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Aligning First-Year Academic Learning Experiences at a Small Liberal Arts University

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WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Aligning First-Year Academic Learning Experiences at a Small Liberal Arts University

by

Robyne Hanley-Dafoe

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

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Abstract

First-year academic experiences in post-secondary education have been widely studied (Pampaka, Williams, & Hutcheson, 2012; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Rapid expansion of student enrolment has impacted the scope of teaching and learning practices at universities (Zepke, 2018; O'Brien & Iannone, 2017). Much of the focus has been on student success, satisfaction, and retention; however, Brownlee, Walker, Lennox, Exley, and Pearce (2009) suggest that more research on the student learning experience is needed. This organizational improvement plan (OIP) expands on this idea to include pedagogy and course design, as they impact student learning, while exploring institutional identity. Using Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames analysis, the steady erosion of first-year teaching and learning practices is attributed to pressures both internal and external to the University. Using appreciative inquiry and Kotter's eight-stage change process model, two empirically supported approaches for change implementation are discussed. After gauging the change readiness of the institution through a critical organizational analysis and using the plan, do, study, act model, two solutions are proposed: 1) authoring *Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses* document and 2) developing professional learning communities. A systematic and strategic change plan is presented, accompanied by a communication plan approach based on the works of Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols (2016) and Husain (2013). The full range leadership approach to foster transformational leadership is discussed as an approach for implementing the change plan. The OIP proposes a series of recommendations and future considerations that can be adopted by other institutions as a platform for first-year teaching and learning renewal.

Keywords: liberal arts teaching institutions, transformational leadership, appreciative inquiry,

Kotter's eight-stage change process model

Executive Summary

This organizational improvement plan (OIP) addresses the erosion of the first-year academic experience by realigning teaching practices to reflect the mission and vision of a small liberal arts university in Ontario. The problem of practice asks how a small liberal arts institution can align first-year courses with the University's mission of student learning experiences being personal, purposeful, and transformative. First-year academic experiences in post-secondary education have been widely studied (Pampaka, Williams, & Hutcheson, 2012; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Rapid expansion of student enrolment has impacted the scope of teaching and learning practices at universities (Zepke, 2018; O'Brien & Iannone, 2017). Much of the focus has been on student success, satisfaction, and retention; however, Brownlee et al. (2009) suggest that more research on the student learning experience is needed. This OIP intends to address this gap.

Chapter 1 explores the organizational context and history with a particular emphasis on the University's positionality and identity as a small liberal arts university. The organizational structure and current leadership practices are highlighted to illustrate the current state in comparison to the desired state. Using Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames analysis, the steady erosion of first-year teaching and learning practices is attributed to pressure from both internal and external forces.

Chapter 2 focuses on the planning and developing stages of the OIP. Using appreciative inquiry and Kotter's eight-stage change process model, two empirically supported approaches for change implementation are presented. After gauging the change readiness of the institution through a critical organizational analysis and using the plan, do, study, act model, two solutions are proposed: 1) authoring *Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses* document and 2) developing professional learning communities.

Chapter 3 bridges the current and desired state of the University described in Chapter 1 with the change plan presented in Chapter 2. This systematic and strategic change plan accompanied by the communication plan approach, based on the works of Cawsey et al. (2016) and Husain (2013), are presented as a means of launching the OIP into practice. The full range leadership approach to foster transformational leadership is discussed as an approach for implementing the change plan recommendations and wayforwarding. The recommendations and future considerations include incorporating larger upper-year courses into the course redesign cycle and having the professional learning community expand to serve as a venue for peer support in pedagogical research.

The aim of this OIP is to develop a plan to address the erosion of the first-year academic experience at a small liberal arts university. It is envisioned that implementing this OIP will allow the University teaching community the opportunity and direction to realign their teaching practices. This transformation shift will provide students a learning environment that is personal, purposeful and transformative. This OIP can also serve as a guiding document for other institutions as a platform for first-year teaching and learning renewal.

Dedication

*This work is dedicated to the memory of my mom.
She believed in me, so one day, I could believe in myself.*

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A doctoral adventure is only possible because of the people who surround us and support us; Our families, our teachers, our friends and clearly our pets. So, with a grateful heart, I express my deep gratitude with these acknowledgements.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my home team: My parents, Jeff, Hunter, Ava Lesley, and Jaxson. I share this entire doctoral journey with you all. Being a mom to you three is the biggest and brightest blessing in my life. You are my true joy. And to Jeff – you are an extraordinary husband and I celebrate the life we have created together. Our little tribe of five is more than I ever could have hoped for. So, to my people...thank you for loving me back.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem of Practice

Organizational Context

This organizational improvement plan (OIP) addresses the erosion of the first-year academic experience by realigning teaching practices to reflect the mission and vision of a small liberal arts university in Ontario. The University's mission and vision statements articulate the importance of fostering and supporting student learning. Indeed, this university is renowned for its small class sizes, innovative pedagogy, and commitment to transformational learning experience through relationships and community. However, this type of first-year learning experience appears to be on the brink of extinction.

Over the past two decades, a slow and steady erosion of the first-year learning experience has occurred. Class enrolment has increased, seminars have been abandoned, the collegiate system has shifted to administration offices, and lecturing to seas of students who seldom meet their professors has become the norm. Assessment and evaluation practices have shifted to standardized multiple-choice tests with little feedback for students. Interestingly, the faculty report that this is not the way they want to facilitate their classes. Currently, no explicit leadership plan specifically oversees the first-year learning experience. A plan is needed, and I have agency and capacity within my role as the Educational Developer at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to craft an OIP to address this issue.

Organizational History

The University is nestled on the banks of a river in Central Ontario and is home to approximately 8,000 undergraduate and 1,400 graduate students. In the fall of 2016, 1,500 first-year students were welcomed. The University was purposefully established in the 1960s as a liberal arts institution as an alternative to conservative universities of the day. The principles of

liberalism, such as holistic approaches to teaching and learning for leisure and joy, in conjunction with small classes, personalized experiences, and collaborative interactive models of teaching and learning were foundational pillars, as evident in the vision and mission statement:

At [the] University, education is both personal and purposeful. Grounded in our commitment to environmental sustainability, social justice and community development, we're here to inspire and equip the next generation – individually and collectively – with the passion, confidence, skills and intellectual rigour to advance their communities and the world. For those who believe that the best education provides you the ability to take an active role in your learning and combines rigorous scholarship with supportive relationships...[this] University is Canada's champion of collaborative learning that's personal, purposeful and transformative. (University position statement, 2013)

The University was forged to be a unique and personalized learning experience anchored by supportive relationships. However, the first-year academic experience appears to be losing these values and traits. For example, class enrolment has increased exponentially. On average, there are now over 300 students in any one of the 95+ first-year courses (Registrar's Office, Fall 2015). Historically, fewer than 100 students would be in first-year classes, and each course would have a seminar or tutorial component of 10 to 12 students led by a faculty member. This learning format provided the opportunity for close interactions, rich discussions, and rapport—not only with faculty, but also classmates. Table 1 shows how the approximate class enrollment averages have changed over the years.

Table 1
Approximate Class Enrolment Averages

| Year | Students in first-year courses | Students per seminar |
|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1965 | 50 | 10 |
| 1975 | 80 | 10 |
| 1990 | 200 | 20 |
| 2000-2015 | 300+ | No seminars |

Note. Data from Institutional Research Office.

Within the teaching context and with large class enrolment numbers, the lecturing model is the norm and lectures are usually three hours in duration. Assessment and evaluation are predominately multiple-choice tests with little feedback for students. The CTL conducted a study in 2015 (CTL, 2015) where faculty reported that this change in teaching practices was not how they wanted to teach nor what they would have expected at this University. The faculty reported feeling trapped by the pressure to accommodate large class sizes due to reduced financial resources and heightened expectations from administration. They also reported that students have challenges that often have little to do with the curriculum but more with variables such as socio-economic difficulties, jobs and responsibilities, mental health conditions, accessibility supports, and, more recently, interpersonal issues, such as how differing worldviews are presented in class.

Organization Structure, Leadership Approaches, and Practices

Organizational structure. The University has a traditional hierarchical academic organization. First-year courses and teaching fall directly under the provost and vice president, academic. Deans and chairs oversee faculty and instructors. The leadership approach from the president and BOG is an autocratic, or top-down, leadership style where control and power are used to make and enforce decisions with little input from the teaching community. Every group below the president and BOG has decreasing amounts of power to enact change or make decisions. Decisions are typically made behind closed doors with information briefings to the wider community afterwards. This approach of leading top-down has contributed to the current tensions that are impacting first-year courses and teaching practices. For example, in the CTL First-Year Academic Experience Report (CTL, 2015), faculty reported frustration with several top-down decisions from senior administration that impacted their teaching practices, including a shift to all first-year courses being half credit (0.5 credit/semester) from full credit (1.0

credit/academic year); higher first-year course enrolments and class sizes; use of overflow rooms (students watch lecture from another classroom at the same time from a monitor) for large classes instead of additional sections of the course; and reduced financial resources for marking and teaching assistants.

Leadership Approaches and Practices

There is a gap between the current state and what the University aspires to be—or was. This disparity is a result of an ideological conflict between the conservative approach of leadership by senior administration and the BOG, and the broader community of faculty, staff, instructors and students. The emphasis of the leadership is on the number of students as funding units and lean management practices (or waste elimination) at the expense of education quality and teaching experiences. This approach is in direct contrast to the University's identity as an institution. There appears to be tension between preserving the reputation of being a small university with small class sizes, close proximity to faculty, and personalized feedback, while at the same time growing rapidly and trying to reduce costs. One impact is demand for faculty to teach more with less. This approach to consumerism and profit does not reflect the University's mission and vision. Although the University is still considered a liberal institution, some members of the leadership team lead by conservative values and this is having an impact on first-year teaching by increasing class sizes, reducing course support (e.g., teaching assistants, marking support), and moving to lecture-only models of teaching.

The main argument of the conservative approach within a post-secondary environment is to preserve the historical value and integrity of an institution based on the hierarchical model of leadership whereby a chosen few elite members of a predetermined social group exercise power and decision making over the collective (Guttek, 1997). This conservative lens maintains and

affirms long-held beliefs and practices, hence ascribing minimal value to change and innovations, challenges, or moving too quickly or dramatically away from a current model. The governance model at this University has a small and select group of members making impactful decisions without outside consultation from the general membership.

This conservative lens can be used to explore and connect to another issue with the current teaching practices. One specific example is faculty's reluctance to take an active role in adapting or enhancing their teaching practices to accommodate larger class sizes. Administration has made a top-down decision to add more students, as noted. Some faculty, disagreeing with this decision but burdened to enact it, move to a lecture-only course format with multiple-choice tests. Faculty have been presented with supports and strategies through professional development opportunities to learn new pedagogical approaches for teaching large classes, yet few faculty attend. In 2016, the CTL offered more than 10 professional development sessions focused on first-year teaching, and their attendance was low compared to that of sessions such as "How to Deal with Conflict and Stress in Your Courses" or "Managing Competing World Views in Your Class."

It is important to recognize this tension. Administration is motivated by financial concerns to increase enrolment targets. Last year, the University increased enrolment by 14% to bring in more revenue but added no additional funds or resources to support the faculty and student service departments. The need for more revenue from student tuition occurred because the current federal and provincial governments have reduced financial support for post-secondary institutions. Universities and colleges are therefore relying on tuition dollars to cover operating costs.

Students, Faculty, and Staffing; Centre for Teaching and Learning; and Challenges

Students. The University attracts strong students. The research office reported that 101 students (those direct from high school) typically have averages between 70% and 90%. Applicants are offered free tuition if entering with a high school average of over 90%, and students can keep this free tuition by maintaining an average of at least 80%. Of the 1,440+ direct-from-high-school students admitted in the 2015–2016 academic year, students with an average between 70% and 80% represented the highest entry-percent category, followed by students in the range between 80% and 90% (Table 2). A total of 78.3% of first-year students have an entry average between 70% and 90% in the 2015–2016 academic year. These data help frame the target population variables within this OIP.

