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# Addressing First-Year Retention Through Servant Leadership Guided Change at an Eastern Canadian University

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WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Addressing First-Year Retention Through Servant Leadership Guided Change at an  
Eastern Canadian University

By

David Owen Decker

AN ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

LONDON, ONTARIO

JULY, 2018

## STUDENT RETENTION OIP

“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing will get better. It will not.”

(Seuss, 1971, p. 62)

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For the leadership in the program, Dr. Elan Paulson, Dr. Scott Lowrey, Dr. Paula Brook, the support along the way has been exceptional. You answered my sometimes pedantic and neurotic emails with ease. Your guidance on this journey has not gone unnoticed. Thank you!

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### Abstract

Higher education institutions have long sought to understand and address the attrition of first-year students. This organizational improvement plan (OIP) addresses the high attrition rates for first-year students at a small university campus located in Eastern Canada. Situated within a multicampus university and in a part of the country experiencing declines in university-aged demographics, the campus faces challenges in both student recruitment and retention. The focus of this paper is on improving retention. This OIP begins by unpacking the political, economic, social, technological, and environmental factors that influence the campus as a way forward in analyzing the poor retention rates of first-year students. This analysis, in combination with publically available institutional data, is used as a point of departure in advancing a change plan to improve retention rates. Grounded in both key retention theory and leadership theory, this study provides a path forward that is led by servant leadership in creating change readiness and mobilizing the campus to improve retention. Through servant leadership guided change—and calling upon both appreciative and distributed leadership in operationalizing change—this work culminates in a comprehensive change plan that suggests faculty-based appreciative advising learning communities is the solution to poor attrition. The final change plan includes action planning, communication plans, and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the change solution.

Keywords: *appreciative advising, change path model, first-year, retention theory, servant leadership.*

## Executive Summary

This paper represents the collective major work undertaken throughout a doctor of education program. Investigating a problem of practice at an Eastern Canadian university—University of Eastern Canada—this paper deconstructs attributing factors in order to advance a solution to address its high attrition rates. Throughout this three-chapter organizational improvement plan, the reader will be led through a discussion of institutional context and the need for change, retention theory and leadership approaches to change, a discussion of solutions, and the change implementation plan.

Chapter 1 introduces the problem of practice to be examined. Throughout this chapter the reader is introduced to the various environmental factors that affect the problem of practice. After thoroughly examining the campus context, the chapter turns to retention theory, namely Tinto (1993) and Braxton et al. (2004; 2014), as a lens that can be used to further understand the retention problem. Guided by attributes in Braxton et al.'s theory of persistence on commuter colleges and universities, the change plan will focus on improving retention by paying specific attention to how students perceive *institutional integrity* and the institution's *commitment to student welfare*. Finally, Chapter 1 introduces servant leadership as an approach to begin the change process required to address campus retention.

Chapter 2 takes a close look at what and how change may be undertaken at UEC. This chapter specifies details of the change process on campus, utilizing Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols's (2016) *change path model* and Nadler and Tushman's (1980) *organizational congruence model*. These two models provide a mechanism for understanding what needs to change and how the change plan can be developed. This chapter further deconstructs the servant leadership approach to change and the potential solutions to improving retention at UEC. Three

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unique solutions to the retention problem are advanced including: a shift toward appreciative advising on campus; the development of faculty professional retention learning communities, and a shift in organizational structure. Finally, with a change solution selected—a blend of two solutions to develop a system of Appreciative Advising Professional Learning Communities—the chapter ends with a discussion on operationalizing change through appreciative and distributed leadership, leadership ethics and what is at stake should there be a failure to address the retention problem.

Chapter 3 outlines the steps required to implement, monitor and evaluate, as well as communicate the change plan. Serving effectively as an action plan, Chapter 3 breaks the change plan into two phases: planning and execution. Planning would follow the *awakening and mobilization* phase of the change path model and would extend beyond the recommendations in this document to include many of the logistics required to actualize this plan. Execution (*acceleration*) of this plan would require four main components: professional advisor training, formation of the Appreciative Advising Professional Learning Communities, training of faculty advisors, and delivery of academic advice under the new model. The implementation plan will be supplemented by both the monitoring and evaluation plan along with the communication plan. The former is concerned not only with the performance of the new academic advising system, but also in monitoring how closely the change plan has been adhered to throughout implementation. Finally, the communication plan outlines the steps required to guide change from *awakening* through to *institutionalization*.

The organizational improvement plan concludes with limitations of the study and recommendations for appreciative advising on campus, including using feedback and data to further enhance the student advising experience.

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### **Glossary of Key Acronyms**

**AA** – Appreciative Advising

**AID** – Academic and Intellectual Development

**AAPLC** – Appreciative Advising Professional Learning Community

**ICSW** – Institutional Commitment to Student Welfare

**II** – Institutional Integrity

**OIP** – Organizational Improvement Plan

**PAR** – Persistence, Attrition and Retention Data

**UEC** – University of Eastern Canada

## **Chapter One – Introduction and Problem**

### **Organizational Context**

Located in a blue-collar community in Eastern Canada, the University of Eastern Canada (UEC) is a small campus born out of the determination and grit of local politicians and businessmen who fought for a university campus. Facing opposition from both the provincial government and the leadership of nearby universities, the battle to establish the campus was challenged by questions of redundancy, effective use of tax dollars, and whether it was needed. Nevertheless, after a decade of lobbying, the institution opened as a feeder campus for a large provincial university. Today, UEC's connection to the local community remains strong, with 80% of approximately 3000 full-time students originating within a 30-minute drive (UEC, 2015). The dependence on local student populations, who live at home, makes UEC a commuter campus. Though UEC does have a dormitory residence, just 10% of students live on campus and have a typical residential university experience. Although it has humble roots as a small feeder campus, UEC has grown to become a full degree-granting institution. Today, while it remains part of a multicampus environment, and has characteristics often found at much larger institutions, the campus continues to display retention patterns like that of a feeder institution. This organizational improvement plan investigates the early departure of students who do not use UEC as a feeder campus and fail to persist at either campus.

### **Mission and Vision**

Evidenced by the governing documents, the focus of UEC is clearly its students. Today, UEC's institutional mission focuses on "providing an extraordinary education where the journey is characterized by a transformative experience that unlocks the innovative potential of the learner" (UEC, 2010). The vision statement centers on the values of "learning, community,

integrity, and excellence” (UEC, 2010). UEC’s strategic plan, while nearly a decade old, is grounded in a philosophy that the role of the university is centred on serving the community. Moreover, the institution’s stewardship role for student learning, research, and education in the province is embedded into the university’s guiding documents and form the basis for UEC’s operations. Students matter. Student retention is central to the goal of the university and is a measure of success for UEC.

### Organizational Structure

During the past half-century, the campus has undergone changes to its organizational structure and overall autonomy. A single university president represents three distinct campuses and reports to a single Board of Governors that oversees all university operations (see Figure 1.1). The UEC campus is led by a vice-president, associate vice-president, and is composed of five faculties. The organizational structure represents a traditional format with an academic dean responsible for each faculty. The faculties have a great range of freedom to create and modify academic programming through respective campus senates, within a bicameral university system (UEC, 2008).

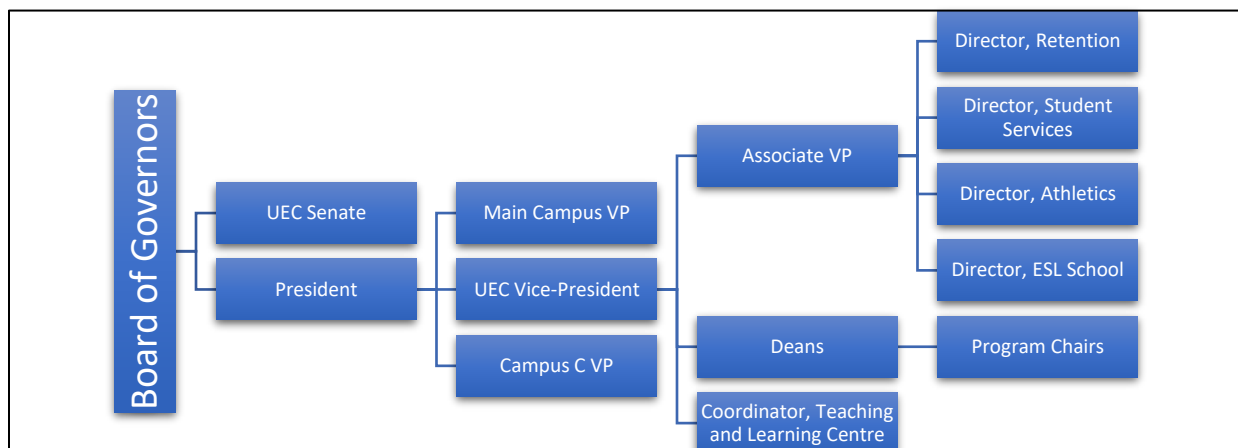


Figure 1.1. University of Eastern Canada Organizational Chart



Given the structural scaffold of the university, it is difficult to consider the UEC campus as a standalone entity. Centralized university services, such as the library and information technology systems, create an interdependent relationship between UEC and its larger campus counterpart as well as the smaller “campus C”. In this regard, while the Senate at UEC can make academic changes, some changes require additional assent from senate committees on other campuses, as the university utilizes a shared student information software system. Finally, while the academic freedom to make programming decisions exists on each campus, the Board of Governors ultimately has final decision-making authority on finance and resource allocation, which can serve to limit the scope of academic decision making.

### **Understanding University Hierarchy**

When considering organizational models, the university reflects a professional bureaucracy: It is divided into three campuses, each with faculties that have their “own local approach... [and are somewhat] insulated from formal interference” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p.79). Authority and responsibility are diffuse and represent a shared governance approach. This works well, as academic units are diverse and require processes that fit their needs. Similarly, when considering the operations of the UEC campus, a divisionalized model is prevalent— “the majority of work is done in quasi-autonomous units” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 80). An outcome of both models is that administration often struggles “when they try to exercise greater control over the operating core” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 80).

Internally, the UEC campus operations are a blend between stagnant bureaucracy and a headless giant (Bolman & Deal, 2013). As a stagnant bureaucracy—an older tradition-dominant organization—significant autonomy exists with individual faculty who are deeply entrenched in teaching and research. Like most faculty in academe, many at UEC hold a worldview that

grounds the institution in a European model of higher education—believing that a “liberal education, whose relevance to life extends beyond job qualifications... [and] prepares him, and later her, for citizenship” (Fuller, 2005, p. 32)—is a significant driving force for the academy. However, as a headless giant, UEC is a “loosely coupled, divisional organization... [that creates] an administrative core [that] is weak” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 87). The administrative core, while valuing the UEC’s educational mission, is also pulled in another direction: financial accountability. Administrators face significant pressure from the provincial government and board members to be more effective and efficient. These demands, over time, led to a shrinking campus workforce and reduced services. These changes have resulted in both minor and major labour disputes that have, consequently, led to some loss of trust in the leadership. The juxtaposition of priorities has created a tension in the working relationships among faculty, staff, and administration.

Understanding UEC’s organizational hierarchy and its inherent tensions are important when considering change. The stakeholders who compose its formal hierarchy are important in addressing retention. However, working within the formal structures alone will not be enough to effect change. Tensions that exist within the shared governance structure may create skepticism toward policies or practices that are handed down by administration through formal channels, even those designed with the best interests of students and the institution. Nevertheless, with student retention demanding attention, tackling the tension among stakeholders must be a focal point in any change plan. Riel and Martin (2017) suggested examining our assumptions to better understand “what [beliefs] we hold without consciously considering evidence to support or contradict it” (p. 127). The next section discusses the leadership problem of practice and offers

guiding questions required to address the tension on campus and create a solution to the retention issue.

### Leadership Problem of Practice

This organizational improvement plan advances a solution to improve the first to second-year undergraduate retention rates. Specifically, this problem of practice investigates the early departure of students who do not use UEC as a feeder campus and fail to persist at the university. For this work, Tinto's (2012) definition of retention is adopted: "the rate at which an institution retains and graduates students who first enter the institution as freshmen at a given point in time" (p.127). Although the provision of education is central to the mission of the UEC, longitudinal student retention rates demonstrate a gap between the mission of the institution and its current reality. In examining the publically available retention rates from 2004-2012, UEC posted an aggregate retention rate of 70.5% (UEC, 2014) amongst first year undergraduate students who entered the campus with no previous post-secondary experience (see Figure 1.2). It should be noted that students although current public data is not available, UECs retention rates have not improved.

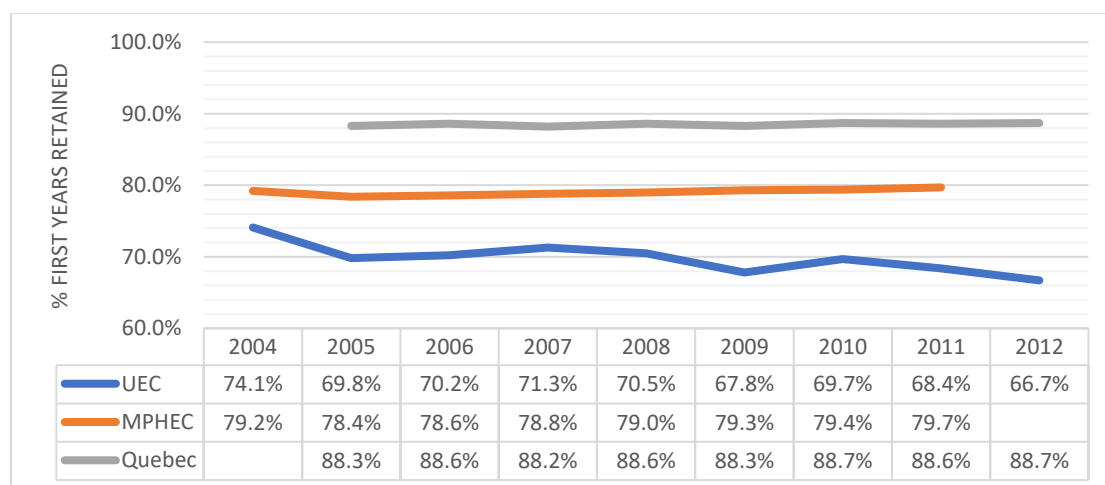


Figure 1.2 Comparative UEC and Industry Student Retention Rates

Source: *Education et Enseignement Superior (2017)*; *MPHEC (2015)*; *UEC Internal Data (2014)*.

Comparatively, government oversight organizations in Eastern Canada have posted aggregate retention rate across all universities that range between 80 - 90% higher (Education et Enseignement Superior, 2017; Maritime Province Higher Education Commission[MPHEC], 2015). Further, UECs first-year retention rate has trended downward in recent years, widening the gap between the campus and other institutions within the region. When students matriculate from year-one to year-two, and ultimately on to graduation, then an institution should display high retention rates, or at least near the industry averages. Grayson and Grayson (2003) report that the average institutional attrition rate in Canada after first year ranges from 20-25%. For UEC, however, that is not the case. UEC currently struggles to reduce student attrition to below 30%.

As a leadership problem, a significant gap in the responsibility and accountability for retention exists on campus. Currently, the campus employs a “retention as everyone’s responsibility” approach that has little formal support within campus organizational structures. While the role of all individuals on campus in supporting students cannot be refuted, this approach alone lacks coordination and, perhaps, even commitment. However, there is cause to be optimistic as the campus has hired a temporary director for retention programming. This position carries a broad and diverse portfolio. The issues with these tactics is the lack of a strategic approach to retention and a campus environment where dedication to retention is unstable—this creates difficulty in diagnosing the reasons for high levels of student attrition. With no specific cause for poor retention performance, the campus must examine its environment, context, programming and even leadership to holistically address the retention problem.

This organizational improvement plan outlines the challenges and opportunities of a campus with retention rates that fall below regional averages and is addressed from the contextual position of a mid-level institutional leader responsible for student enrolment. The problem of practice and solution presented are intended to improve retention by fostering a strategic campus approach to helping students succeed in transitioning from first to second-year of university studies.

### **Guiding Questions from the Problem of Practice**

This organizational improvement plan deconstructs the full scope of the campus contextual environment to address retention at UEC. As a way forward, there are three guiding questions. First, what does “success” mean for students at UEC? For this study, success is defined as the persistence of first-year students so they are retained into the second-year of academic studies. This definition is appropriate from an institutional perspective, as programs are typically designed with a clear pathway toward graduation. However, the number of students in good academic standing who depart UEC after completing their first-year studies may be an indication that for some students, the current goal may not be graduation. Instead, these students may be motivated by other reasons, such as earning partial credentials required for program entry at other institutions, beginning a program near home and later transferring to another institution, or gaining employment. An important part of this study focuses on current institutional research available at UEC which explores student intentions and how to better support students upon entry to the university. Using institutional research in tandem with retention data is an important step in benchmarking and fully unpacking the scope of UEC’s retention issues.

A second guiding question explores the demographics of the student population; specifically, to what extent do demographics and intentions impact retention? The city

surrounding UEC has high densities of low-income and first-generation students (Human Development Council, 2014). These demographic groups often arrive at university underprepared, require additional support, and typically display lower retention rates (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Moore & Shuluck, 2010; Tinto, 2012). To provide students a reasonable chance for success, institutions need to offer a deliberate set of programs, policies, and supports for underprepared learners. Without specific attention to academic intervention programs and support systems, vulnerable student populations will continue to display higher than average attrition rates. This question must address two specific lines of inquiry: What are the demographic characteristics of UEC's first year population; and, does the programs and services offered by UEC reflect the needs of its student population?

The third guiding question relates to the campus's leadership approach to student retention. As the point of departure, what is the current role, responsibility, and approach of leadership in guiding retention on campus? The second part to this question is understanding the steps needed to build capacity for retention initiatives on campus. When the dominant philosophy to retention is considered—an approach that treats retention as everyone's responsibility—how can leadership motivate individual involvement in a way that builds campus capacity to improve student retention?

### **Factors Affecting the Study**

A significant challenge in understanding the full scope of this problem is found in the context of the campus. UEC exists as one campus of a multicampus university. Students who attend UEC can move between campuses within the system without permission or formal process required by the institution. Because of these movement patterns, enrolment data must be carefully analyzed to understand retention patterns. To ensure that institutional and industry data

are comparable, UEC data on transferring students has not been included in this study. This is to say, the data utilized in this OIP only captures those students who have left UEC—they no longer attend UEC or any campus within its system. Understanding and acknowledging that institutional retention data is grounded in a multicampus context is critical. In Eastern Canada, most universities exist as single campus entities and report retention as such; failing to consider the data in this context will skew any conclusions.

This next section addresses each of the guiding questions through an analysis of the institutional history and a deeper analysis of organizational context. Later, a brief PESTE (political, economic, social, technological and environmental) analysis will further explore factors that the leadership of UEC must face when embracing the retention problem of practice.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

#### **Historical and Contemporary Data**

As noted earlier, UEC experiences an estimated 30% attrition rate from first to second year (See Figure 1.2). When compared to institutional data reported to government oversight organizations in Eastern Canada, universities, as an aggregate, report retention rates that are 10 - 20% higher than those reported at UEC (Education et Enseignement Superior, 2017; MPHEC, 2015). Further, UEC's first-year retention rate has trended downward in recent years, widening the performance gap seen between the campus and other institutions within the region. This downward trend (see Figure 1.2), in combination with an overall shrinking in the student body, demonstrates the importance of addressing retention. The next section discusses the characteristics of the first-year class and how that may impact retention.

### **Who Makes Up the First-Year Class?**

UEC administers a student survey every September to new first-year students. Data are weighted to reflect demographic characteristics. The 2016 data reveal that the cohort is 65% female, 87% are under the age of 19, with 22% reporting age 17 or younger (UEC, 2016). Nearly 90% of students are from the province, of which 70% form a sub-group from the area immediately surrounding campus. With a large percentage coming from the local catchment area, this creates a situation where 85% of students live within a 30-minute drive of campus. The pattern for each of these trends (gender, age, living arrangement) has persisted in each of the past three years. To further understand how the cohort may impact retention efforts, student intentions and their generational experience with higher education must be considered.

**Student academic intentions.** In most circumstances, it is safe to assume that students who attend a post-secondary institution intend to eventually graduate. UEC, however, is situated in a multicampus environment where students can transfer seamlessly to another campus. Survey data revealed 60-65% of respondents intend to graduate from the UEC campus (UEC, 2016); others intend to transfer (20%); some are undecided about their plans (15-20%). The latter non-committal group is where efforts to improve retention may yield results—where the campus can help students identify and achieve their academic goals—and retain them. Data also revealed that 40% of students had “definitely decided” on a career path, that 40% had a general idea, and 15% had no idea. UEC has an opportunity to improve retention by addressing noncommittal and career plan indecisiveness amongst its first-year cohort by helping these students identify programs at UEC that may fit their needs.

**First generation students.** In addition to academic intentions, UEC must consider family factors influencing student retention. Students who are the first in their family to enter



higher education institutions are considered first-generation. These students have little preparation in what is to be expected. Further, they often lack a support network in the home, extended family, or community that can help understand and cope with the adaptation and integration to a university community. Researchers have indicated that first generation students are at increased risk to drop-out or stop-out of higher education prior to degree attainment (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Moore & Shuluck, 2010; Tinto, 2012). At UEC, between 50-60% of students identify that they do not have a parent or sibling in their household who has attended university (UEC, 2016).

