
SECTION I

Creating the Context

The first section of this primer focuses on key issues that form the backdrop for any change initiative: characteristics of colleges and universities that influence the change process, procedural issues that continually arise over the course of a change effort, and the specific aspects of institutional culture that will affect the change process. Campus leaders can use these materials to set the stage for intentional change.

The first chapter outlines the context, exploring from two perspectives the challenges of change in higher education. First, it considers the possibilities and constraints caused by the structures of academic organizations. Second, it describes the human elements involved in changing an organization. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the values of higher education and their impact on the change process.

Chapter 2 highlights three central and recurring issues related to changing a college or university. Stated as questions, they are: Why does this institution need to change? How much change is needed? Who will be involved and how? Our work with the 26 institutions involved in the ACE project demonstrates the importance of these questions, as well as the need to address them continually. Throughout the chapter are questions to guide the leadership team in discussing, analyzing, and clarifying the issues.

Chapter 3 introduces and examines the concept of institutional culture, which plays a dual role in institutional change. Culture can be affected or altered by the change (a changed culture is an outcome), and it can also influence the change process (culture is an input that shapes strategies). This chapter aims to help readers refine their understanding of their institution's culture so that change efforts can be more sophisticated in dealing with the complex challenges culture presents.

Chapter 1

Understanding the Change Process

Every campus leader knows that effecting change in a college or university is an art, not a science. Complexities arise from the traditions and history of the institution, external and internal pressures, competing constituencies, the loose connections among units, and pressing questions with no immediately clear answers.

Institutions struggle with two different issues related to change. The first issue concerns where the change has originated, whether by the institution's positional leaders, a small innovative group of campus stakeholders, or some combination of the two. Change directed from the top generally happens more quickly than that which percolates up from the bottom, but there are costs. Top-down change often sacrifices the benefits of wide participation, and achieving ownership may be problematic.

The second issue, which arises after a change initiative is identified, concerns who is involved and how. Change that comes from a group may elicit broader support because it takes place after wide-ranging participation by those affected. These kinds of complexity make change in higher education an exciting, unpredictable, and difficult undertaking.

This chapter has two purposes. First, it explores higher education's structure and the characteristics of that structure that serve to complicate change efforts and challenge campus leaders. It also describes the human responses common in the higher education environment. Second, it explores several core values that, taken together, necessitate a

unique approach to change in higher education.

The Challenge of Change in Higher Education

Like many, if not most, social organizations and systems, colleges and universities are change-averse. However, they have some particular attributes that make the change process different from that in other types of organizations. Patterns of decision making, the established roles of leaders, and the values that have persisted in the academy over many centuries make colleges and universities distinct. These characteristics are rooted in higher education's history, culture, traditions, and structures, and transcend the particular issues at hand or the characteristics of any single institution or even national context. It is important for institutional leaders to be aware of these common characteristics and to take them into account as they proceed.

Autonomy and independence complicate the change process.

While subject to a whole range of comprehensive policies and processes that affect all units (academic regulations, personnel policies, calendars, budget processes, grading systems, graduation requirements, etc.), colleges and universities conduct many activities that are under more local control.

Academic departments, administrative units, and different offices of colleges and universities sometimes operate independently of one another. Because of this fact,

institutions of higher education have been labeled “loosely coupled” organizations (Weick, 1982). For example, the recruitment activities of the admissions office may only loosely connect with the life of the faculty in the biology department; the agenda of the continuing education division is rarely linked to alumni activities or athletics; and faculty in sociology and social work may unite only through a common grading system. In some institutions, schools are autonomous units with their own budgets, policies, and even fund raisers.

The nature of change in loosely coupled organizations is different from change in more hierarchical or tightly coupled systems, in which units have a direct impact on one another: Any type of change is more likely to be small, improvisational, accommodating, and local, rather than large, planned, and organization-wide (Weick, 1982). Change in higher education is generally incremental and uneven because a change in one area may not affect a second area, and it may affect a third area only after significant time has passed. If institutional leaders want to achieve comprehensive, widespread change, they must create strategies to compensate for this decentralization.

Decision making is diffused.

A related influence on how an institution changes is the diffusion of its academic decision making. While some decisions are made centrally in the administration, some occur peripherally in the academic departments (Kennedy, 1994). Because of the loose connections among the academic departments and between departments on the periphery and the administration in the center, departments may not rely on each other or the administration for direction or support. Individual units may not be familiar with each other, and thus may not be practiced in the coordinated, collaborative work that is needed for comprehensive change. In spite of mul-

tiple and sometimes conflicting priorities, institutions can be steered collectively by employing a number of strategies.

Effects are difficult to attribute to causes.

Colleges and universities are “untidy” organizations that operate on the basis of “delayed, confounded feedback,” making it difficult to associate causes with effects (Weick, 1983, p. 17). The outcomes of many actions are known only after a significant lapse of time and only after other events have occurred that “explain” the actual outcomes (Birnbaum, 1988). For example, the impact of specific teaching methods or curricular changes may be clear only after some time, and the measures most likely will be indirect, such as graduate test scores or successes in the job market.

Because higher education institutions are complex and untidy, linking specific outcomes with specific actions is rarely possible. This delayed and confounded feedback has at

Strategies for Countering Incoherence and Fragmentation

The following are steps leaders can take to respond to the diffused decision-making processes in higher education.

- Form work groups composed of people from different parts of the institution to address strategy issues.
- Engage stakeholders in campus-wide discussions of priorities.
- Consciously develop a shared language of terms, information, and examples.
- Share data widely to create an agreed-upon basis for decision making.
- Have leaders send consistent messages.
- Use rewards and resource allocations consistently across units, according to stated priorities.
- Develop forums, projects, and interest groups that cut across boundaries of administrative areas, schools, and departments.

