
Success & Equity Through Quality Instruction

Five Domains

This toolkit provides helpful resources and rubrics for colleges and universities to self-assess current efforts in each domain: strategy, equity, approach, evaluation and culture. There are questions to consider, a self-assessment rubric and resources for more information.

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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.



ACUE | Student Success
Through Exceptional
Teaching

SOVA

STRONG START
to FINISH

Domain 1: Strategy

SSTF Principles Addressed:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

To what extent is quality teaching part of your strategy?

Your strategic plan likely begins with ambitious goals to improve graduation rates and close institutional performance gaps⁸ between student sub-populations based on race, ethnicity, gender and income. It may also specify a variety of student success interventions — such as those in Figure 1 — intended to achieve these outcomes.

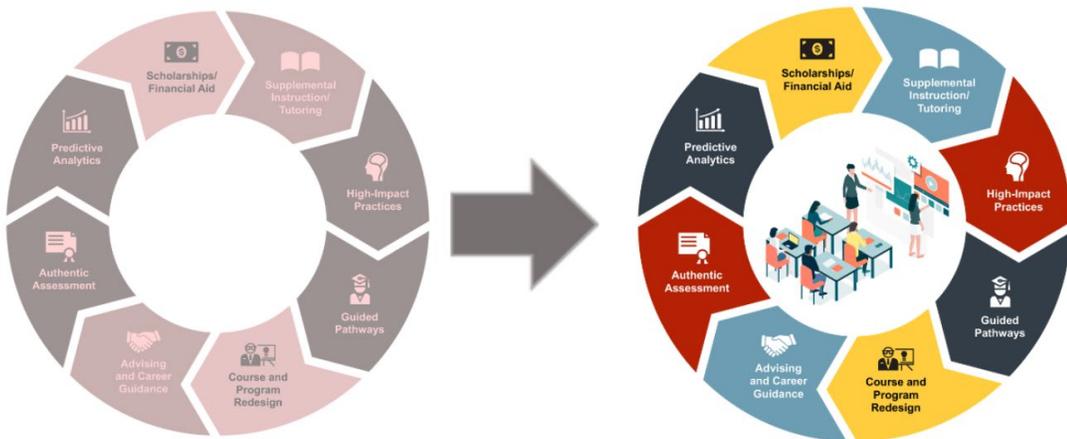


Figure 1. Centering faculty, teaching and learning in a student success strategy.

But on close examination, most if not all student success interventions assume — and rely on — effective teaching delivered by faculty who know and use evidence-based and equity-promoting teaching practices.

For example, supplemental tutoring assumes that students have already benefited from quality teaching in their courses. Predictive analytics are only useful when educators and staff have the skills necessary to act on individualized data. The best designed courses, programs and pathways are only brought to life by well-prepared instructors. Some high-impact practices, such as collaborative assignments and projects, assume that faculty can skillfully establish and manage students’ interpersonal dynamics necessary for deeper, shared learning.

8. Although “achievement gaps” between students of different race, ethnicity, income and gender is a more commonly used term, we use the expression “institutional performance gaps” to emphasize an institution’s responsibility to help students achieve at levels indistinguishable by student sub-group.

“Strategy” Questions to Consider

Your Strategic Plan

- Does your strategic plan discuss the importance of teaching and support to faculty?
- In specific regard to support for faculty, does the plan include measurable objectives, timelines and plans to evaluate impact of professional learning opportunities?
- How well aligned to student success goals are these objectives?
- Were faculty involved in the development of the strategic plan? Did they have a voice in the expectations set for their responsibilities related to student success and the support they need to meet these expectations?
- Are all student success stakeholders, from across the institution, aligned in their beliefs regarding the role of faculty and impact of quality teaching on student success?

Budget, Resources and ROI

- To what extent is your strategic plan, including faculty support, resourced with staff and funding?
- Are resources sufficient to support some, most or all faculty in meeting shared expectations for the role of faculty in student success efforts?
- To what extent are you estimating the degree to which increased student retention and graduation is attributable to investment in faculty and quality instruction?
- Is the chief financial or business officer conducting analysis of the financial return on investment (ROI) in faculty?
- To what extent is faculty support understood as a human capital investment, with a long-term financial benefit, rather than simply another cost?

Role of Professional Development in Accreditation

- What role does evidence-based instruction and high-quality faculty support — as part of your success strategy — play in your re-accreditation?
- How intentional are professional development opportunities?
- Are opportunities merely offered, or more strongly expected, through a range of formal and informal incentives and institutional culture?
- In your self-study, what evidence supports the impact of these activities? What is shared with peer reviewers?

Self-Assessment Rubric: Strategy

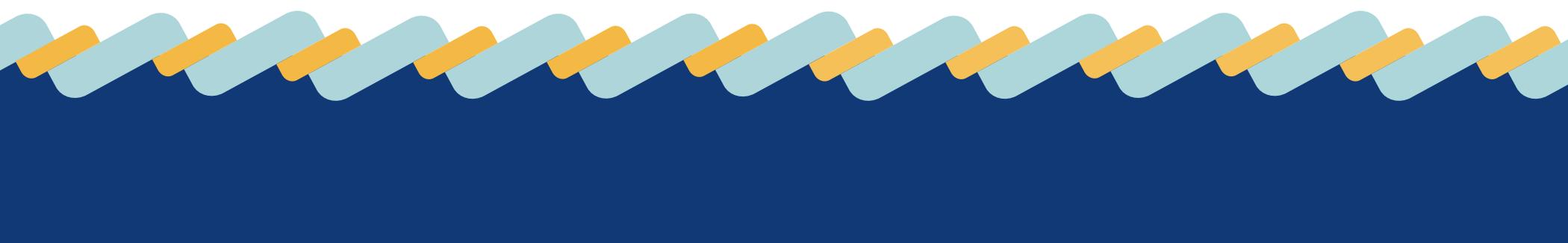
The following rubric provides guidance on how to embed quality teaching, through high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty, into your strategy. How would you rate your institution?

