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## Toward Equity in Guided Pathways Reforms: Lessons from California's Career Advancement Academies

*Robert Roach, Jennifer Thompson, Wei Laiyi, Meg Long  
Equal Measure*

*Kristina Palmer, Katherine Bergman, Naomi Castro  
Career Ladders Project*

## Acknowledgments

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We celebrate all these individuals and institutions for their commitment to creating high-quality opportunities and supports for all California students, and we deeply appreciate their contributions as thought partners.

## About Career Ladders Project

Career Ladders Project works to achieve equity for community college students. Our collaborations with colleges and their community, state, education, and workforce partners enable more students to complete certificates, degrees, and transfers to four-year programs—and to earn wages to support a family. We conduct research, provide strategic advice and technical assistance, and participate in privately and publicly funded initiatives.

## About Equal Measure

Equal Measure is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization that works with foundations, nonprofit organizations, and public entities to advance social change. For more than 30 years, we have partnered with organizations like these working on complex, often messy, social issues to help create more powerful, equitable, and enduring systems and positive outcomes. To have a more direct impact with clients, Equal Measure offers five service lines—program design, evaluation, capacity building, technical assistance, and communications. Through these services, we help our clients clarify program goals, support implementation, engage in learning and plan improvement, conduct mixed-method developmental evaluations, frame narratives to have the strongest impact, and share what we have learned together with the field. Whether it's improving access to college education and careers, expanding access to healthy foods, or building opportunities for financial empowerment, we help our clients make communities stronger, healthier, more equitable, and more inclusive.

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CLP developed the Career Advancement Academy framework, and Equal Measure served as evaluation partner for the CAAs starting in 2012.

## Introduction

Community colleges across California are now investigating and planning Guided Pathways reforms with the goals of improving equity on their campuses and increasing the number of students completing degrees, certificates, and transfers. Some especially helpful lessons for improving equity as part of this reform effort may come from more than 30 California colleges that implemented Career Advancement Academies (CAAs).

The CAAs, which were funded by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office from 2007 to 2017, aimed to reach and serve students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education.<sup>1</sup> They were shown to improve persistence in college and completion of system-recognized certificates and degrees among underrepresented students. This brief distills insights from that experience, aligns them with the Guided Pathways reform framework, and highlights CAA approaches that practitioners can incorporate into their reforms.

We focused on the ways the CAAs addressed critical concerns that community college students had identified in our earlier research.<sup>2</sup> Students' concerns centered on choosing a major and courses, finding supports and getting specialized support, and finding community on campus. Organizing the current research this way revealed four broad areas where colleges can apply the lessons from the CAAs to their Guided Pathways reforms:

1. Colleges can more actively recruit students who may not consider college feasible or feel confident about being college students.
2. Colleges can offer students guidance in choosing a major and understanding its connection to careers, and they can clarify the sequencing and availability of their courses.
3. Colleges can improve awareness of support services, offer integrated and proactive counseling services, and align counselors with academic specialties.
4. Colleges can more actively foster a sense of community and peer-to-peer support – among faculty and staff, as well as among students.

Section One of this brief describes the context for current reforms and provides background on CAAs and their goals. Section Two addresses how CAAs served traditionally underrepresented students and improved equity, and Section Three explores how community colleges can scale promising CAA approaches by integrating them into their current Guided Pathways reforms.

## Section One: The context for current reforms

California community colleges have received state funding to scale the Guided Pathways framework and tailor it to the communities and students they serve. This student-centered, college-wide change strategy is intended to improve completion rates for all students. It explicitly aims to close equity gaps while increasing the number of students completing certificates, degrees, and transfers to four-year institutions, and it follows a series of reform initiatives implemented in recent years. (See Appendix B.)

Guided Pathways reforms affect every aspect of a college; they require a comprehensive and transformative institutional commitment to create intentionally designed, clear, coherent, and structured educational experiences.<sup>3</sup> The Guided Pathways framework integrates support services, improved placement processes, and math and English courses relevant to students' goals. Moving away from the cafeteria model for selecting courses requires clear program maps that simplify student decision-making by laying out course sequences, milestones for progress, and the desired outcomes of each program. The need for new approaches is clear and significant, given stubbornly low rates of persistence and completion for community college students.

