



COMPLETION  
BY DESIGN



# DESIGNING FOR COMPLETION:

The practice and progress of  
the Completion By Design initiative

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# AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE

This report provides an overview of the Completion by Design (CBD) approach and gives a snapshot of the progress CBD colleges have made since the initiative began in 2011. It is a unique opportunity to share emerging lessons and open a dialogue with other community college leaders and practitioners engaged in completion-focused institutional transformation.<sup>1</sup>

*“Completion-focused institutional transformation isn’t easy—but we believe it’s worth it when it comes to student impact. This report makes a first step toward what we hope will be a continued conversation with the field about how to redesign colleges for student success.” – Suzanne Walsh, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

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<sup>1</sup>. This report is intended to be reflective rather than evaluative. Efforts are also underway to assess CBD progress from a research and evaluation perspective.



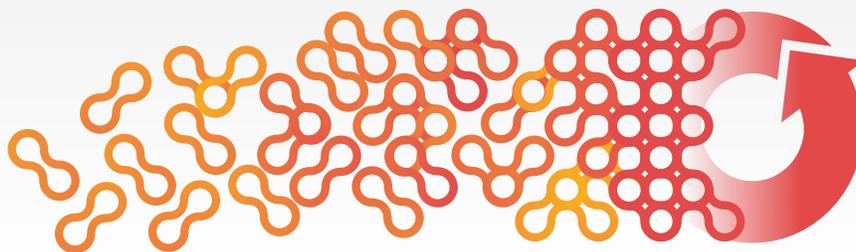
# A systemic solution designed for lasting impact

## Completion by Design boosts completion rates through systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices

Colleges and universities around the country are working hard to ensure student success in the classroom and beyond. Although many colleges have implemented innovative programs to target specific cohorts, at-scale improvements in college completion rates are still rare.

The Completion by Design (CBD) initiative takes a new approach. **Participating community colleges boost completion rates for most students, with a focus on comprehensive institutional transformation.** CBD works with community college faculty and staff in a process of inquiry and design, aimed at systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices that strengthen pathways<sup>2</sup> to completion for students, without increasing costs, diluting educational quality, or undermining community colleges' historical commitment to open access. CBD works not only to boost completion rates of participating colleges, but also to build knowledge about how to succeed at completion-focused institutional transformation for the field. To date, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has dedicated \$35 million to the initiative.

### Traditional approach to reform vs. Completion by Design



#### CHALLENGE

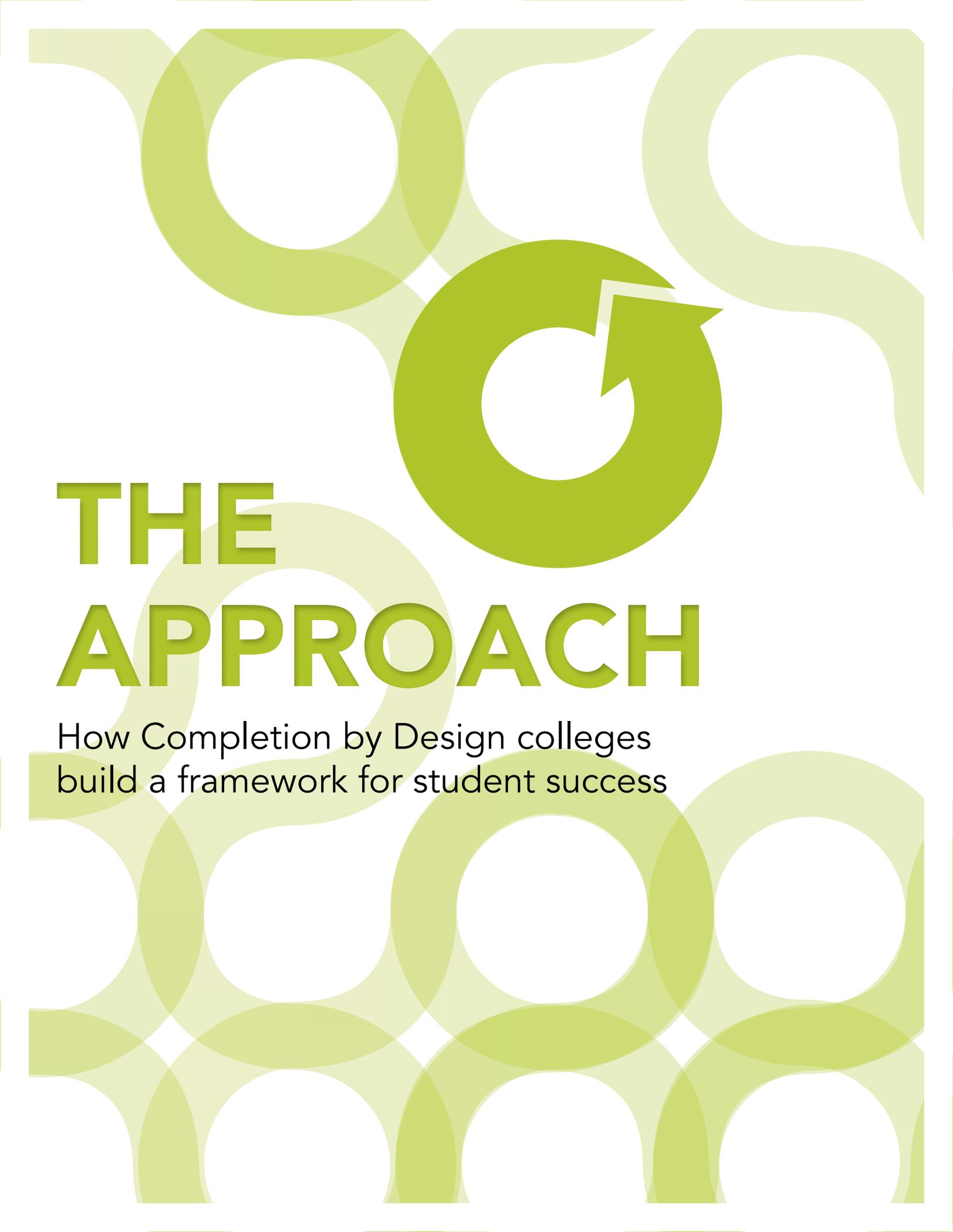
Isolated efforts have not significantly increased student completion

#### SOLUTION

A systemic approach fundamentally transforms the student experience to increase completion

<sup>2</sup> The initiative uses the term “completion pathway” to describe the components that undergird the student experience. Completion pathway is defined as an integrated set of institutional policies, practices, and programs intended to maximize students' likelihood of completing a credential.





