



REPORT FROM THE FIELD:

# ATD's Support for Capacity Building in Teaching & Learning

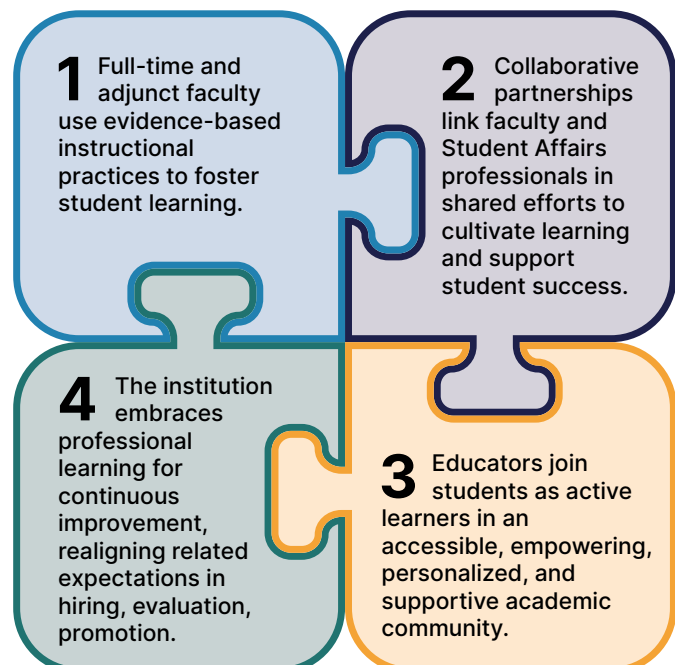
2021–2022

# Introduction

Colleges across the Achieving the Dream (ATD) Network have committed to engaging in bold, holistic, and sustainable institutional change across multiple priorities and areas of focus. Their efforts to build capacity in teaching and learning reflect the importance of several key institutional capacities, including leadership and vision, advancing equity in student learning, engagement and communication, and leveraging data and technology to support student success. [ATD's Institutional Capacity Framework and Assessment Tool \(ICAT\)](#) outlines seven essential institutional capacities required to create a student-focused culture that promotes student success. One focuses specifically on teaching and learning and the commitment to engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in examinations of pedagogy through high-impact professional learning, and a central role for faculty as change agents within the institution. Building capacity in this area is crucial because, as ATD President Dr. Karen A. Stout recently asserted, "Focusing on teaching and learning is still not central to the field's overall theory of change. We still have much more to do to build a deep focus on pedagogy and to support our colleges in building a culture of teaching and learning excellence."

The ATD [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#), published in fall 2020, is designed to meet this need. Building on evidence-based research, our staff and coaches' experiences working with ATD Network colleges across the country, and the best new thinking in the field, the *Toolkit* presents four Cornerstones for Building a Culture of Teaching and Learning Excellence. This model grows out of our Institutional Capacity Framework, understanding that true institutional transformation requires cross-functional effort that transcends multiple capacity areas. These four Cornerstones of Excellence provide a forward-looking vision that colleges are using to inform their work.

- 1. Full-time and adjunct faculty use evidence-based instructional practices to foster student learning.** Research into learning and teaching highlights an array of pedagogically



rich strategies that, when done well, enhance learning and success, particularly for students who are from minoritized backgrounds, who are first-generation, and who are impacted by poverty. To close the equity gap, faculty leaders must adapt these strategies to local contexts and guide implementation at scale by both full- and part-time faculty.

**2. Collaborative partnerships link faculty and student affairs professionals in shared efforts to cultivate learning and support student success.**

Student success initiatives have done powerful work, spurring structural reforms and strengthening holistic student supports that benefit students — and strengthening faculty pedagogical innovation as well. To advance this work and support the students who need it the most, educators from both academic affairs and student affairs must be engaged as valued partners in campus-wide student success efforts such as guided pathways.

