Mapping Systems:  Investigating Causal Factors Using the Five Whys Protocols

**Objective:** We invite a diverse group of stakeholders to collaboratively investigate the subsystems and causal factors linked to inequity and undesired outcomes at their institutions.

**Define a problem of practice on which to focus your discussion (e.g. low retention, low graduation rates, inequitable outcomes, etc.).**

As part of this investigation into appreciation and understanding of the systems which perpetuate this undesired outcome, we offer the following subsystems for analysis:

1. Information Technology
2. Institutional Policy
3. Institutional Finance
4. Teaching and Learning/Developmental Education
5. Student Support and Services
6. Advising
7. State and National Policy
8. Admissions Policy and Practice
9. Curriculum Design/Transfer Policy and Practice
10. Campus Culture

   **PLEASE NOTE, these subsystems are meant to get you started**. **Feel free to focus on any aspect of the campus system that you feel is most relevant.**

**Five Whys Protocol Suggestions for Facilitators:**

1. We ask that each person in the group be allowed to participate in the discussion.  We also ask respondents to consider their local context and lived experience as it relates to each subsystem.

2. We encourage you to take this back to your team and use this inquiry process with your team.

3. We hope to go to at least 5-layers of "why" for each response and record responses.  Please submit one form per subsystem that a respondent investigates.

4. In order to build a fishbone diagram, we encourage you to go through this process a minimum of three times, investigating a different aspect of the system each time. Often, one set of 5-whys gives you the next topic/subsystem to investigate.

**Five Whys Protocols Guidance**

Subsystem Being Investigated: _____

5.  "Why/how does the subsystem support or contribute to low and unjust graduation rates in higher education?"

Response #1: _____

**If the respondent offers a brief reply, record the response, and ask them to tell you more.** Once the respondent answers this question. Record their answer as best you are able in the Google Form. The facilitator should  then ask the respondent to elaborate by asking the respondent to tell you **any** one of the following:
1. "**Why** does that happen?"
2. "**Why** does that matter?"
3. "**Why** has that been perpetuated?"
4. "**Why** don't people know more about that?"
5. "**How** does that happen/work/perpetuate the undesired outcome?"

Ask any "why question" that will help the respondent further unpack the causal factors, and do your best to record their responses.  Each question of "why" may illuminate an additional causal factor.  Listen carefully and capture the person's sentiments as best you can in writing. After each response concludes, ask "why or how" again and continue until your respondent gets to a natural point of resolution.  Try to ask "why" at least five times.  It is ok if you get to a root cause sooner, or the respondent feels they have exhausted their explanation before the fifth prompt.  This exercise is meant to be an investigation, not an interrogation!

Response #2:_____

Response #3:_____

Response #4: _____

Response #5: _____

_____

Please allow each member of the team an opportunity to respond to the five whys for each subsystem that your group investigates.

Following this investigation exercise, we will migrate responses to a causal systems map and share it with the larger group for further refinement and discussion.