

DesignForScale: OHIO

STRENGTHENING STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICY THROUGH A STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT

The DesignForScale Series encourages the field to develop a more strategic and cohesive approach to scaling student success reforms at and across community colleges. The series affirms that it is time to be more systematic, serious, and organized about designing visionary, integrated reforms to be implemented at scale, while maintaining appreciation for questions, new evidence, and college context. The series highlights innovative state efforts to scale structured pathways reforms across the community colleges in their states; other states seeking to scale reforms will find these approaches instructive.

Photograph courtesy of LaGuardia Community College

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY: EXAMINING STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

State and institutional policy can play a pivotal role in efforts to increase student success at community colleges. But few colleges have the capacity to analyze the impact of existing policies or of potential changes that could pave the way for more students to graduate and complete postsecondary credentials. Most do not even know where or how to begin.

The Ohio community colleges participating in Completion by Design made the examination of state and institutional policy a priority from the outset. They recognized immediately that creating an environment that supports policy reform and changes in business practices would be essential to sustaining the intensity of their work and scaling improvements across the state. The Ohio cadre worked with Jobs for the Future, Completion by Design's national partner for state policy, to design a Student Success Audit for Community Colleges in order to help individual institutions:

- Review the effectiveness of existing state and institutional policies and practices and evaluate the extent to which they support student success.
- Identify which policies are state-level and which are under the control of the institution.
- Recommend changes to state and institutional policies and practices to better support student success and to set the conditions for sustainable, scaled reform.



WHAT IS THE STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

The Student Success Audit is a process designed to identify state and community college policies, practices, and business processes that affect student outcomes, and to prioritize revisions that would have the most positive impact on persistence and completion. The goal is for each college to develop a long-term plan for institution-wide policy change, as well as recommendations that can be implemented at the classroom, departmental, and state levels in the short term.

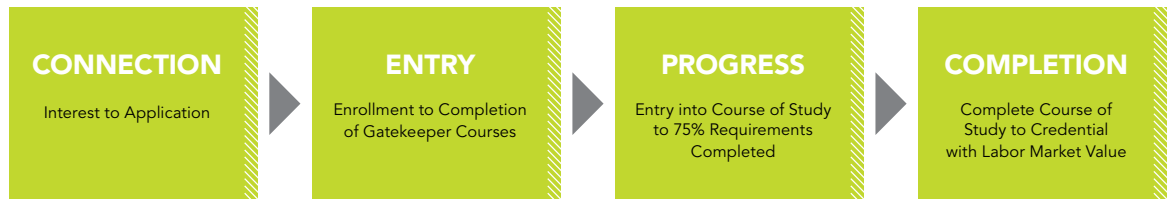
Each audit is tailored to the individual needs of the college. But all share these features:

- > The college invites participation from a broad group of stakeholders, including faculty, administrators, board members and staff from across the institution, and key external partners, such as representatives of local school districts, universities, and employers.
- > Faculty, staff, and partners complete online questionnaires designed by JFF about policies and practices related to each phase of a student's relationship with the college—from initial interest and application, through enrollment and completion of gatekeeper courses, entry into a program of study, and earning a credential with value in the regional labor market.
- > Each institutional policy and practice—at all levels and in all departments, from registration to attendance to prerequisite courses—is examined through the lens of supporting student progression and completion.
- > JFF compiles initial findings and convenes participants to discuss the results.
- > College teams work together, guided by JFF, to come to consensus about priorities for revisions.
- > JFF produces a report that analyzes the findings of the online questionnaire and the meetings of the college teams, synthesizing the results of the audit and highlighting key recommendations for next steps.
- > JFF meets with college leadership, helps them to develop an action plan, and then provides technical assistance for implementing recommendations.

PARTNERS IN THE STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- > [Jobs for the Future](#) is Completion by Design's national partner for state policy, providing support for design, content, and implementation.
- > [Ohio CBD Cadre Colleges](#) are managing partner Sinclair Community College, Lorain County Community College, and Stark State College.
- > [Ohio Association of Community Colleges](#) is the state lead for Completion by Design.
- > The [National Center for Inquiry and Improvement](#) provided guidance on content and analysis.

PREVENTING LOSS, CREATING MOMENTUM FRAMEWORK



SUPPORTING SCALE

Scale happens at many levels: within institutions, across states, and across the nation. Even if supported and guided from a state or national level, however, scale is dependent on local context and local implementation. And scale requires many conditions being primed and ready—ranging from state and institutional policy to leadership and technology.