Understanding Institutional Patterns of Decision Making

1. How “loosely-coupled” is this institution? Give examples.
2. What decisions are made centrally? Which ones are made in decentralized ways?
3. How does the pattern of diffused decision making facilitate change efforts? How does it impede efforts?
4. Are there ways to improve the balance of centralized and decentralized decision making, either through shifting the locus or through better coordination?
5. List possible strategies the institution might use to develop shared goals, common visions, and coherent institutional movement. What has worked in the past? What has not worked?

least three implications for change. First, change leaders may not know where to focus their attention or what to change because the potential outcomes of actions may be unclear. Second, because the actual causes of the outcomes may have come from any number of sources, change leaders may hesitate to alter anything, because they may be tampering with a component that is responsible for a different and unconnected, but desired outcome (Weick, 1983). Third, they may take action with the hope of altering one process and be dismayed when something unintentional occurs instead.

The Human Dimensions of Change

Colleges and universities are especially sensitive to the human responses to change because faculty, staff, and students are so personally committed to these institutions. Faculty often spend their professional lives working in one or two institutions, and decades of association with the same campus and colleagues lead to high levels of comfort and familiarity. To effect comprehensive

change, campuses must understand and respond sympathetically to the human complexities exposed during a change process.

While often exciting, change may provoke fear and anxiety.

This simple statement masks great complexity, for it deals with the unpredictable reactions of human beings to new situations. Fear can be a major issue for people whose professional and personal lives may be altered by change. They may fear ambiguity or the unknown future; they may fear that they will be incompetent or that their skills and knowledge will not be valued in the changed organization. Because they see the world differently from those who are trying to initiate and implement change, they may have a different assessment of the worthiness of a particular change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979). They may be genuinely convinced that the change is ill conceived or frivolous, or that it represents no improvement over the present. An important role of leadership is to help the organization regulate and manage the anxiety that surrounds the change (Heifetz, 1994).

Change threatens the “have-mores.”

Most writers who focus on resistance to change tend to center on followers and their opposition to change, but this is only one group who may potentially resist change. The other group is the “have-mores” (O’Toole, 1995)—those who benefit from the status quo. These resisters may be either faculty or administrators who occupy formal or informal leadership positions, or individuals whose comfort and prestige are supported by the current system. One challenge of institutional change—and an explanation for resistance to change—may be that the proposed change initiatives are working to alter a system and a status quo in which the “have-mores” are deeply invested (O’Toole, 1995). Thus, such resisters may “come out of

nowhere” to derail the change efforts at unexpected times. But when the “have-mores” are in influential positions, other possible change leaders may be marginalized, and any change that does occur will be likely to preserve that part of the status quo cherished by the “have-mores.”

The larger picture may not be well understood, making a focus on the future difficult.

While intentional change requires sustained attention, those who work in higher education are very busy—intensively engaged with their own work and with the present. Faculty are teaching and conducting research, administrators are developing programs and creating

Managing Fear and Anxiety

The following strategies can help manage fear associated with institutional change.

- Reduce the stress of change by providing clear reasons for it, by outlining the direction of the change, by framing the debate, and by offering feedback (Heifetz, 1994).
- Encourage discussion and reflection of the change through town meetings, discussion groups, seminars, and listserv conversations.
- Moderate the pace of change so that people have time to understand it and to incorporate it into their thinking and their actions, and to be less overwhelmed by the prospect of doing things a different way.
- Support change by providing the training needed by people to do things differently and to feel competent in the new environment.
- For people who experience change as loss, an important component of transition to a new way of doing things is the ritual of mourning (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Leaders should encourage people to acknowledge their loss openly so they can constructively move into the future.
- Reframe the change so it highlights opportunities that stakeholders—such as faculty, staff, students, alumni, legislators, boards, and parents—might view as beneficial.

budgets, and students are engaged with coursework, jobs, friends, and family. Undertaking institutional change forces attention away from current activities and onto something different—the proposed changes and a different future. Because people need to move beyond the perspective of their individual endeavors to see the larger picture, change may be an unfamiliar and uncomfortable experience for many.

This difficulty is exacerbated when institutions are under a great deal of stress. Chronic or very severe budget cuts, political battles, and the ordinary and extraordinary flow of events make it difficult to find the time and energy needed to focus on strategic issues. The change process forces people to step out of the flow of daily life, take notice of their activities, and articulate their priorities (Weick, 1995). This stress may be amplified by the additional demands of participating in the change initiative.

The parochial nature of departments and disciplines and the specialization of faculty and staff also make it difficult to see the larger picture. As institutions grow in size and become more differentiated and specialized, the ability to see and understand the enterprise as a whole becomes increasingly limited. “The discipline rather than the institution [becomes] the dominant force in the working lives of academics” (Clark, 1983, p. 31). Most faculty are involved in small units where they feel an affinity and are able to make and influence decisions (Birnbaum, 1988). Because discipline-based departments and programs are the point of involvement for most faculty, they are not accustomed to being institutional citizens—aware of the larger picture and, consequently, responsible for decisions that impact the institution as a whole.

The Impact of Higher Education’s Core Values on Change

While change in higher education bears some similarities to change in other kinds of

Assessing the Human Dimension

1. Who might be most likely to fear the proposed change? Why? What steps can be taken to alleviate their fear?
2. How do different people or groups view the change initiative? Are these differences significant? How important is it for the institution to deal with them directly? How might this be done?
3. Who are the institutional “have-mores”? Why might they resist change? What might they have to lose? How might their support be gained?
4. What steps can the change leader take to expand peoples’ spheres of awareness and responsibility beyond the concerns of their own units?

organizations, the experiences informing this primer suggest that colleges and universities need a different model of change. Given the structure and organization of higher education institutions and the centrality of academic values and purposes of teaching, research, and service, it is not surprising that corporate models of change do not easily adapt to renewal efforts at colleges and universities. For example, “buying in” to someone else’s decision or vision in a corporate setting is a profoundly different dynamic from doing so in the context of shared decision making in a decentralized, values-driven, and historically aware organization. To be successful in a change initiative, campus leaders must be sensitive to these distinctive elements and respond to them in intentional and reflective ways.

