

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL OVERVIEW

### What is the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?

The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool is an online self-assessment to help colleges assess their strengths and areas for improvement in the seven key dimensions encompassed in the Institutional Capacity Framework shown to the right. The assessment process asks a broad range of college stakeholders to assess their institution's capacity across four levels, from minimal to exemplary. Once an institution completes the assessment, the participants engage in a large group dialogue using the Institutional Capacity Framework and discussion prompts to celebrate strengths, prioritize areas for improvement and identify concrete actions for building capacity to support student success efforts. The framework and the tool were developed based on the collective input from Achieving the Dream (ATD) staff, coaches, advisors, nonprofit experts and community college practitioners.



Institutions that complete the assessment tool benefit from:

- insight into institutional strengths and areas for improvement;
- a picture of what improved capacity looks like;
- broad engagement of stakeholders from all areas of the college;
- identification of areas where there is consensus of opinion and where there are perception gaps;
- use of a common language to spark dialogue and engagement in capacity conversations; and
- generation of ideas on how to build strength across the seven capacity areas.

To support capacity building, ATD offers coaching and strategic assistance, premier learning events, virtual networking and professional development opportunities, resources, access to leading national experts in the field and the opportunity to participate in cutting edge learning initiatives to bolster areas of need and build upon existing strengths.

### How it Works

The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool is structured as a rubric with four distinct levels that build from a level 1 (minimal capacity) to a level 4 (exemplary capacity) to assess the seven capacity areas encompassed in the Institutional Capacity Framework. Each of the questions includes four response choices reflecting the associated capacity level. The participant selects the box with the statement that best describes the college's current environment. The four capacity levels are not meant to be exact but to provide a general indication of the college's place on the continuum of institutional capacity. If the institution falls between two levels, always choose the lower level.

## Sample Questions

Does the college have a clear and compelling vision for student success?

The college has no vision statement for student success nor has it articulated a vision for improvements in student success.	The college seeks to improve student success, but its vision is not formalized.	<b>The college has a clear vision statement focused on student success, but it is not widely understood or shared.</b>  Example: A vision statement for student success has been developed, perhaps by senior leadership, but most employees are not aware of it.	The college has a clear and compelling vision statement for student success that is widely shared and understood.  Example: The vision statement for student success is visible and reaffirmed at multiple college meetings.	I don't know
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Is the student success vision used to set priorities and direct action?

The college rarely, if ever, considers its student success vision in setting priorities and actions.	<b>The student success vision is sometimes used to set priorities and direct actions, but the application is inconsistent.</b>	The student success vision is often used to set priorities but not at all levels of the organization.  Example: The student success vision is used to set priorities in instructional departments but not in student services.	The vision for student success is consistently used to set priorities and direct action at every level in the institution.  Example: Before a decision is finalized, it is checked to ensure it supports the student success vision.	I don't know
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## Prepare and Plan

Designate an individual(s) at your institution to facilitate the administration of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool such as your ATD Core Team or Data Team lead.

Decide when to take the assessment. ATD encourages institutions to complete the assessment annually in order to be able to monitor progress in building strength. With your coaches, consider whether an annual fall administration or spring administration would best serve the college in terms of planning cycles and coaching visits.

Prior to the administration of the assessment, the ATD Core and Data teams are strongly encouraged to review the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool supporting materials to orient themselves to the Institutional Capacity Framework, assessment tool, assessment questions, format of the summary results, and the *Capacity Conversation Kit*.

**Tip:** For additional support, watch the ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool preparation recording available on the ATD Connect Network Community.

## Identify Participants

Identify and invite a broad range of stakeholders such as the president's cabinet, Board of Trustees, administrators, full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, and student success teams to take the online assessment. Participants will be asked to provide their functional area and role to facilitate the disaggregation of results and identification of areas of alignment and perception gaps. At the beginning of the assessment, participants will be prompted to select which capacity sections they would like to assess. Once this selection is made, the participant will only see the capacity areas selected. For the initial administration of the assessment, we encourage colleges to consider having participants complete all seven capacity areas. At a minimum, the ATD Core team and Data teams should complete all seven capacity areas. The assessment includes an "I don't know" option for participants to select if they have no basis to judge for a particular question.

**Tip:** Review the *Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool Question Summary* document and the print version of the assessment tool to help in identifying the assessment audience.

## Access

The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool is accessible on ATD Connect:

<https://connect.achievingthedream.org>. After logging in, the facilitator may navigate to the college's community and select the menu item "Institutional Capacity Framework & Assessment Tool" to access the assessment tool link and authentication code.

