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## Faculty & Staff: A Toolkit for Mid-Level Managers


# Policy Typology

This policy typology is designed to help mid-level managers evaluate institutional policies, identify areas for improvement, and make the case for transformation.

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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.



## Policy Typology

In institutions of higher education, policy is used to incentivize desired outcomes, shape individual and collective behavior, and establish transparent guidelines for processes and practices. Mid-level managers often find themselves in the challenging position of being responsible for leading implementation of policies without having been a part of the decision-making process that led to their adoption, and without the formal authority to mandate quality implementation. One essential area of leadership development for mid-level managers is to recognize that they do have the power to influence the policies that are established at higher levels in the institution, system or state. When mid-level managers own their power to influence policy, they also expand their capacity to support quality implementation.

Through a set of guiding questions and recommended action areas, this policy typology is designed to help mid-level managers evaluate institutional policies, identify areas for improvement, and make the case for transformation.

Policy Evaluation and Change Steps	Guiding Questions	Recommended Action Areas
<p><b>1. Evaluating policy problems</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> Do current student outcomes align with the institution's strategic goals? Are there particular policies at the state, system or institutional levels that are driving misalignment, or is the problem driven by practice or implementation challenges?</p> <p><b>B)</b> What is the scope of the problem? Do policies support equitable outcomes for all student groups, disaggregated by race, sex, and income?</p>	<p><b>A)</b> Identify specific examples of policy in code, rule or regulation that are negatively impacting student success.</p> <p><b>B)</b> Gather student-level data, disaggregated by race, sex, income, age and program of study to identify the numbers and proportions of student groups affected by the policy.</p>

Policy Evaluation and Change Steps	Guiding Questions	Recommended Action Areas
<p><b>2.</b>  <b>Root cause and policy analysis – identifying areas for improvement</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> Which stakeholder groups are impacted by, or have the jurisdiction to change, the policy problems that have been identified? What is the optimal method and timing for engaging these groups to understand their perspectives and garner support for change?</p> <p><b>B)</b> Which student-level data points and evidence-based practices most effectively demonstrate the problem? Are systems in place to collect and analyze that data? Are there peer examples/case studies that help identify root challenges in policy?</p>	<p><b>A)</b> Actively communicate with mid-level managers across the institution to identify stakeholders and develop a plan for communication, engagement and mobilization.</p> <p><b>B)</b> Coordinate with institutional research staff and other stakeholders to establish metrics for describing the impact of the policy on student outcomes with a specific focus on aspects of policy that are problematic. Determine if current infrastructure is set up to collect relevant data or if new collection processes are required.</p>
<p><b>3.</b>  <b>Advocating for change</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> What is the highest level of decision-making authority needed to approve policy changes?</p> <p><b>B)</b> Which arguments would be most persuasive to these decision-makers?</p> <p><b>C)</b> Do examples of policy solutions exist in other institutions or states? How can lessons from those policies be applied to the context of our institution?</p>	<p><b>A)</b> Determine if the desired policy change can occur at the department, committee, institution, system or state levels. Learn the processes and deadlines for how the governing body approves changes, and plan backward from those parameters.</p> <p><b>B)</b> Conduct research on the decision-makers' previous actions and strategic goals to frame the imperative for change in terms of their priorities. Provide information to senior leaders of the problems, known to frontline staff and faculty, that might escape policy deliberations at senior levels.</p> <p><b>C)</b> Provide a framework for solution-oriented action by deriving examples of policy reforms from other states, systems and institutions. Identify resources to support effective policy adoption.</p>

### Policy Typology example using a placement policy

Below you will find an example from Texas with content filled in so you can see how the rubric can be used.

Policy development process	Guiding Questions and Answers	Recommended Action Areas
<p><b>1. Evaluating policy problems</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> Do current student outcomes align with the institution’s strategic goals? Is there a particular policy that is driving this misalignment, or is the problem driven by practice or implementation challenges?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, 60% of our incoming students are assigned to developmental math. Very few of these students ever complete a gateway math course, much less a degree or credential.</li> <li>• The policy driver is the state-level requirement that placement be based solely on standardized test scores.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> What is the scope of the problem? Do policies support equitable outcomes for all student groups, disaggregated by race, sex and income?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students are affected by placement policy, but not all student groups are affected equally. Policies based on standardized test scores, by definition, privilege students who are white, Asian, and from middle and upper-income families.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A)</b> Identify specific examples of policy in code, rule or regulation that are negatively impacting student success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The Texas Success Initiative</a> is a state-legislated program to improve student success in college that relies on the use of a high-stakes placement test to determine student “readiness” for college.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> Gather student-level data, disaggregated by race, sex, income, age and program of study to identify the numbers and proportions of student groups affected by the policy.</p>

