



Pathways Engagement 101: A Handbook

This introductory guide to engaging faculty, staff and administrators in the design and implementation of Guided Pathways has been created for institutional leaders at every level, and other college stakeholders who have committed themselves to student-success innovation at scale. In developing it, we have drawn on lessons learned over the last 10 years working on-the-ground with colleges around the country on issues related to institutional stakeholder engagement and change leadership. The principles, sample practices and planning tools suggested here are relevant at multiple stages in the change process. While designed to help leaders at multiple levels think and plan more carefully around the human side of change, this resource has been designed to be of particular value to mid-level administrators who are most often charged with coordinating implementation of change efforts and who must manage change in multiple directions (up, down, and out).

Comprehensive change, of the kind sought in Guided Pathways, that aims to improve outcomes at scale, depends on the cultivation and careful maintenance of a healthy institutional climate for student success innovation. In healthy climates faculty, staff and administrators:

- See a strong connection between personal and professional goals and the aims of Guided Pathways
- Believe that innovating at scale for better student outcomes is of urgent importance to everyone at the institution, including themselves
- Feel respected and valued by colleagues and institutional leadership
- Know how proposed changes will impact them day to day
- Understand how student success initiatives align with institutional priorities
- Believe they have the support and guidance to be successful in their roles

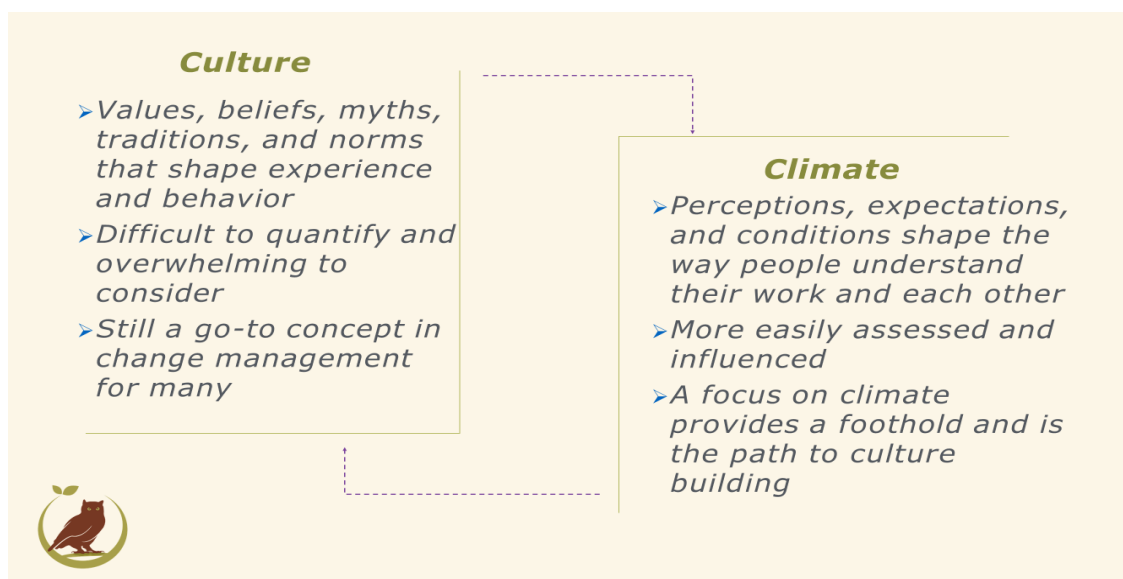
In what follows, we provide a set of concepts, principles and suggested practices associated with healthy climates for student-success innovation. We encourage readers to view this resource as a guide to return to frequently in order to ensure that appropriate attention is paid to the human side of change.

Orienting to Engagement: The Importance of Climate

It is widely accepted that “culture eats strategy for breakfast,” but the work of culture change is daunting and can feel overwhelming to busy college professionals. Where does one even begin when it comes to improving organizational culture? The fact is that each of us has more influence over the human side of change than we generally realize, but understanding the nature of that influence and using it responsibly requires a mindset shift that is hard to make when one is focused exclusively on the concept of culture.

The distinction made in the field of “implementation science” between culture and climate is instructive here, and we suggest it as a starting point for more purposeful planning around engagement and change leadership.

Unlike culture, the all-consuming nature of which makes it difficult to understand and study, climate is about the *perceptions, expectations* and the *conditions* that shape the way faculty, staff and administrators understand their work and the work of implementing Guided Pathways. We suggest leaders at every level focus on climate, rather than culture, when building engagement strategies and plans. In our experience, this lens affords greater practical insight and agency for change leaders at every level.



