

PLANNING WORKBOOK

FACULTY-STUDENT DIALOGUES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Working Together for Community College Student Success

Version 2



Achieving the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

 PUBLIC AGENDA

Faculty-Student Dialogues for Student Success

Planning Workbook

This workbook is designed to help you implement a series of faculty-student dialogues at your college. It contains information about how to plan and organize the sessions, strategies to train moderators and recorders for the sessions, guides to help them lead each session and some suggestions for how to communicate what you learn and to incorporate it into your Achieving the Dream (ATD) strategies. Materials such as sample training agendas, moderator guides and evaluations are attached in five appendices.

The workbook is organized into three sections:

- **Section 1:** Faculty-Student Dialogues—
An Innovative and Tested
Engagement Strategy
Page 3

- **Section 2:** How to Plan and Organize
the Dialogues
Page 7

- **Section 3:** Results and
Recommendations from
ATD Colleges
Page 16

- **Appendices** Page 18

SECTION 1:

Faculty-Student Dialogues— An Innovative and Tested Engagement Strategy

About the Process

There are a number of different ways Achieving the Dream (ATD) colleges have worked to engage faculty and students and, in many cases, staff in their student success efforts and interventions. (See the Field Guide and Faculty Engagement Mini Guide located on the ATD website, www.achievingthedream.org, for specific examples.) In 2007–2008, Public Agenda worked with four colleges to develop and refine one such method of engaging faculty and students in problem solving and developing solutions to help more students succeed. The method was a series of faculty-student dialogues that brought together faculty, students and some staff at three separate two-hour meetings to discuss obstacles to student success and brainstorm and prioritize solutions to those obstacles.

The idea for the dialogues came out of focus group research that indicated that when faculty and students were combined in carefully designed dialogue groups, both faculty and students moved more quickly beyond the kinds of defeatist attitudes and blaming of each other that we often observed when we spoke to each group separately. Both faculty and students began to embrace the joint challenge of promoting greater student success more readily and enthusiastically.

As a result, we designed a dialogue process to help participants and college leaders deepen their understanding of existing obstacles to student success, begin to identify solutions and plant seeds of institutional and attitudinal change.

The experiences of our pilot colleges (see page 6) demonstrate that these dialogue groups can:

- ▶ Help shift attitudes among students and faculty toward each other and the institution by making them more positive, understanding, hopeful and helpful.
- ▶ Help solve real challenges to student learning. Nobody has more hands-on knowledge and experience about what does and doesn't work for students than faculty and students themselves.
- ▶ Help colleges gain valuable insight into their ATD planning and strategizing—whether they are in the planning or the implementation stage.

Broad-Based Engagement as Critical Component of ATD Planning and Implementation

Meaningful stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of ATD at every institution. Broad-based support for the college's student success agenda and institutional change efforts requires not just the top-down involvement of college leadership, but the bottom-up support and engagement of faculty, staff, students and, in many cases, community members and others.

Engaging diverse stakeholders can be as important during the planning phase of any new initiative as it is during implementation. In other words, there's rarely a bad time to engage the campus community in your efforts, and in many cases earlier is better than later; however, even if you are well into your

Faculty-Student Dialogues— An Innovative and Tested Engagement Strategy

dialogue planning process, there's a place for engagement. Ideally, you will make an effort to engage stakeholders from the beginning and through to the end of your ATD work.

Engaging faculty and staff, the student body, community leaders and the broader public as you seek to improve outcomes for underserved students can help your efforts in critical ways.

During Planning

- ▶ Engaging these groups early on makes it more likely that important actors will view your plans as legitimate and be willing to actively support it later, when you are putting it into effect.
- ▶ Well-designed input by critical stakeholders such as students and faculty (and not just a single volunteer on a committee, but truly representative groups) can help you significantly improve your plans. This is because the people closest to the action—students, faculty and those who can immediately affect their performance—have a hands-on, in-the-trenches knowledge that is invaluable.
- ▶ Because the goal is to increase student success, particularly for those in groups that have been historically underserved by higher education, bringing these students and their teachers into the planning process is liable to pay off in a more fine-tuned and effective set of initiatives. Such input minimizes the danger of failing to take some important variable into account as you devise your concrete plans. It will also give you many clues as to the best way to communicate your initiative when the time comes.

- ▶ In a related vein, engaging stakeholders early on can help community colleges avoid unexpected backlashes that can result in significant setbacks. How many times have we seen well-meaning initiatives run up against a brick wall of resistance that could have been avoided through small, acceptable adjustments in substance or communications—had we only realized? Well-designed stakeholder engagement can bring that advance intelligence to the fore.

During Implementation

When done skillfully, involving stakeholders in implementing institutional change minimizes resistance and fosters a sense of shared responsibility. It can also create **DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP** that complements leadership from the ATD core and data teams and can help maintain momentum in the face of presidential transitions and other potential **DERAILERS**.

- ▶ **CHECKING IN** with faculty and students along the way can give you intelligence about what is working and what plans may need midcourse adjustments.
- ▶ Working collaboratively to enhance student success can be a powerful form of professional development for faculty and staff.

Faculty-Student Dialogues— An Innovative and Tested Engagement Strategy

The Particular Importance of Engaging Faculty and Students

Evaluation research on ATD indicates that colleges that are successful in engaging faculty are able to make much faster progress on their success agenda than are those where faculty engagement is limited. Faculty are well positioned to know what works to improve student success, and no other group is better able to design and implement innovations to help students reach their goals.

Just as critical are students themselves. Often assumed to be the somewhat passive recipients of interventions designed by others to help them, students in fact can play a real role in the development of success strategies and can offer important insights into their own experience on and off campus.

The Structure of the Dialogue Process

This guide provides instructions for a particular faculty-student dialogue process that was tested with several Achieving the Dream colleges. It involves the following elements:

- ▶ Dialogue groups of about a dozen each, comprised of approximately equal parts full-time faculty, part-time faculty, younger students and older students.
- ▶ Trained moderators and recorders. In many cases, these roles have been filled by a faculty-student team.
- ▶ Three dialogue sessions of about two-hours each, which take place on a weekly or every-other-week schedule. Each session is devoted to a particular theme, specifically:
 - Obstacles to student success
 - Exploring data and potential solutions
 - Setting priorities for action
- ▶ A report to college leadership on the results of the dialogues, and exploration of various kinds of follow-up on the priorities and recommendations that were identified.

Variations on this basic formula are possible. For instance, staff can be integrated into the groups along with faculty. The students in some or all groups can be drawn from a specific subgroup of the larger population that your college data have shown are having a lower success rate than students overall. Our recommendation is that the first time you apply this methodology you remain fairly faithful to the suggested—and tested—format. Then, over time, you might want to begin experimenting with variations to meet specific goals and needs.

Faculty-Student Dialogues— An Innovative and Tested Engagement Strategy

Faculty-student dialogues at Coastal Bend (TX), Capital (CT), Cuyahoga (OH) and Bunker Hill (MA)

In 2008, new tools and techniques for faculty-student engagement, including faculty-student dialogues and campus conversations, were piloted at four diverse ATD colleges: Coastal Bend (TX), Capital (CT), Cuyahoga (OH) and Bunker Hill (MA). The faculty-student dialogues were designed as a series of three separate two-hour sessions, each with a facilitator/recorder team and comprising some combination of faculty, staff and students. In these groups, participants worked through discussions about obstacles to student success, reviewed selected student achievement data and prioritized various solutions that could improve student outcomes. The campus conversations involved a larger number of participants from the entire campus community, with a combination of large group plenary sessions and smaller moderated discussion groups. Results from both the dialogues and the conversations were reported to the ATD core and data teams and incorporated into strategic and ATD planning at each college.

