

# HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS REDESIGN



A TOOLKIT FOR REDESIGNING ADVISING AND STUDENT SERVICES TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT EVERY STUDENT



Achieving  
the Dream™

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VERSION 3.0

### Acknowledgements

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### About Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream leads a growing network of more than 220 community colleges dedicated to helping their students, particularly low-income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity. Achieving the Dream is making progress in closing academic achievement gaps and accelerating student success through a unique change process that builds colleges' institutional capacities in seven critical areas. ATD, along with nearly 75 experienced coaches and advisors, works closely with Network colleges in 41 states and the District of Columbia to reach more than 4 million community college students.

# INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years, the national narrative in higher education has shifted from one focused on access to a dual focus on access and completion. As institutions have implemented initiatives to increase student success, completion of postsecondary education has slowly increased, with 47 percent of Americans aged 25 to 64 holding a credential beyond high school, up nine percentage points since 2008.<sup>1</sup> Yet, some groups of students are seeing far greater gains than others.

In the United States, the income of one's parents remains one of the top predictors of whether one will make it into the middle class<sup>2</sup> and whether one will attend college.<sup>3</sup> Two-thirds of the 6.9 million students who attend community colleges qualify as low-income, coming from families earning less than \$50,000 per year, and more than one-third live below the poverty line. Most work either full or part time.<sup>4</sup> They look to educational institutions as an affordable stepping-stone to financial stability and a better life.

Further, gaps along racial lines remain stubbornly wide with six-year completion rates for Asian students (68.9 percent) and White students (66.1 percent), far higher than those for Hispanic students (48.6 percent), for American Indian/Alaska Native students (41 percent) and Black students (39.5 percent). In fact, Black students represent the only group more likely to stop out or discontinue enrollment than to complete a credential within six years.<sup>5</sup>

The array of challenges awaiting lower-income or first-generation students and other historically under-served students can be as unexpected as they are daunting. Many students, particularly those attending community college, face a daily struggle to pay for food, housing, child care, health care, and transportation along with tuition and fees. These "indirect costs" amount to 60-80 percent of the total cost to attend college.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these financial obstacles to success, many students enter college to find that navigating the college's processes, policies, and culture formidable. Over the last several years, Achieving the Dream (ATD) has engaged in several initiatives to help two-year and four-year institutions build their capacity to ensure that more students can reach their education and career goals. Through the efforts of the 19 community colleges in the Working Students Success Network<sup>7</sup> (WSSN) and the 36 two-year and four-year institutions in the Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success<sup>8</sup> (iPASS) learning initiatives, we have come to see that enhancing and integrating student supports is central to student success. Helping more students achieve their dreams involves identifying a wider set of student needs—including financial challenges and family responsibilities—and offering redesigned support services to meet them holistically. This holistic student supports approach emphasizes the need for colleges to redefine the way they understand, design, integrate with academics, and deliver the services that are critical for the success of every student.

The goal of this toolkit is to guide institutions in redesigning student supports in an integrated, collaborative, and holistic way that enables students to progress along their educational and career pathways.

1 A stronger nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent: <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2018/#nation>

2 Getting ahead or losing ground: Economic mobility in America: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/getting-ahead-or-losing-ground-economic-mobility-in-america/>

3 Gains and gaps: Changing inequality in U.S. college entry and completion: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17633>

4 2011–12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12) Data File Documentation (NCES 2014-182): <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

5 Completing college: A national view of student completion rates – Fall 2011 cohort (signature report no. 14): <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport14/>

6 Exploring the Topic of Indirect Costs to Today's Higher Education Students: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Quick-Hits-Indirect-Costs.pdf>

7 Learn more about the WSSN at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resources/initiatives/working-students-success-network>

8 Learn more about the iPASS efforts at [www.AchievingtheDream.org/iPASS](http://www.AchievingtheDream.org/iPASS)

# OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT

Over the past 15 years, Achieving the Dream has focused on supporting students to be more successful. Over the years, we have learned a lot about what is necessary—for example, interventions that are not comprehensive, integrated, or scaled do not drive improvements in outcomes. Through initiatives such as WSSN and iPASS, we have worked to further develop best practices in this area. We acknowledge institutions are in very different stages of redesigning their student supports and their institutional context differ greatly. One universal lesson from each campus—regardless of the size, location, degree-granting status, or demographics—is the importance of careful planning up front to consider how holistic student supports address student needs, fit with the college’s mission, align with institutional priorities, and shift institutional culture.

This toolkit provides evidence-based, practitioner-tested tools, tips, and guides that help an institution from initial exploration of their needs through to successful evaluation and refinement. It aids institutions in their planning and execution of a more personal, seamless, and comprehensive support experience that fully equips students to learn and to succeed in

achieving their goals. It charts a deep dive into the essential elements that are relevant for all colleges to consider and use. To ensure the toolkit is useful in practice, we recommend that it be read and used in chronological order. However, each chapter can be read as a stand-alone guide if your college is focused on a particular aspect of student supports.



## Here is a summary of what you will find in each chapter:

Chapter	Value Description	Page
CHAPTER 1: Understanding Holistic Student Supports	Provides a comprehensive overview of holistic student supports in theory and practice. Will help orient team members and senior leaders to the work and inform communication to the campus community.	8
CHAPTER 2: Setting a Vision for the Student Experience	Offers guidance and tips for developing a high-level student-focused vision to guide your redesign and engage stakeholders. This begins by developing a deep understanding of your students, so tools are provided to support this effort on campus.	20
CHAPTER 3: Self-Assessment and Improving Readiness	Introduces a readiness assessment for holistic student supports and a guide for taking and reflecting on these results to translate them into action and a refined vision.	26
CHAPTER 4: The Discovery Process: Know Your Student Experience	Introduces comprehensive tools and tips to ground the team in a deep, common understanding of the existing advising and student support model. Provides an approach for identifying service gaps and areas of focus for the student support redesign.	31
CHAPTER 5: Planning for Action	Offers tips, templates, and activities that you can use to structure a planning period that will result in a strong plan of action, guided by your student-focused vision.	50
CHAPTER 6: Crafting a Communication Strategy	Provides templates and a guide to focus your discussions and prompt consideration of all variables in developing a communication strategy.	55
CHAPTER 7: Tracking Progress and Impact	Provides practical worksheets, instructions, and examples to help institutions plan and execute ongoing, effective performance tracking of your holistic student support approach.	62
CHAPTER 8: Getting the Right Data into the Right Hands	Provides guidance on how institutions can democratize data on their campus in an inclusive, practical, and relevant way for key stakeholders.	70
CHAPTER 9: Developing a Training and Professional Development Strategy	Offers tips and templates to guide the creation of a plan for the training and professional development of staff, faculty, and students necessary for the successful adoption of your holistic student supports redesign.	75
CHAPTER 10: Building Meaningful External Partnerships	Looks at how to utilize external partnerships to help provide services and connect your college more deeply with the community and state agencies that serve your students.	81
CONCLUSION	Ties all chapters together and provides ways to get additional support and resources to further the implementation of your holistic student support redesign.	90
APPENDIX A: Strategies for Grounding Your Redesign in Equity	Offers four practical strategies for ensuring your redesign is built with equity in mind.	91
APPENDIX B: HSS in Action	Provides a deeper look at what holistic student supports can look like in practice through the experience of one WSSN institution.	94
APPENDIX C: Student-Centered Design Process	Outlines a creative, solutions-focused process that ensures a clear understanding of the current student experience and centers on student perspectives, needs, and wants.	98
APPENDIX D: Case Management and Early Alert Technology Evaluation	Provides guidance and tips for the selection and implementation of case management/early alert technologies.	104
APPENDIX E: Degree Planning Technology Evaluation	Provides guidance and tips for the selection and implementation of degree planning technologies.	107
APPENDIX F: Predictive Analytics Technology Evaluation	Provides guidance and tips for the selection and implementation of predictive analytics technologies.	110
APPENDIX G: Scaling Success Themes	Offers discussion questions and tips for scaling your student support redesign.	114
APPENDIX H: Identifying Student Needs Early Through an Intake Survey	Provides examples of two student intake surveys used to assess student support needs.	116

# A TYPICAL REDESIGN JOURNEY IN FOUR STAGES

Holistic student supports redesign involves a strategic, iterative process with four stages. These stages correspond to subsequent chapters in the toolkit but are presented here to highlight recommended action steps in each phase. These action steps are iterative, and these phases should be revisited as new decisions are made and until the institution has achieved their goals.



**1. Discovery and design:** Becoming familiar with current student needs and institutional capacities and processes. Includes development of vision and initial planning.



**2. Early implementation:** Implementation of early plans, data collection, and plan refinement. Includes communicating for buy-in and culture change.



**3. Mature implementation:** Regular professional development/training of all involved employees to reinforce changing roles/responsibilities. Involves continued communication and sharing of data to reinforce value of the work.



**4. Institutionalization and sustainability:** Scaling the work across the institution to serve all students in all areas. Involves continued refinement, communication, training, and celebration of wins to reinforce the work and keep the momentum going.

## What Next?

Each chapter provides tips (noted by a lightbulb icon ) , tools, downloadable templates,<sup>9</sup> guidelines, and resources (noted by a thumbtack icon ) to promote the infusion of promising practices and plans to surmount common challenges. Throughout, we feature experienced voices from the field to illustrate how institutions have successfully pursued redesign and what they have learned along the way.

### A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE AND DEFINITIONS

Higher education is filled with jargon and acronyms that can cause confusion or disengagement.

To avoid this, we share some clarification on the language we will use frequently in this toolkit.

**Holistic student supports:** An approach designed to provide all students with the type and intensity of support they need to identify and select the best pathway to achieve their educational and career goals. A holistic approach meets students where they are, addresses their individual needs, leverages their strengths, and focuses on student development and learning.

**Equity:** A concept grounded in the principle of fairness. In higher education, equity requires institutions to identify structural barriers facing under-served students. Colleges need to eliminate such barriers by investing in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors that lead to student success through the intentional design of the college experience.<sup>10</sup>

**Opportunity gap:** An alternative to the phrase “achievement gap” that recognizes the inequality of opportunity in education, or “education debt,” characterized by a long history of discriminatory gaps in educational inputs such as a school’s

number of teachers, the quality of its facilities, and the availability of textbooks.<sup>11</sup>

**Historically underserved students:** The category of types of students not considered when U.S. education systems were originally designed. Examples include students of first-generation immigrants; from low-income families; of adult status; of color; of marginalized gender identities; from second-language backgrounds; of undocumented status; with military service; with disabilities; with dependents; in foster care; or with records of incarceration.

**Student success:** The outcome of a personal, rigorous, and enriching learning experience that culminates in the achievement of students’ academic goals in a timely manner and fully prepares them to realize their career aspirations.

**Student-focused institution:** A college or university that deeply believes a) in the ability of each and every student it serves to learn and b) in fulfilling its role to provide the conditions enabling all students to achieve their educational and career goals. Student-focused institutions work to ensure no decision, at any level, is made without considering the impact on students.

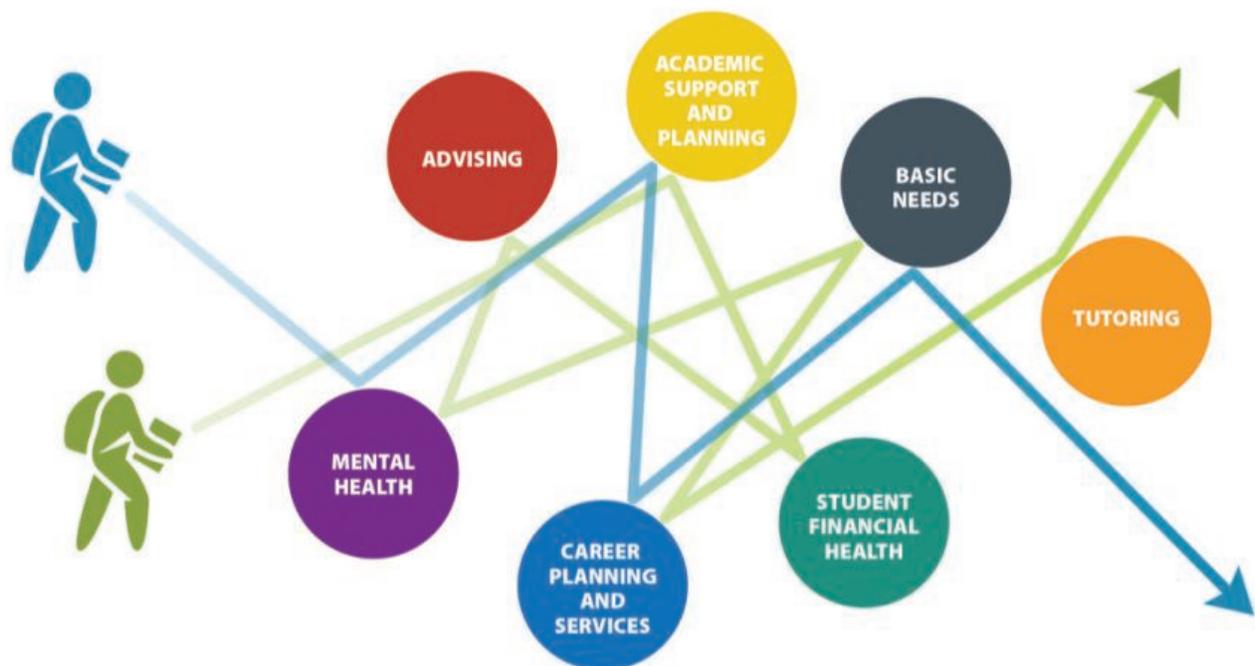
<sup>9</sup> All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss).

<sup>10</sup> For the full text of ATD’s equity statement, visit <http://www.achievingthedream.org/about-us>

<sup>11</sup> From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools: <http://ed618.pbworks.com/f/From%20Achievement%20Gap%20to%20Education%20Debt.pdf>

# UNDERSTANDING HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS

Institutions are increasingly reemphasizing the vital role of a seamless, personalized student experience that holistically connects students to the supports they need to reach their educational and career goals. However, in the typical student support experience, students often encounter disconnected services and technologies and are bounced around when seeking the supports they need. For many students, navigating the enrollment, financial aid, and registration processes can be formidable, especially when facing financial instability and life challenges (e.g., food, housing, child care, health care, transportation, and tuition). Improving postsecondary attainment and economic opportunity requires colleges to systematically address the multitude of factors that undermine student persistence and completion.



Faced with competing initiatives, resource constraints, and status quo structures and processes designed for transactional interactions rather than relational engagement with students, practitioners have long sought a more holistic approach. A student experience in which there is “no wrong door” and the student is seamlessly connected to essential resources has become the “holy grail” of student support redesign.

To promote equity goals, colleges are focusing more and more on redesigning the student experience to combine disparate initiatives and disconnected services and departments into a cohesive strategy individualized for each student.

Especially important is fostering an institutional culture that levels the playing field for low-income working students, first-generation students, and students of color.



Achieving the Dream has found that colleges see the greatest gains in equity outcomes when they promote a personalized experience in which all students:

- Are supported in achieving their goals through intentional and early development of academic, career, and financial plans.

- Have to tell their “story” only once and are not running from office to office to get answers.
- Are proactively connected with supports targeted to their individual needs so they enter the classroom best prepared to learn.
- Feel confident that faculty, staff, and administrators are invested in their success.

## Equity and Campus Culture

Fully embracing and sustaining the shift to a holistic student supports approach often requires deep and broad changes to an institution’s culture. Embedded within the approach is a profound commitment to closing the opportunity gap (see page 7) in academic, career, and financial outcomes for students.

Some institutions have already made this commitment and incorporated it into the campus culture. Others are still holding conversations in this regard. This toolkit contains strategies designed to move your institution toward a culture of equity. We firmly believe that the majority of people who work in higher education have a passion for helping students achieve their dreams and want to support efforts that make this more likely. However, individuals come to the table with different understandings of or beliefs about:

- The current student experience at their institution.
- What defines a good student experience of support services.

- The extent and scale of student needs and the impact this has on their academic success.
- The college’s role in supporting students outside direct academic needs.
- How the institution’s limited resources should be best allocated.

Campus leadership and the team charged with leading the holistic student supports redesign should keep these differences in mind as they leverage their communication strategy (Chapter 6), data collection and sharing (Chapters 7 and 8), and professional development opportunities (Chapter 9) to align the college culture with its holistic student supports vision.

We encourage all institutions to ground their redesign work in a set of strategies designed to move toward, or sustain, a culture dedicated to closing the opportunity gap. Appendix A provides practical strategies to ensure your holistic student supports efforts are designed with equity in mind in a sustainable way.

## Key Components of Holistic Student Supports

Now that you have begun to think about the equity and college culture considerations for beginning holistic redesign work, let's explore the key components of holistic student supports. These components form the basis of the structural and process redesign necessary to implement an inclusive and scalable plan for student success. Colleges should pay close attention these areas as the practical application of holistic interventions depends on coordinating many elements within a college ecosystem.

### Intentional Focus on Services, Delivery, and Connections

Achieving the Dream defines “supports” as the cohesive suite of services that help students address the academic and nonacademic factors vital to success. Traditionally, great effort has been made to identify and enhance discrete services or interventions for different aspects of a student's experience or to address an isolated need. By contrast, holistic student supports embody an intentional focus on the types of services (not just quantity), the ways in which those services are delivered, and how students connect to the services.

#### Services

Services must be aligned with student needs, so an institution must understand who its students are, their responsibilities outside the classroom, the life factors they are juggling, and the strengths they bring to their college experience. Key services are academic advising and planning, transfer advising, student-focused scheduling, career coaching and planning, workforce training, financial coaching and planning, benefits access, and transportation and child care assistance. But a diverse array of services is, in itself, insufficient.

#### Delivery

A one-size-fits-all approach to delivering supports does not acknowledge the diversity of students' needs, experiences, strengths, and personalities. Colleges must employ a blend of methods that fall into two categories. High-touch services are offered in intensive one-on-one advising, coaching, or counseling sessions

that provide a specific service or support to a targeted set of students, often in conjunction with short- and long-term goal setting.

Low-touch services are core supports that reach a wider range of students, typically through large-scale orientations, first-year student success courses, or technology applications. They are meant to operate in concert with one another. Low-touch services can help identify students in need of high-touch services. For example, a student success course with financial content could include a self-assessment to identify a student's possible need for more intensive financial coaching.

#### Connections

Students' need for some services is almost universal, and colleges can meet it broadly and systemically—for example, through mandatory orientations or financial education courses and workshops. Other services are a critical need for a subset of students, such as one-on-one financial coaching or access to emergency aid. The essence of a holistic student supports approach is a culture shift in which colleges intentionally design and offer services both broadly and strategically to equitably, so that students can access each service when they need it most.

Connecting students to short-term services, such as food pantries, can have a significant immediate impact. They also are entry points: A food pantry staff member, trained in needs assessment, can introduce students to other short-term services, such as transportation vouchers and child care subsidies—and to long-term services—like public benefits referrals, financial literacy classes, and financial coaching—that could help them persist, complete, and achieve financial stability.

Considering the integration and interaction of short-term and long-term services is important in making sure that they do not add burdens to their already complex lives. The approach recognizes that students often do not know what they need, yet with timely education and coaching, they can build lasting confidence in their life skills.

## CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES: SSIPP

Research into the student support redesign efforts of two-year and four-year institutions<sup>12</sup> identified five underlying principles. While there is no one model of holistic student supports, these principles provide standards and a guideline for design that can be applied according to each institution's structure and culture.

**Sustained:** Students are supported throughout their full journey at an institution, particularly at key momentum points. This typically involves an informative intake process to ensure knowledge from the outset of a student's needs (both academic and nonacademic), ongoing interaction with the student particularly at key momentum points and monitoring to ensure early awareness of a student who is facing some particularly significant barriers to success.

**Examples of principle in action:** Assigned advisors; long-term coaching; mandatory advising at key momentum points; regular monitoring of students' progress in following academic, career, and financial plans.

**Strategic:** Students are connected to the specific supports they need, when they need them, and in the delivery mode that is most effective and efficient. Through research and experience, colleges know the key points at which students' needs arise in their educational careers and strategically allocate time, energy, and resources to meet those needs in ways students are most likely to use. In addition, colleges provide more resource-intensive support to especially under-served students.

**Examples of principle in action:** Use of analytics to customize outreach, use of group advising and technology for routine tasks, intake triage, oversight and administrative home for core services with clearly defined leadership.

**Integrated:** Students are seamlessly connected to information, resources, and services without being bounced around. Services function as interconnected tools rather than as stand-alone interventions and, when used together, create a strong support structure. Colleges knock down siloes and build bridges connecting disparate departments

and services to promote more equitable and stable college experiences. Critical to designing integrated services is to operate with the student perspective as guide, rather than staff perceptions.

**Examples of principle in action:** Shared case notes or student profiles, established protocols and communication flows between offices, shared ownership of student success, referral procedures to move students seamlessly between departments and services, strong external partnerships to connect students to additional services.

**Proactive:** Students are connected to supports at the first sign of trouble, not after a situation builds to a crisis point. Key to being able to intervene is an institution's data systems, designed to capture information for the student support system. This allows staff to monitor student progress and know when to target specific, just-in-time supports to students in tactical ways.

**Examples of principle in action:** Strategic data use to identify supports for specific students; early alert systems; advisors, staff, and faculty empowered to reach out to students; staff trained to have developmental or coaching-based interactions with students rather than transitional.

**Personalized:** Based on the insights emerging from meaningful staff-student relationships, each student receives the type and intensity of support appropriate to his or her unique and diverse needs. This requires staff and faculty to have a deep understanding of who their students are, particularly those students who come to campus with needs that might be considered nonacademic, but that have significant impact on academic performance.

**Examples of principle in action:** Assigned or embedded advisors and/or coaches, shared case notes, customized outreach to connect students to supports by someone they know, staff and advisors engaged in a teaching relationship with students.

To effectively utilize these five design principles, there are several key institutional practices that ensure an institution will be successful in their holistic student supports redesign.

12 What We Know About Nonacademic Student Supports: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-know-student-supports.html>

## Key Institutional Practices for Holistic Student Supports

Redesigning the student experience through a holistic student supports approach requires transformative institutional change, rather than piecemeal enhancement, to significantly and sustainably improve outcomes. The Community College Research Center (CCRC) notes that such change depends on organizational growth and development that combines new structures, processes, and attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

▲ **Structural change** occurs when policies, structures, and procedures create a framework for new behaviors that improve the student experiences throughout the institution. Within a holistic approach, this might yield organizational redesign or policy changes that encourage long-term relationships between students and advisors.

▲ **Process change** alters how people do their job and is transformative when enough individuals change their practices to ensure that large numbers of students encounter new student support interactions. A holistic approach might involve a) perceiving advising as a function of teaching and b) drawing on case management principles to support students.

▲ **Attitudinal change** occurs when individuals understand their work and view work processes in new ways. Attitudinal change is evident when academic and non-academic supports are naturally and commonly understood to be one interconnected process and essential for the effectiveness of the college's teaching and learning functions.

Structural and process change can sometimes be easier to implement, but attitudinal change has the most profound impact. Many core practices must be in place for holistic student supports to take root.

As *Achieving the Dream* works with institutions implementing holistic student supports, we focus on the following practitioner-based institutional practices. These practices establish the underlying institutional conditions necessary for success in transforming the student experience. This toolkit is designed to help institutions engage in activities that will promote such practices, which we list below, along with associated toolkit chapters and examples of the practice in action.

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<sup>13</sup> Adopting New Technologies for Student Success: A Readiness Framework: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/adopting-new-technologies-for-student-success.html>



### **Establishing Shared Responsibility: Personal and institutional responsibility for collective success**

Creating a culture and shared understanding of everyone's role in and commitment to supporting students holistically requires:

- All staff and faculty members understand their role in enhancing the student experience.
- Institutions are committed to cultural and social equity and supporting the wide range of diverse needs and experiences of individual students.

- All staff and faculty members can respond directly or refer students to the appropriate office.
- Job descriptions include language that ensure staff and faculty members have clear roles in providing student supports.
- Strategic actions for offering and monitoring holistic supports are included in the institution's strategic plan.

*Toolkit Chapters 2 (Setting a Vision for the Student Experience), 6 (Crafting a Communication Strategy), 9 (Professional Development and Training)*

## **College Example:** Creating a Culture of Shared Responsibility and Understanding

**Clark College's**, a mid-size college located in Washington, guiding institutional theme is transformation. So, a priority has been creating a campus environment in which students see the college as a comprehensive resource to help them achieve their academic, career, and life aspirations. Clark re-envisioned its student services as less "siloeed," more intentionally collaborative, and designed to reach significantly more students, particularly low-income working students, student parents, and students from historically under-served groups. Achieving this would take significant education of and buy-in from

faculty and staff. Therefore, the college implemented an annual training for staff to introduce a variety of student services topics, such as understanding barriers to student success. In addition, Clark provides college-wide training on the realities of poverty to help staff and faculty better recognize the lived experiences of their students. That equips faculty and staff to know when support is needed and how to connect students with services. Breaking down service silos led to a more collaborative approach to serving students.

To read more about Clark College's redesign efforts, see Appendix B.



## Building Meaningful Relationships

The success of holistic student supports is rooted in deep and ongoing attention to relational interactions both with students and among staff and faculty so that:

- Students positively identify with at least one person who will support and encourage them.
- Students feel like they belong on campus.
- Personnel collaborate across functional areas to ensure students' needs are addressed in a timely manner.

- Supports are delivered according to a developmental, coaching approach to each interaction with students that focuses on understanding what they need to be successful and acquire self-efficacy.
- The institution cultivates external partnerships built on a shared purpose to provide and deliver services.

*Toolkit Chapters 2 (Setting a Vision for the Student Experience), 3 (Self-Assessment and Improving Readiness), 10 (Building Meaningful External Partnerships), Appendix C (Student-Centered Design Process)*

## College Example: Moving from Transactional to Intentional Support

The University of Hawai'i (UH) System aims to become comprehensively student-centered. For UH and its seven community colleges, that means proactively empowering students to successfully complete their academic journey through intentional connections with faculty, student services, and academic support programs, supported by technology. To this end, UH has leveraged STAR, a degree planning and registration system based on guided pathways developed in-house. Using STAR, students see optimal degree pathways and can make informed decisions

about which courses they register for and when. With STAR supporting transactional and informational interactions, students are empowered to take charge of their own educational decisions and success. As a result, academic counselors are able to spend more time mentoring students about goals, academic challenges, and steps to success, leading to stronger relationships and a greater connection to the campus. As a result, students take fewer off-program courses and graduate faster with fewer excess credits.



## Monitoring Student Progress

To connect all students effectively and efficiently to the supports they need when they need them in a customized

and sustained manner, institutions must implement practices that enable:

- Frequent and consistent checks on student progress to ensure they are connected to supports before they reach a crisis point.
- Ongoing assessment of services offered and unmet need areas.

- Staff and faculty engaging with students through ongoing counseling and coaching check-ins rather than transactional interactions.
- Staff and faculty to regularly check in on referrals and use of services.

*Toolkit Chapters 4 (The Discovery Process: Know Your Student Experience), 8 (Getting the Right Data in the Right Hands), Appendices D, E, and F (Technology Considerations)*

## College Example: Starting with Education, Career, and Financial Planning

Montgomery County Community College's vision of a holistic student supports approach is for "every degree-seeking student to create a career, financial, and educational plan." All students complete a career interest assessment during their first semester, then work with their advisor to refine a career plan and

develop an academic plan and a financial plan that will prepare them to achieve their career goals. These aligned plans guide students throughout their chosen education path and enable advisors to support them in a personalized, ongoing, and holistic way in collaboration with faculty and other support staff.



## Using Targeted Data and Technology Across the Institution

As institutions determine how to strategically use resources that will ensure seamless communication flow and a cohesive student experience, key practices for the use of data and technology include:

- Broad, routine use of data and technology by faculty, staff, and students to monitor students' progress toward their goals.
- Faculty and staff leveraging technology to identify students' needs and connect them to appropriate services.
- Technology connecting students with supports (including public services) and tracking how and when students use these services.
- Technology deployed to empower students to complete routine tasks and access certain services electronically.
- Data widely shared among stakeholders (while protecting confidentiality) to foster continuous improvement of the college's holistic student supports approach.

*Toolkit Chapters 4 (The Discovery Process: Know Your Student Experience), 7 (Tracking Progress and Impact), 8 (Getting the Right Data in the Right Hands),*

### College Example: Leveraging Data and Technology for Transformation

#### Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC)

sought to combine different data sources and processes into their new integrated advising model. Integrated advising blends faculty mentoring with professional advising to support students and build success networks early in a student's career. The new common dataset is being designed to help bridge communication and collaboration among all of the student support services and faculty mentors. NWTC is pulling data from its early alert system and new student intake survey and combining that with the implementation of an analytics platform that will

be live this fall. With that information, the college is developing a comprehensive, institution-wide student success matrix of interventions supported through holistic coaching training. As a result, relationships between faculty and staff are becoming stronger and more collaborative as NWTC leverages data to identify student needs and targeted resources to achieve the best results personalized for each student. Finally, easy access to relevant data helped faculty mentors and academic advisors to make more meaningful connections with students, particularly around issues outside of the formal classroom.