### A. The completion challenge

There has been slight improvement recently in both the share of students staying in school for at least three terms, and the share who complete remedial classes and then pass at least one college-level class.<sup>4</sup> But the six-year completion rate has been low, and flat, for many years. The majority of California community college students who first enrolled in 2010, for example, still had not completed any program or transferred to a university six years later. Nationally, less than one-quarter of full-time associate's degree candidates graduate in three years. Completion rates are even lower for part-time students and for students from low-income families<sup>5</sup> and for African American, Hispanic, and American Indian and Alaska Native students.<sup>6</sup>

Many factors are in play, including numerous aspects of students' life circumstances. Two of the most important factors determining whether a student completes a certificate, degree, or transfer are (a) how long it takes to reach completion, and (b) how early in their community college career students identify a goal (See Part B below). Many community college students nationwide spend time and money earning credits that do not relate to their educational goals.

Associate's degree holders earn nearly 80 credits instead of the expected 60, and certificate earners typically finish with more than twice as many credits as they need.<sup>7</sup> Excess credits represent significant cost in time and money to students and their families, and those expenditures can limit students' future opportunities.

### B. The impetus for this report

Research shows that students are more likely to complete college if they identify a career goal early on, have a clear outline of the courses required, and receive consistent guidance and support along the way.<sup>8</sup> The Community College Research Center found a relationship between entering a program (defined as passing three courses in a program area) early and completing a degree or transfer.<sup>9</sup> To speed underrepresented students' progress into specific programs, California colleges have created several types of learning communities to serve students who have not thrived in the current system. Some of the largest learning communities include Puente, which focuses on Latinx students who wish to transfer to four-year colleges; Umoja, which focuses on African American students and their identity and connection to college; and the CAAs.

CAAs focused on students who otherwise might not attend college or feel confident they can be college students. They recruited students from organizations serving the formerly incarcerated, and they sought foster youth, alternative high school students, people leaving recovery, and low-income students.

Although CAAs served a subset of students and Guided Pathways reforms apply to the whole college, they share important characteristics, including:

- A student-centered approach that gets students "to and through" community college to a credential
- The pursuit of equity and of closing gaps in credential completion for diverse student populations

The CAAs' success in improving completion rates<sup>10</sup> is evidence that adopting and scaling the approaches they took can strengthen Guided Pathways reforms.

## C. California's Career Advancement Academies

Launched in 2007, CAAs served adults ages 18 to 30 whose test scores would have prevented them from obtaining the credentials required for high-wage jobs. The goal was to provide more carefully structured educational experiences for students facing multiple barriers to postsecondary education.

Career Ladders Project developed the CAA framework, which was implemented by more than 30 of California's 114 community colleges. Equal Measure conducted a summative assessment of the CAAs' impact on students, it investigated the sustainability of CAAs, and it researched the partnerships between alternative high schools and community colleges.

The CAA framework consisted of five core evidence-based practices that colleges could adapt. The Guided Pathways framework similarly allows for local innovation and improvement, which in turn makes reforms more scalable to whole campuses and to colleges statewide.

Here are the core elements of CAAs:

- **Industry-responsive technical training.** Clear, stackable credentials and pathways were aligned with employer needs and continuing education. CAA programs built on existing programs or developed new credentials or sequences of courses leading quickly to an entry-level certificate. So students could build on their initial coursework as they pursued a higher-level certificate or associate's degree. Some CAAs developed course content in consultation with local employers to ensure that students' skills met their needs. To keep current on industry trends, CAAs built robust partnerships with local employers and Workforce Investment Boards, which also facilitated student access to internships, jobs, and nonacademic supports.
- **Accelerated and contextualized teaching and learning in English and math.** CAA courses contextualized reading and math in students' chosen fields and often included examples and problems from that field. Combining foundational skills with technical education allowed students to make faster progress toward their goals because they didn't have to complete numerous traditional basic skills courses before entering their chosen field. These changes required Career Technical Education (CTE) and academic faculty to work together.
- **Grouping students into cohorts.** Students in each CAA cohort took all or most classes together, enabling them to form peer learning communities and support each other through school, life, and career events.
- **Transitions support.** To prepare students for success in the workplace, CAAs offered guidance, work-readiness

skills training, job fairs, internships, industry visits, and other support during their transition. Faculty and administrators in support services bridged their own silos to provide comprehensive services to CAA students.

