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Design Thinking: Using Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation to Build Culture and Community in Academic Departments

Amanda Scott, Teresa Drake, Shelley Hawkins, Patricia Nugent, and Melissa Peterson

During the pandemic, the reactive nature of many organizations shined a spotlight on the silos, turf wars, and inequitable workload expectations that were lurking in the shadows of higher education. Higher education leaders are now forced to create a change culture, mid-change—akin to trying to fly an airplane while building it in midair. These dysfunctional internal processes were amplified by the onslaught of external perceptions related to necessity and return on investment of higher education. Design thinking offers a framework for leadership in higher education to address these internal and external processes.

What is design thinking? It is a philosophical approach that provides structure for teams to plan, problem solve, and innovate in a safe and collaborative environment. It consists of three phases: inspiration, ideation, and implementation. Inspiration is the process for gathering insights through problem identification from sources directly and indirectly affected by the situation. Ideation is the process of amassing the insights gathered and forming them into organized ideas. Implementation takes the most impactful ideas and develops an action plan based on those ideas.

Five departments at Bradley University provide examples of using design thinking to address specific departmental challenges.

Department of Occupational Therapy: Developing promotion and tenure requirements

INSPIRATION

The department is newly created and is currently developing policies and procedures related to faculty expectations. This process was initiated by the founding department chair and gathered input from additional faculty as they were hired. Many colleges and universities have ambiguous promotion and tenure (P&T) guidelines due to a one-size-fits-all approach.

IDEATION

The founding department chair examined the key components of teaching, scholarship, and service that best align with the profession. They weighted each component or task according to level of complexity and time commitment to allow new faculty to build confidence through successful completion of components.

IMPLEMENTATION

The department collectively developed a points system rubric to clearly quantify the expectations of faculty regarding teaching, service, and scholarship. This rubric allowed the department chair and faculty to have an open discussion on grading task complexity to foster confidence and expertise related to academic pursuits.

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences: Building collegiality

INSPIRATION

After an almost complete turnover of faculty within 10 years, a new department chair began a phase of change by identifying lack of collegiality as a primary problem. Faculty did not feel comfortable speaking up in meetings, did not always trust one another, and had not felt supported. The project was to develop a high-functioning team.

IDEATION

Faculty experiences at previous institutions, discussions with chairs and faculty in other departments, and researching best practices all generated ideas to improve culture. Ultimately, meeting and committee structures were changed, professional development opportunities were offered, and fair policies were implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION

Regular department meetings with specified time for committee reports provided formal space for wider faculty contribution, and conducting some meetings as workshops fostered communication and collaboration. Multiple opportunities for professional development have bolstered support of faculty, including internal workshops where faculty share pedagogical expertise building a shared culture of teaching excellence. Written departmental policies have been developed for clear and fair processes. After two years, the department is functioning more as a team and is now working toward shared goals.

Department of Nursing: Faculty support

INSPIRATION

The pandemic created a heightened need for faculty support services. Improving nursing faculty well-being became a national imperative necessitating that both higher education factors and individual needs are addressed (Bakewell-Sachs & Trautman, 2021).

Ideation

Nursing administrators designed a seven-month program to promote nursing faculty well-being. The program included three 2-hour workshops. Between workshops, participants worked on projects in small groups.

Session 1 provided strategies for interviewing stakeholders to better understand the emotional touchpoints of well-being. Participants worked in four design teams of three to four faculty each to implement projects that resulted from stakeholder interviews. Session 2 focused on team members grouping stakeholder ideas into thematic clusters and synthesizing the meanings behind the emerging themes to define a specific well-being problem in need of intervention. Teams brainstormed solutions, developed and refined prototypes, and summarized results.

IMPLEMENTATION

In Session 3, faculty focused on the outcomes including learning to identify and analyze well-being challenges and using principles to solve organizational (department, college) well-being challenges. Program outcomes were categorized into three domains: results of design team projects, subsequent changes to the program, and the perceived value of developing well-being interventions. Nursing faculty emphasized how design thinking enhanced their creative thinking and trust in the department, college, and university. The biggest challenge reported by faculty included lack of time to work on projects.