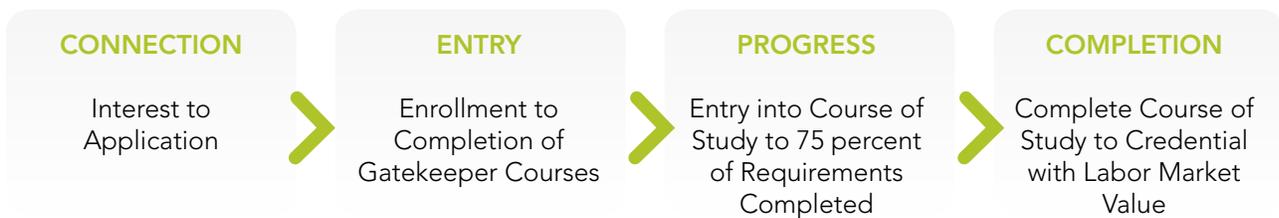
# THE APPROACH

How Completion by Design colleges  
build a framework for student success

# How Completion by Design colleges build a framework for student success

CBD contributes to the college completion movement in two ways. First, CBD facilitates the designing of connected solutions across students' entire educational experiences—from initial connection with the college, entry to college and the selection of a program of study, progression through college toward a credential, and eventually the completion of a credential.

**Our Preventing Loss, Creating Momentum Framework outlines this approach in more detail:**



**For the complete Preventing Loss, Creating Momentum Framework, [click here](#).**

Secondly, CBD creates conditions that allow for this holistic approach by directly addressing a spectrum of organizational, cultural, and administrative factors that can make or break a serious effort to reform. These include the need for the following:

- **Completion-focused leadership:**  
Leadership at all levels (trustees, administrators, faculty, student services, state systems, and associations) makes student learning and completion a top priority.
- **Inquiry and analysis capacity:**  
Expertise exists in, or is cultivated for, reflective, meaningful, and completion-focused dialogue and analysis of student outcome and financial data to inform practice improvements and resource allocation.
- **Change management capacity and attention to culture:**  
Faculty and staff at all levels engage in a process of continuous innovation, learning, and communication in order to build a culture of improvement and completion.
- **Technology capacity:**  
Leadership, faculty, and staff at all levels use technology to increase efficiency of service delivery in and outside of the classroom and to support sophisticated data analysis.



## Initiative Structure Promotes Cross-College Learning

CBD developed a structure aligned with the complex task of practice-based change. Colleges applied in cadres—the organizing unit for groups of full-service campuses and colleges within a state—to promote cross-college strategic alignment and learning. Three cadres—from Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio—were selected to design and implement comprehensive reforms, integrating best practices from prior reform efforts, research, and demonstration projects into their plans.

Together, the CBD cadres represent nine colleges, which enroll nearly a third of all community college students in the three states. Each cadre comprises interdisciplinary practitioner teams that leverage their knowledge and strengthen the collective will for redesign. In each state, a designated lead policy organization supports the cadres by identifying policies that impede reform and by promoting new policies conducive to the colleges' plans.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the state policy leads, a technical assistance team supports each cadre. Because the scope and scale of these pervasive changes are new for these colleges, and for the community college field as a whole, the support structures enable learning on many levels—across campuses, districts, and state lines among peers and between the initiative technical assistance providers and the field.



### Florida Cadre

**Managing Partner Institution:**  
Miami Dade College (MDC)

**Cadre Colleges/Campuses:**  
MDC Hialeah, Homestead, West, InterAmerican, Kendall, Medical Center, North, and Wolfson Campuses

**Policy Lead:**  
Florida College System



### North Carolina Cadre

**Managing Partner Institution:**  
Guilford Technical Community College

**Cadre Colleges/Campuses:**  
Central Piedmont, Davidson County, Guilford Technical, Martin, Wake Technical Community Colleges

**Policy Lead:**  
North Carolina Community College System



### Ohio Cadre

**Managing Partner Institution:**  
Sinclair Community College

**Cadre Colleges/Campuses:** Lorain County Community College, Sinclair Community College—Courseview and Dayton Campuses, Stark State College

**Policy Lead:**  
Ohio Association of Community Colleges

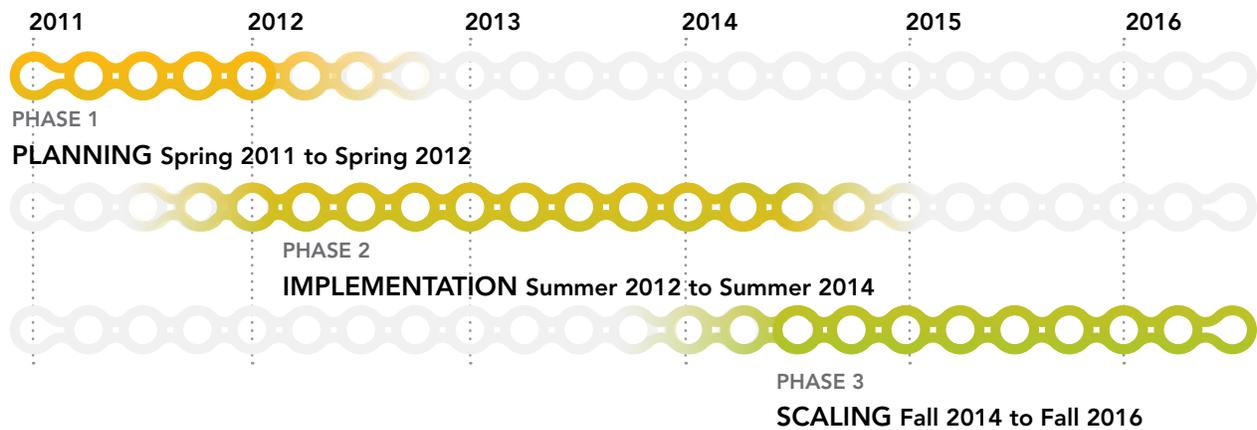
At the initiative level, the Foundation has assembled a number of organizations and individuals to foster learning throughout the CBD network and in the field. They also provide technical assistance and support and align the work of Completion by Design with other completion efforts nationwide.

To see a full list of CBD's current National Assistance Team members, [click here](#).

3. The state policy leads' grants began in Spring 2013; this report therefore focuses primarily on the work of the colleges.



## From Planning to Implementation and Scaling



### Phase 1:

#### **Planning** (*Spring 2011 to Spring 2012*)

The CBD Initiative comprises three phases. The first phase of the initiative was a one-year planning period during which participating community colleges received a set of frameworks, a series of design principles (see below), support in change management, and a nuanced look at their completion data—along with the time and space to reflect on and glean insights from these resources. In the latter part of the year, the colleges designed at-scale strategies to reduce loss points and catalyze momentum points, aimed at different places along the student progression pathway.

