



+ insidetrack.

Coaching for Success

A TOOLKIT FOR HBCU & PBI LEADERS





Contents

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT	3
What Is Coaching?	5
Why Coaching Matters for HBCUs	8
AN EVIDENCE-BASED COACHING MODEL	9
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR COACHING	12
Readiness Assessment	13
IMPLEMENTING A COACHING PROGRAM	18
Phase 1: Plan	19
Phase 2: Implement	22
Phase 3: Integrate	26
Phase 4: Sustain	29
A CALL TO INVEST IN HBCU COACHING AT SCALE	32
CONTACT US	33
TOOLS	34
Tool 1: Vision Statement Builder	35
Tool 2: Coaching Planning Guide	38
Tool 3: My Why Worksheet	42
APPENDIX	44

About This Toolkit

Rooted in a five-year partnership between two mission-driven nonprofits – the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and InsideTrack – this toolkit distills key insights and best practices from coaching initiatives across HBCUs and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs).

While created with the HBCU and PBI community at its center, these core principles of sustainable coaching capacity apply to any institution seeking to equip student-facing staff, expand in-house expertise and build self-sustaining coaching capacity for long-term impact.

Who Is This Toolkit For?

Designed primarily for leaders across HBCUs and PBIs, this guide serves institutional executives, department heads and student success leads committed to long-term capacity building. While anchored in the work of HBCUs and PBIs, the operational frameworks inside offer a scalable roadmap for any higher education leader aiming to equip student-facing staff; build internal expertise; and establish sustainable, long-term coaching capacity.

The Goal

- To inform leaders of the purpose of coaching versus other types of student support
- To provide relevant resources that help leaders determine whether and how to launch a systemwide coaching model
- To describe success factors for launching a successful coaching model

THE HBCU CONTEXT:

Mission, Students and Strengths

HBCUs serve a critical mission, expanding postsecondary access and driving degree attainment for scholars and emerging leaders nationwide.

HBCUs are powered by dedicated, student-centered faculty and staff.

Campus staff maintain a deep culture of care, prioritizing holistic student well-being and building authentic relationships that proactively guide growth and keep students on track toward their goals.

- Sustaining mission amid institutional constraints
- High-Impact reach: HBCUs and PBIs produce nearly [20% of all Black college graduates](#), serving students who balance complex academic, financial and personal commitments
- Scalable infrastructure: As funding environments evolve, building sustainable, in-house support networks is essential to long-term institutional resilience
- Building on a foundation of shared purpose, evidence-based coaching delivers the structured support needed to strengthen student persistence and expand institutional capacity

Given the constraints facing HBCUs and their students, coaching initiatives that build on a culture of care and shared purpose can help provide wraparound support and improve student outcomes.



“Jarvis is a small rural HBCU, and capacity is what we need ... We want to build a solid foundation where we can not only be prepared for the first-time freshmen and transfer students but also increase our retention and graduation rates.”

— Dr. Glenell M. Lee-Pruitt,
President, Jarvis Christian
University

What Is Coaching?



Coaching is a structured, evidence-informed, student-centered practice that empowers students to achieve their goals by fostering growth in students' knowledge, skills and mindsets.

Through intentional, collaborative conversations, coaching helps learners:

- Clarify purpose
- Identify barriers
- Develop actionable strategies for success

Coaching emphasizes holistic student development by supporting academic progress, personal well-being and self-efficacy, all while promoting reflection, accountability and continuous learning.

THE INSIDETRACK APPROACH

As a national leader in student success coaching, InsideTrack views coaching as far more than a single conversation — it is an evidence-based methodology that pairs human connection with data-informed insights. By equipping campus staff with these core coaching capabilities, institutions build sustainable capacity and a lasting culture of student success.

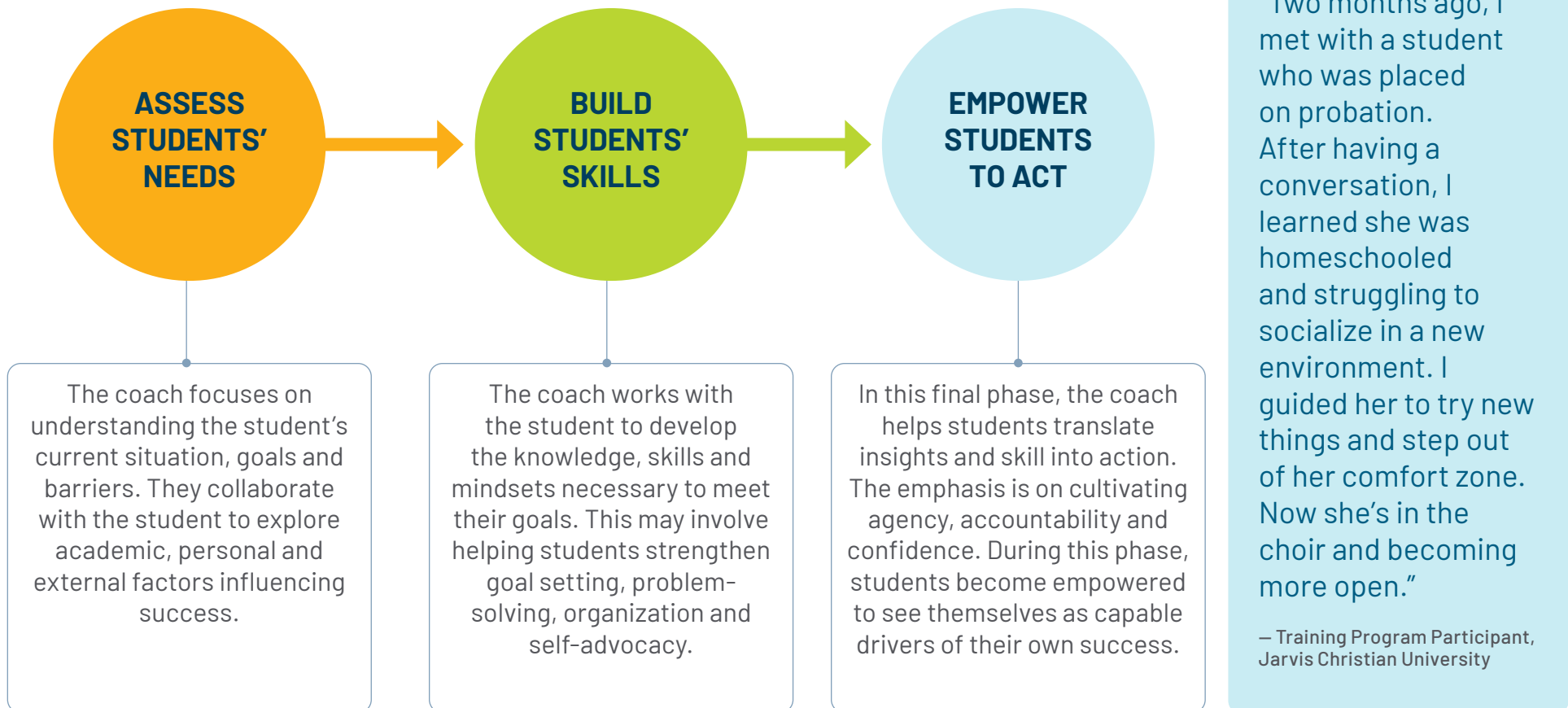
EXPLORE INSIDETRACK'S COACHING FRAMEWORK. »

