



Achieving the Dream™

2022 Leader College of Distinction

Application

If you have questions or concerns about the Leader College of Distinction application, please contact network@achievingthedream.org.

Applications are due Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. ET.

Introduction

Your institution is part of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) Network, the nation's largest network of community colleges working to become strong engines of student and community growth. For over 15 years, ATD has worked with colleges across the country to redesign the student experience with the ultimate goal of increasing credential attainment and closing equity gaps.

ATD uses the designation of Leader College to recognize and celebrate colleges that have achieved and sustained substantial improvements in student outcomes. ATD Leader Colleges are strong in the capacities fundamental to implementing reforms and are models for how colleges can better serve their students. The lessons from their experiences provide valuable insights to the ATD Network.

Leader Colleges may choose to apply to seek the higher designation, **Leader College of Distinction**.

The Leader College of Distinction metrics are rigorous. Colleges must report **four years of data** and show a substantive **three-year upward trend** on the **three** metrics selected in the All Students (Overall) group, including at least one lagging indicator such as completion or transfer. In addition, Colleges must demonstrate, through disaggregation, the **narrowing of equity gaps** on at least **two student characteristic categories** on **two or more metrics**. These more rigorous requirements are meant to motivate and recognize sustained and proactive reform efforts that result in greater student success and equity.

ATD Network colleges have long championed equity in their student success efforts and, consistent with ATD's Statement on Equity, are committed to dismantling the barriers to student access and success that exist in our institutions. You will find that the Leader College of Distinction application includes questions about your institution's equity efforts, as well as current and future opportunities to deepen racial equity work necessitated by the effects of structural racism.

Leader College of Distinction Application



Leader Colleges of Distinction have their own identity as part of the ATD Network. Colleges earning this designation will receive priority participation in ATD's innovation initiatives and for competitive grant opportunities when ATD is able to determine which institutions may apply. They will be asked to present and facilitate more sessions at ATD events and institutes, be asked to serve as mentor colleges, and receive priority to be featured in ATD's communications that reach thousands of individuals, funders, and national media outlets.

How to Apply

Colleges must upload the following completed application documents to the Application Submission website [here](#).

- Application Questions completed inside of the application form (upload PDF form)
- Data Collection Workbook (upload Excel workbook)
- President/Chancellor's Letter of Support and Engagement (upload as a PDF)

What Makes a Strong Application

Review the application evaluation rubric [here](#) [PDF] and consider how your responses align

Questions or Concerns

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Achieving the Dream staff at network@achievingthedream.org.

Institutional Contacts

Role	First and Last Name	Title	Phone Number	Email
Application Contact				
Public Information Officer				
President/CEO				

Section I: Quantitative

Leader College of Distinction Data Collection Template

ATD requires that any institution applying for Leader College of Distinction must meet a certain set of student performance metrics. Please complete this required data collection template with evidence of growth or an upward trend in at least three performance metrics for the most recent four-year period. These are specified in the Leader College of Distinction data template.

All metrics require four years of data with evidence of growth or an upward trend for at least three years. To apply for the Leader College of Distinction designation, you must select three metrics — two from the purple tabs (Group A, leading indicators), and one from the orange tabs (Group B, lagging indicators) — and demonstrate that growth occurred in the Overall category.

Further, you must indicate that an equity gap was narrowed or closed between the groups in at least two student characteristics on at least two metrics. Note that gateway/college-level courses count for a single metric toward this count, even if you present data for the three separate options (Math Only, English Only, Math/English Combined).

Download the Data Template [here](#) [.xlsx] to view and complete the data collection.

Data Analysis

Please describe improvement in three or more metrics. The same reforms and practices may apply to multiple gains; you will be asked to reflect on each outcome individually and describe how institutional changes contributed to the gains in outcomes. These metrics should be reflective of the Overall section of your data template.

I. Metric One Choose an item.

- i. Describe the improvement on this metric. Include the nature, scale, and timing of the student success reforms and practices that were implemented to improve these outcomes *and* the ways in which your analysis shows they contributed to the improved outcomes.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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- ii. Does this metric have a three-year change of at least three percentage points?
- Yes
 - No

IF THE ANSWER IS NO, please justify by explaining why the change is substantive.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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iii. Did your institution narrow an equity gap on this measure?

Yes

No

IF THE ANSWER IS YES: Describe:

- The student groups for whom the equity gap narrowed or closed
- Why your institution focused on these student groups as part of your student success agenda
- The reforms and practices that contributed to these outcomes

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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- iv. Any gap narrowing of less than two percentage points should be justified explaining why the change is substantive. If the gap was not narrowed at all, please leave this space blank.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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II. Metric Two Choose an item.

