

INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT REDESIGN

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



Achieving
the Dream™

Community Colleges Count



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VERSION 2.0

Acknowledgements

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About Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream leads a national network of more than 200 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 working toward closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success through a change process that builds colleges' institutional capacities in seven critical areas. More than 100 coaches and advisors and 15 state policy teams are working throughout 35 states and the District of Columbia to help Achieving the Dream reach more than 4 million community college students.



¹ www.AchievingtheDream.org/iPASS

INTRODUCTION

An integrated student support approach emphasizes the need for colleges to redefine the way they understand, design, and deliver the services that are critical for the success of every student. The goal of the toolkit is to support institutions in redesigning student supports in an integrated, collaborative, and holistic way that enables students to progress along their educational and career pathways.

The toolkit incorporates lessons from our experience working with colleges to increase student access and success and our innovative funded learning initiatives, particularly the Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) project.² It 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.

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.

Integrated Student Support Approach (or Student Support Redesign) promotes and sustains long-term proactive, holistic, and personalized academic and non-academic support experience for every student. Integrating the use of data, technology, and meaningful human interaction, the approach supports broad reforms to structures, processes, and attitudes/values in relation to the student support function of higher education institutions.

While you may have heard acronyms such as iPASS or IPAS, we refer to this approach as an “integrated student support approach” and use “student support redesign” interchangeably as a short-hand description. Whereas some may emphasize

“advising redesign,” we use “student support redesign” because it is inclusive of the holistic and comprehensive redesign of the web of services and supports (including but not restricted to advising) around which this approach is focused.

Student Success means that students have received a personal, rigorous, and enriching learning experience that culminates in the achievement of their academic goals in a timely manner and fully prepares them to realize their career aspirations.

Student-Focused Institution is an institution of higher education that deeply believes in the ability of each and every student it serves to learn and in fulfilling its role to provide the right conditions in which all students can achieve their educational and career goals. Student-focused institutions work tirelessly to ensure no decision, at any level, is made without considering the impact on students.

² www.AchievingtheDream.org/iPASS

OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT

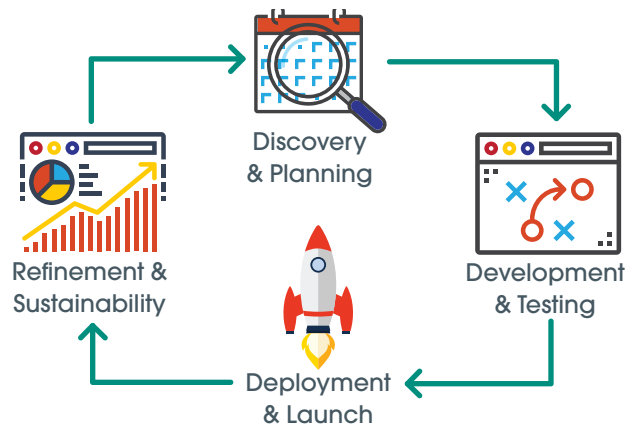
This toolkit was designed to support institutions at many different stages of planning for or implementing an integrated student support approach. Thus, while the toolkit could be used in a chronological order, each chapter can also be read as a stand-alone document for institutions that need support in one particular component of the work. Here is a brief overview:

Chapter	Value Description	Page
CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING THE INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT APPROACH	Comprehensive overview of an integrated student support approach. Will help orient team members to the work and inform communication to the campus community.	8
CHAPTER 2: BUILDING YOUR GUIDING TEAM	Evidence-based guidance on the structure and composition of the teams that effectively lead and support the reform approach.	15
CHAPTER 3: STUDENT-CENTERED DESIGN	A creative, solutions-focused process that ensures a clear understanding of the current student experience and centers on student perspectives, needs, and wants.	20
CHAPTER 4: INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT DISCOVERY PROCESS	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.	36
CHAPTER 5: ASSESSING AND IMPROVING READINESS	A discussion and reflection guide that complements any related readiness assessment selected by the team. Includes additional recommended readiness assessments.	39
CHAPTER 6: PLANNING FOR ACTION	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.	44
CHAPTER 7: CRAFTING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	Templates and a guide to focus your discussions and prompt consideration of all variables in developing a communication strategy.	50
CHAPTER 8: TRACKING PERFORMANCE & IMPACT	Practical worksheets, instructions, and examples to help institutions plan and execute ongoing, effective performance tracking of your integrated student support approach.	55
CHAPTER 9: DEVELOPING A TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	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 integrated student support approach.	65
CHAPTER 10: REFINING FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT	Guidelines, tips, and tools for a strong refinement and scaling discussion.	68
APPENDICES	Supplemental resources related to facilitation tips, scaling questions and tip, and selection and implementation of certain student success technologies, including degree planning, case management/early alert and predictive analytics.	

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT: A TYPICAL REDESIGN JOURNEY

We recommend that the project leader and the guiding team (discussed in Chapter 2) use this toolkit as a step-by-step guide and we encourage you to review the toolkit in its entirety and then plan out the various phases of your work.

For example, you might consider the four key design phases to shape the planning and execution of your student support redesign. Below we identify each phase and their essential components. These components correspond to subsequent chapters in the toolkit but are presented here to highlight recommended action steps in each phase.



Phase 1: Discovery & Planning (Corresponding toolkit chapters: 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

- Review integrated student support approach material
- Form and bring together initial guiding team
- Work through the Discovery chapter of the toolkit
 - Develop your vision and goals
 - Identify the results to be achieved and the changes in critical behaviors (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) necessary to achieve the desired results (progress tracking)
 - Understand your current student supports landscape
 - Map out your ideal student support experience
- Work through the Readiness chapter
 - Understand strengths you can leverage and areas in which to build capacity
- Begin crafting your Action Plan

- Select your technology vendor and begin procurement process
- Refine guiding team to fit redesign model and implementation needs



Phase 2: Development & Testing (Corresponding toolkit chapters: 6, 7, 8, and 9)

- Test your redesign model with stakeholders
- Develop workflow for redesigned system
- Use the changes in critical behaviors developed in phase 1 to:
 - Develop your communication strategy
 - Develop your training plan
 - Finalize progress tracking data collection plan
 - Begin implementing technology solutions



Phase 3: Deployment & Launch (Corresponding toolkit chapters: 6, 7, 8, and 9)

- Begin executing your strategy
- Testing, communicating, and training
- Initial data collection and benchmarking
- Launch of new technology, policies, and processes
- Continuously track progress across all stakeholders



Phase 4: Refinement & Sustainability (Corresponding toolkit chapter: 10)

- Establish cadence for refinement meetings and identify enhancements
- Continuously celebrate short-term successes/progress
- Pursue ongoing training and communication (including of progress)
- Continuously track progress across all stakeholders and make refinements as needed
- Institutionalize the work
- Pursue ongoing evaluation and analysis for continuous improvement and sustainability

A Note About Common Challenges

As simple as the four redesign phases appear, we recognize that this type of holistic institutional change is not quick or easy. Through the iPASS initiative,³ we have worked with institutions of varying sizes, demographics, organizational structures, labor environments, physical locations, and cultures. Below are some of the biggest challenges the institutions faced that others, who are considering or currently pursuing an integrated student support approach, may encounter. While it may be overwhelming to think about these challenges when you start, we find it's useful to note some potential challenges early so you can plan ahead. Subsequent chapters address strategies for overcoming these challenges in greater detail.

Engagement & Communication Challenges (Chapters 8, 9)

- Ensuring early, effective communication of project vision to all stakeholders that energizes and engages.
- Aligning the multiple student success efforts taking place on campus so they don't operate independently of each other.

- Encouraging end-user adoption of technology, i.e., changing the behavior/practices of key personnel and students.
- Designing effective training models for full-time and adjunct faculty and students.

Data & Technology Challenges (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 8)

- Maintaining a strong partnership with technology vendors to limit potential delays in implementation of the technology solution(s).
- Integrating multiple student success technologies, particularly older systems.
- Identifying the most valuable data (leading and lagging) to track progress.
- Understanding what student data each stakeholder group, particularly faculty, advisors, and other student support personnel, needs access to in order to enhance and personalize the way they support students.
- Making data actionable by tying data to interventions and workflow processes.

³ www.AchievingtheDream.org/iPASS

Advising Policies & Practices Challenges (Chapters 2, 3, 4, 9, 10)

- Designing a flexible advising model that meets the diverse needs of all students.
- Providing effective training and ongoing support to personnel assigned to implement the work on the ground.
- Managing the workload associated with technology (i.e., early alert flags) or new requirements (i.e., mandatory advising).
- Scaling the work to reach all students served by the college.

Strategy & Planning Challenges (Chapters 6, 10)

- Aligning the redesign to the college's strategic plan.
- Effectively and sustainably allocating limited time and resources.
- Identifying internal financial and personnel resources that can be repurposed to ensure successful execution of a transformative student supports redesign.
- Calculating the financial cost of the redesign and the potential return on investment.

MAKING THE CASE



As with any transformative redesign effort, there likely will be hesitation, concern, and a lot of questions as you begin to explore how this approach could help your college better serve its students. While the intent of the rest of the toolkit is to help institutions interested in or actively pursuing student support redesign, we offer the following advice.

- Identify a few allies early on to help you communicate the need and value of this approach for your institution and students.
- Connect your work to other student success efforts taking place at your institution to demonstrate how it will be an effective complement.
- Acknowledge that the redesign process will affect the daily work of some colleagues. Be up front about

the unknowns and invite those people to participate in work. That is the way to generate good will and avoid the gossip, fear, and resentment that could undermine the entire enterprise.

- Present the work as a long-term effort that will enhance student outcomes.
- Be up front with expected costs, including new and existing staff time as well as technology purchase and maintenance, and connect them to your student experience vision. Research shows that an integrated student support approach can deliver a high return on investment over the long term for colleges that implement at scale, as per student costs decline and retention and persistence rates increase.⁵

What Next?

Each chapter provides tips (noted by a lightbulb icon ) , tools, downloadable templates,⁴ 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.

⁴ All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be obtained by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

⁵ http://rpkgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/rpkgroup_iPASS_whitepaper-Final.pdf

UNDERSTANDING THE INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT APPROACH

Understanding the Need

We know that college completion is a critical national goal but that completion rates are low. Compounding this reality is the fact that the majority of community college students (76%) believe they are on track to complete their academic goals when, in reality, fewer than 2 in every 5 students earn a degree or certificate within six years.⁶

Driven by the belief that every student deserves a high-quality, personalized learning and support experience, community colleges spent the past decade or more reframing their missions and redesigning their services to enable many more students to persist and succeed, particularly those who traditionally have not been well served by America's higher education system.

Over the past 14 years, Achieving the Dream, a leader of the national community college reform movement focused on helping all students—particularly the most underserved—achieve their educational and career goals and realize substantial value from their postsecondary experience, has learned and disseminated many lessons. They include research findings that students are most likely to persist and complete when their educational experience enables them to have supportive relationships; clarify aspirations and enhance commitment; make college life feasible; and develop college know-how.⁷

Institutions have begun reemphasizing the vital role of a seamless, personalized experience for students that includes supports for academic and career planning, income and work support resources, and financial planning services.⁸ Many innovative institutions are working to identify cost-effective solutions to redesign student support that have promising lessons to share with the postsecondary field. Their experience, combined with Achieving the Dream's work and research, has informed

LESSONS FROM THE ACHIEVING THE DREAM NETWORK

- Boutique, isolated interventions that are not connected or scaled do not yield strong results.
- The full student experience from initial connection through to transition to another higher education institution or a career must be redesigned toward the needs of our students.
- In order to close achievement gaps, equity-minded design is essential and must be comprehensive.
- We must connect the student experience more deeply and dynamically within the broader systems of our communities.

a more integrated approach to supporting students that we put forward as a way to significantly and sustainably increase student success such that students only have to tell their story once, students have clear paths to reaching their career goals, and students have access to wrap-around services that will support their success.⁹ Institutions often know that they need a new approach, but are not sure what it should be. This chapter sets forth principles that redesign efforts can draw on to provide clarity and an underlying research base.

⁶ <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport12.pdf> (Figure 12)

⁷ http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Underprepared_Student.pdf

⁸ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/non-academic-student-support-mechanisms.html> and <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/a-holistic-conception-of-nonacademic-support.html>

⁹ For our definition of student success, please refer to the Purpose of This Toolkit section.

What Is an Integrated Approach to Student Support?

Students do not exist within a vacuum. They all bring unique educational, career, and personal goals, as well as a social context that affects the conditions they need in order to succeed. An integrated student support approach embraces this diversity of goals, needs, and contexts. It also provides a framework for institutions committed to designing a student-focused culture that delivers the combination of supports each student needs at the time they need them.

Sometimes known as iPASS,¹⁰ integrated planning and advising systems (IPAS), or technology-mediated advising, an integrated student support approach is multifaceted. It ensures that all students have access to long-term, personalized support that meets their individual needs inside and outside the classroom. Integrating the use of data, technology, and meaningful human interaction, the approach supports broad reforms to structures, processes, and attitude/values in relation to the student support function of higher education institutions.

Driving Toward SSIPP

It is vital for colleges to create an environment in which students receive support services and interactions that are **SSIPP**.¹¹

- **Sustained:** Students are supported throughout their full journey at an institution, particularly at key momentum points.
- **Strategic:** Time, energy, and resources are more intentionally allocated to provide students only what they need when they need it.
- **Integrated:** Services function as an interconnected set of tools that together create a strong support structure, rather than stand-alone interventions. Full-time and adjunct faculty and staff understand how their role in this support structure ties in with the roles of others. Once-siloed departments collaborate as the norm. Technologies that underpin these services are integrated on the back-end to create a seamless user experience.

- **Proactive:** Institutional policies and practices call for providing interventions and supports at the first sign of trouble, rather than when situations reach crisis mode.
- **Personalized:** All students receives the type and intensity of support appropriate for their unique circumstances and academic and career goals.

Rethinking the What and How of Student Support

Ideally there will emerge a more collaborative culture across departments, as well as individual full-time and adjunct faculty, who often play official and unofficial roles on behalf of students beyond the classroom. An institution will put high value on the work of all stakeholders who are essential to supporting the whole student. Such positive developments depend on changing the traditional ways of providing four essential kinds of support:

- **Education, career, and financial planning:** Helping students to identify their educational and career goals and to select the programs of study relevant to these goals, the courses that fulfill program requirements, and the financial strategies required.
- **Counseling, advising, and coaching:** Engaging with students in a proactive and personalized way to connect students to on- and off-campus resources.
- **Targeting risk and intervention:** Predicting course failure and program stop-out to enact timely and effective interventions for students before they know they need them.