Change begins with an exploration of why a particular change is necessary or important.

Although colleges and universities have undergone significant change and adaptation over time, they are skeptical about change for the sake of change. This reluctance to rush to change has a positive side. It accounts for much of the stability of higher education.

Thus, a thorough exploration of why a change is important and how it contributes to continuing excellence is a vital first step in the process.

That exploration begins with a set of questions rather than with answers. What is the problem? How might the institution be improved? In what ways will students benefit? Other stakeholders? Is the change necessary to the institution’s survival? Well-being? Competitiveness?

Unless the stakeholders really believe that the status quo is unsatisfactory and that change is necessary and beneficial, the process may be doomed from the very beginning. If it does point the way to a stronger institution and to a more exciting place for faculty, staff, and students, that conviction will create a collective will to act.

The change is anchored in the institution’s mission and values.

Changes that are not a good “fit” with the institution’s mission and values are likely not to succeed. For example, why would the faculty of a residential liberal arts college want to develop graduate programs on the Internet? Does intensifying research activities make sense in an institution whose primary mission is serving adult, part-time, undergraduate students?

Similarly, the change process must take into account the academic values articulated by members of the academic community. People who choose to spend their professional careers in academic institutions care deeply about the life of the mind and about educating students—and are less likely to feel marginalized, misunderstood, or diminished by a process that respects the institutional traditions and values.

Stakeholders participate in developing and implementing the agenda for change.

Participatory decision making is an integral part of academic life. Although participation

can slow the decision-making process, a change effort will generally be more successful if many people with different perspectives contribute to its formulation and implementation. For example, improved learning will occur because of the experience and insights that faculty, administrators, students, student affairs staff, learning specialists, and many others bring to this complex issue. No single individual or group has the breadth or the wisdom to formulate a comprehensive change. But more importantly, if people involved in formulating the change feel ownership, they are more likely to be willing participants in the process.

A potential risk associated with broad participation is that the change agenda will become a weak compromise of interested parties. Negotiations and political tradeoffs may give everyone a little but not add up to much. However, setting a limit on participation has real costs and risks; it may cause the change effort to be embraced only by a minority, which, in turn, may cause its demise.

To the extent possible, the agenda for change is supported by a critical mass of campus stakeholders.

Even an inclusive process will not guarantee that all the faculty, staff, and students will embrace the change enthusiastically. Nor is such a goal necessary. But if a change is to be pervasive, it must be embraced by many, not few, stakeholders. The process may start with a small group, then expand its reach through dialogue and involvement, and ultimately influence a critical mass of stakeholders. Acceptance of change cannot be commanded or legislated; significant numbers of people must be persuaded that the change is necessary and ultimately beneficial, because they will be the ones to make it happen.

Preparing for Change

1. Why does this institution need to undergo this change?
2. What will happen if it does not?
3. In what ways does this proposed change fit with the institution's mission and values? How might it conflict?
4. How might the current conditions affect the willingness of faculty, staff, students, and others to engage in the change process?
5. Does the proposed change improve a core function of the institution? In what ways will it improve teaching and learning, service, or research functions?
6. What are the possible costs or risks?
7. How can the institution encourage a level of trust that will increase the likelihood of constructive dialogue?

Leaders lead by persuasion, through other leaders, and by building trust.

As mentioned, one of the most distinctive features of the academy is its dispersed decision-making process and the resulting impact on leadership. Because colleges and universities are more like networks than hierarchies, powerful leadership is not restricted to “the top.” Influential faculty members with no official power may be more important to changing the curriculum than the president. A major change, such as incorporating technology into teaching, requires champions from many quarters—faculty, information technology staff, department chairs, deans—none of whom can create widespread change alone.

While one can envision campus “leaders,” “constituents,” and “stakeholders,” it is difficult to imagine campus “followers.” Some effective leaders often do not have positional titles or formal authority, and they may have few “subordinates” and little influence over areas of the institution beyond their own. These campus “leaders” lead by persuasion. They can set standards, but they often cannot provide incentives and rewards.

On the other hand, positional campus leaders can create a climate that is conducive to certain behaviors, but they cannot command or legislate good teaching or civil discourse on campus. Comprehensive change needs both kinds of leaders.

Because power is dispersed and leadership shared, trust is an essential underpinning of change in higher education. In the absence of trust, stakeholders will focus on preserving rights and privileges rather than taking risks to create a future with the common good in mind. Distrust feeds unhealthy personal and professional relation-

ships and creates dysfunctional organizations. Unaddressed, the destructive powers of distrust are boundless.

Conclusion: Preparing for Institutional Change

Effecting institutional change, as this chapter suggests, is not something accomplished by sheer will. Rather, leaders must be intentional and reflective, develop strategies, and work within the norms and structures of the academy. The questions in the box on page 8 might help leaders think more deeply about what they are setting out to do.

Chapter 2

Addressing the Big Issues

Any change initiative raises a set of fundamental questions that will resurface throughout the process. These questions are not always explicit, but that makes continually addressing them all the more important because answering them throughout the process will allow the initiative to evolve in a healthy, productive way.

Why does this institution need to change?

The reasons for and sources of pressure for change are not always apparent to members of the campus community. Change leaders need to make clear assessments of their environments so that they can articulate why they are doing what they are doing. Intentional change should be reasonably linked to improvement.

How much change should be made? It is important to think about the end result of the change initiative throughout the change process. How much change is necessary, possible, and expected?

Who will be involved and how? Change leaders must consider which campus constituents will be involved in the initiative at various stages and the means by which those individuals and groups will be engaged.

