Data Dialogue Facilitation Guide: Using Student Success and Equity Data to Drive Program-Level Improvement

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help Compton College turn data into meaningful dialogue—helping faculty and staff reflect on what the numbers tell us about student learning, equity, and success and pursue meaningful action steps toward achieving the primary goal of *Compton College 2035*: **accelerating completion while advancing equity and success**.

To engage faculty and staff in reflective, data-informed discussions that connect student success outcomes—especially equity metrics—to program-level practices and decisions. This guide helps departments examine data with an equity lens across the student journey, identify actionable insights within their discipline or departmental context, and foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

This approach aligns with the Achieving the Dream (ATD) framework, which centers on using disaggregated data and equity-minded inquiry to drive institutional improvement. ATD challenges colleges to move beyond compliance reporting and instead focus on learning from data to improve readiness, persistence, completion, and post-college success.

In practice, this guide helps deans and chairs, program managers and service area leaders:
- use data to reflect upon progress toward equity and student success goals;
- identify systemic or program-level factors affecting outcomes; and,
- align program and service improvement efforts with ATD priorities and institutional-set goals.

This ***Data Dialogue Facilitation Guide*** is comprised of seven sections:

I.   ***Guiding Effective Data Conversations for Student Success*** – General principles and practical guidance for fostering regular, open, and collaborative dialogues among faculty and staff about college data and student success;

II.   ***Data Analysis and Program Reflections Guide by Institutional-Set Goals*** - Guidance on how to lead focused, data-informed conversations that connect program outcomes to the College's institutional-set goals;

III.   ***Short Data Dialogue Activities*** - Four activities designed for 15–20-minute segments that fit within a one-hour meeting and use evidence-based protocols for rapid, inclusive engagement;

IV.   ***Four Data Inquiry and Dialogue Session Activities*** - Four practical one-hour data inquiry and dialogue activities, which aligns with the Achieving the Dream

(ATD) framework's focus on building a culture of evidence, improving student outcomes, and promoting equity-minded practices;

V.   ***Action Planning Guide*** - Practical guidance on how to move directly from reflection to action to capitalize on the momentum generated through data discussions;

VI.   ***Closing the Loop*** – A process for regularly scheduled data dialogues and action plan integration at division and department meetings each term so that findings may be incorporated into program review, curriculum updates, and budget priorities, and celebrations of successes across disciplines;

VII.   ***Data Analysis and Dialogue Sessions and Reporting Practices*** – Principles for embedding and reporting the outcomes of data dialogue sessions, which foster a stronger, more collaborative planning culture at Compton College.

Ultimately, the goal is to make data reflection a regular and constructive part of departmental culture—so that every conversation leads to more intentional, equitable, and effective practices.

I. Guiding Effective Data Conversations for Student Success

This section provides practical guidance for fostering regular, open, and collaborative dialogues among faculty and staff about college data and student success. Outlined here are core principles for productive data conversations, strategies for initiating inclusive and meaningful discussion, and guiding prompts designed to help participants reflect on trends, interpret evidence, and collectively generate solutions. By establishing routines and norms for data inquiry, these tools support a campus-wide culture of evidence-based decision-making where faculty and staff are empowered to engage in continuous improvement to advance student outcomes

Basic Preparation for Data Dialogue Sessions
- Gather relevant data (enrollment, persistence, course success, program completion, transfer, employment outcomes).
- Provide a short data snapshot with visuals or summary tables.
- Frame the meeting as a learning and improvement conversation, not an evaluation.
- Establish norms that encourage inquiry, shared responsibility, and consistent implementation of actionable priorities.

Framing Questions to Opening the Conversation
- What do we hope our students achieve through this program?
- How does equity show up—or not show up—in our program outcomes?
- What are we most proud of in supporting diverse learners?

General Guiding Prompts for Reviewing the Data
- What trends or patterns stand out?
- Where do we see improvement?
- Where do gaps persist?
- What additional context might help interpret this?
- How do these outcomes compare across student groups?
- What actions can we take to improve outcomes and close equity gaps?

Sensemaking
Sensemaking is the process of interpreting and understanding complex or ambiguous information in order to decide what it means and how to act on it. In the context of higher education, *sensemaking* refers to how faculty, staff, and administrators collectively interpret data, experiences, and outcomes to create shared meaning that guides decisions and actions. It is not just about analyzing numbers—it is about developing a common understanding of what the data are telling us, why certain patterns exist, and what changes might be needed.