¹⁰ www.achievingthedream.org/iPASS

¹¹ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/what-we-know-about-nonacademic-student-supports.pdf>

- **Transfer practices and labor market alignment:**

Managing student flow between institutions to maximize credit transfer and degree completion, and ensuring that students receive substantial economic value from their credential through jobs with a family-supporting wage.

An institution must make service-related decisions on how to deliver in these four areas. It might, for

example, adopt a case management strategy, create a holistic advising model, utilize predictive analytics, or integrate public benefits and financial coaching. As we'll see in later chapters, redesigning processes and practices requires attention to what types of services will be delivered and how, as well as to the type of technology and data architecture that will underpin those services.

EXAMPLES: INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT APPROACH IN ACTION

Starting with Education, Career, and Financial Planning

Montgomery County Community College's vision of an integrated 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 and holistic way in collaboration with faculty and other support staff.

Facilitating Transfer and Articulation

Lorain County Community College's (LCCC) goal is for all students to have an individualized career and academic plan within one of nine program pathways aligned with local labor market needs. Students receive support from a collaborative team of advisors, counselors, success coaches, and faculty mentors who specialize in the student's chosen program area. A common student data dashboard supports a more personalized support experience and facilitates stronger collaboration within the team. These teams work with on-campus advisors from LCCC's innovative University Partner program, which enables students to choose one of 40 bachelor and graduate degree programs offered

by 12 Ohio universities on the LCCC campus, many at LCCC tuition rates. These programs are mapped to one of LCCC's nine program pathways for a smooth transfer experience for all students.

Moving from Transactional to Intentional Support

The University of Hawai'i (UH) System aims to become comprehensively student-centered and -focused. For UH and its seven community colleges, that includes, 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. Ultimately, this approach leads to students' taking fewer off-program courses and graduating faster with fewer excess credits.

The Role of Data and Technology

An integrated student approach, at scale, can be challenging without the use of technology to help create efficiencies so more time can be spent on personalizing delivery of services to students. By leveraging technology as part of a redesigned advising and support model, institutions can a) boost student efficacy and ownership over their college experience, b) empower faculty and staff to access the information they need 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 an advisor's time by automating routine, one-way information-giving transactions.

However, it is important to emphasize that a new technology is not the solution or the change; it will not transform the student experience or improve student outcomes on its own.¹² Moreover, technology selection, implementation, and adoption should not be solely the purview of any one department. The technology evaluation and selection process must be collaborative and come after the institution has established the vision and goals for their ideal student-focused support structure.

Evaluating Technology Vendors:

Colleges that are most happy with their integrated support software vendor contracts typically work through a process similar to the below:



College conducts a technology gap analysis, taking stock of current challenges and opportunities with existing college software



Leadership team then articulates theory for how new software capabilities will help the college meet its student support goals



In consult with the integrated student support guiding team, leadership team creates a software evaluation rubric and assigns a software evaluation group



Software evaluation group examines at least three vendors, seeking bids and leveraging the rubric to form a recommendation



President or Chancellor negotiates final vendor contract with support from software evaluation team

EXAMPLE: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) sought to integrate different data sources and processes into their new integrated advising model. This new common dataset helped to effectively bridge communication and collaboration among the myriad student support services and faculty mentors. NWTC pulled data from its a) academic planning and early alert systems, b) new intake survey and c) new predictive analytics program.

With that information, the college developed a comprehensive, institution-wide student success matrix. As a result, relationships between faculty and staff became stronger and more collaborative as they leveraged data to identify student needs and targeted resources to achieve the best results for each student. Additionally, easy access to relevant data helped faculty mentors and academic advisors to make more meaningful connections with students.

Redesigning for Transformative Change

Redesigning the student experience through an integrated student support approach requires transformative institutional change, rather than piecemeal enhancements, to significantly and sustainably improve student outcomes. The

Community College Research Center (CCRC) notes that such change depends on organizational growth and development that combines new structures, processes, and attitudes.¹³ Chapter 8 includes examples of the following.

¹² <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/how-colleges-use-ipass-transform-student-support.pdf>

¹³ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/UsingTech-Insights-WEB.pdf>

- **Structural change** occurs when policies, structures, and procedures create a framework for new behaviors that improve the student experiences throughout the institution. Within an integrated student support 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 jobs and is transformative when enough individuals change their practices to ensure that large numbers of students encounter new student support interactions. For an integrated student support approach, this 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 changes can sometimes be easier to implement, but attitudinal change has the most profound impact.

The table below shows what these three kinds of change could look like in practice for universal (or low-touch) through intensive (or high-touch) supports.

EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT IN PRACTICE				
	Student Experience	Structures Policies, resource allocation, organizational hierarchy & roles, technology infrastructure, grounds	Processes Workflow protocols, communication, professional development, expectations.	Attitudes/Values Culture, norms, and institutional priorities and understanding.
Intensive Supports Provided only to students with the highest need. Usually one-on-one support.	Students receive one-on-one support in their area(s) of need related to housing, public benefits access, veterans affairs, childcare, emergency aid, in-depth financial education, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring and promotion policies support and value personnel who provide intensive support. • Adequate funds are allocated to providing intensive support to all students who need it. • Technology connects students with public services/benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development equips personnel with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide intensive support. • Protocols ensure faculty and staff know which supports each student receives and any outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty, staff, and administrators endorse the college's role in supporting students socially, not just in their academics and career. • Student-personnel relationships are seen as an essential component of student success.
Just-in-Time Supports Provided to a subset of students demonstrating a particular need. Often one-on-one support.	As students progress along their chosen path and/or their context changes, they proactively receive supports specific to their needs by an individual who knows them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology supports the identification of each student's needs and connects them to appropriate services. • Policies ensure services are delivered proactively, rather than expecting students to use services when needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning outcomes clearly define the value and purpose of each support. • Protocols clearly identify which function is responsible for delivering each support. • Support staff work with students to continue to develop their self-efficacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support personnel understand their own role as a function of teaching and learning. • Personnel are empowered to continually improve the support services they provide.
Universal Supports Deemed essential and feasible to provide to all students. Sometimes one-on-one support.	All students are supported to some extent in-person in identifying their career goals and mapping an academic plan through to completion of these goals. All students are empowered to conduct routine tasks online.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All campus technologies are integrated to provide one comprehensive view of every student's progress and context. • Technology is employed to empower students to complete routine tasks and access certain services electronically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel work across functional areas to deliver low-touch services to all students in a case management approach. • Technology is used regularly to monitor students' progress towards their goals. • Advisors approach their work as a function of teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone on campus understands their role, and the role of personnel in other functional areas, in ensuring student success. • Faculty understand and value their role in supporting students beyond their classrooms.

How Do Guided Pathways and Integrated Student Support Fit Together?

The “guided pathways” concept, gaining traction in higher education,¹⁴ offers a framework for a more cohesive student experience by: (1) clarifying paths to student end goals; (2) helping students choose and enter a pathway; (3) helping students stay on the path; and (4) ensuring that students are learning.¹⁵

An integrated student support approach provides the structure and processes necessary for delivering an enhanced student progression along a chosen pathway.

In particular, it operationalizes two critical components of guided pathways: Helping students to choose and enter a program pathway and to stay on the path.

	Guided Pathways Practices ¹⁶	Operationalizing Using Integrated Student Support Approach
Helping Students Choose and Enter a Program Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students explore career and college options, choose a program, and develop a program plan early on. Help students take and pass college-level foundational math and English courses in first year. Provide intensive support to underprepared students in college-level courses. Work with high schools to help students explore career and college interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in career, academic, and financial planning early in the student’s journey. Implement supports and processes to help students succeed in gateway and foundational courses quickly. Provide students, faculty, and advisors access to clearly mapped program plans and a strong understanding of the courses and milestones as they build out a full program plan early on. Provide students early on with aligned academic and wrap-around supports to ensure seamless and timely completion of gateway and foundational courses.
Keeping Students on Path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisors monitor students’ progression in completing their program plan. Advisors and students are alerted when the student deviates from the path. Policies and processes are in place to help students get back on track. Assistance is provided to students pursuing limited-access programs to redirect them to a more viable path. Colleges schedule classes to ensure that students take the courses they need when they need them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students, faculty, and staff monitor progress in the student’s plan. Touchpoints with faculty and advisors are built in at clearly defined key milestones. Students, faculty, and staff are alerted when the student is veering off the path and protocols guiding intervention are clearly established across all support functions. Staff approach their interactions with students as a function of teaching. There is a clear system of communication and delineation of roles between faculty and support staff for monitoring student progression and providing needed supports. Course scheduling incorporates students’ plans and life factors to ensure classes are offered when students need them.

¹⁴ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/redesigning-americas-community-colleges.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/pathways/Documents/PathwaysGraphic462017.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/implementing-guided-pathways-aacc.pdf>

Guided pathways and integrated student support are also aligned around the following underlying principles:

- **Redesign the entire student experience:** An institution must understand, analyze, and rework the student experience from first connection to the college to transition to a career or another educational institution. For student support redesign specifically, this means ensuring that colleges provide comprehensive academic, career, financial, and social supports to all students throughout their journey at the institution.
- **Unify multiple student success initiatives:** All student success efforts must be connected and aligned in vision, practice, and policy. For student support redesign, this is important for many reasons; for example, changes to developmental education design and delivery affects the advice and support required from advisors, tutors, and faculty mentors, and in some cases has consequences for financial aid eligibility.
- **Begin with the students' end goals in mind:** There must be an emphasis on understanding students' career and academic goals, and social contexts, to meet their needs. For student supports redesign, this means helping every student identify education and career goals early on—for example, with in-person coaching to interpret the results of career assessment/interest tools. Subsequent supports can then be tailored to those goals and the student's social context to help them stay on their chosen path.

EXAMPLE: ALIGNING NATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

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 an integrated student supports approach into their redesign efforts. Thereby, CCP is enhancing its academic planning for existing and prospective students as it builds clear 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 ensuring that students are enrolled early on in a mandated sequence of courses, and their progress monitored by all parties. A case management approach to advising and risk intervention will also enable the college to more proactively and personally help every student choose, enter, and stay on a pathway to their career goals.

What's Next?

Now that we have established a foundation for the theory and principles behind an integrated student support approach, the following chapters focus more explicitly on how to execute a redesign, specifically the steps for exploring, planning, implementing, evaluating, and scaling. Chapter 2 begins this analysis with details on how to identify the ideal team for leading the design and implementation.

BUILDING YOUR GUIDING TEAM

Pursuing transformative organizational change through an integrated student support 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 the strategic actions essential to an integrated student support approach. While there is no perfect model for a team, there are key considerations to keep in mind.

Team Structure

Engaging representatives from all key stakeholder groups helps inform the development of a thoughtful plan comprising 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 it may change or expand (depending on the phase of the work) to include sub-groups assigned to specific actions 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.

Nonetheless, the team must represent the main areas related to, or sure to be affected by, the 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 your institution's IT landscape.
- The experiences of stakeholders who will be most affected by your redesign.

Or you could structure your team around "functions." In researching the experiences of colleges in the first round of IPAS grants, CCRC identified three categories crucial for project success:¹⁷

- **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.

¹⁷ <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/UsingTech-Insights-WEB.pdf>

26 INSTITUTIONS, MULTIPLE APPROACHES

There are 13 community colleges and 13 four-year institutions working with Achieving the Dream and EDUCAUSE in the iPASS grant initiative. They all took different approaches to developing a guiding team, particularly in the process of selecting leaders:

- Eight institutions appointed a principal investigator to support the project manager. In every case, the principal investigator was from the president's senior leadership team and was involved in supporting the leadership of the work, but not involved in the day-to-day activities.
- Four institutions appointed two co-leaders, usually a representative from academic affairs and another from student services. However, at one institution, an academic affairs representative joined with the Chief Information Officer.
- It was most common for an individual from academic affairs to be in the position of project lead, usually at the associate dean, dean, associate vice president, or vice president level. This is the breakdown of who led or co-led the project:
 - At 18 institutions, an academic affairs representative.
 - At six institutions, a student affairs/success representative.
 - At five institutions, an advancement/planning representative.
 - At four institutions, an IT director.
 - At three institutions, a representative in another position.

When selecting a leader, each institution should consider the goals of their integrated student supports approach in the context of their current culture and structure. For example, those that planned to first leverage education and career planning, or use a faculty advising model, were more likely to select the project leader from academic affairs. Those that focused on intake and risk intervention were more likely to pull the leader from student services.




It is also essential that institutions consider their institutional culture in determining the representation and leadership of the guiding team. Above all, it is critical to choose leaders who are passionate about the work and influential on campus, no matter their job title.




Asking the following questions can help institutions build a strong team.

- Project Leaders: Do they have the skills, attributes, and passion to bring together the people essential to success?
- Project Leaders: Are they well-respected by all key stakeholders?
- Guiding Team: Are there critical stakeholders who need a prominent seat at the table?
- Guiding Team: What new types of collaboration are you trying to incorporate in your redesign and how can you model them on your team?

Key Stakeholder Considerations

As you think about who needs to be on your guiding team, we encourage you to reflect on what role various positions may play in your student support redesign. Since the goal is to identify a team of no more than eight, you will not be able to include all of these positions at one time. However, there may be phases in the project when one role is more necessary than another or you may find ways to engage all of these roles in different ways (such as through sub-groups).


