

PLAN A HOLDS ASSESSMENT

TOOLS FOR ASSESSING ADMINISTRATIVE HOLDS



FROM THE *NO HOLDING BACK* PROJECT

The experiences of the 12 public postsecondary institutions in the [No Holding Back](#) project were the basis for a guide to planning a basic institutional holds assessment that can be used flexibly and tailored to various institutional settings.

**Convene a
Cross-
Functional
Team**

**Identify
Reasons,
Resources, and
Challenges**

**Assess
Holds
Through
Data**

**Review
Policies,
Procedures,
and Processes**

**Consult
Students**

Convene a Cross-Functional Team



Holds may be used in different ways by the operational units within an institution. To fully understand the origins and justification of specific holds, and to encourage buy-in for potential changes to holds policies, representatives of these units should be consulted and involved in a holds assessment.

► The units to involve in the assessment might include:

- The registrar
- Institutional research
- Finance/student accounts
- IT
- Student affairs leadership
- Administrative champions or leadership

► Consider the role of faculty and faculty leadership in originating, using, communicating about, and improving the use of holds.

“ We strongly recommend taking an ‘interdisciplinary’ approach to reviewing policies and practices on holds, including representation from a number of units who have a stake in student progression and completion.

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS



“ Talking with other departments is key. Break down unintended silos by auditing existing holds and the hold communication process.

FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



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▶ Including and leveraging other institutions in a holds assessment can also strengthen your analysis. For example:

- Institutions with high rates of transfer or co-enrollment with your institution.
- System-level or other governing bodies or agencies (see also [Policy Influences](#)).
- Other institutions that you collaborate with for inspiration, practical ideas and examples, and help to stay on track.

Identify Reasons, Resources, and Challenges



Working collaboratively, a cross-functional team can identify what information is important and compelling for the institutions' unique priorities.

▶ **A cross-functional team can acknowledge the various perspectives and capital that coalesce around institutional financial health and student success.** For example:

- **Campus leadership** may wish to proactively respond to external pressures or demonstrate the institution's commitment to support students by limiting the use of holds, while also maintaining institutional viability.
- **Financial units** can share expertise concerning tuition revenue, financial obligations, documentation, payment deadlines and options, past due account balances, and debt collection regulations.
- **Records and admission units** can bring the perspective of admissions requirements, legally mandated forms and documentation, and requirements for credit evaluation and credit portability.
- **Enrollment units** contribute knowledge around student enrollment targets, the roles of various types of students in enrollment levels (such as new students, transfer students, returning and re-enrolling students).
- **Student affairs units** can provide insights on the academic and personal needs of students, as well as perspectives on student equity, progress and success.

▶ **The intentional and thoughtful involvement of stakeholders may reveal unintended and downstream effects of holds.**

▶ **As priorities for a holds assessment are identified, acknowledge what resources will be needed, and what will be available, for the data analysis component.** These dimensions are also important to consider when it comes time to implement any changes that may arise from the holds assessment.

“ A community of practice provided the opportunity to learn best practices from participating institutions and industry professionals committed to supporting students from low-income backgrounds, students who are first in their family to attend college, or students of color in their educational retention and success.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM



“ Financial holds are coordinated to allow student flexibility for continuing registration that does not require prepayment or have cancellation. The threshold is relatively high for a registration hold. They are meant to signal the student that changes need to occur to prevent too much indebtedness.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA



“ You will reveal both positive and negative evidence and patterns. We found that tuition remissions programs are supporting Pell students as intended. And that new students, Black students, indigenous students, and first-generation students are experiencing greater negative impacts.

