

## What is the Issue and Why Does it Matter?



State policy and education leaders continue to focus on improving postsecondary graduation and on-time completion rates, reducing college cost and debt, preparing students for well-paying jobs and meeting workforce demands.

Yet, average college graduation rates—commonly based on six years for a four-year degree and three years for a two-year program—show a national average of 60 percent and 30 percent, respectively.<sup>1,2</sup>

A student's path to complete a college credential can become delayed or derailed for several reasons. In many cases, students take additional courses that are not required for their credential or wait to choose a major

or program of study well into their college career. "While students certainly make choices about enrollment based on personal circumstances, the many course and program options and the limited guidance currently provided by community colleges likely contribute to students' meandering and varied pathways through college."<sup>3</sup> The same holds true for students attending four-year institutions.

Guided pathways are emerging as a strategy to help students complete a credential in a timely manner by encouraging or requiring them to select a program, and develop a degree plan or map, on a specified timeline. At a minimum, institutions may ask students to identify a meta-major, which is a broad area of academic programs with related courses (for example, business, health care or social sciences). Guided pathways programs typically include structured course plans and intensive support services to keep students on track to finish their credential or transfer to complete a degree.

Guided pathways policies and practices may provide students with a clear course of action, limit their financial burden and accelerate their timeline toward completion, while still allowing students to explore various academic and career interests.

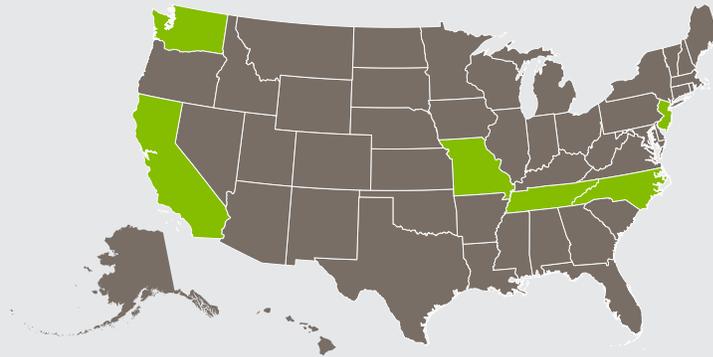
The following sections of this Policy Snapshot provide summary information on 2016 and 2017 legislative activities, as well as legislation and board policies from previous years.

## How Many States Considered Legislation in 2016?

Based on a review of 2016 legislative activity that encourages or requires higher education institutions to develop guided pathways strategies:

- At least six states considered guided pathways legislation.
- Ten bills were introduced.
- Two bills were enacted, six bills died and two bills are pending.

## Which States Considered Legislation in 2016?



STATE	LEGISLATION	STATUS
<b>California</b>	A.B. 2786	Died
<b>Missouri</b>	S.B. 997	Enacted
<b>New Jersey</b>	A.B. 2564 S.B. 599	Pending Pending
<b>North Carolina</b>	H.B. 1030	Enacted
<b>Tennessee</b>	H.B. 2432 S.B. 2507	Died Died
<b>Tennessee</b>	H.B. 2069 S.B. 2306	Died Died
<b>Washington</b>	H.B. 1982	Died

Note: **New Jersey** and **Tennessee** introduced guided pathways companion bills. New Jersey's legislative sessions are biennial and, therefore, the two 2016 bills still are pending for 2017. The **Washington** legislation was introduced in 2015 and reintroduced in 2016 during the state's biennial session.

## Examples of 2016 State Legislation

 **Missouri: Senate Bill 997** (Section 173.2515) established the Guided Pathways to Success Act, a comprehensive approach to improving timely completion. The enacted legislation requires the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education, in cooperation with public two- and four-year higher education institutions, to create a guided pathways pilot program. The program must include at least two of the following components: majors organized into semester-by-semester sets of courses that lead to on-time completion; degree-based transfer pathways between participating institutions; available meta-majors; student commitment to a structured schedule of courses; and clear degree maps, proactive advising and guarantees that required courses are available when needed by students.

 **New Jersey:** A pair of pending companion bills, **A.B. 2564** and **S.B. 599**, requires students enrolled in four-year institutions to file a degree plan by the completion of 45 credit hours, and for community college students to submit a degree plan upon enrollment. All public institutions must develop pathway systems to graduation for each major and the general education program for students who have not declared a major.

