



# Seven Deadly Sins & Seven Lively Virtues *of Educational Reform*

Don't miss the weblinks in the lower right corner of each slide to find out more about what's working

# Meet James

- Dropped out of a community college landscape design certificate program
- Currently driving for Lyft



Thanks for riding with James!

# Where he started



- Has two kids—a baby and a pre-schooler
- Parents helped him put a down payment on a house in West Sacramento, but now he's worried about making the mortgage payments
- Fascinated by botany, is great at math, and is interested in solving problems in a hands-on way
- Had a goal of earning a certificate in landscape design and starting his own business
- *Note: Landscape design certificate earners made \$34,000 two years after graduating*

# What his experience was like



- Advice from faculty: don't quit your day job (only one part-time faculty, so it takes at least two years to complete)
- Couldn't afford to wait and didn't know where to look for another college program, so he dropped out and started driving for Lyft
- Has a buddy with an HVAC job, who is well-paid because it is a union position
- To meet his new goals of getting a union job, he convinced his friend to teach him core HVAC skills by doing repairs on his own home
- Hopes that these skills will be sufficient to get a job doing commercial-level work
- *Note: HVAC certificate earners make \$51,000 two years after graduating*

# Alternative endings



1. Finished the landscape design certificate in a year, attended nights and weekends to earn his associate's in biology, transferred to UC Davis in Biological Sciences, and got a job as a conservation researcher
2. Went straight into HVAC to meet his salary needs, got a certificate in under a year, and leveraged his union connection to get a great job

# Meet Cynthia

- Graduate of San Diego Mesa in the physical therapist assistant program
- Currently works with stroke victims and children at a clinic
- Recently accepted into a bachelor's degree program for physical therapy
- *Note: PTA associate degree earners make \$52,000 two years after graduating*





# Where she started

- Arrived in the US when she was three from Mexico
- Father took her into the fields to inspire her to work hard and do better for herself
- Worries about her father's chronic back pain led her to scour the web for cures while in high school
- Enrolled first at a local community college, where she found it difficult to get into courses (although her basic skills writing class was very helpful), and there wasn't a PT option
- Found San Diego Mesa's PT program on her own and moved two hours from her family to attend

# What her experience was like

- Valued that her teachers knew how to listen and to offer suggestions that expanded her options, rather than blaming her for prior mistakes
- Relied heavily on support from a local family who took her in, and the deep community fostered within her cohort-based program
- Credits success to the mixture of classroom and hands-on learning
- Got a job after a mandated informational interview
- Struggled the most with getting enough sleep and meals while trying to work full time and go to school, and didn't feel like she had time to seek out help from the college







**Cynthia made it because she was self-motivated and enrolled in a highly structured program, but most learners aren't so lucky**