Individual	Role/Contribution
Project Leader	The leader is most likely to see the full picture of the student support redesign—not only the vision and goals, but also the details often required for internal communications. This person must be empowered to make decisions and move the project forward across the institution.
Communications Expert	This person should be a member of the communications department or a skilled communicator/influencer who has a deep knowledge of all the institution’s student success work and is heavily involved in or leading the communication of that work.
IT Director or Staff	A representative from the IT department who is heavily involved in the technology component of the redesign work (such as procurement and tech launch) will help the team communicate the benefits of the new technology. This person, who has a sense of areas where people are likely to struggle or need extra time/help adapting, can assist with training plans.
Administrator Responsible for Advising	This person is likely to be the most knowledgeable about the current advising processes and policies and will be integral for implementing the redesign—and is uniquely positioned to see and communicate the benefits and challenges to the institution as a whole, as well as to the advisors and students as individuals.
Advisor(s)	<p>It is essential to have at least one advisor who will be affected by the redesign on a daily basis. This person will be able to help explain exactly how your redesign will affect advisors and students so that the rest of the team has a stronger grip on those core audiences.</p> <p> It is a good idea to include additional advisors in a test audience to get well-rounded feedback on your messaging and methods.</p>
Faculty (Full Time)	<p>Having a faculty member present is particularly important for institutions that are asking their faculty to adopt new behaviors or processes.</p> <p> Will your student support redesign affect different faculty/departments in different ways? For example, will certain departments be affected more than others? How will the reforms affect developmental education faculty? Or faculty in workforce? Or faculty teaching subjects with high enrollment but low success rates?</p>
Faculty (Part Time)	<p>A student support redesign will likely mean changes that affect both full-time and part-time faculty. One representative from each group would be ideal. If including adjuncts is difficult, you might offer them one-time opportunities, such as a series of focus group sessions, to get their perspectives.</p> <p> Consider creative ways to get feedback from adjunct professors. For example, you might include several (from different departments) in a test audience.</p>

Individual	Role/Contribution
Other Initiative Leaders	<p>If you are part of Achieving the Dream, we strongly encourage you to include your Core Team Leader in your guiding team to help ensure consistency with your other student success efforts and to demonstrate how all your work is part of one cohesive strategy for student success.</p> <p> If you are not an Achieving the Dream college, consider what other major student success efforts are taking place on your campus and whether one or more leaders of those projects could contribute to your rollout plan and implementation.</p>
Institutional Researcher	<p>Including an institutional researcher will be particularly important as you evaluate the progress towards your change vision and goals. The presence of an IR representative who understands your student support redesign will help the team think of new ways of analyzing and communicating the data to facilitate the rollout, refinement, and sustainability.</p>
Human Resource Professional	<p>Significant changes to student supports inevitably has an impact on the daily work of faculty (full time and adjunct) and staff. Someone to bring this perspective to your planning will help when recruiting new faculty and staff, changing existing job descriptions, dealing with union contractual obligations and discussions, and identifying ways to plan effectively for project and senior leadership transitions.</p>
Students	<p>Student buy-in is essential to successful adoption of the new technology and processes. Engage a group that broadly represents your student population in terms of part-time/full-time status, race/ethnicity, gender, age, family, income, campus, high-school, program of study, enrollment in developmental education/college-ready. That will strengthen your overall rollout and help determine whether targeted communications and training are necessary. Find ways to make student participation ongoing rather than a one-off experience.</p> <p> Consider which student groups are more likely to use the new technology or system most and those likely to need most support.</p> <p> Consider ways to include students less actively engaged in the institution. Reaching beyond members of the student government or clubs will enable you to identify new ways to communicate with the students who are usually harder to reach.</p>

Recommended Activities

Once the guiding team has been assembled, consider exercises (such as the ones below) to help orient its members to the work ahead. Keep in mind that the value of the activities depends on the enthusiastic engagement of the entire team, as they contain elements that will appear later in the toolkit.

- Develop a team charter that identifies the team's mission, goals, and how you will operate on a daily basis. A team charter is a great way to get everyone on the same page as it guides how all members move the work forward and work with each other. It can also be a great way to share your team's purpose with stakeholders outside the group.

 All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

- Consider an activity that forces the group to experience the reality of the student experience of your supports to get at the "why" of the redesign. For example, you could have them try to register, participate in the orientation process, observe the advising waiting room at peak times, etc.
- Ask each member of your team to identify hoped-for accomplishments of the redesign in the first year of implementation, particularly relating to attitudinal change and student outcomes (defined in Chapter 1).
- Ask, each person to draft a vision for the student support redesign. What do the visions have in common? How do they differ?
- Have the team members gather to draft a vision and set of goals as a group (recognizing it will change as you move through the exploration, readiness, and planning stages).

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Queensborough Community College: Representative Leadership Drives Collaboration

Queensborough Community College (QCC) wanted to integrate its redesign effort fully with its Queensborough Academies (or guided pathways). So the college convened a guiding team that represented the core groups/offices on campus:

- Faculty concerns are represented and addressed by presence of the Dean of Faculty/Interim Provost.
- The Associate Dean of Enrollment Management represented the needs of Student Affairs and shared detailed knowledge of student onboarding, advising, and communications.
- The Academic Affairs Specialist served as coordinator.
- The Director of Institutional Research contributed expertise in data analysis to inform their decisions.
- The engagement of the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer demonstrated the significance of this work to the college and brought decision-making authority.

This diversity of role, experience, and expertise has been a critical success factor in the redesign. In particular, two team members have stood out as particularly important, though comparable job titles/roles are often overlooked when other colleges assemble teams:

"Having representation from the Office of Institutional Research means we are always focused on being data-driven — we are able to utilize existing data and build in ways of collecting/analyzing data for future needs as well."

"The deep commitment of the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (SVP) is absolutely vital to our success. The presence of the SVP at team meetings means we have buy-in at the absolute highest level of the campus, and also that we have inter-departmental, cross-campus strategic thinking and knowledge."

Broadening Engagement Through Working Groups

To support continued momentum, QCC's guiding team set up a standing one-hour weekly meeting that flexes based on the ebb and flow of the work. During peak planning and implementation times, the meeting can last five or 10 hours. For a few key months, the team has held weekly two-hour meetings to engage a broader group of stakeholders and to present technology demonstrations.

QCC also recognized that, during different phases of the process, other stakeholders should join the team temporarily. At one point or another, the Dean for Institutional Assessment, various IT staff, faculty fellows, and other deans and vice presidents, have done so. Special "working groups" are convened occasionally to represent even more of the community: administrators from the bursar's and the registrar's offices, and a wide array of others, such as program and support services, financial aid, and student advising.

Complementary Roles of Leadership Team and Working Groups

The guiding team focuses on the big picture: articulating the vision, guiding the strategy of the redesign, and sharing updates with the college leadership and beyond. On an as-relevant basis, the working groups have provided new perspectives, secured buy-in from different constituencies, developed an even richer picture of support services and the changes and resources needed, and distributed the workload. The ultimate lesson? Significant change requires significant investment of time and resources, as well as a diverse, dedicated, and representative group of stakeholders with strong core leadership.

STUDENT-CENTERED DESIGN

Before redesigning your student support model, it is critical to understand the existing student experience of your supports. Chapters 3 and 4 provide guidance on how to do that.

- Chapter 3 presents a repeatable process for ensuring that your analysis of the existing student experience and your conception of the ideal experience are centered on your student needs and wants. We use this process to combat the tendency to focus on what works for us as staff and faculty members or to design an experience that works for only some of our students (often the traditional-aged, full-time, degree-seeking student).
- Chapter 4 presents a tool to help you better understand the interactions, processes, and policies that currently

define the student experience of your supports. This tool goes into a lot of detail because we know that a student's experience is defined by many small, seemingly insignificant interactions on a daily basis and the impact of a negative experience can be significant.

We introduce these chapters together because they are closely related and can be completed in tandem. To learn more about how we recommend colleges use these chapters, see "How to Incorporate This Process into Your Discovery and Planning Effort" at the end of this chapter.

Purpose of Student-Centered Design

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 the central focus on the student. Achieving the Dream has used this process with institutions as they transform the student experience of planning and advising services, though its value extends well beyond this topic. In fact, it can be applied to any service, etc., that would benefit from:

- Sharpening the 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 a particular need/want
- Rapid testing and implementation of solutions
- Fostering continuous improvement
- Embracing failure as a learning opportunity

A big part of the value of student-centered design is that it prioritizes the desirability of a solution at the start of the process, then examines the feasibility and viability of possible solutions to narrow down the options.

Desirability

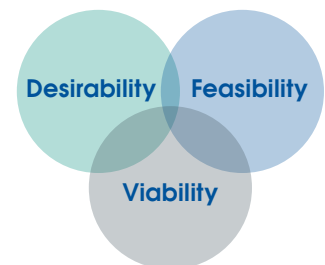
- Will this solution fill a student need?
- Will it fit into our students' lives?
- Will it appeal to our students?
- Is it something our students actually want?

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 in our reach?

Viability

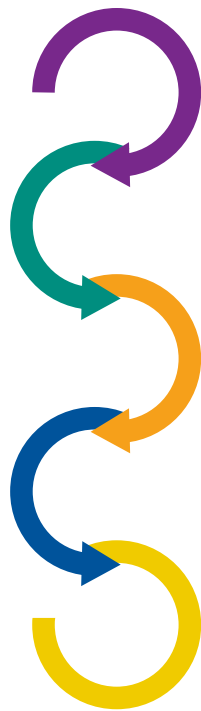
- Will the solution align with our vision and mission?
- Does it honor each student's budget?
- What will the return on the investment look like?



The Process

The various visuals and descriptions of the design-thinking, or the student-centered-design, process follow essentially the same pattern. For the purposes of this introduction, we present a combination of design-thinking descriptions from the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia and from IDEO, an international design and consulting firm (Tim Brown, CEO).¹⁸

Note: While the steps are in linear sequence, there likely will be looping back and forth between them during a redesign process.



What and When — Articulating the Design Brief, an outline of the purpose and scope of the design project.

What Is — Identifying the current situation, as well as 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 — Selecting options that could excite students, have significant positive impact on them, and stay within the college's resources and capabilities.

What Works — Rapid prototyping and testing; selecting and designing in detail the best option; then implementing it.

What and When

The brief often will be developed by the executive leadership team in consultation with the guiding team and can be considered a kind of charter for the guiding team's work. It should include:

1. **Project Description** — A brief statement of the purpose of, or the issue to be addressed by, the project.
2. **Scope** — The boundaries of the project: What functions are considered part the redesign? What functions are not? Are there interactions between functions inside and outside the scope that should be addressed?
3. **Constraints** — Limitations and expectations that must be met if the project is to be successful:

for example, resource availability, capability, technology issues, relevant policies and due dates.

4. **Intended Users** — Identification of the main beneficiaries of the new experience, technology, or service.
5. **Exploration Questions** — Means to generating information (often about students, as well as the availability of new technology) essential to an effective design.
6. **Expected Outcomes and Success Metrics** — Results the redesign should achieve; evaluation techniques most suitable to circumstances.

¹⁸ Liedtka, J., Ogilvie, T., & Brozenk, R. (2014) *The Designing for Growth Field Book*. New York, NY. Columbia University Press. And Brown, T. (2009) *Change for Design*. New York, NY. HarperCollins Publishers.

What Is

This step includes:

- Understanding the current experience; identifying obstacles, challenges, or gaps within it; then writing a problem statement.
- Asking students for perspectives on their current experience, needs, and wants.
- Developing design criteria that will help identify the ideas you want to pursue.

Identifying the Challenges

The discovery process outlined in Chapter 4 encourages two approaches:

1. **Part One:** Collecting and reviewing quantitative and qualitative data can be a starting point for discussion of the current model's impact on students. The review should consider relevant information that may be available from focus groups, College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Noel-Levitz, the Student Information System and the Learning Management System, and other sources.
2. **Part Two:** Completing the first two columns of the Student Experience Discovery Inventory (Chapter 4) can sharpen focus on the process and policy side that helps define the student experience.



Two supplementary tools to add depth to your analysis are an affinity diagram and a process map.

1. An affinity diagram¹⁹ is a great way to generate and consolidate information related to a complex issue or to analyze survey or interview data. The diagram involves organizing ideas, or findings, according to their similarity.
2. A process map is a workflow diagram to clarify understanding of a process or a series of parallel processes.

The team then summarizes the outcomes of these efforts in a problem statement, likely to be several paragraphs long.

Seeking Students' Perspectives

To fully understand the current student experience at your institution, it is essential to call on a variety of techniques. In particular, consider a combination of the following:

- Use one-on-one interviews, focus groups, surveys, and student journals to uncover students' understanding of their needs/experience.
- To gain third-party perspectives, shadow/observe students as they go about their day or conduct a secret shopper experience.
- Have students use tools like process mapping to identify every step in the career exploration and counseling process from their perspectives.

Developing Design Criteria

The last part of the "What Is" step is the development of a set of design criteria. This should incorporate components of your problem statement and the findings from the collection of student perspectives. Here are some examples:

- Provide students with online access to interest inventories and career exploration software.
- Provide students, especially first-generation-in-college students and those from underserved populations, with the career and academic planning support necessary to be successful in college.
- Ensure that students know a faculty or staff member who listens to them and whom they can rely on.
- Ensure that students only have to tell their story once when they seek assistance.
- Ensure that the process accommodates students who are not able to be on campus during the day due to employment schedules, childcare responsibilities, or other reasons.

¹⁹ <http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/idea-creation-tools/overview/affinity.html>.

What If

The “What If” step is intended to foster creativity in generating options for satisfying the design criteria.

This can be a difficult step. The temptation is to jump straight to solving a problem, before evaluating a large number of ideas. Below are some tips on how to run an effective brainstorming session within the student-centered design process.

- Identify facilitators who are not on the design team to enable them to focus exclusively on their facilitation role. See Appendix A for tips for facilitators.
- Establish rules for those participating to set the tone for the session. For example:
 - Defer judgement on or evaluation of ideas proposed
 - Encourage **bold** ideas
 - Build on the ideas of others—use the phrase “yes and”
 - Stay on topic—use your design brief to help with this
 - Allow just 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 plan the session to fit your needs. For instance:
 - Begin by outlining the problem again and having participants explain it to a partner in their own words.
 - Then, provide time for individual idea generation and reflection.
 - Next, invite individuals to share their ideas with the rest of the group.
 - Group the ideas by theme/similarity.
 - Ask all participants to vote for their favorite 2-3 ideas; identify the top vote getters.

At this point, the most popular options are usually in outline form and must be fleshed out in the days ahead before evaluating them during the “What Wows” step.

What Wows

The purpose of this step is to narrow your options to the two or three most likely to have the biggest impact—to “wow” your students. The options should meet the student-desirability, feasibility, and viability criteria that resulted from your “What Is” work.

This step should also include identification of the data you will use 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 data are 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 you do not, consider looping back through “What If” to identify a second or third option. Or consider altering components of your design brief to provide more flexibility.

