The Ada Center

HIGHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY AND PROCESS SUPPORT

Helping Institutions and Systems Reach Their Student Success Goals

Founded in 2017, The Ada Center helps education leaders navigate technology and business process decisions in an increasingly complex environment. Today hundreds of new software tools promise a more personalized, smarter education experience. But for many colleges, navigating this new sea of vendors and jargon—finding the right software solution, setting an implementation up for success, creating an integrated student experience, and engaging faculty and staff—can be daunting. The Ada Center combines software and higher education expertise to support colleges in planning for and making the most of their technology investments.

What We Believe

Technology is not a silver bullet for any problem, but with the right planning and implementation, software can play an important role in advancing student success.

We've seen institutions dramatically increase retention and completion by using case management systems and student planning tools. We've also seen institutions sink hundreds of thousands of dollars—to say nothing of staff time—into software that is not integrated with processes and people, detracting from institution goals and creating inequities. The Ada Center's mission is to help more institutions look like the former and avoid the latter. To do so we work directly with education leaders and national networks that support them. Here are some of the ways we can support your system:

- Mapping your system's technology ecosystem and communication flow, detecting addressable 'pain points' in the student and staff experience

- Creating an implementation and training strategy for a new technology initiative roll-out

- Consulting on software vendor selection, including RFP processes and integration planning

- Moving the system toward a student-centric digital presence, focusing on website and student portal content

- Supporting institutions with a challenged software implementation or struggling to build faculty, staff, and student utilization of a tool

In addition to The Ada Center's work with individual institutions and systems, we support a number of state and national initiatives including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Frontier Set, Achieving the Dream, AACC Pathways, and the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. You can read more about our current projects on the following page.

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Project History and The Ada Center Model

The Ada Center supports the field through two main avenues: (1) engagements with national networks to produce and present research-based content to education leaders, (2) technical assistance to colleges and systems looking for deeper strategic and project-based support. Below is a sample of our recent projects:

- Developed curriculum and presented a student success technology workshop for sixty college leaders, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and hosted at Miami Dade College in December 2017. Currently engaged in follow-up support for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Frontier Set colleges and intermediary partners.

- Partnered with the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program to develop a framework for higher educations leaders on 'Navigating Student Success Technology'. Excerpts of these resources can be seen here: https://www.theadacenter.org/resources/.

- Supported the national AACC Guided Pathways Project and the California Guided Pathways Project through activities such as presenting at Institutes with guided pathways leaders like Omid Pourzanjani and Rob Johnstone. Currently scheduled to present a webinar to CAGP college leaders on June 19, 2018.

- Act as a partner and subject matter expert for Achieving the Dream, presenting at national conferences and workshops, co-publishing content, and supporting the organization's network colleges.

- Engage with over thirty higher education institutions and systems to conduct 'Technology Opportunity Assessments' and provide follow-up support on recommended action items.

Who You'll Work With

Sarah Zauner, *Executive Director, The Ada Center*

The Ada Center was founded by Sarah Zauner in 2017 in response to a growing chorus of college leaders looking for guidance on technology decisions. Most recently, Sarah was the Associate Director at the Aspen Institute's College Excellence program, in which she managed a number of initiatives including Aspen's efforts to improve transfer student outcomes, a collaborative project with CCRC, Public Agenda, and Achieving the Dream; and the Prize for College Excellence. Sarah also managed Aspen's workforce development efforts, directing the Siemens Technical Scholars project.

Prior to joining Aspen, Sarah led the Education Advisory Board's (EAB) community college research, consulting, and software division. In this capacity, she led the development of EAB's student success technology, SSC-Navigate, and managed major research studies on topics such as student onboarding, developmental education redesign, strategic planning, and advising. Sarah has visited over 600 college campuses and state systems offices to support leadership teams with their student success agendas and software implementations. Her work has been featured in publications such as *The Atlantic, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Wall Street Journal*, and *Inside Higher Education*.

Sarah's interest in higher education began as a community college advisor, and grew during her time as an education researcher in China through the Fulbright program. Sarah completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia and her graduate work at Sun Yat-sen university. She's looking forward to immersing herself in the California AEBG context, and will be spending a total of 26 days on this project from May to October 2018.