as well as clear subthemes within categories.

After I coded the data for each interview, I wrote an analytic memo to help me mentally process the data. During this process, I kept a comparative table of emerging codes and made entries into this table as I continued my coding-and-memo process. I member-checked my analytic memos with my interview respondents and in some cases, asked for additional documents that were not available on their college website but which I knew existed (e.g., minutes for posted agendas). Finally, I checked my newly created data tables against my analytic memos and updated them until they reflected all my data.

I compared interview data, key college/district documents, and Chancellor's Office documents and publications data to triangulate my data and validate my conclusions. For comparative analysis, I listed similarities and differences I find in the interview data and the document analysis and used colors to code these in my database. To scaffold this comparative analysis work, I kept a thematic electronic master spreadsheet with internal links to the separate files so that I could observe themes at a macro level. For my document review, I followed the same coding-and-memo process, entering emerging codes and data into a spreadsheet. However, I did not write analytic memos to process document review data since it was not substantial enough. No document data that I collected offered significant findings on their own, but none contradicted interview data. In some cases, document data corroborated interview data.



## **Ethical Considerations**

In contacting potential interview respondents, I stressed my role as a graduate researcher over my role as an academic senate president at a college implementing pathways. My own college was not one of my case study sites, and I have no authority over anyone at my sites, nor does anyone at my sites have authority over me. Even the state chancellor technically has no authority to influence my employment without cause because I hold tenure.

Although academic senate presidents (who are tenured faculty, and elected to the position by faculty) should not be at any risk of job loss as a result of their comments on Guided Pathways implementation, just to be safe, and to protect respondents against reprisal, I assigned pseudonyms (Respondent 1, Respondent 2, and so on) to respondents and their college site identities to keep their feedback confidential. Furthermore, I did not list enrollment counts nor city regions, which would reveal identities to those familiar with the LACCD. Administrators, who do not have tenure protection, are protected by my confidentiality.

## **Management of my Role**

Water cooler talk among faculty at state senate plenary sessions and at local colleges often reflects a sense of distrust and suspicion of the Chancellor's Office, so I understood that such themes could potentially emerge in my data. As I embarked on my study, my plan was that if distrust of the Chancellor's Office and its initiatives emerged in my interview data, I would not withhold or conceal that data in any way. I have used neutral language to describe my data to assure readers that I am faithfully representing the data I collected without editorializing.

## **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The representativeness of my sample (college president and academic senate presidents) buttresses my study's validity. I believe that using the same protocol in all interviews, as well as my pre-testing it with local college constituents in my network, make my study trustworthy.

To establish credibility, I was aware of my own possible bias as an academic senate president at a college implementing Guided Pathways. This role could affect how I perceive/define "influence" for example. Therefore, I pre-tested my definitions in my local networks and consistently used those same definitions for all my coding. I also took care to build all claims on evidence.

One possible threat to my study's validity is that there are multiple factors affecting the diffusion of innovation, and they are not limited to the phenomena that my interview respondents and their college documents described. For example, the fluctuations of college funding due to the enrollment-based nature of our state's previous funding formula might have had effects on the college sites in recent years that may persist into the time frame of my study,<sup>25</sup> even though Pathways-related funding was released in my study's time frame.

Furthermore, I have no way of determining whether or not my respondents answered my questions truthfully. However, because my questions are not of a personal nature and because I advised respondents that answers will be kept confidential and therefore not jeopardize the respondent's job or tenure, I am hopeful that these provisions underline my study's credibility.

A final threat to my study's trustworthiness is appearance of researcher bias, since as academic senate president I have an interest in my college's implementation of pathways.

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<sup>25</sup> That is, previous to the "student centered funding formula" legislated May 2017, also referred to as the "new funding formula."

However, it is my curiosity that motivated this study. I am open to possibilities both as a professional and as a researcher; neither do I have a faculty bias against administrators or the Chancellor's Office. My openness and ability to see things at a macro level is what makes me an effective campus leader. As an academic, I endeavor to study all aspects of phenomena without judgment. However, I used memo-writing during my study to manage any possible bias I couldn't or didn't detect.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate how key constituents (college president, academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors and challenges that influence the implementation of Guided Pathways reform, as well as strategies they used to overcome those challenges and anticipated challenges. I gathered qualitative data through interviews and document review. The themes I uncovered point to several recommendations for multi-college community college districts and the Chancellor's Office.

I describe in this chapter my interview participants, the documents I reviewed, and my findings. I used two types of data collection methods – interviews and document reviews— to investigate how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors and challenges that influence the implementation of Guided Pathways reform, as well as strategies they used to overcome those challenges.

### **Key Factors Influencing Guided Pathways Implementation**

My first research question concerned what key factors influenced Guided Pathways implementation at each college according to college presidents and academic senate presidents. I was interested in how these key community college constituents described the key factors and which factors they described as most influential.

Answers did not break out according to participant role; not all senate presidents said one thing while all college presidents said another, for instance. Rather, my respondents overwhelmingly identified the same challenges, with small variations, but no patterns of correlation to professional roles emerged. Therefore, I report findings by theme rather than by constituent.

## **Financial Support from State Motivated Implementation**

All of my participants cited financial support from the Chancellor’s Office as a key factor, if not *the* motivating factor, in beginning Guided Pathways implementation at their colleges. All three colleges proceeded with implementation prior to the April 2018 release of state funds once they knew the money was coming.

Two senate presidents mentioned having known about Guided Pathways in early 2017 but because of cost, decided against (then still optional) participation in the 2016 AACC California Guided Pathways Project organized by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office. Both were excited once it was announced later in 2017 that the state legislature allocated funding to every community college; at that point “it was a no-brainer” to participate, as Respondent 3 explained.

All three of my participants’ colleges used state Pathways funding allocations to build Pathways steering teams with faculty reassigned from some portion of their teaching assignments, and to host campus-wide Pathways events such as “card sorts.”<sup>26</sup>

## **Faculty Leadership was Vital to Implementation**

All six respondents credited faculty leadership of their college’s Pathways implementation as the reason for its progress to date, while of course progress varied from college to college. This included both the senate presidents, who might be expected to attribute success to faculty primacy, and the college presidents, who might not be expected to. Two of the

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<sup>26</sup> A card sort, also called clustering, is an activity in which cards are printed with the names of all of a college’s majors; participants are asked to arrange these cards into 7-8 “metamajors”—that is, clusters of majors which share similar general education requirements.

three college presidents I interviewed were emphatic about the level of leadership their senate president was showing in Pathways implementation, both of them independently (of any probe) expressing the view that their senate president was respected and trusted by faculty. “I think the number one thing is that the senate president is leading it,” said Respondent 5.

All three presidents discussed specific ways that faculty were playing key roles in pathways implementation, such as serving in leadership roles on pathways teams, inviting the pathways teams to their department meetings to understand Guided Pathways better, working as or with department chairs to create metamajors and map program sequences, and innovating new programs or ideas.

It [Pathways] could not come from the top down. It had to happen within the fabric of the faculty” said Respondent 2. Respondent 6 also considered his own role as college president influential in ensuring that all stakeholders are involved and engaged, “but really,” he emphasized, “it’s coming out of the faculty academic side of the house as to what [Pathways] is going to look like.

(Respondent 3)

This finding of faculty leadership as a key influence on Guided Pathways implementation corresponds to the literature on change. Painter and Clark (2015) argue, “Leaders influence the meanings that are constructed in groups” (p. 194). Thus, faculty leaders are vital to process and mediate new ideas for their fellow faculty based on shared values and academic culture. All my respondents, college presidents as well as senate presidents, recognized that faculty leadership is vital to institutional change and were proud to report on the faculty leadership of their Pathways teams. All three senate presidents that I interviewed are active on their college Pathways team in some capacity.

My study uncovered the complexity of faculty leadership: first, there is a territory or turf aspect, in which faculty prefer one of their ‘own kind’ to lead them. There are examples of colleges which learned this the hard way, as in the Eckel and Kezar (2003) study, where administrators stalled change by trying to lead it themselves without faculty leadership. In contrast, a recent study of Guided Pathways leadership by Ashby (2018) found that leadership selection for implementation teams has symbolic importance, affecting faculty reception. She found that the academic senate “legitimize[d] faculty leads...through a nomination or appointment process” (p. 172). This was the case in my study as well, since per my respondents, the academic senates had to approve establishment of the college pathways teams.

