As You Settle In…
Reflect and Discuss

Introduce yourself to someone nearby. Ask them:

How did you get to your current role?

What skills and abilities got you there?
Leading from the Middle

Todd Benson, COACHE
Laura Palucki Blake, Harvey Mudd College
Katherine Smith, Agnes Scott College
AAC&U Annual Meeting, January 2019
Agnes Scott College’s SUMMIT (introduced 2015-16) reinvents liberal arts education for the 21st century by preparing every student to be an effective change agent in a global society.

- **Global Learning** and **Leadership Development**
- Curricular and Co-curricular
- Additions to the general education program/advising model
  - Core courses in global learning and leadership development (first year)
  - Specializations in global or leadership (2nd/3rd years)
  - Capstone course/digital portfolio (senior year)
- SUMMIT advisors from first year; board of advisors at upper levels
Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities
- Contributing to College-wide Initiatives
- Innovating Teaching/Learning
- Collaborating with Colleagues
- Honoring Personal Motivations

Challenges
- Feeling Prepared for Leadership
- Determining Effectiveness
- Defining Hybrid Roles
- Knowing When and How to Reach Out
- Balancing Time and Energy with Compensation
Positioning Mid-Level Leaders for Success

Manage Expectations
  • Establish clear priorities and timelines
  • Make it clear what your duties are; repeat often
  • Remember relationships matter

- Identify information needs
- Collect, analyze, interpret, and report data and information
- Plan and evaluate
- Serve as stewards of data and information
- Educate information producers, users, and consumers
Positioning Mid-Level Leaders for Success

Systems Approach

• Resist the urge to dive in to the day-to-day
• Focus on building and fixing systems, not people
• Combine workshops, programs, professional development with changes to structures that impact success
Positioning Mid-Level Leaders for Success

Articulate your needs
- Utilize supervisor as advocate
- Communicate your work broadly
- Balance institutional aspirations and available resources
Question: Think back to the time when you were first appointed to your position…

How has your position changed since then?

How was the decision made to change your role?

Were changes accompanied by adequate supports?
Professional Development

How do you know what you need to know to lead from the middle?

How do you challenge yourself to identify your professional development blind spots?
Getting in a groove, not a rut
Closing Questions

What are some of the best aspects of leading from the middle? (Why do you like what you do?)

What do you think the people above and below you need to understand better about your role/work?
Guiding Issues:

- What are the challenges and opportunities inherent in mid-level leadership?
- What are strategies for building relationships, managing conflict, negotiating change and empowering others?
- What can senior leaders do to support mid-level leaders?

Reflect and Discuss:

How did you get to your current role? What skills and abilities got you there?

What does professional development look like in your role? What skills, abilities and knowledge do you need or want to develop (where are your “growing edges”)?
Presenters:

Todd Benson served as a student affairs administrator for over ten years before pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education Leadership and Policy. Making the leap from student affairs to academic affairs began with work in service-learning and civic. During his doctoral program at Vanderbilt University, Todd studied the experiences of doctoral students and the factors that contributed to their acculturation into their respective disciplines. This work expanded as Todd assumed roles in both the Office of the Associate Dean of Graduate Education for Peabody College of Education and Human Development and the Vanderbilt Institutional Research Group. Now Todd is the Associate Director at the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) where he serves as the Chief Operating Officer for COACHE’s two primary lines of research. Todd also writes and speaks about academic leadership and using data as a catalyst for change in higher education. Todd can be reached at todd_benson@gse.harvard.edu

Laura Palucki Blake began her career as a faculty member in psychology, but quickly transitioned into institutional research and assessment as a result of several grant opportunities that allowed her to combine her interest in access and equity for women and minorities in higher education with her background in survey research design. She is currently the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Harvey Mudd College, where her primary role is to coordinate data collection, interpretation and dissemination to support teaching and learning, planning and decision-making across the college. Prior to joining Harvey Mudd, she was the Assistant Director of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. Her most recent article is “Using data to Support Teaching and Learning” in New Directions for Institutional Research. Laura can be reached at lpblake@hmc.edu

Katherine Smith has taught courses in modern and contemporary art and architectural history at Agnes Scott College since 2003. Since earning tenure in 2011, she has assumed several positions that have divided her time and attention among teaching/administration/college-level service projects, including Director, First-Year Seminar Program and Chair, Department of Art and Art History (2012-14). She helped envision, develop, and deliver the leadership development curriculum for SUMMIT, Agnes Scott’s program in global learning and leadership development launched in fall 2015, and is now in her second year as Faculty Coordinator for Leadership Development. Katherine is currently revising a manuscript on contemporary artist Claes Oldenburg (under contract, University of California). Katherine can be reached at kasmith@agnesscott.edu.

References/Additional Resources

