



Grounding Onboarding in the Student Experience



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 3

Onboarding + Guided Pathways..... 5

How to Use This Guide 7

PHASE 1: PREPARATION..... 8

Engage Your Team..... 8

Plan Which Success Factors to Examine 9

Identify Desired Outcomes for Students’ Onboarding Experience 11

PHASE 2: EXAMINATION 14

Describe Onboarding Today 14

Use Quantitative Data and Information to Inform Redesign 15

Gather Student Voices about Their Onboarding Experience 16

Map Students’ Onboarding Experience 18

PHASE 3: PLANNING 20

Vision Onboarding Today and in the Future 20

Determine Onboarding Redesign Priorities and Action Plan 21

A P P E N D I X 24

Introduction

Seeking direction on how to better position new students for success as part of your Guided Pathways redesign? Considering which questions to ask and what evidence to gather to inform and monitor how well students transition into your college, set academic and career goals, and enter a pathway? Or, has your college already made some progress, and are you ready to determine what different groups of first-time students experience and need throughout their first year?

This guide offers a **structured approach to examine and redesign how students experience onboarding** based on the RP Group's Support (Re)defined six [success factor framework](#).¹ This resource includes...

- A **definition of onboarding** in the context of Guided Pathways
- **Support for cross-functional teams** interested in redesigning students' onboarding experience
- A structured process for using Student Support (Re)defined's six success factors framework to:
 - **Determine what successfully onboarded students experience, know, and are able to do at your college**
 - **Identify the outcomes your college wants** for successfully onboarded students
 - **Examine students' current onboarding experience** through quantitative metrics, student perspectives, and system/process mapping
 - **Envision specific opportunities for onboarding redesign** and ways to take action on identified priorities
 - **Establish an action plan** for onboarding redesign, including steps to take and who needs to be involved

Why Use This Guide

Student Support (Re)defined revealed that student perspectives can be a powerful driver for institutional change. By **looking through the lens of the student experience, colleges can identify**

¹ <https://rpgroup.org/student-support/SuccessFactorsFramework>

differences between what your institution intends for students and what students actually experience, and where to focus your redesign work to bridge that gap.

If your college has identified onboarding redesign as part of Guided Pathways planning and implementation, your team can use this process to gather data and evidence about students' onboarding experience at the institution, based on the Student Support (Re)defined success factor framework, and identify areas for structural improvement. It can also be used iteratively as your team works through different aspects of onboarding redesign with various stakeholder groups.

Before You Get Started...

Before using this guide, be sure to have a basic understanding of the Student Support (Re)defined research and its intersections with Guided Pathways by:

- Watch this [25-minute webinar](#)²
- Review [crosswalk between the Student Support \(Re\)defined success factors and Guided Pathways](#)³

Learn more...

This guide is one in a series of resources designed to help colleges leverage Student Support (Re)defined research for Guided Pathways development.

For more information, visit
www.rpgroup.org/student-support

² <http://bit.ly/SSRD-GP-webinar>

³ Read *Crosswalk: Where Student Support (Re)defined and Guided Pathways Meet* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>.

Onboarding + Guided Pathways

Onboarding is a fundamental aspect of “clarifying paths to student end-goals” and “helping students choose and enter a path”—the first and second pillars in the Guided Pathways framework (see *Guided Pathways Pillars*⁴). At the same time, when colleges engage students with effective onboarding practices, they position students for long-term success and goal achievement—“helping students stay on path” and “ensuring students are learning” (Guided Pathways Pillars 3 and 4).

Definitions for onboarding often focus on familiarizing, orienting, and/or training a person to succeed and transition to a new situation and environment. In the current context of the California Community Colleges, the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and AB 705 aim to direct and coordinate the core onboarding components commonly associated with students’ entry into the institution. These activities include orientation, assessment and placement, counseling, educational planning, and academic support.⁵ Furthermore, in order for these activities to be equitable and responsive to students from diverse backgrounds, the college must better understand students’ individual assets, challenges, and needs and provide an appropriate and proactive set of student-centered activities, processes, and policies.

This guide aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional, holistic, and timely support that helps them navigate the college environment when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. While traditional onboarding practices are often geared toward recent high school graduates entering the college for the first time and enrolling full-time, other student groups including part-time, re-entry, first-generation, and nontraditional learners (e.g., older students, parents, veterans, undocumented students), and individuals pursuing workforce training may call for diverse approaches. This guide offers numerous activities and considerations for facilitating the successful entry and positive trajectory of all student groups in your onboarding redesign.

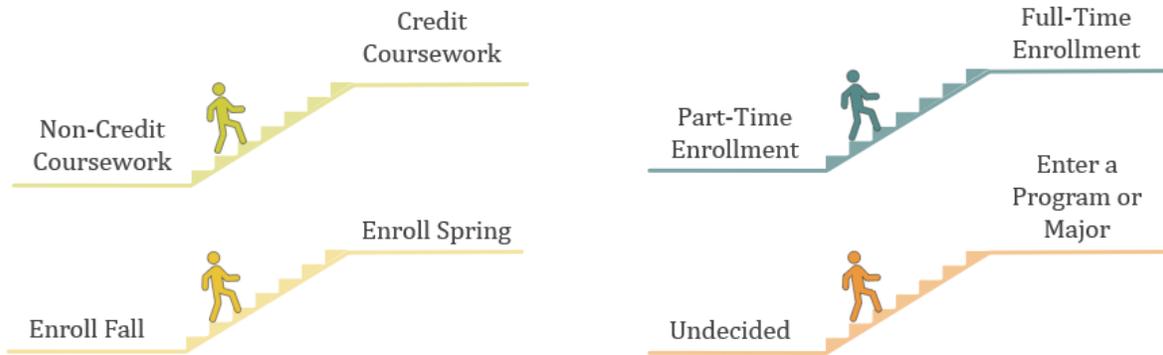
Additionally, onboarding can relate to more than just students’ initial transition into the college, particularly in the context of Guided Pathways. Students may need support to make successful transitions at additional key junctures such as re-entering the college after time away, transitioning from a program or major to a career or the workforce, and transferring from a program to a university (see Figure 1). For the purposes of this guide, the focus will be on new students and the types of support they may need to make successful transitions at key junctures

⁴ Find the *California Community Colleges Guided Pathways—Principles of Guided Pathways* at http://cccgp.cccco.edu/Portals/0/GuidedPathways-principles-of-gp-ADA_091818.pdf.

⁵ Chancellor's Office California Community Colleges (CCCCO) Student Services and Special Programs Division. (2014.) *California Community Colleges Student Success and Support Program Handbook*. Sacramento, CA: CCCCCO.

in their first year. However, college redesign teams can apply the activities and considerations included in this guide to students' different transition points in their college journey with some adjustments.

Figure 1. Student Supports for Successful Transitions



How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed for cross-functional teams tasked with examining, developing, and implementing improvements to students' onboarding experience in an effort to support more equitable student outcomes (via efforts related to Guided Pathways or equity, for example). It provides a process for using Student Support (Re)defined's six success factors to examine your own students' onboarding experiences and then, to identify and pursue related redesign priorities. This guide includes three phases of work with activities and considerations to help your team strengthen and improve students' onboarding experiences (see Figure 2).