It takes skilled, active leadership to lead faculty past initial resistance and through the implementation dip referenced by the literature. “Creating conditions for faculty to act in new ways is a primary task of leadership” (Painter & Clark, 2015). Adams (2011) analyzed the personal characteristics of faculty senate presidents and found that the most effective faculty senate presidents exhibited transformational leadership traits. Indeed, two of my three college president respondents both praised their senate presidents as showing leadership on Guided Pathways, referencing faculty trust in their leadership.

A second and vital aspect of faculty leadership is that instructors learn best from each other; faculty members’ respect for one other as peers adds legitimacy to the innovation shared, per the literature on both K12 and higher education. Bridwell-Mitchell (2015) found that to confront state-mandated reform, peer learning and socialization are critical to institutional persistence or change. “Interactions within teachers’ collegial communities are more likely to result in peer learning because they occur more frequently, engender greater feelings of attachment, and strongly influence understandings of work” (p. 151). Hearing from other

instructors how they have integrated new pedagogical practices or how they are metabolizing Guided Pathways may moderate resistance. In my study this presented as the eagerness of faculty on Pathways implementation teams to reach out to their colleagues at nearby colleges for best practices and implementation resources (flyers, documents, etc. that they could adapt). Respondents talked at length about the particular resources they borrowed from other colleagues; Respondent 3 even showed me a number of them on the spot.

### **Use of the Regional Network Supported Implementation**

All my respondents mentioned how learning about other California community colleges that were farther along in implementation (what I am calling the regional network)—either taking inspiration from their presentations, or specifically reaching out to them, or both—directly aided their own colleges’ implementation efforts by their sharing of implementation practices and relating how they handled particular challenges.

One college president noted, “We have faculty who are connected to colleges like Bakersfield and other places where they're doing [Pathways]. So faculty are like, ‘Yeah, and I talked to so and so at Bakersfield and a few other places. This is how they're doing it.’” Another president explained: “My team comes back[from college visits]. They have a conversation: ‘This is what we learned. This is what other campuses are doing or not doing, and maybe we need to do some more in this area.’”

Two senate presidents mentioned the usefulness of hearing from other college faculty at state academic senate events. One described it like so:

Just hearing about other people talk about things that they're doing or their concerns, hearing what the pitfalls could be, and that, how we need to approach this really carefully, and the [local] senate needs to put some policies in place so



that things are properly vetted and there's not any implementation of anything that could actually hurt student success in the long run.

One of my respondents, a senate president, mentioned that his predecessor invited a faculty member from Bakersfield Community College to present at his college about Pathways even prior to the state announcement of Pathways funding, so his college was reaching out into the network at an early stage out of interest and not from pressure to unlock its state allocation. Further, Respondent 3 mentioned benefitting from a Spring 2018 regional event hosted by Pasadena City College in at which several colleges from the regional network detailed their pathways implementation.

In one case the regional network was strong enough as to have a possibly negative influence on Pathways implementation. A college president described how the role of sibling rivalry was initially so strong as to constitute a hurdle: the much-touted example of a sister college in the district was off-putting to the college faculty, who felt strongly that their college was very different than the sister college. “It just made people beyond nervous; we’re not [them]. We don’t want to be them.”

### **District Academic Senate Facilitated Implementation**

For four participants, the district academic senate was key to successful Pathways implementation at their colleges. District Academic Senate (DAS) is a district-wide committee containing the all nine college senate presidents and three elected representatives from each college. Respondent 3 credited the DAS as key (his word) to his local campus implementation “in terms of [his] ability to provide probably guidance locally, in terms of kind of learning what other folks are doing, the challenges or successes they were having. Helping make sure that the

primacy of the senate was maintained. And that the senate could actually serve as leaders in this.”

Respondent 6 described a small initial territory struggle between his college’s academic senate and a member of his senior staff, and noted the vital role played by DAS in resolving it. According to him, DAS pushed back against faculty instinct to declare primacy over pathways by affirming that there is a role for both faculty and administrators together. His senate president told the story a bit differently but corroborated the initial turf war, affirming that the DAS provided support for local college senates by passing a resolution calling for faculty primacy in Guided Pathways implementation.

Another participant, Respondent 5, claimed her college senate found the district academic senate a better resource than the state academic senate: “[Senate leaders] might go to plenary but bringing something back from plenary and specifically kind of taking it to heart...just doesn't happen. It's more mediated by the district academic senate.”

Noting that all of the nine district colleges are in different stages of readiness vis-à-vis implementation, Respondent 5 emphasized, “If anybody's gonna get all nine colleges onto the same table in terms of what Guided Pathways looks like, it's gonna have to be the district academic senate.”

### **Challenges Experienced during Guided Pathways Implementation**

My second research question investigated the challenges college presidents and academic presidents reported that their colleges encountered in Guided Pathways implementation. I was interested in particular challenges college presidents and academic senate presidents described encountering. As reported above with research question one, there was no pattern of response by participant role, so results are organized here thematically.

## **Timing and Communication from Chancellor’s Office Complicated Implementation**

All respondents described the challenges related to the Chancellor’s Office rollout of Pathways, on issues such as timing, quality, and clarity, among other things.

All six framed the timing of the instructions and resources provided to colleges as a challenge. “I feel like they often do, they put it out there, and then they come up with a plan afterwards,” said Respondent 4. “We hear things that are contradictory to what was said 3 or 6 months earlier,” commented Respondent 6. The example provided was the changing of the framework provided by the Chancellor’s Office to measure implementation from a 14-element model to a framework based on the four-pillar AACCC Pathways model. This change came halfway through Phase One (Fall 2018–June 30, 2019) of implementation.

It is important to note that in this context, “resource” does not mean financial resource only, but rather written documents and visual depictions to guide implementation, such as graphs and questions to direct reflection and action, as well as resources in the form of individuals, such as guest speakers from colleges farther along in implementation, consultants, or regional coordinators provided by the Chancellor’s Office. The Vision Resource area on the Chancellor’s Office website, for example, contains many of written and visual resources to guide implementation.

Two participants remarked on the poor quality of those resources, and one participant could not consistently access the Vision Resource Center online.<sup>27</sup> Respondent 5 was unsparing:

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<sup>27</sup> An online resource repository at the state chancellor’s website: [visionresoucecenter.cccco.edu](http://visionresoucecenter.cccco.edu). According to Respondent 4, a Chancellor’s Office representative acknowledged to him that there had been technical issues with the Vision Resource Center.

The biggest issue is just in how poor the rollout from the Chancellor's Office was, and the lousy training. It's like when you're trying to get people motivated, that does not help. I'm supposed to sell this and this is the crap you give us? It was awful.

Most of my participants acknowledged the Chancellor's Office's provision of resources such as the website, fact sheets and regional workshops, but only Respondent 3 credited these resources as instrumental in his college's implementation efforts. Yet in answer to a follow-up question, even he admitted some doubts: although he had found the "worksheets on the website helpful" he was unclear what the role of the newly-provided regional coordinators were, and how they could possibly be worth the cost: "It's not like they're coming with a tool kit," he said.

Respondent 2 attributed the Chancellor's Office's slow (his word) roll-out to lack of staffing. He described the state Chancellor's Office's contribution as follows: "They were in first gear for a long time, and now they're in second. They still have three more gears to go. So, hopefully, as they move up in gears, they will be much more supportive and helpful."

Several of my participants described these Chancellor's Office-related challenges as familiar from the implementation of prior state initiatives. One respondent explained:

So I think that they're still in their infancy stage,<sup>28</sup> right? So I think they're trying hard. I'm not cynical about it. I think that we see they're behind where they should be and they're trying hard. But they are trying and there's good information out there, it's just not coordinated and it's not connected.

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<sup>28</sup> Here the respondent's reference to infancy referred to the early stage of rolling out Pathways implementation statewide.