Table 2

Entrance Averages for Students Entering from High School Reported for the 2015–2016 Academic Year

| Grade Range | Count | Entry % |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <50 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 50–60 | 4 | 0.3 |
| 60–70 | 113 | 7.8 |
| 70–80 | 580 | 40.2 |
| 80–90 | 550 | 38.1 |
| 90+ | 150 | 10.4 |
| Unknown | 45 | 3.1 |
| Total | 1,442 | 100.0 |

Note. Institutional Research Office, 2015–2016 Report.

Faculty and staffing. Like other universities in Ontario, the University has struggled in recent years with financial challenges; however, its struggles would be considered small compared to those of larger institutions. These financial challenges appear to be under control, with a reported surplus for the past two years. There are approximately 200+ faculty members

and 100+ part-time sessional instructors. The current president is in the second year and has made advances in infrastructure (e.g., new buildings and athletic facilities) and recruitment efforts. It is important to note that some staffing tensions still appear to be present as is evidenced by challenges brought forward during union meetings.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning. The CTL was rebranded in 2015 and employs staff in key positions to support educational development, scholarship on teaching and learning, and teaching recognition programs. More than five faculty teaching fellows currently serve the CTL across the decanal units. The CTL also supports the First-Year Caucus, which is a community of practice that supports teaching improvements and facilitates recommendations from the provost.

Challenges. The University's aim to offer personal, purposeful, and transformational learning opportunities can be affirmed by developing an OIP that targets course design and teaching practices. However, the political climate and stakeholder interests pose limitations and challenges for applying an OIP. It is expensive to operate a liberal arts university when the climate within the government has shifted to a strategic mandate agreement that is focused on job measures post-graduation. Competing stakeholders are impacted by this problem of practice (PoP): faculty, instructors, staff, administrators, managers, students (undergraduate and graduate), and the BOG.

For this OIP, almost all of these stakeholders have competing agendas and approaches to addressing this PoP. Each has an influence on the first-year learning experience, which will be addressed in the planning of this organizational change. I intend to implement my OIP in a manner consistent with full range leadership theory, specifically, the areas of soliciting group members' ideas and supporting calculated risks (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The full range leadership

model has four areas of focus: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence; however, my focus will be in the areas of feedback and risk, as previously mentioned. For some faculty, changing their approach to teaching may be challenging. I intend on ensuring that the faculty members who are taking risks are supported. I will also rely on the component of inspirational motivation to help communicate the vision of creating an improved teaching and learning experience for both the instructor and the students. I intend to support and motivate the faculty to adapt their teaching with differentiated instruction and wise practice strategies for the organizational challenges inherent at this institution.

In summary, this organization is in transition with its core initial framework values being challenged. The next section provides my leadership position statement. My statement also incorporates transformational leadership theory with full range leadership, which weaves together the guiding principles and vision that will guide my leadership work implementing this OIP.

Leadership Position Statement

The leadership theory that I have adopted and practice is transformational leadership. This leadership theory was originally developed by Burns (1978). Burns reported that transformational leadership is when leader can take their followers to a higher level through motivation for improving performance or achieving a goal. Hackerman and Johnson (2004) reported that transformational leaders actively engage with their followers and the process. The authors indicated that these leaders are passionate, empowering, visionary, and creative. An early concern about Burns' theory was that it was difficult to test since the idea of "transformational" seemed elusive to researchers. To address this concern, Bass (1985) furthered Burns' theory by

postulating a behavioural conceptual framework: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation.

For my PoP, I will engage in transformational leadership as my guiding leadership approach. Harrison (2011) reported that a significant body of research supports using a transformational leadership approach in higher education settings. Harrison argued that the benefits of this leadership approach go beyond improved student learning outcomes and can be used to support faculty development (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009). Harrison reported that transformational leadership was positively correlated with decreased faculty turnover rates, higher levels of faculty job satisfaction, increased faculty commitment to university reform and change, and with heightened faculty empowerment (Harrison, 2011). These leadership approach outcomes are important to the PoP because they address the additional stressors and pressure from administration that the faculty and instructors who are teaching the first-year courses are experiencing.

This leadership approach, based on the empirical evidence reported, will also ensure I am adopting an approach that is known to increase faculty commitment to university reform and change. Adams and Hambright (2005) argued that universities need to be learning organizations that are led by transformational leaders. Although the University is not currently being led by transformational leadership practices, this model can be used within this OIP to influence change initiated from the CTL.

I am also committed to the principles of leadership development. Mimbs (2002) presented the importance of viewing leadership development as “self-development.” She argued that we should not see ourselves as leaders in one role, for one particular job. Her research found that most leadership development programs were for a particular job or an in-service for a new

curriculum. She argued that we need to develop the “whole” leader and not just equip them with a particular skill. I adopt this view of leadership development. Being a leader, for me, encompasses all of me. I am a blend of my academic experiences, professional experiences, and life experiences, all while being a teacher, a student, a mother, a wife, a coach, and an athlete, for example. My development as a leader requires commitment to continued growth in multiple areas. I strive to be in a state of renewal, reflection, and learning as part of my development as a leader.

To further support my aim of using transformational leadership, I will also include components of Bass and Avolio’s (1993) full range leadership model. As previously mentioned, Bass (1985) added tangible and measurable components to the transformational model to address the challenge of quantifying Burns’ theory. The full range leadership model can be described as a constellation of leadership approaches and actions that match situations or problems with strategies. As previously noted, this model has four areas of focus: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. I intend on shaping my leadership approach around these two theories. This approach will be well-suited for the climate of the University when it comes to supporting teaching practices and improvements.

Leadership Lens and Fit

In my leadership practice, I adopt the tenets of liberal arts education and leadership as described by Wren, Riggio, and Genovese (2009). I live a life committed to the belief of freedom through education. I believe in the importance of critical thinking, problem solving, knowing your authentic self, and respecting others, and I believe in the power of education to transform lives. I see liberal education as the means of cultivating global citizens, co-creators of knowledge, and lifelong learners. These ideas fit within my leadership framework by the notion

that we need to cultivate deep learning and reflective learners. Everyone's potential is limitless and we cannot predict the future. We can, though, prepare global citizens who will be ready to tackle the difficult questions tomorrow brings. Our role as educators is to prepare the next generation to solve the problems that do not even exist yet. This lens and perspective aligns with the University's intention as articulated in its position statement.

Leadership problem of practice. How can a university ensure that the first-year learning experiences for students within the social sciences and humanities align with the university's vision of education being personal, purposeful, and transformative? What can be done to address the erosion of the first-year learning experience at a small, Central Ontario, liberal arts university?

As previously mentioned, the first-year learning experience at the University was specifically designed to be a unique and transformational learning experience. The University was once renowned for small class sizes, innovative pedagogy, and commitment to transformational learning experience through relationships and community. However, this type of first-year learning experience appears to be diminishing, as noted. Over the last two decades, a slow and steady erosion of the first-year learning experience for students has occurred. From an internal review conducted in 2015, the faculty reported that this is not the way they want to teach their classes. Currently, no explicit leadership plan specifically oversees the first-year learning experience. My OIP aims to set in motion the necessary action and direction to preserve the teaching and learning reputation by fostering a new legacy of quality teaching practices that will ultimately improve student learning. The goal is to renew the University's commitment to meaningful first-year student learning experiences that are aligned with the University's mission for the benefit of the students and instructors.

The gap between present and envisioned direction for the University as it relates to first-year teaching represents an ideological conflict. The University is currently embroiled in a hybrid of conservative and neoliberal ideological approaches of leadership by senior administration and the BOG. The emphasis is on quantity of students as funding units and lean management practices (or waste elimination) versus quality of education and learning experiences. This approach is in direct contrast to the University's identity as an institution/organization. There appears to be a tension between holding on to the reputation of being a small university while at the same time growing rapidly and trying to reduce costs. The impact falls onto the faculty to teach more with less. This approach to student-driven consumerism and profit does not reflect the University's guiding mission and vision. Although the University is still considered a liberal institution, the current lack of coordinated and strategic direction for first-year courses and teaching practices is having a negative impact on the students, the faculty, the staff, and, ultimately, the reputation of the University.

To address this PoP, I intend to implement an OIP that focuses on first-year course design and pedagogical improvements through professional development. The erosion of the first-year learning experience has changed the landscape of teaching and learning in many ways. It is a complex problem with multiple competing factors that need to be investigated to further understand the impact. To develop a deeper understanding of how to improve the first-year learning experience, identifying and understanding the interconnected factors is paramount. A large portion of the first-year experience research focuses on student transitions to university and the issue of retention. For my OIP, I am interested in taking a different perspective. I intend to use course design and teaching focus to lead the University's first-year courses and teaching

practices to a more desirable yet achievable set of practices that will enhance the first-year academic experience.

Framing the Problem of Practice

Historical context. As previously noted, the University was founded in 1967 on the ideals of interactive teaching and learning that is personal, purposeful, and transformative by the efforts of a citizens' committee that wanted to establish a university to serve the local area. It was a public liberal arts and science-oriented university, small, with committed faculty and leaders. The BOG actively recruited leaders who shared the founding leaders' vision and maintained the institutional identity. The senior administration and leadership models remained consistent for several decades after inception, staying true to the original vision and value system. These liberal, values-based leadership practices ended abruptly when the graduate-to-employment focus became the new priority of the province in the early 1990s. Universities were directly impacted by the government shift to an employment-readiness model that resulted in significant federal and provincial funding cuts, leaving the University with significant debt and a questionable future. Statistics Canada reported that in the 1990s Canadian universities were producing 1.2 million graduates, but only 600,000 jobs were created in that decade (Cote, 2007). Cote (2007) wrote:

While these university graduates are less likely to be unemployed, it is because they take jobs requiring lower levels of education, leaving the hapless high school and community college graduate in an even worse predicament than was the case before so many began taking the university route to compete for entry-level positions. This predicament is referred to as the "downward cascading effect" of credential over-production. (p. 2)

To address and navigate the political climate and pressures, new leadership and senior administration were appointed at the University. They introduced a neo-liberal agenda focused

on lean-budgeting, increased profits through tuition, capital-based allocations of resources, and decision making based on investment to returns. An employment hiring freeze was imposed, and budgets were drastically reduced. A clear line between administration and academics was drawn. The teaching and learning experiences were caught in the crossfire and students were adversely impacted by this tension, particularly by two faculty strikes. Present day, this tension still exists, and the legacy of the leadership change has left a mark.

Despite the change in leadership in the 90s, individuals and departments made a concerted effort to preserve and maintain the liberal arts origins. During the hiring freeze, few new faculty and staff were hired, and the origins of the University were still known and practiced when possible, despite the leadership pressures to change. With the 50th anniversary of the University approaching in 2014, the BOG committed to reaffirming the identity of the institution as a liberal arts school. New leadership and senior administration were appointed, and a new chapter began, characterized by a desire to reclaim the origins and values of the University.

The University's once-unique approach to personal development for students through supportive, collaborative community engagement is in more demand now than ever (Slavin, 2008). The teaching practice whereby students lead the way by co-creating experiences rooted in dialogue, diverse perspectives, and collaboration is losing ground to lecture-based courses and standardized testing. In a recent study conducted by the CTL, faculty reported that the once fertile lands of a learning environment that builds life-long passion for inclusion, leadership, and social change is dwindling. Discussions with the first-year caucus group (first-year instructors and staff committee) suggested that due to larger class sizes, fewer financial supports with added financial pressures, and increased student complexity, meeting the expectations of quality first-year courses was becoming more difficult (CTL, 2015). To help inform how this OIP can

support the alignment of the teaching and learning practices with liberal arts values, Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames will be examined in conjunction with political, economic, social, and technological factor analysis (PESTA) and internal data review.

The University Through the Four Lenses of Organizational Theory

As a means of exploring in more depth the organizational context, this section uses Bolman and Deal's (2013) *Reframing Organizations* four frame theory. Each frame will be presented and explored within the context of the small liberal arts university.