The Domains of Climate

- leadership vision and strategy
- organizational/governance structure
- standards of accountability
- communication practices & trust (belonging & mattering)
- support & incentives

The domains of climate are important for both near-term and long-term engagement planning, and we suggest returning to them frequently to analyze progress on cultivating a climate of shared ownership for student success innovation. In preparing for careful, purposeful attention to the human side of change, it is important both to keep in mind and commit to practicing the core principles of meaningful engagement. Effective engagement befitting the challenges and needs of large-scale student success innovation is early, often and authentic.

Characteristics of Meaningful Engagement

□ *Early*

- ✓ *Begin by listening to front-line faculty and staff.*
- ✓ *Be clear about which decisions have been made already, and about where there is room for collaborative design.*

□ *Often*

- ✓ *Engage faculty for mid-course corrections, ongoing input, and enduring co-ownership.*

□ *Authentic*

- ✓ *Lead with questions, and take an asset-based approach when faculty and staff raise concerns.*
- ✓ *Err on the side of transparency.*
- ✓ *Follow up and follow through.*
- ✓ *Coordinate efforts, from top to bottom.*

Tips for “Enlightened Leaders”

Over the course of our work with dozens of colleges in more than half the states in the country, we have observed that particularly effective leaders share certain sensibilities and engage in common practices. These enlightened leaders understand that cultivation of distributed leadership is essential to creating the conditions for accelerated implementation of the core components of Guided Pathways.

What ‘Enlightened Leaders’ Do

✓ Demonstrate Respect

- Lead by listening
- Demonstrate respect for all members of the campus community
- Recognize the efforts of others whenever possible

✓ Use Data for Inquiry, Not Punishment

- Increase not just data collection capacity but also the capacity to help different groups access, translate, and use data to support change work
- Insist on data literacy and provide support to make it possible
- Use data to inspire curiosity and collaboration

✓ Support Experimentation

- Create space for failure, an inevitable part of the process
- Incentivize innovation materially and structurally
- Create possibilities for short-term wins



Beware of the “Fundamental Attribution Error”

Humans have the tendency to overestimate the significance of personality traits and to underestimate the significance of the context and conditions that shape people’s responses to change. Effective leaders resist the natural tendency to focus on personality traits, and instead focus on the conditions and incentive structures that shape the perceptions of various groups of faculty and staff.

Developing Engagement Plans

In this section we provide checklists of questions for design teams to consider carefully as they begin planning for high-caliber, meaningful engagement of faculty and staff. The first set of questions concern the institutional climate for innovation, while the second set concerns faculty and staff attitudes toward Guided Pathways specifically.

Assessing Institutional Climate

- ✓ What are the existing faculty and staff engagement vehicles at our institution? Who participates?
- ✓ When do we engage faculty and staff in the life of institutional interventions?
- ✓ How do college leaders communicate with and support adjunct faculty?
- ✓ Are faculty and staff given public recognition for accomplishments?
- ✓ To what extent do faculty and staff feel respected, heard and valued by their departments and institutional leaders (even when those leaders make unpopular decisions)?
- ✓ How often do faculty and staff meet within their departments to discuss student completion efforts?
- ✓ Do faculty currently meet with colleagues across departments to discuss student success efforts? Do faculty and student support services meet regularly to discuss student success efforts?
- ✓ Around which types of initiatives or issues are adjunct and full-time faculty most likely to engage? How do we know this?
- ✓ To what extent do faculty and staff interact with institutional data?
- ✓ What kinds of professional development or co-learning opportunities are available for faculty and staff?
- ✓ Who are the champions of institutional student completion efforts/initiatives? How did they come to be champions?
- ✓ What are the barriers and challenges to meaningful engagement at our institution?
- ✓ Are there existing venues or opportunities in which to build engagement?

Assessing Pathways in the Context of Faculty & Staff Perceptions

- ✓ How have faculty and staff been involved in the decision or development of plans for Pathways? Where have they been engaged separately, and where have they been engaged together?
- ✓ Do faculty and staff that helped believe the Guided Pathways can make a significant positive difference in student success and be scaled?
- ✓ How have (or how will) faculty and staff members gain a clear understanding of how Pathways will be implemented?
- ✓ How will faculty come to see that the chosen innovation is a good one, that it is important, and that it is important *now*?