## **Pockets of Faculty Resistance Challenged Initial Implementation Efforts**

The second most common challenge mentioned by four of my respondents (representing two colleges) was faculty resistance. Yet, although several respondents identified faculty resistance as an implementation challenge, none described it as a significant one. This may be because Phase One of Pathways implementation primarily involves inquiry, and has not yet resulted in large-scale restructuring of academic divisions or majors at colleges, or yet encroached on pedagogical practices. Although all respondents described hosting college-wide events introducing Guided Pathways to faculty (and other college constituencies) at this early stage it is possible that many faculty are still tuning it out or making assumptions about what it will mean for them; from the work with faculty that respondents described, it seems at this point the faculty most familiar with Pathways are division chairs and faculty leaders such as senate officers and faculty on particular committees such as Curriculum.

Respondent 1 could only identify one individual who had explicitly resisted Guided Pathways; two respondents expected resistance to occur in the future around certain points of implementation, such as the mapping of metamajors and establishing the role of counselors, but the resistance had not presented yet. Resistance originating from past negative experiences, such as past professional disappointments, was mentioned, as three respondents did connect faculty resistance, what there was of it, to initiative fatigue. This echoes the literature on educational innovation (McBride, 2010).

Respondent 4 described pockets of open resistance at his campus: “When Pathways first came out, a faculty member said, ‘Oh, you're drinking the Kool-Aid’ because I was coming out in favor of it.” At the metamajor card sort activity on Opening Day, a group of “eight or nine” of his faculty refused to participate. Respondent 4 explained: “There's definitely a lot of cynicism,

but hope at the same time. [Most] faculty really do hope that [Pathways] will increase student success.”

According to Respondent 5, the closest thing to open resistance Respondent 5’s campus had experienced was with the counselors,<sup>29</sup> who are concerned about what role they would play in the redesigned college structure. Respondent 5 used both the words “resistance” and “apathy” to describe the response of counselors to Guided Pathways. “They have a golden opportunity to help chart their own course, and that's the question... Are you taking us up on it?”

Respondent 3 described some initial resistance in response to an outside Pathways presenter at a campus event—because of a schedule misunderstanding the presenter had to cut her presentation short and leave, which was off-putting to the faculty and initially left a bad impression related to Pathways. Respondent 3 described another less-than-optimal impression left by facilitators contracted by the Chancellor’s Office to facilitate Pathways-based workshops on Opening Day.

At the workshops that the opening day, I did see some [resistance], and I thought it wasn’t managed as well... I kind of felt like the answers weren't as good as I had hoped them to be, in terms of how to address the negativity...I think today I'd say [the facilitators] probably did as good as could be done. 'Cause they couldn't say for sure what might be happening there at the college, 'cause they were visiting.

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<sup>29</sup> In California community colleges, counselors are non-instructional faculty.

Yet although some of Respondent 3's faculty were put off by these initial experiences, many others had a good experience at Pathways-related events: "At the card sorting, many people started off being skeptics and then they walked out like 'Wow, this is great!'"

Respondent 2 contextualized early resistance to Pathways as confusion related to multiple simultaneous, and recent prior initiatives.

At first, when it began, it got confused a little bit with ATD... Achieve the Dream didn't really go anywhere. It started and it had a lot of momentum initially, and then it just died. So, everyone thought, 'Is this just like that? Is this really going to go anywhere? Should we exert any energy in this?'

Respondent 3, a Senate president, reflected on dynamics related to resistance:

I've been around the block quite a bit to know that...it really is hard to know where the silent faculty stand. And the silent majority can be heavily influenced by loud voices on the other side. So I think our primary challenge right now is in building up more genuine support through the activities involved with implementation.

Respondent 3 was mindful that his Pathways team needed to create opportunities to influence the silent majority toward adoption before they inclined toward resistance. This suggests the phenomenon of resistance as something that can occur in waves, breaking at different times and in different directions.

If college presidents and senate presidents report only a few instances of resistance, after describing multiple campus events that they attended or helped facilitate or both, and given their extensive network of personal relationships and intimate knowledge of campus climate, then it stands to reason that many faculty have yet made no movement vis-à-vis the innovation, either to

adoption or to resistance. (After all, as mentioned earlier, Pathways implementation at most colleges statewide during the time of my interviews was still in Phase One, during which most non-leadership faculty could still remain unaffected by changes coming in forthcoming phases.)

This echoes the educational innovation literature which affirms that many faculty members remain uncommitted, “in the middle” (McBride, 2010), deterred by status quo bias; according to Heifetz and Linsky (2002) this may be the largest group in an organization.

### **Bureaucratic Challenges Complicated Implementation**

All my participants described the complexities of coordinating a state-initiated reform within a multi-college district. Although only two of them—both from the same college—explicitly framed this phenomenon as one of the greatest challenges faced in their college’s Pathways implementation, the length of time in their individual interviews and the intensity with which all six participants spent describing the impact of bureaucratic complications on their colleges’ Pathways implementation foregrounded it as one of the essential challenges all the participants faced. In this section I will describe the many aspects of what I label “bureaucratic complications.”

**Too many cooks in the kitchen for financial decisions.** Not only has the LACCD Board of Trustees recently taken an increasingly interested role in expenditures at individual colleges—according to several of my respondents—advocating for shared purchase power at scale, but the district office has its own regulations which complicate purchases. This affected one college which had gone to considerable effort to secure a vendor to redesign its website around Guided Pathways. Respondent 4 explained: “After all of this work...only to come to find out that there was a whole series of steps I was supposed to follow that nobody told me about...[My president] paid for somebody outside to come in and write this beautiful RFP,



which is not even what you do. The district generates it.” He mentioned being told by various vice-chancellors in the district office that they were going to look into [centralized website redesign] but he had not heard back and expressed frustration at the lack of follow-through. This phase of what his college’s Pathways Steering Committee viewed as an essential phase in Pathways implementation—the technical presentation to students—was stalled by this bureaucratic complication.

**Lack of coordination between district and colleges.** Several of the participants described lack of coordination between the district office and the individual college decisions about Pathways implementation. Respondent 1 related that one “disruptive thing that happened” was a decision imposed on the colleges by a district vice-chancellor late into a decision-making process already begun by the individual colleges.

We actually saw two different kind of program mapping systems, and the [Pathways] facilitators are like, “We like that other one; it's more visual.” And then [district vice-chancellor] is like, “No, I already decided. I wrote the check. This is the one we're getting.” And so it didn't feel like it was a senate decision whatsoever. It was his decision. He decided, he was telling us.

There were communication gaps. Important communications from the district office vis-à-vis Pathways implementation did not consistently reach all stakeholders at the individual colleges. Respondent 1 said: “The information that went out to the district senate presidents was sporadic and it didn't go out evenly, and so I had no idea what they were talking about. I started getting texts about, ‘Are we in?’ And I'm like, ‘Are we in on what?’”

**Changing level of district coordination.** My participants noted that a change recently began in the level of coordination between the district office and the colleges: the level of

coordination from the district office was increasing. Any shift in control in the district’s delicate local control balance (between the district office and the nine colleges) creates the opportunity for tension. Several of my participants marked the district mandate (given by the district chancellor to the college presidents) for college Pathways teams to attend the AACC Scaling Institute in San Diego November 2018 as the beginning of a shift to increased district-level coordination on Pathways. At this institute, a district-wide conversation was initiated to explore Pathways implementation from a district-wide perspective—such as whether or not all nine colleges might agree to use the same word for metamajor, for example. Respondent 1’s reference to a vice-chancellor’s (district-level) decision to purchase a curriculum-mapping program before college Pathways teams had given adequate feedback is another example of the shift from local to district control that appeared significant (worrying?) enough to my respondents for all six of them to mention.

Respondent 2 saw Pathways implementation as a natural opportunity for the district colleges to align themselves more: “We need to make some decisions as to what we're going call ourselves.<sup>30</sup> Is it going to be a meta major? Is it going to be pathways? Is it going to be schools? . . . To me that's the next major step for us here.”

