

## Insights from Guided Pathways Webinar: “Building a Big Tent for Leading Change”

**Presented in December 2020 by Dr. Alison Kadlec**, *founding partner at Sova*; **Dr. Monica Green**, *president of Norco College*; and **Dr. Diane Dieckmeyer**, *vice president of instructional services at MiraCosta College*

**Who can use this:** College leadership

### PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES:

- Gain insight into the importance of having a whole-college commitment and a broad coalition to strengthen student success
- Learn mindsets and habits to own your power — and build your capacity to support others to own their power — to lead large-scale change together
- See college examples of iterative and ongoing stakeholder engagement practices to support the design and implementation of Guided Pathways

**Keywords:** organizational change, whole-college commitment, coalition, design, implementation, student-centered, equity, scale, student success, persistence



# Create a Coalition of Support to Lead Large-Scale Change

## STRATEGIES TO BUILD CAPACITY AND ACTIVATE THE WHOLE CAMPUS TO DRIVE STUDENT-FOCUSED CHANGE

At all levels of a college, every single person has the potential to lead change. Their ideas, experiences and expertise contribute to how we can redesign colleges so students meet their educational and career goals. By unlocking the collective power of faculty, staff, administration and students, it is possible to drive institution-wide change that improves equitable student outcomes.

According to Dr. Alison Kadlec, to sustain that kind of large-scale change, it is essential to use a modern leadership approach to build a “big tent,” or a broad-based coalition in which everyone is a leader. Becoming a modern leader happens as you strengthen your capacity to support colleagues as leaders and as you adopt habits to attend to the areas where change tends to fall apart. Those practices are especially important in helping college professionals persist through challenging times like those we have faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a big tent of support employing Guided Pathways, you can reimagine the student experience together.

“[Modern change] is where everybody at the institution needs to think of themselves as a leader and they need to be developed as leaders capable of helping people hold on to their sense of purpose.

— Dr. Alison Kadlec, *Founding Partner at Sova*

## STRATEGIES

### 1. Ground yourself and others in the purpose of your work:

Throughout the continuous journey that is large-scale change, anchor yourself and others in the purpose of your work to help motivate teams and build the resilience that comes with deep purpose. There are fundamental mindset shifts that, when cultivated over time, fuel a sense of purpose and open doors to unlearning and reimagining. Kadlec suggests the following mindset shifts:

- From fixing to **dismantling** systems that have never worked for students experiencing systemic racial and socioeconomic inequities.
- From sorting out students to **supporting** all students to succeed.
- From the myth of meritocracy to meaningful **equity consciousness** that recognizes it is our responsibility to remove barriers for students.
- From the blame game to honest **co-ownership** in which you own what you can and everyone does their part to contribute to change for students.
- From best intentions to **data-informed decisions** that we know support students.
- From assumptions about students' abilities to **critical self-reflection** about the impact of uninterrogated assumptions about students on outcomes and equity gaps.



### STRATEGY IN PRACTICE:

At Norco College, college professionals look to the why of their work by turning to the [story of their data](#). They found equity gaps in students' four-year program completion rates, which led them to commit time and time again to improving outcomes for students of color. At the time of the presentation, Norco College had [started to increase completion rates](#) for Black students and was working to increase outcomes for Latinx students.

In addition to Norco’s college professionals grounding their work in their why, they adopted a collaborative approach, which has been crucial in making continuous improvements for students. Instructional and student services college professionals work hand in hand. They also worked with funders, partners, sister colleges and colleges in the California Guided Pathways Project. Each year, Norco conducts evaluations that enables it to identify needs, expand and contract its teams, and shift resources so it can build on its work and prioritize what it can do for Norco students. For example, through several iterations, Norco has updated its onboarding process for students. By grounding itself in purpose, building a big tent and conducting evaluations, Norco’s college professionals have been able to implement, scale and evolve the four pillars of Guided Pathways.

“ We’re always asking ourselves, ‘How is this better for students?’ So, we’re making sure that we continue to focus on that purpose and that ‘why,’ do the necessary planning, bring the appropriate individuals in — and it’s a whole institution wide reform — and ensure evaluation along the way.

—Dr. Monica Green, *President of Norco College*

## 2. Build a big tent through day-to-day habits of modern change leadership:

Stay ahead of common challenges to sustain student-focused change. That involves communicating clearly and consistently, supporting those leading implementation, and committing to the long-term work of cultivating strong and effective silo-spanning teams. Kadlec suggests adopting the following daily habits:



- ♦ Never stop making the case of your work, and **evolve your case-making** over time.
- ♦ **Listen deeply** to those closest to students and the students themselves.
- ♦ Take realistic stock of capacity of those leading implementation, and **do the hard work of prioritizing**.
- ♦ Ensure that **mid-level managers and frontline faculty and staff have the support they need**.
- ♦ **Upskill in smart, engaging use of data and evidence**, and strive to have only **excellent meetings** that bring out the best in teams.
- ♦ Do the hard, ongoing, inward-facing work to **build meaningful equity consciousness** among faculty, staff and administrators.

## STRATEGY IN PRACTICE:

To redesign the student experience, MiraCosta College created workgroups and a large design community to identify what a success team model could look like — but that all paused when it came to light that not everyone was on the same page about equity. The design community took the time to hear more from students about their experiences, conduct more research, bring in speakers, and share from their own race and ethnicity journeys. At the heart of it all were honest, authentic, sometimes difficult conversations. Ultimately, MiraCosta’s college professionals regrouped and launched the success teams with a deeper, richer understanding of what it means to center student equity.

“ As a Latinx woman, as a former community college student, as a person in the community college system working for over 20 years, and even doing Guided Pathways related work for many years, this pause to rethink what it really meant to center equity was one of the most transformational experiences of my career.

— Dr. Diane Dieckmeyer, *Vice President of Instructional Services at MiraCosta College*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For further guidance and strategies, view the SOVA presentation: [“Building Resilience & Protecting Progress: The Hard Work of Cultivating Culture Change for Equitable Student Success”](#)

*The Success Center at the Foundation for California Community Colleges independently prepared this overview based on the presentation; the overview may not fully represent the presenters’ viewpoints.*