- **Intensive student support services and case management.** CAAs helped students develop soft skills and college knowledge. In addition, they supported students in managing personal issues that might interfere with their success – offering referrals when appropriate.

The CAAs achieved substantial scale, geographic diversity, and reach. From 2007 to 2014, they enrolled nearly 10,000 students across 30 colleges,<sup>11</sup> and statistics from various sources offer helpful snapshots of them. From 2007 to 2013, CAA students were more diverse than their peers across the California community college system.<sup>12</sup> (See Appendix C.)

The CAAs improved completion rates. From 2007 to 2011, more than two-thirds of CAA students persisted in college, and 24% obtained a system-recognized certificate or degree. From 2011 to 2014, 23% received a system-recognized certificate or degree, and another 28% received a low-unit certificate. That 23% completion rate was three percentage points higher than among comparable non-CAA students, and an analysis in 2015 by Equal Measure revealed that this impact was both statistically significant and attributable to the CAAs.<sup>13</sup>

## D. Research and analysis by CLP and Equal Measure

Given the student-centered nature of CAAs and Guided Pathways, the research discussed in this brief was organized according to the following four main student concerns identified in earlier research by CLP:<sup>14</sup>

1. Guidance in choosing a major and understanding its connection with various careers
2. Clearer course sequencing and more course availability
3. Better awareness of support services and counselors with academic specialties
4. A sense of connectedness and peer-to-peer support

Lessons from the CAAs along each of these themes can help colleges make their Guided Pathways reforms equitable. The research for this brief included a literature review, interviews with leaders of CAAs at nine community colleges, and a focus group discussion with additional practitioners who participated in CAAs in the San Francisco Bay Area. (For details, see Appendix A.)

## Section Two: How CAAs served underrepresented students and improved equity

Compared with the general student population at California community colleges, Career Advancement Academy students were older and more likely to be people of color, low-income, and first-generation college students, and they brought a variety of life experiences. Many had worked and not gone to college straight from high school, many were preparing for either a career transition or advancement, and many were juggling childcare, transportation, or food challenges.

These students benefitted from explicit connections between programs of study and specific jobs and from shorter program lengths and the ability to accommodate personal obligations by scheduling classes in a long block or at night and on weekends. They also benefitted from proactive advising and mentoring. Academic supports, such as supplemental instruction and tutoring, were also important. In other words, equity requires offering some students more services than others or providing structured, standardized services and processes for all students and specialized services for some.

Given the success of CAAs in improving college completion rates for the students they served, they provide important insights into approaches that can help Guided Pathways reforms improve equity.

### A. CAAs included guidance for students in choosing a major and in understanding its connection with careers.

CAAs devoted efforts to student recruitment, including reaching out to students not actively seeking college programs. Before CAA students chose a major or pathway, they knew about a college's offerings and believed that attending college was realistic for them. First-generation college students "tend to have more negative attitudes about their academic potential" and report lower academic self-efficacy.<sup>15</sup> Often, CAA faculty and staff members conducted direct outreach in faith communities, laundromats, train stations, local businesses, parent meetings at K-12 schools,

and community-based organizations – places that are part of potential students' daily lives. They also developed flyers and advertised on radio and in community periodicals. Most CAA recruitment methods sought out underserved Californians – students of color, low-income students, and first-generation college students.

**Students often met with a CAA coordinator, faculty member, or counselor to discuss their interests, goals, and career prospects before choosing a specific CAA.** Students value guidance in choosing their major and understanding the connection between a major and potential careers.<sup>16</sup> This guidance oriented students to college, a program of study, and a career path. CAA orientations also generally introduced students to faculty and staff and included tours of the buildings where their courses would meet, an introduction to key student services, and opportunities to get to know other students in their cohort.