**Tip:** If it is the first time logging into ATD Connect, it may be necessary to contact ATD by emailing [atdconnect@achievingthedream.org](mailto:atdconnect@achievingthedream.org) to secure your credentials.

## Administer

To administer the assessment tool, the college facilitator should copy the assessment link from ATD Connect with the corresponding authentication code and email it to the target audience. Please include the instructions, the reason for the assessment, the submission deadline (allow two weeks) and the contact person in the event of questions. A request from the president that includes a clear "why" for the assessment tends to generate higher response rates. Once participants start the online assessment, their responses will be automatically saved for seven days. All submitted responses are considered final.

**Tip:** Please visit ATD Connect for a sample invitation letter from the president.

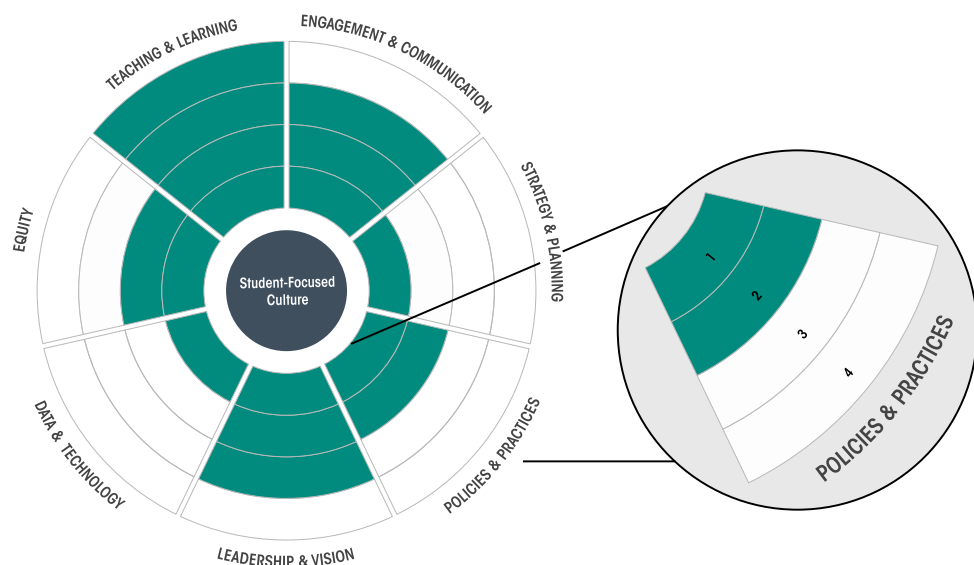
Once the college is ready to administer the assessment tool, the college facilitator can contact ATD at [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org) to request the link to the college's real-time *Results Summary*. This summary will allow the facilitator to monitor response rates. We recommend that colleges also set an internal deadline for respondents to complete the assessment. Once this deadline has passed and the college is satisfied with the response rate, the college facilitator should email [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org) to request the college's final *Results Summary* and *Response Distribution* reports. Once ATD receives this email request, the link to the online summary will be disabled.

ATD will upload the final PDF version of the *Results Summary* and *Response Distribution* reports to the college community on ATD Connect. Please note that these reports will be available to anyone at the college with log in credentials to this community.

## Capacity Results

The college's capacity results will display the aggregated responses from all college participants, disaggregated results by functional area, role, and the categories within each capacity area, and response distribution. The *Results Summary* and *Response Distribution* reports should inform individual reflection in advance of the debrief discussion and serve as a starting point in conversations as your college examines overarching themes, strengths, areas for improvement, and considers specific actions to build institutional capacity.

The sample on the next page is a snapshot of a possible college capacity result which displays shaded levels for the seven areas in the Institutional Capacity Framework. Level 1 represents the lowest level of capacity and Level 4 represents the highest. In the example provided, Policies & Practices was assessed at a Level 2.



**Level 1**  
Minimal level of capacity in place with a clear need to build strength.

**Level 2**  
Moderate level of capacity established.

**Level 3**  
Strong level of capacity in place.

**Level 4**  
Exemplary level of capacity in place.

The sample below is a snapshot of a college’s Leadership & Vision capacity area result. Level 2 indicates that the college has moderate capacity in Leadership & Vision. The average rating of 2.4 provides information on the overall distribution of levels that respondents rated the college when assessing this capacity area.