Structural frame. The structural frame is connected to this OIP through the early works of Clark (1956) who argued that "organizational structures and processes are frames that are shaped and transformed by a distinct organizational identity" (p. 328). The University's organizational structure and unique organizational identity are in transition with their core initial framework values being challenged. As previously noted, there is an ideological conflict. Although the school was forged on the principles of liberalism, the practice of quality academic learning opportunities in first-year is at risk. A structural challenge is the pedagogical practices of first-year instructors. Some faculty choose to persist with traditional lecturing knowledge-transfer methods, making learning one-directional in response to the large class sizes from increased enrolment. Within this practice, faculty are the gatekeepers of knowledge. There is a social architecture to this. A more progressive structure could be to view students as partners in learning and strive for active engagement versus passive listening. Although some faculty embrace the idea of active learning techniques, others resist. The structural frame highlights the importance of knowing roles, goals, policies, and traditions within the teaching landscape. This frame can therefore inform how the OIP can better identify and address these structures.

Another pathway to explore the structural frame is addressing the social components of the teaching-learning transaction through a multi-factor review. Faculty and instructors hold worldviews or versions of their social selves. It is important to recognize that some faculty may be more inclined to adopt liberal values in their teaching practice—others may not. Some faculty may hold a competing view of the purpose of education; others may be more collaborative. Regarding learners, Gary (2006) wrote that liberal education strives to equip them with knowledge and skills to be independent thinkers, to be critical of authority, to be familiar with their own sense of self, and to create their own knowledge and way of seeing the world. Students also play a factor in the social lens. Some students may be more interested in specific employment opportunities following graduation and may not subscribe to the notion of learning for pleasure or freedom of thought.

Human resource frame. Several human resource factors relate to the organizational history. This frame captures the people with their respective personalities and behaviours and how they interact within the ecosystem of the University. There are multitudes of layers of personnel variables within this OIP, including students (and their learning capacities), faculty, chairs, and deans all working within the scope of direction from senior administration. The BOG as well as government are critical stakeholders.

The human resource frame can incorporate how faculty are assigned to teach first-year courses. For some departments, the most dynamic and engaging faculty take on the responsibility of teaching first year. In other departments, it is perceived as a necessary evil that every faculty should take on at least once. Ryan (2012), in his work on neoliberalism and education, wrote that education has now become a marketplace whereby it must be run in the most profitable way possible (hence the reliance on sessional instructors). Ryan noted that this neoliberalism has

created an us-versus-them and survival-of-the-fittest mentality. Administrators are no longer viewed as educators. Ryan explained that the more administrators or teachers resist, the less likely they will be employed. This situation has a significant impact on the agency of control and power for leaders. Addressing the tensions between groups is important to explore within this OIP.

Political frame. The political frame represents the power that politics have within the University. Bolman and Deal (2013) identified four key skills in relation to the political frame of an organization: agenda setting; mapping the political terrain; networking and building connections; and bargaining and negotiating. Each of these skill sets will help develop a plan of implementation for the OIP. The political landscape is challenging due to the ever-changing nature of the climate within the institution as it relates to union groups and the administration's agenda. This challenge is evident when managing competing union groups (faculty versus contractual faculty), administrative economic pressures, student abilities and levels of engagement, and overall provincial position (specifically Ontario university strategic mandate agreements). Introducing any OIP will require significant political navigating, savviness, and confidence for realistic and sustainable changes that are in alignment with internal and external political forces. An additional political and economic consideration is the federal and provincial government funding models. Chiose (2015) reported "Ontario signed strategic mandate agreements with each of the province's 44 universities and colleges, deals aimed at focusing each school on its strengths and reducing duplication across the system" (p. 1).

Symbolic frame. Within this OIP, the term erosion is used to illustrate figuratively what is happening in the learning experience within first-year courses. This word is used to support the notion that "erosion" of the first-year learning experience has symbolic tenets permeating every

dimension. The ritual of the students attending lectures or writing exams; the faculty standing at their podium, professing knowledge to eager minds; and the bricks and mortar of the buildings housing this learning all have symbols and rituals associated with them. It is challenging to quantify or to find consensus on a definition of how students learn best or how students should be taught, as people often hold competing worldviews on what university teaching and learning should be.

Another perspective to consider when reviewing the symbolic frame is the role of technology in the classroom. The faculty study conducted by the CTL found that some faculty believe that no technology should be permitted in classes. Focus group data showed that some faculty believed that technology is creating a distraction for students. Conversely, research in particular applications shows that technology can enhance the student learning experience (Henderson, Selwyn, & Aston, 2015). However, using the symbolic lens in this context, the faculty's perception of what a lecture looks like or what students should be using to take notes in their lecture is being challenged by the introduction of technology into the teaching space.

Kanungo (2001) argued that every organization has a purpose. She reported that authentic transformational leadership styles are needed to create change in an organization. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) argued that this leadership needs to be ethically driven with altruistic intent as opposed to egotist intent. This leadership framework helps understand the tenets of symbolism within the OIP from the perspective of changing how people are teaching. Faculty are the leaders in a classroom. To effect symbolic change, they must be inspired to improve their teaching practices guided by altruistic motivation—to help students learn richly and deeply—versus egotist motivation—to be viewed as popular, liked, or smart. This goal ties into the “why” component of the OIP: Why should the first-year academic experience be improved? Because

symbolically, education is the key to changing lives. I have hope and faith that excellent educational experiences awaken students' deepest potentials and opens their futures. Deep learning is a legacy for both teachers and students.

Internal Data Review

As previously mentioned, the CTL embarked on a collaborative study (CTL, 2015) to develop an in-depth understanding of first-year academic experience. The study was designed to capture the perspectives of faculty/instructors, student support staff, and students in both first and second years on their academic experiences. The project spanned 18 months and included surveys, a faculty focus group, and an environmental scan of over 90 syllabi. Over 135 faculty and student support staff and over 300 students participated. Findings from faculty included concerns about levels of instructional support and challenges with assessment in large classes. Student support staff themes included the challenges of large class sizes and the need to increase personalized learning through seminars, labs, and workshops; expand the availability of academic supports; consider ways to further foster a sense of belonging for students; and support faculty with growing numbers of large classes. Student themes included challenges with access to support services and struggles with engagement in first-year classes (CTL, 2015).

In summary, this section introduced a selective historical review and provided context that explains how this organization is in transition with its core initial framework values being challenged. The PoP was framed using PESTA interwoven with Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames. Internal data relevant to the OIP was also discussed.

Guiding Questions Emerging from Problem of Practice

Potential lines of inquiry that stem from the main problem are examined in three distinct areas: large classes, teaching culture, and faculty professional development.

Potential factor: large classes. How can the University navigate the tension between needing large classes for financial sustainability and providing a personal and transformative first-year academic experience?

Substantive challenges are associated with the current practice of teaching large classes. These large classes are significant contributors to the erosion of the learning experience. Due to increasing numbers of students pursuing post-secondary education over the past 20 years, large class sizes have become commonplace at the University and other institutions (McDonald, 2013). Classes between 300 and 1,000 students are often perceived to be accompanied by major obstacles, thus making them less desirable than smaller classes. Cuseo (2007) drew seven conclusions related to the teaching and learning experience of large classes through a review of 95 research articles reporting on the effects of large class sizes. Cuseo concluded that

- 1) large class size increases faculty reliance on the lecture method of instruction;
- 2) large classes reduce students' level of active involvement in the learning process;
- 3) large class size reduces the frequency and quality of instructor interaction with and feedback to students;
- 4) large class settings reduce students' depth of thinking inside the classroom;
- 5) large class size limits the breadth and depth of course objectives, course assignment, and course-related learning outside the classroom;
- 6) students' academic achievement (learning) and academic performance (grades) are lowered in courses with large class size; and
- 7) students report less course satisfaction in large-sized classes (Cuseo, 2007).

Phenomena of past experience. How can the past conflict between faculty and administration be addressed or resolved to improve the teaching culture at the University?

A major shift in leadership and direction for the University and the impetus of the teaching tensions started after a highly conflictual strike of the faculty union in the 90s . Little has been done in the realm of relationship repair between administration and faculty. At that time, higher teacher-to-student ratios were implemented, thus initiating the demise of small classes and seminars. Also during this time, the faculty union severed ties with the part-time faculty union. According to Newson and Polster (2010), the University's faculty union brokered a deal with the part-time faculty union to support the faculty union's strike by not teaching during the strike in exchange for the faculty union permitting the part-time faculty union to increase their teaching loads. Interestingly, the authors explained that although the part-time faculty agreed and did not cross the picket line, the faculty union reneged on the agreement as soon as the strike was over. Hundreds of precarious workers within the part-time faculty lost pay during the strike and the faculty returned to their permanent jobs with ease. Although these transgressions happened almost 20 years ago, poor relations and trust issues are still felt today between multiple groups within the University's teaching community and administration.

Challenge. How can the OIP be positioned to best lead faculty to participate in professional development opportunities as a strategy to improve course design and teaching practices?

To address teaching practices and course design recommendations within the OIP, I will need faculty buy-in or engagement. Kugel (1993) reported on the importance of faculty continuing their professional development. He argued that teaching abilities develop in stages and many professors neglect to fully understand the importance of continued growth in this area. Whitworth and Chiu (2015) argued that the missing link between faculty and teaching development is the idea of leadership. Teachers and faculty need to see themselves as leaders.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

This section will discuss the existing gap between the present and future state. As previously discussed, in response to the changing priorities of the government in the 90s and financial difficulties, the BOG made a radical shift in their appointments of senior administrators and presidents. Leaders who traditionally were academics, focused on liberal arts philosophies of education, were replaced with business-centred, non-academic leaders. The shift in leadership was an attempt to save the University from financial disaster and possible closure (Jenish, 2014).

Jenish (2014) wrote that on the first day of the new president's appointment, she learned that the financial situation was so severe and additional funding options were no longer available (the banks were not extending credit), the University could not cover the August payroll. Enrolment had plummeted, residence rooms were empty, and the entrance grade requirement had decreased by 6% that year, in a desperate attempt to attract students. The identity and reputation of the University was severely damaged. It could no longer continue operating as it had. The two faculty strikes in the previous years, three changes of presidents (all acting roles), and financial errors had left the University in despair. The new president's mandate was clear but not simple: Save the school. The president stated, "the problems we face are of such great magnitude that fundamental changes are needed" (p. 184). A financial recovery plan was implemented with the goal of streamlining services and cutting costs. It was met with strong resistance and opposition.

The gap between past, present, and future was greatest in the 90s. This time was identified by extreme tension and conflict. However, over the past 20 years, the gap has been closing. The good news is that the future state is not far removed from the present state. The financial recovery plan did save the University. Although the resistors perhaps did not see it at the time, this type of leadership and decision making was needed to save the University. The

challenge now becomes how the University can preserve its deep legacy of quality teaching practices and liberal arts education philosophy in a financially sustainable manner that will prevent repeating the past mistakes that brought financial crisis.

Priorities for Change

Two decades later, the future state of being a small liberal arts university that provides personal, purposeful, and transformative learning experiences in first-year is attainable. The current administration has made a commitment to student-centred learning models and quality, small-class teaching. In 2014, the CTL was opened. The new president charged the CTL to study the first-year academic experience with the goal of making recommendations. This research was the priority of the CTL, and these recommendations from the first-year study will be integrated into this OIP. Based on the CTL's study, this OIP addresses two main areas of focus: faculty professional development and course design.

The University is committed to preserving quality teaching and learning experiences. Recently, the provincial government called for strategic mandate agreements from each of the 20 Ontario universities as a means for differentiation. The senior administration took this opportunity to reaffirm and defend the University's core values.

