The LEAP Challenge
Preparing Students for Complexity and Change

- Liberal education prepares students to understand and manage complexity, diversity, and change.
- Liberally educated students learn how to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. They develop a sense of social responsibility so they can contribute with integrity to their workplaces and to their communities, large and small.
- In Signature Work, each student addresses one or more problems that matter to the student and to society. A problem may be related to a contemporary issue that needs a practical solution, or to an enduring concept, such as freedom, integrity, or justice.
To educate our students

• How can we **align** educational outcomes, practices and policies with the demands of today’s world?

• What key areas of **skill and knowledge** should all students develop in college?

• What can we expect of a college graduate at each **degree level**, AA, BA/BS/MA/MS?
To educate our students

• What should students aim to achieve in their major at each degree level?
• How do we know what our students are learning and how can students demonstrate their achievements?
• What can we do to facilitate transfer and mobility while ensuring increasing achievement at each stage of an education?

....while preparing our students to deal with real-world problems?
What will it take to educate in new ways?

Campus-wide Issues

• A shift from individual modules and classes and a concept of “my work” to a pattern of “our work” to create a pathway concept that gradually builds intellectual and solution-finding skills and the capacity to deal with complexity, uncertainty, paradox and ambiguity.

• New forms of assessment of learning-signature work

• A move from teaching and learning as a solitary process to learning and co-creation of knowledge as a collaboratory process involving faculty, students and community members.

• A goal of engaging students in ways that promote “continuous self-reflection in the light of new experiences, including the witnessed experience of others.” (Andrew Delbanco, 2012, College)
A Primer on Change
Setting Up a Cycle of Innovation

Step 1. Creating a compelling case for change using both qualitative and quantitative evidence to tell the story
Step 2. Selecting the first target
Step 3. Setting meaningful goals and identifying ways to monitor and measure progress toward achieving those goals
Step 4. Identifying and using available capacity
Step 5. Making connections that reinforce and expand the effort and its impact; adapting as needed
Step 6. Learning from the experience, rebalancing and applying the lessons learned
Step 7. Selecting the next target and repeating the steps

Ramaley 2016
Understanding How Your Institution Works
Going with the Flow

Q.1 How ready is your campus to engage in significant change of any kind?

Q.2 Are you working in a conducive environment that embraces collaboration and resource sharing?

Q.3 What else is going on that could create momentum and avenues for collaboration?
Q. 1 How ready is your campus to engage in significant change of any kind?

✓ Policies and practices
✓ Experience with successful change efforts
✓ Distribution of resources: What kinds of information are used to guide allocations?
✓ Appropriate infrastructure to support faculty leadership and a shared governance model
✓ Capacity to engage in evidence-based change and effective institutional research efforts to support this
✓ Leadership support for intentional change
✓ Existing examples of collaboration internally or with the broader community surrounding your institution that offer lessons and opportunities
✓ Other?
Q.2 Are you working in an environment that embraces collaboration?

- Is your institution involved in any projects either internally or in partnership with the broader community or both?
- Is your campus part of a larger network of institutions focused on a common goal such as the First Year Experience or STEM education or...?
- Does the focus of your proposed work match up with those other efforts?
- Looking at your local community, what challenges or concerns could you use as a laboratory for your students and as a focus for scholarship and collaboration?
Q.3 What else is going on that may be creating momentum and avenues for collaboration?

• What institutional priorities might your project inform or address?
• Is your campus involved in a process to review and update your undergraduate curriculum or some component of that curriculum (e.g. General Education or the major) and/or to define or act upon a set of Institutional Learning Goals?
• Are there any campus-wide efforts to enhance the student experience, promote equity and inclusion, or improve retention/graduation rates, etc?
Making a Compelling Case

How does your project support institutional priorities? Can you clearly state the core value/mission that you want to support and the connection of your project to the larger mission at your institution and to the educational success of your students?

