

# How to Use This Guidebook

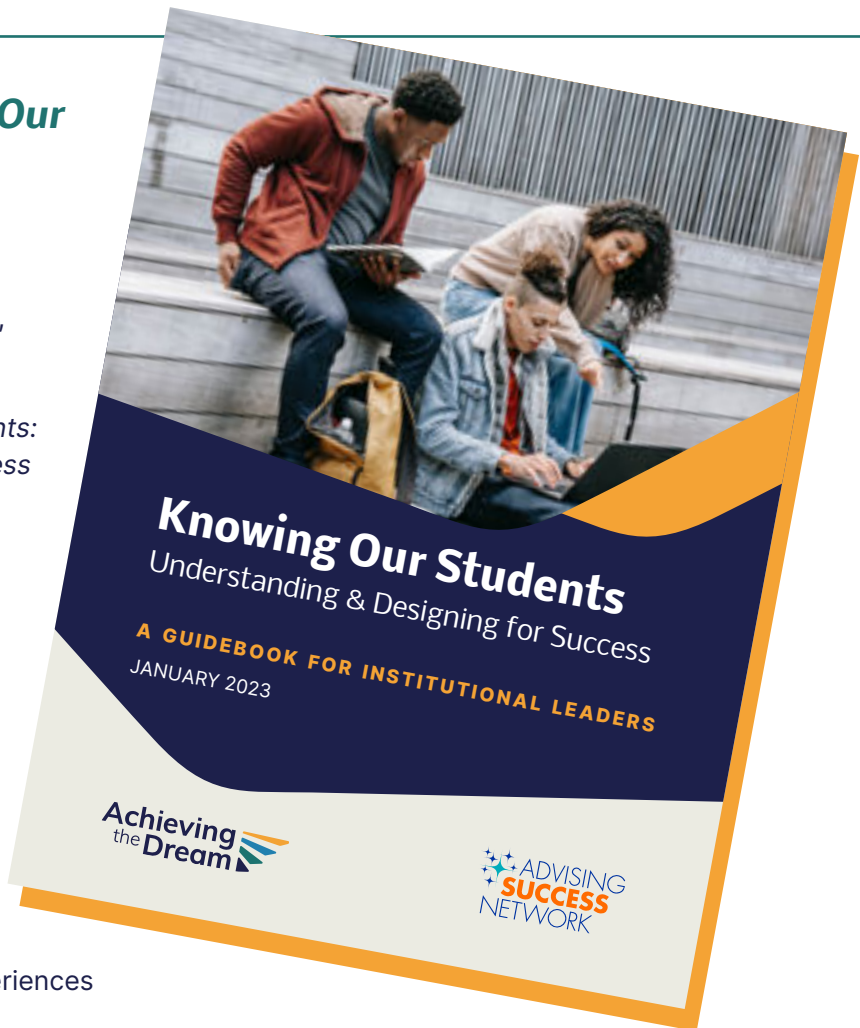
## Purpose of the *Knowing Our Students* guidebook

Today, there is no typical student. Enrollment of diverse students has increased over the past few decades, and student identities have changed from what was once considered “traditional.” The *Knowing Our Students: Understanding & Designing for Success* guidebook outlines resources that colleges can use and steps they can take to identify who their students are. Teams can continue to reference the guidebook as they move through the student-centered designed process outlined in the resource. The guidebook includes sections on using data to:

- Know who your students are
- Understand their unique experiences
- Collect both quantitative and qualitative data
- Use that data to design a student-centered experience

## How to Use This Guidebook

Leaders and teams that are in the early stages of their student-centered design journey may find the most value from the guidebook, especially if they read it and use the tools in chronological order. For teams that have done some of this work previously, each section can be read as a stand-alone guide.



Each section provides tips, guidelines, and resources to promote a deeper understanding of students. Each section concludes with questions and tools to help colleges apply the learnings from that section to their own institutional work. Throughout, the guidebook features examples from the field to illustrate how institutions are working to successfully deepen their understanding of students, how they use data in decision-making, and what they have learned along the way.

The *Knowing Our Students* guidebook includes four sections. The summaries below will help your team understand the content of each section.