Considering the vulnerability of this first-generation sub-group, the indecision that surrounds academic intentions for many students, and the demographic information discussed earlier, it is critical that UEC provides appropriate support for the first-year class if retention is to improve.

### **Recent Approaches to Retention**

UEC has used institutional retention data, data on student demographics, and intentions as a catalyst for action. In the last seven years, the campus has dedicated resources to addressing retention issues: hired a director for retention programming, hired a persistence officer, and initiated various programs which have modestly improved retention. These programs include learning communities, for-credit introduction to university seminars, and an early alert system to flag students who are potentially at risk. These initiatives are intended to help support students who are at risk of dismissal for academic reasons and those who require extra help in adjusting to university-level studies. The framework that guides each of these support programs takes the position that through improved academic support, the campus can improve student retention. These supports, while producing modest results, are isolated actions designed without an overall

retention strategy, lack leadership support, and led to low levels of buy-in amongst campus stakeholders. This is problematic as any retention strategy designed to make notable improvements will require campus-level or a system-level buy-in to be truly effective.

The work of Vincent Tinto (1993) and John Braxton et al. (2004; 2014) is next considered in understanding the importance of stakeholder buy-in and institutional commitment in addressing retention. The theories presented deconstruct student retention based on external factors, internal factors, and individual student motivation.

### **Models of Retention Theory**

From an institutional position, tackling the issues of student persistence and success are best understood through a lens of institutional retention. As stated earlier, Tinto's (2012) definition of retention is used in this study: "...the rate at which an institution retains and graduates students who first enter the institution as a freshman at a given point in time" (p. 127). This definition provides the institution with agency to improve retention. Thus far, UEC's work has focused on improving student supports—acknowledging their needs. However, student need is just one variable that must be understood in the retention formula. To fully understand retention, both Tinto's theory of institutional departure and the Braxton et al. (2014) theory of student persistence is considered.

#### **Tinto's Theory of Institutional Departure**

Tinto's original work is foundational and paradigmatic in the study of student retention in higher education (Braxton et al., 2004). His research, situated in a single institution environment, has been cited and investigated frequently. Tinto (1993) likened student departure from higher education as a symptom of failing to integrate "the values and norms of the community into his or her own value system" (p. 160). If a student is unable to integrate into the

academic and social environment of higher education, he/she is more likely to depart prematurely. More specifically, by examining retention in this way, Tinto viewed external factors as the driving force for student retention: namely, one's membership in a university community.

This theory of institutional departure focuses on the idea that pre-entry characteristics, in combination with student intention and commitment, are inputs for a higher education system. Specifically, once admitted and attending an institution, the academic and social support systems—in combination with motivation factors—affect one's ability to integrate with the new environment. A student's level of motivation, subsequent intentions and commitment to the institution (e.g., engagement) will lead to either retention or departure. This represents the entirety of a student's experience.

Tinto's theory focuses on two sets of factors: student and institutional. The student set includes *entry characteristics, initial commitment to the institution, academic integration, social integration, and subsequent commitment to the institution* (Tinto, 1975). Institutional elements focus on how the *academic* and *social* environments of the campus support student *integration*. These two factors recognize both student and institutional autonomy and the active role each plays in influencing student persistence. Without acknowledging the institution's active role in student success, the campus is relegated to the role of passive education provider.

**Problems with Tinto's theory.** Tinto's research was at a four-year residential university. For UEC, this is problematic for two reasons: First, as a commuter campus, students do not experience the same reality as those who live on campus. Commuter campuses tend to lack the ability to create the diverse and interactive community observed on residential campuses (Braxton et al., 2014). Second, UEC is one of three campuses in a multicampus university.

Thus, some departure is expected, as students move toward degree programs only offered on the larger campus. In fact, 20% of new students indicate their intentions to transfer to another campus at the end of their first year (UEC, 2017). However, these departures are not included in attrition data, as the students who remain within the university system—but on another campus—are not truly lost. While Tinto recognized that student intentions are an important input, he depicts departure as a failure of the institution and a deficit that must be corrected or overcome. For UEC, a student departing to complete a program on another campus is understood as a success of the campus and an indicator of students' success in achieving an initial goal. UEC's retention problem—and this OIP—is only concerned with students who depart the university system altogether.

### **Braxton's Theory of Student Persistence on Commuter Colleges and Universities**

While much of Tinto's work remains useful in the study of retention in higher education, it lacks specificity for UEC. The work of Braxton et al. (2014) on persistence on commuter colleges and universities builds on Tinto's research. Originally developed in 2004, the student persistence theory focuses on six attributes that lead to student persistence. Much like Tinto's research, this theory and model includes *student entry characteristics*, *initial commitment*, and *subsequent commitment to the institution*. It is important to note that both theories place a great deal of emphasis on entry characteristics and external factors, such as socioeconomic demographics. While these characteristics cannot be ignored, institutions often have few methods to control for them. George Kuh (2016) stated that "institutions cannot directly address the [socioeconomic] factors, but they can help faculty and staff become sensitive to students with these characteristics" (p.51). While entry characteristics cannot be controlled, nor should they be dismissed, the leadership approach advanced later in this chapter will provide a means to

acknowledge and understand how these attributes impact retention. Instead, as illustrated in Figure 1.3, institutions must concern themselves with their own organizational characteristics and how these impact student academic and intellectual development. In the Braxton et al. model there is a notable shift from a concern with Tinto's concept of *academic integration* to that of *academic and intellectual development (AID)*.

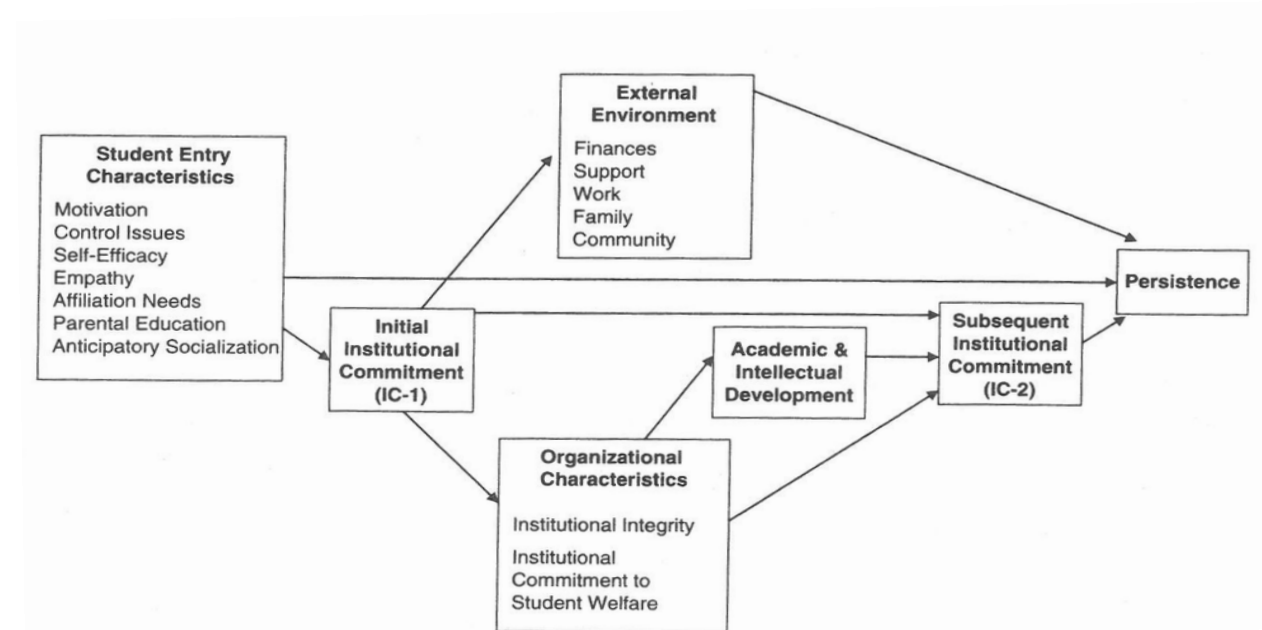


Figure 1.3. Theory of Student Persistence in Commuter Colleges and Universities

From Braxton et al., 2014, p. 111. *Reprinted with permission.*<sup>1</sup>

While the change may appear subtle, the shift to include AID focuses on “student perceptions of their intellectual growth and development and... [not as seen in Tinto’s academic integration] a student’s perception of their congruence with attitude and values of the academic communities of the institution” (Braxton et al., 2014, p. 118). This shifts the locus of control and

<sup>1</sup> From *Rethinking College Student Retention* by J.M. Braxton, W.R. Doyle, H.V. Hartley III, A.S. Hirschy, W.A. Jones, & M.K. McLendon, 2014, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2014 by Jossey-Bass. Reprinted with permission of author.

is an acknowledgement that motivation is driven by internal factors such as academic goals versus external factors such as integration and community membership associated with Tinto's earlier model.

Another significant difference between the Braxton et al. (2014) model and Tinto's (1975) model is the noticeable absence of social integration. Social integration is the "perception of one's degree of social affiliation with others and the degree of congruency with the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the social community of the ... university" (Braxton et al., 2014, p. 139-140). However, this theory removes social integration entirely, as commuter students spend little time on out-of-class activities while attending university. Tinto (1993) noted that a "lack of time and therefore of contact with persons on campus is a serious problem" (p.164): students need to be integrated with social and academic environments; otherwise, they depart. This does not take into account student goals and intentions—a core piece of Tinto's theory. If students have other obligations such as work or family, the appeal of attending class briefly and subsequently returning to their regular routine may be the exact experience they are seeking. In recognizing that student experience at a commuter campus is more about individual goals and experiences, the idea that motivation is internally driven versus externally controlled must be examined.

With social integration discounted to a lesser role, the leadership of a commuter campus must therefore focus on supporting the AID of a student. Braxton et al. (2014) described *institutional integrity* and *institutional commitment to student welfare* as key organizational factors for retention. *Institutional integrity* "manifests itself when a ... university remains true to its espoused mission and goals" (Braxton et al., 2014, p. 88) while *institutional commitment to student welfare* is "[a]n abiding concern for the growth and development of its students" (p. 86). These traits, and perception of the fulfillment of these traits, can impact student commitment,

AID, and retention. Importantly, while social integration is not a dominant factor of concern, Braxton et al. found that students who perceive *institutional commitment to student welfare* and *institutional integrity* highly will subsequently exhibit higher levels of social integration. The importance of these two organizational characteristics are foundational to this organizational improvement plan (OIP), since “when students sense their campus is meeting their academic needs through study and academic skills programs... they are more satisfied and tend to participate in various educationally purposeful activities at higher levels” (Kuh, 2016, p. 51).

With importance placed on student perception of the *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare*, a closer examination of UEC’s internal and external environment is required. Each of the political, economic, social and technological frames of UEC play a role in how both leadership and students view the campus. While a PESTE analysis normally includes an examination of the environment, this has been purposefully omitted, as organizational context was considered earlier in this chapter. The next section provides the results of a brief PESTE analysis and how it may impact the retention problem.

### **Political, Economic, Social and Technological Frames**

#### **Political Frame**

The political frame for this OIP centers on the integration of economic factors and government relations with the universities. The province in which UEC is located has faced a growing deficit over the last decade. This deficit has grown to \$8.2 billion or 24.7% of nominal GDP (Murrell & Fantauzzo, 2014). With pressure to provide economic outcomes for the entire population, significant funding being funneled toward the higher education sector creates a conflict for government that needs to demonstrate accountability to every voter. In working toward the outcomes of the population, the government has an interest in managing the

universities and their leadership. While acts of legislation protect the autonomy of the university, the government has been able to exert some control through both reductions in operating grants as well as tying funding to performance in metrics suited for higher education. It is under this umbrella that improved graduation rates have been identified as a metric of success (Government of X province, 2015). Here, a tension between government and university agenda is better understood.

Even though the government still funnels significant funding to higher education, it has not kept pace with inflation. The government has also placed the university system in the province under a tuition freeze, while at the same time restricting growth in the institutional operating grant. This has created a multi-year institutional deficit that has exerted force on university leadership to reduce spending and become creative in funding solutions. The decrease in revenue has forced administrators to turn their attention from students, research, and advancing knowledge, to that of balance sheets, metrics, and quality assurance. It is through the tactics of tight control of operating grants, focus on metrics, and quality assurance that governments can further influence higher education leaders. As the educational leadership shifts to align itself with that of government intent, the leadership approach itself becomes a tactic of governmentality. Governmentality is the “rationalization and systemization of a particular way of exercising political sovereignty through the governing of people’s conduct” (Niesche, 2014, p. 144). This is to say, through restricting operating grants and applying performance metrics, the leadership at the university has become complicit with government and works to ensure the university functions within the framework provided rather than actively lobbying government to effectively resource the institution. Leadership of the university, in a sense, has become more centred on financial accountability than students’ success.



## Economic Frame

In examining the economic picture of the UEC campus, the entire university system must be considered. Institutionally, the university receives about 60% of its operating revenue from the provincial government. The remaining operating revenue is made up of tuition revenue and other revenue—which can be broken down to 36% and 4% respectively. As a campus, public governance documents illustrate that the distribution of provincial operating funds is calculated using a grant formula that divides the operating grant among campuses based on their respective weighted full-time equivalent enrolments. Despite this formula being uniformly applied across campuses, the UEC campus receives less than 50% of its campus budget from the provincial operating budget. This means the campus relies more heavily on student tuition and external revenue sources than other higher education institutions in the region (UEC governance document, 2007). This is problematic, as when examining the changes in full-time students (see Table 1.1) over the past five years, the decline in enrolment has also contributed to reduced tuition revenue.

Table 1.1

### *UEC Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Enrolment Change over Five-Year Period*

Academic Year	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018 (forecasted)
Student Enrolment*	2954	2768	2749	2700	2683
% Change over previous year	-	-6.2%	-0.7%	-1.7%	-0.6%

Source: University of Eastern Canada. (2016). Enrolment reports.

\*Data perturbed to provide anonymization of institution; however, reflects real enrolment patterns.

With full-time undergraduate enrolment declining, the retention of students is becoming more important to UEC's financial situation. While UEC has been able to offset some enrolment

decline through budgetary control, reductions in operating revenue and a tuition freeze have placed stress on the institution. There are two realities from this financial outlook that affect this problem of practice: first, improving retention can improve the enrolment and therefore the financial situation; and, second, paradoxically the availability of financial resources to supplement a retention strategy will be difficult to achieve. It will be the role of the change agent to advocate for financial resources if the solution to UEC's retention problem cannot be executed under current conditions.

### **Social Frame**

In addition to the demographic characteristics previously noted, UEC's retention may also be affected by the presence of a large volume of low-income students. An examination of the demographic population of the campus's main catchment area reveals many low-income families living near or below the poverty line. The municipality around UEC has led, or has tied with, the City of Toronto for the nation's highest childhood poverty rates (Human Development Council, 2014). To address student retention, the prevalence of low-income families and students must be considered when delivering education; students who are either first-generation, or originate in low income families, typically display higher attrition than average undergraduate students and therefore require additional support (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Moore & Shuluck, 2010; Tinto, 2012). Students from a first-generation or low-income family are vulnerable to weaknesses in the university's support system. These weaknesses present a risk that the institution may be failing in one or both characteristics important to student AID and their subsequent institutional commitment. To provide students a reasonable chance for success, UEC needs to be deliberate in the design and delivery of programs, policies, and supports for vulnerable learners. Without specific attention to academic intervention programs and support

systems, vulnerable student populations will continue to display higher than average attrition rates. This attrition may not be attributed to a student's ability to perform in higher education but rather to the perception the university is not fulfilling its commitments to support learning.

### **Technological Frame**

When considering how technology impacts UEC's retention problem, an examination of the institutional student information system (SIS) and caseload management system is necessary. UEC, like many institutions, employs a student information system capable of creating and managing student records. As an output, data within the system can be exported and manipulated to understand student enrolment and retention patterns. Over time, UEC has created in-house customizations for its SIS. These customizations have allowed the university to make the system more usable without the purchase of costly enterprise level SIS add-ons. Problematic with the customizations, however, are that over time, they have restricted the institution's ability to upgrade and take advantage of the full capabilities of the SIS. The largest consequence, as it relates to this problem of practice, is that it has restricted the purchase of a caseload management system. Without a caseload management system, identifying and following up with students who are potentially at-risk is a challenge. From a student perspective, the lack of a caseload management system creates an environment where the campus appears disorganized. Palmer (2002) noted that the academic environment "is a culture infamous for fragmentation, isolation, and competitive individualism—a culture in which community sometimes feel 'harder to come by' than in other institutions" (p. 179). The lack of a systematic approach to student records creates the appearance of disorganization: a student may move from department to department, continually re-introduce staff to his/her unique issues, and may receive poor or even contradictory information due to an inability to document interactions. Again, this is a problem,

as students may believe the campus is failing to meet its obligations to them—negatively impacting perceptions of the Braxton et al. (2014) theorized factors of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare*.

To partially overcome this challenge, the campus currently employs an email account that is used as a catch-all dropbox. Faculty can email the names of students who are potentially at-risk to this email account and a staff person responsible for collating information will forward the names to the appropriate advisor. While the campus has been able to overcome technological challenges with manual work-arounds, there are significant gains in retention to be made if a caseload management system could be successfully adapted. The gain is not only in improved provision of services to students, but also the improved optics when all staff are informed and have current information.

The next section considers a leadership-focused vision for change. This section bridges the gap between current campus environment and, considering the contextual discussion, creates an envisioned campus environment where retention gaps have been addressed.

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

As noted, UEC has long placed the learner at the center of operations. When the campus first opened in the 1950s, the vision was to provide a place where young people from the community could pursue a university education. The goal is still the same today—to provide an option where students can earn their degrees in their home community. Currently, for 30% of the first-year class, the goal of obtaining a university degree at UEC will go unmet, as they will fail to move from first to second-year of university studies. Although a multicampus institution and some transfer occurs between campuses, this 30% does not continue or transfer to any other campus within the university system and it is not known if they enrol at other higher education

institutions. Further, it is worth noting that the majority of departing students remain in good academic standing and are capable to continue. UEC must address this unique sub-demographic to ensure success for all students who enter the institution.

### **Priorities for Change**

As mentioned previously, UEC has already developed several initiatives to improve retention. These initiatives, while posting modest results, were developed in isolation of one another. Characteristic of these is that they have, quite often, been developed by administration or small working groups, and handed down to the campus operating staff for implementation. This transactional form of governance has led to a campus environment where faculty, who have much to offer, feel left out. To meet the needs of *all* students, UEC's leadership must address this challenge to improve stakeholder buy-in. Academic support development must be approached in a way that builds community and focuses on the goal of student support. Under the current environment, faculty and administration are often at odds. Faculty believe administration's focus on the bottom-line—instead of academic goals—has led to poor academic supports and, therefore, poor retention. Many faculty see this as a distraction for administration and any retention initiatives as a gimmick developed only to protect the bottom-line. For administration to overcome this, trust must be established amongst campus stakeholders.

Servant leadership is key to building this trust:

when servant leaders put followers' needs and interests above those of themselves, maintain consistency between words and deeds, engage in moral dialogue with followers, and instill a sense of purpose and meaning in followers, they accumulate the trust of followers. (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010, p. 647)

To begin this process, UEC leaders must prioritize the inclusive development of academic supports: each stakeholder group (e.g., staff, faculty, teaching committees) must feel it has an equal and active role in supporting students. To do otherwise may doom the change to failure;

initiatives single-handedly dictated from administration may be viewed with skepticism. The approach to supporting students and improving retention, much like the approach and tenacity in creating the campus itself, must be collaborative and centered on the student. For this to work, the administration and the change agent must examine their leadership approach and consider servant leadership as a means to build trust with faculty and staff.

Capitalizing on the small nature of the campus, UEC can become a campus where *all* students fulfill their goals of earning an undergraduate degree. A second priority for leadership must be in improved communication. The current campus environment is, like many higher education institutions', departmentalized and fragmented. The administration, faculty, and support staff form unique groups on campus where common affiliation and trust are held. The campus can also be divided into silos, where information is held and circulated. These groups, however organized, lack integration across all stakeholders. This leads to difficulty in building capacity for retention initiatives, as information flow is problematic. This has led to situations where the full range of services, programs, and policies being offered are not well-understood or communicated from one department to another. To address retention, and to build trust, better communication is mandatory. Communication is not only about "a method to convey a message but also a way to create the message" (Letimäki, 2017, p.156). UEC, through improved communication, can not only better inform its stakeholders, but also mitigate perceived, or real, transparency issues.

Utilizing campus champions and developing networks of stakeholders who work together to sustain support programs and services is essential for each of these priorities and for improving retention. With institutional retention data as a guiding metric, UEC can bring the community together to design initiatives that provide holistic academic interventions. This, in a

sense, is building on the idea that ‘it takes a village’. To mobilize this village, the change agent must avail of change drivers on campus.

### **UEC’s Drivers of Change**

While the formal authority and power on campus exists in the organizational hierarchy, there are several committees that possess informal power which will be important to operationalizing change. The power held by these groups varies in both strength and form. Further, many of these informal committees also have indirect access to direct power through their chairs or team leaders, who often hold positions within the formal hierarchy. The three informal organizations at UEC discussed in this organizational improvement plan are: *Learning Together Committee*; *Learner Experience Committee*; and the *Strategic Enrolment Management Committee*.