The Coaching Process

LEARN MORE:

5 ELEMENTS OF COACHING »

Steps in the Coaching Process:



Coaching Is Different From Advising

BOTH COACHING AND ADVISING HELP STUDENTS NAVIGATE COLLEGE, BUT THEY DO SO IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

- Advising guides students through academic requirements, while coaching develops the mindsets and skills that help them persist and thrive.
- Coaching services should complement, not replace, traditional advising.

	COACHING	ADVISING
Focus	Whole-student growth and empowerment	Academic planning and degree progress
Approach	Developmental and reflective; helps students identify goals, barriers and strengths	Informational and directive; helps students choose courses, majors and pathways
Relationship	Collaborative partnership; listens, asks questions and empowers decision-making	Expert advice; provides expert guidance and ensures academic compliance
Conversation Topics	Motivation, belonging, time management, academic and life balance	Credits, prerequisites, GPA, academic standing
Success Indicators	Retention, self-efficacy, engagement, completion	On-time registration, accurate degree mapping, course completion

Learn more about the distinction between coaching and other student support roles: [DOWNLOAD PDF »](#)

Why Coaching Matters for HBCUs

Coaching programs can equip HBCU staff and faculty with resources and tools that will help them more effectively address the barriers students are facing.

Although HBCU faculty and staff are motivated and mission driven to support students and help them address ongoing challenges, many may not have the experience guiding students in building problem-solving skills.

“I’m no longer fixing the situation or the problem for the student. I’m letting the student think it out, and they go and figure out how to do it.”

—Student Coach



To see the proven impact of this methodology at scale, explore this recent report, [Empowering Student Momentum at HBCUs](#). It highlights how evidence-based coaching drove measurable student outcomes across 25 UNCF partner institutions.



Johnson C. Smith University

Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) implemented Student Success Coaching in 2023

The Impact of Coaching:

- Students receiving coaching had an **89.3% retention rate** between fall 2023 and spring 2024.
- Among coached freshmen, **47% earned a GPA of 3.0 or greater**.
- Click [HERE](#) to read more about JCSU’s coaching program.

“We’ve seen an increase in our persistence and retention in one year. I believe the coaching is making a difference.”