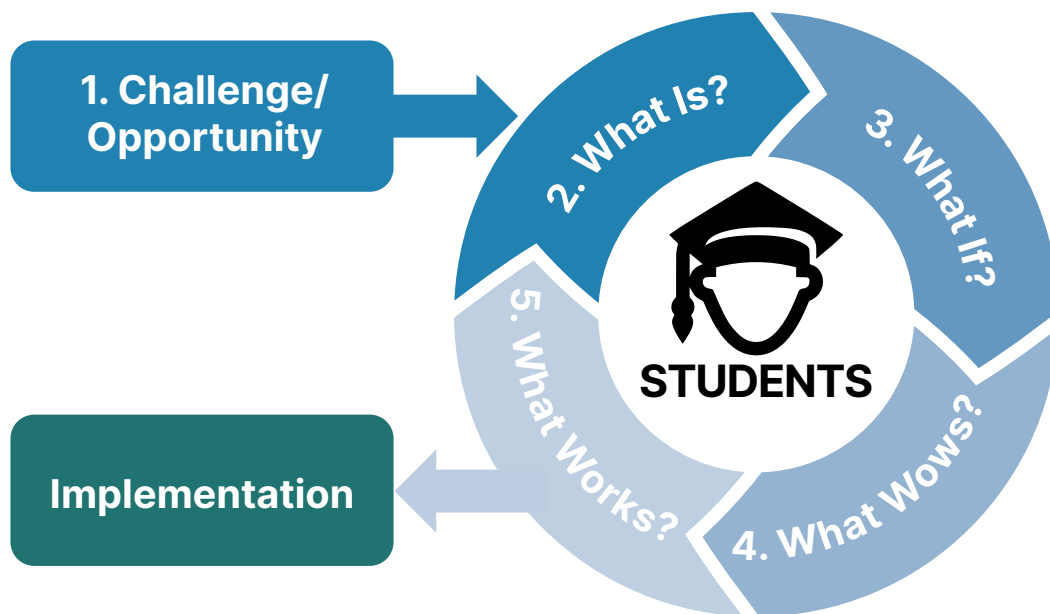


## Section I: Knowing Students

This section introduces the student-centered design process, an adaptive approach to serving students that contextualizes the process of design thinking to the higher education field, with a focus on students and equity. This section also describes the importance of creating success teams and walks readers through the process of identifying a challenge or opportunity that they want to address.

Section I then provides strategies and resources on finding out who your students are and what their intersectional identities are. By the end of this section, there will be a clear picture of the types of data traditionally collected by institutions, and an outlook of potentially untapped data sources that support efforts to know students. A template for building a design brief can be found in the toolbox at the end of this section. It culminates with the following reflection questions:

- What problem or opportunity is being addressed?
- What are the core issues of the problem being solved for?
- How is it a known problem? What evidence exists that describes the current reality?
- Who is not served well by this issue?
- What biases, myths, or assumptions need to be acknowledged before the empathy step begins?
- Why should this problem be solved?
- How will it be known the redesign is having the desired effect?
- What critical, non-negotiable conditions exist that the solution must operate within?