**UEC’s Learning Together Committee.** Co-chaired by faculty members, the work of the Learning Together (LT) Committee is to provide teaching and learning support to faculty. The LT committee provides direction to the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) coordinator as well as acts as an authority on matters involving pedagogy and teaching. The LT committee has little formal structure and is composed of a core set of faculty with expertise in teaching as well as a set of—ever-changing and diverse—sessional instructors who teach part-time on campus. It also includes a small number of executive and non-teaching academic support staff. Both the agenda and the work of the LT committee are conducted using a system that loosely follow the principles of Robert’s Rules of Order (Robert, Robert, & Robert, 2000). While the committee exists as an informal structure, there are three specific ways in which it can effect change: expert power; referent power; and indirect power of various committee members. The first, expert power, is found in the amassed knowledge of the committee on matters revolving around

teaching. This form of power lends itself to providing credibility when working in more formal contexts where expertise is valued. The second type of power, referent, is found in the membership of the committee. Many members hold a great deal of respect amongst their faculty peers on campus. The ability to enter conversations about change, and be taken seriously, is critical when working at the faculty level. The last form of power, indirect, is the direct power and influence that several of the committee members hold as a part of their roles on campus. With the support of various members, change that originates in the LT committee can also be “rolled out” in more formal areas of the campus hierarchy. Membership includes the campus associate vice-president, director for retention programming, and the TLC coordinator. Each of these positions has direct authoritative power—the ability to influence those with the power to make decisions.

While the committee is driven by supporting a collaborative teaching and learning environment, the connection to student retention cannot be denied:

Nowhere is collaboration more important than in the classroom and, therefore, among faculty and between faculty and staff. It is the key to constructing classrooms that fully engage students in learning, provide support for learning, and connect students to other services that promote their success. (Tinto, 2012, p. 112)

The work of the LT committee is undoubtedly tied to retention on campus and will be important to operationalizing change.

**Learner Engagement Committee.** The Learner Engagement Committee (LEC) is composed of deans, mid-level managers, and front-line operational level staff. The work of this committee is to break down communication barriers to create and maintain an open dialogue across units that often work in silos. Because the LEC’s goal is to improve communication among units, the campus can begin a “systems” approach to the business of providing students with a quality educational experience. There is no formal or informal authority that rests with



the LEC. Instead, its work is intended to help identify and troubleshoot problems that may exist across more than one department. In identifying these problems, the committee co-chairs (the associate vice-president and the director of retention programming) provide support and logistical coordination in addressing campus problems that affect the student experience and student success. Further, the concerns of the committee can help illustrate how change impacts the campus and be used to provide direction in planning.

**Strategic Enrolment Committee.** The Strategic Enrolment Committee (SEC) is a group of senior administrators, deans, and other decision makers on campus. It provides oversight and direction for all enrolment planning on campus. This committee, co-chaired by both the associate vice-president and the director for retention programming, serves as a conduit to respond to issues and problems identified by the LEC. This SEC committee contains a great deal of indirect power through its membership. While the committee does not conduct votes or issue directives, any policy or issue identified can be addressed through the formal departmental authority that rests with individual members of the committee. The SEC is critical in advancing change on campus that will require the formal adoption by complete units or departments.

### **Positioning Myself in the Organization**

My position, director for retention programming, intersects the work of faculty, staff, and administration. It is my responsibility to plan and execute student retention and success programming that creates the catalyst for a close interaction among various campus stakeholder groups. My role as a middle manager at UEC provides me the opportunity to network with faculty and staff in a collegial manner, lends me the ear of senior administration, and facilitates my influence of campus change through referent power. Using the networks and aforementioned committees at my disposal, I can affect both anticipatory and reactive change. It is my role and

responsibilities that give me the role as “*change agent*” for this plan on campus. Through “small, relatively minor changes made on an ongoing basis in a deliberate attempt to improve efficiency” (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016, p. 22), the campus can address its retention problem with minimal demand for new resources. This OIP presents the analysis and solution to change on campus that I will advance in the role as change agent.

As teaching and learning are key to improved retention, working closely with faculty and the Learning Together Committee to develop intervention programming and academic supports is critical. During the first years in my role, the pre-existing relationship between administration and faculty created a barrier for advancing any initiative. As a newcomer to campus, and an addition to the administrative staff complement, establishing a working relationship with faculty meant proving my focus was on supporting teaching and learning. Overcoming relationship issues necessitated persistent communication and persuasion that my focus was on the learner. Likewise, this problem of practice requires a strong partnership among campus stakeholders—a prerequisite of which requires building trust, strengthening relationships, and creating campus partnerships that are centred on helping students. This approach works to overcome the tensions and bridge the gap between faculty and administrative perspectives. As the change agent, I must build a collaborative and sustainable approach to support services and policies that centers on serving the student.

**Servant leadership.** The contextual characteristics discussed earlier advocate and support servant leadership as the framework to address this problem of practice. Servant leadership focuses on the follower and on building community. It emphasizes “follower empowerment and development, exhibit[s] ethical and moral behavior, and put[s] the ‘greater good’ above their own self-interest” (Kiersch & Peters, 2017, p. 154). In past situations, some

faculty stakeholders have resisted new initiatives. This resistance is based on a default position that resistance is needed to protect the best interest of students. The application of servant leadership in this situation is a pragmatic one, because when serving the student becomes a common positioning, those who are most resistant become allies instead of enemies. A central tenet behind servant leadership is that through its practice, others too will want to serve. By espousing a servant leadership approach, I will be able to call on others to serve students first. For each stakeholder, placing the greater good of students above self-interest helps the campus realize a full education for all students. However, this alone is not enough. Greenleaf (1996) suggests that servant leadership must be concerned both conceptualizing and operationalization.

To operationalize servant leadership the leader can call upon a number of attributes that need to be manifested in daily interactions on campus. Servant leadership ascribes its core attributes as “listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building communities” (Crippen, 2005, p. 5). In a review of literature, Russell and Stone (2002) also determine that there are both functional and accompanying attributes of servant leadership. The attributes of servant leadership they describe also includes “modelling, pioneering, and stewardship” (p.147). Regardless of the composition of key attributes, the attention paid to serving the follower is why servant leadership—and its connection to building trust—is suited to this organizational improvement plan. In particular, three of these attributes are central to being an agent of change for the UEC community: “stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and community building” (Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 82). Operationalizing servant leadership—and these attributes—requires the additional support of distributed and appreciative leadership approaches. While the

change plan itself will be guided by servant leadership, it will require the focus of the entire campus community to help vulnerable students and create change.

The diversity of attributes that are often ascribed to servant leadership are not coincidental. Servant leadership, as a practice, remains poorly understood and defined with respect to empirical evidence. Despite its use going back centuries (Joseph & Winston, 2005), it was only formally defined in the 1977 by Robert Greenleaf. Today, while empirical support remains scarce, some evidence does exist. Joseph and Winston (2005) found strong correlations between servant leadership and organizational trust. Further, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) found that “altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship to be conceptually and empirically distinct attributes of the practice” (p.318). This, and considerable volumes of academic literature documenting servant leadership, has led to the decision that there is a low risk in advancing servant leadership as the approach to leading retention improvement at UEC: Servant leadership is key to addressing the needs of students.

Students need the attention of both change agents and campus stakeholders alike; the change agents and campus leaders must “function as a community [of servant leaders] that views the growth of its members as foundational” (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 9). Encouraging the development of servant leadership across stakeholders allows the campus to work together to address barriers to retention and examine pathways to student educational goal attainment. Servant leadership, informed by constructivism, allows campus stakeholders to work together to help students achieve their goals and subsequently help UEC improve retention.

**Constructivism and servant leadership.** For UEC’s first-year students who face steep challenges in higher education, a constructivist theory informs the servant leadership approach. As noted above, entry characteristics play an important role in student retention. It is also noted

that institutions have little formal control over these attributes. Constructivism is an approach to education that acknowledges that “students construct meaning from personal values, beliefs, and experiences” (Lambert et al., 1995, p.9)—including their external environment. Both Braxton (2014) and Tinto (1993) place importance on pre-education experiences and the role they play in student persistence. It is fitting that constructivism—best described as “a window into deeper questions about the makeup of the student” (Xyst, 2016, p.11)—informs servant leadership. Therefore, when employed through a servant leadership lens, a constructivist approach helps a change agent understand “the role played by the environment and the interaction between the learners” (Schcolnik, Kol, & Abarbanel, 2006, p. 13).

Because the community surrounding UEC contains many first generation and low-income families, the reality for many students is one of underpreparedness. Academic stakeholders must go beyond traditional levels of campus support to help these learners overcome barriers created by their home environments and education backgrounds. Also, lack of familiarity with a university environment demands a greater effort by UEC to help students accommodate the new experience “into their existing cognitive schemas” (Schcolnik et al., 2006, p. 13). Servant leadership theory, with a constructivist approach, must focus on student needs and the environmental conditions that affect their learning.

The final section of Chapter 1 will provide a brief analysis of UEC’s readiness for change. This readiness and the steps needed to prepare for change will be examined using Judge and Douglas’s (2009) eight dimensions for organizational change capacity.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

UEC has opportunities and challenges in moving toward a position of change readiness. As identified earlier, the biggest challenge may be the need for a shift in campus leadership

vision and commitment. Leadership's current focus on financial shortfalls has had detrimental effects on the ability to build trust. While the campus faces challenges, there are reasons to be optimistic. Recent retention efforts have created a shift toward better communication and systems thinking. This has decreased the vertical distance between senior leadership and the operating core. For UEC, a substantial step towards change readiness needs to be the continued strengthening of leadership focus on student success. To understand change readiness, Judge and Douglas's (2009) organizational capacity for change (OCC) scale is considered. This scale has been chosen for its ability to help understand eight dimensions of change in an institution:

1. Trustworthy leadership;
2. Trusting followers;
3. Capable champions;
4. Involved middle management;
5. Innovative culture;
6. Accountable culture;
7. Effective communication; and
8. Systems thinking. (p. 638)

The OCC scale has also been selected for two reasons: first, the positive relationship between "an organization's capacity for change [and] its ability to adapt to environmental changes" (Judge and Douglas, 2009, p.642); and second, it has also been selected because of the strength between the eight dimensions of change and the attributes often ascribed to servant leaders. To understand UEC's readiness for change, the director for retention programming has considered each of the 32 items in the OCC scale in this analysis (see Appendix A). Using a positive, unsure/sometimes, or negative response, the director considered UEC's contextual environment to better gauge organizational change readiness. The following discussion groups these eight dimensions of change as they relate to the director's responses to the OCC scale when considering this retention problem of practice. Each of the following sheds light on the ability of the campus to both accept and adapt to change.

### **Trustworthy Leadership, Trusting Followers and Capable Champions**

In the current state, the trustworthiness of leadership is questionable. Three of the four questions in the OCC scale related to trustworthiness resulted in an “unsure” response—a result of leadership’s lack of vision for student success and retention. Instead, leadership has been focused almost solely on the financial well-being of the institution—decisions to date mostly ignore retention in favor of recruitment. This focus, in recent years, has led to investments in recruitment and marketing that have occurred in tandem with a series of budget and staffing cuts for current students, and illustrate a perceived lack of attention in supporting students. This has created the biggest challenges the campus may face—creating trust amongst followers. The root of this breakdown in trust is a believed difference of focus between administration and the operating core. If leadership is to build trust with the operating core, they will need to find middle ground between the two groups. Instead of being solely focused on balancing books, the emphasis must also include students.

The leadership team must also strategically shift tone and become more positive and forward-looking. To do this, the vertical distance between both middle management and the operating core needs to be shortened. The OCC scale responses indicated a positive response to both middle management’s “commitment to organizational well-being” and all eight questions related to the change champions in the OCC survey resulted in a positive response. This serves as evidence that leadership needs to take advantage of middle management commitment and the careful use of change champions. Leadership can do this by employing servant leadership and taking a system approach to caring for the institution. Utilizing change champions will be key to reducing the vertical distance in the organizational chart. An antecedent to building trust amongst change champions and middle managers alike is the clear demonstration that students

are important. Actions and processes that are developed by leadership should be well informed by, and for, students. For leadership, supporting students means supporting the faculty and staff who have frontline contact with them. Frontline staff, as indicated by OCC responses, represent an opportunity to strengthen change readiness through their active inclusion in decision-making. Using servant leadership to empower and give voice to frontline staff will build trust.

A strategy to increase change readiness and reception to change would be senior administration's use of student-centred decision-making, utilizing change champions, and empowering frontline staff. This will afford the leadership with a significant amount of 'trust capital,' as staff will be able to see their importance to institutional well-being.

### **Innovative Culture and Accountable Culture**

Another important dimension of this scale for change at UEC involves culture. Because of years of stagnancy on campus, innovation has mostly focused on the concept of 'doing more with less'. Instead of stifling innovation, the scarcity of resources has created a campus environment that is creative in resource use. The unfortunate outcome of this innovation, however, is a campus that is backward thinking and expends energy trying to re-create the service model of days gone by. Not surprisingly, the responses to OCC scale questions on organizational culture represent a mixed analysis. The campus is both innovative but also stagnant as innovation seems only to 'patch holes'. For leadership, the work is two-fold. Foremost, a vision of excellence must be developed to determine how the campus can help students in the future. Second, concerted effort must be taken to properly resource the vision as to provide the opportunity for success.

Through the application of risk assessment measures, campus leadership should be able to foster innovation while also using resources in a way that balances risk against reward. A



culture of accountability can begin with innovation and risk assessment but must work to foster an institutional model of continuous re-evaluation. Instead of treating change as a one-off, innovation and accountability can be used to create a culture that embraces change through fine-tuning and recalibrating services and processes on a regular basis.

### **Involved Middle Management, Communication, and Systems Thinking**

As in many universities, UEC has challenges with respect to work that is compartmentalized. The OCC questions related to communication illustrate problems with the flow of information. There is, however, cause to be optimistic that communication may improve. The campus Learning Together Committee, Learner Experience Committee, and Strategic Enrolment Management Committee provide an excellent medium to build on middle management and inter-departmental information flow. They further provide a medium for frontline staff to ensure their voices are heard by middle and senior managers alike. Through a model that brings operational level, middle managers, and leadership team members together, each of these committees provides a venue for the distribution of information on a regular basis. Challenges and opportunities occurring readily at the operational level can be reported to the decision makers who can affect larger change in a timely manner. These committees are important in breaking down vertical and horizontal communication barriers and work to treat the campus as a single system rather than independent component parts.

### **Mobilizing the Campus**

Trust, accountability, and communication are all important antecedents to change readiness at UEC. Each of these play an important role in preparing the campus for change readiness. Furthermore, they each play a role in the organizational characteristics of *institutional integrity* and *institutional commitment to student welfare* that are critical to academic and

intellectual development (Braxton et al., 2014). In moving toward change readiness, the power of data cannot be overstated. Sharing and discussing both internal and external retention data are important steps in ensuring the campus is ready for change, and this will be discussed in Chapter 2. Using data and communication, campus stakeholders will better understand that change is not simply for change sake.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 1 has discussed the contextual and leadership issues that surround UEC's retention problem. UEC, a commuter campus that is a part of a multicampus university, faces issues with student retention. A current leadership focus on finances, and subsequent budget decisions, have led to an erosion of trust. To create change, the campus must improve student perception of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to the student welfare* to improve AID. The way for creating change calls for the use of servant leadership and relationship building amongst important committees and campus change champions.

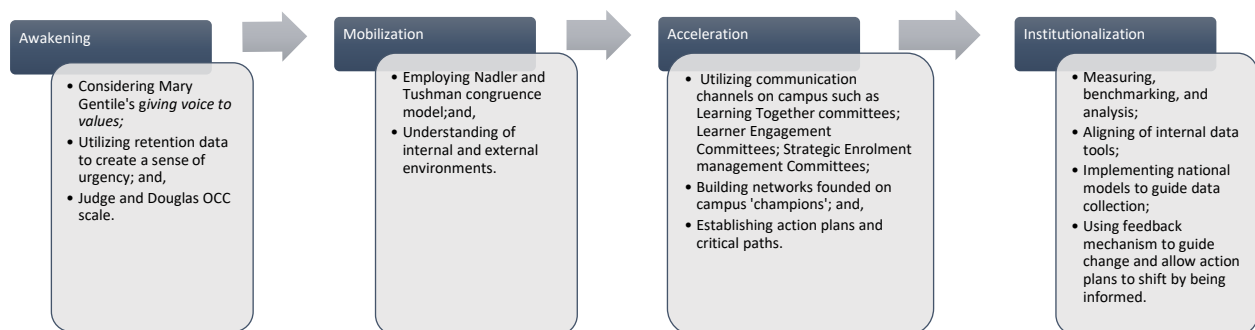
Chapter 2 analyzes retention by addressing gaps in the current campus situation. Specifically, it considers how the status quo may be improved through one of three solutions: the development of a campus-wide appreciative advising model; a faculty-based professional retention learning community; and institutional reorganization of key retention staff. The solution selected maximizes the campus approach to the problem through a combination of both appreciative advising and a professional retention learning community.

## Chapter Two – Planning and Development

The first chapter provided important contextual information on the retention issues that surround UEC. With this context as the point of departure, Chapter 2 will explore the critical issue of what and how to change in order to improve retention at UEC. This chapter has four main sections that include framing the change process, a critical organizational analysis, possible solutions, and leadership ethics.

### Framing the Change Process

To effect change in student retention at UEC, Cawsey, Deszca and Ingols's (2016) *change path model* has been selected as a guiding framework (see Figure 2.1). The change path model is “a four-stage model that concentrates on process issues and is used as a guiding framework [for change]” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 38). As a pathway for organizational change, Cawsey et al. build on the work of other change experts, such as Beckhard and Harris (1987), Duck (2001), Kotter (1996), Gentile (2010), and Lewin (1951) to produce a model that “combines both process and prescription” (p.53). This model's four stages provide a pragmatic approach to change and include awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization (Cawsey et al., 2016), and focuses on the how and what of change (Mahato, 2015).



**Figure 2.1.** Cawsey, Descza and Ingols's Change Path Model at UEC

Source: Modified from Cawsey, Deszca, Ingols (2016).

This model is well-suited for this organizational improvement plan as retention, and the UEC context, has a wide diversity of processes, properties, and stakeholders involved; the CPM will inform and guide the change process. The use of this approach is an acknowledgement of the structural and political forces that are at play at UEC. Given the breadth of power that is distributed across faculty, as well as the authority that rests with campus administration, a balance of process and prescription needs to be carefully planned. Any change plan that is too prescriptive may not fit with the diverse process structures across each individual faculty unit. The CPM provides the flexibility to begin the change process while weighing the delicate balance of these structures and political forces. Given the tensions identified in the OCC scale in Chapter 1, the CPM's flexibility in determining the "how" and "what" of change is well-suited to guiding this change without increasing tension levels.

UEC is an institution with diverse values, and as an acknowledgement that servant leadership is a driving force for change in this study, Mary Gentile's (2010) *giving voice to values* (GVV) will also be used to inform the CPM. UEC has strong symbolic forces that place a deep importance on the history of the institution and the reason it exists—to serve both students and the community. These forces may at times be in tension with external political and economic forces. As recommended, Gentile's approach will supplement the CPM process where diverse values emerge. This blended approach will serve the purpose of ensuring the campus strategically balances emotion as the change processes unfold.

### **Awakening**

Understanding change readiness at UEC requires a close examination of both campus values and the underperformance in student retention. For the former, the analysis presented in Chapter 1 provides us with an understanding of campus conditions. Before considering a

solution, this chapter will revisit the campus contextual conditions and values that will affect the change process. The responses to Judge and Douglas's (2009) OCC scale illustrate a tension amongst campus senior leadership, faculty, and staff; this tension is rooted in the demands of financial accountability and economic decision-making. Accepting the tensions of these demands is instrumental in creating change readiness; becoming entrenched in one's position and refusing to begin conversations about change is not helpful, as accountability will still be expected. Instead, change readiness needs to begin from a position that accepts different realities across groups and works toward common ground. For example, a shared position, for most, is the role that education, learning, and knowledge plays for most educators in higher education. Returning to this common belief will be important to awakening the campus and gaining buy-in from campus champions.

As suggested by Cawsey et al. (2016), when values are in conflict, it is appropriate to use Gentile's GVV process to provide congruence in value systems. The GVV approach allows a change agent, and stakeholders, to ask: "once you know what you believe is right, how can you get it done effectively?" (Arce & Gentile, 2015, p. 537). Thus, if it is appropriate to improve student retention, how do we accomplish the end goal? Given the tensions identified through the OCC scale, the GVV process can help find the middle ground required for change readiness. While Gentile (2010) suggested 12 assumptions when entering a value-conflict conversation, this study focuses on five when attempting to balance values:

1. I want to voice and act upon my values;
2. I have voiced my values, at some points in the past;
3. My example is powerful;
4. I am not alone; and
5. Voicing my values leads to better decisions. (Gentile, 2010, pp. 3-20)

As a catalyst for creating change, these five assumptions are central to shifting from stagnancy to awakening and mobilization. The synergy across and among the five assumptions and the functional attributes of servant leadership—namely modeling, service to others, communication, and integrity (Russell & Stone, 2002)—will provide strength to the change process and a means to apply servant leadership. Through understanding the values and tensions that campus stakeholders bring to the table, the change agent will be able to deconstruct “a version of reality that prioritizes a different set of criteria than the ones with which they may have come to the conversation” (Gentile, 2010, p. 213). It is through examining each reality that the change agent will be able to determine a common ground for which change can be advanced. These above ascribed assumptions, when adopted by UEC stakeholders through a servant leadership approach to change, can help ground decisions regardless of which faction one may belong; change readiness will occur when stakeholders can realize they have more in common than not.

