

Building Clear Roads to Success: A Blueprint for Implementing Program Maps for 2+2 Pathways to Community College Bachelor's Degrees

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Carrie Henderson, Ph.D., Managing Advisor
Katie Grissom, Associate



This white paper explores the development and implementation of program maps to enhance 2+2 pathways, ensuring clear and efficient transitions from associate to baccalaureate programs at community colleges. By integrating the principles of guided pathways, these structured roadmaps help institutions streamline degree completion and improve student success metrics. This document outlines the benefits of program maps, strategies for building them, and considerations for their maintenance.

Understanding Program Maps

Program maps provide structured, sequential guides that align general education and major-specific courses to streamline the associate degree completion process. They facilitate a smooth transfer to community college bachelor's (CCB) programs by clearly delineating course pathways. Developed collaboratively by faculty and advisors, program maps also serve as crucial advising tools that support both academic and career planning.

The Community College Research Center defines guided pathways as a whole-college redesign model that helps students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs aligned with their goals efficiently and affordably.¹ Program maps are a foundational component of this model.

Benefits of Program Maps

➤ Benefits to Students

1. **Clear Academic Pathways:** Minimize confusion by clearly outlining required courses.
2. **Timely Degree Completion:** Reduce excess credit accumulation, saving time and money.
3. **Improved Transfer Success:** Align coursework with upper-division CCB program requirements for a seamless transition.
4. **Cost Efficiency:** Avoid financial burdens related to unnecessary coursework.
5. **Reduced Decision Fatigue:** Pre-defined plans simplify course selection.
6. **Increased Confidence:** Empower students to stay on track and achieve their goals.

➤ Benefits to Institutions

1. **Increased Student Retention:** Clear pathways keep students on track, lowering dropout rates.
2. **Higher Completion Rates:** Streamlined course sequences enhance graduation metrics.
3. **Efficient Resource Allocation:** Predictable course demand supports optimized scheduling and faculty workload management.
4. **Enhanced Advising Efficiency:** Standardized maps empower advisors to provide consistent, effective guidance.

5. **Stronger Faculty Collaboration:** The process of developing maps fosters interdisciplinary alignment.
6. **Commitment to Equity:** Guided pathways promote equitable access and success for all students.
7. **Accreditation Support:** Clear documentation of academic pathways strengthens compliance with accreditation standards.

Building Program Maps

The process of creating effective program maps involves six key steps:

1. **Design a Template:** Establish a standardized template that includes prerequisites, term-by-term course sequencing, electives, degree requirements, and financial aid information.
2. **Identify Degree Requirements:** Gather general education requirements, prerequisites for CCB programs, and any additional associate degree criteria.
3. **Sequence Courses:** Develop a logical, semester-based plan that prioritizes foundational courses, accounts for prerequisites, and balances student workloads.
4. **Plan for Upper-Division Success:** Collaborate with faculty to ensure students complete prerequisites and skill-building courses for advanced learning. Recommend electives that align with career pathways and encourage experiential learning opportunities.
5. **Add Advising Information:** Include key details such as prerequisite grade requirements, financial aid guidance, recommended electives, and available academic support resources.
6. **Validate and Review:** Ensure maps align with official catalog requirements. Solicit input from faculty, advisors, and students to maintain accuracy and relevance. Establish a review cycle to reflect changes in curriculum, accreditation standards, and institutional policies.

What are some key considerations for maintaining an academic program?

Considerations for Maintenance

1. **Regular Review of Academic Catalogs:** Verify that course offerings, descriptions, and prerequisites remain accurate.
2. **Faculty Consultation:** Periodically consult faculty to confirm elective recommendations and identify emerging trends.
3. **Financial Aid Compliance:** Ensure program maps comply with federal financial aid guidelines to avoid excess credit accumulation.
4. **Document and Communicate Updates:** Maintain a log of changes and communicate updates to advisors, faculty, and students to ensure consistent use of the latest version.

Conclusion

Implementing and maintaining effective program maps is essential to supporting student success and institutional performance. These pathways streamline the educational journey, reduce barriers to completion, and promote equitable outcomes for diverse student populations. By adopting a structured approach to program mapping, community colleges can enhance their capacity to guide students toward timely degree completion and career readiness.

Endnotes

- ¹ Community College Research Center. (2024). *Guided Pathways*.