Education, Counseling, and Leadership: Student support

INSPIRATION

There is a well-established teacher shortage in the United States, and 55 percent of members in the largest teacher's union polled stated they will be leaving the profession sooner than planned (Kamenetz, 2022). Furthermore, 90 percent of the same population reported that burnout is a serious problem.

The resulting question was, What changes are needed in teacher education preparation programs to support development and retention of the "whole teacher"?

An advisory committee was established consisting of the department chair; three faculty members (one each from teacher education, counseling, and leadership); a current undergraduate student teacher; and a graduate counseling student.

IDEATION

The committee brainstormed possible participants, formats, and topics. With the rise of awareness of increased mental health issues, it was determined that the focus of the project would be to provide professional development on topics to improve mental health for student teachers. Some of these topics include the evolving LGBTQ+ population, the post-COVID classroom, teacher well-being, the political reality of schools, school violence, and mandated reporting realities.

IMPLEMENTATION

While the advisory committee progresses with a fully developed plan, we will need to recognize that this problem is complex and will likely require several iterations.

Department of Physical Therapy and Health Science: New faculty mentoring

INSPIRATION

Faculty shortages pose a significant challenge to physical therapy programs across the country. According to the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (2021), there were over 340 current and projected faculty vacancies in the 2020–2021 academic year.

The department was fortunate to fill four vacancies in less than two years; however, each new hire came directly from a clinical position and had minimal teaching experience. Knowledge of several areas—such as pedagogy, assessment, higher education policies and legal matters, and accreditation requirements—was limited.

IDEATION

A three-tiered mentoring program was developed to assist with onboarding new faculty as well as to facilitate leadership and mentoring skills of junior faculty. The department chair discussed the program with all faculty, including those tenured senior faculty with 15 to 20 years experience; junior-level, pre-tenure faculty with three to 10 years of experience; and novice faculty with less than one year of experience. Feedback was collected regarding the needs of junior and novice faculty as well as potential contributions for mentorship.

IMPLEMENTATION

Mentoring groups consisting of one senior faculty member, one or two junior faculty, and one novice faculty member were established. Faculty were informed of the structure and expectations for the mentoring program, which includes meeting with their mentoring group on a regular basis. Feedback will be formally collected at the conclusion of the academic year, but anecdotal feedback suggests a perceived value of the program across all levels of faculty.

Conclusion

Change in any organization is often met with apprehension or even resistance if it is not embedded in the culture. Often a missing component to fostering an organizational culture is a focus on people. Design thinking centers on the human experience while answering the questions of who we are creating this change for and why. The overall goal of design thinking is to facilitate a culture supportive of groundbreaking ideas rather than focus on incremental change regardless of the problem being addressed.

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Personnel Change as Opportunity to Transform

Joan R. Poulsen

Headlines in the media regarding staffing have been bleak. Phrases like "The Great Resignation" and "quiet quitting" point to the same phenomenon: personnel shifts and changes abound in higher education. Although higher education is typically a bastion of employment stability (Brantley & Shomaker, 2021), many institutions have seen increased numbers of staff and faculty depart since 2020. More gravely, many institutions have had to make difficult decisions to downsize employees. As leaders, how can we most effectively navigate personnel changes in this climate with the hope of transformational outcomes?

One role of leaders is to have a long-range view of the institution. Although leaders must attend to daily tasks of problem solving, managing, and handling the unexpected, it is crucial that leaders maintain a vision of where and how to move forward, all while cautiously scanning the environment for problems. When it comes to personnel changes, they come in two varieties: either employees are looking to leave or the institution is seeking to dismiss them. While firing for cause is a personnel change, here I will focus only on quitting and layoffs.

The Great Resignation

It is unusual that an employee quits without warning. Leaders should look for warning signs that people are considering quitting. According to Gardner and Hom (n.d.), employees give several common indicators in the months prior to quitting. These include decreased productivity and effort, being less engaged socially with coworkers, attendance issues, and attitude changes and expressed dissatisfaction. Gardner and Hom suggest conducting "stay interviews": individual meetings with current employees to understand their motivation for staying and what they would need from the organization to want to stay. Questions might include, What brings you a sense of meaning at work? What do you wish you could change in your job and why?

