Creating a Process Map for Higher Education

A process or journey map is a visual representation of a process that lists each step from start to finish. Higher education institutions can use process maps to help identify the barriers preventing students from achieving a desired outcome. A process map can be used to guide changes to a process that will reduce the barriers students face.

Step-by-Step Guide to

**STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PROCESS**
- Draft a clear and neutral problem statement, focusing on a measurable outcome (for example, “Too few students are registering full time in the spring semester”). Using this problem statement, identify the process associated with the challenge you are facing.
- Brainstorm the activities involved in the process. Gather multiple perspectives from a variety of staff members (for example, faculty members and administrators) and students.
- Write each step on a separate sticky note, using differently colored notes for the different types of steps, so that you can easily add and move around steps.

**STEP 2: DRAFT YOUR PROCESS MAP**
- Begin with the sequence of steps you want students to follow.
- Write down the details of each step (for example, “student submits online application”) and place them in the order they occur.
- Indicate the points where a decision must be made and identify the decision maker (for example, when a student receives a reminder to register for classes, or when a faculty member must review an appeal application).
- Include details about required meetings, forms, and decision points for each participant.

For more guidance on drafting your process map, refer to “DRAFT YOUR PROCESS MAP: TIPS FOR STEP 2” on the next page. For an example, see the LA College Promise draft process map on page 3 of this document.

**STEP 3: REFINE YOUR PROCESS MAP**
- Speak to multiple students to create a more realistic representation of the process.
- Edit the existing stages or add new branches to incorporate new information.
- Use different paths to represent different actors involved in making the student experience happen.
- Highlight parts of the map where you are missing information about the realities of the process, such as decision points or in-between stages.
- Note how you plan to gather this information (for example, by interviewing three students, three faculty members, and two administrators).

For more guidance on refining your process map, refer to “REFINE YOUR PROCESS MAP: TIPS FOR STEP 3” on the next page.

**TIPS**
- Step 1 is most effective when staff members work together in one place. If possible, try to convene a group of staff members to brainstorm and create early drafts of the process using sticky notes.
- For Step 3, use a diagramming program like Microsoft Visio or PowerPoint to document what you have learned.
- Expect to develop multiple versions of a process map as you collect more information and as your process changes.
- Use your latest process map version in discussions with participants to help refine the map and to understand the participants’ experiences better.
To create a useful process map, you must draw the entire process, take the perspective of a student, and incorporate aspects of both the intended and actual processes. After you have developed and refined your map, you will use it to identify the barriers preventing participants from reaching the desired outcomes.

**Example and Additional Tips**

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**DRAFT YOUR PROCESS MAP**

- **Write a student’s first interaction with the institution** (for example, receiving an email about a program or requirement). If there are multiple possible first interactions, make multiple adjacent sticky notes.

**REFINE YOUR PROCESS MAP**

- **When refining your process map**, write down other ways the student may first hear about your institution (for example, by word of mouth).

**GENERIC PROCESS MAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

1. **Student receives a letter with information about the program.**
2. **Student expresses interest in the program to the appropriate department.**
3. **Student receives forms required to participate in the program.**
4. **Student reads and understands materials and completes the paperwork.**
5. **Student attends a required program meeting.**

**Example and Additional Tips**

- **Record each of the steps the student must take to stay on track for the opportunity or requirement** (for example, submitting an online application).

- **What happens if the student does not complete this step?**

- **What happens if the student does not follow these instructions? How does he or she get back on track?**

- **What happens if the student does not complete each action? How does he or she get back on track?**

- **Note who in your institution (for example, a faculty member or department head) communicates next steps to students, how that person communicates with students, and how much time the communication may take.**

- **Enter the required meetings, forms, or other activities the student must complete to move forward and advance toward the desired outcome.**

- **What happens if the student does not complete this step?**

- **What happens if the student does not follow these instructions? How does he or she get back on track?**

- **What happens if the student does not complete each action? How does he or she get back on track?**

- **Continue to map every action and communication between your institution and the student until he or she reaches the intended goal. Add details about required meetings and forms.**

**REMEMBER**

- **Continue to develop new versions of your map as you learn more about the student experience.** To get a more realistic view of the process, ask students the following questions:
  - Does this map represent your entire experience in the process? What steps are missing?
  - Are there any steps or experiences you have had that are not represented on this map?
  - Which steps are the most challenging for you? Which steps are the easiest?
Student is sent a letter or automated email from the LA District with information on eligibility.

Student qualifies for priority registration by applying for financial aid and completing Assessment, Orientation, and Ed Planning (counseling) by May 1st priority deadline.

Program staff at student’s college shares eligibility criteria with student.

Student attends summer transition and enrolls full time for fall semester.

Student receives notification from program staff about not meeting eligibility criteria and is guided by counselor to complete appeals process for spring semester.

Program staff follows up consistently.

Students enroll full time in Spring.

Students completes required success activities through Spring semester.

Program staff at student’s college shares eligibility criteria with student.

Student attends summer transition and enrolls full time for fall semester.

Student is added to the PeopleSoft LA Promise student group.

Student fills out additional forms required by each college to participate in Promise.

Student qualifies for priority registration by applying for financial aid and completing Assessment, Orientation, and Ed Planning (counseling) by May 1st priority deadline.

Student receives notification from program staff about missing summer transition completion and/or not complying with full time requirement.

Some of the criteria are tracked on PeopleSoft.

Student is sent an eligibility checklist and student contract via their student portal.

Student is sent a letter or automated email from the LA District with information on eligibility.

Student applies to college of choice and expresses interest in LA Promise.

Student learns about LA Promise while in high school via college reps or college high school counselors (Some colleges track communications on PeopleSoft).

Student learns about LA Promise via word of mouth.

Student is out of the program.

Student is out of the program.

Student receives notification from program staff about not complying with full time requirement and is guided by counselor to complete appeals process for possible 2nd year benefits.

Student receives notification from program staff about not complying with full time requirement and is guided by counselor to complete appeals process for possible 2nd year benefits.

Student is out of the program.

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Student is out of the program.