Key elements of sensemaking:

- **Interpretation:** Looking beyond data points to uncover underlying causes, patterns, and implications.
- **Collaboration:** Engaging multiple perspectives to build a shared understanding of issues.
- **Contextualization:** Connecting data to real experiences within programs, classrooms, or student groups.
- **Action Orientation:** Using new understanding to inform decisions, redesign processes, or improve outcomes.

II. Data Analysis and Program Reflections Guide by Institutional-Set Goal

This section is designed to help Compton College's managers, deans, and directors lead focused, data-informed conversations that connect program outcomes to the College's institutional-set goals.

By organizing reflection and analysis around the goals, College leaders can guide teams to identify strengths, pinpoint barriers, and plan targeted improvements that advance equitable outcomes. The emphasis is not just on tracking metrics, but on understanding why patterns exist and how programs can respond.

1. Successful Enrollment
Data Focus: Who finds and enters our program?

Guiding Questions:
- Who is enrolling—and who isn't?
- What barriers exist at entry points?
- How do we promote our program to underrepresented groups?
- What partnerships could expand access?
- How can faculty and staff collaborate across departments and units to help more students find and enter our programs, and eliminate existing equity gaps?

2. Student Readiness
Data Focus: How well are we helping students begin and succeed in college-level coursework, and what barriers or support within our programs most influence that readiness?

Guiding Questions:
- What does our data reveal about students' readiness upon entry — and how does it differ by student group? (e.g., success in first term courses, persistence, core services, such as advising, orientation, completion of education plans)
- How well are students being guided to enroll in college-level math and English in the first year?
- How does our college's structure and culture support or inhibit readiness?
- How are our orientation, advising, and early educational planning processes shaping early student experiences?
- How might our program-level practices (e.g., course sequencing, co-requisites, early supports) enhance or hinder readiness and success?
- How can faculty and staff collaborate across departments and units to strengthen both student and institutional readiness for equitable outcomes?

3. Persistence (Fall to Spring)
Data Focus: Who stays and continues learning?

Guiding Questions:

- Where are the biggest drops in persistence, and for whom?
- What supports have helped students persist in our discipline?
- How can we coordinate across courses, disciplines, and units to improve continuity?

4. First-Year Math and English Completion

Data Focus: Who completes college-level Math and English courses within the first academic year?

Guiding Questions:
- What percentage of our students complete both college-level Math and English within their first academic year?
- How do these completion rates vary across student groups (race/ethnicity, gender, age)? What other student characteristics might help us better understand these completion rates?
- Are there identifiable enrollment, advising or follow-up processes creating barriers for specific populations?
- How might our advising, scheduling, or co-requisite supports influence first-year completion rates?
- What instructional practices or support models (e.g., tutoring, supplemental instruction, embedded support) have been effective?
- What professional development or curriculum redesign efforts could help close equity gaps in gateway course completion?
- How can Math and English faculty collaborate with other disciplines, departments and/or units across campus to reinforce foundational skills and support persistence?

5. Course Success

Data Focus: How equitably do students achieve course outcomes?

Guiding Questions:
- Which courses or student groups have the largest success gaps?
- How do in-person success rates compare to distance education course success rates across different student groups?
- How do teaching practices or grading policies influence equity?
- What instructional supports could improve course success?
- How can we collaborate across disciplines, departments, and units to improve equitable course success rates?

6. Program Completion

Data Focus: Who finishes what they start?

Guiding Questions:
- Who completes our programs, and who stops out?

- How do course sequencing or scheduling affect completion?
- What program-level changes might improve equity in completion?
- How can we collaborate across disciplines, departments, and units to improve equitable program completion rates?

7. Transfer

Data Focus: Who successfully moves on to a four-year institution?

Guiding Questions:
- How clearly do we communicate transfer pathways?
- Are some student groups less likely to transfer, even when eligible?
- What advising or partnerships within our unit and across campus could improve equitable transfer outcomes?

8. 9+ CTE Units Completed and Employment in a Related Occupation (recommended based upon ROI focus)

Data Focus: How students transition from program to career?

Guiding Questions:
- How equitably are students completing 9+ CTE units?
- Are some student groups less likely to complete 9+ CTE units?
- How equitably are graduates securing program-related employment?
- Are there wage or placement disparities by demographic?
- How can we better leverage employer input to guide equitable improvements in our program?
- What advising or partnerships within our unit and across campus could improve equitable transitions from program to career?

