

Transforming Youth Recovery

One Community, One School, One Student At A Time

Capacity Building for Collegiate Recovery

Thriving in the Fullness
of the College
Experience

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INTRODUCTION

With an increasing awareness of the number of young adults facing addiction, a belief has developed that more programs are needed to support these students. According to this belief, college administrators and counselors currently lack the resources for helping students in recovery fulfill their academic and personal potential. In other words, there is a perception that a lack of resources is contributing to the limited number of collegiate recovery programs that are flourishing in the United States.

This premise has led many to approach the desired expansion of collegiate recovery from a program focus – a problem-solving view that seeks to identify and bring forward a distinctive set of activities and services necessary to address the needs of college students in recovery. The primary strategy to date has been to research and create collegiate recovery programs, and then share specific standards to expand the reach of recovery support on college campuses.

Our findings, however, indicate that supporting college students in recovery consists largely of increasing access to resources, many of which are already available within collegiate communities, and building relationships that enable students in recovery to take full advantage of the college experience. This insight has led us to concentrate on shifting from a *program focus* to a *relationship focus* when it comes to starting a collegiate recovery effort. This change in thinking has challenged us to move from a *problem-solving approach* to a *capacity-building approach*. It is an approach grounded in the assumption that college communities already have the resources and capabilities necessary to help students in recovery to thrive. We just need to turn our attention to removing barriers that may be preventing students in recovery from accessing those things that could help them thrive in the fullness of their college experience.



“The program was established when two students came to the then director of our class program and said, ‘It’s really hard to be in recovery and be on a college campus.’ They put their heads together and just came up with a pilot program.”

—Program Director

On every college campus, there is a certain capacity for helping students in recovery to thrive. These capacities reflect the diverse ways that college-specific partnerships and coalitions can form to create activities, services, and programs that best support their students. Our intention is to inspire you to cultivate those relationships that we have seen capable of overcoming barriers to helping students in recovery.

In many places we will use the terminology: “Helping students in recovery to thrive in the fullness of the college experience.” Every institution of higher education is rich in the experiences it has to offer. Typically, only a fraction of an institution’s resources are accessed fully by students – whether you are in recovery or not. What we have found interesting is that recovery can open the doors to experiences that have long remained hidden. Providing access to and encouraging new relationships, support systems, life skills, and educational resources is the intent behind any collegiate recovery program. It is the pathway to thriving, and the mapping discipline reveals assets capable of providing access to the fullness of the college experience.

We believe when striving to help people embrace something new and different, you can achieve more effective and sustainable outcomes when you start from an asset-based approach. This approach recognizes that groups and communities of people change in the direction of their inquiries. Capacity building is all about building relationships and connections among advocates for the change you are seeking. When you empower groups and communities of people to become active agents, rather than objects of change, novel practices emerge. We don’t lead by changing the system because this assumes that we know what is best for people in their communities. We start with finding what is helpful and useful to people and then study **pathways to entry**, barriers to access, and **gaps in advancement**. Ultimately, capacity building is teaching groups and communities of people to learn to help themselves.

Building capacity for recovery includes the following efforts:

Effort 1: Finding and sharing assets and resources.

Effort 2: Building relationships with advocates and supporters.

Effort 3: Mobilizing assets into recovery practices.

Effort 4: Studying points of entry to reveal **engagement patterns**, barriers to access, gaps in services, and new capacity building opportunities.

Effort 5: Defining and measuring the right **protective and well-being outcome indicators** to ensure you are headed in the right direction.

Effort 6: Learning to build capacity to practice **social architecture** and improve local conditions.





THE LANGUAGE OF CAPACITY BUILDING

To understand the **capacity building** approach, we start with certain definitions that will guide your efforts:

First, there are **assets**, which is any person, place or group that can assist and support students in recovery on campus. An AA meeting on campus would be an asset. A dedicated space for students to gather would be another asset.

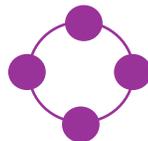
Second, there are **practices** that are created by **mobilizing** the available assets into an offering or relationship of some kind. Holding AA meetings in the dedicated space at a regular time with timely announcements would be a practice.

You build capacity by finding, making visible, and mobilizing your community-based assets into practices and local coalitions that help students in recovery to live their best lives while getting the most out of everything a college experience has to offer.