—JCSU Student Success Coach

An Evidence-Based Coaching Model

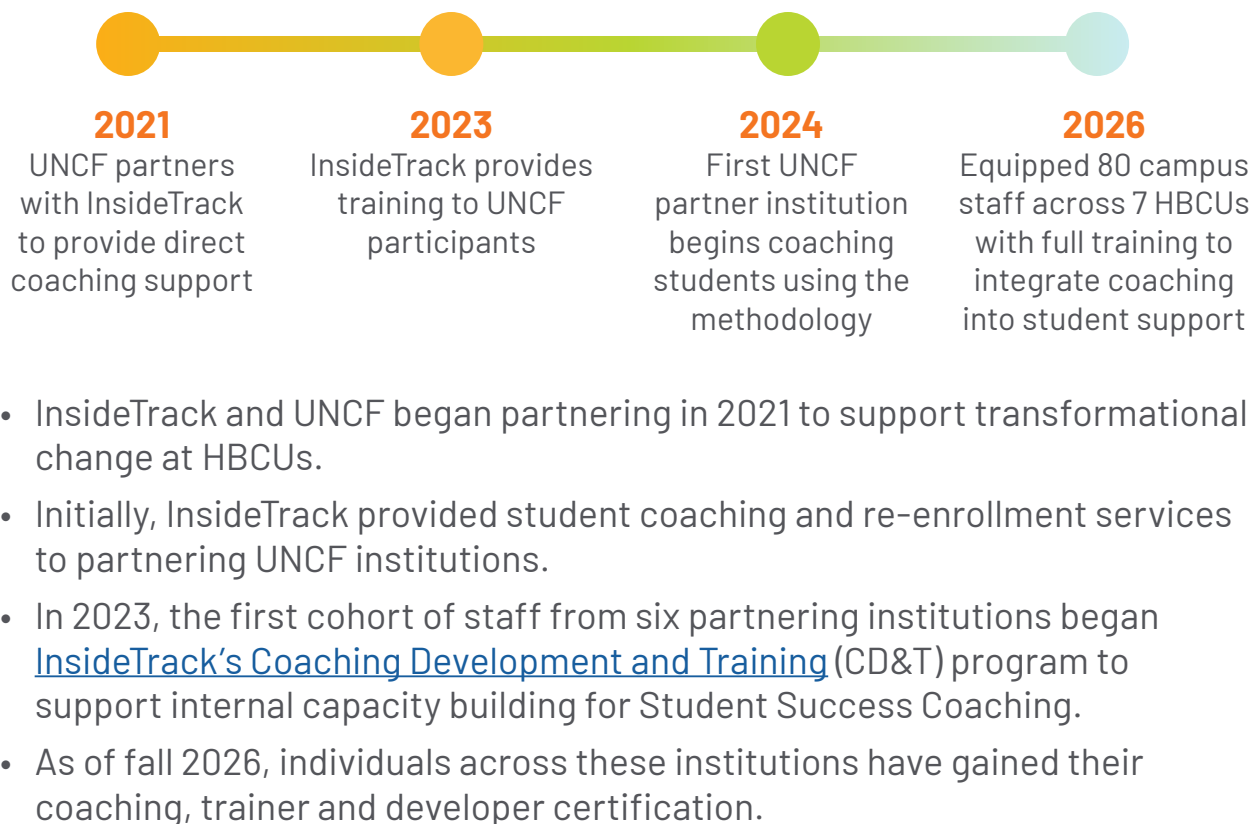


The UNCF + InsideTrack Partnership

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) is focused on supporting HBCUs and PBIs to increase the number of Black students who graduate college.

The UNCF Institute for Capacity Building has been partnering with InsideTrack to support student success through coaching for the last several years.

InsideTrack is an evidence-based coaching model. The success factors presented in this toolkit are derived from lessons learned from the partnership between InsideTrack and UNCF.



"InsideTrack came in understanding the pieces that are important to HBCU relationships – they knew the need for communications at multiple levels of the institution, about the need to be responsive and hold grace for context and challenges."

—UNCF Staff

Evidence-Based Coaching for Student Success:

INSIDETRACK COACHING DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Who Is InsideTrack?

InsideTrack is a mission-driven nonprofit that uses the power of personalized coaching to advance all learners. They partner with institutions nationwide to close equity gaps and drive measurable improvements in enrollment, completion and career readiness.

What Is InsideTrack Coaching?

InsideTrack Coaching is an evidence-based coaching program that provides holistic, tailored support to individuals. Coaches assess and help students address potential risk factors that may limit their social and academic success. Coaches work with students over time to help them develop the knowledge, skills and beliefs they need to advance and succeed. InsideTrack has supported over 3.6 million learners and 425+ partners across their 25+ year history.

Coaching Can Help Your Institution:

- Improve student enrollment and re-enrollment
- Increase retention
- Increase students' GPA
- Increase students' graduation and completion rate

THE PROOF BEHIND THE PRACTICE

- **Research-Backed Methodology:**
Peer-reviewed research confirms our coaching model builds lasting student self-efficacy, autonomy and a growth mindset.
- **Measurable Outcomes at Scale:**
A landmark study of 13,555 learners demonstrated significant, long-term increases in both persistence and graduation rates.
- **Highest Standard of Evidence:**
Our methodology is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) for meeting rigorous standards of evidence.

**EXPLORE THE RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE
BEHIND THE COACHING METHODOLOGY. »**

Laying the Groundwork for Coaching



Designing for Transformation:

THE PHASES OF IMPLEMENTING A COACHING MODEL

	PHASE 0: DESIGN	PHASE 1: PLAN	PHASE 2: IMPLEMENT	PHASE 3: INTEGRATE	PHASE 4: SUSTAIN
	This phase involves assessing institutional capacity to implement and sustain a coaching program.	This phase involves planning, goal setting and resource allocation to ensure successful implementation.	This phase includes training coaches and developing strategies and processes to support coaches.	This phase involves the integration of coaching across campus by embedding practice within existing systems, departments and the institution's culture.	This phase focuses on maintaining the long-term success of coaching by reinforcing best practices, engaging in continuous improvement and scaling.
KEY ACTIONS	- Identify a program champion. - Adapt to resource realities. - Identify a shared vision.	- Establish the structure of the coaching program. - Recruit coaches who are in student-facing roles.	- Support engagement during training. - Establish regular check-ins. - Set up coach-student communication tools.	- Track outputs and student outcomes. - Spread the word about coaching.	- Consider a train-the-trainer model. - Identify sustainable funding streams.
GUIDING QUESTIONS	- How does student coaching support my institution's mission and student success? - What capacity, including financial and human, does my institution have to support student coaching?	- How will we define and measure the success of our student coaching efforts? - Who will serve as coaches?	How will the institution recognize and support individuals participating in coaching training?	How can we use data to track outcomes and build buy-in across the institution?	How will we scale and sustain coaching across the institution?

Laying the Groundwork for Coaching at Your HBCU

This phase involves assessing institutional capacity to engage in a coaching program.

HBCUs and PBIs bring deep strengths, including community, care and cultural commitment, to their student success work. However, these institutions may also face resource constraints. Designing for these realities ensures coaching efforts thrive.

