

# Facilitating Change through the Departmental Action Team (DAT) Model

ASCN Webinar  
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# Departmental Action Team Project: Presenters



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# Objectives

By the end of this webinar, participants will gain:

- Knowledge of the basic components of the DAT model.
- Understanding how the DAT model is implemented, and ways it can be adapted.
- Ability to evaluate if the DAT model is appropriate for catalyzing the kinds of change of interest.
- Awareness of available DAT resources and how they can be used to support change in departmental contexts.

# Outline of Webinar

- Overview of DAT Model
- Culture Overview and Activity
- Principles Overview and Activity w/ Breakouts
- Implementing DAT Model
- DAT Impacts focused on Culture + Principles
- Q&A

# How to Participate

- Use the Zoom chat to ask questions during the presentation as they come up for you
- View the chat to read answers to others' questions
- Links to slides and activities will be posted in the chat

# DAT Model Overview

# What is a DAT?

A Departmental Action Team (DAT) is a departmentally-based working group of 6 to 8 faculty, staff, and/or students with two goals:

1. to **create change** around a broad-scale undergraduate education issue by shifting departmental structures and culture
2. to help DAT participants **become change agents** through developing facilitation and leadership skills

DATs were developed at CU Boulder in 2014; our current NSF project has been funded since 2016 and extended our work to Colorado State University.

# Characteristics of a DAT

**Membership:** 6-8 members from a single department, diversity in roles (TT & NTT faculty, UG and G students, staff), demographics, perspectives

**Timing:** Meet once every other week for 60-90 minutes, for 2-4 semesters

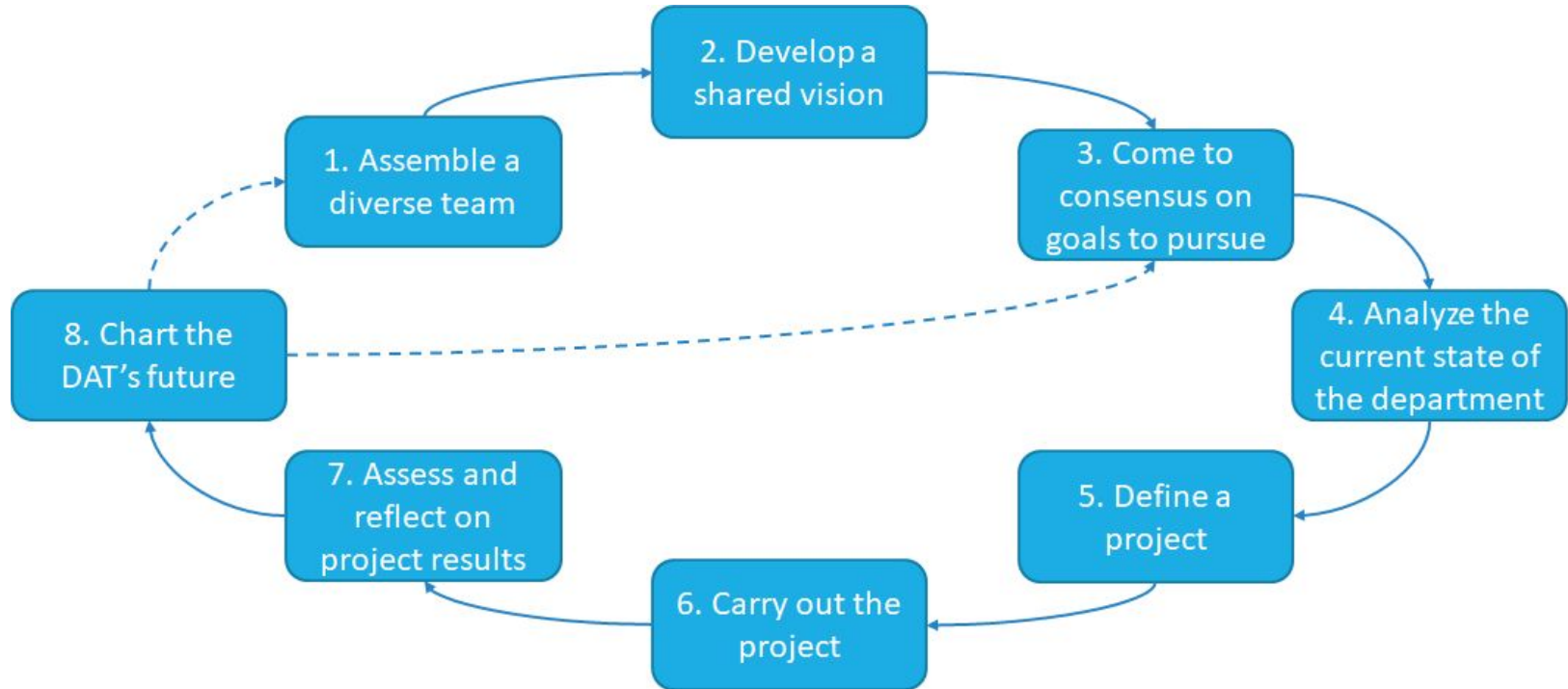
**Facilitation:** External to the department, co-facilitation model, explicit focus on process and team development