In some instances, colleges reported that the data they received from the dialogue groups helped to confirm and/or legitimize the strategies they were already planning to pursue as part of their ATD implementation efforts, giving them greater confidence to proceed. In other cases, administrators were made aware of new areas where they could address issues or problems relatively quickly and without a big infusion of resources. For example, at one dialogue group college students complained that they had no place to store their lunches if they were going to be on campus for the


greater part of the day, meaning that they had to either spend money to buy food or go without. Immediately, the college bought a refrigerator that would be available for students, saving them both time and money. By addressing such “low-hanging fruit” issues promptly, college leadership was able to provide concrete assistance to address students’ concerns, and they signaled seriousness about helping students succeed and establishing a culture of continuous improvement.

Many of the colleges that participated in the pilot described seeing meaningful attitude changes in how faculty related to students. In one case, a full-time professor who had participated in a series of faculty-student dialogue groups told an evaluator, “I used to be able to use my office hours as quiet time to get my work done. Since being in the dialogue group, the word has spread that I’m actually a pretty okay guy and can help. Now I’ve got students coming to my office to talk to me who aren’t even in my classes!”

Finally, the faculty-student dialogue and campus conversation processes can contribute to the building of a culture of evidence at the college. For example, at Coastal Bend College, the college’s institutional research department completed a full content analysis of the qualitative data revealed in the dialogues and campus conversations they held on each of four campuses. The IR staff created a detailed presentation and submitted it to the president, core and data teams and the board of trustees.

Faculty-Student Dialogues— An Innovative and Tested Engagement Strategy

The data is being used to inform the college's new strategic plan. At Cuyahoga, the ATD core team is using the data from its dialogues and conversations in deliberations as the college ends the "demonstration" phase of ATD and moves to policy decisions that will facilitate more widespread implementation of student success strategies. The core team created a final report based on the engagement experiences that were shared with the strategic planning team, which is using the results to create action plans for the FY 09–14 strategic plan.

Overall, the dialogues and conversations were a positive way to promote understanding and build relationships between students and faculty. Participants in the conversations were excited to be involved in a respectful dialogue in which their concerns, suggestions and strategies for action were taken seriously. Faculty and students both expressed great appreciation for the opportunity to interact with each other outside of the classroom environment and said they would like more opportunities for this kind of relationship building. 

SECTION 2: How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

This section of the workbook will guide you through organizing and running the dialogues and offer some suggestions about using the data you gain. (In Appendices 1 and 2, you will find templates of a moderator training agenda and separate moderator guides for each of the three dialogue sessions.)

This section covers:

- Step 1.** Assembling an organizing team
- Step 2.** Holding an initial planning meeting
- Step 3.** Recruiting and training moderators and recorders
- Step 4.** Collecting and disseminating data/results

STEP 1. Assembling an Organizing Team

Once you've decided to hold the dialogues, you will need a small team of people to help you with various planning and logistical tasks, such as recruiting moderators and participants, helping with communications, and collecting and organizing the information from the dialogues.

The team should be a diverse group of about 6 to 10 individuals who are interested in the project, bring a variety of skills and resources to the table and are willing to commit the time necessary over a period of a semester or a few months to make it happen. Members could include staff from academic affairs, student affairs, finance, institutional research, full-time and part-time or adjunct faculty, administrators and deans as appropriate and even students. Ideally, the team should include people who have access to and credibility with the various participants you hope to involve. For example, a respected faculty member may be helpful in recruiting other faculty to either help moderate or participate in the groups, and a well-loved mentor/tutor or academic adviser may be able to successfully reach out to students.

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

Be prepared to explain to people what it is you are planning and what it is you are asking of them. A few simple talking points could include the following:

- ▶ As part of our college's Achieving the Dream work (expand on this depending on person's familiarity with ATD), we are planning to hold a series of dialogues that will include faculty and students to discuss ways to help more students succeed at the college.
- ▶ The dialogues are a unique opportunity for faculty and students to interact with each other outside of the classroom or academic setting, and we believe they will generate interesting and useful discussions about helping students succeed.
- ▶ We expect that the information we learn through the dialogues will help the college with strategic planning, informing our ATD strategies and efforts so that they are as relevant/useful as possible, etc. (NOTE: You can customize here depending on your situation.)
- ▶ We would like to invite you to be a part of the team responsible for planning and organizing the dialogues. We expect that your involvement will be needed over the next few months/semester to help us recruit participants and execute the dialogues successfully. (NOTE: You can always add something about why you are inviting that specific person—for instance, what special qualities or skills he or she will bring that you will find valuable.)

STEP 2. Holding an Initial Planning Meeting

After you've assembled your organizing team, you'll want to hold an initial face-to-face to begin your planning. What follows is an annotated sample agenda to help you think about how to organize the meeting and what you should cover.

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

Faculty-Student Dialogues Planning Meeting—Sample Agenda

(Approximately 2–2.5 hours)

Today's workshop aims to:

- ▶ Explain the importance of faculty and student engagement for our college's ATD work.
 - ▶ Share the dialogue group strategy developed for this initiative and adapt it to meet our college's student success needs and agenda.
 - ▶ Make headway on the main planning tasks that need to be addressed for a successful faculty-student dialogue project.
- ▶ Dialogue groups are envisioned as meetings akin to STUDY CIRCLES, with multiple groups meeting three times for roughly 1.5–2 hours over a three-to-six-week period.
 - ▶ Each group will be led by a trained moderator, and an official recorder will take notes.

Ideally, each group will include a diverse group of 8 to 12 people:

- ▶ Some full-time faculty.
- ▶ At least one adjunct faculty and preferably two or three.
- ▶ Several traditional students (at least two or three from a low-performing student group based on ATD data).
- ▶ Several non-traditional students (ditto).

A. Introductions

NOTE: *Only if necessary—it's possible everyone will know one another already.*

B. Introduce Dialogue Concept and Your Objectives

NOTE: *Although you've likely talked about the concept when you invited people to attend the meeting and be part of the organizing team, you should review overall concept now.*

What are faculty-student dialogues?

- ▶ Series of carefully structured small group discussions combining faculty and students (and staff if you wish) to collaboratively discuss and recommend action on various issues related to helping more students succeed.
- ▶ Expand student outreach and engagement efforts more deeply into the “rank and file” of the student body, including hard-to-reach students—such as non-native English speakers,

What is our college's objective in holding these dialogues?

NOTE: *You will want to customize this section based on your specific objectives—that is, what you hope to learn, gain, understand, create, etc., through this dialogue process. The following bullet points are provided as EXAMPLES ONLY, although they may suit your purposes as well.*

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

first-time college students, older students, working/parenting students and students not inclined to be involved in campus activities.

- ▶ Draw more extensively on junior faculty perspectives.
- ▶ Engage more adjunct faculty in conversations about student success.
- ▶ Provide more support in analyzing and interpreting data to existing faculty groups focused on student success.
- ▶ Deepen understanding of the complex issues related to student success.
- ▶ Develop a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for strengthening student success.
- ▶ Build capacity among college faculty and staff to organize and facilitate dialogue groups.

C. Detailed Structure of the Dialogue Groups

NOTE: Briefly review the content of each session with the meeting participants. Detailed agendas for each session are contained in the moderator guides; see Appendix 2.

The dialogues are envisioned as meetings akin to STUDY CIRCLES, with multiple groups (at least two to three and possibly more). Each group will meet THREE TIMES FOR TWO HOURS OVER A THREE-TO-SIX-WEEK PERIOD and will have a trained facilitator/recorder team.

What is the theme of each meeting, and what will be discussed?

Meeting 1: Obstacles to Student Success

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO STUDENT SUCCESS, AND HOW ARE THESE OBSTACLES OVERCOME? This session draws on the personal experiences of the participants and allows participants to get to know one another.

Meeting 2: Exploring the Data, Exploring Solutions

1. UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH STUDENT SUCCESS AT OUR COLLEGE:
Reviewing a simple outline of Achieving the Dream data on student achievement at our college and discussing the data's implications for improving student success.

NOTE: You'll need to prepare a simple handout with a few well-chosen ATD-related data points, such as graduation rates (broken down by demographics if you have them) or perhaps some data on developmental education at the college. The group will use this handout during their discussions.

