

Student Journey Mapping Instructions

Identify your institution’s key enrollment stages to map the current student journey, barriers, and interventions for change.

Student Journey Stages (for example):

- Aware
- Inquire
- Applied
- Admitted
- Deposit
- Transition to Advisor (at admission)
- Registration
- First day of classes (or other enrollment census milestone)

Next, complete sections 1-5 below for each stage in student onboarding journey. This process can be repeated for other student types.

1. **Process:** List each internal (staff) and external (prospective student) step in the onboarding process.
2. **Barriers:** List all the external and internal factors that might impact students.
3. **Intervention:** For each barrier, brainstorm current or new interventions that could help students overcome that issue.
4. **Barriers to Change:** The interventions that you proposed in the student journey mapping exercise will likely require some institutional change to implement. In this section, you will think through the internal barriers to starting (or increasing) the activities that you proposed.
5. **Next Steps:** Decide which areas to prioritize by assigning them a priority ranking and mapping next steps and stakeholders to involve, owner, and proposed deadline for change.

1. Process

List each internal (staff) and external (prospective student) step in the onboarding process. Highlight individual and departmental owners and contributors for each step. Lastly, identify any barriers for each step and carry these over to Part 2 (Barriers).

Use this template:

Specific Steps in this Stage	Student or Staff Step (Student, Staff)	Individual and Departmental Owner	Barriers in this Step (add to list to the right)

2. Barriers

List all the external and internal factors that might impact students. Consider how different types of students might experience different barriers. Finally estimate how large the impact of each barrier is (in terms of the number of students prevented from making progress).

Common barriers and questions to consider:

- Lack of information
 - What specific information are students missing?
 - Why are they missing the information?
 - Is it not available to them or do they not know how to access it?
- Burdensome bureaucratic process
 - Which specific processes do students have to navigate to complete this stage?
 - What makes these processes challenging for students to complete?
- Financial barriers
 - What level of financial resources does this stage require?
 - Might there be perceived rather than actual financial barriers?
- Student fails to meet criteria set by institution
 - What criteria does institution set for students to complete this stage?
 - Are there specific performance metrics or deadlines that students must meet?
 - What might make it difficult for some students to meet those criteria?
- Student perceives mismatch between their goals and institution offerings
 - What other options are students likely considering at this stage in the journey?
 - Why might they choose one of these options rather than what institution offers?

Use this template:

Specific Barriers in This Stage	Estimated Enrollment Impact (High, Medium, Low)

3. Interventions

What can you do to remove or reduce the barriers identified?

Start with the highest impact barriers that you uncovered in Part 2 (Barriers). Then for each barrier brainstorm potential interventions that could help students overcome that barrier. These could be interventions that are already in place but could be improved or a completely new approach. Consider groups on or off campus that you could partner with to support these students through this phase of the student journey.

After you've created your list go back and score each potential intervention for likely impact (how many more students could be retained in the journey) and required investment by the institution (high, medium, or low). Which interventions stand out as having the greatest likely impact for the least investment?

Use this template:

Intervention	Current or New	Estimated Impact (High, Medium, Low)	Estimated Investment (High, Medium, Low)

4. Barriers to Change

The interventions that you proposed in the student journey mapping exercise will likely require some institutional change to implement. In this exercise, you will think through the internal barriers to starting (or increasing) the activities that you proposed.

We've framed these provocatively as common excuses or rationalizations for why change cannot happen that we have heard on many other campuses. Review the list and identify the rationalizations that you feel are most common at or in your unit. Add additional detail to make it clear how this barrier to change arises in real life. You may even include specific conversations or examples.

While resource limitations are almost always a barrier to change, try to go deeper and examine what is preventing resources from being allocated to this priority. What would have to change in terms of the budget model or the relationships between different units for an action like this to get funded?

Similarly, if you see "culture" as a barrier to this change, try to examine what this means in concrete terms. Why would some individuals or groups decline to support this? Why does this look like a bad idea from their perspective?

Now select the most common barriers that members of your group have experienced from the previous exercise and identify potential strategies to overcome them.

Use this template:

Typical Barriers to Change	How Common Is This? (High, Medium, Low)	Concrete Example of How This Occurs	Strategy to Overcome this Barrier to Change
We don't have enough resources			
We don't have enough staff			
It's unclear who owns this issue—or who has the authority to make a decision			
We're too busy to do anything more than what we're already doing			
Our collective bargaining agreements or faculty handbook makes this change impossible			
Our staff don't have the right skills			

We have too many siloes that don't cooperate			
We don't hold each other accountable			
We lack a culture of customer service			
We're not good at collaborating with groups outside of the university			
Our bureaucratic processes are too rigid			
Some of us believe that some students will never succeed no matter how much you help them			
We are comfortable with the status quo			
People hoard information because they think it will protect their job			
We are more afraid of trying and failing than not trying at all			
Unit leaders discourage their staff from collaborating with other units for fear they won't be able to meet all of their unit needs			
Most people don't believe that recruiting or retention is part of their job			
People do what they are asked or told to do rather than what they know is best for the university			
Resources are allocated to the loudest or most powerful voices rather than true university priorities			
Lack of professional development makes it impossible for people to develop the skills they need to help the institution improve			
<i>Feel free to add more</i>			

5. Next Steps

Over the course of this exercise, you have identified ways to support students across their onboarding process. This last section, you will decide which areas to prioritize by assigning them a priority ranking (1, 2, 3) and providing any additional next steps and stakeholders to involve, owner, and proposed deadline for change.

Use this template:

Priority Ranking (1, 2, 3)	Next Steps and Stakeholders to Involve	Owner(s)	Deadline