The second catalyst required for change readiness is understanding campus underperformance in student retention through a data-informed lens. It is difficult to mobilize stakeholders if adequate information is not shared to characterize the seriousness of the retention problem. To begin the change conversation, relevant data will be made widely accessible. This demands more than simple distribution; it requires communication of data to be clear so that enrolment statistics are understandable. As an example, instead of releasing enrolment data that may be passively ignored, effort should be taken to work with the University’s communications department in designing an internal media campaign that will inform the campus as to the seriousness of the retention problem. Simultaneously, discussion sessions can be organized, questions solicited, and implications made explicit. The active distribution of understandable

data, and comparative regional retention data, should work to shift the campus from its apathetic state.

### **Mobilization**

The second step, mobilization, requires that UEC understand what needs to change. To determine this, the campus will require a comprehensive understanding of the institution's internal and external environment. To this end, Nadler and Tushman's (1980) *organizational congruence model* will be used. This posits that "organizations [are] made up of components or parts that interact with each other" (p.39); when there is incongruence amongst the components, the organization will not function effectively. To analyze what to change, the inputs, transformational processes, and outputs of UEC must align closely with select components of Braxton et al.'s (2014) theory of student persistence discussed in Chapter 1—*institutional integrity, institutional commitment to student welfare* and students' AID.

To understand congruence, inputs will incorporate the campus environment, resources, history, and past strategies used to improve retention. Inputs at UEC will include institutional mission and objectives, student characteristics, staffing and resources. Each of these performs an important role in understanding how any change effort may succeed or fail during implementation. Transformational processes include "task, individuals, the formal organizational arrangements and the informal organization" (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 43). Examining these processes will provide information on how students, staff, and faculty might engage and respond to various solutions to the retention problem. Finally, outputs include student retention rates, as observed in enrolment data, and improvements in graduation rates over time. It is also important to understand the level of student satisfaction on campus. A full campus analysis using Nadler and Tushman's congruence model is provided later in this chapter.

**Acceleration**

The third stage of the change process, acceleration, requires “action planning and implementation” (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 54). To this end, the solution to UEC’s retention problem will be achieved through planning and development of supports that help student AID. Cawsey et al. advocate that change “requires the active involvement of others and information sharing [to] enhance the quality of action planning” (p. 307). The change plan for this OIP involves the three standing committees in teaching and learning: UEC’s Learning Together Committee; the Learner Engagement Committee; and the Strategic Enrolment Management Committee. Through a distributed leadership approach, these groups, in combination with champions in key stakeholder groups, will be instrumental in the campus coming together to create a change plan. The development of a change solution and subsequent action plan will capitalize on working relationships, effective communication, and expertise found within these groups. Both the change solution and action planning will be introduced later in this chapter.

**Institutionalization**

The final phase of the change path model, institutionalization, is composed of measuring, benchmarking, and setting practices in place that allow change to be monitored and serve as a feedback loop for future change. Culminating from previous stages of the model, the success of this organizational improvement plan will demand increased attention to students’ AID. Institutionalization will require data from UEC as well as a mechanism for analyzing the change efforts. UEC currently employs a broad set of tools to measure, track, and analyze metrics related to student engagement and success—and, thus, retention: persistence and retention data, Registrar’s Office reports, first-year student surveys, the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE), and departmental surveys. A component of institutionalization requires



that information gleaned from data mining be used as an effective feedback mechanism for creating change. As an example, data from first-year student surveys provide information on student engagement rates in high impact practices. These are activities that “demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback” (Kuh, 2008, p.14). Using the NSSE data on high-impact practices, UEC will be able to shape programming and services that can increase student engagement—so continued monitoring of these data can help create casual change over time and ensure the students are being served well. Institutionalization requires not only using data but also developing a mindset that data can be used to measure change, demonstrate accountability, and correct course when needed—to do otherwise would be to treat change as a singular event and create vulnerability to future retention problems when the current solution becomes antiquated.

Overall, the change path model provides a framework to guide change at UEC. Each phase of awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization provides the scaffold for understanding how change will be implemented. The utilization of Gentile’s GVV (2010) model and Nadler and Tushman’s congruence model (1980) serves to provide direction in understanding how the framework is applied at UEC. The next section discusses an analysis of institutional data and context using the congruence model.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

As discussed in Chapter 1, higher education retention efforts in recent years have created a shift toward better communication and systems-level thinking. This has decreased the vertical distance between senior leadership and the operating core. For UEC, continuing to strengthen

the work on retention requires understanding the what and how of change. To accomplish this, elements of the PESTE analysis introduced in Chapter 1 will be further examined using Nadler and Tushman’s congruence model (see Figure 2.2). Inputs, transformational process, and outputs are analyzed in this section to understand how the campus currently functions.

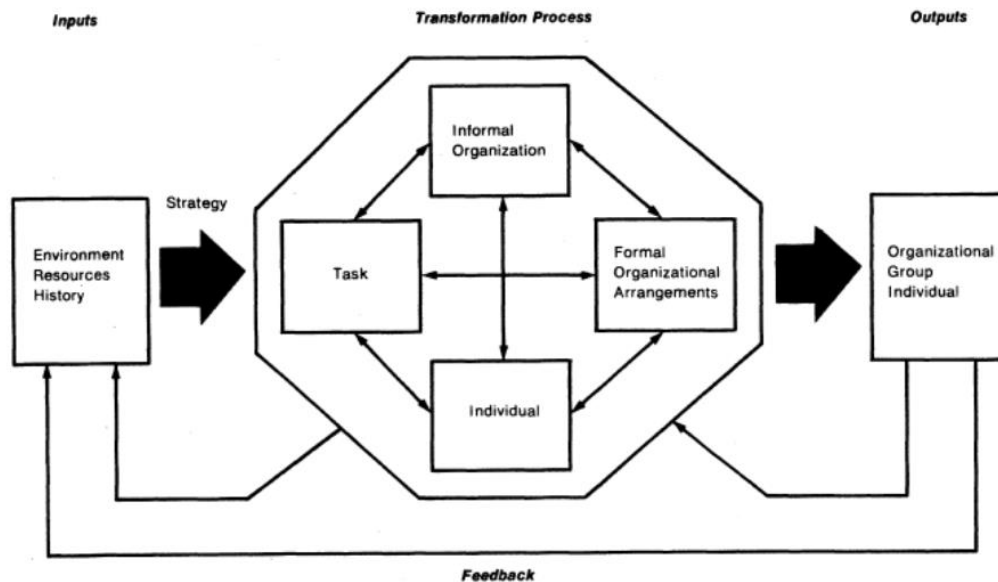


Figure 2.2. Nadler and Tushman’s Congruence Model  
 Source: Nadler and Tushman (1980)<sup>2</sup>. Reprinted with permission.

## Inputs

Inputs can be described as the “materials the campus has to work with” (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 39). As noted in Figure 2.2, there are three main categories: environment, resources, and history. Specifically, inputs reflect the external factors that impact an organization. A brief description of UEC’s campus context was provided in Chapter 1. Highlights include that UEC has faced financial struggles over the last four years—student

<sup>2</sup> From *A Model for Diagnosing Organizational behavior* by D.A. Nadler and M.L. Tushman. 1980. *Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn, p.47. Copyright of Elsevier Science Publishing. Reprinted with author’s permission.

enrolment decline, tuition freezes, and a provincial operational grant that has not kept pace with inflation have placed a great deal of financial stress on the campus. As a result, UEC has accumulated a structural deficit that has, despite efforts to rein in spending through layoffs and cutbacks, only gotten worse. The effect of cost-saving measures has meant resources on campus have been limited in both diversity and depth. The preceding describes a campus that faces resource issues, enrolment challenges, and staffing factors.

A factor that was not described fully is the multicampus nature of the university, where UEC exists as one campus in a multicampus university. The multicampus context is an input that blends both internal and external factors. While not purely external, the other campuses do exert a force that must be discussed. The nature of a multicampus institution is that politics and bureaucracy, similar to what occurs between departments, also occurs amongst campuses, and must be negotiated. It also presents an opportunity to strengthen the institution, as lessons learned, and expertise on one campus, are generally accessible to another.

UEC's place within the multicampus university creates both a form of competition and an opportunity for collegiality with its partner campuses. The discussion of the multicampus setting must include centralized services. The university, as a whole, in recent years has spent a great deal of time centralizing services. Centralized IT services, library services, financial and registrarial policy have created efficiencies and opportunities to provide better services for students. One challenge that has occurred with this centralization is a loss of autonomy. While academic autonomy remains intact, the boundaries around shared services and policies often pose limitations on how autonomy is expressed. An example of how centralized policy can limit autonomy exists even in the small logistical details of how faculties develop courses. If a course number has been used in the same subject area on another campus, the Registrar's Office can

stop its usage at UEC, which illustrates how limitations of centralized policy can pose challenges. A multicampus environment therefore creates the opportunity to work together to create efficiencies in serving students, but also places a demand on stakeholders at each campus to work together. In the analysis of a campus environment that seeks to improve retention, the multicampus environment places some stress on stakeholders who believe they have lost agency.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that arises out of the environmental conditions may be the successful negotiation of autonomy and agency among campuses—and between internal stakeholders. In working through each challenge and opportunity, the emphasis of change must ensure that the campus sees change as an opportunity to create agency instead of a threat to academic freedom.

These environmental conditions place both demands and constraints on the university to develop supports and services that are effective. By working with other campuses, UEC can create an economy of scale in serving students. Further, with an increased emphasis on academic and intellectual development, and decreased importance on social integration, the campus can focus on better serving students. Issues discussed in Chapter 1 related to financial sustainability, high populations of low-income demographics, as well as the multicampus environment discussed in this section must all be considered in understanding how UEC's environment impacts retention.

### **UEC and the Transformational Process**

As a part of the change process, Nadler and Tushman (1980) provided four categories in which to understand how an organization works within its environment: task, individuals, the formal organization, and information organization. These are analyzed in relation to this OIP.

**Task.** UEC exists as an important educational institution within the community; it is charged with the role of providing education in the local geographic region. Over the last 20 years, that role has expanded to include other Canadian and international students. With this educational responsibility, there are several processes and functions that need to be examined, including admissions, advising, and academic support. Admissions includes processes around setting entry standards, providing applications and support to secondary students and schools, application processing, and communication. This has undergone a dramatic change in recent years with respect to ‘how’ and ‘when’ the university conducts outreach to applicants. Overall, the process has seen improvements in the university’s conversion rate (the rate at which admitted applicants eventually register and attend the university). UEC, like many Canadian universities, continues to struggle with incomplete international applications—students often submit applications to many universities, often lack required documentation for admission, or are refused study permits. This problem is limited to a small number of applicants and is experienced throughout the country. Overall, admissions processes are effective and proactive.

Academic advising is an important part of the retention cycle for an institution. After admissions, advising begins at UEC in the spring prior to new students enrolling. Various events, communication threads, and processes help new students gain access to registrarial systems, choose courses, and write preparatory exams prior to the fall term. Advising occurs in both group and individual settings and is focused almost solely on academic course registration; elements of academic support interventions and career advising are gaps on campus. While the focus on academics is important to the program succession, it fails to consider or understand, the whole person–student needs extend beyond academic progression. The overall lack of career counselling services on campus means that academic advisors, who already have a heavy

workload, need to provide this service. Unfortunately, given a lack of time—and hefty student caseload—academics must take precedence and little happens in the way of career advising or planning. This is problematic as the majority of respondents in a first-year survey expressed that they were the “most anxious” about career development and career options (UEC, 2017). With a strong connection between AID, program choice, and career development, the lack of career services leaves students who are undecided or unsure of their program choice without a dedicated resource to help them. It is this resource that can help reduce anxiety around program suitability and career outcomes; without seeing a clear connection between education and career, a student who becomes disenfranchised will likely depart prematurely.

The final task that supports UEC’s core role is academic support. The campus provides a range of services for both faculty and students. The academic supports for faculty include a campus teaching and learning centre that provides faculty orientation, professional development opportunities, and peer support. Supporting faculty is critical to building good teachers and supporting the institution’s core goals. Further, there is a range of services that are oriented toward students: athletics, academic advising, accessibility officers, co-curricular programs, counselling services, financial aid officers, math and writing centres, residential services, and study abroad are all present on campus. These services help round out the student experience and provide extra-academic and social support. As a commuter campus, student interactions across the curriculum and outside the classroom are a challenge. As a result, a learning community forum exists that brings together students from over 25 first-year for-credit courses. This learning community covers topics common to student learning: test-taking, stress management, undergraduate research, library usage, understanding student services, and a semester wrap-up all designed with the intention that the transition to university occurs over the

entire first-year. Students who attend five of the six seminars are rewarded with up to five bonus marks in one of the participating for-credit courses. This approach attempts to bridge academic life and develop the whole student.

**Individuals.** The secondary category of understanding transformational change in an organization is its individuals. Human resources can be broken into two key groups: faculty and staff (of which administration is included). Faculty complements on campus have not experienced any significant change in the 2011-2015 period—tenured faculty had a minimal increase to their overall staff complement, with contract instructors experiencing a slight decrease (UEC, 2015). Over the same time, academic support staff complements have decreased by approximately 13%. The loss of support staffing has been experienced both in senior administration and frontline service areas alike. Despite staff reductions, the range of services offered on campus has not changed significantly; for example, the Student Services office continues to offer the majority of programming offered prior to reductions. The loss of personnel has been countered by reorganizing duties within units such as the merger of frontline service personnel between the Registrar's Office and Financial Services to create a one-stop shop. While the staff complement has impacted the depth of service, the quality of service students receive appears to be stable.

Tinto (2012) suggested that faculty are the most important factor in student retention. With this considered, the aforementioned reductions to the staffing complement may have had a limited adverse effect on student retention. This may be correlated through the several modest increases in student retention that the campus has seen most recently. That the campus has been able to experience several small increases in retention during a period of downsizing speaks to the flexibility of its resources. With the reduction of the staffing complement, the management

team and front-line staff have responded by taking on additional responsibilities. The loss of staffing positions most often reflects a loss in the depth of services rather than the range, as the flexibility of staffing resources is high. Problematic with this approach, however, is that as new responsibilities get added, the focus of staff members gets diluted. This is to say, there is still a strong commitment among staff to serve students but there is now less time for each responsibility on the list.

As a component of recent staffing reductions, front line administrative staff have been reduced. This means that many units have lost key logistical support. While there is an immediate savings in cutting logistical support, a spin-off effect of this action is that higher paid staff members now spend time on basic logistical functions—it is much more affordable to have an administrative secretary prepare a purchase order than have a director do the same task. Again, while staff and senior administration are flexible to do more with less, the effect may be increased cost for simple tasks and less time dedicated to planning and delivering services to students. This situation can also lead to longer-term workplace health effects with increased rates of stress and staff burnout. As an input, human resources are both a strength of the campus but also a limitation. Presently, the staff are resilient and work to serve the students. The limitations, however, are that there is little capacity to increase the responsibility or roles of staff in this current state.

**Formal organization.** A third consideration in transformational processes are the elements of the formal organization. Technology is a significant part of the formal organization processes with the potential to affect retention. The nature of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires that information be shared quickly, accurately, and effectively. There are several resources at play: the student information system; footprints tracking; and an early alert initiative. The student



information system is a powerful records and administrative software package. This software provides the campus with an ability to track student progress, audit academic transcripts, and capture the entire student experience. Access to the student information system is dependent on the role individuals fill on campus and it allows staff to understand the student experience at both an individual level and as a cohort. Footprints, the second piece of technology, serves as a method to track and manage workloads. The footprints system permits the campus to timely manage and complete requests and queries from staff and students, such as requests to update student admission applications, change majors, or submit official records. The tracking of requests allows not only for workplace efficiency, but provides an opportunity for high-level analysis of multiple issues to address larger problems. The final technological piece is an early alert initiative. This initiative uses the university's email system as a medium for faculty and staff to submit the names of students who may be potentially at-risk academically. In the absence of a caseload management system, all potentially at-risk students referred by email are tracked and directed to an appropriate academic advisor who determines what, if any, appropriate intervention may be required to help the student succeed—and stay enrolled. Each of the three technological services represent an interface for staff, faculty, and to some extent students, to manage the many issues that surround supporting academic progression. These systems, while having some limitations, provide the campus with both technological capacity to administer academic programs and respond in a timely manner to issues that may arise.

**Informal organization.** Informal aspects also impact change. UEC's history shapes its informal organization. The origins of the campus are rooted in a political fight between local citizens who demanded a university to serve the community and the government who believed the community could be served well through existing higher education infrastructure. Since

then, the community (and campus) have grown and responded to challenges of autonomy—each time returning to the argument that the community needs UEC. Today, the ties between the campus and community remain strong. UEC hosts a large outreach program for low-income and vulnerable students in the community. The staff and faculty who have remained on campus since its early beginning have a strong commitment to local youth and the success of both campus and community alike.

Another aspect of the campus's informal organization is tied to its formal structure: academic freedom. The reverence and respect from staff and faculty for the creation, growth, and maintenance of academic programming at UEC is strong. For that reason, there is symbolic importance for faculty's ability to advance their own research agendas and disagree with administration's viewpoint without retribution. It is this reverence that provides faculty with great latitude in questioning decisions made within the formal organizational hierarchy. It is also a part of the organization that creates barriers when investigating the academic quality of the institution. With significant latitude given toward academic freedom and expression, the move to conduct any quality assurance test or measures on campus have been challenged and face significant barriers. It is a challenge that can also be reinforced through formal tools within the faculty's union—if enough pressure exists. Another example of academic freedom exists with the early alert initiative on campus. Faculty are *encouraged* to conduct an assessment early in the semester to determine which students may be struggling. However, faculty can only be encouraged, not *required* to participate. A requirement to participate would interfere with the academic freedom of faculty to assess student progress as they see fit. While the faculty and staff are committed to student success, there are limitations to how far administration can go to implement programs that require faculty to act in a specific manner. Over all, while academic

freedom does pose challenges, the presence of academic expression and freedom are positive and provides a venue for open conversations and dialogue.

Each component of the transformational processes—tasks, individuals, formal and organizations—all work together to influence outputs on the campus. These outputs are the product of efforts to educate students and can be used as benchmarks for understanding the “how and what” of change.

### **Outputs**

This part of the congruence model is concerned with the “organizational, group, and individual” outputs of organizational processes (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Whereas this retention problem focuses on first-to-second year succession, the desired organizational output is a high volume of students returning for second-year studies. For this study, high volumes can be described as meeting or exceeding the aggregate institutional average reported by regional oversight organizations. UEC, however, does not meet the standard, and considerable work needs to be done to perform at the regional average. Overall, there is a gap between the institutional mission, the inputs, transformational process, and the final outputs.

In order to fully understand the organizational, group, and individual outputs, Nadler and Tushman (1980) provided three measures to help with the analysis: goal attainment, resource utilization, and adaptability. Goal attainment for UEC compels the institution to “provide an extraordinary education where the journey is characterized by a transformative experience that unlocks the innovative potential of the learner” (UEC, 2010). While lacking a specific measurable outcome, the institutional mission does speak to the intent of the university as an educational provider. For many of the students who depart early, the achievement of a full university education is not realized. This should serve as an indication that the institutional

mission (goal attainment for some students), at least in part, is not being fully attained. The second and third measures have been discussed at length in the section above. Both resource utilization and adaptability are strengths of UEC stakeholders. Despite continued reduction of resources, the campus reacts and adapts to best serve the students. The campus has been able to position itself in a manner that continues to reach out to students. In this way, the campus has been highly successful in maintaining a base level of service.

A challenge remains, however, when the three outputs are considered together. While UEC has been successful in adapting to a changing and downsized environment, student retention continues to underachieve. The gap here is that UEC may be serving the average student in a meaningful way, but it is likely the most vulnerable student that struggles to thrive on campus.

### **The Incongruence between Campus Reality and Student Need**

In the examination of inputs and the transformational process, an incongruence that appears is the stress between the financial realities of the campus and the need to do more. The evidence shows that more attention is required around developing the campus supports and, indeed, a holistic approach to the whole student. Braxton et al. (2014) suggested that *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare* is key to a student's AID and subsequent commitment to the institution. However, it is uncertain how UEC staff and systems, who are already doing more with less, can do more for the student under the current financial realities. Further, there are limitations to what technology can do and to what faculty can be instructed to do. It is also unlikely that new resources will be added to the campus. The question that remains is how can leadership create change within the existing paradigm that works for both the students and institution alike? Any change model must acknowledge these

incongruences and work to encourage participation in the solution through building on the campus's rich commitment to the community and students. Three unique solutions to this problem will be advanced in the next section.

