

Insights from Guided Pathways Webinar: “Converting Short-Term Course-Takers to Graduates”

Presented in December 2022 by Kathy Booth,
project director, Educational Data and Policy at WestEd.

Who can use this: administrators, faculty, classified staff, institutional researchers

PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES:

Understand skills builders and how they leverage short-term course-taking to improve earnings.

Demonstrate clear opportunities for skills builders and embed course-taking into Guided Pathways maps given their existing career and college experiences.

Learn how to assess the data to discern which courses lead to economic mobility and growth so students can make informed decisions.

Keywords: adult learners, completion, economic mobility, equity, Guided Pathways, living wage, skills builders, student parents



Skills Builders to Completers

USING DATA TO SUPPORT ADULT LEARNERS AND GROW ENROLLMENT

A growing number of Californians return to college throughout their lives to increase economic mobility as 21st century jobs demand new skills. Working learners, student parents and many of today’s students need guided pathways that incorporate high-quality short- and long-term certificates and degrees that lead to fruitful careers and living wages. To better serve these lifelong learners, community colleges have an opportunity to better understand their needs and course-taking patterns and incorporate the credentials they seek into guided pathways.

WestEd and other researchers use the term “skills builders” to describe community college students who enroll for a short period of time (often one to two semesters) and successfully complete a few credits, which are mostly in career and technical fields. College teams have opportunities in their guided pathways work to ensure course sequences are better structured for skills builder students and enable them to complete their education.



They are current students: Skills builders are adults who have an understanding of how to navigate the often tricky registration and enrollment process. They also tend to be highly successful in their courses.

They can help forge the path for future students: Working with skills builders could be a strategic

Vision Resource Center

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Explore skills builder data using [LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline](#).
 - See West Ed's instructions on [how to access skills builder data on LaunchBoard](#) (log into the Vision Resource Center to see this resource in the Guided Pathways community).
 - To identify skills builder courses and who is attending them, see West Ed's guide "[Identifying Skills Builders and Estimating Economic Returns to Skills-Building Course Sequences: A Practice Guide](#)."
 - See more research on skills builders: Peter Riley Bahr, Yiran Chen & Rooney Columbus (2023) [Community College Skills Builders: Prevalence, Characteristics, Behaviors, and Outcomes of Successful Non-Completers](#)
-
-