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Guided Pathways and the Segregation of Education

Guided Pathways is a program geared towards helping students succeed in higher education by giving students a map to success and outlining courses needed to complete a degree in their desired field of study. Community colleges and four-year universities across the nation are adopting this program in an attempt to lower the dropout rate, and to help students achieve their goal of completing their degree. Several potential problems arise from programs like Guided Pathways. If Guided Pathways was the cure-all to the stated problems, why is it not adopted universally by all colleges? It seems that only colleges geared toward students from lower social statuses are adopting programs like this, which raises the question – Is this actually a program to keep the students from lower income families from receiving the same education as students from colleges geared towards students from families with higher social status? I feel that this is leading towards a form of digital redlining, and a continuation of segregation based this time on economic class, instead of segregation based on race.

In the past, redlining has been used in different ways to discriminate against people considered to be from minority races by limiting the choice of homes they could purchase and by denying specific services to those people. With the change in technology, and a push for equality, redlining has been reborn in the digital age. Guided Pathways and other programs similar to it seem to be continuing this practice of discrimination and the segregation in the educational system of students of lower economic status. By filtering and possibly limiting their

access to educational programs, are programs like Guided Pathways actually increasing the gap between students of higher and lower socio economic status (SES)? Could Guided Pathways be giving the illusion of higher education equality, while simultaneously creating a new version of discrimination against lower classes?

Higher education has not always been accessible to all. Prior to World War II, higher education was only available to a small elite. In 1960, means tested grants were introduced in order to help students from lower economic status to gain access to higher education. After which colleges saw a 50% increase in enrollment between 1963 and 1968. By 1989, the enrollment numbers increased by 150% from pre-WWII levels. All these signs were very positive to people from lower income status, but with the advent of programs like Guided Pathways, past exclusion and discrimination may be once again limiting access to education by narrowing the range of choices that students from lower social status have access to.