The answers to these questions are important because different campus groups have varied interpretations of “what’s going on.” Presidents and faculty are frequently attuned to different environments and, thus, feel different pressures and see different opportunities. Where some will see a never-ending crisis, others will see only a temporary problem, and still others will see no

problem at all. The same is true for opportunities; one person’s opportunity is another person’s crisis. Therefore, the task of considering and answering the questions “why do we need to change?,” “how much change should be made?,” and “who will be involved and how?” are ongoing and vital parts of a successful change agenda. Although these questions may not be asked with the same intensity or explicitness all the time, they must be continually considered.

Why Does this Institution Need to Change?

Leaders in colleges and universities typically are aware of the pressures and demands their institutions face, and they must make judgment calls on which ones require immediate attention and which ones can be deferred. At the same time, these leaders recognize the importance of the academic traditions, histories, and structures that make the institution successful. Therefore, leaders face a paradox: how to articulate clearly the external and internal pressures that propel a change initiative, while not altering (or even challenging) the characteristics that make the institution successful. Increasingly, these pressures are national and global, but many come from within the academy, too.

The line between external and internal pressure is frequently blurred, and the two are often synergistic—an external pressure can be converted it into an internal desire. Creating positive energy to undertake change is entirely different from reacting to

mandates or pressure. Developing and tapping into that positive energy are challenges of intentional change. Leaders play the important role of framing external demands and challenges, articulating their impacts, and translating them into meaningful institutional terms. As long as a pressure for change becomes “owned” inside the institution, its origin is unimportant.

Understanding the environment: calm or turbulent waters?

Some answers to the question “why does this institution need to change?” come from the external environment. Are forces acting upon the institution that compel it to change? Do pressures from boards (who serve to link the campus with its external environment), legislators, competitors, markets, or donors require action? Institutions differ in the

amount of pressure they experience. To illustrate this range, we can think of institutions as boats in different bodies of water: calm waters, currents, rapids, and at the edge of the waterfall.

- *Calm waters* suggest considerable environmental stability. Institutions have adequate resources. Their graduates, services, and research are in consistent demand. Their environment presents issues requiring only moderate responsiveness. They feel little pressure to change.
- *Currents* are more dynamic environments composed of minor pressures (e.g., modest changes in areas such as finances, enrollment, or academic programs). Institutions experiencing currents do not perceive a great need for change, because external threats are minimal and opportunities do not have a quickly realized pay-off. They have the luxury of charting their course.

Taking Stock: What Are the Pressures for Change?

Which of these forces are exerting pressure on the institution? What are the implications of their presence, absence, or level of intensity?

External Pressures

- The pressure for cost containment and affordability.
- Public demands for educational and financial accountability.
- Increased demands for educational quality and excellent teaching, with their implications for promotion and tenure policies and practices, teaching loads, faculty productivity, and curriculum.
- The growth of alternative models of post-secondary education delivery—including distance education, corporate universities, and transnational delivery.
- The explosion and globalization of knowledge produced both inside and outside the academy.
- The need to serve an increasingly diverse society.
- The pervasive impact of technology on all areas of higher education.

Internal Pressures

- Calls for curriculum reform by faculty and students.
- Student pressures for more attentive “customer service” in the classroom, as well as academic support and social services.
- Increased expectations and demands of adult learners and nontraditional students for access, affordability, and convenience in higher education.
- Changes in the terms and conditions of faculty employment, including the aging of the professoriate, alternate appointment policies, and increased use of part-time and adjunct faculty.
- Higher levels of computer literacy by students.

- *Rapids* represent a constantly changing and unstable environment. Hazards are more apparent, if not completely seen. There are many competing pressures to which an institution must attend, and changes are frequent and fast. One change takes place simultaneously with clusters of other related and unrelated changes.
- *Edge of the waterfall* is a catastrophic environment. One or more critical dimensions take a “sharp turn” (e.g., steep declines in enrollment, escalating internal demands for program or policy changes, severe budget cuts, mandated changes in structures or policies, or critical changes to the economy, such as the relocation of a local industry), creating the need for immediate and far-reaching action. One administrator described his situation as “trying to change the tire on a car traveling at 60 miles per hour down a mountain highway.”

Creating awareness and energy for change.

After assessing the external environment, institutional leaders must develop both an awareness of the need to act and the internal energy for action. The ease of this task may depend upon how fast the waters are. A roaring waterfall usually provides ample motivation. Faculty and administrators will generally concur that “something has to be done; we have no choice.”

At the other extreme, the absence of external pressure is usually perceived as a blessing, but it can breed complacency. Change leaders on these campuses, therefore, will have to choose strategies to raise awareness and convince people that the change is necessary.

At all institutions—but especially those in calm waters—skeptics will question whether the institution is undertaking change merely for the sake of change. Institutional inertia—created either by comfort with the status quo or by lack of awareness of the opportunities or pressures—is a familiar obstacle to change.

Assessing the Climate for Change

1. In what type of water is this institution? Calm, currents, rapids, or waterfall? What evidence supports this judgment? To what extent is this perception shared across campus?
2. What sources of pressure are the greatest? Where do they originate?
3. How much internal desire and positive energy for change exist? Why? What are the implications for proceeding?
4. How much energy comes from the environment? Is it positive or negative? How can the institution tap into (or protect against) that external energy?
5. What strategies can be used to increase awareness of problems or opportunities? What have been successful strategies in the past?

The *awareness* of the need to change must be accompanied by the *energy* required to change. Leaders of institutions in calm waters will have to generate the energy internally because the environment provides little impetus. When an institution is doing well, people are not challenged to do things differently. At the other extreme, institutions facing waterfalls may have too much anxiety to chart a reasonable course of action.

Institutions may become paralyzed by the intensity of the situation and feel that nothing they can do will remedy the downward slide, or they may spend so much energy putting out the daily fires that they cannot think beyond the next impending crisis. In these instances, change leaders have to act as a buffer, protecting the institution from being bombarded by too much energy, driving it in all directions.

How Much Change Should Be Made?