What Works

This is the final step of your student-centered design process. It consists of developing a prototype, testing it to get feedback (including ideas for improvement), refining the prototype, then repeating the process. The prototype either proves unworkable or shows itself ready for final design and implementation.

Many colleges find this stage the most daunting. Quick development and testing can be difficult in the college environment, but the value of the prototyping process outweighs any difficulties involved in its implementation. It is a safe way to test your ideas—quickly (therefore not wasting time), inexpensively (therefore not wasting money), and via demonstration rather than implementation (therefore not causing harm to students).

Methods of Rapid Prototyping

When generating prototypes to test with your stakeholders, carefully consider which options—within the limits of your institution’s resources—will most effectively convey the reality of your idea. Here are some possibilities:

- A step-by-step map of your new process/service.
- A storyboard that illustrates the steps of your new service/experience, with a written explanation to accompany each visual.
- 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.

Your prototype need not be perfect. Remember:

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 elaborate, or reject, is easier than attempting perfection on your first try.
2. Don’t spend too much time developing your prototype.
3. Try not to get attached to your idea or you will not be able to receive and interpret feedback objectively.
4. Build with student behaviors and needs in mind—information from the “What Is” step can help with this.
5. Look for the gaps your prototype doesn’t fill, not just the feedback on the ones it does.

Tips for Receiving Useful Feedback

- Staff, faculty, and administrative comments are important, but student feedback is paramount. If the redesign doesn’t work for students, it is unacceptable; prototype and test another option.
- Consider how best to communicate your idea to your audience.
- Welcome constructive criticism and dig deeper to identify the root causes of any critique.
- Don’t try to sell or defend your idea.
- Be alert to nonverbal reactions.
- Pay special attention to feedback on the “why” and the “need” the prototype is addressing.
- Be sure the person facilitating the feedback process can focus solely on active listening. One way to do that is to choose an additional person to take notes on or record participants’ comments.



For relatively complex designs or redesigns of a process, consider breaking it into its components and rapidly prototype each individually. Coordinating the separate prototypes will be necessary.

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 settle on the final design—the one most desirable to students that also fulfills the feasibility and viability criteria.



Consider using the questions for desirability, feasibility, and viability at the beginning of this chapter to help determine your choice.

How to Incorporate Student-Centered Design into Your Discovery and Planning Efforts

Your team can approach its discovery and planning efforts in multiple ways that incorporate a student-centered design process. Three examples:

1. Follow this student-centered design process in tandem with completing the first two columns of the Discovery Inventory in Chapter 4. The inventory can shed light on obstacles, challenges, or gaps in the current student experience (the “What Is” step).
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 rely on this process to help identify the technology solution to meet their ideal usage needs. It may also have value in designing protocols to ensure that the chosen technology is used effectively.
3. Use the process to engage a broader group of stakeholders, including students, in devising a 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, email services@achievingthedream.org.

INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORT DISCOVERY PROCESS

Engaging in a deep discovery process is a key component of successful planning and adoption of an integrated student support approach. It's important for the guiding team to have a common and comprehensive understanding of what problem is being addressed and to have a clear map of the status quo. A discovery process is a systematic way of documenting what currently happens on campus and will help uncover focus areas for your redesign work and assist with clarifying the vision for the changes you are undertaking (Chapter 6).

This chapter provides a process and template designed to facilitate a discovery reflection for the team and is intended to be complementary to readiness discussions (Chapter 5). Consisting of two parts—data collection/exploration and a student experience inventory—the discovery process should:

- Structure your reflection on and assessment of the current support experience of your students.

- Identify gaps, challenges, and trouble spots to address.
- Ensure all team members and stakeholders share an understanding of the current landscape.

Note: Completion of the discovery inventory will likely require the participation/collaboration of several departments that may not be represented on your team.

PART ONE: Data Collection and Exploration

Collecting Data

Before you begin thinking about your ideal support model, it is essential to review available quantitative and qualitative data to provide a common starting point for discussion of the current model's impact on students. This allows the guiding team to better understand the challenges of the current student support approach and the needs of the students. Here are questions to answer:

- Who are your students?
 - Consider age, gender, race/ethnicity, location, and other demographic factors.
 - Does the existing model of support address various student backgrounds or just one?
- What are your students' goals in the academic, career, and personal realms?
 - Do your structures and processes support the achievement of those goals?
- What experiences/responsibilities/pressures shape your students in terms of family, finances, employment, culture, and language?
 - What holistic support services exist and how do students find out about or access them?
- What challenges/obstacles do your students face on the path to attaining their goals?
- Considering as many support services as possible, to what extent do students use them?
 - Who uses which supports the most and for what reasons?
 - Examine existing data—and, if necessary, gather more—to find root causes.
- What impact do your services, processes, and policies have on student experiences and outcomes?

Understanding the Student Experience

Draw on demographic information to create student personas to explore how students move through your institution and experience support services. Use ATD’s Finish Line Game, a student experience simulation, to support your exploration (visit www.achievingthedream.org/finishlinegame or email services@achievingthedream.org).

Focusing on the experiences of individual students as they move through the institution may reveal issues you would not otherwise have considered. It also involves people not on the guiding team) in understanding the “why” of the redesign and contributes to brainstorming sessions on innovative possibilities for your new integrated student support approach.

PART TWO: Student Experience Discovery Inventory

The second part of the discovery process is a collaborative, open discussion. The guiding team examines the design of the student experience—from intake through advising and student supports—to identify critical pain points and explore ways to address them. This inventory helps examine the current support approach for major structural, process, and cultural components in need of remedy to craft the ideal redesign.

Remember the five design principles from Chapter 1 that the ideal design is sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized.



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

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?
Admissions Documents a) What admissions documents must a student complete before registering for classes? b) What can be submitted online vs. what must be submitted in person? c) Who is responsible for obtaining these documents from the student?				
Intake Survey a) Is an intake survey used to gather contextual information about each student? b) If so, how is this information used to connect students to support services prior to starting class?				

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?
Use of Registration Holds a) Are there additional holds (other than documentation) on students' profiles that may prevent them from registering? b) If so, who is responsible for removing those holds, and is this process automatic or manual? c) How do students know their holds have been removed?				
Admissions Communications a) When does a student start receiving communication from the college through their school account? b) Is a student alerted to only use the institution email account moving forward? c) How are communications sent to a student? For example: email, phone calls, text message. d) During the admissions process, how many communications total does a student receive (all departments)?				

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

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

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?
Advising Policies a) Are students required to meet with an advisor prior to orientation, registration, and/or program placement? If so, explain the process. b) What policies are in place to encourage or require students to see their advisors after the initial visit?				
Student Use of Advising a) Where is information related to advising available to students? b) What evidence indicates this information is easy to access? c) Are students required to make an appointment to meet with their advisor? d) If so, how far in advance do they need to make the appointment? e) Is technology used to empower students to complete routine tasks or access basic services?				

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?
Advising Sessions a) Roughly how often does an advisor see a student each term? b) How often does an advisor proactively contact each student to schedule an advising appointment? c) What is the average length of the advising appointment? d) 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. e) Are there any student surveys or assessments that advisors use when working with students? If so, please list.				
Advising for Student Groups a) 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. b) Are part-time students' advising experiences different from those of full-time students? What evidence supports your response? c) How is advising of noncredit students different in design or process? Does noncredit advising include an emphasis on transition to degree programs?				

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?
Academic and Career Planning a) Do advisors build/ use degree plans for every student they advise? b) Do students, faculty, and advisors have the ability to easily monitor a student's progression through a degree program? c) Do the degree plans automatically update as the student's path changes? d) Are students supported in developing a personalized career plan? If so, how? e) Does this career plan align with the student's academic plan? f) In what order are the career plan and academic plan developed?				

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>Definition and Roles</p> <p>a) Does your institution have a common definition of advising? If so, please list the parts of the current definition.</p> <p>b) Based on your definition of advising, what skill sets are required for advisors to be successful?</p> <p>c) Are the roles and responsibilities of advisors clearly defined and differentiated from the roles of other support professionals, such as counselors?</p> <p>d) Are student learning, retention, and success included in the role description of advisors and other support professionals?</p> <p>e) 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>f) How do you evaluate advising?</p> <p>g) 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?
Training and Collaboration a) Is there a training or professional development program for advisors at your college? b) Is your professional development for advisors optional/mandatory? Ongoing or one-off? Scheduled and in-person and/or available on demand? c) 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. d) Is there a common student folder or communication tool through which to read advisor notes? Is it utilized by the entire college?				
Challenges a) What are the two biggest challenges students report experiencing with advising supports? b) What are the two biggest challenges for advisors?				

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?
Academic Supports a) Briefly describe how tutoring works at your institution. How do students get connected or referred to tutors? b) How do you incorporate library services in coursework and student support services?				
Financial Security a) What supports does the college provide to students with financial security challenges? For example, tax preparation, public benefits, housing support, emergency loans, food pantry, clothing closet, transportation, childcare. b) Are these services provided by the college or through external partnerships? c) How are students made aware of and connected to the supports listed above? d) Does the college have a system (protocols and/or technology) in place to proactively identify students who need these services and track their use? e) What percentage of students who require these supports actually receive them? For example, are these services delivered at scale? f) Are these services provided on campus? If not, how does the college ensure that students receive the support they are referred to?				
Other Supports a) What other service/academic departments do you consider critical to your work in student success? b) What structures promote collaboration across departments?				

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?
Connection to Supports a) Are campus-based supports located in one place, or hub, or do students have to go to different offices for different questions/ services? b) How do students get connected to the following supports: counseling, tutoring, library services, career planning and preparation, financial aid? c) 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? d) How are students "handed off" between departments? What technology or referral process is used? e) Are all front-line staff trained to know whom to refer students to for different issues? If so, how are they trained? f) 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? g) Is this training ongoing? What delivery method is used?				
Scheduling a) To what extent can students get the courses they need, conflict free, at registration? b) How are students' course needs assessed?				

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?
Student-Level Data a) How are student-level data collected and shared with faculty and staff? b) Do you currently have reporting dashboards that are widely used in decision-making? c) Do advisors and other student support staff use student-level data on a daily basis to inform their work with students? d) 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?				
Institutional Data a) How do you evaluate the impact and effectiveness of your student supports? How often does this occur? b) How do you analyze and use data to inform policy and process decisions related to student supports? c) Who is involved in making those decisions? d) How is IR involved in the evaluation process? e) Are you using or planning to use predictive analytics in student success efforts? If so, briefly describe. f) If you are currently using predictive analytics in student success efforts, how long have you been doing so?				

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?
Technology Use a) How does the college currently use technology to support advising and student support delivery? b) To what extent are these technologies used by the target end user in the intended manner? c) To what extent are these technologies integrated with one another? d) 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?				

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Trident Technical College: Understanding Where We Are, to Decide Where to Go

Trident Technical College (TTC) brought together representatives from faculty, student services, tutoring, and IR to complete the discovery activity at the start of their student support redesign. While the process was driven by the project leader, Laurie Fladd, Associate Dean of Science and Math, each individual found they learned a lot about processes they had not been aware of in other departments. In the words of Dr. Fladd, *“any opportunity to break down siloes and work across the college in the best interest of the students is not only a major win for the students but for the College as well.”*

Once completed, the discovery activity buttressed their work with their Achieving the Dream Coach iPASS grant coach. It also was a key input for solidifying their vision of the student experience—a vision that would guide the team and be the centerpiece of its communication strategy. Reflecting on their experience, Dr. Fladd noted that *“the questions about planned changes in the discovery activity helped us work out many of the details of our vision and how we wanted advising to look after our changes.”*

As a result of the prompts in the discovery activity, TTC identified aspects of their student supports approach that they wanted to change, both immediately and in an ongoing reassessment. For example, the activity led to protracted discussion about how to encourage the students to see their

Navigators, who provide support in students’ first semester at the college, and to use the new system as they begin their journey at TTC. The team also identified maintaining a manageable caseload for their Navigators as a priority to bolster the relationship building that is vital to their success. The team monitors both of these as it scales the new model to more students.

Finally, the team recognized the need for thorough advance preparation. Dr. Fladd said, *“Activities like this one really help you to stretch the outer corners of your vision. They always say that the ‘devil is in the details’ and answering detailed, probing questions forced us to really talk about what we wanted advising to look like both inside and outside the Hub.”*

TTC’s Recommendations for Colleges Embarking on Student Supports Redesign

1. Return to your discovery activity each year and compare where you are to the baseline established at the start of your project.
2. Combine this with process mapping the student experience of entering and moving through your college, particularly its support services. *“Only by understanding where you currently stand can you make improvements for the future,”* according to Dr. Fladd.

Supplemental Tool: Technology Inventory

The table below may be useful in identifying current or planned technologies that could strengthen your integrated student support approach²⁰.



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by contacting Mei-Yen Ireland at mireland@achievingthedream.org.

TECHNOLOGY			
Category	Technology Solution(s)	Phase of Adoption	Extent of Integration
Student Information System			
Learning Management System			
Case Management and Early Alert System			
Degree Planning System			
Career Exploration and/or Planning Tool(s)			
Financial Planning/ Management Tool(s)			
Student Portal			
Predictive Analytics System			
Dashboards/Progress Monitoring Tool			
Data Visualization Tool(s)			
Academic Tutoring Tool(s)			
Coaching & Advising Tool(s)			
Student Mobile App			
Coaching & Advising Tool(s)			
Student Mobile App			
Resource Connection Tool(s) <i>May take the form of social networks, portals, campus forums, individualized webpages, text messages, or emails.</i>			
Other Relevant Technologies			

²⁰ If your college is interested in help with completing this technology inventory along with a full technology gap analysis, please email services@achievingthedream.org.

Chapter 5

ASSESSING AND IMPROVING READINESS

As introduced in Chapter 1, an integrated student support approach requires more than the implementation of technology or of a stand-alone initiative. It involves the adoption of holistic, transformative institutional change, which can be challenging and complex. There are certain institutional conditions that make successful implementation of the changes more likely. If these conditions are lacking in some way, colleges may want to improve them before embarking on large-scale redesign. Assessing institutional readiness can reveal potential challenges early so the guiding team can surmount them.

