Promoting Discussion among Faculty in Schools, Community College, and University

The purpose of this topic is to create a forum for ideas that support student understanding of what it means to progress through their education, elementary school through college. For many students there are significant discontinuities in their educational pathways. For example, many students lose interest in math and science in the transition from elementary to middle school. The high school environment and expectations are sufficiently different from middle school that freshman performance is often one of the biggest issues for high school programs. Some students never recover from this rocky transition.

The same is true for the transition from high school to college. Most students will claim they are "going to college," but many are not prepared for the changes in environment and expectations. As a result, they often find themselves unprepared and end up taking remedial classes. They think they are attending college when in fact they are accumulating debt without progressing toward a degree. The transitions in our system create confusion for many students who lose track of vague goals and feel they are not capable of pursuing more education and have no marketable skills. Some aspects of this topic to consider are:

- Transition to the workplace;
- The meaning and characteristics of seamless educational pathways;
- The characteristics of transitions that are useful, productive, and contribute to learning;
- Common issues across ages and institutions;
- Alternatives to traditional classroom formats for instruction that might provide student support in seeing a bigger picture of their educational pathway;
- Improving how we help students learn how to learn, i.e., how to participate in and across contexts for learning such as small group discussion, large group lectures, individually online, in out-of-school settings -- developing "epistemic fluency";
- Communicating with and involving students as participants in creating learning contexts for accomplishing instructional goals and communicating to students the purpose of the learning contexts we create to support learning; and
- Thinking more creatively about exploiting outside-of-school learning opportunities.