Phase 1: Preparation centers on getting your team organized and focused for determining the desired outcomes for student onboarding.

Phase 2: Examination helps your college team use the six success factors as a frame to envision, map, and understand current onboarding from the student perspective for each factor.

Phase 3: Action prompts your team to identify and capture immediate onboarding redesign priorities and actions, based on how the current onboarding helps or hinders students' ability to experience the six factors, and what needed onboarding improvements arise from the evidence.

Figure 2. Phases for Successful Student Support Framework Implementation



PHASE 1: PREPARATION

This phase offers guidance on how to engage your team and outline your college's desired students onboarding outcomes, which will serve as the foundation for the following steps in the guide. This section will help you:

- Engage Your Team
- Plan Which Success Factors to Examine
- Identify Desired Outcomes for Students' Onboarding Experience
- Identify Desired Outcomes for Students' Onboarding Experience

Engage Your Team

Identify and activate your onboarding redesign team. When consider involving representatives with diverse perspectives, include those who work directly and indirectly with students throughout their entry and first year, as well as students themselves.

Specifically consider engaging members of your institutional research, planning, and effectiveness office.

The Role of Institutional Research in Examining Students' Onboarding Experience

Your college's institutional research, planning, and effectiveness (IRPE) office can provide critical support to your onboarding redesign—offering access to data, firming up questions to explore, helping facilitate inquiry activities, and providing support with analysis and meaning-making. If your workgroup or committee does not include an institutional researcher, reach out to your college's IRPE colleagues to inform them of and invite them into your redesign activities.



CONSIDER...

- How does this work connect to existing campus decision-making structures and committees to increase the likelihood your college acts on your findings and action plan?

- What are the desired student onboarding outcomes (see exercise in Appendix B on pages 26-28)?
- Where are there opportunities and potential barriers to redesigning current onboarding?

It will take multiple meetings of your team to fully carry out these activities and process their results.



Ensure your work plan includes communication with and strategic engagement of campus stakeholders to gather input, inform design, and share updates and outcomes of your work (see Appendix H, *Key Onboarding Redesign Priorities Work Plan*).

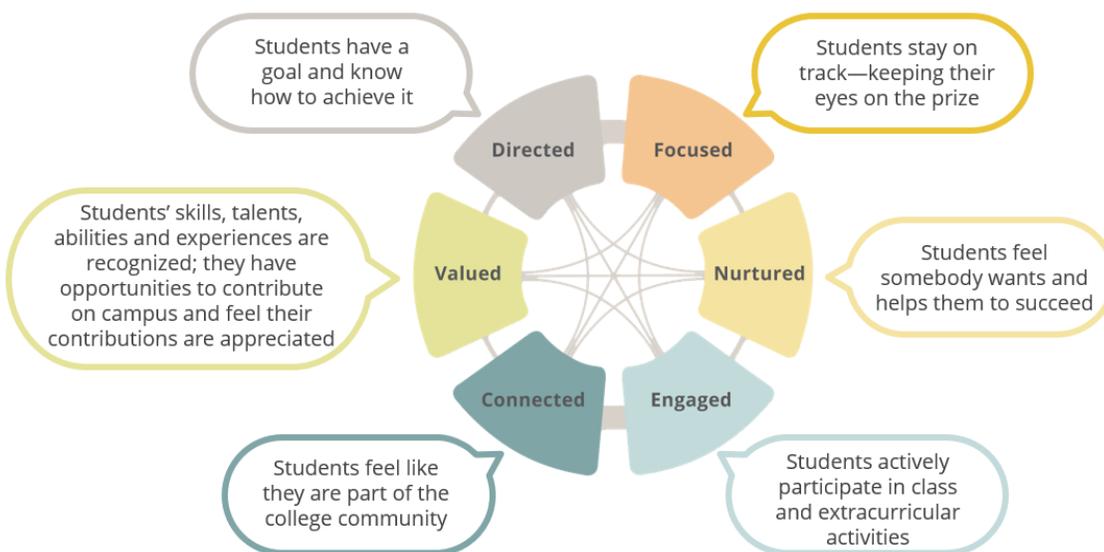


Plan Which Success Factors to Examine

Reacquaint yourselves with the success factor definitions—identified by the RP Group through a review of leading studies on effective support practices and interviews with practitioners and researchers and explored with California community college students through surveys and focus groups.⁶

⁶ For more information, find a deep dive into student perspectives on each factor in *Using Student Voices to Redefine Support: What Community College Students Say Institutions, Instructors, and Others Can Do to Help Them Succeed* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resource](https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources) page, under Reports at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>.

Figure 3. Student Support (Re)defined’s Six Success Factors



Work with Your Team to:

Articulate your onboarding priorities for the next 12-18 months, whether they be broad (e.g., explore and understand the strengths and weaknesses of current onboarding processes from college entry and financial aid application, admission, registration, initial education planning, etc.) or specific (e.g., design a first-year experience for new students).

Select the student success factor(s) that are most relevant to these priorities.



CONSIDER...

- What about the students’ onboarding experiences do you want to better understand given these priorities?
- What is already happening on your campus to strengthen and improve onboarding?
- How does your onboarding help students clarify and enter an educational and career pathway as outlined by Guided Pathways Pillars 1 and 2?
- How critical are the success factors to the onboarding experience of your unique student population(s)?
- What you have already surfaced about improving and strengthening onboarding in your inquiry process versus what you still want to know?



Identify Desired Outcomes for Students' Onboarding Experience

What would be the results for students if their onboarding experience happened as planned and expected? A student-centered approach to onboarding responds to the questions students often have at key junctures, ensuring that they receive the necessary information, counsel, and encouragement as they need it. It also helps them build foundational college success skills and abilities that will empower them to reach critical milestones and complete goals. See Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action (in Appendix A on pages 22-23) list for links to tools and research that can inform the selection of benchmarks and indicators related to your student onboarding.

The Student Support (Re)defined success factors (see page 3-4) can serve as a framework for thinking holistically about students' onboarding experience and outcomes. Consider ways your college's approach will ensure students experience all success factors through their onboarding experience.

Table 1, *Sample Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students* below provides sample outcomes on the next page, aligned to each success factor. Appendix B, *Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students*, offers a place to capture the specific outcomes identified by your team. See also Appendix A, *Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action*, which offers more tools to inform how to strengthen your onboarding processes.

Table 1. Sample Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students

Student Success Factor	Anticipated Outcomes
Directed	<i>Students have informed educational and career goals and by their second semester a comprehensive plan for meeting those goals</i>
Focused	<i>Students complete college-level English and math and demonstrate early progress toward program completion within their first two terms</i>
Nurtured	<i>By the end of the first semester, students can identify at least one individual at the college who they know cares about their success</i>
Engaged	<i>All first-year students tour the Student Success Center and make at least one visit for tutoring assistance</i>
Connected	<i>Students demonstrate a connection to the campus by taking part in at least one extracurricular activity, campus event, and/or peer group each semester</i>
Valued	<i>Students actively provide input on what's working, what isn't, and what the college can do to improve support for more students</i>



CONSIDER...

