PATHWAYS

GUIDED PATHWAYS

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Guided Pathways Inquiry and Design: Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta Majors

June 23, 2017

Career Ladders Project adapted this process from the work of California Community Colleges.

We are deeply grateful to the faculty and staff of Mt. San Antonio Community College. Specifically, Vice President of Instruction Dr. Irene Malmgren, Associate Dean of Instructional Services Don Sciore. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work and contributions of the faculty and staff of Skyline College, particularly those on the Design Team.

Career Ladders Project's Guided Pathways team: Kris Palmer, Dr. Mina Dadgar, Chase Fischerhall, Maeve Katherine Bergman, Luis Chavez, Brook Sinclair, and Lindsay Anglin.

Produced by the Career Ladders Project, June 2017

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One of the most important things Guided Pathways offers is strategies for structural, evidence-based guided exploration that empowers students to identify relevant programs of study early. One of these structural elements is meta-majors (in some cases referred to as cluster or interest areas). Behavioral economics research suggests that clustering options into similar buckets makes decision making manageable for individuals (Scott-Clayton 2012). The intent of clustering programs of study under meta-major umbrellas is to help students choose a major earlier in their career based not only on familiarity or guesswork, but on their interests, knowledge, skills and abilities. Selecting a meta-major will also help students select classes that relate to a specific degree.

Why and when to use this exercise?

Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta-Majors can used as an inquiry tool to explore the concept of meta-majors or as a design tool when a college is prepared to create draft meta-majors. In either instance *Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta-Majors* is designed to encourage greater involvement in Guided Pathways, college-wide, by offering an opportunity for experiential learning and inter-departmental discussions.

Inquiry: When using *Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta-Majors* as an inquiry or process development tool the main goal is to help the counseling, student support and instructional faculty, administrators, and staff understand the challenges faced by students navigating the options for degrees and certificates offered by the college, as well as to explore the implications of meta-majors. The learnings from this process can inform the next stage of inquiry or design. The college may want to consider using the sorting activity (section (2)) with students, prior to the designing of meta majors, in order to provide faculty and staff with insights into the ways students may think about the clustering of majors.

Design: It is recommended to use *Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta-Majors* as an inquiry tool before utilizing it as a design tool. Starting with inquiry will help inform the design process as well as support recruitment for the design phase. Once in the design phase it is essential to have a "critical mass" of counseling, student support and instructional faculty, administrators, and staff from across the college to ensure all stakeholders have input in the design. The main goal of *Degree and Certificate Sorting for Meta Majors* as a design tool is to create a draft of meta majors, with supporting design principles, to be furthered developed and finalized at a later stage in the design phase.

The instructions below will indicate where steps can be skipped or are optional based on the goal of inquiry or design.

Degree and Certificate Sorting Activity

1) Prework

a) Determine activity goals and logistics

i) Determine your goal: Inquire or Design

ii) Consider venue, time, and staffing for activity

- Consider room layout (round tables, whiteboards, etc.)
- Enough time for robust discussion
- Each sorting team will need a trained facilitator (link to training PPT and resources)

iii) Invite attendees with an eye for cross functional teams representing whole college (e.g. counseling, student support and instructional faculty, staff, and administrators, including classified)

- Inclusion should be the guiding principle for this planning:
  - (a) Consider minimizing known time conflicts (e.g. multiple flex day commitments, competing division, shared governance or committee meetings)
  - (b) Consider accessibility
  - (c) Consider scaffolding for those who have not been introduced to Guided Pathways concepts and principles yet

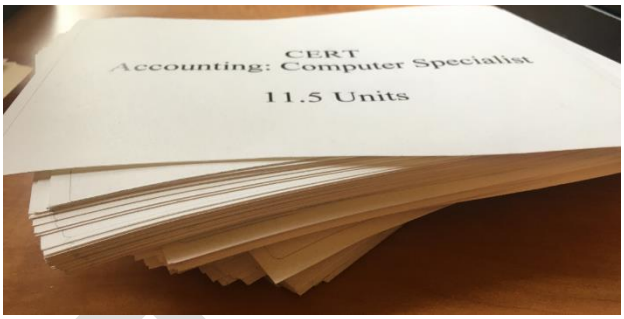
b) Gather ALL of college's degrees and certificates (local, AA/S, ADT, IGETC, etc.)

i) Note new, under development and ending programs of study

ii) Determine inclusion of non-certificate and degree programs (non-credit, basic skills, other course offerings)

iii) Sample document

c) Prepare degree and certificate materials



i) Print sets alphabetically on index cards

ii) Place container/bag with the meta major worksheet, instructions, and prompting questions (Link to templates)

iii) Include catalog and other student support materials

2) Degree and Certificate Sorting

a) Language and Information Norming

i) Provide background on guided pathways, specifically the why of meta majors and the import of college-driven design principles (Link to PPT deck and Guided Pathways one pager)

b) Form Cross-functional Teams of 5-10 People

i) Ensure balanced perspective from the college with counseling, student services, and instructional faculty and staff (link to activity)

ii) Assign facilitators to each table to support understanding of critical design principles as well as answer questions

iii) Complete sign-in sheet documenting name, position, and department and/or discipline