## Reimagining Policy and Practice

To truly impact the student experience, institutions must be prepared to reimagine, implement, and provide accountability for new policies and practices including:

- Policies that ensure services are delivered proactively and seamlessly, rather than expecting students to find services when they need them.
- Policies that are routinely reviewed so they facilitate the desired student experience and do not produce unintended barriers for students.

- Protocols that ensure faculty and staff awareness of which supports each student receives and any outcomes.
- Student learning outcomes that clearly define the value and purpose of each support.
- Hiring and promotion policies that provide accountability and demonstrate the value of personnel having a role in student success.

*Toolkit Chapters 5 (Planning for Action), 6 (Crafting a Communication Strategy), 9 (Developing a Training and Professional Development Strategy), Appendix G (Scaling Success Themes)*

## College Example: Reimagining Policies and Practices to Nurture Culture Change

**North Arkansas College (Northark)** adopted the slogan of “Northark Cares,” reflecting its commitment to weaving new services into every aspect of the institution’s standard operations and create a culture of caring focused on helping each student succeed in the classroom and beyond. Efforts to change the culture ranged from retraining faculty and staff for more personalized advising and instituting mandatory success courses, to collecting and using better data to create a food pantry and associated interventions to ensure students’ financial struggles come to light and are addressed. Fundamental to implementing

Northark’s redesign was to reimagine policies to ensure the work was not just one department’s responsibility or seen as “the next new thing” that would soon disappear. For example, Northark trained its advisors and financial aid officers, admissions and registrar staff, as well as others to provide financial and career coaching, to help students apply for benefits, and to coordinate referrals to other services. In addition, the college implemented a “Go-To Person Campaign” where faculty and staff were assigned several students who, based on their needs assessments, were deemed at high risk of dropping out.

## Leveraging Data and Technology for Holistic Student Supports

By leveraging the power of technology as part of a redesigned advising and support model, institutions use student information and data that a) boost student efficacy and ownership over their college experience, b) empower faculty and staff to access sufficient information and time to build strong relationships with students, and c) generate additional data to inform strategic decisions and the refinement of policies and practices (such as student-focused scheduling). Ideally, technology enhances service delivery and frees staff time by automating routine, one-way information-giving transactions so personnel can engage in student support relationships that:<sup>14</sup>

- Deliver student supports as a teaching and learning function.

- Benefit students on a regular basis.
- Connect students to the information and services they need, when they need them, to keep them on track for graduation.

However, it is important to emphasize that, despite what many believe,<sup>15</sup> a new technology is not the solution; it will not transform the student experience or improve student outcomes without underlying business process redesign that defines roles and responsibilities for supporting students. Moreover, technology selection, implementation, and adoption should not be solely the purview of the IT department. It must be collaborative and come after the institution has established the vision and goals for their ideal student-focused support structure.

<sup>14</sup> How Colleges Use Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) to Transform Student Support: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/how-colleges-use-ipass-transform-student-support.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Using Technology to Reform Advising: Insights From Colleges: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/UsingTech-Insights-WEB.pdf>

## A Foundation for Pathways Implementation

Increasingly colleges are using the pathways framework to effect student-centric design.<sup>16</sup> In a pathways approach, colleges intentionally design a student experience that helps students clarify their end goals, choose the most direct path to achieving those goals, and devise proactive interventions to keep students on track to completion. Moreover, they provide intentional evaluation of programs and services to ensure students are learning.<sup>17</sup> The foundation of a holistic approach is to support the structures and processes that enable students to progress from connection with the college through to the completion of a valuable credential. Holistic student supports inherently bolster the fundamentals of a successful pathways model. Holistic student supports and pathways complement and leverage each other.



help students succeed in gateway and foundational courses. Comprehensive intake procedures are necessary to identify students' academic and non-academic needs early.

### **KEEP STUDENTS ON A PATH: Helping them stay on track and complete**

As students, faculty, and staff are empowered to monitor

progress along students' academic, career, and financial plans, touchpoints must be built in for faculty, students, and advisors at key milestones. A holistic student supports approach establishes clear roles and responsibilities among faculty and staff, and workflow and communication-flow procedures create a seamless experience for students. In designing the support structure for students, institutions must implement personalized, equitable, and meaningful holistic supports. That is accomplished by such means as early alert and intentional, relational interactions with advisors and faculty. Student-facing technology, such as degree audits, strategic scheduling, and degree planning, allow institutions to create efficiencies and direct the high-touch services where they are most needed.

### **CLARIFY THE PATHS: Building educational pathways that develop skills and talent to help students achieve their goals**

For all students to create career, financial, and academic plans early in their journey, educational pathways must be clear, well-defined, and aligned with strong labor market or transfer outcomes. Data are used to identify student needs and to design the on-ramps and career pathways that lead to the realization of student goals.

### **HELP STUDENTS EMBARK ON A PATH: Guiding them to the right start**

Colleges must focus on becoming equitable and student-ready institutions to transform the student experience. Moving to holistic student supports enables institutions to redesign onboarding and intake processes to ensure students engage in career, academic, and financial planning early in their student journey. It also involves implementing alerts, inventions, and supports outside the classroom to

### **ENSURE LEARNING: Requiring students to master knowledge and skills**

At its core, holistic student supports provide the structure for students to arrive in the classroom in the best condition for learning. The approach's success on the classroom activities, so institutions must attend to the alignment of student success initiatives with faculty professional development. Academic supports like tutoring are most effective when they are designed to support specific program learning outcomes, are integrated with classroom content, and answer student questions about the knowledge they are gaining that leads to employment or transfer.

<sup>16</sup> Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/redesigning-america-community-colleges.html>

<sup>17</sup> Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation: <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PathwaysGraphic462017.pdf>

## College Example: Pathways Alignment

The Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is part of the American Association of Community Colleges' Pathways Project and works with Achieving the Dream on infusing a holistic student supports approach into their redesign efforts. Thereby, CCP is enhancing its academic planning processes for existing and prospective students with its new clearer program paths. Advisors, counselors, support staff, and students will fully utilize degree audit and academic planning

tools to enable development of a prescribed academic plan. This ensures that students are enrolled early on in a mandated sequence of courses, and that their progress is monitored by all parties. Then CCP can intervene if necessary and connect students with appropriate supports. A case management approach to advising and risk intervention also enables the college to more proactively and personally help all students choose, enter, and stay on a pathway to their career goals.

## Next Steps

Now that the basics have been covered, it is time to take the first step toward understanding your college's capacity to serve student needs within its existing culture and infrastructure. How well are systems organized to meet both traditional and nontraditional needs, to acknowledge the factors that could stand in the way of persistence? How prepared are faculty and staff to look differently at student success goals and embrace a holistic approach and more active engagement? How can your college free up or reallocate resources for redesign? How do you deliver services in a way that reflects the realities of students' complex lives?

The following chapters focus more explicitly on how to execute a holistic student supports redesign, including the steps for creating a vision; assessing readiness; exploring the existing and ideal student experience; and planning, implementing, evaluating, and institutionalizing the work. It is important to remember that the core of a comprehensive redesign is ensuring that services and supports are student-centered. While the core challenge of this work is understanding how to operationalize a holistic model, the core reward will be appreciating the impact a holistic model can have on student outcomes and the college community.

## Student Story from Big Bend Community College

Beatriz is a second-year Business Information Management student who was excited about graduating in spring 2017. She grew up in a traditional migrant family home. There was little emphasis on education and her father pulled her out of school during 11th grade.

After marriage, her husband encouraged her to return to school, get her GED, and continue studying. Juggling college, work, and motherhood has been hard, and college at the same time, but she and her husband have been taking steps to ensure college completion for both of them.

Beatriz's biggest accomplishment so far is completing three of the five certificates in her program. "I don't think anyone thought I could really do it aside from my husband, and look at me, I am almost done!" She hopes that in 10 years she has steady employment, can grow with a company, and be a homeowner. "I am always super satisfied with what I've had. My parents had me thinking that I would be a farmworker

just like them. I have already broken that cycle and look forward to growing more and more." She describes her journey as amazing and exhausting. She recently told a staff member that the support she has received through the college's integrated student services has been one of the kindest gestures she has ever experienced. "(The staff) all helped me and didn't expect much back from me other than to be a good student. I could come just as I was and it wasn't wrong for once. I think it would be awesome if I could do the same for others." Beatriz explained that these interactions helped her tremendously by boosting her self-esteem enough to give her a sense of belonging at school. Financially the integrated student services helped with childcare. "I feel confidence and peace right now and that is very important when you want to be successful. I shouldn't have made it this far. Daycare and money have been impossible. I had no family encouragement. But I know the school and the staff is going to back me up."

## All Hands on Deck: Culture Change in Action at North Arkansas College

To help meet the needs of its low-income students, North Arkansas College opened an on-campus food pantry in the fall of 2015. Stocked in part by a fundraising competition among different college departments, Pete's Pantry (named after the community college's mascot) was an immediate success—so much so, that the shelves were stripped nearly bare soon after it opened.

After arranging an emergency shipment, the college's truck-driving program instructor volunteered to haul the supplies early in the morning on his day off, and volunteers from across campus helped restock Pete's Pantry. "With an all-hands-on-deck approach, the shipment was broken down, inventoried, and stocked just in time for the pantry to open," says a college official.

All told, more than \$10,500 in food was distributed to 265 North Arkansas College students and their family members during the 2015-16 school year. When paper goods ran low later in the year, faculty and staff brought more than 400 rolls of toilet paper and paper towels from home to keep the shelves filled. College officials also helped students who came to the pantry and requested additional services to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and referred them to other services. The coordinated effort paid off: Students who accessed the pantry in the fall were 12 percent more likely to persist than their counterparts who did not, according to college officials.

"Pete's Pantry was a dream that WSSN made a reality, and we feel it has had, by far, the greatest impact on our students," the college says. "It has also been a tangible motivator to encourage students to remain in college to pursue their goals."

North Arkansas—better known locally as "NorthArk"—adopted the slogan "NorthArk Cares" for its WSSN efforts. Fearful of "grant overload," college leaders focused on integrating services into existing programs, training larger numbers of staff members to provide coaching, and deepening faculty and staff understanding of the challenges high-poverty students face.

Financial- and career-literacy programs were incorporated into NorthArk's freshman orientation

success course; students in that course are also required to attend one-on-one financial and career coaching sessions. The college's advisors and financial-aid officers, admissions and registrar staff, and others have been trained to provide financial and career coaching, as well as help students apply for benefits and coordinate referrals to other services. Starting this fall, faculty also will provide coaching services during assigned faculty advisor sessions.

"Instead of creating a WSSN Center and only serving students in that center/program, NorthArk chose to implement the strategies in multiple college functions and processes to ensure multiple student exposures, strategic longevity, and ultimately culture change," a college official says.

NorthArk leaders also quickly recognized the limitations of existing data systems and upgraded technology to better meet the needs of advising center personnel and coaches. This is helping the transition to a case-management advising and mentoring approach for all students.

"Students seem to thrive and light up when they realize their coach will not judge or make decisions for them, but facilitate them in talking through all sides of the issue, coming to their own conclusions," the official says. "Once students find the excitement of knowing what they are working for, they seem to be more engaged and invested in being successful, one step at a time."

NorthArk officials share stories about how growing numbers of faculty and staff have focused on helping individual students: finding a work-study job in the college library for one student who was living in a campground near campus; helping another appeal denial of SNAP benefits; and giving yet another, with aspirations of earning a Ph.D. in mathematics, his first suit as part of a program that provides students with professional attire for job interviews.

"He looked at the staff member and said, 'I could get married in this suit.'"

NorthArk points to the cumulative impact of individual successes like these over time. "We find that our students would much rather break their direction down into small steps, celebrating little victories along the way."

# SETTING A VISION FOR THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Vision setting is one of the most important steps in developing a holistic student supports model. A vision clarifies what you are aiming to achieve and helps to align the college community around a clear understanding of where the institution is heading. A strong vision is aspirational and sets the tone for who and what you want to become as a student-centered institution. This vision should resonate with the college board of trustees, administration, faculty, staff, student body, and the surrounding community. Most importantly, the vision is the foundation for all your strategic thinking and planning. Developing a compelling vision starts with a guiding team and a strong understanding of the student experience.

## Establishing Your Guiding Team

Setting the vision for a holistic student experience is not the job of one person. The vision should reflect the collective understanding of student needs and reflect the voices that directly and indirectly impact the student experience. As you develop this vision, you are working toward shaping the student, faculty, and staff experience to transform your institution. Pursuing transformative organizational change through a holistic student supports approach requires strong cross-functional and cross-hierarchical collaboration, up-front planning, attention to detail, and a deep understanding of the needs, challenges, and desires of diverse stakeholders. A guiding team is critical to change leadership; it is an empowered, representative group responsible for identifying and implementing essential strategic actions.

Engaging representatives from all key stakeholder groups helps inform the development of a compelling vision and thoughtful plan comprising the details necessary to begin and complete a successful change effort. However, a large core team could bog down and confuse strategy development. We recommend a team of not more than eight (ideally six) people. At times this team may change or expand (depending on the phase of the work) to include sub-groups assigned to specific tasks for execution of the strategy. We encourage you to think creatively about how to engage a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the design and implementation of your strategy, while keeping the core team small.

## LARGE COLLEGES

While smaller colleges may be able to clearly identify a core group of guiding team members, large multi-campus colleges may have a harder time narrowing down a guiding team. Large colleges may have guiding teams slightly bigger than the recommended six to eight people; however, it is not recommended that these colleges develop teams of such size that it loses focus and momentum.

The guiding team must represent the main areas related to, or sure to be affected by, the envisioned redesign. Collectively, the members should have in-depth knowledge of one or more of the following:

- Current advising and student support processes and policies.
- The need for an integrated advising and student support approach and its impact.
- Integration of new technologies into the institution's IT landscape.
- The experiences of stakeholders who will be most affected by the redesign.

Or you could structure your team around "functions." In researching the experiences of colleges in the first round of iPASS grants, CCRC identified three categories crucial for project success:<sup>18</sup>

- Content Masters contribute technical and process information.
- Influencers have earned widespread respect and trust and can help the broader college community understand and feel confident in proposed changes.
- Key Decision Makers have the authority to move the project forward.

## Understanding the Student Experience

Before committing to a holistic redesign model and communicating that vision, it is important for guiding teams to have an accurate understanding of the current student experience. This requires the intersection of both quantitative and qualitative data; resist the temptation to rely on anecdotal information. Base your holistic approach on data-driven knowledge of the students you serve, their current experience of support services, and the needs not yet being addressed. To design a support model that encompasses all students, not just traditional, college-age students, the team should explore:

- Who they are.
- Where they come from.
- What they value.
- What their goals are (academic, career, personal).
- How they feel about college and seeking support.
- What they struggle with most.
- What they think they need support in.
- How they think they use your services.
- How they actually use your services.

### **ACTIVITY:** Play Achieving the Dream's The Finish Line Game

What are the factors that help or hinder student progress? ATD designed The Finish Line Game as a professional-development tool to help the faculty, staff, administration, and board of trustees have those sometimes difficult, yet robust discussions about student success and equity. The board game sets up teams to walk in the shoes of ten students as they navigate their educational journeys and confront the impact of college policies, practices, and culture on their progress and success.

For more information on The Finish Line Game see: [www.AchievingtheDream.org/Finish-Line-Game](http://www.AchievingtheDream.org/Finish-Line-Game)

## Student-Centered Design

To help your team build its understanding of your students, we recommend embedding student-centered design into your planning and implementation process. Student-centered design is a creative approach to identifying desirable solutions to complex problems. It takes the process of “design thinking” and contextualizes it to the education field with a central focus on the student. The process could apply to any service, experience, or product that would benefit from:

- Beginning with a focus on student needs and experiences.
- Using multiple ways to bring student voices into the analysis of existing processes/policies/products.
- Generating creative solutions to address the needs/wants.
- Rapid testing and implementation of solutions.
- A focus on continuous improvement.
- An approach that embraces failure or lackluster results as learning opportunities.

For colleges, much of the value of student-centered design is that it prioritizes and offers tools for developing a deep understanding of the students’ needs, wants, and experiences before the design process begins. Focus on the student remains central throughout the process even in its later stages, which consider whether ideas that have been generated are feasible for the institution as viable long-term solutions.

The student-centered design process is flexible, simple to understand, and conducive to creativity. A college can follow the process as-is or infuse aspects of it the planning and implementing of redesigns. For each stage of the process, many simple, effective tools are available to teams set on keeping students at the center of the redesign while being creative and nimble when executing.

A more detailed outline of the student-centered design process and how it can complement your planning and implementation efforts can be found in Appendix C.



For more resources on assessing student needs, consider the following:

*Guide to Assessing Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*, by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, describes how to perform two types of studies: 1) Surveys to assess basic needs security and 2) Opportunistic small-scale experiments to evaluate the effectiveness of programs meant to address basic needs security. Access the guide at <http://www.wihopelab.com/publications/Basic-Needs-Insecurity-College-Students.pdf>.



Student survey data accumulated and shared by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) and Noel Levitz, among others, could increase understanding your students’ experiences without the need to develop your own survey. In addition, CCCSE offers a free toolkit on conducting focus groups. Access the toolkit at <http://www.ccsse.org/focusgrouptoolkit/>.

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## Activity: Get to Know Your Students

The following chart can help your team begin evaluating the extent of student need on your campus.

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT						
Questions for Your College	0 – 20 %	21 – 40 %	41 – 60 %	61 – 80 %	81 – 100 %	Don't Know
What percentage of students work more than 20 hours a week?						
What percentage of working students experience regular changes in their shifts or number of hours?						
What percentage of students have children or care for family or friends?						
What percentage of students receive or are eligible for Pell Grants?						
Of those who receive Pell Grants, what percentage live below the poverty threshold for a family of four?						
What percentage of students say they live paycheck to paycheck?						
What percentage of students receive income-based public assistance?						
What percentage of students feel they are carrying too much debt?						
What percentage of students struggle to feed themselves and/or their families?						
What percentage of students have unstable living situations?						
What percentage of students have a disability or other health concern for which they may want assistance?						
What percentage of your students come from households where English is not their first language?						
What percentage of students come from households where no one has a college degree?						
What percentage of students are being flagged for additional services?						
What percentage of students come to your campus knowing what career they are seeking?						

## KEEPING STUDENTS ON THE ROAD TO PERSISTENCE

When WSSN participant **Patrick Henry Community College** went through this self-examination and assessment process, it found that transportation in its rural Virginia location was a major challenge. Many students did not have a car they could use or money for gas. The public bus service was limited and often difficult for students to navigate.

PHCC officials devised a solution—to offer students emergency transportation assistance as part of the WSSN Education and Employment service pillar. PHCC provided bus tokens, gas vouchers, and reimbursement for minor car repairs to 160 students in the second year of its redesign—a significant increase from the 13 students served in year one.

## Developing a Meaningful Vision

Now that your college's guiding team has a thorough understanding of student needs and experiences, it is time to begin work on a vision for holistic student support redesign. While the redesign efforts will directly impact the student experience, it is important to understand that changing the student experience is directly related to changing the way the college community engages with students. In essence, the vision for a holistic approach is about looking inward and becoming the college you want your students to experience. This requires a strong change leadership approach.

A strong vision, as described by John Kotter's 8 Steps for Successful Change,<sup>19</sup> is a clear, concise, specific, forward-looking, and inspirational articulation of what the institution aspires to be, and what it hopes to achieve through holistic student supports. The vision should focus on the student experience the institution is striving for in the next 5-10 years rather than on what the institution needs or wants. Yet, all stakeholders should be able to draw from the shared vision to determine team and individual priorities and actions.

Leaders from all parts of the college should communicate this vision early and often to all stakeholders to generate energy and support. The vision is even more compelling when engagement opportunities are in place early to demonstrate the vision in practice and to take advantage of the energy. Because it conveys the "why" behind your invitation to partners (Chapter 10), a strong vision motivates external stakeholders to provide supports to students that the college cannot.

Finally, the vision is central to the development of your redesign goals and action plan (Chapter 5) and a critical part of the communication and engagement strategy (Chapter 6) for your holistic student supports redesign. Leaders should be open and transparent in their decisions and not be afraid to answer questions with "I don't know yet." In this era of "initiative fatigue," setting and communicating a strong vision helps align multiple student success efforts taking place on campus so they do not operate independently of each other.

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As you develop or refine your change vision, consider the following.

### Crafting a Compelling Vision

- Center your vision on the student experience.
- Align your vision with the institution's strategic direction.
- Make the vision compelling and something people will want to be part of.
- Use simple, clear language to make the vision accessible to everyone, including students and your community.
- Limit the description of your vision to 150 strong, persuasive words. Supplemental communications can provide further information tailored to your stakeholders.
- Demonstrate how your holistic student supports redesign will complement and integrate with the other student success efforts at your institution.
- Leave no doubt that supporting students is the collective responsibility of everyone at the institution.
- Ensure your vision provides a clear guide for the daily work of all faculty and staff and sets forth a solid commitment to your students. This may require creating complementary communications.

### Engaging the Campus in Your Vision

- Bring students, staff, and faculty into the process of creating or refining your vision.
- Engage the community in a discussion of the extent to which the security of students' basic needs (food, housing, transport, child care, health, etc.) become a campus priority, especially when it comes to retention efforts.
- Ensure all team members can effectively convey your vision.
- Infuse the vision into campus life by engaging senior leaders, particularly the president/chancellor, in consistently referring to the vision.
- Provide opportunities early on to engage in putting the vision into practice in small yet meaningful ways.
- Celebrate faculty, staff, and students who embody the vision in their actions and words.

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<sup>19</sup> How to Create a Powerful Vision for Change: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkotter/2011/06/07/how-to-create-a-powerful-vision-for-change/#3dac882451fc>

# TWO EXAMPLE VISIONS

## Visionary Community College

Every student at Visionary Community College will receive personalized support tailored to individual needs and delivered by a team of professionals dedicated to each student’s success and the economic vitality of our community. This intentional student experience will encompass academic, career, financial, and social supports and embody high-quality service, purposeful support that reaches students when they need it, and an approach that engages students in their own learning journey.

## Transformational Community College

Every student will feel like a valued member of the Transformational Community College community. We will challenge and support our students to become lifelong learners and the best version of themselves. We will do so by being the best version of ourselves and working together to ensure every student gets the support, information, and tools needed to flourish in an academic program that aligns with personal and professional goals.

Components of the ideal experience you WANT for your students.	How the ideal experience differs from what your college has done in the past.

**Draft a compelling vision statement about what the ideal or desired experience will accomplish for students.** NOTE: Make sure your statement is concise but aspirational! It should articulate an enterprise that people will WANT to be part of and allow them to see how their daily work could contribute to its culmination.

# SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVING READINESS

As introduced in Chapter 1, a holistic student supports approach requires more than the implementation of a stand-alone initiative or enhancing one type of support service. It involves the adoption of comprehensive, transformative institutional change, which can be challenging and complex. Certain institutional conditions make successful implementation more likely and a college may want to make sure they exist on its campus before embarking on large-scale redesign. Assessing the degree of institutional readiness could reveal potential challenges so the guiding team can surmount them early on.

The readiness assessment offered in this chapter is particularly instructive for institutions pursuing holistic student supports redesign. It encourages colleges to consider the broader institutional structures and processes essential to providing holistic student support and building institutional capacity. The assessment draws on the seven institutional capacities in Achieving the Dream's ICAT<sup>20</sup> and reflects this toolkit belief that redesign requires structural, process, and attitudinal changes. The assessment strengthens case-making with stakeholders by conveying a) what exemplary capacities look like and b) the vision for student support attainable through redesign.

No matter which assessment you choose, fully utilize the results in your discovery and planning process. Ideally, engaging with a self-assessment tool should:

- Encourage cross-functional and cross-hierarchical conversations throughout the institution.
- Identify and prioritize necessary additional steps before implementing your redesign strategy.
- Assist with evaluating indicators for transformative reform.
- Provide a foundational understanding of the principles that will undergird your redesign.

We recommend the following three steps to interpret and use your results for an effective planning process.

## Step One

In addition to having the guiding team complete the assessment, you may wish to broaden the group to include additional administrators, faculty, and staff to gather richer data. Use the key to assign scores for each capacity. The table below shows the ranges possible for each component, with higher scores indicating higher capacity and, therefore, a higher readiness for change.

Capacity/Component	Score Range
Leadership and Vision	0-16
Data and Technology	0-32
Equity	0-40
Teaching and Learning	0-32
Engagement and Communication	0-16
Strategy and Planning	0-20
Policy and Practices	0-20

Collect and aggregate the individual responses and share the results with the guiding team to review prior to the readiness discussion. We also encourage you to

share with the team other documentation that may have been created previously, such as a draft of vision and goals.

<sup>20</sup> To learn more about ATD's ICAT assessment: <http://www.achievingthedream.org/our-network/our-approach>

## Step Two

Gather your guiding team to discuss the readiness results. We encourage you to choose an experienced facilitator, someone internal or external to your institution, who is not too close to your redesign efforts. The facilitator can help keep the deep, honest discussions productive and inclusive. A facilitator employing best practices will:

1. Begin by setting the tone of the meeting to create a safe space for all to share their viewpoint.
2. Record individual responses on flip charts or ask a “recorder” to take notes.
3. Balance participation so most, if not all, participants have an opportunity to speak.
4. Remind participants of guidelines as needed. Do not allow putdowns or interruptions.
  - a. Help build consensus by restating points of common ground and by making connections between different perspectives.
  - b. Check for consensus when you sense it has emerged. Repeat agreements as you hear them and make sure the note-taker has the language to which the group has committed.
5. Challenge assumptions and premature conclusions, helping the group gain a better understanding of underlying issues.
6. Summarize and restate in a neutral manner what he or she heard. Ask questions to clarify what someone is saying if the group is unclear.
7. Keep the group focused on topic and move the meeting forward. Consider using a “parking lot” for issues that come up that are not directly related to the current discussion.

During the meeting, use the following to guide discussion:

1. What surprised you about your readiness results?
2. For each assessment capacity/component on which the institution did not score high, what barriers might have been responsible and what could be done to eliminate them?
  - a. Who needs to be involved to increase readiness?
  - b. What resources are needed?
3. For any capacity/component on which the institution scored high, list potential challenges to sustaining that score through your holistic student support work.
4. Each team member should identify two key themes or insights derived from the readiness results. Assemble a list of essential takeaways that speak to a variety of stakeholders.
5. Reviewing each of these takeaways, what are the logical next steps in the team’s holistic student supports work?
6. The process for scaling an effective strategy requires early and ongoing commitment to organizational culture and structures. Consider including time to discuss what conditions prerequisites for the redesign effort’s being scaled quickly and smoothly. Consider using the “Scaling Success Themes” questions (Appendix G).
7. Based on the score from the readiness assessment and the core team discussion, reach consensus on your five top priorities.

## Step Three

List the main discussion points and the team's possible next actions. If the institution fared poorly across the aggregated assessment results and in your readiness

discussion, consider sharing results and recommendations with the institution's leadership team to get feedback before proceeding further with the redesign.

## A NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY READINESS

Technology is a tool for enhancing your student support redesign. The change vision should drive the technology-related decisions and not the other way around. While technology can play a critical role in creating a more personalized and proactive experience, if used incorrectly, it can also cause distraction and delay.

More than 150 software offerings claim to aid higher education institutions with integrated student support redesign, each with its own methodologies, capabilities, user-interfaces, and implementation approaches. Achieving the Dream together with The Ada Center<sup>27</sup>—an organization that helps higher education institutions make the most of technology investments through counsel on purchasing, implementation, and integration—have created a set of technology evaluation guides to help colleges better navigate technology decisions (Appendix D: Case Management and Early Alert; Appendix E: Degree Planning; Appendix F: Predictive Analytics).

The technology evaluation guides enable institutions a) to assess their readiness for adopting key software capabilities and b) to better select in a sea of vendors the ones who offer those capabilities. The guides examine early alert and case management systems, predictive analytics, and degree planning tools, according to the following:

### **Institutional Readiness Considerations**

- College Practices and Structures
- Existing Data
- Human Resource Needs

### **Vendor Selection Considerations**

- Desired Functionality
- Pricing
- Integration

# ATD's Holistic Student Supports Readiness Assessment

## Assessment Category

- **Not yet considered:** The college has not yet begun to plan for this component. (0)
- **Needs to develop:** The college knows this will be required and has some vague ideas about it. (1)
- **Needs to strengthen:** A basic plan is in place but not all of the details such as budgeting, timing and staffing, have been determined. (2)
- **Implemented:** This is already working in parts of the college but not institution-wide. (3)
- **Implemented and scaled:** This is working on an institutional level at the college on all campuses. (4)

CAPACITY/COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT CATEGORY
<b>Leadership and Vision</b>	
Current college student success reforms are fully aligned and integrated and reflect the vision and goals of the institution.	
The president, cabinet, and board agree with the vision for student success and actively commit to providing necessary resources.	
The vision and goals have been created intentionally with support and participation from all levels of college leadership.	
Senior leaders recognize and leverage the expertise of frontline staff in informing and leading student success efforts.	
<b>Data and Technology</b>	
The college has the capacity to integrate new and existing technology to enhance student success.	
The college has the IR staffing with the capabilities to manage the college and integration of data from new platforms.	
There is a history of IR and IT collaboration.	
Data integrity standards exist, are understood, and are widely accepted and applied.	
The college has a history of using, or a plan to use, data to inform decisions around equity and student success.	
Appropriate data is readily accessible by faculty, advisors, and other student support staff.	
The college provides continuous professional development to faculty and support staff to use data proactively in the decision-making process.	
The college has a history of collecting, or plan to collect, both leading and lagging indicators.	
<b>Equity</b>	
The college considers equity when proposing and evaluating policies and practices.	
The college has a thorough understanding of its student population across all ethnicities and cultures.	
The college has a clear picture of its students' financial situations including expenses for food, housing, transportation, and child care.	
Faculty and staff routinely engage in conversations on equity and enlist students with a variety of perspectives to join the conversation and to guide change.	
College leaders formally and consistently encourage employees to apply an equity lens in the design and implementation of major college student success efforts.	
The college has developed services that build students' financial literacy that include short-term and long-term planning.	
The college has developed a proactive benefits screening process that connects students with the supports they need.	
The college helps students access public benefits, financial aid, and other income supports that improve student and family economic stability.	