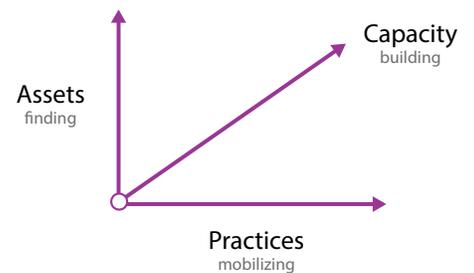
Asset

Any person, place, or group that can meaningfully contribute to supporting and helping those in recovery.



Practice

The mobilization of assets into a clearly defined, easily accessible recovery service.



Capacity Building

The activities that make assets visible and mobilize the community by forming practices and coalitions to help students in recovery to live their best life while getting the most out of their college experience.



The “early stage” of any collegiate recovery program is characterized by a group of students, with assistance from **advocates**, finding and connecting with individual and organizational assets within their community. Advocates are usually staff and faculty members at the college, and their role is to support and encourage students as they organize for capacity building activities. As time goes on, assets are combined and mobilized into certain practices that are accessible to any student in recovery on the college campus.

The approach we discuss in this document is a set of steps called **the continuum of capacity building**.

The continuum is a process that students in recovery, and the advocates that support them, can go through to involve on their college campus.

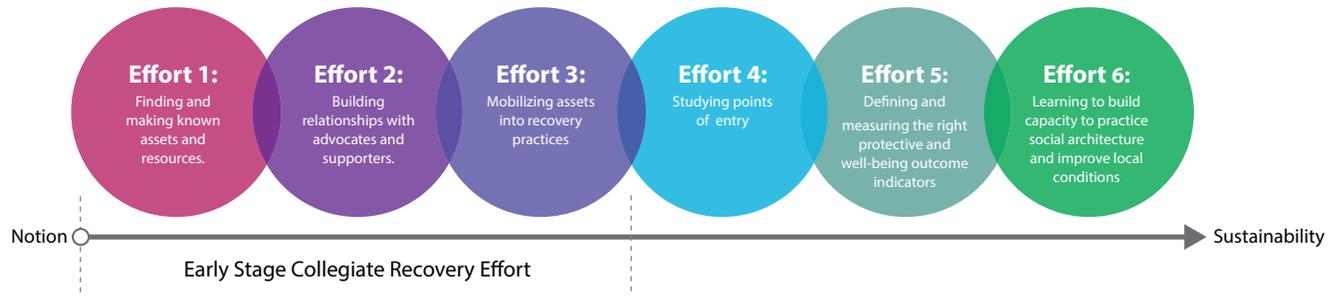
The amount of time you spend on each effort will vary. To use a simple example, in the early stages of any collegiate recovery program, more time will be spent on finding and **mapping** your community-based assets. As the collegiate recovery program and community matures, you might spend more time on institutionalizing and improving your collegiate recovery experience.

Each of these efforts has a goal of benefiting students in recovery. We have found that students in recovery often connect first with each other and then seek assets that can best support their recovery and academic goals. The value of “doing recovery together” is undeniable. For this reason, capacity building should always involve groups of students in recovery at a specific campus working together to make connections on their campus and in the broader community. The breakthrough will come when we can help them connect with a larger community that are making similar changes, and in turn identify with a national capacity building movement to help students in recovery thrive in the fullness of their college experience.

There is a point along this continuum of capacity building when awareness and participation provides an opportunity to **institutionalize** the effort. That is, the college community begins to accept your practices as a necessary part of the healthy and academically rewarding environment everyone values. Typically, early stage collegiate recovery programs transform when a set of practices are ready to be called a program. **Institutionalization** is not a necessity for all experiences, but is viewed as an important consideration for long term **sustainability**.



Continuum of Capacity Building



It is important in your early stage efforts to remain mindful that you are working to find practices that work for students. At first, new practices can be introduced and validated by the students. Over time, it is students themselves who will generate the most valuable practices for sustaining their recovery and pursuing their academic goals.

You may find it helpful to reference the lifecycle for collegiate recovery programs on four-year campuses, which is outlined on the next page. In our experience, the biggest mistake those in early stages can make is to ignore this path. Too often, many try to skip ahead on the lifecycle without realizing the consequences of doing so. It is important to maintain focus on the process versus the end results. It is a process intended to start small and grow gradually in early stages. For this reason, we encourage specific early stage capacity building efforts that support the lifecycle steps necessary to reach maturity and sustainability.