#### **Completion by Design's Pathway Design Principles guide the choices colleges make to boost completion rates**

1. Ensure students know requirements for success
2. Minimize time required to prepare for college
3. Accelerate entry into coherent programs of study
4. Customize and contextualize instruction
5. Integrate student supports with instruction
6. Leverage technology to improve learning and program delivery
7. Continually monitor student progress and provide proactive guidance
8. Reward behaviors that contribute to completion

**For a detailed description of the CBD Pathway Design Principles, [click here](#).**



## Phase 2:

### Implementation (Summer 2012 to Summer 2014)

The second phase is a two-year implementation period, during which the colleges are implementing and refining strategies identified during the planning year. Each college follows its own timeline for change during the implementation phase. Teams will continue to design some strategies that require more detailed planning and to refine those they have begun to implement. This will result in continued improvement and implementation of key CBD concepts well past this two-year period. Collectively, the cadres estimate that at least one of the elements of their respective redesign strategies will reach the majority of their students this fall.<sup>4</sup>

## Phase 3:

### Scaling (Fall 2014 to Fall 2016)

In this final phase, scaling, the colleges will continue implementation on their campuses while working collaboratively with their state partners to identify reforms with promising results that can be scaled up for statewide and field-level impact. Scaling CBD is a multifaceted, multiphase process. Because changing the student experience for most students within the colleges is a guiding principle, strategies should begin at scale—not limited to pilot cohorts of eligible students or a small number of campuses within the cadre. During the scaling phase, however, colleges will continue to improve upon existing strategies while ensuring even deeper impact and reach on their campuses.

Much of the groundwork for scaling outside of the original cadre institutions is happening now: the cadres, state policy lead organizations, and other CBD partners have begun work to disseminate lessons learned, advance complementary public policy changes, and engage early-adopter colleges in the implementation phase. The scaling phase will build on this momentum, with colleges and states asked to reflect on progress to date as they develop more formal strategies and structures to support state and field level scaling.

Exact replication of the CBD initiative is not expected of any college outside of CBD. Rather, the focus of scaling CBD statewide and nationally will be on adaptation of CBD's essential elements—its design principles, processes, tools, and/or lessons learned—to local campus context. **The legacy of CBD at a field level will be campus and state commitment to comprehensive redesign of the student experience from every stage of the student pathway, and a toolkit to draw upon in the development of a strategy customized to local context.**

*“Completion by Design colleges are implementing changes at a scale I have not seen institutions attempt in 30 years of work with colleges and universities. They aren’t just piloting boutique interventions and hoping to scale them up someday—they are engaging faculty and staff in fundamentally rethinking the design of their programs and services to enable students to achieve their goals for completion and career advancement.” – Dr. Davis Jenkins, Community College Research Center*

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4. The target range is between 80 and 95 percent of students across cadres.





# MEASURING PROGRESS

Early data and trends offer insight  
into potential impact

# Colleges track progress to inform continuous improvement

The CBD initiative believes that to reach its goals, all stakeholders must share the following: 1) a common understanding of where the work is starting (baseline data), 2) a common understanding of where the work is heading (improvement targets), 3) and a systematic method to track progress at regular intervals.

**Measuring and describing the success of CBD for students is critical—in order both to communicate CBD’s impact to the field and to inform the cadres’ continuous improvement.** The initiative’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) represent the best thinking from the cadres and the Foundation about how progress along the completion pathway could be represented from a quantitative perspective. Because movement along these measures will take time, the Foundation is also developing other indicators to highlight institutional and cultural changes that are precursors to observed changes in student outcomes.

## Colleges used key performance indicators to set realistic targets

During summer and fall 2012, the colleges began to identify KPIs and improvement targets designed to build the shared expectations noted above. They took the following steps:

- 1. Define common, initiative-wide KPIs.** The Foundation identified eleven leading indicators that would capture student progress longitudinally (see text box). These indicators draw on experience from previous student success initiatives, research, and thorough discussion with cadre representatives and field-level research experts from the CBD Data and Evaluation advisory group.
- 2. Collect baseline data.** The colleges worked with institutional research staff and the initiative’s technical assistance team to collect existing data related to each KPI.
- 3. Map college strategies to each KPI; document evidence for each strategy; and model improvement scenarios.** In an effort to set realistic expectations for change, CBD leadership teams at each college mapped their implementation strategies to each KPI. This approach also helped the colleges prioritize the most promising ideas suggested by the research. Lastly, members of the initiative’s technical assistance team provided model improvement scenarios—estimates of the magnitude of changes in completion outcomes based on the strategies—to help determine realistic targets.
- 4. Discuss and agree upon targets.** Armed with the data accumulated in Step 3 above, the colleges consulted with the technical assistance team and then met to settle on final targets. The Foundation reassured colleges that it understood that the targets could only be educated estimates, not guarantees.

This process of attempting to add some “science”—by basing targets on a combination of evidence, data, and practitioner insight—to the usually political and/or aspirational nature of setting targets for foundation grants was largely considered a success.

## Completion by Design’s Key Performance Indicators

1. Percentage of students coming directly from high school who place below college level
2. Accumulated Credits:
  - A. Percentage distribution of students by first term credential-bearing credit accumulation, and first term credential-bearing plus developmental education credit accumulation
  - B. Average number of credential-bearing credits accumulated during the first term, and credential-bearing and developmental education credits accumulated during the first term
3. Percentage of attempted credential-bearing credits completed during student’s first term, and attempted developmental education credits completed during student’s first term
4. Percentage of students persisting from first term to second term
5. Percentage of students who start below college level and complete recommended remediation within one year
6. Percentage of students who pass required entry-level math and English within one year and two years on first attempt
7. Percentage of students persisting fall to fall term
8. Percentage of students earning 12 college credits in one year, 24 in two years
9. Percentage of students who enter a program of study (POS, concentrate) within one year and two years
10. Percentage of students who receive a credential within five years
11. Excess Credits:
  - A. Percentage of students earning excess college credits beyond two-year degree requirements
  - B. Average number of excess credits



