

A Process Approach to GE Reform: Creating Substantive and Sustainable Change

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Approaches to Institutional Change

Content Model

Works from perspective of “what” needs to
be changed

Process Model

Works from perspective of “how” to
accomplish change

Trainor, 2004

1st principle: Define a process before focusing on curricular content

Institutional Culture

- ❖ Shared set of attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterize an institution

(Trice & Beyer, 1984)

- ❖ Any effective reform process must identify and address institutionally-specific cultural issues that could impede or facilitate successful reform efforts

- ❖ 2nd Principle: Assess, challenge, and change institutional culture while implementing process-focused reform



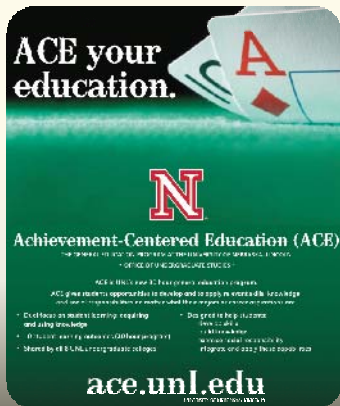
(Gano-Phillips & Barnett, 2008)

Components of Institutional Culture Impacting GE Reform

- ❖ Governance and decision pathways
- ❖ Use of data
- ❖ Leadership capacity
- ❖ Effective communication
- ❖ Constituent engagement
- ❖ Internal and external politics
- ❖ Time frame for reform

(Gano-Phillips & Barnett, forthcoming)

General Education & Governance



Process variable: Governance

- ❖ Institutional
 - Forming planning groups
 - Developing governing documents
 - Identifying key characteristics
- ❖ College (Arts & Sciences)
 - Moving from course content areas to outcomes
 - Communicating challenges
 - Diplomacy efforts



Process variable: Governance

- ❖ Departmental
 - Faculty control
 - Departmental meetings
 - Faculty angst
 - Meaningful conversations
 - Developing assessment

Lessons learned

- ❖ Build trust
- ❖ Use firefighters
- ❖ Start with learning outcomes, not courses
- ❖ Think creatively about new and existing structures
- ❖ Employ multiple strategies for engaging and communicating with people
- ❖ Communicate with different audiences

Process variable: Data

- ❖ The importance of an advocate
- ❖ Assessment to engage multiple advocates
- ❖ Creating conversation and energy
- ❖ Participation in the national conversation
- ❖ Response to stakeholder assumptions
- ❖ “We have to.”

Assessment Methods

- ❖ Longitudinal interview study
- ❖ Direct assessments
 - Written Communication
 - Critical Thinking
 - Familiarity with Cultures
- ❖ Indirect assessments
 - Goal-to-course mapping
 - Transcript review

Process variable: Leadership

- ❖ Role: process management
 - Outcome neutral *except student learning first*
 - timeframe
- ❖ Advocate for
 - inclusion
 - transparency
 - shared responsibility

Process variable: Leadership

- ❖ Role: communication
 - political dimensions
- ❖ Advocate for
 - broad ownership
 - data
 - Consensus

Outcomes: What's different on one goal of interest?

- ❖ Consensus about the importance of the goal
- ❖ Assessment Finding: clarity of language
 - Addition of rationale, examples
- ❖ Assessment Finding: under-emphasis of goal
 - U and G designations
 - One goal emphasized per class
- ❖ Issues around the changes

Leadership Outcome

- ❖ Advocacy for process
- ❖ Changing campus culture through institutionalizing leadership
 - Office of Essential Studies



Summary and Conclusions

First Principle: Define a process for reform before discussing content of reform.

Second Principle: Assess and be willing to change institutional culture in implementing institutional change.

Discussion

A Process Approach to GE Reform within Institutional Culture

Governance – Data – Leadership
Communication – Engagement - Politics – Time Frames

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