**Focusing on structural reforms provides an opportunity to give more learners the type of supports that Cynthia had**



# Death By Pilot

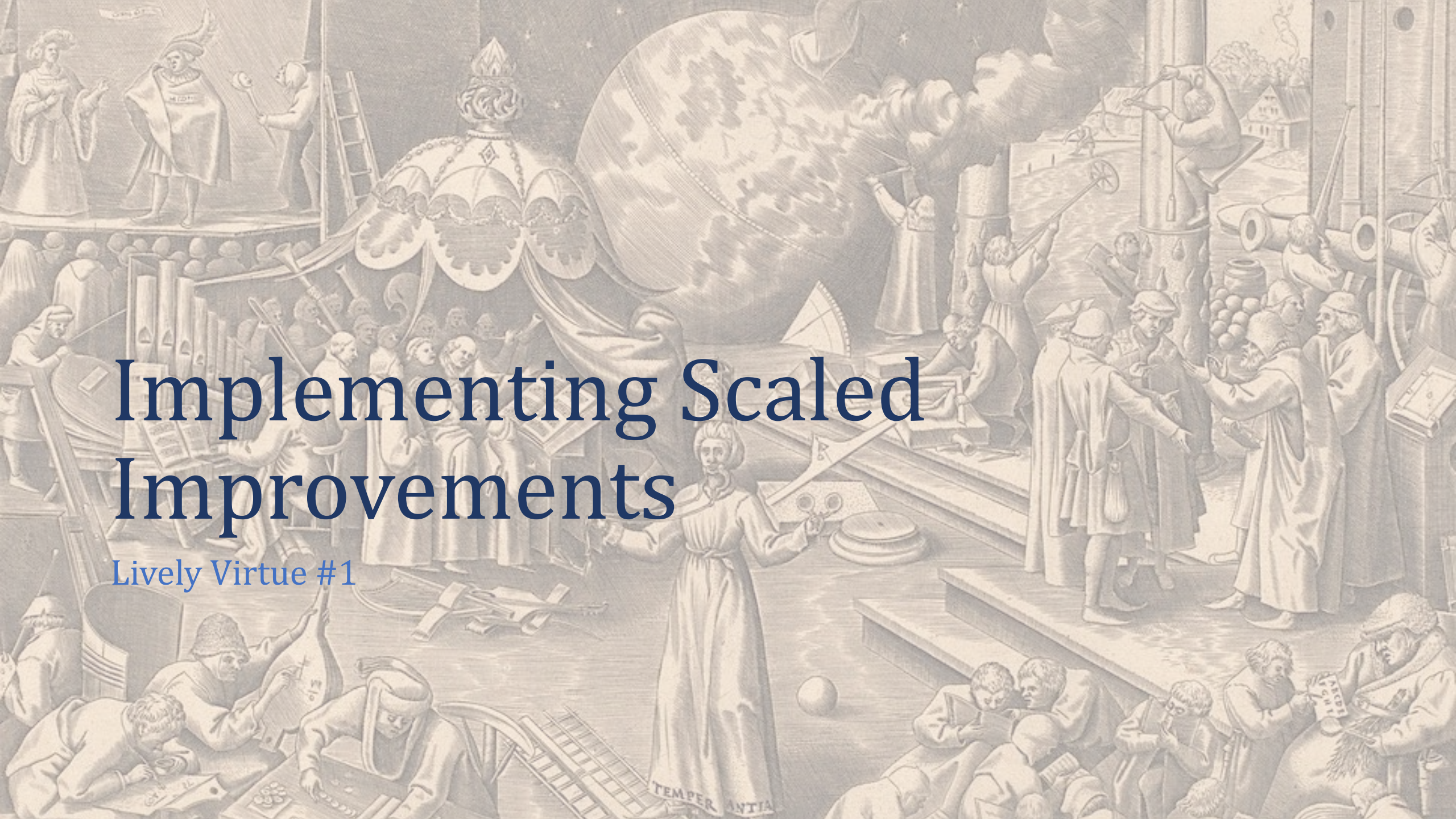
Deadly Sin #1

# Death by Pilot

- Pilot projects are very effective at **diverting the energies** of the most talented people into work that affects a small percentage of our overall learner population
- Even though research shows that the approach works, we argue that the costs are too great to be applied to all learners (while we continue to pour **resources into things that we know don't work**)

*Ask yourself:*

*How much more energy would it take to do something at scale than to do it for 100 learners?*



# Implementing Scaled Improvements

Lively Virtue #1

# Scaled Improvement: Cuyamaca College

In spring 2015, the college decided to implement comprehensive reforms to math placement and curriculum. By fall 2016, they launched Math Pathways, including:

