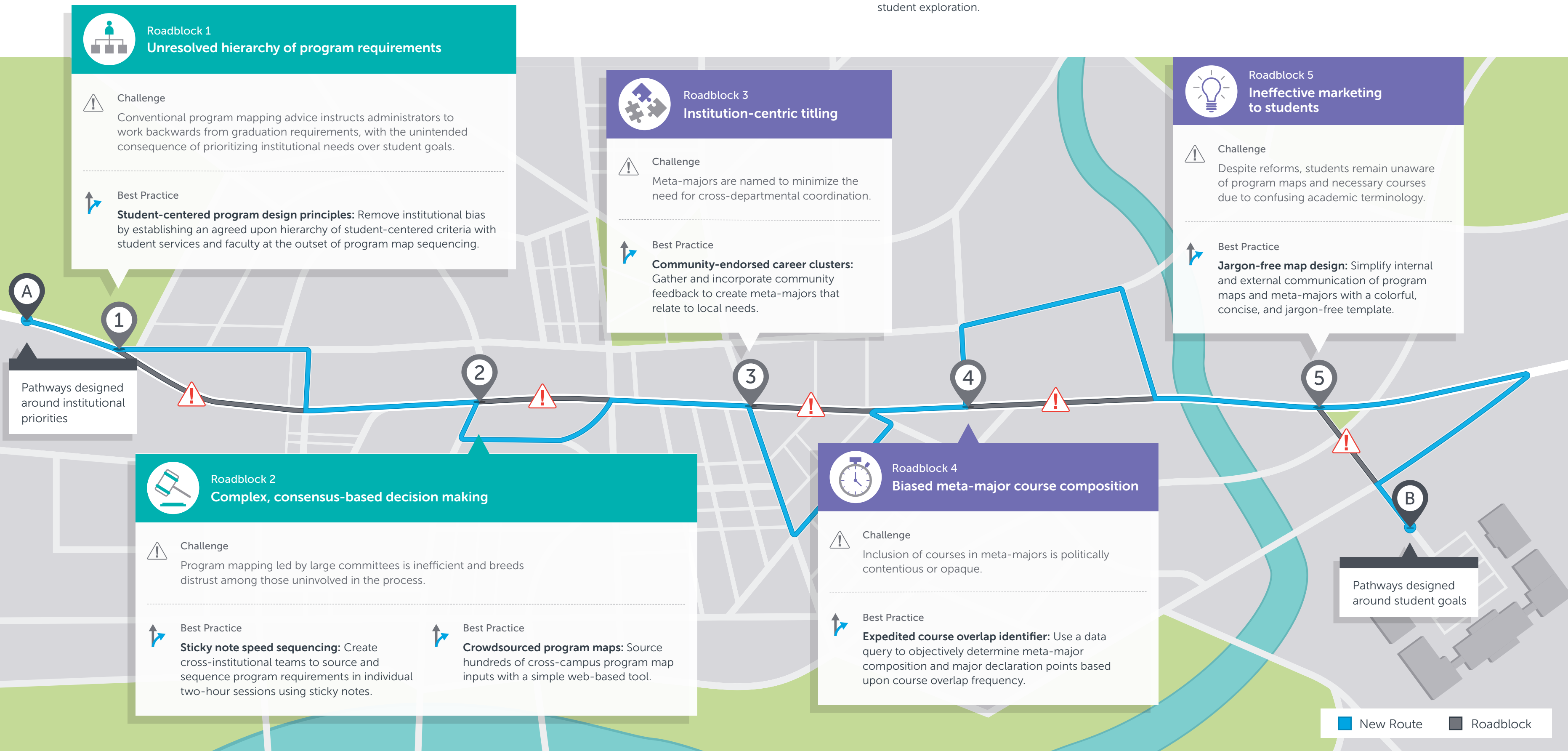# Overcome the Roadblocks on Your Route to
Student-Centric Pathways

Most community college students struggle to efficiently complete their degrees within the desired time frame. While life factors are often cited as the most common reason for the delay, many students simply don't know the logical (and shortest) sequence for completing all the necessary courses.

One of the hardest, but most critical, parts of developing pathways is constructing the program maps and meta-majors behind them. Institutional politics or history can get in the way, leaving student goals by the wayside. And if the program maps and meta-majors aren't right, subsequent reforms to advising, enrollment, or course scheduling will be off as well.

To design successful pathways with students at the center, program maps and meta-majors must be based on clear principles that eliminate institutional biases and maximize the amount of time for student exploration.

Roadblock 1
Unresolved hierarchy of program requirements

Challenge
Conventional program mapping advice instructs administrators to work backwards from graduation requirements, with the unintended consequence of prioritizing institutional needs over student goals.

Best Practice
Student-centered program design principles: Remove institutional bias by establishing an agreed upon hierarchy of student-centered criteria with student services and faculty at the outset of program map sequencing.

Roadblock 3
Institution-centric titling

Challenge
Meta-majors are named to minimize the need for cross-departmental coordination.

Best Practice
Community-endorsed career clusters: Gather and incorporate community feedback to create meta-majors that relate to local needs.

Roadblock 5
Ineffective marketing to students

Challenge
Despite reforms, students remain unaware of program maps and necessary courses due to confusing academic terminology.

Best Practice
Jargon-free map design: Simplify internal and external communication of program maps and meta-majors with a colorful, concise, and jargon-free template.

A — Pathways designed around institutional priorities

Roadblock 2
Complex, consensus-based decision making

Challenge
Program mapping led by large committees is inefficient and breeds distrust among those uninvolved in the process.

Best Practice
Sticky note speed sequencing: Create cross-institutional teams to source and sequence program requirements in individual two-hour sessions using sticky notes.

Best Practice
Crowdsourced program maps: Source hundreds of cross-campus program map inputs with a simple web-based tool.

Roadblock 4
Biased meta-major course composition

Challenge
Inclusion of courses in meta-majors is politically contentious or opaque.

Best Practice
Expedited course overlap identifier: Use a data query to objectively determine meta-major composition and major declaration points based upon course overlap frequency.

B — Pathways designed around student goals

Legend: ■ New Route   ■ Roadblock

Build Program Maps → **Develop Meta-Majors**

Need more best practices to support your students? **We can help:** eab.com/ccef

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