- How does your college define onboarding? Which institutional activities are included?
- What timeframe (e.g., through the first semester, through the first year, over the course of the student's entire academic journey) is considered?
- What do you want a successfully onboarded student to know and be able to do? What outcomes do you want for all successfully onboarded students?

- How might the onboarding experience need to differ for specific student groups and/or based on students' goals, enrollment patterns, and life circumstances (e.g., part-time vs. full-time enrollment, credit-oriented vs. non-credit-oriented, evening vs. day attendance, working vs. non-working students, students who are independent vs. living with family, new vs. returning learners, students who are career technical education and/or transfer oriented)?

PHASE 2: EXAMINATION

This section offers guidance on how to begin to re-envision your onboarding, to identify and examine data and information—including gathering students’ experiences—to inform your team’s understanding of current onboarding successes and challenges. The final step in this phase outlines how to map your students’ onboarding experiences to understand, from the students’ perspective, what is working as designed and what needs to be changed. Engaging in these activities, in no particular order, will prepare the team to identify onboarding priorities and to identify what to consider in an action plan responding to opportunity gaps. This section will help you:

- Describe Onboarding Today
- Using Quantitative Data and Information to Inform Redesign
- Gather Student Voices about Their Onboarding Experience
- Map Students’ Onboarding Experience

Describe Onboarding Today

To envision where you would like to go and what you need to do to get there, you often need to determine where you are.

Work with Your Team to:

Consider the onboarding experience from the perspective of *today’s students*.

This exercise (see Appendix F, *Visioning Student Onboarding Poster Activity*) offers an opportunity to gain perspective on the current student onboarding experience. The goal is to map key onboarding policies, practices, and approaches by each of the success factors to underscore what is working and to highlight areas where more can be done to ensure student onboarding addresses all six success factors.

- Identify elements / descriptions of the students’ current onboarding experiences.
- Make individual notes and then place your sticky notes in the appropriate quadrant on the poster paper.
- Review and discuss where there are gaps and opportunities.

Use Quantitative Data and Information to Inform Redesign

To celebrate your onboarding successes and recognize and address any onboarding challenges, explore available data and information relevant to and collected as part of the two previous exercises, *Identify Desired Outcomes for Students' Onboarding Experience* (pages 11-12) and *Describe Onboarding Today* (page 14).

Work with Your Team to:

- **Collect information related to the outcomes** you want for successfully onboarded students
 - Review and select some of the suggested data and metrics outlined in Appendix C, *Tool for Examining Quantitative Data on Students' Onboarding Experience by Factor*, for each success factor that has particular relevance to onboarding
 - Identify other data and metrics that may be of importance to your college's onboarding approach
- **Disaggregate the data to explore various characteristics of different groups of students** who successfully move from one onboarding activity to the next compared to those who do not
- **Discuss the results** of this data collection; possible prompts include:
 - What trends are present in the data?
 - What onboarding activities are or are not students completing?
 - Who appears to be completing the most onboarding activities/steps and who is not?
 - What additional information do students need?
- **Identify what the findings say about areas of opportunity** for strengthening onboarding for different student groups

For a more detailed discussion of examining the student experience using the Student Support (Re)defined success factors to inform Guided Pathways inquiry and redesign, see the [Grounding College Redesign in the Student Experience](#) guide.

Gather Student Voices about Their Onboarding Experience

Who knows the student experience better than students! Although we can make educated guesses about what does and does not work for students during onboarding and what more they want during their first year, gathering student input can inform improvements to various onboarding policies, processes, and practices. An added benefit of inviting students to share what they observe, feel, and experience is that it can help them feel *connected* to and *valued* by the institution. See Appendix C, *Tool for Examining Quantitative Data on Students' Onboarding Experience by Factor*, for sources of data to explore.

Work with Your Team to:

- **Use the findings from the exercise, Use Quantitative Data and Information to Inform Redesign** (above), and the templates in Appendix D, *Tool for Gathering Students' Voice About Onboarding Experiences by Factor*, to guide the questions you ask students; given what you already know from quantitative metrics and what specific aspects of the student onboarding experience you want know more about to prioritize which factors to explore
- **Invite students to share their onboarding experiences** by asking them how the college helped (or did not help) them feel directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and/or valued during their onboarding experience. **Review the following resource**, [Get Started...Collecting Student Voices for Guided Pathways Inquiry and Design](#)⁷, to support your process for listening to students (see Appendix D, *Tool for Gathering Students' Voice About Onboarding Experiences By Factor*)
- **Identify and discuss key themes** emerging from these student perspectives and examine any differences various student groups share about their first-year experience. Possible reflection questions include:
 - How do students' perceptions of onboarding differ from the college's intended experience?
 - What do students think the college is doing well in terms of onboarding that could be amplified / scaled?

⁷ http://cccgp.cccco.edu/Portals/0/StudentVoicesInquiryGuide_Full_May14.pdf

- What areas of the onboarding experience do students say needs improvement?
- What did students NOT discuss that reveals an area of opportunity?
- How do students' onboarding experience differ from group to group and what do these difference reveal?
- What success factors do students seem to experience during their onboarding and which ones are absent? Which ones might the college need to better address?
- **Determine what the findings say about areas of opportunity** for strengthening onboarding for different student groups, for example:
 - Assistance for students with limited computer skills as they complete CCCApply
 - Coordination / Co-location of various activities and processes—application, academic counseling, registration, financial aid advisement—to limit the number of different people and locations or offices students will need to visit
 - Scheduling of onboarding activities and supports in the evenings and/or weekends for students who work and are unable to visit campus during the day or on weekdays
 - Assigning a dedicated counselor to support a cohort of students within a particular area of interest or meta-major



CONSIDER...

- **How might engaging these specific student groups based on the findings from *Use Quantitative Data and Information to Inform Redesign* activity above expand your insights on how various students experience onboarding?**
 - Recent high school graduates
 - Nontraditional students (e.g., veterans, older learners, parenting, and undocumented students)
 - Students transitioning from noncredit to credit
 - Students pursuing career technical education (CTE) degrees and certificates
 - Re-entry students
 - Part-time vs full-time students

For additional resources related to gathering student voice, download

Get Started...Collecting Student Perspectives for Guided Pathway Inquiry and Redesign

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1aOoCT8Ovs5z5rdtiuiNpF-T2ToEgpus3>

Map Students' Onboarding Experience

Walking in students' shoes can allow us to test our assumptions and design more truly student-centered approaches, activities, and services. Experiencing onboarding in the way that a student does can illuminate whether or not the existing systems and processes have the intended impacts and address students' burning questions and needs, putting students on path for success.

Work with Your Team to:

- **Review the sample mapping tool in Appendix E, *Tool for Mapping Students' Onboarding Experiences by Factor*, and/or develop scenarios to experience different aspects of the onboarding process as students do, using the success factors as an anchor for this exploration**
- **Select an onboarding system or process to map from the student perspective;** the quantitative data you examined, and the student voices you collected can guide your selection; examples could include outreach, application, guided self-placement, registration, and selection of a meta-major
- For each selected system or process, **think about what specific steps and actions students have to take** as part of that system/process (e.g., completing the application and the guided self-placement process, scheduling a meeting with a counselor, selecting and registering for classes, applying for financial aid); who they interact with and at what points; what information is conveyed, when, and how is it communicated; where these steps physically take place and/or where students have to go on campus, etc.
- **Discuss the results** of each mapping activity; possible reflection questions include:
 - What was this experience like for you?
 - What did stepping through this process/system as a "student" reveal?