Strategy	The institution ... Makes high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty part of its strategic plans for student success, including reform of developmental education, at scale.	Strategic Plan			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Plan mentions quality teaching and support to faculty.	Plan includes measurable goals for quality teaching and support to faculty.	Plan includes measurable goals for quality teaching and support to faculty, timeline for implementation and evaluation.	Plan makes explicit connection between professional learning opportunities for faculty, quality teaching, and the role of faculty in student success; plan includes measurable goals, timeline for implementation, evaluation and communications activities.
		Budget, Resources and ROI			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Few resources allocated, small numbers of faculty engaged.	Specific resources allocated for some faculty.	Sufficient resources allocated to support large numbers of faculty, with a plan to estimate return on investment (ROI).	Sufficient resources allocated to support all faculty, with evaluation and analysis to regularly determine ROI.

Strategy	The institution ...	Accreditation			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	Makes high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty part of its strategic plans for student success, including reform of developmental education, at scale.	Quality teaching and support to faculty is mentioned in self-study.	Quality teaching and support to faculty is a meaningful part of self-study.	Quality teaching and support to faculty is a substantial part of self-study with some evidence of faculty impact.	Quality teaching and support to faculty is a substantial part of self-study with strong evidence of faculty and student impact.

A Note on the Rubric

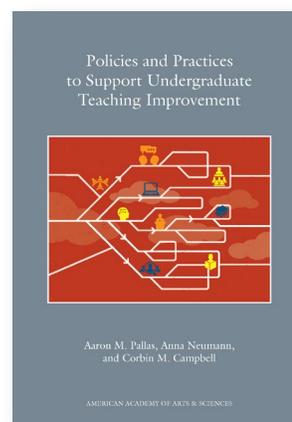
The four-level rubric presented in each domain is aligned to the Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA) published by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2020). The ITA helps an institution determine the degree to which it “provides faculty and staff with regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities that meet their needs and help improve their practices.” The rubric in this toolkit provides more detailed guidance on practices and policies that constitute such learning opportunities, including how to create inclusive learning conditions with culturally responsive pedagogies that promote an equity mindset among faculty and more equitable outcomes among students.



Highlighted “Strategy” Resource

[“Policies and Practices to Support Undergraduate Teaching Improvement”](#)

In this short guide published by the **American Academy of Arts & Sciences**,⁹ scholars Aaron M. Pallas, Anna Neumann and Corbin M. Campbell focus attention on undergraduate teaching. This practical resource describes an institutional context that neglects teaching, followed by recommended policies and practices necessary to make “teaching improvement ... [a] coordinated activity at multiple levels of the academic enterprise.”



Additional “Strategy” Resources

Complete College America is a national advocate for dramatically increasing college completion rates and closing institutional performance gaps. It works with states, systems, institutions and partners to scale highly effective structural reforms and promote policies that improve student success. CCA helps colleges identify gaps, develop action plans and implement proven strategies that transform the student experience.

[“Estimating the Return on Investment \(ROI\) for Instructional Improvement Efforts,”](#) commissioned by the American Council on Education and developed by Ithaka S+R, provides a methodology for cost-benefit analysis of faculty professional learning opportunities.

[“The Future of Undergraduate Education, The Future of America,”](#) a major report published by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, emphasizes the importance of quality instruction.

Phase Two Advisory weaves research, strategy and project management to help practitioners identify the best way to move from idea to action. It has deep expertise in the design and implementation of onboarding and holistic student services redesign, process mapping foregrounding the student experience, workshop facilitation and implementation research.

Student Ready Strategies assists colleges and universities as they make transformative changes to culture, practice and outcomes. Services range from high-level strategic plans that provide a blueprint for long-term success, to tactical business plans that outline a core value proposition and key internal capacities.

[“Why Colleges and Universities Need to Invest in Quality Teaching More than Ever,”](#) published by ACUE, draws together evidence from a variety of fields to show the nexus between teaching, learning and institutional success.

9. American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2017). The Future of Undergraduate Education, The Future of America. Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education.

Domain 2: Equity

SSTF Principles
Addressed:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

At your institution, to what extent is quality instruction promoting greater equity of educational opportunity and achievement?

Historically, the bell curve was a deeply embedded structural model for how we think, talk, make policies and implement practices about students and their achievements. But this orientation is bedeviled with inequity, given that it presumes that some students will do well and some poorly, with students too often distributed by race, gender and socioeconomic status. One recent study, which is part of a larger literature, shows the detrimental effects of these mindsets to Black, Latinx and Indigenous students.¹⁰

Fortunately, higher education is embracing an equity-minded approach — one in which we take greater responsibility for the successful education of each and every student, as individuals. Higher education is looking at more finely disaggregated outcome data by sub-groups of students to direct resources where they are needed most. Without question, there will always be differences in student outcomes based on innate talents, effort and life circumstances. But this growing equity orientation allows, and expects, more students to meet our expectations and without lowering standards.

Research has identified specific mindsets, language and practices that support students who were underserved by their prior educational experiences. Moreover, interrogating our practice can ensure that we don't unintentionally make students feel invisible or turn them off — and out — of college, foreclosing the opportunity we seek to provide.