What assets already exist that can support this work? Describe the assets that you have identified and how you can gain access to them. Examples: related projects, implementation of similar strategies, areas of special emphasis on campus, goals of the strategic plan.
Making a Compelling Case

What underlies your campus culture and how can you provide information that will be convincing in your context?

- **Structural:** emphasis on rationality, analysis, logic, facts and data.
- **Human Resource:** the importance of people and relationships
- **Political:** a world of conflict and scarce resources
- **Symbolic:** a focus on stories, hope and shared meaning

Building Support for Your Work

• Who are the gatekeepers or stakeholders who have the most influence or control over the distribution of resources and the setting of institutional priorities?

• Within your campus governing and decision-making structure, where can you generate the most interest and potential support both for your own project and for the larger changes that will be needed for the work to be embraced and incorporated into your campus culture, the curriculum more broadly and your shared expectations for your graduates?
Getting Ready to Launch Your Effort

• **How will you get the attention and buy-in of key people?** What are the venues for raising awareness? Prioritize these venues and conversations. Are you part of those networks? If not, how could you gain access to them?

• **What is your message to these stakeholders?** How will you talk about your project and the value of this work? What lessons do you hope to learn from your experience that might be applicable to other parts of the curriculum or to campus-community relationships or to broader institutional goals?
Making Your Case

Now, outline your message starting with the points that are most likely to gain traction in your environment with the people you want to reach.

• What are people most concerned about on your campus?
• How does your project address any of those concerns?
• Why else might they be interested in your work and what would be a good way to approach them?
• How will you work with your team and others to craft your message and back it up with stories, examples, lessons learned depending on your campus culture.
Getting Started

• Tips on leading from the middle
• Work with your Institutional Research Office:
  ✓ All academic change is a scholarly act and should be evidence-based!
  ✓ Different audiences expect different kinds of evidence.
• Position your Work as an answer to important institutional questions
Leading from the Middle

**Rule 1:** Everyone you work with is **important.** You can get things done through the relationships you develop and invest in. Some of your most helpful allies may

**Rule 2:** Be on a mission. Keep your larger vision and goals in mind when you are making small choices.
Leading from the Middle

Rule 3: Stop, Look and listen. When something erupts, don’t react immediately. Take time to study what is really going on. Don’t jump to conclusions or act on bad information. Defuse the situation if you can, without annoying the “higher ups.”
Leading from the Middle

Rule 4. It’s hardly ever about you. You are part of something bigger and more important and it will help to keep that perspective.

Rule 5. Be Courageous. You often must lead people over whom you do not exercise much control or authority and who may not share your interest or urgency.

Working with your Institutional Research Office

Think of them as consultants not simply as a data store

A compelling case is based on effective approaches to **monitoring** the progress you are making and **measuring** the impact of your project on the issues it is designed to address.

Is your IR Office already involved and if so, in what ways?
How do you plan to evaluate your project? What questions are you seeking to answer?
Have you talked with IR about what information they already collect and how those data could be useful to you?
How will you gather evidence and how will you use it to monitor your progress and evaluate the impact of your work?
What additional information would help you assess your progress and make your case?
How easily could those data be collected and interpreted?
In Summary

Positioning Your Work as an Answer to Important Questions

- Every campus has critical questions to answer. How can your work provide answers to questions that matter most to your colleagues and to campus leadership (administrators, faculty, students)?
- Campus leaders want good stories to tell in speeches, alumni magazines, donor conversations. How can you become one of those good stories?
- The path to managing diversity, complexity and change is inherently transdisciplinary and must be approached through collaboration across fields of study. Do you already work with colleagues in other fields and other disciplines? If not, how could you create opportunities to do so?
- It helps to have friends. Figure out what else is going on that complements your project. There will probably be some other people who can offer advice and peer consultation. Look for related efforts elsewhere on your own campus or in other institutions with which you have connections and use them as vehicles for building momentum and a better environment for systemic and integrative learning.
Judith A. Ramaley
jramaley@pdx.edu