CAPACITY/COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT CATEGORY
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	
Faculty and student support staff are provided with opportunities for continuous professional development on equity and student success.	
A training plan has been developed for faculty and student support staff based on their needs and current understanding of student supports.	
All faculty have incorporated key student success elements into their syllabi, curricula, and resources for students.	
The college is prepared to offer education and career services including academic and career advising.	
The college is committed to creating clearly mapped academic pathways that guide students to further education or a career.	
The college has personnel and processes in place to help students choose and enter a pathway.	
The college has a plan and supports in place to help keep students on their path.	
Learning outcomes are aligned with successful academic or career requirements and these learning outcomes are regularly assessed and improved.	
<b>Engagement and Communication</b>	
The need for holistic redesign has been clearly communicated to faculty, staff, and advisors.	
Cross-functional teams have been created to implement redesign.	
Defined responsibilities and resources of each department have been shared.	
A communication plan for the redesign has been created.	
The institution develops and maintains external community partnerships to offer expanded services to students.	
The institution promotes community partnerships on campus, so students are aware of the services available to them.	
<b>Strategy and Planning</b>	
A continuous improvement structure exists that monitors the implementation of the redesign.	
A plan exists for ending current initiatives or incorporating new initiatives into the redesign.	
Appropriate resources have been allocated or committed to implementing the redesign.	
The goals for the redesign are in line with the strategic goals of the institution.	
A plan exists for how, where, and when redesigned services will be delivered.	
<b>Strategy and Planning</b>	
An understanding exists that policies and practices should ensure proactive, holistic, and sustained student supports.	
The college is willing to change existing systems, structures, workflows, and processes to remove obstacles to student success.	
A commitment exists to embedding academic and nonacademic supports within the student experience.	
The redesign plan leverages technology to streamline new processes.	
Job descriptions reflect a collaborative and holistic approach to supporting students across departments and support units.	



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

# THE DISCOVERY PROCESS: KNOW YOUR STUDENT EXPERIENCE



At this stage, your team should have developed an understanding of holistic student supports, have crafted a clear vision for the student experience of your institution, and have completed a readiness self-assessment. In this next phase, the team dives into examining the current student experience of supports and identifying gaps between reality and the ideal outlined in your vision.

To achieve a deeper understanding of the current student experience, we offer two complementary means of getting started.

1. Tools and resources from the student-centered design process, mentioned in Chapter 2 and explained in full in Appendix C.
2. The Holistic Student Supports Discovery Inventory, which is intended to help you grasp the interactions, processes, and policies that define the student experience of your supports. This tool goes into a lot of detail because we know that a student's experience is shaped by every interaction, big or small, with the college and college community. By fully exploring each interaction point in, you will be able to identify specific areas of success and concern to facilitate designing student-centric and student-centered supports.

## Equity at the Center

Improving student outcomes, through holistic student supports, requires colleges to systematically address the multitude of factors that undermine student persistence and completion. These factors go well beyond academic support, to encompass students' socio-cultural situation and their most basic needs for financial stability.

To be truly student-centered and committed to equity demands rethinking how to provide not only academic services, but also a whole host of supporting services. The more you address the distinct interests, aspirations, cultural backgrounds, and life complexities of individual students and groups of students, the better their outcomes.

## Student-Centered Design: A Tool for Understanding the Current Student Experience

When developing a student-centered design process, teams are challenged to use multiple methods of collecting and analyzing data on who your students are and how they are currently experiencing supports at your institution. This is discovering your “what is” state (learn more in Appendix C) and doing so is critical to the development of intentional strategies that improve student supports and college operations.

This stage of the student-centered design process is particularly complementary to the discovery process outlined in this chapter. To supplement your discovery process, consider using multiple ways to understand the student perspective of your current experience by incorporating data from a combination of the following:

- Focus groups, surveys, or one-on-one interviews.
- Secret/mystery shopping: Anonymous individuals using a product or service offered by the institution to gain insight into the experiences of the average student.
- Shadowing students: Following or observing a student using a product or service to understand how they use and experience it.
- Student personas: A semi-fictional representation of a subset of your students.
- Empathy maps: An alternative way to represent your students that emphasizes their thoughts, feelings, words, fears, etc.
- Inclusive process mapping: Documenting the entire process, in detail and from the student perspective, that includes a broad range of individuals, including students.
- Technology systems that document how students move through college process or services or document feedback on services.

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## Holistic Student Supports Discovery Inventory

The Discovery Inventory is a collaborative exercise to foster open discussion at your institution. It could help your guiding team to:

- Examine the current design of the student experience, from intake to advising and sustained support through the transition to the workforce or further education.
- Identify and address critical pain points.; and
- explore additional data and ideas for addressing these pain points.

This inventory enables examination of the current support approach and those of its major structural, process, and cultural components. Remember that **current design** refers to how processes are implemented at your college right now. Aspirational changes or planned future changes not yet implemented would go in the **ideal design** column.

You may find that the exploration your team conducts using a mixture of the methods outlined in step two of the student-centered design process (add page reference in final) (26) can be instructive as you complete the discovery inventory, particularly for completing columns two and three: the challenges of the current design and the features of the ideal design. Also, we recommend review of the five core design principles of holistic student supports (SSIPP) emphasized in Chapter 1.

The last page of the inventory includes supplemental questions related to technology. They should advance a) analysis of how current tools are used in operationalizing your holistic student supports and b) identification of gaps that may indicate a need for additional tools. A detailed explanation of technology considerations for four key technologies can be found in Appendices D, E, and F.



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

## ADMISSIONS AND ENTRY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Admissions Documents</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> What admissions documents must a student complete before registering for classes?</p> <p><b>b)</b> What can be submitted online vs. what must be submitted in person?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Who is responsible for obtaining these documents from the student?</p>				
<p><b>Intake Survey</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Is an intake survey used to gather contextual information about each student?</p> <p><b>b)</b> If so, how is this information used to connect students to support services prior to starting class?</p>				
<p><b>Use of Registration Holds</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are there additional holds (other than documentation) on students' profiles that may prevent them from registering?</p> <p><b>b)</b> If so, who is responsible for removing those holds, and is this process automatic or manual?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How do students know their holds have been removed?</p>				

## ADMISSIONS AND ENTRY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Admissions Communications</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> When does a student start receiving communication from the college through their school account?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Is a student alerted to only use the institution email account moving forward?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How are communications sent to a student? For example: email, phone calls, text message.</p> <p><b>d)</b> During the admissions process, how many communications total does a student receive (all departments)?</p>				

## ORIENTATION

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Orientation Policies</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are all students required to attend an orientation?</p> <p><b>b)</b> If not, who is required to do so and how did the institution determine which populations needed orientation?</p>				
<p><b>Attending Orientation</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> What steps must a student take to be able to attend orientation? How does a student register for orientation?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How often is orientation held (including times) and how do students learn about the available orientation sessions?</p>				
<p><b>Orientation Goals and Topics</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are there student learning outcomes for orientation?</p> <p><b>b)</b> List the specific topics that are covered during orientation?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How is orientation evaluated for effectiveness?</p>				
<p><b>Orientation Delivery</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> How is new student orientation delivered?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Is it a one-off event or a series of in-person and virtual interactions/nudges?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Who besides orientation staff attend or participate in orientation (faculty, staff, administrators)?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Advising Structure</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Do you have faculty advisors, professional advisors, or a hybrid model?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Do you have full-time advisors?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Is advising centralized or decentralized by campus/department?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Is one person ultimately responsible for advising?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Does this individual have sufficient time to support and oversee advisors?</p> <p><b>f)</b> Does this individual have sufficient authority to ensure advising quality and consistency?</p>				
<p><b>Assignment of Advisors</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Does every student have an assigned advisor?</p> <p><b>b)</b> If so, how and when are students assigned an advisor?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How are students introduced to their advisors?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Does a student have a specific advisor for the entire academic journey?</p> <p><b>e)</b> If not, at what point does the student move from one assigned advisor to another?</p> <p><b>f)</b> What does this hand-off process look like?</p> <p><b>g)</b> Can students walk in without an appointment to see an advisor? Do you use a kiosk or sign-in system?</p> <p><b>h)</b> What is your student to advisor ratio?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Advising Policies</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are students required to meet with an advisor prior to orientation, registration, and/or program placement? If so, explain the process.</p> <p><b>b)</b> What policies are in place to encourage or require students to see their advisors after the initial visit?</p>				
<p><b>Student Use of Advising</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Where is information related to advising available to students?</p> <p><b>b)</b> What evidence indicates this information is easy to access?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Are students required to make an appointment to meet with their advisor?</p> <p><b>d)</b> If so, how far in advance do they need to make the appointment?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Is technology used to empower students to complete routine tasks or access basic services?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Advising Sessions</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Roughly how often does an advisor see a student each term?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How often does an advisor proactively contact each student to schedule an advising appointment?</p> <p><b>c)</b> What is the average length of the advising appointment?</p> <p><b>d)</b> What are the top three areas advisors focus their sessions on? For example, career planning, academic planning, financial literacy and planning, identifying unique barriers to success.</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are there any student surveys or assessments that advisors use when working with students? If so, please list.</p>				
<p><b>Advising for Student Groups</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are any groups of students advised differently? For example, STEM students, Pell recipients, certificate seekers, honor students, student athletes, first-generation students, online students, or undecided students. If so, briefly describe the main differences.</p> <p><b>b)</b> Are part-time students' advising experiences different from those of full-time students? What evidence supports your response?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How is advising of noncredit students different in design or process? Does noncredit advising include an emphasis on transition to degree programs?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Academic and Career Planning</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Do advisors build/ use degree plans for every student they advise?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Do students, faculty, and advisors have the ability to easily monitor a student's progression through a degree program?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Do the degree plans automatically update as the student's path changes?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Are students supported in developing a personalized career plan? If so, how?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Does this career plan align with the student's academic plan?</p> <p><b>f)</b> In what order are the career plan and academic plan developed?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Definition and Roles</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Does your institution have a common definition of advising? If so, please list the parts of the current definition.</p> <p><b>b)</b> Based on your definition of advising, what skill sets are required for advisors to be successful?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Are the roles and responsibilities of advisors clearly defined and differentiated from the roles of other support professionals, such as counselors?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Are student learning, retention, and success included in the role description of advisors and other support professionals?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Do you have advising learning outcomes and/or syllabus for students? If so, are these academic-related or do they include non-cognitive skill building and career development?</p> <p><b>f)</b> How do you evaluate advising?</p> <p><b>g)</b> Is someone at the college in charge of the coordination and evaluation of, and the reporting on, all advising services?</p>				

## ADVISING AND PLANNING

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Training and Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Is there a training or professional development program for advisors at your college?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Is your professional development for advisors optional/ mandatory? Ongoing or one-off? Scheduled and in-person and/ or available on demand?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How do advisors communicate/ collaborate with other student service offices or with the academic divisions? For example, when referrals for academic or personal support services are necessary, or when multiple campus locations are involved.</p> <p><b>d)</b> Is there a common student folder or communication tool through which to read advisor notes? Is it utilized by the entire college?</p>				
<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> What are the two biggest challenges students report experiencing with advising supports?</p> <p><b>b)</b> What are the two biggest challenges for advisors?</p>				

## STUDENT FINANCIAL SECURITY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Financial Education and Coaching</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> At what point in the student’s journey does the college identify what financial needs the student has? How is this information gained and who owns that data?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Are protocols in place that clarify who responds and in what way(s) based on this information?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Is financial education embedded into the institution’s orientation and/or student success course?</p> <p><b>d)</b> If so, is the content designed to be immediately useful to the student?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are one-on-one financial coaching supports available to students?</p> <p><b>f)</b> If so, how do students get connected to these one-on-one services?</p> <p><b>g)</b> Are these supports offered to students throughout their experience or targeted towards incoming students? What mechanisms are in place to connect a student to these services later on in their journey?</p> <p><b>h)</b> Does the college have a system (protocols and/or technology) in place to proactively identify students who need these services and to track their use?</p> <p><b>i)</b> Are financial education supports provided by the college or through external partnerships?</p> <p><b>j)</b> What percentage of students who require these supports actually receive them? i.e., are these services delivered at scale?</p> <p><b>k)</b> Are these services provided on campus? If not, how does the college ensure that students receive the support they are referred to?</p>				

## STUDENT FINANCIAL SECURITY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Food and Clothing Pantries</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Does the college offer a food or clothing pantry services to students either provided by the college or a partner organization?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Is the food pantry located on campus in a location where students are likely to go rather than hidden in a low-traffic part of campus?</p> <p><b>c)</b> If not located on campus, how does the college support students in accessing the pantry?</p> <p><b>d)</b> How do students become aware of and get connected to the food/clothing pantry?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are all faculty, staff, and administrators aware of the services offered by the pantry?</p> <p><b>f)</b> Does the marketing/messaging campaign incorporate an effort to reduce the stigma often associated with accessing food/clothing pantry services?</p> <p><b>g)</b> When a student uses pantry services, do staff engage the student to identify other support needs or a longer-term strategy to address their food insecurity?</p> <p><b>h)</b> Does the college have a system (protocols and/or technology) in place to proactively identify students who need these services and to track their use?</p>				

## STUDENT FINANCIAL SECURITY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Emergency Aid</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Does the college offer assistance to students experiencing a financial emergency?</p> <p><b>b)</b> In what form(s) is the emergency aid offered? For example, vouchers for purchasing items on campus, scholarships to cover completion costs, emergency loans, restricted micro-grants, unrestricted micro-grants?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Does the college have a clear operating definition of an “emergency” that guides who can access this support?</p> <p><b>d)</b> How are students made aware of and connected to these supports?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are there clear guidelines in place to govern how distribution decisions are made and by whom?</p> <p><b>f)</b> Typically, how soon after a need is addressed does the student receive their aid?</p> <p><b>g)</b> Are there any restrictions on which students can access emergency aid and how frequently?</p> <p><b>h)</b> Are faculty, staff, and administrators aware of these supports and how students can access them?</p> <p><b>i)</b> When a student receives emergency aid, do staff engage the student to identify other support needs or a longer—term strategy to address their financial or other needs? If so, how?</p> <p><b>j)</b> Does the college have a system (protocols and/ or technology) in place to proactively identify students who need these services and to track their use?</p>				

## STUDENT FINANCIAL SECURITY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Other Financial Supports</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> What supports does the college provide to students with financial security challenges? For example: tax preparation, public benefits, housing support, transportation assistance, legal aid, child care.</p> <p><b>b)</b> Are these services provided by the college or through external partnerships?</p> <p><b>c)</b> How are students made aware of and connected to the supports listed above?</p> <p><b>d)</b> How are these services embedded into the student experience?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Does the college have a system (protocols and/or technology) in place to proactively identify students who need these services and to track their use?</p>				

## INTEGRATION OF STUDENT SUPPORTS AND SUCCESS STRATEGIES

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Academic Supports</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Briefly describe how tutoring works at your institution. How do students get connected or referred to tutors?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How do you incorporate library services in coursework and student support services?</p>				
<p><b>Other Supports</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> What other service/academic departments do you consider critical to your work in student success?</p> <p><b>b)</b> What structures promote collaboration across departments?</p>				

## INTEGRATION OF STUDENT SUPPORTS AND SUCCESS STRATEGIES

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Connection to Supports</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Are campus-based supports located in one place, or hub, or do students have to go to different offices for different questions/ services?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How do students get connected to the following supports: counseling, tutoring, library services, career planning and preparation, financial aid?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Are students and support staff/advisors alerted when students are at risk of falling off their program path? Are policies in place to intervene to help the student get back on track?</p> <p><b>d)</b> How are students "handed off" between departments? What technology or referral process is used?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are all front-line staff trained to know whom to refer students to for different issues? If so, how are they trained?</p> <p><b>f)</b> Are all faculty (including adjunct) aware of the range of supports provided by your institution and how to connect students with them? If so, how are they trained?</p> <p><b>g)</b> Is this training ongoing? What delivery method is used?</p>				
<p><b>Scheduling</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> To what extent can students get the courses they need, conflict free, at registration?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How are students' course needs assessed?</p>				

## USE OF DATA AND ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Student-Level Data</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> How are student-level data collected and shared with faculty and staff?</p> <p><b>b)</b> Do you currently have reporting dashboards that are widely used in decision-making?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Do advisors and other student support staff use student-level data on a daily basis to inform their work with students?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Does Institutional Research (IR) regularly meet with or train college staff and faculty to discuss and explain the nuances of this data, and to answer questions?</p>				
<p><b>Institutional Data</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> How do you evaluate the impact and effectiveness of your student supports? How often does this occur?</p> <p><b>b)</b> How do you analyze and use data to inform policy and process decisions related to student supports?</p> <p><b>c)</b> Who is involved in making those decisions?</p> <p><b>d)</b> How is IR involved in the evaluation process?</p> <p><b>e)</b> Are you using or planning to use predictive analytics in student success efforts? If so, briefly describe.</p> <p><b>f)</b> If you are currently using predictive analytics in student success efforts, how long have you been doing so?</p>				

## USE OF DATA AND ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY

	Current Design	What are the issues for students, staff, or faculty with the current design?	What is the ideal design? What additional information do you need to answer this?	What changes or next steps are needed to move toward the ideal design?
<p><b>Technology Use</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> How does the college currently use technology to support advising and student support delivery?</p> <p><b>b)</b> To what extent are these technologies used by the target end user in the intended manner?</p> <p><b>c)</b> To what extent are these technologies integrated with one another?</p> <p><b>d)</b> Are there any functionalities available to you with your existing technologies that you are not currently using? If so, why are they not being used?</p>				

## Supplemental Tool: Technology Inventory

The table below may be useful to your team in identifying current or planned technologies that support your holistic student support approach.

TECHNOLOGY				
Category	Technology Solution(s)	Phase and Scale of Adoption Among Target End Users	Extent of Integration	Where multiple systems collect similar data, what system will be the source of truth?
<b>Student Information System</b>				
<b>Customer Relationship Management</b>				
<b>Learning Management System</b>				
<b>Early Alert System</b>				
<b>Degree Planning System</b>				
<b>Career Exploration/ Planning Tool(s)</b>				
<b>Financial Planning/ Management Tool(s)</b>				
<b>Student Portal</b>				
<b>Data Warehouse</b>				
<b>Predictive Analytics System</b>				
<b>Dashboards/Progress Monitoring Tool</b>				
<b>Data Visualization Tool(s)</b>				
<b>Academic Tutoring Tool(s)</b>				
<b>Coaching and Advising Tool(s)</b>				
<b>Resource Connection Tool(s)</b> May take the form of social networks, portals, campus forums, individualized webpages, text messages, or emails.				
<b>Other Relevant Technologies</b>				

# PLANNING FOR ACTION

Evidence-informed planning is essential to implementing a successful holistic student supports model. Your college should be guided by a clear vision, an understanding of your institutional readiness for change, and the information gained about your students via the student-centered design process or tools. Thorough preparation helps you assemble the best team, with members in accord concerning vision and goals and their realization. It also enables you to identify challenges and to brainstorm ways to minimize or avoid them.

While each institution's planning period may look different, a well-defined plan should include the following outputs:

- A compelling vision and ambitious goals.
- Detailed work plans with timelines, roles/responsibilities specified, and required resources identified.
- A detailed communication strategy and work plan (Chapter 6).
- A plan for providing professional development and training to faculty, staff, administrators, and students (Chapter 9).
- A plan for tracking progress throughout the execution of the redesign strategy, altering the redesign as the tracking indicates, and preparing a summative evaluation closer to the completion of execution (Chapters 7 and 8).
- A plan for refining and sustaining the new approach.

This chapter provides tips, templates, and activities to guide your team in planning for action.

## Value of an Action Plan

Moving an institution toward transformative change includes intentionally addressing institutional structures, processes, and attitudes. This work—collaborative, challenging, and rewarding—requires long-term commitment. Planning helps establish well-defined tasks (constituting an outline of individual and team responsibilities) and ensures that all members of the team are aware, engaged, and accountable.

It is important to note that a deep planning process should not be equated with inaction. The planning period is critical to communicating with core groups about what is being planned, why the goals matter, and who is involved. It is also time to gather input and ideas from a broad range of stakeholders with diverse perspectives, experiences, and skillsets. Creating feedback loops allows people to contribute at specific intervals, or whenever they have an idea, and presents opportunities to engage more directly in planning activities.

## Important Planning Practices and Decision Points

- Begin with the student in mind.
  - Your team should now have a thorough understanding of the students you serve and the way they experience your support services.
- Keep equity at the center.
  - As part of an equity agenda, the goal is to remove obstacles known to put low-resource students at a disadvantage, so they can achieve their goals.
  - Integrate services into every student’s experience to destigmatize holistic delivery.
  - Customize and bundle services for individual situations.
- Strategically combine low-touch and high-touch services.
  - Consider a case management approach including student success coaches or mentors to ensure comprehensive service delivery without duplication and to minimize the chance that students will fall into service gaps.
  - Consider using technology to collect student data so services can be tracked and offered where they are needed.
- When planning for data collection and utilization be sure to use common definitions, language, and coding of services.
- Find committed champions to lead your holistic student support work.
  - Equity and student support services needs an administrative home and clearly defined leadership.
- Balance student need with realistic institutional capabilities.
  - Will services be offered through a physical hub or a distributed model?
  - Which services will be opt-in and opt-out for the student?
  - How will you ideally sequence services for students, so they receive support when they are ready for it?
  - How will you prepare your faculty and staff to be referral points for student supports so students can receive direction from anyone on campus at any time (the “no wrong door” approach)?
  - Be aware of and advocate for state safety net programs that can help meet students’ basic needs.

The action plan provided in this chapter is a template for achieving your redesign vision and goals. As a living document, it should be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis to guide team members and support planning deliverables.

**Remember:** The holistic student supports approach is meant to be transformative, so construct your action plan with scale, sustainability, and equity in mind from the beginning.

### A Note on the Timeline

Colleges should look ahead *at least* three years, based on our experience—and on the research,<sup>21</sup> which shows that multiple years of planning, execution, and refinement are required to plan and implement an integrated student support approach that significantly transforms the student experience. However, institutions that have implemented some student support changes recently may find their redesign takes less time than that of an institution that has not. Therefore, we strongly encourage institutions to split their plan into phases, as suggested below, to make the work more manageable and less daunting.

<sup>21</sup> Advising Redesign as a Foundation for Transformative Change: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/advising-redesign-foundation-transformative-change.pdf>

## Completing the Action Plan

### STEP ONE: Revisit your vision and the key take-aways from your institutional assessments

As you refine the change vision that you developed in Chapter 2, you would do well to:

- Align your vision with the institution's strategic direction.
- Connect your vision to the student experience.
- Demonstrate how your holistic student support approach will complement and integrate with the other student success efforts at your institution.
- Ensure all team members are easily able to convey your vision.
- Ensure your vision provides a clear guide for the daily work of all faculty and staff and sets forth a solid commitment to your students.
- Leave no doubt that supporting students is the collective responsibility of everyone at the institution.
- Limit the description of your vision to 150 strong, persuasive words. Supplemental communications can provide further information tailored to your stakeholders.

#### Examples of Overarching Goals

- Implementation of a case management model for all students.
- Creation of a campus-wide communication plan.
- Creation of a data plan for collection, interpretation, and communication of important redesign data.
- Inclusion of equity in all structural and process changes on campus.

Once you agree on your vision, identify and describe three to five overarching goals that will ensure its achievement. Each of these overarching goals serve as markers of progress and should be specific, attainable yet bold, inclusive of a timeline, and measurable.

### STEP TWO: Identify changes in critical behaviors and anticipate how you will engage stakeholders in making these changes

Map backwards from your vision and goals to specify the changes in critical behaviors (of administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students) necessary to reaching your desired student supports model. For instance, perhaps you want all new students to develop an academic and career plan in their first semester. This will require altered behavior

from advisors, counselors, students, and faculty (whether intimately involved in supporting students in their planning or not). Review Chapter 7 for more detail; describes the relationship between leading and lagging indicators, as well as key evaluation terms that will be useful at this stage.

## STEP THREE: Identify your phases

Gather the team and brainstorm the major milestones and activities that constitute your vision and goals. Then organize those milestones/activities into phases by:

- Timeframes: Year 1, Year 2... or Semester 1, Semester 2...
- Planning and implementation stages, such as those discussed in this toolkit's introduction (Discovery and Design, Early Implementation, Mature Implementation, Institutionalization, and Sustainability).
- Support-model components you plan to redesign. For example, some institutions in the iPASS grant began by implementing an early alert process with a complementary technology tool, then moved to academic planning and career exploration. This made progress toward a broader student support redesign more manageable given their resources. Other colleges use the establishment of a food pantry as an entry point to connect students to other critical services. See "Planning in Action" example below.

Regardless of how you define your phases, each will comprise multiple strands: for example, policy and process redesign, setup and rollout of technology, communication about the work, and redesigning the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff. Each phase may involve one master plan and several complementary plans, as laid out in the rest of the toolkit. This chapter will help you develop a master plan for each phase. The following chapters will focus on developing plans for other components, such as communication and engagement, professional development, progress tracking and evaluation, and refinement and sustainability.



Make sure to include communication, engagement, training, and progress tracking goals in all phases.



Remember to celebrate your wins along the way.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY: Visualizing the Student Experience

Your vision and goals are essential to your communication strategy and should be well understood and regularly revisited by your team. For the benefit of stakeholders beyond the team, consider designing a visual representation of your vision. This should be inspirational, vividly illustrating

the student experience you are aspiring to. It may allude to the connections to other student success efforts at your institution and demonstrate the core work involved in achieving the vision. This would help connect the lofty ambition with the changes stakeholders are or will be seeing on a daily basis.

## STEP FOUR: Brainstorm barriers and potential solutions

Barriers can come in many forms. Guiding a college community through a transformative change is both a challenge and an opportunity for growth and progress. While your team is encouraged to think about all the ways your implementation can be successful, it's also important to intentionally identify barriers that may impede progress and culture change.

We recommend that you gather your team for a two- or three-hour session to:

- **Brainstorm Barriers:** This should be short and well facilitated within a "safe" environment in which team members can voice their concerns or fears without repercussion. Remember to be specific; that will help in the next portion of the meeting. For example, do not just say "buy-in," but identify the groups most

likely to resist or struggle with the change. It may be helpful to discuss what's behind each barrier by asking "Why is this a barrier?" or "What's causing this barrier?" Getting to root causes usually points to actionable solutions to address barriers.

- **Prioritize Barriers:** Here the team will identify the top five barriers, the ones most likely to appear and to have significant impact on the progress toward and the timeliness of your redesign.
- **Brainstorm Solutions:** Focus primarily on potential solutions to the five barriers. These brainstormed ideas should determine your action plan tasks. Each of the prioritized barriers will correspond to tasks that could yield solutions. Use the table below to capture your ideas.

## STEP FIVE: Complete the Work Plan for Each Phase

Complete a work plan for each phase you identified. Consider using the work plan template shown below.



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

PHASE ONE WORK PLAN					
Name and brief description of phase					
Related major goals					
Measurable indicators of progress by year, term, or month:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>					
Major Milestone/ Activity	Key Steps	Start Date	End Date	Lead Staff Member(s)	Resources Required



### Things to Consider:

- Use data to support the narrative that faculty and staff already “know” to help create urgency.
- To help with buy-in, include main stakeholders on your guiding team.
- Plan your president’s involvement and have a process for getting senior leadership approval on large changes such as structural ones.
- Have a storyteller on your team to engage people around the college and unify them in a powerful coalition.

