Non-instructional Program Review: MAPS Learning Community

Institutional Outcomes: MAPS

The MAPS Learning Community grew out of the Guided Pathways Initiative. The goals of the MAPS program align closely with the Guided pathways Framework to support students in choosing a college path and promote better enrollment decisions. The program targets first-time college students in an effort to ease the transition to college and identify academic and career areas of interest in their first semester of college. Students are encouraged to enroll in both the Humanities 101 "The Human Condition" and Counseling 130 "Career Exploration and Life Planning" courses in their first semester at COM. These courses introduce students to various disciplines and potential careers and aid in their college readiness and retention to their second semester. HUM 101 provides students with the foundational college reading and writing skills in an effort to prepare them for college level English (ENGL 150).

Another component of the MAPS Learning Community is the Peer Mentoring program. Each MAPS student is paired with a senior College of Marin student to help support their educational goals. They connect students to college resources and provide a strong sense of community and belonging. Peer Mentors are encouraged to help these students advocate for themselves and seek appropriate resources as early as possible in their college careers. The MAPS Peer Mentors also plan and host events related to topics of equity and inclusion, mental health, academic skill building, career choice, among many other topics. These events help students develop skills and knowledge that improve their ability to access, persist, and succeed in college.

Student Access & Success (Strategic Plan):
Reduce barriers to access and to students achieving their educational plan goals in a timely manner; create a welcoming atmosphere with increased human contact.
The MAPS Learning Community aims to reduce barriers to access by providing students with personalized support. Each student in the MAPS community works closely with their Peer Mentor to develop a success plan. These students are introduced to COM resources, which include working with a COM Counselor. Not only do the MAPS Mentors meet weekly with a Counselor to discuss their own and their Mentee challenges, but the Mentees have a direct line to the Counseling and English faculty through the program. Each MAPS member is required to meet with a counselor at least twice during their first semester to develop a comprehensive Student Educational Plan (SEP).

Provide effective orientation and early support to students so that they can determine and achieve their educational goals.
MAPS specifically targets students in the beginning of their academic career at COM. Students join the MAPS program in their first semester at COM. This provides early and effective support as students transition to college. They are effectively oriented to the college and

are provided with early support. One of the goals of MAPS students being enrolled in the HUM 101 and COUN 130 in their first semester, is to identify a major by the end of their first year. The second year of the MAPS program will include additional career resources and internship opportunities.

Build awareness in students of educational goal options and paths to achieve these goals. Ensure that all students reach milestones and complete educational goals in a timely manner.

With the HUM 101 classes, students are introduced to academic discourse. They are exposed to a number of disciplines through guest lectures in the class and different perspectives and viewpoints via the course content. Students exposed to more non-traditional majors have more opportunity for transfer to the university of their choice. They are more aware of their educational opportunities related to academic and major choice through the HUM 101 course. In addition to the HUM 101 course, students also enroll in COUN 130, where they have the opportunity to explore various careers of their choice. They are provided information on pursuing educational opportunities related to their career interests through the course as well.

MAPS is also working on more robust second year programming. The second year students will continue to have opportunities to connect with the community but will also have more focus on career building. Milestones including applications for admission in their second year and support for applications, PIQs, resume writing, interviewing skills and internship opportunities make up the second year programming.

Equity (Strategic Plan):
Decrease toward elimination of existing racial equity gaps at the College, with the goal of eliminating gaps.

The MAPS learning community supports first-generation college students and a racially diverse student population. With the personalized support, students are more likely to persist and have continued academic success.

Hire, support, and retain equity-minded employees reflective of the diversity of the student body and expect all College employees to approach their work with equity-mindedness. Given that Marin County's stark racial inequities are intertwined with the College's ability to achieve its mission, be a leader in promoting equity throughout the county

Beginning in 2019, the MAPS learning community has utilized graduate student interns. The Counseling Department supports diverse faculty interns in an effort to hire, support and retain equity-minded new professionals in the field. The MAPS program hopes to support new professionals in the field of Counseling that reflect the diverse student population at COM and within the MAPS program. The two previous MAPS Faculty Interns are both new COM faculty in the Counseling Department and demonstrate the success of the Counseling Internship Program. This program sparked the introduction of the new campus-wide Faculty Diversity Internship program that has been extended to all disciplines and served as a leader in promoting equity.