**Area of focus:** Broad-scale issue related to undergraduate education, chosen/refined by participants through visioning process

**Relationship to department:** Supportive chair, regular communication to cultivate allies, support, positive feelings



# DAT Life Cycle



# Theory of Change

Maps out the logic for how a DAT's structure and activities lead to desired outcomes.

1. Before a DAT.
  - A DAT forms in the department
2. Running a DAT.
  - The department values the work of the DAT
  - The DAT has affected change related to undergraduate education
  - DAT members are change agents
  - DAT members enact DAT culture without help
3. After a DAT
  - The department is supported by its members in making sustainable, positive, iterative changes that are aligned with the Core Principles

# Focus on Culture

# Departmental culture impacts the student experience.

Culture includes:

- Visible artifacts
  - meeting structure, physical space, departmental celebrations, policies and rules, ...
- Invisible values, beliefs, and assumptions
  - research is our priority, only tenure-track faculty make decisions, students know who and when to ask for help, ...

# Culture in Practice

What are some attributes of departmental culture that could impact the student experience?

- (3 minutes) Reflect on your answers to this question, based on your own experiences, observations from working with academic groups, knowledge from the literature, etc.
- (10 minutes) Share your responses with the group in Padlet: <https://tinyurl.com/CultureActivity>. Click on the pink plus, or double click anywhere, to add a thought.



# Focus on Principles

# Core Principles

1. Students are partners in the educational process.
2. Work focuses on achieving collective positive outcomes.
3. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation inform decision making.
4. Collaboration among group members is enjoyable, productive, and rewarding.
5. Continuous improvement is an upheld practice.
6. Work is grounded in a commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice.

These are both **design principles** and desired **cultural characteristics** of the DAT (and department).

# Principles in practice

Imagine a department that is becoming more aligned with the principle you have been assigned. As a group, consider:

- What would this look or sound like in a department?
- Why does this matter for the student experience?
- How will this impact students?

Access the activity here: [www.tinyurl.com/ASCNDATbreakout](http://www.tinyurl.com/ASCNDATbreakout)

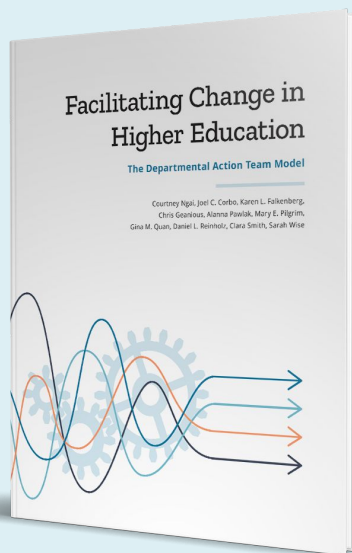


# Implementing the DAT model

# Two places to access resources



[Facilitating Change in Higher Education:  
The Departmental Action Team Model.](#)



DAT Digital Toolkit:

<https://dat-project.org/digital-toolkit/>

[HOME](#) [ABOUT DATS](#) [RESEARCH](#) [CORE PRINCIPLES](#) [PEOPLE](#) [DIGITAL TOOLKIT](#)

Welcome to Departmental Action Teams  
Project: a proven way to bring lasting positive  
changes to your department.

# Is the DAT model right for your context?

These resources define the essential components of the DAT model, and what can be adapted to your context:



How-To Guide 1: [Using Innovation Configuration Maps](#)



Table 1.1: Basic characteristics (and anti-characteristics) of a DAT



Handout 1: [DAT Core Principles](#)



DAT Model Theory of Change (TOC)

# Initiate communication & assess readiness

## STARTING POINT

A department needs change but lacks internal capacity to enact change



## OUTCOME 1

Facilitators, department members, and department leadership communicate about having a DAT in the department



## OUTCOME 2

There is external support for the DATs to form

# Communication & readiness resources



How-To Guide 4: [Building Awareness of DATs](#)



[Digital Toolkit Slides](#)  
2.0-2.10: DAT Model  
Overview



Handout 3: [Collaborative Communities](#)