Our historical mission has been to educate—not to train—an informed citizenry, to produce politically active, critically thinking graduates...as our mandate, vision and mission all make clear, the University is differentiated by its values, principles, interdisciplinary and guiding sense of social justice. (Stewart, 2015, p. 9)

The University's aim is to bridge and seek balance among the key stakeholders. These stakeholders include external groups like the federal and provincial governments, the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities, and other institutions through partnerships. Internally, the stakeholder groups include students, faculty, student-support staff, the BOG, and senior

administration. The common organizational interest that binds the internal stakeholders is the belief that the University is a remarkable school that educates—not trains—the students.

Another shared interest is preserving what differentiates the University from other institutions. It was forged to be different, and it needs to persist in a sustainable and meaningful capacity. There is consistency and agreement among the stakeholders that the school remains a liberal arts institution that holds the original values and principles, but the disagreement comes from how this ideal should be met. The shared vision among the groups is advantageous, and this OIP sets out to introduce a plan to illustrate how competing stakeholders can work together to achieve the desired future state.

Envisioned Future State

Jenish (2014) wrote, “there is the University’s enduring allure—a powerful alchemy based on its size, its setting and its intellectual vibrancy—that has captivated students, staff and faculty alike through the years and across the decades” (p. 217). Senior administration has recently approved several key initiatives, such as expanding the CTL, hiring new Senior Lecturers, and building new active learning classrooms, that will support the aim of improving first-year academic experiences focused on professional development opportunities and course design renewal practices.

Kugel’s (1993) work looked at the value of faculty continuing their professional development. Kugel believed that faculty teaching abilities develop in stages. He proposed that many professors neglect to fully understand the importance of continued growth in this area. Whitworth and Chiu (2015) argued that the missing link between faculty and teaching development is the idea of leadership. Teachers and faculty need to see themselves as leaders. Hargreaves’ (2007) work introduces how this OIP can leverage the University’s original identity

as a liberal arts institution that values teaching and learning, while being mindful of the current pressures of maintaining a viable model of a liberal arts school, moving forward. “The challenge of educational change is not to retreat to the past but to develop an intelligent relationship to it that acknowledges its existence, understands the meaning it has for its bearers, and learns from it wherever and whenever possible” (p. 227).

During the implementation phase of the financial recovery plan, senior administration increased class sizes significantly and faculty development did not necessarily keep pace. Course design for small lecture/seminar courses with 50 students looks remarkably different for courses with 300 students. Professional development opportunities need to be presented for faculty to learn how to design courses for larger classes. However, the reality for centres of teaching and learning almost everywhere is that they offer these types of sessions, but faculty do not attend. Based on the recommendations from the CTL’s study, the approach to address this issue—faculty needing training but not attending when offered—is to present training opportunities as professional learning communities (PLCs).

The underlying philosophy of using PLCs is that faculty learn together in a safe, supported, and non-competitive environment. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2007) reported that student learning experiences improved when faculty took part in PLCs that focused on developing and implementing new pedagogical practices in their classes. The literature provides evidence of the benefits of PLCs, such as improving the teaching culture of an organization (Vescio et al., 2007), increasing student achievement (Lomos, Hofman, & Bosker, 2011), reducing teacher isolation, increasing knowledge of effective teaching strategies, and increasing job satisfaction (Annenberg, 2004). Cox, Richlin, and Essington (2012) recommended that PLCs need to be specifically structured, year-long academic communities of practice with shared goals

of building a teaching community, engaging in scholarly (evidenced-based) teaching practices, and developing scholarship on teaching and learning.

This section explored the historical climate of the University by delving into the legacy and impact of past leadership practices. The gap between current and future states was discussed, with the emphasis on how the institutional study, conducted by the CTL, can be used to frame the OIP as a way-forward plan by incorporating the recommendations around faculty development. The OIP considers the stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization, who hold a shared vision of preserving the legacy of quality teaching practices in first-year courses in a financial sustainable manner.

Organization Change Readiness

This section introduces Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change pathway model and the organizational capacity of change by Judge and Douglas (2009) to assess the University's change readiness. Competing internal and external forces that shape change will also be introduced and explored.

The change pathway model (Cawsey et al., 2016) is a combination of process and prescription. It can be used to capture how an organization can adopt change and what specific steps are needed to initiate this change. The first stage is awakening, which is a critical organizational analysis that examines both internal and external forces that will impact (positively or negatively) the organization's change potential. Cawsey et al. wrote that "the most powerful driver for change tends to originate outside organizations" (p. 53). For this OIP, one of the external factors is the provincial government's introduction of strategic mandate agreements for Ontario universities.

These strategic mandate agreements are powerful external drivers initiating change at this University, and this OIP plans to use them to influence how an improvement can unfold. The University can seize this opportunity to reintroduce the principles of liberal arts teaching as a strategic means of differentiation.

Cawsey et al. (2016) expanded this view to include that “leaders also need to understand deeply what is going on inside their own organizations” (p. 53). As previously stated, the University is in an ideological conflict between what it has become over years of financial hardships and leadership transitions and what it wants and strives to be. Based on reports from the 2015 CTL study, some faculty are seeking professional development opportunities to further expand their teaching practices to support liberal arts educational principles. In contrast, other faculty reported that liberal education is no longer relevant.

Although internally there are competing views present, there is consensus that quality teaching is important. This shared goal will be important to support the change. Senior administration has also expressed interest in re-establishing a positive teaching culture and climate, especially for first-year university students, as demonstrated by introducing new foundation courses and expanded student transition services for first-year students.

A second model to gauge change readiness is Judge and Douglas’ (2009) organizational capacity for change model. The authors argued that organizational change is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires examination from eight distinct, but interrelated, dimensions. These include (a) trustworthy leadership, (b) trusting followers, (c) capable champions, (d) involved mid-level leaders, (e) supported innovative culture, (f) accountable culture, (g) effective communications, and (h) systems thinking. This tool is presented here as a change-readiness gauge to explore both internal and external forces that shape change at the University. This

model will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2 with specific attention to how these two models relate.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for exploring the PoP for a small liberal arts institution that strives to provide an educational experience that is personal, purposeful, and transformative for its students. The heart of this PoP is that this organization is in transition with its core initial framework values being challenged by internal and external factors. Historical and present-day factors were discussed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexity of the first-year academic experience. This chapter also highlighted the gaps between the envisioned institution among the current realities and challenges. Leveraging the internal data from the CTL faculty and student study and the literature and scholarship on teaching and learning, this OIP moves forward with the aim of focusing on professional development and course design as possible solutions. These two areas of focus will be used to introduce the needed organizational change that will realign the institution as a liberal arts university while improving the teaching and learning experiences through faculty professional development and course design, which will have an impact for both faculty and students. Chapter 2 sets the stage for how this OIP can be implemented, specifically focusing on process change, critical organizational analysis, solutions to emerging questions within the PoP (introduced in Chapter 1), leadership approaches to change implementation, and leadership ethics.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

The aim of this OIP is to realign the first-year academic experience with the University's mission and vision of education being personal, purposeful, and transformative. Chapter 2 explores a key framework and theory for leading the change process and is composed of five sections. Section one introduces framing theories of organizational change with a specific model for leading this process, while introducing an incremental and continuous organizational change approach. Theories of change leadership in relation to the organizational context and the PoP framing are also reviewed here. The second section conducts a critical organizational evaluation through a gap analysis between the current state and the future state of the University. Section three presents three potential solutions informed by research to address the PoP. The chapter concludes with sections four and five, which describe the chosen leadership approaches to change and ethical considerations as they apply to the change process.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

This first section applies the appreciative inquiry (AI) framework to the OIP. Next, Kotter's eight-stage change process model is applied as the model for leading the organizational change process. Last, the type of organizational change being considered in this OIP, the incremental and continuous organizational change approach, is examined.

Appreciative inquiry. This theory of organizational change was first introduced by Cooperrider (1986). Cooperidder's theory falls within the paradigm of positive organizational studies (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Cooperidder (1987) defines AI as "the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system 'life' when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (p.5).

It is considered both a philosophy and a method, with a specific technique for implementation. The approach is rooted in a collaborative dialoguing method process divided into four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Figure 1 illustrates how the four stages are part of a circular process that helps facilitate an attitudinal shift toward focusing on the positives within an organization. Each circle is part of the larger theme and flows multi-directionally.

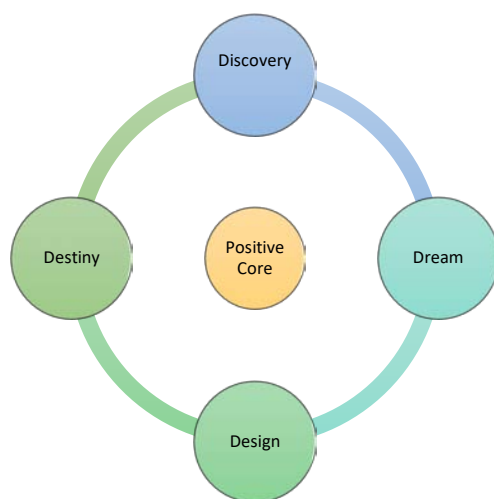


Figure 1. Appreciative inquiry 4D cycle.

Adapted from *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* (p. 5), by D. Cooperrider, D. Whitney, and J. Stavros, 2008, Bedford Heights, OH: Crown Custom Publishing.

Discovery. This stage has participants reflect on and express what is working best in relation to the question of inquiry. For this OIP, the participants could be the First-Year Caucus committee. Questions may include the following: What first-year courses are working well? Who are our first-year faculty champions? Which courses are students gravitating to? Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) called this the “positive core.” This process is designed to facilitate the group’s recognizing and identifying the organizations’ strengths.

Dream. During this stage, the group is invited to imagine their organization at its best. The aim is for the group to identify shared values and aspirations for the organization. Participants are encouraged to seek out symbols or graphical representations that reflect this desired state.

Design. The group is now prompted to use the results from the discovery and dream stages to form a concrete proposal or plan for the new organizational state. This stage maps out how to achieve the ideal state.

Destiny. The final stage is the action implementation phase. The participants are encouraged to now take the necessary steps to bring the change into reality. Bushe (2011) explained that Cooperrider originally named the fourth stage Delivery but changed the name to Destiny as he felt that Delivery brought participants back to the traditional change management approach of assigning work to specific people. The higher hope for the Destiny stage is collective actions and everyday practices that shepherd change into the organization.

This four-stage model fits within the context and culture of the organization. Research supports using AI to help organizations connect back to their original missions and purposes (Bushe, 2012; Cameron et al., 2003; Grant & Humphries, 2006). This outcome facilitates the OIP goal of realigning the University's first-year courses to the mission and vision of education being personal, purposeful, and transformative. Using AI as an approach to leading change draws on the field of positive organizational scholarship (POS) (Dutton & Glynn, 2007). Dutton and Glynn reported that POS is a "broad framework that seeks to explain behaviours in and of organizations. It focuses explicitly on the positive states and processes that arise from, and a result in, life-giving dynamics, optimal functioning, or enhanced capabilities or strengths" (p. 1). Dutton and Glynn went on to argue that

The emergence of the POS perspective in the early 21st Century can be explained by a number of factors, including: an observed shift in the applied social sciences away from deficit-based to more strengths-based approaches, a return to organizational fundamentals and optimism in the wake of highly visible and significant organizational scandals (p. 5).

AI falls within the POS perspective because it is considered a strengths-based leadership approach. Although some researchers argue that leadership models should avoid moralistic overtones (Roberts, 2006), this leadership change approach fits with how this OIP aims to align the first-year courses with the University's mission, which is anchored in positive overtones. Research has illustrated the methodological strengths and challenges of taking an AI approach (Duncan & Ridley-Duff, 2014; Fieldhouse & Onyett, 2012). However, Dupuis, McAiney, Fortune, Ploeg, and de Witt (2016) reported that when an AI approach is used as a guide for cultural change, it can bring about greater transparency allowing stakeholders to understand the challenges, appreciate the need for change, and support personal investment into the new possibilities within an organization.

Within the context of my OIP, this change process model aligns with what faculty and students have been asking for. For example, the CTL study (CTL, 2015) posed three strategic questions to faculty and students:

- 1) What are the highlights of first-year courses?
- 2) What are the lowlights of first-year courses?
- 3) What is one wish that could improve your first-year courses?

The faculty data suggested that despite several unique challenges to teaching first-year courses, there were multiple positives. Several faculty reported being deeply committed to quality first-year teaching at the University. This OIP, using the AI model, will help build upon these positives by identifying what is working well and provide an opportunity to celebrate these

strengths. The common concern heard from faculty, students, and staff is that change is being implemented without consultation (CTL, 2015). This change process method could address this concern. As mentioned in Chapter 1, within the context of this OIP, a strength of the organization is that the stakeholders may share differing agendas for priorities and practices of change, but the group shares a deep commitment to preserving the legacy of quality teaching and learning experiences for students. The University strives to be unique and provide students with an educational experience that is personal, purposeful, and transformative.

Using AI could help realign the current practices of first-year teaching with the mission and vision of the University as well as on-board the multiple stakeholders with the OIP.

This leading change process also aligns with my leadership position statement. The leadership theory that I have adopted and practice is transformational leadership. This leadership theory was originally developed by Burns (1978). Burns reported that transformational leadership occurs when leaders can take their followers to a higher level through motivation for improving performance or achieving a goal. It is rooted in forward thinking and positivity. Burns explained that working collaboratively was more productive than working individually. He argued that these leaders needed to raise moral expectations and values and inspire their followers to strive for them on an on-going basis, not simply in certain transactions (Burns, 1978). Others have subsequently expanded upon Burns' work (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Kotter's eight-stage change process model for leading the process of organizational change. Kotter's model, illustrated in Figure 2, will be used to address how organizational change will be implemented across the University. Each stage in this eight-stage model supports the change process, ultimately working toward capitalizing on the big opportunity, which, within

the context of this OIP, refers to seizing the momentum from the first-year academic study (CTL, 2015) to bring about change to the teaching and learning practices.



Figure 2. Kotter's eight-stage change process model.

Copied from *Leading Change* by J. Kotter, 1996, Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Dawson, Mighty, and Britnell's (2010) research found evidence to support the use of Kotter's model to facilitate the work of educational developers who engage in university-wide change efforts. The researchers argued that Kotter's model "can be a rich resource for helping developers guide change at their institution and beyond" (p. 76). This model provides strategic direction for members of an organization to facilitate change. As previously noted, some faculty reported that change happens without their knowledge, in a top-down manner (CTL, 2015). One of the strengths of this model is the transparency of the change process. Each stage is explicitly stated and is connected to the bigger picture.

Pollack and Pollack (2015) reported that although Kotter's model is one of the most recognized models for change management, few case studies in the literature examine how this model is used in academic settings. Their research supports the use of Kotter's model to introduce a major organizational change within a university setting. However, they noted that the change team needed to revisit several of Kotter's processes throughout the change process to be successful. In another study, Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo and Shafiq (2012) set out to gather

current arguments and counterarguments in support of Kotter's model. They argued that Kotter's work was based on personal experience within business and research. The researchers reviewed 15 years of empirical research looking for evidence for each of the eight stages defined in Kotter's model. The review reportedly found evidence for most of the steps, although no formal studies were found covering the entire spectrum and structure of the model. The researchers concluded that Kotter's change management model appears to derive its popularity from its direct and usable format and generalizability across disciplines. The researchers argued that Kotter's model would be most useful as an implementation planning tool but that complementary tools should also be considered (Appelbaum et al., 2012).

Taking the context of the University from Chapter 1 into consideration, this change model also fits with how change can be introduced following the AI phase. Once a destiny or plan is created by the key stakeholders, Kotter's model could be used to seize the big opportunity for the organizational change implementation to begin.

Type of Organizational Change

This OIP intends to use the process of incremental and continuous change. Burnes (2004) defined continuous change as the ability to change continuously in a fundamental manner to stay current with the pace of change. Burnes defined incremental change as when stakeholders within an organization address one problem and one objective at a time. The strength of this type of change approach is the view that change is best implemented through successive, limited, and negotiated shifts (Burnes, 2004). Grundy (1993) argued that incremental change can be divided further into two categories: smooth and bumpy. Smooth refers to straightforward changes that are clearly systematic and predictable and develop at a constant rate. Bumpy refers to

implementation changes that come up quickly and may be unpredictable but get addressed and resolved quickly.

This OIP will attempt to bring about change in a smooth manner by using a clear and explicit communication plan (Chapter 3). This OIP intends to use the momentum of emerging change patterns identified in the 2015 CTL faculty study. Faculty reported that they wanted supports to improve their teaching, especially in the area of course design and large class instruction (CTL, 2015). A radical change is not needed here, rather a purposeful improvement plan that is introduced incrementally and maintains a continuous direction of improvement delivered through professional development opportunities and wise course-design processes.

Theory of change leadership linked to organizational context, position statement, and framing the problem of practice. This section introduces a transformational leadership model to support this OIP. The guiding leadership theory that I have adopted is transformational leadership because of how it intersects with the aim of my OIP and the organizational context. This leadership theory was originally developed by Burns (1978). Burns reported that transformational leadership occurs when a leader can take their followers to a higher level of performance through motivation for performance improvement and goal achievement. Hackerman and Johnson (2004) reported that transformational leaders are actively engaged with their followers and the process. An early concern about Burns' theory was that it was difficult to test since the idea of "transformational" seemed elusive to researchers. To address this concern, Bass (1985) furthered Burns' theory by postulating a behavioural conceptual framework: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. A significant body of research supports using a transformational leadership approach in higher education settings (Balwart, 2016; Noland, 2005; Treslan, 2006).

Harrison (2011) argued that the benefits of this leadership approach go beyond improved student learning outcomes and can be used to support faculty development (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009). Harrison reported that transformational leadership was positively correlated with decreased faculty turnover rates, higher levels of faculty job satisfaction, increased faculty commitment to university reform and change, and faculty empowerment (Harrison, 2011). These outcomes are important to my PoP because they address the issue that the faculty and instructors who are teaching the first-year courses are experiencing additional stressors and pressure from administration. This leadership approach, based on the empirical evidence reported, will also help ensure I adopt a leadership approach that is known to increase faculty commitment to university reform and change. Adams and Hambricht (2005) argued that universities need to be learning organizations that are led by transformational leaders.

Critical Organizational Analysis

As introduced in Chapter 1, a model of gauging change readiness is the Judge and Douglas (2009) organizational capacity for change model. The authors argued that organizational change is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires examination from eight distinct but interrelated dimensions. These include (a) trustworthy leadership, (b) trusting followers, (c) capable champions, (d) involved mid-level leaders, (e) innovative culture supported, (f) accountable culture, (g) effective communications, and (h) systems thinking. This tool is presented here as a change-readiness gauge to explore both internal and external forces that shape change at the University.

The University's senior leadership and BOG appear to be making concerted efforts to include community members in discussions about how to frame the University's strategic mandate agreement contract with the government. This approach builds dimension one,

trustworthy leadership, through transparent and collaborative leadership practices. The senior team has also committed resources to expand the CTL and has increased teaching stream permanent positions, which demonstrates the commitment to supporting improved teaching practices—an internal factor. As noted, the previous leadership challenges, financial crisis, government changes, and faculty strikes have all impacted the University's community members' relationship with and attitudes toward senior leadership. Efforts to establish the current leadership as trustworthy have started and will need dedicated continuance to move past the previous decades of conflict.

Regarding the second dimension, trusting followers, there has been an increased commitment to strengthen the communication and access between faculty and senior leadership. These improved relationships are evidenced by open-forum sessions and senior leaders taking part in regular day-to-day functions, such as attending classes, meeting with students, and visiting departmental meetings. These actions are contributing to an increase in followership, as demonstrated by an increased number of faculty and staff attending said events and opportunities.

The University has a history of using their champions to implement change (dimension three). An example of this strategy is developing a first-year caucus for faculty. This group meets regularly and supports innovative first-year projects. This group will have a paramount role in championing the pedagogical shifts suggested within this OIP.

Dimensions four, five, and six—involving mid-level leaders, providing a culture that supports innovation, and creating an accountable culture—present as a challenge. These areas require additional support and development. At present, mid-leadership (e.g., deans and chairs) is not commonly engaged in change practices. Innovation is sometimes met with resistance or

opposition. For example, the CTL faculty survey revealed that some faculty found bringing technology into the classroom has hindered the learning environment for students (CTL, 2015). Although innovation is not necessarily linked with technology, having negative attitudes about the use of technology could impact innovative practices. Accountable culture is also an area that needs further examination to gauge readiness. Recently, the University moved to a responsibility-centred management model, which has shifted how operating budgets are allocated and maintained. It will be useful to monitor this new system to gauge the varying degrees of impact on accountable culture in relation to first-year courses. It would be interesting to see how first-year courses are funded and how faculty are able to access funds or resources that help shepherd innovation into their courses.

Last, dimensions seven and eight, effective communication and systems thinking, are areas for which the University has emerging capacity. It will be important to ensure that a transparent communication plan is developed to launch this OIP. Transparent and bidirectional communication, meaning that there is designated space for active dialogue and consultation, will be crucial. Systems thinking is an approach the University has adopted and is presently in an emerging phase of rollout, as demonstrated by senior leaders prioritizing the study of the first-year courses. The process of systems thinking (plan, act, rollout, reflect, redesign, and sustain), provides insight into identifying and understanding how internal and external forces shape change.

Possible Solutions to Address the problem of practice

This section will examine and analyse three possible solutions to address this PoP. Each solution will be explained and linked back to the organizational context. Each solution will be analysed using a relative merits method of exploring advantages and disadvantages concurrently,

with the aim of selecting the optimal solution to address the PoP. The relative merits method is a research method used within the field of educational research. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggested using this method to compare possible solutions, or parts of solution, to see which elements hold merit for meeting the overall objective. The final solution selected will be used in Chapter 2 for the implementation and communication components of this OIP.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the potential lines of inquiry that stem from the main problems can be summarized in three distinct areas: challenges of teaching large classes, teaching culture, and faculty professional development. The CTL study also provides a series of recommendations that can contribute to the larger discussion about the possible solutions for addressing the ultimate goal of this OIP, which is realigning the academic experience in first-year courses with the University's mission and vision. The CTL study made recommendations in three areas: faculty, students, and staff and administration (CTL, 2015).

Possible solution one: develop an institutional plan for large first-year classes. As noted in Chapter 1, substantive challenges are associated with the current practice of teaching large classes. Research and survey data report that these large classes are significant contributors to the erosion of the learning experience. Cuseo (2007) concluded that

- 1) large class size increases faculty reliance on the lecture method of instruction;
- 2) large classes reduce students' levels of active involvement in the learning process;
- 3) large class size reduces the frequency and quality of instructor interaction with and feedback to students;
- 4) large class settings reduce students' depth of thinking inside the classroom;
- 5) large class size limits the breadth and depth of course objectives, course assignment, and course-related learning outside the classroom;
- 6) students' academic achievement (learning) and academic performance (grades) are lowered in courses with large class size; and
- 7) students report less course satisfaction in large-sized classes.

These findings can help inform and leverage the importance of how large first-year classes are designed. The CTL study suggested that faculty who teach first-year courses need tailored supports and resources that address the specific challenges they face. The study also suggested implementing guidelines from best practices for student assessment in all first-year courses. The Principles of Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada (Joint Advisory Committee, 1993) state that assessment strategies

- are pedagogically valid and aligned with disciplinary expectations;
- are communicated clearly;
- allow students to demonstrate their understanding;
- provide opportunities for timely feedback (for the purpose of improvement);
- are connected to the learning outcomes or goals of the course and the program;
- clearly reflect and incorporate what is valued in the course;
- are authentic and/or relevant to students;
- have sufficient variety to enable different student strengths and needs to be demonstrated and further developed; and
- include both formative and summative opportunities.

Another consideration within this solution is for administration to confer with faculty and staff to determine what constitutes a personalized experience in first-year courses. Should there be a limit to how many students are in one course? Should large classes be required to also have seminars or tutorial components to ensure smaller learning experiences? Who should be teaching first-year courses? The major hurdle to developing an institutional plan is significant financial and attitudinal support from senior administration. This shift in teaching and learning practices would have to be a strategic direction the University adopts. It would permeate every area of first-year courses and have far reaching implications that could also impact the University's reputation, including branding from a marketing perspective, recruitment, and even the strategic mandate agreement with the provincial government.

Resources needed. This solution would require careful consideration in several areas to address how an institutional first-year course plan could be implemented.

Financial resources. The first step of developing a plan would not require any financial resources, but themes or consideration within this plan would have significant financial implications. As previously discussed, there is a tension between needing large classes for financial sustainability and the goal of the first-year academic experience being personal and transformative. If the plan was to suggest capping enrolment in large first-year courses, then the University would have to re-evaluate how first-year courses are funded. Another financial consideration is the cost of training faculty and developing training on new pedagogical approaches to large-class instruction. There would also be costs to adopting new assessment practices, specifically in cost of marking student work. Using standardized tests and computer-generated scoring is appreciatively less expensive than written submissions, course-embedded assessments, or collaborative group work.

Time resources. Teaching first-year courses with the aim of being personal requires a substantial time commitment for faculty and staff. The idea of time relates to administrative tasks, such as responding to a high volume of emails from students, meeting with students, and planning engaging classes that go beyond traditional lecturing or knowledge transfer methods. There is also the time of a working group to draft and have approved an instructional plan. A plan like this would have to be approved by several areas of governance, including faculty board and senate.

Human resources. If a plan were developed, the human resource considerations would be broad. The first step in developing an institutional plan for first-year courses would be to form a working group to draft said plan. This group requires representation from several key constituent

groups including students, staff, faculty, deans, chairs, union representatives, senior administration, and financial staff. This plan cannot be top-down. Within this plan, consideration around staffing these courses and course supports will need to be established.

Physical resources. This plan would also have to consider how the University could physically offer more classes with fewer students per class. There would be a greater demand on the physical environment. At present, the University relies heavily on three major lecturing halls that house the largest first-year courses. If an enrolment cap was implemented, special considerations would need to be made to find alternative locations, such as medium-size classrooms versus large lecture halls. This physical resource needs would have to be addressed in the plan.

Advantages and disadvantages. Adopting an institutional plan for first-year courses would have significant potential to improve the quality of first-year academic experiences for students and would meet the goal of this OIP of realigning the first-year courses; however, the first plan proposed in this section comes at a significant cost and poses a major challenge for consensus. However, this plan would outline several key factors to consider for first-year courses, such as class size, course designs, physical space, teaching practices, and course assistance, which all would help foster a positive learning culture. The disadvantage is the cost of implementing such a plan, which would require a significant overhaul of how first-year courses run at the University. It is challenging to ignore the evidence of how this change would improve the student experience, but the cost and getting consensus among the multiple stakeholders could be difficult.

Possible solution two: professional learning communities. On a much smaller scale compared to solution one, solution two proposes developing PLCs for faculty who teach first-

year courses. In Chapter 1, the challenge was presented in the form of a question: How can the OIP be positioned to best lead faculty to participate in professional development opportunities as a strategy to improve course design and teaching practices?

To address teaching practices and course design recommendations within the OIP, faculty engagement is crucial. Kugel's (1993) work argues for the importance of professional development for faculty. He believed that teaching develops in stages and that engaging in on-going professional development is crucial. Whitworth and Chiu (2015) argued that the missing link between faculty and teaching development is the idea of leadership. Teachers and faculty need to see themselves as leaders. D'Eon, Overgaard, and Harding (2000) researched the idea of teaching being a social practice and how the nature of teaching itself can be incorporated into the discussion of teachers as leaders of their classrooms. They argued that teaching is more than a craft or a technical enterprise. D'Eon et al. reported it is best to categorize teaching as a type of social practice: "Social practices are purposive, rational, moral, communal, and are identified by their activities" (p. 160). The idea of faculty being leaders within the classroom suggested that "teachers could be given the opportunity in faculty development sessions to think deeply about the purpose of teaching, the activities that are being used to achieve such purposes, the social dimension of their practice, and its underlying norms (p. 161).

Professional development opportunities need to be offered for faculty to learn about wise practices for designing courses for larger classes. However, the reality for CTLs across the country, is that they offer these types of sessions, but faculty do not attend. Based on the recommendations from the CTL's study, the approach to address this issue—faculty needing training but not attending when offered—is to present training opportunities as PLCs.

The underlying philosophy of using PLCs is that faculty learn together in a safe, supported, and non-competitive environment. Vescio, Ross, and Adams (2007) reported that student learning experiences improved when faculty took part in professional learning communities that focused on developing and implementing new pedagogical practices in their classes. The higher education literature provides evidence of the benefits of PLCs, such as improving the teaching culture of an organization (Vescio et al., 2007), increasing student achievement (Lomos et al., 2011), reducing teacher isolation, increasing knowledge of effective teaching strategies, and increasing job satisfaction (Annenberg, 2004). Cox et al. (2012) recommended that PLCs need to be specifically structured, year-long academic communities of practice with shared goals of building a teaching community, engaging in scholarly (evidenced-based) teaching practices, and developing scholarship on teaching and learning.

Resources needed. To develop PLCs, several in-house resources would be required. This solution, although appreciatively less costly and challenging to implement than solution one, would still require commitment from the University's senior administration and reallocation of internal resources.

Financial resources. The CTL would be a natural fit to lead the PLC for first-year instructors. This arrangement would require minimal financial cost since the CTL is already established and is currently responsible for hosting and facilitating professional development activities for faculty. Minimal financial outputs for resources, such as textbooks or attending conferences to prepare the educational developers within the CTL, may be required.

Time resources. This solution would require significant time from the faculty to meet regularly as it goes beyond their regular committee work. As Cox et al. (2012) recommended, PLCs need to be specifically structured, year-long academic communities of practice. The time

of the CTL staff would also need to be considered since the CTL would manage the administration and curriculum of the PLC. This work would involve everything from recruiting members to booking rooms to developing resources for the group.

Human resources. The human resource commitment for this solution ties in with the previous area of time. The PLC would require faculty to participate and staff to support the group. It would also be useful for people who have previously taught first-year courses to support the work of the PLC. Sharing institutional knowledge and best practices would be helpful. This collaboration would require people outside of the first-year courses to also get involved.

Technological resources. Few technological resources would be required for this solution. The University has a pre-existing learning management system where resources from the PLC can be shared communally. The system also has meeting management software that can organize meeting times based on group members' availability. This available technology would result in few to no additional technological resources. One small consideration would be meeting space. Space availability is a reoccurring issue on a growing campus; however, solutions are available with some flexibility of time and locations.

Advantages and disadvantages. This solution is much more practical and realistic to implement than solution one because of the scope. Essentially, this solution focuses on supporting the faculty through additional resources and training opportunities with the goal of this support translating to the student learning experience. There is an assumption being made here that should be addressed. If faculty learn about new pedagogical approaches for teaching large classes, for example, there is an assumption that they will then use them in their large classes. This outcome may not be the case. Research suggests that changing teaching practices

requires commitment from the teacher, deep reflection, and administrative support (D'Eon et al., 2000; Knight et al., 2005; Kugel, 1993). It is sometimes easier for faculty to teach how they previously taught, unless a specific action plan is in place. This potential problem is a disadvantage of this solution. Although it is modest in resources required, it may not necessarily achieve the aims of this OIP as a stand-alone solution.

Possible solution three: individualized professional development for instructors.

Instructors are the leaders of the classroom, and their actions directly impact the learning outcomes for students (Condon et al., 2015). The third possible solution is to focus one-to-one with instructors in personalized professional development opportunities. The CTL study (CTL, 2015) revealed that over 95 first-year courses are being offered each academic year. More than half of these courses are being taught by part-time instructors. One limitation to forming PLCs, as outlined in solution two, is that they are typically made up of tenure-track faculty. Part-time faculty are less likely to participate in PLCs due to the very nature of precarious working conditions. Therefore, a potential solution to improving the quality of learning experiences for first-year students may lie in better supporting part-time instructors.

University teaching practices have shifted dramatically away from the once-secure, tenure-track professoriate model whereby undergraduate and graduate students are instructed primarily by permanent faculty. In Canada, as in other parts of the world, it is estimated that more than half of all undergraduate students are taught by contract faculty (Stewart, 2015). Stewart reported that precarious academic employment has been on the rise for decades, and he attributes this increase to the decrease in public funds, which is forcing universities to seek less-costly teaching models. Stewart argued that the number of new tenure track positions has not kept up with larger student enrolment, and therefore more students are being taught by

precarious academic workers. Precarious academic work creates significant challenges for part-time faculty, including a lack of job security, fair pay and access to benefits while feeling like second-class citizens to their full-time faculty counterparts (Stewart, 2015). Cholo (2015) wrote that adjunct faculty are the new fast-food workers of universities: educated professionals paid minimum wage salaries with no benefits or security.

Powell (2015) argued that many part-time faculty continue to engage in academic teaching because they love the subject area, the students, and the opportunity to teach. Part-time faculty reportedly see the value in what they are doing, despite the less-than-optimal terms of employment. Regarding academic effectiveness of part-time faculty, Landrum (2009) hypothesized that part-time faculty would have weaker instructional capacity and less academic rigour. However, no significant differences in student course evaluations and course grade distributions emerged. They did note that a limitation to using part-time faculty is that many do not see themselves as teachers because of the precariousness of their working environment.

Institutions need to develop practices of supporting part-time faculty, help them develop confidence in their teaching practices, and provide opportunities for recognition for their teaching (Ott & Cisneros, 2015). Landrum (2009) noted substantial differences in mechanisms of support for part-time faculty compared to full-time faculty. Therefore, strategic support for part-time faculty may be a possible solution, which could be framed by Kugel's (1993) classic model on how faculty become teachers. Although this model is dated, it is considered the model that authentically captures the stages faculty progress through as they become teachers (Asaf, Shachar, Tohar & Kainan, 2008).

Kugel (1993) proposed a two-phase, six-stage theory of becoming a teacher in higher education. The emphasis of phase one is on teaching. Within phase one there are two stages.

During stage one, early teaching faculty focus primarily on their own role in the classroom, especially managing the sense of “imposter syndrome.” Kugel suggested that new faculty may even be nervous when students ask questions since they may not know the answer. Kugel explained that once faculty become comfortable in front of the class and develop basic administration and teaching skills, they begin to feel more satisfied with the role as teacher and move into stage two. In stage two, the focus shifts to their understanding of the subject matter they teach. Once faculty have their own “teaching-self,” they can focus on the depth and richness of their subject area. Kugel wrote that faculty in this stage move from being worried about not having enough to say in a lecture to running out of time because they have so much to say. Kugel wrote that the faculty is now someone who is accepted as a person of authority. The focus here remains on the subject. Kugel proposed that once faculty have a firm grasp of themselves and the subject, they move into phase three, which emphasizes student learning.

In stage three, the focus shifts from teaching to learning with a goal of helping students become better learners. The faculty begin thinking about their subject material and how to best present it to the students. Faculty start to engage in reflection on teaching practices and explore pedagogy more deeply. In stage four, the faculty shift to helping students learn to use what they have been taught and teach toward application. Here, the faculty may take the approach of guiding the students to discovery. The faculty’s views change to wanting students to learn how to think rather than learning what to think. In stage five, the student is viewed as independent, and the goal of the faculty is to recognize that students know how to learn, how to interpret new information, and how to problem solve. Kugel (1993) wrote that here the faculty step back to let their students soar.

The final stage, stage six, is referred to as tuning. This stage encompasses the practice of deep reflection of teaching practices. Kugel (1993) argued that faculty need to be constantly developing, refreshing, and exploring their teaching practices. Although Kugel's work is dated, many still use his theory as the classic approach to supporting faculty seeing themselves as teachers (Bell, 2001; Hopwood & Stocks, 2008; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002)

Resources needed. Strategic support for part-time faculty having access to professional development opportunities that promote teaching identity requires resources. This solution focuses on a largely underserved and under-supported working group at the University.

Financial resources. The CTL already has capacity to offer one-to-one consultations for faculty. If a high percentage of part-time faculty decided to take part in this type of individualized professional development, an additional staff member for CTL may be required. Also, since part-time faculty are paid a stipend for courses taught and no additional monies are allocated for professional development time, some type of financial compensation should be provided to the part-time faculty for their time attending professional development sessions.

Time resources. Supporting part-time faculty in a one-to-one setting would require significant time of the CTL staff member or members to provide this level of support. It would also take the time of the part-time faculty who, as previously noted, are not paid for meetings or attending professional development opportunities.

Human resources. As previously mentioned, this solution would require staff in the CTL and part-time faculty to engage in the process. Additional considerations would be the union representing the part-time faculty and interactions with administration to navigate how this cost could be addressed. The part-time faculty may also be more likely to continue working with the University if the University was investing in their professional development. This investment

could lead to decreases in part-time faculty turnover, retraining costs of new part-time faculty, and time required by hiring practices, such as on-boarding new teaching staff each semester.

Technology resources. This solution would require few to no technology costs.

Advantages and disadvantages. This solution provides tailored support for an underserved group that plays a critical role in first-year teaching. More than half the courses are taught by part-time faculty, and little is done to address the realities of the precarious nature of their employment at the University. On the other hand, full-time faculty may take exception to programs specifically designed to support part-time faculty. This solution also relies on the assumption that professional development will translate into the classroom, like in solution two; however, I argue that this underserved group is more likely to take their professional development learnings into the classroom based on findings of Figlio, Schapiro, and Soter (2013). These researchers reported that “students learn relatively more from non-tenure track faculty in their introductory courses” (p. 2). The authors argued that many part-time faculty usually bring outside professional experiences into their classroom teaching, and this additional experience has a positive impact on student learning. They argued that faculty who can teach with real-world application tended to have students who were able to make better connections with the material (Figlio et al., 2013).

This solution also aligns with the University’s reputation of being a leader in social justice issues. If the University took this approach to supporting this group, it would set the example for the country on how part-time faculty should be valued, supported, and recognized within the post-secondary landscape. Having a recognized, empowered, and supported community of part-time faculty could indirectly impact the students they teach and hence improve the quality of first-year course experiences. Gappa and Leslie (1993) found that part-

time faculty rarely received the same levels of supports, resources, and opportunities for professional development as full-time faculty. The researchers went on to say that with the rapid changes in education and the role of part-time faculty responsible for teaching so many courses, universities cannot afford to neglect their professional development. Other researchers have reported similar findings pertaining to the lack of support and resources for part-time instructors within the academy (Knight, Baume, Tait, & Yorke, 2007; Ryan, Burgess, Connell, & Groen, 2013)

Reframing the Three Possible Solutions

In this section, the three possible solutions are presented for reframing. Table 3 outlines each of the solutions and explains the key deliverable.

Table 3

Summary of Three Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

| | Proposed solution | Key deliverable |
|------------|--|--|
| Solution 1 | Develop an institutional plan for large first-year classes | Extensive strategic institutional first-year teaching plan, approved by Board of Governors and Senate; incorporates key themes: class size, enrolment, assessment practices, hiring practices, and course design |
| Solution 2 | Professional learning communities | Strategic professional development offerings for all faculty who teach first-year courses with an emphasis on collaborative learning |
| Solution 3 | Individualized professional development for instructors | Targeted professional development for part-time faculty to address how this group of educators is underserved and heavily burdened with the precarious nature of employment |

Recommended Solutions

For this OIP to address the outlined PoP, a modified combination of the three previously presented solutions will be used. The first solution, to develop an institutional plan for first-year courses, is most likely to have the greatest impact on first-year academic experiences if it was to get approved by senior administration. It is also the least likely solution to get approved because of the high cost and consensus needed to implement change that could be called radical.

Institutional history has several examples of complex and multi-layered plans that would likely bring about positive change, but due to cost and administrative hurdles, such as governance approval, faculty approval, and financial implication, they never get off the ground. However, I believe a plan could be drafted that could serve a similar purpose without being thwarted by the bureaucratic realities. In lieu of a plan that would mandate change, I propose authoring a guiding principle document that highlights best teaching practices and considerations for teaching first-year courses. This document could be a series of invitations to “think-about” versus a statement of “you need to do X.” These guiding principles could encompass the main tenets proposed in the solution one discussion, including having discussions at the department level (or decanal unit level) about what each department’s first-year courses should look like. These aspects could include enrolment goals, size caps, methods of assessments, types of teaching pedagogies, and who teaches these courses. The deans of each decanal unit could bring forward the increased financial needs to the vice president and provost academic during budget allotment presentations and advocate for more resources to meet the collective vision of what each department’s first-year courses will be. The document could still be authored by a well-represented and diverse working group to ensure an authentic voice from all key stakeholders.

The second solution is a combination of proposed solution two and three. A PLC will be developed through the support and expertise of the CTL that specifically recruits both groups of faculties and offers one-to-one breakout support as part of the program. Barriers for part-time faculty, such as not having financial compensation, will need to be addressed. This issue would go forward to joint-committee (union and employer) to see how funding could be arranged. This teaching support could potentially become a negotiated union benefit through the employer. This PLC will focus on course design and teaching pedagogies, as suggested in the CTL study (CTL, 2015), but will extend to purposefully recruit and support part-time faculty concurrently. As demonstrated in Figure 3, two concurrent solutions will be launched as the main action items of this OIP to meet the goal of realigning the first-year academic experience with the University's vision and mission to be personal, purposeful and transformative.



Figure 3. OIP solutions for realigning the first-year courses with the University's mission and vision statements.

Plan, Do, Study, Act Model

Solution one: Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses.

Solution 1 proposes authoring a document that contains empirically supported strategies and techniques for effective pedagogical practices for first-year teaching. The document *Wise*

Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses will be informed by the research findings presented through this OIP and additional sources retrieved through a selective and targeted review of the literature and gray materials from other institutions. The literature review component of the resource will be purposely short, succinct, and applicable to the current culture of the University. It will not be an exhaustive review of the current literature on all first-year academic experience findings. Boote and Beile's (2005) work contributed to the decision to use a brief-literature review format because of the scope of this PoP.

I would make a call through the CTL seeking expressions of interest for people to sit on the working committee for this resource. I will make selections based on representation of key stakeholders, ensuring that groups that may have been historically left out from this type of work will be actively recruited. I also intend to host a community town hall once the committee is established to collect feedback from the community members at large. The committee will then circulate the document for comments and feedback throughout the authoring process. I will aim for the document to receive endorsement from senior administration, and I will then distribute the document broadly.

Solution two: professional learning communities. Once again, I will make a call for expressions of interests through the CTL. I will ensure that recruiting efforts reach the part-time faculty as well. I will set a group meeting schedule, and I will establish meeting goals with input from the group. I would suggest that the previous First-Year Caucus group be dissolved and new terms of reference for this PLC be established through the guidance of the CTL. I intend to have the group composition and the schedule of events be informed by the research of Vescio et al. (2007). They articulated how PLCs ought to be established. My intention is that the PLC will support its members as they develop the practices of being reflective practitioners with the goal

of improving the experiences for students in their courses. It will be important for this PLC to have the endorsement of the senior administration, whereby the PLC can serve as a professional development opportunity that can be used in merit and promotion. Both solutions will be reviewed and re-evaluated annually to measure how these solutions are impacting the quality of first-year courses at the University. Additional information about communication plans and measuring organizational improvements goals are outlined in Chapter 3.

Leadership Approaches to Change

This section explains how the two identified leadership theories are aligned with the PoP solution proposed in the previous section. The proposed solution has two parts: authoring *Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses* and developing PLCs. The first will serve as a guiding principles document that will help inform and shift the current practices of first-year teaching. The goal is that at the decanal and department levels, using the resource, groups can start working toward changes gradually or at an accelerated pace based on the particular needs and vision for the department. This pace connects to the leadership theory of transformational leadership originally developed by Burns (1978). The heart of this theory is that leaders can take their groups of followers to a higher level through motivation for improving performance or achieving a goal. The *Wise Practices* resource could serve this goal by bridging the gap between the current state and the envisioned state of first-year courses with specific tools based on empirical research. The resource can help members of departments understand how they could improve the learning experience in their first-year courses by adopting some or all of the recommendations. As Hackerman and Johnson (2004) reported, transformational leaders are actively engaged with their followers and the process. The CTL would not only author the resource but also be available for support and training for anyone or any group that would like to

implement a recommendation. For example, if members of a department decided they wanted to try different forms of pedagogical methods, as suggested by Cuseo's (2007) research, the CTL could provide this support, therefore making them part of the process of change, like Hackerman and Johnson (2004) suggested.

Harrison (2011) reported that transformational leadership approaches work well in higher education settings. Harrison argued that the benefits of this leadership approach go beyond improved student learning outcomes and can be used to support faculty development (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009). These findings connect to the second solution of developing PLCs. Harrison found that when faculty were being supported through a transformational leadership approach, faculty turnover rates decreased, job satisfaction increased, commitment to university reform and change strengthened, and faculty empowerment grew. These findings dovetail with similar research about faculty who participate in PLCs (Vescio et al., 2007). As previously explained, this leadership approach is known to increase faculty commitment to university reform and change. Adams and Hambright (2005) argued that universities need to be learning organizations that are led by transformational leaders. The PLC will be successful if framed using transformational leadership based on the research summarized here.

To further support the connections between the PoP solutions and transformational leadership, Bass and Avolio's (1993) full range leadership model can lend explicit steps to the change process. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, Bass (1985) added tangible and measurable components to the transformational model to address the challenge of quantifying Burns' theory (1973). The full range leadership model can be described as a constellation of leadership approaches and actions that match situations or problems with strategies. The full range leadership model has four predominate areas of focus: idealized influence, intellectual

stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation. Both solutions fit within the leadership theories selected.

An additional consideration when reflecting on leadership theory and addressing the PoP through this OIP is the University's identity and the relationship between liberal arts education and leadership. Wren, Riggio, and Genovese (2009) summarized some of the key principles of liberal education and leadership: living a life committed to the belief of freedom through education; critical thinking, problem solving, and knowing your authentic self; and respecting others and the power of education to transform lives.

The University is a liberal arts school. The mission and vision statements describe themes of cultivating global citizens and students being co-creators of knowledge and lifelong learners. This lens and perspective align with how change can be supported by using transformational leadership theory and the full range leadership model to shepherd in solutions that are rooted in the shared beliefs about education that permeate the very foundation of the University.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

In this final section, I connect the leadership approaches and the proposed solutions for change, described earlier, to leadership ethics. The impetus of this OIP is to take the existing state of teaching and learning practices in first-year courses and make them better for both the student and the instructor. To explore leadership ethics in relation to change as proposed in this OIP, ethical leadership research will be discussed. Caldwell et al. (2009) argued the importance for leadership models to be rooted in ethical practices. They proposed that any form of leadership needs to consider decisions and actions through an ethical lens. Caldwell et al. noted that "transformational leadership honours the governance obligations of leaders by demonstrating a commitment to the welfare of all stakeholders" (p. 175). This belief is consistent with the

original vision of Burns (1978), who argued that transformational leadership enables leaders to honour the duties owed to both individuals and organizations based on moral foundations. In the context of the proposed solutions in this OIP, it is important to identify the stakeholders and ensure that these changes are considering their welfare. Pfeffer (2007) wrote about how leaders need to inspire their followers by raising the bar for each person's own development and by doing so will improve the performance of the organization. Pfeffer further explained that when leaders motivate their group members to pursue excellence within their own roles in the organization, they can create a culture of trust that will result in high performance and long-term sustainability. Toor and Ofori (2009) furthered this idea by saying that "for good leadership, it is important that leaders are not only competent but also ethical in their everyday conduct" (p. 543). Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) explained that ethical leadership can be summarized by leader honesty, such as truth telling, operating with integrity (e.g., principled behaviours), and being trustworthy. In addition, "honesty and integrity are seen as important components of a transformational leader's idealized influence" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 119). The previous information supports the use of transformational leadership theory as it is deeply rooted in ethical principles. Kirkbride (2006) explained how the full range leadership model can be used within an organization to develop transformational leadership practices. Therefore, for this OIP, I propose using the full range leadership model to support the shift to a transformational leadership approach and shepherd in the proposed changes. Next, it is important to identify the key members impacted by this OIP to ensure their welfare is considered.