Once enrolled and engaged, there are evidence-based approaches that make content relevant, deepen learning and spur persistence to course completion and graduation — ensuring the outcomes we seek. Such instructional practices can promote student achievements that are indistinguishable by race, gender or socioeconomic status — the very definition of equity.¹¹

10. Canning, E. A., Muenks, K., Green, D. J., & Murphy, M. C. (2019) STEM faculty who believe ability is fixed have larger racial achievement gaps and inspire less student motivation in their classes. *Science Advances*. American Association for the Advancement of Sciences.

11. Eddy, S. L., & Hogan, K. A., (2017). [Getting Under the Hood: How and for Whom Does Increasing Course Structure Work? CBE—Life Sciences Education, 13\(3\)](#). Lawner, E., & Snow, M. (2020). [Advancing academic equity at Broward College: Improved course completion and passing, Particularly among Pell-eligible and Black students](#). Association of College and University Educators.; Association of College and University Educators. (2018). [More As and fewer Fs across 150 classes, enrolling 4,582 CCSF students, taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty](#).; Association of College and University Educators. (2019a). [Completion gap closed for Black/African American students at Texas Woman's University: Improved course completion for students taught by ACUE-credentialed faculty](#).; Association of College and University Educators. (2020). [Inclusive and Equitable Teaching, ACUE Curriculum Crosswalk](#).

“Equity” Questions to Consider

Leadership

Achieving equity across higher education is an ambitious undertaking that begins with leadership.

- To what extent does your leadership prioritize equity in strategic plans and communications?
- Do finely disaggregated goals exist, against which actions can be taken, to close institutional performance gaps?
- How well are equity goals known and embraced by all stakeholders with planned equity-advancing actions resourced by leadership?
- Is equity of opportunity and achievement for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Pell-eligible and other subgroups of under-served students an institutional imperative?

Language

To what extent does deficit language predominate, referring to underprepared students needing remediation, and allow a pessimistic culture to persist?

- Does such deficit language unintentionally put the burden (and blame) of academic preparation on the student, rather than on prior educational experiences?
- Alternatively, does asset language dominate your policies, practices and campus culture, generating an optimistic culture?
- How intentional and resourced is the campus-wide conversation on issues of equity?
- Who’s in the conversation? Who’s not? How can you bring them in?

Mindset

Our mindset affects our speech, actions and the responses of others. Unintended biases can influence who we expect should do well and who shouldn’t — becoming self-fulfilling and unconscious prophecies. Just as we approach our disciplines with prior assumptions and theoretical orientations, we must approach teaching and students with equitable beliefs about their ability to learn, irrespective of their race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status or gender, as well as the educational opportunity gaps that we have the ability to close.

- To what extent do unintended biases in classes, majors and across the institutions limit expectations for students and their achievements?
- To what extent do you and your colleagues believe in your own agency to impact how students perceive their ability to learn and meet your expectations?
- In what ways is a growth mindset reflected in campus language, practices and policies and in how students are talked about and with, in your everyday interactions?

Professional Development Content

- Are a growth mindset and equity mindedness explicit components of faculty development?
 - So that faculty can deepen their own sense of self-efficacy — their belief about their ability to help each and every student learn?
 - As well as faculty members’ beliefs about their own ability to learn and implement teaching approaches shown to promote a growth mindset among students?

- To what extent does professional development content:
 - Dive deeply into issues of equity, including how to examine and manage one's biases, and identify and avoid micro-aggressions and stereotype threats?
 - Provide faculty with opportunities to develop inclusive approaches, sometimes collectively referred to as culturally responsive pedagogies?
- How widespread is such awareness and practice across your entire faculty, and how do you know?

Feedback and Data

- Is student outcome data gathered and finely disaggregated by student sub-groups, including Black, Latinx, Indigenous and Pell-eligible students, and used to inform equity-promoting actions?
- In what ways do you address these differences in outcomes at your institution, to support the success of students whose outcomes are consistently and systematically less than other subgroups?
- Are gaps between and among student subgroups described in the affirmative, to not blame the students, and take responsibility for closing the differentials?
- Are institutional performance gaps described as the institution's responsibility to close?
- To what extent is student feedback gathered about campus climate above and beyond student academic achievement, rates of course completion, and retention to graduation?
- What is the response to student feedback about campus culture?

“Achieving equity across higher education is an ambitious undertaking that begins with leadership.”



Self-Assessment Rubric: Equity

The following rubric provides guidance on how to promote greater equity of educational opportunity and achievement through quality instruction and high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty. How would you rate your institution?

<p>Equity</p>	<p>The institution ...</p> <p>Helps faculty create a productive mindset and develop practices that create inclusive learning conditions with culturally-responsive pedagogies that promote more equitable student outcomes.</p>	Leadership			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Little to no evidence that equity is prioritized.	Some evidence that equity is prioritized in strategic plan and periodic communications.	Equity prioritized in strategic plan, campus-wide in initiatives, regular communications, and student success services with some evidence of closed institutional performance gaps.	Equity prioritized in strategic plan, regular communications, student success services, course design and delivery, admissions, financial aid and other operations with strong evidence of closed institutional performance gaps.
		Language			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Dominant use of “deficit” language that is problem-focused, e.g., “under-prepared,” “achievement gap” and “remedial” that may unintentionally place blame on the student rather than shared responsibility with the institution.	Mix of deficit and “asset” language that is solution-focused and recognizes institutional responsibilities, e.g., “under-served,” “institutional performance gaps” and “developmental”.	Intentional and institution-wide commitment to transforming language in policies, practices, courses and services to “asset” paradigm.	“Asset” paradigm pervasive in language across the institution.
		Language refers to “all students” without reference to, and may overlook, specific subpopulations or individuals.	Language focuses on all students with some reference to sub-populations and individuals.	Language more precisely speaks to the institutions various subpopulations of students.	Consistent and pervasive use of language that reflects a good understanding of student sub-populations and individuals.