Lifecycle Of A Collegiate Recovery Program

	NOTION	ESTABLISHMENT	MATURITY	SUSTAINABILITY
Growth	Advocates invite people with whom they have developed relationships.	An increasing number of referrals into the community come from students in recovery.	The majority of referrals into the community and the practices of the community come from students in recovery.	The collegiate recovery community is self-sustaining and may contribute to the creation of smaller, focused coalitions.
Practices	Initiation of services, discussions, and activities that students in recovery express interest in.	Collegiate recovery practices shift from serving individual needs to being group-focused.	Implementation of practices from similar communities to best serve the majority of students in recovery.	Sharing of practices so that similar communities can initiate like services for students in recovery.
Sense of Community	Not yet.	Local coalition and social network established; community guidelines recognized.	Community norms adopted and external relationships established through communications and activities.	Connection to broader national movement of students in recovery thriving in the fullness of the college experience.
Goal	To cultivate a small-group of highly active students in recovery as the foundation upon which to build a community.	To create a sense of community among students and participating coalitions .	To prepare, if appropriate, to institutionalize the collegiate recovery community into a defined program.	To identify potential sub-groups which can form to strengthen the coalition of supporters for students in recovery.



THE EXERCISES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

GETTING STARTED: CAPACITY BUILDING STARTS WITH THE GROUP

Everything we have seen and heard about supporting a community of students in recovery has led us to the importance of starting with a small group. Peter Block, a noted author in the area of community-building, reminds us, “A shift in community benefits from shifts in individual consciousness but needs a communal connectedness as well, a communal structure of belonging that produces the foundation for the whole system to move.” He goes on to point out that such shifts occur only after small steps that are organized by small groups patient enough to learn and experiment and learn again.

For those who already engage in efforts around collegiate recovery, promoting capacity building activities may seem obvious. Emphasizing the small support group, for example, is a known ingredient to maintaining and thriving in recovery. But there is a power in being explicit about creating a connected environment that encourages the telling of stories that focus on the potential within recovery, versus the perceived deficiencies associated with addiction. There is a strength that builds when community members are collaborating and conversing while they look for assets that can help students in recovery to thrive in the fullness of the college experience. And there is a value in always being grounded in data collected directly from community members – which are the students in recovery themselves. In early stages, the concern is not for thriving programs, but for thriving students in recovery. Instead of worrying about creating a program, worry about finding what works for students and doing more of it.

The pages that follow outline a few exercises for you to use as your group begins capacity building efforts. These exercises include: (1) Exercises for Finding & Sharing Assets & Resources, (2) Exercises for Building Relationships With Advocates & Supporters, and (3) Exercises for Mobilizing Assets into Recovery Practices.





EXERCISES FOR FINDING & SHARING ASSETS & RESOURCES

Exercise 1: Community Mapping

Community mapping is a way to create an inventory of individual, organizational, and physical assets that can inform and shape the practices of each collegiate recovery program. The idea of mapping has roots in the process of uncovering local talents and gifts that can contribute to a healthy and fulfilling recovery community. The true value of the mapping discipline, and why it is promoted as a keystone activity for capacity building, is an ongoing process of outreach and relationship-building. Just as every recovery path is unique, so is every recovery community. It is the act of mapping that will reveal the unique characteristics and associations that can help students in recovery to thrive in the fullness of the college experience.

Community mapping is a starting point for the establishment of early stage collegiate recovery efforts. Your inventory of “assets” makes visible things that can contribute to the supportive environment you want to create.

Based on the 2012-2013 community-based asset research conducted by Transforming Youth Recovery, potential community assets for early stage collegiate recovery efforts on four year campuses fall into nine categories that can combine to connect, support, and serve students in recovery.



The Nine Categories of Community-based Assets

- Advocacy and Education
- Activity Spaces
- Health and Wellness
- Life Skills
- Mental Health Services
- Recovery Support
- Student Services
- Substance Use Counseling
- Treatment Services

For a more detailed description on how to community map see our Community Asset Mapping Toolbox.

Exercise 2: Capacity

A key part of the capacity building approach is transforming college environments into **asset-rich** communities that have a positive vision for students in recovery.

Capacity, a web-based community asset mapping tool, provides direct support for your community mapping. As with any tool of capacity building, it is designed to complement the face-to-face interactions that are expected during the process.

When you first visit Capacity you can create an account that will allow you to add assets from your local college community. To record any asset, you can enter data directly into the online form, either on your computer or mobile device, or you can use the Asset Inventory Template to record information and have it entered at a later date.

Beyond the convenience of one location where your assets can be catalogued and accessed, every asset mapped will be represented by a dot on a map of the United States. As clusters of assets begin to emerge, you will be able to see where capacity is building and better connect students to the resources in the community.

