

The Pioneer Programs

The first programs to focus on developing a Pathway were Nursing, Welding, and Culinary. Nursing was a natural fit, as the laddering curriculum had already been developed so making a few changes and integrating the developmental education component was all that had to be done with the program.

Welding was another natural program with which to work. The need for welders is huge in the Milwaukee metropolitan area and employers would like to see ways for more welders to be work-ready in shorter time frames. Although this program began work on its Pathway, one of the issues with it is the fact that the courses within the technical diploma did not ladder into the AAS degree. Ultimately when the truth “Curriculum at any given level is embedded into next higher credential” was determined in 2013, it was evident that the Welding program pathway would need to be revised. It is currently under review.

Culinary was also an early adopter. Instructional Leadership for the program realized that in many ways the program was already performing in the Pathways model. They recognized that formalizing a pathway would make it easier to work with High Schools and allow more flexible scheduling. The faculty members within the program were supportive of ways in which their students could move through their program successfully. This program area was the first one to recognize the need for and to begin pulling apart their curriculum (even at the course level). They did this to reframe the competencies within the AAS program in such a way that it met the industry job needs for certificates and technical diplomas, rather than sequencing courses only for the AAS degree.

Research has indicated that the more developmental basic skill education and English language skills are embedded into a context (e.g. occupational curriculum), the more quickly students learned the basic skills or language. Additionally, many people are unemployed and underemployed due to the lack of basic skills or English language barriers. However, the culture had been one of “those Developmental Education students” and “our program students. This required a culture change. The early adopters had to begin the work of breaking down the silos between Developmental Education and the program areas.

Not incorporating the needs of students to be program ready as part of the pathway was **not** an option. The relentless act of never accepting “no, it can’t be done” by the VP of student services and Assistant Provost kept the pathway project in motion through all the difficult times.