- ✓ Which faculty members do you most need to support and champion the change, and why? What is their current perception of the quality of leadership and the value of innovation?
- ✓ Who are the existing champions of the change or intervention?
- ✓ What actions can be taken to expand the number of faculty and staff champions of the intervention?
- ✓ What is the role of faculty in the implementation of the pathway? How much creative control is given to faculty to tweak the pathway?
- ✓ What kind of conversations and deliberations do faculty need to have in order to come to intellectual terms with the uncomfortable changes that will likely come with adopting the pathway?
- ✓ What kinds of conditions and supports do faculty need in order to accept and embrace the actual changes that come with adopting the pathway or other new ways of doing something?

Considering “Fit”

For implementation scientists, the concept of “fit” is essential for understanding what accelerates and slows progress. The following factors should be carefully considered when planning for near-term and long-term engagement of faculty staff. Keep in mind that consideration of these factors will yield a deeper understanding coming pain points for faculty and staff. Being clear-eyed about these challenges will improve the design team’s chances of creating an appropriate engagement strategy.

- ▶ Relative Advantage – Does Pathways help faculty and staff do something we need or want to do, or that is expected of us?
- ▶ Compatibility – How does Pathways resonate with the core values/identities of various groups of faculty and staff (especially those who will be asked to carry the water)? Where are there tensions and perceived conflicts?
- ▶ Complexity – Do people think it’s going to be hard to do the comprehensive work of implementing Pathways well? Are they right?
- ▶ Trialability – Will faculty and staff be able to experiment with key aspect of institutional reforms during design and implementation to see how they work without high levels of risk or a pre-condition of required commitment?
- ▶ Reinvention – How much creative input do various groups/stakeholders get in design and implementation?
- ▶ Risk – What do people think they risk losing with Pathways? Are they right?

Engagement Planning Tools

In this section we offer a set of tools to support effective engagement planning. Stakeholder mapping, power mapping and the creation of 90-day engagement plans are three useful approaches to developing an engagement strategy that is calibrated to institutional realities and nimble enough to be refined over time. When developing an engagement strategy, keep the following initial tips in mind:

- Take the time to assess the institutional climate and conditions for accelerated implementation of Pathways before diving into engagement planning.
- Bring a sufficiently diverse group of people together to inform engagement planning
- Be as intentional about engagement planning as you are about the planning for technical implementation of Pathways components
- Commit to meaningful engagement in the long-term, but plan in 90-day and 120-day increments to ensure effective implementation of your engagement strategy.

Stakeholder Mapping

This Stakeholder Mapping tool should be used as a deliberative exercise aimed at helping the design team plan for engagement. Not every group of faculty and staff needs to be engaged in the same way, at the same depth or at the same time. Thinking carefully about sequencing and prioritizing engagement activities is a crucial component of effective engagement

INFLUENCE	High			
	Moderate			
	Low			
		DEGREE OF SUPPORT FOR PATHWAYS		

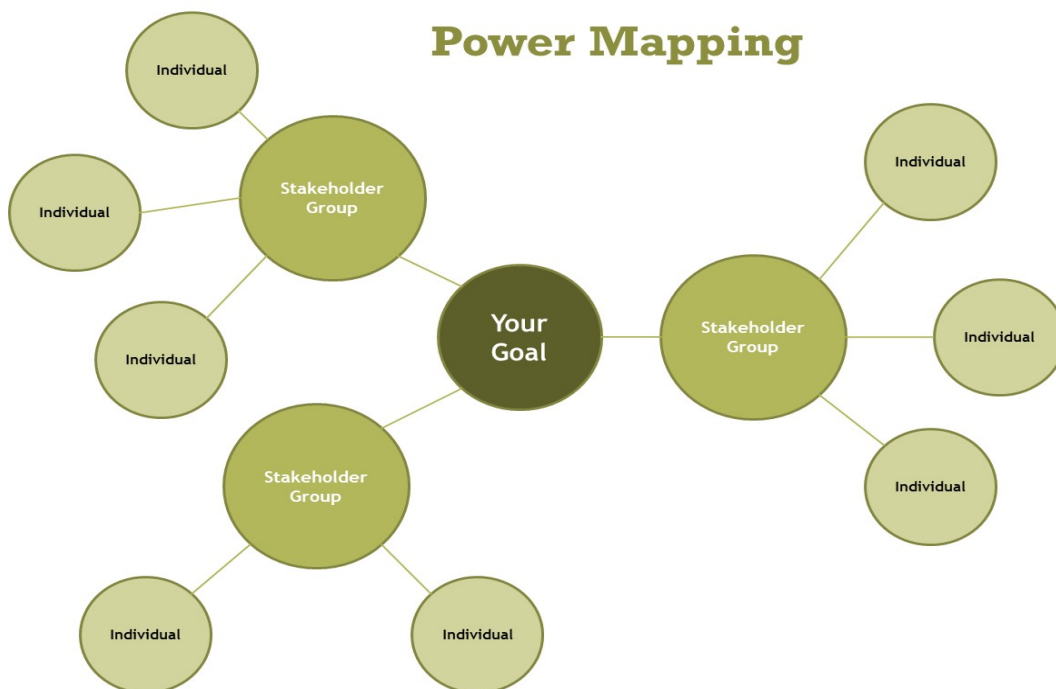
Stakeholder Mapping Discussion Questions