**3. Educators join students as active learners in an accessible, empowering, personalized, and supportive academic community.** Building a culture of teaching and learning excellence asks faculty and staff to examine their practice, test new evidence-based approaches, and see themselves as learner/teachers. Inquiry and reflective practice are crucial to ongoing professional learning processes. Engaging students as partners in this effort ensures broader, more meaningful, and more equitable change.

**4. The institution embraces professional learning for continuous improvement, realigning related expectations in hiring, evaluation, and promotion.**

Colleges must support faculty and staff engagement in professional learning with policies, practices, and resources. This is vital to improving outcomes and closing the equity gap. Strategic support for professional learning is essential to meaningful and enduring institutional improvement.

These Cornerstones of Excellence fit together to outline the parameters of a culture of teaching and learning excellence. They offer our colleges a vision to strive for, a pathway to greater equity and student success. Their broad nature suggests that realizing this vision will involve changes in structure, behavior, and attitudes.

This brief report shares updates from our Teaching and Learning team's work in the field during the 2021–22 year, informed by ATD's Institutional Capacity Framework and these four Cornerstones of Excellence. The highlights that follow represent the deep, dedicated work of many faculty, staff, and college leaders across the country to advance equity in student success through capacity-building in teaching and learning.



# Building Capacity for Change: Strengthening Professional Learning on Your Campus

Across the country, colleges face enrollment challenges, equity gaps, and the need to prepare students for meaningful careers. Faculty are key to addressing all these issues. To meet this moment, in fall 2021 ATD launched [Building Capacity for Change](#), a new teaching and learning seminar and coaching program designed to help colleges engage educators and build student success. This program was highlighted in a cover story in [Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning \(March/April 2022\)](#).

Building Capacity for Change draws on research showing that high-impact professional learning is essential to building faculty engagement and student success. Working with campus-based, cross-functional teaching and learning teams, this seminar and coaching program empowers cohorts of ATD Network colleges to apply a comprehensive framework for high-impact professional learning to their campus needs and goals. Structured partnerships linking teams with their chief academic officers guide the transition from action plan to effective implementation.

The seminar leverages ATD's dynamic [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) and links leadership teams from across our Network in virtual synchronous and



asynchronous engagement. With coaching from national professional development leaders, teams help each other in a program that combines college-focused self-assessment and strategic planning with supportive cross-college community. At the program's conclusion, teams come away with resources for research-based pedagogies and student support structures, strategies proven to advance equity-focused change, a cohesive college-focused action plan for professional learning impact, and connection to a growing national network of support.

Initially piloted with three small cohorts of colleges in 2020–21, the seminar process engaged two cohorts of ATD Network colleges in 2021–22 and has drawn



rave reviews. In feedback surveys, 90% of participants rated “the support in applying the principles of high-impact professional learning on my campus” as helpful or very helpful. And 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the process helped them “identify campus strategies for strengthening professional learning design and leadership.”

“Having a framework to approach our work was excellent,” wrote one participant.

Another shared, “I am gaining a lot of insight because of the intentional, deeper level conversations with our campus team members.

In addition, we are learning strategies and practices from other colleges to help strengthen our program.”

And one recent participant commented: “It was an invaluable experience. We are about to roll out our new professional learning certification, we are working on increasing and implementing many communities of practice. I feel that there has been a shift collectively in our focus on professional learning and equity-minded implementation of the practices we learned in the program.”



# Teaching and Learning with Open Educational Resources (OER)

Based on promising findings from the multiyear [Open Educational Resources \(OER\) Degree Initiative](#). ATD partnered with SRI Education to conduct a study to examine whether the use of OER can transform teaching and learning and how open content can enable more equitable, culturally responsive teaching practices. Funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the study addresses the urgent need to better understand how the use of OER can support educational equity, particularly in educational settings that serve historically marginalized student populations.

