



Leading Improvement in Teaching & Learning: The President's Role

Mary Rittling, Senior Fellow, College Excellence Program, The
Aspen Institute
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The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program Framework for Student Success

Labor Market Outcomes

- Do graduates find strong employment opportunity in well-paying jobs?

Learning

- Do colleges set expectations for learning, measure what is learned, and use that information in a process of continuous improvement?

Completion and Transfer with Bachelor's Degree

- Do students earn degrees and other meaningful credentials, and do those who transfer go on to earn bachelor's degrees?

Equity

- Do colleges strive for equitable access and outcomes for underserved minority and low-income students?

Our focus for today:
**What is the role of the *president* in driving
improvement in teaching and learning at the college?**



Independent Reflection

Before we dive into today's content, take 15 minutes independently to reflect on your own practice, using the questions below and on **Handout 1**.

- How do **your faculty** define good teaching at your institution?
- What data points do **you and the provost** look at regularly to determine the quality of teaching at your institution?
- How well do **you** understand students' classroom experience? Through what mechanisms?



Debrief

- How do **your faculty** define good teaching at your institution?
- What data points do **you and the provost** look at regularly to determine the quality of teaching at your institution?
- How well do **you** understand students' classroom experience? Through what mechanisms?



The president needs to *own* the teaching and learning strategy.



The **president** needs to own the teaching and learning strategy.

- The mission, vision, and values of the organization speak to a quality of learning.
- This needs to be a reality for students.



The **president** needs to own the teaching and learning strategy.

- Unique “bully pulpit” to build urgency and drive change
- Understanding of the resource implications needed for a strong teaching and learning environment
- Human capital strategy implications
- Holistic view of the college: teaching and learning does not exist in isolation



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The president must understand his or her **relationship** to the teaching and learning strategy.

- Faculty control over curriculum
- Faculty must implement strategy – in classroom and through professional development
- Deans and department chairs implement department processes
- Other reasons?



So the president must first understand the landscape and develop a hypothesis about who will lead what kind of change, before charging the right faculty leaders to develop a learning strategy.



The president needs to *own* the teaching and learning strategy.



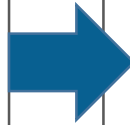
Three levels of understanding

- Student learning at your institution
- Teaching and learning innovation (and innovators) at your institution
- The science of teaching and learning and what works elsewhere



Understanding the Issue: Student Learning

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?



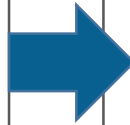
Consider quantitative evidence

- Students' course completion rates, overall and disaggregated, as compared to all faculty.
- Students' credential completion rates, overall and disaggregated, as compared to peer institutions.
- Post-graduation success data: transfer and bachelor's degree attainment rates, employment and earnings outcomes.



Understanding the Issue: Student Learning

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?



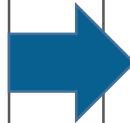
Listen to faculty and students

- Seek to understand the challenges that both faculty and students see in student learning.
- Utilize information on the student experience, collected through CCSSE data, focus groups or surveys.



Understanding the Issue: Faculty Innovation

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?
- Where are our institution's teaching and learning strengths?



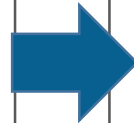
Identify common areas of strong practice around which college-wide improvement can be organized. You may consider such national examples as:

- Active learning strategies?
- Action research?
- Teaching reading skills?
- IBEST/Coreq. dev ed?



Understanding the Issue: Faculty Innovation

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?
- Where are our institution's teaching and learning strengths?



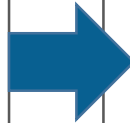
Understand who does the best teaching.

- Who is doing the most innovative and effective work to improve student learning in the classroom?



Understanding the Issue: Science of Teaching

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?
- Where are our institution's teaching and learning strengths?
- What can we borrow (and be careful not to steal)?



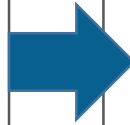
Understand the field.

- What is known about the teaching practices that lead to the greatest learning gains among adults?
- What is known about learning barriers faced by students of color?
- What evidence exists from other colleges that have achieved strong learning results?



Understanding the Issue: Science of Teaching

- What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?
- Where are our institution's teaching and learning strengths?
- What can we borrow (and be careful not to steal)?



Avoid adopting solutions before you've defined and diagnosed the problem.

- Don't adopt solutions from other colleges without carefully identifying the specific challenge at your institution.
- New technology alone is not a solution.