<p>Equity</p>	<p>The institution ...</p> <p>Helps faculty create a productive mindset and develop practices that create inclusive learning conditions with culturally-responsive pedagogies that promote more equitable student outcomes.</p>	Mindset			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Fixed mindset about students and their abilities dominates.	Mix of fixed and growth mindset about student abilities.	Intentional and institution-wide commitment to transforming mindset among administrators, faculty and staff to one of growth and ability.	Growth mindset is pervasive across the institution.
		Content			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff address few to no inclusive teaching practices, growth mindset or equity-mindedness.	Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff address a subset of inclusive teaching practices, growth mindset or equity-mindedness.	Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff address a comprehensive body of inclusive teaching practices, growth mindset and equity-mindedness.	Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff address a comprehensive body of inclusive teaching practices, growth mindset and equity-mindedness, with follow-up mechanisms to support implementation, reflection and refinement of recommended approaches.

Equity	The institution ...	Feedback and Data			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	Helps faculty create a productive mindset and develop practices that create inclusive learning conditions with culturally-responsive pedagogies that promote more equitable student outcomes.	No clear mechanisms to collect student views on issues of diversity, equity or inclusion.	Episodic mechanisms to collect student views on issues of diversity, equity or inclusion.	Anecdotal student evidence suggests a culture that fosters diversity, equity and inclusion.	Students are regularly and systematically asked — and report in high numbers — experiencing an institutional culture that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion.
		No clear mechanisms to understand the extent to which teaching is inclusive, embraces diversity, and promotes more equitable outcomes.	Episodic mechanisms to understand the extent to which teaching is inclusive, embraces diversity, and promotes more equitable outcomes.	Anecdotal evidence suggests that faculty typically implement, reflect on, and adjust their teaching to create inclusive learning environments that promote more equitable outcomes.	Measures are in place to confirm that faculty regularly implement, reflect on and adjust their teaching to create inclusive learning environments that promote more equitable outcomes.
		Summative or formative student outcome data not collected, disaggregated, analyzed or acted on.	Some summative or formative student outcome data not collected, disaggregated, analyzed or acted on.	Summative and formative data are collected, disaggregated, analyzed and acted on by some departments or offices.	Summative and formative data are collected, disaggregated, analyzed and acted on, in real time across the institution.

Highlighted “Equity” Resource

ACUE’s curriculum crosswalk [“Inclusive and Equitable Teaching”](#) demonstrates how evidence-based teaching practices align with the principles of inclusive instruction for equitable outcomes. As this publication notes: “Inclusive teaching practices help all students learn, but are especially beneficial to students ... traditionally underserved by institutions of higher education.” The resource draws on resources from the **Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning at the University of Delaware**, a recipient of the 2018 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award, and the **University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching**, among others.



Additional “Equity” Resources

Student Ready Strategies’ Vanessa Keadle identifies an opportunity to promote greater equity in [“Deficit Language in Course Descriptions,”](#) a Strong Start to Finish “Points of Interest” paper.¹²

The Center for Urban Education’s [“Racial Equity Tools”](#) takes an organizing perspective, recommending flexible approaches with practical activities that support a race-focused continuous improvement process. Four phases of work address “Laying the Groundwork,” “Defining the Problem,” “Creating Solutions through Inquiry” and “Sustaining and Scaling the Work.”

The “Equity Scorecard” helps institutions to reduce higher education gaps for racial and ethnic groups, as described in [“Confronting Equity Issues on Campus: Implementing the Equity Scorecard in Theory and Practice.”](#)¹³

ACUE’s [“Inclusive Teaching Practices Toolkit”](#) is an open-access resource for self-directed use. It recommends ten foundational and evidence-based practices for inclusive teaching that promote more equitable learning. It includes instructional videos, expert interviews, and is aligned to the ACUE’s Effective Practice Framework and credentialing programs.

[“Ensure All Students are Learning”](#) equity tools, published by the Center for Community College Student Engagement, provides “tools, issue briefs and spotlight series documents,” that “explore equity-centered practices that college professionals — including faculty, department chairs, deans and directors — can employ to ensure all students are learning.”

12. Keadle, V. (2020). Deficit Language in Course Descriptions. Strong Start to Finish.

13. Bensimon, E. M., & Malcom, L. E. (Eds.) (2012). Confronting equity issues on campus: Implementing the equity scorecard in theory and practice. Sterling: Stylus Publishing.

Domain 3: Approach

SSTF Principles
Addressed:
2, 3, 5, 7

At your institution, to what extent do faculty participate in regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities that promote student success and equity? In other words, how comprehensive is your approach to faculty support and development?

For too long, faculty have been asked to teach every student well, including students underserved in their prior education, and prepare them to graduate as contributing members of society — with nary any training in effective instruction.

Without question, America's 1.5 million professors are experts in their fields. The vast majority of college educators, though, have not been equipped to use evidence-based teaching practices. That said, when faculty use the evidence-based skills that empower their own craft, we can expect faculty to empower students to reach their full potential.

Approach Questions to Consider

Comprehensiveness

Effective teaching, like other highly skilled professions, requires a range of practices that are integrated with sophistication. Yet too often, professional learning opportunities address only a topic here or a hot-button issue there, when a comprehensive approach is necessary.

