FEBRUARY 2025

Charting Our North Star

The Role of the Office of Institutional Research and Analytics in Developing Austin Community College's Theory of Change

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Director of Institutional Research

ACC | OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH & ANALYTICS

About ACC

70,000+
Students

80%
Undergraduates

11
Campuses

40%
Hispanic/Latino

73%+
Part-Time

30%+
Adult Learners

20%
Dual Credit

30%
FTIC 3-Yr Transfer

28%
Full-time FTIC 3-Yr Graduation

Contents

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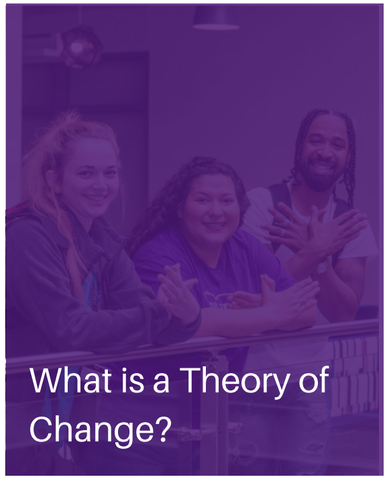

What is a Theory of Change?

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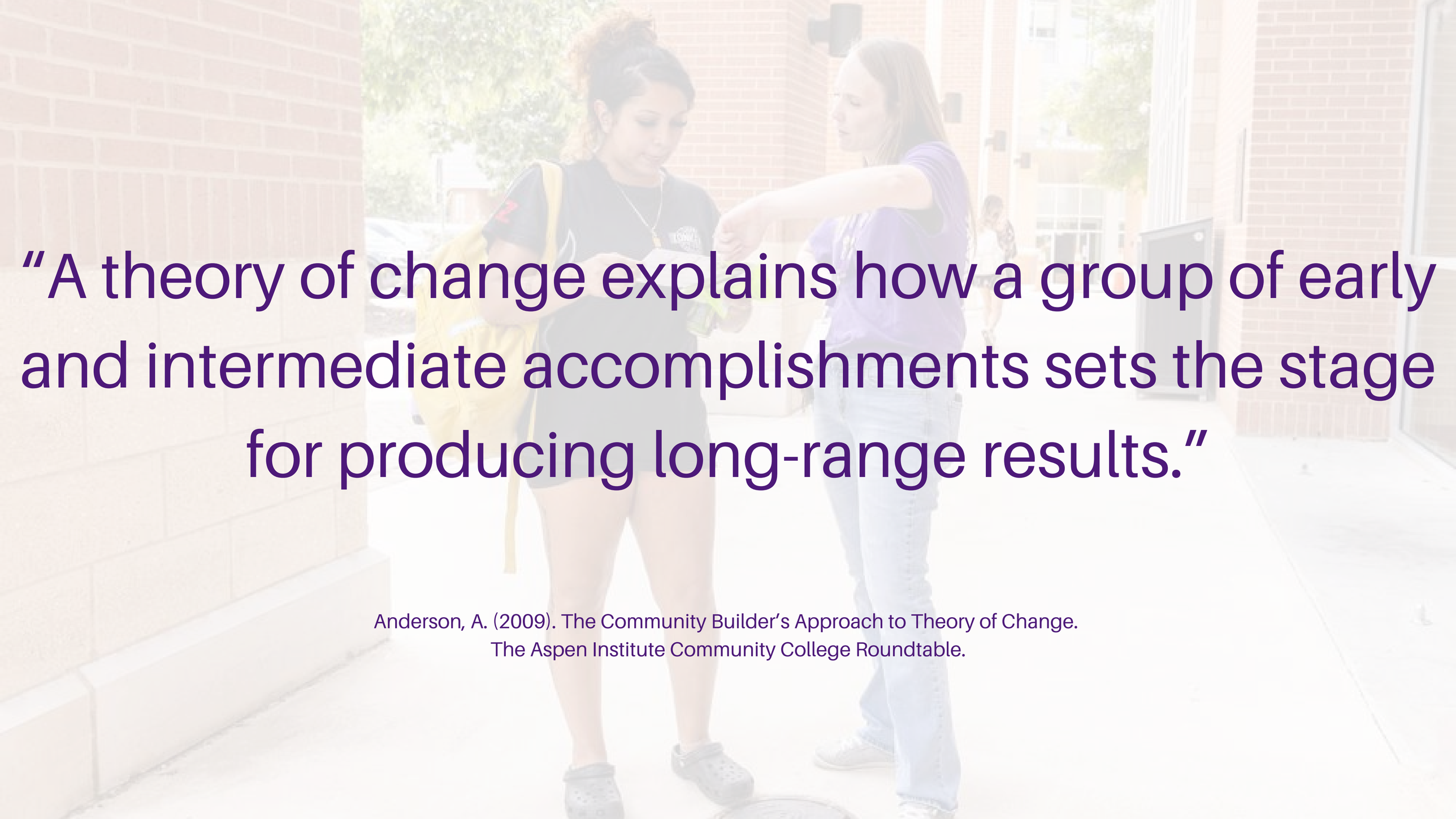
Reflection and Discussion