Career advising and career development courses helped students to understand what careers their majors would lead to and what skills would be required. Career development courses or seminars, offered concurrently with program content, built skills for interviewing, developing a resume, and presenting to an employer. Most also involved elements to help students determine whether they wanted to start or continue a career directly or pursue a higher credential or degree. Often taught by a counselor or advisor, these courses provided up-to-date information about certificates, degrees, and transfer opportunities.

*Equity requires offering some students more services than others or providing structured, standardized services and processes for all students and specialized services for some.*

## B. CAAs provided clear course offerings and sequencing.

CAAs featured courses in math and English that were contextualized to specific programs. For example, students studying to be automotive technicians would take a math class that incorporated examples of how they would apply math in their careers (such as how to convert ounces to quarts of oil).

Linking math and English courses with co-requisites, and building in supports, enabled CAA students to enter college-level classes directly. This gave students immediate access to college credit, another goal of Guided Pathways reforms. (This approach is now codified, in large part, in AB 705, which took effect in January 2018. Colleges must now use high school records instead of a test to place students in math and English classes and must maximize the probability that each student completes transfer-level coursework in both subjects within one year.)

CAA programs that took longer than one term to complete had program maps listing the specific courses students should take each term, creating a clear path to finishing on time. Sometimes, this included intentionally linked, contextualized courses that taught both relevant skills and the clear applications for those skills.

Program mapping facilitated the development of stackable credentials that enable students to earn introductory certificates quickly and then, by continuing (or returning), earn

higher-level certificates or associate's degrees. The credits earned and courses completed toward introductory certificates would count directly toward higher-level certificates and degrees. Thus, an educational and career progression that might begin with an introductory certificate leading to an entry-level job could continue with more study, leading to a promotion at work – and a salary increase.

CAA programs were often block scheduled, meaning that necessary courses were offered back to back so that students didn't have long gaps between classes and could spend their time on campus efficiently. Block scheduling also enabled instructors to reinforce contextualized basic skills through industry content courses and to help students think about career choices and preparation. It also better accommodated students' life and job schedules and could help shorten overall program length (from two terms to one, for example).

## C. CAAs made students aware of available supports, including integrated and proactive counseling services and counselors with academic specialties.

As part of the onboarding and orientation process, CAA students met with a counselor, advisor, and/or peer mentor to discuss potential barriers or challenges they faced. Sometimes this included an assessment of need for wrap-around supports, such as childcare, transportation, or a food pantry, and staff connected students with centers on campus or



community-based partners that could assist students. Some colleges have centers that bring together nonprofit and government partners to provide low-income families with wrap-around services, such as childcare, transportation assistance, financial literacy training, or a food pantry.

**A key element of CAA support services was that they were often brought to students around class time or through a planned, mandatory session so students did not have to make time to seek services.** Most CAAs had a dedicated counselor who became a point of contact for all CAA students. One interviewee said CAAs “took support that most students would have to self-select into and brought it to them and embedded it into their experience.” These services include workshops on financial literacy, resume development, interviewing, career exploration, and self-care. Bringing the service to the student, or walking the student to the appropriate building, removes the barrier of having to navigate college systems for information on services and find the appropriate office, and it connects the student with them when the student is most likely to be available.

*We had a specific course sequence that students were supposed to take. It simplified it for the student by eliminating some of the confusing choices.*

*I see the same thing being true for Guided Pathways. It will be laid out to them.”*

— A California community college practitioner

**CAA programs tended to have a dedicated counselor or a counselor assigned to support CAA students.** This allowed for personalized academic, career, and wrap-around supports for groups of students.

**In some programs, faculty and staff met weekly or every two weeks to collaborate on curriculum implementation and do informal case management.** As part of this, they also would discuss student progress and decide which faculty or staff member should approach a student to offer supports. Gathering staff and faculty who interact with students in different classes and contexts allowed for a more holistic assessment of students’ strengths and areas of opportunity, as well as a better understanding of how best to support specific students.