In my experience, similar interventions have extended employees' tenures. As an example case, a professional staff member had consistently shared that they were on the job market. Direct supervisors talked with the employee, asking what about their work was most meaningful and what was most dissatisfying, and then took action. In this case, that meant minimizing attendance at specific meetings this employee found highly frustrating and increasing student interaction in their job. This strategy served to retain this staff member for another four years. Since departing, this person has held two different positions in less than two years.

Importantly, Gardner and Hom note that these warning signs offer a few *months* of notice. When

leaders can recognize these signs early, intervene with stay interviews, and advocate for changes to improve the employee's satisfaction, it may very well extend an employee's tenure. That said, it is important for leaders to know what reasonable concessions they can offer fairly and equitably.

Navigating layoffs

Institutions never wish to engage in layoffs, and depending on their position, a leader may not be the first to know such a decision is coming. It is helpful to consider information like department and campus budgets and enrollment trends as indicators to use to help envision whether layoffs may be on the horizon. Fostering open discussions with upper-level leadership can aid in foreseeing such changes as well.

Leaders must plan ahead (whether by months or by hours) and recognize that layoffs are major transitions for all levels of the institution. Colleagues "left behind" after layoffs can benefit from the perspective that they are in a transition as well. When you reframe layoffs as transitions, an evidence-based model of great use to consider is Schlossberg's 4S model (Schlossberg, 2008). Schlossberg suggests that when we have a transition in life, four factors which can help or hinder our navigation of the change: self, situation, supports, and strategies.

Self refers to one's mental resources and characteristics. Such personal characteristics as being optimistic or having experience navigating layoffs might help a leader. Being emotionally reactive or having little trust in one's ability to navigate change, by contrast, may hinder this transition.

Situation refers to the level of control, timing, and length of the transition. According to Schlossberg, it is generally more helpful to have greater control over the transition. Additionally, timing involves factors such as considering what other stressors coincide with the transition. For instance, if layoffs co-occur with other major stressors (e.g., a

global pandemic), the transition may be more difficult than if few other stressors were present.

Support has to do with the social support of others around during the transition. As a leader, it helps to have a mentor, confidant, or team to lean on both for problem-solving advice and as a sounding board.

Finally, *strategies* refers to coping techniques we might use. Effective strategies may include increased self-care or stepping away from an emotionally charged conversation. Ineffective strategies may include substance use or ignoring problems.

It is useful for leaders to consider which assets exist in all four areas and where deficits lie. By taking stock of the strengths, leaders may realize what they can leverage moving into the layoff and transition. By recognizing deficits, leaders create opportunities to advocate for resources.

Personnel changes as loss and transformation

For leaders and employees "left behind" after an employee leaves, many feel a twofold sense of loss: the social loss of colleagues and the institutional loss of people who held specialized knowledge. Often models of grief and loss, such as the well-known Kubler-Ross theory, are helpful to refer to when understanding that supervisors and employees may go through denial, anger, bargaining, and depression before moving to acceptance. Different employees may be at different stages, and there is no deadline for the process to end. At my institution, after a reduction in force, many employees did not move into acceptance fully for four to six months.

After considering the disruption and negativity of personnel changes, one must ask whether there are any positives beyond budgetary savings. As I know from examining literature on organizational change and experiencing it as a leader, positives are neither immediate nor guaranteed. It is up to the leader to strategically work through challenges with

the potential for positive outcomes in the long term. Here are three transformations I made while leading a group through a reduction in force at my institution just over a year ago.

Building trust: Engaging in a reduction in force certainly can breach trust among employees, so how a leader navigates this change is critical. The leader must start from scratch with levels of trust, which is an opportunity to build a culture of trust. According to Covey (2022), being consistently transparent, listening, and following through on promises and deadlines helps to build trust. Building a team with trust ultimately leads to stronger performance.

New roles: Changes in personnel can open discussions about what existing employees would like to engage in to increase job satisfaction. For instance, after our reduction in force, we were left with a gap in staffing around first-year retention initiatives. After I discussed this gap with staff, one employee shared that she had always wanted this role. By adjusting her duties to incorporate this, her commitment to the institution and satisfaction at work increased.