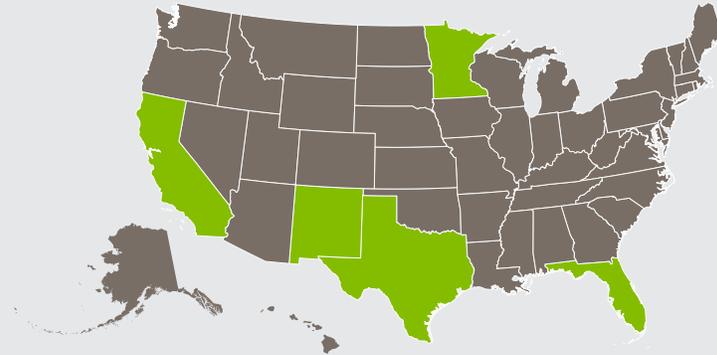
 **North Carolina:** The enacted 2015-16 appropriations bill, **H.B. 1030** [Section 11.7(b)], required the University of North Carolina system to adopt a plan to improve timely degree completion. The plan must allow for strategies to meet individual institutions' needs, such as, but not limited to: redesigned courses, early alerts systems, tutoring, degree mapping and innovative merit-based completion incentives.

## How Many States Have Considered Legislation in 2017?

Based on a review of legislative activity that encourages or requires higher education institutions to adopt guided pathways strategies (as of April 18, 2017):

- At least five states have considered guided pathways legislation.
- Eleven bills have been introduced.
- One bill was enacted, one bill died and nine are pending.

## Which States Have Considered Legislation in 2017?



STATE	LEGISLATION	STATUS
<b>California</b>	S.B. 539	Pending
<b>Florida</b>	H.B. 3	Pending
	S.B. 2	Pending
	H.B. 929	Pending
	S.B. 374	Pending
<b>Minnesota</b>	S.F. 302	Pending
<b>New Mexico</b>	H.B. 108	Died
	S.B. 103	Enacted
<b>Texas</b>	H.B. 655	Pending
	H.B. 1198	Pending
	H.B. 3768	Pending

Note: **Florida** and **New Mexico** introduced companion bills to promote guided pathways strategies.

## 2017 Examples of State Legislation



**California:** **Senate Bill 539** establishes the Community College Student Achievement Program to create a coherent, integrated and system-wide approach that provides students with instruction, advising, support services and financial aid. The program's objectives include improving timely completion rates and increasing students' ability to obtain high-paying jobs. Community colleges must develop comprehensive guided pathway plans that incorporate the following components: clear, measurable learning outcomes for educational programs; multiple measures to determine students' necessary coursework; and processes to ensure that students receive consistent, targeted advising and support services.



**Florida:** Proposed companion bills, **H.B. 3** and **S.B. 2**, aim to strengthen Florida's "2+2" articulation by establishing the "2+2" targeted pathway program. The program's goal is to improve transfers to a baccalaureate degree program and on-time completion. Among the requirements, state universities must: establish a four-year on-time graduation plan for a baccalaureate degree program; advise students enrolled in the program about the university's

transfer and degree program requirements; provide students access to academic advisers and campus events; and guarantee admittance to the state university and degree program.

 **Minnesota:** Minnesota's [Senate File 302](#) focuses primarily on reforming developmental education placement and instruction policies and practices. Under the legislation, institutions must provide support strategies for underprepared students. As part of this requirement, college campuses may expand proactive advising and develop meta-majors in broad academic disciplines as an alternative to undecided majors. Note: Minnesota introduced a similar bill, [S.F. 2589](#), during the 2015-16 session.

 **New Mexico:** Companion bills, [H.B. 108](#) and [S.B. 103](#), require the New Mexico Department of Higher Education to develop and implement a statewide articulation plan that includes a meta-major and transfer module. The bills define a meta-major as 15 credits of lower-division general education and prerequisite courses, which are established by the department, and that can articulate to multiple degree programs. Higher education institutions must accept courses taken as part of an approved meta-major or transfer module to meet lower-division graduation requirements of degree programs.

 **Texas:** [House Bill 3768](#) creates the Texas Guided Pathways Program for public two- and four-year higher education institutions. The program intends to provide students with clear and efficient pathways for completing certificates and degrees, including course sequences and transfer compacts. One overarching goal is to streamline student pathways for completing credentials to increase statewide educational attainment rates.

