**Transcript of Video 4: Stay on the Path**

Hey, Greg Kemble again.

This video looks at the third of the Four Pillars of the Guided Pathways framework: helping students to stay on the path. This pillar builds on the work of the first two pillars—clarifying the path, and helping students enter the path. I guess that’s the strength of the metaphor: all four pillars work together to support student success.

This pillar focuses on systems and tools that allow students and the college to monitor students’ progress, and to reach out to encourage them to continue making progress—to stay on the path—or to intervene if they fall off their chosen path.

Except for those students in selective programs like nursing—and this is not just true at Yuba; this is true across the state--we generally don’t monitor our students’ progress. Counselors are always available, but we don’t do much to get students seek them out. This often means that students have to figure things out on their own.

And as a result, students either quit—we saw evidence of that in previous videos—or they end up graduating with far more units than they actually need. So, at Yuba last year, the students who earned a degree did so with an average of around 93 degree-applicable units. That’s a full year of classes—assuming they go full time. And of course, many of them don’t. So 30 units could be more than two years.

There may be good reasons how some students meander--we’ll talk about one of these later in the video. But according to the research behind Guided Pathways, one of the main reasons that students end up with so many units is that they're too often being left to figure things out on their own.

And when you add the fact that we don’t give them the information they need to figure things out—if the catalog is wrong, or if we don’t offer a course when they need it--and that was a complaint we heard in the focus groups—well, figuring things out on their own is likely to mean they’re going to end up with more units than they need.

So one point of this pillar—helping students stay on the path—is to offer systems and tools that help our students monitor their progress and plan their future courses. Degree audit, electronic ed plans—the RP Group, who did the student focus groups, seemed a bit bemused to learn that we still do Ed Plans on paper—these are tools that we’ve been talking about for some time but, for various reasons, we haven’t managed to get them in place. My expectation would be that implementing a Guided Pathways framework would allow us to focus our attention more effectively in areas like this by making it a priority.

And while these can help students monitor their own progress, we can also leverage them to reach out to students. We of course have already begun, and are ramping up, Early Alert, which allows counselors to contact students whom faculty have identified as being potentially at risk.

But we could also contact students in other situations. We could encourage them to stay on the path, for example, by sending an email to them when they are within a semester of their degree. Or we could intervene if they fall off their path; we might have student mentors reach out if they don’t reach a milestone, or if they register for a course that isn’t on their path.

So one of the concerns I’ve heard expressed about Guided Pathways is the fear that we’re limiting students’ choices. I plan to address this issue in a later video, but there is one aspect of this that is worth addressing here.

The question is: What happens to students who decide they’ve chosen the wrong path? Aren’t we taking away their opportunity to change paths when they discover, for example, that they prefer science to literature?

Well, we’re talking about *helping* students to stay on the path, not *forcing* them to. More important, the tools we’d develop to help students stay on path would also provide support for students to navigate these types changes.

So, for example, if our system generated an alert when a student signed up for a class off her path, a counselor could reach out to make sure this was intentional, and to offer advice when it is most useful. In some cases, this might be supplying information she needs in order to decide if she really does want to switch majors—it could tell her how much extra time it'll take to reach her goal, or what effects the change would have on her financial aid.

And if she decided she really did want to change paths, we’d be able to get her to enter, and stay on, her new path much more efficiently.

Guided Pathways are meant to guide students, not to railroad them. And the third pillar is meant to provide systems and tools that support students both on and off their path, and to give counselors the opportunity to reach out to them before they make decisions that delay their goals or, worse, before they quit. And it’s meant to provide a tool for students, to allow them to monitor their progress and to make informed decisions as they navigate the college.

The next video will look at 4th pillar. I will see you then.