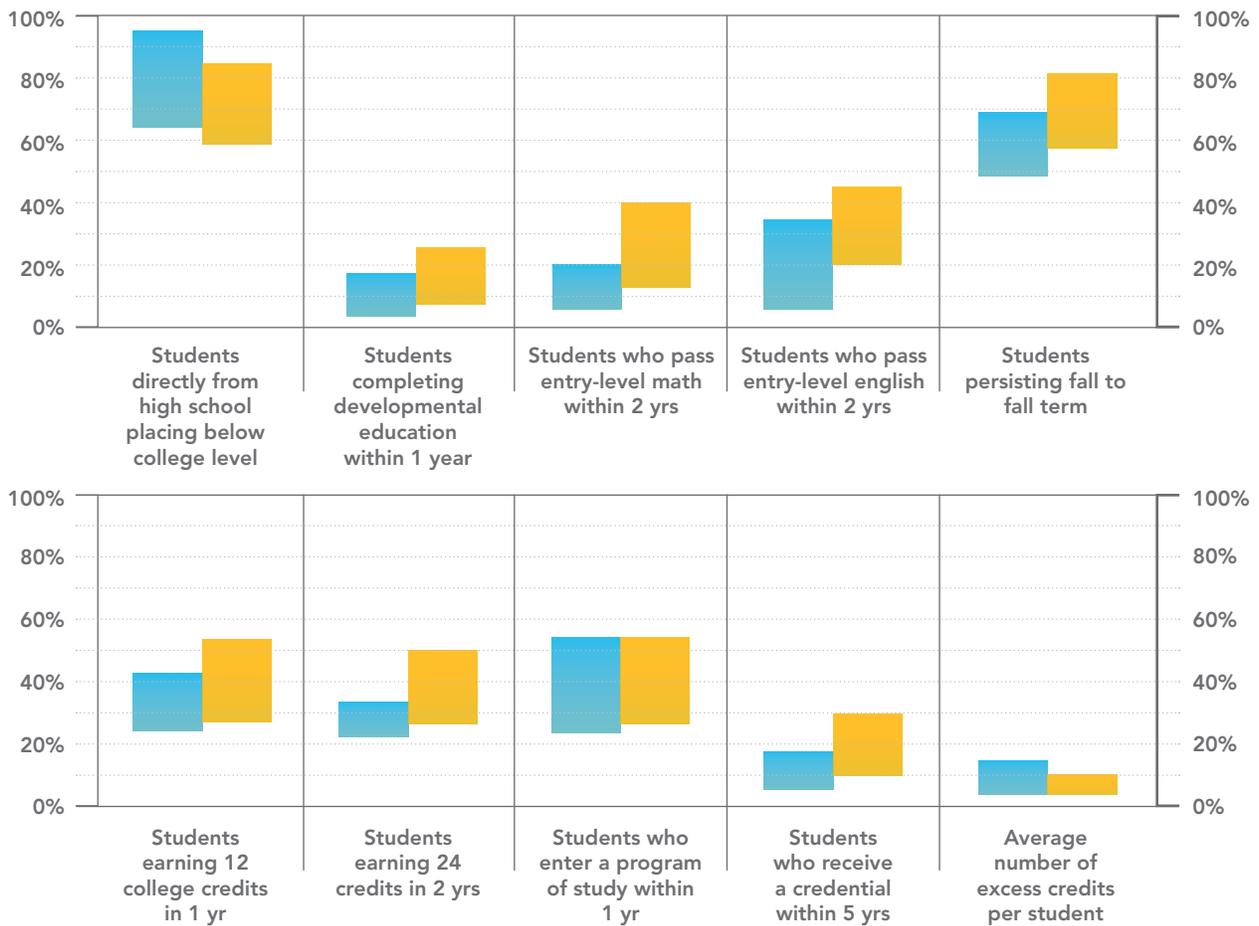
## Colleges start at different points, but share confidence in the CBD approach

The baseline KPI data and 2015 KPI targets (ranges for first-time-in-college students shown below) that emerged from this process vary, reflecting the unique circumstances of each of the colleges.

### Range of KPI Baselines and 2015 KPI Targets

**KEY**

- Range in baseline among 9 colleges
- Range in 2015 Target among 9 colleges



The graph displays the fairly wide variance in KPI baseline measures between the nine CBD colleges. This variance reflects both the differences in local and state contexts and the variety of colleges' current and previous improvement efforts. The largest variances are associated with developmental education—initial placement (95 percent vs. 65 percent) and completion of college-level English coursework (34 percent vs. 5 percent)—and entrance into a program of study during the first year at the college (54 percent vs. 23 percent).

The graph also displays the KPI targets set by the colleges. By analyzing the median improvement percentages of the colleges (not specifically shown on the graph), it is clear that the colleges are most optimistic about improving the percentage of students completing a credential in five years (a median targeted improvement of 77 percent), and about the percentage of developmental education students who complete college-level math in two years (median improvement of 61 percent). Significant expected improvement to the five-year completion rate reflects the colleges' confidence in the CBD process, as this KPI essentially represents the “sum” impact of all the other redesign. Colleges' confidence in developmental education targets is likely explained by the significant work within and outside CBD that is taking place in the nine colleges and at the state level in Florida, Ohio, and North Carolina.

On average, the colleges are least optimistic about improving the percentage of students needing developmental education (median improvement of 10 percent) and about fall-to-fall persistence rates (median improvement of 17 percent). The developmental education finding likely reflects the challenges of improving the pipeline with K-12 education—although it should be noted that changes in North Carolina to the placement process and a shift in Florida to an opt-in model for developmental education will likely fundamentally change this KPI. On the persistence side, the rates are fairly high at the colleges to begin with, and there has not been much variance in persistence rates historically at these or other two-year colleges. There is also not much change estimated on the excess credits KPI, with absolute percentage point improvements estimated to be in the zero-to-two point range at most of the colleges. The already low average number of excess credits—5 to 14 excess credits for graduating students—likely explains this minimal anticipated change.

Taken together, the colleges are very optimistic about the improvements they expect to see when CBD is fully implemented. Through the KPI target-setting process, the colleges have reflected this optimism by setting ambitious targets.



# State-by-state profiles: Colleges have initiated significant changes

The three cadres have made strong progress toward the goals they enumerated in their implementation plans. Each CBD college engaged in independent and collective efforts during the planning year to apply the loss-momentum framework and CBD design principles, while addressing their unique histories of innovation and initiatives, local and state policy context, and culture. As such, the overview of the efforts by the nine colleges and three cadres in the first year of implementation demonstrates key similarities and also unique features. In the complicated political, policy, and funding environment that these (and all) colleges face in 2013, the progress described below represents a fundamental and structural step forward in improving completion outcomes at scale.

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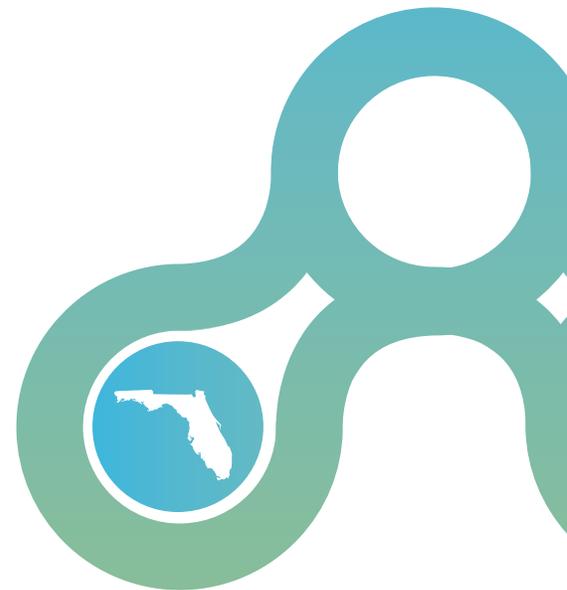
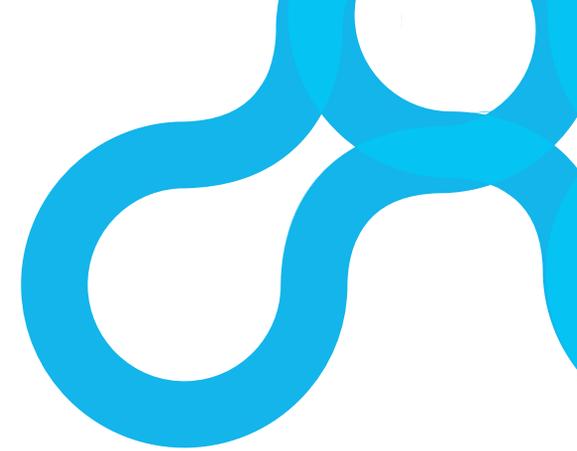
## FLORIDA