Sensemaking Reflection Prompts:
- What themes emerged across metrics?
- What's working well?
- What other data do we need?
- What opportunities for improvement exist?
- What action steps will we take in order to advance opportunities for improvement?

III. Short Data Dialogue Activities

Each of these activities is designed for **15–20-minute segments** that fit within a one-hour meeting and use evidence-based protocols for rapid, inclusive engagement. Each micro-activity can stand alone or be embedded in larger meetings, rapidly advancing your culture of evidence, engagement, and action without requiring significant meeting time or extensive preparation.

1. Data "Post-It" Insights Walk (15–20 min)

Purpose: Quickly surface group insights on specific metrics (enrollment, persistence, etc.)
How:

- Post data charts around the room or on a virtual board.

- Give each participant a stack of post-it notes.

- Prompt: "As you review this data, what is one insight, question, or surprise?"

- Participants post notes directly on charts (or type into shared digital slides).

- In the final 5 minutes, facilitator highlights common themes or most provocative questions shared and asks participants for one specific prioritized action step for immediate attention.

  Outcome: Broad input in a short time, establishes at least one prioritized action to begin moving to end equity gaps and focuses for deeper work in later sessions with more time allotted.

2. Rapid Story-to-Data Check-In (15 min)

Purpose: Connect individual student/advisor experiences to quantitative outcomes.
How:

- Start by reading one anonymized student story or quote.

- Present a related data trend (e.g., gateway completion).

- Small group/paired reflection: "How does this story help us interpret the numbers? What does the data affirm, and what's missing?"

- Each group reports one takeaway and one piece of data that points to the need for a high-priority action for the group to undertake.

  Outcome: Humanizes the data, identifies a priority action for the group, and quickly surfaces patterns that merit follow-up.

3. Quick Win Brainstorm (15–20 min)

Purpose: Turn analysis into achievable, near-term actions.
How:

- Share a targeted data snapshot (e.g., "Math 150 retention by modality").

- Guided prompt: "What's one thing we could change in the next 60 days to improve this number?"

- Have table groups propose "quick win" actions, noting one owner per action.

- Groups share out; document the list for the development of an Action Plan Grid at the next meeting.

  Outcome: Action planning is launched with a specific, concrete follow-up activity for the next immediate meeting.

4. Mini-Equity Spotlight Discussion (15–20 min)

Purpose: Scaffold equity-minded analysis into routine discussion.
How:

- Present a disaggregated metric (e.g., course success rates by student group).

- Ask: "What might explain these differences? What are our spheres of control or influence here?"

- Invite short, rotating group response, emphasizing "evidence over assumptions."

- End with one-minute written commitment: "What is one thing I will do—or ask about—before the next meeting – that we may consider for an Action Plan?"

  Outcome: Normalizes equity conversations and prompts individual as well as team follow-up that will be further developed in an upcoming Action Plan.

VI: Four Data Inquiry and Dialogue Session Activities

Here are four practical **one-hour activities** designed for deans and directors to facilitate data inquiry and dialogue sessions with faculty and staff. Each activity aligns with the **Achieving the Dream (ATD)** framework's focus on building a *culture of evidence*, improving *student outcomes*, and promoting *equity-minded practices*.

Activity 1: Student Success Data Gallery Walk

Purpose: To foster faculty-driven analysis and identification of trends in key student success metrics.
Time: 60 minutes

Steps:

1. Post visual data displays (charts, dashboards, infographics) around the room showing trends such as enrollment, persistence, and course completion.

2. Divide participants into small groups to review specific data sets.

3. Each group identifies one surprising trend, one equity concern, and one success pattern.

4. Groups report back key insights and potential causes.

   Outcome: Participants collectively identify top 2-3 priority areas for follow-up actions.

Activity 2: Student Story + Data Connection

Purpose: To connect quantitative metrics with student experiences and deepen the understanding of readiness and persistence challenges.
Time: 50–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Begin with anonymized student case summaries or quotes from surveys.

2. Present related data (e.g., first-year math/English completion, fall-to-spring persistence).

3. Facilitate small group discussions by asking participants to consider what they see in students' described experiences that aligns with, explains, or validates what they see in the data.

4. Groups draft one actionable change that could improve that metric.

Outcome: A list of actionable changes to be implemented.