1

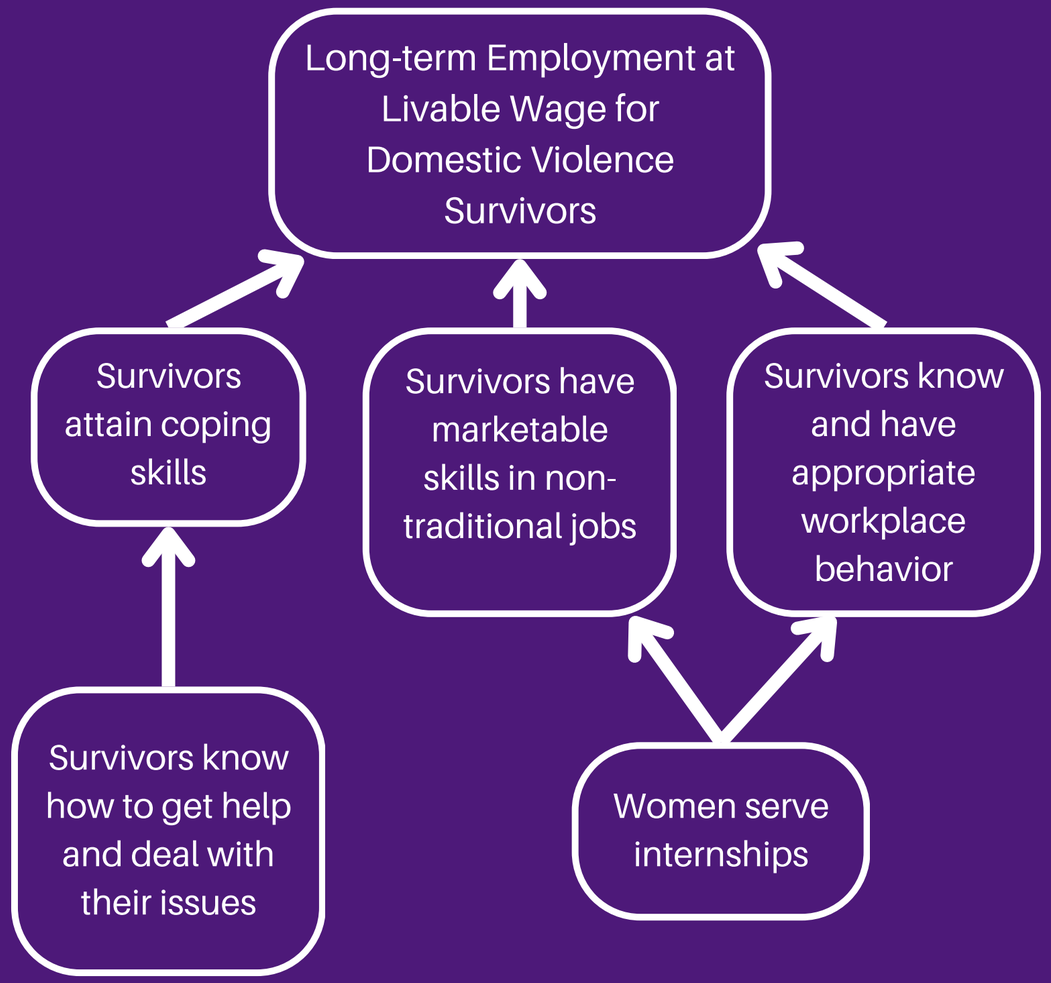
What is a Theory of Change?



"A theory of change explains how a group of early and intermediate accomplishments sets the stage for producing long-range results."

Anderson, A. (2009). The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change.
The Aspen Institute Community College Roundtable.

Project Superwoman



Adapted from: ActKnowledge and Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. (2003). *Guided example: Project Superwomen*. https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/Superwomen_Example.pdf

Key elements of a Theory of Change

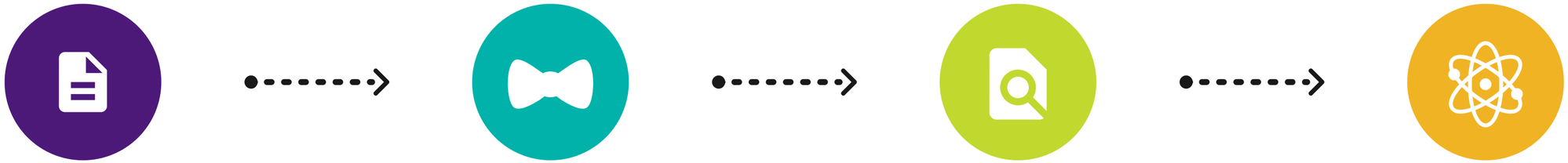
- Focus on systemic change
- Stakeholder engagement
- Data-driven approach
- Must address root causes
- Must incorporate continuous adaptation

2

Establishing ACC’s Theory of Change

Starting the Journey

Where Data and Strategy Meet



1 - Grassroots Strategic Planning

2 - Chancellor Russell Lowry-Hart

3 - Five-year Data Look Back

4 - Theory of Change

ASHLEY

ACC Student

Age: 26 - Woman of Color

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY

Part-time

- 2-3 classes/term
- One distance education

WORK STATUS

Working 11-34 hours/week

CAREGIVING STATUS

At least 10 hours/week caring for family members

WISHES

- Complete her award and start a career that pays a family-sustaining wage
- Make meaningful connections with instructors and peers

