

Strategic Coaching Design

Advancing Student Success with a Networked Improvement Community

In the fall of 2017, JFF launched the Assessment, Research, and Coaching Pilot Project aimed at providing modest amounts of funding to Centers in the Student Success Center Network to design and implement coaching strategies. The Pilot funded 10 Centers to implement coaching to address high need areas such as guided pathways implementation informed by the Scale of Adoption Assessment (SOAA), data collection on student enrollment and outcomes to inform implementation, and institutional capacity for transformative change. The Centers tested their coaching designs over a 1-year period, offering early lessons on how colleges are using coaching to implement guided pathways and student success strategies.

The North Carolina Student Success Center, housed within the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) office, launched the North Carolina Guided Pathways to Success in January 2018 using a networked improvement community approach to accelerate learning and advance student success reforms, increase statewide capacity, and sustain improvements. The first cohort, which includes 17 out of the 58 community colleges, began implementing guided pathways in May 2018.

North Carolina Guided Pathways to Success Goals

- Assist cohorts of colleges with adopting North Carolina Guided Pathways to Success Network (NC GPS) practices at scale through intensive professional and organizational development in a learning and sharing network of support.
- Engage all 58 community colleges in using the Scale of Adoption Self-Assessment as a tool for benchmarking and change across the NCCCS.
- Create networked improvement communities (NICs) with cadres of trained practitioner-facilitators for cross-college collaboration and continuous learning; these groups are referred to as the NC GPS Network.
- Leverage resources to ensure that technical assistance and professional development will be available for non-cohort colleges.

Why Coaching?

North Carolina aims to build internal capacity for change leadership that supports scaling and sustainability efforts. Coaches advocate for transformative change for students and colleagues in the NC Community College System. Each NIC Facilitator is a practitioner located within his/her respective college whose roles include coaching, advising, organizing, and catalyzing change.

Why a Networked Improvement Community?

NICs are unique types of networks that utilize human and technical resources in ways that advance their improvement processes (Bryk et al, 2010).¹ The NC GPS Network is one of these learning communities that shares current insights and innovations, and develops collective capacity to use data, test ideas, and improve processes. Additionally, the NC GPS Network informs system- and college-level policy and practice-based reforms.

Promising Accomplishments

- Established the first cohort of colleges and their leadership teams, including the NIC Facilitators who will receive coaching training to prepare them to fulfill the dual role of facilitator and coach.
- Introduced NIC Facilitators to using improvement science and tools such as systems mapping, fishbone diagrams, and driver diagrams to identify problems, set goals, establish measures, select solutions to make, and test changes.
- Prepared NIC Facilitators to map out student experiences in order to help their colleges identify resources needed to support students along their academic and student success pathways.
- Hosted first of four NC GPS Institutes adapted from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) coaching model.

¹ Bryk A. S., Gomez L. M., & Grunow A. (2010). *Getting ideas into action: Building networked improvement communities in education*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Stanford, CA, essay, retrieved from <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/spotlight/webinar-bryk-gomez-building-networkedimprovement-communities-in-education>

Coaching Design and Strategies

LEADERSHIP

The 2018 cohort includes 17 colleges with one NIC Facilitator per institution who is an employee selected by college leadership to facilitate guided pathways efforts for two years. NIC Facilitators bring a variety of professional expertise from their primary roles in academic and student services. Each college leadership team is composed of six to ten members including the NIC Facilitator, the president, and the chief academic officer. The latter is the lead contact whose role is to hold the college accountable and drive the change.

TRAINING

The training design for the NIC Facilitators incorporates networking practices, strategies for building internal capacity, and professional development and technical assistance for the facilitators and colleges. NIC Facilitators receive initial training for their NIC role, read selected books about ways to improve student success, and participate in all NC GPS Institutes. They also shadow national experts with the ultimate goal of developing a pool of experts in North Carolina. Beginning in fall 2019, a subset of eight NIC Facilitators will be highly trained as coaches. NIC Facilitators from neighboring institutions will serve as learning and support partners for professional development, assessment, data collection and reporting, and results sharing among colleges and across the state.

DESIGN

The coaching plan is carried out by the NIC Facilitators who are supported by the NC SSC, local subject matter experts, and national partners. The facilitators support their colleges in learning about and leading college-wide transformations based on the guided pathways framework. Each NIC Facilitator works closely with the college president, other campus leaders and college divisions with the support of the full NC GPS Network to



engage in transformative change. In the collaborative structure of a NIC, each convening of the NC GPS Network concludes with a completed work product and a summary of next steps for the NIC Facilitators to use at their colleges in support of guided pathways implementation plans. Scheduled events through June 2019 include three additional NC GPS Institutes, two regional one day financial stability conferences, a convening on holistic student supports and advising, and the creation of a faculty teaching and learning series for all 58 colleges.

MONITORING

In this initial stage, the AACC coaching model was used as a guide for the first NC GPS Institute in May 2018. This and other models are being considered as planning moves forward. A critical goal of the NC SSC is for future institutes to use subject matter experts in a variety of areas to offer guidance and share expertise on methods to affect transformative change. As a tool for gathering evidence about what needs to change, the Scale of Adoption Assessment will be utilized in the second institute to help identify which professional development, technical assistance, and coaching activities would be most beneficial for each of the cohort colleges.

CCRI Role

As a national partner for the Student Success Center Network, Community College Research Initiatives (CCRI) supports Student Success Center Executive Directors in the design of evidence-based coaching strategies for their guided pathways implementation. These designs utilize strategic planning, technical assistance, professional development, communities of practice, and applied research and evaluation to achieve more equitable outcomes for community college students. Broadly, CCRI conducts research on equitable college access, progression and transfer, degree completion, and employment in living-wage careers for underserved students and diverse learner populations throughout the United States. Follow us on Twitter [@CCRI_UW](https://twitter.com/CCRI_UW).

Student Success Center Network research is funded by Jobs for the Future to the University of Washington Foundation and the Community College Research Initiatives at University of Washington. This work is licensed to the public under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license (see creativecommons.org), which governs the Terms of Use. You are free to copy, display, and distribute this work, or include the content in derivative works, under condition that the work is fully and properly attributed to the authors and to the Community College Research Initiatives, University of Washington.



Suggested citation: Newton, R., & Kovacich, K. (2018). *Advancing student success with a networked improvement community: The North Carolina Student Success Center strategic coaching process*. Seattle, WA: Community College Research Initiatives (CCRI), University of Washington, Seattle.