



Association of American Colleges and Universities
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for Student Engagement, Inclusion, and Achievement

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Institutional Capacity for Change: 10 Questions for Exploration

Read through the following questions and circle the ones that seem most important to explore generally and at the Institute, in particular. Can you answer those questions clearly with what you know about your institution now? If not, how would you go about answering them? Who would you talk with? What documents might you read? What evidence could you cite to justify the answers you give to the questions that matter most to you?

1. Review your team's goals for the Institute, which are listed in your notebook under Tab 2. Are these goals current? If not, what has changed?
2. Do you have a mandate for change? If so, from whom?
3. What has been your institution's past experience with change?
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. What individuals or groups needed to be involved that were not involved?
 - c. Was the change "smooth" or "rocky", and why?
4. Who might resist the change you are seeking to make? Who might support it?
 - a. What are the roots of resistance (e.g., fear of the unknown or untried; loss of something important or meaningful; philosophical differences; pragmatic concerns [questions about resources, procedures, etc.]?)
 - b. What might you do to work through the resistance?
5. How are important decisions made at your institution?
 - a. How loosely coupled is your organization?
 - b. If there is a strong sense of shared purpose, what contributes to that coherence? If not, what might be done to bring people together to seek common goals and to build shared expectations about what the future should be?
 - c. What decisions are made centrally and what decisions are made locally?
 - d. Is it clear who makes decisions and the basis for those or is decision-making diffuse?
 - e. Who has the most power in your institution?
6. Is the campus ready to change? If not, what might you do to create a more receptive climate for change?

- a. Do promotion and tenure guidelines recognize, document and reward faculty behavior that supports the goals of the changes planned?
 - b. Is there an infrastructure in place to support the kinds of interactions or activities that are required to support the changes planned?
 - c. Does your campus have a culture of inquiry or a culture of evidence that supports intentional and evidence-based change?
 - d. What kinds of information are available to you to guide your work?
 - e. Is budgeting linked in a meaningful way to planning and are institutional goals clear and kept in mind when decisions are being made about how to allocate resources?
 - f. What is the relationship between your governing board and the campus community? Is the Board supportive of change and do its actions support innovation and accept the risks that attend innovation?
 - g. Has your senior administration been in place for a while or have you had a number of recent transitions and turnovers? Are further turnovers expected?
7. How does information spread at your institution and how accurate is the information that people have about the condition of your organization, its prospects, and the priorities that have been put in place for the future?
8. Are you ready to manage the inevitable reactions that will ensue once change has reached a stage where it cannot be ignored or explained away?
9. What are the particular contributions each team member can make to the change effort? For what particular groups or communities can they serve as “ambassadors” for the change?
10. As your team moves through the week, think about where you would like to be vis-à-vis your project 6 months from now. And what will the team be doing upon your return this summer?

Sources for more information about managing change and exploring institutional readiness to undertake and sustain transformational change

Peter Eckel, Madeleine Green, Barbara Hill and William Mallon (1999). On Change III. Taking Charge of Change: A Primer for Colleges and Universities. American Council on Education: Washington DC

Judith A. Ramaley (2002) Moving Mountains Institutional Culture and Transformational Change. In Robert M. Diamond (editor) Field Guide to Academic Leadership. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA. p. 59-73.

Prepared for teams by the 2008 Institute faculty and adapted from a workshop presentation given by Judith Ramaley, April 2006