WORRIES

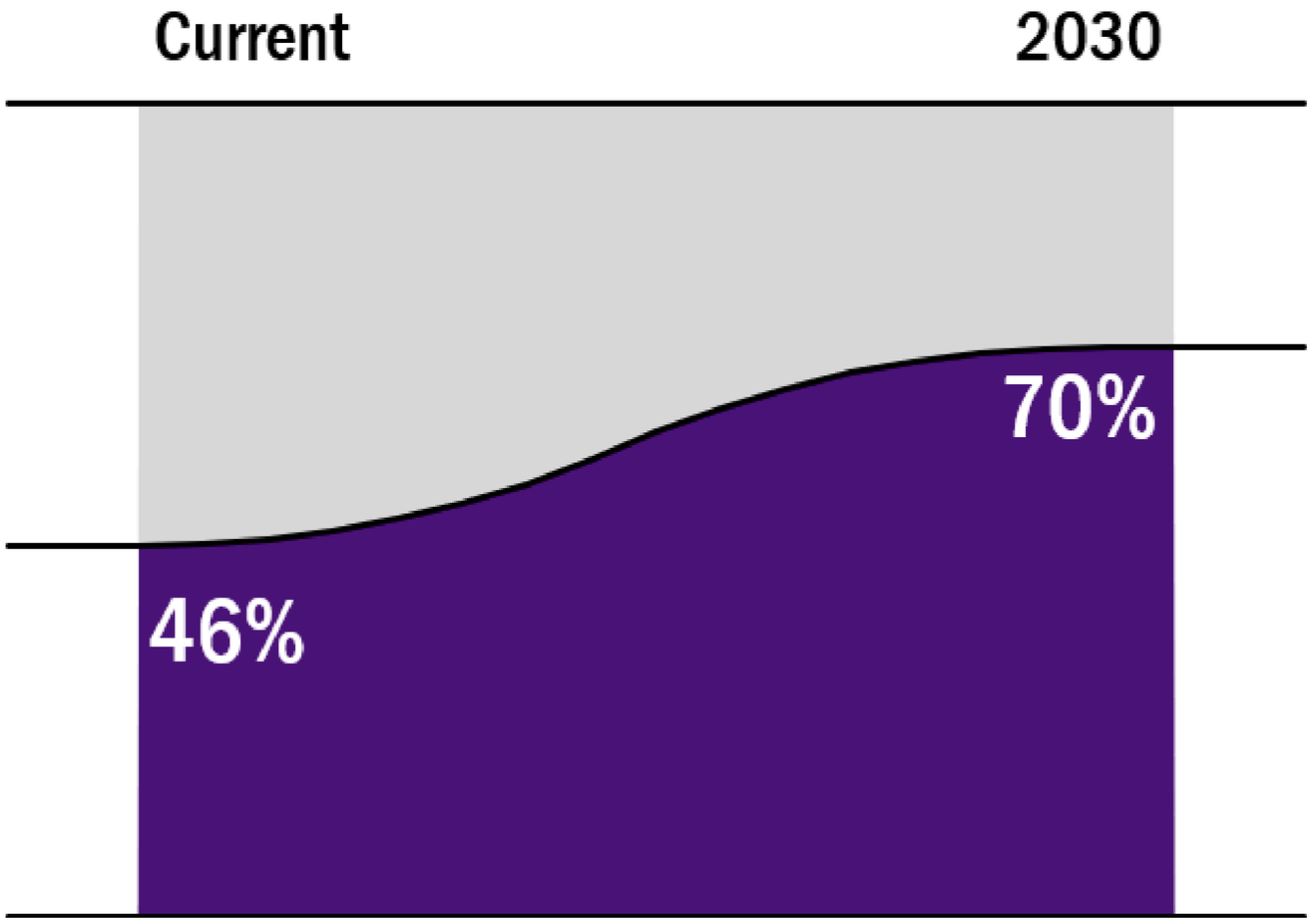
- Managing high levels of stress & anxiety
- Hasn’t found “her people,” which stokes isolation
- Courses won’t have available seats at times she can attend
- Will not have enough money to pay for school

ACC's Theory of Change

When students...

Start Strong + Enroll Full-time + Meet Basic Needs + Culture of Belonging & Connection → Completion Success

ACC's North Star is to dramatically improve completion from 46% to 70% by 2030.



ACC's North Star is to dramatically improve completion from 46% to 70% by 2030.

The completion rate includes

Graduates & Award Completers
(Degrees & Certificates, Occupational Awards)

Transfers to other institutions

within three years of starting as a first-time-in-college student at ACC

Audience Poll

Does your institution have a completion goal?

Does your institution use data-based student personas?

START STRONG

- Required Advising
- Student Success Course
- Co-Requisite Courses
- Dual Credit
- Direct-to-College Matriculation

ENROLL FULL-TIME

- Strategic Scheduling
- Paying for College
- Academic Tutoring & Coaching
- 8-Week Sections

MEET BASIC NEEDS

- Child Care
- Food Security
- Housing Security
- Emergency Aid
- Transportation
- Mental & Physical Health

CULTURE OF BELONGING & CONNECTION

- Demonstrate caring from all staff
- Foster belonging & engagement in the classroom
- Foster vibrant student community
- Transfer

Audience Poll

Which pillar of ACC's Theory of Change do you find most compelling or relevant for your institution?

