H. Quality Focus Essay

Project 1: Developing an Enhanced Student Communication Plan

Introduction and Rationale

Guided Pathways as a structured approach to student success holds as a central tenet that student engagement is critical to the implementation of its four pillars. Applying the principals of the Guided Pathways Initiative, the Guided Pathways Steering Committee at Los Angeles Southwest College initiated the process of redesigning the ways in which the college (1) communicates to students and (2) communicates between campus committees. Within the Guided Pathways initiative communicating to students in a timely manner is a crucial component of the onboarding process; therefore, streamlining messaging to make it more timely, intentional, and directed, so that messaging to students will be less repetitive, more relevant, and presented in a wider variety of formats is equally important throughout a student's entire college experience.

As part of LASC's inquiry into redesigning students' onboarding experience, timely and efficient communication to students arose as a crucial aspect of effective student support and success, yet one not limited exclusively to first year onboarding. As Guided Pathways work groups focused on the "First Year Experience," it became equally important to examine the "Second Year Experience," so that the same level of care, concern, and support persists throughout a student's entire college experience. Therefore, we began to identify:

- Key contact points and crucial messages throughout the entire college experience to optimize the ideal time to deliver that message.
- From whom the message should originate.
- And what method of communication would best convey the information.

In the existing communication that occurs between the district, the college, various support services, and students, the Guided Pathways work group identified a great deal of duplication and redundancy in the communication. Much of the communication was overly informational, instructional, and prescriptive with little personalized support addressing psychosocial issues, non-academic barriers to success, building a sense of community, or validating a student's presence in higher education. In addition, many students reported feeling over-communicated with, and that much of the communication they receive turns into noise.

To address this concern, the Guided Pathways work group proposed a communication plan to streamline the messaging that goes out to students so that not all messages are emails or Canvas announcements. Furthermore, through revised messaging, we aim to create a learning culture, where students have access to academic and non-academic resources both optional and required, throughout their academic journey.

After developing messages to introduce students to the support services our campus offers and determining the frequency of the messages, we will identify "specific on-campus contact points" from which these communications will originate. For example:

- In-reach to students regarding academic support would deliberately come from a contact person in the Student Success Center.
- In-reach to students regarding financial aid and financial planning would come from a contact person in the Financial Aid office.

This approach will not only provide students with the information they need and introduce them to a direct contact person in the service area, but it will also help to create a community, as this facilitates students' ability to build a personalized network of campus partners and in turn this can positively impact student persistence and completion rates.

The campus began developing communication template examples in Fall 2021:

LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE GUIDED PATHWAYS
COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES 2021

Instructions: Please feel free to change these templates as needed. These are a guide in starting the conversation with students.

EMAIL TEMPLATES	CANVAS ANNOUNCEMENTS	SMS TEXT BLAST	ACTION (S)
Audience: Current Students – Priority Registration Subject: Looking for Priority Registration? Greetings [insert LCP name] pathway, It is time for you to update your information in order to register for classes for next semester. Registration will open in [insert month appropriate for the next term i.e. "November for spring registration" or "April for summer/fall registration." What does this mean for you? Priority Registration! If you do not update your information with LASC, by completing the steps listed below, you will not be assigned a priority registration date. It only takes a couple of minutes to complete it but it must be done before you can be assigned a priority registration date. Your Pathway Team, Website: [insert LASC website and Facebook page if available]	UPDATE FORMS must be completed before you can REGISTER for a new semester, every time! Don't miss out on the classes you need to finish! Have Questions? Check out the Counseling Center or contact the [insert name] Pathway counselor or advisor [insert contact info]	Registration is coming! Get your Education Plan with a counselor. lasc.edu/counseling	Classroom PPT Slide: "Importance of update form."

As part of this enhanced communication plan, the Guided Pathways initiated work group will also examine how the College's existing multimedia is used to communicate with students. For example, prior to students first or second year, they might receive a Canvas module that would provide them with "What You Need to Know in Your First (or Second) Year of College" to set the tone for the year and provide important information needed for the upcoming year. This module would interactively guide students to explore a broad range of resources and offer success tips with links to workshops, key deadlines, and general survival skill spotlights for the first and second year. The modules would be intentionally streamlined for ease of navigation and students would have access to additional information through embedded links. The purpose of these modules will be to promote a learning culture in which students actively engage with the available resources.

One course within each Career and Academic Pathway (CAP) could be identified as the core course to provide personalized weekly announcements and an interactive Q & A session. Additionally, within each of the specific CAP, videos and PowerPoint templates would be

provided by the PIO and the CAP Leads with weekly announcements from the college, the CAP, and the course itself.