#### **D. CAAs fostered peer-to-peer support and connectedness on campus.**

CAA participants usually entered programs in cohorts – a group of students starting the same program at the same time. CAA cohorts were generally small (30 students or fewer) and took some or all of their classes together. The students were encouraged to form study groups and complete team assignments together. Being part of a cohort meant that students got to know each other, see friendly faces, and encourage one another. The cohort approach also facilitated the development of math and English courses contextualized to specific pathways because a course could run with students exclusively (or almost exclusively) from that CAA.

**CAA programs often utilized affective pedagogy, an asset-based approach that focused on self-efficacy, confidence, and a feeling of belonging.** Interviewees described CAA participants as disproportionately likely to be first-generation college students and students who may not have initially considered college to be an opportunity for them. The cohort model complemented affective pedagogy by helping students develop confidence and providing a peer support group; as students learn more, they begin to support their peers.

**CAA programs embedded peer supports, both academic and nonacademic, which increased a feeling of belonging and helped students develop leadership skills.** Students became more self-confident and supported their peers, including through program- and class-specific study groups that were often led by those doing well in the course. The cohort model helped facilitate this. In addition, some CAA programs hired a paid peer support (generally, a student who recently completed the program) to provide tutoring and check on whether any students would benefit from wrap-around or financial supports.

**Faculty and staff also tended to develop a community of practice around the CAA.** Their regular meetings, in addition to providing informal case management, also addressed curricular alignment and instruction. Interviewees cited this collaboration as a key process element that contributed both to the development of strong CAAs and to success for the CAA participants.

## Section Three: How colleges can integrate promising CAA approaches into their Guided Pathways reforms

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here are numerous promising approaches to incorporating the insights offered by the success of CAAs into Guided Pathways reforms to help ensure they are equitable.

### A. Colleges can more actively recruit students who may not consider college feasible or feel confident about attending college.

Whether students see themselves as having academic potential depends on their familiarity with higher education and their “college knowledge,” as well as their academic preparation.

**Promising approach: Use focused and intentional recruiting strategies.** Recruiting strategies that focus on first-generation and low-income students and other potential students who face extra barriers are important ways for Guided Pathways reforms to serve students who may not be actively considering college, as well as those who’ve already enrolled. CAAs actively recruited people facing major transitions such as re-entry after incarceration, and they advertised in places where people go in their everyday lives (such as laundromats) and where they look for employment (such as workforce development agencies).



### B. Colleges can offer students guidance in choosing a major and understanding its connection to careers, and they can clarify the sequencing and availability of their courses.

One key element of CAAs was an intentional course sequence and a clear map for students, which reduced confusion about how to progress and acquire credits. As part of their Guided Pathways reforms, most colleges are engaging in mapping and aligning programs of study.

**Promising approach: Group programs and create clear sequences of required courses.** CAA credentials were stackable (i.e., courses required for a credential also counted toward an associate’s degree), and they linked with career options. Guided Pathways are designed to help students decide on a program of study and reduce the burden of an overwhelming number of options. Many colleges are also developing “meta-majors,” or broad groupings of disciplines by interest or sector, and they are producing maps of course sequences that are required for students to complete a program of study. This approach provides students more guidance and clarity as they learn which programs interest them and select a career path.

### C. Colleges can improve awareness of support services, offer integrated and proactive counseling services, and align counselors with academic specialties.

To create the Guided Pathways elements of proactive advising and early alert systems, community colleges are considering how their counseling and advising structures and processes can support students more systematically and more often.

**Promising approach: Restructure counseling and academic advising to more efficiently accommodate students and customize supports.** Dedicated and proactive counseling is expensive to scale to an entire institution. As an alternative, colleges are considering how to provide more customized counseling. Examples include dedicating counselors to specific meta-majors and more clearly defining roles of advisors and

## How two CAA colleges now group their offerings

Skyline College has developed four meta-majors to encompass more than 100 degrees and certificates that it offers. They are (1) arts, languages, and communication; (2) business, entrepreneurship, and management; (3) science, technology, and health; and (4) society and education. Each meta-major includes various programs of study, and many offer stackable credentials so students can build on certificates of achievement to earn skills certificates, certificates of completion, and associate's degrees.

Students work with counselors to explore their interests and select a meta-major; if they're undecided, their counselor will enroll them in a program where students discover meta-majors and programs of study that interest them.