2. HELPING ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED: A
Choicework dialogue using Public Agenda Choicework materials, resulting in common ground, disagreements and questions and concerns about helping all students succeed.

NOTE: In this meeting, participants will use the "SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS" Choicework discussion materials as the basis for their discussions. These materials are available in written and video format. The written version is included as an appendix to this guide. (For copies of the video materials, please contact Public Agenda directly, at publicengagement@publicagenda.org.)

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

Meeting 3: Finding Solutions—Setting Priorities

- I. DEVELOPING A SET OF THREE TO FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGE LEADERSHIP TO REVIEW THAT WOULD RESULT IN GREATER STUDENT SUCCESS.

OPTIONAL: These recommendations could include a project that the group (or some portion of it) could work on together over the course of the semester if the college will support it. In this way, the dialogue group could become a problem-solving task force.

NOTE: *You'll need to prepare a simple handout that outlines the college's ATD priorities and implementation strategies. The participants will use this during their discussion at this meeting.*

After the three sessions

All groups will come together at a plenary session to report results to representatives of the Achieving the Dream core, data and engagement teams and discuss further steps.

NOTE: *While you need not necessarily commit to a large plenary session, you should plan for some form of real debriefing to college and Achieving the Dream leadership. Following the debriefing, there should be a feedback loop to the participants in the dialogue groups (and even better to the wider campus community) about any follow-up actions connected to the concerns and ideas generated by the teams.*

Allow time for discussion, questions, concerns and the like.

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

D. Strategic Planning

NOTE: Create a worksheet, similar to the table below, for taking notes and organizing your planning efforts for the dialogues.

Faculty-Student Dialogue Strategy: Key Planning Notes

Purpose	This section is to recap your objectives as discussed earlier.
Who will be involved in the groups?	Whom do you want to participate? Which groups are especially important?
How many groups? Multicampus?	What is realistic for you? Will you hold dialogue groups on all of your campuses if you are a multicampus institution?
Time frame	When will you hold the groups? For example, is there a planning process coming up that would benefit from the information you will gain? Remember, you'll need time to organize, recruit participant, train moderators, and analyze results.
Recruitment strategy and incentives	This is the most critical and perhaps most challenging task. Think about various incentives for faculty and student participation, including, but not limited to, campus/bookstore/gas gift cards, professional development credit (for faculty), class extra credit (for students) and the like.
Moderating strategy	Whom will you ask to moderate and record the groups? (Some colleges used a team approach and paired a faculty member with a student.) Good moderators must be able to listen without sharing their own opinion, help others express themselves openly and set a problem-solving tone for the discussion. See the moderator guide for Session 1 for more detail. Recruiting the moderators and supervising their training should be a specific task for a few team members to work on.
Analysis strategy	How will you collect and analyze the information from the groups? Who will be responsible for this task?
What kinds of communications, used how?	What is your plan for communicating what you learn to college and ATD leadership? How will you report back to the dialogue participants and the wider campus community? How can you use online and Web-based tools to help with this?
Additional	

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

E. Next Steps

- ▶ How will your team keep in touch and share information? When will you meet again?

NOTE: Based on the plan you develop, close out the meeting by reviewing responsibilities and tasks assigned to various team members and make a plan for keeping in touch (i.e., in-person meetings? conference calls? e-mail Listserv?) and sharing information.

- ▶ Who will be responsible for what tasks?

NOTE: Because there are a number of moving parts, such as recruiting participants, recruiting and training moderators, organizing logistics (such as time/location) and communicating effectively, it might make sense to divide your team into workgroups of two to three people.

STEP 3. Recruiting and Training Moderators and Recorders

Next on your list will be organizing a training session for those you've recruited to serve as moderators and recorders for the dialogue groups. Each dialogue group needs a minimum of one moderator and one recorder, but you may also choose to ask people to work in teams—for example, a faculty member and a student co-moderating. The moderator and recorder should be the same for each of the three sessions so that the moderators can establish a rapport with the group and help participants feel at ease.

Whom should you ask to moderate and record?

Recruiting Moderators

We can't stress enough how important it is to focus on recruiting good moderators (and recorders, too). Moderators play a key role in the dialogues and have a very large impact on the experience. While the following guidelines can help you to select moderator trainees, the

most important qualifications—PEOPLE SKILLS, the ability to think on one's feet and a real interest in supporting an open, inclusive dialogue—should be kept in mind regardless of a candidate's background on paper or other POLITICAL considerations.

Ideally, moderators will have the following sorts of skills and abilities:

- ▶ Group facilitation skills/experience.
- ▶ Ability to create an environment in which it is safe and comfortable for people to express their views.
- ▶ Ability to help participants articulate the reasoning, experiences and values supporting their positions.
- ▶ Ability to play devil's advocate and challenge people (in a friendly, civil way, of course) to consider alternate viewpoints.
- ▶ Comfort with and ability to manage group conflict.
- ▶ Ability to take a nonpartisan moderating stance.

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

- ▶ Nonpartisan credibility. Some people may be able to moderate in a nonpartisan manner but, because of past associations, will not be viewed in that light by members of the group.
- ▶ It is often a plus to have some diversity among the moderators (of race, ethnicity, gender and the like); this can help participants be more comfortable expressing themselves.

Recruiting Recorders

The recorders also play a crucial role and should be carefully selected and trained. Using flip charts and markers, recorders must be able to quickly summarize the main points in the discussion and write them legibly enough for all to see. Like the moderators, they must also be nonpartisan, trusted to record all ideas, not just those they agree with.

Ideally, recorders will also attend the moderator/recorder training session. If recorders are not able to attend, they should be fully briefed and should meet with their moderators prior to the conversation to clarify roles and tasks, create a sense of teamwork and avoid last minute confusion.

Organizing and Executing the Training

Moderators and recorders need to have a solid idea of what will be expected of them and some chance to practice their roles in a training session. The training should be mandatory for moderators and strongly recommended for recorders and takes about two and a half hours.

There are a few different ways you can execute the training. Someone from your organizing team can take the lead in conducting the training, using the materials and training guide provided here (see appendix). Alternately, you may have very experienced trainers and facilitators on your campus whom you can ask to conduct the training with the moderators and recorders you have recruited, again with help from the attached training guide.

Finally, Public Agenda is available to assist you with the training and can send one of our staff to work with your moderators and recorders prior to the dialogues. For more information, contact Public Agenda at publicengagement@publicagenda.org.

Whoever is conducting the training should review the attached training guide well in advance of the training, as certain materials/handouts are needed and you'll want to have everything organized for the trainer and moderators.

How to Plan and Organize the Dialogues

STEP 4. Collecting and Disseminating Data/Results

Finally, a few individuals from your organizing team will need to be responsible for collecting and compiling the important information from the dialogue sessions.

Sources to include are the flip chart notes from the dialogues and the Moderator/Recorder and Participant Evaluation forms, which should have been distributed and collected at the final session. You don't need to be concerned with every comment that appears on the flip chart notes; your focus should be critical obstacles insights and priorities for action.

In addition to summarizing the important themes and action priorities, it's helpful to identify which ideas for action can be considered low-hanging fruit—that is, those opportunities for follow-up that would be comparatively easy to develop or implement vs. more ambitious actions that would require new resources, time and so on.

During your initial planning meeting, you will have started thinking about how to communicate the data from the dialogues to college leadership, as well as to the broader campus community. You may need to revisit that conversation based on what you end up with—but at a minimum, you should plan to report your results in some fashion to the ATD core and data teams and to all of those who participated in the dialogues. A more ambitious approach would be to distribute a broader report to a wide group of college leadership and even trustees, as well as to the entire campus community. You might think about posting a story about the dialogues and what you learned on the college's website and inviting readers to comment and make their own suggestions. 🏹

SECTION 3:

Results and Recommendations from ATD Colleges

Public Agenda conducted an evaluation of the faculty-student dialogue process at the four colleges that were the first to implement the process. Below are the impacts they noted and their recommendations for other colleges planning to hold faculty-student dialogues.