- What was particularly supportive? Difficult? How efficient and/or effective is the current system/process design in terms of helping students get/learn what they need in a timely way?
- Which success factors does this system/process reinforce in the student experience? Which success factors are missing from the student experience through this system/process?
- **Use these steps iteratively** to focus on additional points in the entry and first-year experience and understand the perspective of various student groups, especially those that may need more onboarding support (e.g., first-generation college goers)
- **Identify what the findings say about areas of opportunity** for strengthening onboarding for different student groups

Note: Mapping activities may require additional time, several visits to various offices and locations, and examination of which and when various activities and services are provided and by whom.



PHASE 3: PLANNING

The next two activities are informed by and build on the previous steps. This phase will assist your team in identifying key priorities for onboarding and envisioning and planning for effective student onboarding in the future. This section will help you:

- Vision Onboarding Today and in the Future
- Determine Onboarding Redesign Priorities and Action Plan



Vision Onboarding Today and in the Future

Your team is now positioned to identify what aspects of students' onboarding experience you want to improve and/or redesign.



Supplies Needed

Sticky notes, poster paper, and markers



Work with Your Team to:

Return to the desired student learning outcomes you identified for students' onboarding experience during Phase 1: Preparation

Review the onboarding experience of current students, including...

- The data and evidence on the onboarding experience of different student groups gathered during Phase 2: Examination

Consider the onboarding experience of *future students*.

- a. On a separate poster paper with the same cells and descriptions as determined in the *Map Students' Experience* activity (above), ask each person in your team to use sticky notes to identify what will be different for students in the key onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities to ensure students are more directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued through a comprehensive and sustained onboarding experience.
- b. Make individual notes and then for each process, place sticky notes on the appropriate factor(s) that are noted by their first letter on the poster paper (e.g., directed is 'D').
- c. Discuss and note where there are opportunities for scaling up practices and approaches and implementing new policies and structures under the Guided Pathways framework.

- d. Lift up common themes and record them on the template in Appendix G, *Key Onboarding Themes and Redesign Priorities Summary*, to inform onboarding redesign priorities in the action plan.



Determine Onboarding Redesign Priorities and Action Plan

After you envision your onboarding future, your team is ready to determine how to act on the prioritized success factors. In thinking about your future vision for onboarding different student groups, what specifically needs to change? What does this future vision inspire in terms of top areas of redesign? The Appendix A, *Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action*, offers additional resources to support your team's efforts.



CONSIDER...

As you and your team reflect on the findings and decisions informed by the various activities in this guide, contemplate on how the information and data collected can and should influence student onboarding redesign on your campus. The following questions and responses are offered to assist with the development of a plan to successfully strengthen and revamp what students experience in their first year at your institution.

- **What are the key takeaways?** Identify the key themes (see Appendix F) from the visioning exercise. Think about what you discovered about the student onboarding experience *by factor*, as well as what big takeaways surfaced *across the factors* you explored.
- **What do these results say about ways to redesign student onboarding to ensure that students are clear about and ready to enter available pathways at the college?** Reflect on possible redesign opportunities. Think about a top set of priorities and/or changes to pursue. Hold central which student groups will benefit from these changes and what are the equity implications for the proposed redesign.
- **What evidence do you have for these proposed changes?** Summarize the evidence supporting these potential change(s) collected in Phase 2 (including disaggregated metrics and outcomes, student perspectives, systems/process maps, etc.) and in the previous *Vision Onboarding Today and in the Future* activity.
- **Which success factor(s) do these proposed changes address?** Consider which success factor(s) will be strengthened by the revamped student onboarding, recognizing that some changes may advance multiple factors.
- **Which Guided Pathways pillar(s) do these changes advance?** When looking at the results of your exploration, mapping, outcome setting, and visioning, and the changes your team is considering, think about how they relate to the Guided Pathways

framework. Consider how these changes will help clarify the path for students and get them on a path.

- **How do these proposed changes relate to other Guided Pathways priorities, equity planning efforts, and redesign activities taking place on campus?** Recognizing that student onboarding is likely one among others your college is potentially redesigning, consider the context for these proposed changes. Identify how they confirm and/or challenge other results and/or redesign priorities.
- **What are your next steps?** Identify how you will pursue the proposed changes. Determine what specific steps your team will take, who is responsible for these steps, and what is your timeline for completion.

Use the key themes (see Appendix G, *Key Onboarding Themes and Redesign Priorities Summary*) and work plan template (see Appendix H, *Key Onboarding Redesign Priorities Work Plan*) to capture your responses from your reflection and your ideas about how each change your team intends to make and prioritize to strengthen the student onboarding experience.

For More Information

Visit:

The RP Group's Student Support (Re)defined at www.rpgroup.org/student-support

California Community Colleges Vision Resource Center at
<https://visionresourcecenter.cccco.edu>

Contact:

guided-pathways@rpgroup.org

Tell Us About Your Experience

We want to hear from you! How did you use this guide? What did you learn?

Share your story at research@rpgroup.org

Need Help Using This Guide?

Contact us at
research@rpgroup.org.

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For more information on the RP Group's Student Support (Re)defined project, visit www.rpgroup.org/student-support. For more information on our Guided Pathways work, visit <https://rpgroup.org/All-Projects/Guided-Pathways/Resources>.

Need help using this guide? Have a story to share? Contact us at research@rpgroup.org.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action

Appendix B: Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students

Appendix C: Tool for Examining Quantitative Data on Students' Onboarding Experience by Factor

Directed

Focused

Nurtured

Engaged

Connected

Valued

Appendix D: Tool for Gathering Students' Voice About Onboarding Experiences by Factor

Directed

Focused

Nurtured

Engaged

Connected

Valued

Appendix E: Tool for Mapping Students' Onboarding Experiences by Factor

Directed

Focused

Nurtured

Engaged

Connected

Valued

Appendix F: Visioning Student Onboarding Poster Activity

Appendix G: Key Onboarding Themes and Redesign Priorities Summary

Appendix H: Key Onboarding Redesign Priorities Work Plan Resources

Appendix A: Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action

This appendix lists additional resources to inform the development of a work plan and support stakeholder engagement based on the considerations and decisions made as a result of the exercises and activities outline in this guide.

[Engaging internal stakeholders during the planning phase in *Internal Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Toolkit*](#)⁸

[Promoting faculty and staff engagement and making the case for large-scale change in *Tools for Leaders*](#)⁹

Resources to Support Onboarding Design and Implementation

[*New Student Onboarding Diagnostic: What First Impression Does Your College Make? \(EAB\)*](#)¹⁰

A tool to assess key onboarding processes and how they can be improved or strengthened

[*What We Are Learning About Guided Pathways \(Community College Resource Center\)*](#)¹¹

A summary of key practices from national Guided Pathways efforts including recommendations for strengthening onboarding practices

[*Understanding the Student Experience Through the Loss/Momentum Framework: Clearing the Path to Completion \(Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges\)*](#)¹²

A guide to ensure students successfully transition through critical junctures in their educational journey

[*Student Engagement in Guided Pathways Development*](#)¹³

An overview of six design principles for ensuring student engagement

⁸ <https://thecompassforsbc.org/sbcc-tools/internal-stakeholder-engagement-workshop-toolkit>

⁹ <https://www.pathwaysresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PathwaysLeadersToolkit-04192018.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://pages.eab.com/New-Student-Onboarding-Diagnostic.html>

¹¹ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-are-learning-guided-pathways.html>

¹² Find *Understanding the Student Experience Through the Loss/Momentum Framework: Clearing the Path to Completion (Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges)* on our [Completion by Design](#) project page, under Resources at <https://rpgroup.org/All-Projects/ArticleView/articleId/116>.