One senate president perceived signs of a power struggle when the district finally did attempt to take a central role. “[The district] didn't really do anything to get us started. I mean, they're kind of slowly starting to support us because we did the event in San Diego, the AACC event and there seemed to be a little bit of a power struggle going on at that event.” When

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<sup>30</sup> Respondent 2 is referring to a generic term that the nine colleges, district-wide, might agree to call the program paths that we create to provide consistency and clarity for students who take classes at several of our colleges.

probed, the senate president explained: “Just like, here we were [at the aforementioned AACC event] and [a senate president from one of the nine colleges] wanted to host this lunch and [LACCD district vice-chancellor] acted like she was against it or something...”

Participants showed mixed feelings about the late-starting, now-increasing role of the district office in Pathways coordination. One senate president found it problematic:

Really a year and a half where we've all been really thinking about this really in depth and . . . done a lot of research... a lot of vetting, and then when the AACC put out this idea that we're gonna coordinate this through all nine colleges, and we're gonna sort of look alike, we're gonna have similar aspects of Guided Pathways, it felt a little bit shocking because we should have started out that way. It should have started that way rather than, ok, you guys explore these ideas, now let's come together and coordinate them all. And I think it can be done, but not 100% because all the colleges are so different.

Respondent 2 saw the slowly increasing coordination between the district office and the nine colleges as ultimately beneficial, with a caveat: “I think it's fine for the campuses just to do their own thing, but it's good to create some commonalities between all of us. It doesn't have to mean we have to be exactly the same, maybe creating some standards, I think, would also help.”

Respondent 5 also saw potential benefits for district leadership in the context of Guided Pathways implementation, but was skeptical.

One of the biggest issues in the LACCD is the fact that you have nine colleges doing things in nine different ways. Guided Pathways would be an awesome way for us to all get on the same page, but we do not have the political will, nor do we have a district consultation structure that would get us there. That's the biggest

issue, I think. ... It's funny, when we were in [district] Chancellor's cabinet about a month ago,<sup>31</sup> and [district vice-chancellor] said, "Well, so do the colleges want the district office to help facilitate?... " I'm sitting there thinking, the nine colleges of the district couldn't decide which bathroom to use, let alone a comprehensive Guided Pathways program.

**District capacity and financial implications.** An interesting finding was the financial implications for district Pathways coordination. Two of the three college presidents and two of the three senate presidents commented on district coordination capacity and related implications. Respondent 2 reflected on the district office's capacity for Guided Pathways leadership, describing staffing limitations exacerbated by multiple state reform initiatives (such as the new student funding formula) that the vice-chancellors at the district office must juggle.<sup>32</sup> Time and effort is spread thin on each initiative, thus hampering, in his perception, the effectiveness of each individual on any given outcome. "We're not going to get anywhere if we only dedicate 10% of the time [to Guided Pathways]." He described the issue's thorniness: hiring more vice-chancellors to staff the district office, perhaps a vice-chancellor solely dedicated to just one initiative like Guided Pathways, for example, is a de facto tax on the district's nine colleges, so it is not in the colleges' interests to push for this.

Like Respondent 2, Respondent 5 was mindful that any formal district role would mean more money paid by the college back to the district.

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<sup>31</sup> Chancellor's Cabinet is a regularly-scheduled meeting of the nine college presidents with the district chancellor.

<sup>32</sup> Though the "new funding formula" was passed by the California state legislature May 2017, it is still commonly referred to as new. It is also referred to as the "Student Centered Funding Formula."

There was some interest in trying to create a role for the district office to be some sort of enforcement. I didn't have any interest in that because then whenever the district office wants to be part of something under the guise of helping, then it's, "Well, we can't do this without funding, so give us x amount of dollars of your Guided Pathways [allocation]."

Respondent 4 noted: "It [the district formalizes a central Pathways office and/or vice-chancellor position] would be a complete change of infrastructure, and that is a very slow, slow moving process. That's going to be the problem."

### **Strategies Used to Address Challenges Experienced during Guided Pathways Implementation**

My third research question concerned strategies used at the colleges to overcome any challenges experienced in Guided Pathways implementation. The most commonly mentioned strategies participants described using to overcome challenges were use of the regional network, relationships, and flexibility/adaptability.

#### **Regional Network**

Use of the regional network, or individuals reaching out to contacts at other colleges farther along in Pathways implementation, was the strategy most cited as useful to address challenges. This was mentioned by both college presidents and senate presidents—all my respondents, in fact—who described faculty reaching out to other faculty and administrators

reaching out to administrators in their networks. In one “crossover” case, a senate president described attending a CIO<sup>33</sup> conference and finding it helpful.<sup>34</sup>

In the context of implementation challenges, a college president mentioned seeing another college team present on their experience at one of his statewide meetings. He said, “I think that that's where I think also our contacts come in. I'm sure Sierra College faces the same situation. I'm sure Bakersfield [Community College] did as well.” He took comfort that he could reach out for help as needed.

Respondent 4 described hitting a bureaucratic roadblock vis-à-vis naming metamajors which he navigated by reaching out to his neighboring sister colleges.

But also as what we call them, we're kind of in a holding pattern now. I reached out to [sister college] and [sister college]... We can get together, maybe just do some clustering on our own, because [the district office is] still kind of at that, "Okay, are we going to do district clustering?" It felt like it in November [2018], we might be, but then nothing's happening.

Use of regional network, as both a key implementation factor and a strategy to address challenges, is known to scholars. The literature confirms that it is typical for colleges to seek out fellow colleges in their networks for implementation ideas (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Alfred, Shuts,

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33 Chief Instructional Officer, or Vice-President of Instruction, sometimes called Vice President of Academic Affairs.

34 I use the term “crossover” to indicate that a senate president is networking with administrators on this occasion instead of his academic senate counterparts. The networking reported by respondents tended to occur more frequently along constituent lines, for example, administrators conferencing with administrators, senate officers with senate officers, faculty with faculty, and so forth.

Jacquette, and Strickland (2009) found that both use of external networks and internal relationships are essential components of college leadership.

### **Relationships**

Two college presidents mentioned the importance of relationships and one-on-one talking with all constituents to bridge ideological divides about Pathways implementation. Respondent 6 said: “The way to overcome these challenges in particular is just to have ongoing, open dialogue and talking through how we can address them and solve them.” Respondent 2 explained:

I have...the kind of relationships with people [colleagues] where we can have a good debate, a healthy debate and next day we're still friends...and that's the way I like to work. It's work. It's nothing personal. It's just ... and I think as a result, everyone knows that I'll be calling them up so we can have a discussion and we can agree to disagree.

This finding corresponds with what Eckel and Kezar (2003) found in their longitudinal study of change in diverse institutions. They report that “leaders intentionally surfaced troubled relationships; issues of lack of trust and conflicts in priorities were openly discussed” (p. 153). Luthans (2002) includes “influence of friends or peers” as one of his five techniques to overcome change resistance.

### **Flexibility/Adaptability**

Flexibility and adaptability were mentioned by three participants as a response to initial challenges. Respondent 6 put it succinctly: “The way to overcome [challenges] is to recognize that it's not a finished product. It's going to take time, recognize that it's going to evolve and that's okay.” Respondent 3 explained:

I think the main challenges that I brought up so far has to do with...where the faculty are at and I think how we managed that was we tried to be flexible. We tried to be sensitive to potential for resistance, sensitive to concerns that were out there, and then be flexible and adapt. I think that's really been the key ingredient.

That colleges used flexibility/adaptability and relationships to overcome challenges in initial implementation is unsurprising; this is borne out by the literature. Research in organizational theory recognizes the need for flexibility, in terms of “thinking differently” (Eckel & Kezar, 2003) or finding unconventional ways to resolve obstacles (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013). In fact, Holmes, Clement, and Albright (2013) argue that “willingness to step outside existing structures to solve difficult problems demonstrates a key characteristic of exceptional leaders” (p. 277).