Doing what wasn't possible: Often institutional change grinds to a halt with the words "We've always done it this way." Major personnel shifts do open opportunity, however, and what was once considered impossible or met with stonewalling may become feasible. As an example, after our reduction in force, we did several previously impossible things. We moved all staff in the affected department to a single physical space. We also did a major revision to new student onboarding and finally built relationships across campus units, leading to streamlined enrollment processes.

To conclude, personnel changes are part of higher education now more than ever. As leaders face the challenges of retaining employees or navigating an unwelcome layoff, there are strategies they can use to navigate these changes. Regular communication with employees and stay interviews can greatly improve retention. Actively planning how to navigate layoffs and using models of transition like Schlossberg's 4S model can help leaders create a roadmap through changes. Finally, even as people grieve both the change and lost personnel, there is opportunity. Writing this over a year after a reduction in force at my institution, I can attest that the changes we endured were not welcome, but reflecting, we now have employees who call themselves "a cohesive team," more standardized and efficient enrollment processes, and better mentorship among employees. Transformation after personnel change is possible.

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Navigating Microaggressions in the Workplace

Jennifer Mitchell and Marcine Pickron-Davis

After your colleague, a Black woman, gives a presentation, you hear another colleague approach them and say, "You're so articulate. You speak really well."

You overhear a guest asking your colleague, "Where are you really from?"

A male leader on a committee you are on only asks the women members to schedule meetings and take notes.

Someone stops by your desk once per week to ask whether your colleague's natural hair is a dress code violation.

Your boss refuses to give a project that involves new technology to an assumed older colleague.

Your boss schedules a celebratory team lunch during Ramadan. Two of your colleagues are Muslim and will be fasting during this time.

Microaggressions are pervasive and happen everywhere. Institutions of higher education are not exempt.

"Microaggressions are the everyday slights, insults, putdowns, invalidations, and offensive behaviors that people experience in daily interactions with generally well-intentioned individuals who may be unaware that they have engaged in demeaning ways" (Sue et al., 2019).

Given that people spend most of their lives at work, microaggressions in the workplace have a profound impact on people's mental, spiritual, and even physical health (Luc, n.d.). To foster a positive institutional climate and culture, the Office of Diversity and Community Relations at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine launched training workshop called Navigating Microaggressions in the Workplace. The training is designed to examine the dimensions of microaggressions, explore the implications of microaggressions, and equip faculty and staff with strategies to navigate the occurrence of microaggressions in the workplace.

1. Almost two-thirds of women face everyday sexism and racism—known as microaggressions—at work (Leanin.org, 2018).
2. Black women experience a greater variety of microaggressions and are more likely than other women to have their judgment questioned in their area of expertise (Sarkis, 2020).
3. Seventy-one percent of lesbian women experience microaggressions at work. They are far more likely than other women to hear demeaning remarks about themselves or other lesbians.
4. About half of men have experienced microaggressions; the problem is worse for men of color and gay men. Black men are more likely than White men have their judgment questioned and be asked to provide more evidence of their qualifications.
5. Forty percent of older workers experience

microaggressions when colleagues speak to them more slowly and louder than they would younger peers.

A study conducted by Curiosity at Work and *Fortune* on microaggressions in the workplace reveals that 68 percent of Americans say microaggressions in the workplace are a problem, with more than one quarter having experienced it as a target and 36 percent being a bystander. Although microaggressions aren't always intentional, the best way to address them proactively is through education and awareness (Luc, n.d.).

Types of microaggressions

In the workplace, people may experience oppression in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions can be verbal or nonverbal, intentional or unintentional, and occur at the interpersonal or system level (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 60). These words and actions are often rooted in unconscious or implicit bias—the attitudes toward people or the stereotypes we have about people without our conscious knowledge.

There are primarily three types of microaggressions:

Our Navigating Microaggressions in the Workplace training aims to assist attendees in building a tool kit to respond to microaggressions they may encounter as a target or bystander at work. The training is interactive and engages attendees in role plays to practice self-awareness, reflection, and self-care while navigating microaggressions encountered in the workplace.

Microassaults. These are conscious, direct, and intended acts. They can be verbal or nonverbal and are meant to hurt the intended victim. Some examples are name-calling, jokes, and offensive signs, postings, or posters.

