






# Workbook for Planning for Shortened Academic Terms

## Purpose

Achieving the Dream (ATD) is pleased to offer this workbook, designed to guide colleges through the preparatory and planning work that will help build shortened course formats at their institutions. The workbook is a complementary tool to the *Preparing for Shortened Academic Terms: A Guide*, which goes into more detail about why colleges are making this shift, what the research says about the impact of the shift, and promising practices from colleges and ATD coaches who have successfully implemented this student success effort. This workbook is divided into phases of the work, which do not necessarily need to be completed sequentially. Instead, as the college prepares and plans for this change in its unique context, these phases may be occurring as parallel workstreams. The content in this workbook draws from change leadership principles; ATD's experience implementing institution-wide transformational change efforts; and planning for structural, process, and cultural changes specific to this type of effort.

## Phases of work

The content of this workbook is split into the following phases of the work.

-  Part 1: Early Decision Making
-  Part 2: Purpose and Case Making
-  Part 3: Strategy
-  Part 4: Academic Planning
-  Part 5: Support Planning

## Part 1: Early Decision Making

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A key early decision in the process is to define the scope, timeline, and goals of the work for the college. For example, a college may want to plan only the exploratory phase and not yet get deep into the academic or support work that accompanies this transition, or a college may want to plan out their entire journey from exploration to offering.

**Scope:** What are the boundaries of your planning and implementation? Where will your college begin and end your efforts?

**Timeline:** How much time are you giving yourself to complete this scope of work?

**Goals:** What is important to accomplish during this scope of the work?

**Metrics:** What data do you need to complete this phase? What key indicators will let you know if this phase of the work was a success?

**Problem Identification/Definition:** What problem are you trying to solve with this transformation? How are you defining your problem to be solved?

**Key Stakeholders (Team Composition):** Who needs to share critical feedback and assist with making decisions at this stage of the work?

**Communication Plan:** Who needs to be aware that this part of the work is occurring? Not all the stakeholders in the communication plan need to be on the initial team.

**Inclusion of the Student Voice:** Where do we need to elevate and include the student perspective?

**Actionable Steps:** What steps do you need to take to accomplish the goals set for this phase of the work?



Key Decisions	
<b>Examples</b>	
Scope	<i>This work will encompass research through our own data collection and that of other institutions.</i>
Timeline	<i>By the end of the fall semester.</i>
Goals	<i>Do some initial research in the field, explore the impact of this work at similar colleges; look into institutional data on course success across term length.</i>
Metrics	<i>Look at institutional data focused on early momentum metrics; Course success across term length.</i>
Problem Identification	<i>Poor course success rates; high withdrawal rates; poor part-time persistence and completion.</i>
Scope	
Timeline	
Goals	
Metrics	
Problem Identification	

Team Composition	
Key Stakeholder Areas	Specific Stakeholders to be Represented
<b>Examples</b>	
Faculty	<i>Science, Math, English, Advisors etc.</i>
Support Staff	<i>Registrar, Testing, Financial Aid, Orientation, Advisors, etc.</i>
Administration	<i>Deans, Unit Supervisors, etc.</i>



Communication Plan		
Role	Message	Modality
<b>Examples</b>		
<i>Ex. Faculty</i>	<i>Bring awareness to the exploration and invite participation.</i>	<i>Department meeting/Faculty Council</i>
<i>Ex. Support Staff</i>	<i>Bring awareness to the exploration and invite participation.</i>	<i>Department meeting/Staff Council</i>
<i>Ex, Business Offices/Bookstore</i>	<i>Bring awareness to the exploration and invite participation.</i>	<i>Department meeting</i>

Actionable Steps	Notes
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Create exploratory team</i>	
<i>Ex. Collect our own data</i>	<i>Data sub-team</i>
<i>Ex. Craft message to share with stakeholders</i>	<i>Work with marketing</i>

## Part 2: Purpose and Case-Making

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This phase of the work involves investigating your “Why” and then using this information to make the case for a transition to shortened academic terms across the institution. The data collected in the exploratory phase should be the foundation for your “Why” and will be key in creating the case to share with the college.