Guiding Questions: MAPS

Practices being implemented within the program to improve student access, retention, and/or success
Research, models, and/or framework is informing the use of these practices

Peer Mentoring Component:
· Peer advising helps students with adjustment, specifically through peer support, and can contribute to the student's social and academic needs with the addition of shared social identities (Cerezo & McWhirter, 2012).

· According to Cerezo and McWhirter (2012), both mentoring and peer advising contribute to advancing student educational achievement, especially when applied to helping Latino/a students. Mentoring helps students with transitioning and adjusting to college life by assisting students in gaining knowledge about resources on campus and improving their self-esteem.

MAPS Events & Community Involvement:
· The more the student was involved in school, the more successful academically (Hill and Susanne, 2013).

Intended objectives

The Mission of MAPS:

To foster a community for incoming students to ensure an inclusive and safe learning environment by providing:
  o Successful transition from high school to college
  o Guided pathways for major selection
  o Academic Empowerment
  o Peer and faculty mentorship
  o Job shadowing and internship opportunities
  o Added access to support resources
  o Connection to the larger college community
  o Support the achievement of post secondary goals

 What is the impact of these practices on access, retention, and/or success? Please provide both quantitative and qualitative data
   – **Analysis and Reflection**

Program Goals:
  1. Students will have a higher retention rate than their peers who did not participate in the MAPS program
  2. Students in the MAPS program will spend more social time on campus outside of their classes
  3. More students in the MAPS program will have Student Educational Plans (SEPs) compared to the general COM population

Impact of these practices on access, retention, and/or success:

Part 1: MAPS Student Track Data Report

MAPS started in Fall 2018. A method used by the MAPS Coordinator to track student data was through an automated tracking system. Signing in and out of the student tracker system is the only requirement to utilize the MAPS space. After reviewing the student data report for Fall 2019, it was surprising to me that there were over 265 students utilizing the MAPS space. As of March 17, 2020, there are currently 83 active MAPS students/mentees which means there are a lot more students utilizing the space than those of the MAPS program.

Recommended Courses: Humanities 101 and Counseling 130

Students in the MAPS program are recommended to take HUMM 101 and COUN 130 classes. The table below demonstrates the number of students who have taken each class, or the number of those that have not taken the classes.

Table 1: HUMM 101 and COUN 130

Humanities (HUMM)101	Counseling (COUN) 130	Both HUMM 101 & COUN 130	Have not taken neither course
5 (15%)	7 (21%)	11 (33%)	10 (30%)

Out of the 33 students 1/3 of them have taken at least one of the courses (HUMM 101 or COUN 130)/ 1/3 of the 33 students have taken both classes and 1/3 have not taken either class.

Part 2: Online survey

Student participants were provided questions within the survey to understand (a) whether the MAPS program at College of Marin has prepared them to succeed in college and in reaching their educational goal, (b) which services in the MAPS program have been the most helpful, (c) retention rate, (d) overall satisfaction of the program, and lastly (e) any recommendations to improve the MAPS program.

The table below shows whether or not students believe MAPS has helped them prepare to succeed in college and in being successful in attaining their educational goals.

Table 2: Has MAPS prepared you to succeed in college? N =33

Yes	No	Not sure
31	1	1

Some comments by MAPS participants about MAPS contribution to success in college:
"I haven't been in MAPS very long, only one semester but I feel like it's helped me think about trying to set goals for each semester which is helpful especially because this semester I'm taking classes that are very exciting to me".

"MAPS has provided a safe and adequate learning environment with proper resources and guidance to not only keep me academically successful every semester but in the following semesters to come".
"Yes, because now I have developed skills within myself to be more involved with the school community and help people and that's why I'm going to school. To increase my knowledge and help people in the future".

The table below shows the top most helpful resources in the MAPS program according to the MAPS student participants. The three services below were identified by tallying students' mention of the services in their responses on the survey. 7 out of 33 students did not provide a response to this specific question about the MAPS services.