Microinsults. These convey subtle rudeness and insensitivity. They demean a person's heritage or identity. They make people feel unwelcome. Some examples:

- Asking people, "Where are you really from?"

- Greeting a crowd by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen"
- Crossing the street when you see a Black man approaching
- Not including gender-inclusive options on a form
- Not including office furniture in your space that is inclusive of different body sizes or abilities

Microinvalidations. These subtly exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of others. Some examples:

- Saying, "You aren't gay. It's just a phase" or "I don't see color"
- Not giving assignments or projects to someone because they have kids
- Planning social events people are expected to attend on religious days or holidays like Jewish holidays or Muslim holidays
- Exclude women, people of color, or those with disabilities from the imagery in a building

Strategies to respond to microaggressions

There are strategies for responding to microaggressions in the workplace. There is a strategy for everyone. Responding to microaggressions does not have to be aggressive. We recommended, when possible, bringing compassion, kindness, and curiosity to respond to microaggressions. Individuals rarely in the workplace have the intent to cause harm against another individual. But it does not mean an individual will not intentionally or unintentionally insult another. If this happens, here are a few ways to respond to microaggression.

Redirect: Shift the conversation

State the impact: Let someone know how their words made you feel. For example, "I felt upset when I heard you say you weren't giving that big project to Jane because she has kids."

Inquire or clarify: Asking a question or for clarification can help someone pause and think about the impact of their words. It can help them dig deeper into where they got that information.

Types of Microaggressions

Microassault	Microinsult	Microinvalidation
Explicit acts intended to hurt the victim.	Behavioral/verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and demean someone's heritage or identity.	Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, experiences, and realities of others.

Check in: This strategy gives you time to process what happened and requests a moment to check in with the person who committed the microaggression. Maybe you know what they said was wrong or offensive but aren't sure why.

Raise awareness: A gentle correction can provide a moment of education. Recently I overheard someone use the term "oriental" to describe Filipino women. I corrected them by saying, "I believe a more inclusive term is Asian. It's even better to use their ethnicity if you know that." Or you might say to your team, "I felt uncomfortable when the student only spoke to the White people on our team. I wonder whether anyone else noticed that."

Apologize: We all commit microaggressions. We are human. So when you do, own your mistake, apologize, learn, and move on.

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Strategies to Respond to Microaggressions

Approach	Example
Redirect	"Let's shift the conversation…."; "I'm wondering what others thought about that…."
Impact Statement	"I felt upset when I heard you say you aren't giving that big project to Jane because she has kids."
Inquire/Clarify	"Say more about that"; "I heard you say that all Asians are good in math. I'm wondering where you learned that?"
Check-in	"I heard what your colleague said to you. I thought it was inappropriate and I wanted to check in to see how you are doing."
Raise Awareness	"I believe a more inclusive term is…" "I said something similar to that before and a colleague reminded me that….

Five Campus Hot Spots: Why Higher Education Institutions Need to Adapt to Reduce Burnout

Vicki Bautista and Gretchen Oltman

Today's professionals use the term "burnout" to describe how a person might feel about their personal and professional obligations and responsibilities—or the overwhelming, pervasive nature of such. When we converse about burnout, we are commonly describing how tired, buried, or overburdened we are on account of our daily responsibilities. The World Health Organization (2019) has recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon or a "syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." Higher education is not immune to faculty and staff mental wellness challenges, additionally, as college presidents report these as prominent problems on their campuses (Taylor et al., 2021). Furthermore, Gallup discovered that three out of four employees feel burned out on the job at least some of the time (Hemphill, 2022). With this in mind, it is imperative that leaders in higher education consider their role in creating a culture that supports the well-being of those who serve the campus daily. While burnout tends to be an employee issue, campus leaders can create the conditions and atmosphere to notice, moderate, and prevent burnout conditions. It goes without saying that a campus filled with faculty, staff, and students suffering from burnout is probably not functioning at its prime.

Below, we identify five hot spots, or reasons, where burnout shows up on today's campuses. We also set forth suggestions on how to best change our typical response strategies to promote healthier, more productive learning and working environments for all.