**Timeline:** How much time are you giving yourself to complete this portion of the work?

**Goals:** What do you hope to accomplish during this phase of the work?

**Metrics:** What data do you need to complete this phase? What key indicators will let you know if this phase of the work was a success? Are you anticipating unintended consequences that these efforts may produce?

**Key Stakeholders (Team Composition):** Who needs to be giving critical feedback and assisting with making decisions at this stage of the work? Note this may include the same stakeholders from the earlier phase or may include additional stakeholders as the work progresses.

**Crafting your “Why”: What message will most resonate with stakeholders?** This will be the message that will explain the purpose of this change to institutional stakeholders. It should be data-informed and include sense-making of the current data, who is harmed, how the shortened academic terms will help, who will benefit the most. It should also relate directly to your institutional mission and strategic goals. All data should be disaggregated to include unique contextualized student populations as well as intersecting identities where possible (examples include student parents, working students, Veteran students, etc.).

**Communication Plan:** Who needs to be aware that this part of the work is occurring? Not all the stakeholders in the communication plan need to be on the initial team.

**Inclusion of the Student Voice:** Where do we need to elevate and include the student perspective?

**Key Foundational Training: Who needs to be trained in order to do this work successfully?** This includes any training that will help stakeholders understand how this transition can be used as an equity strategy to student success.

**Actionable Steps:** What steps do you need to take to accomplish the goals set for this phase of the work?



Key Decisions	
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Timeline</i>	<i>By the end of the spring semester.</i>
<i>Ex. Goals</i>	<i>Conduct sense-making of institutional data, create a story to share with stakeholders to highlight the purpose of the work, communicate early messaging</i>
<i>Ex. Metrics</i>	<i>Session feedback from stakeholders (including students) General understanding of the purpose of the change at the college</i>
Timeline	
Goals	
Metrics	

Team Composition	
Key Stakeholder Areas	Specific Stakeholders to be Represented
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Faculty</i>	<i>Science, Math, English, Faculty Council Chair, etc.</i>
<i>Ex. Support Staff</i>	<i>Registrar, Testing, FA, Institutional Research</i>
<i>Ex. Administration</i>	<i>Key Senior Leadership to show support and priority</i>



Key Data Points in Crafting the “Why”	
Course success rates by term length	
Course success rates by modality	
Course success rates by Gateway course	
Course success rates by key program requirements	
Course success rates by disaggregated population	
Part-time to full-time ratio	
Course success rates by enrollment status	
Average number of hours students enroll in per semester	
Term-to-term persistence rates	
Average time to completion	
Average credits earned at completion	
Withdrawal rate <i>Disaggregated by student populations, by program, and if possible, the pattern or withdrawal (what week do they typically withdraw at highest rates?)</i>	



Crafting your “Why”	
<b>Example</b>	
<i>What do we see now (current state)?</i>	<i>Ex. course success rates by modality, withdrawal rates, attendance patterns, time to completion, persistence rates disaggregated by student population</i>
What do we see now (current state)?	
What does the data tell us?	
What does that mean?	
Who is most impacted?	
Who is least impacted?	
Who will benefit from this change?	
How will this transition benefit students?	
What is the benefit to the institution?	
How does this tie into your mission and your institutional strategic plan?	

Communication Plan		
Role	Message	Modality
<b>Examples</b>		
<i>Ex. Faculty</i>	<i>Share the “Why” and the impact for students.</i>	<i>Faculty Council Presentation</i>
<i>Ex. Support Staff</i>	<i>Share the “Why” and the impact for students.</i>	<i>Department Meeting</i>
<i>Ex. Business Offices/Bookstore</i>	<i>Share the “Why” and the impact for students.</i>	<i>Department Meetings</i>





Professional Development	Stakeholders
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. HSS training</i>	<i>All faculty and support staff</i>
<i>Ex. T&amp;L training</i>	<i>Faculty</i>
<i>Ex. Equity training</i>	<i>College-wide</i>