### **Possible Solutions**

In light of the contextual conditions of Chapter 1, and the results of the organizational analysis in the previous section, three main solutions are being advanced. Leadership solutions to retention at UEC require strengthening the *commitment to student welfare* and *institutional integrity*. These two variables require building on retention through creating an environment where students are both more successful and feel their chief concerns are being heard. To this end, the use of an appreciative advising model, a professional retention learning community, the institutional realignment of the organizational chart—or an hybrid solution—are being advanced as potential solutions. Each of the proposed solutions are viable options to addressing campus retention through a shift in leadership that supports the inherent intent of supporting those who support students.

#### **Solution One: Appreciative Advising (AA)**

Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2012) discussed academic advising as the “hub of the wheel in higher education” where an “institutional representative who builds relationships with students helps them interpret their educational experiences, become engaged at the institution through involvement in curricular and cocurricular opportunities, and devise an individualized plan for fulfilling their life and career goals” (p. 283). When juxtaposed against academic advising at UEC, which often involves a transactional process focused on academic issues where students receive advice through a one-way channel of information flowing from advisor to student, the contrast is stark. This solution would recommend a shift toward appreciative

advising through “an intentional and collaborative process of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experience” (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2013, p. 83). Appreciative advising can be further understood as:

[A] model which includes mechanisms and processes which allow an approach to the student to occur in a positive and inviting manner. It allows the advisor to assist his or her students by integrating them into the higher education experience enhancing their self-esteem, modifying their locus of control and motivating them (Truschel, 2008, p. 8).

Appreciative advising (AA) is attractive, as it focuses on the whole student and can help address gaps in career counselling. AA, at UEC, can be understood as an approach to advising where the diverse elements of student life are deconstructed and then integrated to help a student seize opportunities that develop his/her academic plan. The use of an appreciative advising model by faculty and academic advisors is an appropriate approach to improving retention— “[r]esearch consistently shows that academic advising can play a role in a student’s decision to persist and in their chances of graduating” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 404). The key piece to an appreciative advising model is that it looks at the student from a positive position. Instead of examining the issues or deficits that a student may have, an appreciative advising model looks at what the student can do to improve, or what opportunities he/she may have. By co-creating the academic plan with the student, the advisor leads the student through a six-phase process with the intention to “disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, don’t settle” (Bloom et al., 2013). Appreciative advising “highlights the connections among... the advising process, and student success from cognitive, metacognitive, and affective perspectives” (Bloom et al., 2013, p. 97). This model works well with the servant leadership approach to change at UEC. Instead of treating advising as a process where the student is the recipient of information, appreciative advising works to empower students, and creates agency in their own advising plans.

In general, the application of an appreciative advising model on campus will require some shifts in how advising currently occurs. UEC's current model utilizes both professional advisors and faculty members to facilitate advising. As a service to students, academic advising is different in each faculty—some faculties rely solely on professional advisors while others use a blend of professional and faculty advisors. Regardless, most faculty on campus hold some form of informal advising role. While the professional advisor is likely familiar with appreciative advising—and may even employ parts of it—it will likely be foreign to faculty members for whom advising plays a smaller role in their overall workload. Habley et al. (2012) note that “across institutional types, only 32% of all academic units mandated that faculty advisors be trained” (p. 294). A demand of this model would be the need for professional development for both faculty and staff. This training would involve some additional cost; however, it would be small and should remain within existing budgets for professional development. The cost of this approach may also be lower, as UEC can call upon advising resources from another campus within the system, where AA is already being used to provide some training. This approach would also encourage faculty to take up a more formal role in advising. While there may be some objection, advising is an acceptable form of campus service within their collective agreement and as such, provide some informal advising under the current paradigm. Another demand to shift toward an appreciative advising model may be to create the shift from old processes to new—campus resources are already taxed and doing more than the minimum in advising, and may only serve to increase the burden on staff. If appreciative advising is to be successful, then the approach must provide additional supports to advisors during the transition period. Until old processes are grandfathered out, the advisors will require help. Creating the shift to appreciative advising will require better communication tools in

providing students with information on general academic rules and policy in a more transparent and visible manner. In this way, by empowering students with information, there will be a diminished demand for advisors' time for matters that may be trivial. This should both increase advisor availability and create an opportunity for more meaningful advising. A strategy to support this may be to phase in appreciative advising by cohort over time or to start in smaller program areas. Once a proof of concept has been established, the model can be scaled to whole faculties or the larger campus area.

### **Solution Two: Professional Retention Learning Community(PRLC)**

As an approach to supporting the unique identity and characteristics of each faculty, another potential solution is establishing a professional retention learning community (PRLC) amongst each of the five faculties at UEC. The purpose of each learning community would be to facilitate learning and enable best practices in student success pedagogy to persist at the institution. Capitalizing on knowledge and expertise from the UEC Learning Together committee, a PRLC would examine practice inside and outside the classroom that serves to support academic and intellectual development. Utilizing a combination of a faculty champions, program chairs, deans, and the director of retention programming, the PRLC can facilitate learning in a localized manner that serves a faculty group. PRLCs provide an option to engage faculty in the short-term, but in a manner that will have long-term benefits. Fullan (2016) stated that through “self-consciously focus[ing] on deep change [we can] build capacity for today and tomorrow... [so that] when it comes time to depart they can always leave them learning” (p. ix). This is to say that the benefits from a PRLC may persist after membership in the committee ends.

The advantage to a PRLC is that the small and localized approach is more likely to fit the needs of the academic unit involved. Instead of developing a one-size-fits-all approach to



retention strategies, faculty based PRLCs can optimize the approaches that work for them. In nursing, for example, retention strategies may include not only supporting the academic growth of a student but also focusing on what strategies are needed for physical or mental health care competencies. The faculty of arts may recognize a disconnect between academic outcomes and student's concerns regarding career development: this could result in a strategy to incorporate service learning or increased guest lecturers from industry. The nature of the localized PRLCs is that they can be responsive to the needs of students in the specific areas of study.

A potential drawback of this solution is the need for buy-in amongst many campus stakeholders. Instead of a campus-based approach that requires moderate buy-in, localized PRLCs would demand greater participation from many units. Garnering participation from units would require a period of promotion, discussion, and clarity. The approach may also encounter issues around whether campus administration is micro-managing faculty members or even worse, interfering with academic operations.

### **Solution Three: Institutional Realignment of the Organizational Chart**

Under the current organizational chart (see Figure 1.1), the director for retention programming reports directly to the associate vice-president. As the faculty and administration have been “at-odds” at times, having the director for retention programming report to the teaching and learning centre coordinator may mitigate these pressures. If the director for retention programming were a part of the Teaching and Learning Centre staff, the position would likely be viewed more collegially. The director would be seen as a peer who shares concern for student academic development; the director would likely be invited to be an active member of various faculty-based committees—a happening that only currently occurs upon request to the faculty and with a specific purpose. The concept here is that by shifting the director away from

administration and aligning more closely to the teaching and learning side of the house, then faculty will be disarmed; faculty will be more comfortable with the position reporting to an academic appointment versus an administrative one. Instead of viewing retention as an approach being undertaken solely for financial reasons, faculty may view retention as key to supporting student success. The commitment of faculty to both the change process and improving retention is of the utmost importance: “they need to recognize the value their participation adds to the institution’s efforts” (Black, 2010, p.86). A positive effect of this change is that the director for retention programming will, almost overnight, have increased credibility when working for faculty. The current methodology means that retention initiatives are seen as an add-on to faculty operations instead of being embedded. The change in organizational hierarchy will also mean there is a strong probability of a shift in faculty mindset as they will see the director as a tool to help in the teaching and learning process.

One of the problems with this solution is that a change to the organizational hierarchical chart is more easily discussed than achieved. The first major concern with this solution is that it steps well beyond the agency of the change agent—while advocating for this solution is reasonable, the ability to make significant progress would be unrealistic. Second, a shift of this nature would entail building on the responsibilities of the teaching and learning centre coordinator: a position that is currently “soft” funded (through external funding as opposed to base operational budget). The campus would be required to dedicate more resources to the Centre to establish the coordinator’s role as a base-budget position and trigger a re-classification process to ensure the title and remuneration of the coordinator reflect the new responsibilities.

**Weighing the options.** Either of the three options suggested represent a possible solution to UEC’s retention problem, so too does maintaining the status quo. The latter would be

an acknowledgment that UEC cannot improve retention rates beyond their current levels and that the campus must genuinely have a unique context that prohibits performance at levels posted by other institutions in the region. This is not the position of this paper; maintaining the status quo has been dismissed as the best viable option. Each of the solutions presented above have been compared to understand their potential utility in addressing UEC's retention problem (see Table 2.1). In considering the option to reorganize the organizational hierarchy, this solution, while having significant potential to improve faculty relations and work in the retention field, is not viable. Problematic with this solution is that it is beyond the agency and control of the director for retention programming to make such a change. It would further be difficult as it requires investment in the teaching and learning centre at a time when campus resources are already lean.

**Table 2.1.**

*Comparison of Change Solutions for UEC's Retention Problem*

Factors for Consideration	<b>Solution #1 AA</b>	<b>Solution #2 PRLC</b>	<b>Solution #3 Org. Restructure</b>	<b>Hybrid Solution (AA+PRLC)</b>
Can this solution address the retention problem without a significant investment of resources?	YES	YES	POTENTIALLY	YES
Does this solution have the capacity to improve student perception of <i>Institutional Integrity</i> and <i>Commitment to Student Welfare</i> ?	YES	POTENTIALLY	NO	YES
Will results be seen in the short-term?	YES	POTENTIALLY	YES	YES
Will results be seen in the long-term?	YES	YES	YES	

Does this solution help build capacity for serving students?	NO	YES	YES	YES
Does this solution lend itself to servant leadership?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Can this solution address the unique processes of each faculty?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Does this solution address student concern about career/life outcomes?	YES	NO	NO	YES
Does the change agent have agency to affect change through this solution?	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	NO	POTENTIALLY

This leaves two potential solutions: faculty-based PRLCs and AA. Faculty-based

PRLCs are an attractive option, as they provide an ability to create unique retention strategies for each faculty unit involved. Indeed, responding to retention could be more proactive and responsive to issues as they arise. This would also address the staff workload capacity discussed earlier, as faculty would be the core stakeholder effecting change. A noteworthy challenge with the use of PRLCs is gaining high levels of buy-in from stakeholders in every unit on campus. This solution would require a significant investment of time, and success may only present itself in the way of small wins. Until PRLCs are established and have gained credibility, the chance to make a deep impact may be limited; students would not be the main beneficiary of this solution until the PRLCs become a fixture of campus culture. These issues may be solved, however, if AA were used as a framework to guide the work of PRLCs—a hybrid solution that captures the advantages of both solutions.

Appreciative Advising provides the best opportunity to engage both staff and faculty stakeholders in their work to help students grow. It addresses the variables advanced by Braxton et al. (2014) that are crucial to student AID and subsequent commitment to the campus. As an approach, AA will demand a small investment, or reallocation of campus resources, to provide professional development to a small number of staff in a train-the-trainer approach. Overall, students would receive the benefits of the approach quickly by addressing concerns about academics and the links to overall career preparation, providing support and direction when students are struggling, and providing agency to the student. Using AA as the framework to build PRLCs would effectively increase the capacity of the campus to provide academic advising, address a concern of one of the guiding questions in Chapter 1—how can UEC build capacity to improve retention? This solution also lends itself to the servant leadership approach, as leaders “seek to identify means of building community among those who work in an institution” (Joseph & Winston, 2005, p. 10). This approach, as it evolves, will also address the issues with reduced time for career counselling, for the number of advisors would increase and thus reduce overall burden on the professional advisors.

Appreciative Advising themed PRLCs (AAPLC) are the solution being advanced to UEC’s retention issues. The approach fits well with the environmental context, requires little investment by the campus, and complements the servant leadership approach required to awaken and mobilize the campus.

### **Plan, Do, Study, Act**

The implementation of the hybrid solution requires following Cawsey et al.’s (2016) four phases: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. The planning will begin with the *awakening* phase, which requires communicating about plans and conveying of values.

Through use of servant leadership, *mobilization* will demand that advisors, support staff and faculty determine the best approach to implement small, but achievable change, to the existing advising model. In order to effectively plan for change, the move toward AAPLCs will begin in a single unit and focus on short-term goals. The initial change will act as a proof of concept for both purposeful action and designing measures of success by which change can be monitored. After the initial change has been implemented, a period of evaluation will take place to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the new advising model and learning communities. Using evaluative data, the campus can begin to scale the new model to other faculties (*acceleration*). This new model can take additional steps beyond the proof of concept that will move the campus further away from its old advising model and closer to PLCs that provide depth in academic advice and work to support student retention. With the advent of the new model, existing benchmarks and metrics can be used to ensure change is sustainable and dynamic—allowing change to be flexible instead of fixed—so the campus can avoid dramatic organizational change in the future. This plan will lead to an *institutionalization* of AAPLCs across the campus and allow the campus to better serve and retain students.

To begin this work, the director of retention programming, in the role as an agent for change, must work closely with units and advisors to initiate the process. The following section outlines the leadership approach, agency, and practice required to commence this work.

### **A Servant Leadership Approach to Enacting Change**

Although often grounded in a biblical perspective, servant leadership can be found in many contexts where care and attention to the other is required. Indeed, the “human-centred approach of servant leadership counteracts the top-down tendencies ... and opens up a space for nurturing growth and creativity in academic groups” (Moll & Kretzschmar, 2017, p. 170-171).

Servant leadership lends itself to the AA themed change solution as “it entails the intentional and collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experience and achieve their dreams, goals and potential” (Bloom et al., 2013, p. 83) Within the academy, an AAPLC model can help build relationships among students, staff, and faculty—and help improve retention—by focusing on the core belief of servant leadership: Servant leadership means to serve first, “then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 13). Servant leadership, in the UEC context, is leading in a way that helps support campus stakeholders to work for, and to serve, the students. AAPLCs, through servant leadership, is about empowering students with the information and knowledge to make decisions and create positive change for themselves.

### **Core Beliefs of Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is first and foremost about serving. Specifically, it is about serving the people one is leading, focusing on their well-being, and empowering them to reach their potential. Similarly, AA employs six phases that focus on building trust, discovering strengths, inspiring each other, co-constructing realistic goals, providing support, and challenging each other (Bloom et al., 2013). As a change agent, espousing servant leadership can encourage and build a serving culture which ultimately improves the performance and attitudes of the whole group (Flynn, Smither, & Walker, 2015). There are ten competencies associated with servant leadership: listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, healing, contemplation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 2004).

When juxtaposed against Braxton et al.’s (2014) attributes of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to the welfare of students*, several competencies become important to fostering an environment of student success. Both Spears’s (2004) focus on commitment to the growth of

people and building community are servant leadership competencies in the move toward an appreciative advising change plan. For UEC's administrative team, each of these competencies is important, but the emphasis must be on the latter two in order to shift toward a servant leadership approach.

**Commitment to the growth of people.** Servant leadership is key to this organizational improvement plan, as success is found in lifting others to their fullest potential. In this way, if more students are successful in achieving their educational goals, they will persist in their education and institutional retention will be improved. Problematic, however, is that without AAPLCs, students may lack the goal-setting and life-direction they need to succeed. In developing the potential of others, UEC can help create meaning for students, and the stakeholders who support students. Servant leaders are ethical, they encourage, they empower, and most importantly, they care (Flynn et al., 2015). Similarly, the application of appreciative advising can help students identify their strengths, discover themselves, and set goals. UEC staff, faculty, and administration have a strong sense of commitment to the institutional mission—for UEC, this means a commitment to the students. UEC's stakeholders are on a mission to serve students, but are at times pulled in other directions by the demands of managing the institution. The lesson in Dr. Seuss's (1971) *The Lorax* can serve as an important reminder to attend to the needs of the followers. In *The Lorax*, the reader is exposed to a situation where the environment has been destroyed through a series of bad business decisions. Continually, the antagonist is given a chance to change to serve the greater good of the forest—an avenue that is never taken until it is too late. At the end, the moral serves both as a call to action and describes the importance of servant leadership in repairing the community: “UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing will get better. It will not” (Seuss, 1971, p. 62). UEC's



administrative team must espouse servant leadership—both conceptually and in operation—in the development of a campus AAPLC model so that each stakeholder on campus is mobilized to play an integral role in creating a better experience for students.

### **Building Community**

For the administrative team at UEC, embracing Spears' (2004) values of servant leadership will be instrumental in helping with building a community of professional and faculty appreciative advisors within the PLCs. When utilized together, each of the values of servant leadership can work to reduce the power-distance of a traditionally top-down hierarchy. The combination of both foresight and stewardship will improve decision-making beyond the short term. Listening, empathy and healing will build connections between the leader and those being served. Finally, awareness and persuasion will improve the dialogue between administration and followers when the difficult decisions must be made. Building community requires that members of the administration 'let down their guard', focus on the campus's overall mission, and include others in decision making. This is not to say that formal authority will cease to exist, but instead it will be informed and grounded in the need to serve students. To "achieve the successful implementation of servant leadership [and appreciative advising], it is essential to balance the caring dimensions and the dimensions of providing vision, direction, fair treatment, academic excellence and opportunities for professional development" (Moll & Kretschmar, 2017, p. 177). These are critical steps in strengthening relationships and creating change that builds community.

Change at UEC is required in order to stabilize enrolment through improved retention; it is also required in order to fully meet the institution's obligations to its students. To continue on the current path would be an admission that the campus cannot do any better in serving its

students. Providing students with the best opportunity for success is ethically the right thing to do.

In order to demonstrate *commitment to the growth of people* and also *build community*, this change plan will call upon both appreciative leadership and distributed leadership to aid in exhibiting servant leadership guided change. The next section discusses how each of these approaches complement the change plan at UEC.

### **Operationalizing Servant Leadership**

As a means of operationalizing servant leadership, both distributed leadership and appreciative leadership will be utilized. Distributed leadership is “a shared influence process to which several individuals contribute and [draws upon] leadership that arises from the interactions of diverse individuals, which together form a group, or network in which essential expertise is a dispersed quality” (Dampson, Havor & Laryea, 2018, p. 80). Distributed leadership is well-suited to complement the change plan as drawing upon community expertise is required for the successful implementation of AAPLCs. Specifically, “distributed leadership acknowledges the complex interplay between subjects, objects and instruments, rules, community and division of labour to build leadership capacity” (Jones, Harvey, LeFoe & Ryland, 2014, p.605). As AAPLCs will require professional advisors, faculty and the change agent to work together in addressing advising deficits, its use—through a servant leadership lens—will help flatten the organizational hierarchy.

Appreciative leadership—similar to appreciative advising—gets its roots in appreciative inquiry. Its inclusion as a leadership process that can operationalize change process is consistent as the “role of an appreciative leader is to be a catalyst for change and to look for and nurture the best in others” (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015, p. 237). It further aligns itself with the intended

change plans—the adoption of AAPLCs—as “appreciative leadership has been best described as a composite of change practices based on the assumption that organizations have a positive core that, if revealed and tapped, unleashes positive energy and positive improvement” (Lewis et al., 2006, p.89). This shows great synergy with servant leadership that seeks to empower others to better serve themselves and others. Finally, appreciative leadership, like distributed leadership, works to flatten the organizational hierarchy” (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015, p. 237).

As a strategy in operationalizing change, distributed leadership and appreciative leadership approaches will be deployed throughout specific phases of the change plan. The latter, appreciative leadership, will be required to successfully awaken the campus and gain stakeholder buy-in. Specific principles of appreciative leadership will be implemented throughout early phases of the change plan to create momentum for change. Distributed leadership will be more specific to latter stages of the change plan when it will be necessary to mobilize many referent and expert leaders on campus in successfully establishing AAPLCs.

Each of these approaches—through a servant leadership lens—can help both awaken and mobilize the campus to take action. Their inclusion will provide specific means of creating change that addresses a gap in serving students and meeting the campus mission and morale obligations. The next section discusses the ethical considerations of creating change and what is at stake should the campus fail to act.

### **Leadership Ethics**

For the administrative team at UEC, a shift toward servant leadership would mean knowing and understanding the needs of the student body, and then becoming advocates to ensure these needs are met. As noted, previous surveys have identified that the lack of career planning supports, a prime concern for students, is a significant gap in the student needs that has

gone unmet. Further, as discussed in Chapter 1, UEC is a commuter campus that faces difficulty in fully developing the student experience. While the students who attend undergo a typical academic experience, the social experience is underdeveloped, and, therefore, does not hold the same level of importance (Braxton et al., 2014; Braxton et al., 2004). As at most commuter campuses, UEC students arrive on campus to attend class, and when the opportunity arises, leave campus to return to the rest of their lives: work, family, and extracurricular activities. It is a reality that even full-time students may see themselves as part-time, as other obligations outside the academy have equal importance. As a result, staff and faculty that develop extra-academic and social programming often struggle with student engagement and low participation rates. The engagement of students outside the classroom must therefore fit within a schedule that respects the experience of a highly mobile student body. As an input into the campus system, the use of AAPLCs can help students understand their priorities and help motivate them to use programs developed to aid student success, and thus retention.

