

The Politics of Change: Launching an Initiative

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Common reasons for implementing new approaches to student engagement and success

- To educate all our students for a complex world
- To respond to demands for higher retention, graduation rates
- To prepare a productive workforce and to educate a more engaged citizenry
- To create more equitable access to meaningful experiences and success for all students
- To enhance relevance and connections of the campus and its curriculum to large societal issues

Why is your institution interested in this initiative? What is your role on the team?

- This project is a response to symptoms such as poor retention rates, enrollment declines, legislative demands, changing interests of students, community needs or....
- An administrator has asked you to be on this team to design an initiative and has sponsored your team to come to this Institute to get started.
 - ✓ You aren't sure why.
 - ✓ You and others persuaded a dean, provost, other to send a team to this Institute to learn more and develop a plan to address an issue you care about.
 - ✓ You have specific expertise or connections needed
 - ✓ Other?

Your own reasons for implementing new approaches to student engagement and success

- Who has asked you to do this and what are their reasons for doing so? How involved is your senior leadership?
- Why are you committed to this work?
- What expertise and experience do you bring to this work?
- What other expertise or connections does your team need and where might you go to find what you need?
- How does student success, engagement and equity fit into other campus priorities and who sets those priorities?
- Is your work already connected to other efforts to promote student success? Is there already momentum behind this?

Now What?

1. What is the main goal of your team's project?
2. Are you just starting to work out a plan to address this goal/issue or are you building on earlier work?
3. Have you worked with the members of your team before or are you just getting to know each other?
4. How much do you know about the culture of your institution and how it responds to change?
5. Have you been involved in other change efforts before this one?
6. What do you think it will take to implement the goals of this project at your institution? Do your teammates agree?

Common ingredients required for promoting student engagement and success

- Shared understanding about what student success means
- Good information about the problems you need to address to support success for all your students and ways to monitor progress in accomplishing your goals
- Effective professional support infrastructure , technical assistance and incentives available to all instructors and staff
- A portfolio of strategies that fit your campus mission and the nature of your students
- Knowledge about efforts already underway on your campus to engage students and support success and the connections amongst them
- Support from campus leadership (administration, faculty and staff, students) and from external constituencies (policymakers, community leaders, employers, etc.)

Things to Consider as You Develop Your Plan

- Q1. Why is this initiative to address student engagement and success important for your institution? How will you make the case?
- Q2. Do you have the resources and capacity that will be needed to accomplish your goals? What additional support and capacity do you need?
- Q3. How might you manage/fill in important gaps in capacity and build support for this project?
- Q4. What would success look like and how would you know?

What are *you* and your team thinking about and worry about most?

- Getting attention and support from senior administration
- Finding the funding to carry on the work and expand access to HIPs in the face of budget cuts or other priorities
- Building faculty support and overcoming faculty resistance; working with faculty governance
- Managing student reactions to changing course requirements and working with student leadership
- Providing a convincing case to win over your critics
- Measuring the impact of HIPs and other educational changes on learning
- Other????

Q1. Why is this initiative to address student engagement and success important?

- What do your campus leaders (President, Provost, VPs, Deans, chair of Faculty Senate, etc) care about and how do you know? What pressures are they experiencing?
- What do your own colleagues talk about? Is the student experience on that list? If so, how?
- Who decided to send a team to this year's Institute and why? What problem are you being asked to address?
- Which campus leaders know that you are at the Institute?
- Who else will need to support or contribute to this project as it gets underway?

Q2. Do you have the resources and capacity that will be needed to accomplish your goals? What additional support will you need and how might you obtain it?

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Q3. How might you fill in the gaps in capacity and build support for this project?

Finding Allies

How are decisions made on your campus that affect the curriculum and how well are you connected to these people?

- Who names the problems/asks questions?
- Who participates in the work and what roles do they play?
- Who identifies and evaluates options?
- Who allocates resources to advance the work?
- Who cares about the choices made?
- Who bears the risk and who enjoys the benefits?
- Who interprets the results and defines success?

Q4. What would success look like and how would you know?

- Evidence of improvements in student learning
- Improvements in retention and graduation rates
- Development of additional capacity to support student success
- Greater collaboration across unit and departmental lines
- Evidence of greater student sense of belonging, involvement in their learning, ability to contribute etc.
- Evidence that some aspects of institutional structure, policy and practice and culture have changed and are more supportive of equity and engagement
- Other??

What is missing from this list of evidence of success?

- What might you do to improve the capacity of your institution to support success for all of your students?
- Whose support will you need in order to accomplish this?
- How might you obtain that support?

How a Change Process Works (1)

Creating Your Action Plan

1. Make the case for change.

Question 1: What problem do you want to address and why?

2. Create a theory of action.

Question 2: What is contributing to the problem and how do you want to deal with it and why?

3. Select a suitable project

Question 3: What else is being done that might complement your project and how might you gain momentum for your own project?

How a Change Process Works(2)

4. Launch the process and gather evidence to track the impact of the work.

Question 4: Are there baseline data that you can use to compare the outcomes of what you plan to do with what happens now? Where would you get it?

Question 5: What evidence can you collect to track progress?

How a Change Process Works(3)

5. Review the outcomes and draw lessons from the first stage of the effort. Share the lessons.

Question 6: What story will you have to tell as a team about your experience with the project?

Question 7: How can you tell that story in ways that work for different audiences?

Question 8: What do the leaders on your campus know/need to know about your work? How would you approach them?

How a Change Process Works(4)

6. Create a supportive environment for the change effort to continue

Question 9: Is there agreement on your campus about what student success means? How might your experience contribute to other efforts underway at your institution to enhance student success?

Question 10: How might your work help build momentum and a stronger case for ways to promote success for all your students?

Question 11: How well did your campus culture, policy environment and infrastructure support your work on this project so far? What changes would be helpful and feasible?

How a Change Process Works(5)

7. Apply the lessons learned from your first project, expand the effort and adapt the approach to different disciplines and programs across the institution.

Question 12: How can you generate interest in the work and recruit additional participants?

Question 13: What adaptations will need to be made to sustain and grow the effort?

8. Continue to monitor the impact of the changes you are introducing and make adjustments as circumstances require.

Question 14: How can you contribute to a culture of evidence and inquiry on your campus?

Things to Keep in Mind

- How are important decisions made at your institution and what frame is usually used (technical, organizational, personal)? How do you usually make sense of things? Does your approach match up with larger institutional behaviors? Is your case compelling to others who may think differently?
- Who already buys into your agenda and how can you recruit additional advocates and partners?
- Who is likely to resist or oppose your agenda and why?
- How can you attach your agenda to the ambitions and goals of campus leadership and how do you find out what those goals are?

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