### Approach & Priorities

Miami Dade College (MDC) considers CBD an integral part of its comprehensive student achievement initiatives. This effort includes:

1) creating structured intake processes that comprise mandatory orientation, advising and improved assessments, 2) integrating academic and student support programs aligned with learning outcomes, 3) redesigning curriculum and developing structured program pathways that lead to career and transfer opportunities, 4) increasing forward momentum by shortening course sequences, especially for developmental education and English language learners, 5) strengthening the transition from developmental education and English language learner programs into college-level study and career outcomes, 6) increasing student engagement through communities of interest. [Click here](#) for more information about Miami Dade College and more detail on its implementation plans.

MDC focused its early implementation efforts on the redesigned early student experience for first-time, direct-entry students. In summer and fall 2012, the college launched for these students a mandatory orientation, noncognitive diagnostic assessments, advisor assignments, test prep courses for students placing into developmental education, and one-on-one advising appointments to review assessment results and plan academic pathways. In 2012-2013, over 7,600 students were assigned advisors, and roughly twice as many students as the previous year completed individual academic plans. As of September 2013, over 8,000 students were



*"Our change process has been successful because our champions consist of more than half of the faculty, staff, and administrators at the college. Despite the uncertainties associated with such a large-scale endeavor, the institution as a whole had committed itself to integrating the academic and student support areas, communicating transparently, taking risks, and using data to improve processes along the way." – Dr. Lenore Rodicio, MDC Vice Provost for Student Achievement Initiatives and FL Cadre Managing Partner Director*



assigned advisors for the 2013-2014 academic year. The test prep classes showed strong results, with approximately 50 percent of students testing at least one placement level higher after the test prep—and performing as well or better in fall term courses in comparison to students who placed into those courses without test prep. In summer and fall 2013, MDC launched “version 2.0” of the mandatory orientation and test prep classes. Initial results show a 23 percent increase in the number of students participating in the orientation. Similarly, there was an increase in the number of students participating in the test prep courses with similar success rates. In addition to rolling out these changes, overlapping, cross-functional teams representing hundreds of faculty and staff continued to design other strategies. In the fall and into the spring, these teams, incorporating lessons learned from initial implementation, evaluated and refined the intake experience and redesigned curriculum pathways for priority disciplines.

## Progress Highlights

- **Academic Pathways:** Led by a core team of faculty, 27 intradisciplinary teams and 100 interdisciplinary teams developed more structured curriculum pathways, examining current course offerings in the context of transfer and workforce requirements, federal and state requirements, discipline standards, and learning outcomes. This team vetted redesigned pathways—along with on-ramps for developmental and EAP students—for four “target disciplines”: the largest programs that together represent about 75 percent of the student body. The four target disciplines were biology, business, criminal justice, and psychology.
- **Comprehensive Student Development, including Coaching/Mentoring and Student Success Experiences:** The college reviewed and documented the impacts of the redesigned early student experience implemented in summer and fall 2013 and improved the model. One team focused specifically on the processes related to advising and developed recommendations for near-term and longer-term holistic support models for students, including how to equip professionals to provide support. Approximately 3,200 students transferred from professional advisors to academic coaches and mentors in May 2013. Another team gathered input and evidence on effective student success courses and other experiences and formed recommendations for models and roles within the college. In addition, MDC launched its pre-college advisement process in 13 of its feeder high schools. This pre-college advisement includes targeted communication to high school students, assistance with the application and admissions process, and themed activities including financial aid awareness and career exploration activities.
- **Communities of Interest (COI):** In addition to developing a draft framework that aligns curriculum, services, faculty, staff, administrators and spaces with students’ career interests, the COI working group prepared for fall implementation of COIs for the largest academic areas, business and health programs. Additional communities will be implemented in the spring 2014.
- **Integrated Learning Support:** Lab managers, campus Chief Information Officers, and learning resources and Virtual College personnel have inventoried campus resources and best practices in preparation for integrating technology supports into other strategy areas.
- **Advising into Programs of Study:** The Florida College System is responding to two major legislative requirements (HB 7135 and SB 1720) to advise all students, including students who are not prepared for college, into meta-majors (broad program streams). The system’s successful implementation of this legislation stands to appreciably accelerate the rate at which students in all of its colleges enter and succeed in programs of study. In response to this legislation, MDC enrolled over 4,100 students in its redesigned developmental education courses, and implemented a pilot program for multiple measures placement with 400 students.

## Next Steps

In the coming months, MDC will continue to refine approaches while focusing on the tactical details necessary for executing implementation strategies. Goals for the fall include the following:

- Expanded implementation of coaching and mentoring services for students
- Roll-out of student success experience components
- Fall term implementation of the redesigned curriculum pathways and business and health communities of interest
- Expanded early student outreach/pre-enrollment advising programs in all high schools



# NORTH CAROLINA

## Approach & Priorities

The North Carolina cadre is implementing changes in three key areas, leveraging several ongoing college and state initiatives in conjunction with its CBD work.

First, the colleges will significantly redesign popular programs of study. The goal is to make these programs more prescriptive overall and to better align them with the demands of the local job markets or the requirements for junior standing for a baccalaureate degree. Targeted technical programs are reviewed by faculty and department chairs with industry contacts as well as by local, industry specific advisory boards that provide counsel about industry skills requirements. Also, many technical programs have unique certification or accreditation requirements that help guide program alignment. To help ensure transfer to four-year institutions with minimal loss of credit, the cadre has undertaken both local and system-wide assessments of transferability and articulation. Locally, colleges reviewed their respective general education core offerings in light of their transferability to the University of North Carolina (UNC) system. Those assessments resulted in significant reductions in the number of courses offered to satisfy a general education requirement. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) office, the cadre policy lead, is working system-wide with UNC General Administration to develop a new, comprehensive articulation agreement that includes a standard general education core curriculum that guarantees credit transfer and satisfies the general education core requirement at all 16 universities in the UNC system.

Second, the cadre will integrate several proven innovations that reduce the number of students referred to developmental education and accelerate the movement of referred students into well-defined and prescriptive programs of study.

Third, it will develop intensive advising models to provide consistent support and continuity for students from entry through transfer or completion.