### **Administrative Ethics**

The administrative team must manifest servant leadership by both making decisions that support the students and becoming a voice for them. It “manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 13). If an institution strips away student supports in the hopes of balancing any year’s budget, the consequence may not only exacerbate the campus retention problem, but neglect to support the very students for which the campus is designed to serve. In advancing the case for servant leadership, Fitzgerald (2015) says to “think beyond immediate, short-term gains and towards future goals and dreams” (p. 80). Some moderate success can be achieved through focusing on short-term goals, but real success is moving beyond these goals—for UEC this

means budgetary decisions must focus on student need. This is a difficult balance; however, to take the easy road is to compound the campus's problem. As St. Francis of Assisi suggests "when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing you have received, only what you have given" (Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 82). Further, from a Marxist approach, change agents on campus should acknowledge that "[they] create [them]selves through the process of production" (Sidorkin, 2004, p. 252). If leadership is to have a meaningful existence, it must serve students. The theoretical assumption of servant leadership is that it is only through the service to others that we can ever truly lead. Leadership, at its roots, is for the service of others and must work to create conditions where the followers can succeed. For the administrative team at UEC, while balancing books at the expense of student supports may be required at times, attention must be paid to minimizing adverse effects.

In order for UEC to remain a leader in higher education, the financial strength of the institution must be carefully managed, but so too must the academic mission, which includes student support. To neglect the latter is to take the position that being present as an educational provider is more important than the actual provision of education. To shift from this position, the administrative team must adopt the core beliefs of servant leadership. Espousing servant leadership—and visibly demonstrating it on campus through actions that lead change toward an AAPLC model—will help create positive change within an environment of scarce resources.

**The ethics of managing change.** One of the common criticisms of servant leadership, and a challenge that will come from implementing change, is that it may appear itself as micromanagement. The nature of servant leadership is that it requires close attention to the follower and a level of interaction that is often diagnosed as interference (Northouse, 2012). Naturally, the move to remodel academic advising and create AAPLCs will require working

closely to fully understand the current environment. It will further demand working with stakeholders to guide them toward working in a new model; it may be expected that feelings of micromanagement and interference may arise. This should not be a reason to avoid the practice of servant leadership—instead it should inform its practice. Joseph and Winston (2005) found that the application of servant leadership “help[ed] establish the organizational and interpersonal trust that holds servant-led organizations together” (p.15). The very practice of servant leadership, and application of its attributes, will work as a positive feedback loop to reinforce its practice. It will be important for change agents, in the face of micromanagement issues, to remain true to servant leadership and avoid authoritative or transactional style leadership. Clear demonstration of lived servant leadership will be critical to implementing change.

As suggested through Acre and Gentile (2015), when creating change, it is important to understand the position of those affected by the change. The change agent must understand “what is at stake for key parties, even those who disagree, what are the main arguments you are trying to counter, and what levers can you use to influence those who disagree with you?” (p. 540). It is in these situations that the principles of appreciative leadership can be useful as it is important that all “staff participate in answering the central positive questions at hand and are empowered to innovate and create what is needed in moving the organization forward” (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015, p.238). This approach to managing change allows the change agent to not only facilitate change, but also be attentive to the matters that concern stakeholders. Senior leaders have a duty of care to faculty, staff and students. In moving through the change process, administrators must be aware of the new expectations that will be placed on the campus community and how they change will impact morale, workload, stress and engagement—this is particularly important for those faculty who will be most involved in change. Addressing and

mitigating issues as they arise will help discourage feelings of insecurity, uncertainty, and animosity that may arise during the move toward an appreciative advising model.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 2 has provided an in-depth analysis of how change will be approached at UEC. Using Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model, this organizational improvement plan deconstructed the organizational contexts of the campus. Utilizing Cawsey, Dezsca, and Ingols's (2016) change path model facilitated the development of a campus servant leadership guided appreciative advising themed PLCs as the way forward to correcting UEC's retention problem. The last section of the chapter discussed the ethical imperative of administration to act for the benefit of both students and the campus. The final chapter provides a well-developed systematic path toward implementing this change solution on campus.

### **Chapter Three – Plan Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

This chapter is a shift from the discussion of the problem of practice. Throughout this third chapter, an action plan to create change at UEC will be advanced. This action plan will have three distinct components, including change implementation, communication, and monitoring and evaluation. Although each component is discussed separately, each of the implementation, communication, and change process monitoring and evaluation sections will execute concurrently and include feedback loops to ensure the change process is dynamic and responsive.

To be successful, the organizational improvement plan will be grounded in short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. Short-term goals include: (1) communicating the need for change in a way that garners sufficient buy-in and begin planning; and (2) creating a change management working group responsible for planning. Mid-term goals, those that should be between 12-18 months of execution, include: (1) reducing the work-load of professional advisors through shifting the ‘student load’ of first-year students to faculty advisors; and (2) successfully establishing benchmark metrics by which the change plan’s outcomes can be measured. The short-term and mid-term goals reflect the need to both *awaken* and *mobilize* the campus. It is therefore logical that the long-term goals are reflective of *acceleration* and *institutionalization*. The first long-term goal is, through servant leadership, to improve the relationship between faculty and administration on campus through actively demonstrating that the motivation to improve is grounded in the need to do better for students. The second long-term goal is to achieve greater capacity for academic advising on campus by developing faculty’s knowledge and practice of appreciative advising. This goal hinges on successful implementation of AAPLCs in the majority of departments on campus. The third goal for this project is to improve



student perception of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare* and therefore improve subsequent commitment to the institution and overall retention rates.

The following change implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation plan, and communication plan will provide the blueprint to reach each of these goals and create an environment where change at UEC is manageable and sustainable.

### **The Change Implementation Plan**

As discussed in Chapter 2, this change plan will lead to a shift in advising culture at UEC. The basic building blocks necessary to begin the *awakening* and *mobilization* phases of the CPM (Cawsey et al., 2016) were examined in depth in Chapter 2 and illustrate important steps in each process. This chapter moves beyond that discussion to consider the next steps. *Awakening* will require getting all stakeholders to understand they share a worldview of education—learning and knowledge creation played an important role at the beginning of many careers—and they are the base for our interpretation of the higher education environment. To serve students well is to ensure this worldview is grounded in change conversations. Also, the vast distribution and discussion of enrolment and retention data need to be done effectively. The plan to distribute enrolment data will be broken down in the communication section later in this chapter. *Mobilization* should allow campus stakeholders to participate in their own deconstruction of the campus environment and retention data—ensuring the campus has a say in shared decision making is key to distributed leadership. To begin the change plan, the change agent must first take steps to ensure stakeholder reaction to change is well understood.

### **Understanding Stakeholder Reactions**

Critical to awakening is that the campus may have very different ideas on the causes and solutions to the retention program. It is important for the change agent to utilize appreciative

leadership and the *discovery* and *dream* phases to provide time for campus stakeholder input. These phases, which also influence the communication plan at the end of this chapter, focus on “mobilizing the whole system by engaging all stakeholders in the articulation of strengths and best practices” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.16) that currently work well now and could work well in the future. This can be achieved through Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) *congruence model* and Judge and Douglas (2009) *organizational capacity for change scale*. These models which will highlight the shortcomings and strengths of the campus community’s understanding of the retention problem. As a change agent, guiding the campus through the congruence model will require a continued focus on student success and student retention. To do otherwise may lead to diverse conversations on research, campus governance structures, and an assortment of issues that are not related to the retention problem. As the change agent, care must be taken to address concerns of the campus as they arise. Appreciative leadership—and appreciative inquiry—provide an opportunity for narratives to better understand the past and present, while they also provid[ing] a medium through which all participants are able to envision potential futures” (Royer & Latz, 2015, p. 697). Gentile (2010) insists embracing values and addressing tension requires understanding the values at play, finding common ground, and “building a set of allies who are engaged first by helping us solve our problems” (p. 221). Individual faculty will undoubtedly have concerns regarding workload and their preparedness for change. Similarly, professional advisors, who already have heavy caseloads, may be reluctant to entertain a plan that will not ease their workload for 12-24 months. As the change agent, steps must be taken to balance the real concerns of stakeholders with the need to address students’ needs and campus retention—planning must include steps to “observe and listen” (Greenleaf, 1996, p. 212) to feedback from faculty and staff, address concerns and then build allies. These steps represent the

*design* phase of appreciative inquiry and are instrumental in co-constructing “an organizational design that people feel is capable of drawing upon and magnifying the results-oriented vision of the change plan” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p. 16). This also represents the backbone in preparing individual stakeholders and the campus for both the *acceleration* and *institutionalization* phases of change and are discussed in the communication plan at the end of this chapter. The following section describes the core of the change plan—developing AAPLCS at UEC.

### **Appreciative Advising Professional Learning Communities (AAPLC) at UEC**

The shift from transactional and responsive advising toward an appreciative advising professional learning community model will provide the campus with a means to address several issues that negatively affect retention. These issues include the lack of career development planning, capacity-building amongst faculty and staff, and understanding and addressing concerns of first-generation students and low-income students as they enter post-secondary studies at UEC. Appreciative advising is a model that can address these issues, for it:

allows the advisor to assist his or her students by integrating them into the higher education experience, enhancing their self-esteem, modifying their locus of control, and motivating them through the use of Socratic dialogue. Appreciative advising assists in shifting the advisor role from viewing the at-risk student in a “deficit” model (what the student does not have) to a sufficient or positive model” (what the student has or can do).  
(Truschel, 2008, p.8)

The development and implementation of appreciative advising professional learning communities (AAPLC) at UEC, if done correctly, can address retention by improving student perception of both *institutional integrity* and *commitment for student welfare*. The next section will describe the proposed AAPLC model, the goals, and a fuller discussion on implementation.

Creating a shift toward AAPLCs will require a change in the way that academic advising is currently delivered on campus. The shift, while initially requiring additional work by advisors

and the change agent, will, over time, reduce the workload of advisors through building the advising capacity of individual faculty members. It should also serve to strengthen the overall relationship between undergraduate students and faculty by fostering meaningful conversations and removing any stigma or fear associated with approaching faculty. Young and Linda (2014) note the “significan[ce] of student-faculty interaction as it relates to psychosocial college outcomes and... significant positive effects on students’ academic self-concept” (p.799). The design of AAPLC at UEC will include a deliberate attempt to encourage individual faculty members across each faculty to formalize their participation in the delivery of academic advising. In this way, distributed leadership is important as the need to call upon the professional advisors and individual faculty members to actively engage in the professional learning communities—and in change—is important. The collective actions of many referent and expert leaders will create professional learning communities that focus “not just on individual teachers’ learning but on (1) professional learning; (2) within the context of a cohesive group; (3) that focuses on collective knowledge, and (4) occurs within an ethic of interpersonal caring that permeates the life of teachers, students, and school leaders” (Stoll & Louise, 2007, p.3). The nature of both AA and PLCs lend themselves to a servant leadership approach that is concerned with building the community.

The use of AAPLCs will be instrumental in improving student perception of the campus by delivering academic advice. Doing so will serve to strengthen not only service delivery, but also build on overall knowledge of the academic curriculum and improve student retention as:

1. First-generation students who may be lost in higher education will be better served through this model by receiving advice in a supportive manner that empowers them and provides agency in the learning process;
2. Individual faculty members will learn to rely on their peers for support in delivering academic advice and increase the advising capacity of the campus; and,

3. This approach of AAPLCs, when broken down at a program level will also have the added benefit of building community and strengthening the relationship between students and faculty through close-knit interactions and learning together.

The development (*acceleration*) and implementation (*institutionalization*) of AAPLCs will follow the work to both *awaken* and *mobilize* the campus. Somewhat problematic is that through the initial change processes, the campus may come to an alternate solution than the one adopted by this organizational improvement plan. As servant leadership involves a great deal of empowerment—and specifically avoids handing down decisions from the top—the reality may be that the change agent may need to use persuasion, modelling, and stewardship (Crippen, 2005; Spears, 2004) to lead the campus toward the AAPLC model. With the assumption that the campus decides to move forward with AAPLCs, the next phases will discuss both *acceleration* and *institutionalization* and how they will be operationalized through a distributed leadership approach.

### **Enacting Change through Distributed Leadership**

Although servant leadership is the guiding approach to change at UEC, it is understood that many stakeholders and processes will be required to navigate change. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) note that it is difficult to talk about leadership practice without reference to tools, artifacts and organizational structure (p. 25). These artifacts are not limited to static objects such as policies and processes, but actively include the social environment. Further, it must be acknowledged that while “individual leaders and their attributes do matter—as in the guiding approach of servant leadership—they are not all that matters (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2001, p. 27). To that end, the following change plan highlights the need for a collective and collaborative approach to enacting change. Collaborative approaches to leadership—where many individuals work interdependently—call upon professional advisors,

faculty members, and senior administration to work together in “open and fluid interactive relation[ships] within the organization through shared decisions (Hairon and Goh, 2015, p.700).

Through the four stages of the change plan highlighted below, the change agent can enact change by sharing responsibility and calling upon the referent and expert leaders of the campus.

### **Acceleration phase**

As the campus moves from the *mobilization* phase, the next phase will require the development of action plans and utilization of champions and networks to effectively create change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Initially, a collaborative approach to distributed leadership is needed “as action is required by multiple leaders working together at one time and place” (Dampson, Hayor & Laryea, 2018, p.80). Action planning will require close work between the change agent, academic advisors, the Learning Together committee, and Learner Engagement committee to develop a pilot model for the AAPLCs. The pilot will include a small scale AAPLC that exists within a program that will serve as a proof of concept. The proof of concept design itself will include four distinct phases including professional advisor training, AAPLC formation, faculty advising training, and delivery (of academic advice). Table 3.1 provides a summary explanation of these four phases. The anticipated timeline and detailed full work breakdown structure can be found in Appendix B.

**Table 3.1**

*Proof of Concept Four Stages of Planning*

<b>Professional Advisor Training</b>	<b>AAPLC Formation</b>	<b>Faculty Advisor Training</b>	<b>Delivery (of academic advising)</b>
Providing the educational and professional development support to the professional academic advisors on campus is critical to the success of this organizational improvement plan. Professional Advisors will engage in training	Formation and initial meetings of the AAPLC will discuss the role and expectations of the group as a support agency to one another. Members will be encouraged to	Initial training of the faculty advisors to be led by professional advisors. Including formal training on principles of appreciative advising and university academic	Commencing in the Fall semester during ‘Welcome Week’. New Faculty Advisors, under the leadership of the professional advisors and support from their

both at other campuses within the University system and in the professional training provided through industry organizations.	share advising challenges and stories and build capacity to deliver quality faculty-led appreciative advising.	calendar. Also includes informal community building through the AAPLC.	AAPLC, will engage their advisees.
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***Professional advisor training.*** The backbone of each AAPLC will be the professional advisor that is attached to the faculties. The role of the academic advisor will be to specifically train faculty members on the intricacies of both the appreciative advising model as well as the ‘ins and outs’ of the university academic curriculum. For this to be successful, each professional advisor on campus will engage in appreciative advising professional development. While UEC’s professional advisors are already familiar with AA, the additional training is intended to ensure a level of competence is held so that UEC can utilize a ‘train the trainer’ approach to educate faculty. This will happen in two ways: internal and external training. Internally, professional advisors at UEC will work closely with the advising team on another campus to understand how AA is delivered. It will be the responsibility of the change agent to coordinate workplace visits and cross-campus collaboration. Externally, professional advisors will be given the opportunity to attend appropriate national conferences related to academic advising, and more specifically, appreciative advising. The Florida Atlantic University Office of Appreciative Education provides both online and in-person training in all areas of academic advising—opportunities for this training will be made available to the professional advisors, the change agents, select members of the Learning Together committee, and several faculty champions. It is the role of the change agent to advocate for financial resources to be allocated for both cross-campus and external professional development. There will be a cost associated with this training; however, it is not expected to exceed \$40,000 over the course of two academic years. Through reallocating professional development training and advocating with senior administration, it is assumed that the financial resources for this training will be available. An important role of the change agent

will be to use data and appropriate literature to effectively communicate the need for change and availability of financial resources.

*AAPLC formation.* The creation of the first AAPLC is an important step in developing the proof of concept. This step requires collaboration—distributed leadership—amongst faculty administrators, professional advisors, the Learning Together committee and change agent to place the pilot AAPLC in a faculty where there is a reasonable chance of success. This is an important step not only in highlighting the need for success but also demonstrating the flattened hierarchy in creating change—a desired outcome of the distributed leadership approach to change (Jones, Harvey, LeFoe & Ryland, 2014). Factors to be included in the decision will be: faculty level of change readiness; perceived levels of buy-in from departmental faculty, and level of knowledge held. While choosing a department where all three factors are the highest may seem logical, it is not required, and may even be ill-advised. There is value in choosing a department in which, if successful, other departments can see synergy with their own environment—the incongruence between the most prepared and least may cause individual stakeholders to discount the success of the pilot. Using a servant leadership approach, the change agent must use communication, community-building, and commitment to build the capacity of others (Crippen, 2005) in creating a decision-making process where many stakeholders are included and that the outcome of the AAPLC is achievable and realistic to campus context. The decision to create the pilot AAPLC must consider the level of buy-in, responses from each department's congruence model, as well as Judge and Douglas's (2009) organizational capacity for change scale, and depth of training required. From this perspective, with a bottom-up approach to the creation of the first AAPLC, the campus will reach a significant milestone in creating change.



***Faculty advising training.*** A core piece of the AAPLC is to provide training and support to each participating faculty member. The professional advisor attached to the faculty, in eliciting a servant leadership model, will play an important role in leading the advising training. Training must be both formal and informal. The formal must focus on elements of the academic calendar and approach to appreciative advising while the informal must centre on building the professional learning community in a manner that creates faculty knowledge capacity of advising matters; both the change agent and the professional advisor hold a stewardship role in facilitating the learning community and training. Additionally, while the pilot will be delivered in a single department, the professional advisors from the other faculties can be called upon to help with the training of faculty during the pilot phase. This additional support will serve two purposes: (1) it will allow individual faculty who feel ill-prepared with access to additional supports and opportunity to ask questions; and (2) it will allow each professional advisor the opportunity to observe the challenges involved in creating the first AAPLC prior to scaling the model. This further espouses the servant leadership approach in tending to the well-being of the follower and building an advising approach that better tends to the well-being of students. The faculty advising training will take place during winter, spring, and summer terms in the lead-up to the commencement of the Fall semester.

***Delivery.*** Concurrent to faculty advising training, the change agent will work with the faculty professional advisor and program chair to assign an advisor to each student in the incoming cohort of first-year students. Each faculty advisor will be assigned between 8-12 first-year students for whom they will work with from first-year through graduation. The delivery of appreciative advising would commence during Fall Orientation and continue throughout both the Fall and Winter semesters. Using both group and individual advising sessions, the faculty

advisor—with support from the faculty professional advisor—will work with their advisees to help them unpack their own strengths, their ambitions, and work to empower them in making academic decisions. As core to appreciative advising, working closely with students to help them self-actualize their agency and role in education is important; this agency and subsequent empowerment are also outcomes shared with servant leadership.

**Institutionalization phase.** Concurrent with the pilot AAPLC, faculty professional advisors will be in constant communication with their own departments in sharing results and growing pains in order to prepare other departments for AAPLCs in the subsequent year. The pilot AAPLC will be subject to both ongoing and final evaluation at the end of the winter semester—after two full semesters of delivery. Consistent and open communication between individual faculty advisors and their advisees, faculty advisors and faculty professional advisors, along with the change agent, will allow for monitoring of ongoing issues and gaps in training. This network of communication will be critical to monitoring change and informing the expansion of AAPLCs to other departments. Additionally, first-year students will provide feedback through survey instruments developed for the AAPLCs as well as the campus-wide First-Year Exit Survey. The Spring semester following the pilot will be critical for evaluation and communication of the results. This feedback is important as a measure to make adjustments to the plan, demonstrate accountability for the change process, and also in scaling the program to other faculties. *Institutionalization* will include monitoring mechanisms and communication—to be discussed later in this chapter—as well as scaling up the AAPLCs to each willing faculty and program. AAPLCs will not be deemed mandatory and it is hoped that by demonstrating success elsewhere, the most immovable departments will eventually come onside. The next

section of this paper will discuss the monitoring and evaluation plan associated with this solution.

### **Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation**

The change plan described previously is dependent on the active participation of many stakeholders in adjusting their role to meet the demands of the new campus paradigm. Critical to moving from the *acceleration* phase to *institutionalization*—scaling up the model—is both benchmark data and active feedback mechanisms. Each phase of the change plan will be subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation. To help the campus successfully move toward the new model, both new and existing data sets will be used to ensure flexible and dynamic change are achieved without negatively impacting the current quality of service. Several key metrics need to be monitored to understand how the change plan will affect advising on campus:

1. To what degree can students readily access academic advising on campus;
2. To what degree does faculty and staff feel prepared to deliver academic advice under the new plan;
3. To what degree will the student experience change between the old and new academic advising paradigm on campus; and
4. How does the new approach to academic advising improve campus student retention numbers between first and second-year?
5. How does faculty adjust to their formal role of advising and does it enhance their engagement in retention?

The following section will discuss each phase of the implementation and the active feedback mechanisms employed to inform change processes.

### **Monitoring Change**

The phases of change plan contain three distinct components—planning, training, and delivery. Monitoring each component requires a method of evaluation that can help change course, if necessary, and determine successfulness of the plan. Calley (2011) suggested three

types of evaluation when developing intervention programs, including “fidelity, process, and outcomes” (p. 348). While this change is not strictly a new program, the characteristics of rolling out a new intervention program and rolling out new academic advising process are similar—each is attempting to alter the course and provide better outcomes for clients.