BEST PRACTICES WHEN DESIGNING A COACHING PROGRAM:

- 1. Identify Program Champion.** Choose program champions with protected time to identify and support coaches.
- 2. Adapt to Resource Realities.** Begin at a scale your institution can sustain. Start with a small cohort if staffing or funding is limited.
- 3. Identify a Shared Vision.** Create a shared vision of coaching that connects coaching to long-standing university commitments to access, belonging and student care.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- Who on your campus has the authority, credibility and protected time to champion this work, and what support would they need to be effective?
- Given your current staffing and financial landscape, what scale of coaching effort can you realistically sustain in year one? Are there flexible funds or partnerships that could support this work?
- What specific student needs or barriers are you trying to address through coaching?
- Which campus partners (e.g., faculty, advisors, student affairs, athletics) need to be part of early vision setting to build shared ownership and momentum?

Identify Program Champion

A program champion serves as a visionary and champion of a coaching program. This individual identifies goals for the program, matches the institutions with appropriate training partners based on institutional need, and guides coaches through training and implementation.

A PROGRAM CHAMPION'S ROLE IS TO:

- **Identify goals** for implementing a coaching program
- **Create a strategy** to implement coaching within their institution
- **Ensure coaching is adequately resourced** for initial implementation, scaling and sustainability
- **If possible, participate in coaching training** to deepen understanding of a coach's role
- **Advocate** for program implementation across the institution
- **Meet regularly with university staff involved in coaching** to communicate expectations and navigate challenges
- **Report on progress toward coaching goals (e.g., number of students served, student outcomes)** to support continuous improvement



TIP FROM PROGRAM CHAMPIONS

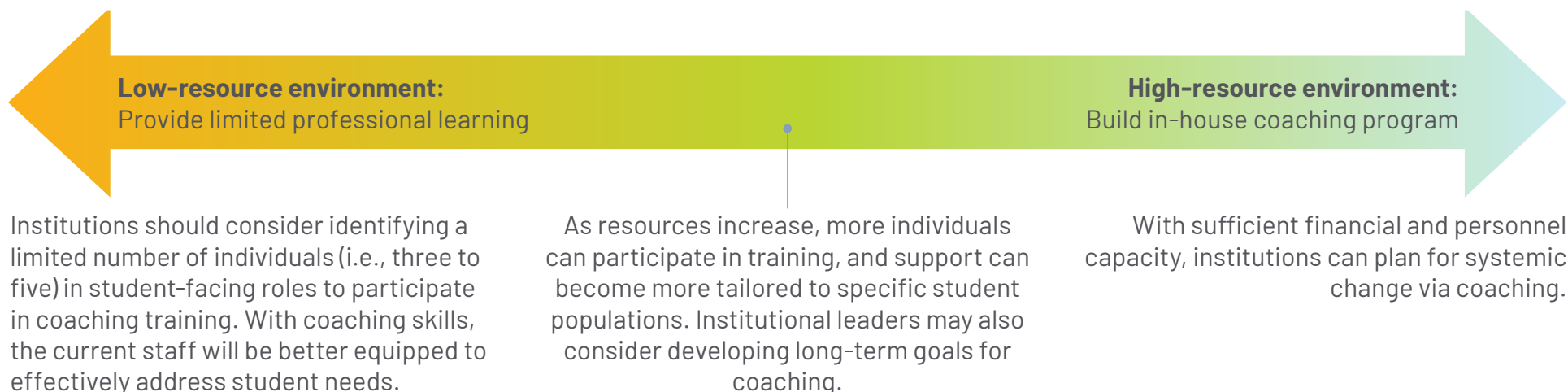
In retrospect, institutional leaders who championed the work wished they'd understood the coaching model better from the start. Several noted that having the opportunity to attend the coaching training themselves, or at least receive a more detailed orientation, would have provided valuable insight into the structure, goals and expectations of the model.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN IDENTIFYING PROGRAM CHAMPIONS:

- Does this individual have institutional power?
- Does this individual have the capacity to participate in a coaching training and/or support a team of coaches?
- Does this person have a clear understanding or vision for how coaching will be integrated into other programs on campus?

Adapt to Resource Constraints

Depending on your institution's available resources, you can engage in extensive capacity building to support systemic change in coaching or opt for a lighter touch and briefer professional learning to provide distinct training and skill development for staff. Consider both the financial and human capital constraints when determining your coaching commitments.



Given financial uncertainty, many institutions may need to consider identifying additional resources to support trainees or sustain coaching programs with internal capacity. At JCSU, the program champion envisioned a fully embedded coaching model with full-time coaching roles. However, limited resources made that vision uncertain. To address this, the champion partnered with local organizations and foundations to obtain grant funding for full-time coaching positions. After demonstrating the program's success, the program champion successfully advocated for its integration into the university's core budget.

Identify a Shared Vision

Institutional leaders with a clear vision for implementing coaching at their institutions were well prepared to begin coaching training.

Your institution may be well positioned to support systemic change in student support through student coaching. However, institutions that are not yet prepared to use coaching for systemic change may still participate to build the capacity of individual staff members.

BEFORE BEGINNING COACHING, CONSIDER IF:

1. Your institution has a clear vision for how coaching can support its mission and current goals.
2. Your institution's key leaders (e.g., president, provost, transformation officer):
 - ☐ Value coaching as a tool for student success and are seeking tools to strengthen practice
 - ☐ Believe student coaching is part of the institution's strategy, not a temporary add-on
 - ☐ Are willing to allocate human and financial resources to the successful implementation of coaching
3. Your institution can identify dedicated staff roles (or faculty with protected time) who can commit to coaching students full-time or with a dedicated part-time allocation.
4. Your institution has staff who can manage the coaching program.