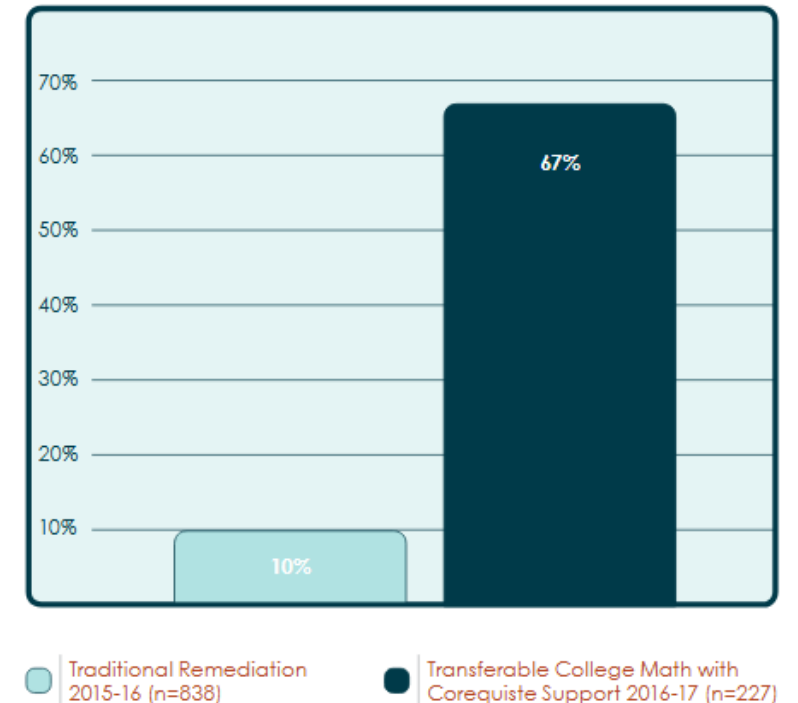
- **Placement** based on self-reported high school grades and coursework
- Placed **all** under-prepared students into **transfer-level** courses with tailored co-requisite support, based on their intended **major**
- Altered **curricula** to be more rigorous, hands-on, and collaborative, and to address affective skills

# Scaled Improvement: Cuyamaca College

In 2016-17, under-prepared students were **seven times more likely** to pass transfer-level math

- 4x higher for Latinx students (from 15% to 65%)
- 5x higher for White students (from 16% to 76%)
- 9x higher for Black students (from 6% to 55%)

Figure 1: Completion of Transferable College Math Within One Year for Underprepared Students





# Hiding Behind Regulations

Deadly Sin #2

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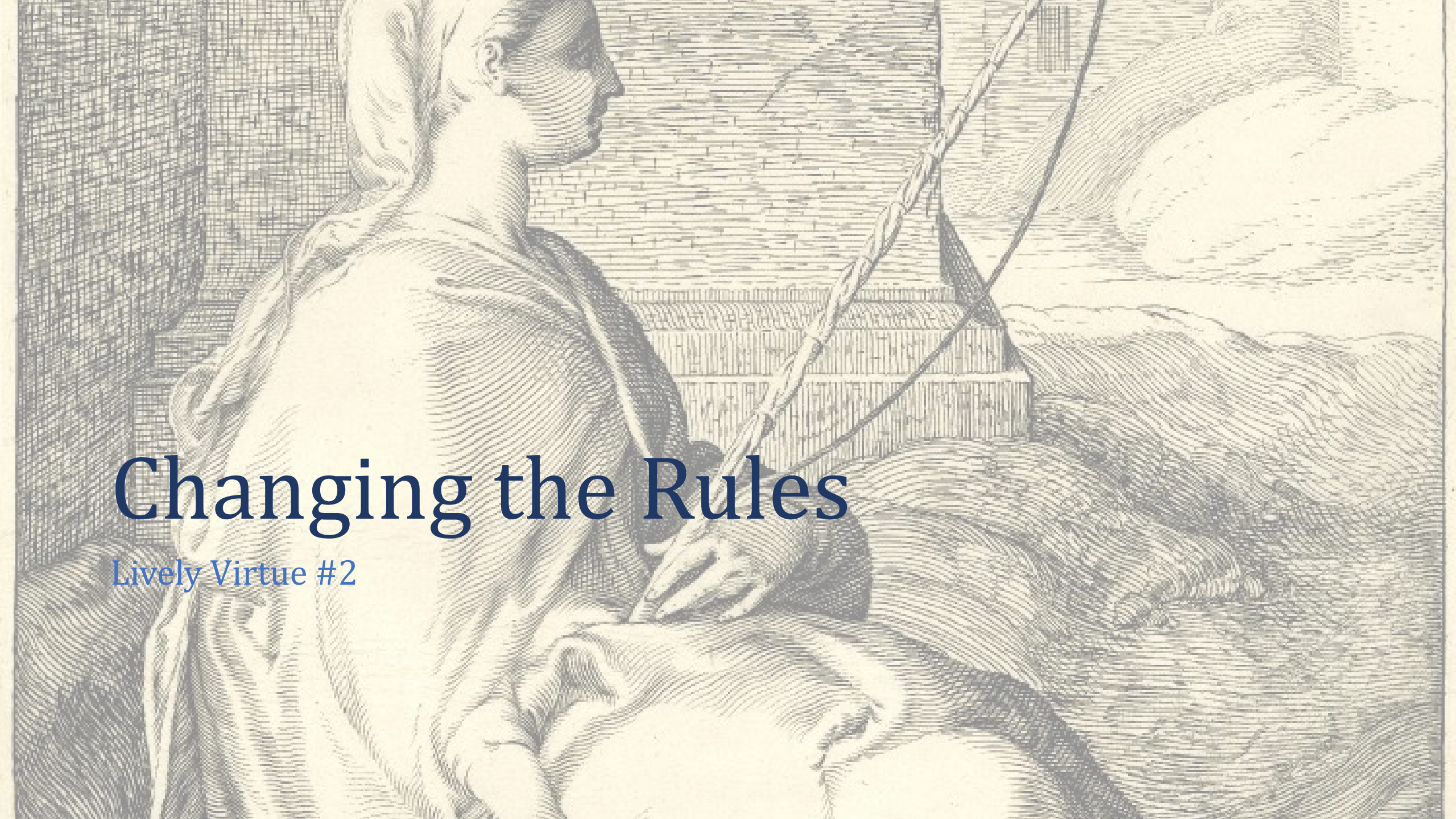