### **Anticipated Challenges in Guided Pathways Implementation**

Challenges that participants anticipated facing ahead in future phases in their colleges' Pathways implementation ran the gamut, from preserving local control in the face of bureaucratic complications, to engaging the “silent majority” of faculty who had not yet registered their views on Pathways curricular redesign, to worries about sustainable funding for the efforts—but the most common anticipated challenge was the mapping of metamajors.<sup>35</sup> In this section, I highlight some of my participants' individual anticipated challenges, summarize the consensus on

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<sup>35</sup> Spring 2019 is the third and final semester of Phase One: Inquiry in the state chancellor's office's implementation timeline. Because the state's target is for colleges to map metamajors prior to the end of Phase One, which ends June 30, 2019, none of my participants' colleges had not yet concluded that process at the time of my interviews in January and February 2019.



metamajor concerns, and relate strategies respondents expect they will use for anticipated challenges.

As Guided Pathways continues, one thing Respondent 1 anticipates possibly being a future challenge is unwillingness from “the student services side” of the college to change its processes and procedures as necessary to accommodate a Guided Pathways college redesign. Respondent 5 was concerned about whether or not counselors will “play ball” going forward in Pathways implementation. Respondent 3 anticipates a challenge “in the next calendar year” of making different campus decisions about use of funds. He described a “silo mentality” when it comes to particular programs or efforts shepherded by different individuals/committees that could stymie a campus-wide Pathways redesign that should be, in his mind, integrated with all campus funding and curricular decisions. “The guidance from the state is to be thinking about those monies in the same way you think about the student-centered funding formula. From the state's point of view its Guided Pathways that should facilitate that.”

Respondent 4 anticipates a challenge with district-wide coordination and technology concerns in future phases of Guided Pathways implementation. “The individual colleges all wanting to their own thing. That's going to be an issue,” he stated. Respondent 4 also anticipates some difficulty when his college reaches the “Fourth Pillar” of Guided Pathways (“ensure student learning”) and possibly some funding issues going forward because of the LACCD Board of Trustees’ ideas about how district money should be spent.

Respondent 6 foresees funding challenges, with release time, “faculty load, scheduling, and competition between other departments” when we institutionalize Pathways (after implementation concludes). Depending on how Pathways (re)structures the college, additional

staffing may be needed—which will cost money. He is also concerned with keeping enrollment up, courting new enrollment, and communicating pathways to prospective students.

The one common anticipated challenge—shared by two respondents—was the forthcoming curricular challenge of realigning programs, sequences, and perhaps departments around the metamajors that are now being mapped. Respondent 2 spoke at length about his concerns: “I think that we'll see a little bit more if we need to change curriculum and programs. We'll see when that happens....I'm sure certain departments will not see themselves being part of another metamajor with another department. They'll say, ‘We're not really them.’” Respondent 6 recognized it will be essential to arrange things in a way that “faculty don't lose what they might perceive as... los[ing] some ground in this particular discipline.”

Related to these curricular concerns is Respondent 3's concern that faculty do not fully understand the radical nature of redesign that is involved in Guided Pathways implementation. He explained:

Some people seem to see it but then they start using the term “pathways” as if they're just talking about that particular program pathway between that major or career to degree and transfer. And they start talking about well we just need to make sure the pathways are guided. And for me Guided Pathways is about redesigning the college. So I do hope that we start using the term redesign more.

### **Strategies Planned to Address Anticipated Challenges in Guided Pathways Implementation**

Only three of my participants spoke on my fourth research question—how they expected to handle anticipated challenges in future implementation phases—and only briefly. The strategies they expect to use reprised what respondents had described using to overcome existing challenges: leveraging relationships and reaching out to colleges in the regional network.

## Summary

In summary, using six semi-structured interviews of college presidents and Senate presidents in the Los Angeles Community College District, and an extensive document review, I found that key factors influencing Guided Pathways implementation included state financial support, faculty—particularly senate—leadership, use of the regional network, and the support of the district academic senate. Challenges in early Pathways implementation included timing, quality, and communication of Chancellor’s Office outreach, faculty resistance, and bureaucratic challenges related to the dynamics of a multi-college district. Respondents described using campus relationships, flexibility, and regional network partners to overcome these challenges. Forthcoming challenges participants anticipate include curricular redesign issues, funding challenges related to institutionalizing Pathways, and possible unwillingness from certain campus groups such as counselors, student service personnel, and “undeclared” faculty.<sup>36</sup> Some participants expect to use the same strategies to address future as past challenges.

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<sup>36</sup> That is, faculty in the “silent majority” who have not declared their stance on Pathways. See “Pockets of Faculty Resistance,” final paragraph.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My study investigated a problem that is at once personal and political: poor student completion in taxpayer-funded community colleges. These schools are state assets, as are the students: they are a future source of state revenue as employed, tax-paying citizens, colleges are increasingly accountable to the legislature for their success or lack thereof. Yet, completion statistics do not exist only on an XY axis: these data signify students' lived experiences. Students' academic successes and failures are personal, predicating not just self-efficacy but economic fortune.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how key constituents (college president and academic senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors and challenges that influence the implementation of Guided Pathways reform, as well as strategies they used to overcome those challenges and anticipated challenges. I gathered qualitative data through interviews and document review and the themes I uncovered point to several recommendations for multi-college community college districts and the Chancellor's Office.

Key factors influencing Pathways implementation at community colleges were financial support from state, faculty leadership, use of the regional network, and influence of the district academic senate; challenges encountered in implementation included bureaucratic challenges such as timing and communication gaps from the state Chancellor's Office, district logistical hurdles, and pockets of faculty resistance; and strategies colleges used to overcome challenges in initial implementation included use of regional networks, flexibility/adaptability and relationships. The many anticipated challenges varied but include difficulties related to mapping metamajors.

Of the key influential factors and challenges to Pathways implementation my study uncovered, the two most significant are the influence of the district academic senate and the bureaucratic barriers. My findings yield insight on some concrete steps which can streamline implementation of current and future reform in order to benefit students.

In this final chapter, I draw conclusions from my most significant findings in the context of relevant literature and make recommendations. After discussing limitations of the study, its contributions to the literature, and possibilities for future research, I conclude with a personal reflection.

### **Discussion**

My study is anchored in the problem of student completion. Two of my respondents started their interview acknowledging this, and another two ended with such remarks. Thus, in implementation of the newest educational reform Guided Pathways, hearts and minds are fertile for ideas which will optimize student outcomes. Yet, progress is slow because of logistical and bureaucratic challenges.

Certainly some challenges are expected, like skepticism and suspicion as individuals worry about how changes related to Guided Pathways implementation will affect their daily quotidian. Accordingly, my participants described such resistance—whether from faculty worried about the classes they teach, counselors concerned about shifting roles, or various other staff—administrators, student service personnel, and so forth—concerned about maintaining operational stability as colleges face multiple simultaneous changes and challenges.

But the largest obstacles described by these college leaders in a multi-college district are of a logistical nature, concerning coordination and communication between colleges, between the district office and the colleges, the district and the board of trustees, and between the state

and the colleges/district. None of my respondents interpreted these difficulties as intentional or nefarious; although at times expressing frustration, they overwhelmingly took a pragmatic, no-nonsense view of the situations they described. They were familiar with these operational challenges from past experience and they expected more of the same in the future. Their strengths lie in their ability to negotiate this multi-tiered bureaucratic gauntlet with resilience and good humor. Their most relied upon—and according to their accounts, their most effective—strategy to combat hurdles consists of talking! –talking to each other in state or local committees, talking to fellow colleges, talking to each other instructor to instructor—but one way or another, leveraging established relationships to work things out collegially. The literature on educational reform, as explained in Ch. 2, describes the most successful reforms as being peer-led (faculty-driven) and inclusive of all college constituencies.

### **Influence of DAS**

The influence of the district academic senate emerged in my study as the most significant key factor influencing colleges' Pathways implementation. There is no scholarship specifically addressing district level academic senate in a multi-college district. Gerald (2014) researched multi-campus *college* presidents' perceptions of the AACC core competencies<sup>37</sup>—but not college president of multi-campus *districts* like the LACCD. Academic senates within a multi-college district are identified as a key actor in the curricular reform process described by Gallego (1997) but the conference proceeding is brief, and it is the college academic senates that are referenced, not a district-wide senate.

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 2, “Role of Community College Presidents,” for an overview of these.