Impacts/Results

- ▶ The work of the groups was plugged directly into college-level key teams in AQIP, ATD and the FY 09–13 strategic plan.
- ▶ Participants developed a sense of community, and all expressed a sincere interest in wanting to make a change.
- ▶ Key barriers identified here matched CCSSE/Noel Levitz data and other ATD work. So the work legitimized much of what we have piloted. Additionally, hearing actions directly from students really helped inform our key planning teams.
- ▶ This has been the dialogue/conversation to provide a JUMPING-OFF POINT both for real changes around policy and for our strategic planning process to move forward in regard to student success.
- ▶ We have a stronger appreciation of internal stakeholders. We know an AQIP weakness is internal communications, and this reinforced the need for stronger internal communications with stakeholders.
- ▶ I believe we do and have continued to give staff/faculty other opportunities to provide comments/feedback and work on committees for some of these new initiatives.
- ▶ At the institutional level, many of these changes have been incorporated in the college's strategic plan and campus and departmental goals.
- ▶ The tone or atmosphere that was created/started through these conversations feels different from in the past. I believe people at all levels feel more engaged and feel they have contributed both to the conversation and to the possible solutions to some of our issues.
- ▶ Consensus was reached on a number of important issues and initiatives, including collegewide mentoring, learning communities, specific initiatives regarding developmental education, enhanced student services for distance learning and a more specific focus on support services and student engagement.
- ▶ This kind of work affects attitudes/culture: In our last strategic plan, we focused on student services. Since creating that plan, we have shifted our administrative culture to a focus on student success and data-driven decision making. However, students are largely unaware of that change. This work underscored and reinforced our commitment to student success and to students KNOWING that we have that commitment. Listening to

Results and Recommendations from ATD Colleges

students, in particular, has helped us understand the next key step in our cultural transformation is engaging our students on key issues such as creating a life plan, seeking academic support, connecting to college services/people and getting involved in our campus life.

- ▶ The most glaring impact of our work in the faculty-student engagement project is the moderating skills and general abilities to conduct focus groups and forums that we achieved through the training. The most important impact is the increased participation and engagement with students and faculty that occurred through the various events.
- ▶ The biggest surprise was the extent to which students and faculty enjoyed participating in the focus groups and forums.
- ▶ What was surprising was the extent to which the students appreciated the opportunity to talk with faculty and administrators in a different venue.

Recommendations/Suggestions

- ▶ Starting off with small numbers is okay... you need to start somewhere.
- ▶ You need the support of your president/top officials to encourage participation and establish the importance of the work.
- ▶ Try to reach students where they are (in the classroom) instead of trying to get them to come to campus for another meeting.
- ▶ Do something to show your appreciation for everyone's time/energy...thank-you gift/special lunch/etc.
- ▶ The biggest challenge we face is the time constraints on our students and the high percentage of part-time faculty teaching at the college. Both make it difficult to schedule events or forums where one or both groups can meet to discuss and share their thoughts. You may need to try different approaches until you determine what works at your institution.
- ▶ One suggestion is to focus on how to sustain the engagement work continuously, past the initial dialogues. Reinforce that engagement requires continuous efforts.
- ▶ Another suggestion would be to have a pre-assessment whereby an institution could evaluate its current LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT. This way, specific goals could be outlined and set out, and following the engagement work, a post-assessment could be done to evaluate the effectiveness of the work. ☞

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

Appendix 2: Moderator/Recorder Guides

Appendix 3: Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Evaluation

Appendix 4: Faculty-Student Dialogues Participant Evaluation

Appendix 5: "Success Is What Counts" Discussion Starter:
Helping All Community College Students Achieve

APPENDIX 1:

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

Student-Faculty Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Training

(Approximately 2.5 hours)

Agenda with Training Notes

Here's a summary of what you'll need to have on hand for the training:

- ▶ Copies of the moderator/recorder guides for Sessions 1–3 for trainees
- ▶ Copies of ATD data handout (created by dialogue organizing team, to be used during Session 2)
- ▶ Copies of ATD priorities handout (needs to be created by dialogue organizing team, to be used during Session 3)
- ▶ Copies of the “SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS” Choicework DVD if you plan for moderators to use it, and a DVD player so the group can watch the video during the training (contact Public Agenda for copies, publicengagement@publicagenda.org)
- ▶ Copies of the Moderator/Recorder and Participant Evaluation forms

1. Introductions

(10 minutes) _____ to _____

Introduce yourself, then ask participants to say who they are and briefly why they decided to participate in this initiative.

2. Review Plan for the Day

(5 minutes) _____ to _____

Tell participants (sample language):

Our purpose here today is to train you to moderate and record a 3-part series of faculty-student dialogue groups. First, we will quickly review the concept and rationale for the dialogue groups, then we'll look at the structure of the three meetings, and finally we'll do some role play to get warmed up for the dialogues.

3. Review Overall Dialogue Concept and Rationale

(15–20 minutes) _____ to _____

Tell participants (sample language):

The faculty-student dialogue groups we are planning are part of an effort to develop the college's capacity to engage faculty and students in new ways that improve student success and support the overall Achieving the Dream agenda. (Make sure everyone knows what ATD is—you should be prepared to explain the initiative and the college's ATD goals focus areas.)

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

The faculty-student dialogues are a series of three meetings, each about two hours, to bring students and faculty together for a conversation about student success and ways to help more students reach their goals. The idea is to start working together and sharing ideas to figure out ways to improve outcomes for students.

NOTE: Please add to the following list ANY SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES YOUR COLLEGE HAS in holding the dialogues.

We believe these groups can accomplish two things:

- ▶ One, they change people's attitudes toward students, faculty and the institutions—make them more positive, understanding, hopeful and helpful.
- ▶ Two, they can help solve real challenges to student learning. Nobody has more hands-on knowledge and experience about what works and doesn't work for students than students themselves and faculty. We need to tap into that knowledge and feed it to the institution to create better practices and policies.
- ▶ But for the process to really work well, it needs to be facilitated well. That's what today is all about.

Stop and Ask:

1. Has anyone here participated in something like this before? What was your experience?
2. Any other logistical questions before we go over the structure of these small group dialogues in more detail?

4. Review Structure of the Dialogue Groups

(20 minutes) _____ to _____

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following is PLACEHOLDER TEXT—at the training, you should be able to tell the participants exactly how many groups you are going to run, who is going to be participating in them, when and where they are going to be held.

Tell participants (sample language):

We are envisioning these as meetings akin to STUDY CIRCLES, with multiple groups meeting several times. Groups will include:

- ▶ Several full-time faculty.
- ▶ At least one adjunct faculty and preferably two or three.
- ▶ Several traditional students (preferably two or more from a low-performing student group based on your college's ATD data).
- ▶ Several non-traditional students (preferably two or more from a low-performing student group based on your college's ATD data).

Each group will meet three times for two hours over a three-to-six-week period and will have a trained facilitator/recorder team to lead it.

Following is the general agenda for each session (a much more detailed agenda for each session is in the moderator guides—we'll go through those together shortly).

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

IMPORTANT NOTE: This schedule assumes your college is going to be holding three distinct meetings. You may need to adjust if you've decided to hold only two, for example, or if you plan to shorten each meeting.

Session 1: Obstacles to Student Success

1. PURPOSE, OVERVIEW, INTRODUCTIONS.
2. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO STUDENT SUCCESS, AND HOW ARE THESE OBSTACLES OVERCOME? In this session, we draw on our personal experiences. In the next, we review data from the Achieving the Dream data collection work.

“HOMEWORK” FOR NEXT MEETING: At end of Session 1, distribute handout with ATD data on student success at the college. Tell group to review before next session.

Session 2: Exploring the Data, Exploring Solutions

1. UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH STUDENT SUCCESS AT OUR COLLEGE: Review a simple outline of Achieving the Dream data on student achievement and discussing the data's implications for improving student success. (Should have been handed out at end of Session 1.)
2. HELPING ALL STUDENTS SUCCEED:
A Choicework dialogue using Public Agenda Choicework materials.