# Hiding Behind Regulations

- Whenever someone says it's not allowed due to a regulation or law, we often let the conversation stop, rather than **investigating what the rules really are**
- We treat regulations as immutable, rather than working to **fix the rules** that are getting in our learners' way

*Ask yourself:*

*Which of these rules are based in college or district policy and so could be changed in the near-term? How could the Chancellor's Office be alerted to statewide rules that are problematic?*



# Changing the Rules

Lively Virtue #2

# Changing the Rules: Skyline College

- In 2013, the college adopted a comprehensive **diversity framework**
- The framework empowered leaders to **examine** policies, practices, and procedures
- Leadership is now committed to examining current assumptions, with a refrain of **“We make this stuff up!”**

# Changing the Rules: Skyline College

The college has made changes to internal policies, including:

- Adjusting **hiring process** to incorporate a lens toward diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Creating **standards** of excellence for college leaders that are linked to college outcomes
- Developing **cross-functional teams** to support reform efforts

This structure has enabled the college to move forward on multiple fronts including guided pathways, dual enrollment, a promise program, and improved academic supports.



# Blaming Faculty (and Counselors)

Deadly Sin #3

# Blaming Faculty (and Counselors)

- We often point the finger at people who work with learners most closely, even though they may **have not been engaged** in how the education institution desires to change its practice (especially adjuncts)
- Rather than approaching professional development as a critical component of achieving our institutional goals, training and coaching resources are generally **minimal and uncoordinated**

*Ask yourself:*

*How can we build the engagement and skills of those who will be implementing educational reform policies, so they can be successful?*

An engraving of a woman in classical attire, possibly a personification of a virtue, seated and looking to the right. She is wearing a draped garment with intricate folds. The background features architectural elements like columns and a window with a view of a landscape. The style is detailed and characteristic of 18th or 19th-century book illustrations.

# Investing in Professional Development

Lively Virtue #3

# Investing in Professional Development: Valencia College

- Faculty led a process that identified essential competencies for educators, which are integrated into the **onboarding and tenure** process
- All new faculty, **including adjuncts**, create a learning plan and take 50 hours of professional development to build core skills, including conducting classroom action research
- Experienced faculty review research projects, to help support **ongoing learning**



# Investing in Professional Development: Valencia College

Valencia College won the 2011 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, based on outstanding student outcomes.

