



Proposal: Meta-Major Identification and Collection in ctcLink

The Data Governance Committee (DGC) seeks approval to implement an enhancement request to establish requirements for effective meta-major identification and management in ctcLink

Meta-Major Background and Introduction

Meta-majors are high-level groupings of Academic Programs of Study/Academic Plans, synonymous with “Pathways” or “Areas of Study” at the institutional level.

Meta-majors were introduced to the Washington state community and technical colleges (CTCs) during the launch of the Guided Pathway Initiative in 2015.

A key component of the Guided Pathway model is, “The systemic institutional approach focuses on the construction of a transparent, structured education experience that effectively engages each student from point of entry to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers”[1].

In April 2019, the Washington Legislature passed the Workforce Education Investment Act, HB 2158 to provide funding for Guided Pathway work.

The meta-major component of Guided Pathways is implemented at all CTCs. The identification of meta-majors and aligning meta-majors with programs of study was accomplished in the system’s Legacy Student management Software.

However, the new ctcLink software implementation did not include considerations for converting, identifying, or uniform system-level processes for the systemwide initiative of Meta-Majors. As individual colleges went live with ctcLink, each college has developed or is trying to determine its own process of identifying meta-majors and connecting those meta-majors to academic plans and subsequently associating meta-majors to individual students.

Problem

Two obstacles have arisen from the inattention to meta-majors in the ctcLink conversion.

Student identification of their Meta-Major

Students learn about meta-majors and identify their own meta-majors at each institution through different channels and processes.

Institutional meta-major identification should be consistent across all CTCs so students have a consistent way to view and/or interact with the Meta-Major.

Reporting requirements

Each institution has developed its own process for identifying meta-majors, if at all, in the ctcLink system. There is not a uniform process for attaching meta-majors to academic plans or to individual students.

Due to the multiple institutional strategies, this means it is not possible to report systemwide student success outcomes by meta-major.

A sub-committee of 20 individuals from RPC, ARC, PIC, IC, and SBCTC met several times over the summer to develop a proposed enhancement requirement request.

Proposed Enhancement Requirements

Overarching Requirements

The ability to input into ctcLink, extract from ctcLink, and identify each student's meta-major per quarter.

1. Student-Focused

- The ability to view and store local/college specific meta-major codes in ctcLink for student facing visibility and functionality

2. Reporting-Focused

- The ability to view and store local/college-specific meta-major codes in ctcLink for local reporting
- The ability to connect (roll up) local/college-specific meta-major codes for system-level reporting (as in the Legacy solution)

Proposed Enhancement Requirement Detail

Student-Focused Requirements

- Students should be able to see and interact (at least initially) with the meta-major.
- Students should be informed as to what a meta-major means (e.g., that they are not earning a degree in a pathway)
- Ability to allow students to select a meta-major early on at admission or at least the first quarter.

Reporting-Focused Requirements

First priority from a college perspective

- Desire to report at the college level the number of students in each of the meta-majors per term
- The ability to extract the meta-majors to the Data Warehouse
- Data integrity: The inability of meta-majors to be connected to the wrong academic plans
- Adherence to a uniform solution

Second priority from a systemwide perspective

- An overarching ability to identify meta-majors from a system level
- The ability to extract the meta-majors to the Data Warehouse
- Desire to report at a system level the number of students in each of the overarching meta-majors
 - Notes: The committee was not sure how this would look but wanted to create a solution with a secondary field/solution next to the institutional meta-major for the future potential of adding in a global/system meta-major code next to the locally-defined meta-major code.
 - The global meta-major code should also have the potential to be student-facing because this would be the channel for students to identify matching meta-majors for transferring within the CTC system.
 - Perhaps a global roll-up is a phase 2 activity. However, the initially developed meta-major solution should have consideration for this future possibility

Solution Constraints

- **Solution does not require colleges to change their already-established meta-majors / pathways labels/program clusters/subplans/focus areas**
- Potential solution(s) must be able to be integrated with Student Success software
- Solution must be maintainable by staff; not concentrate on a select few employees on campus
 - A solution that involves frequent management of the student program plan stack unduly burdens a few college employees.
- Solution needs to account for a single academic plan connected to many Meta-Majors
 - An example is the AA-DTA which is part of several meta-majors on most campuses.
- A single meta-major contains many academic plans
 - Most institutions are using subplans along with areas of focus; therefore, redefining subplans and focus areas is not an option.
- Ensure interaction with a potential solution is easy and user-friendly for students

Solution Considerations for Functional Users

- **IF** the solution is connected to the academic plan...
 - The meta-major should have the same business rules as the academic plan, specifically the students cannot change the meta-major after admission, but must meet with an advisor.
 - As noted above as part of the “Solution Constraints” section, the meta-major to academic plan code association should not be limited to a small number of users (i.e., only those few with security settings to modify the academic program/plan stack) to maintain.
- **IF** a solution is developed which does not adhere to the data integrity reporting requirement above and the solution allows for potential mismatched academic plans and meta-majors then processes and procedures must be developed to batch re-align.