### The Student-Centered Design Process

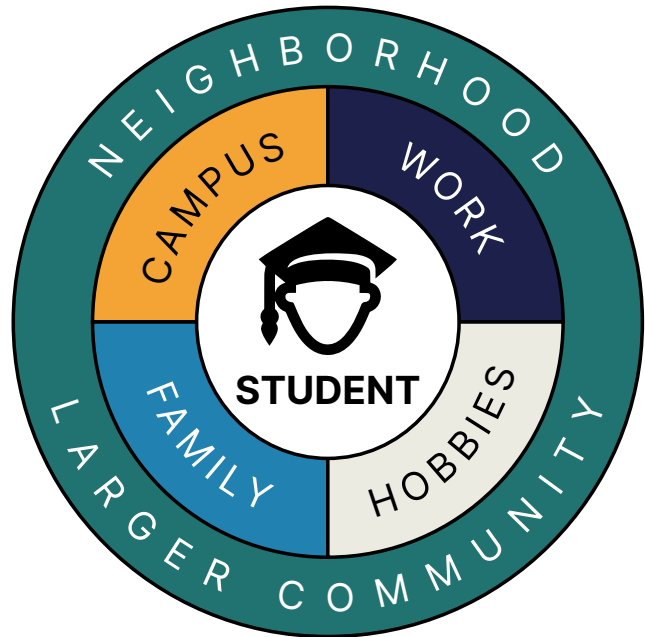


## Section II: A Closer Look at the Student Experience

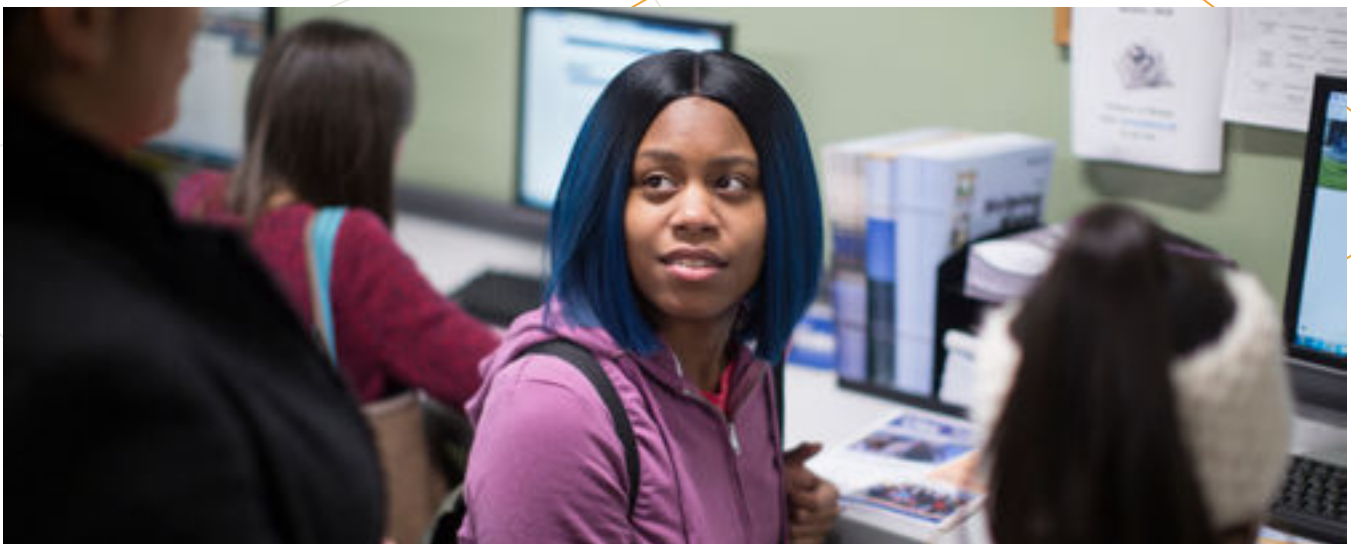
To understand the student experience, colleges must understand the structure of their systems and how it can impact a student's journey.

In this phase, teams can work to develop a deep understanding of what causes and what reinforces the challenges they are trying to address. This step highlights the role qualitative and quantitative data plays in understanding the student experience. A campus's climate and the environment that surrounds a student holistically affect their experience.

The end of the section contains tools that help teams understand the systemic structures of the student experience prompts them to explore these reflection questions:



- What are the structures that students must navigate?
- What are the steps a student must take in order to reach the intended outcome of the aforementioned structure?
- What data points about your students, beyond their identities, are currently collected?
  - Which offices collect that data?
- What data points would be useful to the institution that are not currently collected?
- What assumptions or myths about students, or certain student populations, exist on campus?



## Section III: Collecting the Data

After the team identifies challenges to address and better understands their college's system, they should dive deeper into who their students are through qualitative and quantitative data. Section III helps teams understand how a student's intersecting identities affect their experiences within the college system. Since the experts on this topic are the students themselves, this section shares strategies on where to look for existing data and asks teams to gather data from the student perspective both quantitatively and through the student voice.

Finally, with this data, Section III shares how a team can conduct a process map. Process mapping presents an opportunity to understand student-facing processes on campus and how they impact the student experience. The section ends with additional examples of capturing student experience and the following guiding questions:

- Which student populations are most adversely impacted by the problem or opportunity?
- Reflecting on what is already known about their campus experience, which tools for gathering their input would be most likely to gather the richest information?
  - For example, students enrolled part-time, who are working or parenting, may have less time to spend attending a focus group on campus or engaging in a process mapping activity.
- What are the most critical questions the team has about this student population's experience related to the problem or opportunity?

## Section IV: Using Data to Design the Student Experience

The final section brings all the steps together. Now that the team has expanded its understanding of the challenge it is trying to solve, the students being served, and how an institution's policies, processes, structures, and culture affect students, institutions can begin to implement informed, equity-minded solutions.

Section IV shares resources on making more sense of the data teams have gathered and translating their findings into action. It shares strategies such as creating student personas to map their journey through an institution and helps teams think about implementation and scaling.

The section concludes by asking the following questions:

- How can the tools and tips identified in this section be infused into the current redesign process?
- What challenges or pushback are anticipated when using these strategies?
- What gaps in knowledge and understanding need to be bridged in order to increase support for the use of these tools and strategies?
- How will decisions be made around which ideas will be moved forward and tested?
- What metrics will be used to quickly evaluate whether these ideas are addressing the root cause(s) of the problem or opportunity?
  - What metrics will be used to ensure these ideas improve the experience and outcomes of the students most disproportionately impacted by the status quo?