Both a comprehensive policy strategy and an integrated technology approach will strengthen and sustain the work of the cadre. The comprehensive policy strategy includes levers developed collaboratively with the policy lead and that address legislative, NCCCS State Board, and local policy issues. As an example, the team identified a key legislative policy lever as providing summer full-time equivalent funding for developmental education. Additionally, the State Board approved allowing



*“Completion by Design provides North Carolina with a structure that frames all of our college and system-wide initiatives. It effectively blends practice and policy, and gives us a common language that will aid scaling across the state.” – Ed Bowling, Executive Director, North Carolina Completion By Design and CBD Managing Partner Director*



multiple placement measures for determining which students would test for developmental courses. At the local level, policies such as mandatory orientation and course prerequisites will support the work of the cadre. On the technology side, each college is implementing new software to support advising and academic planning activities. [Click here](#) for more information about the North Carolina Completion by Design cadre and its implementation plans.

The North Carolina cadre organized cross-college work teams for each of their major strategy areas. These teams are leading the changes at each college. In addition, cadre leadership is working closely with the NCCCS office and other partners to advance a completion-focused policy agenda that aligns closely with the practice changes at the colleges. The cadre also launched engagement and sharing mechanisms to support scaling the work to other North Carolina community colleges, including a Moodle site set up for NCCCS presidents and their senior administrators to share updates and resources with the community college system. Four additional North Carolina community colleges are working with the initial CBD cadre to engage in similar redesign activities the cadre is calling “CBD 2.0.”

## Progress Highlights

- **Program of Study Redesign:** Each cadre college is redesigning, or has already successfully redesigned, at least three large programs of study to be more prescriptive and, in some cases, to require fewer total credit hours. To accomplish this task, teams conducted detailed analyses of transfer dynamics and university system requirements as part of their curriculum redesign work. In addition to informing course selection for greater continuity with the university system, gathering this information also deepened the cadre’s overall understanding of the challenges transfer students often face. It has also significantly impacted the current development of a new comprehensive articulation agreement between the two systems.
- **Developmental Education Placement Policy:** After a thorough and comprehensive vetting process, the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges approved a multiple measure placement policy. The new policy, which establishes high school grade point average as the primary placement measure, will be implemented at colleges in fall 2013, to be fully implemented statewide by fall 2015.
- **Intensive Advising:** Cadre colleges have consulted with experts to review and strengthen their advising models, including development and training for advisors. Guilford Technical Community College is launching a new mandatory orientation model this fall, which includes web-based “pre-orientation” modules that students must complete prior to registering for orientation. The cadre has also finalized plans and begun implementation of a technology platform to undergird their intensive student advising, coaching, and mentoring processes.

## Next Steps

In the coming months, the North Carolina cadre will focus on deepening implementation of their strategies, while continuing to refine and adapt to the new practices, processes, and policies. Specific goals and activities for the coming months include the following:

- Continue training for new advising models
- Restructure additional programs of study at each college
- Roll out each college’s redesigned intake/first-semester changes, including registration, first-year experiences, and student success courses
- Implement, train, and launch the Student Success Plan software to support academic planning and intensive advising, including incorporating the newly redesigned programs of study
- Prepare for launch of multiple measures placement policy, along with necessary supports for students who “place up”—students who are exempted from developmental education but may still require some added supports—and begin diagnostic placement testing to align with the modularized developmental curriculum
- Share learning with other North Carolina community colleges and assist them to develop action plans for their institutions.

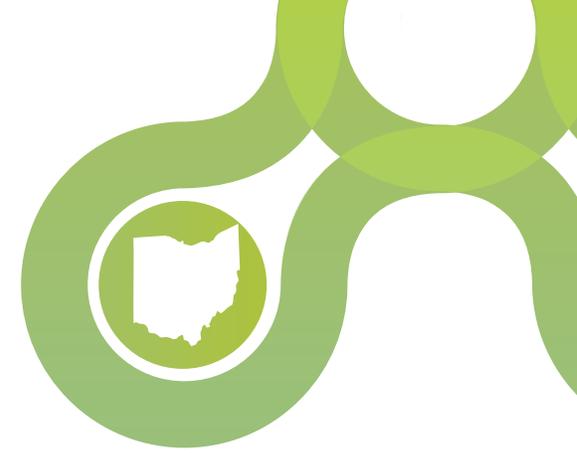


# OHIO

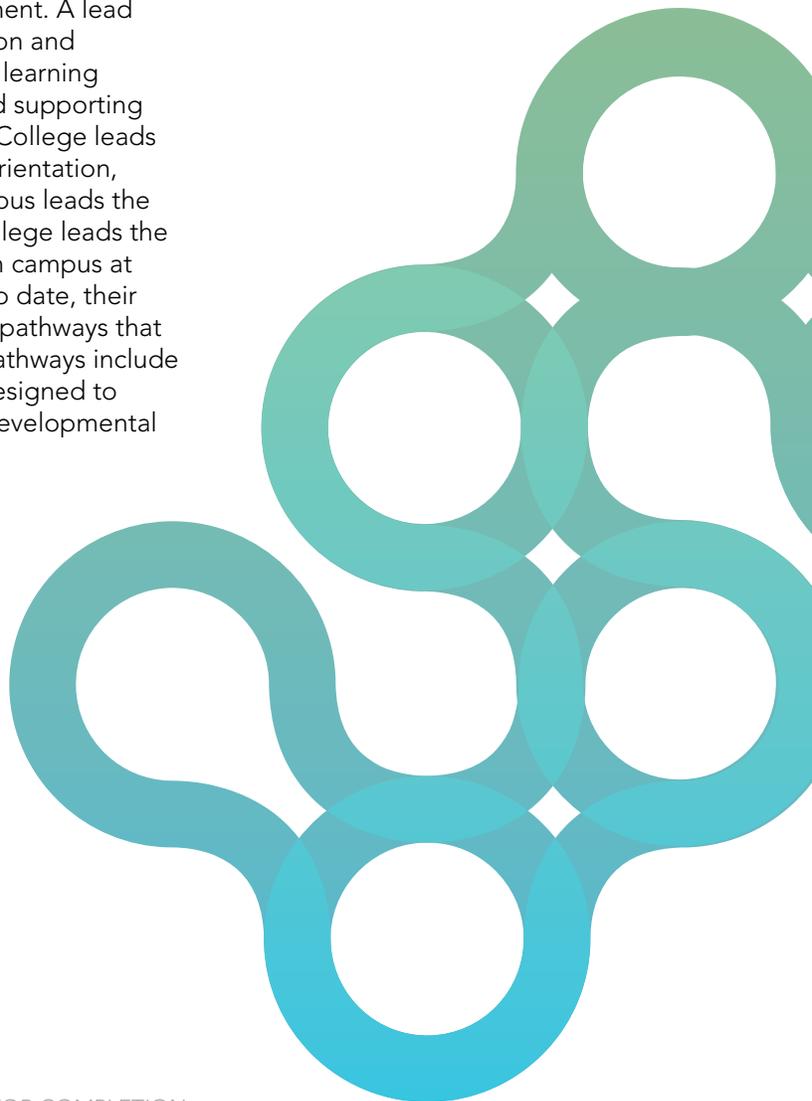
## Approach & Priorities

The Ohio cadre plans to redesign each institution through four overarching strategies. To help students become college-ready more quickly, the cadre will continue its efforts to partner with high schools through early intervention in the junior year of high school and to redesign developmental education, increasing contextualized and accelerated course options. The cadre colleges also will revise and restructure academic programs of study, with an enhanced focus on learning inside and outside of the classroom. A third broad goal will be the integration of student services with academic programs throughout the student's time in college, creating a more holistic approach to student support and advising. Finally, the cadre will work with other partners in the state to implement institutional and state policies to increase progression and completion. [Click here](#) for more information about the Ohio Completion by Design cadre and its implementation plans.