## Previous Legislative and Policy Activity

Several states enacted legislative actions related to guided pathways prior to 2016 and 2017. The following examples do not necessarily represent the full scope of legislation or postsecondary coordinating and governing board policies, but demonstrate states' interest in pursuing policies that encompass various aspects of guided pathways.

 **Florida:** In 2013, Florida lawmakers enacted [S.B. 1720](#) requiring the state board of education, in consultation with the State University System of Florida Board of Governors, to develop a series of academic meta-majors and academic pathways to guide students toward degree completion. Florida College System institutions must use course placement test results to determine if students possess the skills required for their chosen meta-majors. The state board of education, which oversees the Florida College System, adopted [Rule 6A-14.065](#) that establishes eight meta-majors and gateway courses for each meta-major.

 **Hawaii:** [House Bill 547](#), enacted in 2015, requires the University of Hawaii system to explore options that increase students' on-time graduation. To accomplish this goal, the university system may consider developing a graduation pathway system that includes structured default pathways to graduation, meta-majors, academic maps, cornerstone classes, intrusive advising model, highly-structured options and data about the local employment market.

 **Indiana:** Indiana's [Higher Education Act 1348 of 2013](#) requires state institutions to provide students with a degree map based on their specific educational objective or course of study. Subsequently, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education released a [Degree Map Guidance](#) for public colleges and universities. The commission includes degree maps in a comprehensive strategy to improve timely degree completion and cost-effectiveness.

 **Minnesota:** As part of the 2015 omnibus higher education bill, [S.F. 5, Section 22](#), the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota must develop plans that encourage students to complete degrees, diplomas or certificates. The legislation indicates that campuses may adopt several strategies to increase timely completion, including: replacing developmental courses with co-requisite courses; expanding intrusive advising; developing meta-majors; making available alternative mathematics curricula; implementing opt-out scheduling by automatically enrolling students in a schedule; facilitating the transfer of credits; and encouraging students to enroll full-time, including through financial assistance incentives.

 **Texas:** [Senate Bill 1189](#) (2015) requires all junior colleges to establish a multi-disciplinary associate degree program. Before a student earns 30 credits, they must meet with an adviser to complete a degree plan. A degree plan is defined as a statement of the course of study requirements to complete an associate or bachelor's degree.

## Resources

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Davis Jenkins, Hana Lahr and John Fink, Implementing Guided Pathways: Early Insights From the AACC Pathways Colleges (New York, NY: Community College Research Center, 2017), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/implementing-guided-pathways-aacc.html>.

Davis Jenkins, Redesigning Community Colleges for Student Success: Overview of the Guided Pathways Approach (New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Revised 2014), [http://www.mcca.org/uploads/ckeditor/files/DavisJenkins\\_CCRC\\_Guided%20Pathways%20Overview\\_Revised%20Oct%202014\(1\).pdf](http://www.mcca.org/uploads/ckeditor/files/DavisJenkins_CCRC_Guided%20Pathways%20Overview_Revised%20Oct%202014(1).pdf).

Complete College America, Guided Pathways to Success (Indianapolis, IN: Complete College America), <http://completecollege.org/the-game-changers/> (Accessed March 30, 2017).

American Association of Community Colleges, The Movement Toward Pathways (Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges), <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/pathways/Pages/ProjectInformation.aspx> (Accessed March 30, 2017).

## Endnotes

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1. U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics 2016, Completion Rates, Table 326.10 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2016), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_326.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_326.10.asp) (accessed March 30, 2017).
2. U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics 2016, Completion Rates, Table 326.20 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2016), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_326.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_326.20.asp) (accessed March 30, 2017).
3. Thomas Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars and Davis Jenkins, What We Know About Guided Pathways (New York, NY: Community College Research Center, 2015), 1, <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-know-about-guided-pathways-packet.html>.

# AUTHOR

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### About Postsecondary Legislative Tracking

The Postsecondary and Workforce Development Institute at Education Commission of the States tracks legislation on multiple issues related to college readiness and higher education. The team follows the bill's status from introduction through its final action, summarizes key provisions and assigns topics. The policy tracking helps keep an eye on trends, innovative policy approaches and the overall landscape of higher education legislative activity. This information is leveraged for several purposes, including postsecondary policy snapshots that offer a brief background on a topic, a visual take on recent bills and summaries of selected state legislation.

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