Activity 3: Data-to-Action Planning Roundtable

Purpose: To translate institutional research findings into short-term, department-level improvement actions.
Time: 60 minutes

Steps:

1. Present a key institutional data snapshot (e.g., one-year persistence rates or gateway course success).

2. Ask each table to identify 2-3 barriers within their control.

3. Develop one 90-day actionable goal.

4. End with a brief "pitch out" round, where each team shares its recommendations for an actionable goal. From those that are "pitched," have participants vote on the top two goals for implementation.

   Outcome: Two priority goals identified for implementation actions.

Activity 4: Equity Gap Discovery Data Dialogue

Purpose: To build capacity for equity-minded interpretation of data among faculty and staff.
Time: 55–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Present disaggregated data on course success, persistence, or gateway completion by student group.

2. Use guided prompts to ask "What do you notice?" and "What might explain this?"

3. Discuss possible structural or pedagogical factors influencing outcomes.

5. Conclude by asking teams to identify one change in practice or policy that could narrow the gap.

Outcome: Increased awareness of systemic inequities and cross-functional collaboration on strategies. Participants collectively identify one or two top priority areas for one or more change(s) in practice or policy over the next 30 days, identify a small implementation team who will be responsible for follow-up actions and report-outs to the group.

V. Action Planning Guide

As data dialogue sessions conclude, it is critical to move directly from reflection to action. The momentum generated through these discussions—insights, shared understanding, and renewed commitment—can easily fade if not captured in a timely, intentional way.

Creating an action plan at the close of each session helps translate conversation into concrete next steps, ensuring that identified opportunities for improvement lead to meaningful change. This process allows departments and units to document commitments, assign responsibilities, and establish timelines while the dialogue is still fresh. By ending each data reflection with a clear, achievable plan, teams sustain engagement, strengthen accountability, and advance the College's broader goals for equity and student success.

Action Plan Grid [SAMPLE]:

Focus Area by Institutional-Set Goal	Equity Gap or Opportunity Addressed	Priority Actions	Possible Tasks &/or Steps	Action Team Members	Deadline for Completion	Reporting Dates: Interim and Final
Student Readiness	Recurring barriers linked to student readiness	Investigate placement, onboarding, and advising processes to determine how these shape students' readiness and persistence	Locate existing surveys of students, interviews, focus groups, and/or listening sessions that provide student perspectives on their onboarding and advising experiences. Create a short survey of students asking them	Division Chair (name) Department X Faculty (name) Department Y Staff (name)	June 1, 2026	Interim: March 1, 2026 Final: May 1, 2026

			about their onboarding and advising experiences.			

VI. Closing the Loop

Revisit equity data and action plan progress at division and department meetings each term. Integrate findings into program review, curriculum updates, and budget priorities. Celebrate successes and share effective practices across disciplines.

Appendix: Recommended Two-Year Cycle [SAMPLE]

Two-Year Data Dialogue Cycle	Focus Area	Example Activity Outcomes
Fall	Successful Enrollment Student Readiness	Review enrollment trends, identify access barriers and promising practices
Spring	Persistence (Fall to Spring) First-Year Math and English Completion Course Success	Examine equity gaps, plan instructional and student supports
Fall	Program Completion Transfer	Analyze graduation/transfer rates, update pathways
Spring	9+ CTE Units Completed Employment in Program-related Field	Review unit completion data and job placement data, assess prior actions, identify barriers to goal attainment and promising practices

VII. Data Analysis and Dialogue Sessions and Reporting Practices

Division, Department, and Unit Meetings

1. Standardize meeting agendas <u>for all units</u> across the College by using a common agenda template, which include standing items for data review and dialogue.
2. Document on all agendas the connections between agenda items (or activities) and Compton College 2035 objectives and strategies. This practice will help reinforce the purpose behind the agendized work and its importance to achieving the larger goal of ***accelerating completion while advancing equity and success***.
3. Create flexible, inclusive opportunities for part-time faculty to engage in data dialogues and planning sessions, and to serve on action teams. Consider how to garner their input and perspectives in an online format for part-time faculty who may not be able to participate in person.

Monthly Updates: Support action teams by making sure that they meet for at least 30 minutes at the beginning of each month to review the grid, updating completion status and adding notes. Help coordinate the scheduling of these 30-minute sessions. This will support accountability and ensure that the activities are completed by reporting deadlines.

Quarterly Roll-Up: Summaries of completed Action Plans may be submitted to the Institutional Effectiveness Office for quarterly reporting to the Cabinet, Core Planning Team, the Student Success Committee, and to the campus as a whole through the President/CEO's regular communications.