The study examined teaching practices among committed OER users and technology-oriented faculty members. Researchers interviewed faculty and administrators and conducted student focus groups and course observations at eight community colleges.

In collaboration with SRI Education, ATD released the findings in an April 2022 report entitled *Teaching and Learning with Open Educational Resources*. The report is the first of its kind, presenting research findings and introducing a framework for enacting open and culturally responsive practices. The report identifies five dimensions of practice that participating faculty demonstrated while delivering open and equitable classroom instruction. The five dimensions are:

- Increasing student voice and ownership over their learning
- Using inclusive and relevant course content
- Creating opportunities for knowledge creation and collaboration
- Striving to increase students' critical consciousness
- Building safer and inclusive classroom culture

In fall 2022 ATD will release our *Faculty Guide to Open and Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices*. The *Faculty Guide* will provide faculty, instructional designers, and faculty developers with a wide range of examples of open and culturally responsive teaching and will offer practical strategies for implementing elements of the five dimensions in design of courses, instructional materials, teaching, assessments, and classroom interactions. In addition, institutional leaders will find guidance for integrating these practices into the college's teaching and learning reform efforts.



# Adaptive Courseware: New Models to Support Student Learning

Achieving the Dream is one of 12 higher education and digital learning organizations that make up the [Every Learner Everywhere](#) (Every Learner) Network, whose mission is to help higher education institutions improve and ensure more equitable student outcomes through advances in digital learning, particularly among poverty-impacted, racially minoritized, and first-generation students. Every Learner partners are addressing high failure rates in foundational courses through the provision of scalable, high-quality support to colleges and universities seeking to implement adaptive courseware on their campuses.

As part of its ongoing effort to help community colleges develop effective teaching and learning practices, ATD worked with seven community colleges in Florida, Ohio, and Texas on this initiative, providing coaching and direct support to the colleges, fostering collaboration within and among the participating institutions, and serving as a liaison to the Every Learner Network.

Over the past year, we released [a series of 11 case studies](#) — seven focusing on the strong work of each of these colleges and four that emphasize the power of adaptive courseware in specific disciplines (i.e., English composition, science,



business and social sciences, mathematics). These case studies were followed by an [April 2022 report](#) summarizing the critical lessons learned across all seven institutions, emphasizing how adaptive courseware is implemented and how it is used in particular disciplines to better serve students. The lessons learned represent the work of hundreds of faculty, staff, and administrators in over 25 different courses from nine disciplines across the campuses of the seven participating institutions, who together served more than 7,500 students throughout the pilot.

The experiences of faculty, staff, and students at these colleges indicate that adaptive courseware:

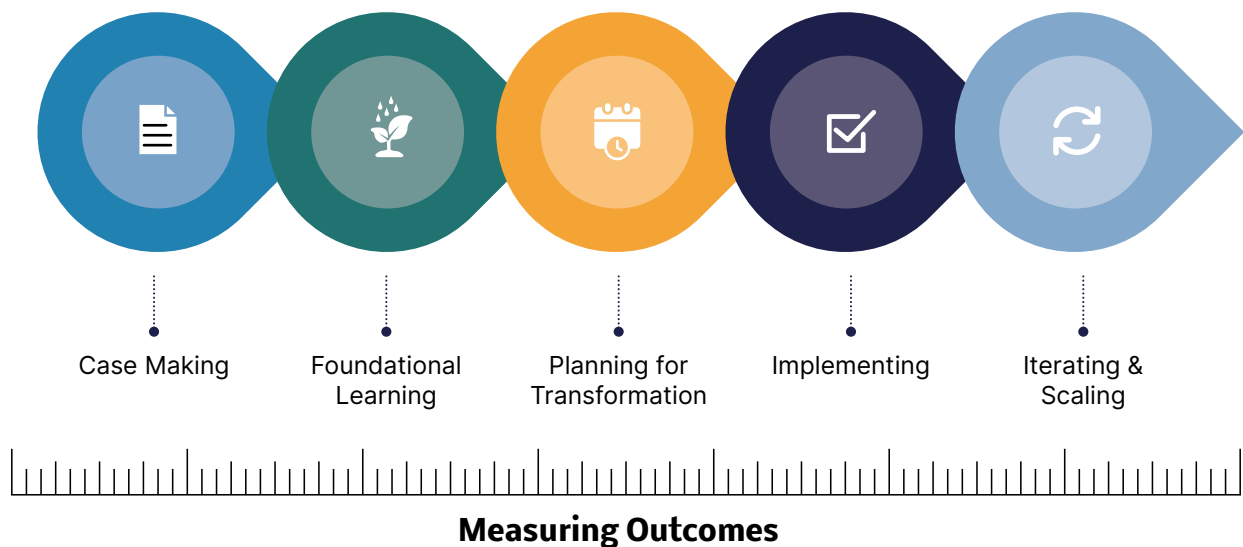
- **Encouraged student self-efficacy** by promoting progressive skill building through guided practice
- **Helped faculty members identify students who needed support and intervene appropriately** by using courseware data analytics to identify specific students and/or topics that a large number of students found difficult
- **Supported flipped classroom models** in which students were introduced to key concepts before coming to class for further discussion or support, ensuring they were more engaged and prepared for classroom work
- **Addressed discipline-specific needs**, including reinforcing prerequisite skills in mathematics, walking students through multiple-step procedures in science courses, presenting complex and nuanced concepts in smaller, actionable chunks in social sciences and business, and building discrete skills in areas such as grammar and structure in English courses
- **Reduced course costs for students**, supporting ongoing institutional efforts to keep textbook and material costs low



# Educational Transformation with Digital Learning Services

Based on our learnings from the adaptive courseware initiative, ATD developed modules for two intensive digital learning services: **Evidence-based Teaching and Student-centered Instruction** and **Equitable and Inclusive Digital Learning at Scale**, that we are currently delivering. These 18-month services involve a course and coaching that engage a cohort of faculty and administrators from 3–5 institutions focused on using evidence-based teaching practices, data, courseware, and technology tools to improve learning outcomes and better serve students. The phased services equip institutions to leverage digital learning to increase gateway course and degree completion, lower the cost of instruction, and deliver more equitable learning outcomes for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, poverty-affected, and first-generation students.

The modules for this engagement are organized around five areas of focus: 1) Case Making; 2) Foundational Learning; 3) Planning for Transformation; 4) Implementing; and 5) Iterating & Scaling. A sixth focus area, Measuring Outcomes, is appropriately interwoven throughout the five modules.



The first two modules have cohort-based, synchronous sessions with **Foundational Learning** involving some overlap with **Planning for Transformation**. The latter part of **Planning for Transformation** entails each institutional team finalizing their plan with personalized support from their coach. Piloting the plan occurs during the **Implementing** stage with the continued support of the coach. At the conclusion of this process the cohort is reunited for synchronous sessions during **Iterating & Scaling**.



# Regional Professional Learning Communities Work to Strengthen Career Pathways

This initiative aims to strengthen the crucial role that community colleges play as connectors between education and employment in their communities. Launched in 2020 with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, ATD is supporting four communities in the creation of regional professional learning communities (PLCs) that bring together high school educators, community college faculty, workforce development professionals, community-based organizations, and employers. The participating communities and host colleges are:

- Cleveland, OH (Cuyahoga Community College)
- Flint, MI (Mott Community College)
- Tallahassee, FL (Tallahassee Community College)
- Tyler, TX (Tyler Junior College)

Each of the four communities identified gaps in their local education pathways that are preventing young people impacted by poverty from achieving economic mobility, and they demonstrated a strong connection between this project and the local community colleges' strategic priorities.