- Are your professional development opportunities comprehensive?
 - Do they help faculty develop a body of evidence-based practices necessary for both effective and inclusive teaching that promote stronger and more equitable student outcomes?
 - Do they span across areas of course design, active learning, inclusivity, assessment and higher order thinking?
- On this foundation of shared, proven practice, do your faculty members have opportunities to dive deeper into areas of pedagogical specialization, to teach online or with discipline-specific approaches?

Professional Development Content

- To what degree is the professional development evidence-based?
- How practical is the guidance of your professional development offerings?
 - Does it lean toward the theoretical, leaving educators with a clear sense that something is important — like equity — without answering “how” to achieve it?
 - Or does professional learning also include specific practices that answer the question: “How do I do it?”

- Are a variety of practices recommended, to allow faculty to choose what to implement based on their context, their students and their course learning objectives?

Frequency

Developing new skills takes time, practice and consistent effort. The regularity with which your institution expects and supports professional development is also a reflection of priorities.

- To what extent are professional learning opportunities episodic and one-off, such as a professional development weekend?
- Or are opportunities frequent, such as week-to-week and month-to-month, so that evidence-based practices become part of one's daily practice?

Delivery

Some delivery methods for professional development and training are more effective than others, as measured by the learning and implementation of new practices. In your offerings:

- Are opportunities for professional learning job-embedded and relevant to a faculty member's current context?
- Do they include pre- and in-service elements, treating the development of one's practice as a career-long endeavor?
- Are there opportunities for collaboration with colleagues?
- Are offerings facilitated by an expert or coach who provides real time feedback?
- Do they offer choices of evidence-based practices so faculty members can decide what will work best in a particular context, and to deepen motivation?
- Is implementation required, to ensure that best-practices are put into use?
- Do offerings include structured reflection for faculty to self-assess what went well, what refinements to make going forward, and to deepen their own learning?

Scale

- To what extent are professional development efforts offered at scale?
 - Do only interested faculty take advantage of professional learning opportunities?
 - Or are offerings provided at sufficient scale, and with sufficient encouragement or requirement, to engage all faculty and ensure evidence-based instruction for all students, campus-wide?

Self-Assessment Rubric: Approach

The following rubric provides guidance on how to assess the strength of your approach to faculty support and development, regarding the extent to which faculty participate in regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities that promote student success and equity. How would you rate your institution?

Approach	The institution ... Implements regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty and staff that promote student success and equity.	Content			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Theoretical, absent of practical takeaways, with little-to-no basis in evidence.	Generic, with some practical takeaways and some basis in evidence.	Practical with a good basis in evidence.	Specific, contextualized to one’s students, with a strong basis in evidence.
		Comprehensiveness			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Single-topic, addressing a core instructional concept.	Subset of core, evidence-based instructional competencies necessary to create the conditions for stronger, more equitable student outcomes.	Comprehensive body of evidence-based instructional competencies necessary to create the conditions for stronger, more equitable student outcomes.	Comprehensive body of evidence-based instructional competencies necessary to create the conditions for stronger, more equitable student outcomes with follow on support for continuous development in areas of specialization (e.g., online instruction, discipline-specific strategies/pedagogical content knowledge.
		Frequency			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Episodic, one-off.	Short duration.	Longer duration.	Regular and recurring.

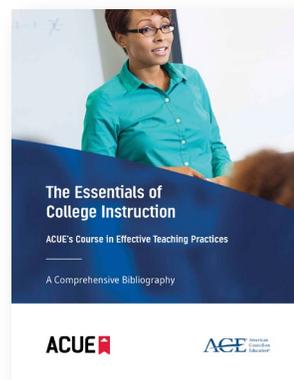
Approach	The institution ...	Delivery			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	Implements regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities for faculty and staff that promote student success and equity.	Workshops or webinars, consultations.	Workshops or webinars, consultations, short duration courses/trainings.	Workshops or webinars, consultations, short duration online and in-person courses/trainings.	Workshops or webinars, consultations, short and long duration online and in-person courses/trainings.
		Pre-service.	Pre-service or in-service.	Pre-service and job-embedded in-service.	Pre-service and job-embedded in-service.
		Little to no collaboration with colleagues.	Some collaboration with colleagues.	Collaboration with colleagues within and across departments.	Collaboration with colleagues within and across departments with in-depth discipline specific discussion and action.
		Unfacilitated.	Self/group facilitated.	Peer facilitated.	Expert facilitated.
		Few if any practical teaching approaches recommended.	Some practical teaching practices recommended.	Choice of recommended teaching practices.	Choice of recommended teaching practices relevant to large and small classes, in-person, online and hybrid settings.
		Implementation suggested.	Implementation encouraged.	Implementation required.	Implementation and self-reflection required.
		Scale			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
Few (~2% or less of faculty engaged).	Some (3% to 16% of faculty engaged).	Many (17% to 84% of faculty engaged).	Most (85% to 100% of faculty engaged).		

Highlighted “Approach” Resource

[ACUE’s Effective Practice Framework](#)[©] identifies 25 core teaching competencies, organized into five major areas of practice, that constitute the evidence-based teaching approaches that every professor should possess, regardless of discipline or type of institution. These five areas help professors:

- **Design an effective course**, with approaches for redesigning courses and syllabi, to better define and achieve desired student outcomes.
- **Establish a productive learning environment**, with practices that build relationships, embrace diversity, help students persist and create an environment that supports learning.
- **Use active learning strategies** that promote and leverage active learning, and to plan and facilitate engaging discussions.
- **Promote higher order thinking**, with practices that deepen learning and help students take greater ownership of their studies.
- **Assess in ways that inform instruction and promote learning**, with methods of formative and summative assessment to promote learning and refine teaching.