Actionable Steps	Notes
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Collect any data that will help with making the case</i>	
<i>Ex. Create Sense-Making Presentation</i>	<i>Ask IR for help making data understandable and actionable</i>
<i>Ex. Get on calendar for Department meetings</i>	
<i>Ex. Arrange key foundational training for stakeholders</i>	<i>Ex. equity, HSS or T&amp;L training</i>

## Part 3: Strategy

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This phase of the work will craft the institutional strategy that will guide the early implementation of this transition. Key early strategic decisions include what the academic calendar will look like and which classes will move to shortened terms first. Some colleges decide that they will convert all classes simultaneously to a shortened term while others decide to pilot with the top 10 or 25 enrolled courses and others choose to change by program. Institutional strategy will be influenced by the data collected in earlier phases, the size of the institution, the number of courses offered, and the capacity for change which includes the willingness (buy-in) to make this transition across the college.

**Timeline:** How much time are you giving yourself to complete this portion of the work?

**Goals:** What do you hope to accomplish during this phase of the work?

**Strategy: What is the plan for early implementation?** What will the academic calendar look like? What classes will be moved to a shortened term first? This strategy should be data-informed and align best with what the college has capacity to implement and what it is trying to accomplish..

**Metrics:** What data do you need to complete this phase? What key indicators will let you know if this phase of the work was a success? Are you anticipating unintended consequences that these efforts may produce?

**Key Stakeholders (Team Composition):** Who needs to be giving critical feedback and assisting with making decisions at this stage of the work? Note this may include the same stakeholders from the earlier phase or may include additional stakeholders as the work progresses.

**Communication Plan:** Who needs to be aware that this part of the work is occurring? Not all the stakeholders in the communication plan need to be on the initial team.

**Inclusion of the Student Voice:** Where do we need to elevate and include the student perspective?

**Key Foundational Training:** Who needs to be trained in order to do this work successfully? This includes any training that will help stakeholders understand how this transition can be used as an equity strategy to student success.

**Actionable Steps:** What steps do you need to take to accomplish the goals set for this phase of the work?



Key Decisions	
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Timeline</i>	<i>By the end of the spring summer term.</i>
<i>Ex. Goals</i>	<i>Determine which courses will convert to a shortened term first (all, top 10, top 25, programmatic)</i>
<i>Ex. Metrics (implementation and impact)</i>	<i>Number of courses converted, number of students impacted, etc.</i>
Timeline	
Goals	
Metrics	

Team Composition	
Key Stakeholder Areas	Specific Stakeholders to be Represented
<b>Examples</b>	
<i>Ex. Faculty</i>	<i>Science, Math, English, Faculty Council Chair, etc.</i>
<i>Ex. Support Staff</i>	<i>Registrar, Testing, FA, Institutional Research</i>
<i>Ex. Administration</i>	<i>Key Senior Leadership to show support and priority</i>



Crafting your strategy	
Course success rates	<i>Ex. include developmental/gateway courses, high enrollment courses, key progression course, etc.</i>
What will the academic calendar look like?	<i>Ex. two seven-week terms</i>
What is the institutional plan for course conversion?	<i>Ex. top 25 enrolled courses, Gen Ed courses</i>
Which option will have the most student impact?	<i>Ex. sheer number impact</i>
Which option will have the most equitable student impact?	<i>Ex. impact underserved students, part-time students, adult learners, and student parents</i>
Which option do we have the most institutional capacity for?	<i>Ex. consider leadership support (at all levels), funding, technology, level of expertise, etc.</i>
Which option do we have the most academic affairs support for?	<i>Ex. where are faculty most supportive and willing?</i>
Which option do we have the most student affairs support for?	<i>Ex. where are support staff most supportive and willing?</i>
Which option is most in alignment with our price range?	<i>Ex. does our strategy include student success technology/platforms, active learning platforms, professional development expenses, etc.</i>
What technology will be required for our strategy?	
What professional development will be offered with our strategy?	
What will strategy look like scaled?	<i>Ex. Think to scale early in planning.</i>