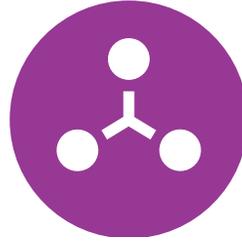
The day will come when the dots will fill the map from coast to coast, and they will form the footprint of a national movement for collegiate recovery. See the complete community mapping asset toolbox in the Capacity application for additional “how to” information.

The 2015 Collegiate Recovery Asset Survey completed by 91 collegiate recovery programs on four year campuses in the U.S. identified the following nine assets as critical to starting any collegiate recovery effort:

- Individuals available for 1:1 recovery support (coaching, guiding, supporting, mentoring).
- Individuals who are dedicated staff for a collegiate recovery program (faculty, staff, students; full or part-time).
- Individuals who are influential within the University and/or in the broader community and are interested in advocating for students in recovery.
- Mutual aid support groups near or on campus for students in recovery (i.e. AA, NA, GA, and other 12-Step meetings in addition to groups such as Celebrate Recovery, SMART Recovery, eating disorder recovery, Teen Challenge, etc.).
- Physical space for students to get together socially, soberly, and safely (organized meals, dances, bowling, or other age appropriate activities).
- Physical space that is dedicated for students in recovery to gather and meet.
- Organizations, departments, and services that a collegiate recovery program can refer students who need outside services (treatment centers, mental health professionals, counselors, psychologists, etc).
- Organizations, departments, and services that can refer students to a collegiate recovery program (judicial affairs, academic counselors, mental health counselors, treatment centers, etc.)
- Students in recovery who are interested in growing the recovery community on-campus.

See a full list of 38 assets for building collegiate recovery capacity on a four year campus here: <http://transformingyouthrecovery.org/resources/38-assets-building-collegiate-recovery-capacity-rev-august-2015>





EXERCISES FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADVOCATES AND SUPPORTERS

Exercise 1: Foundational Conversations

It's just you and some students you know. Everyone is in recovery...and going to school...and wanting to get everything they can out of their college years. And as you talk to each other, there seems to be an idea that recovery, academic progress, and participation in the fullness of the college experience could all be enhanced by a supportive community and additional recovery support services. There has been talk of working to establish such a community; if it's going to happen, you're going to have to get involved.

So how do you make sure everyone who is involved is on the same page as you work to build relationships with advocates and supporters?

You are starting to make a shift that must be driven by conversation. At this "notional" stage in your lifecycle, the key conversations are about "relationship" and "possibility."

Conversation 1: Your Recovery Story

In a group setting, each group member should tell their story of being in recovery:

- Make it personal, for credibility.
- Keep it simple and in the present tense, so it's real and understandable.
- Be clear about what recovery means to you.
- Use concrete examples from your life to talk about what recovery has given you.



- Mention the length of time that you have been in recovery.
- Talk about your recovery, not your addiction.
- Be clear that you understand there's more to recovery than not using alcohol or other drugs – that part of recovery is creating a better life.

As a storyteller, you will want to focus on being frank and open but also concise. As storylisteners, you should concentrate on listening empathetically — that is, listen for what the story means to the teller and for what decisions the teller has made and the actions they have taken. Some people find it helpful to have these conversations even before they start community mapping — they can help to build the mapping team.

Conversation 2: Making a Commitment

In a group setting, each of you should explain your commitment to changing the way your college community supports students in recovery. Focus on the future rather than the past. Be sure to include these four points:

- Why working to build a supportive environment for recovery and academic success is important to you.
- Why thriving, as a student in recovery, in the fullness of the college experience, is a worthy goal.
- What is personally at stake for you in this quest that the group is undertaking together.
- If you were to cut back on your participation at some point, or drop out altogether, what would be the most likely reason for that.

Conversations 1 and 2 will help build the *relationships* you need within your group. They will also help you when community mapping should an advocate or connector ask you why this effort is important to you and your students. The next conversation will address what the group will be working toward.

Recovery Story Template

I'm (name) and I am in recovery, which means that I have not used (substance) for more than (length of time).

I am committed to recovery because it has given me new purpose and hope for the future, while helping me gain stability in my life. (Insert concrete examples.)

I am now speaking out because recovery has helped me change my life for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same.



Conversation 3: Stating Intentions

In a group setting, imagine a time far in the future when you could look back and say, “Much of who I am and what I have accomplished, I owe to the group I helped establish to support college students in recovery.”

