Pathways to Results News

March 2016

Upcoming Workshop: Transforming Career Pathways: Leveraging Evidence, Partners, and Program Review

Date: May 17, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Location: Illinois Central College's North Campus

Join this engaging forum to learn and share the real experiences of local community colleges that have used the Pathways to Results (PTR) methodology to modify or reimagine their Program Review process. This panel of experts represent colleges that have acted as leading change agents in partnership with their K-12, industry, and transfer partners to create a more inclusive, data-driven approach to pathway change.

This workshop is intended for those looking to embed best practices uniquely into their own work. The day will include workshop time dedicated to sharing flexible tools for improvement and facilitating dialogues with a broad spectrum of pathway partners within and beyond the community college related to career pathway improvement. These tools use Illinois' newly revised Guiding Principles for Career Pathways Design and Implementation as a basis and framework for change, which provides a valuable connection between the change process and program review requirements.

Click here to register for the event

Finding the Right Tool Among Many for Transforming Pathways: A New Brief

As we assess and make decisions about our research and many leadership efforts, one question is often at the forefront: How do we make sure that our work is both meaningful and useful in the field to help improve and support student success?

This question led us this fall to think about how we can help practitioners, many of whom are actively striving to be "data-driven" or "evidence-based" in their practice, to make sense of and apply the many types of evidence and many sources of data (particularly those available in OCCRL's products) in a systematic and accessible manner. In other words, to start to make OCCRL's work in the pathways field even more useful.

OCCRL has produced a great deal of work on practices, populations, and principles to be used by institutional agents to produce equitable outcomes for students on their pathways. What we haven't done is illustrate how the various publications, findings, and products can fit together in specific contexts to address problems of student success. In our latest Insights on Equity and Outcomes brief— Transforming Pathway Performance: Leveraging Key Knowledge of Pathways Principles, Populations, and Practices we sought to do this by offering a facilitation tool to bridge what we know from research with how campus practitioners make decisions in the field.

This facilitation tool is now available in its first published iteration.

PTR Implementing Change Series: Analyzing Student Data from an Equity Perspective…In Real Life

Guest post by Cari Lynn Hennessy and Maureen Pylman of Harry S Truman College

What does it mean to report student outcomes by gender, race, or income level? Our college has been grappling with this question as we pursue a variety of assessment projects that involve analysis of student data.

We have found that some educators object to reporting outcomes by demographics at all. They worry that we will use race or gender to "explain" low success rates. They also question the purpose of presenting data that show predictable gaps between privileged and less privileged students. What do these reports ultimately achieve?

As researchers, we appreciate these concerns, and we are mindful of them when we analyze student data. However, we also believe that measuring and addressing gaps in student outcomes is essential work that drives our institution to improve.

The Pathways to Results process gives us a model for analyzing demographic data responsibly, and it provides language that helps us to keep the focus on institutional responsibility. In particular, our team has benefited from the distinction between "deficit-minded" thinking and "equity-minded" thinking, a concept originating from the Center for Urban Education that is integral to the PTR process. Rather than concluding, "These students do not perform as well," we have adopted the mindset that "We are not serving these students as well."

Click here to read more

PTR Implementing Change Series: Developmental Education at Sauk Valley Community College

Guest post by Dr. Jon Mandrell of Sauk Valley Community College

The Pathways to Results process is built upon the implementation of an equity-focused continuous improvement model to serve all stakeholders within a student pathway. Since PTR's inception, colleges have been forming councils, consisting of secondary and postsecondary educators, industry members, economic development professionals, and others believed to be vital to identifying barriers and overcoming them. This "full-court press" on a program has created rich dialogue that has unraveled many barriers to success and a pathway to improvement at Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC).

Staying true to its philosophy, OCCRL has implemented a second-year PTR process to support promising ideas for improvement. The idea is quite simple: pick up where first-year teams left off and continue unpacking the data while also implementing an evidence-based intervention for success.

Two years ago, SVCC embarked on the journey of PTR within its Multicraft Technology A.A.S. pathway. The program, which is manufacturing-based, allows a student to take a core set of required courses, but then specialize in a selected area, including Welding, HVAC, Alternative Energy, Electronics, or Electrical. This "jack-of-all trades" A.A.S. degree has provided manufacturers with some relief to the skills gap they'd been experiencing.

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A Global Renaissance in Postsecondary Vocational Education?

Date: April 12, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Location: 740 15th Street NW, Suite 900 Washington, DC 20005
Register here

Join this lively discussion on international trends in skills-based education and training policies. The event will feature experts from Latin America, Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States and will include two panel discussions, one on "pathway models" that will look at the context of vocational education in each country, and the other will critically examine "new" strategies such as competency based education and apprenticeship programs. Specific topics will range from Germany's efforts to combine vocational and academic education, England's "higher vocational education" pathways, new apprenticeship programs in Latin America, Australia's vocational qualifications and labor market connections, and apprenticeships in Canada and the United States. All speakers will address concerns on how emerging pathway models support academic progression, social equality, and economic mobility.

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