None of my respondents mentioned what characteristic of the district academic senate made it so influential, although they did describe specific helpful actions it took. However, it is hard to know whether it was the district academic senate president, motions made by individual members, or some other factor, so it is impossible to draw conclusions about the factors that contribute to its influence on the colleges. Miller and Pope (2003) argue that a senate's leadership determines its strength; this could certainly apply at a district level. Clearly more study is needed on this subject.

### **Bureaucratic Challenges at State and District Levels**

Bureaucracy, on several levels, was overall the greatest obstacle to Guided Pathways implementation per my respondents. California's local control model for governance of the California community college system presents in this study of a multi-college district as an operational clash between the state Chancellor's Office and the district, the state Chancellor's Office and the colleges, and the district and the colleges. Rather than operating in sync, they are all running on separate tracks.

Timing is not coordinated enough. For example, the district office's attempts to coordinate Pathways efforts did not manifest until November 2018, 6 months after the college Pathways implementation teams had been required to submit their Work Plans to the state Chancellor's Office. The first LACCD Pathways Design Summit was not held until January 2019, only 6 months prior to the end of Phase 1 on the timeline created by the Chancellor's Office.

In contrast, the district academic senate had been preparing a job description for its own district level Pathways coordinators since Spring 2018. However, this position did not come online until January 2019, delayed by bureaucratic processes involving the district personnel

division. This illustrates the multiple levels of bureaucratic hurdles that can sabotage implementation efforts in a large system even when the efforts *are* well planned and well timed.

Communication gaps were profound, not only because the units were not in sync, but because the messaging from the state Chancellor's Office was not consistent. Respondents described receiving guidelines and tasks that changed a few months later;<sup>38</sup> conflicting messages from the state are exacerbated by the district-level bureaucracy, which is not nimble enough to respond quickly.

Darin (2013) uncovered definite resistance to the idea of central governance at a state level. Although his respondents overwhelmingly valued the current decentralized governance model, they did seem to acknowledge that California community colleges would benefit from more coordination. Two of the college presidents in my study acknowledged that staffing up the Chancellor's Office comes at a price to the colleges. Would it be worth the cost if colleges could count on clear messaging from the Chancellor's Office in regard to future initiatives? That is something only the colleges can answer.

The literature on bureaucracy in educational and organizational theory is extensive. Weber's (1946, 1947) early work on bureaucracy framed it as a practical solution to yield operational obedience within ethical constraints.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, bureaucracy is a tool to produce outcomes at scale for complex systems such as governments and schools which cannot simultaneously facilitate multiple independent decisions and still function (Lumby, 2019).

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<sup>38</sup> This was explained by my participants and confirmed by my review of chancellor's office communication documents.

<sup>39</sup> Obedience is Weber's word.



However, I see a distinction between the sheer unwieldiness of a system bureaucracy, the attendant constraints on innovation relative to its size—an apt metaphor might be the USS Queen Mary, and the time and effort needed to turn its trajectory by two degrees, for example, relative to a smaller boat—and the simple operational challenges that can sabotage a desired change in direction. For example, technological and communication issues, which both presented in my findings, can undercut implementation. To extend the ocean liner metaphor, if the captain can't communicate with the engine room, or if the ship springs a leak, the time or effort it takes to turn the rudder two degrees starboard is immaterial.

The LACCD is clearly the Queen Mary in this metaphor; it is an enormous apparatus of multiple units that must closely cooperate to serve passengers. Each unit comprises its own interior universe of still more disparate units. Some level of deviation is permissible to a point—if a sick housekeeper can't turn over her suite of rooms, or if the bus boys in Catering go on strike—the ship can still sail on. But too much simultaneous, or cumulative deviation, will eventually affect progress.

As the grand ocean liner puffs along, the state Chancellor's Office sends orders to navigate to a new destination; accordingly, the ship changes course. Up on the bridge the district chancellor and his team call orders into the intercoms, but the lines crackle and the message is interpreted differently by different units. At subsequent intervals along the journey, the Chancellor's Office sends revised instructions; the captains relay the new coordinates. Perhaps this time, several of the intercoms don't work on the receiving end and the new message doesn't get through to all. It's hard not to imagine a situation of absurdity, if not chaos, slowly coming to a boil. What are the personnel in the individual units, perhaps comparing notes in the break

room, meant to do? Keeping folding towels of course, keep serving passengers—that’s what they know how to do—and wait for leadership to sort it out.

Perhaps the district academic senate appears in this scenario as the Coast Guard—they see the ocean liner stalled out at sea, struggling to change direction, or changing direction erratically. They come alongside and ask questions, make suggestions, and intercede between the state Chancellor’s Office and the boat captains. How precisely they do this would make interesting reading, as I discuss in suggestions for additional research.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: Enhanced Communication in Chancellor’s Office**

**The Chancellor’s Office should enhance its communication.** Communication is vital. Conflicting messages from the state are exacerbated by the district-level bureaucracy, which is not nimble enough to respond so quickly, as shown in this study. Clear, consistent, and less frequently changed guidelines from the Chancellor’s Office would enhance districts’ and colleges’ ability to fully cooperate and produce desired outcomes sooner. Madsen (2008, n.p.) says: “No matter how well you believe a message was delivered, if it was not clearly received and understood, it was not effectively communicated.”

#### **Recommendation 2: Inclusion of District Academic Senate Representative in Chancellor’s Consultation Council**

When undertaking present or future reforms, **the Chancellor’s Office should invite a faculty representative from the district academic senate, such as the district senate president or designee, of the state’s four multi-college districts to its Chancellor’s Consultation Council meetings.** This would forge a stronger link to the large districts that require more internal coordination for timely and efficient implementation.

Currently, a member of the Community College League of California participates in Consultation Cabinet, but the League's board members are all college presidents. Including a representative of the district academic senate, which this study showed to be influential in facilitating Pathways implementation, will increase chances that the state's multi-college districts can organize and coordinate cohesive internal implementation from the inside out, instead of from the outside in.

### **Recommendation 3: Streamlined Internal Communication in Multi-College Districts**

**Multi-college districts should streamline internal communication.** Multi-college districts should collaborate with the district academic senate executive committee and their IT departments to ensure that all listservs are functioning and all proper constituents are added to the listservs. The district chancellor and his team should send the same instructions to all constituent groups via all listservs to avoid inconsistent messaging. Communication should be regular and redundant to ensure consistency.

### **Recommendation 4: Avoidance of Frequent Guidance Changes**

**In leading present or future reforms, the Chancellor's Office should avoid changing guidance more than once a year.** It is difficult to understand the need for sending changes and therefore conflicting instructions to the colleges during implementation; this study shows that for a multi-college district, doing so is counterproductive. Rather, the Chancellor's Office could take more time to interpret legislative imperatives and prepare the launch. No doubt there is much pressure on the Chancellor from the legislature, but the Chancellor should push back as much as possible and explain that haphazard implementation can yield haphazard results. He/she can cite evidence like this study and those that follow it. There must be a way to find a middle ground between the extreme of lengthy faculty deliberation at colleges and the quick turnaround

demanded by the legislature and the Chancellor. Local board members of multi-college districts should use their personal and political connections to legislators whenever possible to echo this message and thereby support the Chancellor's Office in this recommendation. Furthermore, this recommendation could integrate Recommendation 3 by including faculty representatives from multi-college districts in the planning before the launch.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited by its use of only qualitative data to investigate perceptions of college presidents and academic senate presidents in a large multi-college district. The collection of quantitative data through a statewide survey could enlarge the picture of implementation (influences and challenges) statewide. Furthermore, the site of my study was a large, urban multi-college district; its characteristics might have yielded findings that differ substantially from what college presidents and academic senate presidents at small, rural, and/or single college districts might have said. In addition, other multi-college districts might work differently, and have different dynamics.

Furthermore, my study was limited by the amount of interviews I conducted; interviewing all nine college presidents and senate presidents might have proved even more illuminating. However, my selection criteria (college presidents and senate presidents who have held their position for at least 1 year) as well as my reluctance to use my own college limited my pool of interview candidates. To be sure, I believe my selection criterion of "held the position for at least 1 year" did enhance my study by ensuring a level of familiarity of each respondent with his/her campus which could yield richer findings.