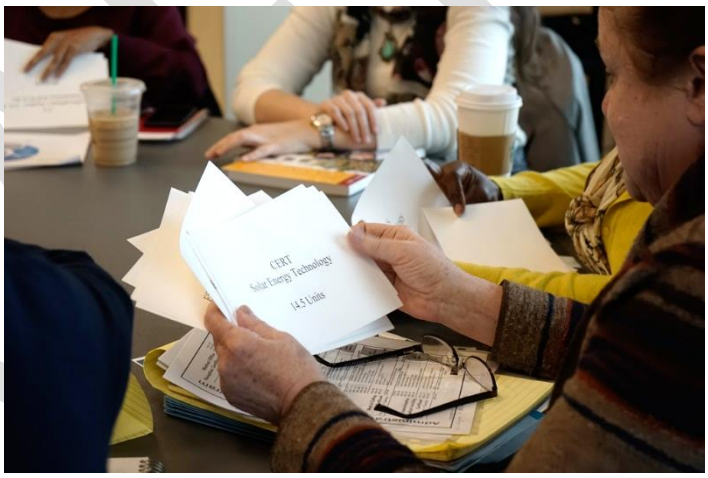
c) Intentional Sort

i) Referencing the *Design Principles Tool,* introduce the concept of design principles. Per the tool, design principles can be incorporated at one of two times: a) before the teams engage in the clustering activity (Version 1) or b) after the teams engage in the clustering activity (Version 2).

ii) ***Version 1****:* Ask teams to work together to begin creating draft design principles to test and develop (Equity, common prereqs, common/shared competencies, no "other", etc.). Each team

applies the principles they developed (not more than 5 for this exercise) to direct their clustering activity. Team uses these draft design principles to sort all of the degrees and certificates into clusters which support student exploration of the transfer and career opportunities available. OR

iii) ***Version 2***: Team engages in the clustering activity without intentional principles, agreements, or explicit guidance. After clustering, ask teams to analyze their process and record their decision-making after the fact. How did they direct their sort? What were their considerations? This list of retrospective considerations can become a reflection on the role of design principles. Teams should then consider whether there are elements they did not consider and would like to consider next time. How might different guiding principles change their outcome?



iv) As they work, teams note thinking and findings in the worksheet, including further developing and refining draft design principles and completing a statement of logic for each meta major created, as well as note areas of disagreement (link to worksheet)

v) Team returns sorted cards with cluster labels and completed worksheet in container/bag

3) Postwork

a) Synthesis Community Data

i) Taking one set of sorted cards, use Excel to create list of all the degrees and certificates in each cluster. Repeat for each cross-functional team's sorted cards.

- To do this, it is helpful to start with the original Excel list of all the degrees and certificates in column A. While reviewing the sorted cards add the assigned cluster name in column D.
- After finishing the assignment of each degree or certificate in column B, use the Excel filter to turn the original alphabetical list into a list sorted by clusters.
- This will take roughly 45 minutes for each set of sorted cards.

ii) Use cluster names to create a visual of cluster themes
- Sample

b) Analysis (DESIGN ONLY)

i) Determine the analysis strategy for selecting the draft meta majors (e.g. the most innovative, the most common, the preference of leadership team/design team, most aligned with design principles)

ii) With each team's list of degrees and certificate sorted by clusters, begin to identify commonalities and distinctions among teams in accordance to your analysis strategy (see above (b)(i)). Examples include:
- Cluster titles
- Assignment of degrees and certificates
- Design principles
- Distinction among teams

iii) Document the similarities, differences, and questions:
- Most common clusters
- Significant discrepancies in degree and certificate assignments
- Common design principles
- Conflicting design principles
- Remaining questions

c) *Communicate Findings*

i) Re-convening participants in the same cross-functional teams of 5-10 people

ii) ***DESIGN ONLY*** Provide an overview of the process for analysis

iii) ***DESIGN ONLY*** Share findings in accordance with analysis strategy (see above (b) (i)). Examples include:

- Most common cluster names
- Areas of emerging practices: common design principles and assignment degrees and certificates
- Areas of distinction: conflicting design principles and assignment of degrees and certificates

iv) Teams review raw data (the Excel files the degrees and certificates sorted by each team's cluster assignment)

- Discuss and record exciting elements, areas of concern, and further questions to explore

v) ***INQUIRY ONLY*** Document teams' share out of aha and uh-oh from group discussion. Collect feedback from participants on process improvements, who was missing in the cross-functional teams (e.g. counselors, classified staff, administrators), necessary updates to list of degrees and certificates, suggestions for communicating next steps college-wide, and any additional comments to consider in the next stage

vi) ***DESIGN ONLY*** Document teams' suggestions for communicating next steps college-wide, and any additional comments to consider in the next stage