## OUTCOME 3A

**Some department members are ready to participate in a DAT**

Some department members have an understanding of DATs

Some department members recognize a need for change that is aligned with the DAT model

Some department members have a desire to develop as change agents

# Communication & readiness resources



How-To Guide 4: [Building Awareness of DATs](#)



[Digital Toolkit Slides](#)  
2.0-2.10: DAT Model  
Overview



Handout 3: [Collaborative Communities](#)

## OUTCOME 3B

**The departmental leadership  
is ready for a DAT**

Departmental leadership has an  
understanding of DATs

Departmental leadership recognizes a  
need for change that is aligned with the  
DAT model

# Indicators of Success



Evidence that a DAT is likely to be successful in your department:

- Meaningful conversations about improving undergraduate education have occurred
- There is expressed interest from the department chair and some department members in the DAT model

Evidence that your department may not be ready for a DAT:

- Improving undergraduate education is not a priority in the department
- The department is already in the middle of change (e.g., hiring a new dept chair)

# Facilitator preparation

## OUTCOME 3D

### **Facilitators are ready to run a DAT**

Facilitators understand departmental needs and context

Facilitators have the capacity to support a DAT in the department

Facilitators have legitimacy in the eyes of potential DAT members and department leadership



# Facilitator preparation resources



Chapter 2: Preparing to Facilitate DATs



[Facilitation Skills Inventory](#)



How-To Guide 5: [Documenting and Reflecting on Meetings](#)



How-To Guide 8: [Using DAT Member Input](#)



DATs in Real Life

# Indicators of Success



Evidence of facilitator readiness:

- Involvement in a facilitator community
- Completed self-assessment of facilitation skills inventory
- Sufficient understanding of departmental needs and context

# DAT Impacts

# DATs at CU and CSU, 2014-2020

Departments at CU or CSU	Curricular Changes	Cultural Changes
Astrophysics * Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences * Communication Studies Computer Science * Electrical, Computer, & Energy Engineering * Forestry & Rangeland Services * Geological Sciences * Human Development & Family Studies * Information Sciences Integrative Physiology * Linguistics Mathematics Physics * Political Science * Religious Studies *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established a new major</li> <li>Developing a skills assessment and implementation plan</li> <li>Improved transition to the major</li> <li>Ensuring a coordinated curriculum across the major</li> <li>Developing learning outcomes and program assessment plan</li> <li>Promoting evidence-based instructional practices</li> <li>Improving undergraduate employability</li> <li>Restructuring the major to be more cohesive</li> <li>Advancing student engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving experiences for underrepresented undergrads</li> <li>Improving departmental climate</li> <li>Engaging undergraduates in departmental community</li> <li>Improving student spaces and instruction</li> <li>Improving departmental communication</li> <li>Increasing diversity in the major</li> <li>Improving diversity and inclusion</li> <li>Developing and implementing a peer mentoring program</li> </ul>

Table 1. Departments and changes are not aligned. \*Group continued catalyzing change after external facilitation ended.

# DAT Profile: "Potions"

- Focus: Improving experiences for underrepresented undergraduates
- Membership: Four faculty, one postdoc, two staff, three graduate students, two undergrads
- Outcomes: Two reports on diversity and inclusion in department; monthly seminar on equity and inclusion; increased access to honors intro course; gender neutral bathrooms; welcome event for admitted students from underrepresented groups; became a permanent committee, 2019 President's Diversity Award.

"[C]ompared to a regular faculty committee...having both the undergrad and grad student perspectives about both their experiences and what they really care about I think has been really important for shaping what we do, and that's incredibly valuable."  
-Potions Faculty Member

# DAT Profile: "Divination"

- Focus: Developing learning outcomes
- Membership: 2 undergraduate students, 1 graduate student, 3 faculty members, 2 student advisors, 1 staff member
- Outcomes: Development of department-level student learning outcomes; aligning these with learning outcomes for major's courses; development of a department-approved plan for collecting learning outcome data.

"[P]roviding those models for change, we probably would've never seen that had we not been part of a DAT. And talking through that was also really good because it allowed us to see really how we function as a group, and then department, to make that change happen...It's also been good to have that space to ask someone who has that in their wheelhouse, just talking points or language, how to come up and draft that."

- Divination Faculty Member

# DAT Profile: "Runes"

- Focus: Ensuring a coordinated curriculum across the major
- Membership: One tenure-track faculty member, four lecturers
- Outcomes: Departmental approval to provide course releases for three instructors and to support curricular reform across the department; integrated case studies about topics of interest across courses; instructor support for ongoing faculty teaching development.