Change leaders tend not to focus much of their time or energy on this question because they think the answer is predetermined by the

pressures they are facing. But they can make some deliberate decisions about the desired extent of change. For example, does a college change two general education requirements, or does it rethink course credits based on “seat time” and instead adopt learning-based outcomes? A clearly articulated answer leads to the exploration of another question: How can the campus get there? The answer also gives faculty, students, and staff a vision of the future and helps them know how the change will affect them personally.

Two basic elements of change—depth and pervasiveness—can be combined in different ways to describe varying magnitudes of

change. The matrix on page 15 outlines four different types of institutional change—adjustment, isolated change, far-reaching change, and transformational change, ranging from low to high on the measures of depth and pervasiveness.*

Adjustments include a change or a series of changes that are modifications in a particular area. One might call this kind of change “tinkering.” As Henderson and Clark (1990) suggest, changes of this nature are revising or revitalizing, and they occur when current designs or procedures are improved or extended, but they neither alter the basic ways of doing business nor have deep or

Answering the Question “Why Change?”

To overcome low awareness of a problem (in other words, to make self-evident the answer to the question “what does this institution need?”), leaders can use some of the following strategies to develop internal energy for change.

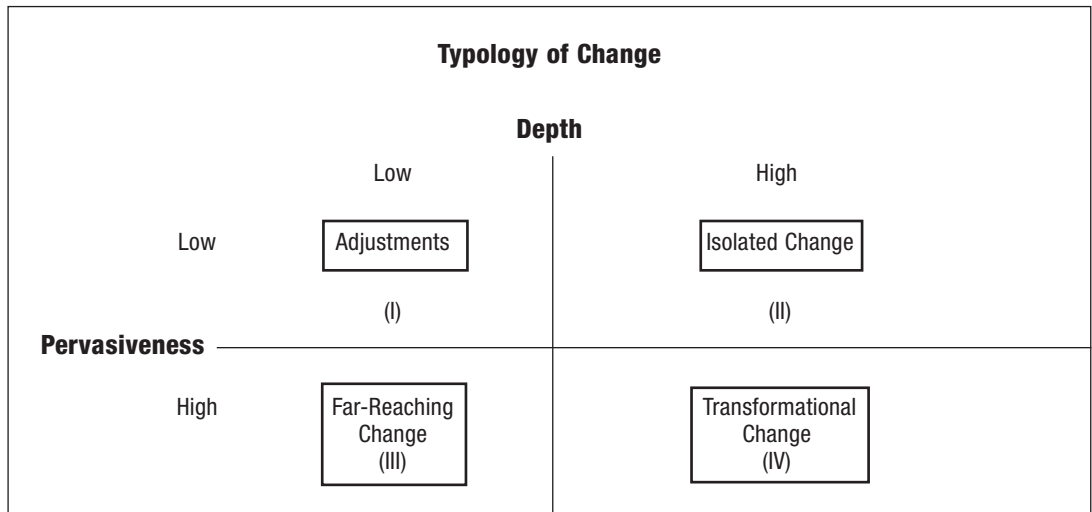
- *Promote the free flow of information.* Various constituencies on campus are more likely to understand the reasons for change if they have access to the same information upon which the decision to change was based.
- *Articulate consistent and repeated messages.* Change leaders should attempt to foster public discussions of the issues. Leaders can set the agenda through formal and informal events and activities, from an official presidential speech to a casual hallway conversation.
- *Share ownership of the problem.* Senior leaders can appoint an ad hoc committee to investigate the extent or the potential implications of the problem. The president of one ACE project institution charged an ad hoc faculty group with answering the question “is student retention a problem?” The report that followed was a call to the campus-wide community for action.
- *Create synergy between external and internal pressures for change.* An external force or internal pressure taken alone might not generate enough interest or momentum to induce campus stakeholders that change is necessary. But taken together, the confluence of internal and external pressures might help tell a convincing story. For example, one ACE project institution had to institute a performance-based funding system as a result of legislative action. At the same time, faculty members were concerned about a high need for remedial courses. Leaders coupled the external mandate with internal desires to create an environment in which campus members knew why change was occurring.
- *Identify a crisis in the making or ripen an issue.* In institutions where the sense of urgency is especially low, the case for change can be made by the actions of leaders (Heifetz, 1994; Kotter, 1995). For example, an issue could be identified in an institutional self-study and accreditation review. A legislative study could intensify attention to teaching. An enrollment change could spur more attentive consideration of curriculum changes.

*For an in-depth discussion of this model of types of change, see Eckel, P., B. Hill, and M. Green. 1998. *En Route to Transformation, On Change: An Occasional Paper Series*, No. 1. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Charting the Pressures of Change

Creating a grid may be helpful in understanding the pressures leading any institution to change. First, identify needed improvements (or problems). Then for each one, identify the source of pressure and its magnitude. Finally, consider the implications for action.

Needed Improvement	Source of Pressure	Degree of Pressure (Calm, currents, rapids, waterfall)	Implications



far-reaching effects. An example is the incorporation of computer simulations into introductory biology labs.

The second quadrant is *isolated change*, which is deep but limited to one unit or particular area and is not pervasive. For instance, a department might adopt a service mission and incorporate service into its promotion and tenure guidelines, help faculty incorporate service-learning into their classes, and provide extra money for faculty outreach projects. The change is deep within the unit but does not permeate the rest of the institution.

The third quadrant is *far-reaching change*; it is pervasive but does not affect the organization very deeply. An example might be the development of online submissions of reading lists to the bookstore. The change affects all faculty but not in profound ways.

The final quadrant is *transformational change*, which occurs when a change exhibits dimensions of **both depth and pervasiveness**. An example of transformational change is when an institution, as a whole, adopts a service mission. It then touches the whole institution in deep and meaningful ways.