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY



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► Consider possible challenges, which may include:

- Lack of standardized, computerized, or documented data about holds.
- Lack of capacity to compile and analyze holds data.
 - 💡 The available [Technical Guide for Assessing Administrative Holds with Data](#), accompanying [workbook](#), and examples and perspectives from other institutions in the [Data and Evidence guide](#), may help mitigate capacity issues.
- Varying audiences and expectations for what type of data are compelling for change.
- Reluctance to change institutional practices that are perceived as supportive of institutional viability.
 - 💡 Emphasize that you will first be looking for evidence that there is a need for any change. Invite concerned stakeholders to participate in the assessment and represent their perspective.
- Concern that altering the use of holds could impact student compliance with administrative requirements, advising, and other activities.
 - 💡 In your initial data analysis, evaluate the effectiveness of existing holds in achieving compliance, so you will work from evidence rather than impressions about the usefulness of holds. This provides a benchmark “compliance indicator” as you experiment with alternatives.

Assess Holds Through Data



Compiling and analyzing the available data about holds from your student information system and other information management systems is a foundational part of a holds assessment.

💡 The available [Technical Guide for Assessing Administrative Holds with Data](#), accompanying [workbook](#), and examples from other institutions in the [Data and Evidence guide](#), provide a basic replicable framework for quantitative analysis of holds.

Review Policies, Procedures, and Processes



An assessment of administrative holds usage must include a systematic inventory of and an understanding about the policies, regulations, administrative requirements, and institutional guidance governing holds. From this, institutions may also discover discretion with the use of holds, and where there is possibility for improvement.

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“ Holds can prevent students from receiving scholarships. For example, a library fine that prevents students from registering may limit students from meeting scholarship requirements or from obtaining transcripts or grades needed for specific scholarships or applications.

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST

“ One anticipated challenge with changes was departmental buy-in. To mitigate this challenge, we provided departments with the relevant hold information so they have the data they need in order to participate in inventorying holds, and to know that we are attempting to make positive changes to the student experience by evaluating hold usage.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

“ Be willing to critique and focus on continuous improvement. This work is not easy; too often language like “because we have always done it this way” will come up and you need to think past that to “Why do we do this”.

EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

“ Data retention, storage and integrity is essential for examining policies and their impact on student success.

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

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FROM THE NO HOLDING BACK PROJECT

The [Policy Influences guide](#) outlines the types of federal, state, governing system, and other influences identified by the institutions in the *No Holding Back* project, and other useful insights, that can be a useful starting point for a systematic policy inventory.

Based on what is learned from the policy inventory, institutions may find opportunities for improvements such as these:

- ▶ Reduce, consolidate, and refine the holds that are available for staff to place on student accounts.
- ▶ Clarify the procedures, documentation, and process for:
 - Using available holds
 - Requesting or originating new holds
 - A periodic review of holds
 - Governing, approving, and modifying available holds.
- ▶ Institute options other than registration holds to provide information to students, guide them through requirements, alert them of a need for action, or get payment on owed balances.
- ▶ Implement data monitoring and review of holds usage, including who has access to this information, how it will be made available, and how it will be used.
- ▶ Improve how holds are communicated, shifting the focus of content from administrative language to student-centered messaging across channels, including webpages, course catalogs, student agreements and codes of conduct, online student portals, emails, and text messages.

Consult Students



Consider how you can get student feedback about their experience with holds. This can be especially useful for things that cannot be revealed by data, for example:

- ▶ Contributing factors to observed patterns in hold usage that vary by type of student
- ▶ Preferred methods of communication
- ▶ Why students do not respond to certain types of communications

The [Student Perspectives guide](#) details the perspectives of 50 students from 10 of the participating institutions about their experience with holds and includes sample material for student focus groups or interviews.

Note: Information has been anonymized unless express permission to attribute was granted.

“ When we discontinued placing registration holds on students in poor academic standing, their responsiveness to notifications of required actions dropped only by 1%.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY-FULLERTON



“ We want to change the language we use with students and not use the word “hold”, which can be scary or off-putting to students. But this word is also used in so many systems and tools that we utilize that are created by third parties. We are hoping to shed a light on the role of these systems.

LARAMIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



“ We are beginning conversations with stakeholders on alternative methods for student support beyond the hold, in hopes to eliminate several student success holds.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA



Do you know of another resource, have a question or want to recommend something?

Share with us here:

[www.wiche.edu/
administrative-holds/share](http://www.wiche.edu/administrative-holds/share)