Start Strong

Enroll Full-time

Meet Basic Needs

Belonging & Connection

3

How OIRA is Supporting the Theory of Change

Collegewide Support

The Data Summit

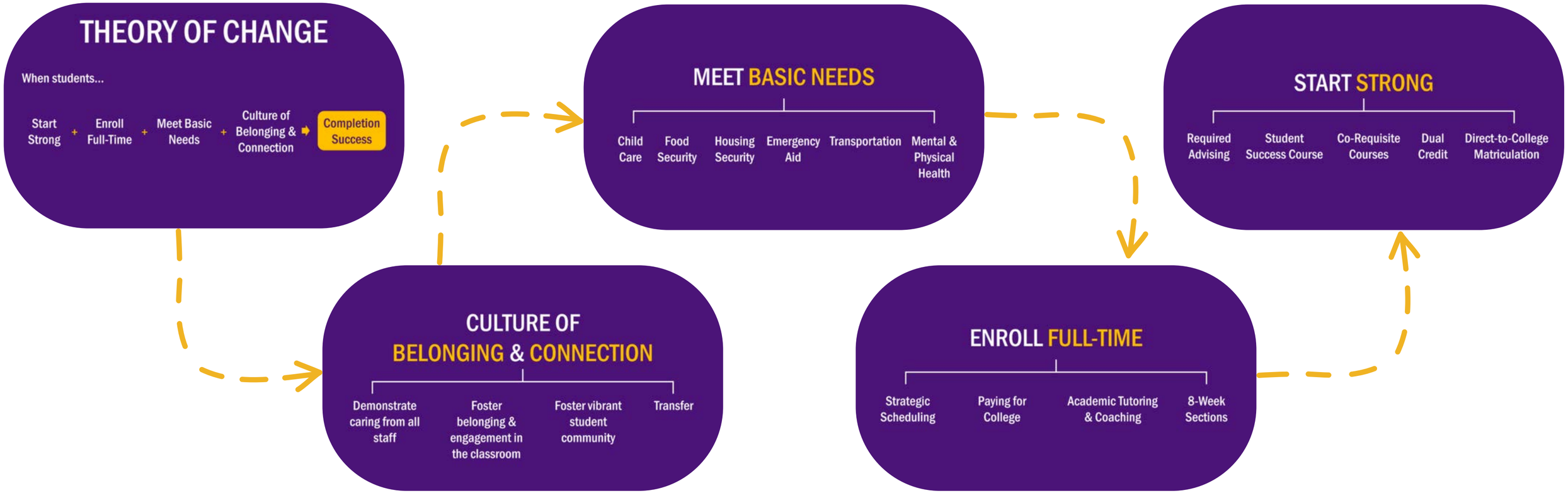
- ACC campuses closed for the day on March 27, 2024
- All full-time staff and faculty are required to attend
- Chancellor launched the Theory of Change collegewide
- Vice Chancellor of Institutional Research and Analytics introduces the data that motivated the pillars and the North Star

Preparing for the Summit

Two OIRA Videos

Homework Slides

After the Summit - Data Deep Dives



1 - North Star

April 9, 2024

2 - Belonging & Connection

April 15, 2024

3 - Meet Basic Needs

April 24,2024

4 - Enroll Full-time

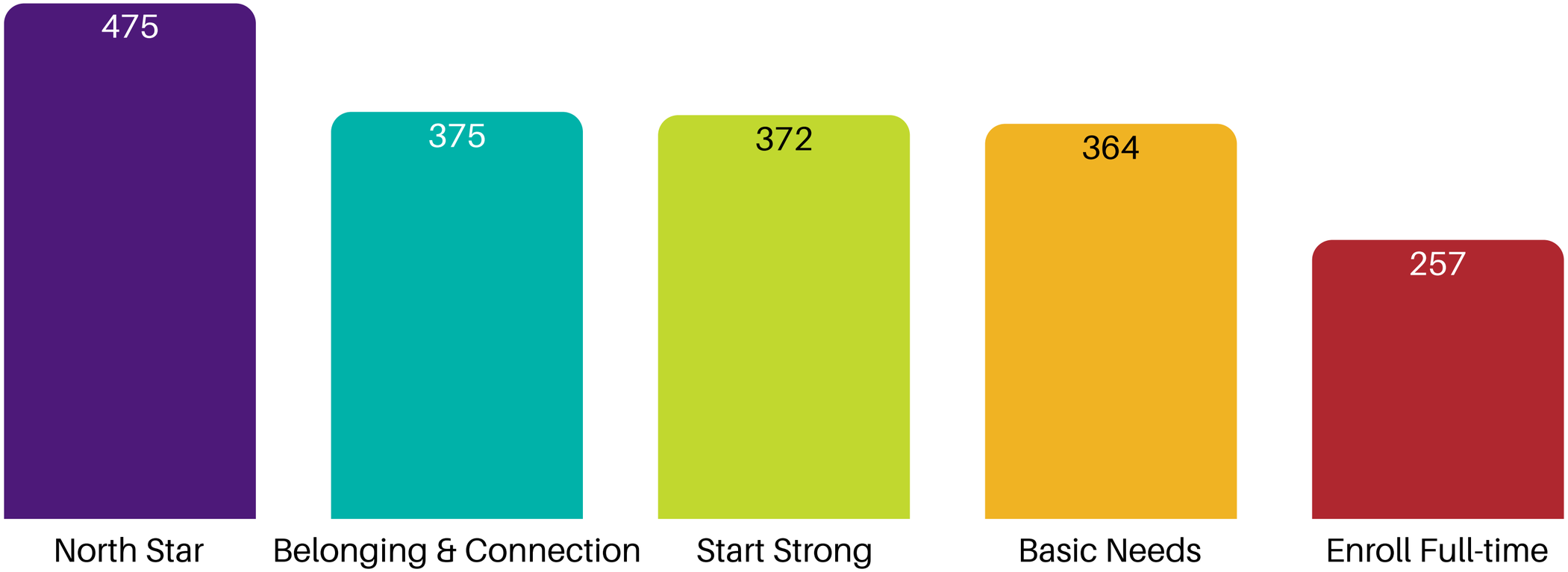
May 3, 2024

5 - Start Strong

May 10, 2024

After the Summit - Data Deep Dives

804 ACC faculty and staff joined at least one live Data Deep Dive session, with **38% attending three or more sessions.** In addition to the live events, the **session materials were also viewed and downloaded 960 times.**



After the Summit - Summer Data Refresher Series

A five-day outreach effort providing opportunities to explore and enhance understanding of the data behind ACC's Theory of Change.