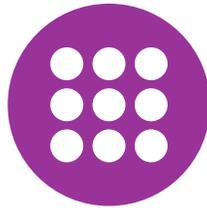
In many ways, this future might resemble a combination of what each of you said you had *at stake* in your commitment conversation.

- Working from the future back to the present, create a “from/to” chart that compares the future state to the present state for recovery support services on your campus and in your surrounding community.
- Write a paragraph that “paints a picture” of your intentions to work together toward a desired future state.
- Keep that paragraph in front of you as you go through the following steps.

You can download the [Creating a Statement of Intentions](#) worksheet to assist the group in this conversation at transformingyouthrecovery.org.

Having these conversations will help the group to align on purpose and intent; this clarity will help you as you work to build relationships with advocates and supporters.





EXERCISES FOR MOBILIZING ASSETS INTO RECOVERY PRACTICES

Exercise 1: Follow the Steps to Mobilize

Up to this point you have focused on those things that can contribute to your capacity for supporting students in recovery on your campus. Our attention now shifts to the mobilization of discovered assets into recovery practices.

Mobilizing begins by expanding those conversations you started when you set out to find and identify your community assets. Now you will want to talk about how assets can combine to create experiences, support, and collaborations that are useful to your community of students. The ultimate step is to build coalitions among those who expressed a willingness to support and serve students in recovery and take action.

The steps toward mobilizing assets into practices begin with conversations, but they don't end until practices are supported through coalitions that deepen community awareness and work toward the institutionalization of your collegiate recovery efforts.



THE STEPS TO MOBILIZE



step one

Have conversations that mobilize assets

- Conversations are how relationships develop. Among those who have expressed a willingness to help, explore common interests and shared opportunities to get involved in one another's activities.
- Students in recovery are the best advocates and wherever possible should be directly involved in conversations about supporting and serving the community.
- Consider new opportunities to cooperate to meet diverse needs of students – both in terms of recovery and academics.



step two

Combine assets into practices

- Those opportunities that are acted upon become practices – experiences that bring assets to life in the recovery community.
- Identify assets that will be easiest to connect and work with. Quick wins often take the form of speaker opportunities, support groups, social events, newsletters, and referrals.
- Focus on what works for your group of students and ensure you are creating a diverse breadth of experiences and activities that advance recovery and academic goals.



step three

Build cooperation among practices to create a coalition

- The final step is to build cooperation among those contributing to practices by creating a local coalition of support for students in recovery.
- Those people who step up to get involved are good candidates for a coalition. Build relationships between those people, groups, and organizations – unite with a common voice behind a common cause.
- Strive to create a local coalition that has enough 'key players' on campus so that those left out cannot block progress.
- Over time, successful practices are repeated and local coalitions are institutionalized. This is the point when a more comprehensive collegiate recovery program can be considered.



Exercise 2: Identify Recovery Practices and Possible Coalition Members

To start, look back over your community asset inventory and make a list of individuals who might have something to offer to students in recovery. Using the [Recovery Practices and Local Coalitions Worksheet](#), list these names on the left and place each person's organization to the right. There is space provided to keep track of relationships. As you fill out the worksheet you will instantly see gaps where limited conversations about potential activities or services have taken place, and you can put your time toward filling those gaps.

Once you begin, patterns will start to emerge. Some individuals will be involved in multiple organizations. Some organizations will be more involved than others. Patterns will appear between similar practices, showing what can be pieced together into experiences and activities for the recovery community.

Lastly, the worksheet provides space to mark down the cause or causes that motivate any one person or group. When patterns begin to emerge between like causes, coalitions can be built. When you are ready, bring this group of people together to talk about your common cause and interest. Ask them if they can agree on a common cause, and unite for a common voice. A coalition is, after all, an alliance of people and groups for combined action.

I felt like a lot of these students, they just did the same stuff every day. They weren't really expanding their knowledge. They weren't really opening their mind to what else the world has to offer you – arts, culture, going and doing different things out in the community. Just go, go try different things because you don't know what you like until you go try it. Let's go rock climbing, let's go ride roller-coasters, stuff to get us out of this recovery bubble.

—Student in Recovery

Exercise 3: Remove Barriers to Mobilizing Assets

Just as each individual may choose a different pathway to their recovery, each community will have different opportunities available to support those in recovery. Those opportunities are determined during community asset mapping, but this data is not complete until interpreted in the context of what it takes to establish practices and build local coalitions to support recovery efforts in your community.