The Framework is steeped in an asset-based philosophy that values students’ prior knowledge and experiences. It was developed in collaboration with professors, faculty developers, and experts in teaching and learning. The Framework is supported by more than 300 citations published in [“The Essentials of College Instruction, A Comprehensive Bibliography”](#)¹⁴ and was independently endorsed by the **American Council on Education**.¹⁵



Additional “Approach” Resources

In [“Improving Teaching Through Reflection”](#),¹⁶ Catherine Haras, Senior Director of the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning at CSU Los Angeles, reviews key research on meta-cognition. Through her center’s offerings, she’s found that “ongoing reflection is seminal to faculty professional development.”

The podcast [“Effective Professional Development for Faculty Engaged in Developmental Education Reform”](#),¹⁷ features SUNY’s Jennifer Miller on faculty engagement.

Motivate Lab connects rigorous motivation research to professional development. It supports partners interested in leveraging the power of learning mindsets to improve academic outcomes, particularly for students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds.

[“Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors”](#),¹⁸ by Linda Nilson, now in its fourth edition, remains an indispensable guide full of practical advice.

14. Sekel, J. C. (2018, July). The essentials of college instruction: A comprehensive bibliography. Association of College and University Educators.

15. American Council on Education. (n.d.). Contributors to ACE’s Teaching and Learning Scholarship. [Blog post].

16. Haras, C. (2018). Improving Teaching Through Reflection. Association of College and University Educators.

17. 2020

18. Nilson, L. B.. (2016). Teaching at its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors. John Wiley and Sons.

Domain 4: Evaluation

SSTF Principles
Addressed:
6

At your institution, to what extent are professional learning efforts evaluated to determine what faculty have learned, how they are changing their teaching, and the consequent impact on student success and equity?

“How do we know?” It’s perhaps the oldest question of the academe. On what basis do our disciplines stand? And how do we know if our students have mastered the knowledge, skills and dispositions we believe important?

It’s fair to ask the same question of efforts to improve the quality of instruction to achieve stronger student outcomes, that are indistinguishable by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status or gender — our definition of equity.

Over the history of college teaching, there is a long tradition of believing that quality instruction is too personal and idiosyncratic to evaluate and measure.¹⁹ This belief persists despite decades of evidence that has identified practices associated with stronger and more equitable student engagement, persistence, learning and course completion. It can be measured.

“Evaluation” Questions to Consider

Faculty Data

- As you examine your professional development efforts, what kind of data do you collect from faculty?
- Above and beyond attendance at professional development activities, how do you ascertain what faculty are learning and implementing?
- Are data self-reported or generated by program analytics, such as through a learning management system? Or gathered through peer observation?

Student Data

- Are students taught by faculty who are developing their teaching practice more engaged in their studies?
- What changes do you see in grades and rates of course completion? Or other authentic measures of learning, such as writing samples?
- To what extent are these data analyzed against comparison data from students taught by similarly situated faculty who have not yet engaged in faculty development activities?

19. [Zimmerman, J. \(2020\). The Amateur Hour, A History of College Teaching in America. Johns Hopkins University Press.](#)

- Are observed differences meaningful? Do tests of statistical significance confirm that the observed differences are not random, but likely associated with quality instruction?
- Are outcomes finely disaggregated by student sub-group, including Black, Latinx, Indigenous and Pell-eligible students, to determine if equity goals are being advanced?

Institutional Data

- Among students taught by faculty who are developing their teaching practice, does better teaching translate into higher rates of retention and program completion?
- If so, and in addition to improved educational outcomes, what is the financial return on investment in faculty and quality instruction?
- Can you discern benefits to your institution's reputation, number of student applications, and acceptance rate due to investment in — and being known for — quality teaching?

Collection Methods and Analyses

- What is the status of your data infrastructure? For example, do you have ready access to course rosters, the assigned instructor and student outcome data?
- Are you able to gather necessary descriptive statistics, such as student and faculty demographics? Are comparison data available for analytical statistics?
- Can faculty and student data be readily combined to make meaningful and disaggregated inferences about the effects of faculty professional development on student outcomes?

“Above and beyond attendance at professional development activities, how do you ascertain what faculty are learning and implementing?”



Self-Assessment Rubric: Evaluation

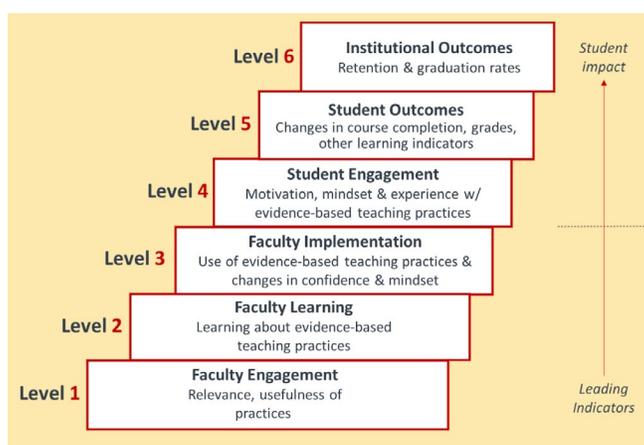
The following rubric provides guidance on how to assess the strength of your assessment of professional development activities, the impact of what faculty learn and do, and the consequent impacts on student success and equity. How would you rate your institution?