On most campuses, change is a composite of these four types. A change initiative is likely to be dynamic—changing as the process unfolds—rather than remaining within one quadrant. What starts out as an isolated

change in the single academic department, for example, may spill over into other departments or units. Even a small, seemingly innocuous change can become a broader type of change. For example, a conversation about a new e-mail system can quickly grow into efforts to implement technology-based pedagogy.

Change leaders should consider how deep and pervasive an impact they want to

Thinking Intentionally About Change

1. Who in the institution recognizes the change initiative as important? How does the answer inform efforts and strategies?
2. List the related change initiatives underway on campus (or in a school or department). To what extent are they synergistic? To what extent might they be? What steps might be taken to increase the impact of the various change initiatives through synergy?
3. Place the change initiative on the chart above (adjustment, isolated, far-reaching, transformational). Who would agree/disagree with this placement? What might the answer suggest about strategy?
4. Describe some important changes the institution has undertaken in the past. To what extent did deep and/or pervasive change occur? What were the circumstances? How do they compare to today's situation?

produce and choose change strategies to accomplish that goal. Not every change needs to transform an institution, but many colleges and universities unwisely attempt only small-scale alterations when their external and internal environments demand intentional transformational change. Still others try to change their institution in deep and broad ways when only isolated change is necessary.

Developing “Hindsight in Advance”

The obvious paradox of this expression, “hindsight in advance,” offers a particular way to focus on the future. Even though the term “hindsight” (defined as a perception of an event after it has happened) is about the past, the second part of the phrase, “in advance,” places the concept in the future and has valuable implications for effecting institutional change. The term, which was coined in a book on strategic change, means coupling the clearness of hindsight with the advantages of picturing the future. The quest for hindsight in advance “starts with what could be and works back to what must happen for that future to come about” (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994, p. 82).

Why use a phrase that tinkers with time and puts the past in the future? One of the keys to successful change is the ability to imagine and communicate a well-developed picture of the future. This strategy helps a campus articulate how much change is needed. It does not attempt to predict the future with great clarity, but rather to articulate possibilities and set the direction for what could be. By adopting the clarity that accompanies the notion of hindsight, leaders are better able to describe where the institution is going and avoid unintended consequences that are not desirable.

Hamel and Prahalad (1994) offer three useful techniques for creating hindsight in advance.

- *Ask “dumb” questions.* To start with a picture of the future, leaders can ask “dumb” questions that challenge fundamental assumptions. “Dumb” questions are the kinds of questions children are not afraid to ask. They are also the kinds of questions outsiders ask because they are grounded in different assumptions and offer unexpected perspectives.
- *Allow time for speculation.* To picture what could be, change leaders need to specu-

Developing Hindsight in Advance

Trying to think creatively about what *could be* for the institution is a challenge because it involves freeing oneself from very real constraints. One way to begin is to ask individuals to imagine the future and what could be in their own departments or units. It may be easier to dream about the possibilities of the future from the familiar perspective of one’s own work or unit. Linking together many smaller futures may help paint an institutional one.

Another method is to update concrete examples that capture today’s institutional life. For example, admissions materials and viewbooks, faculty handbooks, and institutional web sites provide concrete expressions of the present. Go through these documents and identify things that could be different in the future. What would be different about them? Would future classrooms include a computer on each desk, or would there be no classrooms as now conceived? Would future faculty orientation agendas include sessions on teaching effectiveness or portfolio assessment? What types of information might future new faculty be given about promotion and tenure?

Once desirable possible futures have been described and articulated, the next phase is to design strategies to make the future come about. What needs to happen for the imagined futures to become realities? What changes must be made? How might the institution go about implementing those strategies?

Types of Involvement

The type of involvement by campus constituents will vary with their interest and available time and energy.

- *Change leaders* orchestrate the process.*
- *Contributors* affect change through participation in subcommittees or special task forces.
- *Resource* people provide information for others.
- *The informed* do not participate actively but stay up-to-date about what is occurring and why.
- *The uninformed* are not involved because they either don't know about the initiative or don't care about it.
- *The constructive skeptics* are the loyal opposition who add useful critiques and commentary.
- *The resisters* are invested, for a variety of reasons, in preserving the status quo. They may be active or passive resisters, with tactics ranging from foot dragging to sabotage.

*The role of leadership teams is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

late. They have to give themselves permission to take intellectual risks, to make guesses based on hunches and incomplete data, to follow their intuition, and to speculate on what they *feel* about the future as well as what they *know* about it. Thinking speculatively may be a challenge for academics raised on methodological rigor and data analysis, but nevertheless it can lead to worthwhile results.

- *Bring others into the discussion.* In order to paint a picture of the future, change leaders must listen to diverse and unconventional voices. Determining what could be requires a “multiplicity of lenses.” The description of what could be will be more complex, have more depth, and be more thorough and more creative when people are involved who have different perspectives and different experiences, work in different parts of the institution, and bring

new language and different metaphors to the change process.

Who Will Be Involved?

Colleges and universities have historically operated through collaboration, shared governance, collegiality based on trust, open discussion, and healthy debate. Frequently they still do. But increasingly, higher education is struggling with tendencies to be professionalized, bureaucratized, and balkanized. The tension between these two models—the collegiate and the corporate—exacerbates the potential for conflict over who decides. In many institutions, the roles and responsibilities and the division of labor in decision making among governing boards, administrators,

Strategies for Involving People

When identifying people to become involved, consider what strategies have worked well in the past. How might individuals be identified and tapped to participate in the change effort?

- Involvement may be part of a college or university officer's job responsibilities.
- Change leaders may look for volunteers to serve on special task forces or committees because of particular interests or commitments to an issue. They may issue a broad invitation to encourage open participation.
- Involvement may occur through a special appointment. Leaders frequently appoint faculty and staff to sit on task forces because they are recognized as having some special content or experiential knowledge, because they are respected as campus opinion leaders, or because they have a reputation as being insightful and dedicated.
- Others may become involved because they are representatives of some key constituency on campus. For example, institutional protocol may dictate that important committees always are composed of members from the faculty senate, the faculty union, the student government, and the two largest colleges at the university.

and faculty are unclear, overlapping, and fragmenting. Debate abounds on many campuses about who sets policies, who implements them, who refines them, and who evaluates them.

