Before designing solutions or interventions, you need to establish a clear understanding of the scope and type of problem facing your institution and students. To define your problem clearly, your institution will follow the following three steps:

**STEP 1** BEGIN BY THINKING ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- What can you observe that tells you what is and is not happening in a process?
- Who are the students that are experiencing this problem?
- What outcomes of interest are students not achieving?
- Why does this problem matter to your institution and students?
- How can your institution measure the scale of this problem?

**STEP 2** CONSIDER HOW THE PROBLEM MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Be clear about which people and what parts of the process are included.
- Do **NOT** speculate about the cause of the problem or its solution.
- Describe a problem that is measurable and, if possible, state its scale.

**STEP 3** CRAFT A CLEAR PROBLEM STATEMENT THAT DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- Describes a challenge that you can investigate through behavioral diagnosis.
- Sets aside any assumptions or conclusions about what is causing the problem.
- Contains a description, or quantification, of an outcome of interest.

**Clear Problem Statement:**

*Only 24 percent of students attend summer courses.*

- Is specific about the stage in the process (summer)
- Measures and quantifies the scope (24 percent)
- Is clear about who is encountering the problem (students)

**Ineffective Problem Statement:**

*Students don’t attend summer courses because they do not value their education.*

- Does not quantify the scope of the problem
- Attributes reasons or speculates as to causes of the problem (is not a neutral description)