Evaluation	The institution ... Evaluates the impact of high-quality professional learning opportunities on faculty and staff, changes in their teaching practices, and the consequent impact on student success and equity.	Faculty Data			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Attendance records, feedback satisfaction surveys.	Attendance records, feedback satisfaction surveys.	Attendance records, feedback satisfaction surveys.	Attendance records, feedback satisfaction surveys.
			Measures of faculty engagement in their own learning.	Measures of faculty engagement in their own learning.	Measures of faculty engagement in their own learning.
				Measures of evidence-based and equity-promoting teaching practices learned.	Measures of evidence-based and equity-promoting teaching practices learned and implemented.
		Student Data			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
				Level of student engagement in their learning, as a result of faculty using evidence-based teaching practices, as determined through course evaluations and surveys.	Level of student engagement in their learning, as a result of faculty using evidence-based teaching practices, as determined through course evaluations and surveys.
				Grades.	Grades. Authentic work product and indicators of learning. Course completion rates.

Evaluation	The institution ... Evaluates the impact of high-quality professional learning opportunities on faculty and staff, changes in their teaching practices, and the consequent impact on student success and equity.	Institutional Data			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
					Recruitment and yield rates. Retention rates. Graduation rates. Financial ROI analysis. Reputational measures.
		Collection Methods and Analyses			
		1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		Self-reporting.	Self-reporting.	Self-reporting.	Self-reporting.
				Course/training program analytics (e.g., LMS data).	Course/training program analytics (e.g., LMS data).
				Peer feedback.	Peer observation and feedback by a trained colleague. Written reflections on teaching, teaching journals.
		Little to no analysis.	Aggregated and descriptive statistics.	Aggregated and descriptive statistics.	Aggregated and descriptive statistics.
				Analytical statistics.	Analytical statistics. Longitudinal or cross-sectional comparison data.

Highlighted “Evaluation” Resource

ACUE’s six-level logic model is widely used to guide the evaluation of faculty development programs. The model describes changes among faculty and students in a sequence of leading and lagging indicators. This approach was informed by the work of Donald Kirkpatrick and James Kirkpatrick²⁰ to assess industry training and Thomas Guskey’s²¹ and Susan Hines’²² application to professional development. A detailed explanation of the model can be found in **“Connecting the Dots: A Proposed Accountability Method for Evaluating the Efficacy of Faculty Development and Its Impact on Student Outcomes.”**²³



Additional “Evaluation” Resources

Numerous studies that used this logic model were recently reviewed in **“Our ‘Directive’: Quality Teaching and Learning,”**²⁴ in **Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning.**

“Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence,”²⁵ by Andrea Beach and colleagues, examines the field of faculty professional development and emphasizes the value of data and evaluation.

The American Council on Education has published **“Unpacking Relationships: Instruction and Student Outcomes,”** which includes insights on effective teaching regarding the relationship between instruction and student outcomes²⁶ and **“Institutional Commitment to Teaching Excellence: Assessing the Impacts and Outcomes of Faculty Development.”**²⁷

20. Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2007). Implementing the four levels: A practical guide for effective evaluation of training programs. Berrett-Koehler.

21. Guskey, T. R. (2000). Evaluating professional development. Corwin Press.

22. Hines, S. R. (2011). How to evaluate the impact of faculty development programs [White paper]. Magna.

23. MacCormack, P., Snow, M., Gyurko, J., & Sekel, J. C. (2018). Connecting the dots: A proposed accountability method for evaluating the efficacy of faculty development and its impact on student outcomes. Association of College and University Educators.

24. Gyurko, J., & Snow, M. (2020). Our “Directive”: Quality Teaching and Learning. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 52:5, 6–16.

25. Beach, A. L., Sorcinelli, M. D., Austin, A. E., & Rivard, J. K. (2016). Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence: Current Practices, Future Imperatives. Stylus Publishing.

26. Jankowski, N. (2017). Unpacking Relationships: Instruction and Student Outcomes. American Council on Education.

27. Haras, C., Taylor, S. C., Sorcinelli, M.D., & von Hoene, L. (2017). Institutional Commitment to Teaching Excellence: Assessing the Impacts and Outcomes of Faculty Development. American Council on Education.

Domain 5: Culture

SSTF Principles
Addressed:
7

At your institution, to what extent are communications, incentives and other culture-building activities generating faculty and staff enthusiasm — and meaningful participation in — high-quality learning opportunities?

The culture of an institution can accelerate — or bring to a screeching halt — efforts to make evidence-based instruction central to any student success strategy.

The change we seek — to ensure that every student benefits from high-quality instruction — is an iterative process. New professional development efforts can create the proof of practice necessary for adoption at scale. Positive momentum around these activities can grow a culture that prizes and rewards great teaching, just as that culture grows momentum to formalize this work in norms, practices and policies. This dynamic conception of change imagines a virtuous cycle in which strategy, equity, approach, evaluation and culture reinforce one another, as elaborated in Measures of Institutional Cultural Change (below).

“Culture” Questions to Consider

Communications

- As you grow a culture that prizes the work of faculty and quality instruction, to what extent are you communicating — and celebrating — these efforts?
- Do internal communications include newsletters, special announcements and other recognitions?
- Are efforts and participating faculty highlighted externally in alumni newsletters, press releases and produced media?
- How can you give quality teaching the same stature as other important initiatives that you regularly promote?