Specifically, community mapping will help you uncover answers to the following questions:

- **What's possible?**
What do we have now that we can leverage for students in recovery?
- **What's needed?**
What do we need to find or create to meet the needs of our community?
- **What's stopping us?**
What do we need to address to better connect assets, establish practices, and build coalitions?

The first two questions inform capacity building for your recovery community. The last question is about barriers to mobilizing assets. It is about identifying what must be removed – not added – in order for the community to start or continue to support students in recovery.



Barriers can come from anywhere within or outside of the community, and may not be uncovered during the community mapping process. It is not until conversations start moving toward practices and coalitions that some barriers to cooperation make themselves apparent.

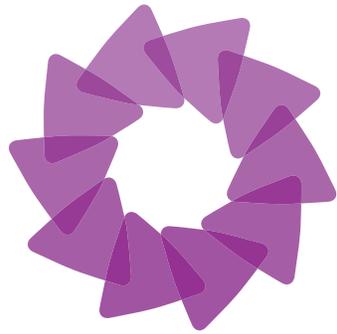
The chart of common barriers, solutions, and tactics show how the efforts of the capacity building continuum are intended to help you fulfill your intentions for early stage collegiate recovery efforts.

BARRIER	SOLUTION	TACTIC
<p>Limited Time It's a big world out there, and there is only so much time in a day. Building relationships, practices, and coalitions takes a long time, which can slow progress and momentum.</p>	<p>Prioritize Some assets will be easier to engage than others, some will be used more frequently, and some will be considered more impactful. Collect data from your community – ask students in recovery what they want first.</p>	<p>Students First Students in recovery are the first community asset and play a central role in identifying, prioritizing, and mobilizing community assets.</p>
<p>Shame Students in recovery are the most effective advocates for their community, but sometimes experience shame associated with identifying themselves as someone in recovery to those outside of their immediate community.</p>	<p>Recovery Stories Create environments and opportunities that encourage students in recovery to change their personal narrative from <i>the telling of their addiction story to the telling of their recovery story</i>.</p>	<p>Recovery Messaging Training This training, developed by Faces & Voices of Recovery can help students in recovery to talk about the positive attributes of their recovery identity and community.</p>
<p>Stigma Every recovery community has a stereotype. The challenge is that the default of this stereotype is often negative, which makes <i>every single thing</i> more difficult. At most colleges, for example, the culture of binge-drinking obscures the separation of and sympathy towards those truly struggling with substance use disorders.</p>	<p>Share and Tell While inspiring, stories are difficult to re-tell without some assistance. Provide advocates with the information they need to speak empathically about your recovery community. By sharing with your advocates they can educate their peers, increasing their engagement and knocking down unseen barriers on your behalf.</p>	<p>Build Awareness Stigmas are spawned through ignorance. When people actually meet and connect with students in recovery they often become aware for the first time of their biases, and are forced to reconsider their views. Bring together those individuals and associations that emerge to support you and invite them to work <i>with</i> you to expand outreach and create a healthier college community.</p>

Glossary for Capacity Building for Collegiate Recovery

Asset	Any person, place, or group that can meaningfully contribute to supporting and helping those in recovery.
Asset-rich	An environment or location that has many resources (people, places, or groups) to support and help those in recovery.
Capacity building	The activities that make assets visible and mobilize the community. This is done by forming practices and coalitions to help students in recovery to live their best life while getting the most out of their college experience.
Coalition	An alliance formed to carry out an action or intention. In this case, an alliance formed to support students in recovery.
Engagement patterns	Repeated series of events that detail how and when students utilize recovery resources or assets.
Gaps in advancement	Barriers that a collegiate recovery program may face as they work to create or grow their program. These may include funding, student participation, faculty and staff interest, available assets, etc.
Institutionalization	A distinctive milestone as evidenced by open recognition from the institution and the commitment of resources for collegiate recovery efforts.
Mobilize	The act of engaging and preparing assets to support students in recovery.
Pathways to entry	The steps students take to access recovery resources.
Practice	The mobilization of assets into a clearly defined, easily accessible recovery service.
Protective and well-being outcome indicators	Metrics that are used to ensure that students in recovery are thriving.
Social architecture	The design of an environment, site, or location to ensure it is promoting the desired set of goals.
Sustainability	The ability for a program to be self-sustaining for a long time. This may include things such as inclusion in future institutional plans, funding, staff, space, coordination across institutional networks, active engagement of students in recovery, etc.





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