VISION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Use this [Vision Planning Template](#) to think through your vision before selecting participants or beginning training. Make sure your vision is feasible, given institutional capacity.

Implementing a Coaching Program



PHASE 1: Plan with Purpose

For HBCUs and other PBIs, planning is essential because thoughtful planning, goal setting and resource alignment can help institutions navigate limited funding and staffing capacity while ensuring coaching efforts are sustainable.

This phase includes all activities before staff attend a coaching training.

Best Practices When Planning for a Coaching Program or Training:

1. Establish the Structure of the Coaching Program.

Build a strong coaching foundation at your institution by outlining responsibilities, setting measurable outcomes and planning a clear implementation timeline.

2. Recruit Coaches Who Are in Student-Facing Roles.

Hire or select coaches who have a background working with students as mentors, counselors and/or advisors to promote relationship building and connection with students.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- How, and when, will you know coaching is successful?
- Do you have staff who are well positioned to add coaching to their role?
- Alternatively, are you able to hire staff who can be dedicated to coaching?
- What processes will you use to identify, onboard and support coaches so they are prepared and motivated to do this work?

Establish the Structure of the Coaching Program

In collaboration with key institutional leaders, the program champion will need to establish the structure of coaching at the institution.



COACHING PLANNING GUIDE

Use this [Coaching Planning Guide](#) to think through each of the following components of coaching at your institution.



Recruit Coaches Who Are in Student-Facing Roles

Recruiting coaches who are excited to work directly with students and deepen their coaching practice is key to systemically improving coaching throughout the institution.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Avoid volunteering staff to become coaches.
- Hire specific individuals who have a direct connection to students and dedicated time to engage with students.
- Hire individuals with a career background in student support services or counseling. If serving a specific student population, such as student athletes, hire coaches who have a shared experience or understanding of that student population.
- Ensure coaches understand the time commitment required to participate in coaching training and are excited to start.

"I was hired to be a success coach. My primary role is to meet with students at least three times in the semester. My primary focus is on first-time, full-time freshmen. This semester, I am meeting with students and teaching Freshman Seminar. ... Therefore, the students who I am meeting with three times over the course of the fall and spring term, I am also teaching them Freshman Seminar. So students interface a lot with me."

—Student Coach



Institutions should have specific criteria in mind for staff who serve as success coaches. The JCSU Program Lead had well-defined criteria and expectations for the coaching role, in part because the position came with a formal job description.

However, even when coaching is not a designated role, institutions should recruit coaches who are well positioned to succeed as coaches. These characteristics include prior coaching experience, teaching experience (especially if the role involves a course component), comfort with data to track and analyze student progress, and sufficient tenure or time spent working with students to build meaningful relationships.

PHASE 2: Implement With Support

The implementation phase is when preparation turns into action. Coaches participate in training and begin implementing coaching activities that directly support students.

This phase is critical because it allows HBCUs and PBIs to leverage their strong culture of care, deep faculty commitment and close student relationships to deliver coaching that is both personal and impactful.

‘I’m working with two young men. We’ve identified goals for them to work on. In our sessions, we talk about how they are progressing. That’s refreshing to see them follow through.’

—Coach Training Participant, Voorhees University

Best Practices When Implementing Coaching:

- 1. Support Coaches’ Engagement During Training.**
Foster engagement during training by safeguarding participant time and guiding coaches to identify their “why.”
- 2. Support Coaches by Establishing Regular Check-Ins.**
Strengthen support with regular check-ins and connections to fellow trainees.
- 3. Set Up Coach-Student Communication Tools.**
Use training time to define how students, coaches, faculty and staff will communicate.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- How will you protect coaches’ time so they can fully engage in training and early implementation?
- What rhythm of check-ins (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly) will help your coaches feel supported and stay aligned?
- How will you create a sense of community among coaches so they can learn and problem-solve together?
- How will you monitor engagement or struggle among coaches so you can intervene quickly?
- What communication systems or tools will you use to ensure students can connect easily with their coaches?

Ensure Coaches Engage with Training

If coaches hold multiple roles at your institution, it may be difficult to prioritize their engagement in training. To maintain engagement and build enthusiasm for coaching, some institutions adopted the following practices.

1. **Protect participants' time by creating clear schedules.**

Clear coaches' schedules on training days for deep engagement and post-session reflection.

2. **Minimize competing demands.**

During the training period, consider releasing participants from additional time-intensive demands.

3. **Remind coaches how the training will be relevant to their work and how their role will change following certification.**

See the My Why Worksheet to help participants identify their "why" before training.

"The training has been very rewarding. The framing piece that I learned was great to get information from the students who do not want to talk. Essentially, the tools I've learned from InsideTrack help me gain more information from the students and manage change with team members. It was also eye-opening, great and beneficial."

—Student Coach



TIP FROM COACHES

Although training may be time intensive, several coaches shared that it was highly rewarding, providing tools that improved their efficiency and effectiveness when working with students.



MY WHY WORKSHEET

See the [My Why Worksheet](#) to help participants identify their "why" before training.

Support Coaches by Establishing Regular Check-Ins

Program champions can support participants through training by establishing structures and incentives for coaches and the coaching program.

- **Biweekly meetings:** Coaches can share experiences, problem-solve, and strengthen their practice during biweekly meetings. Former coaches shared that these meetings kept them connected and motivated when working with students.
- **Regular meetings between coaches and the program champion:** Even if coaches' direct manager is not the program champion, coaches should meet with the program champion regularly during and after training to receive individualized guidance and engage effectively.
- **Create a monitoring system to track coaching-related metrics:** Program champions should use data to identify trends in coaching practice, celebrate coaches' growth and target support.