Existing self-assessment tools include Achieving the Dream's Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool²¹ (ICAT), CCRC's Pathways Scale to Adoption Self-Assessment,²² CCRC's Technology-Mediated Advising and Student Support Institutional Self-Assessment,²³ and CCRC's Readiness for Technology Adoption Self-Assessment.²⁴ Your institution's choice will depend on the emphasis of your redesign and its alignment with other reform efforts. We encourage you to contact Achieving the Dream staff²⁵ to discuss the options and get connected to the various readiness tools.

Achieving the Dream finds that CCRC's Technology-Mediated Advising and Student Support Self-Assessment rubric is particularly instructive as institutions consider the broader institutional structures and processes that are necessary to provide holistic student support. The rubric reflects the emphasis advocated in this toolkit that student support redesign requires structural, process, and attitudinal changes. The rubric is also useful for case-making with stakeholders by clearly conveying what exemplary capacities look like and the vision for student support that can be attained through the redesign process.

No matter which assessment you choose, make sure to 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 across the institution.
- Identify and prioritize any necessary additional steps before implementing your redesign strategy.
- Assist with evaluating indicators for transformative reform.
- Provide a foundational understanding of the important principles that will undergird your redesign.

Once you have completed an assessment, we recommend the following four steps to interpret and use your results for an effective planning process.

Completing the Assessment

Complete the assessment individually. 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. You may want more than just the guiding team to take the assessment. Collect and aggregate the responses and share with the guiding team to review prior to the readiness discussion. We also encourage you to share other documentation with the team that may have been created previously, such as a draft vision and goals, to help individuals prepare to engage fully in the meeting.

²¹ <http://www.achievingthedream.org/about-us/our-approach>

²² <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-know-about-guided-pathways-packet.html>

²³ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/technology-mediated-advising-student-support-self-assessment.pdf>

²⁴ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/evaluating-your-colleges-readiness-for-technology-adoption.html>

²⁵ Email_services@achievingthedream.org

Step One

Bring together your guiding team (see Chapter 2), a small cross-functional and cross-hierarchical group of internal stakeholders, to reflect on and discuss the readiness results. We also encourage you to identify an experienced facilitator who is not too close to your redesign efforts for the conversation. This is critical because the effectiveness of your readiness assessment results is in the deep, honest discussion that occurs (see Appendix A: Tips for Facilitators). We also recommend that you identify one person to serve as the “recorder” of the conversation.

Step Two

During the meeting, use the following questions to guide your discussions:

- 1. What surprised you about your readiness results?
- 2. For each of the assessment components/categories on which the institution did not score high, what barriers can be overcome, and what opportunities could be pursued, to increase your readiness?
 - a) Who needs to be involved to increase readiness?
 - b) What resources are needed?

- 3. For any component/category on which the institution scored high, list potential challenges to sustaining the high score through your integrated student support redesign.
- 4. Individually, identify two key themes or insights that you see as being the most essential takeaways from your institution’s readiness results. Each team member should then share two insights to generate a list of essential takeaways that speak to a variety of stakeholders.
- 5. Reviewing each of these takeaways, what are its implications for the team’s next steps and your redesign?
- 6. The process for scaling an effective strategy requires early and ongoing commitment to organizational culture and structures. We encourage you to consider including time in the discussion to focus on what conditions will need to be in place to ensure the redesign effort can be scaled quickly and smoothly. Consider using the “Scaling Success Themes” (Appendix B) questions to guide your discussion.
- 7. Below are key components of a successful integrated student support approach. The list, a supplement to your assessment results, should be used to help the team reach consensus on five top priorities that need to be addressed to ensure success.

Policies & Practice
The common understanding is that institution-wide policies and practices should ensure proactive, holistic, and sustained advising and student supports.
We are prepared to change existing systems, structures, workflows, and processes to remove obstacles to, and provide additional supports for, student progress and completion.
We are committed to a holistic approach to embedding academic and non-academic student supports within the student experience.
Our redesign leverages technology to streamline support to students.
Data & Technology
We are prepared to successfully integrate new and existing technology.
We have robust IR staffing that has the capacity and skill set to manage a (potentially) high influx of new data from the new technology systems.
IR and IT staff have a history of collaboration to optimize processes for data use.
Data are readily accessible to faculty (full time and adjunct), advisors, and other student support staff.
Professional development is provided to faculty (full time and adjunct) and staff to increase their ability to use data in decision-making.
Advisors, faculty (full time and adjunct), and other student support staff use data proactively to determine which interventions/services to provide to specific students.
Leadership & Vision
The vision and goals for the redesign guide decision-making and are fully integrated with our pathways reform or other student success reform.

Strategy & Planning

We have built a continuous improvement structure that monitors implementations issues and addresses them as they arise.

We have considered how this redesign supports and/or leverages other student success initiatives (guided pathways, developmental education redesign, etc.) being implemented or planned at our institution.

We have committed resources to strengthen functions across the institution to institutionalize the redesign.

Engagement & Communication

We have clearly communicated to faculty (full time and adjunct), advisors, and other student support staff the need for the redesign, how they will be affected by it, and how it will benefit them.

All stakeholders understand the need for change and how the redesign of advising and student supports fits within their work on implementing the redesign at scale.

The guiding team comprises cross-functional and cross-hierarchical representatives from across campus.

Relevant departments have, and are aware of, clearly defined responsibilities and resources for the redesign.

Step Three

Compile a list of important discussion points to guide the team meeting on the next step in the planning process: Action plan development (Chapter 6). 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

As emphasized in Chapter 1, an integrated student support approach should reflect a vision of a holistic student experience. That is, the change vision should drive technology-related decisions, not the other way around. While technology can play a critical role in creating a more personalized and proactive student support infrastructure, if used incorrectly, it can also cause a distraction from college efforts.

Today there are over 150 software offerings that claim to support higher education institutions with integrated student support redesign, each with their own methodologies, capabilities, user-interfaces, and implementation approaches. Achieving the Dream together with The Ada Center²⁶—an organization that helps higher education institutions make the most of technology investments through purchasing, implementation, and integration support—have created a set of technology evaluation guides to help colleges better navigate technology decisions (Appendix C: Degree Planning; Appendix D: Case Management and Early Alert; Appendix E: Predictive Analytics).

The technology evaluation guides help institutions (1) assess their college's readiness for adopting key software capabilities and (2) better select among a sea of vendors who offer those capabilities. The guides examine early alert and case management systems, predictive analytics, and degree planning tools, looking specifically at the following considerations:

Institutional Readiness Considerations

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

Vendor Selection Considerations

- Desired Functionality
- Pricing
- Integration

²⁶ www.theadacenter.org

Chapter 6

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Careful, evidence-informed planning is an essential component of successful transformation of your student support model. Thorough preparation helps you enlist the right people and get them on the same page with regard to your vision and goals and their realization. It also enables you to identify challenges and brainstorm ways to minimize or avoid them.

Each institution's planning period may look different, but all will generate significant outputs, including:

- A compelling vision and ambitious goals.
- Detailed work plans with timelines, roles/responsibilities specified, and resources required
- Detailed communication strategy and work plan (Chapter 7).
- 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 8 and 10).

- A plan for refining and sustaining the new approach (Chapter 10).

This chapter provides tips, templates, and activities in service to such accomplishments.

Please note: Do not equate this planning process with inaction. It is a critical time to begin 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.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: RE-CENTERING FOCUS ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

As a team, review and discuss the following with a focus on understanding your students, their experience of your student supports, and the impact on their outcomes:

- Your completed discovery activity (Chapter 4), learnings from your exploration of the student perspective (Chapter 3), and notes from your readiness discussion (Chapter 5).
- Core student success data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Pell status, gender, program of

study, campus, and any other relevant metric for your institution.

- Qualitative data you collect on the student experience, via surveys (such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement), focus groups, interviews, and secret shopper activities. If you do not have such data, we strongly urge you to gather some. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement offers a comprehensive focus group toolkit.²⁷

²⁷ <http://www.ccsse.org/center/initiatives/iss/focusgroup toolkit.cfm>.

Value of an Action Plan

Successful planning for student support redesign begins with the student in mind. Your team should now have a thorough understanding of the students you serve and their current experience of your support services.

The Action Plan provided in this chapter is a template for achieving your redesign vision and goals. It can guide team members in the fulfillment of their individual responsibilities. As such, it should be a living document, reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis. Craft it to help existing and new team members grasp and take inspiration from your vision and embrace their role in achieving it.

Remember: The integrated student support 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 the research,²⁸ 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.

Completing the Action Plan

STEP ONE: Develop Your Change Vision and Goals

A strong vision, as described by John Kotter's 8 Steps for Successful Change²⁹, is a clear, concise, specific, forward looking, and inspirational articulation of what the institution aspires to become, and what it hopes to achieve through an integrated student support approach. All stakeholders can draw from it to set priorities and guide actions.

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

- Align your vision with the institution's strategic direction.
- Connect your vision to the student experience.
- Demonstrate how your integrated 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.

EXAMPLES OF 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 the student in their own learning journey.

Transformational Community College

Every student will feel like a valued part of the Transformational Community College family. 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.

28 <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/advising-redesign-foundation-transformative-change.pdf>

29 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkotter/2011/06/07/how-to-create-a-powerful-vision-for-change/#3dac882451fc>

NOTE: As discussed in Chapter 1, technology is an essential component of this work as it provides additional tools and data, as well as the ability to free up personnel time to rededicate to deeper relationship building. We encourage you to pause after developing your vision, goals, and changes in critical behaviors to reflect on the capabilities of your existing technology before identifying any new technologies you may wish to procure. Use the Technology Inventory worksheet in Chapter 4 to help map your existing technologies but also to explore some of the existing tools' capabilities of existing tools that you may not yet be using.

- 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.

Once you have agreement on your vision, identify and describe three to five goals that will ensure its achievement. These overarching goals, markers of progress toward the vision, should be specific, attainable yet bold, inclusive of a timeline, and measurable.

STEP TWO: Identify the Changes in Critical Behaviors and Anticipate How You Will Affect Them

Map backwards from your vision and goals to identify the changes in critical behaviors (of faculty, staff, and student) necessary to reaching these goals. 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). So planning to change and track that behavior would be essential. Review Chapter 8 for more detail, particularly the Outputs to Results Continuum, which describes the relationship between leading and lagging indicators, as well as key evaluation terms that will be useful at this stage.



Once you have identified the necessary changes in critical behaviors, engage your data team, IR department, and/or math faculty in choosing the best ways to track and evaluate these changes.

STEP THREE: Identify Your Phases

To 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.
- 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.

No matter 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 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

Transformative change brings a host of potential challenges that can derail progress. Some may be clear immediately, such as financing the purchase of new technology. However, most barriers are unforeseen or underestimated.

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

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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 emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

CHALLENGES WITH BUY-IN

Put yourself in the shoes of your main stakeholder groups and consider the work from their perspective. Your guiding team should have at least one person from each group, so allow them time to share their thoughts first. Try not to challenge or attempt to persuade them before fully hearing them.

Consider more proactive ways to engage people beyond your team in the planning phase through focus groups or an advisory group comprising of these stakeholder groups. After drafting your Action Plan, team members could meet with these groups to “pressure test” it and get feedback to embed in a revised plan.

PHASE ONE WORK PLAN

Name and brief description of phase

Related major goals

Measurable indicators of progress by year, term, or month:

-
-
-

Major Milestone/ Activity	Key Steps	Start Date	End Date	Lead Staff Member(s)	Resources Required

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES: Lessons from iPASS Grant Institutions

Effective Communication to Promote Buy-In and Adoption

When pursuing transformative change like student support redesign, which will impact all aspects of the institution, effective communication can make or break the effort. Institutions that, early on, openly communicated their vision and welcomed stakeholders to share their ideas and concerns, were most likely to gain adherents. Additionally, successful institutions executed an open, regular communication strategy throughout their redesign and infused celebration of early wins to maintain momentum.

Communication Mechanisms to Change Student Behavior

Email remains the dominant way to reach students. However, some iPASS institutions found that students don't check their academic email account often enough to see time-sensitive messages. Institutions that brought the student voice into their communication strategy could employ creative approaches to getting word to students.

Policy and Process Redesign as the Key to Change

Often, when institutions purchase a new technology, their focus is on procurement and implementation. It is best to couple implementation with a deep examination of current policies and processes in need of change. That facilitates adoption of the technology and ensures success in its connecting to planned improvements of the student experience.

Professional Development that Equips Faculty and Staff to Succeed

Moving to an integrated student support approach requires faculty (full-time and adjunct) and staff to fundamentally change the way they work on a daily basis. Providing thoughtful professional development that equips them with the specific

skills (beyond technology use) they need to succeed in their new role is crucial for changes to stick. In addition, well-designed professional development can help to span silos and nurture a college culture that is inquiry based, collaborative, and transparent. (Read more about engaging adjunct and full-time faculty in student success innovation.³⁰)

Planning to Mitigate Human Resource Obstacles

It is essential to engage your human resource department in the redesign work as you begin to discuss the ways in which people's roles will change and what new roles you will create. It can be worthwhile to craft job descriptions and performance evaluations tied to the competencies needed for the positions, not to specific experience. In addition, creating a transition plan for key leaders of the work will mitigate challenges related to leadership turnover.

Using Data to Track and Refine the Plan

Despite best intentions, it is common for teams implementing a student support redesign to neglect the collection, analysis, and use of data to track adoption of new technology and processes and the impact on student experience. Be sure to evaluate metrics throughout the semester so refinements can be in real time, not at the end of the term or academic year.

Aligning Multiple Reforms to Tackle Fatigue

Pursuing multiple student success reforms at once often leaves faculty and staff exhausted and overwhelmed by the scale and pace of change. Many iPASS institutions frequently communicated how their iPASS effort aligns with other student success reforms, to show that it is not just "busy work". In addition, a well-structured redesign team and high-quality professional development can help alleviate real and perceived new burdens.

³⁰ <http://achievingthedream.org/resource/121/cutting-edge-series-1-engaging-adjunct-and-full-time-faculty-in-student-success-innovation>

Chapter 7

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. This chapter is intended as a complement to the Action Plan in Chapter 6 to prompt you to consider all variables as the team develops a communication strategy. It also offers a template. We encourage you to consider how this strategy fits into your institution's overall student success communications.

