

Using Improvement Cycles to Accelerate Partnership Work for Transfer Student Success Texas Pathways Institute

April 2021



Why Use an “Improvement” Approach to Work on Transfer?

- Large, complex problems can (and must) be broken down into **‘bite-sized’** pieces
- Modifying key improvement strategies for transfer efforts can **make work doable**, and can **improve the pace & quality** of efforts to lower barriers to transfer student success

Key Elements of an Improvement Cycle

- **Driver Diagrams** structure conversation about the most important challenges and opportunities for collaborative work can help cross-institutional teams go **deeper faster into real work**
- **90-Day Plans** to turn driver diagrams into action plans provides a structure and light project management ethos to push work forward, keep teams on the same page, provide **mutual accountability**

A Good Driver Diagram...

... forces delineated articulation of key challenges

... serves as the theory of action to guide the creation of an effective short-term (90-day) work plan

... helps translate a high-level goal into a logical set of underpinning activities or projects

... captures the scope of leading challenges in a snapshot

... helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done

Guiding Questions


1. What is the existing condition that needs to be improved?
2. Why does it need improvement/ what's the evidence?
3. What are the root causes or core drivers of the specific challenge we want to make progress on?
4. What is our role & long-term goal?
5. What is the "SMART" (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goal that we could achieve in 3 years?
6. What are the possible concrete actions that we could take that would help us make progress on our SMART goal?

Driver Diagram Template

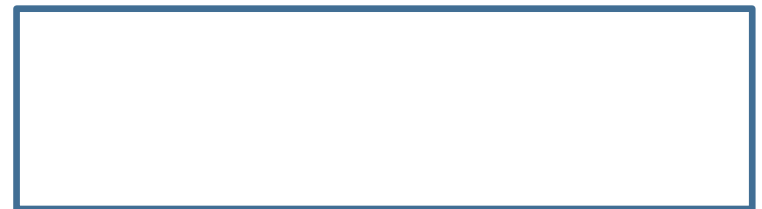
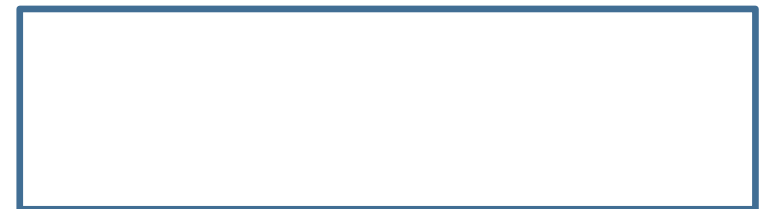
OVERALL AIM

Dramatically improve outcomes for transfer students & close equity gaps

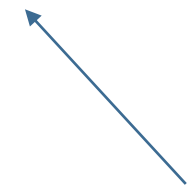
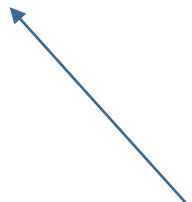
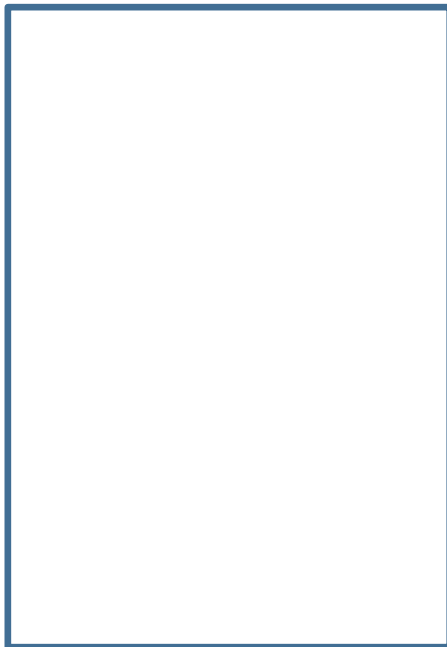
PRIMARY DRIVERS