“HOMEWORK” FOR NEXT MEETING: At end of Session 2, distribute handout on college's ATD institutional change priorities. Tell group to review before next session.

Session 3: Finding Solutions—Setting Priorities

1. DEVELOPING A SET OF THREE TO FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS for college leadership to review that would result in greater student success.
2. OPTIONAL: These recommendations could include a project that the group (or some portion of it) could work on together over the course of the semester if the college will support it. In this way, the dialogue group could become a problem-solving task force.

DISTRIBUTE AND COLLECT THE PARTICIPANT EVALUATION FORMS. Moderators and recorders should also fill out their evaluation forms in the days immediately following the end of the dialogues and return these to the organizing team.

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

After the Three Sessions

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following is “placeholder text”—you may have specific plans for how you will report on and use the data gained. Communicate those to the group.

Tell participants (sample language):

After the data have been compiled from the different groups, all the groups will come together at a large meeting to report on the insights and recommendations to representatives of the Achieving the Dream core and data teams (and other college leaders) and discuss further steps.

STOP AND ASK: Any questions about the basic format of the three sessions?

Take a Break

(10 minutes) _____ to _____

5. Review Moderating and Recording Basics

(10 minutes) _____ to _____

Tell participants (sample language):

In the rest of the training today, we’re going to look at how to facilitate each of the three dialogue sessions and examine the roles of moderators and recorders.

Moderating basics

On the most basic level, the task of the moderator is to make sure the participants in the small group discussions understand what they are supposed to be talking about when—so that the discussions stay focused and on schedule. Beyond this, their job is to make the conversations as participatory and productive as possible.

It is essential to the credibility of the dialogue that moderators be **NEUTRAL** as to the substantive outcomes of the conversations and avoid appearing biased.

Primary objectives include:

- ▶ Creating an environment where people are comfortable expressing ideas.
- ▶ Not allowing individuals or subgroups to dominate the discussion.
- ▶ Helping people examine their own views and understand the views of others.

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

Recording basics

The recorder's job is TO CAPTURE THE MAJOR POINTS DURING THE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS. While the recorder is not expected to write everything that is said word for word, he or she should try to capture the essence of the main points being made by each participant.

It is especially important to record not only each person's position ("I'm for such and such"), but each person's thinking ("I'm for such and such because...").

It is equally important that recorders do their best to keep their own views out of the way and record the proceedings as faithfully as possible.

Some practical tips

- ▶ You will be working on a flip chart so the group can see the document you are creating. On the first sheet, be sure to identify which group you are recording and number the pages as you go.
- ▶ Do not bother with people's names; just record their perspectives and ideas.
- ▶ Write as large and legibly as you can without slowing down.
- ▶ You can occasionally ask the group or moderator to clarify a point if it is unclear to you or if things have moved too quickly.

- ▶ Ideally, you'll be able to remove each finished page and tape it onto a wall so the participants can see the pages when they are ready to summarize their conversation. But some rooms don't have walls that work for this, and it's important not to miss anything, so if you can't get the sheets up on a wall, simply flip them over as they fill up and keep writing.

STOP AND ASK: What, if anything, seems most challenging to you about moderating or recording these groups? Discuss as needed.

6. Reviewing the Three Meetings in Detail and Role Playing

(60 minutes) _____ to _____

At this point in the training, ask the participants to take out the moderator/recorder guides for each of the three sessions and explain that you want to walk them through the agendas for each. The agendas and tasks for Sessions 1 and 3 are fairly straightforward and are unlikely to present any confusion. Session 2, in which participants use the Choicework materials, is slightly more complicated, so you may want to spend more time reviewing that session. With the participants, read through the moderator guides for each session, making sure to answer any questions along the way. If you have a copy of the "SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS" Choicework video, you should plan to show it when you are reviewing that section of Session 2.

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

NOTE: Make sure to call attention to the MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT NEEDED list at the beginning of each guide and answer any associated questions. Moderators will need to make sure they have everything organized and ready to go prior to each session.

Using role play

One strategy you can use while reviewing the material for the different sessions is role play. With this technique, one person acts as the moderator, one as the recorder, and the other trainees play the roles of various characters—that is, different faculty, student and staff types they’ll likely encounter in their actual groups. This is not necessary for every section of each guide, but it could be useful for certain sections so that moderators have the opportunity to practice a little before they are ONSTAGE.

For example, if you are reviewing Session 2, you might want to role play a bit through “PART III. USE OF CHOICEWORK” to begin and structure conversations. Ask someone to act as the moderator and someone to act as the recorder. Ask the other participants to play various roles—young student, experienced faculty member, adjunct faculty and so forth—as you work through that section of the guide. In this way, the group simulates what a real discussion might be like.

Following are some sample ROLES that people can play during the training.

Characters for student and faculty dialogue role playing

FACULTY MEMBER: Seasoned English professor at the college who entered the profession with a love of teaching but is somewhat jaded 20 years later. Thinks students have become lazy and unwilling to do the work. Has seen reform at the college come and go and thinks, “This too shall pass.”

ADJUNCT FACULTY MEMBER: Has part-time position at the college teaching computer science. Feels unprepared to teach students who still have trouble with basic study skills. Wants to help out but feels isolated from college insiders and doesn’t know who will listen or act on her suggestions.

HONORS STUDENT: Wonders what the problem with peers is and why they don’t work harder. Just graduated from high school and is earning credits before planned transfer to four-year institution.

YOUNG STUDENT WITH CHILDREN: A 19-year-old, married, parent of two children. Had a solid elementary and early high school career but dropped out of school to start a family. Is in her second year at the college and is struggling to manage all the responsibilities of school, home and work. Is considering dropping out of the college to work full-time.

Sample Moderator/Recorder Training Agenda with Notes

RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE: Graduated from local public school. Thinks college is an extension of high school except that attendance is not required. She has a lot of her same friends from high school.

MIDDLE-AGED STUDENT: Recently unemployed for the first time in 20 years and is struggling both emotionally and academically with retooling courses. Has a better appreciation now for having schools instill in young students a passion for lifelong learning.

SEASONED TEACHER: Has seen it all. Has been at the college for over 40 years and has noticed how the incoming student population is less prepared to handle basic courses in math and English. He thinks the college should reconsider open admission policies.

7. Logistics and Concluding the Training (10 minutes) _____ to _____

Take a few minutes to answer any questions and remind moderators that for each session they will need to have with them all of their materials, moderator guides and so forth.

If you haven't already, make sure moderators and recorders know whom they are going to be working with and know where they are going to be holding their sessions and when—that is, go over any logistics. Tell the group whom they should contact (i.e., someone from the organizing team) with questions, problems and so on.

WISH EVERYONE GOOD LUCK

AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION!

APPENDIX 2:

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Session 1: Obstacles to Student Success

Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Guide

The Moderator's Job

On the most basic level, the task of the moderators is to make sure that participants understand what they are there to discuss, understand the ground rules and stay reasonably focused and on schedule. Beyond this, they work to make the conversation as highly participatory, constructive and productive as possible.

TIP

If you have especially strong views that you must share, or think of yourself as an expert on the subject with a “correct” view of the answer, you should not be a moderator or a recorder.

Successful moderators are comfortable with the goal of an open deliberation without a preset outcome. It is essential to the credibility of the process that moderators be neutral regarding the substantive outcomes of the conversations and avoid appearing biased or as having an agenda. The moderators do, of course, have an agenda with regard to the process of the session—to facilitate a civil, productive, collaborative deliberation among participants, but not to lead people toward a CORRECT answer.

