COVID-19 Reflection Exercise

Achieving
the Dream ™

Introduction

Many of the colleges in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) network are changing practices and processes as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teams at the colleges are identifying practices they can "leave behind" and processes that they want to leverage sustainably in the future.

Coaches have expressed interest in helping colleges reflect on their COVID-19 experiences, focusing on what they learned that can be applied and scaled in what is likely to be a time of ongoing uncertainty and disruption. The COVID-19 Reflection Exercise for ATD Colleges was developed by three ATD coaches who support Tennessee colleges in collaboration with several ATD staff.

We believe this reflective tool, either by itself or together with other ATD resources, will help colleges prioritize near-to-medium term actions, allocate resources strategically and scenario plan for ongoing operations. These additional resources are available at ATD COVID-19 Resource site in the "Data Strategy During COVID-19" section and include:

- Data-Informed Decision Making in Times of Disruption Guide
- Building Adaptive Capacity for Agility and Resiliency Guide

Instructions for ATD colleges

Determining who will participate in the Reflective Exercise

The exercise is designed to be used by various configurations of stakeholders. It could be completed by the student success teams with or without the President's cabinet; by a crisis response team; in department meetings; or by a large cross-section of the college population. The administration of the Reflection document should match the culture of the college. However, since the college's actions impact employees differently based on their respective positions, it is important to include a diverse group of stakeholders. There is an optional question at the end of the Reflection that allows participants to identify their functional area of responsibility. We also recommend that these differences be acknowledged in the Reflection exercise.

We suggest that any cover email or verbal instructions that accompany the exercise presents it as a learning exercise and not an evaluation of individual or department performance. This perception can be minimized by a clear statement about why this exercise will help the college build additional capacity for supporting all students, faculty and staff in times of disruption. The communication likely should originate with the college president or other senior leader.

Completing the Reflective Exercise

In each section of the Reflection there are opportunities for respondents to offer comments and describe lessons learned. The responses will provide powerful examples of the hard work and the sincere interest of the college community, and showcase creativity, innovation and commitment.

The open-ended questions also provide a rich source information that can be shared throughout the college community once the exercise is completed. The question that prompts storytelling about some successes (employees, students, programs, etc.) provides content that can be shared in newsletters, websites and other venues as reminders of the great work being done by employees, students and community partners.

Discussing the Reflective Exercise and Identify Actionable Next Steps

We recommend the student success teams and the President's cabinet meet to discuss the findings of the Reflective exercise with a goal of sharing what was learned, celebrating successes, driving continuous improvement actions, and allocating resources towards strategic priorities.

This discussion can be facilitated by ATD coaches in a virtual coaching session. Coaches have been trained to use the virtual capacity café structure to organize whole team and break-out group discussions with a focus on actionable next steps.

Sharing the Output from the Reflective Exercise with the College Community

We strongly recommend that however the exercise is administered at the college, summaries of the results are shared widely. Different ways to share feedback could include: the broad themes that emerge; listing of key strategies that seem to be working; discussion of policies that might need to be changed or have been changed; the training that will be offered to address identified needs.

The message should be clear and repeated: "We are a learning community. We're learning, we want to share what we've learned, we want to apply our learning to policies and practices that help employees and students succeed in greater numbers."

And lastly, "We sincerely thank you for your advice and guidance as we look to the future."

COVID-19 Reflection Exercise for ATD Colleges

"You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before."

--- Rahm Emanuel

1. **As you reflect on your college's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please take a few minutes to share how your college met the educational and personal needs during the crisis:**

	No difficulty at all *All the supports were/fell in place*	Some difficulty *Minor challenges, but resolved*	Much difficulty *Infrastructure exists, but major resources needed*	Nearly impossible *No infrastructure in place to support this*	Not applicable	Comments and/or Lessons Learned
Ability to transition to remote working environment for:						
Faculty (Virtual Classroom, Test Proctoring, etc.)						
Student Support Staff						
Operations Staff (M/O, Business, Leadership)						
Administrative Staff						

	No difficulty at all *All the supports were/fell in place*	Some difficulty *Minor challenges, but resolved*	Much difficulty *Infrastructure exists, but major resources needed*	Nearly impossible *No infrastructure in place to support this*	Not applicable	Comments and/or Lessons Learned
Increasing Infrastructure to Support Remote Work (LMS, Teleconferencing) for:						
Faculty						
Student Support Services Staff						
Operations staff						
Administrative Staff						
Students						
Timely communications to:						
Employees						
Students						
Community supporters /friends						

	No difficulty at all	Some difficulty	Much difficulty	Nearly impossible	Not applicable	Comments and/or Lessons Learned
	All the supports were/fell in place	*Minor challenges, but resolved*	*Infrastructure exists, but major resources needed*	*No infrastructure in place to support this*		
Increased Training to Support Effective Strategies for Remote Work for:						
Faculty						
Student support staff						
Operations staff						
Administrative Staff						
Maintaining College Culture:						
A culture of student success						
Academic rigor/integrity						
Culture of Care for Employees						
Changes in Policy or Practice						
A focus on equity and inclusion						

	No difficulty at all *All the supports were/fell in place*	Some difficulty *Minor challenges, but resolved*	Much difficulty *Infrastructure exists, but major resources needed*	Nearly impossible *No infrastructure in place to support this*	Not applicable	Comments and/or Lessons Learned
Funding/budget						
Resource re-allocation						
Providing local or state emergency grants to support students						
Distributing CARES Act grant support to students						
Enrollment strategies for Summer						
Enrollment Strategies for Fall						

2. **What do you think went particularly well [or better than expected] and why?**

3. **What do you think did not go as well [or worse than expected] and why?**

4. What are the 1-2 key lessons learned from your college's response to COVID-19 that will impact your student success work in the future? What "old ways" of doing business do you recommend "leaving behind"? What "new ways of business" do you want to preserve going forward? What opportunities to do things differently did you discover?

5. Is there a story or two that best illustrates the kind of successful and/or innovative response to the Covid-19 crisis that you can share that might inspire others?

6. What is your area of responsibility (faculty, staff, administration, other)? This question is voluntary.