

## Goals

Provide "adaptive" strategies, tips tools to help Team Leads support your institutions in protecting & advancing student success priorities amid current conditions.

- --Strategies for resetting case-making for guided pathways reforms, and for focusing teams
- --Tips for meeting people where they are, and for leading from the middle during the ongoing uncertainty
- --Tools to strengthen facilitation of complex, collaborative work under current conditions



## Let's play a game...

A) At this point in the semester, I'd say most faculty and staff at my college are feeling \_\_\_\_\_ and

B) When I think about protecting and advancing our student success priorities under current circumstances, I find myself thinking about \_\_\_\_\_

- C) Overall, I'd say that right now working relationships between faculty, staff, and administrators are \_\_\_\_\_ but also \_\_\_\_\_
- D) Of all the priorities/initiatives underway before the pandemic \_\_\_\_\_ seem(s) most important to prioritize now because\_\_\_\_



## What We're Hearing...

"If we're ever given the chance to go back to 'normal,' I hope we don't. We can't lose sight of the problems this crisis has exposed, and we can't underestimate the power of what we've been able to accomplish for our students because the crisis forced us to... We have a revolutionary opportunity to transform ourselves to work better for students, and we have to take it." -AVP. Georgia (May)

"It's hard for me to imagine a time after COVID, and it's hard for me to picture what it was like before COVID. What does that mean?" — My daughter, age 10 (last night)

"People seem to understand more now than they did before about the depth of challenges facing our students and the need to rethink what we do in order to better meet the needs of our students who are, in every area of their lives, facing a huge array of obstacles. I think we may be more ready to reimagine how we do our work, how we serve our students."

-Provost, TX (June)

"We're all exhausted. The early adrenaline is gone, and there's no new normal in sight, not really. We're worried about our jobs, our students, our families. We're exhausted."

-Faculty member, MA (Sept)

"Everyone – administration, faculty, staff, and students alike -- is engaged in what feel like impossible balancing acts, professionally & personally. People are feeling overwhelmed, and that makes people less trustful, less flexible, less forgiving of each other...How do we create an environment to pull people out of survival mode to look up and ahead so that we can come out of this stronger?" –VP, Arizona (Aug)



## Resetting Case-Making: Back to Basics & Leveling Up

## Large-scale equity-focused student success work is deeply counter-cultural

Large-scale = moving beyond boutique programs to pursue evidence-based <u>redesign of policies</u>, <u>practices</u>, <u>procedures at scale</u> to lower artificial barriers to more equitable outcomes & to secure the future of the college

**Equity-focused** = a clear-eyed, evolving understanding of structural inequity/systemic racism, and the <u>longstanding</u> complicity of higher education in raising artificial barriers for students from historically marginalized and/or minoritized communities

**Counter-cultural** = embracing key <u>ideas that are</u> <u>completely different from those that dominate</u> both spoken and unspoken deeply held beliefs & norms of practice...

#### What Values Ground Your Work?

- From sorting to supporting (from goalie to guide)
- From the myth of meritocracy to meaningful equity consciousness
- From blame-game to honest coownership
- From best intentions to datainformed decisions
- From unspoken assumptions about students' abilities to critical, individual self-reflection about the impact of deep-seated uninterrogated assumptions about students on outcomes & equity gaps



## The Forever Target: A Healthy Climate for Student-Focused Innovation

In healthy climates for continuous improvement in student success innovation, a critical mass of faculty, staff and administrators...

- ✓ see a strong connection between personal/professional goals and
  the student success priorities of the college
- ✓ believe that innovating for better student outcomes is both urgently important & expected
- √ feel respected & valued by colleagues and institutional leadership
- √ know how proposed changes will impact them
- ✓ understand how discrete initiatives align with broader institutional priorities & student success vision
- ✓ believe they have the support & guidance to be successful in their roles



# Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works.

Often when we are angry,
there are other emotions
hidden under the surface.

## Angry

grief scared embarrassed overwhelmed tricked shame frustrated depressed distrustful stressed grumpy attacked rejected helpless trapped guilt nervous anxious annoyed exhausted envious disrespected unsure disappointed lonely offended uncomfortable insecure worried regret hurt

The Gottman Institute

## **Strategies for Managing Difficult Behavior**

- > Set the right ground rules:
  - a. Stay Engaged
  - b. Speak Your Truth
  - c. Accept and Expect Non-closure
  - d. Experience Discomfort
  - e. Be Kind (apply grace) and Accountable
- > Practice empathy: people (including you) are at our worst when we're scared, sad, or exhausted
- > Thicken your skin: academic culture and American societal norms incentivize bad behavior
- > Calm yourself: create emotional distance by remembering the "fundamental attribution error"
- Model the behavior: be respectful, tell it like it is, ask the hard questions, create space
- > Empower the group: let others own the conversation, help people keep eyes up and forward

When it comes to difficult behavior that takes the form of passivity/disengagement, it is important to:

- Meet people where they are
- Push where you can
- Create space for disagreement
- Engage 1:1 before or after

## Using Short Term Improvement Cycles to Reset, Protect, or Accelerate Work

### Why an Improvement Approach?

- Insights of improvement science are relevant to most problems of practice, but may be especially salient in the age of COVID
- > Complex, adaptive problems can (and must) be broken down into 'bite-sized' pieces
- ➤ Adopting key improvement strategies can accelerate progress & improve the quality of problem-solving

#### Which Tactics & Tools?

- Using "driver diagrams" to structure & summarize conversations can help groups go deeper faster into real work
- ➤ Using "90-day" plans to turn driver diagrams into action plans provides a structure & light project management ethos to push work forward and keep teams on the same page



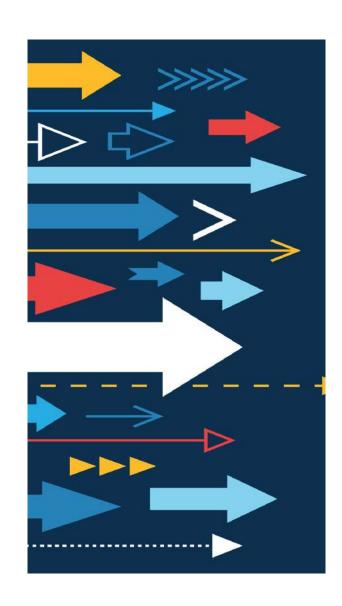
## **Core Elements of an Improvement Cycle**

### **Creating a Driver Diagram**

Collaboratively articulate the driving challenges, focusing on where there is room for action & coownership, and articulate a long-term goal, a S.M.A.R.T goal, and near-term action priorities.

## **Creating a 90-Day Plan**

Clearly articulate the near-term goal (in relation to a longer-term goal), outline tasks, responsibilities, needs, dependencies, timeline, and cadence of collaboration on a 3-month workplan.



## A Good Driver Diagram

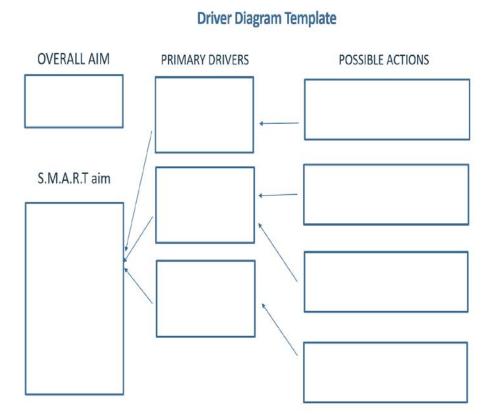
...forces delineated articulation of <u>key</u> challenges

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

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

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

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





## A Good 90-Day Plan...

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

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

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

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

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

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

30	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status
	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status
60						
	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status
90						



## **Driver Diagram Example: Strategically Advancing Key Student Success Priorities**

#### **OVERALL AIM**

Leverage in every possible way the COVID crisis to make progress on our most important student success priorities

#### S.M.A.R.T AIM

Bring our SSLI team onto the same page about the most important/highest-impact work that needs to be advanced this academic year to improve outcomes for students and close equity gaps

#### **PRIMARY DRIVERS**

Unevenness in our college community's understanding of equity issues impedes our ability to be strategic and committed to the most important work

People in various siloes are experiencing different pressures and challenges that make coordination more difficult

Senior leaders and our uppermost mid-level leaders are not able to provide the internal leadership we need

Frontline faculty & staff are expressing frustration and anger in ways that slow & stall work that needs

#### **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

Ground everyone in a shared definition of equity that is action-oriented & anchored by a shared understanding about sources of inequity. Prioritize individual reflection & growth as well as group work

Take time in cross-functional team meetings to scour the conversation for overlooked opportunities to connect dots and solve discrete problems that build muscles of collaboration.

Identify obstacles to upper and mid-level leaders sending the signals that need to be sent and devise strategies to supply those above with language and to practice supportive candor about the help you need.

Distinguish between various sources of stress and work with colleagues to identify the best strategies for addressing what can be addressed.



## **Driver Diagram Example: Strategically Advancing Key Student Success Priorities**

#### **OVERALL AIM**

Protect and strengthen our guided pathways work amid conditions of uncertainty and growing exhaustion

S.M.A.R.T AIM

Leverage our completion plan requirement to advance meaningful work

#### **PRIMARY DRIVERS**

Because the CPs were mandated from above, they are not viewed as authentically connected to the real student success work of the college

Because the CPs are public, colleges are incentivized to approach it as a boxchecking or target-drawing exercise.

When colleges are in "survival mode" it's very difficult to ask people to think strategically about the work to be done

#### **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

Ground the team in a shared perspective about equity imperative that is action-oriented & anchored by a shared understanding of sources of inequity. Approach the CP as an opportunity to level-set student success work as equity work.

Explicitly distinguish between the artifact that will be submitted/made public and the actual work that the CPs are intended to enable. Be explicit about the difference and invite people to connect the dots between the required exercise and the most important work that needs to be done.

Identify the most essential priorities & opportunities for making significant progress on student success goals, and position the CP as a strategic tool to lift people's eyes and galvanize shared will for accelerated progress.



## **Driver Diagram Example: Improving Teaching & Learning**

#### **OVERALL AIM**

Implement guided pathways at scale in order to achieve dramatically better and more equitable outcomes for students

S.M.A.R.T. AIM

Scale high-quality active and experiential learning opportunities for all students

#### **PRIMARY DRIVERS**

Absence of a widespread understanding of the value and defining features of high-quality active & experiential learning

Passive and active resistance from full-time faculty to adopting new evidence-based strategies for supporting active & experiential learning

Insufficient PD for adjunct and full-time faculty to try & improve new techniques.

COVID has put us in a new world where a majority of faculty are struggling with learning how to be effective, and some of our faculty are entirely unprepared for this modality.

#### **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

Identify impediments to senior leadership prioritizing and communicating effectively about the commitment to teaching & learning within guided pathways.

Assess full-time and adjunct faculty starting point attitudes, capacity, and will for purposeful creation of active & experiential learning opportunities for students

Convene deans, chairs and instructional designers/Center for Teaching & Learning staff to talk about the evidence around the best approaches to active & experiential learning

Distinguish between unmet PD/training needs, staffing & resource shortfalls, disincentives, and communication breakdowns and work to connect faculty facing different challenges with the supports they need



## **Driver Diagram Example: Math Pathways**

#### **OVERALL AIM**

Dramatically improve outcomes for our baccalaureate seeking students

#### S.M.A.R.T. AIM

Align or improve math pathways to significantly increase applicability of math completed at the 2-yr for transfer students' programs of study at the 4-yr

#### PRIMARY DRIVERS

Lack of curricular alignment and shared clarity about the relationship between course objectives/outcomes

Insufficient connections between 2yr & 4yr institutions to establish shared understanding of barriers and opportunities around increasing applicability

Inattention to deeper structural and cultural impediments to creation of seamless math pathways

#### **POSSIBLE ACTIONS**

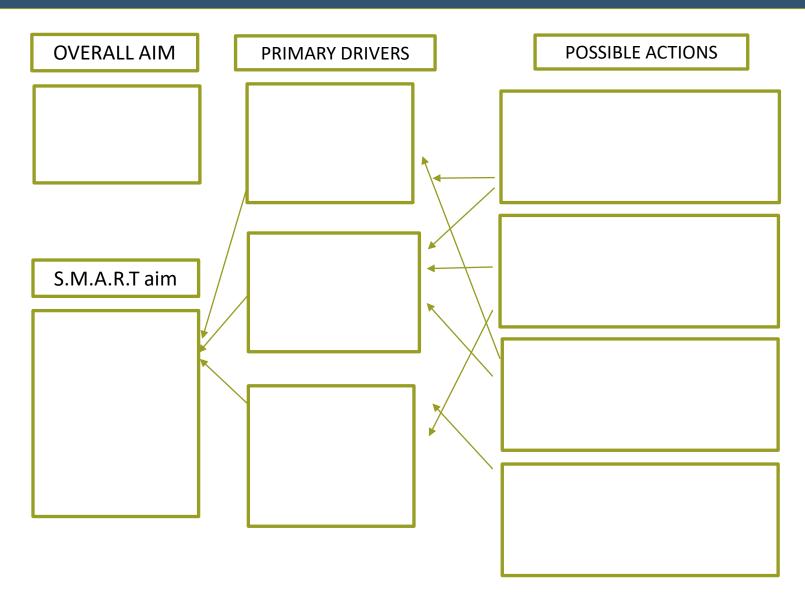
Convene senior academic leadership (presidents & provosts) at 2yr & 4yr on an ongoing basis to look at data on which courses are/are not applying, and to identify the range of issues contributing to lower-than-desired applicability rates

Convene math chairs and deans in programs serviced by math across the 2yr & 4yr to unpack the range of issues contributing to lower-than-desired applicability rates, and to identify key opportunities for improvements

Convene advising leadership from the 2yr and 4yr to clarify issues related to applicability with the aim of improving advising to ensure students take the right math for their longer term educational and career goals



## **Driver Diagram Template**





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

	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status
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## **Unpacking Bad Meetings**

Top 10 plagues of collaborative problem-solving (that skillful facilitation can mitigate against)

- 1. Misaligned expectations
- 2. No clear, achievable goals
- 3. No progress
- 4. Poor use of data
- 5. People don't feel heard, respected
- 6. Collaboration encouraged but not supported
- 7. Unmanaged/unacknowledged interests or power dynamics
- 8. Lack of authenticity
- 9. Bad behavior
- 10. No outcomes

## **10 Tips for Running Good Virtual Meetings**

- 1. Collaboratively set norms for virtual teams and practice rigorous goal clarity for each meeting
- 2. Check in as humans first, create space to develop perspective-taking capacity & the ongoing development of equity consciousness
- 3. Send an agenda in advance of every meeting, and ask everyone to consider one question prior to the meeting
- 4. Don't assume that video is always best, reserve some topics for phone-only and walking meetings specifically
- 5. Keep video meetings short 30-60 minutes and/or provide frequent "brain breaks"
- 6. Experiment with different meeting lengths (15 min & 30 min meetings for specific goals), keep standing meetings tight & focused
- 7. Limit the number of participants in conversation pods (keep deep working meetings to >10 people or create breakout rooms)
- 8. Consider recording meetings to cascade information, and provide alternative input opportunities (collaborative documents)
- 9. Practicing community organizing skills to compensate for lack of connectors (anticipate hot spots, engage in shuttle-diplomacy)
- 10. Give everyone time on the agenda and/or assign specific roles (including a "Jedi" for harder conversations)





## Making the Most of Team Time Tomorrow

- ✓ What are your goals for tomorrow?
- ✓ What would success look like coming out of team time tomorrow?
- ✓ How are people likely to feel upon arrival in your team time?
- ✓ What ideas do people most need to hear as they head into team time?
- ✓ Can you see using a 3-month action planning process to advance your priorities and make the completion plan deadline a vehicle for real work?



