



THE RESOURCE CENTER

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What do the Student Success Leadership Institute, Guided Pathways, VIP-PASS, Student Success Action Plans, and Complete 2021 have to do with one another? The answer is, everything! These terms are a continuum of one driving goal across the VCCS, to increase student success. To better understand how it all fits together requires a little reordering.

Think of it this way.



At the center of all that we are doing is **Complete 2021**, our strategic goal. This goal is essentially focused on tripling earned credentials for the economic vitality of the Commonwealth. It's a goal that recognizes that the value of a well-educated and highly skilled workforce is greater than the institution. When our friends, family, and neighbors thrive, the economic impact drives our institutions, improves our education system, and enhances the quality of life in our communities. Reaching this goal requires more than the development of small-

scale initiatives that only impact a limited numbers of students. It requires that we evaluate institutional and systemic barriers that impede student success, and give every student a clear pathway to a workforce credential, certificate, or degree based on their career goals.

In the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016, all 23 colleges participated in the Student Success Leadership Institute. This institute was the catalyst for introducing the guided pathways framework to our colleges. During the institute, small college teams placed a critical eye on data, discussed college strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats, explored the guided pathways framework, and developed a series of action plans. At the conclusion of the institute, each college submitted a final *Student Success Action Plan*, articulating their goals for improving student outcomes over the next five years.

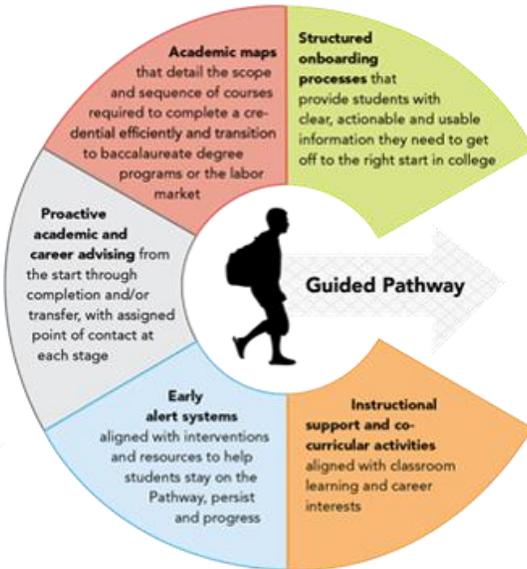
What is guided pathways?

Guided Pathways is an umbrella term used to describe highly structured student experiences that guide a student on the path to completion. Very simply put, guided pathways is not some program or initiative that a college undertakes to suddenly improve student outcomes. It is the thoughtful consideration of internal and external factors that influence our college communities and the willingness to take a systemic approach to addressing those factors in the interest of student success. Guided pathways is purposeful design-thinking to shepherd our students from college connection through program completion. In a Guided Pathways approach, incoming students are given support to clarify goals for

college and careers, choose a program of study, and develop an academic plan with predictable schedules. Embedded advising, progress tracking, and feedback are integrated into pathways leading to successful transfer or entry into the labor market.

A Comprehensive Guided Pathways Approach.

(Guided Pathways graphic from Completion by Design)



Don't we already do this? For some students, the answer is yes. At each of our colleges there is a high-touch program or two that addresses specific populations of students with embedded advising and coaching to ensure they stay on-track and onto completion. For the vast majority of our students, self-advicing is the norm, and there are no embedded or intrusive support services. For these students, they are doing the best they can to navigate our institutions, and far too often, they are unsuccessful. What we know for sure is that we must find a way to streamline our programs and services, and scale our support efforts to ensure that faculty and staff have a clear understanding as to the goals of each student. From there, we can do our best to target limited resources on high-touch services and supports for those who need them most.

How does VIP-PASS fit into the picture?

Remember the *Student Success Action Plans* described earlier? Once all plans were submitted, a team was assembled to better understand the goals of each college. After reading and comparing all 23 college action plans, a number of emerging themes developed. There were four main areas identified as challenges and opportunities for our colleges: (1) *Onboarding and Advising*, (2) *Structured Programs and Optimal Scheduling*, (3) *Targeting Risk and Intervention*, and (4) *Completion and Employment or Transfer*. After discussing these common themes with the colleges, VIP-PASS was developed.

VIP-PASS stands for the *Virginia Integrated Program of Planning and Advising for Student Success*.

It is based on Achieving the Dream's Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) strategy. Achieving the Dream's model accomplishes holistic transformation of the full student experience by integrating technology solutions with a guided pathways approach. So VIP-PASS very simply is implementing a guided pathways strategy using technology. VIP-PASS is comprehensive, but it is not magic. To improve student success throughout the VCCS, we have to focus on doing the work at the campus level to evaluate policy, programs, advising, support services, and business processes. ***The technology is a compliment to a well-planned guided pathways approach.***

VIP-PASS is poised to be a game changer for the VCCS, but only if we all do the critical work needed to ensure we are addressing student success at every level and in every role at our colleges. There is no one area that addresses student success in isolation. Every person, every process, every policy, and every program should work in concert to help our students reach their ultimate goals.

This is not a one-off initiative; it is mission critical work.

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