¹³ https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3H_pY9T2ulbV3NYeHYza1p0cjFJSUJTVNiUFdTc19WSUxn/view

Data Sources for Examining Your Students' Experiences

CCCCO Data Mart

<https://datamart.cccco.edu/datamart.aspx>

CCCCO LaunchBoard

<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Home.aspx>

CCCCO Career & Technical Education Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS)

<http://cccco.edu/Data.aspx>

CCCCO Student Centered Funding Formula

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/FinanceFacilities/StudentCenteredFundingFormula.aspx>

CCCCO Student Success Metrics

<https://digitalfutures.cccco.edu/Projects/Student-Success-Metrics>

Resources for Establishing Priorities and Taking Action

Find more information on...

- Using Student Support (Re)defined to set priorities and restructure onboarding activities, based on examples from California community colleges, <https://rpgroup.org/StudentSupportRedefined/StudentSupport-Re-definedinCCCs>
- Designing an intake and onboarding process to help students start college right based on a loss/momentum continuum, *Building Guided Pathways: Practical Lessons from Completion by Design Colleges*, https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/building_guided_pathways_toolkit_2_16.pdf
- Supporting students to select and enter a program of study, *Entering a Program: Helping Students Make Academic and Career Decisions*, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/entering-a-program.pdf>

Appendix B: Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students

This appendix provides examples of student onboarding outcomes for each of the six success factors to **inform your team’s development of outcomes** that are most appropriate for your students as part of the Phase I activity, *Identify Desired Outcomes for Students’ Onboarding Experience* on page 12.

The student onboarding outcomes you outline in this Appendix will...

- Inform your team’s exploration of key metrics and which data sources and information to examine and monitor to better understand students onboarding experiences (see Appendix C).
- Outline key questions to be asked to capture students’ voices about their onboarding experiences by factor (see Appendix D).
- Identify and map how key onboarding activities (see Appendix E) can and should be structured to ensure they will help your team realize the desired student onboarding outcomes.
- Provide a starting point for how to strengthen and improve onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities and key themes and priorities that result from this reflection (see Appendices F and G).

This tool is part of the [*Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions*](#),¹⁴ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students’ first-year experiences.

The following table offers suggested onboarding outcomes for students for each of the Student Support (Re)defined Six Success Factors. For each factor, the sample outcome from the *Identify Desired Outcomes for Students’ Onboarding Experience* activity of the *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* is offered starting place.

¹⁴ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students

Student Success Factor	Anticipated Outcomes
Directed	<i>Example: Students have informed educational and career goals and a comprehensive plan for meeting those goals by their second semester.</i>
Focused	<i>Example: Students complete college-level English and math and demonstrate early progress toward program completion within their first two terms.</i>
Nurtured	<i>Example: By the end of the first semester, students can identify at least one individual who they know cares about their success.</i>

Outcomes for Successfully Onboarded Students – continued

Student Success Factor	Anticipated Outcomes
Engaged	<i>Example: Students report that their initial coursework is culturally relevant, linked to their long-term career and life goals, and is preparing them for the next steps in their post-secondary or career journey.</i>
Connected	<i>Example: Student demonstrate a connection to the campus by taking part in at least one extracurricular activity, campus event, and/or peer group each semester.</i>
Valued	<i>Example: Students know their feedback is important to the college and actively provide input on what’s working, what isn’t, and what the college can do to improve support for more students.</i>

Appendix C. Tool for Examining Quantitative Data on Students' Onboarding Experience by Factor

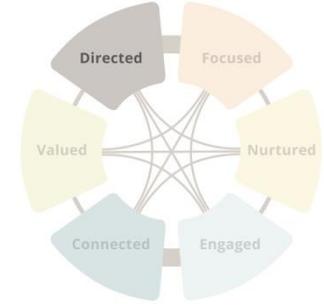
This appendix will help inform your team to **explore key metrics and the most appropriate data sources and information** to examine and monitor students onboarding experiences.

The metrics and data sources and information you discuss and identify in this Appendix will...

- Relate to the outcomes developed for each of the six success factors in Appendix B.
- Support the development of key questions to be asked to capture students' voices about their onboarding experiences by factor (see Appendix D).
- Identify and map how key onboarding activities (see Appendix E) can and should be structured to ensure they will help your team realize the desired student onboarding outcomes.
- Provide a starting point for how to strengthen and improve onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities and key themes and priorities that result from this reflection (see Appendices F and G).



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experience: DIRECTED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)¹⁵ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing

all learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

This tool highlights ways students can feel directed at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

DIRECTED students...

- Have a goal and know how to achieve it
- *Have informed educational and career goals and a comprehensive plan for meeting those goals by their second semester*

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students completing an orientation
- % of students identifying an educational goal within the first semester
- % of students completing a personalized comprehensive educational plan
- % of students participating in a first-year experience course/program
- % of students entering a program of study
- % of students exploring college and career options via a career center, a success course, etc.
- % of students completing 9 units in area of study within the first year
- % of students completing 30 units within first year
- Number of students moving from non-credit to credit coursework

¹⁵ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How Directed Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them find direction as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

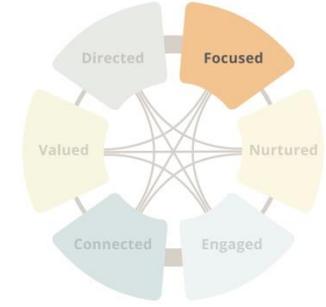
Where onboarding helps different groups of students be directed	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students be directed	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students are finding direction during the onboarding process, and the metrics to help you find an answer.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experiences: FOCUSED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)¹⁶ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing

all learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including focused—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

This tool highlights ways students can feel focused at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

FOCUSED students...

- Stay on path—keep their eyes on the prize
- Complete college-level English and math and demonstrate early progress toward program completion within their first two terms

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students completing transfer-level math and English within the first year
- % of students enrolling in/eligible for special programs within the first year
- % of students selecting and entering an area of interest / meta-major and / or a program / major

¹⁶ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How Focused Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them be focused as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

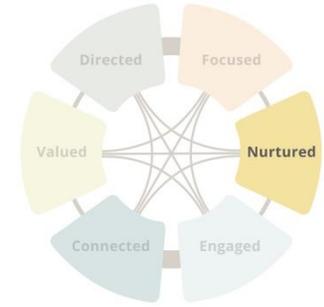
Where onboarding helps different groups of students be focused	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students be focused	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students helped to focus during the onboarding process, and the metrics to help you find an answer.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experiences: NURTURED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)¹⁷ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing

all learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including nurtured—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

This tool highlights ways students can feel nurtured at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

NURTURED students...