Regular check-ins create space to track progress, share insights, and surface any challenges that may hinder implementation or student support. At JCSU, structured meetings between coaches and their supervisor or program lead are built into the coaching model. Coaches meet weekly with one another and every other week as a full group to problem-solve and share lessons learned.

"I really try to use a biweekly meeting to bring people together collectively. I hope that the synergy will resonate and motivate because we've had a few people drop off, and we've had some people who are no longer eligible for certification."

—Program Champion

"We always make sure we're keeping [our program champion] up to date with how often we're interacting with our students. ... She checks in on our progress to see if there's anything that might be hindering those students. ... We also brainstorm ways to put ourselves out there more to the students."

—Student Coach

Set Up Coach-Student Communication Tools

To prepare for implementation, coaching programs should use the time during training to define how they would like students; coaches; and key campus partners, such as faculty and staff, to communicate. Establishing these channels early on can help build collaboration and support smooth, full-scale integration upon certification.

STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE REGULAR COMMUNICATION:

1. **Consider implementing technology systems that allow two-way communication and document sharing between coaches and students.**
2. **Establish regular cycles where students' academic progress and early alerts can be shared with coaches.**
3. **Establish regular student pulse surveys to understand how students perceive their coaches.**

"Our student mobile app allows [students] to make appointments with their coach, advisor or anyone in our care units, along with their course instructors. ... The key is to really create what's called a coordinated care network for every single student, which connects them with the key units across campus."

—Student Coach



Institutions can leverage technology to support communication. JCSU adopted the Navigate360 platform and solidified campuswide integration of their coaching program. Renamed for JCSU's mascot, BullsNav cultivates communication among coaches, staff and faculty, creating a system of coordinated care to identify and address students' challenges; incorporates the coaching program into JCSU's daily operations; and provides a platform for implementing a progress report system.

PHASE 3: Integrate Across Campus

Integration weaves coaching into the fabric of campus life, transforming it from a program into a shared practice of care and student empowerment.

Integration occurs when the coaching program becomes embedded within existing systems, departments and the institution's culture.

Best Practices When Integrating Coaching Across Campus:

1. Track Outputs and Student Outcomes.

Monitor activities and student outcomes to ensure program fidelity, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate the added benefits and value of the program.

2. Spread the Word About Coaching.

Increase coaches' visibility on campus and share early results that prove coaching's value and strengthen confidence in the approach.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- What early data or student stories can you share to build momentum and deepen buy-in across campus?
- What systems or resources do you already have to support data monitoring and evaluation?
- How will you communicate the purpose of coaching so that faculty, advisors and staff understand how it complements their work?
- Where on campus (e.g., academics, student affairs, athletics, residence life) can coaches be most visible and accessible to students?

Track Outputs and Student Outcomes

Tracking outputs (e.g., coaching activities) and student outcomes (e.g., student results) related to the implementation of a coaching program helps the institution:

- Monitor program fidelity
- Identify areas for improvement or additional support
- Provide evidence of how coaching influences student outcomes

Institutions should begin tracking institutional and individual-level student data to capture changes before and after the implementation of a coaching program.

Institutions can share data across the university to help build buy-in for the coaching program. Below are examples of outputs and outcomes that institutions should consider tracking.

OUTPUTS = what was done

Students

- Number of students supported through coaching
- Number of coaching sessions
- Number of interactions between student and coach

Coaches

- Number of coaches completing each certification
- Number of meetings between the program lead and coaches

OUTCOMES = changes in knowledge and skills

Students

- Retention rate
- Completion rates
- Re-enrollment rate
- Understanding of their goals
- Sense of belonging, self-efficacy and growth mindset

Coaches

- Sense of efficacy

Spread the Word About Coaching

Start sharing early wins to build momentum and generate support across the institution. Sharing evidence early helps build trust, eases skepticism from those used to more traditional approaches and demonstrates real results for students. Visible early success not only reduces resistance but also builds long-term belief in the coaching role and the model itself.

STRATEGIES TO SPREAD THE WORD:

1. **Partner with different programs across campus.**
2. **Increase coaches' visibility on campus by presenting at and attending campus events.**
3. **Articulate how coaching is different from other student support services.**
4. **Share early data on student outcomes and student success stories.**
5. **Allow students to become program champions by sharing their experiences.**

"Some people were resistant to change. ... However, as more data on the impact has been released, we've seen more positivity. Now that they see why [coaches are] here, what [they are] doing, and the impact [they are] making with students, the reception has improved."

—Student Coach

PHASE 4: Sustain and Scale

This phase focuses on sustaining the program from within by scaling what works, building internal capacity, and ensuring there is ongoing support rooted in the institution's own culture and resources.

Best Practices to Sustain and Scale Coaching:

1. Consider a Train-the-Trainer Model.

Build long-term capacity by enabling staff to deliver and sustain high-quality certification training.

2. Identify Sustainable Funding Streams.

To expand coaching beyond current staff capacity, program champions should seek grants and reallocate funds to maintain long-term support.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- What long-term funding strategies will allow you to sustain and grow your coaching program?
- How will you ensure coaching knowledge is not lost during staff turnover?
- What data will you regularly review to understand progress and refine your approach?
- Where could coaching expand next (e.g., first-year students, athletes, specific departments) once your initial model is stable?

Drive Sustainable Impact with a Train-the-Trainer Model

A train-the-trainer model builds lasting capacity by providing internal staff the tools to deliver high-quality certification training themselves. This approach deepens institutional expertise while [maintaining an active connection to InsideTrack's national Coach & Trainer Network](#) – providing certified campus leaders with ongoing professional development, updated curriculum tools and peer collaboration to ensure long-term program fidelity.

