



# ATD START RIGHT GUIDE



# Acknowledgements

## Message from Dr. Karen A. Stout

### Welcome to Achieving the Dream!

We are pleased to share this ATD Start Right Guide, updated to support your student access and success work.

The guide will help you form teams to plan and implement your work, understand the foundational capacities required to develop and sustain a robust action agenda for improving student access and success, learn about the role and attributes of ATD coaches, and find pertinent research and resources to support your work.

Achieving the Dream was created in 2004 to address low rates of success and inequities laid bare by national college completion data. Too few community college students were completing their programs of study, and too many were stuck in long sequences of remedial courses. The groups most poorly served by our institutions included students of color and low-income students—the very ones who relied upon community colleges as their portal to higher education and a better life for themselves and their families.

Much innovation and success has happened since then. When we look at graduation rates at 165 ATD institutions for students who started college in 2012 and compare that to rates for students who started college in 2015, we see an aggregate gain of three percentage points for White, Black, and Hispanic students. This gain is substantive and significant. Yet our progress closing equity gaps is not as strong, and gaps of 9 percentage points remain between White and Black students and 3 percentage points between White and White Hispanic students in these cohorts.



Your institution's decision to become an Achieving the Dream institution is especially timely. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed to all of us in tangible ways, beyond disaggregated data points, the vulnerabilities of the students and citizens in our communities who need us the most. A troubled economy and widespread outrage at systemic racism compel us to be bolder in centering racial equity in our access and student success work. There is a moral arc to student success work, that community colleges, especially Achieving the Dream colleges, must be proactive to lead forward.

At DREAM 2020, keynoter and acclaimed journalist James Fallows said community colleges are "America's institutions of the moment." As leaders, we have a responsibility to affect change in a meaningful way in the communities we serve. That requires an expanded vision of what success looks like. As an ATD institution, you will be encouraged to incorporate not just interim objectives for completion of credentials, but also longer-term ambitions for higher earnings and prosperous communities. As institutions of the moment, you will be challenged to make access, success, and equity fundamental goals of your work.

We are honored and excited to be your partner in this critical endeavor.

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# Achieving the Dream Overview

**Vision:** To help all students—particularly the most underserved—achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity.

**Mission:** To lead and support a national network of community colleges to achieve sustainable institutional transformation through sharing knowledge, innovative solutions, and effective practices and policies leading to improved outcomes for all students.

## Who We Are:

Achieving the Dream leads a network of more than 277 institutions across 44 states and the District of Columbia. Achieving the Dream leverages its network, including more than 70 coaches and numerous partners and investors, to bolster colleges in building their capacity to support the students and communities they serve. Together, we help more than 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.

**Our focus on access and completion for first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color anchors our support for community colleges across the nation.**

Since 2004, Achieving the Dream Network colleges have met the challenge to advance student success and reduce equity gaps, leading to improved economic and social mobility for their students. We guide colleges

committed to improving student outcomes through an institutional transformation process designed to enable all students to earn certificates and degrees, improving their economic prospects, and supporting their local communities. Our work on building data capacity and encouraging leadership and innovation has shaped the national conversation on equitable outcomes for all students. Our focus on access and completion for first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color anchors our support for community colleges across the nation.

Today, Achieving the Dream is working toward a new definition of student success that incorporates not just interim objectives—the completion of degrees or certificates—but also longer-term ambitions for higher earnings and prosperous communities. In this next phase of work, we will be redefining student success as college access and completion that delivers economic benefits to students and the surrounding community. This vision of student success offers exciting possibilities for students, colleges, and the education reform movement at large.



## Our Programs and Services

Achieving the Dream delivers programs and services that are successfully implemented, aligned, and scaled to increase student success, close equity gaps, and generate economic benefits in network college communities. Our programs and services are organized around Achieving the Dream's deep commitment to equity. Achieving the Dream's longstanding commitment to equity is even more relevant as colleges strive to scrutinize and dismantle the barriers facing underserved students and invest in equity-minded practices and behaviors that lead to success for all students. We champion equity and challenge our network colleges to dismantle barriers and act with an equity lens to ensure that all students receive the supports needed to be successful and valued in the community.

**ATD champions equity and challenge our network colleges to dismantle barriers and act with an equity lens to ensure that all students receive the supports needed to be successful and valued in the community.**

**Customized Approach:** We help introduce and scale innovative new approaches such as creating a culture of teaching and learning excellence and redesigning student supports to integrate across all areas of the institution. We identify effective ways to scale proven approaches, such as refining and expanding structured academic and career pathways.

**Coaching:** Diagnostics and customized coaching initially help strengthen the institution's leadership and data-analysis capacity. Coaches help institutions improve their ability to build institutional capacity, lead whole-college reform, and sustain continuous improvement. They also help colleges track leading indicators that research has suggested leads to improved student retention and completion and identify and close equity gaps. Coaching also helps address key challenges— from looking deeply at how to improve teaching and learning, to building more robust partnerships with business and community partners.

**Connections:** For more than 15 years, Achieving the Dream has built a national network of leaders who foster innovation and peer learning. We enable institutions and their leaders to learn from and with their peers through regular network events, summits, institutes and webinars, and reports, briefs, and guides that share information about best practices across institutions. Our network draws from the expertise of ATD Leader Colleges and Leader Colleges of Distinction, which have met important institutional benchmarks, as well as other institutions that have significant experience in all aspects of institutional transformation.



## What We Have Learned

Since its inception in 2004, Achieving the Dream has learned critical lessons about community college outcomes improvement. These lessons speak to the importance of:

- **Equity.** Equity must be at the center of every decision made at the institution, and not a set of discrete interventions. Disaggregation of student outcomes and experience data, and identification of the root causes of equity gaps, must be followed by systemic action to dismantle barriers and change practices and behaviors. Structures, policies, process, and the college culture must be designed to meet the needs of the students served by the college.
- **Scale.** Disconnected, boutique and/or pilot programs and interventions do not deliver strong returns. Institutions that design student success strategies with the end in mind and implement at full scale to support whole-college transformation have stronger impact and outcomes.
- **Systems Approach.** All aspects of the institution are connected as part of one system that serves the student. Any effort to improve student outcomes or the student experience should be connected and aligned with other student success efforts throughout the institution.

- **Clear and Coherent Pathways.** Often known as Guided Pathways, this is an evidence-based framework for intentionally and holistically designing the student experience. Programs, support services, and instructional approaches are redesigned to help students clarify their goals, choose and enter pathways that will achieve those goals, stay on those pathways, and master knowledge and skills that will enable them to advance in the labor market and successfully pursue further education.
- **Integrated, Holistic Supports.** Starting with a student-focused culture, this approach incorporates the academic, career, and life factors vital to success. It embodies an intentional, evidence-based focus on the types of supports, the way in which the supports are delivered, how the students are connected to the supports, and the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the supports based on their impact.
- **Culture of Teaching & Learning Excellence.** Institutional support for excellent teaching and for high-impact professional learning is a central component of our reform work. College leaders need to empower all faculty to lead innovation in pedagogy; rethink and align course and program student learning outcomes; and build clear, coherent course and program sequences. This includes more dynamic, relevant, culturally responsive teaching that engages and cultivates students' ownership of what they learn; professional learning programs that foster collaboration between faculty and Student Affairs colleagues; and environments in which faculty and students are partners in learning.
- **Design and Action Informed by Data.** An institution's ability to collect and use data to guide decision making is essential to improving student outcomes and achieving systemic change. Research highlights those data that are most relevant to collect and monitor to assess student and institutional improvement.
- **Broader Connections.** Community colleges are anchors in the communities they serve and must lead the way in developing deep partnerships to other education systems, employers, and community-based organizations to support the economic and social health of their students and communities.

# Achieving the Dream's Approach

## Institutional Capacity Framework

Institutions cannot continue to make progress in improving equitable student outcomes without committing to organizational change and capacity building. ATD's framework for institutional capacity building incorporates seven essential capacities. Research shows that these capacities must be in place for colleges to create the student-focused culture that promotes equitable student success.

With the capacity framework as a guide, our approach integrates and aligns existing college success efforts such as redesigning academic and career pathways, engaging faculty in student success, putting data and information in the hands of faculty and advisors for evidence-based decisions, preparing for accreditation, integrating planning and advising systems, and addressing students' financial challenges to help them continue their studies.

The seven capacity areas are:

- 1. Leadership & Vision** – The commitment and collaboration of the institution's leadership with respect to student success and the clarity of the vision for desired change.
- 2. Data & Technology** – The institution's capacity to collect, access, analyze, and use data to inform decisions, as well as to use powerful technology to support student success.
- 3. Equity** – The commitment, capabilities, and experiences of an institution to equitably serve low-income students, students of color, and other at-risk student populations with respect to access, success, and campus climate.
- 4. Teaching & Learning** – The commitment to engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in examinations of pedagogy, meaningful professional development, and a central role for them as change agents within the institution. Also, the college's commitment to advising, tutoring, and out-of-classroom supports as well as restructuring developmental education to facilitate student learning and success.
- 5. Engagement & Communication** – The creation of strategic partnerships with key external stakeholders, such as K-12, universities, employers and community-based organizations, and internal stakeholders across the institution to participate in the student success agenda and improvement of student outcomes.







**6. Strategy & Planning** – The alignment of the institution with the umbrella goal of student success and the institution’s process for translating the desired future into defined goals and objectives and executing the actions to achieve them.

**7. Policies & Practices** – The institutional policies and practices that impact student success and the processes for examining and aligning policies and practices to remove barriers and foster student completion.

The capacities reflect a heightened focus on what happens in the classroom and the academic, career, and life supports that are essential to student learning and success. Equity and a culture of evidence are embedded in all seven capacities, reflecting the need for colleges to incorporate evidence-based decision making and invest in equity-minded practices and behaviors at the core of everything they do. Finally, the principle of “systemic improvement” comprises both strategy and planning, and policies and practices, focusing deeper attention to the roles of these capacities in guiding and sustaining holistic change.

The ATD framework unites improvement efforts under one cohesive institutional umbrella. It weaves research (including research on organizational adaptivity and resilience), experience from other Network colleges and the best thinking about student success from the field with the successful strategies already underway on campus. Each college undertakes the work differently, but the Institutional Capacity Framework and other ATD support services provide a practical approach to creating an institution that systemically supports the success of all students.

# The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool: A Diagnostic for Assessing Strengths and Areas for Improvement

To support and guide our colleges in their organizational capacity building, ATD developed the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) in 2016 with input from the Network and the field. Colleges are encouraged to take the self-assessment in their first semester/year in the ATD Network to assess their current capacity and identify strengths they can leverage in their student success work and areas to work on building capacity. The ICAT was updated in 2019 based on feedback from the field and additional research.

**Changing campus culture and improving equitable student outcomes is a challenging task that requires self-reflection, critical thinking and feedback, and coordinated action across the institution.**

The ICAT asks a broad range of college stakeholders to assess their institution's capacity in seven key areas using a range from minimal to exemplary. Stakeholders include a cross-section of representatives from the board of trustees, president's cabinet, administrators, full-time and part-time faculty, staff and student success teams. Colleges report that engaging a cross-section of representatives results in rich conversations that surface critical issues. We strongly recommend that colleges collaborate with Achieving the Dream coaches to review the results to identify strengths,

discuss areas that would benefit from additional focus and resource allocation, and formulate actionable ideas for ongoing improvement.

Changing campus culture and improving equitable student outcomes is a challenging task that requires self-reflection, critical thinking and feedback, and coordinated action across the institution. The ICAT is a tool that supports this work. Colleges that complete the ICAT are leveraging the results to guide strategic planning, prepare for accreditation, launch pathways, implement high impact practices, facilitate discussions across the college and drive action.

Colleges preparing for accreditation find that the ICAT can be an important tool. Some accrediting agencies want colleges to use more than one form of assessment, including qualitative and quantitative measures in the initial accreditation or reaffirmation. Although the ICAT was not intended to be a psychometric tool, it produces a numeric result with qualitative feedback from faculty and staff who participate in accreditation processes. In 2016, ATD published a short paper that describes how the ICAT is aligned with accreditation. It can be found [here](#).

## Building Blocks for Successful Change

As colleges seek to advance their student success agenda, build capacity, and engage in large-scale reform efforts to improve the student experience, there are nine building blocks, or success factors, for successfully leading change. These building blocks are not sequential. Institutions can use them at any time to address ongoing and emerging needs.

### Prepare for desired change

- Set the stage for “unfreezing” habits in favor of cultivating a student-focused culture.
- Examine current student data along the continuum of the student experience: from initial connection through completion and transition to a transfer institution or to the workforce.
- Examine these data not only in aggregate, but disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, Pell status, and other student characteristics relevant to your institution.
- Gather and analyze qualitative data to identify the root causes of student success outcomes and equity gaps.
- Engage a cross-representation of the college community to complete specific sections, or all seven sections, of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool. Consider including board of trustees, administrators, full- and part-time faculty, and staff.
- Reflect on your results and engage in a facilitated large group dialogue, using a method such as the ATD Capacity Café, to share reflections on strengths, priority areas for improvement, and actions to make the institution stronger. Encourage your colleagues to consider their specific role in the college's student success agenda.





### Form your student success team(s)

- Identify cross-functional, cross-hierarchical teams to guide the student success agenda.
- Select chairs or co-chairs and other team roles.
- Develop team charters to specify team purpose, goals, and metrics.
- Consider how this team builds alignment across student success efforts, e.g., whether this team should be the “owner” or “approver” of all student success initiatives at your institution.
- Establish a meeting cycle and schedule meetings.

### Develop your student success vision and strategy

- Create a compelling student success vision to steer change.
- Ensure this vision is inclusive.
  - Does it take into account the work of full-time and part-time faculty, and of staff and administrators from all areas of your institution? Work towards a vision that builds alignment of all your student success efforts.
- Think big and with high aspirations.
- Set clear goals for student outcomes as well as for your institutional capacity and culture.
  - Where are you now and where do you want the institution to be in one, two, and three years with respect to student access and success?
  - What are the milestones or targets along the way that will signal you are on the right track?
- Identify what actions you will take to build institutional capacity for achieving your goals.

## Communicate for urgency, understanding, and commitment

- Develop a communications plan for impact and relevance that answers why and makes the case for the core need for change.
  - Why now—the unique opportunity for change you have now and the urgent need to address the “why.”
  - Why you will succeed—the assets and strengths the institution will leverage to address the “why.”
- Include messaging that uses data to identify the challenge or need and appeal to logic. Complement this data by capturing student stories to personalize the challenge, appeal to emotions and promote commitment and energy around the work.
- Consider why some of your colleagues may have difficulty with your plan and be proactive in engaging with them. Sometimes what we experience as “resistance” from a colleague is actually their attempt to offer what they believe is a better solution to the problem.
- Identify a “brand” for your Achieving the Dream student success work with clear and simple messaging, e.g. “Student Success Lives Here.”
- Leverage multiple communication channels to share your progress.

## Engage a cross-representation of the college community

- Think broadly about the internal and external stakeholders you need for your student success agenda to succeed—board of trustees, full-time and part-time faculty, administrators, staff, students, K-16 partners, community organizations, employers, state and local policy-makers.
- Empower leadership at all levels—up, down, and across the institution—to use their skills and abilities to embrace their roles as change agents. Provide leadership development experiences for those who express interest but who may not yet have had the opportunity to develop these skills.

## Identify and regularly celebrate successes, small and large

- Identify milestones or short-cycle key performance indicators that can be used to create meaningful feedback on your progress and sustain momentum.
- Celebrate and broadly communicate successes and the individual contributors.



### Sustain focus on student success

- Continually communicate your student success vision and goals and reinforce the shared responsibility—student success is everyone's business. At times, your colleagues may have differing definitions of student success. It can be difficult to reinforce shared responsibility if people believe that their ideas about student success aren't being heard. Be sure to continue this conversation and lean into it.
- Identify barriers to true urgency and the steps you can take to overcome obstacles.
- Create an environment where people can focus on executing the college's student success priorities, realizing that successful change often involves "going slow to go fast."
- Focus on leading indicators that are predictive of student success outcomes or results and can be directly influenced by faculty and staff to improve student outcomes. For example, class engagement and use of a skills lab are often leading indicators for course success.

### Institutionalize change

- Identify the changes that you want to become permanent—to "freeze" —to sustain your student-focused culture.
- Identify how you will institute those changes through policy changes, process redesign, resource allocation/reallocation, and professional development. Consider how you will engage all stakeholders in each of these pieces and how their design can facilitate stronger collaboration between colleagues who may not get to work together often.

## Evaluate, refine, and continuously improve

- Continuously use evidence to evaluate and refine your student success work from the planning stages through implementation and to inform decision-making.
- Cultivate a culture of inquiry, “How does this hire/expense/intervention support student success?”
- Retake annually sections of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool, if not the entire assessment, to gauge your current levels of capacity, where you have built strength and where you still need to focus on improvements. Consider how ATD’s coaching and Holistic Student Supports, Teaching & Learning, and Gateway to College, Equity, and Data & Analytics resources might be helpful here.

## ATD Student Outcome Metrics

Achieving the Dream supports its colleges and the field to collect, analyze, use and share data on student outcomes. We encourage institutions to develop a culture of inquiry and evidence to identify barriers to student progress, inform decision making, allocate resources strategically, evaluate progress and build increased capacity for sustainable change.

In addition to research in the field, ATD has access to longitudinal data that colleges currently submit to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Almost half of all ATD colleges now participate in the Postsecondary Data Partnership through NSC and receive key performance indicator reports with disaggregated data that allows them to gain better insights into student performance and trends by population, including:

- Analyzing completion of the early momentum metrics, such as gateway course completion and credit completion in the first year that are predictive of retention and completion
- Tracking completion of credential(s), and transfer to four-year institutions
- Evaluating whether student outcomes are equitable using disaggregated data
- Benchmarking performance against other colleges in the ATD Network

ATD is an active participant in the Institution of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) Postsecondary Data Collaborative Working Group, and encourages our Network colleges to adopt a field-driven Metrics Framework. The key metrics in this framework fall into three major categories:

- **Performance** metrics measure institutional performance related to student access, progress, completion, cost, and post-college outcomes
- **Efficiency** metrics consider how resources impact college completion, driven by increased interest in college costs and affordability
- **Equity** metrics seek to include all students and accurately represent the higher education experience of populations that are underserved and may be “invisible” in other data collections

ATD colleges are coached to analyze and equitably improve the following:

### **Performance Metrics**

#### ***Early Momentum – Credit Accumulation***

- 0 college credits in 1st term
- 6+ college credits in 1st term
- 12+ college credits in 1st term
- 15+ college credits 1st year
- 24+ college credits in 1st year
- 30+ college credits in 1st year

#### ***Gateway Course Completion***

- Completed college-level Math in 1st year
- Completed college-level English in 1st year
- Completed both college English & college Math in 1st year

#### ***Persistence***

- 1st term to 2nd term
- 1st year to 2nd year

#### ***Credit Completion Ratio***

- College credits earned vs. attempted in 1st year

Learn more about metrics and ATD's approach to building data capacity and a culture of evidence in the Data Discovery Guide.



# Role of Coaches

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ATD engages its network colleges in whole-college transformation using a coaching process that is informed and continuously improved by longstanding partnerships and practice in the field. The primary responsibility of ATD coaches is to help colleges build capacity, lead systemic reform and sustain continuous improvement. Coaches work with colleges in the following ways:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to articulate and support a common understanding of equity and its impact on student achievement
- Apply student-centered systems/design thinking strategies and methodologies
- Guide the development of structures and processes to support strategy execution, accountability, and ongoing improvement using their deep knowledge and experience
- Support planning and facilitation of intentional and structured working sessions during in person or virtual coaching sessions
- Connect institutions to best practices, peer institutions, college examples and resources
- Offer meaningful and detailed feedback on project plans, activities and reports
- Contextualize the student success work to the college, system, and state environment
- Plan and execute learning events and workshops

ATD coaches embed themselves in the culture of the organization, endeavoring to be a trusted advisor by asking clarifying, thought-provoking questions about the college's student success work. Coaches begin to surface unspoken concerns and assist the college to implement new ways to reach their student success goals. They listen with empathy, model collaborative behavior, and help college teams identify areas for ongoing continuous improvement.

ATD's coaches have a range of expertise. Some coaches have cross-trained to support colleges in multiple areas. For example, a coach can serve both as a leadership coach and a teaching and learning coach. Achieving the Dream is constantly evolving its coaching capabilities to stay abreast of trends and meet network institutions' needs. One example of this is equity coaching that will be rolled out in 2020.

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**Leadership and Data Coaches:** Leadership Coaches bring senior-level experience implementing systemic, evidence-based reform to support college leadership teams build organizational capacity and achieve their long-term strategic goals. In partnership with Data Coaches, they apply data and equity-based lenses to support the development, operationalization and assessment of organizational visions. They model how to use student performance outcomes, efficiency outcomes and equity outcomes to inform improvement efforts. Data coaches support colleges to build additional capacity in institutional research, institutional effectiveness, planning, research and accreditation.

**Holistic Student Supports Coaches:** Holistic Student Supports coaches provide additional support to colleges that are ready to integrate academic and non-academic services. They accomplish this integration by facilitating exploration of operational processes and workflows, examining root cause issues in the workflows that impact student success outcomes, process and resource mapping, communications auditing, and conducting intensive opportunity assessments. HSS coaches serve as trainers, project managers, connectors, critical friends, and facilitators.

**Teaching & Learning Coaches:** Teaching and Learning coaches support colleges to build a culture of teaching and learning excellence by assessing institutional needs. They conduct assessments to help determine priorities for professional learning programs for all faculty; audit faculty position descriptions and processes for evaluation, retention and promotion; and strengthen alignment between professional development and policies and practices.

# Suggested Team Composition

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One of the first things new ATD colleges do is establish one or more strong teams to lead their student success efforts. No one person can do this work successfully. ATD recommends network colleges create a team charged with both accomplishing their ATD work and aligning it with other student success activities underway at the institution.

Some colleges have separate Core and Data teams, while others merge these functions into one team. There is no right way to do this; the work proceeds most successfully when it is aligned with institutional best practices for whole-college change efforts. We encourage institutions to work with their ATD coaches to identify a structure that works best for their campus.

## Core Team

The core team should consist of a broadly representative group of college leaders at all levels of the organization who are highly regarded, influential members of the college community. While this is usually not an official governance body, its decisions should guide the student success work at your college. The team should generate energy and urgency for change as team members reinforce one another's commitment and work together to infuse their shared vision throughout the institution.

### Essential Core Team Members

- President/Chancellor/CEO (ad hoc)
- Chief Academic Officer
- Chief Student Services Officer
- Chief Data Officer/Institutional Researcher
- Key Faculty Leader(s)
- Chief Information Officer or equivalent

### Suggested Additions to the Core Team

- Additional faculty, including at least one part-time faculty member
- Institutional Effectiveness officer, if separate from Chief Data Officer
- Diversity Equity Inclusion Officer, if applicable
- Front-line advisors/counselors
- Faculty and/or staff from Teaching and Learning Centers and other professional learning hubs
- Academic Support Center leaders
- Trustee(s) or Member(s) of the Board
- Community Representative(s)
- Student Representative(s)



### Core Team Responsibilities in the First Three Years

- Engage in courageous conversations needed to push forward efforts to achieve equitable outcomes.
- Use the quantitative and qualitative data to identify equity gaps, explore their root causes, inform decision making to dismantle barriers and guide student success working teams to carry out the student success work at the college.
- Use the results of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) and follow-up discussions at a Capacity Café to strengthen the seven key capacity areas.
- Develop an evidence-based Action Plan that details the work to be done to improve the student experience and equitable student outcomes.
- Maintain an inventory of all student success initiatives, align them and evaluate them for consistency with student success vision and priorities.
- Coordinate all student success initiatives to effectively and efficiently utilize college resources and avoid duplicative efforts. Support the student success working teams to overcome barriers and navigate the college governance system.
- Regularly review the work of the student success working teams and offer helpful, constructive advice.

- Assure that a communication plan is developed and executed to achieve broad awareness and engagement across all members of the college.
- Ensure that student success work is aligned with the college budget and strategic plan, as well as other strategic initiatives where applicable.
- Develop an inventory of policy and practice barriers that inhibit student success.

### Core Team Leader Description

Most colleges have two core team co-leads, one each from academic and student affairs. The Core Team Leaders play a pivotal role in the Achieving the Dream work on campus. They are expected to lead the Core Team in all its areas of responsibility including developing a culture of inquiry and action that allows the college to more effectively drive equitable success for all students. Additionally, the Core Team Leaders are the people primarily responsible for increasing engagement in and communication about the college's student success work. The Core Team Leaders ensure the planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement of interventions run smoothly. They are tasked with leading the college in integrating all its student success efforts to ensure they work together towards the same student success goals.

The Core Team Leaders act as the main contact for Achieving the Dream and are responsible for maintaining communication with ATD as well as the college's coaching team. It is also their responsibility to ensure the college submits annual updates to ATD (known as the Annual Reflection).

### Attributes of Strong Core Team Leaders

As you decide who at your college is best suited to lead your college's Achieving the Dream work, consider the following attributes common to strong Core Team Leaders.

A strong Core Team Leader:

- Is deeply committed to equity and the success of all students.
- Believes the college's role in students' success is not limited to academics.
- Has a proven track record of collaboration and group facilitation.
- Possesses a deep knowledge of the college's structure, programs, policies, and culture.
- Has the ability to see and effectively communicate the big picture to a wide audience.
- Is highly respected across all college departments and campuses.
- Can effectively garner support for an initiative throughout the college.
- Has a proven ability in leading complex, college-wide projects that have positively impacted the college and its students.
- Understands data and its role in the decision-making process.
- Is an effective team player able and eager to work across departments.
- Is empowered with enough authority to lead others through significant change.
- Treats others with respect and works hard to allay concerns before they arise.
- Has confidence that ATD can support the college make sustainable, systemic change.

## Data Team

Achieving the Dream also recommends that Network colleges consider creating a Data Team. This team can be solely focused on collecting, analyzing, and sharing data regarding students' access, progression and success. The team also can be integrated with and perform these functions within the Core Team.

### Suggested Data Team Members

- Chief Data Officer/Institutional Researcher
  - ATD suggests that this individual serve on both the Data Team and the Core Team in the model where both exist and act as the liaison between the two teams.
- Chief Technology Officer
- Institutional Effectiveness officer
- Assessment officer
- Senior Planning Administrator
- Faculty, especially those with skills and/or interest in quantitative/qualitative analysis
- DEI officer, if applicable
- Student Services staff, especially those involved in student on-boarding
- Individual responsible for reporting Student Tracker data to the National Student Clearinghouse
- Front-line Advisors/Counselors

### Data Team Responsibilities in the First Three Years

- Develop a candid analysis of the college's performance on student outcomes, with a special focus on low-income students, students of color, and others who face barriers to success.
- Define key terms and establish relevant timeframes and data sources.
- Examine quantitative and qualitative data. From this examination, create a compelling narrative showing where the college is doing well and where it needs to improve, especially as it relates to its underserved population of students.
- Create or build on a culture of evidence at the college.
- Engage the wider college community in the use and analysis of data in their daily work, particularly as it pertains to identifying equity gaps and intervening. This also includes designing and implementing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Involve students and faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses of current college policies, structures, and services.
- Support the Core Team in engaging students, faculty, community members and others in dialogue about the analysis and proposed goals and strategies.