- Feel somebody at the college wants and helps them succeed
- *Can identify at least one individual who they know cares about their success by the end of the first semester*

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students meeting regularly with a counselor
- Number of students establishing a point of contact in either an individual (e.g., counselor) or a special program (e.g., TRIO, EOPS/CARE, DSPS, homegrown support initiatives) on campus within the first year

¹⁷ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How Nurtured Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them feel nurtured as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

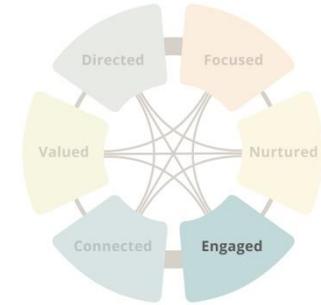
Where onboarding helps different groups of students feel nurtured	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students feel nurtured	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students are nurtured during the onboarding process, and the metrics to help you find an answer.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experiences: ENGAGED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)¹⁸ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing

all learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including engaged—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

This tool highlights ways students can feel engaged at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

ENGAGED students...

- Actively participate in class and extracurricular activities
- Report that their initial coursework is culturally relevant, linked to their long-term career and life goals, and is preparing them for the next steps in their post-secondary or career journey

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students accessing academic support services
- % of students participating in an extracurricular activity on campus (e.g., athletics, clubs, student life activities)
- % of students taking part in courses with contextualized or applied learning experiences (e.g., service learning, project-based learning) with their first year
- % of students engaging in work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, work experience, etc.

¹⁸ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How Engaged Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them feel engaged as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

Where onboarding helps different groups of students feel engaged	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students feel engaged	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

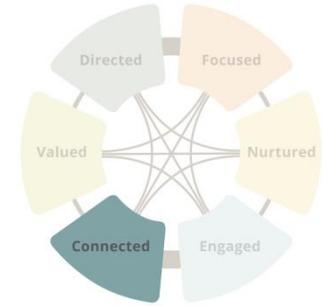
2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students are engaged during the onboarding process, and the metrics to help you find an answer.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experiences: CONNECTED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)¹⁹ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including connected—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.



This tool highlights ways students can feel connected at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

CONNECTED students...

- Feel that they are part of the college community
- *Demonstrate campus connections by taking part in at least one extracurricular activity, campus event, and/or peer group each semester*

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students completing an application, but who never enroll
- % of students seeing a counselor at least once a semester
- % of students visiting instructors during office hours
- % of students reporting the support of peers
- % of students developing a relationship with a primary counselor
- % of students indicating that they received culturally sensitive support from those that helped them enroll, register, and access supports and services

¹⁹ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How CONNECTED Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them find connection as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

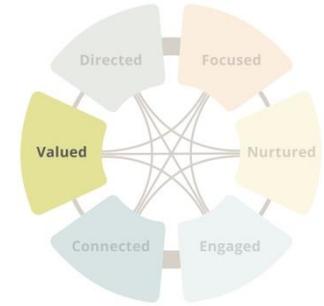
Where onboarding helps different groups of students feel connected	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students feel connected	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students are helped to feel connected during the onboarding process.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer



ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE Students' Onboarding Experiences: VALUED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁰ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including valued—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

This tool highlights students can feel valued at your institution through their onboarding experience then suggests quantitative data to better understand if students currently are directed at your institution. Start by selecting one or more of the suggested metrics that resonate most with your team, keeping in mind your team's capacity to carry out this examination and the experiences of diverse student groups and those students that may need more onboarding support.

VALUED students...

- Feel that their skills, talents, abilities, and experiences are recognized
- Know their feedback is important to the college and actively provide input on what's working, what isn't, and what the college can do to improve support more students

Key onboarding metrics to consider:

- % of students indicating their strengths (and needs) were recognized in designing their educational plans, and determining academic and non-academic supports
- % of students providing feedback on onboarding experiences

²⁰ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

Exploring How Valued Your Students Are...

1. Identify what your college already knows about how your institution and/or how your division, program, or function helps them feel valued as part of the onboarding process; include what evidence you already have.

Where onboarding helps different groups of students feel valued	Where onboarding could do more to help different groups of students feel valued	What evidence/metric must be examined to confirm

2. Determine what more you want to know, including question(s) your team has about if/how students are valued during the onboarding process, and the metrics to help you find an answer.

Questions	Metric(s) to Explore Answer

Appendix D. Tool for Gathering Students' Voice About Onboarding Experiences by Factor

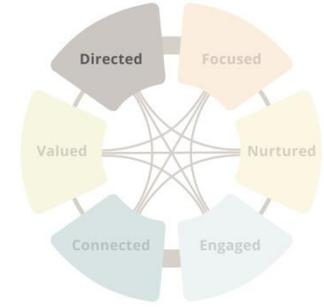
This appendix will help your team **develop a process and outline questions to capture your students' voices** about their onboarding experiences by factor.

The themes, topics, and questions you outline to help gather students' onboarding experiences will...

- Relate to the outcomes developed for each of the six success factors in Appendix B.
- Inform your team's exploration of key metrics and which data sources and information to examine and monitor to better understand students onboarding experiences (see Appendix C).
- Identify and map how key onboarding activities (see Appendix E) can and should be structured to ensure they will help your team realize the desired student onboarding outcomes.
- Support the strengthening and improvement of onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities and key themes and priorities that result from this reflection (see Appendices F and G).



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: DIRECTED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²¹ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing

all learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel directed as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

DIRECTED

How are students currently finding direction in the onboarding process?

Explore what different student populations at the college say about...

- What did/didn't work during the enrollment and registration process
- What did/didn't work about their English and/or math assessment and placement experience
- What did/didn't work during the meta-major selection and program entry process
- How informed they were of college requirements, resources, and opportunities after their orientation
- What did/didn't work in terms of accessing financial aid
- How they explore educational programs and career options
- How they decide their educational and career goals
- How they created their educational plans
- How they select courses
- How the college supports them or can support them in feeling directed

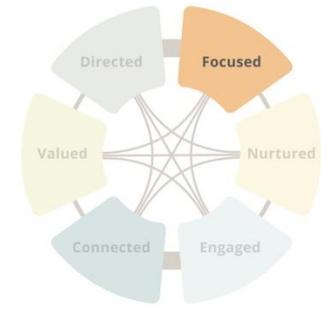
²¹ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel directed?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: FOCUSED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²² which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a

path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel focused as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

FOCUSED

How does your college's onboarding process currently help students determine how to stay on path and gain momentum at key transition points in the first year?

Explore what different student populations at the college say about...

- How the institution reaches out to them at the college and the content and timing of what is shared
- How first-year experience courses stoked their motivation and confidence in their ability to realize their goals
- How they are able to monitor their own progress
- How far along they are on their educational path, what else they have left to do, and what keeps them going
- What the college does or can do to help them stay focused

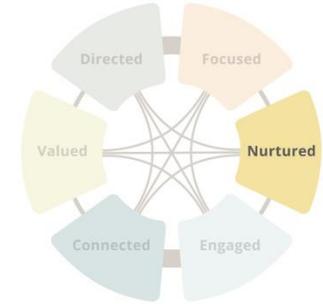
²² Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel focused?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: NURTURED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²³ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a

path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel nurtured as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

NURTURED

How does your college's onboarding process ensure students are nurtured in the early stages of their college experience?