Serving an annual headcount of 50,000, of which 70% began in basic skills and 46% are Black or Latinx:

- **52%** of full-time, first-time students complete or transfer within three years (compared to a national rate of 40%)
- **46%** of underrepresented minority students complete or transfer (compared to a national rate of 34%)



# Blaming Our Partners and Our learners

Deadly Sin #4

# Blaming Our Partners

- We blame high schools for sending us under-prepared students when the evidence shows the bigger issue is **using high-stakes test to assess college readiness**
- When four-year college policies make it difficult to change our own pathways, we don't always articulate **the impacts of their rules** on our learners

*Ask yourself:*

*How can we engage high schools, adult schools, and four-year colleges so that we work together to remove the barriers for student success?*

# Strengthening Partnerships

Lively Virtue #4



# Strengthening Partnerships: Long Beach College Promise

In 2008, the Unified School District, Community College, and CSU joined together to improve opportunities for local students to complete higher education, including:

- **Outreach** beginning in sixth grade, to support college readiness
- LBCC **placement** based on high school grades and courses, plus guaranteed access to courses through first-semester success plans
- **Free** first year of college at LBCC
- **Guaranteed** admission in CSU-Long Beach for students who meet minimum requirements

# Strengthening Partnerships: Long Beach College Promise

Within five years, they achieved:

- **500%** increase in transfer-level English success
- **200%** increase in transfer-level math success
- **30%** increase in CSU-Long Beach enrollment among local high school students

And now serve as a model for the 50 promise programs now running in California.



# Allowing a Vocal Minority to Prevail

Deadly Sin #5

SUPERBIA


# Allowing a Vocal Minority to Prevail

- When departments like math or English become the sole arbiters of the types of literacy and numeracy skills that learners need, we may end up **offering the wrong classes** (what happened to geometry?)
- Because some practitioners are uncomfortable talking about money, we don't address the fact that our learners are **seeking careers and living wages**—an issue made all the more urgent because our learners are often living in poverty

*Ask yourself:*

*How can we change the conversation to address the issues that are the highest priority to our learners?*





# Holding Everyone Accountable for Student Success

Lively Virtue #5

# Holding Everyone Accountable:

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District & South Texas College

In 2007, the K-12 district and community college joined together to make students ready for, connected to, and able to complete college.

- The superintendent identified leaders of college-going efforts at the school sites and gave them **larger roles** within the initiative
- To motivate principals, the district created **specific goals** and encouraged collaboration across sites to meet these goals
- Teachers were **trained** in a framework that was embedded into the curriculum and expectations were established for teaching quality in these areas, **reinforced** through peer observation
- Data **indicators** for college-readiness have been established at each grade level, which are used to **guide** school and college activities

# Holding Everyone Accountable:

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District & South Texas College

In a district that serves 32,000 low-income and primarily Hispanic students across 42 schools in three cities, within five years:

- The four-year graduation rate increased from 62% to **90%**
- The dropout rate declined from 18% to **3%**



# Arguing over Data Definitions

Deadly Sin #6

# Arguing Over Data Definitions

- It's important to understand methodology, but focusing on **edge cases** can prevent any meaningful engagement of the overall numbers.
- It's unlikely that we will have complete and perfect data sets, so we need to decide what a **reasonable threshold** for information is so that we can engage in conversation about the implications of available data.

*Ask yourself:*

*How can we help our colleagues feel more comfortable with data, so that the conversation can also involve possible action steps?*

