

## PROGRAM MAPPING: Why, What, and How?

To facilitate the discussion at your Departmental Flex Day, we have prepared this informational packet with some suggestions. For most departments, we encourage you to spend 1-2.5 hours on this topic. In some instances, this timeframe can certainly be extended via small group work.

The time on flex day should be spent “laying the ground work” and understanding the importance of program maps (and the [Guided Pathways Framework](#) as a whole), particularly from an equity perspective. Having clear, understandable, efficient maps for programs is one step in “leveling the playing field” between first-generation students and others. First generation college students are the category most likely to significantly benefit from program maps.

**We do not expect, nor recommend, any course sequencing work to be done on this day. Rather, we recommend some introductory/pre-work be accomplished so that when program mapping actually occurs (starting in early Fall and with the assistance of a trained Program Mini-Team), the faculty have already considered (and perhaps accomplished) some of the “pre-work”.**

The goals of Program Mapping are to:

1. Identify a **course sequence** that effectively introduces and offers students equitable opportunities to master program learning outcomes (PLOs) and clearly demonstrates progress towards an award.
2. Ensure program learning outcomes (PLOs) **effectively and equitably prepare students for transfer and/or job entry/career opportunities.**
3. Program Mapping activities are aligned with the Guided Pathways Framework Pillar: **Clarify The Path:**
  - All programs are mapped (with the students' end-goal in mind) to transfer and career and include these features:
    - Detailed information on target career and transfer opportunities
    - Information on course sequences, critical courses, and recommended contextualized/ complementary general education and elective courses
    - Embedded awards and progress milestones
    - Mathematics and other core coursework are aligned to each program of study

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION:

### The “Easy Way” vs. the “Right Way”

We have identified 2 ways to construct program maps: the “easy way” and the “right way”. Occasionally (though not often) these two ways are the same; but in most instances, they are not. The “easy way” is simply to place into a sequence the courses of our “areas of emphasis”. The “right way” involves much more thoughtful and reflective work. As a college, we intend to take this opportunity to construct maps the “right way”. This will, of course, be more time-consuming, disconcerting, and stressful, but the results for our students will be significant. The “right way” invites a critical review of our program learning outcomes, our pedagogy, our inequitable outcomes, our course formats, and our curriculum. This critical review stands in contrast to the “easy way” which simply assumes what we do is justified (because we’ve done the same thing for the past 50 years).

### “Starting with the End in Mind”

Of utmost importance in constructing useful, efficient, and logical program maps is to “start with the end in mind”. This means, from a student perspective, that the entry skills needed for their “next step” (transfer, workforce, career) are where we start. These entry skills then become our program’s exit skills (aka Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)). Starting with those outcomes, we build the map “backwards” to ensure that all our students are supported to achieve those outcomes.

For programs meant to lead straight to the workforce and/or a career, we can identify the entry skills based on our advisory boards and/or industry reports. Our faculty need to investigate and collect information on these entry skills. Our Workforce Development Office, Career Services Center, and SMC’s trained “Data Coaches” will assist faculty in the collection of this information.

For those programs meant primarily for transfer or “transfer to future career”, we can identify the entry skills based on the lower division major preparation spelled out by the 4-year institution. This is where it becomes tricky and the “easy way” is likely to be called upon **in the short term**. [ASSIST.ORG](https://www.assist.org) tells us what courses at SMC are accepted as the lower division major prep of any given major. So that is a place to start. However, just because our course is “acceptable”, doesn’t necessarily mean it is “equivalent”. In fact, we might be doing MORE in our courses than the equivalent at the 4-year institution. And while that absolutely benefits our strongest students, it likely doesn’t benefit many of our students who struggle to complete our courses. Thus, it behooves us to investigate the actual lower division major prep courses at the 4-year institutions. THAT would tell us what the entry skills would be for upper division work (and thus inform our PLOs). So while we expect transfer maps to be based on articulation agreements ([ASSIST.ORG](https://www.assist.org)), we really want discipline faculty to investigate further to consider possible changes to our curriculum (**in the longer term**). Keep in mind that some of our course-to-course articulations were established 30+ years ago.

Some thoughts on “transfer to future career”: There are many online resources available to help faculty answer the perpetual question asked by our students: “What can I do with a major in XX?”. We want our faculty to give that some serious thought as this information will become part of the maps. While we may not want to acknowledge it, most of our students do NOT seek to be “career students” nor college professors. So to better assist our students, we need thoughtful answers to that central question.

In terms of transfer, [ASSIST.ORG](#) is endless. To help focus our efforts in constructing transfer maps, we will begin with the top 2-4 transfer destinations for our students. We have compiled the university and major at the transfer destination of all our students to the UC and CSU over the past 5 years. Please use this data rather than anecdotes. The [SMC transfer information document](#) is sorted by 6-digit “Classification of Instructional Programs” (CIP) code and we ask that you please review the entire document before deciding the top 2-4 transfer destinations in a given field.

#### “The Basics” vs. “The Advanced”

The basic map should NOT go beyond the entry/exit skills (PLOs) that have been identified. Rather, maps should cover the basics and allow for “additional/advanced work” for those students who are interested. This is true for both individual courses as well as entire programs. Consider the following: If one’s thinking involves: “well, that would be nice” or “that would REALLY prepare the student”, then it does NOT belong on the map (unless it can count as fulfilling either a General Education requirement or an elective requirement for a degree). While we pride ourselves on the success of our students after they leave SMC based on the preparation that we have provided (and we certainly should), our collective challenge is how to continue to do that while ALSO providing increased opportunity and support for ALL our students (not just the ones who come to us most prepared).

#### “Associate Degrees for Transfer” and “UC Pathways”

[Associate Degrees for Transfer](#) (AD-T) are Chancellor’s Office-Approved Degrees based on a “Transfer Model Curriculum” approved by all CSUs for all community colleges. Students earning a degree for transfer are guaranteed admission to a CSU and earn a GPA advantage when applying to CSU impacted campuses or majors.

The UC has created [UC Pathways](#) for the most common 21 transfer majors.

Sometimes the requirements of the AD-T coincide with the requirements of the UCs, sometimes they don’t. If an AD-T for the CSU is available, the new UC Pathways website discusses the similarities and differences. Our faculty need to be familiar with these differences.

## PREVIEW OF PROGRAM MAPPING

### “Program Mapping Mini-Teams”

For each program (degree, certificate of achievement, department certificate that is not part of a larger award, or transfer program with no specific award), a Mapping Team will be constructed composed of:

- A Curriculum Committee Representative
- A Counselor
- Multiple “Expert Faculty Member(s)” intimately familiar with the primary discipline of the program (which may or may not be the Curriculum Representative)
- A student (hopefully)

### “Program Maps”

Program Maps are more than a simple sequencing of courses in an area of study. They do sequence courses (including English, Math, and other GEs) but they also are thoughtfully constructed to:

- maximize effective and efficient unit accumulation in an area of study (momentum) given the particular circumstances of students
- identify milestones and/or exit points (and consequent expected employment opportunities and income) for students
- facilitate complementary course combinations for students
- acknowledge and remedy the structural inequities currently present at SMC

Each completed program map will be reviewed by the Map Review Team.