### Planning in Action

Many institutions have started to address issues of student financial instability and food insecurity with the planning and implementation of food pantries on campus. As discussed in Chapter 1, a campus food pantry can provide a key entry point for colleges to engage students. This resource creates a safe space to address an immediate need and to engage students in addressing other challenges that can impede successful completion of an educational goal or program. For more information on how other colleges ATD has worked with set up food pantries and entry points to deeper financial supports, review Achieving the Dream’s Addressing Food Insecurity on Campus publication at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/17232/addressing-food-insecurity-on-campus-establishing-food-pantries-at-community-colleges-and-connecting-students-to-wider-services>

# CRAFTING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



Given the importance of strong communication to generate buy-in for successful institutional transformation, what follows is a resource for your team to use in thinking through the most effective ways to explain your student support redesign to various audiences. Additionally, administrators will use various communication strategies to market the new student supports to the college community. Specifically, the college will want to be sure that students know what support services are available, how to access the services, and why the college believes that these supports are important to each student's success. This chapter, a complement to the action plan in Chapter 5, prompts you to consider all variables as the team develops a communication/outreach strategy. It also offers a template. We encourage you to consider how this strategy fits into your institution's overall student success communication.

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## Steps to Developing a Strong Communication Strategy

### **STEP ONE: Revisit your change vision and your identified goals**

The vision statement you drafted at the start of your planning process is your team's north star, guiding members as they strive daily and individually toward the same goals. It is also central to your communication strategy as it informs the messages targeted at various stakeholders. Therefore, before crafting the strategy, the team would do well to refresh its understanding of the vision. Team members, individually then as a group, should reflect on the following questions and consider possible edits to the vision.

- Does the vision still resonate with you? If not, does the team believe a new vision is necessary?
- Do your vision and goals clearly define what you are trying to achieve?
- Is it inclusive of all stakeholders—that is, written so it is clear and relevant to non-team members?
- Is it focused on your students?
- Is it ambitious?
- Is it inspirational?
- What about your change vision needs to be communicated to broader stakeholders? How and when should that happen?

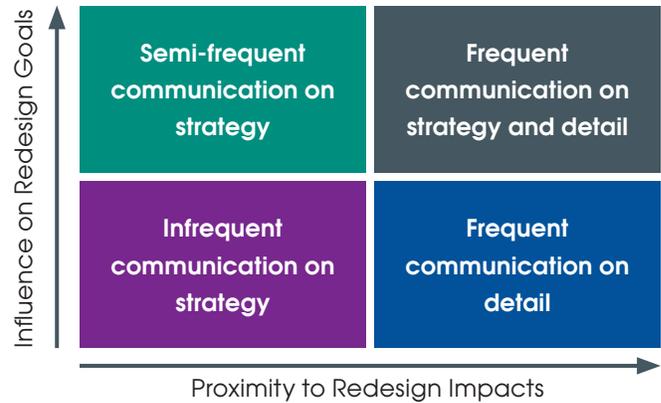
## STEP TWO: Analyze stakeholders and barriers

Conduct an analysis of your student support work with a focus on stakeholders and barriers. Consider the following:

- Who should you speak to first? Consider mapping your audiences by their influence on achieving your goals and their proximity to the reforms (i.e., how much their day-to-day will be affected by the changes).

Putting your audiences into categories based on these criteria will help you to prioritize your efforts and to gauge the right frequency and complexity of communication for each group.

- Which stakeholders need to feel a sense of urgency for the redesign to succeed?
- What barriers or other issues may keep that from occurring?
- How can you leverage key stakeholders to generate excitement and buy-in?
- What role can communication play in overcoming barriers?



## STEP THREE: Define the purpose and goals of your communications strategy

Your strategy should focus on driving attitudinal and cultural change as it relates to your holistic student supports approach and on its integration with your institution's other student success efforts and goals. Communication is not an end but a means to transformative change.

 Once you have determined your purpose, set specific and measurable communication goals that align with those for the student success redesign and with institutional goals. Limit the number to three: more risks dilution.

*If you identify more than one goal, complete steps four to nine with a separate template for each.*

## STEP FOUR: Identify your key audiences (internal and external)

You will have different audiences that you will communicate with concerning your holistic student supports work. Profile specific audiences (stakeholders) you are targeting with your communication efforts. These will be the students and other groups most directly affected by your changes (those who will be asked to alter their daily behavior or attitude/values). Other audiences are people who have some authority over the changes (such as senior leaders, the board of directors, the college foundation) and who are only indirectly affected by the changes (such as external partners). The core messages that you develop

should be consistent across all audiences, but also customized to speak to their different interests.

Profile information could include: an audience's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as they relate to student support work; obstacles to this audience's fully supporting or participating in progress toward your goals; and characteristics such as values, concerns, and motivations.

Next craft two or three compelling messages that speak to each group. The table below can help you craft different messages for different audiences.

Audience	Key Messages: What They Need to Know
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college is interested not just in helping our students succeed academically, but also in connecting their educational goals to their career goals.</li> <li>• We are committed to working with students to find income and work supports to tide them over when life gets complicated.</li> <li>• We also want to link students to financial services and asset building for a solid and stable financial future.</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty and Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work of faculty and staff—to teach, counsel, advise, and fully support our students—remains at the center of our endeavors.</li> <li>• This new effort is an opportunity to build on our successes by helping students see the connection between academic success and financial stability during and after college.</li> <li>• Your knowledge and expertise will be central to our working with students to identify their needs—academic and financial—and providing them with required supports.</li> <li>• We are always asked to do more with less, which is why we are reaching out to the community to pool more resources to help our students.</li> </ul>
<b>State and Community Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our new effort is about helping students succeed academically and become financially stable, which will benefit our community and our state.</li> <li>• Through coordination with the college, this effort will help community and state agencies more easily reach students who need their help.</li> <li>• Your partnership is critical to the success of this initiative.</li> <li>• The college is committed to working with our community and state partners to help students create a more vibrant community and improve our economy.</li> </ul>
<b>Policymakers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college is engaged in an effort to make better use of existing resources at the college and in community and state agencies to help more students succeed academically and achieve financial stability.</li> <li>• The intent in using an integrated student support services approach is to help more students succeed, which will have a direct impact on the state’s socioeconomic well-being.</li> <li>• State policymakers are critical to the college’s efforts, by making it easier to knit together public resources across agencies and scale up comprehensive service delivery, and by setting policies that make helping community colleges expand and integrate services a key state priority.</li> </ul>



Consider testing the messages with representatives of these audiences through focus groups, interviews, or an ad hoc advisory committee.

## STEP FIVE: Develop key messages

Now that you understand your audiences, what do your audiences need to know about the holistic student supports approach to generate buy-in and/or who needs to know your definitions, rationale, and tactics? For each audience, identify what matters most to them in their role, the biggest obstacles they face in achieving their aims, how your student support redesign can get them closer to their ideal, and what your purpose for communicating with them is (i.e., is it informative only or to generate buy-in to change behaviors). Whether they are concerned about access to more tailored and timely student information, a more fulfilling role in supporting students, or a reduced workload, your communication plan should be detailed and informed by evidence about their goals and challenges. Messages need to speak directly to these audiences, connect with their lived experiences, and show how the student support approach has value to them, to their students, and to the campus community and the community at-large.



Make sure your communication strategy answers the questions: Why? Why now? Why will we succeed? Keep in mind that the “why” needs to appeal to both the head and the heart (logic and emotions).



For some stakeholders (for example, advisors, counselors, tutors, students), there may be a life cycle of communication, from problem-setting to vision-sharing to information-sharing to behavioral-change inducement. Consider this as you craft your messages and plan your communication timeline.

As you develop your messages, consider how to address different groups. What early wins could you pursue to build urgency and buy-in for your redesign with each audience? For example, could your president or another senior officer highlight the importance of the work in all upcoming communications?

### ACTIVITY: Creating an Elevator Pitch

When you have only a short amount of time to convey the essence and the importance of your work, an elevator pitch can help you focus the key components of your message. You can craft a pitch for each key audience you want to reach. The key is to imagine that you have a very short time period (like a ride in an elevator) to communicate your message.

#### Building Your Pitch

The typical pitch includes the following components:

- Problem Statement
- Value Statement (the big idea)
- How We Do It
- Proof Points (evidence of success)
- Examples or Stories
- Engaging Question

**Step 1:** In a sentence, describe the problem your audience faces and would like to solve.

**Step 2:** Describe in a few short sentences the most significant value of the college’s new effort and what it changes.

**Step 3:** Write a few sentences describing how your new approach works, making clear what it accomplishes.

**Step 4:** Provide evidence of the benefits.

**Step 5:** Tell a brief story to illustrate the benefit.

**Step 6:** State what you want to happen next.

**Step 7:** Create an attention-getting hook.

**Step 8:** Put it all together, beginning with the hook.

**Step 9:** Review, tighten, rework, read aloud.

## ACTIVITY: Creating an Elevator Pitch, continued

### Shaping and Sharpening Your Pitch

As you work on your pitch, keep in mind the following to make sure it is as focused as possible.

Shaping Your Pitch	Sharpening Your Pitch
Clarify the problem	Remove hot air
Use numbers wisely	Match against models
Make it about people	Try different hooks
Make it relevant	Test through speech
Anticipate the obvious objections	Simplify
Use simple language	Practice
Be truthful	Make it natural and in your own voice

### STEP SIX: Identify the communication media

Just as different audiences may need customized messages, different audiences may also respond better to different communication vehicles, including the messenger. Determine the most effective way to reach your target audience(s), such as spokesperson, social media, website, email, newsletter, meeting, speech, posters, intranet, video, or printed materials.

We encourage you to identify multiple sources to ensure that a) you are reaching different stakeholders favoring different change styles and b) your core messages are tailored to the media chosen.



Note the communication options open to you, then map them to your audiences and messages.

## ACTIVITY: Matching Audience, Vehicle, and Messenger

Create a table that identifies the audiences you want to reach, what communication vehicles you think will be most strategic for each audience, and who are the best messengers. Try to identify as many discrete audiences as possible.

Audience	Communication Vehicle	Messenger(s)

## STEP SEVEN: Identify evaluation metrics

Evaluating your communication strategy is essential to the effective use of time and resources. On-going, rather than summative, evaluation enables you to make mid-course corrections and achieve maximum impact. Establish targets and milestones for each measure.



Develop SMART evaluation metrics (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, timely).



Conduct a pre-communication strategy assessment for each metric so you can accurately track your success.

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## STEP EIGHT: Develop a work plan

A communication work plan is a detailed timeline of the activities you will undertake as part of your communication plan. Closely aligned with (or even merged with) your existing action plan (Chapter 5), it should provide more detail to identify:

- Resources—including partnerships, staff, students, and money—needed to complete your communication activity.
- The lead person for all things related to a specific communication activity/event/product, as well as other key people involved.
- Activities that memorably convey your message to the intended audience.
- Timeline for each activity.

It is critical that your communications strategy align with that for each of the other student success initiatives now or soon to be in place. Many Achieving the Dream colleges find that developing one

overarching communications strategy maximizes cooperation among initiatives, so that stakeholders are enthusiastic about participating.



This is an ideal time to think about making other initiatives on campus your partners, who could share funds, expertise, joint marketing, or other resources.



For important messages, consider using multiple and unconventional media and activities. For example, your students might, through a short play, communicate the ways your project will benefit faculty and advisors.



Each communication activity should focus on achieving your identified goals.



Anticipate celebrating your successes. Transformative changes like this can take years to reach fruition; communicating the smaller wins along the way helps maintain momentum.

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## STEP NINE: Evaluate and adjust as necessary

At regular intervals, determine the strengths and weaknesses of your plan, identify obstacles, and make improvements.



Explore how you can leverage your communication successes to generate more excitement about the work.

# Communication Strategy and Work Plan Templates

## Communication Strategy Template

Limit your strategy description to one page that clearly demonstrates the links among components. The document will guide your decisions and shape explanations of your activities to team members and others who are invested in the success of the student support redesign. Below is a template that could benefit strategy development.

Insert the vision for your holistic student support redesign here.							
Insert the overarching purpose or objective of your internal or external communication efforts here.							
Communication Goal	Related Redesign Goal(s)	Audience(s)	Core Message(s)	Medium/a	Frequency of Communication	Evaluation Metric(s)	Key Activities/ Events/ Products

## Communication Work Plan Template

To implement a communication plan, you need many tools for organizing the time, resources, and staff. This template may prove useful.

Activity / Event / Product	Status	Due Date	Description, Including Key Messages	Audience	Medium/a	Lead Person	Resources Needed	Evaluation Metric(s)	Related Communications Goal

 All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

# TRACKING PROGRESS AND IMPACT

Regular and thoughtful tracking of implementation progress and impact is essential to your holistic student supports approach. From the beginning of the work, institutions should: 1) identify the metrics or measures you will track, 2) create a data collection plan that details how the information will be gathered and who has primary responsibility for data collection, 3) develop strategies for dissemination of data findings, and 4) use the data to inform continuous improvement of redesign efforts. This process helps your team make refinements to ensure you achieve your action plan goals (Chapter 5) en route to your student success vision.

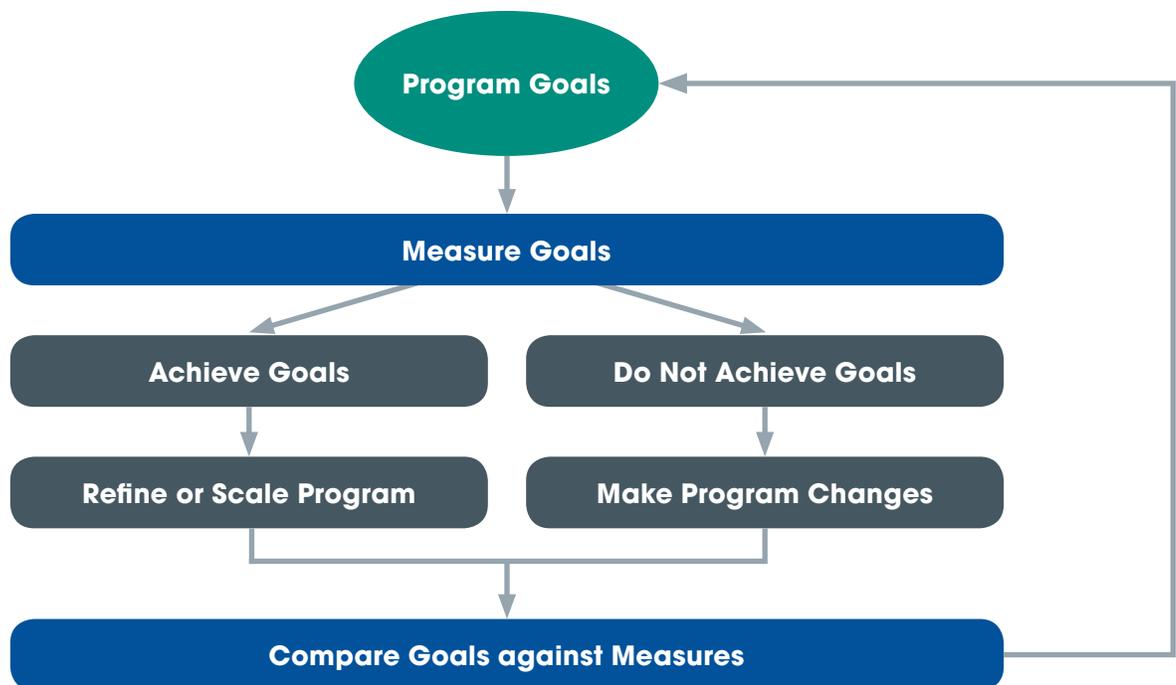
This chapter focuses on the types of metrics to track and is intended to help you plan and execute effective evaluation of your student support redesign.

The next chapter contains a deeper dive on data dissemination and utilization. Worksheets, instructions, and examples are provided throughout.

## Continuous Program Improvement Cycle

Continuous program improvement is the primary reason institutions should track implementation progress and student outcomes. Reliable data collection will inform timely program improvements necessary to reach your goals. The continuous program improvement cycle diagrammed below is based on a comprehensive tracking system. It is

important to think this process through completely at the beginning of your college’s holistic student supports work. You may need to adjust your plan to speed progress towards your goals. However, solid design up front will make the work of collecting and tracking data much more efficient from the start.



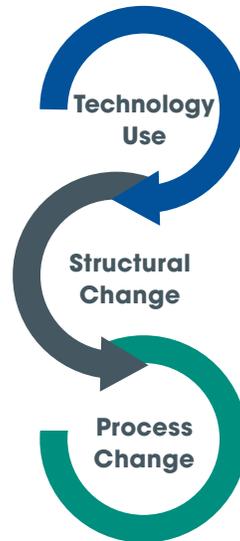
## Tracking Implementation Progress

While typically more **activity-based** than outcome-based, tracking your implementation progress will help you determine the adjustments necessary to strengthening your redesign efforts for ultimate achievement of student success goals. Activity-based metrics measure things like participation rates, stakeholder utilization, structural changes, and process changes. They tend to be more descriptive in nature than results oriented. Activity-based metrics tend to answer the question: **“How much have we accomplished?”** Within a traditional evaluation framework, activity-based metrics are comparable to outputs that measure the number of things done.

Let’s suppose you are implementing a new early alert system. You have selected the product and/or vendor and are ready to roll out a training program. Within the first term of implementation, you track faculty participation and find that 65 percent of full-time faculty and 23 percent of adjunct faculty took part in the training. A likely interpretation of this data is that more faculty need to be engaged in the training, particularly adjuncts, to ensure maximum use of the early alert system.

Participation in training programs is activity-based. This data does not help you understand the impact

### Types of Metrics for Tracking Implementation Progress



the alert system is having on student persistence and completion, which are outcome measures. Using the early alert example, an outcome-based metric might be the percentage of students who persist from term to term as a result of this intervention. Outcome-based metrics are addressed in the next section of this chapter.

There are multiple types of activity-based measures institutions can consider when monitoring implementation progress. First, as part of student support redesign efforts, many institutions are implementing new technology platforms. Technology use measures typically describe levels of technology adoption among key stakeholder groups.

Technology use metrics should be used to inform program improvements in many ways. Most important, they will identify areas requiring additional action by the institution. For example, many institutions are requiring students to build career, academic, and financial plans as part of holistic student supports efforts. In this case, it is important that institutions track access and utilization of plans via a platform shared by students, faculty, and staff so that those with limited/no access or under-utilization can be addressed.

## EXAMPLES OF TECHNOLOGY USE MEASURES

- Total number of career, academic, and financial plans built by students and advisors.
- Percentage of faculty, staff, and students using (and not using) degree planning tools.
- Percentage of full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff raising warning flags or giving students kudos.
- The nature of flag alerts posted (for financial aid, academic probation, absences, failed or missing homework, or poor academic performance).
- Percentage of students with multiple warnings or alerts by student group.
- Percentage of alerts that are closed, within a specific time frame, and by whom.
- The nature and number of notes recorded by faculty and staff to facilitate information sharing about student needs or guidance provided(39).

Chapter 1 described the importance of structural and process change. During the redesign rollout, institutions should track and monitor the extent and nature of these activities to determine whether the institution

is moving toward holistic change. Structural change measures emphasize the extent to which systems and business practices are changing.

## EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE MEASURES

- Extent to which advising practices shift to proactive, personalized, and integrated student support. For instance, changes in job descriptions, participation in professional development, and use of incentives and accountability tactics can be monitored.
- Number and type of policies and procedures changed from optional to mandatory (e.g., educational plan required of all students in first semester, mandatory advising, mandatory student success course, mandatory orientation).
- Extent to which the student intake process collects necessary information from students, including non-cognitive factors.
- Extent to which resources and training have been developed to help full-time and adjunct faculty and staff transition to new practices. Consider tracking the number of trainings/tools that are offered/generated and participation rates by stakeholder group.
- Percentage of degree programs that could be completed by a full-time student, on time, based on schedule.
- Percentage of associate degree programs comprising 60 credits and percentage of bachelor's degrees comprising 120 credits.
- Number and percentage of stackable certificate programs created or redesigned.
- Reorganization of institutional units and leadership, like the merging of career services with enrollment services.

If institutions learn from their tracking efforts that very few changes in systems and business practices have occurred in support of redesign efforts, this should signal a need to enhance or broaden structural changes. For example, consider an institution that spent significant time and resources on the redesign of a new student orientation or a new first year

experience course but did not make the service mandatory for new students through formal policy change. Without this change in business practices, only a small percentage of new students are likely to attend. It is important to regularly monitor the structural changes that are (or are not) in place in support of redesign efforts.

Process change measures are similar to those for structural change; however, they focus, not on business practices, but on individual engagement and interpersonal interaction with new or modified systems and practices. Like technology use and structural change measures, process change measures can signal a need for program modification. For example, you might embark on advising redesign and learn early into implementation that advisors continue to spend a majority of their time registering students,

are not using student risk assessment tools, have not increased the quality and quantity of time spent with students, or are not working collaboratively with faculty to help students progress, despite changes in business practices. This can signal an urgent need for additional training/professional development, new accountability protocols, or other improvements. If such information is not tracked and ongoing refinements are not made, the likelihood of advising redesign's being successful is greatly diminished.

## EXAMPLES OF PROCESS CHANGE MEASURES

- Percentage of new students enrolling in orientation prior to the start of the first term.
- Percentage of new students provided career orientation, assessment, and counseling.
- Number and percentage of students with academic plans by program/major by the end of the first term.
- Number and percentage of deviations from academic plans or shifts in majors (outside meta-majors).
- Number and percentage of students who review academic audit information prior to registering, or review degree planning tool to assess the impact of changing major or program on cost, time, and career.
- Extent to which advisors use students' risk assessments.
- Total number of appointments made by students and advisors and/or the average time of advising sessions.
- Number and percentage of students participating in group advising, if offered.
- Student utilization of college resources and support services.
- Number and percentage of full-time and adjunct faculty who, throughout the term, record attendance and grades accessible by the early alert system.
- Extent to which faculty and staff follow protocol for closing alerts.
- Percentage of students who follow through on alerts (go to tutoring, see advisor, etc.).
- Level of cross-functional use of advising, tutoring, and instructor notes/reports regarding students.

The technology use, structural change, and process change measures provided above are not exhaustive; they are designed to stimulate your thinking. You may have ideas for other measures that

will better suit your needs.. Include in your plan only the most critical tracking metrics. This will keep the workload manageable and the analysis focused on implementation progress.

## Tracking Impact

In addition to tracking implementation progress, measures should be carefully designed to assess end results or impact of redesign efforts. Impact measures are very different from outputs or activity-based measures.

Let's say your institution incorporated intensive career services for all new students into your action plan. A related activity-based metric is the number and percentage of new students provided career services (career awareness, aptitude assessment, and counseling). In contrast, a related outcome-based metric would be the percentage of new students concentrating in a major field of study early in their academic experience (nine credits of core course work within their second, third, or fourth academic terms). Another related outcome-based metric might be the percentage of students changing majors throughout their academic experience. In this case, one would expect a reduction in the number and percentage of students changing majors as a result of early career awareness and counseling services. Similarly, another outcome-based measure is the average number of excess credits at the point of graduation. If students are provided career services on the front end, concentrate in a major field of study, and do not change majors, then institutions might logically expect that the average number of excess credits at the point of graduation are reduced. These metrics assess the results of redesign implementation.

Student success outcomes can be broken into three overall categories: **1) changes in attitude, knowledge, or skill, 2) changes in behavior,** and **3) end results or ultimate impact on student success.** A good example of attitudinal change might be the percentage of students who identify career counseling, degree planning/audits,

### Types of Metrics for Tracking Impact



academic planning/advising, or financial aid advising as “very” important to their academic success. Similarly, an increase in knowledge of labor market conditions might be expected of new students who are provided intensive career assessment and counseling services. A good example of behavioral change is the extent to which advisors have shifted from registration clerks to advisor-teachers. Whereas, an example of a student success measure is the extent to which student learning outcomes are achieved for orientation, or a first-year experience course, or advising sessions and subsequently term-to-term or year-to-year persistence.

Changes in attitude, knowledge, skill, and behavior tend to help us answer “**How well have we done?**” Metrics that focus on ultimate impact or end results tend to help us answer “**Is anyone better off?**”

To provide the clearest, fullest picture of your redesign progress, it is important not only to track activity-based metrics and outcome-based metrics, but also to employ both quantitative and qualitative techniques—and to disaggregate the data you collect to analyze implementation progress and impact for different student groups. Our comprehensive tracking approach provides ongoing feedback on how implementation is progressing and offers a basis for taking immediate action to improve your redesign, as well as quantifying your intended impact early on. This data can also inform your communication plan and help you identify short-term wins that can be celebrated, thereby generating excitement across the institution. While implementation tracking and impact assessment are both critical to success, they should be developed as an aligned plan given the overlap in purpose.

## BALANCING LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS

Leading indicators provide real time, formative feedback to inform immediate actions necessary to produce intended outcomes. Leading indicators are precursors to your intended results and are typically measured on a weekly basis, within the first few weeks of a term, or at midterm.

In contrast, lagging indicators are results or end outcomes that measure the impact of an intervention or a series of interventions. Lagging indicators measure important changes that happen over time and are recorded at the end of a term or a year, or over several years.

## Use of Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics can be an important way to identify metrics that matter most for your college and your students. Some institutions have a solid data foundation—or extensive capacity for cohort-based longitudinal tracking, disaggregation of data, and other quantitative and qualitative indicators—that is comprehensively used to improve the student experience and overall student outcomes. For them, a promising next step would involve shifting from historical data to data that can be both predictive and prescriptive. Predictive analytics help institutions move beyond what has happened in the past to what is likely to happen in the future. The intent of predictive analytics is to identify probable student outcomes so that negative or undesirable behaviors and outcomes can be avoided before they occur. In essence, predictive analytics help institutions move from hindsight to foresight.

Such analytics, based on historical patterns, can help institutions:

- Predict student behaviors from day one instead of monitoring student behaviors after the fact (i.e., at the end of a term or academic year, or after students have already derailed or strayed off path).

- Identify the characteristics, behaviors, or other factors that matter the most (i.e., are most predictive of future student failure or success at an institution). For example, is it high school GPA or an assessment test score that is most predictive of remedial course completion? (The factors that matter most can vary by college and by student groups.)
- Determine “tipping points” for the institution (i.e., the points at which many students are less likely to persist or graduate) that can signal a need to change or alter business practices.
- Identify specific groups of students least likely to persist or graduate so outreach and interventions can be tailored accordingly.

If possible, institutions should consider metrics that are indicative of future student failure or success.

Remember: When predictive models are developed, they inherently incorporate biases from the context (cultural, individual, and institutional) in which they are created. Take care to ensure that the model does not reinforce, or amplify, these biases, both when developing your own predictive model or purchasing a technology that produces a predictive model.

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## Tools for Selecting and Collecting Your Data

To effectively develop a performance tracking plan, we provide two aids for use in tandem.

**Tool #1** is the **Measurement Selection Worksheet**, which will help your team think through the measurements necessary to answer these questions: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

**Tool #2** is the **Data Collection Plan**, which identifies the sources of the needed data and how they will be

analyzed, and specifies responsibilities, due dates, and targets.

On the next page you will find both tools with instructions on how to use them and examples of how to complete the worksheet.

 All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

## Tool #1: Data Collection Worksheet with Example

CAREER PLANNING				
How much have we done?	How well did we do it? (Leading Indicators)		Is anyone better off?	Performance Targets
Activity-Based Measures (to track implementation progress)	Changes in Attitude, Knowledge, Skill (initial impact outcomes)	Changes in Behavior (intermediary impact outcomes)	Results: Student Success Outcomes	
# and % of new students provided career assessment and counseling services	Students are more knowledgeable about career options and major fields of study best suited for them (types of jobs within career fields, nature of job responsibilities, likely earnings upon graduation)	Increase in number of new students with a career/academic plan prior to class registration	More students concentrate in a major field of study in their 2nd, 4th, terms	10% increase in % of students concentrating in a major field of study by the end of their 3rd term
# and % of advisors provided training on labor market information and career assessment tools	Advisors are more knowledgeable about labor market conditions associated with specific careers/major fields of study	Increase in # of advisors using labor market data and career assessment tools	Decrease in # of students changing majors throughout their academic experience	40% decrease in % of students changing majors by May 2020

To start, list the redesign focus area at the top of the worksheet. **You should prepare a Measurement Selection Worksheet for each focus area of your work.** For example, if your redesign incorporates both case management and career planning emphases, you would have a worksheet for each, with the focus stated at the top.

### STEP ONE: Start with results or intended impact (column 4, then columns 2-3)

Begin completing the worksheet by identifying the ultimate result you are striving for (your student success outcome measures) in column four. Using the second column and third column, brainstorm changes in attitude, knowledge, skill, or behavior you think are necessary to achieving your intended end results.

### STEP TWO: Develop activity-based metrics (column 1)

In the first column, list the activities you will need to monitor to ensure that implementation stays on

track. Refer to technology use, structural change, and process change metrics based on your action plan. These are the activities or products that have been completed and should logically be related to the outcomes (columns two and three) and results (column four).

### STEP THREE: Set performance targets (column 5)

Once all metrics are identified, designate some performance targets. Institutions often struggle with the best way to establish targets. Instead of pulling a percentage change out of the air (like 5 percent or 10 percent change), we encourage you to examine baseline data, then determine the number of people who would need to be affected to achieve a certain percentage change. This will help you set realistic targets.