Hot spot 1: Lack of confidence in leadership

Constant turnover, lack of transparency, and unbalanced decision-making can erode confidence in campus leadership. Campus leaders, while charged with difficult and demanding jobs, must steadily work to earn and build the trust of the entire campus community. Rumors, unethical practices, hidden agendas, and constant change cause people to feel unsteady with leadership decisions, so when difficult decisions need to be made, buy-in can be negligible if not completely absent.

- **Be consistent.** When leaders maintain consistent behaviors over time, campus community members can better understand their approach and anticipate how to respond to daily responsibilities. Some ways to remain consistent in higher education are to communicate clear expectations with simple, straight-forward messaging, explain your rationale when making decisions, and maintain a consistent

demeanor whether things are going well or you are handling a challenging situation. Inconsistent responses increase stress and the possibility of withdrawal by people involved in the decision-making processes, so take care to examine how and why you make decisions the way that you do.

- **Practice participatory leadership.** When leaders use a participatory leadership approach, they actively listen to others and involve them in decision-making processes. A few ways to practice participatory leadership are to be open-minded when hearing others' ideas, approaches, and possible solutions to institutional issues; encourage collaboration to solve challenges by bringing the right people to the table; and reach out to all employees, even the quiet ones, to make sure their voices are heard even if they don't have confidence to share ideas in a group setting.

Hot spot 2: Unmanageable workload

According to the CUPA-HR Higher Education Employee Retention Survey, a survey that targeted higher education employees without teaching responsibilities, 67 percent of staff have found it necessary to work additional hours beyond their typical workday to complete their current job duties. Additionally, the survey found that 63 percent of staff have taken on additional responsibilities because of staff shortages (Bichsel et al., 2022).

- **Check in frequently.** It is important for leaders to be aware of how much additional work employees are taking on due to turnover. Schedule frequent individual meetings with employees to check in on workload or plan frequent walk-arounds to check in less formally (Serrat, 2017).
- **Don't encourage work during non-working hours.** Leaders should reflect on their own work habits as one way to understand the

perceptions others have about the amount of work to be done in day. For instance, what type of work-life balance are you modeling when sending emails, messages, or texts outside standard business hours? If you find yourself working in the evening, on the weekends, or during holiday breaks, use the "delay send" email feature so the message arrives during the next scheduled workday or make your expectations clear about how soon you need a response (Giurge & Bohns, 2021).

Hot spot 3: Absence of role clarity

The absence of clarity in higher education happens for a variety of reasons: overlapping roles and responsibilities between team members, faculty and staff turnover, and the introduction or sunsetting of new programs or initiatives. It is not uncommon for people to take on multiple roles or serve in various capacities, even across departments or colleges. While building new skill sets can be a positive professional attribute, working for competing supervisors or having layered professional responsibilities can lead to steady dissatisfaction.

- **Define individual roles.** As a leader it's important to help clearly define roles and expectations. For new employees, review their job descriptions since these could differ from their actual day-to-day responsibilities. For employees that are established with the program, department, school, or college, discuss their responsibilities and clarify your goals and expectations for them. For all employees, share which tasks they should prioritize, which ones they can move to the bottom of their to-do lists, and what success looks like in each employee's role.
- **Be transparent.** To create a culture of transparency, everyone on your team should know and understand each person's role, responsibilities, and priority tasks. Think about

how challenging it is would be to complete a puzzle without the picture on the box to guide you. The same is true in the workplace: without having the full picture, it can be challenging for employees to understand their roles.

Hot spot 4: Unclear communication

Clear and consistent communication can help anyone working within a campus community to feel invested and valued. Unfortunately, many campuses are plagued with competing messages, outdated strategic plans, and unclear and inconsistent performance expectations. When campus community members do not know how to measure their own success, they are left guessing where the markers of good performance actually lie. Campus leaders, in turn, need clarity to effectively win support and champion new processes—both of which require thoughtful, meaningful dialogue with stakeholders.