Finally, I conducted this study during the first phase of the California statewide Pathways implementation calendar. While the findings are still fascinating, conducting it at a later implementation phase may have yielded different results.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study contributes to the dearth of research on Guided Pathways implementation in California community colleges, as well as the literature gap on innovation implementation in multi-college community college districts, the role of the (college level) academic senate, the district academic senate in a multi-college community college district, and the state Chancellor's Office in educational reform.

A future study might investigate whether there are differences in key influencing factors and challenges among multi-college and single-college districts, since approximately half of California community college districts contain only one college.<sup>40</sup> There is a considerable range between multi-college districts themselves—my site contains nine colleges, but some districts contain as few as two or three. In addition, given my study's finding of the district academic senate's influence on reform implementation, it would be interesting to interview district academic senate presidents and/or vice-presidents in multi-college districts throughout the state to examine if the phenomenon of an influential districtwide senate extends to other multi-college districts.

Research on the Chancellor's Office and how it perceives and relates to, on an operational basis, the multi-college districts and individual colleges (during reform and in

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40 Fifty-two of the 72 districts (72%) govern only a single college; only three districts statewide contain four or more colleges. (<http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Districts.aspx>)

general) would be invaluable. A researcher could examine the viability of my recommendations, for instance.

Finally, a study similar to this one, whether or not recalibrated per some of the above suggestions, would be interesting to conduct at a later phase of Pathways implementation.

### **Significance of My Research**

I plan to share my findings with faculty leaders at the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Chancellor's Office, and the AACC. Findings on the perceptions of community college leaders (presidents and academic senate presidents) on factors influencing the implementation of Guided Pathways, as well as challenges encountered, strategies to overcome those challenges, and challenges anticipated in the remaining phases of Pathways implementation, will be useful to these parties in the future. Multi-college districts will find my study relevant, particularly in regards to the role of the district academic senate, but single college districts can benefit as well.

### **Reflection**

Whether or not Guided Pathways will be the panacea for poor completion rates remains to be seen; however, the matter is extremely complicated, so below I reflect on the nuances that surround the Guided Pathways conversation. As alluded to in my introduction, the current political climate of the community college world is one of upheaval and distrust. Timing *is* everything, and the timing of California's statewide Pathways rollout has unfortunately coincided with the passage of two other large-scale systemic disruptions: a new funding formula partially based on college success rates, and AB705, a law enabling college freshmen to place directly into transfer-level Math and English classes. It is sobering that Guided Pathways, a complex, multi-faceted reform which has been many years in the making, anchored in extensive

research and piloted widely, could succeed or fail not by virtue of its own merits but simply because of the unfortunate timing and fraught political context of its rollout.

As a faculty leader, I understand faculty fear surrounding these momentous changes. It is a lot to ask faculty to change almost everything about how we do business: not only how the college gets paid, with its attendant financial implications for how many students graduate or transfer in a given year, but also to the way programs and majors are structured and sequenced, and how instructors teach their classes. This would be a lot in the course of one career, let alone all three within the span of 3 years. People are only human. Whether or not college and faculty practices are in error, the reality is that status quo bias is real and that humans find change terrifying, as well-equipped as our brains are to adapt to it.

On the other hand, while conducting my literature review of past suggested interventions for community colleges to increase student success, I was struck by the many parallels between reform measures suggested decades ago by scholars but never implemented (at scale, anyway) and the reforms now being forcibly enacted by the state legislature. It is difficult not to conclude that colleges had sufficient “warning” and time to metabolize these changes in a more incremental fashion and at their own discretion, customized for local needs and challenges.

Also at play here are profound philosophical and cultural differences between the actors party to these many concurrent community college reforms. Politicians and businesspeople prize timely outcomes and tangible products; academics value tradition and process. Accordingly, many current educational institutional practices and pedagogies are hundreds of years old. Ideologically, academics value philosophical inquiry (for both faculty and students) and academic freedom, two values faculty may perceive as directly at odds with some of the changes being advocated. Neoliberalism is an ever-present wolf at the door of public education; one of

the many changes legislated for community colleges in the last 24 months was Chancellor Oakley's creation of an entirely online 115<sup>th</sup> community college "to prepare students for jobs." Although the chancellor claimed its goal was not to compete with existing college online courses and programs, the online college is seen by colleges and their faculty statewide as a direct threat to their online enrollment. To add insult to injury, an MBA was hired to serve as college president. This triggers deep resentment among educators at the presumption that finance expertise equates to educational know-how, and underlines for them the many times businesspeople have been brought in to "fix" educational institutions that have failed expectations.

However, one value all parties share—politicians, businesspeople, college administrators and instructors, and taxpayers—is student success. If we can press pause on territorial skirmishes and competition among egos/reputations long enough to actually listen to each other, I believe that is what we would hear. We all want our learners to succeed academically and thrive professionally. We want them to learn, but in a reasonable amount of time, *and* make money that enables their families and our state to thrive. In order to achieve that, given our nuanced system of state and local governance with its bureaucratic complexities and our human foibles, we are going to have to do some of the same things that my participants found necessary for successful Pathways implementation: we are going to have to talk to each other. We are going to have to leverage personal relationships, be flexible, and open ourselves to trying things that scare us. And for college faculty and administrators—we are going to have to do all this while we are really tired, both from the sheer volume of change work required and the stress of it all.

My recommendations directly support this idea of working together around a focus on shared values. Improving communication in both state-to-college and district-to-college levels,



as well as expanding the state Chancellor’s Consultation Council to include faculty leadership, are critical steps in this direction.

### **Summary**

I reviewed in this chapter my study’s most significant findings in the context of relevant literature, accounted for limitations, made recommendations and concluded with a personal reflection. In this study of key implementation factors and challenges during Guided Pathways implementation, significant findings emerged with insight that benefits both multi-college districts and the Chancellor’s Office. Implementing these recommendations will enhance connection between the Chancellor’s Office and multi-college districts, facilitating smoother implementation in our shared efforts to accelerate student completion.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Holly Bailey-Hofmann

January 14, 2019

Interview Protocol for Community College President and Academic Senate President

For the proposed study: Key Factors that Influence Guided Pathways Implementation in California Community Colleges according to Community College Leaders

### Introduction and Consent Language

I appreciate your willingness to participate in my research. The data from this interview will be incorporated into my study of key factors in Guided Pathways implementation in community colleges. The content of the interview will be confidential and your identity will not be disclosed. My research is not dependent on the success or failure of any of the change efforts being attempted at your college.

The interview should take an hour or less. You will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in this interview. If you choose to stop participating before the end of the interview, you will still receive the gift card.

Our conversation will be audio recorded so I can make a transcript of our conversation. I will be the only person who has access to our recorded interview and its transcription. Are you okay with me recording our conversation? *[Pause for verbal consent.]*

Any quotes I use from our interview will be assigned a pseudonym and no participant names or identifying features (such as college enrollment count) will be used in writing up the study.

Do you have any questions you would like me to answer before we begin? *[Pause for answer.]*

[Start recording devices.]

## Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about your professional background and how you came to your current position.

Probe: How long have you held this position?

Probe: Please briefly describe what other positions in academia or elsewhere you have held *prior to* your current position and for approximately how long.

Probe (*for college presidents*): Have you ever been faculty?

2. What initially led to your college's decision to implement Guided Pathways?

Probe: Who was involved in making this decision?

3. Describe how the *process* by which your college began institutionalization/implementation of Guided Pathways.

Probe: By law, community colleges are meant to use the participatory governance process to make major college decisions, especially curricular ones. Practice sometimes differs from policy.

How does that relate to the process you just described?

Probe: Who made the decisions about how to, for example, form a GP committee or who will do GP work?

4. Describe the factors/influences/events that influenced your college's *ongoing progress* (or lack thereof) toward Guided Pathways implementation.

Probe: Tell me what influence, if any, the Chancellor's Office had on your college's progress (or lack thereof) toward Guided Pathways implementation.

Probe: Can you name any specific factors?