"[The facilitators] didn't have an agenda. They were about helping us find our own path and I think that was really important. That's a big takeaway I took from it: in working with other faculty in our department we have to be very careful to not push our own views or our own agenda on them. And obviously there is a purpose for [the new curriculum coordinator] positions and we need to keep that in mind, but we also have to work with them to try to implement change."

-- Runes Faculty Member

# DAT Profile: "Transfiguration"

- Focus: Recruiting and retaining women in the undergraduate program
- Membership: 1 undergraduate student, 1 student advisor, 1 staff, 1, NTT faculty, 2 tenure-track faculty
- Outcomes: Serving as the hub for overseeing actions other departmental committees are taking towards inclusion goals and collecting & analyzing data to keep track of progress

Received external funding to continue this work in the department and is a department-wide initiative



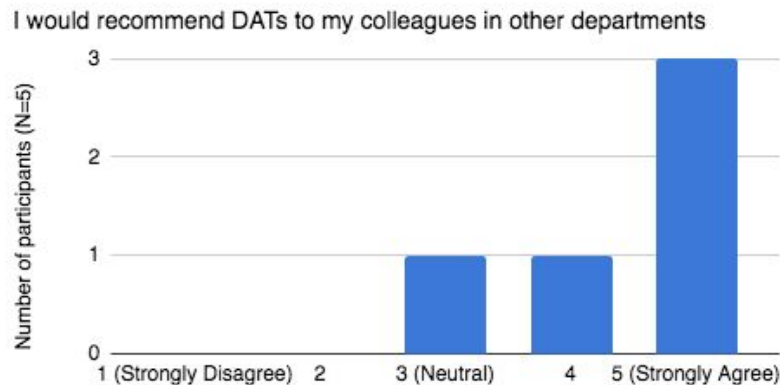
# DAT Profile: "Alchemy"

- Focus: Departmental climate
- Membership: Six staff, six faculty
- Outcomes: Development and presentation of results of student experience survey; organization of a departmental orientation for freshmen; creation of student "call to action" groups; hosting departmental retreats; continued data-focused monitoring of departmental climate

"Everyone is literally at the same table... And in the meeting as you witnessed today, there's no hierarchy of faculty versus staff.. Basically, you drop your title at the door"  
- Alchemy Faculty Member

# DAT Profile: "Herbs"

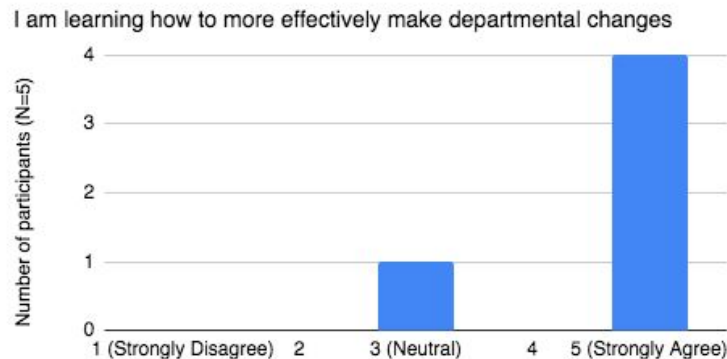
- Focus: Assessing majors' disciplinary skills
- Membership: Seven tenure-track faculty, four graduate students, 1 undergraduate student
- Outcomes: development of a long-term assessment plan; development and a pilot of skills assessment; departmental approval for two faculty to implement multi-year skills assessment.



# DAT Profile: "Summoning"

- Focus: Engaging undergraduates in departmental community
- Membership: 2 tenure-track faculty, 2 instructors, 2 graduate students, 2 undergraduates
- Outcomes: Welcome events for new and prospective majors; establishment of departmental Facebook and LinkedIn presence; creation of an annual Industry Night; improvements in ways to involve undergraduates in departmental committees.

"I am not sure how we will survive without our facilitators. Please do not leave us." -Summoning DAT Member



# Summary of DAT Impacts

- Driving department-wide curricular change
  - Supports learning; accreditation efforts
- Catalyzing cultural and community change
  - Supports belonging; equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives
- Developing the change agency of DAT members

# Q&A

Use the Q&A Feature on Zoom to ask questions to the hosts

# We'd like to hear from you!

Want to get updates, ask questions, or implement a DAT?

- Complete the webinar feedback **survey**
- Reach us through our contact form:
  - <https://tinyurl.com/DATContactForm>
- Information and resources at our website: <https://dat-project.org/>

# References

DAT Project on the Web: <http://dat-project.org/>

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