How to Engage with Data for a Chance to Win

Join the poolside chat!
We've created a Padlet where you can share your insights from digging into the data. Anyone who participates in the Padlet and leaves their email address on their post gets one entry into the raffle. Share your thoughts, experiences, or what you learned from the Data Deep Dives!

Take the quizzes!
Each daily email will link to a quiz question related to the featured content. You will get one entry into the raffle if you answer the question correctly.

That's up to six entries for a chance to win one of the Totes Data Informed swag bags!

After the Summit - Summer Data Refresher Series

Summer Data Refresher Series (Day 2 of 5) – Start Strong

Dr. Jenna Cullinane Hege ACC jenna.cullinanehege@austincc.edu via regroupcloud.co... Jul 23, 2024, 8:04 AM

to me

Good morning, colleagues,

Today's data refresher is the first pillar of the Theory of Change - **Start Strong**.

What does it mean to Start Strong?

Students who start strong are equipped with a clear plan, are provided intensive proactive support, and are enabled to begin making academic progress quickly.

Key takeaways shared during the Data Deep Dive session include:

- ACC loses 44% of first-time-in-college students between the first and second fall semester. Helping more students to **start strong** is intended to reduce the number of students who stop out.
- Practices such as meeting with an advisor and completing an ACC success course with a passing grade are associated with increased persistence.
- Research has found that while the traditional developmental education model is not optimal for student success, co-requisite courses offer an evidence-based alternative where students are enrolled in college-level, credit-bearing courses and receive additional aligned academic support during the semester.
- Dual credit plays an important role in accelerating students to complete. For the fall 20 FTIC cohort, students with dual credit had a higher North Star Completion Rate than those without, 60% compared to 42%.
- Students from ACC's service area who enroll directly after completing their high school degree have higher persistence rates after one year than students who do not enroll directly after high school. However, only 10% of service area students who graduated high school in AY2022 enrolled at ACC.

How to Engage with Data for a Chance to Win a Fun-Filled Summer Tote

Take today's quiz - a correct answer will get you an entry into the raffle.
What percentage of students from ACC service area schools did not directly enroll in any institution of higher education after graduating high school in 2022?