MODERATOR TIPS

- Remember, you are there to help other people feel comfortable voicing their opinions and to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard.
- Encourage participants to talk to one another, not to you.
- If one or more perspectives are not getting a fair hearing, ask if someone in the group can make a case for that view.
- Help the group to identify and summarize common ground as the discussion moves forward, but don't force it.
- Good moderators listen actively, speak little and help create a safe environment for the exchange of ideas.
- Good moderators will help keep people on schedule and will make sure that everyone's ideas are recorded.
- You are not there to share your views, act as the group “expert” or force the conversation to go in a particular direction.
- Don't let any one participant dominate the discussion.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Moderators look for opportunities to keep the conversation stimulating and on track by:

- ▶ Encouraging people (without being pushy) to participate and share their views.
- ▶ Keeping especially assertive individuals from dominating the discussion.
- ▶ Digging beneath the surface by, for instance, asking participants why they feel the way they do.
- ▶ Making sure a point someone is making is well understood.
- ▶ Pointing out tensions between different perspectives.
- ▶ Occasionally summing up and refocusing the discussion.
- ▶ Occasionally introducing important arguments (in a neutral manner) that are being overlooked to stimulate deeper thought.

The Recorder's Job

The recorder makes sure that everyone's main ideas are captured in writing. Everyone in the group should be able to see and read the notes as they are being written, so it is best to use a flip chart and thick marker or pen. If possible, as pages are filled they should be posted on the walls so that everyone can refer back to ideas that were raised.

TIP

If you have illegible handwriting, you should not be the recorder!

As the conversation moves through different phases (see agenda, page 4), recorders should start new sheets with clear headings. It can save time for the recorder to label some sheets with the main headings (pros and cons of various approaches, common ground, areas of disagreement and so on) in advance of the event so that they have more time to keep up with ideas during the discussion and organize them effectively. Recorders should work to keep their notes organized so anyone can go back to them and make sense out of them at a later date.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Effective recorders are good listeners and have a knack for capturing the essence of what people are saying. Although it is not possible or desirable to record comments word for word, you must record enough so that someone looking at the paper at a later time will be able to make sense of the ideas. Recorders should not judge ideas, they should simply record them. A good recorder will not speak except to ask for clarification so that he or she can capture people's ideas accurately.

Some practical tips for recorders:

- ▶ You will be working on a flip chart so the group can see the document you are creating. On the first sheet, be sure to identify which group you are recording, and number the pages as you go.
- ▶ Do not bother with people's names; just record their perspectives and ideas.
- ▶ Write as large and legibly as you can without slowing down.
- ▶ You can occasionally ask the group or moderator to clarify a point if it is unclear to you or if things have moved too quickly.
- ▶ Ideally, you'll be able to remove each finished page and tape it onto a wall so the participants can see the pages when they are ready to summarize their conversation. But some rooms don't have walls that work for this, and it's important not to miss anything, so if you can't get the sheets up on a wall, simply flip them over as they fill up and keep writing.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Agenda for Session 1 Dialogue

(Approximately 2 hours)

Overview

- I. Welcome/Purpose of the dialogues/Brief overview of the three-session structure
- II. Group introductions/Ground rules
- III. Group discussion: What are the biggest obstacles to student success?
- IV. Conclusion

The Session in Detail

- I. Welcome/Purpose/Overview

_____ - _____

(10 minutes—write in times)

Moderator makes a few brief opening remarks welcoming everyone and explaining what the groups are all about. You should cover:

- a. WHO YOU ARE AND THE ROLES OF THE MODERATOR AND RECORDER.
- b. THE PURPOSE OF THE DIALOGUE GROUPS. [*Sample language*] We're here to help the college develop strategies for improving student success and closing achievement gaps. This is something the college is already working hard on.

For example, the college is part of the Achieving the Dream initiative to improve student success at community colleges across the nation. As part of that initiative, the college is working on ways to involve faculty and students in helping to figure out strategies to improve student achievement. That's what these three dialogue groups are all about: working as a team to understand the obstacles to student success and determine ways to help more students succeed.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

- c. **OVERVIEW.** Each session will be focused on a different theme:
Today: Obstacles to student success.
Next: Exploring the data and exploring solutions.
Final: Finding solutions and setting priorities for action.

After the final session, we'll report our findings to college leadership.

Today, we'll begin with introductions and ground rules and then start talking about our topic. Any questions?

II. Introductions and Ground Rules

_____ - _____ (40 minutes)

Introductions

One by one, participants introduce themselves by talking about:

- ▶ Their name and a few basic facts (what year student, what subjects taught, a few personal tidbits).
- ▶ Their history at the college (how they came to be there and what they've been doing there).
- ▶ Their goals (whether as student or teacher).
- ▶ Their greatest challenge in reaching their goals (whether as student or teacher).

Moderators and recorders have probably already introduced themselves but can add to their intros as appropriate.

Moderators should create a **SEATING CHART** for themselves with names and key information about participants that they can refer to as the conversation progresses.

Ground rules

Explain to people that a few simple ground rules will help them keep the conversation productive and on track. The following ground rules work well. Feel free to put them in your own words. Recorders should note them briefly on the flip chart.

- ▶ **SHARE THE TIME:** "Let's work together to make sure everyone has good opportunities to participate. To do that, let's try to keep our statements at a reasonable length so no one inadvertently monopolizes the time."
- ▶ **DISAGREE RESPECTFULLY:** "In this conversation we are free to agree and to disagree with one another. If we disagree, let's do it respectfully, keep it on the level of each person's ideas and avoid any personal attacks."
- ▶ **MANAGE CELL PHONES:** "Let's make sure that all cell phones are turned off (or if you're on call for emergencies, on vibrate) for the duration of our time together."

Moderator/Recorder Guides

III. Discussion: What are the biggest obstacles to student success, and how can these obstacles be overcome?

_____ - _____ (60 minutes)

RECORDER: Write this question on a new sheet.

MODERATOR: Explain that the group will have an hour to compare perspectives on this question and deepen its understanding, as a foundation for working on solutions in the next two sessions.

BEGIN BY CALLING ON A COUPLE OF STUDENTS AND THEN BEGIN MOVING TO FACULTY.

Early on, you might need to be a little more active getting the conversation going, but soon people will be responding to one another's comments. As long as they do so respectfully and constructively, this is a good thing and you should encourage it.

Your job is to help everyone participate and make sure no one dominates, make sure people's statements are clearly understood and look for ways to deepen the conversation from time to time. A few optional probes that can help you deepen the conversation are:

- ▶ Why do you think that is? (Asking WHY is often helpful, especially early on.)
- ▶ Have you had personal experience with what you're talking about?
- ▶ How does your point relate to what _____ just said, which sounds like a very different take on the same theme?

- ▶ Some people say _____ is a big factor for students. (Perhaps this is some research you've seen or something you've experienced yourself.) Do you think that plays a role in what you're talking about?

IV. Conclusion

_____ - _____ (10 minutes)

- ▶ How did this session go, and is there anything we can do next time to improve the process?
- ▶ About next session (topic, handouts, questions).

FOR THE NEXT SESSION:

Handout on Student Achievement Data

Ask group to review simple ATD data presentation on student success at the college for discussion in next session. What questions are raised by the data? What conclusion do you draw about what needs to happen to close achievement gaps? This is the kind of thing we'll be talking about at the beginning of the next session.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Session 2: Exploring the Data, Exploring Solutions

Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Guide

Materials/Equipment Needed:

- ▶ Extra copies of Achieving the Dream student achievement data handout.
- ▶ DVD set up to show “Success Is What Counts” discussion starter DVD.
- ▶ Handouts of “Success Is What Counts” discussion starter.
- ▶ Flip chart and markers for recorder.
- ▶ Handout on college’s ATD priorities/goals.

I. Welcome and Overview

_____ - _____ (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to review the purpose and game plan for this session.

Sample Language

Last session we spent some time exploring our own experiences at the college and our own perceptions of what makes it hard for students to succeed. Today, we’re going to build on that first conversation in two ways.

First, we’ll talk about the data we handed out at the end of last session on student achievement here at the college.

Second, we’ll look at different ways in which we can help more students succeed, using a video discussion starter created by Public Agenda to help people talk and think about this subject.