Steps to Developing a Strong Communication Strategy

STEP ONE: Refine your change vision

The vision statement you drafted at the start of your planning process should act as 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?
- Does it 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 redesign with a focus on stakeholders and barriers. Consider the following:

- 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

Identify the overarching purpose of your outreach. Your strategy should focus on driving attitudinal change as it relates to your integrated student support approach and on its fitting with your institution's other student success efforts and goals. Communication is not an end in itself, 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)

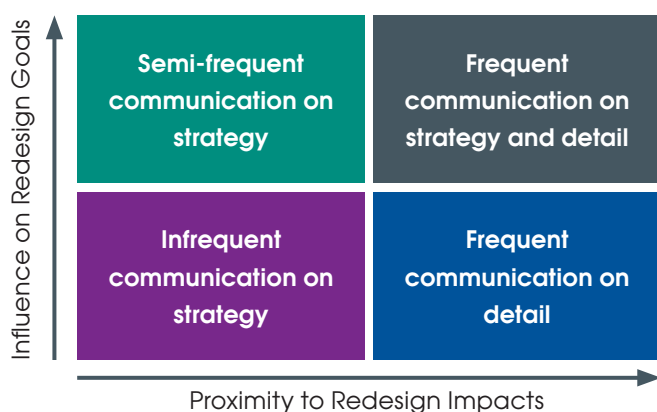
Profile specific audiences (stakeholders) you are targeting with your communication efforts. These will be the students and other groups most directly affected by your changes (those who will be asked to alter their daily behavior or attitude/values. Other audiences are people who have some authority 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 staff and faculty).

Profile information could include: an audience's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as they relate to student support redesign; 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.


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


 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.




STEP FIVE: Develop key messages

What do your audiences need to know about the integrated student support 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 should be concise and engaging.

 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?

STEP SIX: Identify the communication media

Determine the most effective way to reach your target audience(s), such as social media, website, email, newsletter, meeting, speech, posters, intranet, video, or printed materials. We encourage you to identify multiple media 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 channels open to you, then map them to your audiences and messages.

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.

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 6), 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 communicate the ways your project will benefit faculty and advisors through a short play.



Each communications activity should focus on achieving your identified goals.



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

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.

Communications Strategy and Work Plan Templates



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

Communications 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 integrated 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

There are many tools for organizing the time, resources, and staff you need to implement a communication plan. This template is one that 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

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

University of Texas at San Antonio: Inclusive Communication Planning Yields Success

University of Texas at San Antonio's (UTSA) iPASS project sought to enhance student success by empowering students, in collaboration with staff and faculty, to build a degree plan using a new technology system with the goal of strengthening support interactions from orientation to graduation. Recognizing that communication with all stakeholders was vital to adoption, the core UTSA iPASS committee—comprising representatives from the Provost's Office, Academic Advising, Institutional Research, and Information Technology—crafted a communication strategy that responded to the broad range of perspectives of their audiences. The committee also assembled a group of students, faculty, staff, and institutional leaders to contribute to strategy development.



Target Audiences

- Students were the primary audience and the goal was to foster interest in and the desire to use new tools to speed their academic journey. UTSA developed short, entertaining promotional videos (available to view at <https://vimeopro.com/utsavideoproduction/utsa-degree-works>) encouraging students to set up their degree plan using the tool.
- Faculty and student support staff were essential secondary audiences in the drive to secure adoption of the new tool.

- The university's leaders were the final target audience—potential champions who could communicate the importance of the work, tie it in with the other student success programs on campus, and foster collaboration to meet student needs.

Executing the Strategy

Two offices—Academic Advising and the Office of Information Technology Customer Relations and Communications—teamed up to put the plan into effect. They employed digital marketing (videos, website, digital signage, emails), print marketing (T-shirts, pens, banners, flyers, elevator posters), and campus outreach (information sessions, tabling).



The team tried to be transparent and inclusive throughout the planning and implementation and to respond promptly to all questions. Especially important to their success was emphasizing how the project would support other student success initiatives and sharing success stories of other institutions engaged in similar projects.



Measuring Communication Success

The UTSA team evaluated the success of the communication strategy by leveraging new and existing mechanisms to get feedback from key audiences.

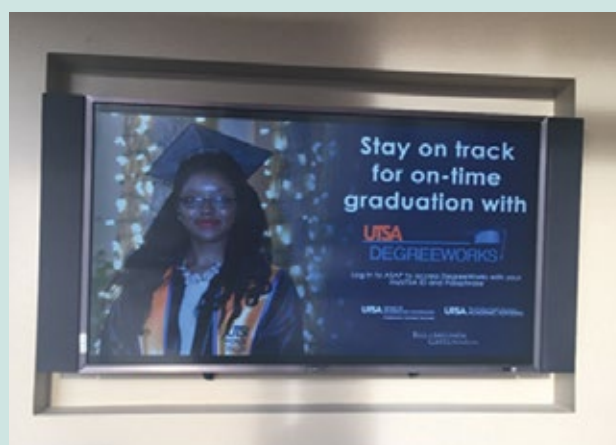
- Student feedback was gathered through regular focus groups and the Office of Information Technology's (OIT) Student Innovation Coalition—a monthly open forum where students are invited to learn about products and services available to them and are treated to lunch.
- Faculty feedback was gathered through the existing quarterly OIT Faculty Advisory Committee meetings, where committee members were also tasked with contributing to the communication endeavor.

- Metrics related to user adoption of technology were also part of the evaluation. For example, in spring 2016 only 14 percent of students had degree plans locked in on the institution's technology platform. By early spring 2017, this number had risen to 80 percent.

Most Effective Communication Methods

UTSA has a large population of commuter students who attend class online or on campus, but spend limited time there.

- The most effective communication was digital, leveraging high-traffic student webpages and digital boards located on campus, combined with targeted emails, particularly focused on incoming students.



- Flyers were the least effective means of communication method, usually appearing on crowded bulletin boards.
- The team plans to add communication options: for instance, an ad for the degree planning tool in the "Orientation Planner," a brochure distributed to all incoming students.

TRACKING PERFORMANCE & IMPACT

Regular, thoughtful tracking of your performance/progress and indicators of your impact is essential to your integrated student support approach.

From the beginning of the redesign effort, collect evidence and information that allows you to understand if changes are taking root (performance or progress tracking), as well as quantitative and qualitative data related to measuring the impact of your redesign on students, faculty, staff, and the institution (evaluation). It helps your team introduce refinements to ensure you achieve your Action Plan goals (Chapter 6) en route to your student success vision.

To choose among available metrics ask:

- How do we define and measure successful implementation and impact?
- How should we collect the data?
- Who is responsible for collecting and disseminating the data?
- Who should have access to the data and how should we provide access?
- What process will we use to analyze the data on an ongoing basis?

After putting your metrics in place, you will be able to answer the following:

- How well is our implementation going?
- How do we communicate our progress beyond the guiding team?
- What impact is our redesign work having on the student experience and student outcomes?
- What progress are we making towards our student success vision and goals?

This chapter provides worksheets, instructions, and examples to help you plan and execute ongoing, effective performance tracking and evaluation of your student support redesign. The outcomes will be invaluable in refining and enhancing your work.

Tracking Performance and Impact Metrics

While performance tracking and evaluation of impact are both critical to success, they should also be developed as an aligned plan given the overlap in purpose. We encourage institutions to develop a plan that tracks data in the five essential buckets identified in Figure 1. This comprehensive approach provides ongoing feedback on how the implementation is progressing and offers a basis for taking immediate actions to improve your redesign, as well as quantifying your intended impact early on. This data can also inform your communication plan, identifying short-term wins you can celebrate and more broadly generating excitement across the institution.

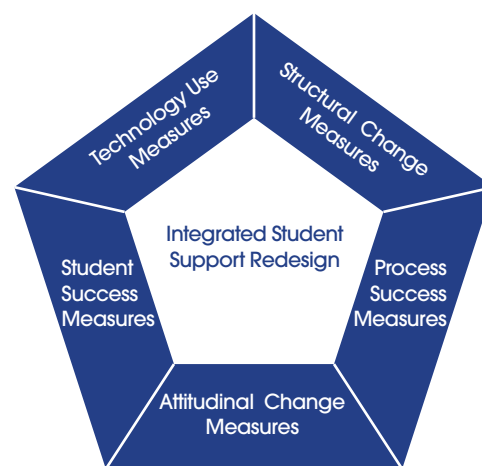


Figure 1

Evaluation is built upon the three types of essential change discussed in Chapter 1: structural, process, and attitudinal. During the redesign rollout, institutions must track and monitor to see whether the institution is moving holistically toward achieving change at all three levels.

Given the importance of technology adoption, it is also necessary to track technology use measures, precursors to successful structural, process, and attitudinal change. Institutions will likely identify these with technology vendors, as they are contingent on the project focus and technology that each institution is deploying.

Finally, your institution may need to employ some key student success metrics that provide comprehensive evaluation of the redesign’s impacts on student outcomes. Please note that it will take time for impact to be reflected in student success metrics, so it is critical to track other categories that demonstrate success more quickly and provide a picture of whether you are on track to impact student outcome data.

The definitions below should help identify the metrics you will prioritize in tracking and analyzing in each category. Examples of metrics appear later in the chapter.

Metric Category	Definition
Technology Use Measures	Show the extent of technology adoption among key stakeholder groups.
Structural Change Measures	Show the extent to which systems and business practices are changing or have changed.
Process Change Measures	Show the extent to which changes in individual engagement and interpersonal interactions with systems and business practices are changing or have changed.
Attitudinal Change Measures	Show the extent to which core underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs are changing or have changed. The underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs relate to the systems, business practices, and individual engagement and interpersonal interactions.
Student Success Measures	Show the student outcome results achieved.

To provide the clearest, fullest picture of your redesign progress, it is important to employ both quantitative and qualitative evaluation and to disaggregate the data you collect to analyze the impact on various student populations and the causes of this impact.

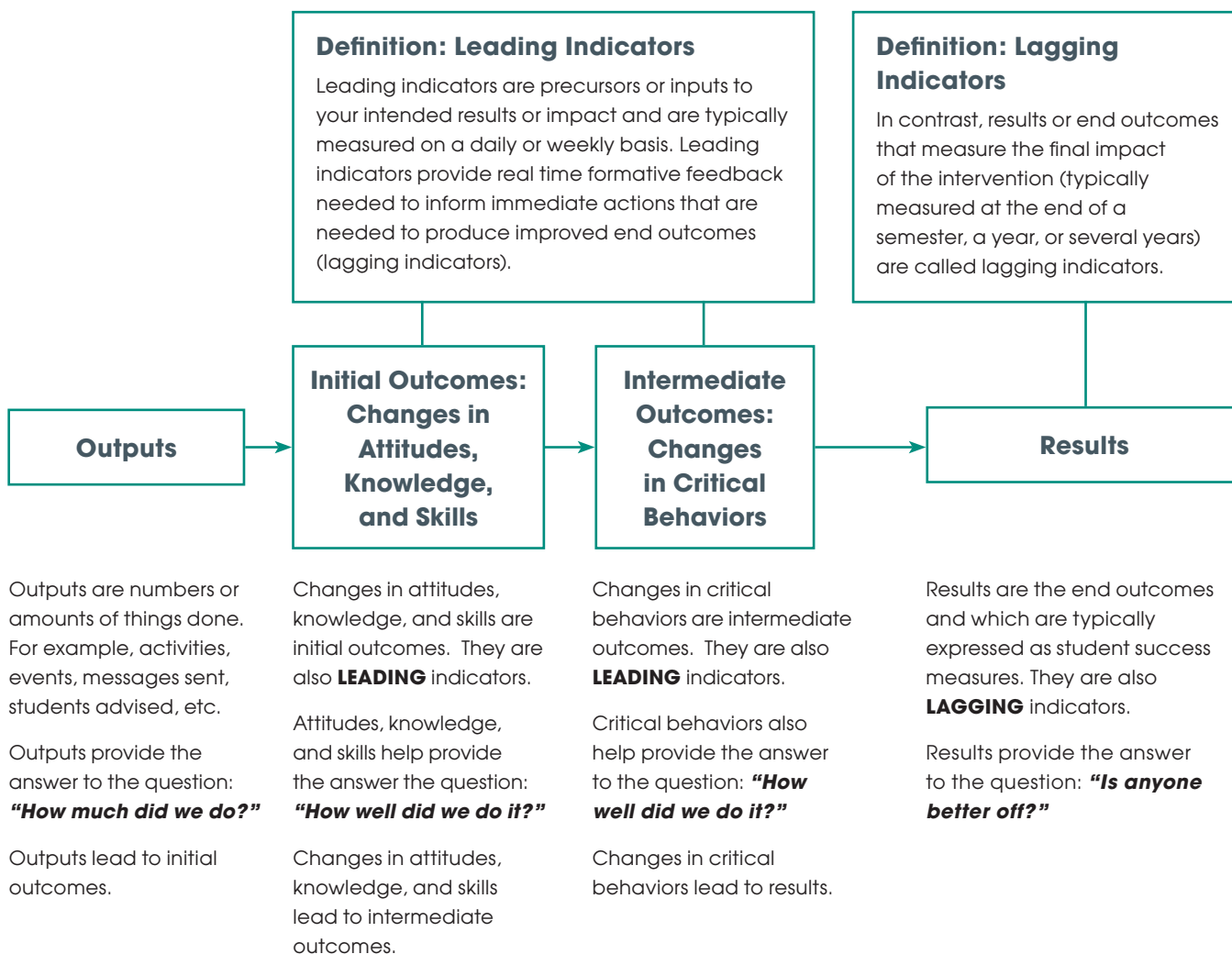
In addition to ensuring you are tracking metrics in each of the five categories, it is important ensure you track both **leading** and **lagging** indicators. **Leading** indicators track actions—such as the percentage of students registering for classes in their academic and career pathway or creating academic and financial plans—that institutions have control over and that can make a difference in achieving desired outcomes. These are specific levers that institutions can pull in areas of action related to technology use, structural change, process change, and attitudinal change that are likely to lead to improved student success.

Lagging indicators measure important changes that accrue over time that demonstrate the institution is making progress. For example, these might include tracking progress in raising the percentage of students completing gatekeeper courses and total courses completed in their major or students completing degrees without having to earn extra credits beyond those required. It might also include exploring reductions in students changing majors and similar behaviors associated with taking longer to earn a degree.

The Outputs to Results Continuum describes the relationship between leading and lagging indicators as well as key evaluation terms that will be useful in the development of your measurement selection and data collection plan.