The Ohio cadre took a learning community approach to implementation, drawing from the respective strengths of each campus to drive progress, learning, and cadre alignment. A lead college is responsible for coordinating implementation and strategy development in each area, capturing critical learning about implementation dynamics and approaches and supporting the other cadre colleges. Lorain County Community College leads the front-end redesign work focused on the intake, orientation, and advising processes; the Sinclair Courseview campus leads the design of faculty/staff mentoring; and Stark State College leads the developmental education redesign work. The Dayton campus at Sinclair leads the academic pathway redesign, and, to date, their faculty-led teams have developed over 120 program pathways that will serve as ideal course maps for students. These pathways include on-ramps, which are an intentional set of practices designed to help students, based on their specific needs within developmental education and college entry.



*“Completion by Design has been an incredible catalyst on our campus. It links individual projects and initiatives together into an overarching system that helps more students complete their goals.” – Dr. Kathleen Cleary, Associate Provost, Sinclair Community College and Ohio CBD Managing Partner Director*



## Progress Highlights

- **Academic Program Redesign and Contextualization:** As noted above, Sinclair's departmental teams have developed over 120 academic pathway templates for full- and part-time students, as well as six on-ramp pathways for students who place into developmental education. The pathways include default electives and built in stackable certificates. Teams from the Courseview campus, Lorain, and Stark State are also working to contextualize and embed experiential education into courses and programs.
- **Accelerating Students through the Pathway:** In addition to strengthening their fully scaled Math Emporium model (where courses are redesigned using technology and coaches instead of lecturing), Stark State has focused on accelerating and contextualizing developmental coursework. Lorain and Sinclair are also working on a variety of strategies in this area, including modularized math, boot camps, bridge courses, and incorporating emerging evidence on placement approaches.
- **Integrated Student Support Strategy:** The colleges have all implemented mandatory new student orientation or plan to begin implementation with this entering cohort of students, which is expected to reach approximately 65 percent to 95 percent of entering students at the colleges this fall. In addition, the team at Courseview has begun training for faculty mentoring to connect students with a program of study early.
- **Institutional and State Policy:** The cadre is working with Jobs for the Future to develop an institutional policy review tool to be used on campuses beginning in September 2013. At the state level, CBD leaders are working to align the cadre's priorities with the state policy team's work and recent Complete College Ohio task force recommendations.

## Next Steps:

In the coming months, the Ohio cadre colleges will continue to move forward on their strategies, strengthened by their learning-oriented lead college structure. Some of their priorities for the coming months include the following:

- Refining models for developmental education placement and course delivery, based on emerging research and practical models from the other CBD cadres and nationwide
- Strengthening the approach for delivering effective and sustainable academic, career, personal, and financial aid advising
- Incorporating institutional policy considerations and implications, using the institutional policy review tool currently under development



## Early implementation offers emerging lessons

A number of common themes in both strategy and execution emerge from the experiences of the cadres and colleges described above. Not surprisingly, given the structure and support of the initiative, the strategy themes are consistent with the loss-momentum framework and the CBD design principles. Most notable across the colleges and cadres are the following: a focus on redesigning academic pathways with increased structure; intentional advising approaches as new students enter and also throughout the student pathway; efforts to integrate student support structures; and refining approaches to help students succeed in transfer-level math and English.

From an initiative standpoint, the colleges and cadres are exactly where the Foundation would want them to be: at the end of a successful year of wrestling with the numerous challenges of early implementation, and poised to take the next steps in their evolution toward creating truly transformed colleges with streamlined student experiences and increased student completion. Each of the states has received commendations on their culture change and strategy execution from external partners, including Achieving the Dream coaches, the technical assistance team members, and others who have worked with the colleges over a sustained period. Some common themes and emerging lessons related to strategy execution include addressing upfront the importance of the following:

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**Campus Engagement:** Because their Completion by Design work touches every aspect of the institution, all of the participating colleges have focused a great deal of time and effort on engaging the right people to strengthen and sustain the work. A key challenge has been calibrating the level of engagement and inclusivity with the stage of the work; for example, the transition from planning to implementation entailed engaging more front-line staff who are or will be responsible for execution of the identified strategies. Generally, colleges have been successful with team structures that can be flexible as new goals and objectives emerge, and with crafting thoughtful vehicles with wide distribution—like newsletters, department meetings, and convocations—for sharing information and updates.



*“This ambitious and audacious initiative believed that a dedicated group of college leaders and practitioners could integrate the best thinking in the field with their unique college cultural features and transform the student experience. Two years in, the progress has been exceptional. I fully believe that the group of students entering Completion by Design colleges in Fall 2015 will encounter a vastly different—and improved—experience than did those in Fall 2010.” – Dr. Rob Johnstone, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement*





**Culture Change:** The goal of CBD is to fundamentally transform the student experience for completion. In addition to broad engagement across their campuses, CBD teams have taken steps to ensure that this work affects the core functions of their colleges and that the vocabulary and habits of faculty and staff reflect a focus on student success. The colleges are aligning with other initiatives and work under the umbrella of student success and completion, and are embedding a completion orientation into all ongoing meetings and other organizational processes.

**Professional Development & Training:** All of the CBD colleges are implementing new completion approaches and providing more student services on a large scale. With that ambition comes a great need for professional development to empower large numbers of faculty and staff to carry out new practices. Colleges have invited researchers and practitioners to present ideas; facilitate discussions; and run workshops on leadership strategies, technology applications, faculty mentoring/coaching/advising, and a range of instructional and curricular practices. The sheer scale of the professional development and training work on CBD campuses sets this initiative apart from other efforts. For example, as of July 2013, the Florida cadre had registered over 3,400 participants in 50 professional development and training workshops on student achievement issues, totaling 220 hours of training. Additionally, the central component of the 2013 CBD cross-cadre retreat was a series of professional development workshops.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, the cadres have benefitted from learning from both internal and external experts (often via the technical assistance team) how to build and sustain momentum for institutional transformation.