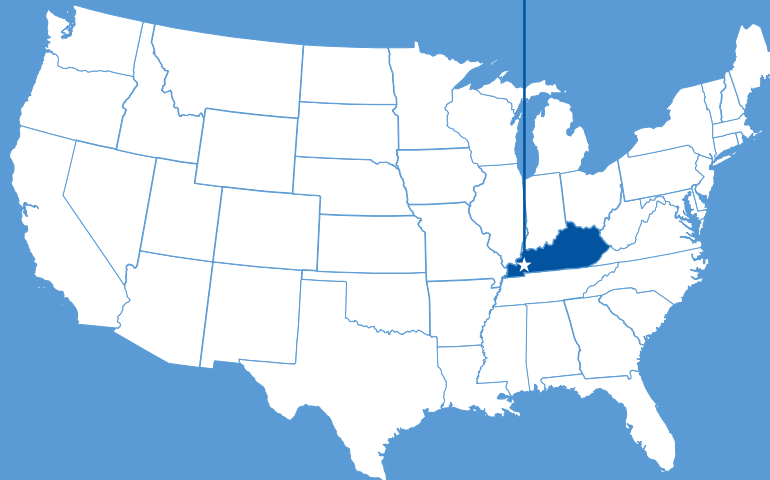


West Kentucky Community and Technical College



WKCTC administered the ETS Proficiency Profile and found only 40% of students were capable of basic reading skills (compared to 60% nationally).

Faculty members across all disciplines now participate in professional development focused on how to teach students a set of reading strategies proven to improve reading ability.



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Small Group Discussion

Discuss the questions below and on **Handout 2** with those at your table.

- What are the challenges in teaching and learning at your institution today?
- If you aren't sure, how will you go about finding out? What data might you need?
- Is there a center of gravity for teaching and learning innovation? Which faculty are most engaged?
- What advances from learning science would make sense to investigate given your college's challenges? Belonging theory? Inclusive pedagogy? Others?



Debrief

- What are the **biggest** challenges in teaching and learning at your institution today?
- If you aren't sure, how will you go about finding out? What data might you need?



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15-MINUTE BREAK

The president needs to *own* the teaching and learning strategy.



Elevating and Engaging Faculty: Key Strategies

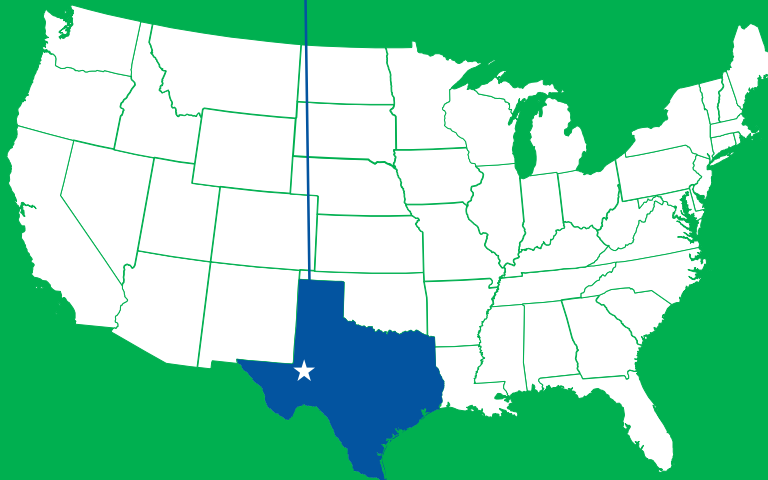
- **Find and elevate the faculty** doing the best work in teaching and learning.
- **Hire and support good middle managers** who create a supportive environment that allows faculty to test their ideas and find their voice.
- Charge faculty leaders with **developing a strategy to advance student learning goals** across the college.
- Encourage a bold vision and remind faculty of **why this work matters**.
- Deepen trust by **showing up**: teach a class, regularly visit classrooms, communicate quality teaching as a value of the college.
- Give those innovative faculty the **structures and resources they need** to implement a vision that aims to scale effective practices.



Odessa College



Odessa's Drop Rate Improvement Program (DRIP) teaches instructors best practices for cultivating a sense of belonging among their students (such as interacting with students by name at the beginning of a new semester and meeting with students one-on-one). Implementation led to an increase in in-class retention rates from an average of 83% to 95%.

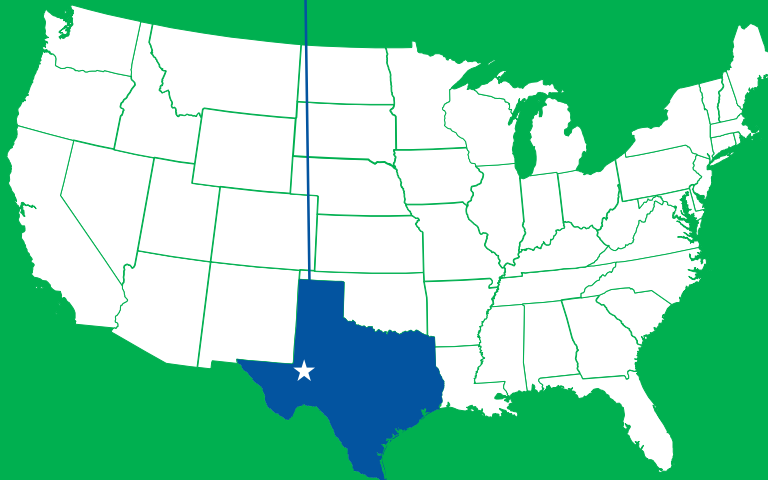


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Odessa College



Faculty professional development is aligned to the college-wide AVID program, an initiative and philosophy designed to close achievement gaps through a set of social and academic skills and behaviors taught to all students. New faculty take an initial AVID course, veteran faculty continue with an advanced AVID course focused on high-engagement teaching techniques.