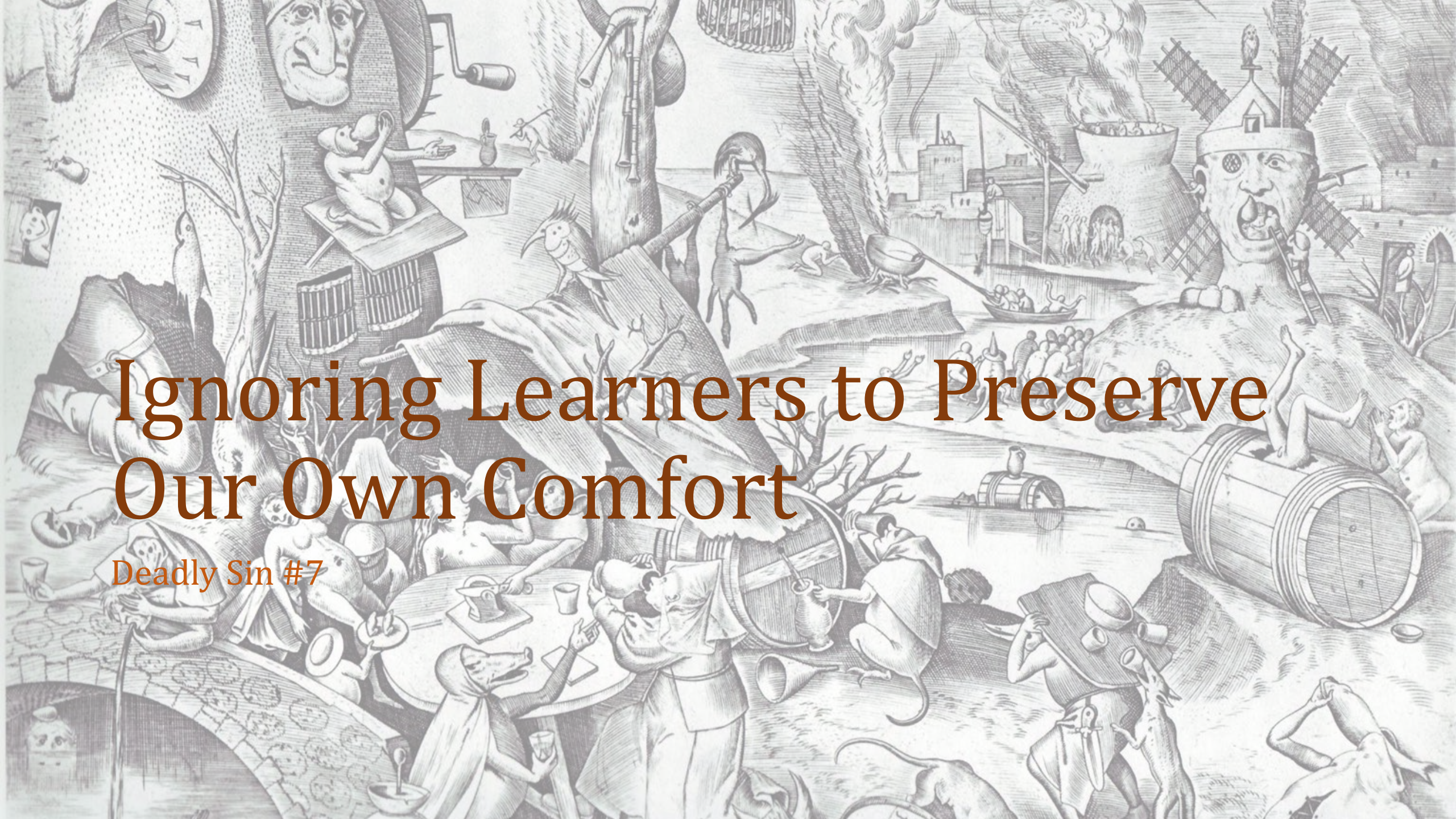
# Facing the Truth

Lively Virtue #6



# Facing the Truth: Cabrillo College

- Career and Technical Education Outcomes Survey revealed that only 22% of students in the medical assistant program got a job in their field of study
- Shared the data with area employers and learned that students needed stronger math and language skills—critical feedback that **had not been surfaced in advisory committee meetings**
- Revamped the program based on other allied health programs with **stronger outcomes**, including integrating contextualized math and English and implementing a cohort model, and results improved significantly



# Ignoring Learners to Preserve Our Own Comfort

Deadly Sin #7



# Ignoring Learners to Preserve Our Own Comfort

- Many of the changes necessary to improve learner outcomes will require **giving things up and shifting what each of us does** within the institution
- Giving things up can be painful and uncomfortable, but it can also be freeing and bring us in **alignment with why we chose to work** at community colleges, adult education, and workforce development programs
- Most of these issues are **grounded in race** and deep divides in opportunity—we have to take these issues head on

*Ask yourself:*

*What will this change in practice mean for our learners, not just for ourselves?*



# Being Willing to Give Things Up

Lively Virtue #7

# Be Willing to Give Things Up: You

What is one thing that you would be willing to change?

What have you already risked to do the right thing?

“Push yourself to be better  
than you were yesterday.”

Cynthia Huerta