Questions about who is involved and in what ways are important ones to answer. Ultimately, the success of a change initiative depends on persuasion, widespread agreement, and voluntary acceptance from many campus constituencies. Strategies to develop ownership must involve a broad range of faculty, staff, students, trustees, and community members to ensure that the content of a change agenda is widely meaningful.

Many faculty, administrators, and students want to be involved in—or at least be heard on—the change agenda, but not everyone wants the responsibility of being a change leader or even a key decision maker. To complicate matters, the way people want to be involved may differ over time. Change leaders have two important roles in ensuring participation in the process: (1) to ensure a credible means of identifying those who want to participate and (2) to create a legitimate way to involve those whose skills, temperament, intelligence, and capacities are important to the change initiative. Staffing committees and task forces is a challenge for change leaders because of the two issues noted above: The leaders must take a broad enough view of the kind of people who should be involved to accommodate volunteers and have enough perspicacity to realize the range of abilities needed to ensure the success of the initiative.

Individuals can become involved in a change process through many avenues. The box on page 18 illustrates several methods by which change leaders can involve others.

Leaders have two major tasks in bringing people into a change endeavor. First, they must understand and respect the institutional patterns of governance, culture, and norms that dictate who will be involved. For

Deciding Whom to Involve and How

1. List who needs to be involved in the change initiative and compare that list to who is currently involved. What needs to be done to address the differences between these two lists?
2. Do patterns of governance, culture, and norms limit who is involved on campus? How? How can participation be broadened in legitimate ways?
3. In what ways can new participants be brought into the change initiative? As major change agents? Contributors? Resource people? Who should be tapped?

example, if a president appoints a small committee of representatives at an institution that usually invites institution-wide participation, campus constituencies may question the committee's legitimacy. At the same time, bypassing existing campus structures or creating ad hoc committees can often be useful. The challenge is to ensure legitimacy by adhering to campus processes and structures at the appropriate and expected time.

Second, leaders must look for ways to broaden the scope of participation so that new participants with fresh perspectives and new energy can offer their insights and advice. A change initiative can easily stall if the participants are the same familiar faces who are involved in every major endeavor, if proposed strategies are old and tired, or if those involved are overcommitted and cannot give the requisite attention. A special challenge may occur in small institutions or in those that employ large numbers of part-time faculty, because there may be simply too few full-time people to engage in the work of change. Widening participation to include more students, staff, board, and community members can help address the problem.

Chapter 3

Analyzing Institutional Culture

Each institution has its own particular culture, although it is shaped by the broader academic culture.

Institutional culture determines what is important, what is acceptable, and how business gets done at a particular campus. Culture is shaped by commonly held beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions (Schein, 1992). Institutions that undertake significant change will be altering their culture, or at least those aspects of their culture that are no longer working well.

Culture both *acts on* and *is acted upon* in a change process. To make progress on a change initiative, an institution must operate paradoxically—that is, it must change its culture in ways that are congruent with its culture. If change strategies violate an institution’s cultural norms and standards, they will be seen as illegitimate and inappropriate, and in the end, they will be ineffective. Changing a culture while working within it may seem implausible, but institutions succeed at cultural change when they are reflective about how their campus culture shapes institutional life and use this insight in crafting strategies to change it in the desired direction.

To change a culture, leaders must gain an outsider’s perspective on their culture, for which they frequently need help (Schein, 1992). Newcomers have the advantage of bringing fresh eyes to the task. Some leaders find it helpful to invite sympathetic “outsiders” to describe the culture and to help

cultural “insiders” grasp what is occurring. Heifetz (1994) recommends that leaders “stand on the balcony” to get a view of the patterns from above. Participants in the ACE project gained such perspectives through reciprocal learning from a network of institutions and systematic institutional reflection. As part of the project, institutions worked with outside process consultants and forged linkages with other institutions. At the same time, many hired their own consultants, participated in other national projects, brought in new campus leaders, and engaged in cross-institutional exchanges and visits. Intentional reflection on what participants learned

Assessing Institutional Culture

Imagine a consultant or campus visitor responding to the following questions. If this exercise is done by a leadership team, respond individually and compare answers. Then ask these same questions of someone new to the institution or an outsider familiar with it.

1. List ten adjectives that describe the campus culture.
2. Describe major subcultures within the institution. To what extent could the same adjectives be used to describe the subcultures? What other adjectives might members of different subcultures use?
3. What are the implications of these answers for the change agenda and for the process to accomplish it?

through these means provided them with useful insights on their institutional culture.

Defining and Observing Institutional Culture

Culture is the “invisible glue” that holds institutions together by providing a common foundation and a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions. Institution-wide patterns of perceiving, thinking, and feeling; shared understandings; collective assumptions; and common interpretive frameworks are the ingredients of institutional culture (Kuh and Whitt, 1988; Schein, 1992).

In complex organizations such as colleges and universities, institutional culture may have a common central culture determined by its history or contemporary operational style, but it also may be strongly influenced by a collection of subcultures (Bergquist, 1992). Subcultures develop as a result of organizational differentiation—that is, the development of different units or structures that have different purposes (Schein, 1992). For example, a research center at a university may have a different culture from an academic department at the same institution, or different cultures may exist in art and chemistry departments.

When first hired, one college president asked senior faculty members to describe the institution’s culture. “I was told that they

couldn’t do it,” he said, “but when I violated it, they would sure let me know.” This example underscores the difficulty with understanding and working within one’s own culture. Because we are immersed in the institution’s culture, we often experience it as “the way things are” or “how we do things around here.”

