

Strategic Coaching Design

Making the Match

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 New Jersey Council of County Colleges established the New Jersey Center for Student Success in 2012 to serve as a statewide resource for the state's 19 community colleges. During the 2017-18 academic year, the Center identified the need to help colleges advance their guided pathways and college readiness work, selecting 7 coaches and 12 colleges to be part of the Student Success Center Network's coaching pilot.

Promising Accomplishments

- Five colleges developed a new student support and advising/coaching model, and one college has already trained their academic advisors in the new model.
- Four colleges re-organized their guided pathways efforts by developing new teams and creating communication plans. One college has used this approach to springboard their program mapping work and multiple measures approach.
- Two colleges improved their assessment practices and data utilization processes; one addressed student learning outcomes and one addressed the non-academic aspects of their newly designed student support and advising model.
- One college redesigned their First Year Seminar curriculum to align with guided pathways and had the coach/consultant train all the course instructors for Fall '18.

Coaching Design and Strategies

The Center adopted the term "coach/consultant" because consultant was used by the colleges before the coaching pilot began. Also, some colleges expressed a need for specific subject matter expertise rather than organizational change expertise; therefore, the term consultant seemed to be a better fit for their context. Recognizing the importance of both terms, a combined term of coach/consultant was adopted by the Center, with the following nine strategies playing a key role in the coaching design:

ASSESSMENT DATA

A variety of formal and informal assessment processes were used to determine the areas of greatest need for college coaching/consulting. Six areas identified for the first round of coaching were: 1) making the case: getting campus engagement in guided pathways; 2) developing program maps;

Why Coaching?

Using guided pathways as a framework, the NJ Center for Student Success offers professional development opportunities that provide a strong foundation for the guided pathways work of faculty, staff, and administrators. However, feedback from guided pathways leaders coupled with a third-party evaluation pointed to the need for increased individualized support for the colleges. Thus the Center developed a coaching program focusing on guided pathways as well as college readiness. A whole host of change initiatives are associated with the coaching program, including advising and course redesign, program mapping, and career planning.

KEY FEATURES OF THE COACHING STRATEGY

- Expertise from inside and outside of NJ represented in 7 coaches/consultants working with 12 colleges on guided pathways or college readiness.
- Well-crafted matching process involving the Center leadership, colleges, and potential coaching candidates to ensure the best-qualified coaches are matched to college needs.
- Formative evaluation including a standardized reporting process to document coaching and college accomplishments, challenges and shared learning.

3) implementing Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) and other developmental education re-designs; 4) exploring and implementing advising and student support models; 5) using student success /first year experience courses to help students choose and stay on a path; and 6) developing or enhancing a teaching and learning center and faculty development.

APPLICATION

An application form was sent to the 19 NJ colleges asking them to identify two areas of need from the six areas listed above. The Center also asked administrators and guided pathways leaders to recommend faculty and staff who might be interested in being a coach/consultant.

COACHING SERVICES & COSTS

The Center leaders invited local and national partners to help them identify potential coaches/consultants and then asked those who were recommended for these positions to provide a brief biography and resume. Center leaders also asked potential coaches/consultants to provide a full-day rate, including travel and preparation, and an hourly rate for their services.

COLLEGE-COACH MATCH

The Center leaders reviewed the pool of college and coach/consultant applicants and identified potential matches. Approximately two coaches/consultants were proposed for each college, and cost estimates for these pairings were computed.

BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE REVIEW

A sub-committee of the Center's Advisory Board reviewed all the college applications, the coach/consultant resumes, and the potential college-coach/consultant pairings made by the Center. After group deliberation, the Advisory Board sub-committee recommended the coach/consultant pairings, with flexibility, if needed, by the Center leadership.

COLLEGES CHOOSE COACHES

Once pairs were approved, the Center leaders contacted the campus leaders designated by the colleges to review the coach/consultant pairings, providing resumes and support materials. The college leads shared this information with their campuses and then shared their preferred coach/consultant with the Center leaders. Except for one college, due to special circumstances, all the recommended pairings were selected.

CONTRACTING

After the colleges identified their coach/consultant, the Center engaged in the contracting process and shared a scope of work with the colleges to document the coaching assignments, with coaching beginning shortly thereafter.

MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY

The colleges and coaches/consultants were asked to develop an individualized assessment and action plan at the start of the project, specifying up to three action steps, responsible parties, a proposed timeline, intended outcomes, and completion dates. Also, brief progress updates were completed at about two-month intervals, and a final report was produced at the conclusion of the contract.

COLLEGE-COACH/CONSULTANT SUPPORT

The Center maintained contact with college leads and coaches/consultants, the Center's Executive Director held individual phone calls with each college lead and coach/consultant, and the Center's Assistant Director provided feedback on assessments, action plans and progress reports as they were submitted. Three webinars were also led by the Community College Research Initiatives (CCRI) group to support this work, focusing on organizational improvement, on college engagement in coaching, and on lessons learned about coaching/consulting during the pilot.

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).

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