Table 3: Top three most helpful resources in the MAPS Program, N = 33

MAPS Mentors	Workshops/Events	The MAPS space
12	6	5

Examples of how these services helped students:
Comments about MAPS mentors:
"I like having someone to check in with and to talk about my course load with because they know what I'm going through and can give me solutions or ways to get through hard times".
"There is at least one person there that can always help you out. They have such a diverse group of mentors that each mentor can handle a different student in need."
Comments about Workshops/Events:
"The most important and helpful opportunities that have been provided by maps the most useful ones are the workshops".
"I really like coming here to focus on homework and participating in workshops".
Comments about the MAPS space:
"The room maps is held in".
"Just being there".
"Having a place to relaxed and to get help".

Table 4 Retention Rate
(current active & inactive MAPS students/mentees)

Active	Non-Active	Total
83 (72%)	31 (28%)	114 (since Fall 2019)

Presently the MAPS program has a 72% retention rate, but one thing to keep in mind is that there are MAPS applications being processed; thus the number of active participants is expected to grow. Additionally, it is important to note that out of the 33 MAPS mentees that took the survey, 100% answered yes on question 15 which asks "do you see yourself being part of the MAPS program until you reach your educational

goals?". This means that at least 33 out of the current active 83 or 40% of the current mentees see themselves to be part of MAPS for the foreseeable future.

Table 5 Overall Satisfaction Rate

(N = 33)	Average Rate: 8.52

"I gave it a ten, because it has helped me feel welcome when I come in the door, given me new friends, and a path to get to where I want to be".

"I'm not as involved as I wish I would be but it's a pretty good program. The weekly texts with updates help".

"It's a great environment at time but sometimes there is tension in the room. And sometimes and this is probably just me overthinking things but I don't feel like I'm liked or welcomed as much in the "club" anymore. There are all these events to help but sometimes it isn't much help, it's still pretty divided".

"Maps reminded me of an old program called boy's and girl's club in middle school and I love going to that place every day. After middle school, I Volunteer to the program because I like it so much. Maps bring back the fun time I had in my middle school program".

"Overall, it's been a program that has changed me for the better. Besides some personal nitpicks and possibly small improvements that could be made, it accomplishes its purpose of connecting students together to form a friendly academic community on campus."
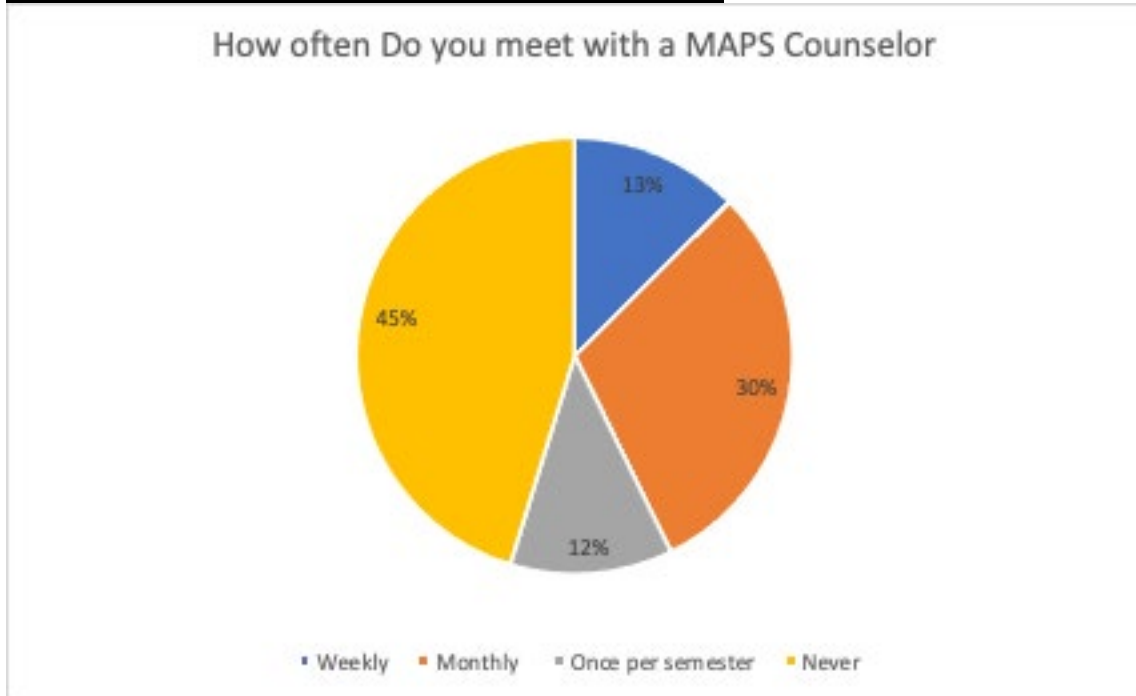
Table 6: Meeting with MAPS Counselors (N=33)
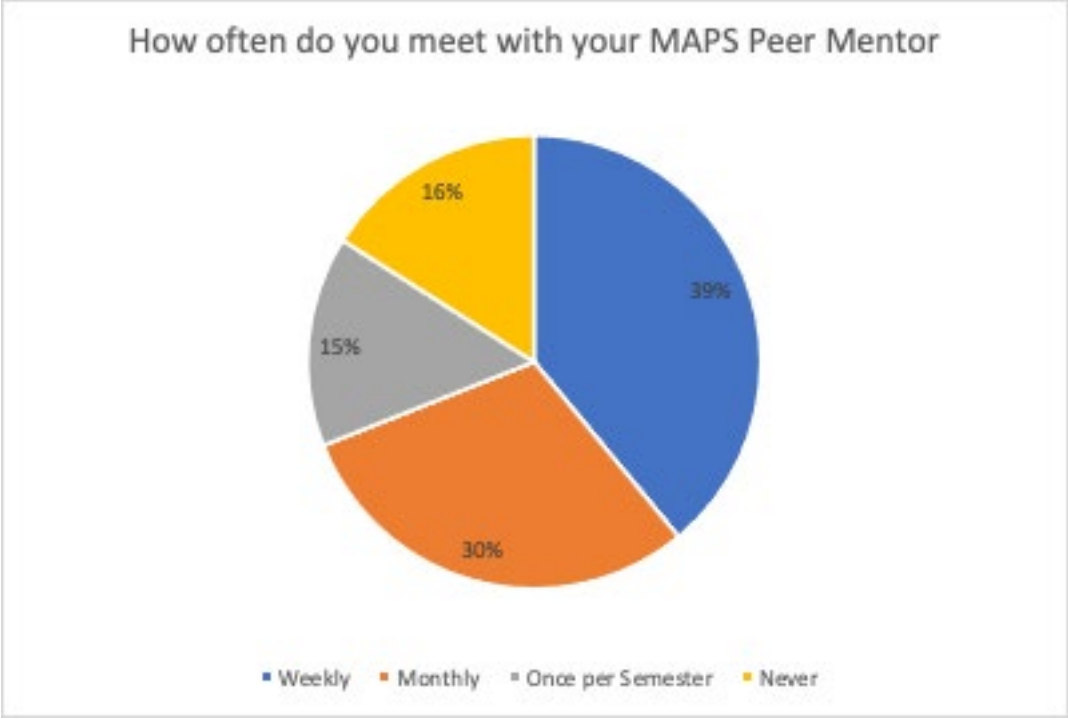

How often Do you meet with a MAPS Counselor

- Weekly 13%
- Monthly 30%
- Once per semester 12%
- Never 45%

Table 7: Meeting with MAPS Mentors (N=33)

How often do you meet with your MAPS Peer Mentor

Legend: ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Once per Semester ■ Never

Slices: 39%, 30%, 15%, 16%

Table 8: Feeling Part of the College of Marin Community through MAPS (N=33)

Yes	No	Not sure
31	1	1

"Yes, it has, I know more people now, that I can say hi to on campus, and it has given me something to be a part of".
"Yes, maps is like a mini club at a big school. It gets you involved with school activities".
"Yes, I do believe MAPS has made me feel more a part of the College or Marin Community. With all the games and events that they have for students and professors".

Table 9: Time spend on Campus (N=33)
Question number 13 on the survey asked students if they were not part of the MAPS program did they think they would spend less time, the same amount of time, or more time on campus. Below are the answers to that specific question.