Probe: Are there any resources or resource people your college has consulted? (Regional events, consultants, campus visits, etc.)

**5. For college presidents only:** Tell me what role the Academic Senate has played in Guided Pathways implementation.

Probe: What role has the Academic Senate president played?

Probe: Can you give me an example?

**For Academic Senate presidents only:** Tell me what role the College President has played in Guided Pathways implementation.

Probe: Can you give me an example?

6. In the past few years, particularly 2017 to the present, the Chancellor's Office has been publishing regular communications, offering regional conferences, advertising resources, and so forth to community colleges as a part of its effort to influence state-wide implementation of Guided Pathways. Describe the use your college, and any individuals at your college, has made of these overtures.

7. What district level efforts are in place to facilitate the implementation of Guided Pathways?

Probe: How have those efforts (if applicable) been influential in your college's Guided Pathways implementation?

Probe: Can you give me an example?

8. What are the primary challenges your college has faced or currently faces in Guided Pathways implementation?

Probe: Can you give me an example?

9. If your college has faced implementation challenges (#8), have you managed to overcome those challenges? How?

Probe: Have faculty been resistant? How so? Please describe.

Probe: Can you give me an example?

Probe: How have you addressed these challenges?

Is there anything else you would like to share on this topic?

Thank you so much for your time and participation.

I will be transcribing this interview in the next few days, and I can offer you the option to review the recording transcript. Please contact me before March 15<sup>th</sup> if you would like to review the transcript.

And as a thank you for your time, I will be sending you a link in the next day or so for your Amazon gift card.

Some language was adapted from Apigo (2015).

## APPENDIX B: DOCUMENT PROTOCOL

Document	Information to obtain	Research question
College (and district) calendars, website, mission statement, accreditation self-study documents, artifacts, meeting minutes, College Council and/or Academic Senate resolutions, newsletters, emails, etc.	Evidence of (college and/or district) town hall meetings to explain or solicit input on Guided Pathways Documents/artifacts articulating college's social system, college values (e.g., mission statement, accreditation self-study documents)	1. How do key constituents (college president, senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence the statewide reform process of Guided Pathways implementation? a. What are the key factors described by <u>college presidents</u> as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?
Newsletters, emails, resolutions produced by the college president, senior staff, or district chancellor	College Council/ Faculty Senate (as applicable) resolutions concerning implementation of Guided Pathways (or lack thereof)  Faculty Senate/College Council (as applicable) resolution to embed GP into participatory governance structure (or lack thereof)  Integration of GP into college participatory governance structure (whether or not it's formally called a committee)	b. What are the key factors described by <u>academic senate presidents</u> as influential in Guided Pathways implementation?  2. What are the primary challenges and barriers in Guided Pathways implementation a. according to <u>college presidents</u> ? b. according to <u>academic senate presidents</u> ?

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<p>Committee or department meeting minutes showing collaboration among constituencies/disciplines in implementation of GP or investigation of, and preparation for, implementation of GP</p> <p>Senate newsletters, emails concerning GP (or lack thereof)</p> <p>Evidence of campus meetings to brainstorm/solicit input/plan GP (or lack thereof)</p> <p>District/chancellor newsletters, emails, resolutions related to GP (or lack thereof)</p> <p>College documents/artifacts articulating college's social system, college values (e.g., mission statement, accreditation self-study documents)</p> <p>College Council/ Academic Senate (as applicable) resolutions or meeting minutes showing resistance/urgency/enthusiasm/indifference/etc. to Guided Pathways</p> <p>Faculty Senate/College Council (as applicable) resolutions or meeting</p>	<p>3. In what ways are campuses overcoming challenges to Guided Pathways implementation</p> <p>a. according to <u>college presidents</u>?</p> <p>b. according to <u>academic senate presidents</u>?</p>
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minutes urging compliance with  
Chancellor's Office, or resisting  
actions of Chancellor's Office

Committee or department meeting  
minutes urging compliance with  
Chancellor's Office, or opposing  
actions of Chancellor's Office

Senate newsletters, emails urging  
compliance with Chancellor's  
Office, or resisting actions of  
Chancellor's Office

District/chancellor newsletters,  
emails, resolutions urging  
compliance with Chancellor's  
Office, or resisting actions of  
Chancellor's Office

Evidence of retreats or meetings  
held by campus group for the  
express purpose of GP planning to  
comply with Chancellor's Office  
directives, or to resist Chancellor's  
Office's push of GP

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## APPENDIX C: STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

*Key Factors that Influence Guided Pathways Implementation in California Community Colleges according to Community College Leaders*

Holly Bailey-Hofmann, Ed.D. candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study for her dissertation. Dr. Robert Teranishi from the Education Department at UCLA is her faculty sponsor.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a California community college leader, defined as faculty or administrator who is participating and/or leading Guided Pathways implementation efforts at your campus. I am seeking two types of participants for the study: the college president, and the Academic Senate President. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

Guided Pathways is a state-wide educational reform being implemented to address low degree/certificate completion and transfer rates, as well as long completion times, in community colleges. Present and future educational reform stakeholders will benefit from understanding key factors influential to Guided Pathways implementation at local campuses. The purpose of this study is to explore how key constituents (college

president, Senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence the statewide reform process of Guided Pathways implementation.

### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in a one-on-one private, recorded interview regarding Guided Pathways implementation at your campus.
- Have the option to review interview transcripts for accuracy.

### **How long will I be in the research study?**

The interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes.

### **Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

Interview questions focus on campus implementation of Guided Pathways. Some participants may feel uncomfortable if they do not wish to discuss this information. I will use a pseudonym when referring to specific colleges by name and conceal identifiable characteristics such as enrollment numbers.

### **Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

Participation will provide valuable input on the state of educational innovation in California community colleges.

**Will I be paid for participating?**

All interview participants will receive a \$20 Amazon.com gift card for their participation.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, no participant names or identifying features [of participants, or colleges] will be used in writing up the study. The demographic questions in the interview ask respondents about their role on campus, how long they have been working, and their involvement and opinions about Guided Pathways implementation at their college. Campus names will be collected only for tracking purposes, and I will use a pseudonym when referring to specific colleges by name.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

- **The research team:**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, please contact: Holly Bailey-Hofmann, the researcher, at [baileyhh@wla.edu](mailto:baileyhh@wla.edu) or (310) 415-3986 or Dr. Robert Teranishi, Faculty Sponsor, at [robert.teranishi@ucla.edu](mailto:robert.teranishi@ucla.edu) or (310) 825-5380.

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program 11000 Kinross Avenue,  
Suite 211, Box 951694  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

## APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES RECRUITMENT LETTER EMAIL

**Subject: Research Participation Invitation – Interview of <College Presidents/Academic Senate Presidents> >(this was customized for each of the two target groups) concerning Guided Pathways Implementation**

My name is Holly Bailey-Hofmann, and I am an Ed.D. candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). I am also the Academic Senate president at West Los Angeles College.

I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation study *Key Factors that Influence Guided Pathways Implementation in California Community Colleges according to Community College Leaders*. Dr. Robert Teranishi from the Education Department at UCLA is my faculty sponsor. The purpose of this study is to explore how key constituents (college president, Senate president) on community college campuses describe the key factors that influence the statewide reform process of Guided Pathways implementation.

As a(n) <college president /Academic Senate President>, you were selected to be in this study because you are a California community college leader, defined as faculty or administrator who is participating and/or leading Guided Pathways implementation efforts at your campus.

I am soliciting participants to interview for 45-60 minutes at a location convenient for you. Your responses will be confidential and your identity concealed. Your participation in the interview is voluntary. You will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card for participation.

Most importantly, your participation will provide valuable input on implementation of educational innovation in California community colleges.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [baileyhh@wlaac.edu](mailto:baileyhh@wlaac.edu) or (310) 415-3986 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Robert Teranishi at [robert.teranishi@ucla.edu](mailto:robert.teranishi@ucla.edu) OR (310) 825-5380.

If you would like additional information about the study, please click here to review the Study Information Sheet. ([Link was provided.](#))

Thank you for your time in completing this survey and contributing to the study.

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