- **Design communication plans.** Since academic leaders are responsible for sharing institutional information and updates with faculty and staff, it is important to establish where the messages will come from—then use that method consistently. For instance, if a college dean shares with faculty and staff that they will provide biweekly updates via email throughout the academic year, it is important to remain consistent with the communication plan. If circumstances arise for a delay in the biweekly communication, they dean should notify faculty and staff about it to ease any worries, concerns, or rumors about the change in the communication plan. Additionally, pay clear attention to changing trends in strategic plans, initiatives, and other campus projects. Keep abreast of where each of these is headed and inform your colleagues of what you know, including of any changes.
- **Ask for guidance.** Since each faculty and staff member needs different forms of professional support, each employee will require a

distinct approach. Ask each person how you can help them succeed in their role. Often, employees will continue to shoulder multiple responsibilities and think that their leader knows and notices what is happening when in reality that's not the case. Taking the time to purposefully interact can reveal some of the truths behind how and why someone's job conditions may be burning them out.

Hot spot 5: Unreasonable expectations

Spending a career in education usually leads one to understand that long hours and a servant mindset are generally appreciated throughout the campus community. And on today's campuses, it is not uncommon to find faculty and staff willing to put in extra effort and work hard to help meet college goals. But when long hours, complex tasks, and scarce resources become the norm rather than the exception, workload becomes unmanageable. Campus leaders, then, are often left questioning why work quality and employee engagement are suffering.

- **Provide proper tools.** Many times, ignoring employee-focused resources can set the tone for how employees approach their workplace tasks. When thinking about tools, you should consider time, tangible and intangible resources, and personnel. When was the last time you asked those you lead whether they have what they need to successfully do their jobs?
- **Clarify expectations.** Considering how much work employees can successfully manage on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semestral, or annual basis is an important task for leaders. Especially for high-achieving employees, leaders should communicate which tasks, projects, or initiatives to prioritize and which to complete as time allows; taking on too much may lead to stress and burnout. So expectations match reality, meet with employees regularly to determine a realistic timeline for assigned

tasks and solicit ideas from employees on how they can successfully complete tasks.

Higher education will always be full of complex processes. It is also important to recognize that to make an impact, we must first take care of ourselves and those around us. Knowing what you know now, where can you start creating meaningful change for the better on your campus?

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Leading in and through Change in Higher Education

Stephanie Hinshaw

As the saying goes, "The only thing constant is change." This has especially been true in higher education over the past few years. Higher education institutions, teams, leaders, and students have all had to respond to the great change that has influenced how and where higher education is delivered. This period of disruption has amplified the need for higher education leaders to know how to lead both in and through change. Specifically, leaders utilize thinking and processes to lead while in the midst of change to be able to get effectively get through the change.

Change is often perceived as unwelcome and complex, and as a result, leaders too often shy away from implementing the needed change (Anthony et al., 2017). The definition of change, however, is not so intimidating. Specifically, Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines the word as "to make different in some particular, to undergo a modification, or to give a different position, course or direction." When thought of at this level, change aligns with positive leadership principles associated with transformational leadership and servant leadership.

More precisely, servant leadership principles hold that leaders are accountable for improving their teams and team members' performance, outcomes, and overall well-being (Sipe & Frick, 2015). In other words, leaders are accountable for altering their teams' actions and making the teams better overall. With this in mind, it is critical to discuss the types of changes leaders will more than likely see in higher education and some strategies to lead in and through those changes.

Common types of change in higher education

Recognizing a desired or needed change is an essential ability for a leader. Additionally, leaders can accelerate their ability to handle the change if they can understand what type of change they are experiencing to inform their actions and behaviors. In over 20 years in higher education leadership, I have observed four main types of change:

- Changes in society
- Changes in the higher education sector
- Changes directed by leadership
- Changes elected by self

Changes in society are changes with which all industries grapple and to which organizations must respond. Some examples include pandemics, environmental occurrences, and digital transformation. Changes in the higher education sector are ones that most if not all colleges and universities must account for in their operations and strategy. These include accreditation changes and competition-driven changes. In both higher education and societal changes, leaders are not the primary drivers of

change; external factors outside of their control are. Leaders who accept rather than resist this fact can move more quickly to implement changes.