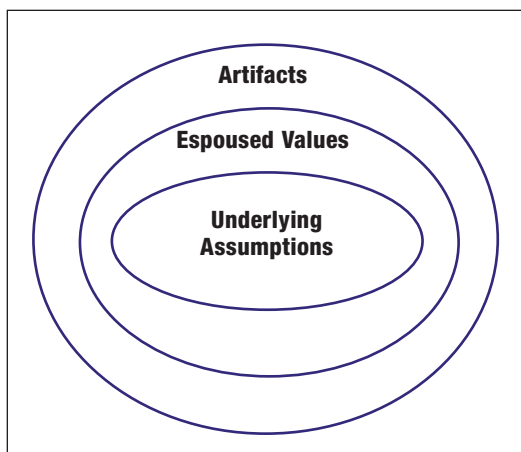
Understanding institutional culture is analogous to peeling away the many layers of an onion (Kuh and Whitt, 1988). The outer skins of the onion are the organization’s *artifacts*, the middle layers the *espoused values*, and the inner core the *underlying assumptions* (Schein, 1992).

Artifacts are those visible products, activities, and processes that form the landscape

What Do Artifacts Reveal?

A first step toward understanding one’s culture is to describe institutional artifacts (insider language, myths, stories, published mission, observable rituals, and ceremonies). This layer describes “what is happening.”

1. Ask someone new to the institution or an outsider (such as someone from another institution or someone on an accreditation team) to describe what his or her first impressions were of the institution based on its policies, practices, or language regarding certain aspects of institutional life (i.e., teaching and learning, faculty life, the student experience). What was the basis for these impressions?
2. Ask colleagues to describe past decision-making processes or what they learned about past changes efforts that were successful or unsuccessful.
3. Describe the rituals, ceremonies, and events that are important to the institution. What values do they express?
4. Ask outsiders what their “read” is of given issues. What are the clues informing their opinions?
5. Which of these artifacts reflect the institution’s stated values? Which do not?



Articulating Institutional Values

Although understanding one's culture is a complicated process, an easy place to begin is by talking about the institution's values. Values explain "why we are doing what we do." Choose artifacts mentioned above and ask, "Why is this so?" Attempt to elicit value statements.

1. What does this institution (or department or school) value?
2. Are some values more important than others? Which ones? Who would agree with these rankings? Who would disagree?
3. Are there instances where the "espoused values" seem at odds with the underlying assumptions or beliefs?

of the institutional culture. Examples of artifacts include insiders' language and terminology, myths and stories, published mission statements, observable rituals and ceremonies, reward structures, and communication channels.

Espoused values are the articulated beliefs about what is "good," what "works," and what is "right." For example, an institution might value promoting lifelong learning or developing future global citizens, faculty-student contact outside of class, or active learning over formal classroom activities.

At the inner core of organizational culture are the *underlying assumptions*. These are the deepest ingrained assumptions that have become rarely questioned, taken-for-granted beliefs. They are the most difficult to identify because only cultural insiders can truly understand them, even if they cannot readily articulate them.

Examples include such statements as: acquiring knowledge is more important than transmitting it; community welfare is more important than individual welfare; if it's not invented here, it will not work in our culture; or some disciplines are more influential than others.

Uncovering Culture

The key to peeling away layers to reach the underlying assumptions—the core of an organization's culture—is to view the three layers in relation to one another. If the espoused values and the underlying assumptions are congruent, the assumptions remain inconspicuous (Schein, 1992). The result is a firm cultural and attitudinal base for action. For example, an institution awards financial aid to international students (artifact) because it is intentional about being globally oriented (espoused value). The inconspicuous underlying assumption might be that international students are so valuable to a global institution that scarce resources must be spent to ensure their presence.

Artifacts and behaviors are explained both by espoused values and by underlying assumptions, but when inconsistencies exist between espoused values and underlying assumptions, the assumptions come to light and understanding these assumptions becomes more critical. In instances where certain decisions do not affect behaviors or changes do not stick, the values and assumptions underlying the actions may be inconsistent with them. In the following examples, the underlying assumptions are congruent with the artifacts and explain them, but they are incongruent with the espoused values. In other words, artifacts (what people do) match assumptions (what people truly believe), but not espoused values (what people profess to believe). Exploring inconsistencies helps reveal the underlying assumptions that may need to change.

- Two of the junior faculty who were recognized with outstanding teaching awards (artifact) did not receive tenure even though teaching is said to be important (espoused value). The explanation lies in the underlying assumption—that teaching is not as significant as other factors in the tenure process.

-
- A faculty senate committee produces a report (artifact) calling for “enhanced academic excellence” (espoused value) and echoing the goals in the strategic plan (artifact). When “weak” departments and programs are slated for elimination, faculty across campus protest because closing academic departments conflicts with their shared view that the campus is a “family”

Digging Deep: Uncovering Underlying Assumptions

The key to uncovering underlying assumptions is to determine if all the artifacts have been adequately explained by the espoused values, or if some of the artifacts are in conflict with the values stated.

1. What underlying assumptions support the change initiative?
2. Can conflicts between an espoused institutional value and the practices of various academic and/or administrative units or other artifacts be identified? How might these discrepancies be addressed?

and the family must stay together (underlying assumption).

Because underlying assumptions are so deeply a part of the organization, they are rarely identified or questioned. It is only when artifacts are not adequately explained by the espoused values, or when artifacts are in conflict with espoused values, that underlying assumptions become prominent. To put it another way, espoused values are publicly expressed values, or espoused theories, that we say guide our actions. Underlying assumptions, those that truly direct our actions, are really our theories-in-use (Argyris, 1993).

Changes that are not supported by underlying assumptions may have little impact and a short “shelf-life.” These incongruent changes also may have lasting negative effects, as their failures become ingrained in institutional memory. The success in making change “stick” is determined by the match between the proposed change and the institution’s underlying assumptions.