

Completion by Design Pathway Principles

VERSION 2, Revised March 2012

Completion by Design (CbD) has identified a set of pathway design principles drawn from research, practice, and participating colleges' experience during the planning phase. While there is no single model for a completion pathway – defined as an integrated set of institutional policies, practices, and programs intended to maximize students' likelihood of completing a credential – these principles can help inform the choices colleges make when designing their pathways. Creating systemic change requires attention to the eight principles below, but colleges must strategically implement the principles based on their local context and students' needs.

Principle 1: Accelerate Entry into Coherent Programs of Study

- Provide a structured, efficient, and prescriptive student progression experience that is aligned to learning outcomes; field competencies (as defined by 3rd party accreditation organization where possible); and requirements for further education.
- Provide a clear sequence of courses with limited electives that lead to credentials.
- Establish essential prerequisites for every certificate or degree program, including basic English and math.
- Eliminate requirements that are not essential to success in a chosen field of study.

Principle 2: Minimize Time Required to Get College-Ready

- Help students avoid developmental education whenever possible.
- Design assessment and placement to match students to customized interventions that provide only what they need and no more.
- Provide remediation simultaneously with college-level work rather than sequentially.
- Provide multiple pathways that allow students to acquire only the content they need to succeed in their desired academic programs.
- Base progress on demonstrated competency rather than seat time.

Principle 3: Ensure Students Know Requirements to Succeed

- Ensure students understand the assessment and placement process – including the importance of tests – and ways to prepare for it.
- Communicate clearly (and frequently) the requirements to earn a certificate or degree for each program and make sure this information is readily available to every faculty member, staff, and student.
- Communicate expectations to K – 12 partners.

Principle 4: Customize and Contextualize Instruction

- Use program-specific content to make basic skills relevant and engaging.

- Provide opportunities for experiential learning to engage students and deepen their mastery of critical knowledge and skills.

Principle 5: Integrate Student Supports with Instruction

- Integrate students supports, such as advising and study skills, directly into instructional programs, to promote progression and learning for all students, not just those who seek out assistance.

Principle 6: Continually Monitor Student Progress and Proactively Provide Feedback

- Monitor student progress toward program goals and provide prompt feedback to students and staff.
- Use data on student progress and learning to inform program planning and professional development by faculty and student services staff.

Principle 7: Reward Behaviors that Contribute to Completion

- Create both monetary and nonmonetary incentives to encourage change in student behavior so they remain motivated.

Principle 8: Leverage Technology to Improve Learning and Program Delivery

- Employ technology-enabled courseware to make instruction more customized and engaging.
- Provide students, instructors, and staff with timely information about student progress.
- Reduce costs of instructional programs, student services, and administrative functions.

Completion by Design provides technical assistance to, and promotes learning among, groups of colleges in Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas to help colleges implement these principles at scale and create a culture of inquiry and innovation. CbD will also advocate for changes in state policy to promote wide adoption of these principles across the four states.