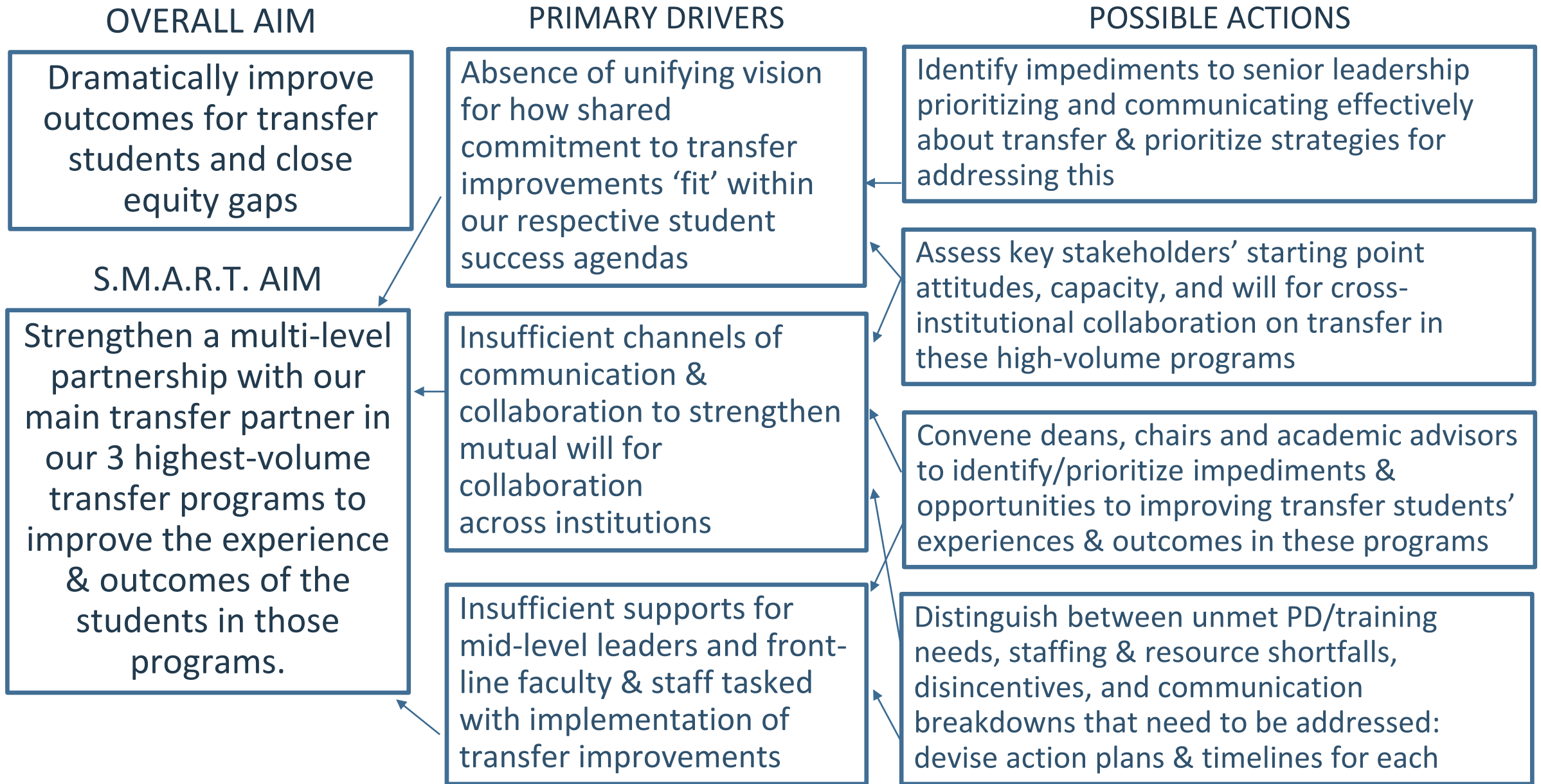
POSSIBLE ACTIONS



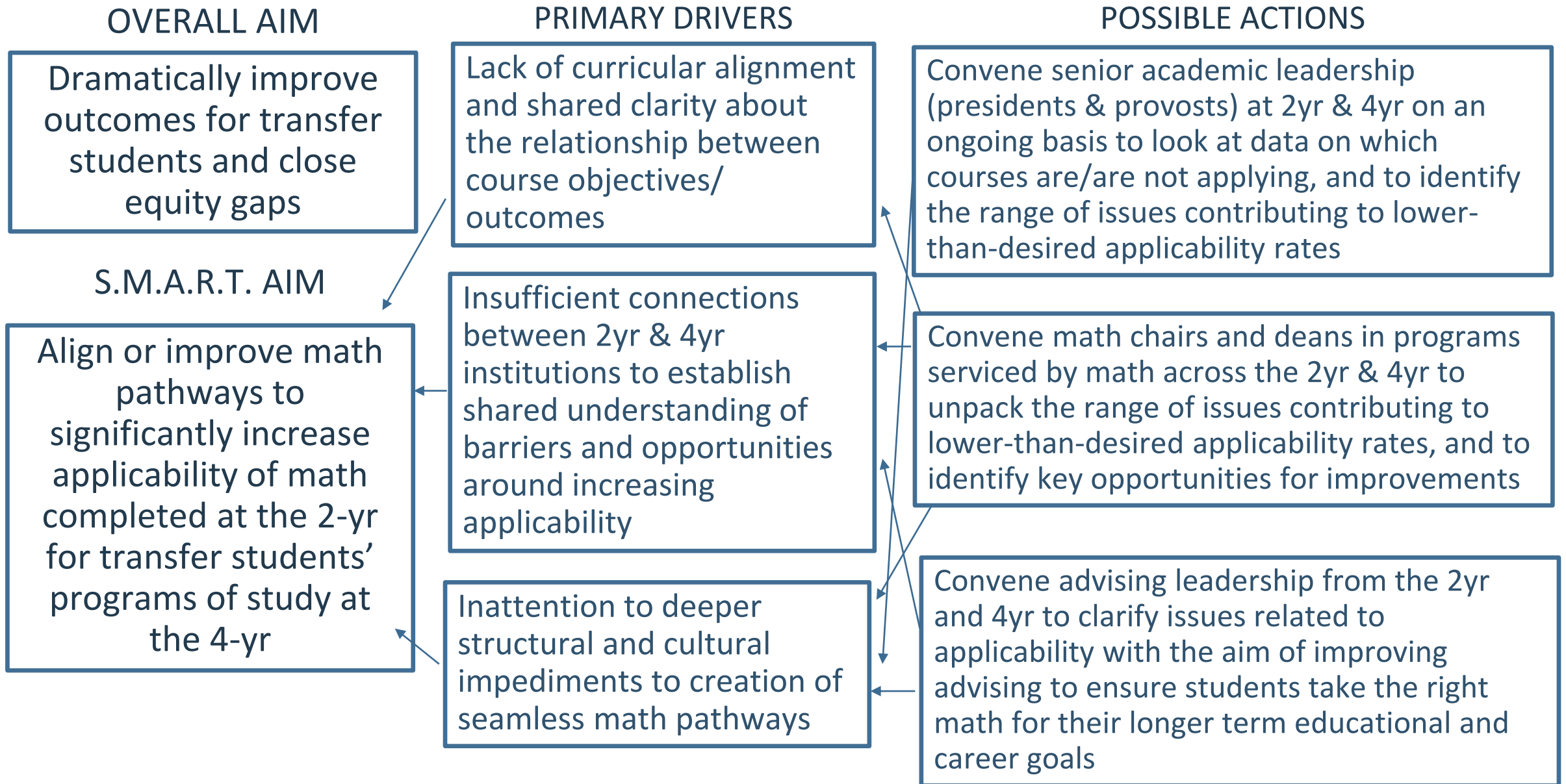
S.M.A.R.T Goal



Driver Diagram Example #1



Driver Diagram Example #2



A Good 90-Day Plan...

...forces articulation of the relationship between the S.M.A.R.T goal & the near-term goal (requires next steps)

...is clear-eyed but ambitious, grounded in data, focused on *the most important* work (not just good work)

...includes careful consideration of both technical & adaptive dimensions of improvement

...includes deadlines, responsibilities, and owners of tasks

..helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done and hold each other accountable for progress

- 1) What do we want to accomplish in the next 3 months?
- 2) How will this contribute to our S.M.A.R.T goal?
- 3) How will we know if we're successful?

30	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status
60	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status
90	Activities	Owners	2-Yr Needs / Implications	4-yr Needs / Implications	Due Date	Status

What Excellence Looks Like

an example from another state

From an Enrollment Manager at a Regional Public University:

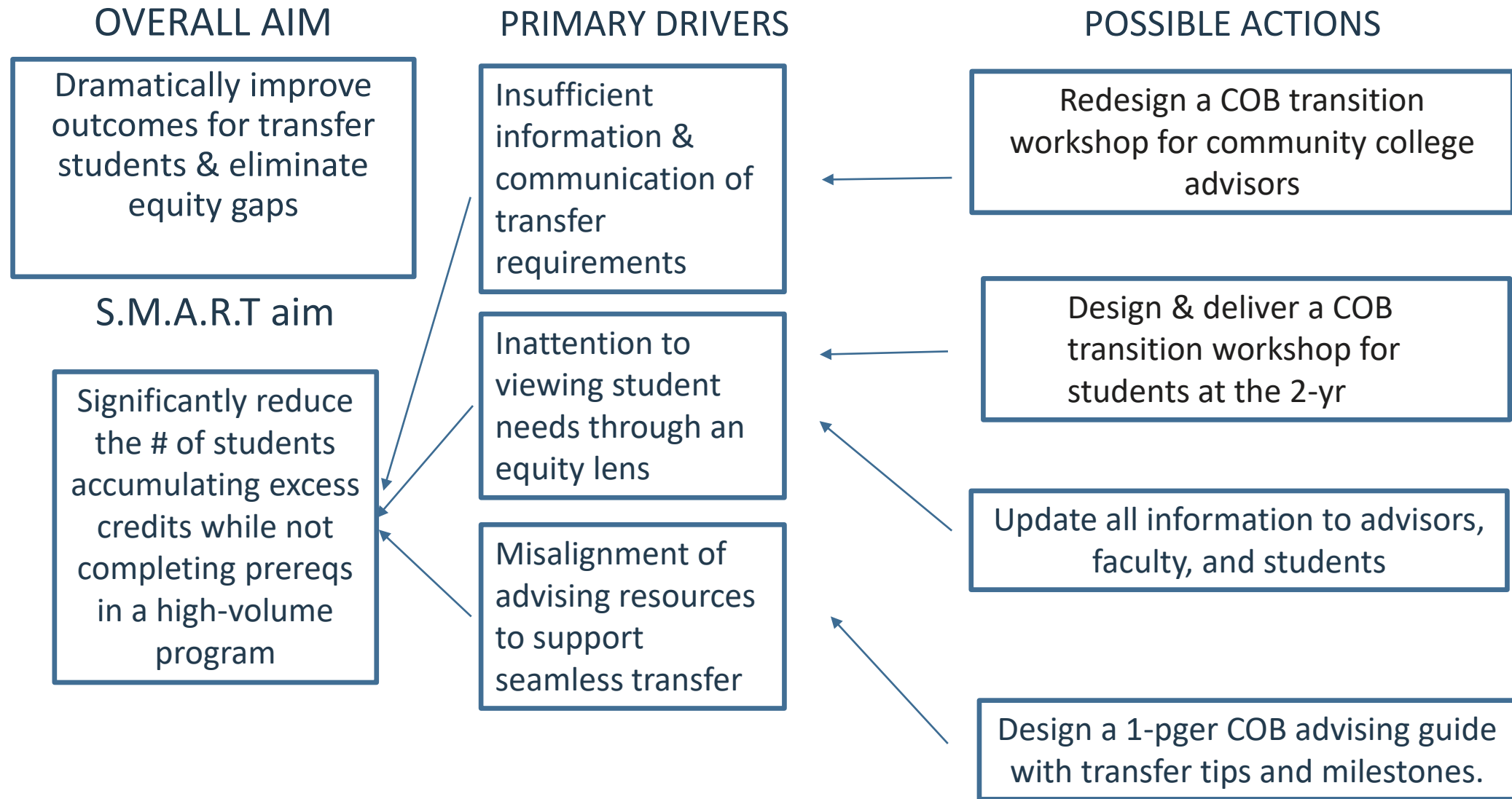
Our College of Business (COB) had recent analysis on CC transfer applicants, which showed that students were meeting and exceeding the minimum GPA required for admission, but they were not completing prerequisites prior to transfer. The completion of prerequisites is critical to progression in upper-level courses and minimizes the risk of students graduating with excess credit hours

The reviewing team also reviewed key resources such as transfer guides, brochures, and websites, and noticed dated information.

5 Collaborative Achievements in 90-Days

1. Redesigned & offered a COB transition workshop for community college advisors;
2. Designed & delivered a COB transition workshop for students at the 2-yr
3. Updated all resources available to advisors and students
4. Designed a 1-page business advising guide with transfer tips and milestones
5. Resolved a key pain point by advocating for a computer competency exam at the 2-yr to satisfy the 4-yr's COB microcomputer prerequisite course.

Driver Diagram Template



Finalizing 90-Day Plans: Key Questions that Need Good Answers

- 1) Are we clear about what specifically we want to accomplish in the next three months?
- 2) Are we sure that what we're seeking to do is the most important thing we can be doing to make progress on our shared SMART goal? (Is it ambitious enough? Can it be done in 3 months?)
- 3) Whose input & support is essential for our progress? (have we captured that in the 'needs & implications' section of the 90-day plan?)
- 4) Do we have people assigned to action items and a plan for engaging our wider teams and individuals implicated in the 90-day plan?
- 5) Have we agreed on when/how the teams will come back together? (Are meetings scheduled?)



Thank you !
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