The ground rules remain the same as last time. Let’s just review them very quickly.

Before we start, does anyone have anything to say about last session or any questions about this one?

II. Discussion: Exploring the Data, Exploring Solutions

_____ - _____ (30 minutes)

RECORDER: Distribute data handouts if anyone did not bring theirs from last session.

MODERATOR: Explain that the group will have half an hour to compare perspectives on the data and deepen its understanding as a foundation for working on solutions.

Begin by calling on a couple of students, and then begin moving to faculty, asking them what they thought about the data. Questions that might be useful to get the group going are:

- ▶ What was the most surprising thing you saw in the data?
- ▶ What questions did the data raise for you?
- ▶ What do the data suggest to you about what needs to happen to help students succeed and close achievement gaps?

Moderator/Recorder Guides

III. Use of Choicework

_____ - _____ (60 minutes)

Now you'll make a transition to the next phase of the conversation, which uses the Choicework video discussion starter. Simply explain that the conversation will now start looking at ways to help more students succeed, beginning in today's session and continuing in the next one.

And to get the conversation going, you're going to use a 10-minute video discussion starter. Explain that the video presents several ideas for helping more students succeed and that it can be used to think about the strategies that make sense for your college.

Then show the video.

After the video is finished:

- ▶ **INITIAL VOTE.** As a way to get things rolling, begin by taking a preliminary **SENSE OF THE GROUP'S STARTING POINT** vote. Sample language you can draw on is the following:

"We're going to begin by taking a quick vote. For the purposes of this exercise, and just to get us going, choose one approach to vote for as your favorite. There are probably a mix of ideas you like and don't like in all the choices, and you might even have some ideas that aren't included in any of the approaches—that's great and we'll definitely get to talking about all those things. But just to help us jump-start the conversation,

choose the one approach that comes closest to your view of what's the most important idea, what will most help us address this issue. After we take an initial vote, we'll begin discussing the different ideas."

A few people may resist voting. Encourage them to play along, telling them it's just a device to get things moving and they won't be held to their vote. But if one or two get stubborn, don't get hung up, just keep moving along.

- ▶ **GETTING STARTED.** Begin the dialogue by asking people why they voted/lean the way they do. Make a point of beginning with a few students. (If you start with a faculty member, the students may become intimidated.) And then start moving the discussion around the group and see how it develops.
- ▶ **KEEPING IT MOVING.** As people talk about their responses to the Choicework guide, the conversation will evolve and people will begin responding to one another's ideas. Without being controlling or intrusive, your job is to simply help the conversation along now and then by occasionally doing things like:
 - Making sure someone's statement is understood by others.
 - Asking someone who has been hanging back if he or she has any thoughts on what's being said.
 - Reminding someone who talks for a long time that we need to make some time for others to respond.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

IF NEEDED. *Additional strategies that can help if the group is slow to take off:*

- ▶ Instead of just asking people why they like a particular approach to the problem, ask them about the downside of their approach: “You’ve talked about what you like about that approach. What’s hard or challenging about it?”
- ▶ Ask people why they didn’t choose one of the approaches.
- ▶ Very briefly introduce for people’s consideration an argument or fact that they haven’t talked about but that could be interesting. For instance: “I’ve heard some people argue that [whatever]. What do you think about that idea?”

IV. Discussion Summary

_____ - _____ (15 minutes)

Here we take a moment to take stock of the discussion that has transpired so far, before moving toward implications and ideas for action we might want to take in our campus community to help address this issue. In this section, we work with the group to clarify the discussion’s areas of common ground, areas of disagreement and the informational needs people have.

NOTES:

- ▶ Moderators and recorders can participate in this section, reminding people of things that came up during the conversation.
- ▶ When you or people in the group volunteer observations about areas of common ground or disagreement, check quickly with the group before recording it on the flip chart. In other words, make sure your group is comfortable that something was really an area of common ground before MAKING IT OFFICIAL and recording it.

Sample Language

Let’s take a few minutes to take stock of the discussion we’ve had so far, to help us get ready to talk about ideas for acting on this issue. We want to organize this review around three areas:

- ▶ Common ground
- ▶ Disagreements
- ▶ Questions and concerns

Let’s begin with common ground. What were our most important areas of common ground? Where was there a lot of agreement in our conversation?

Record common ground ideas.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

NOTES:

- ▶ It doesn't have to be a perfect consensus, just something that most people agreed about. If one or two people disagreed, you can add that to the questions/concerns category.
- ▶ Make a special point of capturing any solution that most people agreed on.

What about disagreements? What were the most important areas where we had very different points of views in our discussion?

Finally, what questions or concerns or areas did we identify that require more information or study?

V. Conclusion

_____ - _____ (10 minutes)

How did this session go, and is there anything we can do next time to improve the process?

About next session:

- ▶ We'll build on today's conversation to focus on developing specific ideas and recommendations for student success. To help us get ready, we have a handout on what the college is already working on to help more students succeed through its Achieving the Dream initiative.

BETWEEN SESSIONS: Ask participants to review simple handout on college's ATD institutional change priorities as well as any policy work it's involved with. The group will discuss in Session 3.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

Session 3: Finding Solutions—Setting Priorities

Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Guide

Materials/Equipment Needed:

- ▶ Extra copies of Achieving the Dream priorities handout.
- ▶ Notes from last session’s Choicework summary (common ground, disagreements, questions/concerns).
- ▶ Flip chart and markers for recorder.

I. Welcome and Overview

_____ - _____ (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to review the purpose and game plan for this session.

Sample Language

So far we’ve:

- ▶ Talked about our own experiences at the college and our own perceptions of what makes it hard for students to succeed.
- ▶ Looked at student achievement data to see what we can learn from them.
- ▶ Had a Choicework dialogue using the Public Agenda materials as a way to get us thinking about solutions and strategies to help all students succeed and close achievement gaps.

- ▶ We ended that session by noting the areas of common ground, disagreement and questions/concerns from our conversation (refer to flip chart notes, which should be posted), and then we gave you a handout about the college’s Achieving the Dream priorities for action to improve student success.

Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes talking about the college’s Achieving the Dream priorities and then spend most of our time brainstorming our own ideas for helping all students succeed. These will be recommendations for the college leadership to review and possibly integrate with the current action priorities. And they may also include ideas that we may want to keep working on as a group.

Before we start, does anyone have anything to say about last session or any questions about this one?

II. The College’s Achieving the Dream Priorities

_____ - _____ (15 minutes)

RECORDER: Distribute handouts on priorities if anyone did not bring it from last session.

MODERATOR: Explain that the group will have 15 minutes to discuss the college’s Achieving the Dream interventions and priorities for increasing student success before going on to think about additional strategies. Explain that this is important because as the group develops its own

Moderator/Recorder Guides

recommendations and priorities, it will be easier for the college to implement them if they complement what is already going on.

Begin by calling on a couple of students and then begin moving to faculty, asking them what they thought about the college's action priorities. Questions that might be useful to get the group going are:

- ▶ Did they all make sense to you? Was there anything that you didn't understand about them?
- ▶ Any surprises?
- ▶ Which idea do you think is likely to have the greatest impact on student success, and why do you think so?
- ▶ Do you think any of them are off base?

III. Setting Action Priorities: What can be done to help more students succeed?

____ - ____ (60 minutes)

Sample Language

For the next hour, we're going to work on ways to help more students succeed. This is essentially a brainstorming session, but to get ready for it, let's each take five minutes to think about this question and jot down a few notes.

Based on all of our discussions so far, on the data we've examined, on what the college is already doing to help and on everything you know about what students are struggling with and what can help them succeed...what are one or two or three things that could be done to help more students succeed and to close our college's achievement gaps? What are things that could be done or put in place or developed that will help more students succeed?

Just make a few notes about one or two or three concrete ideas—if just one, that's fine. And then we'll start talking about our ideas.