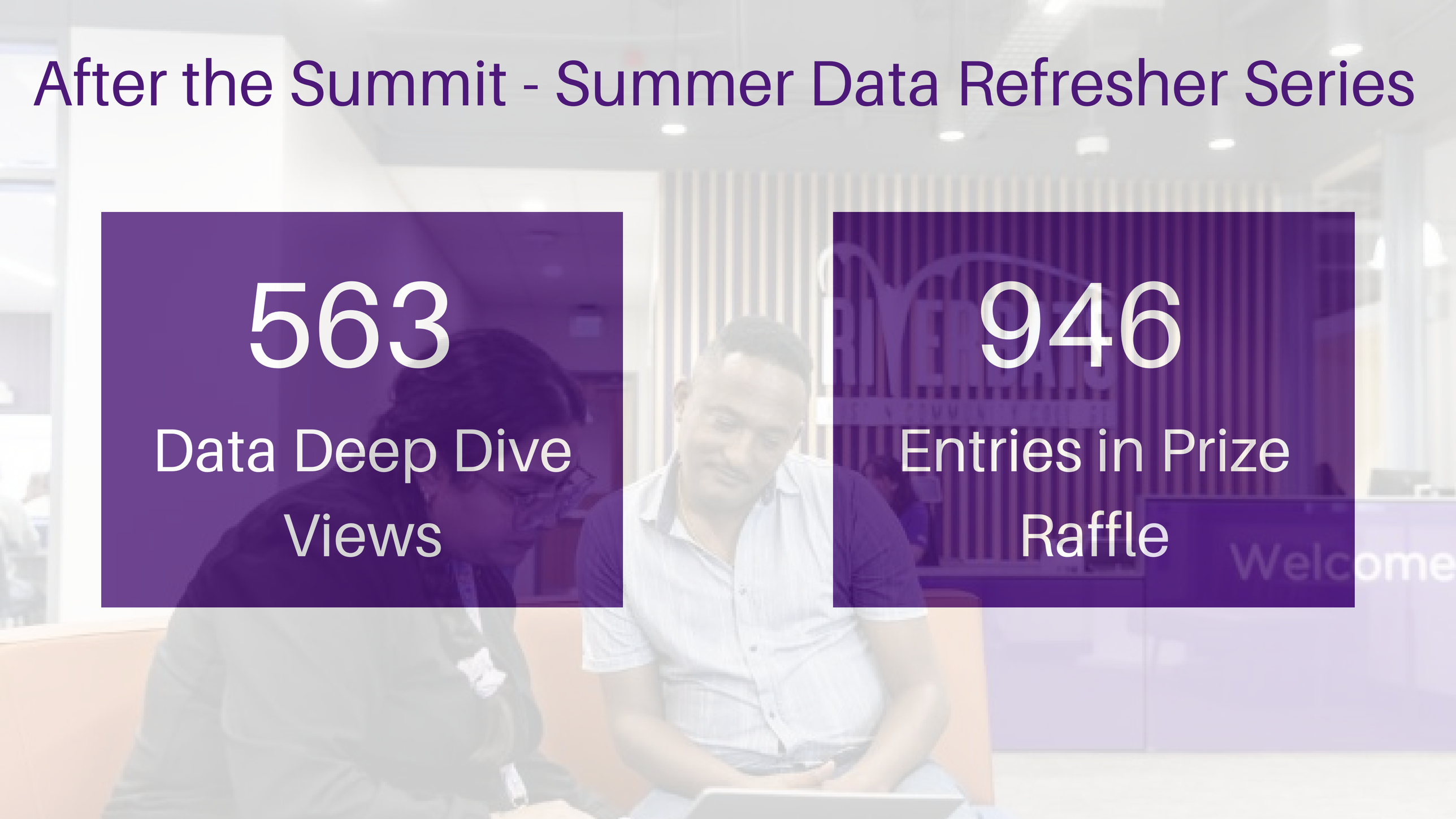
- 25%
- 43%
- 55%
- 72%

Join the poolside chat!
We've created a Padlet where you can share insights from digging into the data. Anyone who participates in the Padlet and includes their ACC email address on their post gets one entry into the raffle. Share your thoughts, experiences, or what you learned from the Data Deep Dives!

Where to Access Resources

Take the plunge! You can find recordings of all the Data Deep Dive sessions and answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the OIRA Data Deep Dive webpage.

After the Summit - Summer Data Refresher Series



563

Data Deep Dive Views

946

Entries in Prize Raffle

Targeted Support

Theory of Change Structure

Growth Culture

Empowering Leadership

Process & Structural Changes
(for Ashely)

Theory of Change Structure

Leadership Team
Project Management

Steering Team
Advisory

Required Advising
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Strategic Scheduling
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Meet Basic Needs
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Demonstrated Practices of Caring from Employees
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Student Success Course
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

8-Week Courses & Programs
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Direct-to-College Matriculation
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Belonging & Engagement in the Classroom
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Co-Requisite Courses
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Paying for College
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Transfer
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Vibrant Student Community
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Dual Credit
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Academic Tutoring & Coaching
Design Team
D T C L Co Co

Data
Team

Technology
Team

Change Management
Team

Leadership Development
Team

Chancellor's Leadership Institute

Theory of Change Institute

Theory of Change Structure

195

Employees on 14 Design Teams

104

Participants in the Theory of Change Institute

37

SMEs on the 4 Development Teams

19

Administrators in the Chancellor's Leadership Institute

16

Students Hired onto Design Teams

Tenets of ACC's Theory of Change

- Radical transparency and radical simplicity in all things
- Ground everything in data
- Focus on continual process improvement
- Technology is a tool (but not the solution)
- Culture is key