Policy development process	Guiding Questions and Answers	Recommended Action Areas
<p><b>2. Identifying areas for improvement</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> Which stakeholder groups are impacted by the policy problem? What is the optimal method and timing for engaging these groups to understand their perspectives and garner support for change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math faculty who teach developmental and gateway courses, advisors.</li> <li>• Existing meeting structures and additional professional learning opportunities woven throughout the academic year.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> Which student-level data points most effectively demonstrate the problem? Are systems in place to collect and analyze that data?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of students placed into developmental math, disaggregated by race, sex, income, age and program of study.</li> <li>• The rates at which various student groups complete gateway math courses and continue to advance toward transfer and/or degree completion.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A)</b> Actively communicate with mid-level managers across the institution to identify stakeholders, and develop a plan for communication, engagement and mobilization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with deans and chairs to engage in discussion on the policy topic during committee meetings or other engagement opportunities in the department.</li> <li>• Create protocols for collecting input from a variety of stakeholders to create a shared understanding of the problem, division of responsibilities, and a plan for coordinated action.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> Coordinate with institutional research staff and other stakeholders to establish metrics for describing the impact of the policy on student outcomes. Determine if current infrastructure is set up to collect relevant data or if new collection processes are required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine if these data are already regularly reported to senior leaders of the state THECB. Establish common metrics for evaluating problematic aspects of the policy and impacting policy change over time.</li> </ul>

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Policy development process	Guiding Questions and Answers	Recommended Action Areas
<p><b>3. Advocating for change</b></p>	<p><b>A)</b> What is the highest level of decision-making authority needed to approve policy changes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THECB could change policy through the rulemaking process. However, they have historically relied on the legislature to mandate significant changes.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> Which arguments would be most persuasive to these decision-makers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational equity and student success.</li> <li>• 60x30TX strategic plan.</li> <li>• Cost savings for students and taxpayers.</li> </ul> <p><b>C)</b> Do examples of policy solutions exist in other institutions or states? How can lessons from those policies be applied to the context of our institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant policy changes on placement are occurring in dozens of states and systems of higher education. These changes have been catalyzed by an overwhelming amount of evidence about the efficacy of using HS GPA to predict postsecondary outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A)</b> Determine if the desired policy change can occur at the department, committee, institution, system or state levels. Learn the processes and deadlines for how the governing body approves changes, and plan backward from those parameters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, THECB has offered flexibility to IHEs to place students using multiple measures of readiness, instead of on standardized test scores. In addition, there will be an opportunity to advocate for making these exceptions permanent during the anticipated rulemaking process at the end of August 2020.</li> </ul> <p><b>B)</b> Conduct research on the decision-makers' previous actions and strategic goals to frame the imperative for change in terms of their priorities. Provide information to senior leaders of the problems, known to frontline staff and faculty, that might escape policy deliberations at senior levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze longitudinal student data on the inequitable impacts of current placement policy.</li> <li>• Connect estimates for improved student success rates with the 60x30TX plan.</li> <li>• Analyze financial data, including expected revenue from improved retention and completion.</li> </ul> <p><b>C)</b> Provide a framework for solution-oriented action by deriving examples of policy changes from other states, systems and institutions. Identify resources to support effective policy adoption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather reports and resources to support institutional implementation decisions. CCRC, MDRC, CAPR, CAP, RP Group and many other organizations have deep expertise in this area.</li> </ul>

# About This Toolkit

This toolkit was conceived by the Dana Center and Sova with the goal of bringing together leading lessons and insights gleaned by these organizations over the years through direct work supporting hundreds of institutions committed to scaling ambitious, equity-grounded student success reforms. Based on our combined insights, we built this toolkit to provide institutions and systems with practical resources to help mid-level managers become more effective leaders of complex change, and to help inform institutional and system leaders tasked with providing professional development for mid-level managers.

## Toolkit authors

### Martha Ellis

Martha M. Ellis, Ph.D. is president of Mellis LLC, a consulting firm bringing deep experience, substantive knowledge, and research-based innovation to leaders as they confront the challenges and opportunities facing higher education today and in the future. She is the senior pathways lead for the Texas Success Center, Achieving the Dream Leadership Coach, and professor in residence at the University of Texas at Austin.

Previously, Martha was managing director for the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to joining the Dana Center, Martha was associate vice chancellor of Academic Affairs for the University of Texas System. She has 35 years of experience in universities and community colleges in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, including two college presidencies, provost, chief information officer, graduate and undergraduate dean, and faculty member positions. Martha has won numerous teaching awards, has written scholarly publications and is an invited presenter at national conferences. She was recognized by the U. S. Congress and Texas House of Representatives for her leadership in higher education.

### Alison Kadlec

Alison 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.



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## About Strong Start to Finish

Strong Start to Finish is a network of policy and research partners, institution and systems leaders, and foundations advancing system reforms in developmental education, so every student can succeed in their first year of college. In particular, we support college success for Black, Brown, Asian American, Indigenous students, adult learners, and students with low incomes, who have been underserved by the education system for too long. We work to scale the use of proven, proactive strategies that remove barriers that typically impede these students from earning essential college credits in English and Math courses in their first year. Education Commission of the States is the host of the Strong Start to Finish network.







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