The Student Success Audit for Community Colleges provides a structure, process, and tool for institutions and states to create conditions supportive of scale. By examining existing policies and practices, determining how supportive they are of student success, and making necessary changes, institutions are making their reforms concrete, long-term, and collegewide. While engaging in substantive conversations about their institution's policies and practices, each institution's faculty and staff are also able to determine which areas they cannot tackle on their own due to state law or regulations. Ultimately, colleges collaborating across Ohio will be able to pinpoint state policy reform priorities and collectively request changes that have the potential to help many more students graduate.

CBD colleges also are using the changes they make in their own policies and practices to demonstrate the possibilities to other Ohio colleges interested in increasing student success.

COMPLETION BY DESIGN

Completion by Design works with community colleges and their state partners to significantly increase credential completion and graduation rates for low-income students. The initiative, funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), takes a new approach to an old problem, aiming at comprehensive institutional transformation to create permanent improvement. Completion by Design collaborates with faculty and staff at a group of colleges to make systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices that strengthen pathways to completion while maintaining access and quality without increasing cost. The initiative also aligns state policy to support the colleges' work, and builds knowledge about how to succeed in this work at a large scale, with the goal of spreading CBD principles to other colleges in the state.

OHIO CADRE

The Ohio CBD cadre consists of three community colleges—managing partner Sinclair Community College, Lorain County Community College, and Stark State College. Together, the colleges serve nearly 54,000 students, about one-fourth of all Ohio community college students. The cadre is focusing on revising academic programs of study, with integrated improvements in developmental education, intensive advising, and academic pathway redesign. Florida and North Carolina also participate in CBD.

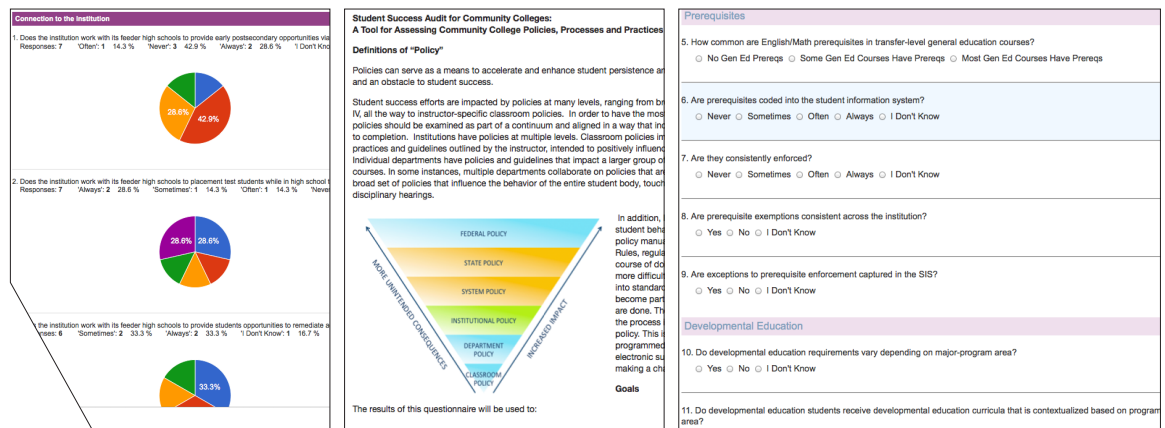
WHAT'S NEXT?

Ohio has made significant progress using the Student Success Audit to identify state and institutional policy revisions that would promote community college completion. This systematic process will set the stage for sustainable, long-term, scaled reforms.

Next steps include:

- > Each college will develop a plan for implementing the changes surfaced by the Student Success Audit. JFF will provide technical assistance in developing and implementing the plans.
- > The Ohio Association of Community Colleges will analyze policy changes needed at the state level, and JFF will advise the OACC on policy development and implementation.
- > The Ohio Association of Community Colleges and the three CBD cadre colleges are formulating a plan for scaling the audit process across all 23 community colleges in the state.

STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES



"THE STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT PROVIDED THE OHIO CADRE COLLEGES WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A DISCIPLINED APPROACH TO EVALUATING CURRENT POLICIES. HAVING JOBS FOR THE FUTURE FACILITATE THIS PROCESS ENABLED US TO JUMP START OUR POLICY WORK ON CAMPUS AND ACROSS THE STATE."

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE STUDENT SUCCESS AUDIT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES?

–Dr. Kathleen Cleary, Managing Project Director, Completion by Design Ohio

Please contact **Gretchen Schmidt**, Program Director at Jobs for the Future, at gschmidt@jff.org.