

OpenIDEO Challenge: [How might we better prepare all learners for the needs of tomorrow by reimagining higher education?](#)

Refinement Phase

Pick a Problem not a Major

Insights, Barriers, Challenges and Priorities

Changing the Paradigm

Start-up Costs: None.

Unlike apps and curriculum guides or motivational speakers with book sales to consider, this approach to 'reimagining higher education' has no actual start-up costs.

It is possible that a curriculum guide could be developed but would be better tailored by local counselors, college access personnel and advisors based on student needs and local mentoring resources. With online connections, networking, mentors and project team members could be gained from across the nation or the world.

The depth of involvement will vary with the practitioner based on the commitment of the institution and the results of student responses. It can go from a beginning discussion to a multi-year redesign of how to work with students in the new framework.

Institutions and schools may need to commit time and funds to professional development on the change of approach in order to develop an implementation strategy and train faculty and staff in multi-year approaches. This will vary with the organization.

Challenges and Barriers

When first discussing the concept with students, they are startled. They really haven't thought about their futures from a problem-solving perspective. Their goals have normally been more immediate or short-term. This is a new framework.

Arguments have even been made by some in looking at the proposal both through OpenIDEO and locally that a complete reset may be rejected out of hand by schools, institutions and organizations as too radical or too nebulous as working within the approach is more self-designed than prescribed.

It has also been pointed out that students may not be ready for the depth of thought and self-reflection this model may call for and that it will take time and guided direction to move them from a very single-focus direct approach to one in which the student has more control of their options for the future by concentrating on transferable skills that can be brought to bear in adjusting to changes in their educational and career options.

The most challenging item in moving to this approach will be in gaining commitment from the 'adults' to approach the idea with commitment and give it the time and individual student guidance needed to explore opportunities and have documentable student results.

Approach Priorities

1. When implementing this idea, if a secondary or younger school has a college access program such as GEAR UP, or one of the federal TRIO programs such as Upward Bound or Educational Talent Search, they might be a starting point with a pilot or targeted program.

2. Advisement programs and Counselors.

To our experience in working with a large range of colleges from private to public, from community colleges to research universities the advisor pool normally is a multi-pronged approach.

1. When a student first shows up on campus they have a First Year advisor who works with them on finding a major and transitional needs they might have.
2. Once they declare a major, a student is assigned an academic advisor in that college or department. This person is usually a faculty member charged with seeing the student takes the correct courses to graduate with a degree in their desired major and emphasis.
3. If a student decides to change their major, they are reassigned to an advisor in that area who can work with them on what classes they now have to have to fit the criteria for graduation there.
4. If the student has an internship, practicum, or co-op, they will likely also have an advisor for that who oversees their performance and is the liaison with the company or placement.
5. Once approaching graduation, students usually begin working with completion, capstone, or career planning and placement advisors on wrapping up their education on an undergraduate level and getting a job or into graduate school.

Each of these folks have their own agenda to accomplish with a student with various levels of connection and involvement.

If working with a problem-solving standpoint, each advisor has a common thread and can assist the student in not just 'what classes to take' but also problem based groups for networking and multi-disciplinary focus, projects and mentoring helping students refine their 'seat at the table' and identifying their individual assets and strength to use as transferable skills.