

Develop a "Linkages Program" for entering Freshman and Sophomore students, or transfer students from Community Colleges who attended high school in our region with Linked Learning Pathways.**CURRENT CHALLENGE:**

High school teachers, education, community and business leaders, in addition to policy makers, politicians and philanthropic organizations are sharply focused on one of the most promising reform movements in a decade: Linked Learning. Approximately 25% of students graduating high school in California are coming from Linked Learning programs or programs moving towards Linked Learning Pathways. By fall 2016 the Linked Learning Alliance estimates this number to increase to 38% of high school graduates. Community Colleges around California have made tangible and significant commitments to the students graduating from these programs. Yet, no higher education institution in the CSU system has significantly committed to students graduating from LL Pathways. The LL Alliance President estimates the number of graduates in the state from these programs to blossom to 50% of all high school students within the next few years. Currently, at Fresno State, the Lyles School of Engineering and the College of Arts and Sciences are involved in classrooms in Porterville, a certified pathway program, and Kremen developed teachers to teach in the program. But our efforts are 'siloes' and silent. All students graduating from career pathways programs need to know that the type of work they have been involved in for four years doesn't just end after four years of high school. Students need support in the soft skills of career attainment, as well as the hard skills of disciplinary knowledge. Currently, all our students are treated the same when entering, and same doesn't mean equal. A student from a traditionally low performing high school, who has persevered in a pathway, applied and been accepted to Fresno State needs, and deserves, more from of as a HEI. We need our community to have a greater populace that is educated, we can make a difference by implementing an innovative program focus on BOLD linkage between regional high schools and our university.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

Linkages Program is for entering Freshman and Sophomores, or transfer students from Community College, who attended high schools in our region with Linked Learning Pathways, or wall to wall programs similar to Linked Learning. Linkages would go beyond a College Promise by focusing on students entering Fresno State who graduated from a career pathway from any high school with college and career, or similar, pathways. This would include Junior transfers who come from CC and attend Linked Learning, or LL similar, pathway programs in high schools.

Students could be offered tangible rewards for pursuing a pathway in high school. Possibly guaranteed course access, priority access to tutoring services in library, a Linked student online forum, or best, an informal mentoring program modeled after our employee mentoring program where faculty and staff connect with our young students to help them succeed at FS and beyond. Linkages incorporates a community advisory board with students, employers, community and school leaders, and HIE members focused on equity and access. This would not only help student success for who believed in higher ed as adolescents, but connect faculty and staff to community issues, employer and non profit needs, the private sector, and high schools in real, relevant and realistic ways. Student success in soft skills would complement the hard skills of discipline knowledge. Partnerships with community and schools has shown to be one researched based way to ensure the engagement of higher education with real issues of our communities and lives of our constituents. Partnerships are becoming the key to ensure the continuity of higher education to serve, and we could begin this by focusing on students; on people. It takes more from all of us as a higher ed community to support the incredible efforts our regional high school leaders are putting in place and ensure that the students' hopes and dreams mean something real. Linkages would be this program.

BENEFITS TO FRESNO STATE:

Fresno State will become a lighthouse for supporting Linked Learning for our communities, our K-12 institutions and our families and future students. We would be a high priority regional hub housed at Fresno State, infusing a focus for students graduating from pathways in high school by partnering with community leaders, the Linked Learning Alliance and Connect Ed in a systemic focused manner. President Obama has called Linked Learning the most promising school reform in decades. Long Beach State already has this type of program in place, with the College Promise, but Linkages would go beyond just accepting students to the campus, the program would support students in multiple ways once they were in classes. Our students would see purpose beyond high school for taking pathway courses in high school, our families would see Fresno State reaching out to their children in meaningful ways. Currently, employers have arrived at the Linked Learning conversation in tangible and powerful ways. Fresno State can be the higher ed leader that arrives at the table with a systemic, supportive student achievement initiative that encourages students to think "Fresno State" when leaving middle school and choosing a high school pathway program. In December, when speaking with the James Irvine Foundation, the leaders asked me what Fresno State was doing to be the higher education institution of preference for linked learning type pathway programs in the Valley. Individuals at organizations like the James Irving Foundation are looking for something different and something BOLD that has powerful impact on our communities, and the lives of our populace. In addition to becoming a hub of excellence in student support from high school pathways, staff and faculty would have the opportunity to give back, to volunteer service and add to the Fresno State legacy of community service.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: