
Success & Equity Through Quality Instruction


The Core Principles and Role of Faculty

Strong Start to Finish's Core Principles provide guidance on the overarching shape of developmental education reform. Faculty play an important role in advancing all seven Principles.

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Every student deserves a strong start in their first year of college. This toolkit is part of a SSTF three-part series, providing resources to assist postsecondary leaders design and implement reform strategies that support equitable outcomes for students who are marginalized and racially minoritized.



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The Core Principles and Role of Faculty

Strong Start to Finish's [Core Principles](#) provide guidance on the overarching shape of developmental education reform. As the below table shows, faculty play an important role in advancing all seven Principles.

Principle 1: Identify academic direction and supports

Every student's postsecondary education should begin with a well-designed process that empowers them to choose an academic direction and build a plan that starts with passing credit-bearing gateway courses in the first year. This principle assumes that programs of study are clearly designed and communicated.

Role of Faculty

Faculty must be part of this design process to ensure that their expertise is reflected in course outcomes and the sequencing of courses to achieve program-level learning outcomes.

Principle 2: Enroll in college-level math and English

Every student should be placed in courses based on multiple measures, using evidence-based criteria, instead of through a single standardized test. Historically, too many students capable of college-level work were misassigned to remedial courses bearing no credit. But better placement is just a start.

Role of Faculty

Once enrolled, students should experience courses replete with evidence-based teaching practices from well prepared and supported faculty.

Principle 3: Provide supports

Campus communities need to assess, and as needed, transform policies and practices to ensure that every student is provided with high-value learning experiences, with the supports needed to remove barriers to success — especially students from historically underrepresented, disenfranchised and minoritized communities.

Role of Faculty

Only well-prepared faculty, versed in a comprehensive set of teaching approaches, can create the conditions for high-value learning experiences. In particular, faculty must possess the evidence-based and inclusive teaching approaches and use them with the intention to promote equity in order to better support underserved students and close equity gaps.

Principle 4: Streamline remediation options

Program-appropriate college-level math and English courses should be offered to every student through evidence-based, integrated support models designed to accelerate gateway course success.

Role of Faculty

Out-of-class supplemental supports are just that—supplemental to students' primary interactions with faculty, which must be of the highest quality.

Principle 5: Align courses with programs of study

Every student is provided access to multiple pathways, such as statistics and data science, that integrate rigorous math appropriate to different disciplines and to the well-paying careers of today and tomorrow.

Role of Faculty

Faculty are essential to the alignment of courses within programs; only faculty can ensure students master learning outcomes through teaching practices that make content relevant, surface prior knowledge, and help students build new knowledge and skill.

Principle 6: Use data effectively

Every student is supported in staying on track to a postsecondary credential through the institution's effective use of early momentum metrics and mechanisms to generate, share and act on finely disaggregated student progression data.

Role of Faculty

Faculty are best positioned and have the most consistent contact with students, to collect — and act — on real time qualitative and quantitative data.

Principle 7: Prioritize the student experience

Efforts must be made to improve the student experience, meet the evolving needs of students, and remove barriers to student success. The institution will demonstrate this prioritization by using mechanisms that elevate the voices and lived experiences of students — and the entire campus community.

Role of Faculty

For many students juggling a variety of responsibilities who may only have time for class — courses and faculty define their college experience.

About This Toolkit

This toolkit provides institutions, higher education systems and state agencies with a framework to fully engage faculty in the student success movement. It was prepared by ACUE and Sova based on decades of research and insights gained by these organizations through direct work supporting hundreds of institutions committed to scaling ambitious, equity-grounded student success reforms.

Toolkit Authors

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President and Co-founder, ACUE

Dr. Gyrko is president and co-founder of ACUE and has spent more than two decades leading innovative efforts to create and expand educational opportunities for students at all levels, in the United States and around the world. Gyrko spearheaded ACUE's earliest work with faculty, provosts, presidents and experts to define the evidence-based teaching approaches that every college educator should possess — ACUE's Effective Practice Framework. Together with ACUE's chief academic officer and founding team, Gyrko devised ACUE's online courses in effective teaching and developed ACUE's comprehensive approach to institutional partnerships which encompasses academic, research, planning and communications services. Gyrko formed and maintains ACUE's collaborations with leading higher education associations and national philanthropies, including the American Council on Education, with whom ACUE's credentials are co-issued. He co-authored ACUE's approach to program accountability, which underlies numerous studies demonstrating the positive impact of effective instruction on student outcomes.

Penny MacCormack, Ed.D.

Chief Academic Officer, ACUE

Dr. MacCormack is the chief academic officer at ACUE. In this role, she led the creation of ACUE's Effective Practice Framework — a research-based and independently validated statement of the teaching skills and knowledge that every college educator should possess. She also leads the development and implementation of all ACUE course offerings, through which faculty are awarded the only nationally recognized teaching credential endorsed by the American Council on Education. Under MacCormack's direction, ACUE has published numerous studies finding statistically significant improvements in outcomes among students taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty. These peer-reviewed studies have been commended for their range, depth and rigor of analysis.

Meghan Snow

Chief Data Officer, ACUE

Ms. Snow is the chief data officer at ACUE. In this role, she is responsible for setting and executing a strategic research agenda and supporting a culture of data-driven decision-making across the organization, with the goal of delivering on the mission to ensure student success and equity through quality instruction.

At ACUE, Snow led the development of the organization's approach to evaluating the impact of ACUE's courses on faculty and students at partner institutions. To date, ACUE has published over twelve evaluations demonstrating, in part, improved student performance and improved faculty self-efficacy. Snow has presented papers and sessions about this work at conferences including the Association for the Study of Higher Education, the American Educational Research Association, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Christine Ferrell

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Ms. Ferrell served as executive director of strategic communications at ACUE. A strategic marketing and media leader with extensive experience ranging from brand management and strategy to integrated marketing communications and digital media optimization, Ferrell has dedicated more than a decade of her career to enabling growth for institutions of higher education. Prior to her tenure at ACUE, Ferrell served as director of marketing and media relations at North Carolina State University's Poole College of Management, and served as director of marketing and business development for the Executive MBA and online MBA@UNC programs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

Alison Kadlec, Ph.D.

Founding Partner, Sova

Dr. Kadlec is a founding partner at Sova, where she leads a body of work focused on accelerating the pace and improving the quality of large-scale, equity-grounded reform of higher education. She has worked with scores of colleges and universities across the country to support the capacity of senior and mid-level leaders to effectively engage members of their communities as constructive partners in the hard work of change on behalf of equitable student success. Alison and her team also work with state policymakers and system leaders in more than half the states in the U.S. to help improve the quality of policy development and implementation around higher education and workforce issues. She has been active in the Guided Pathways movement since its origins, led the 2020 update of the Core Principles for Transforming Remediation, and is working in several states on issues related to scaled redesign of developmental education.

Paul Markham, Ph.D.

Founding Partner, Sova

Dr. Markham's work focuses on building and sustaining cultures for innovation and change. Prior to launching Sova, Paul served as vice president for organizational strategy at Public Agenda and vice president for strategic partnerships & development at Achieving the Dream, Inc. Paul also served as senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where he led the Foundation's work focused on developmental education redesign and the creation of Pathways for student success. As

a faculty member, he served as associate professor of education at the University of Washington Bothell (UWB) and assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Western Kentucky University (WKU), both broad access universities committed to the success of all students who seek a postsecondary education. Paul has extensive experience in building capacity for social change organizations and initiatives through his roles as director of strategic partnerships & community engagement at UWB and director of the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships and director of the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility at WKU. In all these roles, Paul focused on developing organizational capacity to contribute to healthy communities, strong economies and an engaged democracy. In the private business sector, Paul has led a number of implementation and improvement efforts as both a process engineer and quality assurance manager.

Ashmi Patel

Program Manager, Sova

Ms. Patel's work focuses on equity, inclusion and diversity within higher education. Prior to joining Sova, Ashmi served as the director of the Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity at Eastfield College, where she developed programs to enhance students' social and intellectual development, eliminate barriers to student access and success, and develop a culture of equity-mindedness and inclusivity. Previously, as a program associate at the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, Ashmi worked on executive leadership development for aspiring community college presidents. As a first-generation child of immigrant parents from India, Ashmi has experienced the importance of student success support structures and identity development within colleges.

About The Association of College and University Educators (ACUE)

ACUE promotes student success and equity through quality instruction. In partnership with colleges, universities, higher education systems and associations, ACUE prepares and credentials faculty in the evidence-based teaching practices that improve student achievement and close equity gaps. Numerous and independently validated efficacy studies confirm that students are more engaged, learn more and complete courses in greater numbers — more equitably with their peers — when taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty. ACUE's online, cohort-based credentialing programs are delivered through institutional partnerships and open enrollment courses endorsed by the American Council on Education.

About Sova

Sova is a mission-driven organization focused on promoting equitable upward mobility for more students through reform of higher education and workforce development. Sova's work is based on the conviction that sustainable, scalable, high-quality innovation in higher education and workforce development must be designed and implemented with rigorous attention to the human dimensions of change. Sova's core services are focused on adaptive change leadership, strategic communications and will-building, program strategy and implementation support.



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