While there are consistent elements across all the PLCs, there are also opportunities to learn from the diversity among the communities' specific needs. For example, the PLC in Tyler, Texas, is creating youth apprenticeships for computer networking and IT. In Flint, Michigan, the PLC is strengthening STEM pathways by removing barriers to high school students earning college credits. In Cleveland, Ohio, the PLC is collaborating with healthcare employers to develop academic and workforce programming to address unmet demands in the local labor force. And in Tallahassee, Florida, the PLC is building a Business & Industry Leadership Team to address the lack of economic opportunity for its lowest-income ZIP code.

Over the past 18 months, staff and coaches from ATD's Teaching and Learning and K-12 Partnerships teams have offered professional learning and technical assistance in the design and facilitation of regional PLCs and supported the relationship-building and case-making needed to establish collaborations between local school districts, community colleges, community-based organizations, and employers. In fall 2022 we will release a *Practitioner's Guide* that includes case studies and learnings from this initiative with an aim of supporting the field in designing and facilitating regional professional learning communities that can work to strengthen alignment of regional education to career pathways.



# Postsecondary Teaching with Technology Collaborative

The [Postsecondary Teaching with Technology Collaborative](#) is a research and capacity-building center that aims to study and improve how faculty lead and manage online courses to support student success. Specifically, the Collaborative is investigating how faculty can adapt their teaching and use technology features to help students apply and strengthen a set of mindsets and strategies — such as their sense of belonging and self-efficacy, as well as help-seeking and self-evaluation — broadly known as self-directed learning skills.



SRI Education and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University's Teachers College lead the Collaborative, in partnership with ATD and nine broad-access colleges and universities (including six ATD Network colleges).

Faculty need evidence-based guidance to successfully adapt how they teach in online course environments. Research suggests that faculty can leverage widely used technologies, such as

learning management systems and adaptive homework systems (e.g., the adaptive learning technologies highlighted in ATD's case studies

published in collaboration with the Every Learner Network — see page 6), to support students in applying and strengthening self-directed learning skills. The Collaborative is building on these findings to provide much-needed insights for faculty, administrators, and education technology developers about what combination of instructional strategies and technology features faculty can use to best help students achieve their full potential in a rapidly expanding online learning landscape.



To meet this need, the Collaborative aims to:

- Increase awareness of the importance of self-directed learning skills in postsecondary contexts
- Develop an instructional model with comprehensive guidance to support faculty to embed self-directed skill development into teaching with technology
- Support colleges and universities in building capacity to improve instructional quality in ways that support the diverse students broad-access institutions serve, and ultimately, to improve student outcomes while achieving educational equity
- Strengthen feedback loops among researchers, practitioners, and education technology developers to generate better ed-tech products

Funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, the Collaborative's work began in fall 2021 with a study of institutional practices and policies at the nine partner colleges and universities. Specifically, the research examines what these institutions are doing or plan to do to help faculty and students transition successfully to online courses, and whether and how institutional policies support these efforts. The study also investigates institutions' current and planned efforts to strengthen student self-directed learning skills, as well as institutional contexts around introductory STEM courses.

SRI, CCRC, and ATD collaborated on the design and facilitation of a three-part virtual convening in February–March 2022, bringing together teams from the nine participating institutions for shared learning and planning. Researchers from SRI and CCRC presented on the robust body of evidence for the benefits of self-directed learning and shared early insights from fall 2021 focus groups and interviews at the participating colleges. ATD presented on the essential role of faculty professional learning to support implementation of these evidence-based pedagogies and practices and facilitated a series of small group discussions and working sessions to leverage the power of peer learning.



## North Carolina Teaching & Learning Hubs

In an effort to further our shared goals of fostering student success across North Carolina, the [Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research](#), Achieving the Dream, and the [North Carolina Student Success Center](#) are leveraging our considerable technical expertise, along with our trusted relationships with community college presidents and extensive statewide networks, to create four Teaching and Learning Hubs at North Carolina's community colleges.