Guiding Principles of ACC's Theory of Change

Financial Effectiveness

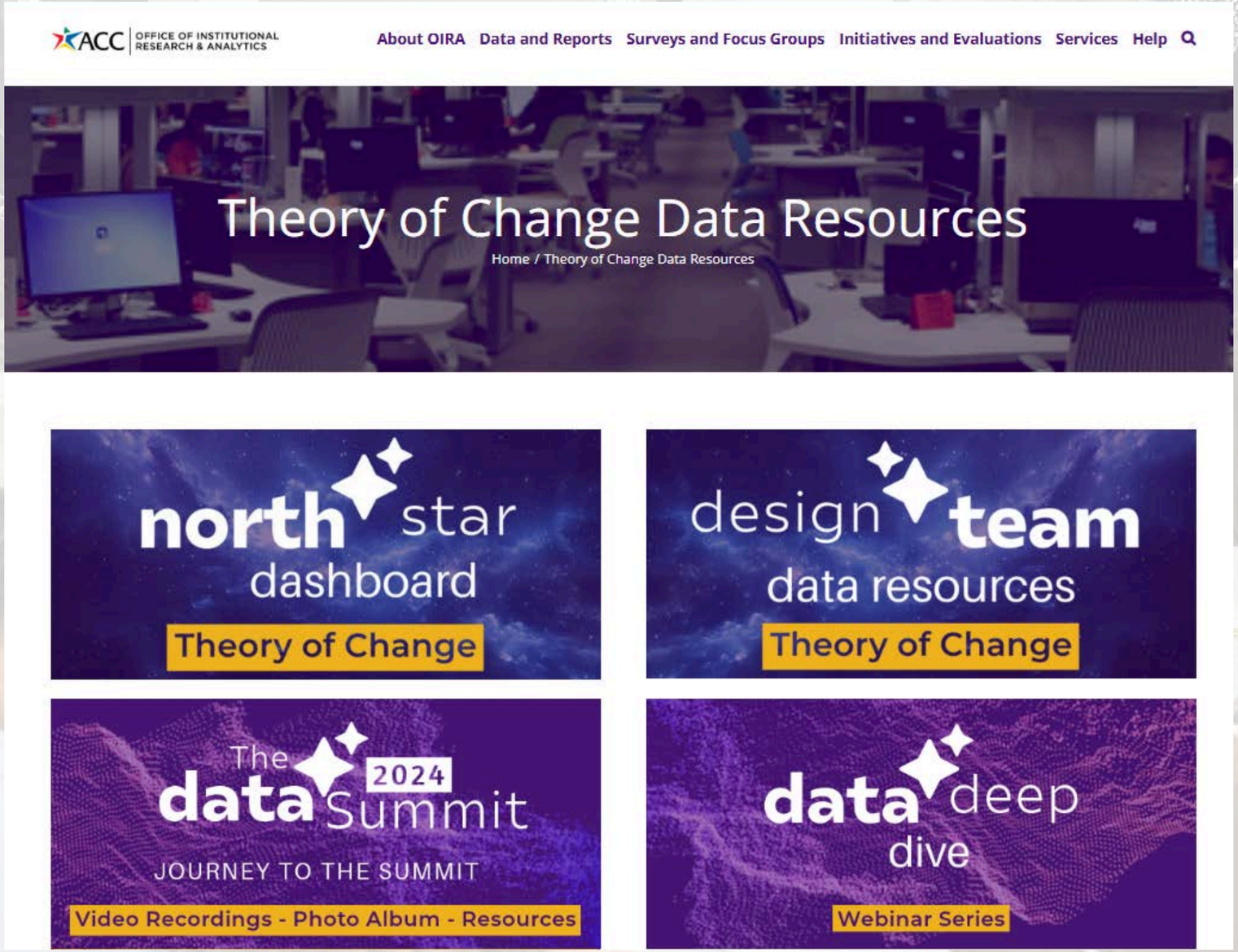
Holistic Wellness

Impact

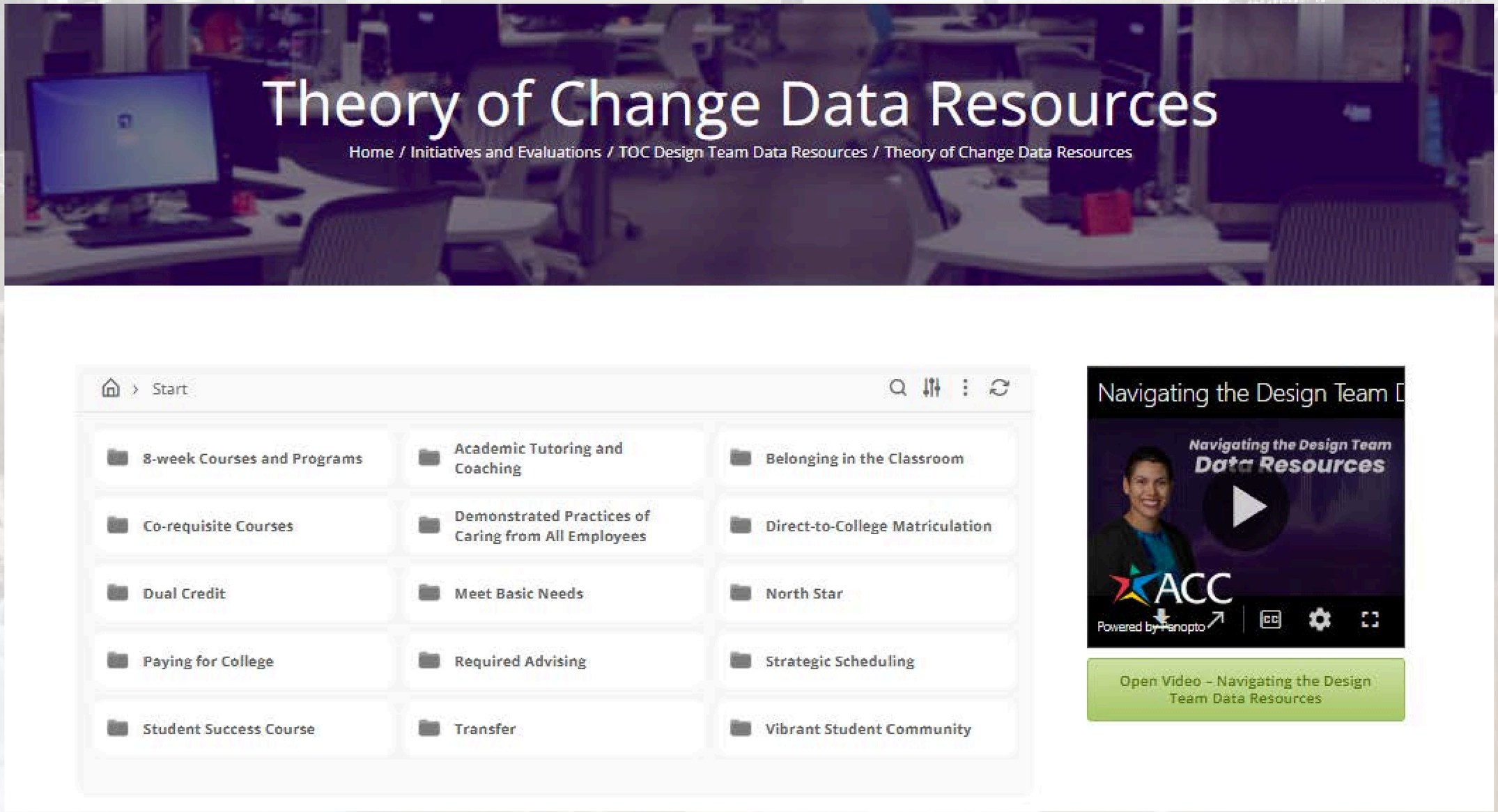
Scale

Alignment

Dedicated Data Resources on OIRA Website



Dedicated Data Resources on OIRA Website



Continued Data Collection Support

Ad Hoc Data Requests

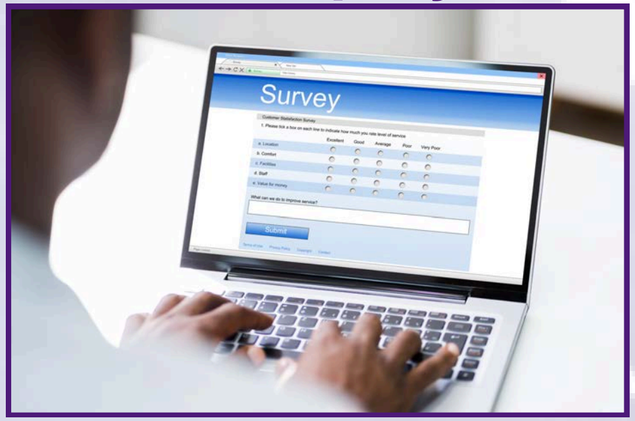
Does your request support a TOC design team?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Has your request been approved by the TOC Development Team?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Coordinated Student & Employee Surveys