Spend Less time	The same time	More time	Not sure
22 (66%)	8 (25%)	0	3 (9%)

"I think I would still be on campus the same amount of time; I just like coming here because it's a nice place to hangout".
"I would definitely have spent less time on campus if it weren't for maps".

"I would definitely spend less time on campus. Before MAPS I would leave right after my class and now, I can just chill here and talk to friends".

Table 11: Students Educational plan (SEP), Current Grade Point Average (GPA).

Student	SEP	GPA
Total:	30/33 90% yes	20/27 75% GPA higher than 2.00

Analysis and Reflection

Findings/Challenges/Accomplishments/Next Steps

MAPS has grown rapidly since its inception and it was immediately clear that we had been successfully in forecasting the needs of our students. We were able to adapt and serve our growing population by hiring more Peer Mentors and Program Coordinators/Peer Supervisors. Having a designated space on campus with all of the attendant student resources anchored our program and enabled students to connect not just with their Mentor, but with their fellow Mentees on a regular basis. Students have overwhelmingly found the mentorship model to be beneficial to their well being. Over time, we have developed and polished a Mentor training program that goes beyond covering relevant campus resources, but training (both initial training and ongoing training-oriented meetings) on topics related to interpersonal skills, active listening, and team-building. Our program has attracted numerous qualified applicants hoping to get an opportunity to be a Mentor for MAPS.

Shelter-in-place orders and life ongoing since the pandemic began required further agility on the part of the MAPS team. Suddenly, the enticement of a physical space for MAPS was gone and Zoom fatigue meant that Mentees were less inclined to spend spare moments joining social activities for MAPS. Shifting personal circumstances made it difficult for Mentees and Mentors to connect, and engagement consequently went down. We decided to flex and meet students where they are; in Humanities 101 and Counseling 130. The TA positions not only helped Mentors and Mentees connect more routinely (and helped familiarize students with MAPS to begin with,) they enabled the Peer Mentors to broaden their knowledge base and build skills that would be useful in other MAPS arenas. For example, MAPS began organizing more large-scale career themed events which were very well-attended, and these events were facilitated by Mentors who had polished their presentation skills partially through their TA positions. Additionally, these events have helped foster stronger faculty-Mentee-Mentor relationships, as often they have been present in our panels/events. We have kept these events open to non-MAPS students to bolster our reach and also reinforce bonds between members of other learning communities.

Some of the challenges we face looking forward, as well as next steps: We expect that numbers will continue to rise in MAPS as we slowly edge into having a physical campus presence again, and we are currently lacking a structured tracking system so that we can collect more meaningful data for MAPS. This data would drive our future outreach efforts, and would be vital to our plans for the second year of MAPS, which will focus more on helping students

gain externships, internships, and work experience related to their field(s) of interest. The second year program is currently in development, and would involve students potentially enrolling in a 1-unit course in job and internship skills while concurrently gaining experience. This is a primary focus of several of the current coordinators. We also would like to offer MAPS scholarships, and we need to develop these scholarships in collaboration with campus partners. We are planning to organize some off-campus events, including campus tours and recreational activities that would fortify the MAPS bonds further, and connect MAPS Mentees with opportunities for career, academic, and personal growth. Another challenge (also tied to future goals for MAPS) is the lack of a full-time learning community coordinator. While our team has done a good job of pulling all of the pieces together, there is a sense that if we had a consistent full-time presence to manage the core responsibilities of MAPS coordination, We would be able to overcome administrative obstacles more efficiently.

What antiracist and equity practices are being implemented within the program to improve student access, retention, and/or the success of Black, African American, and Latinx students?

Antiracist and equity practices are foundational to the MAPS learning community philosophy and approach, and we have incorporated these practices into MAPS in multiple ways. First, we make equity a focal point in our hiring process, and try to attract Peer Mentors with an equity mindset. Some of our interview questions relate to a candidate's perspective about, and experience with, diverse populations. Next, we incorporate antiracist and equity practices into our MAPS Peer Mentor training. Finally, we strive to ensure that all of our events and activities are organized with equity in mind, including pursuing speakers and panelists at events who are representative of the diversity within our learning community.