## Tool #2: Data Collection Worksheet with Example

CAREER PLANNING				
Measures (Initial and intermediary outcomes from measurement selection worksheet)	Data Collection Sources & Procedures	Analysis Methods	Person(s) Responsible for Collection & Analysis	Due Dates
Students are more knowledgeable about career options and major fields of study best suited for them (types of jobs within career fields, nature of job responsibilities, likely earnings upon graduation)	Brief questionnaire administered to new students prior to the start of the term	Quantitative analysis	IR Office collects, guiding team analyzes	Every term, results due by week 4
Advisors are more knowledgeable about labor market conditions associated with specific careers/ major fields of study	Participation rates of advisors in LMI training	Descriptive data analysis	Advising supervisor collects, guiding team analyzes	End of fall term, monitor at the beginning, middle, and end of each term
Increase in number of new students with a career/ academic plan prior to class registration	Date career/ academic plan is created compared to date of registration by students	Descriptive data analysis	Advising supervisor and IR Office collect, guiding team analyzes	Spring, monitor weekly each term
Increase in number of advisors administering career assessments and using labor market data to guide students to a major field of study	Brief survey or flash focus group of advisors to assess knowledge and use of LMI	Comparative analysis (to former knowledge and behaviors of faculty)	Advising supervisor and IR Office collect, guiding team analyzes	Fall 2017, monitor weekly each term

### STEP ONE

In the first column, list all identified measures from Tool #1 Measurement Selection Worksheet.

### STEP TWO

Identify the data collection plan (data sources, data collection methods, timelines, etc.) for each of the measures.

### Additional Tips for Success

 Disaggregation of data is critical for student success metrics in order to answer questions such as **“Did we do well for all students or only some?”** and **“Who did we help most and who needs more support?”** Typical variables to disaggregate include race/ethnic group, gender, age, part-time/full-time status, and Pell status.

 Your evaluation should include both quantitative and qualitative measurements. Multiple sources (including surveys, focus groups, interviews, and student records) are essential tools to help you identify **why** your redesign effort is or is not working and **how** you can refine it to increase chances of successful implementation and adoption. Qualitative data is particularly valuable to inform the refinement. Collecting qualitative data does not have to occur in one large effort. Periodic release of short two- or three-question surveys can also provide fruitful information

on which to act. Remember to survey all stakeholders participating in or affected by your redesign effort to get a holistic view.

 For those leading indicators you track, consider in advance the types of corrective action you could take to improve performance. By thinking through these options, how they would work, and the training required in advance of their use, it would be possible to test them if leading indicator feedback suggests this is necessary. This will help you expedite testing of improvement ideas during the rollout.

 Monitor performance during the rollout and take improvement actions as appropriate. In particular, the impact evaluation component of your Tracking Progress and Impact Plan will be an integral part of the refinement and scaling discussions. The evaluation measures and leading indicators you track can inform your reflection on the corrective actions that are needed to reach your goals.

 Read more about evaluating student success efforts, particularly using a logic model, through Evaluating Student Success Interventions: Principles and Practices of Student Success at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/177/evaluating-student-success-interventions-principles-and-practices-of-student-success>.

# GETTING THE RIGHT DATA INTO THE RIGHT HANDS

Leveraging data is a critical component of an effective holistic student supports approach. Interpreting data and empowering faculty and staff to utilize data to identify momentum and loss points, and to improve the student experience, is essential to creating a student-centered campus culture. While many institutions use data to track state, federal, and accreditation metrics, colleges across the country are now starting to deepen their understanding of the value of a data-informed and data-rich culture in support of teaching and learning and student success. Moving towards a student-centric data rich culture requires institutions to put data in the hands of teaching faculty, student support professionals, and college operations staff to help them understand the state of what is, what could be, and how their roles impact a holistic student experience. While transparency is critical, it is also important to ensure faculty and staff are not inundated with data that they do not understand, but are provided with support to make correct inferences. By rethinking the relationship between data and the college community, institutions can engage and empower stakeholders and bolster the idea of shared responsibility for student success.

Democratizing data is vital because it can:

- Inform stakeholders of progress.
- Communicate “small wins” to maintain urgency and momentum.
- Help employees do their jobs better and improve accountability.
- Improve relationships with students.

- Improve transparency at an institution.
- Help secure buy-in from all areas of the college.
- Bring new ideas to the table to improve the work as you go forward.

As you consider sharing data across your institution, the following questions may help you plan and prioritize.

## Key Considerations for Distributing Your Data Distribution

### CONSIDERATION ONE: Who needs access to what data?

To begin with, the guiding team should discuss which of your holistic student supports stakeholders could benefit from exposure to data. They could include:

- Faculty (full-time and part-time)
- Student Support Staff (financial aid, registrar, admissions, counseling, etc.)
- Advisors
- Managers
- Institutional Technology
- Leadership Team
- Students

Once you determine who needs access to the data, determine which metrics need to be shared so stakeholders can do their jobs better. This will most likely be different for different stakeholders as few people need to see all the data all the time. So be sure to have diverse representation on the leadership, data, or communication team that is responsible for sharing metrics. This group should then consider:

- What is the role of each stakeholder group in your redesign effort?
- What goals do you have for these stakeholders? For example, are they being asked to change the processes they follow or how they do their job?

- Based on role and goals, what data points (whether already being collected or not) would be most useful to this group in:
  - Inspiring them to make the change?
  - Empowering them to track their progress in making the change
  - Holding them accountable for the change?
  - Enabling them to see the impact of the change?

## IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE METRICS

One aspect of a college's a holistic student supports redesign is focused on advising. The college is a) moving toward a case management approach to enable advisors to build relationships with their students and b) repurposing internal resources to reduce the caseload for each advisor by hiring two new advisors. The college's goal is for advising to become more meaningful and a function of teaching and learning. Advisors are expected to move away from registering students for class and to focus more on career exploration and developmental conversations with advisees.

By discussing the questions in Consideration One above, the guiding team should be able to identify the right metrics to empower advisors to make this change. Such metrics could include:

- Aggregate Data
  - Percentage of students who engage in a career exploration discussion (or who complete online career assessments), tracked each week.
  - Percentage of students who select an area of study or a major, tracked each week.

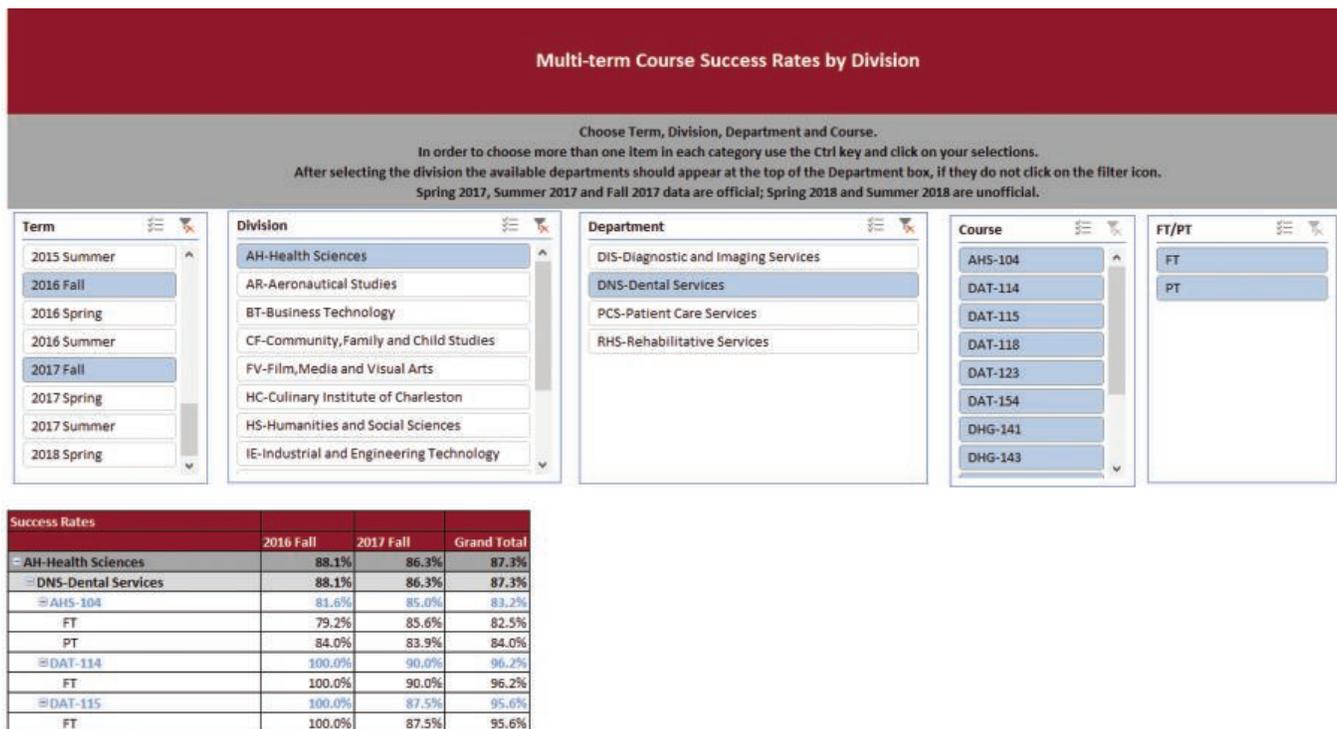
- Course success and retention rates for students who select a major in the first semester vs. the rates for students who do not.
- Satisfaction with advising services as reported by students.
- All the above data should be disaggregated by caseload assignment, race/ethnicity, Pell eligibility, gender, age, and feeder school/zip code, among others.
- Student-Level Data: For each of their students, it could help advisors to see data on:
  - Student characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, age, Pell status, other aid information.
  - Career and/or academic goals, program of study, current schedule, course grades (including assignment grades throughout the semester/term), etc.
  - Student responsibilities, such as work commitments, family or personal tasks, transportation needs, high school transcripts, etc.
  - Student engagement, such as completion of career exploration activities, use of other support services on or off campus, participation in campus/student life activities, etc.

## Consideration Two: How will the data be distributed and how often?

When sharing data with stakeholders it is important to do so in a clean, simple, and concise manner and via a modality that fits into their daily work life, so as to maximize use of the data. For example, do not email a spreadsheet of figures to students; they are unlikely to engage in data presented that way. Instead, consider posting progress on a banner in the student union to keep the change front and center. Depending on the metrics involved, data can be distributed weekly, monthly, at the end of the term/semester, or at the end of the academic year. An effective way to share data with employees is through data dashboards, which can be created using many different types of technology already available to the college.

### Data Dashboards

Data dashboards can be an empowering option for making data available to your institution. By creating a tool that allows faculty and staff to filter data and collect only what they need, they are equipped to monitor their own progress and adjust as necessary. With Excel alone, even resource-strapped institutions could produce dashboards. The diagram below shows a course success dashboard shared with faculty and staff. Stakeholders can examine student success based on the term, the division, the department, the course, and the classification of faculty. This type of tool puts useful information in the hands of frontline faculty and staff without overburdening the institutional research department of the college.



### Consideration Three: What will they do with the data?

The data, even though its utilization will vary according to stakeholder role, will benefit everyone providing student services. Appendix G offers multiple examples of student intake surveys that can be used to provide data that an institution can use to reach out to students to offer services and inform relationship building. Data provide critical feedback that directs us as we modify our structures and alter our processes, so they are more student-centered and equity-minded. The goal is to support the student early and seamlessly and allow for relational interactions with the support staff. For example:

- A faculty member adjusts course content, structure, and/or teaching approach based on gatekeeper success rate data.
- The financial aid office begins to offer FAFSA help sessions based on FAFSA completion data.
- The Leadership Team may reallocate resources based on service tracking data.
- The dean of student engagement opens a food pantry based on student intake survey data.
- Advisors change how they engage with students based on student satisfaction data.
- Students commit to their own success when they see success stories.
- Counseling begins to offer more sessions on stress management after seeing service tracking data.
- IT creates a “Did You Know” campaign to offer regular tips and support on the technology platform after seeing technology utilization data. This data is monitored weekly throughout the semester and in alignment with the support campaign.

## THE ROLE OF FACULTY

Faculty, both full-time and adjunct, play a pivotal role in your holistic student supports work. Not only can they use data to improve course structure, pedagogy, and content, but they are also one of the few people on your campus who have a regular (often long-term) relationship with students. Through this relationship, as well as conversations driven by late or incomplete assignments or missed classes, faculty often have the ability to spot student needs early on. When equipped with information about the availability of support services and how to access

them, faculty can refer students to needed supports before a crisis point is reached. Additionally, since faculty see students the most, they can serve as an excellent vehicle for delivering key information to students that may enhance their holistic experience outside the classroom. For example, if faculty are aware that food pantry utilization is up (an important data metric), it can be a helpful prompt for them to remind students in class that this service is offered on campus and tie adequate nutrition to improved academic success in a non-stigmatizing way.

## A Note on Training

In the same way many students don't see themselves as a "math person," many staff and faculty may not be comfortable trying, or equipped, to effectively interpret the data they receive. It's important for the institution to provide adequate training and support to ensure data is not misinterpreted, as this could have negative consequences. For example, data showing that progress towards goals is occurring, but at a rate slower than some staff or faculty may have expected, can result in low morale or provide fuel to those opposed to change. Worse still, incorrect interpretation of student data could result in support needs being missed. Effective training of existing and new faculty can help prevent these consequences and does not have to be resource intensive. ATD institutions, particularly those with smaller institutional research (IR) departments,

often engage math faculty and other faculty/staff with strong data interpretation skills to support the IR department in offering training and ongoing support.

Ongoing support to faculty and staff to facilitate their role in the redesign can help in providing prompts/nudges and reminders of the behavior you want faculty and staff to enact. Just as we can't expect students to remember everything from a four-hour orientation workshop, we can't expect faculty and staff to become data pro's after one or two training sessions. Employing a growth mindset approach to the training of employees in using data should help reinforce the idea that ongoing support is likely to be needed and is beneficial to their continued learning and skill building in this area.

## Data Distribution Strategy Worksheet

The table below can be used as a resource to help institutions plan their data distribution strategy.

Role	Data Required	Who Owns Data	How Should Data Be Displayed	How Frequently	How Will Data Be Used	Training Required
Example: Faculty	Career and academic goals of their students	Student services	Student profile	Updates provided monthly	To inform faculty-student discussions and course contextualization	Yes
	Support service utilization for their students	Institutional research	Data dashboard and student profile	Weekly	To ensure their students get needed support outside the classroom	Yes
	Gatekeeper course pass rates, disaggregated	Institutional research	Data dashboard	Each semester/term	To adjust content and structure	No



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

Data in the hands of stakeholders is a tool critical to ensuring the college community has the right information to support a holistic student supports approach. This creates a space for institutional research teams to bolster the teaching and learning of faculty and staff by providing the foundation for content and context in the interpretation of data. By encouraging

the sharing of data and engaging in meaningful discussions on the current student experience and the ideal student experience at your institution, faculty and staff become partners in your holistic student supports work. When the entire college community is informed and empowered, they are in better position to see opportunities for improving the student experience.

# DEVELOPING A TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

As your college explores structures, workflows, and business processes to support your holistic student supports redesign, you will need to ensure that faculty and staff have the necessary training and professional development to understand, implement, and sustain this work. This may include changes in roles, accountability measures, using new technologies, using data to inform continuous improvement, implementing new college business practices, policy changes, program updates, change leadership, and effective communication practices.

This chapter explores the creation of a strategy for the technical training and professional development necessary for the successful adoption of your holistic student supports approach. Training refers to learning associated with acquiring specific knowledge or skills required for a specific job or task. For example, learning how to raise and lower flags in an early alert system, or to use a degree planning tool. Professional development focuses on the continuous growth of skills, knowledge, and abilities that contribute to professional and personal growth. For example, advisors coming to see themselves as guides of students' learning experiences, or full-time

and adjunct faculty and staff learning new techniques for supporting students holistically. Training is usually a short-term, easily measured activity—professional development is continuous and cumulative.

Towards the end of the chapter, we present templates to complement your broader action plan (Chapter 5). We encourage you to consider how your strategy can complement and integrate with the institution's overall professional development offerings, particularly those related to student success efforts. Ultimately, your use of this chapter will depend on the overall shape of your project.

## Creating an Effective Plan

### **STEP ONE: Determine your professional development and training audience(s) and their needs**

Who will feel the impact of your redesign and in what ways? What new technologies or processes will be called for? What new skills or approaches will different stakeholders need? Depending on the specifics of your redesign, the audience may include the following:

- Senior administrators, such as provosts, deans, and department chairs.
- Advisors, including both professional advisors and departmental faculty who advise students.
- Student support staff who work directly with students, such as counselors, financial aid and career services personnel, librarians, tutors, and student life staff.
- College employees who support the operation of the college but do not necessarily work directly with students.
- Full-time and adjunct instructors/faculty.
- Technology and institutional research staff.
- Students.

Remember these five key points:

1. Each audience will have different perspectives, different expectations, and different needs, and would benefit from a customized training strategy comprising multiple trainings, plans, and timelines.

2. Concentrate on the structural, process, and attitudinal changes essential to a holistic student supports approach. To that end, full-time and adjunct faculty and staff may need a comprehensive strategy for training and professional development that provides more than one-time trainings on tools or new processes.
3. It is important that all college faculty and staff have a working knowledge of the changes taking place and the expectations of other groups. For example, advisors will need to understand how their role connects to that of the faculty—who in turn must understand the roles of the various support service staff.
4. Even employees in technical areas, such as IR and IT, need to understand the “why” behind the redesign as the sustainability of your redesign efforts requires the enthusiasm and inclusion of all college student and operational support areas. At many institutions using technology to enhance their student supports, IT staff co-lead to bridge the communication gap between those working with students daily and those ensuring the technology works efficiently for all.
5. Professional development ideally inspires a willingness among full-time and adjunct faculty to become active partners in the change process. Aim for programs that will unify various groups.

As employees learn new skills, processes, and approaches, they will also develop stronger bonds across your institution’s units or divisions.

 For more information about engaging faculty in student success, see Achieving the Dream <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/121/cutting-edge-series-1-engaging-adjunct-and-full-time-faculty-in-student-success-innovation>; and Public Agenda’s Engaging Adjunct and Full-time Faculty in Student Success Innovation <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/13810/engaging-faculty-and-staff-in-the-student-success-agenda-case-studies-from-the-walmart-foundation-press-for-completion-grant-program>.

Refer to the table below to assess the capacities/skills required to begin to deliver student services in a holistic way from an equitable lens. In the second column indicate who already has that skill and in the third column indicate who needs that skill but is lacking. Finally, in the fourth column indicate if capacities/skills are connected (for example, career coaching skills may be connected to financial coaching). This table will quickly help you determine where the gaps are in skills and will help inform you of professional development/training audiences and the skills they require.

STAFF CAPACITIES ASSESSMENT			
Capacities/Skills	Current Capacity (Staff that possess the capabilities)	Gap Analysis (Staff that need the capacity but are lacking those)	Connectivity with Other Capacities/Skills (Identify connections that need to be built and/or strengthened)
<b>Education &amp; Career Services</b> Academic Advising Career Coaching Job Training Employment Specialists			
<b>Income &amp; Work Supports</b> Financial Aid Planning Public Benefits Advising Transportation Assistance Food Pantry Child Care Assistance Housing Assistance Tax Preparation/Assistance			
<b>Financial Services &amp; Asset Building</b> Financial Literacy Education Financial Coaching Financial Product Assistance			
<b>Technology Utilization</b> Raising early alerts Creating academic plans Appropriate messaging through technology			

## STEP TWO: Determine the goals and objectives of the overall strategy

The key to a successful training strategy is knowing what the participants need to understand and be able to do. i.e. What gaps in information, knowledge, or skills exist that could prevent different stakeholders in moving to the new behaviors and processes you want them to implement? For each audience you identified in Step One, develop goals and objectives.

**Goal:** A broad statement of the expected impact of the strategy overall. What behaviors (these can be

technical) and/or attitudes do you hope to see? Why is this important? What impact will these changes have?

**Learning Objectives:** Specific statements describing the knowledge, skills, and abilities that participants should possess after various sessions. Equip each objective with a verb embodying a measurable and observable action. Two or three objectives per session are sufficient; each objective will encompass multiple skills.

## STEP THREE: Decide on frequency and delivery mode

**Frequency:** Neither the technical training nor the professional development component will be a one-time offering. On the technical end, skills will often need to be refreshed or updated as new capabilities emerge; and a subset of users will need more frequent support. Anticipating the “what” and “how” of the ongoing support will speed adoption of the tool and ease its implementation. As for professional development, provide multi-session, long-term engagements that enable full-time and adjunct faculty and staff to gain mastery of the new processes and behaviors.

**Delivery mode:** Initial in-person technical trainings could be more effective in building confidence in using the tool, but much of the ongoing support could be virtual. Could answers to common questions and remedies for common errors be automated? If so, the training session could cover that. Consider the most appropriate format for the session, including:

- Length of time needed for satisfactory engagement with the content, short of overwhelming the participants.
- Most effective group size.
- Mix of presentation, group activities or discussion, and individual reflection.

- Best messenger for the content, based on authority exercised and respect commanded, as well as on skill and knowledge.



For sessions focused on training to use tools, consider whether your technology vendor(s) have a training program and existing training materials in place. If so, you may want to ask the vendor representative(s) to “train the trainer,” offering their program(s) to a few key individuals at your institution, who can then train others or lead the development of your training program. (These are often useful for training, but insufficient for professional development.)



Is training expertise available at your institution? Perhaps people in your human resources department, as well as faculty skilled in instructional design, could co-create a program. Their involvement will strengthen the training and model collaboration across your institution’s units or divisions.



Which professional associations or other organizations could lend a hand in this area? For example, NACADA<sup>22</sup> excels at advising-specific trainings and professional development.

## TRAINING STAFF TO BUILD FINANCIAL SKILLS

Porterville College in California has invested significantly in the professional development of staff who provide WSSN integrated services. In the spring of 2017, 14 counselors and staff members participated in a five-day training on financial topics, including a financial-health model, income generation, spending plans, debt alleviation, credit

building, investing, retirement, and estate planning. Training also included the COACH model, with such topics as creating a college-going culture, developmental-level supports, and college-success strategies; learning coaching skills; and helping students generate income, save for college, and budget around financial aid, credit, and investing.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>

## STEP FOUR: Design the session agenda

Break the Step Two objectives into specific skills, bodies of knowledge, and competencies to create a logical sequence of agenda topics for the session.

 Based on objectives, agenda, and audience, identify the individual(s) who will most effectively deliver this training to attain your overall goal.

Determine where and when the series of sessions will take place, who will lead them, how invitations will be issued, and whether any pre-work or other materials will go to participants in advance.

**Evaluation:** This consists of two parts: participants' feedback on the effectiveness of the session a) in preparing them to take on a new role or use a new technology, and b) in making a positive impact on a change of process or behavior (or the adoption of a new technology). Decide whether, and how, to collect baseline data to measure these changes.

 Account for how and when the training will be offered to those who may not be present at the regularly scheduled session, such as adjunct faculty or part-time staff.

 Remember that most people will absorb information—and feel more comfortable using the knowledge and skills afterwards—when they engage with it throughout the session in meaningful ways.

 Reinforcing the rationale of the work is essential. Asking open-ended questions that begin with “why,” “how,” or “what,” rather than simply asking “Do you understand?” will help participants articulate your vision in ways that resonate with them and encourage buy-in from others. Likewise: “What questions do you have?” is preferable to “Do you have any questions?” This sets an expectation that everyone should be engaging deeply enough to formulate questions—which should be the norm in the learning process.

 Plan for and deliver “just-in-time” refresher training and/or communication of where resources are available to support early adoption. For example, when asking faculty to, say, raise an alert or complete a survey, offer links to short training videos on those tasks.

 Ideally training strategies include longer-term professional development activities. Consider how you might include learning circles, case studies, or weekly case discussions. The goal is to enhance the training structure with practical methods for internalizing behavioral change.

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## STEP FIVE: Evaluate and adjust as necessary

It will be important for the guiding team to monitor the success of the training and professional development offerings. That will allow improvements to the overall training strategy or remedies for any knowledge or skills gaps. Monitoring, frequent at the start of the implementation and scaling processes,

can occur less often afterward. Institutions have found it necessary to revisit their training needs and design at least once a year. This will also help the team understand where and when full-time and adjunct faculty and staff want to go deeper on specific topics.

# Professional Development Session Plan Template

<b>Presenter</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	
<b>Goals</b>	
<b>Training Topics</b>	
<b>Pre-Work/Handouts</b>	
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	
<b>Metrics to Ensure Outcomes Are Met</b>	
<b>Session Structure</b>	
<b>Modality</b>	
<b>Frequency</b>	

 All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by visiting [www.achievingthedream.org/hss](http://www.achievingthedream.org/hss)

## **College Example:** Leveraging a Peer-to-Peer Training Model at Montgomery County Community College

Supporting students to develop a comprehensive career, financial, and educational plan during their first semester was the focus of Montgomery County Community College's (MCCC) second round of reform through the iPASS grant mentioned in the introduction to this toolkit. The college brought on a completely new technology to help students explore their career interests and develop a career plan. That produced the most significant demand for training.

Advisors were the first to be trained. At a professional development day before use of the tool was required for students, two advisors led a training session with their peers. Critically, the training covered not only the nuts and bolts of using the tool, but also the philosophy and research behind it, to build buy-in and excitement. A few months later, during the first semester of using the tool, a professor who taught career development led another session, with a philosophical approach to career counseling. Later training opportunities, scheduled monthly, addressed new advising processes that blended career and academic advising.

MCCC chose the peer-to-peer approach because it had proved successful in prior projects. Such a significant change for advisors required sessions effective in building not only skill, but also confidence in and support for the new processes and tool. As reinforcement, the executive director of institutional research regularly emphasized the tool's reliability and validity.

### **Measuring Success**

A positive indicator was that all students in the college's target group successfully completed their career interest survey and developed a career plan as a requirement along the pathway to their second semester.

Feedback from advisors also indicated success. Many encouraged students outside the pilot group to use the tool; and a core group of advisors began to use it in their own coursework and as part of a lunch and learn series. Additionally, 87 percent of first-semester students who completed their MyCareerPlan assessment persisted to the spring semester, compared to only 26 percent of students who did not complete it. And over 1,000 returning students who were not required to complete it also took advantage of the tool.

For many counselors and advisors, career advising is at the heart of academic advising. Thus, the tool itself, with its ability to collect information from various sources, was very well received.

### **Institutionalized Change**

Stefanie Crouse, assistant professor/academic advisor and iPASS core team member, notes: "Our iPASS work has become part of the ongoing dialogue at MCCC." This manifests during biweekly meetings as cross-functional discussions about the ways that iPASS is changing the student experience. In monthly advising meetings, changes in protocol and student engagement are discussed. As the college heads toward more intensive changes surrounding the use of their learning management system, advisors participate in weekly check-ins where colleagues share experiences.

Reflecting on the five years of their holistic student supports approach, Crouse says: "Our early work in this space focused on education planning and early alerts, which laid the foundation for the next level: career planning through advising. Prior to this, advising was a transactional experience, focused on semester-by-semester experiences. Our approach now empowers advisors and students to see advising as creating a pathway for students from start to completion."

## Chapter 10

# BUILDING MEANINGFUL EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Higher education institutions—particularly community colleges, public four-year institutions, and minority serving institutions—are among many entities committed to tackling social problems, enhancing economic opportunity, and improving quality of life for individuals. Nearly every college is in a town, city, or county that is home to community partners. Many of their services align with the mission of our colleges, and some partnerships already exist, especially in areas related to workforce development, in which the needs and opportunities for both sides of the partnership are clear. Building a holistic student supports approach that goes beyond the typical academic supports and includes career and financial supports requires organizing and leveraging new partnerships to broaden the scope of services and boost results for all parties involved.

Traditionally, colleges have not seen a need to enter service areas that are in the sphere of social or community agencies. However, with the recognition that increasing numbers of our students face serious and competing demands that directly affect their ability to focus on their studies, working with community partners allows colleges to provide career, financial, and academic supports to students and create a student-centered education experience that leads to success and completion.

Leveraging partnership opportunities allows the institution to more efficiently provide holistic services to students, stretch limited budgets, reduce redundancies, strengthen college relations, and improve persistence and completion.

This chapter discusses the importance of identifying community partners based on interests and mission, framing written work agreements, clarifying expectations and goals on both sides, countering internal resistance, and maintaining ongoing engagement to grow and pivot when circumstances change.

## STEP ONE: Identify where you need a partner

To begin work on this aspect of expanding and integrating your student support services, it will be helpful to first assess your current and potential partnerships, as well as your processes for nurturing these relationships. If your college does not have community partners on campus, the assessment

can assist you in thinking through key questions for developing such partnerships.