1. **Have a team member attend a coach developer training.**
2. **Identify additional staff who are interested in coaching and assess their capacity to become a coach.**

"If [staff or faculty] have an interest in becoming a certified success coach, the resources are here. We have a trainer who is certified and a developer who is certified. So everything is in-house."

—Student Coach



Institutions can scale internally by investing in trainers. At JCSU, one coach went on to complete the InsideTrack Developer training and another became an on-campus trainer. Together, they have since trained two additional coaches in-house. This demonstrates how having a dedicated individual in the coaching role who is well respected by their peers and passionate about coaching students can immediately shift the coaching landscape at an institution. This is especially significant given that high turnover rates at HBCUs can often be a barrier to consistent program implementation.

Identify Sustainable Funding Streams

Because many institutions may want to extend coaching to more students than staffing capacity allows, identifying grant funds or reallocating the budget can help maintain funding for multiple years of coaching. In collaboration with institutional leaders, the program champion should identify additional funding streams to train more coaches or sustain coaching.

EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING FUNDING SOURCES TO EXPAND AND SUSTAIN COACHING:

- University foundation
- Local grants
- State grants
- National philanthropic partnerships
- Federal grants (e.g., Postsecondary Student Success Grant)
- President/provost special projects fund

“Currently our work is supported through [a mayor’s office initiative] – essentially an initiative that our mayor established in 2021-22 that invests a certain amount of money to [the university] to create more access and equity to higher ed and enhance students’ experience.”

—Program Champion



At JCSU, early successes of the coaching initiative encouraged the university to invest more strategically in the program:

- JCSU leadership plans to use current program outcomes to secure future funding and integrate the coaching program’s costs into the university’s budget.
- JCSU’s early successes also led the Institutional Advancement Team to consider adjusting the operational budget to better support the initiative.

A Call to Invest in HBCU Coaching at Scale



The next breakthrough in college completion will not come from asking HBCUs to do more with less – it will come from investing in their capacity to do more of what works.

College success coaching helps students move from uncertainty to action, from crisis to connection, and from enrollment to graduation. Early evidence from the UNCF–InsideTrack partnership demonstrates its promise: at Johnson C. Smith University, freshman retention reached 89.3%, representing a three-percentage-point increase, while 47% of coached freshmen earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Across participating institutions, coaching strengthened relationships, student confidence, accountability and engagement.

Strategic investment enables HBCUs to build the staffing, leadership, technology, early-alert systems, referral networks, data infrastructure and internal training capacity needed to support generations of students. It turns coaching from a temporary program into a permanent institutional capability.

THE RETURN ON THIS INVESTMENT CAN BE SEEN IN:

- More students retained and completing degrees
- Increased tuition revenue preserved through stronger persistence
- Reduced costs associated with student attrition
- Stronger HBCU systems and institutional capacity
- More graduates entering high-demand careers
- A deeper and more diverse national workforce pipeline
- Sustainable campus expertise that remains after grant funding ends

We invite visionary philanthropists and corporate leaders to make a catalytic investment in a national HBCU coaching infrastructure – one that prepares and certifies coaches, builds campus-owned capacity, identifies students before they stop out, and measures progress from enrollment through graduation and career entry.

Fund a scholarship and you help a student afford college. Fund coaching and you help that student navigate college.

Invest in HBCU coaching capacity and you strengthen the institution's ability to help thousands of students persist, graduate, enter the workforce and create generational change.



Franklin Soares, Ph.D

Director, Institutional Capacity Building College
Success Coach Partner

Email:
successcoaching@uncf.org

uncf.org >

insidetrack®

Henri LaSane, Ed.D.

Associate Vice President of HBCU Programs

Email:
hello@insidetrack.org

insidetrack.org >

Tools



TOOL 1:

Coaching Vision Statement Builder

Answer the questions below to articulate the purpose of coaching at your institution.

PURPOSE & RATIONALE

What pressing student needs or challenges is coaching meant to address?

Why is coaching the right fit for your institution at this moment?

What broader institutional priorities does coaching help advance?

STUDENT POPULATION

Which students stand to benefit most (e.g., first-year students, students on academic probation, athletes, commuters)?

How should students feel or behave differently after experiencing coaching?

DESIRED STUDENT IMPACT

What skills, habits, or mindsets should students gain?

How should students feel or behave differently after experiencing coaching?

(continued)

TOOL 1:

Coaching Vision Statement Builder

Answer the questions below to articulate the purpose of coaching at your institution.

INSTITUTIONAL GOALS FOR COACHING	
What institutional outcomes (e.g., retention, belonging, completion) matter most?	
How does coaching complement existing student success initiatives?	
VISION FOR SCALE	
Do you envision coaching as a campus-wide practice or a targeted effort?	
What does the ideal coaching model look like in three years?	
GUIDING VALUES & APPROACH	
What values should guide coaching on your campus?	
How can coaching reflect your institution's culture, history, and community?	
What principles should coaches uphold in their work with students?	

TOOL 1:

Coaching Vision Statement Builder

Pull it together: Use the prompts on the previous pages to craft one clear, powerful statement.

TEMPLATE:

"Our institution uses coaching to [purpose] by supporting [student group(s)] in building [skills, habits, mindsets] so they can [intended impact]. Our coaching approach reflects our commitment to [values], advancing our institution's [mission, strategic priority, culture]."