Explore what different student populations at the college say about...

- When someone across the campus community reached out to them on campus or expressed that they wanted them to succeed
- When a faculty member demonstrated they cared about them or wanted them to succeed
- How feeling nurtured relates to their academic progress and success
- What the college does or could do to make them feel that someone wants them to achieve their goals and helps them do so

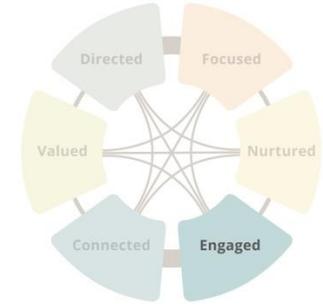
²³ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel nurtured?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: ENGAGED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁴ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel engaged as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

ENGAGED

How is your college promoting students' engagement inside and outside the classroom in the first year?

Explore what different student populations at the college say about...

- How engaged they are in the learning experiences in their courses and programs
- What approaches or experiences foster their engagement in their coursework
- Where/how they access academic and non-academic support
- What opportunities they have to participate in extracurricular activities both on and off campus
- How is learning contextualized to students' pathways/chosen careers

²⁴ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

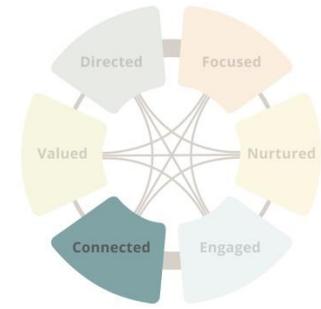
What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel engaged?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: CONNECTED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁵ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.



Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel connected as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

CONNECTED

How is your college's onboarding process fostering students' connections to peers, educators, and the campus community?

Explore what different student populations say about...

- Ways they have been made to feel connected to the college and the impact of this connection on their success
- How entering into a program of interest has helped them build connections to faculty, staff, and peers
- When they have felt a sense of place/belonging at the college
- Where they go to connect with students, educators, others on campus
- How they describe their association with the college to others and what level of pride they have in attending the college

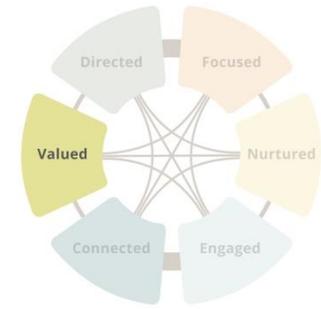
²⁵ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel connected?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)



GATHER STUDENTS' VOICE about Onboarding Experiences: VALUED



This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁶ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a

path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to consider questions to explore with students to ensure they feel valued as they are onboarding. The first page for each factor offers sample questions for your team's consideration. The second page provides space for your team to outline additional questions, to highlight their link to the factor(s) and/or the Guided Pathways pillars, and to identify potential ways to collect information and data to address the questions posed.

VALUED

How is your college demonstrating that it values student and their contribution as part of the onboarding process?

Explore what different student populations say about...

- When and how has the college made them feel like they had something of value to offer
- What opportunities the college has offered to provide constructive feedback and input on what happens at the college both inside and outside the classroom
- How the college has meaningfully invited and responded to their input
- How the college has meaningfully recognized their strengths and addressed their needs
- How their sense of culture and identity is expressed at and honored by the college

²⁶ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What additional questions would you like to explore to be sure your students feel valued?

Additional questions to ask students	Related factor and/or Guided Pathways pillar	Methodology (interviews, focus groups, survey)

Appendix E. Tool for Mapping Students' Onboarding Experiences by Factor

This appendix will help your team **identify and map how key onboarding activities can and should be structured** to ensure they will help your team realize the desired student onboarding outcomes and that students are experiencing the six success factors as part of their onboarding experience.

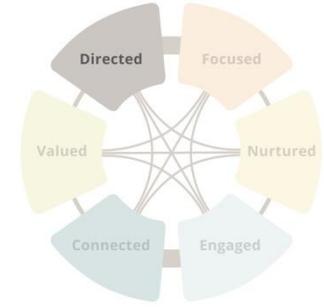
The themes, topics, and questions you outline to help gather students' onboarding experiences will...

- Relate to the outcomes developed for each of the six success factors in Appendix B.
- Inform your team's exploration of key metrics and which data sources and information to examine and monitor to better understand students onboarding experiences (see Appendix C).
- Support the development of key questions to be asked to capture students' voices about their onboarding experiences by factor (see Appendix D).
- Support the strengthening and improvement of onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities and key themes and priorities that result from this reflection (see Appendices F: Visioning Student Onboarding Poster Activity and G).



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: DIRECTED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁷ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide



highlights how the Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students feel directed and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

DIRECTED

How does your college help first-time students select and be prepared to enter an area of study?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to one or more of the following activities and their impact on students.

- Supporting student application and enrollment
- Connecting students to financial aid and other financial assistance
- Helping students clarify their goals, identify appropriate programs of study
- Helping students develop comprehensive education plans
- Ensuring students understand the requirements and benefits of program completion, the full cost of attendance, and how to fund it
- Making students aware of various services and supports designed to facilitate their success

²⁷ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

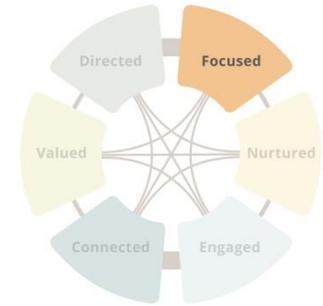
What does the college do now that helps students be directed, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: FOCUSED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁸ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student



Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool is designed to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students be focused and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

FOCUSED

How does your college help first-time students stay on track and remain motivated through their first year?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to one or more of the following activities and their impact on students.

- Ensuring students have a clear path to completing their goals
- Monitoring student progress toward goals
- Making students aware of how their initial coursework will help them realize their long-term personal and career goals
- Ensuring students access to the available financial aid and grants for which they are eligible

²⁸ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

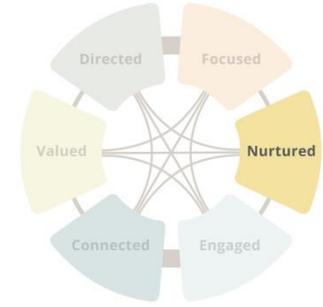
What does the college do now that helps students be focused, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: NURTURED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)²⁹ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student



Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool is designed to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students feel nurtured and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

NURTURED

How does your college ensure that first-time students feel that someone wants and expects them to be successful in their first year?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to the following activities and their impact on students.

- Celebrating students' completion of key milestones (e.g., entering a path)
- Offering proactive advising and support when students are struggling, before they fail or withdraw
- Organizing key supportive services to be available to students who are unable to come to campus during the day or week

²⁹ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

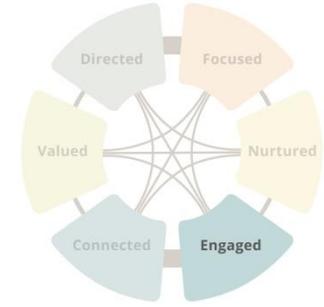
What does the college do now that helps students feel nurtured, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: ENGAGED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)³⁰ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student



Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool is designed to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students feel engaged and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

ENGAGED

How does your college inspire first-time students to actively participate in class and extracurricular activities during their first few semesters?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to one or more of the following activities and their impact on students.