For example, the Canvas learning module "Communication Update Q and A" for Week Nine, might ask students "What is the last day to drop with a W?" followed by a second question: "What might happen if I drop with a W?" In this way students become informed about important deadlines and the impact withdrawing early might have on their financial aid status.
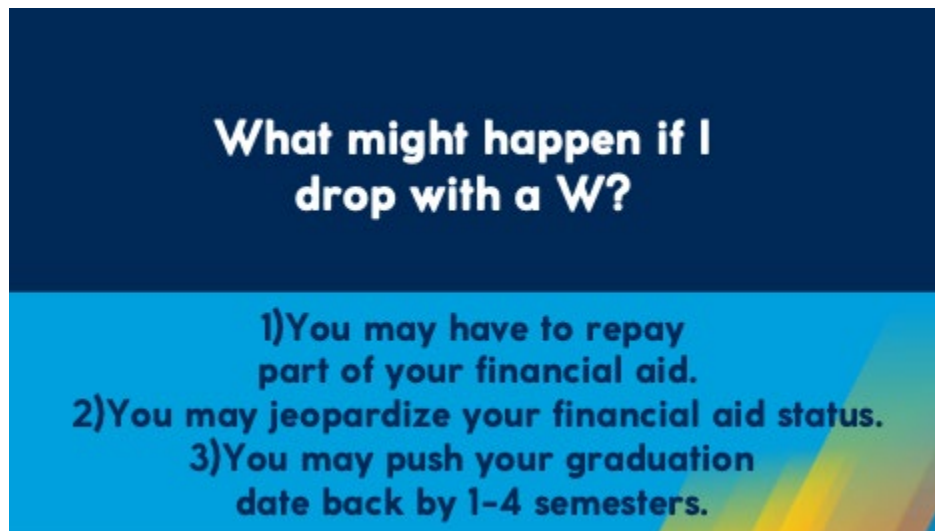
The Enhanced Student Communication Plan also calls for an exploration of how on-campus events, such as the Transfer and Career Fairs, can be expanded to include personal statement work, a UC insight question writing workshop, alongside workshops on financial planning and financial literacy, transfer planning for families, applying for transfer, choosing the right college, as well as employment opportunities and workshops on interview skills and résumé preparation.

Other proposed forms of communication might also include:
- Video messaging
- "Success Tip of the Week" spotlights or "Resilience Narratives" through Canvas messaging and/or the campus newsletter, with links to Canvas Student Support Hub pages populated with other recorded workshops in key success areas
- Open Zoom Room hours staffed with Peer Guides and Student Ambassadors to enable student to student support
- Intentional graphic-based messaging of non-academic support and resilience via digital messaging boards and campus computer home screen backgrounds
- And postcards sent to home addresses

Finally, the Guided Pathways committee has recommended that the college pursue a public art grant in order to communicate that messaging as public art can create a sense of respect for place, history, and importance. Artwork can transform spaces, build community, and establish the role of the college in the community and in students' lives. It can also build community and can set the tone for the college experience. Visual messaging through public art on campus might also encourage students to engage in civic issues as it can empower students, validate their inclusion in

representation, and highlight the college's legacy, linking past, present, and future. Strategically placed murals, posters, and artwork would enable the college to showcase various careers with BIPOC representation, showcase significant events in community or college history, and celebrate inclusivity and tolerance with anti-discrimination and anti-racist messaging.

Anticipated Impact on Student Learning and Achievement

An Enhanced Student Communication Plan would not only provide students with valuable information about deadlines and services, but it would also include messaging that validates students, increases their sense of belonging, provides opportunities for student engagement, sets high expectations, and establishes an internal locus of control for self-advocacy, learned optimism (empowerment), resiliency, and emotional intelligence. The goal of the communication plan is to empower students with both informational knowledge on successful college navigation and to create an ongoing learning culture to help empower students to create their own success. The communication plan will be an effective tool for providing timely information, promoting a learning culture, and offer an important opportunity to close long-standing equity gaps for historically underrepresented students.

Outcome Measures

The specific actions proposed in Project One are designed to improve communication to students and increase student success.

Below are the intended outcomes:

Enhanced Student Communication Plan
1. Improve in-reach and outreach to students.
2. Improve student retention and satisfaction.
3. Increase access to and participation in student support services and activities.

Projects	Committee & Taskforce Engagement	Measurable Outcome

Implement Enhanced Student Communication Plan	Public Relations Manager
	Student Services
	     Admission & Records
	     Counseling
	     Financial Aid
	     Outreach & Recruitment
	     Student Success Center
	     Retention Center
	     Welcome Center
	CAP Success Teams & Student Ambassadors
	NACES
	Academic Departments
		Streamlined Communication as measured by Pre- and Post-Implementation Audit and Self-Evaluation of Student Communications
		
		Increased Access to Support Services as measured by Student Satisfaction Surveys
		
		Increased Workshop attendance, Change in Number of Financial Aid and other Student Services' recipients as measured by Non-Instructional Program Review