EXAMPLE:

Our coaching program exists to strengthen student belonging and academic momentum by helping first-generation students build confidence, problem-solving skills and a clear sense of purpose.	Grounded in our culture of care, our coaching program empowers students to navigate challenges, develop agency and persist toward graduation by providing holistic, relationship-centered support.	Our institution uses coaching to advance equity and student success by equipping students, especially those who are first generation, with the tools, skills and personal support needed to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
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COMBINE VISION STATEMENT HERE:

TOOL 2:

Coaching Planning Guide

Answer the questions below to create a plan for how coaching will be implemented at your institution.

This planning guide helps you turn your coaching mission into a clear, operational plan. While Tool 1 supports you in defining the purpose and goals of coaching at your institution, Tool 2 walks you through the practical decisions needed to bring that vision to life. As the program champion or program lead, you will use this guide to outline coaching roles, select and support coaches, determine key activities and timelines, identify the student outcomes you hope to influence, and build the structures that allow coaching to integrate smoothly across campus. The prompts in each section are designed to help you make intentional choices that reflect your institution's values, resource realities and student needs and lay the groundwork for a sustainable and high-impact coaching program.



TOOL 2:

Coaching Planning Guide

1. Coaching Roles & Responsibilities

Use this section to outline who will lead, manage and deliver coaching.

- Who will serve as the program champion? This person is an institutional advocate who secures support, resources and alignment for coaching.
- Who will serve as the program lead? This person is the day-to-day manager who operationalizes the coaching model.
- What are the coach's responsibilities?
- How will coaching align with existing advising and student support roles?

2. Selection & Recruitment

Identify who should be selected and how you will choose them.

- Which current or new staff are best positioned to serve as coaches?
- Do they have student-facing responsibilities and the time and capacity to engage deeply?
- What criteria will you use to select coaches (e.g., skills, experience, disposition)?
- Will coaches apply, be nominated or be invited?

3. Institutional Support for Coaches

Ensure coaches can fully participate in training and implementation.

- How will you, the program champion and the program lead protect coaches' time for training and coaching?
- What workload adjustments or reassignments may be needed?
- What ongoing support structures (e.g., supervision, peer groups, check-ins) will be available to coaches during and after training?

TOOL 2:

Coaching Planning Guide

4. Outline Key Coaching Activities

Clarify what coaching will look like day to day.

- Which students will coaches serve (e.g., all first-year students, students on probation, athletes)?
- How frequently should coaches meet with students?
- What will the typical coaching cycle include (e.g., intake, goal setting, check-ins, closure)?
- How frequently will coaches meet with one another for learning, problem-solving and alignment?
- What expectations will you set for documentation or tracking of sessions, including how coaches and students use tech tools?

5. Develop an Implementation Timeline

Create a realistic sequence of activities from training to launch.

- When will training begin and end?
- When will coaches start meeting with students?
- What are your short-term goals (first semester)?
- What are your midterm goals (year 1)?
- What are your long-term goals (year 2 and beyond)?
- What organizational dependencies or prerequisites need to be addressed before launch?

6. Communication & Collaboration

Establish processes that connect coaches to students, faculty and staff.

- What communication systems will students use to engage with coaches (e.g., email, coaching app)?
- How will coaches collaborate with faculty, advisors and student affairs staff?
- What information-sharing expectations will you set (e.g., progress updates)?

TOOL 2:

Coaching Planning Guide

7. Funding & Sustainability

Plan for the ongoing support of your coaching program.

- What internal funds can support coaching roles or release time?
- What external grants or philanthropic opportunities can be pursued?
- How will you plan for multi-year sustainability?
- What resources or teams will be needed to maintain the program as it grows?

8. Data, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

Ensure your program strengthens over time.

- What student outcomes matter most for your institution (e.g., retention, GPA, credit accumulation, belonging)?
- What coaching activities will you track (e.g., sessions completed, student contacts, outreach attempts, referrals)?
- How will you measure changes in student experience or skills (e.g., surveys, student reflections, interviews)?
- What data will be collected and by whom?
- How will data be used to refine coaching practices?
- How will you gather feedback from students and coaches?
- How will progress be shared with campus stakeholders? How often will coaching activities and student outcomes be reviewed (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually)?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and analyzing the data?

TOOL 3:

Finding My Why

Guide coaching staff through the following questions to help them reflect and identify their purpose.

Coaching requires deep reflection, commitment and a strong sense of purpose. This tool helps you articulate your personal “why” for coaching: what motivates you, what you hope to offer students, and how coaching aligns with your values and lived experiences. Use the following reflection questions to develop your “Why” statement.

PURPOSE & MOTIVATION	
What inspires you to support students in this way?	
What experiences in your life make you want to guide students through challenges?	
Why does coaching feel important or meaningful to you?	
CONNECTION TO STUDENTS	
What strengths or personal characteristics do you bring to relationships with students?	
What do you understand about the students you’ll be coaching (e.g., their experiences, strengths, barriers)?	
How do your own experiences help you relate to students?	

(continued)

TOOL 3:

Finding My Why

VALUES & APPROACHES

What values do you bring to your interactions with students?

What kind of support do you want to be known for?

How do you want students to feel after meeting with you?

IMPACT & GOALS

What kinds of academic or personal changes do you hope to help students achieve?

What kind of growth do you want to see in yourself as a coach?

How will you know coaching is making a difference?

Appendix



Detailed Description and Timeline of InsideTrack's Coaching Model

InsideTrack's Coaching Certification Program is a one-year+ commitment.



LEADER FEEDBACK ON INSIDETRACK SUPPORT:

"The quality and caliber of the training that we have received is at a very, very high standard. [The trainer] is extremely knowledgeable, and I feel like she was custom made for my team."

- Program Champion