- i. Describe the improvement on this metric. Include the nature, scale, and timing of the student success reforms and practices that were implemented to improve these outcomes. Also describe the ways/processes in which your analysis shows they contributed to the improved outcomes.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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- ii. Does this metric have a three-year change of at least three percentage points?
- Yes
 - No

IF THE ANSWER IS NO: Please justify by explaining why the change is substantive.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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iii. Did your institution narrow an equity gap on this measure?

Yes

No

IF THE ANSWER IS YES: Describe:

- The student groups for whom the equity gap narrowed or closed
- why your institution focused on these student groups as part of your student success agenda
- The reforms and practices that contributed to these outcomes

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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- iv. Any gap narrowing of less than two percentage points should be justified with a trend note explaining why the change is substantive. If the gap was not narrowed at all, please leave this space blank.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

III. Metric Three Choose an item.

- i. Describe the improvement on this metric. Include the nature, scale, and timing of the student success reforms and practices that were implemented to improve these outcomes *and* the ways/processes in which your analysis shows they contributed to the improved outcomes.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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ii. Does this metric have a three-year change of at least three percentage points?

Yes

No

IF NO: Please justify by explaining why the change is substantive.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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iii. Did your institution narrow an equity gap on this measure?

Yes

No

IF THE ANSWER IS YES: Describe:

- The student groups for whom the equity gap narrowed or closed
- Why your institution focused on these student groups as part of your student success agenda
- The reforms and practices that contributed to these outcomes

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

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- iv. Any gap narrowing of less than two percentage points should be justified by explaining why the change is substantive. If the gap was not narrowed at all, please leave this space blank.

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

Section II: Narrative

This section should elaborate on the narratives of success on specific outcomes that you described in Section I.

- I. Please reflect on the extent to which your institution's culture promotes equity and demonstrate how your institution's approach builds on the foundations of the seven capacity areas of the ATD Institutional Capacity Framework. Share both how your work connects to the successes you shared in Section I and the opportunities you have identified for future work. Your narrative should include specifics on how you have addressed campus climate and fostered an inclusive culture.

In addition to your overall equity work, discuss any equity work specifically focused on racial equity. Discussions of equity should include not only outcomes but any qualitative data you have on sense of belonging or student experiences on campus.

Successful applicants will tell a cohesive, engaging story of how the institution leveraged and/or augmented institutional strengths to implement transformative student success reforms or programs, how your institution advances equity, including racial equity specifically, and the extent to which your college has built and/or strengthened capacity to sustain these reforms and achieve equitable outcomes at scale.

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Maximum character count: 4300 characters

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the applicant to enter their response within the 4300-character limit.

II. Benchmarking and Goals Process

Does your institution have specific goals or benchmarks for student success metrics?
e.g., 75% of all degree-seeking students completing 24 college-level credits in their first year; narrowing the racial equity gap on the percentage of students still enrolled at your institution after their first year; or, increasing the percentage of Pell students who earn any award in three years by 10 percentage points.

- Yes
- No

IF THE ANSWER IS YES: Please discuss:

- How the goals or benchmarks were set (e.g., examining institutional data, state data, national data, and/or data from similar institutions)
 - If you sourced data from outside of your institution, what was your source? (This is not scored.)
- How these goals or benchmarks align with your strategic plan and/or equity goals
- Your college’s degree of satisfaction with progress toward reaching these goals or benchmarks. Are student outcomes on track with the institutional goals?

Maximum character count: 2500 characters

Section III: President/Chancellor Letter of Support and Engagement

Please include a letter from the president/chancellor that further explains why the institution should elevate to **Leader College of Distinction** status.

Submit your letter as a PDF document on the submission site [here](#).

Your letter should include how your institution demonstrates a commitment to equity, and your contributions to the ATD Network, including:

- How your college has increased overall student success metrics (i.e., completion metrics);
- Ways your college is centering equity in your student success work (include your institution's equity statement and plan of action if you have one);
- The progress you have made around equity on campus and what structure is driving that change;
- Current and future opportunities to deepen your racial equity work;
- Ways your college has contributed to the ATD Network (e.g., hosted other colleges for learning days, presented on the college's ATD work at national conferences, contributed to an ATD publication, participated in national media calls, participated in ATD grant funded learning initiatives); and
- Thoughts about how your college will continue to contribute to the Network as a **Leader College of Distinction**.

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