Project Action Plan

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Required	Timeline
Identify Momentum Points for the onboarding process and throughout the college experience Encourage students to take action and meet momentum points	• PRM (Lead) • Guided Pathways Onboarding Task Force • Counseling • Admissions	• Starfish Software • Canvas templates	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.
Clarify Paths Develop corrective communication plan for Students off path	• Counseling • Admissions • Enrollment Management Committee	No additional Resources	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.
Inform/Refer Implement proactive checking-in schedule and referral to needed support services	• Counseling and Student Services Units • Academic Departments	Starfish Software	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.
Remove Barriers Through Early alert system with counseling for student intervention	• Counseling and Student Services Units • Academic Departments	Starfish Software	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.
Opportunities Publicize Pathway specific opportunities	• Career Center • Academic Departments • Public Relations Manager	Digital Newsletter for each CAP	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.
Walk-in Prepare for in-person and virtual support needs	• Student Services • Academic Departments	Professional Development	Pilot draft by Fall 2022; evaluate and refine ongoing.

Project 2: Cross-Committee Communication and Collaboration

Introduction and Rationale

In 2021, the Guided Pathways Steering Committee began the process of vetting recommendations from various campus constituencies and shared governance committees for ideas that would increase cross-committee communication and collaboration across the college, to integrate the Guided Pathways initiative with college-wide plans and activities that support student success and student equity. These recommendations, with regards to the implementation of the Guided Pathways Initiative, relate to State mandates, campus policies and procedures, and the institutionalization of best practices to promote cross-committee communication and collaboration to increase student success.

Project Two proposes the development of a formalized process for shared governance campus committees to formulate plans and make recommendations to the campus community to communicate more effectively through an enhanced process of regularly sharing committee-to-committee recommendations via the existing participatory governance process. This is intended to reduce duplication of efforts across campus committees, focus committee efforts, and facilitate more cross-committee communication and collaboration with a goal to improve student success.

Anticipated Impact on Student Learning and Achievement

Through the integration and coordination of the various committees, Project Two proposes to facilitate a clear communication alignment among the participatory governance committees, college-wide plans, initiatives, and activities that support student success. The Guided Pathways Steering Committee believes that by expanding cross-committee communication, committees will be more aware of how their actions and decisions influence other committees to successfully impact student success. This can be expanded through the implementation of the Strategic Planning Committee's Road Show where the College's strategic goals and accompanying master plan goals from the various subcommittees are operationalized so that objectives are clearly outlined, and each committee is aware of the objectives within their purview. This would be accompanied by an active engagement with the College's Comprehensive Work Plan which is updated by the College president on a monthly basis.

The Guided Pathways Steering Committee has observed that many committees working independently often pursue similar goals and generate recommendations, and funding requests through their annual plans which overlap those of other committees. In order to focus the work that existing participatory governance committees already do, and to better focus on Guided Pathways efforts in areas such as onboarding, student success, completion, and equity, the Guided Pathways Steering Committee proposes that

each committee have an action plan to include alignment with other campus plans culminating in a single ranked work plan for the college in order to reduce the amount of work done simultaneously and in similar areas by multiple committees.

that the plans and recommendations be compiled annually through the Strategic Planning Committee in order to centralize which committee is responsible for what areas of the college's plans so that committee efforts and resources can be focused more productively.

Outcome Measures

To support the integration and coordination of the Guided Pathways initiative with the various college-wide plans, initiatives, and activities that support student success and student equity. The following are the intended outcomes:

Improved Cross-Committee Communications and Collaboration
1. Increase cross-committee communication
2. Increase cross-committee collaboration.
3. Increase effective engagement in committee work.

Projects	Committee & Taskforce Engagement	Measurable Outcome
Improve Cross-Committee Communications and Collaboration Plan	Campus Administration Academic Senate All Campus & College Committees	Increased effective engagement in committee work and collaborative projects as outlined in yearly committee operational agreements and measured by End of Year Committee Self-Evaluations, and a visual display of progress made towards all institutional goals.

Project Action Plan

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Required	Timeline
Utilize S.M.A.R.T Goals to develop and submit annual objectives in the committee operating agreements	Committee Chairs and membership	Professional Development for committee co-chairs	Implementation beginning Fall 2022
Communicate intended annual objectives to campus committees and collaborate, when appropriate, in order to complete annual objectives.	Committee Chairs and membership College Council Academic Senate	No additional resources needed	Implementation beginning Fall 2022
Prepare a mid-year progress report/spotlight that is shared with the campus via a committee newsletter released the third week of spring term.	Committee Chairs and membership Public Relations Manager	Campus-wide Digital Committee newsletter	Every February beginning 2023
Complete committee annual self-evaluation forms to report on progress made throughout the year toward completion of institutional goals.	All Committee membership Strategic Planning Committee	No additional resources needed	Every May—in progress

The two projects in this Quality Focus Essay (QFE) were initially developed in response to student surveys and recommendations from various campus constituencies. The College is utilizing the opportunity of the QFE to further develop and operationalize projects at scale for the purposes of improving student learning and achievement, specifically in the areas of persistence and completion.