We didn't have a particular model in mind when we formulated our approach to promoting equity in MAPS. We drew from our experience and professional training as Counselors and the diversity practices that have been fundamental to our individual work to inform our thinking and approach. This approach includes a focus on retention through community-building and individual mentor support, exploring career and major options to help imbue meaning and focus on our Mentees' experience at COM, and connecting students, in a meaningful way, with campus and community resources that can support them personally, academically, and in their career development. The various facets that we've described, common to many learning communities, are aligned with Tinto's theories around student retention/persistence.

Naturally, The Guided Pathways movement itself also informed our approach. Guided Pathways came to be as a means of closing equity gaps, as a response to the all-too-common scenario of students, mostly underrepresented students/first generation students, receiving little structured guidance and support on their campuses, and becoming lost in an inscrutable system.

Our Intended Objectives
- Provide social engagement, both through individual support from Peer Mentors and Coordinators, as well as opportunities to engage with other Mentees.
- Promote diverse students' academic success by providing *EARLY* opportunities to explore academic focus and career direction through Counseling 130, Humanities 101, and other relevant events.

- Developing strategic campus relationships and connecting students (through these campus allies,) with resources like tutoring, that will enhance their ability to succeed, and to feel supported by many campus partners.

Objectives Moving Forward
- Mentorship is a crucial element for success for Latinx, Black, and African-American students. We provide Peer Mentor relationships for our Mentees, but an area to expand upon would be to find and establish relationships with ***professional*** mentors from the community.   One of our coordinators, Erick Munoz, and our graduate intern, Shinna Kim, have been engaged in more recent research surrounding diverse community college populations (research that expands considerably on Tinto's) and the following was taken from Shinna's paper ""Black and Latino Male Students in Community College"

"According to The Impact of Mentoring Programs for African American Male Community College Students, recommends taking an institutional approach for increasing admission and graduation rates for Black male students by implementing mentoring programs "geared towards African American males because it provides a structured support system" (Gibson, 2014, p. 79)"

We are not a culturally-based learning community like Puente or Umoja, and there is evidence that involvement in a culturally-based learning community can be particularly beneficial to Latinx and Black or African American students, as well as other underrepresented students, however, we are striving for the shared goal of connecting students with campus allies, promoting and nurturing Peer Mentor relationships, and connecting students early on in their college career with a clear path to graduation and/or transfer. We seem to be succeeding, considering that (prior to the unforeseen impacts of COVID,) our Mentee population doubled in the first two years of MAPS. Adding professional mentors, representative of our diverse mentee population, to the program could only enhance our impact with our students, and is an obvious and natural next step for MAPS.

Impact
Once again, collecting data in a meaningful way has been a challenge for us. As of yet, we have no reliable/privacy-compliant database from which we can track students or extrapolate a particular set of data to hone in on key information that would help us answer questions about program efficacy more precisely. That is at the top of our wish list! However, we have been fortunate to be joined by Erick Munoz, who focused his graduate thesis on the MAPS learning community. Our community is dominantly first-generation and diverse. The following encapsulates our greatest impacts, based on Erick's research:
- 90% of MAPS students have a current Student Education Plan
- Over 75% are in good academic standing
- All but one student surveyed by Erick said that MAPS had a significant positive impact on their college experience.
- The Peer Mentor relationship was the most commonly mentioned positive aspect of the MAPS program, followed by events, and finally (when we were active on campus, pre-quarantine) the MAPS space.

To quote Erick's thesis,
"As mentioned before, my first recommendation would be to give MAPS a more extensive evaluation once it has reached its 5th year, to give the coordinators enough time to gather more student's data. Once enough data is available, a program evaluator will be able to take that data

and compare it to the general COM student population. This practice of program evaluation is necessary periodically to ensure the program continues to meet goals and objectives, and provide new insights into program strengths and limitations. The early indicators show that MAPS succeeds in meeting goals, but continuous review will allow the program to thrive in the ever-changing culture of higher education. The MAPS program offers a model that many other colleges could use to launch similar mentoring programs, and help more students in their pursuit of academic success."