

## The Case for Guided Pathways

Saint Louis Community College (STLCC) will be the leader in the nation for equipping graduates for family sustaining jobs and providing seamless pathways for University matriculating students into junior level status within their major of choice. STLCC will achieve this by embarking upon Guided Pathways to solidify its commitment to student success and completion. While on this journey, we will transform our current infrastructure, increase cooperation between units, departments and Centers, while incorporating a multi-faceted approach to improve student success and ease matriculation into academic and/or work-related pathways for all students. Guided Pathways is a transformational framework that redefines the student experience. This approach to student success and organizational fortitude aligns with the strategic goals of the institution to expand minds and change student lives.

STLCC recognizes we have room to improve our service to students and outcomes. In 2018, STLCC witnessed a substantial increase in its combined three-year graduation and transfer rates.

### **New Full Time (NFT) Students: Graduation/Transfer Rates (NCCBP)**

2014	2015	Change
29.3%	34.2%	16% higher

Notably, STLCC's transfer rate is greater than its three-year completion rate in 2018.

### **STLCC: All Students**

Transfer	3-Year Completion
18.3.%	15.9%

Moreover, the College's three-year graduation rate continues to lag in comparison to our benchmark institutions.

### **NFT 3-Year Graduation Rates**

<b>STLCC</b>	<b>MO Community Colleges</b>	<b>National</b>
16.7%	40.79%*	41.21%*

More disconcerting, our 2-year graduation rates for 2016 NFT students is much lower than the NCCBP 2016 benchmark for Missouri Community Colleges and nationally.

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**2016 NFT 2-Year Graduation Rates**

<b>STLCC</b>	<b>MO Community Colleges</b>	<b>National</b>
7.4%	19.9%	18.82%

The statistics for our African-American students are the most concerning of all.

**African-American Student Graduation Rates**

<b>2-Year</b>	<b>3-Year</b>
1%	6%

STLCC is committed to the democratic mission of the comprehensive community college. However, we recognize in order to make a greater impact on our students and the communities we serve requires a change in how we serve our students from the point of entry to the point of completion and placement into their chosen career field or University destination. Thirty-three percent of our students are African-American. As shown above, the 2-year graduation rate for African-Americans is 1% and their 3-year graduation rate is 6%. This is not an acceptable outcome. In St. Louis some African -American neighborhoods experience unemployment rates ranging from 17-36% (2019 State of St. Louis Workforce). Thus, equity is not just an institutional imperative but a community imperative. Changing lives must include improving the completion rates of our largest population of minority students. Another noteworthy statistic reveals our students graduate with excess credit hours required to earn an Associate degree. Excess credit hours are costly in time and money for our students. The College must refine student choices to clarify student career paths.

**STLCC Graduate Credit Hours (Average)**

<b>Average Hours Required</b>	<b>Hours Earned Upon Graduation</b>
62	80

Our goals for Guided Pathways are fivefold:

- a) clarify and streamline paths to student goals;
- b) help students choose and enter a pathway;

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- c) close student achievement gaps by helping them stay on and progress within their chosen path;
- d) employ faculty talent and expertise to ensure impactful learning occurs by sustaining continuous improvement through ensuring student outcomes attainment, embedding experiential learning, and high impact practices;
- e) ensure students are gainfully employed and/or enter a University path within the major of their choice upon credential attainment or graduation.

STLCC will begin its Pathways journey with the end in mind--student completion. The question we must ask is, “How does a student get there (graduation) from here (our front door)?” To answer the question, we will perform a diagnostic analysis, which will include process mapping of our current student services, workforce and academic models to analyze and document the current student experience from point of entry to exit from the institution. The analysis will inform the institution of the opportunities to scale exceptional practices, applaud our efforts in some areas, and reveal and eliminate barriers we may have imposed upon student entry and programmatic progression. The analysis will also inform the institution of policies and/or procedures that may enable or hinder the student onboarding experience and completion.

It is imperative to change the lives of all our students and the communities we serve for the better. To offset the 1% anticipated decline in the St. Louis population, which includes a 6.5% decrease in age group 15-39, and a 22% increase in 65+ years and increased diversification of our community (IRP Population Projection 2020-2030), STLCC must redesign the educational experience to support students becoming transfer and/or career ready. We must holistically address students not just earning the credits needed to meet Missouri’s standard core transfer curriculum (CORE 42) but the additional 18\* credit hours needed for graduation. We must also ensure every student has a roadmap to family sustaining job opportunities. In doing so, STLCC will realign courses with student needs, provide high impact credentials, provide in-time support services to students with academic milestones on their educational roadmap, and build a culture of collaboration across STLCC departments, and employees that put students first. STLCC will expand its focus and college culture beyond determining if students are college ready, but ensuring we are student ready. Reframing our focus on Guided Pathways will move STLCC to the next level of organizational and student excellence and student success.