The next two changes, changes directed by leadership and changes elected by self, are changes arising within a given institution. In other words, they are changes a college or university wishes to make for strategic or operational reasons. Changes directed by leadership are changes senior leaders or boards have chosen for the organization. Changes elected by self are ones the unique leader wishes to make. In both cases, leaders typically need more internal steps than the changes dictated by external forces as they will often need to spend time convincing either their teams or leaders about why the change is necessary. Additionally, these changes often require much more vetting and business modeling to ensure that they truly are right for the institution. These changes are often perceived more positively by the respective leader as they are chosen; however, more steps are frequently needed to convince others of the reason for the change.

Each of the four types of higher education change require leaders to act, respond, enlist others in a vision, and manage change. But where a leader spends most of their time and energy changes. For example, it would be easier to enroll faculty in a change required by accreditation than in one elected by leaders. In the latter instance, the leader would need more time to promote, explain, and enroll others in the need for change, which can be tricky. Different or different innovation processes can aid leaders with leading and in change.

Thinking and processes for change leadership

Numerous resources exist for leaders related to change management. Books, models, talks, and the like have all been produced to assist leaders in conquering change. Often these resources need to be combined with other leadership tools. Two concepts that can be especially helpful in leading change efforts are systems thinking and a stage-gate innovation process.

SYSTEMS THINKING

Ludwig von Bertalanffy created the concept of general systems theory to aid individuals in solving intricate problems (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Specifically, Bertalanffy argued individuals could be more effective with complex issues by thinking beyond a specific problem or issue. Instead, systems thinking urges individuals to consider the patterns, structures, and beliefs supporting an event. One of the most common models to explain systems thinking is the iceberg model (Cunliff, n.d.). The model received its name as, like an iceberg, people often see only the "tip," which is the event. Individuals rarely see what lies below: patterns, structures, and beliefs.

Concerning change, the change itself would be considered the "event" or the tip of the iceberg. Systems thinking calls on leaders to think beyond the event level—to consider the patterns related to the change, the systems needing adjustment to support the change, and most importantly, the beliefs individuals have related to the needed change. To effectively lead change efforts, a systems thinker leader would consider all aspects related to the change and create strategies to address each level. Systems thinking argues that true transformational change cannot occur without addressing all aspects. This means leaders need to understand their team members' thoughts and beliefs related to the change and work with them to transform thinking or honor their thinking with the change.

STAGE-GATE INNOVATION PROCESS

Although systems thinking encourages leaders to think more deeply about changes, it does not provide a process to develop an actual solution or innovation. Systems thinking tells leaders to think differently; it does not provide a method on how to create the change or solution needed. Another process, the stage-gate innovation process, provides a method to turn ideas into implemented solutions

by using a structured process. Robert Cooper and Scott Edgett are credited with creating the stage-gate process to aid businesses with their innovation processes.

Stage-gate processes may vary in the number of stages and terminology used. The most common steps are as follows:

1. Ideate
2. Assess
3. Validate
4. Design
5. Launch

In each stage, the leader uses different tools to evaluate an idea. During the ideate stage, the leader defines the problem and the value proposition. In the assess stage, the leader formulates a solution and gets initial feedback to evaluate the idea. During the validation stage, the leader spends time and energy completing the research needed to support (or not) the change. The design stage, which is often the most complex, follows. Here, the leader creates an actual solution or change along with the supporting business plan and model. Finally, the change commences.

The stages add rigor and structure. Often, leaders want to move directly to the launch phase, which can cause organizational complications if important components, costs, structures, beliefs, or people have gone unconsidered. The stage-gate approach offers a process leaders can use to appropriately evaluate ideas. This evaluation can cause modifications in ideas or even lead to an idea not moving forward. Using a stage-gate approach when managing change allows for a leader to have a more detailed solution.

Conclusion

Both systems thinking and the stage-gate innovation process provide manners for higher education leaders to manage the changes they will encounter. It is important to note there is overlap in these concepts and they are best used in conjunction with one another. Additionally, they can be coupled with other change management processes or leadership principles to fit a leader's unique style. What is most important is that leaders have a process and mindset that allow them to lead both in and through change. Change, as stated at the start of this article, is constant. Higher education is no exception to this. Higher education leaders will have changes required by our society and the higher education sector as well as changes they choose to institute themselves. Regardless of the type of change, having tools to address change will save leaders time and heartache.

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