Initially launched in the east and west regions of the state in September 2021, the Hubs complement individual colleges' teaching and learning efforts to support scalable, sustainable professional learning activities for full-time and part-time faculty and staff educators. Building on the success of this first year, the Belk Center recently announced that the program would expand to support educators in the Central and Piedmont regions of the state and would welcome four new colleges to the East Hub.

Each Hub is co-hosted by two North Carolina community colleges with leaders drawn from those colleges' faculty. ATD's Teaching and Learning staff and coaches have provided leadership development seminars for the Hubs' faculty leaders, offering guidance around the design of high-impact professional learning, pedagogies and practices, and data-informed planning and decision making. Each month, ATD's team offers professional learning programs for full-time and part-time faculty and staff educators in each Hub. A parallel thread of ATD programming engages leaders of professional learning and chief academic officers in workshops and other convenings to support capacity building — strengthening of professional learning at each participating college.

Since 2021, the Hubs have worked with local campus networks to offer virtual and face-to-face workshops and seminars — helping educators learn about, adopt, test, and scale the evidence-based strategies that have increased equitable student success outcomes across the nation. And to ensure that local area needs are met, Hub programming is designed in close collaboration with local educators and campus leaders. To date, programming topics have explored evidence-based pedagogies, high-impact practices, and culturally responsive pedagogies to advance equity in student learning and engage first-generation students, students from minoritized backgrounds, and students impacted by poverty, among others.

Visit the [Belk Center website](#) for more information about Hub programming and the host and affiliate colleges in each of the four Hubs.