Tools for Selecting and Collecting Your Data

Outputs to Results Continuum



FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

Formative Measurement — The use of **leading** indicators (both qualitative and quantitative data) for feedback on progress in implementation of an intervention for the purpose of identifying actions that can be taken to improve the intervention and likely results. Formative measurement may not be just leading indicators—can also be things like focus groups. The key is that it is used to make real time adjustment. May not even be about

outcomes—could be about approaches that are making people mad or confronting unexpected challenges.

Summative Measurement — The use of **lagging** indicators or end results (quantitative and sometimes qualitative information) to determine if the impact or benefits justify the continuation and/or scaling of the intervention.



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

To effectively develop a performance tracking plan, we provide two tools that should be used in tandem.

1. **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?

2. **Tool #2** is the **Data Collection Plan**, which identifies the sources of the needed data, how they will be analyzed, responsibilities, due dates, and targets.

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

Tool #1: Measurement Selection Worksheet with Example

CAREER PLANNING				
Key Questions	How much have we done?	How well did we do it? (Leading Indicators)		Is anyone better off?
Categories	Outputs: Number or amount of things done	Changes in attitude, knowledge, or skill (Initial Outcomes)	Changes in behavior (Intermediary Outcomes)	Results: Student success measures
	# and % of new students provided career services (i.e., career awareness, aptitude assessment, and counseling)	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, 3rd, 4th terms
		Advisors are more knowledgeable about labor market conditions associated with specific careers/major fields of study	Increase in number of advisors administering career assessments and using labor market data to guide students to a major field of study	Decrease in number of students changing majors throughout their academic experience
				Decrease in excess credits at point of graduation

Step One

List the redesign focus area at the top of the worksheet and then brainstorm ways to measure how much your college has accomplished to date. You should prepare a Measurement Selection Worksheet for each focus area of your work. For example, if your redesign incorporates both early alert and degree planning emphases, you would have a worksheet for each, with the focus stated at the top of each worksheet.

Quantitative measures and qualitative information would be provided for tracking the progress of all of your focus areas. Some of the result metrics—student success measures—may be the same for each area. In

such cases, the leading indicators help provide a basis for making judgments on the contribution of each focus area to the changes in student success.

Step Two

Begin completing the worksheet by identifying the ultimate result you are striving for (your student success measures) in column four, also known as the lagging indicators. Refer to example measures provided at the end of this chapter.

Step Three

In the second column and third column, brainstorm intended leading indicators. Refer to examples of

measures provided at the end of this chapter. These could be technology uptake, attitudinal change, structural change, process change measurements, or qualitative data extracted from surveys or focus groups. Focus on leading performance measures for your college to track progress towards your intended results (column four) in real time.

Be sure to identify measures that the team considers to be the most critical and feasible.

- The most important leading indicators are those that, during the redesign rollout, will provide the best feedback on how well the rollout is going and inform the need for action to improve performance, and therefore contribute to and guide your refinement efforts.

- Feasibility is a function of the team's ability to reasonably obtain data on the leading indicator. This means that, if some new data collection procedures are necessary, they are not unduly burdensome compared with their value to inform decisions on how well things are progressing and the need for improvement. It also means that the full list of leading indicators is not unduly burdensome to collect and analyze when considered in total.

Step Four

In the first column, list the outputs for the focus area based on your action plan. These are the activities or products that have been completed and should be logically related to the outcomes (columns two and three) and results (column four).

Tool #2: Data Collection Worksheet with Example

CAREER PLANNING					
Measures (Initial and Intermediary Outcomes from Measurement Selection Worksheet)	Targets	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)	85% of new students are more knowledgeable about career options and major fields of study best suited for them	Brief questionnaire administered to new students prior to the start of the term	Quantitative analysis	IR Office collects, guiding team analyses	Every term, results due by week 4
Advisors are more knowledgeable about labor market conditions associated with specific careers/ major fields of study	100% of advisors are knowledgeable about labor market conditions associated with specific major fields of study	Participation rates of advisors in LMI training	Descriptive data analysis	Advising supervisor collects, guiding team analyses	End of fall 2017 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	100% of new students have 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 analyses	Spring 2018, 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	100% of advisors administer career assessments and use 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 analyses	Fall 2017, monitor weekly each term

Step One

List all identified measures from Tool #1 Measurement Selection Worksheet in the first column.

Step Two

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

Step Three

Be sure to gather baseline data to determine how well you are doing. Make sure you are involving your institutional research and/or information technology office(s) and, if you are in the Achieving the Dream Network, your Achieving the Dream Data Team.

Step Four

Use baseline data to set performance targets. Monitor progress toward performance targets. Use performance outcomes to inform improvements.



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 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 of the 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 that could be taken 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 master 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 the *Evaluating Student Success Interventions: Principles and Practices of Student Success document*.³¹

31 <http://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/177/evaluating-student-success-interventions-principles-and-practices-of-student-success>

Example Measures by Category

The following section presents measurements for your team to consider tracking. The list is certainly not exhaustive and you likely have ideas for other measures that will better suit your needs. The list is designed to give you a starting point and stimulate discussion about possible measures to track. Keep in mind that you should include in your plan only the most critical metrics to track to keep the workload manageable and the analysis focused on your progress and intended impact.

Technology Use Measures

- Number of warning flags raised for:
 - Financial aid and academic probations.
 - Absences.
 - Failed or missing homework.
 - Poor performance.
- Number of positive flags (kudos) raised for:
 - Strong performance or improvements.
 - Students making up missing work.
 - Students receiving tutoring.
- Percentage of students receiving:
 - One to three warning flags.
 - Four or more warning flags.
 - Kudos.
- Percentage of raised flags closed.
- Percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty using early alert system to:
 - Raise warning flags.
 - Give students kudos.
- Percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who record attendance.
- Percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who record mid-term grades.
- Total flags raised for x number of students.
- Total number of appointments being made by students and advisors.

- Total number of notes that staff record in the system.
- Percentage of students using degree planning tools by purpose (degree planning, degree auditing, registration, etc.).
- Percentage of advisors (staff and faculty) and student support staff using degree planning tool in the desired manner.
- Total number of degree plans built by students and/or advisors.

Structural Change Measures

Leading indicators of structural change show the extent to which there has been change in systems and business practices. Note that some of the examples are complex and may need to be tracked over a much longer time than others, such as creation of meta-majors or pathways.

- Extent to which advising and student support systems and practices have moved from a focus on enrollment and registration to a focus on sustained, strategic, integrated and proactive and personalized advising and student support. For example, consider tracking the number of changes to policy, staffing structures/roles, professional development, etc.
- Number and type of policies and procedures changed from optional to required (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

information from students, including non-cognitive factors, which can be used to identify at-risk students.

- Extent to which tools are used to assess students' non-cognitive skills as part of risk assessment.
- Extent to which resources and training have been developed to help full-time faculty and adjunct faculty and staff transition to the new practices. Consider tracking the number of trainings/tools that are offered/generated and the attendance at or use of each.
- Extent to which academic planning software supports academic pathways (guided pathways).
- Protocols established for closing alerts and included in training for faculty and staff.
- Number of student support and advising policies and practices redesigned.
- Redesigned student intake process, such as changes to related policies, processes, staffing, etc.
- Redesigned student orientation, including an introduction of these tools and instruction on their use.
- Creation of meta-majors/educational and career pathways.
- Percentage of degree programs that could be completed by a full-time student on time based on schedule.
- Associate's Degrees: Percentage of degree programs comprising 60 credits.
- Bachelor's Degrees: Percentage of degree programs comprising 120 credits.
- Number and percentage of stackable certificate programs created or redesigned.
- Reorganization of institutional units and leadership.
- Creation of new positions and or titles in support of this work.
- Number of high-impact practices³² being offered throughout the curriculum to help increase student engagement.

Process Change Measures

Leading indicators of process change show the extent to which there has been change in individual engagement and interpersonal interactions with systems and business practices. Note that some of the examples are complex and may need to be tracked over a much longer time than others, such as shifts in advisor functioning.

- Extent to which advisors shift from functioning as registration clerks to approaching advising as teaching.
- Extent to which advisors have access to and use student's risk assessment.
- Extent to which advisors have access to and use periodic assessments of student's risk levels and advise student accordingly.
- Number and percentage of high-risk, intermediate-risk, and low-risk students (as defined by the institution) that receive proactive advising and interventions.
- Number and percentage of students participating in group advising, if offered.
- Number and percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty using early alert system.
- Number and percentage of course sections where early alert is used.
- Number and percentage of new cohort students using degree planning tool.
- Student utilization rates of resources and services.
- Average time of advising session for high-risk students, mid-risk students, and low-risk students.
- Extent to which student learning outcomes for advising sessions are achieved with high-risk students, mid-risk students, and low-risk students.
- Number and percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who record attendance accessible by early alert system.
- Number and percentage of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who record grades throughout the term that are accessible by an early alert system.

32 Learn more about high-impact practices at <https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips> and http://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees_3.pdf

- Extent to which faculty and staff follow protocol for closing alerts.
- Number and percentage of students who follow through on alerts (go to tutoring, see advisor, etc.).
- Number and percentage of situations where students do not follow through on early alerts which are responded to through collaborative cross-functional follow-up by faculty and staff.
- Level of cross-functional use of advising, tutoring, and instructor notes/reports regarding students (creation of notes and reports and review of notes and reports).
- Number and percentage of students with academic plans by program/major.
- Number and percentage of deviations from academic plans not approved by advisor.
- Number and percentage of advisors who monitor their students' progress and reach out to the student if concerns arise (financial, academic, etc.)
- 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.

Attitudinal Change Measures

Leading indicators of attitudinal change show the extent to which core underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs have moved from norms of efficiency and non-integrated support to norms of broad ownership of sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized advising and student support. The underlying attitudes, values and beliefs are in regard to the systems, business practices, and individual engagement and interpersonal interactions with systems and business practices.

- Change in responses on survey items related to advising (Noel Levitz, SENSE, NSSE).
- Change in perceptions of advising redesign usefulness.
- Institutional support for advising redesign, particularly among key stakeholders.
- Satisfaction surveys of users (students, faculty, staff)—be sure to include questions that uncover the ways in which users experience the institution and their work differently as a result of the advising redesign. Consider a short survey of two or three questions that could be asked periodically to track satisfaction, with different versions of the survey for faculty, for staff, and for students. Keep in mind that satisfaction may decrease at first if there are refinements needed.
- Use of focus groups to track satisfaction and changing attitudes, values, and beliefs.
- Extent to which full-time and adjunct faculty and staff believe the resources and training have been effective.
- Extent to which tools are used to assess essential college and career skills as part of risk assessment.
- Extent to which full-time and adjunct faculty and staff understand and are committed to the college's vision for the student experience based on the integrated advising and student support strategy.

Student Success Measures

The student success metrics identified below capture leading indicators and student outcomes across the trajectory of the student experience. Note that those identified during the earlier phases of the student

experience (Connection/Entry, Progression) are likely to be your leading indicators, while those identified later in the student experience are likely to be your lagging indicators and ultimate outcome metrics.

Connection / Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial enrollment • FAFSA completion • Completion of New Student Orientation • Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE/BCSSE) • Number and percentage of students completing diagnostic • Number and percentage of students entering major or meta major • Number and percentage of students with academic/career plan • Number and percentage of students with financial plan
Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-term credits successfully passed and GPA • Attainment of credit milestones • Fall to spring persistence • Fall to fall persistence • Course success rates • Course withdrawal rates • Credit completion ratio • Developmental education course completion • Gateway course completion • Changes in survey results from Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE); Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI); National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate and degree completion rates • Graduate satisfaction rates • Average length of time to credential • Average credits to credential • Cost of excess credits to credential
Transition / Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer rate with award • Transfer rate without award • Ratio of credits earned to credits transferred
Transition to Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rates • Median first-year earnings • Employer satisfaction rates

DEVELOPING A TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This chapter explores the creation of a strategy for the technical training and holistic professional development necessary for the successful adoption of your integrated student support 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 the whole student. Training is usually a short-term, easily measured activity—professional development, continuous and cumulative.

Towards the end of the chapter, we present templates to complement your broader action plan (Chapter 6). 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.

Steps to Developing a Strong Professional Development and Training Plan

STEP ONE: Review adult learning principles and determine the type of learning in which to engage full-time and adjunct faculty or staff

Begin by reviewing basic adult learning principles, first identified in 1970 by Malcolm Knowles, who noted that adults:

- Need to know why they need to learn something;
- Need to learn through experience;
- Approach learning as problem-solving; and
- Learn best when the topic is of immediate value.

His concepts have been adapted in a wide range of training and educational contexts, both professional

training development and instructional design at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

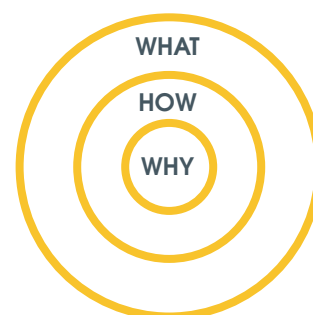


For information about Knowles' theory, review this primer.³³



As Knowles would recommend, start with "why" and gear your sessions to supporting your transformation. In his TED talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action,"³⁴ Simon Sinek discusses his concept of the "golden circle," where "Why?" is at the center of any endeavor's success.

The Golden Circle



Consider whether you hope to engage audiences in a **training** or **professional development** opportunity.

Concentrate on the structural, process, and attitudinal changes essential to an integrated student support 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.

³³ <http://www.instructionaldesign.org/theories/andragogy.html>

³⁴ https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en

STEP TWO: 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, student life staff.
- Full-time and adjunct instructors/faculty.
- Technology and institutional research staff.
- Students.

Remember these four 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. It is important to inform each group, to an appropriate degree, of the knowledge and 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. If processes vary from one department to another, the session should cover them.

3. Even employees in technical areas, such as IR and IT, need to understand the “why” behind the redesign. At many iPASS grantee institutions, IT staff co-lead on bridging the communication gap between those working with students on a daily basis and those ensuring the technology works efficiently for all.

4. Professional development ideally inspires a willingness among full-time and adjunct faculty to become active partners in the difficult and often uncomfortable 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 the publication by Achieving the Dream and Public Agenda, “Engaging Adjunct and Full-time Faculty in Student Success Innovation.”