**Fidelity.** Fidelity is the first step and is best described as “the degree to which the integrity of a program’s original design is maintained when... being implemented” (Calley, 2011, pp. 348-349). Strictly speaking, this requires an assessment to determine whether the intended change plan experienced scope shift from design to delivery. These steps serve to provide validity for all further measurements; any success or failure determined in later metrics cannot be attributed to the change plan if the plan was not followed. An important piece to monitoring and assessing the fidelity of change is captured within the communication plan. Feedback loops from AAPLC meetings and campus planning discussions will use evidence to assess the degree to which the change plan is being followed. It should be noted that monitoring fidelity is done to understand and document how the plan ‘changes’ from design to delivery, not for the sake of restricting change of the plan. Successful change must be responsive to contextual issues and a change to the original plan may serve to strengthen the plan; monitoring fidelity ensures that when the plan is scaled to the campus, similar results can be achieved in other faculties by having access to the most accurate change plan. As a servant leader, the change agent is responsible for overseeing the change plan to ensure it meets the needs of followers’ welfare (Northouse, 2013)—both advisors and students—and continues to address the original problem. In this way, the change agent owes a duty of care in ensuring the fidelity of the change plan remains intact unless circumstances arise that demand a change.

**Process.** Process is the second piece of evaluation. While seemingly similar to fidelity, process assessment “describes information about the type and quantity of program activities” (Calley, 2011, p. 354). In this regard, understanding the volume of advising occurring on campus under existing paradigms, compared to the volume delivered through the change plan, will be important. This is to say, process analysis is concerned with the delivery of services. Monitoring the process ensures that the quantity, type, and quality of the academic advising reaching the students is, at a minimum, meeting the current standards. However, as discussed in the above goals, it is hoped that the capacity for academic advising services on campus improves. To successfully monitor the advising processes, existing datasets and information provided by the professional advising team will be used to create benchmarks. For example, during the training of professional advisors, assessments conducted through Florida Atlantic Universities Appreciative Advising Institute will provide feedback on advisor understanding of AA. These assessments will serve as benchmarks in understanding advisor readiness in engaging in the faculty advisor training and helping guide the creation of AAPLCs.

Further, current datasets, including first-year student surveys and the *National Survey on Student Engagement*, will provide critical information on the primary concerns of first-year students and how they have availed of the services on campus. These datasets will provide longitudinal baseline data on the nature of academic advising on campus. The continued use of these datasets throughout the change plan implementation will serve as a gauge by which to measure the nature and quality of academic advising. Data provided by the professional advising team, such as the number of student visits and the amount of one-on-one advising that is occurring on campus, can create baseline data and be used to establish benchmarks for the change plan. As the change plan rolls out, the process evaluation will also capture data on the

number of advising appointments that are held between the new faculty advisors and first-year students. Using this information to evaluate the process rollout will ensure each faculty advisor receives an adequate amount of support; if a faculty advisor was holding very few appointments, an intervention could occur in the form of additional support from the advising team, counsel from their AAPLC, or at worst, reassigning a portion of their student load to another faculty advisor. This demonstrates both care to the faculty as well as accountability for meeting student needs.

**Outcomes.** The final assessment piece is monitoring outcomes. Outcome evaluation “focus on the results or the effects of the interventions for the client” (Calley, 2011, p.355). Calley (2011) called for three categories for which outcomes need to be measured: “knowledge-based outcomes, affectively based outcomes, and behaviorally based outcomes” (p.356). Knowledge-based outcomes will survey the student’s understanding of their academic program, university services, and the career options available to them. This can be effectively measured through both the first-year exit survey and through the results of the *National Survey on Student Engagement*. The *Canadian University Survey Consortium* also provides important information regarding student experience; however, it only surveys first-year students every three years and the survey cycle may not coincide with timelines of the change plan. Affectively based outcomes are concerned with how the program impacts a student’s emotional state. Again, the aforementioned surveys measure student perception of quality and their ‘happiness’ with the campus experience. The first-year exit survey is an internal tool and specific questions could be tailored to query the impact of the change plan on student experience. Finally, for behavioral change, considering this change plan, student persistence in their education is amongst the biggest determinants of success. Enrolment data from the campus, and annual persistence,

attrition, and retention data can be used to measure whether students are continuing their education at UEC and whether they move on to second-year (and ultimately on to graduation).

As discussed, each of these datasets will provide information that can be used as feedback loops for the change plan. The nature of these sets is that they can be used both to provide baseline data and to measure change. Triangulation of data within, and between, sets can provide a holistic approach to monitoring and understanding the effects of the change plan. The next section will provide a description of the data available to both the change agent and campus stakeholders.

### **Data to Measure Change**

Prior to any change commencing, the planning team will conduct an extensive review of the existing data sets on campus. These data sets will be sourced internally and externally, including UEC's first-year student survey and first-year exit survey, the *National Survey on Student Engagement*, the *Canadian University Survey Consortium*, UEC's persistence, attrition, and retention datasets, and longitudinal enrolment data from the institution as well as industry oversight organizations (see Table 3.2 below). Existing datasets will serve to establish baselines for critical areas of investigation. Understanding how the campus performed in the past is important to determining the effects of change.

Table 3.2

#### *Datasets for Monitoring Change at UEC*

<b>Data Set</b> <i>When it is Collected</i>	<b>What does it measure?</b>	<b>How it will be used to benchmark or monitor evaluation?</b>
<b>First-Year Student Survey</b>  <i>Data collected via survey during third week of classes</i>	First-year student experience evaluating the transition to UEC from time of application until third week of class. Survey captures data on advising processes, registration, and asks questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metrics on access to advising services will provide critical data on quality and frequency of student/advisor interaction.</li> <li>• Metrics on students' perceived level of concern with academic and career outcomes can be used for both benchmarking and</li> </ul>

	regarding students' perceived level of concerns with academic, financial, housing and student career outcomes.	informing annual changes to the advising services model on an ongoing basis.
<b>First-Year Exit Survey</b> <i>Following final exams in April.</i>	Measures levels of engagement, use of campus services, perception of level of success, and intentions of first-year students after transition to UEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions regarding use of campus services—especially advising—can be used to benchmark and monitor for changes.</li> <li>• Questions on student intentions can provide feedback on whether students see more agency/empowerment in their educational goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Florida Atlantic University Appreciative Advising training course</b> <i>For professional advisors: Winter semester during the professional advisor training phase of the change plan.</i>  <i>For faculty advisors: Spring semester prior to Fall term commencement of change plan.</i>	Using assignments, exams and discussion groups, the AA Institute assesses the readiness of academic advisors in their understanding of the theory and application of AA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides measures to determine professional advisors' level of knowledge in AA.</li> <li>• Provides measures to determine professional advisor readiness to act as a trainer of AA methods.</li> <li>• Provides measures to assess faculty advisor level of knowledge on AA methods and readiness in assuming the role of advisor.</li> </ul>
<b>National Survey on Student Engagement</b> <i>Annually during the Fall semester.</i>	"NSSE annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development" (NSSE, 2018).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "[P]rovides a concise and easy-to-digest summary of key results, with further details provided in the engagement indicators and high-impact practices reports which breakdown your results nicely by engagement themes" (NSSE, 2018).</li> <li>• UEC also subscribes to the topical module on <i>Academic Advising</i> which asks targeted questions on the frequency and quality of advising on campus.</li> </ul>
<b>Canadian University Survey Consortium</b> <i>Annually during the Winter semester.</i>	"Surveys provide comparative information on student characteristics and experiences" (CUSC, 2015).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides data on student experience and engagement in academic activities.</li> <li>• Provides data on "student satisfaction with their institution" and "skill growth and development" (CUSC, 2015).</li> </ul>
<b>Persistence, Attrition, Retention data</b> <i>Each cohort's PAR data is updated after the last day to add courses. Cohort data begins to populate one semester after initial registration.</i>	Data on student retention by cohort by faculty by campus. Students are sorted by cohort and tracked as aggregate as they progress through the university system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longitudinal retention numbers can be used to 'awaken the campus' and serve as a benchmark for which to measure changes in retention overtime.</li> </ul>



<b>UEC Enrolment data</b>  <i>Continuous cycle focusing on Fall and Winter enrolment.</i>	Data provided through the university's SIS on new student applications, registrations and graduation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on student body demographic composition; new and ongoing enrolment in programs and faculties.</li> </ul>
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This collection of datasets provides a wealth of feedback on two important components: students' perceptions of success and experience on campus, and overall retention and enrolment patterns at UEC. These are important for monitoring and evaluating the successfulness of change. The triangulation of these data sets provides the campus not only with purposeful information on outcomes of change and process of change, but also how the campus has been able to affect perception of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare*.

Noticeably absent, however, is any data that may be used to measure faculty and staff perception of the quality of advising services on campus and their experiences throughout the change process. Questions on faculty perception of support from their AAPLC, the professional advisor team, and the change agent have not been built. In part, as noted above, feedback mechanisms within the communication plan will provide a mechanism to respond to issues that are vocalized—this, however, is not enough. Staff and faculty need a means to share their experiences in the change plan—this is essential in the practice of both appreciative and distributive leadership. This gap must be addressed in the planning phase and should include a medium by which feedback on experiences can be collected and utilized. A failure to monitor and evaluate staff and faculty experiences is to neglect the welfare of the team; it is a lapse of duty for the servant leader who is supposed to serve first (Greenleaf, 1977). It is also a step that is needed to ensure that student support systems—namely staff and faculty—remain engaged. Without meaningful stakeholder buy-in and engagement, the OIP will fail. It is also this step, along with communication plan feedback loops, that will serve to mitigate any issues that arise

throughout change implementation as well as help calibrate the prescriptiveness of the change plan to the reality on the ground.

### **Calibrating the Change Plan**

The change plan described at the beginning of this chapter serves as a natural progression from planning of change to delivery. Each step occurs in sequence and can be said to flow based on an optimal work environment. It is, however, unrealistic that every scenario can be anticipated. The communication plan, described in the next section, and a staff and faculty feedback tool, will play important roles in keeping change ‘honest’. While the aforementioned timelines envision a scenario where the change plan unfolds in a lock-step sequence, there is ample opportunity for the campus to alter its plans, add additional supports, or even delay roll-out for a full academic year without impacting current advising services on campus. It will be the role of the change agent and the planning committee to ensure that feedback from the staff and faculty is used to deliberately support change. For example, should a professional advisor voice concerns that the training for faculty advisors is taking more time than anticipated, then the planning team can take steps to review the need for additional training support—this action, while potentially delaying an early phase of the plan, will strengthen the chance of success upon execution of the delivery phase.

The plan for monitoring and evaluation, as well as calibrating the plan with real-world experience, is dependent on a highly effective communication plan amongst stakeholders and the change agent. In addition, the communication plan will also be critical in both pleading the case for change as well as serving as a feedback loop as a part of the change process. The following section will deconstruct this communication plan.

### **Communication Plan**

At the core of the entire organizational improvement plan lies the communication plan. The successful execution of communication is critical, as “change is frequently stressful to those impacted, even when change is positive” (DuFrene & Lehman, 2014, p. 477). For the change agent, successful change begins with communicating the need for change on campus. As an ongoing process, the communication plan serves as a feedback mechanism through which the change plan is informed. Each of these roles are necessary and help secure the buy-in and engagement of stakeholders from followers to senior administrators. The strength of the communication plan also works to foster relationships and strengthen professional networks. In order for AAPLCs to support one another and to be successful, their professional network demands a versatile communication plan. This is to say, communication is as much about being clear and transparent as it is about relationship-building. Lehtimäki (2017) described the “content of relationships as task building and information sharing” (p. 100). This serves to illustrate the social importance of proper communication. The communication plan for UEC will be broken into three core steps: (1) making a case for change; (2) building the case for change; and (3) informing change through feedback. An outline of the communication plan is provided in Appendix C.

#### **Core Step One: Making a Case for Change**

As the change agent on campus, the role held by the director for retention programming exists as a crossroads between staff, faculty, and student relationships. Observing and understanding how one stakeholder interacts with another and the outcomes of said interactions is a key part of managing change. Determining the need for this change plan has been in some ways second nature, as the director’s job is to put the campus under a microscope. Indeed, it is

to look for the means by which students can be more successful and therefore make the campus more successful. As an extension of this, the change agent holds a duty of responsibility in communicating the need for change.

The work to *awaken* the communicate the need for change to senior management, and key campus champions such as the Learning Together Committee, is an important first step. The campus senior administration committee is composed of the vice-president, associate vice-president, deans and several other high-ranking positions. As discussed above, ample data is readily available to the director for retention programming to begin this conversation. It is anticipated that it will require numerous meetings with the senior administration committee—each introducing more detailed data—to illustrate the need to take action. The use of data is important, but alone may not be sufficient. It is also important for the change agent to empathize and encourage senior administration’s moral duty to the students. Using an appreciative leadership approach, the change agent must highlight “what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and constructively capable... in a way that strengthens a system’s capacity to apprehend, and heighten positive potential” (Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2004, p.73). This is to say, the change agent should work to communicate a vision for change. As a servant leader, the change agent must demonstrate foresight to envision a model of the campus that will elicit action amongst decision makers (Crippen, 2005; Russell and Stone, 2002; Spears, 2004). In discussing “change agency,” Fullan (1993) focused on how we appeal to one’s sense of moral purpose. He stated that “moral purpose is one of change processes strange attractors because the pursuit and pull of meaning can help organize phenomena as they unfold” (p. 18). As a change agent on campus, communicating the need for change means utilizing data in unison with a vision for change that appeals to senior management moral purpose on campus. Once the need

for change has been communicated in this way at the highest level and most important stakeholders, the next step is to extend the message to the broader community.

### **Core Step Two: Building a Case for Change**

Perhaps one of the most essential steps of the entire change plan is building a case for change. Although this step must follow ‘making a case for change’, buy-in from senior administration alone will doom the change plan to failure. Indeed, for this reason, this step is a blend of core step one, and further requires a high-level of consultations, consistent and frequent messaging, persuasion, and listening. Persuasion represents a critical skillset of the servant leader, but so too is “listening” (Sidorkin, 2004). It would be ill-advised to begin a communication plan that is one-directional. DuFrene and Lehman (2014) stated “that people enveloped in uncomfortable and uncertain situations have worries they need to express, and they need assurance that their concerns are being heard” (p. 448). The change agent must be persuasive but also be willing to hear out each campus stakeholder and show empathy. When illustrating the problem of practice, many stakeholders will present solutions to the problem that are worthwhile and deserve full contemplation. Indeed, the servant leader change agent must use the communication plan to demonstrate the importance of change but also remain open to other models that may address the problem of practice. To this end, appreciative leadership can help by “introducing processes that work to flatten the hierarchical structure through full participation of its members” (Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015, p.239). The change agent can action this through the *giving voice to values* model and be demonstrating a willingness to understand the voices of others. This requires approaching arguments with the position “[e]ven if [I am] convinced that we are correct about our assumptions, how would we act differently if we held different assumptions” (Gentile, 2010, p. 217). This is to say the change agent must display a “purposeful

and directed attempt to understand others and their experiences” (Riel & Martin, 2017, p. 50). Faculty and staff have many close interactions with students daily; being able to empathize will be important for creating buy-in and building a case for change.

As a purposeful means to communicate, both informal and formal channels need to be utilized. Informal channels will require utilizing the referent power of relationships—through the Learning Together committee and Learner Engagement committee—and expert power as a middle manager on campus. Referent power requires capitalizing on relationships and campus champions to advocate the need for change. Greenleaf (1996) states that “[h]e who would communicate should be certain that he is the right person to be communicating” (p. 212). This is to say that communication depends upon the “social relationships and undergirding power that supports these relationships” (Maxcy, 1991, p. 55). Communicating with colleagues and capturing the ear of those faculty members who are respected amongst their peers will be required. Expert power further requires utilizing data and knowledge on processes on campus to communicate gaps in the current system. Formally, having the change agent present during departmental meetings, faculty council, and senate committees will be crucial. These presentations should appear to be iterative over a period of time to ‘hammer home the message’. It will be important to solicit feedback from campus partners. Again, while this intended change plan aims to create professional networks of faculty advisors, studying other change solutions is important and gives voice to others through practiced distributed leadership. A step in getting the campus to recognize the need for change is to provide opportunity for each stakeholder, or stakeholder group, to go through their own process of completing Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) congruence model.

It is expected that both making and building a case will take up to one academic year in execution—this represents a major component of both *awakening* and *mobilizing* the campus. While this may be seemingly tiresome, the efforts during these phases of the communication plan are instrumental to the overall success of creating real change on campus. It is only with the support of senior administration, and the buy-in of faculty and staff, that the campus can move from awakening and mobilizing onto planning and action.

### **Core Step Three: Informing Change through Communication**

As the change process enters the *acceleration* phase, it will be important to use communication as a mechanism to inform the direction of the plan. Communication in this manner will assert the position that stakeholder input is needed to ensure the change plan is successful. It is also necessary to use two-way communication to solicit feedback to add additional supports where required. The stakeholders closest to the change process have information that can be used to help address issues as they arise—effective feedback loops can inform the change agent where efforts need to be directed. This communication needed for core step three must exist amongst the change agent and several key stakeholder groups, including the AAPLC as a group, professional advisors, the new faculty advisors, senior administration and students. Ongoing communication must take place regularly and address key concerns for each stakeholder.

**AAPLCs.** As a part of this communication plan, the AAPLC must meet no less than three times per semester—at the beginning, midterm, and end—to ensure that members of the pilot AAPLC can regularly draw attention to any issue they may be encountering. As a means of ensuring students are receiving appropriate and timely academic advice, the AAPLC should be developed as a conduit through which new faculty advisors can draw upon the expertise of their

peers as well as the professional advisor. Explicit steps should be taken to document and note any issue as it arises. Special attention should be taken to note any successful approach used so it can later inform the *institutionalization* phase of change when AAPLCs are being scaled up in other departments. The change agent should act both as a facilitator and secretary for AAPLC meetings to ensure that clear messaging occurs both within the group itself but also upwards to senior administrators who will closely monitor the change plan. AAPLCs act as the backbone for supporting faculty in their formal roles as academic advisors. It is only through active and engaged dialogue among the group members that capacity can be built to improve advising—and improve student persistence and retention.

**Professional advisors.** Upon execution of the change plan, it is likely that the professional advisors on campus will quickly become overworked; this is a considerable possibility that needs to be monitored. The change agent—as servant leader to the professional advisors—must take care to closely observe professional advisors in their work environment and to lend support whenever possible. This monitoring is dependent on ongoing and constant communication between both the change agent and advisors. Similar to the empathy shown to stakeholders during the ‘making the case’ phase of the communication plan, the change agent must diligently listen to professional advisors as they work through the *delivery* stage of the change plan. Using feedback from the professional advisors, the change plan can be updated to improve roll-out of AAPLCs to other faculties during the *institutionalization* phase of change.

**New faculty advisors.** Similar to what occurs with professional advisors, the change agent must be aware of how new faculty advisors are responding to their new responsibilities. Unlike professional advisors whose responsibilities are limited to academic advising, the change agent must also be aware that faculty have a specific duty of care to the students registered in



their courses. This will affect the amount of time faculty must hold office hours, and the nature of one student visit versus another may be quite different. As an example, a faculty member may be required to wear his/her appreciative advisor hat at one moment followed by his/her professor hat the next. Workload management will have different characteristics and faculty teaching 'load' may have to be balanced delicately in relation to the advisee load assigned to each individual advisor. The role of the change agent, again, is to display empathy, to listen to faculty concerns, and to advocate for additional support and resources where possible. The change agent here will hold a special responsibility for clear documentation of faculty issues as they arise, as it may ultimately affect how AAPLCs are implemented in other faculties. A part of this is ensuring that feedback provided clearly differentiates between advising time and the open-office hours associated with teaching.

**Senior administrators.** As the individuals who fund and support the change plan on campus, an open dialogue will need to exist with the change agent. A component of this communication will occur naturally through regular reporting channels and existing organizational hierarchy between the change agent and the associate vice-president. In addition to regular communication, it will also be important to meet frequently with the senior administrators' committee to provide regular updates on the implementation of the plan and the successfulness of the plan. The number of students who met with advisors, the frequency by which the AAPLC is meeting, the number and types of issues that have arisen—and the solutions found to those same issues—will need to be clearly articulated to the senior administrators in order to provide reassurance that the plan is working.

**Students.** At the centre of the entire change plan are the students. The students will require a number of modes through which they can express concerns about the change in

academic advising on campus—these will include individual student meetings, focus groups, and the student council. Important, here, is that as new students they would not have been subjected to the previous advising model and would be likely unaware in how their model differs from the past. As a part of the new advising model rollout, the change agent should work with the university's communication and marketing team to develop both messaging and appropriate communication platforms to inform students as to the nature of the new advising model. This communication should begin prior to students' arrival on campus and continue throughout their first year.