**Los Angeles Trade-Tech College**, which uses the term "pathway" instead of "meta-major," developed nine pathways, informed by its early CAA work. Students are introduced to these options in three phases of three pathways each. Every program of study lies within these pathways, though some degrees bridge two.

counselors so as not to duplicate responsibilities and to allow counselors to be more specialized. Another tool is an early-warning system that alerts counselors to specific students' needs. Colleges also can assess how existing programs that support underserved students (such as TRIO) contribute to success for these students, and they can layer these supports in meta-majors – for all students – while providing additional support where needed.

### D. Colleges can more actively foster a sense of community and peer-to-peer support – among faculty and staff, as well as among students.

Student cohorts may be the toughest element to incorporate directly from CAAs into college-wide reforms because CAA cohorts were small. Colleges can instead nourish feelings of connectedness by creating clear course sequences with pathway maps that lead groups of students to take most classes together in their first semester or two. They also can encourage faculty and staff to build community by collaborating across functions and departments.

*I'm realizing that CAA provided the funding and the license to really pilot what an early-stage pathway can look like, which for us set the criteria that we then followed, learning from the principles of CAA."*

— A California community college practitioner

Colleges already are creating cross-functional Guided Pathways design teams that include faculty from various departments, deans, senior leaders, and staff from student services, enrollment, and financial aid; many teams also include classified staff, staff from noncredit programs, and students. In fact, interviewees emphasized that agreement from multiple areas of the college – and incorporation of different perspectives – will be essential to the success of reforms.

**Promising approach: Encourage students to spend time in groups, particularly in the beginning of programs.** Colleges can incorporate cohort experiences near the beginning of programs, through orientation or linked courses. Low-unit college and career success courses also bring peer groups together. Bridge programs, on-ramp programs, affinity groups<sup>17</sup> or preparatory sessions also promote a cohort approach.

**Promising approach: Include students and classified staff members in Guided Pathways design from the early stages.** Given the student focus of Guided Pathways reforms, it is critical that students from across the college at least provide feedback on their development and implementation. To design reforms that are truly student-centered requires including student voices. Including classified staff is important because they interact with students on a daily basis; if they inform and support reforms, they will more effectively implement them.

## Colleges that had CAAs have taken a variety of approaches to improving student supports

Reforms at several colleges enable counselors to provide individualized support and identify students who would benefit from more targeted supports. These changes incorporate the CAA element of regular and proactive advising and help guide students in academics and in their careers.

- **Contra Costa College** has 15 counseling and advising staff members who are mostly generalists supporting all students. The college began embedding counselors in pathways as part of its CAA. Now, as part of its Guided Pathways reforms, the college is considering assigning counselors to meta-majors so they become specialists and can provide more contextualized support to students within meta-majors. The college has evaluated and redesigned the job descriptions for counselors and academic advisors, clearly delineating their roles so they can spend more time providing nonacademic supports. Clarifying their roles freed up funds to hire part-time and seasonal advisors for periods of high demand. Contra Costa is also considering adding mandatory “checkpoints” for all students so they receive academic and career advising at key points, perhaps when they earn 15, 30, and 45 credits.
- **LA Trade-Tech College** built on its early work with the CAAs as it rolled out its nine pathway areas, embedding a pathway counselor in each. The college no longer has a centralized counseling department.
- **Skyline College** required students to complete an orientation specific to the CAAs in order to enroll in courses. Skyline College is moving toward this approach for its meta-majors so students meet peers and instructors and better understand the meta-major they have chosen to explore.

**Promising approach: Build in dedicated planning time to facilitate and encourage faculty-staff collaboration.** Some CAA staff found collaboration important in curriculum development and in real-time student case management. By sharing information and impressions, they found they were better able to identify students who benefitted from additional support. It will be important to build on the cross-functional nature of Guided Pathways reforms by incorporating collaboration into each meta-major and program of study as well. Many colleges paid stipends for CAA faculty to collaborate, but interviewees generally said having dedicated time was more important.