*Note: This step assumes you have already developed a strong understanding of your students' needs, outlined in Chapters 2 and 4. The Student Needs Assessment in Chapter 2 should prove particularly useful for this step.*

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS NEEDS ASSESSMENT			
Service	Is this in line with the institution's vision for the student experience?	Is it provided effectively by the college or an existing partner?	Do we need to identify a partner?
Example: Housing assistance	Yes	Sometimes informally by staff but not systematic	Yes
Proactive support in application and intake processes			
Academic advising			
Career advising			
Job search and placement assistance, including resumes and interview skills			
Mentoring			
Counseling Services			
Financial education/literacy			
Individualized financial coaching			
Financial aid assistance			
Emergency aid assistance			
Benefits screening and application			
Access to child care			
Access to reliable transportation			
Access to nutritious food, often via a food pantry or food bank			
Access to safe housing			
Access to mental and physical health services			
Access to clean, professional clothing			
Tax preparation assistance			
Legal assistance			
Other			

## How Three Colleges Leveraged Community Relationships

**Highline College (WA)** has developed a strong partnership with the United Way of King County. In the fall of 2016, United Way began piloting the Housing Ready Crisis Resilient program to test new strategies to reduce homelessness by increasing low-income county residents' access to emergency financial assistance, income supports, and financial products. United Way saw Highline College as an ideal campus for the pilot "because of the work the college has already done to address homelessness and poverty through the WSSN, Welcome Back Center, and other campus-wide efforts." This partnership addresses a range of services including:

- Direct enrollment in or referrals to programs related to housing assistance, food assistance, transportation, FAFSA, and tax preparation.
- Education and awareness of the Working Students Success Center, scholarships, financial aid, child care, and other programs.
- Workshops on financial empowerment and asset building.
- Direct financial coaching for students.
- Hosting events on campus.

- Free tax-preparation services for college students and eligible faculty.
- Commitment to work with students and school leaders to design effective interventions.

**Danville Community College (VA)** launched a partnership with Virginia 529, a state program to promote college savings. DCC's Greater Opportunities for Achievement in Learning (GOAL) Center is partnering with Virginia 529 to kick off a new "Two Generation" effort. Through this partnership, students can attend financial workshops and receive financial advice on college savings, not only for themselves, but also for their children.

**College of the Ouachitas (AR)** has developed a partnership with the Central Arkansas Development Council, a private nonprofit community-action program that provides a wide array of resources. One is the Individual Development Account program, designed to help people become more financially stable. Council representatives visit the campus to conduct workshops on the program and are available to follow up with students and help them develop a better understanding of financial management and asset building.

## STEP TWO: Identify what you desire in an ideal partner

For the services you identified in Step One as needing a partner to deliver, the team should discuss and document what they desire in a partner. There are many considerations at this stage. At minimum, keep in mind the following when completing the table below:

- The extent of alignment you want between your goals and the goals of a partner. Typically, high alignment is ideal.
- The levels of data-sharing you want to have with your partner and what metrics are critical vs. ideal.
- The capacity of the partner to serve your students. Are you looking for a partner that can serve students in multiple ways or just one? Do you need a partner that can serve 50 or thousands of students?

- The specifics around the service you are looking for the partner to provide. For example, does the service need to be in-person or virtual? Appointment-based or drop-in? Located on campus, near campus, or anywhere in your service area? Are evening and weekend hours needed to serve working students?
- The potential for the partnership to help open other doors or lead to additional opportunities down the road.



Once you have completed the table, consider turning your ideal partner characteristics into a checklist to facilitate completion of **Step 4: Evaluate Partners and Make Selection.**

Service	Ideal Partner Characteristics (includes all the minimum characteristics)	Minimum Acceptable Characteristics
Example: Housing assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated to the academic and career success of those they serve as part of the road to self-sufficiency.</li> <li>• Capacity to provide support to 500 students.</li> <li>• Holistic approach to housing that includes access to transport, health care, and counseling.</li> <li>• Willing to share all data relating to our students who use their services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven track record in supporting homeless individuals/families to become self-sufficient.</li> <li>• Capacity to provide support to 100 students.</li> <li>• Willing to share data on whether our students received housing assistance.</li> <li>• Offers services in the evening and on weekends.</li> </ul>

### STEP THREE: Brainstorm potential partners

Next, the team should spend time identifying the names of organizations (local, state, or national) that could be partners. At this stage, the team should not venture toward evaluating the partners, but should focus on identifying a broad range of possibilities. As you brainstorm (in-person in a formal session or virtually via a shared document or email), consider the following:

- **Be creative.** Consider partnerships with local businesses with expertise or services your students could benefit from, such as local banks providing financial education or lower-priced services, or local entrepreneurs providing mentor opportunities for students seeking to open their own business.

- **Build on existing relationships.** External partnerships can grow out of various formal and informal connections. Consider checking with your institutional foundation or board of trustees, or interviewing faculty and staff to find out where relationships already exist in any form and look for ways to expand or strengthen them.

- **Research which organizations other colleges partner with.** Looking at other institutions’ choices can broaden your perspective on which organizations can support your goals.

### STEP FOUR: Evaluate potential partners and select

This will require the team to conduct research into each partner organization. It may take some time but is critical to ensuring the best fit for your needs. The

team should nominate one or two people to conduct the research, paying attention to the aspects noted in the table below.

INSERT SERVICE NAME:				
Potential Partner	Partner’s Strategic Goals/ Mission	Partner’s Major Projects/ Services	Sample of Partner’s Outcomes	Partner’s Strengths

After completing this table, the team needs to evaluate with the goal of identifying the ideal partner or narrowing the possibilities. The two key questions to address are:

- 1. How close are they to your ideal partner characteristics identified in Step Two?** If you turned your ideal characteristics into a checklist, use it to facilitate discussion.
- 2. What is the potential for impact on students’ lives and their progression along a pathway?**

Also, you may want to address the following:

- What are the risks with potential partners? Consider the risks both of partnering and of not partnering with them (what would you miss out on?).

- Are these organizations you would be proud to be associated with? Do they have a good reputation in the community?
- Is there another institution that has partnered with any of these organizations, one you could contact for information?
- How much time and what resources would it take to set up a partnership with this organization? Is the potential impact on student experience and outcomes worth this investment or could those resources yield a higher return elsewhere?

## Decide on Your Partner(s)

Based on your discussion, you should have at least shortened your list of potential partners. You may want to initiate discussions with the remaining possibilities to gauge how willing and able they are to fulfill the components of the ideal partnership.

When making the final decision, consider the following:

- **Keep it manageable for your staff.** Too many partners can be a lot to manage, particularly if they are partners in the same area, such as working with multiple food banks in different parts of your service

areas. Where this is the case, consistency in the partnership agreement is important to the efficiency and consistency of the students' support experience.

- **Take a holistic approach to external supports, not just college-provided supports.** Where multiple partners are working on issues that are tightly connected, your college should align goals, data sharing, and other aspects of partnership to avoid creating new support siloes for the student to navigate. For example, a significant proportion of students who require public benefits assistance are also likely to gain from food banks/pantries, emergency aid, and financial coaching.

## Leveraging a Partnership for Multiple Effects

When a student at Cañada College (CA) ran into a problem attempting to cash his financial aid check, he approached a financial coach on campus. The coach used her relationship with a local credit union to put the student in touch with the right person to help. More than just cashing the check, the credit union was able to set up the student with

free checking and savings accounts, consolidate his debt from a previous car loan, and lower his interest rate. The student had begun with only one request; his savvy coach leveraged a college partnership to help him build a financial infrastructure to lead to greater success over time.

## STEP FIVE: Begin partnership discussions and develop a strong written agreement

When first reaching out to a potential partner, nominate a relationship manager to be the key contact for discussions. This may not end up being the same person who executes the partnership once it is agreed on. Often, at preliminary stages, the relationship manager at this stage is higher in the college's hierarchy to demonstrate commitment, has a broad institutional view, and holds authority to make partnership decisions.

As you enter talks, you will need to:

- **Speak their language.** Demonstrating you care about their goals and needs being met through the partnership will get the relationship off on a positive note.
- **Be aware of institutional differences.** Divergence in culture and calendar should be recognized. When a nonacademic institution partners with an academic institution, busy times—and priorities during such—will not always coincide.
- **Effective partnerships must be win-win.** When both sides feel satisfaction in truly making a difference in people's lives, a partnership flourishes. This means learning about one another's goals and developing a shared vision. For example, establish reciprocal relations with your local workforce development center; offer on-site help with resume and job preparation in exchange for updates on local labor trends useful to your career center.
- **Be prepared to be flexible.** Partnerships take time to set up and are often made with organizations with limited capacity, so it's essential to be patient and keep communication frequent and open. Partners need to welcome change as the service delivery evolves.
- **Keep students at the center.** Partnerships should support a holistic approach to serving students and their families, so students achieve academic success and financial stability.

## Setting Up a Written Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding

Whether the partnership is formal or informal, jointly developing a mutually beneficial agreement will clarify roles and expectations and provide reminders of essential information, such as the goals of the partnership, how you measure success, and how the partnership works in practice for students. This should keep the partnership on track, especially when inevitable staffing transitions occur.

Writing a Memorandum of Understanding will clarify, among other things:

- The purpose and goals of the partnership. Goals should be clear, measurable, and focused on both the student impact and experience.
- How that purpose is linked to a partners' mission.
- Expectations and the roles and responsibilities of the partner.
- How students will be connected to the service and what you want that experience to look like. To plan this in detail and from the students' perspective, so you may want to use tools offered in the student-centered design process. For example, you could work with your partner to develop a mental model<sup>23</sup> of the students' experience of being referred to and receiving the service. Then, perhaps, create a process map that specifies the actions taken by each partner and the communication that occurs.
  - How will you identify which students need the service?
  - Does the support need to be provided on campus, or could you refer students to your partner's services? How will referrals be made?
  - If the service is not provided on campus, will the college or partner provide transportation support to students who need it?
  - What feedback loops can be set up to ensure the college knows the service has been received and its outcomes?
- Communication and decision-making protocols, both day-to-day and long-range. Maintaining regular, open communication with your partner(s)

is essential to keeping the relationship strong, identifying and addressing process errors quickly, and adjusting when student needs or the external environment—such as local, state, or federal policy—changes.

- How resources will be shared.
- Data to be collected and reported on both sides. Create a mechanism to analyze data that reveal whether goals are being met. A continuous feedback loop could identify which programs and services are—and are not—helping students reach their goals.
- What procedure should be followed if one or both parties wish to end the partnership. Keep up with your students' needs and your college's limitations. As new needs arise, develop new partnerships to respond. Don't be afraid to end partnerships that are no longer working for your students.

The Memorandum of Understanding will help establish the processes for how the college will work with the partner and ensure that students remain the top priority. Such agreements lay a foundation of trust, which is essential for working through common partnership challenges such as:

- **Resistance to change.** Some on the college side may feel that bringing nonacademic services to students is not a necessary college function; on the other side, a community-based organization may feel the partnership threatens its budget or role. Staff on both sides may worry about increased workload and demands on their limited time.
- **Database problems.** Colleges and their community-based partners may have outdated or incompatible database systems. In fact, this is likely because these entities make do with scant resources, which could limit the partnership's ability to collect information on services provided.
- **Culture clashes.** The missions or work styles of the partners may collide. A well-articulated agreement on common goals and outcomes is the best guarantee of a mutually beneficial partnership.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/mental-models/>

# Considerations for Data Collection and Partnership Evaluation

Your institution has several options for the collection of data and the evaluation of a partnership. Here are two.

## **CONSIDERATION ONE: Create a neutral or equitable evaluation team**

We strongly recommend that a college establish a partner leadership team. It would comprise representatives from active internal and external partners and assigned the primary responsibility to facilitate:

- A coordinated and integrated service system for employers and job seekers.
- Customer satisfaction and continuous quality improvement processes to gather and use customer feedback for program improvement. All staff must share commitment to and implementation of Customer Service Standards.
- An open communication process with regular meetings and consensus decision-making.
- Where possible, open input for site-based decisions, and a conflict-resolution process for partner disputes.
- The development of site-based policies and procedures as needed, to enhance customer services, accountability, and the integration of services.
- Production of a quarterly operations report to be shared with all partners and stakeholders.
- The development of a policy regarding the length of terms and a rotation policy for the partner leadership team.
- Determination of appropriate alignment of partners to ensure that all partners deliver services and supports within the scope of the college's mission and strategic vision.

## **CONSIDERATION TWO: Assemble a holistic student services data system advisory committee**

A college could accomplish this by following five steps:

### **1. Identify members**

Select them from the wide set of constituents representing both those who will design/maintain the data system and those who will use it: for instance, IT staff, senior and mid-level managers, faculty (both full- and part-time), and student services staff who will be working with students. Include any key external partners who will be involved in service delivery and data sharing.

### **2. Hold planning meetings**

Determine the tasks of the committee and the goals of your program, as well as who is being served, what services are going to be provided, and who will provide them. Next, put together a plan for system development and an outline of key data elements for review.

### **3. Design the data system**

Convene a series of meetings to work through the design of the system, the elements to be collected and tracked, and the types of reports to generate to ensure that the system meets the needs of the college.

### **4. Test for usability**

Once the system is designed, take ample time to test it and confirm that users are comfortable with the system interface, and identify any problems that users are having with data collection, entry, and use.

### **5. Design ongoing evaluation and seek feedback**

Then hold regular meetings of the committee to evaluate the system's effectiveness, trouble-shoot problems, and make adjustments.

The main concerns are to ensure that the partnerships effectively serve the students and to gather the feedback vital to the continuous improvement process.

## Data review timelines and continuous improvement guidelines

Institutions need a reliable system to collect baseline data and must create timelines for thoroughly reviewing the data—and the partnerships—on a regular basis. It is essential, for external accountability and internal growth and sustainability, to document service use and impact, and to analyze what is and is not working in terms of students' achieving their goals. Good data, widely shared among relevant stakeholders (while protecting confidentiality), foster progress toward persistence and attainment goals.

Articulating improvement guidelines on outcome goals powers a continuous feedback loop. Data on

services requested and provided are generated; the numbers are matched against those in the guidelines. If the college is on track to maintain steady progress, excellent. If not, automatically generated is a process of devising and implementing adjustments, which themselves generate data.

Through those timelines and guidelines, a holistic support approach can hone service delivery to help more and more low-income and other underserved students achieve their academic goals and improve their financial health. That, in turn, can benefit a wider set of students—and the college as a whole.

## A NOTE ON THE IMPACT OF POLICY ON HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORTS

As your college moves into new areas to support students, federal, state, and local policy decisions outside higher education begin to affect your work in new ways. For example, food pantries are becoming more prevalent on campuses across the country to address students' immediate food insecurity issues. When setting up such pantries, identifying which items will be most useful to students depends to some extent on what items are and are not covered by SNAP benefits. In fact, food pantries tend to expand beyond providing food to offer some essential items not covered by public benefits, such as toilet paper, soap, cleansers, and feminine hygiene products.

Therefore, to help your college better serve students more holistically, you may take a more

active role in trying to shape discussions on local, state, and federal policy. Consider using the Integrated Student Support Services Policy Assessment tool, which provides guidance on, for example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Workforce Training; Financial Aid and Education; Access to Benefits; and Child Care and Housing, Transportation, and Food.

 Download Achieving the Dream's Integrated Student Support Services: State Policy Considerations at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/17438/integrated-student-support-services-state-policy-considerations>.

# CONCLUSION

Holistic student supports provides a framework for institutions committed to designing a student-focused culture that delivers a seamless, personalized, and collaborative experience for students. This toolkit offers a starting point for institutions looking to improve academic performance, life outcomes, and equity for students who, historically, have not been well-served by higher education.

Yet change on this scale presents significant challenges for institutions. It demands the campus community work together more closely than ever before to examine the impact of policies, processes, structures, and culture on their students and make significant changes where necessary. No single resource can provide all the guidance and answers institutions need to make these tough decisions and implement their changes. Achieving the Dream offers this toolkit as a free, publicly available resource to help institutions make informed decisions and execute effectively along the redesign journey. For institutions that seek more comprehensive guidance, we offer additional support through various coaching and training tools, resources, and peer learning opportunities.

For more information on these, contact Dr. Mei-Yen Ireland at [mireland@achievingthedream.org](mailto:mireland@achievingthedream.org).



# STRATEGIES FOR GROUNDING YOUR REDESIGN IN EQUITY

## **STRATEGY ONE: Develop a campus-wide definition of student success and equity**

All too often in higher education, words or phrases that allude to complex concepts are used with an assumption that everyone hearing and using those words understands them in the same way. Yet, taking the time to consider, we know this is not the case.

Definitions are vital to building a common understanding of goals, challenges, solutions, and the purpose of holistic redesign. Delineation of concepts that are complex, subjective, and fluid provides clarity that shows all stakeholders the direction in which they should head.

For holistic student supports, it is particularly important to elucidate the key concepts or beliefs that underpin your efforts. At minimum, we encourage institutions to develop campus-wide definitions of terms like: “student success,” which is subjective and vague; “equity,” which is complex and often misunderstood; and “holistic student supports” or whatever comparable phrase you choose. Campus engagement can help personalize definitions to your institution and legitimize them, as the community sees itself in the final wording. This is particularly important for terms that refer to students. Bringing students into defining “student success,” for instance, provides a depth and legitimacy that can’t be achieved otherwise.

For definitions of some key words, refer to the introduction to this toolkit. You may also find Achieving the Dream’s equity statement could contribute to your own definition of equity for students. View the equity statement at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/about-us>.

## **STRATEGY TWO: Make your commitment to culture change public**

Publicly stating your goals and your commitment to them is a critical part of executing your strategy. It increases expectations that the institution will hold itself accountable to achieving culture change. Moreover, it can inspire your community to pitch in, generate interest in new partnerships to support students, and thereby energize the team leading the effort.

It’s important, in building trust and enthusiasm, for students, faculty, and staff to understand the values inherent in the course your college sets. When you communicate your commitment to change, it can help de-stigmatize the use of college services such as food pantries, emergency aid, and financial coaching. You will have demonstrated the prevalence of the need for those services and their impact on a student’s ability to progress.

## **STRATEGY THREE: Embed an equity lens into your decision-making processes**

Culture change is not simply an alteration in policy that trickles down into practice. It requires ongoing adjustments to the day-to-day operations of the college. This is particularly true when that change is a pivot toward a greater emphasis on equity, a word that has as many definitions as there are stakeholders.

Once you have crafted a widely agreed on understanding of what equity comprises, the guiding team members can embed it in their deliberations on designing a new student support approach. For example, the team could explore the following questions in every strategic decision they make:

- Who gains most from the options we are considering? Who stands to lose, if anyone?
- Teams could use tools from the student-centered design process (Appendix C) to think through the potential impact on students with different goals, needs, and responsibilities, such as student personas. Even better, getting input from students directly about how the decision could impact them can be informative.
- How does this impact contribute to achieving our definition of equity and our redesign goals?
- What is the source of any inequitable impact identified?
- What steps need to be taken or what needs to change to make sure this decision supports students equitably?

## STRATEGY FOUR: Expand your definition of sustainability

Sustainability is the active process of establishing the changes and outcomes of your holistic student supports redesign efforts as a lasting part of your institution's structures, policies/behaviors, and culture/attitudes. When Achieving the Dream talks about planning for sustainability, we do not mean finding funds and other resources to continue the redesign project "as is." Instead, the idea is to sustain the successful changes that your efforts have produced, to continue working towards the goals you have not yet achieved, and/or to keep identifying new goals.

We encourage you to consider a more complex definition of sustainability that includes the following dimensions:

- Actively building on the successes you have achieved. Continue to leverage the knowledge, skills, resources, and relationships you developed through the grant, for instance, to inform the steady improvement of your advising, planning, and other student support services. Explore how to apply these resources to other initiatives taking place on campus and share them with the colleagues involved.
- Ensuring your efforts are, and continue to be, in pursuit of eliminating achievement gaps and effecting equity for current and future generations.
- Working towards an achievable level of agility that will enable you to continue to refine and improve your work over the longer term as the goals, needs, challenges, and strengths of the students and communities you serve evolve. Agility<sup>24</sup> requires both the ability to be nimble/responsive to a changing environment, as well as maintaining a stable core that anchors the constant change to your mission.

To help your team pursue this expanded understanding of sustainability, we offer the following discussion questions.

## Review/Reflect on Your Progress

1. What are the goals of your student support redesign?
2. What have you accomplished so far?
  - a) What has been the impact of your work? What data informs your response?
  - b) Do you have the momentum needed to achieve a change?
3. What goals have not been reached? What challenges have not been addressed?
  - a) Be sure to consider student outcomes in aggregate and for different student populations. Is your work impacting all students and closing achievement gaps?

## Sustaining the Changes

1. What has been done or needs to be done to institutionalize the successes of your redesign, so they become a permanent part of the college culture? (For example, policy changes, cross-training other staff, budget allocation, restructuring, adjustments to job descriptions, new protocols and procedures, updates to performance evaluation/expectations, professional development.)
2. What resources are needed to sustain the work? (Consider resources such as time from existing faculty, staff, administrators, new positions, equipment, space, and finances, etc.)
3. What obstacles might you encounter as you work toward sustainability? How will you address them? For example, do you have a plan for succession of key team members and senior institutional leadership?
4. What partners, outside your institution, could be helpful in sustaining your work?

<sup>24</sup> Balancing Acting and Reacting: Agility in Today's Higher Ed Environment: [https://evollution.com/managing-institution/operations\\_efficiency/balancing-acting-and-reacting-agility-in-todays-higher-ed-environment/](https://evollution.com/managing-institution/operations_efficiency/balancing-acting-and-reacting-agility-in-todays-higher-ed-environment/)

## Building on Your Successes

1. What's your vision for the next iteration of holistic student supports redesign at your institution? For example, if you focused on academic supports, have you considered how to integrate services such as financial supports, financial aid, tutoring, library services, or child care services into a more holistic approach?
2. Do you have the right people on the team and proper team structure to realize your new vision? Are other efforts taking place on campus that you should work with more collaboratively?
3. What partners, outside your institution, could be helpful in the next phase of your work?

## Sustainability as a Concept of Equity

1. What structural, process, and attitudinal changes from your student support redesign are most impactful for your historically underserved populations?<sup>25</sup>
  - a) What evidence informs your response?
  - b) Have these changes been institutionalized to ensure they are sustained?
  - c) What more needs to be done to ensure equity for underserved populations?
2. What structures are—or need to be—in place to collect ongoing student input to inform the continuous improvement and evolution of your work?

## Sustainability as Agility

1. How could you gain a stronger understanding of future higher education needs and goals in your service area and integrate this knowledge into current decisions or future planning?
  - a) Are these efforts systematic or one-off?
2. In what ways does your institution provide the structure, space, and culture needed to promote continued improvement?
  - a) Are faculty, staff, and students able to propose solutions to challenges or pain points and feel confident that their proposals will be considered sincerely and fairly? Is the bureaucracy kept at a reasonable level?<sup>26</sup>
  - b) How does this play out in your holistic student supports work? How can your redesign team make the time and space to propose and work on new ideas?

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<sup>25</sup> Examples of historically underrepresented students include but are not limited to: first-generation, low-income, students of color; adult students; marginalized orientations, gender identities, and intersex students; students with second-language backgrounds; undocumented students; veterans; students with disabilities; students with dependents; foster care youth; and formerly and currently incarcerated students.

<sup>26</sup> <https://evollution.com/opinions/achieving-agility-higher-education-critical-transformations/>

Appendix  
**B**

## HSS IN ACTION

Making the institutional changes to implement a holistic student supports approach is no small task. It must be a deliberate, concerted, and institution-wide effort that involves leadership, staff, faculty, and ultimately the students themselves. However, that does not mean that this work is done in a vacuum. Institutions can often connect holistic supports to other efforts already occurring on campus—for instance, implementing guided pathways, revamping an institution’s strategic plan, responding to a system- or state-wide initiative on improving student success, preparing for an accreditation review, or being involved in another grant-funded initiative.

The following case study looks at Clark College in Washington and provides insight into its extensive work to address equity gaps through intentional student-centered design and the alignment of institutional practices. As you review this case study, you will be able to identify design principles and practices described in Chapter 1 of this toolkit. College teams are encouraged to use this case study as a starting point for a discussion about how their institution can make these types of changes to better help students achieve their academic, career, and life goals.

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### **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES:** Transforming Student Services at Clark College

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I don’t know that I have ever been anywhere where I felt like somebody’s on my team so much. Like, you want success for me as much as I want success for me and that was an amazing feeling.

—Terra, Nursing student and single mother at Clark College

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Clark College’s guiding theme as an institution is transformation. Central to that theme has been creating a campus environment in which students see the college as a comprehensive resource to help them achieve their academic, career, and life aspirations. Clark supports those aspirations with holistic and integrated student support services.

As one of 19 colleges that participated in Achieving the Dream’s Working Students Success Network

(WSSN), Clark set out to re-envision their student services in a way that was less “siloeed,” more intentionally collaborative, and designed to reach significantly more students, particularly low-income, working students, student parents, and students from historically underserved groups. The WSSN’s focus on intentional combinations of supports for each student aligned with the college’s vision and strategic plan for integrating student services and provided the college with the opportunity to infuse resources into that work.

Specifically, Clark aimed to:

- Strengthen the integration of career exploration and coaching into every aspect of the college’s wrap-around support services.
- Expand the Workforce Education Services staff to provide more intensive, one-on-one support for students.
- Develop a financial literacy program to support student knowledge and skills to make informed financial management decisions.
- Normalize access to public benefits as a tool that students can use to be successful in their educational and professional goals.

Clark’s efforts to redesign its student services were systematic and aimed at a long-term transformation that would increase student completion rates. It began by forming a cross-functional leadership team that included the high-level leadership of the vice president of student affairs, the director of workforce education programs, the director of career services, and the decision support specialist for continuous improvement and analytics. The makeup of this team ensured that a variety of perspectives guided the work and that the effort to strengthen and integrate the college’s student services was a collaborative campus-wide initiative.

## Individualizing and Integrating Support

One of Clark’s first decisions was to use some initiative funds to hire four resource coaches to lead the implementation of more integrated services at the college and provide students with the focused services they needed in different program areas. The new personnel included a:

- **Workforce Education Services (WES) Coach**, working directly with students enrolled in WES for retention and student support purposes.
- **Transitional Studies Coach**, working directly with students enrolled in Transitional Studies, a program for students advancing to credit bearing coursework for retention and support purposes.
- **Financial Literacy Coach**, providing individual financial coaching for students, assisting them with developing short- and long-term financial goals,

budgeting, managing credit, making loan repayment plans, and asset building. The coach also developed and implemented financial literacy workshops.

- **Retention/Career Coach**, providing individual assistance with career goal-setting, planning, research to select a major, career preparation, and developing student success plans.

The coaches are now a permanent part of the college’s staff. They work directly with students in each of the four areas to provide one-on-one coaching and support, to refer students to other resources—both internal and external to the college—and to provide intensive follow-up to make sure students get the services they need to be successful. For Clark, a key part of the design was to promote a high degree of collaboration among the coaches through regular meetings and case management note-sharing, so they would routinely exchange knowledge and coordinate service delivery. “We were trying to eliminate the situation where students were having to tell their stories again and again to different people in different offices,” says Armetta Burney, director of workforce education services.

Another area of focus for Clark was to design multiple ways to connect with students, identify their needs, and refer them to the appropriate services. Those innovations have endured. For example:

- The college embedded information about a wide variety of services, including financial literacy and management skills, career education, and access to public benefits, into their College 101: College Essentials course (required of, but not limited to, all transfer students).
- Students in Workforce Education Services—which serves those who are pursuing vocational, professional, and technical non-transfer degree programs and certificates—go through an intensive intake process and have access to an array of academic and nonacademic supports. These include assistance with tuition, fees, and books, as well as help in accessing other supports that include public benefits such as Basic Food, Employment, and Training (BFET). These supports are important to help low-income students succeed.

- To make strategic use of their limited resources, the college developed some more targeted programs to aid low-income students surmount short-term obstacles—and ultimately connect with longer-term solutions. For instance, the college’s Emergency Grant Program benefits students who encounter extraordinary events or circumstances that could hinder their ability to continue their education. The newly launched food pantry addresses immediate food insecurity issues and connects students to additional benefits. In addition, these students receive coaching from the financial literacy coach to build longer-term financial management skills.

Clark redesigned its student entry and onboarding process to include a comprehensive intake survey every student must take to be able to register for classes. This survey asks students questions about academic readiness and the need for student support services, such as child care, transport or food assistance, financial literacy or coaching, or technology assistance. Their responses lead to direct follow-up from relevant departments to ensure students have the resources they need from day one of their college experience.

To support students as they enroll at Clark, the college uses internal funds to hire enrollment navigators who will serve as the main connection point for new students. These navigators will assist students with the enrollment process and help connect them to resources addressing needs gleaned from their student survey answers. Students are then assigned to the advising services office, which uses a caseload model. This approach gives advisors the ability to build meaningful relationships with their assigned students that will ultimately result in students’ being served in a more holistic and personal manner.

Underpinning the above is a robust data system. Clark was already capturing student utilization of services through transcripts, a tracking system, and notes; however, the college did not have a caseload management or referral system. As part of its work, Clark expanded its use of AdvisorTrac to allow enhanced tracking of and communication about student needs and progress, provide early alerts on student needs, and allow for effective referrals between the four coaches at the college. These new capabilities have enabled the college to scale this more personalized and sustained approach to support every student.