STEP THREE: 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. For each audience you identified in Step Two, 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 FOUR: 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 effect 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 the:

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



Have your technology vendor(s) already developed training materials? If so, speak to your vendor representative(s) about accessing them, to determine their suitability for your use. Customizing these materials should include inserting the workflows for your institution, clearly describing the “why” or rationale for the redesign, and summarizing how the program will work for your institution as a whole.



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, NACADA³⁵ excels at advising-specific trainings and professional development.

STEP FIVE: Design the session agenda

First, break Step Three objectives into specific skills, 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 materials will go to participants in advance.

Evaluation: This should consist of two parts: participants’ feedback on the effectiveness of the session in preparing them to take on a new role or use a new technology, and 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: for instance, adjunct faculty.



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

35 <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>

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, in communications asking faculty to, say, raise an alert or complete a survey, offer links to short training video 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.

STEP SIX: 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 Strategy and Session Plan Templates



All editable templates referred to in this toolkit can be accessed by emailing services@achievingthedream.org.

Professional Development Strategy Template

Insert the vision for your integrated student support redesign here.							
Professional Development/ Training Goal	Related Redesign Goal(s)	Audience(s)	Learning Outcomes	Essential Topic(s) to Cover	Delivery Mode(s)	Delivery Frequency	Notes

Professional Development Session Plan Template

Audience	
Goals	
Training Topics	
Pre-Work/Handouts	
Learning Outcomes	
Metrics to Ensure Outcomes Are Met	
Session Structure	

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Montgomery County Community College: Leveraging a Peer-to-Peer Training Model

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. 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 that *"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 integrated 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

REFINING FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

Engaging in transformative institutional change requires a strategic approach in which the institution builds in a process for: a) learning from the successes and challenges at each stage of implementation, b) realigning the implementation with the original vision of transformation, and c) brainstorming the goals and next steps for ongoing success. As soon as the initial planning work is finished, institutions—to regularly assess and improve the reform—must turn to a cadence of refinement that builds on the same teams, data, structures, and procedures (communication, facilitation, training, honest feedback, etc.) established in previous chapters of this toolkit.

Refinement is about building on the planning and implementation work (as detailed in previous chapters), setting up a routine for reflection, and identifying methods for improvements. Refinement is also a long-term and continuous process. As your

contextual reality changes—for example, through changing student needs or public/institutional policy reforms—and new promising practices are found, you should continue to refine your integrated student support approach.

Guidelines for a Strong Refinement Discussion

Who

Refinement conversations should occur with your guiding team (Chapter 2) and key end-users and IR (if not already represented on the guiding team). It is important to include end-users to ensure that there is a clear understanding about how different stakeholder groups may be responding to your redesign.

When

We strongly recommend that institutions begin to assess the need for refinement early, even during the first semester of the initial launch of your student support redesign. In addition to providing the opportunity to make real-time course corrections, beginning the refinement process this early will prepare you to begin thinking about sustainability more quickly. Although you will still be collecting performance tracking data, as soon as you have gathered a couple of months of data on the impact

and adoption of the rollout we encourage you to schedule a refinement discussion. Analyzing early data may suggest minor refinements to be implemented immediately or more significant changes for the following semester. Remember, refinement is a continuous process in which there is a cadence of assessment that should start during the first semester and then be institutionalized.

What

In addition to pulling together the team and using the discussion questions below, there are several planning documents you will want to refer to as you assess progress and refine, particularly your original vision and goals. We encourage you to have a progress report of initial evaluation measures, along with the action plan, communication plan, and training plan that your team has been using.

How

The most effective discussions will occur when the group is open and honest. In a cross-functional, cross-hierarchical group, there are some steps you may need to take to ensure that a safe space is created for this dialogue. As discussed in Chapter 5, we strongly encourage you to include an outside facilitator (someone who is not intimately involved with the redesign work) and utilize the facilitator tips in Appendix A.



We encourage you to consider discussing each of the steps below and compile notes during the discussion. Notes about challenges, areas that require attention, or barriers to urgency should then be used to identify key next steps for your action plan in your next phase of the work.

STEP ONE: Review initial performance tracking data (Chapter 8) and possible barriers

- What does the data show about use and adoption of the new technology? What does the data show about your progress toward transformative change (structural, process, and attitudinal)?
- Are you on track in your implementation and adoption?
- Brainstorm potential barriers that different stakeholder groups may be facing; hold conversations with representatives of those groups. Then consider what might be the root causes of the barriers. What needs to be done to overcome these barriers?

STEP TWO: Review your Action Plan vision statement and timeline (Chapter 6)

- Does this vision statement still resonate with your aspirations for the redesign?
- Are you making progress toward this vision and toward transformative institutional change? What data support your answer?

- What are key areas that require more attention to ensure they are implemented successfully?
- What milestones have been reached and what additional milestones need to be developed to scale the success thus far?
- What successes have you experienced thus far? Have you celebrated those short-term wins? What steps need to be taken to build on these successes?

STEP THREE: Check for technology updates and new features

Most institutions recognize that a phased approach in rolling out their technology solutions is a best practice. All too often, though, they stop after the first phase rather than continuing to leverage what they have invested in. Make sure you take the time to look at new features you are not yet using that may support your efforts, as well as enhancements delivered by your technology vendor.

- Engage end users and find out what they are and are not using and why. What else might they like to be able to do with the platform? It may be possible that the feature is available.
- Schedule a follow-up call with your technology vendor for an update on the solution. Share your findings with them: What works, what doesn't, what you wish the technology did for you?
- Review updates/enhancements made to the system. You may be surprised to discover that some of the issues identified by your users have already been solved, and that adopting these new solutions can be an easy "win" to continue to boost adoption.
- If needed, engage with your vendor in your next phase of implementing new workflows. Remember to leverage their training materials and best practices.

STEP FOUR: Determine any steps needed for sustainability

Based on what's working well or what may need to be shored up through institutionalization, determine what mechanisms you need to sustain and move toward institutionalization of the work. Consider whether you might need any of the following:

- Policy changes
- Cross-training other staff
- Budget allocation
- Restructuring
- Adjustments to job descriptions or performance reviews
- Additional funding
- Additional professional development
- New protocols or procedures



For more resources on sustainability and scaling, check out these resources:

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>

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>

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>

TAACCCT Sustainability Toolkit: https://taaccct.workforcegps.org/resources/2016/07/25/13/22/Resource_TAACCCTSustainabilityToolkit

Scaling Innovation in Community Colleges: A Guide to Action: <http://www.jff.org/publications/scaling-innovation-community-colleges-guide-action>

STEP FIVE: Identify next steps, refine, and repeat

After reviewing the notes from the discussions of Steps One through Four, revisit the following documents and identify the next steps and refinements needed:

- Action Plan
 - Do you need to make any revisions to the vision statement?
 - Enhance and build out the timeline.
 - What considerations do you need to take into account to ensure you are integrating this work with other student success initiatives?
- Communication Plan and Training Plan
 - Build on what worked from the first phase of the rollout. What adjustments need to be made to the communication plan to address barriers and maintain urgency? How are you planning to improve and sustain your training efforts?
- Tracking Progress and Impact
 - Do the measures you are using capture the data you need to track the rollout and adoption of your redesign in a timely manner?
 - Do the measures you are using track leading and lagging indicators of the impact of your redesign?
 - Do you need to make any adjustments based on the refinement and scaling discussion? Do data reveal a need to slow down, speed up, shift gears, or modify certain components?
 - What data should be shared with stakeholders to maintain urgency and momentum needed to scale your redesign?
- Next Touchpoint for Refinement
 - Ideally there is a regular cadence to when you will have refinement meetings. If not, be sure to establish what the timeline and touchpoints will be for subsequent refinement discussions. What structures or procedures could you put in place to institutionalize the refinement process?



TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

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 assist with this as well as note-taking. Some people are more visually oriented and need to see critical information as it is being discussed.
3. Balance participation so most, if not all, participants have an opportunity to speak. This is particularly important given that this team is cross-hierarchical. If someone is dominating the conversation, encourage that person to give others an opportunity to participate. Ask to hear from people who have not yet spoken.
4. Remind participants of guidelines as needed. Do not allow put downs or interruptions. This is a critical aspect of the facilitator’s role, and can be one of the most challenging. If well managed, contrasting views can be highly valuable. It can be a helpful way to identify the areas that need greater attention prior to project implementation and/or identify areas around which there may be differing messages or experiences depending on one’s functional and hierarchical location at the institution. If conflict arises, encourage team members to discuss the ways in which their experiences may have influenced their perspective on that component. Make note of these differences as they may indicate necessary steps in developing your Action Plan.
 - a) Help build consensus by restating common ground, as you hear it, and by making connections between different perspectives.
 - b) Check for consensus when you think the group has had an opportunity to discuss concerns and reach some agreement. Repeat agreements as you hear them to help the group and to make sure the note-taker has the language to which the group agrees.
 - c) Make sure questions are framed to elicit more information or to understand the view of the person we are working with, or to co-create new and better options, not to prove a point.
5. Challenge assumptions and premature conclusions, helping the group gain a better understanding of deeper or underlying issues.
6. Use your listening skills. Summarize and restate in a neutral manner as needed, or ask someone to restate what he or she heard. Ask questions to clarify what someone is saying if the group is unclear. Listen for the gem of wisdom or important nugget in each comment.
7. Keep the group focused on the 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. Make a plan for addressing each tabled issue before closing, if possible.
8. Remind the team that any negative findings or interactions do not mean that the institution cannot or should not move forward with its work, but help identify potential issues that may need to be addressed as the institution engages in transformative reform.

SCALING SUCCESS THEMES

The process of scaling an effective strategy is a common challenge for higher education organizations due to the required early and ongoing commitment to change organizational culture and structures (administrative, power, and budgetary structures) as well as the need for broad-based buy-in. Each institution will approach their scaling efforts differently due to variances in institutional structure and culture; however, there are common themes across successful scaling efforts.³⁶ Below we organize these themes into four areas and provide questions to consider as you consider your institutional readiness to undertake and scale integrated student support redesign.

Visionary Leadership

Success Themes

- 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 with all institutional stakeholders along with data indicating the short-term wins that show progress towards achieving this vision.
- Redesign efforts are clearly and publically linked to the institution's overarching student success strategy and goals as well as the institution's accreditation and planning processes.

Questions to Consider

- i. 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?
- ii. What aspects of your vision are resonating with key stakeholders? What does this mean for your communication efforts as you scale?

- iii. 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)
- Attitudinal change (core underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs)

- iv. What institutional strengths should you leverage to overcome these obstacles?

Engagement & Communication

Success Themes

- Those who will be carrying out 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.

³⁶ 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

- i. As support for your redesign has grown, have you leveraged all supporters of this work to build momentum and buy-in?
- ii. Review John Kotter's theory of urgency³⁵. Based on this understanding of the definition of and need for true urgency, 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 to adopt the advising redesign?
- iii. 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?
- iv. How are you using your short-term wins and other evidence of success to continue to build excitement around the work reaching more students?
- v. 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 develop the expertise necessary to support quality implementation of an expanded strategy.

Questions to Consider

- i. 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?
- ii. Do your training and support mechanisms have the capacity to support scale?

- iii. How has your data been used to inform your training and supports?
- iv. How do you measure institutional learning to ensure the effectiveness of training and supports?
- v. Are there any student success efforts that have not demonstrated significant success that 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

- i. Is your data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income (or proxy such as Pell grant status), gender, enrollment status, etc.?
- ii. What economies of scale do you expect from scaling your redesign to all students? What is the cost per student?
- iii. 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?
- iv. How will you assess the effectiveness of your scaling effort? What metrics define success?
- v. Are you tying your evaluation and communication plans together so that early outcomes are being communicated and any issues addressed transparently?



CASE MANAGEMENT AND EARLY ALERT TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION RESOURCE



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 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 and Mei-Yen Ireland at 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 an 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 top priorities for our college to address?
- * • Do we have 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 the next evaluation guide).

- Which data is 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 a 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 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 LMS, 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:
 - a) The data the software will need to access?
 - b) The direction/s of the data flow?
 - c) 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 with overlapping capabilities with 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).



DEGREE PLANNING TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION RESOURCE



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 Pathways³⁷ 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 on that course map, and notify staff when students veer off the course map. 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 undertaking 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 and Mei-Yen Ireland at 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 a 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?

³⁷ A framework for a more cohesive student experience that includes (1) clarifying the path to student end goals; (2) helping student choose and enter a pathway; (3) helping students stay on the path; and (4) ensuring that students are learning

- Is the college moving toward a student-centered scheduling approach, adjusting course availability based on projected student need and demand?

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 an audit 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 new-ness and complexity of degree planning tools, as of 2017 there are only half a dozen degree planning software offerings 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 services 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 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 immediately be reflected in your registration system of record to ensure the course doesn't become overbooked. Other information can be transmitted at night, or in less regular intervals. Before finalizing a vendor contract, ensure you clearly understand the vendor's integration plan with your data systems, and what will be required of you and the vendor to ensure that integration can 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:
 - a) The data systems the degree planning tools will need to access?
 - b) The direction/s of the data flow?
 - c) 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 with overlapping capabilities with 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 term 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** summarizing what has happened at the college;
2. **Predictive analytics** suggesting what could happen in the future based on previous trends and patterns; and
3. **Prescriptive analytics** suggesting 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 Integrated Student Support Redesign. That is, we won’t be covering predictive learner analytics that are the underpinning of many online learning technologies nor will we be examining predictive enrollment analytics used to target prospective students. Instead, we’ll be focused on predictive analytics models that offer insight on how to tailor student supports and interventions.

Predictive success analytics can suggest which students are most likely to drop out or struggle, which interventions will be most impactful for different types of students, and 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 on 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 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.

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 a predictive analytics software. If you are looking for additional guidance, please reach out to please reach out to Sarah Zauner at sarah@theadacenter.org and Mei-Yen Ireland at 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 have a clear list of questions they’re hoping to help answer with 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 compliment 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 ten 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 upon 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 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 compliment 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. Choosing a predictive analytics vendor 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 SIS or LMS vendor 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 requires 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 standalone predictive analytics technology vs. a more comprehensive set of capabilities?
- Do we want to partner with a new vendor as an alpha or 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 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 bringing in 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:
 - a) The data systems the predictive analytics model will need to access to implement the tool?
 - b) The data systems the predictive model would ideally access to implement the tool?
 - c) 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 with overlapping capabilities with software we already own, which system will be the system of record for those capabilities? When will this transition occur?



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