

# Guided Pathways Meta Majors

Cañada College - Inquiry Phase

# To begin: A little story about choice

## The Jam Jar Experiment

In 2000, in a Menlo Park supermarket, professors of psychology from Stanford set up a booth with jars of jam.

Customers could taste as many jams as they wanted and received a coupon for \$1 off.

First offering: 6 flavors of jam.

Every few hours, they switched from offering a selection of 6 jams to a group of 24 jams.

On average, customers tasted two jams, regardless of the size of the assortment.

60% of customers were drawn to the large assortment, while only 40% stopped by the small one.

30% of the people who had sampled from the six-jar assortment decided to buy jam, while only 3% of those confronted with the two dozen jams purchased a jar.

# What does this have to do with GP?

The “paradox of choice”:  
Too many choices leads to  
overwhelm, indecision, and  
frustration.

Students entering into community college are overwhelmed with navigating the amount of choices available to them in what to study, which classes to take, what degree/certificate to earn, and where to transfer.



# How is Cañada doing?

- *16% of full-time students earn their degree/certificate in 3 years*
- *2% of part-time students earn their degree/certificate in 3 years*
- *Students, on average, are attempting 118 units before earning a 60-unit Associate's Degree.*

# What is Guided Pathways?

College students are more likely to complete a degree efficiently<sup>1</sup> if they:

- ◆ choose an “Area of Interest”
- ◆ develop an academic plan
- ◆ follow a road map of the courses they need to take
- ◆ receive guidance and support to help them stay on plan

Most community colleges use a “cafeteria” model, allowing students to choose from an abundance of disconnected courses, programs, and support services.

Students often have difficulty navigating these choices and end up making poor decisions. Many drop out of college altogether.

<sup>1</sup> *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* by Bailey, Jagers, and Jenkins

1.

# Meta Majors

Areas of Interest or Career Groups

# What are Meta Majors?

Incoming students are given support to explore their “area of interest” based on potential degrees or careers, choose a program of study, and develop an academic plan based on program maps created by faculty and advisors.

Meta Majors group degrees and programs together thematically and help students to select one of the structured, educationally coherent program maps that align with students' goals for careers and further education.

# What are Program Maps?

Program maps help students complete their required classes in ways that are thematically aligned, building upon the student's stores of knowledge while preparing them to transfer successfully and/or enter the workforce.

Program maps are NOT:

- ◆ A highly regimented sequence of courses
- ◆ Favoring certain subjects over others
- ◆ "Pushing students through the degree factory"
- ◆ Inflexible: students can change pathways and even Meta Majors.

# Benefits of Meta Majors and Program Maps

- ◆ Allow students to explore “areas of interest” before selecting a major.
- ◆ Help students understand, explore, and choose appropriate educational goals.
- ◆ Reduces units that don't help students reach goals.
- ◆ Provide support to determine/refine goal during first semester.
- ◆ Give students clear and efficient paths to reach those goals.
- ◆ Ensure those paths are available.
- ◆ Provide support and resources to keep students on those paths.

# But why?

It's an equity issue





# Thanks!

## Any questions?

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Meta Major Mondays: 1st and 3rd Monday of each month in Building 3, Room 142 from 2:30-4pm.