## Seeing Student Services as a Path to Success

To truly achieve its goal of transformation, Clark did several things to ensure that its new approach became a central part of the college’s culture. First, it recognized that creating a leadership team and hiring the coaches wasn’t enough to transform the college. In practice, it would take significant education and buy-in from faculty and staff to make the approach work.

To address this need, the college implemented a two-day training for staff at the end of the summer term, during which the college is closed to the public. During these annual trainings, staff are introduced to a variety of student services topics, including understanding barriers to student success. Devoting work time to these matters and setting clear participation expectations emphasizes the importance of helping students succeed and conveys the priority of student service to the college’s mission.

In addition, Clark provides college-wide training on understanding poverty to help staff and faculty better recognize the lived experiences of their students. Being able to see certain student issues through a different lens helps faculty and staff feel better equipped to recognize when support is needed and to step in to connect students with services. The trainings prepare them to ask students the kind of questions that can lead to getting them the right help, rather than making assumptions about the reasons for behaviors such as being late or falling asleep in class.

These measures have helped to break down service silos and led to a more collaborative approach to serving students. “One of the strongest outcomes of this work has been the collaboration across departments that had not previously worked together closely,” notes William Belden, vice president of student affairs. “Cross-departmental work has now become the regular way we do business.”

Just as important to working with faculty and staff to prepare them to better address student needs was getting students to view utilization of student services and access to benefits as a normal part of college life—to destigmatize the act of seeking these services and benefits that some see as a sign of weakness or failure on the student’s part. To do this, Clark created an online campaign using social media to promote access to benefits. Specifically, Clark produced a powerful set of videos with students speaking sincerely about their own lives, the help they needed, and how Clark was able to

provide them with the services and access to benefits that helped them succeed in college.

Overcoming negative perceptions was critical, according to Julie Robertson, decision support specialist for continuous improvement & analytics. “We surveyed one-third of our students to gain a better understanding of the challenges they were facing and found that at least a quarter of our students were routinely dealing with both food insecurity and housing insecurity. It was important for students to see that their individual challenges were shared by many of their peers.” The online campaign, particularly where students could hear from other students, was central in getting that message out.

At the same time, Clark worked to make sure that the services were available to address these issues when it became clear that they were barriers to student success. Key to being able to respond was the college’s partnerships with other external agencies. The college partnered with a local housing agency to refer homeless students directly to housing services to supplement the housing resource navigation it was already providing through the resource coaches. It worked with the Department of Social and Health Services to become

an assisting agency, which has allowed the college staff to complete public benefit applications on behalf of students. And it established the Penguin Food Pantry on campus to help address student food insecurity.

Ultimately, Clark transformed its campus into a hub of services, both academic and nonacademic, and normalized all services as a regular part of the college-going experience.

## Conclusion

Like many colleges, Clark College has been deeply involved in the implementation of guided pathways. Moving to a holistic student supports approach along with that work has allowed Clark to transform in such a way that it is now poised to truly meet the full range of needs of each of its students. “It can feel overwhelming,” says Belden, “but we are committed to thinking differently about how we serve students to ensure we are giving them the best chance to succeed at our institution, in our community and beyond.” Early evidence is suggesting positive results as students who have intensive and integrated interactions with student services are much more likely to persist from term to term.

## Questions for Reflection

The following questions are to help you think about what lessons to learn from the Clark College experience that could inform how your institution could move to a more holistic student support model.

1. Clark initially targeted certain programmatic and student service areas to connect with low-income students. Can you identify similar areas at your college where you would have significant opportunities to intervene in students’ lives and refer them to services and access to benefits?
2. A key to Clark’s success was an intentional effort to educate, train, and engage the staff and faculty at the college. Specifically, it tackled the issue of poverty directly. Does your institution’s culture promote that type of campus-wide involvement and discussions about tough issues such as poverty and the challenges that low-income students face? If not, how do you think your institution could move in that direction?
3. Clark has ultimately designed an ambitious student service model intended to capture holistic information about the needs of each student, from the minute he or she steps on campus, with on-going monitoring and follow-up throughout that student’s college career. Does your institution have the organizational and technological capacity to deliver, support, and track student services in this sustained way?
4. Clark used student survey data to identify key needs of its students and respond with the appropriate services. What do you believe are the most pressing issues for your students outside the classroom that your institution could address? How do you know?
5. What was the most valuable lesson you learned from the Clark College experience?
6. What do you believe would not translate to your institution as you think about strengthening your student services and why?



# STUDENT-CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS

This appendix provides a full overview of the student-centered design processes that can help institutions ensure their holistic student supports redesign is informed by the needs and wants of its students. Due to the heavy focus on gathering student perspectives and data, the process helps institutions design an approach to deliver equity in the student experience of support services.

## Purpose of Student-Centered Design

To help your team build its understanding of your students, we recommend embedding the process of student-centered design into your planning and implementation process. Student-centered design is a creative approach to identifying desirable solutions to complex problems. It takes the process of “design thinking” and contextualizes it to the education field with a central focus on the student. The process can be applied to any service, experience, or product that would benefit from the following:

- Beginning with a focus on student needs and experiences.
- Using multiple ways to bring student voices into the analysis of existing processes, policies, and/or services.
- Generating creative solutions to address the need/want.
- Rapid testing and implementation of solutions.
- A focus on continuous improvement.
- An approach that embraces failure as a learning opportunity.

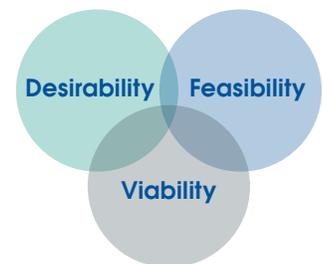
For colleges, much of the value of student-centered design is that it prioritizes and offers many tools for developing a deep understanding of the students’ needs, wants, and experiences before the design process begins. This focus on the student remains central throughout the process even as later stages of the process bring in the notion of whether ideas generated are feasible for the institution and a viable long-term solution to the need.

### Desirability

- Will this solution meet a student need?
- Will it fit into our students’ lives?
- Will it appeal to our students?
- Is it something our students actually want?

### Feasibility

- Do we have (or have the resources to acquire) the technology we need to execute the solution?
- Do we have the time necessary to execute the solution?
- Can we actually make it happen with the resources within our reach?



### Viability

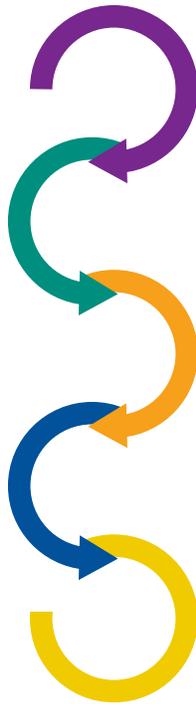
- Will the solution align with our vision and mission?
- Does this solution honor student budgets?
- What will the return on the investment look like?

A second reason that colleges find value in the student-centered design process is that it is flexible, simple to understand, and creative. The process can be followed as-is or the college can infuse aspects of the process into its current approach to planning and implementing redesigns. For each stage of the process there are many simple, effective tools available to support teams in keeping students at the center while being creative and nimble when executing.

## The Process

While there are a variety of visuals and descriptions of the design thinking, or student-centered design, process out there, they all follow essentially the same pattern. For the purposes of this introduction, we present a combination of the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia and the IDEO descriptions of design thinking.<sup>27</sup>

*Note: While the steps are listed in a linear sequence, when they are used in a redesign project, there likely will be looping back and forth between the steps.*



**What and When?** — This is the Design Brief, which outlines the purpose, scope, and key considerations for the design project.

**What Is?** — Identification of the current situation and student perspectives on the ideal experience based on an empathetic understanding of current experiences.

**What If?** — Generating options for creating an ideal student experience.

**What Wows?** — Selection of the option(s) that are impactful and “wowing” for students and are within the college’s resources and capabilities.

**What Works?** — Rapid prototyping and testing, selection and detailed design of the best option, and implementation.

## DESIGN TEAM

A design team leads the design project. The team should have five to seven members and include members from the service being redesigned as well as others whose knowledge and experience that

will be helpful to the design process. The process provides multiple opportunities to engage a wide range of students, staff, faculty, and administrative leaders in the redesign.

## The ‘What and When?’ Step – The Design Brief

The start of the process should be developing a design brief that provides the design team with critical information on their charge. It should include a brief project description, followed by information on scope, constraints, target users, exploration questions, and expected outcomes and success metrics.<sup>28</sup> The sponsor for the design project, typically a member of the college’s executive leadership team, develops the design brief in consultation with the executive leadership team and members of the design team. The executive leadership team should approve the brief, as it can also be thought of as a charter for the design team.

### Importance of a Balanced Design Brief

To be effective, the design brief must provide sufficient information to foster creativity while not being overly restrictive. Understanding that there are financial and capability constraints, along with technology considerations, encourages creativity, because new ways of doing things are necessary for the redesign to fulfill the purpose and objectives. If the constraints and considerations are not specified in the brief, it is more likely that the redesign will be less innovative and will focus more on just expanding upon what is already being done.

<sup>27</sup> The Designing for Growth Field Book: <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/the-designing-for-growth-field-book/9780231164672>

<sup>28</sup> The Designing for Growth Field Book: <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/the-designing-for-growth-field-book/9780231164672>

Your design brief should include the following components:

1. Project Description – A brief statement of the purpose or issue to be addressed by the project.
2. Scope – The boundaries of the project; what functions are—and are not—considered part the redesign, and what interactions between functions inside and outside the scope have to be considered.
3. Constraints – Limitations and expectations that must be met if the project is to be successful. Categories include resource availability, capability, technology considerations, relevant policies and due dates.
4. Intended Users – Who will be the primary user of the new experience, technology, or service?
5. Exploration Questions – Key questions that have to be answered to ensure an effective design. These will often be about students and new technology that may be available.
6. Expected Outcomes and Success Metrics – What results should the redesign achieve? How will we know if the redesign has been successful?

## The ‘What Is?’ Step – Current Situation and Ideal Experience

This step includes:

- Understanding the current experience and identifying obstacles, challenges, or gaps; leads to the development of a problem statement.
- Seeking student perspectives on their current experience, needs, and wants.
- Developing design criteria that will be used to help you identify which ideas you want to move forward with.

### Identifying the Challenges

The discovery process outlined in Chapter 4 of this toolkit encourages two approaches to defining the current situation and identifying problems and challenges.

**Part One:** Data collection and exploration focuses on a review of available quantitative and qualitative data as a starting point for discussion of the current model’s

impact on students. The review should consider information, relevant to the scope of the project, that may be available from focus groups, CCSSE, Noel-Levitz, the student information system and the learning management system, and other sources.

**Part Two:** Completing the first two columns of the Student Experience Discovery Inventory can help focus more on the process and policy side that helps define the student experience.



Two supplementary tools can be used to add depth to your analysis of the existing student experience:

1. An affinity diagram<sup>29</sup> is a great way to generate, organize, and consolidate information related to a complex issue or to analyze survey or interview data. The diagram consists of organizing ideas, or findings, according to their similarity.
2. A process map is a workflow diagram to bring forth a clearer understanding of a process or series of parallel processes.

Based on the outcomes of these efforts, the team then develops an overall problem statement summarizing the identified problems and challenges of the current situation. The problem statement will likely be several paragraphs in length.

### Seeking Students’ Perspectives

To fully understand the current student experience at your institution, it is essential to use a variety of techniques. Consider a combination of the following:

- Student understanding of their needs/experience: One-on-one interviews, focus groups, surveys, student journals.
- Third-party perspective of student needs/experience: Shadowing or observing, secret shopper, student mental models (e.g. a student’s understanding of how advising works).
- Development of student personas from this information.
- Students’ participating with tools like process mapping to identify every step in the student experience of career exploration and counseling.

<sup>29</sup> <http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/idea-creation-tools/overview/affinity.html>

## Developing Design Criteria

The last part of the “What Is?” step is the development of a set of design criteria. This builds on the design brief (which should be considered as a source of criteria) to incorporate components of your problem statement and the findings from the collection of student perspectives. Some examples of design criteria that are taken from a problem statement and student perspectives are below.

- Provide all students with online access to interest inventories and career exploration software.
- Provide all students, especially first-generation in college students and underserved populations, with the career and academic planning support necessary to be successful in college.
- Ensure that all students know someone who listens to them and on whom they can rely.
- Ensure that students don’t have to keep repeating their story when getting career counseling and academic advising.
- Ensure that the process accommodates students who are not able to be at the college during day time due to their work schedules, childcare responsibilities, or other reasons.

## The ‘What If?’ Step

This is intended to foster creative thinking to generate options for satisfying the design criteria developed at the end of the “What Is?” step. It generally manifests as a brainstorming session that is focused on generating a large number of ideas based on the design brief.

This can be a difficult step. There is a temptation to jump straight into solving a problem, latch onto a preferred idea before considering several options, or evaluating ideas as they are suggested. Below are some tips for how to run an effective brainstorming session within the student-centered design process.

- Identify a facilitator who is not on the design team to enable them to remain focused on their facilitation role rather than shift between facilitation and participation.
- Set rules for those participating to set the tone for the session. For example:
  - Defer judgement or evaluation of the ideas.
  - Encourage bold ideas.
  - Build on the ideas of others—use the phrase “yes and.”
  - Stay focused on the topic—use your design brief to help with this.
  - One conversation at a time.
  - Be visual.
  - Share the space—don’t allow the more vocal participants to dominate or derail the conversation.
- Invite a broad group of stakeholders to participate in the session to generate more, and more creative, ideas.
- Carefully design the session to fit your needs. Consider the following outline:
  - Begin by outlining the problem again and having participants explain the problem to a partner in their own words.
  - Then, provide time for individual idea generation and reflection.
  - Next, have individuals share their ideas with the rest of the group.
  - Group the ideas by theme/similarity.
  - Have all participants vote for their top two or three ideas, then identify the ideas with the most votes.

Finally, it’s important to note that the options developed during the brainstorming session are usually more in an outline form and require further detail before they can be evaluated during the “What Wows” step. Once the brainstorming process has been completed, the outlined options need to be reviewed and a handful of the best options selected to undergo further detailing.

## The ‘What Wows?’ Step

The purpose of this step is to narrow the options to two or three that are most likely to have the biggest impact, or to “wow” your students. The ideas should be those that are most desirable to the student, but also fulfill the feasibility and viability criteria outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The exact criteria you use to select the ideas will be derived from your design brief, problem statement, and information about student experience and need garnered from the work on your “What Is?”

This step should also include identification of the data that will be used for rapid testing of prototypes.



It is possible to identify so many criteria and so much required data that the selection process becomes very difficult. Exercise care to ensure that the criteria and the data required are those most essential to the success of the redesign.



It is best to have at least two options to test via rapid prototyping in the “What Works?” step. If there are not two that meet your criteria, consider looping back through the “What If?” step to refine one or more options to end up with two to three options, or consider if you can alter components of your design brief to provide more flexibility.

## The ‘What Works?’ Step

This is your final step of the student-centered design process and is often the least familiar to institutions of higher education. Specifically, the process of “rapid prototyping” is new to many in higher education. Rapid prototyping consists of developing a prototype, testing it to get feedback (including ideas for improvement), then refining it based on this feedback. The process is repeated until you conclude either that the prototype will not work or that it does work and is ready for final design and implementation.

Many colleges find this stage to be most daunting given the challenges related to developing and testing a prototype quickly within the college environment, as well as the concerns related to the impact of making mistakes. However, the prototyping process is intended to be a safe way to test your ideas while limiting the impact of any mistakes because it is quick (therefore not wasting time) and cheap (therefore not wasting money), and a demonstration rather than implementation

(therefore not causing harm to students). This section provides examples and tips for prototyping and getting useful feedback to inform your refinement.

## Methods of Rapid Prototyping

The following are just some examples of how you can generate prototypes to test with your stakeholders. It’s important to carefully consider which option(s) will most effectively convey the reality of your idea as well as which options you have the capacity to develop. You can also consider using multiple methods to prototype and test your ideas.

- A step-by-step map of your new process/service.
- A storyboard that illustrates the steps of your new service/experience. Under each visual, there is a written explanation of what is happening.
- A video recording or live role-play.
- A paper or virtual mock-up of computer screens for a new technology tool/process.
- A physical model (small or large) that demonstrates a new product or space layout.
- A rough or pilot version of a new software, tool, experience, or service.

It’s important to remember that your prototype does not need to be perfect and should be able to be developed in a short period of time. When prototyping, keep these things in mind:

1. Don’t overthink it. If you’re not sure where to start or what you are trying to achieve, just get something started and iterate on that. Having something to work on, or reject, is easier than trying to create the perfect prototype on your first try.
2. Don’t spend too much time developing your prototype.
3. Remember the purpose of a prototype is to demonstrate your idea for feedback. Try not to get attached to your idea or you will not be able to receive and interpret feedback objectively.
4. Build with the student behavior and needs in mind—use the information collected in the “What Is?” step to help with this.
5. Look for the gaps that your prototype doesn’t fill, not just the feedback on what it does.

## Tips for Receiving Useful Feedback

- While staff, faculty, and administrative feedback are important, student feedback is paramount. If the redesign doesn't work for students, it is unacceptable, and another option needs to be prototyped and tested.
- Consider how best to communicate your idea—who is your audience and what are your goals.
- Welcome constructive criticism and dig deeper to identify the root causes of any critique.
- Don't try to sell or defend your idea.
- Pay attention to nonverbal reactions.
- Focus on feedback about the “why” and the “need” the prototype is helping you address, not the more cosmetic feedback points.

- Be sure to have a method of receiving feedback that enables the facilitator to focus on active listening—for example, by having an additional person available to take notes or a device to record the discussion.



For a relatively complex design or redesign of a process, consider breaking the process into major or key steps and rapid prototype each individually. Coordination of the results will be necessary to ensure the overall process will work as intended.

## Selecting the Final Design

After multiple rounds of prototyping, feedback, and refinement, the design team should use the design criteria developed in the “What Wows?” step to select the design solution to move forward with. Remember, this should be the one that is most desirable to the student but also fulfills the feasibility and viability criteria outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

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## How to Incorporate This Process into Your Discovery and Planning Effort

There are multiple ways your team can approach its discovery and planning efforts in a way that incorporates a student-centered design process. A couple of examples are below.

1. Follow this process in tandem with completing the first two columns of the Discovery Inventory in Chapter 4. The inventory can help shed light on the current student experience, or the “What Is?” step, by identifying obstacles, challenges, or gaps within the current experience and processes.
2. Use the process at multiple stages where you need to generate creative ideas for a service, process, product/tool, or experience. For example, colleges that decide to implement an early alert system may choose to employ this process a) to help them

identify the right technology solution to meet their ideal usage needs and b) again, once the selection has been made, to design the processes and protocols that ensure effective use of the technology.

3. Use the process to engage a broader group of stakeholders, including students, in the creation of the solution to generate more, and more creative, ideas and to boost excitement for your work.



To access examples of this process in action, including sample design briefs, effective interviewing tips, design selection criteria, and methods for brainstorming, or to learn how ATD can help facilitate this process with your team, contact Dr. Mei-Yen Ireland at mireland@achievingthedream.org.

## A Guide for College Leaders

Case management and early alert tools enable faculty, student services staff, and advisors to monitor student progress and coordinate interactions with students. Of all the student success technologies available today, this category of software is the most developed. Several dozen vendors offer case management and early alert tools, each with variances in capabilities, user-interface, and workflow.

The most robust case management and early alert tools are designed to manage and coordinate all student interactions across the college. The tools incrementally build profiles of each enrolled student and log students' interactions with staff, participation in campus activities, and performance in the classroom. More sophisticated tools create automatic notifications for staff when a student is deemed "at risk" of dropping out. Many of these tools also include built-in communications mechanisms that enable staff to send targeted communications to students who could benefit from outreach.

Technically, case management and early alert tools are the easiest student success software category to implement. Practically, they are some of the hardest for colleges to make the most of—these systems are only as good as the information being put into them and the organizational framework surrounding them. Early alert capabilities, in particular, require the college to develop a framework for categorizing and responding to students' needs and obstacles as they arise.

While no guide can determine if, when, and what type of case management and early alert software is right for your college, this resource will provide an overview of institutional readiness considerations and vendor selection considerations for colleges that are evaluating case management and early alert software. If you are looking for additional guidance, please reach out to Sarah Zauner at [sarah@theadacenter.org](mailto:sarah@theadacenter.org) or Dr. Mei-Yen Ireland at [mireland@achievingthedream.org](mailto:mireland@achievingthedream.org).

## Institutional Readiness Considerations

- College Practices and Structures
- Existing Data
- Human Resource Needs

## Vendor Selection Considerations

- Desired Functionality
- Pricing
- Integration

## Institutional Readiness Considerations

### College Practices and Structures

Case management software not only requires that faculty and staff log interactions with students; it also requires the college to determine when and how to respond to student behaviors and attributes associated with dropout risk. While software vendors may suggest what constitutes an "at-risk" student, ultimate responsibility lies with the college to prioritize a set of risk factors and associated responses. These collective decisions about managing student support are often called a "case management framework." Before moving forward with early alert and case management software, it's important to address these structural questions about how your college will configure and manage this new software tool.

- Do we have a sense of the student attributes and behaviors that are correlated with success and attrition at our institution? If we have to prioritize, which are the top priorities for our college to address?
- Do we have the capacity to assign faculty and staff members to the sorting, responding, and tracking of alerts raised about students?
- Who will be responsible for managing each type of alert raised about a student?
- What will the follow-up step be for each type of alert? If that follow-up doesn't work, what happens next?

- How much information about individual students do we want each staff and faculty member to be able to access?
- As we build out our case management framework, how can we ensure that our system is configured to minimize inequities in the student experience?

## Existing Data

Case management and early alert tools can be implemented with minimal existing data. In some cases, the system needs only basic access to your college student information system. More robust early alert and case management software has the ability to integrate with other sources of student data, such as a learner management system or a predictive analytics model (discussed in Appendix F).

- Which data are most important for determining if a student is in need of an intervention? Where is each piece of data going to come from?
- How can we minimize the number of unique technologies that faculty and staff must access on a regular basis, while avoiding costly integration across technologies? (Note: By requiring that all critical student data be stored in the student information system, your college can minimize the complexity and cost of integration with other technology systems.)

## Human Resource Needs

For case management and early alert software to succeed, the desired end users (e.g., student services staff, advisors, faculty) must commit to embedding the software in their routines. Advisors will need to log all interactions with students in the software, and faculty will need to regularly input information about the students in their courses. Further, the college will need to appoint a set of individuals to manage and respond to information collected about students. Most colleges that successfully implement comprehensive case management and early alert systems find they must modify their advising model.

- Does college leadership have the capacity to help guide the necessary process and structural changes associated with adopting a case management and early alert tool?

- Is the college prepared to dedicate staff capacity to monitoring student “alerts,” triaging those alerts, and intervening with students who need extra support? (Note: Increasingly colleges are hiring or re-allocating at least .5 FTE of a senior advisor to triage all student alerts.)
- Is the college prepared to launch a long-term communication and training campaign with faculty and staff on the new software?

## Vendor Selection Considerations

### Desired Functionality

Colleges interested in case management software will find no shortage of choice. Several dozen vendors offer software with case management and early alert capabilities. These products range from very limited student progress monitoring functionality designed for a specific department, to a robust set of monitoring, analytical, and communication capabilities tailored for staff, faculty, and leadership throughout the college. The more robust the system, the higher the price tag. It’s recommended that colleges gather feedback from frontline staff to help create a prioritized list of desired capabilities. More so than with other technologies, colleges should be very mindful of the software user interface—this should be a tool that faculty and staff can use with minimal burden.

- Do we have a prioritized list of “must-have” and “nice-to-have” feature requirements?
- Does the current iteration of the software tool meet all of our must-have feature needs? (Note: Most vendors show demos with planned capabilities as well as current capabilities.)
- How closely does the software workflow map to our ideal processes?
- Are frontline staff generally excited by the new resource? Do they find the user experience intuitive?
- Have we met with at least three vendors and ranked their products according to cost, capabilities, user interface, and implementation support?

## Pricing

Early alert and case management software pricing typically includes a minimal one-time implementation fee and a recurring annual fee. Pricing is determined based on breadth and depth of software functionality, college size, and maturity of the product. You can expect vendor pricing to range from \$25,000 to \$80,000 annually. Most case management systems priced at the low end of the spectrum are designed for a specific department (e.g., tutoring) rather than as a holistic system for the college. Case management tools may also be sold as part of a larger software package.

- Have we received demos and quotes from at least three software vendors?
- Do we want to partner with a new vendor as an alpha or a beta partner (for a discounted price), or do we want to partner with a more established vendor with a proven track record?
- Can we estimate the anticipated “return-on-investment” for the tool in terms of student success?
- Have we calculated the comprehensive cost of the tool (beyond the vendor quote), including the cost of staff bandwidth to implement the tool?

## Integration

Unlike other student success software categories, case management and early alert systems can be implemented effectively with relatively minimal integration requirements. Some case management systems only require integration with the student information system. Other case management and early alert tools will offer integration with the learning management system, predictive analytics tools, and department-specific case management tools (e.g., tutoring, athletics). The primary data for these case management and early alert tools comes from recorded interactions with faculty and staff.

- Do we have a data specifications chart that details:
  - The data the software will need to access?
  - The direction(s) of the data flow?
  - How frequently these data systems will need to be accessed?
- Does our CIO feel confident that the integration plan outlined with the vendor is feasible?
- Does the vendor have a proven integration track record? Have we discussed contingencies with the vendor should we run into integration challenges?
- If we are purchasing a tool whose capabilities overlap those of software we already own, which system will be the system of record for those capabilities? When will this transition occur? (Note: Most colleges have unique case management systems and/or manual processes across departments. To increase coordination across departments, it’s beneficial to gradually move as many departments as possible onto a single case management software.)

## A Guide for College Leaders

Degree planning tools enable students and their advisors to plan for and track student progress toward fulfilling graduation and transfer requirements. While degree audit software—an administrative technology that stores program requirements and performs student “graduation checks”—is used by nearly all institutions, degree planning tools are a relatively new addition to the field.

Guided Pathways<sup>30</sup> reform efforts drove the development of myriad degree planning technologies, such as tools with the ability to help students understand how college programs of study map to employment opportunities and further education. All degree planning tools enable the college to build semester-by-semester recommended course maps for students, monitor student progression, and notify staff when students veer off path. Increasingly, degree planning tools also help educate students about post-graduate outcomes associated with a program of study and enable students to more easily register for a desired class schedule.

Even at colleges that have developed recommended course maps, degree planning tools require a significant effort to successfully implement. Compared to other student success technologies, the change management, integration, and data vetting needs are extensive. Colleges that have implemented degree planning tools often cite the implementation as a catalyst for reviewing their course offerings and student advising structures.

While no guide can determine if, when, and what type of degree planning software is right for your college, this resource will provide an overview of institutional readiness considerations and vendor selection considerations for colleges that are evaluating degree planning software. If you are looking for additional guidance, please reach out to Sarah Zauner at [sarah@theadacenter.org](mailto:sarah@theadacenter.org) or Dr. Mei-Yen Ireland at [mireland@achievingthedream.org](mailto:mireland@achievingthedream.org).

## Institutional Readiness Considerations

- College Practices and Structures
- Existing Data
- Human Resource Needs

## Vendor Selection Considerations

- Desired Functionality
- Pricing
- Integration

## Institutional Readiness Considerations College Practices and Structures

Implementing degree planning software requires the college to create and regularly maintain recommended course sequences for each program of study. The college will also need to develop policies that account for a variety of “what if” scenarios with those course sequences, such as student scheduling conflicts, lack of course availability, and differing student goals.

- Has your college created recommended course sequences or maps for each program of study?
- Is there a structure in place to regularly review and update these course sequences?
- Is there a good awareness of the post-graduate outcomes—including employment, transfer patterns, and transfer requirements—associated with each program of study?
- Do advisors have the necessary information to tailor course maps to meet student needs?
- Is the college moving toward a student-centered scheduling approach, adjusting course availability based on projected student need and demand?

<sup>30</sup> A framework for a more cohesive student experience that includes (1) clarifying the path to student end goals; (2) helping students choose and enter a path; (3) helping students stay on the path; and (4) ensuring that students are learning.

## Existing Data

Degree planning software requires access to college degree rules, typically stored in a degree audit, and access to the college course schedule and catalogue, typically stored in the student information system. For more extensive capabilities, degree planning tools require access to current transfer requirements and the linking of labor market data to programs of study. Ensuring that the above data sources are accessible and accurate is a prerequisite to a successful implementation.

- Has your college recently conducted a review of your degree audit, removing duplicative entries, clearly coding courses, and ensuring the overall accuracy of content?
- Is the data within your degree audit and transfer requirement database accessible to your preferred vendor? (Note: Always inquire about data acquisition options with your preferred vendor. Occasionally you will need to allocate a portion of your IT/data systems staff capacity to help a vendor translate information.)

## Human Resource Needs

Implementing and maintaining a degree planning tool requires extensive coordination within and across departments. Colleges that historically have had more decentralized decision-making processes find they must migrate toward more centralized processes upon adoption of a degree planning tool. Advising, academic department chairs, career services, the registrar (and college scheduler), IT, and institutional research will all find significant changes to their workflow.