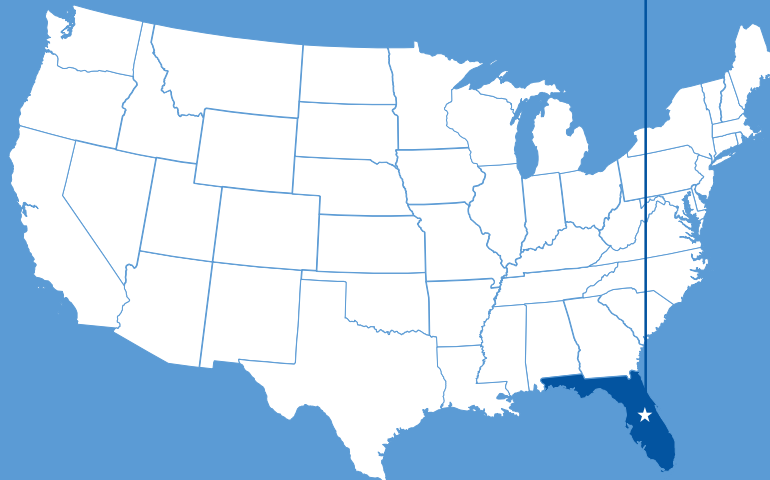


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Valencia College



1. Redesigned tenure process--in response to faculty needs-- built on a commitment to high-quality teaching and measuring what students learn.
2. Extensive support for faculty from an innovative, well-resourced Teaching/Learning Academy.
3. Collectively-designed seven Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator area touchstone for the hiring and professional development.



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What did this look like at Davidson County Community College?



What did this look like at Davidson County Community College?

- Task force created with the goal of defining excellent teaching at Davidson
- Guiding questions in a memo directly from the president:

What is the central challenge in student learning?

What are the qualities of effective instruction across the campus?

How is effective instruction delivered, assessed, and improved upon?

What are the techniques, structure, and context that the faculty use to develop learning outcomes?

What have we learned over the past five years about what works and doesn't work to produce better and deeper learning?

What did this look like at Davidson County Community College?

- Task force created with the goal of defining excellent teaching at Davidson
- Guiding questions in a memo directly from the president:

What is the role of the faculty in creating an equitable post-secondary educational opportunity and serving as facilitators of social mobility?

What critical questions remain?

What would a faculty development structure look like that would address the conclusions of the discussion?

How do faculty on campus create relational trust?



What did this look like at Davidson County Community College?

GUIDING TEACHING PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Effective teaching centers on **facilitating student learning** to meet the requirements of a changing global economy.
- 2) Effective teaching is inspirational, **providing clear expectations** for students regarding learning goals, course policies and assignments
- 3) Effective teaching **encourages students to engage** in critical thinking, reflective reasoning, problem solving, collaboration, and application.
- 4) Effective teaching **helps students understand** how course content is relevant to them and their community throughout their lives, preparing students for enhanced career and educational opportunities.
- 5) Effective teaching **fosters a collegial and dynamic process** in which faculty share and learn strategies and approaches focused on improving student learning.
- 6) Effective teaching **infuses a culture of assessment** of student learning into the instructional environment to inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, resources and student success.



Independent Reflection & Group Discussion

Spend 10 minutes reflecting independently on the following questions on **Handout 3**:

- Do you know who the best teachers are at your institution? How do you know? List them.
- Who are the faculty members in leadership positions at your college (consider your group of Pathways champions, faculty senate leaders, union leaders, etc.)? Do the two lists match?
- If not, how might you bring the identified “excellent faculty” to leadership positions at the center of reform efforts? How might you appeal to them? What challenges might you face?
- If so, what is being done at your college to bring those leaders to the center of reform?

Independent Reflection & Group Discussion

Discuss as a whole group:

- How might you bring the identified “excellent faculty” to the center of reform efforts? How might you appeal to this group? What challenges might you face?

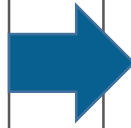


The president needs to *own* the teaching and learning strategy.



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes

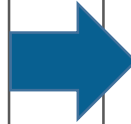


- How do interview questions and processes reflect the college's focus on teaching and learning?
- How do you measure whether or not mindsets are aligned with the college's mission?
- Who is involved in the hiring/interview process for faculty? Is that diffuse or centralized?