Communication Plan		
Role	Message	Modality
<b>Examples</b>		
<i>Ex. Faculty</i>	<i>Share the strategy and gather feedback.</i>	<i>Faculty Council Presentation/Department Meetings</i>
<i>Ex. Support Staff</i>	<i>Share the strategy and gather feedback</i>	<i>Department Meetings</i>
<i>Ex. Business Offices/Bookstore</i>	<i>Share the strategy and gather feedback</i>	<i>Department Meetings</i>
<i>Ex. External Stakeholders (community)</i>	<i>Changes are coming (tease the benefit?)</i>	<i>Ads, Billboards, community meetings</i>

Actionable Steps	Notes
<i>Ex. Adjust strategy team</i>	<i>Who can stay, go, and who needs to be added?</i>
<i>Ex. Try various scenarios of implementation and impact to arrive at final strategy</i>	<i>Ask IR for help making data understandable and actionable</i>
<i>Ex. Get on calendar for Department meetings to share strategy and gather feedback</i>	
<i>Ex. Engage Marketing</i>	<i>To craft internal and external messaging.</i>



## Part 4: Academic Planning

This phase of the work helps faculty plan for the redesign of their courses to be offered in shorter academic terms. Faculty are encouraged to consider the structural, process and attitudinal changes that will be required to redesign the policies, content, pedagogy and modality of their course in shorter terms.

**Structural Change:** Organizational and or policy changes (e.g., contracts, job descriptions, technology changes, professional development).

**Process Change:** Changes in the way people interact with systems and business practices (e.g., deadlines, hiring, and practices around student-centered processes).

**Attitudinal Change:** Occurs when individuals understand their work and view work processes in new ways (e.g., agreement among faculty and staff that academic and non-academic supports must be connected).

Areas of Change	What Structural Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?	What Process Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?	What Attitudinal Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?
Course Redesign			
Course Materials (Implementation of OER)			
First-Year Experience			
Developmental Education			
Academic Pathway Redesign			
Course Sequence			
Preferred and Toxic Course Combinations			
Term Credit Cap			
Course Content			
Learning Objectives			



Course Modality			
Technology			
Attendance			
Syllabus			
Culturally Responsive Practices			
Course Level Assessment			
Professional Development/ Training			
Workload and Contracts			
Data			
Full and Part-Time Faculty Capacity			
Other...			



## Part 5: Student Support Planning

This phase of the work helps student affairs faculty and staff plan for the redesign of the processes that may need to be adjusted to support students across the institution in shorter academic terms. Student Affairs faculty and staff are encouraged to consider the structural, process and attitudinal changes that will be required to redesign policies and practices in key support areas.

**Structural Change:** Organizational and or policy changes (e.g., contracts, job descriptions, technology changes, professional development).

**Process Change:** Changes in the way people interact with systems and business practices (e.g., deadlines, hiring, practices around student-centered processes and semester versus term processes).

**Attitudinal Change:** Occurs when individuals understand their work and view work processes in new ways (e.g., agreement among faculty and staff that academic and non-academic supports must be connected).

Areas of Change (non-Academic)	What Structural Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?	What Process Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?	What Attitudinal Change(s) may be necessary? What does success look like?
Admissions			
Advising			
Tutoring			
Financial Aid			
Counseling			
Services for Students with Disabilities			
Communication			
Facilities			
Orientation			
Marketing			
Finance Office			
Human Resources			
Professional Development/ Training			





Workload and Contracts			
Technology			
Data			
Library Services			
Other...			

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## Contact Us for Additional Support

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Achieving the Dream offers a plethora of resources, tools, and services to support colleges in planning and implementing institution-wide changes based on recent research and the experiences and successes of our 300+ college-strong Network. To learn more about how ATD can support your work in this area or in other areas, please contact [hss@achievingthedream.org](mailto:hss@achievingthedream.org).