

How is it different from other college and career readiness programs?

GFSF was designed for ALL students rather than a select few or a special population within a school.

The GFSF program is founded in a freshman transition course that helps students **get focused** on their education and future career as they develop an online 10-year Plan. Designed for all freshmen, this semester or year-long comprehensive guidance course is as applicable for high-achieving students as it is for students at risk of dropping out.

GFSF is a whole-school redesign effort with a continuum that covers the four years of high school.

Building on their work in the freshman transition course, students update their 10-year Plans in grades 10, 11, and 12. The three GFSF follow-up modules help students **stay focused** as they explore and expand postsecondary goals. The online plans reflect students' evolving aspirations so instructors and counselors can provide effective advisories and academic coaching.

Students complete high school with two dynamic documents: a 10-year Career/Life Plan and a Skills-based Education Plan.

The development of these documents is made possible by a comprehensive, classroom-based guidance experience (up to 138 hours of classroom time) that is developmentally appropriate. This in-depth planning process helps students build the intrinsic motivation to succeed as they develop the critical and creative thinking skills employers seek.

Students' online 10-year Plans can be used by all instructors and counselors for advising and academic coaching.

The online 10-year Plan creates the opportunity for true personalization with each student. A student's online 10-year Plan Summary Page can be quickly reviewed enabling counselors and instructors to provide laser-focused advice and guidance centered on evolving goals, plans, and dreams.

The online 10-year Plan can empower students throughout life.

In their coursework, students learn that the 10-year Plan is a lifelong process, so an app provides students with mobile access to the information that populates their 10-year Plan Summary Page. Using the app, students can update their plans when inspiration strikes and they can easily share their plans with supporters—advisors, mentors, family, and friends.

GFSF is a curriculum-based effort with comprehensive instructional materials.

Instructors are not left to their own devices to cobble together content for the GFSF program. Using the recommended course materials, classroom teachers have the tools to deliver consistent, content-rich lessons in a meaningful scope-and-sequence fashion.

The curriculum materials address rigorous standards.

The freshman transition course addresses rigorous academic standards and aligns with the Freshman Transition Standards from the George Washington University's Freshman Transition Initiative.

To allow for easy integration into academic classes in grades 10, 11, and 12, each 16-lesson GFSF follow-up module was developed using the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards as the foundation.

The cornerstone of the GFSF program is a 10-year Plan that is broader than the four-year education plans commonly used by high schools and colleges.

Students develop, upgrade, and enhance an online 10-year Plan of their own design aimed at economic self-sufficiency and life satisfaction.

When students have a career focus, they enter post-secondary education ready to declare a major or program of study that matches their individual drives and life goals, which increases completion rates.

*"Research from the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy shows that students who entered a program [of study] in their first year were **twice as likely** to complete a certificate, degree, or transfer as students who entered a program after their first year. First-year concentrators were nearly 50 percent more likely to complete than those who entered a program in their second year, and the rates of completion fell sharply for students entering a program of study later than their second year."*

- Recommendations of the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force

GFSF promotes student-centered Skills-based Education Plans focused on skill acquisition and successful workforce entry rather than traditional Student Education Plans focused solely on graduation from school.

Traditional Student Education Plans outline the courses needed to complete a major/program of study. Unique to the GFSF program, the Skills-based Education Plan helps students create a plan to gain skills and knowledge through traditional coursework and to acquire the specialized skills required for their identified career path.

Employers look for individuals who have specialized job content skills and (except for professional degrees) most traditional programs of study cannot deliver the range of information required. Students must become self-directed learners who seek out opportunities (e.g., internships, on-the-job training, online courses, authoritative books, etc.) in order to acquire the knowledge and skills to compete in the workplace.

The GFSF coursework helps students develop the higher-order thinking skills required in the 21st century workplace.

Too many career exploration programs use online assessments that defer to algorithms when advising students. After answering a string of multiple-choice questions, the computer magically maps an education or career path for the student.

In contrast, the GFSF program combines adult advocates and a proven decision-making process that teaches students to use their own brainpower—analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating life choices to develop a personalized strategic plan. This in-depth decision-making model can be used throughout life to navigate an ever-changing workplace and society.

The GFSF program is the “missing link” for career academy and career pathway programs.

Students are often asked to select a career academy or pathway after attending an assembly or a career fair. Is it any wonder that these important programs are plagued by high dropout rates and lateral movement between pathways? The comprehensive guidance provided by the GFSF program teaches students a process for determining not only the career they desire but also the lifestyle they envision. When students make informed choices before entering a program of study, they are more likely to complete.

The GFSF program was designed to include a viable dual enrollment option.

Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) has one of the largest and most well-respected dual enrollment programs in the country. The GFSF program grew out of a 3-unit Dual Enrollment Freshman Transition (DEFT) course SBCC offered at four Santa Barbara area high schools. Each 16-lesson GFSF follow-up module can equate to one unit of college credit.

While the dual enrollment component is optional, it is encouraged because of the impact it has on the freshman mindset. When students realize they can tackle college-level material, they expand their personal vision of what is possible.

The GFSF program flips the college/career planning paradigm.

Most students first choose the college they want to attend, with little thought of a major, much less a career. With that backwards approach as the starting point, it’s hardly surprising that so many students wander through a maze of majors without completing.

It is the career path that should dictate the major or program of study, which in turn should dictate the appropriate colleges/schools. The GFSF program exposes students to this reality and, beginning in the freshman year, provides the foundation to help them tackle this more realistic, multi-stage strategy.

Designed for a quick and efficient launch, GFSF has comprehensive professional development available.

Personnel can make or break any new program, so the GFSF program has a variety of capacity-building options for schools and districts, including workshops, conferences, self-directed online options, and technical assistance contracts. Too numerous to inventory here, the following web sites provide additional information:

www.aiworkshops.com
www.careerchoices.com/lounge
www.focusonfreshmen.com
www.getfocusedstayfocused.com/conference

Also review the resources found in the *Get Focused... Stay Focused!*[®] Program and Instructional Manual and the *Instructor’s and Administrator’s Guide for Career Choices and My10yearPlan.com*[®].

The GFSF program changes the culture of the school.

With the online 10-year Plan, every adult in the high school can personalize their work with each student.

- Academic instructors can review each student’s 10-year Plan so they can recognize student goals—both in class and in one-to-one discussions.
- Parent-teacher meetings can be even more productive when the child’s 10-year Plan is part of the discussion.
- With training, classroom instructors can support over-committed guidance staff and become effective members of the advisory team. After all, guidance is recognized as a critical element in bolstering student success.
- Attendance and academic achievement will increase, while suspensions and dropout rates will decrease. Why? When students see a path to a satisfying life, they understand the value of education. Students no longer ask, “Why do I need to learn this?”

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