### **Data Team Leader Description**

The Data Team Leader's primary responsibilities are to create a culture of evidence and inquiry at the college by analyzing, interpreting, communicating and incorporating data into the daily work of the institution. This responsibility includes identifying, organizing, and delivering professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, administrators, and senior leaders. This development should be designed to build skills in data analysis, use data to inform their work, and identify the right questions to ask.

The Data Team Leader acts as the main contact for all data-related communications from Achieving the Dream. Along with the Core Team Leaders, the Data Team Leader may be responsible for maintaining communication with the college's Data Coach. It is also his/her responsibility to ensure that any data reports to Achieving the Dream are submitted on time.

## Attributes of a Strong Data Team Leader

As you decide who at your college is best suited to lead your college's Achieving the Dream data analysis work, consider the following attributes common to strong Data Team Leaders.

- Strong Data Team Leader:
- Is deeply committed to equity and the success of all students.
- Possesses a strong knowledge of the college's structure, programs, policies, and culture.
- Is an expert in quantitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- Recognizes the value and importance of all data, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Has a proven ability to lead a team in data analysis and can operationalize findings to the college community.
- Possesses a strong understanding of the technology used to support the college's student supports and teaching and learning environment.
- Has a good understanding of state and national data-related issues.
- Is highly respected across all college departments and campuses.
- Is empowered with enough authority to lead others.
- Treats others with respect and works hard to allay concerns before they arise.
- Has confidence that ATD can support the college make sustainable, systemic change.



## ATD Contact

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Any questions regarding your college's Achieving the Dream participation should be directed to: [network@achievingthedream.org](mailto:network@achievingthedream.org). The Network Engagement Team at Achieving the Dream regularly checks this inbox and will direct your questions to the ATD staff member or team best suited to answer your questions as quickly as possible.



## Additional Resources

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Achieving the Dream recommends periodically checking the Resources and Research section of our website. ATD adds new resources here as they are released. This section contains some of the most high-demand resources that ATD institutions utilize.

### General

*Achieving the Dream 15th Anniversary Report (2019)*: A helpful introduction to ATD's origin, growth, and path forward with its network colleges. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/about-us/15th-anniversary>

*Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT)*: A field-validated diagnostic tool allowing institutions to assess their strengths and areas for improvement in seven key areas integral to student success. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/institutional-capacity-assessment-tool-capacity-cafe>

*Data Discovery Guide*: A media-rich, comprehensive guide to approaching student success using data to guide your work. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/14989/data-discovery-guide>

*Toolkit for Actionable Decision Making in Times of Disruption*: A toolkit designed to help colleges build resilience and agility around student learning, student supports, and enrollment management. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/18100/toolkit-for-actionable-decision-making-in-times-of-disruption>

*Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit*: A toolkit for redesigning student supports in an integrative, collaborative, and holistic way so students can progress along their educational and career pathways. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/17502/holistic-student-supports-redesign-a-toolkit>

*Teaching and Learning Toolkit: A Research-Based Guide to Building a Culture of Teaching & Learning Excellence*: Using ATD's four cornerstones of excellence, this toolkit synthesizes research and stories from our colleges, and guides institutional teams as they build capacity in teaching and learning. This resource will be released in late-July 2020. Please check the ATD website for this and other forthcoming publications.

### COVID-19

*Online Teaching & Learning through Disruption Webinar Series*: a set of webinars ATD held in April 2020 to support ATD institutions transitioning to an online learning environment. <https://www.achievingthedream.org/resource/18040/webinar-series-online-teaching-learning-through-disruption>

#### **Additional COVID-19 Resources:**

<https://www.achievingthedream.org/resources/covid-19-connecting-supporting-the-atd-network>





Achieving the Dream™

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or contact us at [info@AchievingtheDream.org](mailto:info@AchievingtheDream.org) or call (240) 450-0075

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