First-year students should be provided with an opportunity to meet at the beginning, middle, and end of their first year to conduct a focus group on their experiences with advising. This will serve as a mechanism to communicate feedback to the overall change plan. Additionally, survey instruments discussed in the previous section will, on a larger scale, provide feedback to the communication plan. Using feedback from both focus groups and datasets, the change agent should again engage with faculty advisors and professional advisors to correct course where needed. Any feedback that is utilized to improve advising should then be communicated back to the student body and be documented so that the scope—and fidelity—of the change plan are well understood. Doing this will complete the circle of communication and illustrate to students, faculty, and staff that the purpose for change was indeed to better *serve* students. The new model will not only provide better service to students, but also engage students to help improve the model and clearly demonstrate that student input matters. Acting in this way further illustrates the campus' attention to its *commitment for student welfare* and displays its *institutional integrity*—Braxton et al.'s. (2014) two key variables in improving students' subsequent commitment to the institution.

The communication plan outlined in this section is a cornerstone of the overall change plan. Commencing at the earliest stages of change, communication is required to build relationships, to illustrate a concern for students' needs, and to act as a feedback mechanism. Communication, as a tool, will foster confidence in the change plan and help build capacity within the program itself.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 3 has provided a change plan that includes three components including the change implementation plan (or action plan), the monitoring and evaluation plan, and the communication plan. The collective change process requires the change agent and campus stakeholders to implement all three aspects of this plan simultaneously. This plan, if successfully executed and resourced, provides UEC with a suitable approach to change that will address first-year retention for the long term. By implementing deliberate and purposeful faculty-based appreciative advising, where faculty advisors feel supported, the campus can address weaknesses in career counselling, the anxieties of first-year students, and help alleviate some of the burden on professional advisors. The final portion of this paper will present future considerations and next steps in advancing successful change.

### **OIP Conclusion: Next Steps and Future Considerations**

This paper intended to highlight the case for addressing retention at University of Eastern Canada. Using servant leadership as a guiding practice, this OIP advanced the use of appreciative advising professional learning communities as an approach to improve student perception of *institutional integrity* and *institutional commitment to student welfare* as means to address *academic and intellectual development*—and student retention. This approach purposefully builds capacity for advising, addresses weaknesses in career counselling and the

anxieties of first-year students, and finally helps alleviate some of the burden on professional advisors. While the hybrid solution presented in this plan can improve retention, it is not without its limitations—three limitations are discussed below.

One limitation of this OIP is that it addresses retention through a “one size fits all” approach. While at an individual level the appreciative advising professional learning communities support the unique characteristics of each student, the intervention itself is designed to treat each cohort of students as a single entity. The overall implementation and oversight of the program does not take into account individual needs and demographic characteristics when assigning advisors. The campus curriculum at UEC is diverse and wide-ranging; so too are the students who enter the school. After implementation, the next steps to improving the advising model would be to use monitoring and evaluation data in concert with enrolment data to determine whether various student demographics require additional support.

A second limitation is the ability for the change agent to utilize servant leadership in a manner that is recognizable to the operating core. The description and attributes of servant leadership are broad and diverse. As such, the change agent must make an effort to emphasize that serving students is the motivation for taking action. Accordingly, getting campus stakeholders to take up the principles of servant leadership in their own practice may also be difficult. A challenge with this is not only having an agreed upon set of attributes, but also comes with the assumption that serving the institution’s teaching and learning mission are the underlying reasons for taking up leadership roles. To mitigate this limitation, both appreciative and distributed leadership have been included to complement servant leadership. Through their inclusion, the change agent has enlisted several other tactics to help flatten the organizational hierarchy and build capacity for change on campus.

A final limitation with this OIP is the agency of the change agent. Within the narrow scope of this plan, the change agent can work effectively with both the operational core and senior administration to lead change. As the change agent, applied servant leadership will require utilizing both informal committees and formal hierarchical structures to begin the change in the existing environment. However, over the time of this writing, UEC has commenced a strategic planning process and is close to finalizing a new academic plan. These documents, when adopted, will influence administrative decisions at the highest level. The role of the change agent, as advocate for student success initiatives, is to be a voice for the introduction of AAPLC through ongoing campus consultations. Through a servant leadership approach to change, the change agent must work through these realities in order to serve followers—and create an environment of success, persistence, and retention.

The problem of practice investigated a strategic solution to help students succeed in making the transition from first to second year of university studies—and improve campus retention. Grounded in a campus environment that is resource-strapped while serving a population of first-year students with high representation of first-generation students, the campus must take action to improve retention. The solution—an AAPLC model—can improve student retention by addressing the key concerns of students—*anxiety of transitioning to university and career outcomes*—and improve their perception of the campus. Through calling upon faculty to serve as faculty advisors and commit to professional learning communities that foster their growth, the campus will be able to actualize impactful change for students. By strengthening both the academic advising services and faculty-student relationships, the campus can make a meaningful impact on student perception of *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare* that can lead to improved *academic and intellectual development* and, ultimately,

improved student retention. By making the purposeful changes outlined in this organizational improvement plan, UEC can create a campus environment where student success is supported more broadly by all campus stakeholders and the mission of “learning, community, integrity, and excellence” is fully achieved.

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## Appendix A

### Modified application of Judge and Douglas (2009) Organizational Capacity for Change scale at UEC.

Responses to this survey tool have been modified from its original Likert scale. The modified scale reflects an affirmative response, unsure/sometimes response, and a negative response. The responses here are those of the Director, Retention Programming (DRM) and reflect only a brief analysis considering the problem of practice.

<b>Do business unit leader(s):</b>	<b>DRM Response</b>
1. Protect the core values while encouraging change?	Unsure
2. Consistently articulate an inspiring vision of the future?	Negative
3. Show courage in their support of change initiatives?	Unsure
4. Demonstrate humility while fiercely pursuing the vision?	Unsure
 <b>Do middle managers in this organizational unit:</b>	
1. Effectively link top executives with frontline employees?	Unsure
2. Show commitment to the organization's well-being?	Positive
3. Balance change initiatives while getting work done?	Sometimes
4. Voice dissent constructively?	Positive
 <b>Do we have change champion(s) who:</b>	
1. Command the respect of the rest of the business unit?	Positive
2. Possess good interpersonal skills?	Positive
3. Are willing and able to challenge the status quo?	Positive
4. Have the will and creativity to bring about change?	Positive
 <b>Do we have an organizational culture that:</b>	
1. Values innovation and change?	Unsure
2. Attracts and retains creative people?	Negative
3. Provides resources to experiment with new ideas?	Positive
4. Allows people to take risks and occasionally fail?	Unsure



**Do frontline employees:**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. Open themselves to consider change proposals?            | Unsure   |
| 2. Have opportunities to voice their concerns about change? | Positive |
| 3. Generally, know how change will help the business unit?  | Unsure   |
| 4. Generally, view top management as trustworthy?           | Negative |

**Do change champions recognize the:**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. Interdependent systems implications of change?   | Positive |
| 2. Importance of institutionalizing change?         | Positive |
| 3. Need to realign incentives with desired changes? | Positive |
| 4. Value of addressing causes rather than symptoms? | Positive |

**Do employees throughout the organizational unit:**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. Experience consequences for outcomes of their actions? | Negative |
| 2. Meet deadlines and honor resource commitments?         | Unsure   |
| 3. Accept responsibility for getting work done?           | Unsure   |
| 4. Have clear roles for who has to do what?               | Positive |

**Does information flow effectively:**

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. From executives to workers?                | Sometimes |
| 2. In a timely fashion?                       | Sometimes |
| 3. Across organizational units?               | Negative  |
| 4. From customers to the organizational unit? | Sometimes |

**Appendix B**

**Detailed Change Action Plan**

ID#	Est. Time	Descriptor	Lead/stakeholders	Resources
1.0	One - two semesters – Commencing Fall semester one year prior to execution of pilot.	<p><b>Planning team:</b>                      Formation of working group charged with the implementation of AAPLCs on the UEC campus. Planning team will be charged with developing the pilot model for a single faculty on campus. This will be rolled out in four distinct phases: professional advisor training, AAPLC formation, faculty advising training, and delivery.                      Specific duties included here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing terms of reference for scope of work;</li> <li>• Meeting every two-three weeks as necessary;</li> <li>• Examining advisor workload to determine best approach to pilot project roll-out with distinct purpose of limiting any adverse effects to advising services;</li> <li>• Working with faculty to determine existing scope of knowledge and gap between knowledge required to provide advising to students;</li> <li>• Examining each faculty and department to determine which unit would provide the best chance of success in the pilot project;</li> <li>• Engaging chosen faculty and department to gain buy-in;</li> <li>• Examining and developing of metrics for fidelity, process and outcome evaluation; and,</li> <li>• Developing of staff and faculty communication channels for which to provide feedback.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Change agent/</b>                      Learning Together Committee; Deans; Academic Advisors</p>	<p>Time (~2-3 hours per week during planning phase)</p>

<p>2.0</p>	<p>One semester – Commencing winter semester prior to execution</p>	<p><b>Professional Advisor Training</b>                  Providing the educational and professional development support to the professional academic advisors on campus is critical to the success of this organizational improvement plan. Professional advisors will engage in training both at other campuses within the university system and also in the professional training provided through industry organizations. Specific duties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a training plan with advising leaders on other campuses of the university. This should couple the strength of UECs advising team with the institutional knowledge of the Appreciative Advising model already being executed at one of UEC’s sister campuses;</li> <li>• Attending Florida Atlantic University training for professional advisors, faculty champions, deans, and change agent. An important outcome is ensuring that each stakeholder not only receives the training, but is fully versed in program characteristics, purpose and the need. NOTE: This training should also be extended to any faculty member who may be entrenched in the disbelief that AA is useful.</li> <li>• <i>Alternative: Submit RFP for advising training to be delivered on campus by NACADA or similarly qualified agency. Any RFP that is below the estimated cost of travel and training should be investigated as the opportunity to host training on campus will open the doors to more stakeholders.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Change agent as coordinator &amp; professional advisors as trainees/ deans and/or senior management as budgetary decision-makers</b></p>	<p>Internal training: \$2,000 to cover cost of inter-campus travel. External training: Est. \$2,500/each Total est. \$30,000.</p>
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<p>3.0</p>	<p>One-two semesters – Commencing Winter semester prior to execution</p>	<p><b>AAPLC formation</b>                  Formation and initial meetings of the AAPLC will discuss the role and expectations of the group as a support agency for members. Members will be encouraged to share advising challenges and stories and build capacity to deliver quality faculty-led appreciative advising.                  Specific duties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial meeting between all stakeholders in the department;</li> <li>• Individual faculty will discuss their expectations and outlook for their involvement in advising;</li> <li>• Providing a planning and feedback mechanism for faculty advisor training;</li> <li>• Providing support to faculty who feel ill-prepared or reluctant in the new model;</li> <li>• Auditing faculty’s knowledge of academic regulation and university policies; and,</li> <li>• Using audit results to develop training manuals and procedure cheat sheets ahead of faculty advising training;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Change Agent/</b>                  Professional advisors, deans, LT committee</p>	
<p>4.0</p>	<p>One semester – commencing Spring semester</p>	<p><b>Faculty Advising Training</b>                  The core training objective is to prepare faculty for their new advising roles. Assessment of level of faculty knowledge on advising, academic policies, and advising practices are key in this stage.                  Specific duties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of professional development training to faculty advisors as a group;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Professional advisors &amp; new faculty advisors/logistical support and leadership provided by change agent</b></p>	<p>\$3,000                  1.5 day training to occur off-site. This fee would cover space rental and meals for 20 individuals.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation to faculty by institutional researchers on first-year student transition factors and data;</li> <li>• Attendance during spring advising and registration events to meet with students and better understand the types of questions that arise at such events—attendance and participation at such events would help alleviate fears and worries about faculty’s new advisor role; and,</li> <li>• Faculty advisors to go through drills and mock exercises with common student issues (course selection, undecided program, scheduling issues, career preparation); and,</li> <li>• A minimum of two individual and one group meeting with professional advisors/and or other faculty advisors for training.</li> </ul>		
4.1	One month	<p><b>Creating Advisee List</b>                  Once the core group of new faculty advisors has been determined for the pilot, a list of new incoming students for that faculty/program will be divided to give each faculty member a caseload.                  Specific duties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review list of new students arriving for the Fall semester and divide them into groups by admission type;</li> <li>• Review list of new Faculty advisors and their perceived level of knowledge with respect to advising topics;</li> <li>• Assign each faculty advisor 8-12 advisees—faculty who are most comfortable will receive more advisees and potentially more complicated students (transfers versus fresh from high school); and,</li> <li>• Distribute list no later than 8 weeks prior to class.</li> </ul>	<b>Change agent with help from professional advisors</b>	N/A

<p>5.0</p>	<p>Two semesters – Commencing in Fall Semester— THIS IS GO LIVE.</p>	<p><b>DELIVERY</b>                  Commencing in the Fall semester during ‘Welcome Week’.                  New faculty advisors, under the leadership of the professional advisors and with support from their AAPLC, will engage their advisees:                  Specific duties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting their advisees, once in both Fall and Winter semesters, to conduct group advising sessions. The goal of these sessions should be basic orientation to the institution and the expectations of each student;</li> <li>• Meeting advisees individually, at the beginning of each semester, to discuss scheduling, course progression, and general university policy;</li> <li>• Meeting advisees, at least once per semester, to discuss student goals, their strengths, their expectations of the university, and progress; and,</li> <li>• Suggested meeting at the end of the semester to discuss the outcome of the term.</li> </ul>		
<p>5.1</p>		<p><b>Feedback Mechanism</b>                  Fall and Winter term debrief with the AAPLC and stakeholders. These should be done off-site to discourage interruptions and maximize participation. These debriefs should serve as a feedback mechanism for the roll-out of AAPLCs to other units on campus.</p>	<p><b>Change agent</b></p>	<p>Est. \$5,000 to cover two off-site one-day debrief meetings at the end of the Fall and Winter semesters.</p>

Appendix C

Communication Plan Outline

Phase	Timeline	Lead/Channel	Audience	Message/Main points	Goal
<b>Making the case for change</b>	One-two semesters	<b>Change Agent (Director for Retention Programming)— senior administration meetings; bi-annual retreats; individual meetings as needed</b>	Senior Administration Team; Senior Strategic Enrolment Management Committee; Learning Together Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unpacking retention data;</li> <li>- Drawing attention to moral imperative through the institutional mission and vision;</li> <li>- Communicating the need for change;</li> <li>- Using the congruence model to illustrate deficits on campus and make the case to improve advising.</li> </ul>	Securing senior administration buy-in/awakening; Demonstrating deficits in retention work; Demonstrating deficits in campus supports, especially advising.
<b>Building the case for change</b>	One-two semesters	<b>Change agent; campus champions; campus communications department; Learning Together committee; senior administrators— faculty meetings; department meetings; committee meetings; individual meetings.</b>	Operating core; professional advisors; faculty members; student service departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging the campus in the OCC scale;</li> <li>- Unpacking campus values using the GVV model;</li> <li>- Distributing retention data;</li> <li>- Communicate the need for change;</li> <li>- Using the congruence model to illustrate deficits on campus and make the case to improve advising;</li> <li>- Demonstrating senior administrators are listening and want to improve student success;</li> <li>- Communicating a vision for change.</li> </ul>	Listening to campus voices; Informing change through understanding campus concerns and tensions; Awakening the campus;

<p><b>Informing change through communication:</b> <i>AAPLCs</i></p>	<p>Ongoing commencing acceleration phase</p>	<p><b>Change agent; professional advisors; LT committee—</b> Meetings of the AAPLC (three per semester)</p>	<p>AAPLC Pilot faculty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing two-way communication from the top-down and vice-versa;</li> <li>- Distributing change plan details to the AAPLC;</li> <li>- Facilitating AAPLC meetings;</li> <li>- Using LT committee to build capacity of AAPLC by communicating student success pedagogies.</li> </ul>	<p>Documenting of issues and challenges as they arise;</p>
<p><b>Informing change through communication:</b> <i>Professional Advisors</i></p>	<p>Ongoing commencing acceleration phase</p>	<p><b>Change agent—</b> individual meetings</p>	<p>Professional Advisors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitoring for professional advisor burn-out;</li> <li>- Understanding the needs of professional advisor;</li> <li>- Demonstrating empathy;</li> <li>- Developing capacity of faculty advisors through networking with professional advisors.</li> </ul>	<p>Understanding resource needs; determine issues, challenges and opportunities with the change plan; providing venue for feedback; demonstrating empathy for advisor workloads.</p>
<p><b>Informing change through communication:</b> <i>New Faculty Advisors</i></p>	<p>Ongoing commencing acceleration phase</p>	<p><b>Change agent/Professional advisor—</b> individual meetings</p>	<p>New faculty advisors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitoring for faculty advisor burn-out;</li> <li>- Understanding faculty workload repercussions; demonstrate empathy;</li> <li>- Listening to issues regarding maintaining student advising relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>Providing a communication channel for faculty to voice individual concerns; determining issues, challenges and opportunities with the change plan. demonstrating empathy for advisor workloads.</p>



<p><b>Informing change through communication: Senior Administration</b></p>	<p>Ongoing commencing acceleration phase</p>	<p><b>Change Agent—</b> regular SEM meetings; bi-annual retreat</p>	<p>Senior Administration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing details on monitoring and evaluation;</li> <li>- Providing details on issues and challenges as they arise from individual meetings with the faculty and professional advisors;</li> <li>- Understanding senior administration’s perception of the advising system and respond to any issues they perceive with the new system;</li> <li>- Providing venue to demonstrate accountability;</li> <li>- Using data and feedback to understand change.</li> </ul>	<p>Communicating need for more resources where indicated through individual meetings with other stakeholder groups; providing updates on advising processes, quantity and quality of student advising appointments; providing feedback mechanism for which senior administration can make decisions regarding scaling the change plan; demonstrating accountability.</p>
<p><b>Informing change through communication: Students</b></p>	<p>Ongoing commencing acceleration phase</p>	<p><b>Change Agent; Communications department—</b> Individual appointments; focus groups; meetings with the Student Council</p>	<p>Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing venues to gauge student experience and perception of student advising system;</li> <li>- Developing communication messages regarding the advising system operates and its purpose;</li> <li>- Developing communication channels for students to provide feedback.</li> </ul>	<p>Using student feedback to determine the efficacy of the new advising system; Informing students about the advising system; demonstrating to the campus that student success is important by giving students’ voice in the process.</p>

**Appendix D: Express consent from Dr. John Braxton via email to use figure 6.1 of his text (figure 1.3 in this document).**

Re: Doctorate student seeking permission to use figure  
Braxton, John M <[john.braxton@Vanderbilt.Edu](mailto:john.braxton@Vanderbilt.Edu)>

**Reply all**

Fri 3/9/2018 9:38 AM

To:

David Owen Decker

Inbox

Dear Mr. Decker. I am gratified that you find *Rethinking College Student Retention* useful to your dissertation research. You have my permission to use figure 6,1 from the book. You need only to reference its source.

I wish you success in the completion of your dissertation. Sincerely, Dr. John M. Braxton  
Sent from my iPad

On Mar 9, 2018, at 6:34 AM, David Owen Decker <[ddecker3@uwo.ca](mailto:ddecker3@uwo.ca)> wrote:

Good morning Dr. Braxton,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing you this morning as I am seeking permission to use a figure in your text *Rethinking College Student Retention* in my doctorate work. I am currently enrolled in the third year of a Doctor of Education program at University of Western Ontario.

My work focuses on a case study commuter campus in Eastern Canada that has experienced longitudinal high attrition.

In my review of literature, I have found the work of yourself, and your colleagues, to be very informative and has helped guide my own case study. I have placed particular emphasis student perception of the organizational characteristics—namely *institutional integrity* and *commitment to student welfare*.

I am wondering if you would consent to me including figure 6.1(page 111) in my own work. The final work will not be published. It will, however, be searchable through a repository of doctorate papers at University of Western Ontario.

I thank you for your time in reading this email and any consideration you give to my request.

Thank you,

Dave Decker  
Doctor of Education (EdD) Candidate  
University of Western Ontario

**Appendix E: Express consent from Dr. Michael Tushman via email to use figure 4 of his article (figure 2.2 in this document).**

Re: Doctorate student seeking permission to use figure

Tushman, Michael <mtushman@hbs.edu>  
Fri 3/9/2018 2:34 PM  
To: David Owen Decker <ddecker3@uwo.ca>;  
Dave,

Of course..pls do use as you see fit.

All the best,

Mike

**From:** David Owen Decker <ddecker3@uwo.ca>  
**Date:** Friday, March 9, 2018 at 8:31 AM  
**To:** "Tushman, Michael" <mtushman@hbs.edu>  
**Subject:** Doctorate student seeking permission to use figure

Good morning Dr. Tushman

(I apologize if this reaches you in duplicate. I used a form on the HBS website prior to locating your email. This email is almost verbatim of what I submitted via the form)

In anycase,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing you this morning as I am seeking permission to use a figure in your article *A Model for Diagnosing Organizational Behavior* in my doctorate work. I am currently enrolled in the third year of a Doctor of Education program at University of Western Ontario.

My degree is in educational administration and leadership and focuses on a case study commuter campus in Eastern Canada that has experienced longitudinal high attrition.

In my review of literature, and through readings in our program, I have found the work of yourself and the late Dr. Nadler to be very informative and has helped guide my own case study.

I am wondering if you would consent to me including figure 4(p.47) in my own work. The final work will not be published. It will, however, be searchable through a repository of doctorate papers at University of Western Ontario.

I thank you for your time in reading this email and any consideration you give to my request.

Thank you,  
Dave Decker

Doctor of Education (EdD) Candidate