

Curriculum and Instructional Design

Curriculum management has had its own set of considerations as Pathways have begun to be developed. These exist in the areas of managing curriculum for approval at the state and college level as well as the design of the courses and credentials.

With respect to program and course design, the curriculum department was initially less involved. However, it became apparent that as the first few programs began to explore pathway design and matching credentials and curriculum, the need for a “big picture” approach was critical. As faculty considered the credentials within a pathway leading to a 2-year Technical Diploma/AAS degree, they needed to carefully consider how the courses within the terminal credential were embedded in the early credentials. Sometimes this required new courses or redesign of current courses. Every program had some type of change, down to rewriting courses to make their pathway work. Since curriculum changes affect many other areas of the college it was also very important that curriculum documents were thoroughly checked for quality and consistency. While this redesign of curriculum is a necessary component of successful Pathway curriculum, initially there were problems in maintaining course numbering/approval within the college and with the WTCS State Office.

The Pathway model also created issues for getting credentials and courses approved at the state. As a college on the leading edge of developing pathways, many of the processes for managing the Pathways model were not yet developed and vetted. This made processing the many curriculum changes (major modifications, program approval, and certificate approval) very difficult. For instance, very early on there was no process at the WTCS State Office to submit a request for an embedded certificate – one of the very credentials that the colleges were intended to provide. Another problem arose when the second part of the two part curriculum approval process (electronic submission into the WTCS computer system) was being upgraded. During this time submissions were not even accepted in the electronic approval process. Without electronic approval, student information is not available for data collection. Most of these problems have been resolved as the State office has begun to formalize its process for approving pathway curriculum for colleges.

Another role that the curriculum office undertook was as facilitators to assist the faculty work align the input they got from advisory and industry folks to revise curriculum. These industry experts were needed to help faculty identify the very specific skill sets required within each industry job along the pathway, so that faculty could create the needed curriculum and credentials.

Initially there was much curriculum re-work and approval. However there was much internal support for making the many required changes. Devising and approving curriculum has been a work in progress for both the state and college simultaneously. The processes are improving and are becoming more effective for everyone.