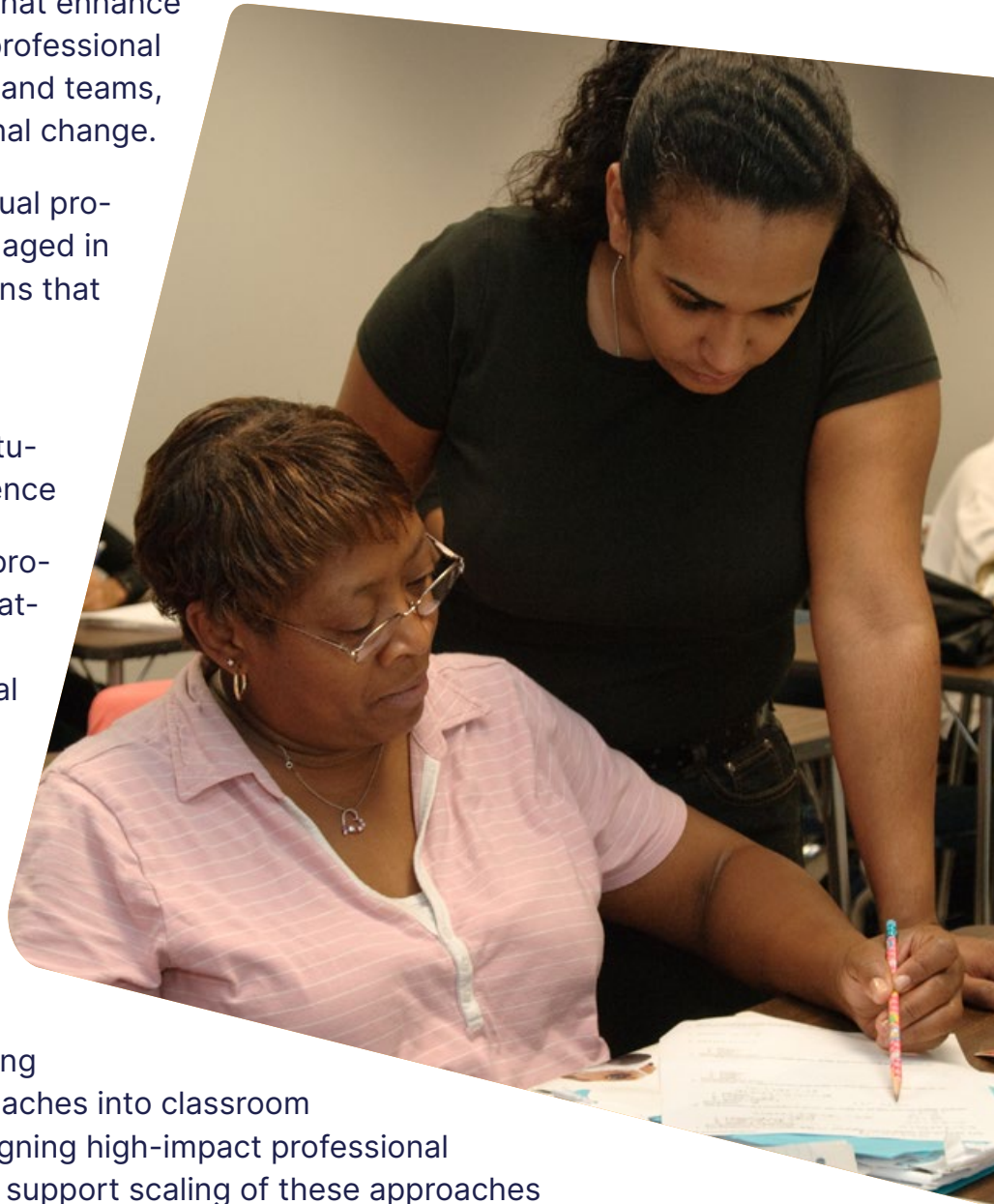


## 2022 Teaching & Learning Institute: Being an Equity-Minded Educator

It takes courage to acknowledge ways we perpetuate inequities in our courses, practices, and policies, which is why ATD's 2022 Teaching and Learning Institute was designed to offer opportunities for connection, facilitated conversations, and deep dives into strategies that enhance teaching practices, foster professional learning among colleagues and teams, and contribute to institutional change.

Over three half-days of virtual programming, participants engaged in workshops and presentations that empowered them to:

- Address inequities in instruction and the student learning experience
- Design high-impact professional learning strategies to implement equitable instructional models that support successful learning experiences and outcomes
- Collaborate with institutional teams to develop action plans for (a) integrating equity-minded approaches into classroom practice and (b) designing high-impact professional learning programs to support scaling of these approaches



This year's Institute convened over 350 participants representing 118 colleges. In addition to wonderful plenary presentations from Dr. Tazin Daniels and Dr. Rajiv Jhangiani, ATD's Teaching and Learning staff and coach experts collaborated with



presenters from 26 colleges on a wide range of workshops and presentations, including:

- Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard: An Analysis Tool to Assess Teaching & Learning
- Students Shape Teaching and Learning: Empowering Student Voice in Professional Learning Programs
- A Framework for Using Open and Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices: Outcomes of the Teaching and Learning with OER Study
- Faculty Learning Communities: Making Professional Development Effective for Faculty and Students
- Developing a Sense of Belonging for Students in the Classroom
- Implementing Shortened Academic Terms: Considerations for Institutional Capacity and Course Design
- Advancing Equity with High-Impact Professional Learning
- Leveraging the Co-requisite Model to Advance Equity
- Doing High-Impact Practices at Scale: Transforming Student Learning with High-Impact Practice





[www.achievingthedream.org](http://www.achievingthedream.org)

Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a partner and champion of more than 300 community colleges across the country. Drawing on our expert coaches, groundbreaking programs, and national peer network, we provide institutions with integrated, tailored support for every aspect of their work — from foundational capacities such as leadership, data, and equity to intentional strategies for supporting students holistically, building K–12 partnerships, and more. We call this Whole College Transformation. Our vision is for every college to be a catalyst for equitable, antiracist, and economically vibrant communities. We know that with the right partner and the right approach, colleges can drive access, completion rates, and employment outcomes — so that all students can access life-changing learning that propels them into community-changing careers. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).