- Structuring students' connection to academic supports
- Offering contextualized learning and work-based learning opportunities in their first year, particularly related to their academic and career goals
- Creating structured opportunities for open dialog and engagement inside and outside class

³⁰ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

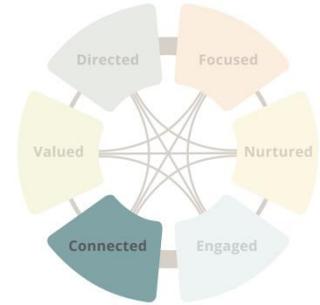
What does the college do now that helps students feel engaged, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: CONNECTED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)³¹ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student



Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool is designed to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students feel connected and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

CONNECTED

How does your college ensure that first-time students feel that they are part of the college community in their first year?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to the following activities and their impact on students.

- Helping students join a cohort or peer group
- Demonstrating to students that they belong at the college
- Instilling “school spirit”—positioning the college as a place of pride and worth with students and the broader college community

³¹ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

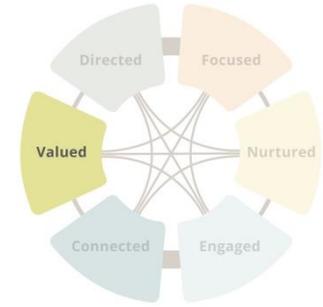
What does the college do now that helps students feel connected, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected



MAP STUDENTS' ONBOARDING: VALUED

This tool is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#)³² which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. The guide highlights how the Student



Support (Re)defined identified six success factors—including directed—can positively affect students' first-year experiences.

Use this tool is designed to help your team highlight existing onboarding processes, policies, and practices that help students feel valued and identify opportunities to do more and to determine which student groups would benefit the most from onboarding improvements.

VALUED

How does your college ensure that first-time students feel that they are a valuable part of the college community in their first year?

Identify and map current processes and systems related to the following activities and their impact on students.

- Inviting students to share their personal and cultural experiences
- Recognizing students' unique talents and experiences
- Creating ways for students to provide feedback and input in regularly

³² Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

What does the college do now that helps students feel valued, where are opportunities to do more, and which student groups are likely to be impacted by these changes?

Current effective processes and systems	Areas of opportunity and growth	Students groups most likely to be affected

Appendix F: Visioning Student Onboarding Poster Activity

The next two appendices—Appendices F and G—will support clarity about how to strengthen and improve onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities and relevant themes and change priorities by **examining what is working and what changes are needed** to ensure students are experiencing the six factors as part of their onboarding experiences.

The recognition of student onboarding strengths, desired improvements by each of the success factors plus the identification of key onboarding themes and priorities will...

- Advance the outcomes developed for each of the six success factors in Appendix B.
- Inform your team’s exploration of key metrics and which data sources and information to examine and monitor to better understand students onboarding experiences (see in Appendix C).
- Support the development of key questions to be asked to capture students’ voices about their onboarding experiences by factor (see Appendix D).
- Relate to how onboarding activities (see Appendix E) can and should be structured to ensure that students are experiencing the six success factors as part of their onboarding experience.

This activity is part of the [Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions](#),³³ which aims to assist your efforts to ensure new students receive intentional and comprehensive support when they enter (or re-enter) the college, placing *all* learners on a path toward success and completion. This guide highlights how Student Support (Re)defined identified six success factors can positively affect students’ first-year experiences. The goal of this exercise is **to compare current *and* future or anticipated onboarding processes, practices, and policies.**

Instructions

1. Place two poster sheets on a wall and label the first poster—current onboarding, and the second poster—future onboarding.
2. Divide each poster into several cells by drawing a table with several rows and columns on each.
3. **For the current onboarding practices poster, write in onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities you identified** (see *Identify Desired Outcomes for Students’ Onboarding Experience* (pages 12-13) and *Describe Onboarding Today* (page 14)) in the guide into each of the cells. See example below...

Application	Student Education Plan	Welcome Center
First-Year Experience Course	Guided Self-Placement	Financial Aid Application and Verification

4. Then invite each team member to write a statement on sticky notes as to how the current onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities highlighted in each of the cells is

³³ Read *Grounding Onboarding Redesign in the Student Experience: A Student-Centered Guide for Institutions* on our [Student Support \(Re\)defined Resources](#) page, under Tools & Guides at <https://rpgroup.org/Our-Projects/Student-Support-Re-defined/Resources>

helping students feel *directed, focused, connected, engaged, nurtured, and/or valued*; be sure to write at the top of each individual sticky note the related onboarding systems, processes, practices, and activities AND relevant success factor (e.g., completion of an initial Student Education Plan helps students be directed; entry into a metamajor or program of interest will help more students be focused.)

5. Repeat this process for each transition point.
6. As each team member to place their individual sticky notes in the appropriate cell and organize by the relevant factor(s)³⁴ (e.g., directed is 'D'). See example below...

<p>Application</p>	<p>Student Education Plan</p>	<p>Welcome Center</p>
<p>First-Year Experience Course</p>	<p>Guided Self-Placement</p>	<p>Financial Aid</p>

7. On the second poster paper for *future onboarding*, **repeat the exercise with a focus on the onboarding experience for future students**. Note that the listed onboarding **systems, processes, practices, and activities** in the table may be the same or different than those included on the first poster.
8. Discuss and note where there are opportunities for scaling up practices and approaches and implementing new policies and structures under the Guided Pathways framework to ensure more students are experiencing most, if not all, of the success factors as part of their onboarding.
9. **Lift up common themes and record them** on the template in Appendix G, *Key Onboarding Themes and Redesign Priorities Summary*, **to inform onboarding redesign priorities in the action plan** (see Appendix H, *Key Onboarding Redesign Priorities Work Plan*).

³⁴ Each student success factor is identified in the graphic by its first letter (e.g., directed is 'D').

Appendix G: Key Onboarding Themes and Redesign Priorities Summary

Key Themes from Onboarding Visioning Exercise (see Appendix E)

1:
2:
3:

Rows can be added to capture additional themes but consider how many priorities are truly manageable.

Appendix H. Key Onboarding Redesign Priorities Work Plan

Proposed Redesign <i>Proposed change to policy, process, practice, program</i>	Evidence <i>Findings supporting proposed change</i>	Success Factor(s) <i>Factor(s) addressed by proposed change</i>	Guided Pathways Pillar(s) <i>Pillar(s) addressed by proposed change</i>	Related Campus Priorities <i>Links to, impact on other campus redesign efforts</i>	Next Steps <i>Identification of who will do what by when to advance this proposed change</i>
Create a “Welcome Center” as a first stop for students where they can receive assistance and support from various departments and programs when they arrive on campus	Students, particularly those who are historically underrepresented, report... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of clarity about where to seek assistance • A need to visit multiple locations and people to receive support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directed • Connected • Engaged • Nurtured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying the path 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Pathways • Student Equity & Achievement Program 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use information and data to make case for development of Center 2. Garner administrators’ faculty, and staff support 3. Identify team to design new Center