The “results by category” indicates the average rating by category within the capacity area. A category is the organizing structure for the assessment questions. For example, questions 1 and 2 fall under the Vision category and 2.2 is the average rating for that category. Whereas, questions 3 and 4 fall under the Leadership category and 2.5 is the average rating for that category. The report also provides the number of respondents who assessed this capacity area (N=55).

**Tip:** Refer to the *Sample Results Summary* document for a more detailed look at the capacity results.

## LEADERSHIP & VISION

The commitment and collaboration of the institution's leadership with respect to student success and the clarity of the vision for desired change.



### RESULTS BY CATEGORY (N=55)

LEVEL 1 2 3 4

#### Vision

1. Does the college have a clear and compelling vision for student success?
2. Is the student success vision used to set priorities and direct action?



#### Leadership

3. Does the Board of Trustees provide leadership for student success?
4. Does the president actively support efforts to improve student success?



The sample below is a snapshot of a college’s Leadership & Vision response distribution. This *Response Distribution* report summarizes the response distribution for each question in the assessment tool. It is a complimentary report to the *Results Summary*.

**Tip:** Refer to the *Sample Response Distribution* document for a more detailed look at the capacity results.

**Total Number of Respondents: 82**

	Level 1 (N)	Level 2 (N)	Level 3 (N)	Level 4 (N)	Don't Know (N)
1. Does the college have a clear and compelling vision for student success?	0	10	31	39	1
2. Is the student success vision used to set priorities and direct action?	0	18	43	18	2
3. Does the Board of Trustees provide leadership for student success?	0	5	19	55	2
4. Does the president actively support efforts to improve student success?	1	3	18	48	11

**Debrief and Discuss**

After the submission period has closed, schedule a large group engagement activity with a cross-representation of participants and your Achieving the Dream coaches to discuss the results, celebrate strengths, prioritize areas for improvement and identify concrete steps to build capacity in areas needing improvement. The debrief session also enables further exploration of perception gaps so the institution can begin to build alignment.

**Tip:** ATD offers several discussion and facilitation options through the *Capacity Conversation Kit* located on the ATD Connect Network Community, including the use of a Capacity Café method.

**Act**

Act on the concrete steps identified to build capacity. Coordinate with your coaches on targeted strategic assistance, participate in learning events and professional development opportunities, access resources from the ATD Connect Network Community.

“The ICAT provides a structure for stakeholders from all areas of the college to collectively examine critical elements necessary to support student success and determine how we are doing in relation to these elements. With a broad focus that extends beyond individual initiatives, we were able to use the tool to identify college strengths within capacity areas and develop a foundation on which to build future efforts. The capacity areas within the ICAT provide a framework for strategic planning, with mechanisms in place to ensure widespread engagement in identifying strategic priorities for improvement and advancement related to building and sustaining a thriving culture of student success.”

*Margaret H. Annunziata, Director, Student Success Initiatives & Institutional Assessment, Davidson County Community College*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### General

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**Q: What is the difference between the Institutional Capacity Framework and Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** The *Institutional Capacity Framework* is ATD's approach to institutional change. Launched in February 2016, the framework has at its core seven capacities essential for a student-focused culture that promote student success. Strength in the seven capacities positions a colleges to take on interventions at scale. The companion *Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool* is an online self-assessment instrument to help colleges gauge their capacity strengths and areas for improvement.

**Q: How does the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool prepare and support a college with major interventions and redesign efforts?**

**A:** Strength in the seven capacity areas positions a college to successfully implement and scale interventions such as guided pathways, developmental education reform, integrated planning and advising systems, Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, and grants such as Title III.

**Q: Why should my college take the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** The benefits include:

- insight into institutional strengths and areas for improvement;
- a picture of what improvement looks like at the exemplary capacity level;
- broad engagement of stakeholders from all areas of the college;
- identification of areas where there is consensus of opinion and where there are perception gaps;
- use of a common language to spark dialogue and engagement in capacity conversations; and
- generation of ideas on how to build strength across the seven capacity areas.

**Q: Do colleges still need to complete the Principles Assessment?**

**A:** No, the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool replaces both the Achieving the Dream Readiness Assessment and Principles Assessment.

### Preparation and Administration

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**Q: When should the college complete the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** Colleges are encouraged to complete the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool on an annual basis. New colleges are encouraged to complete the assessment during the fall semester or early spring prior to their second coaching visit. Colleges in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year or later are encouraged to select an administration cycle that best serves the college's planning cycle, college in-service days, and coaching visits. An annual fall administration may make sense for some colleges whereas a spring administration may make sense for others.