The following questions should be considered during the stakeholder mapping exercise:

- Have we accounted for all our key groups/individuals?
- Do we understand and agree about the sources of potential resistance (e.g. self-interest, fear of change, fear of not being successful, principled opposition, weariness)?
- How does our core story resonate with the motivations of different audiences, and what does that mean for framing and focus when making the case to different groups?
- What are our natural opportunities for case-making and engagement of different audiences? Where do we lack existing venues for important/difficult conversations?
- What does our analysis suggest with respect to sequencing and timing of engagement activities? Who should be engaged when, in what ways and with what frequency?
- What does our analysis suggest with respect to appropriate depth of engagement of our key groups/individuals (e.g. inform, consult, engage, empower)?

Power Mapping

Power mapping is another approach to engagement planning. For this exercise, choose a goal or target of your work and place it in the center circle. Identify the groups that have influence over what you're trying to accomplish – positive **and** negative influence. Identify the key individuals in those stakeholder groups that serve as “gatekeepers” to some essential element of your goal – supporters **and** those that might oppose what you're trying to accomplish. Use insights from this activity to plan key meetings, stages of engagement, etc.



Conducting a “Pre-Mortem” Exercise

A Pre-Mortem exercise is an approach to creative risk-analysis aimed at informing high-quality, near-term and long-term engagement planning. Conducting a pre-mortem periodically with different groups of stakeholders can be useful for avoiding pitfalls and for making mid-course corrections in implementation of Pathways.

- ▶ **Step 1:** Choose your focus. Be clear about the specific change you’re pursuing and will be discussing during the exercise.
- ▶ **Step 2:** Imagine an unspecified, unmitigated fail. “We’ve looked into the crystal ball and the picture of the future is grim. The effort has failed. Not only has it failed, but it’s failed *completely* and *miserably*. But the crystal ball doesn’t tell us why it failed...”
- ▶ **Step 3:** Generate reasons for the failure. Each person works alone quietly for 5 minutes to generate a list of all the reasons they can think of to explain the failure.
- ▶ **Step 4:** Work in your groups to consolidate the list. Each person takes turns sharing 1 reason, “round robin” style, until all of the individual lists have been recorded on a flip chart.
- ▶ **Step 5:** Work in your groups to rank the reasons. Choose the top 3 items on your list. These are the most likely and serious reasons for failure that your group has generated.
- ▶ **Step 6:** Revisit your plan with these risks in mind. What have you learned? Begin generating solutions and vetting their relative priority and viability. Focus: What is in our control

Creating a 90-Day-Plan

A 90-day plan is an approach to imposing helpful discipline around engagement activities. 90-day plans specify clear goals and establish accountability for progress toward those goals. This sort of intentional approach to engagement planning is important for long-term success of Pathways implementation.

- ▶ **Prioritize:** Conduct a ‘pre-mortem’ exercise to identify your top 3 challenges/priorities.
- ▶ **Establish goals:** Outline the critical few things you must do in the next 30/60/90 days. Be specific. Have a clear picture of success. Don’t create a laundry list.
- ▶ **Activities to accomplish the goal:** List the steps you’ll take to achieve your goal.
- ▶ **Owner:** Specify who is accountable for the goal. It may be you, or this could be a spot to leverage key experts, partners, etc.
- ▶ **Due date:** State when your goal will be achieved.
- ▶ **Others implicated:** Focus on things you can control, but note where you’ll be relying on communication with others to achieve your goal.
- ▶ **Support/resources:** Identify the things you must have (within your control) to achieve your goal.



30-60-90 Day Engagement Planning Template

The following template is designed to support purposeful, near-term engagement planning

	Goals to accomplish	Activities to accomplish goals	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Support / resources needed (within my control)	Status
30							

	Goals to accomplish	Activities to accomplish goals	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Support / resources needed (within my control)	Status
60							

	Goals to accomplish	Activities to accomplish goals	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Support / resources needed (within my control)	Status
90							