- Is the college prepared to long-term commit faculty and advisor capacity to regularly updating course sequences and ensuring the post-graduate information associated with a program of study is accurate?
- Does the college have the infrastructure to monitor student progression along course sequences, intervening with students who need extra support?
- Is the college prepared for the initial data vetting and not insignificant IT lift required to implement a degree planning tool?
- Does college leadership have the capacity to help guide the necessary process and structural changes associated with adopting a degree planning tool?

## Vendor Selection Considerations

### Desired Functionality

Given the relative newness and complexity of degree planning tools, as of 2017 there are only half a dozen degree planning software packages on the market. Most of these tools offer a similar set of capabilities: colleges can pre-populate recommended course sequences for students, students can learn about the post-graduation outcomes associated with a program of study and customize a course sequence, and staff can monitor student progression on that sequence. Despite these superficial similarities in vendor capabilities, there are substantive differences in user interface, workflow, data sourcing, implementation processes, and integration strategies across vendors. In addition, some vendors offer more intensive career planning resources for students, wrap-around student service nudges in addition to academic guidance, and the ability for students to create a schedule and register directly within the tool. It's recommended that colleges view product demos for at least three degree planning tools before moving forward with a preferred vendor.

- Do we have a prioritized list of "must-have" and "nice-to-have" feature requirements?
- Does the current iteration of the software tool meet all of our must-have feature needs? (Note: Most vendors show demos with planned capabilities as well as current capabilities.)
- How closely does the software workflow map to our ideal processes?
- Are frontline staff generally excited by the new resource? Do they find the user experience intuitive? (Note: Some colleges have found it helpful to include a student voice in decisions about student degree planning tools.)

### Pricing

Degree planning software pricing typically includes both a one-time implementation fee and a recurring annual fee. Pricing is determined based on breadth and depth of software functionality, college size, and maturity of the product. You can expect vendor pricing to range from \$60,000 to \$120,000 annually; however, degree planning tools are often part of a

much broader software bundle such as a module within a comprehensive student information system or case management system.

- Have we received demos and quotes from at least three software vendors?
- Do we want to partner with a new vendor as an alpha or a beta partner (for a discounted price), or do we want to partner with a more established vendor with a proven track record?
- Can we estimate the anticipated “return-on-investment” for the tool in terms of student success?
- Have we calculated the comprehensive cost of the tool (beyond the vendor quote), including the cost of staff bandwidth to implement the tool, possible transcribing fees, or supplemental integration costs?

## Integration

More so than for other software offerings, degree planning tools require extensive integration with other data systems, most importantly your student information system and degree audit. For these systems to function smoothly, there will need to be two-way communication with your degree planning tool and your student information system. This is called bi-directional integration. Further, some degree planning capabilities require that information exchange or transfer occur in real time. For example, if students register for a course within a degree planning tool, that information needs to be immediately reflected in

your registration system of record to ensure the course doesn't become overbooked. Other information can be transmitted at night, or at less regular intervals. Before finalizing a vendor contract, be sure that you clearly understand the vendor's plan for integration with your data systems, and requirements that you and the vendor must meet for integration to happen. It is important that this information is articulated in layman's terms as well as technical terms.

- Do we have a data specifications chart that details:
  - The data systems the degree planning tools will need to access?
  - The direction(s) of the data flow?
  - How frequently these data systems will need to be accessed?
- Have we made customizations to our source data systems that could lead to data access and interpretation challenges?
- Does our CIO feel confident that the integration plan outlined with the vendor is feasible?
- Does the vendor have a proven integration track record? Have we discussed contingencies with the vendor should we run into integration challenges?
- If we are purchasing a tool whose capabilities overlap those of software we already own, which system will be the system of record for those capabilities? When will this transition occur?

## A Guide for College Leaders

Across the last several years, predictive analytics has become one of the buzziest terms in higher education. Many software products labeled as “predictive analytics” are in fact a combination of three types of big data analytics:

1. Descriptive analytics summarizes what has happened at the college.
2. Predictive analytics suggests what could happen in the future based on previous trends and patterns.
3. Prescriptive analytics suggests what a college should do in a specific scenario.

These three types of big data analytics are each valuable for informed decision-making across the college.

For the purposes of this guide, we’ll specifically examine predictive analytics as it relates to holistic student support redesign. That is, we won’t be covering predictive learner analytics that underpin many online learning technologies, nor will we be examining predictive enrollment analytics used to target prospective students. Instead, we’ll focus on predictive analytics models that offer insight on how to tailor student supports and interventions.

Predictive success analytics can suggest a) which students are most likely to drop out or struggle, b) which interventions will be most impactful for different types of students, and c) which academic pathways will optimize a student’s chance of graduation. Today’s predictive analytics vendors deploy different methodologies for arriving at these suggestions, and it’s important for your college to carefully probe these methodologies.

Vendors who sell predictive analytics typically offer other software capabilities. Most commonly, predictive analytics vendors offer case management tools that embed their predictive model in an early alert

## Equity and Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics tools are most useful to colleges that have a) a clear list of questions they’re hoping to help answer with a predictive model and b) a clear direction for how they plan to apply the insight. Most colleges that successfully deploy a predictive analytics tool marry insight from the model with other methods of understanding the student experience—for example: student focus groups, secret-shopping activities, and in-depth interviews with frontline staff and faculty. While predictive analytics tools can be useful, it’s important to ensure your institution understands how to use this type of data. In addition, colleges are encouraged to think about the intent for these tools to avoid their intentionally exacerbating equity gaps and amplifying unintentional bias.

framework. Before purchasing an analytics tool, your college should evaluate which of the three types of big data analytics would be most impactful to your college, and which types of analytics you’d like to keep in-house.

 For more information on the use of predictive analytics, read Chapter 6 of Achieving the Dream’s Data Discovery Guide at [www.achievingthedream.org/data-discovery](http://www.achievingthedream.org/data-discovery).

While no guide can determine if, when, and what type of predictive analytics tool is right for your college, this resource will provide an overview of **institutional readiness considerations** and **vendor selection considerations** for colleges that are evaluating predictive analytics software. For additional guidance, please reach out to Sarah Zauner at [sarah@theadacenter.org](mailto:sarah@theadacenter.org) or Dr. Mei-Yen Ireland at [mireland@achievingthedream.org](mailto:mireland@achievingthedream.org).

## Institutional Readiness Considerations

- College Practices and Structures
- Existing Data
- Human Resource Needs

## Vendor Selection Considerations

- Desired Functionality
- Pricing
- Integration

## Institutional Readiness Considerations

### College Practices and Structures

Predictive analytics tools are most useful to colleges that know what questions they hope to answer with the help of a predictive model and how they plan to apply the insight. Most colleges that successfully deploy a predictive analytics tool marry insight from the model with other methods of understanding the student experience—for example: student focus groups, secret-shopping activities, and in-depth interviews with frontline staff and faculty.

- How will we complement insight supplied by a predictive model with other sources of information on the student experience, such as secret-shopping, focus groups, and process mapping activities?
- Do we have a structure in place to ensure that information supplied by a predictive model is used to lessen rather than deepen inequities in the student experience?
- How will information supplied by a predictive model (and other sources) inform our case management framework?
- How will information supplied by a predictive model (and other sources) inform how we resource student success interventions?

### Existing Data

Predictive analytics models offer a unique methodology for understanding the student experience. Data access needs vary based on the model, with some tools requiring access to upwards of 10 unique data systems and others requiring access only to data in your student information and case management systems. Many vendors offer to

“clean” the data in your source systems as part of implementing a predictive model. It’s worth noting that, while the vendor may help organize your data and highlight errors, missing data fields ultimately need to be completed by college staff who know the information. Data coding unique to the college will also need to be decoded for the vendor.

- Has your college identified the source data believed to be most important for understanding student success patterns and trends?
- Has your college cleaned the source data in those systems (e.g., removing outdated data fields, completing missing information)?

### Human Resource Needs

More so than for other tools, predictive analytics software requires significant engagement with institutional research (IR) and the staff that maintain your major data systems. To understand the time commitment required from these individuals, it’s helpful to take stock of the data quality within the data systems the predictive model must access. Data systems with lots of customization, outdated data, and missing fields will require college staff to dedicate significant time to cleaning and explaining the data. Further, to leverage the data from the predictive model, the college leadership team will need to commit to reviewing and acting on data from the model (and other sources of student experience data).

- Is the college prepared for the initial data vetting required to implement a predictive analytics model?
- Does college leadership have the capacity to review insight from the predictive model (and other sources) and determine how it should be used to improve the student experience?
- Does the college have the IR capacity to help train and provide ongoing support to staff, faculty, and administrators on how to use the data?
- Does IT have the capacity to partner with the vendor and create an integration plan for the predictive analytics tool?
- Is the college prepared to commit staff to other methods of capturing the student experience to complement the information supplied by a predictive model?

## Vendor Selection Considerations

### Desired Functionality

When evaluating predictive analytics capabilities, it's important to evaluate both the methodology of the model and how the model can be applied. Many predictive analytics vendors offer tools for applying the insight from their predictive model. Increasingly predictive analytics tools are sold alongside case management and early alert systems that embed the predictive analytics model, with the option to add-on degree planning capabilities as well. If a vendor sells software capabilities beyond their predictive analytics tool (e.g., case management), it is unlikely that they will support strong integration with other vendors who offer those same software capabilities (e.g., other case management vendors). As a result, selecting a predictive analytics vendor should not occur in isolation. The choice has ramifications for current and future software capabilities.

- Do any of the vendors we currently work with offer a predictive tool that would negate the need for integration with our other tools? If not, does our student information system or learning management system have a partner agreement with any vendors offering a predictive analytics tool?
- Have we evaluated the vendor methodology, considering how it aligns with our internal hypotheses about the student experience, equity values, and student success vision?
- Do we understand and agree with how the vendor defines a successful student outcome for the purposes of its model? (Note: This is a very important question for community colleges to understand, as many predictive models were originally built for four-year institutions.)
- Does the current iteration of the software tool meet all of our must-have feature needs? (Note: Most vendors show demos with planned capabilities as well as current capabilities.)
- Are institutional research staff generally excited by the new resource?
- Are we comfortable with the vendor strategy for how we can apply the predictive analytics model, such as through case management or degree planning systems?
- Have we thoroughly examined the vendor's data security and ownership policies? Do non-technical staff at the college have a full understanding of what these policies mean, practically?

### Pricing

Predictive analytics software pricing typically includes a significant one-time implementation fee and a recurring annual fee. You can expect vendor pricing to range from \$30,000 to \$100,000 annually, with a one-time implementation fee sometimes approaching \$75,000. The least expensive analytics software offerings are typically not specific to higher education and require a greater implementation effort from the college. More expensive predictive analytics offerings are specific to higher education and are often one piece of a greater set of technologies capabilities.

- Have we received demos and quotes from at least three software vendors?
- Have we examined the pricing difference of a stand-alone predictive analytics technology vs. a more comprehensive set of capabilities?
- Do we want to partner with a new vendor as an alpha or a beta partner (for a discounted price), or do we want to partner with a more established vendor with a proven track record?
- Can we estimate the anticipated "return-on-investment" for the tool in terms of student success?
- Have we calculated the comprehensive cost of the tool (beyond the vendor quote), including the cost of staff bandwidth to implement the tool and supplemental integration costs?

## Integration

Data system integration needs and strategies vary significantly across predictive analytics technologies. For predictive models that include a more extensive set of data inputs from the college, integration will also be extensive. For models that include only a few inputs, integration will be minimal. Some vendors have an integration strategy that relies on the college's first adopting their other software tools to generate data for the predictive model. This approach limits integration requirements, but means the predictive analytics insight takes time to generate. Other predictive models limit integration requirements by drawing data insight from a wider network of colleges. Your institution should evaluate at least three different methodologies (each with different integration strategies) before choosing a vendor.

- Do we have a data specifications chart that details:
- The data systems the predictive analytics model will need to access to implement the tool?
- The data systems the predictive model would ideally access to implement the tool?
- How frequently these data systems will need to be accessed and how often the model is updated?
- Have we made customizations to our source data systems that could lead to data access and interpretation challenges?
- Does our CIO feel confident that the integration plan outlined with the vendor is feasible?
- Does the vendor have a proven integration track record? Have we discussed contingencies with the vendor should we run into integration challenges?
- If we are purchasing a tool whose capabilities overlap those of software we already own, which system will be the system of record for those capabilities? When will this transition occur?



# SCALING SUCCESS THEMES

The process of scaling an effective strategy is a common challenge for higher education organizations due to the early and ongoing commitment to changing organizational culture and structures (administrative, power, and budgetary structures) as well as the need for broad-based buy-in. Each institution will approach scaling efforts differently, due to variances in institutional structure and culture; however, there are common themes across successful scaling efforts.<sup>31</sup> Below we organize these themes into four areas and provide questions to ponder as you consider your institutional readiness to undertake and scale holistic student support redesign.

## Visionary Leadership

### Success Themes

- Holistic student support redesign leaders have a strong understanding of the cultural context in which the redesign will be scaled.
- Leadership of all key divisions and departments are aligned in the redesign vision.
- This vision has been clearly and regularly communicated to all institutional stakeholders, along with data indicating the short-term wins that show progress towards achieving it.
- Redesign efforts are clearly and publicly linked to the institution's overarching student success strategy and goals, as well as the institution's accreditation and planning processes.

### Questions to Consider

1. Is the vision for the redesign aligned at all levels of the institution? Does the guiding team have the support and resources to implement your scaling plan?
2. What aspects of your vision are resonating with key stakeholders? What does this mean for your communication efforts as you scale?

3. What obstacles do you anticipate facing in your scaling efforts? Consider categorizing your challenges by the type of change each represents:
  - Structural change (the design of systems and business practices).
  - Process change (individual engagement and interpersonal interactions with systems and business practices).
4. Attitudinal change (core underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs). What institutional strengths should you leverage to overcome these obstacles?

## Engagement and Communication

### Success Themes

- Those who will execute the changes on a daily basis are heavily involved in the design and approval of necessary policy and practice changes that impact their daily work.
- Redesign leaders presented the pilot and scaling plan to stakeholder groups to elicit multiple perspectives, identify potential obstacles, and refine the plan before implementation.

<sup>31</sup> Adapted from Catalyst Fund Evaluation: Case-Informed Lessons for Scaling Innovation at Community and Technical Colleges by DVP Praxis and Equal Measure: <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/14804/catalyst-fund-evaluation-case-informed-lessons-for-scaling-innovation-at-community-and-technical-colleges> and More to Most: Scaling Up Effective Community College Practices by MDC, Inc.: <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/1905/more-to-most-scaling-up-effective-community-college-practices> and Cutting Edge Series #2: Scaling Community College Interventions by Achieving the Dream and Public Agenda: <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/227/cutting-edge-series-2-scaling-community-college-interventions>

## Questions to Consider

1. As support for your holistic student support work has grown, have you leveraged all supporters to build momentum and buy-in?
2. Review John Kotter's theory of urgency.<sup>32</sup> Based on this understanding, what would you say is the current level of urgency on campus for your student support redesign: true urgency, false urgency, or complacency? What barriers may be preventing the campus community from feeling truly urgent about adopt the advising redesign?
3. If you believe a significant proportion of the population is feeling truly urgent about this change, what are some specific strategies or steps the team should take to sustain and leverage the urgency?
4. How are you using your short-term wins and other evidence of success to continue to build excitement around the work of reaching more students?
5. What does your data tell you about the effectiveness of your communication plan? What course corrections are needed?

## Support Structures/Resource Allocation

### Success Themes

> Stakeholders involved on the ground in scaling the redesign are supported in making the necessary changes through the allocation of adequate decision-making power, training and support, staffing, and financial resources to facilitate scale.

> Leadership has committed the necessary resources to developing the expertise necessary to support high-quality implementation of an expanded strategy.

### Questions to Consider

1. Has there been adequate consideration of additional demands on key stakeholders implementing this work on the ground? Is there a likely source of required resources?

2. Do your training and support mechanisms have the capacity to support scale?
3. How has your data been used to inform your training and supports?
4. How do you measure institutional learning to ensure the effectiveness of training and supports?
5. Are there any student success efforts that have fallen short of expectations and could be discontinued? Can these resources be reallocated to your integrated student support approach?

## Data/Evidence of Progress

### Success Themes

- Stakeholders have access to, and the training to interpret, data related to student support redesign to inform their work and monitor the progress of their scaling efforts.
- Redesign performance data is contextualized within the goals of the institution and needs of its community.

### Questions to Consider

1. Is your data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income (or a proxy such as Pell grant status), gender, enrollment status, etc.?
2. What economies of scale do you expect from scaling your redesign to all students? What is the cost per student?
3. Have you humanized the numbers when sharing them with the broader community? Have you considered turning the percentages into numbers and the numbers into students/people?
4. How will you assess the effectiveness of your scaling effort? What metrics define success?
5. Are you linking your evaluation and communication plans so that early outcomes are being communicated and any issues addressed transparently?

# IDENTIFYING STUDENT NEEDS EARLY ON THROUGH AN INTAKE SURVEY

As you take steps to better understand the students you will be serving and their needs, it is critical to identify the population you intend to reach and how they might fit into cohorts—demographically, socioeconomically, first-generation, ESL, and so on. Many colleges have embedded an intake survey into their application process, first-year experience course, orientation, or other support service to identify a wide array of needs and connect each student to the supports they need early on in their college journey. Some examples of these intake surveys are below.

## Welcome Intake Form from Skyline College



Grow and Prosper.

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

### WELCOME FORM

Please print carefully. This information is used to serve you more effectively, and is only used for SparkPoint programs. To learn more, please see a SparkPoint staff member. All information is confidential.

**A** **Personal Information**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Gender:  Female  Male  Do not identify  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is the best way to contact you?  Phone  Email  Text (Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Are you an active military personnel?  Yes  No  
 Are you a veteran?  Yes  No  
 Marital Status:  Single  Living with a partner  Married  
 Widowed  Divorced/Separated  Registered Domestic Partnership  
 Ethnicity:  African American  African  Asian  Caucasian  Latino  Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  
 Native American  Middle-Eastern/Arab  Multi-racial  Decline to State  Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Primary Language Spoken At Home: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How did you hear about the SparkPoint Center?  
 2-1-1  Workshop  Flyer/brochure  Nonprofit agency/staff  Local business  
 Event  Friend/family  TV/news/internet  Walk-in  
 If referred, what is the name of the person, workshop or agency? \_\_\_\_\_

**B** **Education and Financial Information**

What is your highest level of education completed? (Check ONE)  
 Eighth grade or less  Some college  Trade/vocational certification  
 Some high school  Two-year degree  Graduate/Professional degree  
 High school diploma/GED  Four-year degree

What is your estimated yearly household income before taxes?  
 \$0-9,999  \$15,000 - 19,999  \$30,000 - 39,999  \$50,000 - 59,999  Over \$70,000  
 \$10,000 - 14,999  \$20,000 - 29,999  \$40,000 - 49,999  \$60,000 - 69,999

What is your estimated debt?  
 \$0-999  \$2,000-2,999  \$4,000-4,999  \$6,000-9,999  
 \$1,000-1,999  \$3,000-3,999  \$5,000-5,999  Over \$10,000

What is your current estimated savings?  
 \$0-499  \$1,000-1,499  \$2,000-2,999  
 \$500-999  \$1,500-1,999  Over \$3,000

**C** **Interests and Goals**

Check all that apply. (Speak with a staff member to see which services are available at your center or visit [www.sparkpointcenters.org](http://www.sparkpointcenters.org))

<input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolling in college/school	<input type="checkbox"/> Getting job training	<input type="checkbox"/> Opening a bank account
<input type="checkbox"/> Broadband/internet access	<input type="checkbox"/> ESL support	<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare enrollment	<input type="checkbox"/> Owning a home
<input type="checkbox"/> Buying a car	<input type="checkbox"/> Finding a job/career	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving credit	<input type="checkbox"/> Public benefits
<input type="checkbox"/> Child development	<input type="checkbox"/> Food assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning to budget	<input type="checkbox"/> Reducing debt
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Foreclosure prevention	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning to save	<input type="checkbox"/> Starting a business
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency rental assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Free tax preparation	<input type="checkbox"/> Money for school	<input type="checkbox"/> Tenant counseling

Please rank the top 3 areas of interest, in order of choice:  
 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

version 1/28/2013 For Sparkpoint Staff Only ETO Data Entry: Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Student Information Intake Form from East Arkansas Community College

### SUCCESS NETWORK COACHES' STUDENT SURVEY

We need your help! The Success Network Coaches (SNC) program at EACC helps students with educational, career, and financial planning. This survey will help us better meet the needs of students. Survey responses are strictly confidential. Responses will be used only in aggregate form for statistical research. Taking the survey is voluntary and students may stop at any time. Demographic information will be used in a non-discriminatory manner, consistent with applicable Civil Rights Laws.

#### EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

1. What type of degree do you plan to earn from EACC? (select one)
  - a. Associate's degree
  - b. Certificate
  - c. Certificate and Associate's degree
  - d. None of the above
  - e. Undecided
  
2. Do you currently attend EACC: (select one)
  - a. Full time (4 or more classes per semester)
  - b. Part time (1 to 3 classes per semester)
  
3. What is your major or program? (select one)
  - a. Allied Health such as Nursing, Rad Tech, Medical Coding, etc.
  - b. Law Enforcement or Criminal Justice
  - c. Teacher Education
  - d. General Education Transfer to a four-year college or university
  - e. Undecided or other
  
4. Upon earning your degree or certificate from EACC, do you plan to: (select one)
  - a. Attend a 4-year college/university full-time
  - b. Work full time
  - c. Work while attending a 4-year college/university
  - d. None of the above
  - e. Undecided
  
5. If you plan to complete a 4-year bachelor's degree, what school(s) are you interested in transferring to (select all that apply):
  - a. Arkansas State University – Jonesboro
  - b. University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
  - c. University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
  - d. an online college such as Phoenix, SNHU, Strayer, or other
  - e. other college or university not listed here
  
6. Have you previously attended any colleges or universities other than EACC? (select one)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

7. If you previously attended a college other than EACC, what school(s) did you attend (select all that apply; skip this question if you have not previously attended another college or university):

- a. Arkansas State University – Jonesboro
- b. University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
- c. Another community college in Arkansas
- d. an online college such as Phoenix, ITT, SNHU, Strayer, or other
- e. other college or university not listed here

8. Do any of the following apply to you? (select all that apply)

- a. First semester in college
- b. Undecided college major
- c. Undecided career plans
- d. Failing grade(s) in previous college coursework
- e. No school for five or more years

### **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

9. What is your ethnic background? (select one)

- a. African American
- b. Caucasian/White
- c. Hispanic or Latino
- d. Native American or Asian/Pacific Islander
- e. Other

10. Are you currently employed: (select one)

- a. Full time
- b. Part time
- c. Seasonal
- d. Unemployed
- e. Other/not sure

11. Do you qualify for Pell? (select one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. Do you receive Pell or other Financial Aid? (select one)

- a. Pell
- b. Loan
- c. Other financial aid
- d. Combination of the above
- e. I receive no financial aid

13. If you qualify for Pell or other aid, but do not receive it, why? (select one)

- a. Academic Probation
- b. Academic Suspension
- c. Other

14. How many dependents (children or adults) do you support? (select one)

- a. None
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3
- e. 4 or more

15. Do any of the following apply to you? (select all that apply)

- a. SNAP recipient
- b. Medicaid recipient
- c. Current TEA
- d. Former TEA
- e. WorkPays

16. Did either of your parents (or custodial or legal guardians):

- a. Earn an Associate's degree
- b. Earn a Bachelor's degree
- c. Earn a Master's degree or higher
- d. Attend college but not earn a degree

**NEEDS NOT BEING MET**

17. Do you face any of the following obstacle(s) or challenge(s) in completing your academic or career goals? (select all that apply)

- a. Locating reliable childcare
- b. Paying for reliable childcare
- c. Child support problems
- d. Other single parent issues
- e. None of the above

18. Do you face any of the following obstacle(s) or challenge(s) in completing your academic or career goals? (select all that apply)

- a. Physical health issues relating to yourself
- b. Mental health issues related to yourself
- c. Physical health issues relating to a child or other dependent
- d. Mental health issues related to a child or other dependent
- e. None of the above

19. Do you face any of the following obstacle(s) or challenge(s) in completing your academic or career goals? (select all that apply)

- a. Locating reliable transportation to school
- b. Paying for reliable transportation to school
- c. Housing/living environment that is unsafe
- d. Housing/living environment not conducive to good study or work habits
- e. None of the above

20. Are you challenged by inadequate finances in any of the following areas? (select all that apply)

- a. Food
- b. Housing
- c. Transportation
- d. Dependent expenses
- e. None of the above

## HELP OR ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

1. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Reading Skills
- b. Math Skills
- c. Writing Skills
- d. Science Skills
- e. None of the above

2. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Choosing a Major
- b. Choosing a Career
- c. Assistance accessing Public Benefits
- d. Assistance in finding a job
- e. None of the above

3. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Time Management
- b. Stress Management
- c. Goal Setting
- d. Parenting Skills
- e. None of the above

4. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Debt Reduction
- b. Financial Management
- c. Creating a Budget
- d. Exploring salaries of different careers
- e. None of the above

5. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Motivation
- b. Math Anxiety
- c. Test Anxiety
- d. Self-Esteem
- e. None of the above

6. I could use help in the following areas: (select all that apply)

- a. Test Taking Skills
- b. Note Taking Skills
- c. Study Skills
- d. Attendance Issues
- e. None of the above

We want to help! Is there anything else that a mentor or coach could assist you with in order to help you complete your educational, financial, or career goals? Please contact...

## Student Information Intake Form from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College



Inspire students to fulfill their dreams by engaging in personalized success plans and completing their pathway credentials.

Data has shown that successful students are those who know where they need help and take advantage of the resources offered. Your honest responses to these questions will help us provide you with early support. This survey will only take approximately 3-5 minutes to complete. Your responses will only be shared with appropriate NWTC staff who may contact you to provide assistance and resources.

Where do you plan to take most of your classes this semester?

- Green Bay
- Marinette
- Sturgeon Bay
- Shawano
- Oconto Falls
- Crivitz
- Luxemburg
- Niagara/Aurora
- Online

How certain are you about your career goals?

- Very certain
- Moderately certain
- Slightly certain
- Not certain at all

How certain are you about your program choice?

- Very certain
- Moderately certain
- Slightly certain
- Not certain at all

How many hours per week do you plan to work while enrolled in classes?

- 0
- 1-9
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40+

Do you provide frequent care for individuals other than yourself (e.g., children, siblings, parents, etc.)?

- Yes
- No

What is the primary language that you speak?

How would you rate your past experience in Math?

- Not challenging at all
- Slightly challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Very challenging

How would you rate your past experience in Reading?

- Not challenging at all
- Slightly challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Very challenging

How would you rate your past experience in Writing?

- Not challenging at all
- Slightly challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Very challenging

How would you rate your past experience in Science?

- Not challenging at all
- Slightly challenging
- Moderately challenging
- Very challenging

How confident are you in your ability to use a computer to complete assignments?

- Very confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not confident at all

How confident are you that you will have access to the internet when you need it to complete assignments?

- Very confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not confident at all

How are you planning to pay for college?

- Self-funded (job, savings, etc.) or Parents
- Financial Aid / FAFSA (grants, loans, work study)
- Veterans Education Benefits
- Unsure
- Other (i.e., Employer Funding, Scholarships, etc.)

When you have to go to campus for class, how will you typically get there? (Select all that apply)

- My own vehicle
- Bus
- Ride with family or friends
- Walk/Bicycle
- Taxi or Uber/Lyft
- I am taking online classes
- Unsure/I do not have reliable transportation
- Other

How much flexibility do you have in your schedule to increase your study time if needed?

- A lot of flexibility
- A moderate amount of flexibility
- Only a little flexibility
- No flexibility at all

Which of the following services would you like information about before you begin classes at NWTC? (Select all that apply)

- Academic Coaching/Tutoring
- Accommodations/Disability Services
- Computer tutorial — Academic (e.g., navigating NWTC systems, using classroom software, etc.)
- Computer tutorial — General (e.g., email, file/folder organization, saving documents, etc.)
- Childcare/Parenting resources and activities
- Community Resources (e.g., housing, food share, social service agency information, or referrals)
- Extracurricular activities (e.g., student organizations, student government, intramural athletics, etc.)
- Financial coaching and budgeting
- iRespect! (e.g., events, Diversity Team, iRespect! pledge, etc.)
- Mentoring
- Navigating Campus/Campus Tours
- On-Campus Employment
- On-Campus Housing
- Personal Counseling (e.g., anxiety, depression, ADHD, etc.)
- Purchasing Textbooks/NWTC Supplies
- Study Abroad
- Veterans' Services
- Wellness/Campus Healthcare Options
- Other (please specify)

I know I will succeed in college because:





Achieving the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM:**

Visit [www.AchievingtheDream.org](http://www.AchievingtheDream.org)

or contact us at [info@AchievingtheDream.org](mailto:info@AchievingtheDream.org) or call (240) 450-0075

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