Incentives

- What incentives, both intrinsic and extrinsic, can you bring to bear to deepen faculty interest and motivation?
 - Are financial incentives, such as stipends or increases in base salary, appropriate to institutional norms and in your financial plan?
 - Do you take into account professional considerations, such as changes in title, consideration as part of promotion and tenure (for full-time faculty) or rehire (for part-time faculty)?
 - How does a faculty member’s investment of time and energy into their teaching compare to the incentives you’ve set for time spent on research? Or institutional service? Are they comparable? Do they encourage the professional behaviors you seek?

Expectations

- What are your explicit expectations of faculty vis-à-vis their teaching abilities and professional development?
 - If professional development is voluntary, how will you marshal other cultural forces to grow these efforts to scale?
 - Can you make expectations more explicit, even required, as part of employment offers and contracts?

“What incentives, both intrinsic and extrinsic, can you bring to bear to deepen faculty interest and motivation?”



Self-Assessment Rubric: Culture

The following rubric provides guidance on how to assess the extent to which communications, incentives and other culture-building activities generate faculty and staff enthusiasm — and meaningful participation in — high-quality learning opportunities. How would you rate your institution?

<p>Culture</p> <p>The institution ...</p> <p>Through its leadership, communications, recognitions, and a variety of formal and informal incentives, engages faculty within an institutional culture that values and prioritizes meaningful engagement in high-quality learning opportunities.</p>	Communications			
	1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	Sporadic communications, professional development/training recruitment notices.	One-off communications drafted as needed, to support faculty recruitment for professional development and training opportunities.	Modest communications plan that references leadership support, some faculty recognitions, internal news story or external press release, in support of faculty recruitment, participation and completion.	Fully developed internal and external communications plan to support faculty development and related efforts, including: formal announcement/messages from leadership (president/provost) to institutional community, campus news stories, student newspaper articles, congratulatory emails, social media spotlights, formal recognitions through virtual or in-person events and/or digital/print publications, earned, owned and paid media.
	Incentives			
	1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	<i>Extrinsic only</i> Stipends, job requirement.	<i>Extrinsic</i> Stipends, job requirement.	<i>Extrinsic & Intrinsic</i> Stipends, job requirement. Release time, raise in base pay, professional development credits.	<i>Extrinsic & Intrinsic</i> Carefully designed mix of extrinsic and intrinsic incentives, specific to campus culture and faculty interests, to maximize interest and participation in continuous improvement of teaching practices.

<p>Culture</p> <p>The institution ...</p> <p>Through its leadership, communications, recognitions, and a variety of formal and informal incentives, engages faculty within an institutional culture that values and prioritizes meaningful engagement in high-quality learning opportunities.</p>	Incentives			
	1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
		<p><i>Intrinsic</i></p> <p>Recognitions, special professional designations, related professional opportunities.</p>	<p><i>Intrinsic</i></p> <p>Recognitions, special professional designations, related professional opportunities, and additional offerings aligned to faculty interests and cultural expectations.</p>	
	Expectations			
	1 – Nascent	2 – Emerging	3 – Developing	4 – Embedded
	Voluntary and self-directed.	Voluntary and self-directed.	Participation is an expectation of employment.	Participation is a condition of employment in hiring agreement or collectively bargained agreement.
		Professional learning opportunities are encouraged by provost, deans, department chairs and colleagues.	Faculty involvement and active engagement is coordinated as part of department, school or institution-wide student success efforts.	Faculty involvement and active engagement is coordinated as part of department, school or institution-wide student success efforts and formal job responsibilities.
			Part of promotion and tenure considerations.	Meaningful element of promotion and tenure considerations.
				Continuing education required.

Highlighted “Evaluation” Resource

[“Culture Change 101: The Most Important Lessons We’ve Learned,”](#) was published by Sova in its on-going support of institutions committed to scaling student-focused, equity-grounded reform of institutional policies and practices. It includes key tips and tactics for culture building, presented in a lessons learned format. Derived from work with dozens of institutions, and delivered as part of on-going technical assistance to institutions in California and elsewhere, the content is designed for individual reflection, group deliberation, implementation planning, and continuous improvement of culture-building work.

Additional “Culture” Resources

In **“The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education,”**²⁸ scholars Adrianna Kezar and Peter D. Eckel examine the impact of institutional culture on the change process in colleges and universities. Evidence, gathered through an ethnographic approach and understood through a two-tiered cultural framework, suggests that campuses should conduct audits of their institutional culture before engaging in the change process.

Ron Heifetz and colleagues’ **“The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World,”** remains a classic resource, full of hands-on, practical guidance told through stories, tools, diagrams, cases and worksheets to help leaders take colleagues outside their comfort zones to assess and address the toughest challenges.

Achieving the Dream’s [Teaching & Learning Toolkit: A Research-Based Guide to Building a Culture of Teaching & Learning Excellence](#) is grounded in research and informed by the work of its network colleges. The guide is designed to support college teams in building institutional capacity in teaching and learning.

[Teaching in Higher Ed](#) is a weekly podcast hosted by **Bonni Stachowiak** of Vanguard University. It offers faculty a running conversation with some of the world’s leading teaching and learning experts. Related conversations can be found at [Tea for Teaching](#), a podcast hosted by John Kane and Rebecca Mushtare out of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at the State University of New York at Oswego.

The recorded webinar, [Designing High-Impact Practices for Equity and Impact in New Contexts](#), from AAC&U, discusses strategies for supporting student success and advancing equity in new contexts.

28. Kezar, A., & Eckel, P. D. (2002). The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education. [The Journal of Higher Education](#).

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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Dr. Gyurko 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. Gyurko 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, Gyurko 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. Gyurko 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.

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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

Executive Director of Strategic Communications, ACUE

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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Student Success
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