*CAA was that model that created a spirit [of collaborating for student success].*

*I think that spirit is living on in this Guided Pathways effort, because the faculty members on [our reforms] committee have that success to draw on.”*

— A California community college practitioner

**In conclusion,** the CAA experience provides valuable insights into specific ways to serve students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Those insights provide guidance on methods for new statewide community college reforms, especially the design and implementation of Guided Pathways, to help ensure they reach potential students and serve all students equitably.

## Appendix A: Research methodology and practitioners who participated

The Equal Measure team utilized three main research methods: a review of key reports and documents related to CAAs and Guided Pathways; a review of self-assessments of Guided Pathways readiness and implementation that California community colleges performed in 2017; and semi-structured interviews with faculty and staff from community colleges across California. To develop the list of interviewees, Equal Measure consulted with Career Ladders Project to generate a list of individuals from colleges that had CAA programs of study and that are engaging in Guided Pathways reform. At these colleges, they interviewed individuals who were key implementers of CAAs or deeply involved in or knowledgeable about Guided Pathways reforms at their college. These individuals were asked to identify additional colleges or individuals who would be helpful to interview. In all, Equal Measure interviewed 16 individuals representing nine California community colleges, including eight colleges that had CAA programs and one that had a learning community that served a similar population.

In each interview, the Equal Measure team asked questions about CAAs and about Guided Pathways. With respect to CAAs, the team asked about the students who were served, the key elements that supported students, and factors that affected success and sustainability. With respect to Guided Pathways, the team asked about the status and structure of reforms under way at each college and about the lessons from CAAs that would be important to consider as reforms continue statewide.

At right are the names and college affiliations of the 16 practitioners who participated in structured interviews with Equal Measure that informed the research and conclusions in this brief. Eight of these practitioners' colleges had CAAs and one had a closely related program.

Interviewees	Colleges
Chris Lebo-Planas	Berkeley City College
Shannon Penn	Berkeley City College
Evan Decker	Contra Costa College
Kelly Schelin	Contra Costa College
Tiffany Miller	El Camino College
Jose Anaya	El Camino College
Beth Maher	Laney College
Leticia Barajas	Los Angeles Trade-Technical College
Madelyn Arballo	Mt. San Antonio College
David Clark	Reedley College
Maria Munoz	Santa Monica College
Guido del Piccolo	Santa Monica College
David Hasson	Skyline College
Raymond Hernandez	Skyline College
Lorraine DeMello	Skyline College
Alina Varona	Skyline College

Career Ladders Project staff facilitated a focus group on May 17, 2018, with representatives from CAAs at selected colleges in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The transcript of that conversation also provided qualitative data used in this analysis.

Focus group participants	Colleges
Shannon Penn	Berkeley City College
Evan Decker	Contra Costa College
Dona DeRusso	Diablo Valley College
Drew Douglas	Contra Costa Community College District
Lupe Daniels	Diablo Valley College
Tiffany Welter	Los Medanos College
Rick Ramos	Merritt College

## Appendix B: Initiatives in California related to Guided Pathways

California community colleges are involved in several reform efforts aimed at improving student achievement using an integrated, institution-wide approach. Goals include improving students' decisions about courses to take, minimizing achievement gaps, and supporting all students from their point of entry to graduation. These reforms all seek to increase the number of students who earn high-quality postsecondary credentials and degrees.

**1. American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project.** Started in 2015, this is a national initiative with 30 participating colleges in its first cohort, including three from California (Bakersfield College, Irvine Valley College, and Mt. San Antonio College). Multiple national partners are participating in this initiative, including the Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Aspen Institute, Jobs for the Future, Achieving the Dream, Center for Community College Student Engagement, Community College Research Center, Public Agenda, and National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII). A second cohort, called AACC Pathways 2.0, launched in 2017, includes 13 colleges across the nation, including Santa Monica College in California.

**2. California Guided Pathways Project.** This is a competitive program of 20 community colleges chosen from across California that began in 2017 to demonstrate implementation of Guided Pathways in California. Colleges contribute funds, and private organizations, including AACC and NCII, and provide guidance via a series of institutes.

**3. State funding for Guided Pathways.** Starting in 2017, the state allocated \$150 million, to be distributed to all of California's 114 community colleges over five years, to seed program inquiry and design and to support implementation of Guided Pathways reforms. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office leads the effort with support from the Career Ladders Project, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, The RP Group, 3CSN, Leading from the Middle, and other partners.