**Q: Who should complete the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** A broad range of stakeholders such as the Board of Trustees, president's cabinet, administrators, faculty, staff, the ATD Core team and the ATD Data team who represent a wide range of functional areas including academic affairs, student services, administrative services, and continuing education.

**Q: How many people should complete the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** A minimum of ten individuals per capacity area should complete the assessment. Ideally, the respondents should represent the roles and functional areas described above.

**Q: Does each person need to complete all seven sections of the assessment?**

**A:** At the start of the assessment the participant has the option to select the capacity area(s) that align with their institutional knowledge and expertise. For the first administration of the assessment it is recommended that participants complete all seven areas. There is an “I don’t know” option for each question if the respondent has no basis to judge. At a minimum, the ATD Core Team and ATD Data Team should complete the entire assessment.

**Q: How do I access the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool?**

**A:** The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool is accessible on ATD Connect: <https://connect.achievingthedream.org>. After logging in, the facilitator may navigate to the college’s community and select the menu item “Institutional Capacity Framework & Assessment Tool” to access the assessment tool link and authentication code. If it is your first time logging into ATD Connect, it may be necessary to contact ATD by emailing [atdconnect@achievingthedream.org](mailto:atdconnect@achievingthedream.org) to secure your credentials.

**Q: How do I respond when I believe that my organization falls between two levels?**

**A:** Always choose the lower of the two levels.

**Q: When do I select “I don’t know”?**

**A:** Select “I don’t know” when you do not know, or have no basis to judge, the answer to a particular question.

**Q: How long will the assessment take?**

**A:** Approximately one hour if all seven capacities are selected.

**Q. Can I leave the assessment and come back later to finish?**

**A:** Yes. If you use the same browser and enable cookies, your response is automatically saved for seven days. When you click on the assessment link again, it will re-direct you to the page where you left off. After seven days, your partial response will be deleted.

**Q. May a college take a section(s) of the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool more than once a year?**

**A:** Yes, please make this request by emailing [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org).

## Results

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**Q: During the collection period, can I monitor responses?**

**A:** Yes. Once the college is ready to administer the assessment tool, the college facilitator has the option to monitor results by contacting ATD at [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org) to request the link to the college’s online *Results Summary*. This summary will allow the facilitator to monitor response rates in real-time.

**Q: How do I obtain the college’s *Results Summary* and *Response Distribution* report?**

**A:** The college facilitator must email [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org) to request the college’s final *Results Summary* and *Response Distribution* reports once all responses have been collected. ATD will upload the final PDF version of these reports to the college community on ATD

Connect. These reports will be available to anyone at the college with log in credentials to this community.

**Q: Who has access to respondents' individual responses?**

**A:** No one. All responses collected through the assessment tool are anonymous. ATD will have a database of the responses but no response is associated with a specific individual.

**Q. Will a college be able to tell the number of respondents for each question, by role and by functional area and how many answered "I don't know"?**

**A:** Yes, a *Response Distribution* report will be made available on the college community on ATD Connect.

**Q: How do I interpret the college's results?**

**A:** The assessment is not a scientific tool based on rigorous psychometrics principles and should not be used as one. The ratings are meant to provide a general indicator of institutional capacity. The ratings displayed in the *Results Summary* represent a convergence of opinion (i.e., where college stakeholders see their institutions' capacities), instead of a measurement of capacity based on objective input and outcome measures.

**Q: Is it possible to review the capacity results of another college for comparison?**

**A:** No, Achieving the Dream will not share the capacity results of other colleges.

**Q: What support can colleges expect when reviewing results?**

**A:** ATD Leadership and Data Coaches will support colleges in using the tool, developing action plans based on the results, and providing tailored assistance to bolster capacity where needed.

**Q: What resources on the Institutional Capacity Framework and Assessment Tool are currently available to help colleges build capacity based on their results?**

**A:** Colleges will have access to resources associated with each of the seven capacity areas through ATD Connect on the Network Community.

## Technical

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**Q: I am having trouble logging in to ATD Connect. Who should I contact?**

**A:** Email [atdconnect@achievingthedream.org](mailto:atdconnect@achievingthedream.org) and an ATD staff member will assist you.

**Q: Do I need internet to take the assessment?**

**A:** Yes, the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool requires a broadband internet connection and updated web browser.

**Q. Is the assessment tool mobile optimized?**

**A:** Yes, participants may complete the assessment on their smart phone, tablet or computer.

## Additional Questions

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If you have additional questions, please contact your ATD Leadership and Data Coaches or email Achieving the Dream at [ICAT@achievingthedream.org](mailto:ICAT@achievingthedream.org).