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes
- Onboarding/induction

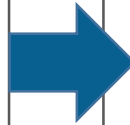


- What is required during the first semester/first year induction process?
- Is it mostly about systems and processes, or about teaching and learning priorities and skills?
- Are significant portions connected to building/reinforcing cultural norms?



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes
- Onboarding/induction
- Promotion and incentives

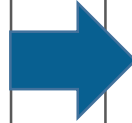


- Keep the focus on improving teaching and learning....not on “top-down” accountability.
- How do promotion or incentive structures *support faculty practice* to, in turn, advance student learning?



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes
- Onboarding/induction
- Promotion and incentives
- Professional development

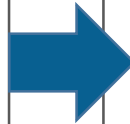


- Base on a goal-oriented plan (eg. teaching reading strategies across the institution) rather than generalized topics
- Ensure faculty are active learners (e.g. learning circles, peer observation)
- Support instructors as they improve teaching practice in applied settings (e.g. peer observations)



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes
- Onboarding/induction
- Promotion and incentives
- Professional development
- Finance and budgeting priorities

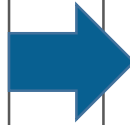


- Centralize some professional development funds to support particular institution-wide purposes aligned to student success goals
- Dedicate resources to those who teach teaching and learning (Center for T&L)
- Consider how to use faculty buyouts and/or early retirement



How can the college's systems and practices support strong teaching and learning?

- Hiring processes
- Onboarding/induction
- Promotion and incentives
- Professional development
- Finance and budgeting priorities
- Data use protocols



- What systems do you have in place to monitor and discuss progress?
- Are you employing regular processes (program review, course completion review) to address gaps in learning?
- Is the college using assessment tools to establish a common understanding of student learning and setting benchmarks for improvement?

“The Stupidest Things We Do”

- Using **Handout 4**, take **15 minutes** to independently consider the human capital processes at your institution related to faculty, including tenure, onboarding, promotion, professional development, and hiring.
- List some of the “stupidest things” that your college does with regards to these processes: things that are **misaligned** to your teaching and learning goals.
- What specifically does the college do that contradicts or undermines student success goals?
- What disincentives might be in place that might actually prevent faculty from improving their teaching practice?
- What changes could you make to better align incentives to student success goals?

“The Stupidest Things We Do:” Debrief

- What disincentives might be in place that might actually prevent faculty from improving their teaching practice?
- What changes could you make to better align incentives to student success goals?

The president needs to *own* the teaching and learning strategy.



National partners are available to support this work.

Questions? Reflections?

Return to your reflections on Handout 1. Take a few minutes to jot down some next steps inspired by our conversation today.





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Thank you!



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Twitter: @aspenhighered

Handout 1: Independent Reflection

Take 15 minutes independently to reflect on your own practice.

How do **your faculty** define good teaching at your institution?

What data points do **you and the provost** look at regularly to determine the quality of teaching at your institution?

How well do **you** understand students' classroom experience? Through what mechanisms?

Understand student, faculty,
and national context



Elevate innovative faculty
and bring them to the
center of reform



Institutionalize systems and
practices for sustained
improvements



Handout 2: Small Group Discussion

Discuss the questions below with those at your table.

What are the challenges in teaching and learning at your institution today?

If you aren't sure, how will you go about finding out? What data might you need?

Is there a center of gravity for teaching and learning innovation? Which faculty are most engaged?

What advances from learning science would make sense to investigate given your college's challenges? Belonging theory? Inclusive pedagogy? Others?

Handout 3: Reflection and Group Discussion

Spend 10 minutes reflecting independently on the following questions.

Do you know who the best teachers are at your institution? How do you know? List them.

Who are the faculty members in leadership positions at your college (consider your group of Pathways champions, faculty senate leaders, etc.)?

Do the two lists match?

If not, how might you bring the identified “excellent faculty” to leadership positions at the center of reform efforts? How might you appeal to them? What challenges might you face? If so, what is being done at your college to bring those leaders to the center of reform?

Handout 4: “The Stupidest Things We Do”

Take 15 minutes to independently consider the human capital processes at your institution related to faculty, including tenure, onboarding, promotion, professional development, and hiring. List some of the “stupidest things” that your college does with regards to these processes: things that are **misaligned** to your teaching and learning goals. What changes could you make to better align incentives to student success goals?

What things does your college do that are misaligned to your teaching and learning goals? Consider specific disincentives or processes that undermine student success goals.	What changes could you make to better align these processes to student success goals?
<i>Example: The hiring process is based heavily in individual departments and focuses on subject matter expertise rather than on teaching pedagogy. No alignment to college-wide student success goals.</i>	<i>Example: Task force to develop interview questions and rubrics to be used college-wide that align to college goals.</i>