### 4. Guided Pathways reforms also build on and leverage several pre-existing initiatives.

- **Strong Workforce Program** – expands the availability of quality community college career technical education and workforce development pathways, credentials, certificates, and degrees
- **AB705** – changes how students are placed in math and English courses and maximizes the probability they will enter and complete transfer-level coursework
- **Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP)** – formed in 2018, combines several initiatives.
  - **Student Success and Support Programs:** enhance student access to California community colleges and improve persistence and achievement of educational goals (Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 1986; Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012)
  - **Basic Skills Initiative:** aimed to improve student outcomes by changing basic skills practices.
  - **Student Equity Program:** provided funding to close achievement gaps and increase access and success for underrepresented students. Until 2015-2016, colleges were required to maintain a Student Equity Plan. This requirement is now folded into the 2017-2019 Integrated Plan, which encompasses all three of the programs in the SEAP.

## Appendix C: Characteristics of CAA students compared with all California community college system students, 2007-2013

	Characteristic	CAA students, 2007-2013*	All students in the California community college system, 2007-2013
GENDER	Female	46%	54%
	Male	51%	45%
	Under 25 years of age	45%	53%
ECONOMIC STATUS	Pell Grant recipient	42%	N/A
	BOG waiver recipient	63%	N/A
RACE/ ETHNICITY	Hispanic (any race)	48%	33%
	African American	16%	7%
	Asian	9%	15%
	White	18%	32%
	Other/unknown	9%	12%

Source: Equal Measure, Career Advancement Academies: Summative Evaluation Report (2007-2013).

\*Based on CAA participants with matching COMIS data from 2007-2013. N=5,522, which is 62% of the total sample of 8,917 students enrolled in CAAs.

## Endnotes

- 1 To learn more about CAAs, see Equal Measure. Sustaining the Career Advancement Academies. (May 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CAA-Report-Final-050115.pdf> and Equal Measure and The Career Ladders Project. Career Advancement Academies: Insights into Contextualized Teaching and Learning. (March 2016). Retrieved from [https://www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/F14\\_CAA-CTL\\_Report\\_3.16.pdf](https://www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/F14_CAA-CTL_Report_3.16.pdf)
- 2 This list of student needs was drawn from Dadgar, M., Arrillaga, E., Buck, D., Sinclair, B., Fischerhall, C., and Brown, K. (August 2017). Bringing Student Voices to Guided Pathways Inquiry and Design: Findings from Student Focus Groups at Two California Community Colleges. Career Ladders Project. Retrieved from <https://ccgp.cccco.edu/Portals/0/Bringing-Student-Voices-to-Guided-Pathways-Inquiry-and-Design.pdf>
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- 9 What We Know About Guided Pathways. (March 2015). Community College Research Center. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 This count is based on individual college reports and NOT on Chancellor’s Office Management Information Systems (COMIS) data.
- 12 Equal Measure. (March 2014). Career Advancement Academies: Summative Evaluation Report (2007-2013).
- 13 Equal Measure. (May 2015). Sustaining the Career Advancement Academies. Retrieved from: <http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/CAA-Report-Final-050115.pdf>
- 14 This list of student needs was drawn from Dadgar, M. et al. (August 2017).
- 15 Hellman, C. (1996). “Academic Self-Efficacy: Highlighting the First-Generation Student.” *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College* (3, 6).
- 16 Dadgar, M. et al. (August 2017).
- 17 California State University Bakersfield. Affinity Groups. Retrieved from <http://www.csub.edu/compliance/AffinityGroups/>



The Career Ladders Project works with community colleges and their K12, university, community, workforce and employer partners to improve educational and career outcomes. We foster these improvements through research, policy change and strategic assistance to colleges and their partners.

**678 13th Street, Suite 200 | Oakland, CA 94612**

[www.careerladdersproject.org](http://www.careerladdersproject.org) | Twitter: @clpor



**520 Walnut Street, Suite 1450 | Philadelphia, PA 19106**

[info@equalmeasure.org](mailto:info@equalmeasure.org)