Focus Group Training & Support

Data Leadership on Design Teams

Big picture: Get to the core of the issue & broadly accessible

Inspires action at the design level

Student-centered, not institution or staff-centered

Data Headlines

Socialize key insights & builds a foundation for case-making

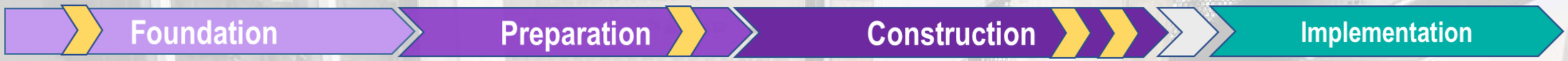
Describe the size and shape of the issue

Reflect a synthesis after review of many different data reports/ sources

4

Reflection and Discussion

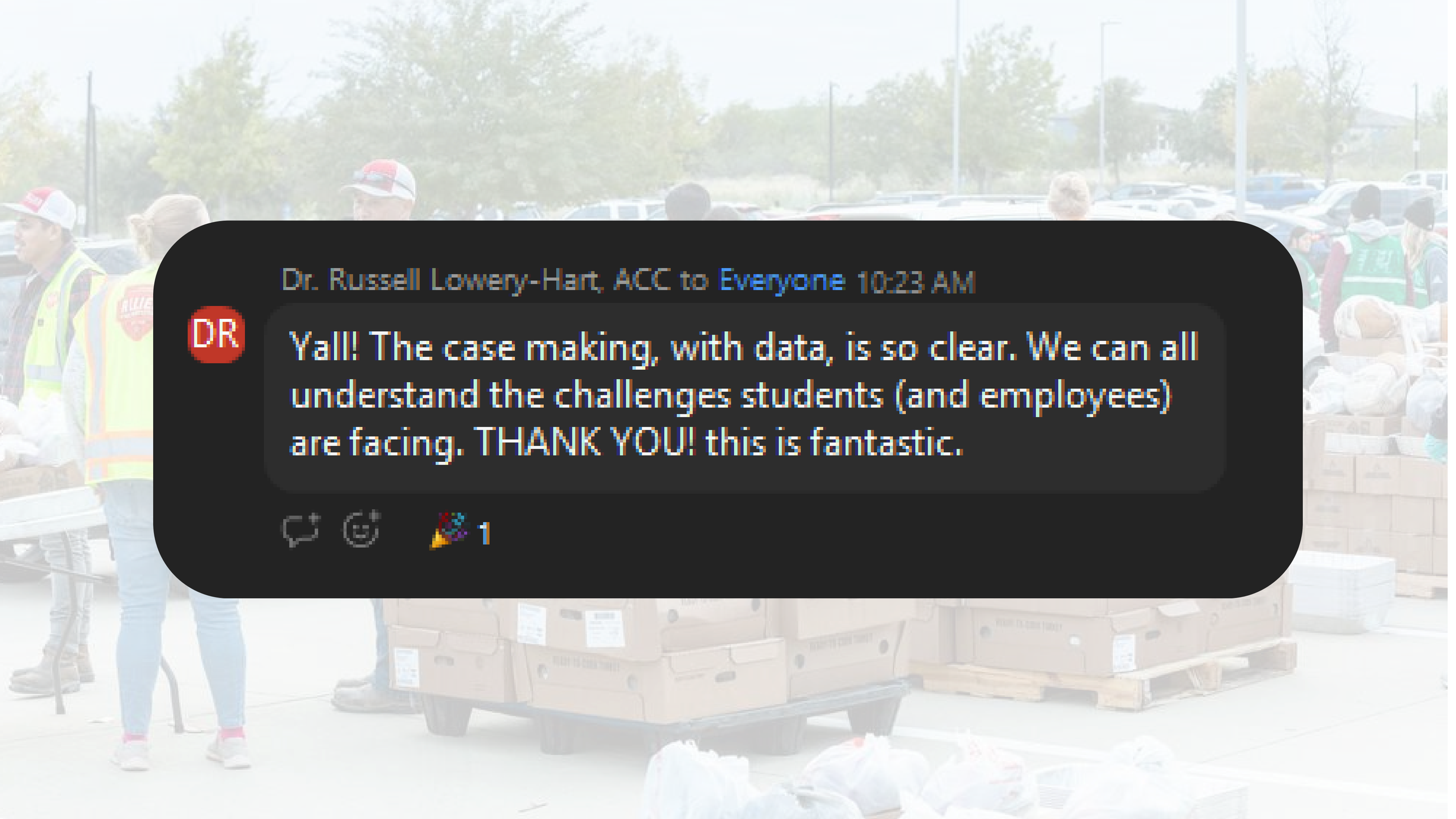
Design Stages and Phases



Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026
PHASE 1					
PHASE 2					
PHASE 3					

Lessons Learned (So Far)

- Invest in analytical & data literacy capacity
- Engage everyone in the process
- Surround the team chairs with support
- Prioritize this and pause other innovations


Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, ACC to Everyone 10:23 AM
DR
Yall! The case making, with data, is so clear. We can all understand the challenges students (and employees) are facing. THANK YOU! this is fantastic.
1

Scan the QR code to complete the session survey.

Texas Association for Institutional Research

Annual Conference: February 25-28, 2025
Omni Hotel in Corpus Christi, TX

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