After five minutes or so, start the group talking, using the following procedure:

- ▶ Go around the group (starting with a student or two), asking people to share one of their ideas.
- ▶ As people explain their ideas, ask clarifying questions to help each person flesh out his or her idea. ("So, how would that work?" and so on.) And encourage others in the group to ask clarifying questions. But do not get into a discussion of the merits of the ideas yet—this is not the time for criticism, this is the time for brainstorming, getting ideas out on the table; later, you'll look at the ideas more critically. Explain this to the group as needed.
- ▶ Recorder should be writing the ideas on the flip chart as people put them out.

Moderator/Recorder Guides

- ▶ After you've gone around the group once, go around again quickly in case people have additional ideas. If they don't, they can pass, but hopefully everyone will have one idea to contribute.
- ▶ After going around two or three times, you should have a good list. At this point, ask people to review the overall list and to decide which idea they think would have the greatest impact on student success and why. And then ask people to start talking about that—which idea they think will have the greatest impact.

WITH FIVE MINUTES LEFT IN THE 60-MINUTE BLOCK OF TIME DEVOTED TO SETTING PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:

After participants have had a chance to comment on their top ideas, ask everyone to choose their top three ideas. As people say which those are, the RECORDER should place a checkmark next to the ideas people vote for. This way, you'll end up seeing very clearly which ideas have the greatest number of votes.

IV. Working on the Presentation of Our Action Priorities

____ - ____ (15 minutes)

The top three ideas will be the main ones that you will present to the college leadership meeting. Create a new flip chart for each of them and talk about them one at a time, developing them enough so that they can be clearly presented later on: "Okay, with idea A, let's make sure we're really clear about how we want to present this. What's the best way to say it? What are the most important things that college leaders need to understand about this idea?" Spend five minutes on each idea in this fashion.

V. Final Thoughts

____ - ____ (20 minutes)

Any final thoughts? Take a little time to see if people have final thoughts or comments on the work they did together. After final thoughts, explain that you'll be back in touch with information about the college leadership session where your ideas will be presented and further discussed.

IMPORTANT: Distribute the evaluations and ask participants to fill them out—collect them before people leave.

THANK EVERYONE FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX 3:

Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Evaluation

College and/or campus name:

1. I am a (choose one):

- Student
- Full-time faculty
- Part-time faculty or adjunct
- Administrator
- Foundation/trustee member
- Other (please indicate)

2. Overall, how would you rate the experience of your discussion group?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

What is the single most important reason for your rating? Please explain:

3. What would you say were the most important results/outcomes of the group?

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of the moderator/recorder training in preparing you to moderate/record your group?

- Extremely effective/helpful
- Somewhat effective/helpful
- Not very effective/helpful
- Not effective/helpful at all

Why do you feel that way?

Faculty-Student Dialogues Moderator/Recorder Evaluation

5. What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of the training and preparation to facilitate these stakeholder dialogues?

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of these discussion groups in the future?

7. What would you like to see happen with the information generated by your group? Who should receive this information?

8. Are there any other good ways you can think of to get student and faculty input and involvement in efforts to improve student success?

APPENDIX 4:

Faculty-Student Dialogues Participant Evaluation

College and/or campus name:

1. I am a (choose one):

- Student recently out of high school
- Student at least five years out of high school
- Full-time faculty
- Part-time faculty
- College staff member or administrator
- Other (please indicate)

2. Overall, how would you rate the experience of your discussion group?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

What is the single most important reason for your rating? Please explain:

3. Please rate the following aspects of your discussion groups overall according to the following scale:

(1) excellent (2) good (3) fair (4) poor

- Moderator teams
- Opportunity to interact with new people
- Quality of discussion

4. What would you say was the most important result/outcome of the group?

5. What would you like to see happen with the information generated by your group? Who should receive this information?

Faculty-Student Dialogues Participant Evaluation

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of these discussion groups in the future?

7. Are there any other good ways you can think of to get student and faculty input and involvement in efforts to improve student success?

8. Would you recommend this process to other students or faculty or not? If not, why not?

APPENDIX 5:

“Success Is What Counts” Discussion Starter: Helping All Community College Students Achieve

Community colleges serve a wide variety of students with a wide variety of goals.

For example:

- ▶ They offer a first step into higher education, often the best step for students who can't afford tuition at a four-year college or who don't have the necessary grades.
- ▶ They are an option for students who prefer to stay close to home.
- ▶ They provide marketable job skills to both recent high school graduates and older students who want to upgrade their careers.

Like all community colleges, our college has some students who are struggling. In other words, we have some achievement gaps—and we want to do something about them. Our goal in this dialogue is to think about how the college and community can work together to close achievement gaps and help all students succeed.

We'll begin by describing three areas that the college and community could focus on to achieve these goals:

- ▶ Making sure students are able to do college-level work.
- ▶ Helping students deal with the pressures in their lives.
- ▶ Ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience.

Of course, each of these approaches to student success may be of value. And you may have other ideas to add. But it's also important to set some priorities so that we can put our resources to the best possible use.

Let's get started by reviewing these three approaches in greater detail. Which do you think is likely to have the greatest impact on student success, and why?

“Success Is What Counts” Discussion Starter: Helping All Community College Students Achieve

Approach 1: Focus on making sure students are ready to do college-level work

For a variety of reasons, too many community college students arrive without a solid enough academic foundation. With adequate preparation, these students are better able to take advantage of the educational opportunities the college has to offer and less likely to be thrown off course by the pressures in their lives.

Therefore, we should do things like:

- ▶ Strengthen remedial education and tutoring to help struggling students catch up.
- ▶ Support improvements in K–12 education and the transition from high school to college.
- ▶ Offer English as a second language (ESL) programs for non-native English speakers.

Those who like this approach say,
“With many students arriving at community college without the academic skills and attitudes it takes to succeed, it’s critical to make sure they’re ready for college-level work.”

But others say,
“The college has a big enough task providing a quality education once students arrive. It’s not practical to expect it to make up for things students should have learned before they get there.”

Approach 2: Focus on helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

Community college students tend to be busy people with busy lives. Most have jobs, many have children and few have a great deal of money. As a result, there are many pressures in their lives that can make it difficult for them to stick with their studies and meet their goals.

Therefore, we should do things like:

- ▶ Ease the burden on lower-income students by providing scholarships and child care.
- ▶ Encourage employers to allow flexible work schedules to help students balance college and work.
- ▶ Mentor students who need support and guidance in managing the challenges in their lives.

Those who like this approach say,
“By helping community college students cope with the pressures that can derail their studies, we can increase their chances of success.”

But others say,
“These are adult college students who need to take responsibility for their personal lives, however complicated they may be. The college should keep its focus on teaching and learning.”

“Success Is What Counts” Discussion Starter: Helping All Community College Students Achieve

Approach 3: Focus on ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

The most important thing we can do to promote student achievement is provide a quality educational experience, one that is challenging and engaging and gives students the skills they need to meet their educational and career goals. If we do that, we’ll be able to help every motivated student to succeed.

Therefore, we should do things like:

- ▶ Raise academic expectations and standards.
- ▶ Train faculty in effective teaching strategies, including those that help less successful students.
- ▶ Invest in up-to-date technology.

Those who like this approach say,
“Having high academic expectations for students and providing them with a rigorous and engaging course of study is the key to student achievement.”

But others say,
“Community colleges serve many different kinds of students, and we shouldn’t assume that all of them need or want an equally rigorous academic experience. Some have more immediate and practical goals.”

THE CHOICES IN BRIEF

Approach 1: Focus on making sure students are ready to do college-level work

▶ **Those who like this approach say,**
“With many students arriving at community college without the academic skills and attitudes it takes to succeed, it’s critical to make sure they’re ready for college-level work.”

Approach 2: Focus on helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

▶ **Those who like this approach say,**
“By helping community college students cope with the pressures that can derail their studies, we can increase their chances of success.”

Approach 3: Focus on ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

▶ **Those who like this approach say,**
“Having high academic expectations for students and providing them with a rigorous and engaging course of study is the key to student achievement.”



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