



Richard Bland College

of WILLIAM & MARY

RBC at the CCRC's Summer Institute for Guided Pathways at Rural Colleges

June 14-24, 2021

At the [Community College Research Center's \(CCRC\) institute for Guided Pathways at Rural Colleges](#) in June, the team from Richard Bland College examined RBC data on programs, demographics, and course-taking. They also heard the most recent thinking on guided pathways from leaders in the movement as well as testimonials from colleges whose implementation of guided pathways increased student enrollment, retention, and completion while decreasing time to degree. The data exercises revealed that RBC has yet to group its degree programs into "meta-majors," or broad areas of interest, that can help students determine how to proceed with a plan of study early in their college career. The team was introduced to the "Ask, Connect, Inspire, Plan" model of onboarding, which reimagines the student's experience from admissions through the first semester by ensuring that students:

1. receive multiple formal opportunities to express their academic, career, and transfer interests as early as admissions and throughout their initial advising and first-year experience courses,
2. connect to an academic and career community of other students, alumni, faculty, and partners,
3. become inspired by meaningful educational experiences in their area of interest in the first semester, and
4. exit their first semester with a plan of study to complete their degree and either transfer to a four-year college or enter the workforce.

Choosing a Path: Ask, Connect, Inspire, Plan

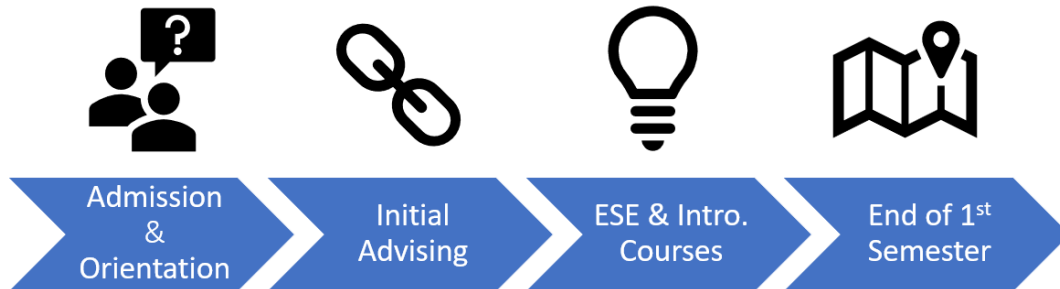


Figure 1.0 “Visualizing the ACIP Onboarding Model at RBC”

The CCRC emphasized that the adoption of guided pathways is not another initiative; it is a movement that centers student success and equity by addressing those aspects of the educational system that present obstacles for different groups of students. The RBC team identified first-generation, Pell-eligible, and African American students as among those student groups that it could serve better, and it examined case studies of successful implementers of guided pathways, as well as its own programs, to produce a list of six meta-majors around which RBC can organize its degree programs, study plans, and academic & career communities:

- Liberal Arts & Humanities
- Science & Technology
- Health & Biosciences
- Business & Entrepreneurship
- Education, Counseling, & Public Service
- Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics

Key areas of interest and development for the evolution of Exceptional Student Experience (ESE) to Guided Pathways for Success (GPS@RBC) that emerged from the team’s experiences and work during the institute include:

- A “both/and” advising model that realizes greater collaboration between Learner Mentors and Faculty Advisors within a meta-major
- The organization and standardization of first-year experience courses by meta-major in order to provide inspiring, momentum-building experiences that connect students with academic and career communities and assist in the development of an individualized plan of study
- The completion of program mapping and study plans by Faculty
- The identification or development of career and skill inventories and instruments for use by Learner Mentors
- The streamlining of the “interest-to-confirmation pipeline” by Admissions to six steps or fewer
- A renewed emphasis on experiential learning in introductory courses in a major taken during the first semester in addition to supports for students in crucial English and math courses (co-requisite models for English and math were affirmed along with moving toward placement through multiple measures—re-examining pre-requisites may be in order)
- The transparent and accessible tracking of student success data on a “Metrics that Matter Most Dashboard” that attends to enrollment, retention, completion, and equity.

Those who are interested in learning more at this time are invited to attend the ongoing meetings of the Learner Success Lab and its subcommittees, all of which are open to all members of the campus community who desire to attend. To check meeting times and committee charges, visit the LSL [SharePoint site](#) or email lsl@rbc.edu to inquire. You can also ask any of the members of the attending CCRC team from RBC: Thom Addington, Tiffany Birdsong, Eric Earnhardt, Mary Gurnick, Alice Henton, or Jason Pode.

The team left the institute excited and energized about how guided pathways can help RBC reduce the number of obstacles the education system places before our students and help RBC deliver on our student value proposition.

The team would like to express its deepest thanks to the CCRC and the Program Lead, CCRC Senior Research Associate, Hana Lahr, and RBC’s primary contacts and guides during the institute, CCRC Senior Research Associate, John Fink, CCRC Research Associate, Amy E. Brown. Their help was instrumental in coming to our conclusions and making the most of the experience. We would also like to thank Lindsey Myers and Erin Baldwin, RBC’s ACE-LSL Advisors, who directed us to the opportunity.