**Cadre Alignment and Learning:** Particularly in Ohio and North Carolina, where participating campuses are distinct institutions and geographically dispersed, a critical lever has been strategic alignment and shared learning across institutions. Tactics such as cadre-wide retreats and regular calls with the implementation leads have enabled continued dialogue and fostered shared learning. In Ohio, the lead college structure includes a status update tool, whereby institutions document and assess implementation strategies and share what they are learning in writing and at retreats. Learning from peers has been a key component of the CBD work.

**Policy Alignment:** The intensity of this redesign work has highlighted the need for a deliberate connection and robust dialogue between institutional change strategies and state policy innovators. To clear the way for reform, the colleges need to: 1) identify which barriers and required changes exist at the state level, and which are institutional, 2) effect changes in institutional policies that can accelerate their work, 3) and closely collaborate with state policy partners to outline appropriate state policy responses. The better the state system and legislative leaders understand the approach and the progress of CBD, the more likely the state policy environment will support the CBD approach to institutional change and its implementation at scale.

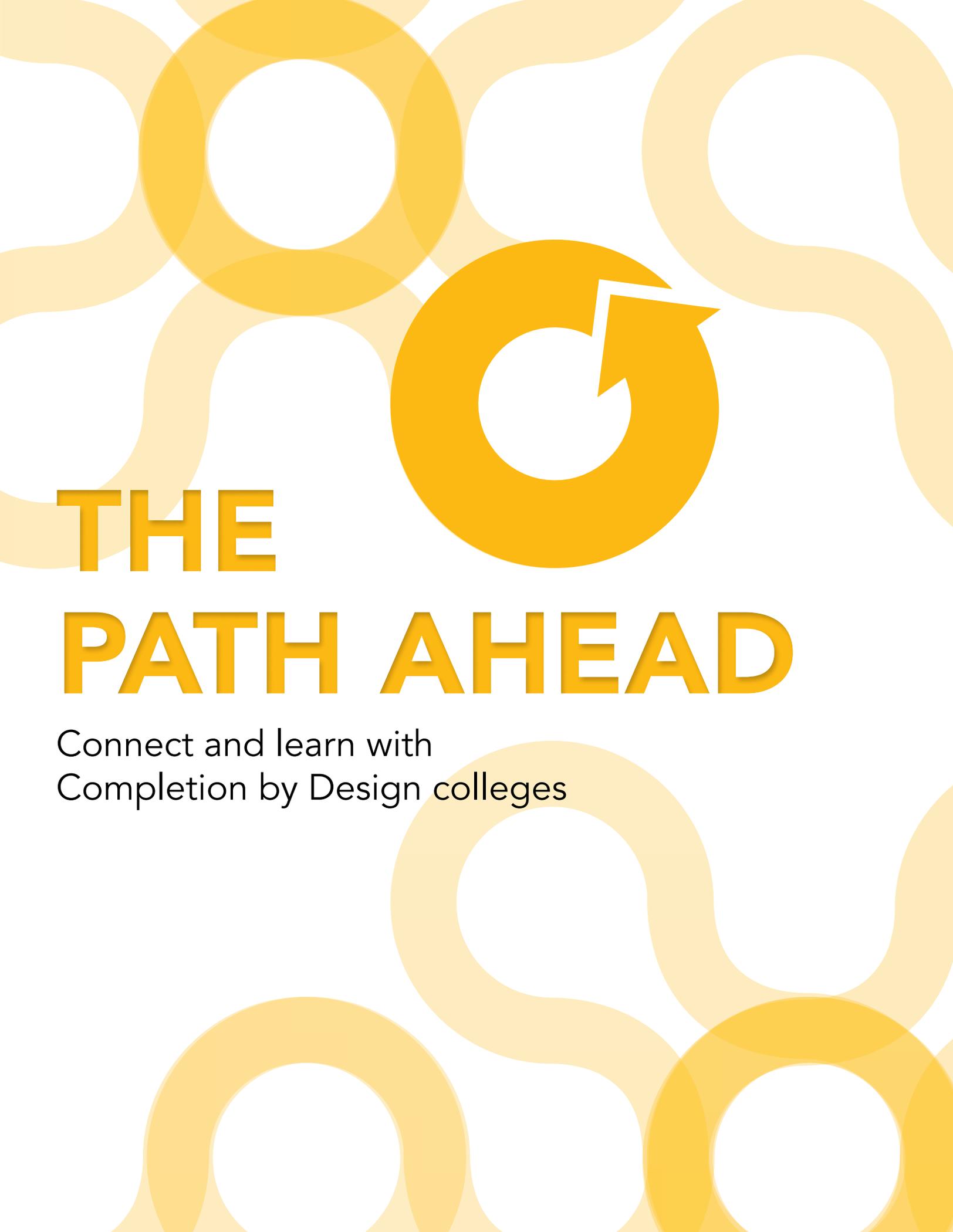
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In addition to these themes, the cadres are also thinking through how to enhance the technological infrastructure to support these changes; how to begin scaling lessons and models to other institutions within their states (e.g., North Carolina’s “2.0” work described above); how to continue to course-correct and refine strategies as part of a continuous improvement process; and how to sustain, measure the cost and benefit of, and institutionalize the large-scale changes they are driving.

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5. For more information on the retreat, see CBD’s March initiative newsletter, available online.





**THE**

**PATH AHEAD**

Connect and learn with  
Completion by Design colleges

# Connect and learn with Completion by Design colleges

CBD's approach of integrating learning throughout the initiative will only bolster the significant progress detailed above. The cadres and other initiative partners will continue to identify areas where they need to sharpen and strengthen their thinking, connect to existing research, and engage in careful and thoughtful experiments. At the initiative level, the Foundation will be working to provide learning opportunities on some of the key topics the cadres are incorporating into their work. CBD will continue to document the lessons, frameworks, and models that other colleges can use to strengthen their own completion-focused institutional transformation efforts. CBD is developing an Institutional Transformation Quick Start Kit that outlines, at a high level, the CBD process and accompanying tools used to date. CBD will continue to populate and build-out this kit as the initiative evolves. In addition, the CBD newsletter is one of the main sources of information about upcoming opportunities to participate in and apply what the CBD network is learning; sign up at [completionbydesign.org](http://completionbydesign.org). Lastly, the CBD online Knowledge Center includes many of the resources developed to support the CBD colleges through planning and implementation, along with much of the best thinking in the field on promising practices and implementation strategies—all of which are publicly available.

CBD colleges accomplished a lot in the first year of implementation, and are poised to accomplish much more in the coming years. CBD hopes that sharing its approach, progress to date, and emerging lessons helps to inspire others working on completion-focused transformation, and that sharing this report will spark others to connect with CBD in order to advance the work.

**Stay connected. Sign up for updates and read the Completion by Design blog at [completionbydesign.org](http://completionbydesign.org).**



*“Learning and collaboration are central to CBD. We plan to continue our efforts to disseminate lessons and progress throughout the implementation and scaling phases. We are eager to dovetail with other student success efforts occurring throughout the country, and look forward to connecting with and learning from them.”*  
– Jill Wohlford, CBD Initiative Learning and Management Lead



