

FAQs about DATs



What is a DAT (Departmental Action Team)?

A Departmental Action Team is a working group of about 4 to 8 faculty, staff, and/or students who work on a cross-cutting issue related to undergraduate education in their department over one or two years. The DAT is supported by outside facilitators who have experience with best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; group dynamics; organizational culture; and education research. The DAT is sanctioned by the department chair, with the knowledge of the rest of the faculty.

What do DATs do?

DAT participants choose the focus of their work by developing a vision for undergraduate education in their department; example foci from prior DATs include curricular/instructional revision and alignment, improving equity and diversity, and enhancing community among faculty, students, and staff. DATs both implement change and focus on creating lasting structures (e.g., committees, positions, policies) that can continue their work over time (rather than viewing change as a one time “fix”). DATs maintain transparency by sharing information with and making recommendations for change to the chair, appropriate departmental committees, and the department as a whole.

What is the time commitment for DAT members?

DATs typically meet for an hour every other week throughout the academic year, with possible meetings during the summer. DAT meetings typically involve a combination of goal-setting, data collection and analysis, planning, and strategizing. DAT participants may assign themselves homework and may choose to meet more frequently as needed.

How are DAT participants compensated?

Departments often award faculty participants with service credit and count staff participation positively in job reviews. Currently, the DAT project team can fund stipends for student participants.

Who are the DAT facilitators and researchers?

DATs are part of an NSF-funded research project running from 2016 through 2020 on the CU and CSU campuses. The project PIs are Mary Pilgrim, Assistant Professor, Math (CSU), Joel Corbo (CU), and Daniel Reinholz (SDSU). At CSU, DATs will be co-facilitated by Karen Falkenberg, Instructional Designer II at TILT, and Courtney Ngai, a postdoc, whose research interests include a focus on learning chemistry. Contact datinfo@colostate.edu for more information.

What are examples of DAT outcomes?

Several DATs ran at CU between 2014 and 2016 as part of an AAU-funded project. Here we list some of the large structural changes that the DATs initiated, but not the fine-grained outcomes.

- Allocated several instructor course equivalents to serve as curriculum coordinators
- Formed a standing committee focused on student diversity, retention, and recruitment
- Structured a new major, with a focus on course alignment and student cohort-building
- Restructured a course sequence to better support majors transitioning to upper division