The key members impacted by this OIP are students, faculty, administration, and staff. Since the primary goal of this OIP is to improve existing teaching practices within first-year courses, the risk associated with change is low; however, any change can bring about

disruptions. It is important to keep this in mind for all stakeholders. Faculty who have taught a particular way for a long time may feel threatened by the change in expectations; students who have become acclimated to lectures may feel uncomfortable with new active-learning strategies; staff may be called upon to provide additional support and resources to faculty; and part-time instructors may still be left in precarious work scenarios despite taking part in professional development opportunities. The key to address these potential disruptions will be a transparent communication plan. How these proposed changes are communicated will be crucial to the success of this OIP and the strategy will be thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

Shepherding change at the post-secondary level related to teaching and learning practices requires strong evidence for the need to change and a plan that is rooted in empirical support and theory. In this chapter, the OIP expanded on central ideas presented in Chapter 1 by introducing key frameworks and theories for leading the change process. This chapter included five sections. Section one introduced framing theories of organizational change using AI and Kotter's eight-stage change process model. Theories of change leadership in relation to the organizational context and how the PoP was framed were reviewed here. Section two offered a critical organizational analysis through a gap analysis between the current state and the future state of the University. Section three presented three potential solutions to address the PoP informed by research and selected a blend of all the solutions that has two main deliverables: authoring the *Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses* resource and forming a PLC with strategic recruitment for part-time faculty. The chapter concluded with sections four and five that discussed the chosen leadership approaches to change and ethical considerations as they apply to the proposed change process. In Chapter 3, the change implementation plan and a

strategic communication plan will be presented, followed by a discussion about the ongoing monitoring and evaluation frameworks that will be used in this OIP.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

The aim of Chapter 3 is to bridge the findings from the previous chapters and move toward the action and implementation phases of this OIP. Aforementioned, the goal of this OIP is to develop a plan that will support the realignment of the first-year academic experience with the current mission and vision of a small liberal arts university. The University strives to offer an educational experience that is personal, purposeful, and transformative. In order to bring about this desired change plan, key theoretical frameworks will be introduced in relation to the previous discussions in Chapters 1 and 2. It is important to also introduce the methods of monitoring and evaluating the proposed changes. How these proposed changes will be presented to the University community will also be outlined in a succinct communication plan that articulates key steps and stages for implementation. Reference will also be made to the responsible stakeholder associated with each stage of the change plan to increase accountability, a sense of collaboration, and recognition to those who are part of the plan. This approach will meet the goal of this OIP being applicable, transparent, and attainable. Finally, the chapter introduces potential next steps and future considerations that can support sustainability and wayforwarding of the work outlined within this OIP.

Change Implementation Plan

In this section, the connections between the organizational analysis in Chapter 2 will be discussed by outlining a strategy for change through summarizing goals, priorities, and limitations. To recap, the proposed change plan has two main areas of focus: 1) authoring a guiding document, *Wise Practices and Considerations for Teaching First-Year Courses*, and 2) developing a PLC specific to first-year teaching and learning. As outlined in Chapter 2, this *Wise Practices* document will be informed by the research findings presented throughout this OIP.

Additional sources retrieved through a selective and targeted review of the literature and gray materials that focus on optimal first-year teaching practices and considerations will also be included. The second proposed area of change is the creation of a PLC hosted through the CTL for all faculty, part-time and full-time, who have a touch on the first-year teaching experience. I intend to have the PLC group composition and the schedule of professional development topics be informed by the research of Vesccio et al. (2007). Vesccio et al. outlined considerations for forming effective and sustainable PLCs. My intention is that the PLC will strive to support the its members as they develop the practices of being reflective practitioners within their teaching practices to benefit the students' academic experience within their courses.

Fit Within Organization Strategy

The University's strategic plan includes two main areas that are interconnected with this OIP. The first area is a commitment to supporting students in making significant contributions to an increasingly complex world with a distinctive liberal arts education that focuses on personal and professional development. The second area is to encourage and celebrate excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. As Chapter 1 explained, the University was forged to be unique through its teaching model and its commitment to personalized learning experiences. This goal is abstract; however, the proposed change plan harmonizes this abstract ideology with concrete steps. The University can provide a personalized learning experience to first-year students by implementing some or all of the suggestions from the *Wise Practices* document. The University also strives to nurture and support interdisciplinary studies, the cornerstone of a liberal arts education. The PLC will serve this collaborative approach to collegial learning that will foster improved teaching practices across disciplines. This OIP fits within the foundational

identity of how the University sees itself and how it is positioned within its strategic mandate agreement with the province.

Faculty reported, in the CTL study (CTL, 2015), that several areas are in need of improvement within the first-year teaching experience, including resources for teaching assistants, marking supports, classroom spaces, strategic staffing plans (who is teaching these courses), and recognition and acknowledgement for those who teach large classes. The *Wise Practices* document will take into consideration the issues shared within the CTL study, as well as the feedback from staff and students. In addition to the CTL study results, empirically supported best practices from the literature will also frame the recommendations within the *Wise Practices* document. The overall aim will be to support an improved teaching and learning culture at the University through the development of resources and supports.

Some examples of recommendations include

- cap to first-year course enrolment;
- weighting of first-year course values for staffing plans (i.e., large first-year courses count as more than one);
- assessment and evaluation guidelines, including providing feedback early and often;
- student-centred pedagogical practices; and
- first-year course design standard practices.

These strategies will ideally lead to an improved situation for both faculty and students. They will also support the overarching goal of this OIP by realigning the first-year academic experience with the vision and mission of the University.

Proposed Solution and Change Management Plan

The proposed solution involves several concurrent and consecutive mini-plans. The first step will be to mobilize a working group to serve as authors and consultants for the *Wise Practices* document. The group will be hosted and facilitated through the CTL with authentic

diversity and broad representation from key stakeholders. Authentic diversity is defined as having representation within the group that accurately reflects membership of the organization at large. So, in this context, membership would include students, instructors, student support staff and administrators, as well as instructional designers and educational developers. The *Wise Practices* document will be concise, readable, realistic, and empirically grounded. It will also lay out strategies on how departments can implement small changes or adopt full first-year course overhauls. The document will be drafted and circulated broadly for feedback, including to Senate for approval and the BOG for informational purposes. It will be important for senior administration and the BOG to be aware of the recommendations because of the financial implications, including physical space requirements (e.g., heavier use of 200-seat classrooms versus lecture halls), staffing plans, and re-branding of the first-year academic experience for student recruitment purposes.

Once the *Wise Practices* document is approved, a series of changes within departmental units will be set in motion. As previously noted, the pace of adoption of the recommendations will likely vary. Providing this flexibility is crucial for this OIP. Although the *Wise Practices* document is in alignment with how a university should be teaching first-year courses and how the University sees itself, some faculty and staff may not want to embrace change. For example, a faculty member may not want to adopt a student-centred approach to instruction and may believe that these recommendations contravene their academic freedoms to teach how they see fit. It will be important to leave space for faculty and departments to maintain their autonomy within their teaching practices. The University community has a history of rejecting change that is perceived as radical or top-down, as reviewed in Chapter 1. Conversely, some faculty and departments will welcome these changes and may become ambassadors of the change plan and

the CTL. This group of instructors and departments will hopefully become part of the network-improvement community.

During the first two semesters of implementation, select departments and their respective faculty would, ideally, serve as pilot groups. These pilot departments could then serve as supports and leaders for other departments. Ruben, De Lisi, and Gigliotti (2016) discussed change management in post-secondary settings and outlined five steps: 1) planning, 2) leadership, 3) communication, 4) culture, and 5) assessment. The researchers introduced the Five-by-Five Matrix for Planned Change. Ruben et al. explained how sometimes gradual implementation of the change and seeing others taking the first steps can help bring those resistant to change around. This five-step model aligns with how I would suggest implementing the change management practices based on the leadership approaches previously discussed.

The final *Wise Practices* document will be divided into two distinct change categories: 1) inside the classroom and 2) outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom includes recommendations pertaining to course design and pedagogy. Outside the classroom focuses on resources like staffing and physical space. The CTL will take the lead on the inside of the classroom changes and the provost and vice president of finance will take the lead on the outside of the classrooms considerations since those depend on funding allocations and resource assignments.

The second area of the proposed plan is the introduction of a PLC hosted through the CTL. This group will replace the current First-Year Caucus to promote wider representation of membership. The group will focus on learning the fundamentals of course design and pedagogy to bring about the recommendations from the *Wise Practices* document. This group will also serve as a network-improvement community to communicate within their respective departments

and articulate how these proposed recommendations can be implemented. Bryk, Gomez, and Grunow (2010) reported that using network-improvement communities in educational settings is an ideal alternative to providing one-size-fits-all information, especially when diverse expertise is needed to communicate changes in different areas. They also explained that “networks enable individuals from many different contexts to participate according to their interests and expertise while sustaining collective attention on progress toward common goals” (p. 6). Given that the PLC will have representation from different departments, the participants can be responsible for taking the messaging back to their home departments. They will ideally be able to present the information, their learning and first-hand experiences in a manner that speaks to the culture and needs of their department.

Another potential issue could be the cost of reducing class sizes, both for the physical space and the need for more instructors to teach. Presently, most of the large first-year classes are taught in one of four main lecture halls. If a class size cap was implemented, additional classrooms and instructors would be required to accommodate more class offerings. This issue could be mediated if not all of the first-year courses adopted the classroom cap at the same time. A gradual approach to this change could help the University absorb the additional classes and associated costs.

Goals for Implementing the OIP

Cawsey et al. (2016) introduced the importance of using specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (SMART) goals to shepherd in change. The next section looks at short-, medium-, and long-term goals for the change plan that fit within the SMART framework.

Short-term goal. The first goal will be to have a department willing to pilot a revised first-year course. Ideally, one course per decanal unit (three decanal units) could serve as an

exemplar (Phase 1). The courses would implement most of the recommendations from the *Wise Practices* document. Discretion would be left with the instructors to decide which recommendations they would like to initially adopt or try. The course would also fit within the class size cap and be staffed with a teaching assistant and marking support. A second short-term goal would be to establish the PLC. The aim would be to have faculty in the group who would be interested in taking part in Phase 2 and refreshing their courses. The faculty who are currently changing their courses could serve as resources for the group to share their experiences and learnings.

Medium-term goal. After the first semester is completed, the next goal will be to have three to five courses per decanal unit offer revised first-year courses each semester. The medium-term goal would span two semesters. This time frame could capture up to 30 revised course offerings for a total of approximately 90 first-year course offerings per academic year. After one academic year, one third of all first-year courses would be following the revised course design format. This target of having one out of three courses following *Wise Practices* is realistic based on the literature that discusses curriculum changes and implementation (Sng, 2008). Sng suggested that incremental changes to a proportion of overall curriculum revisions were more sustainable compared to a full curriculum overhaul. This change would be felt by both the student and the faculty. The PLC will continue as a means of support, providing learning and collaboration opportunities. The PLC will also continue to serve as a network-improvement community to the broader university community. The faculty who have taken part will now have direct experience to share.

Long-term goal. Ideally, two-thirds of all first-year courses across the University will follow the *Wise Practices* document recommendations within the first 18 months or 6 semesters.

Moving forward, all newly developed first-year courses would have to meet the established *Wise Practices* criteria before being approved by the Undergraduate Senate Committee for Curriculum. The *Wise Practices* document should be revisited at the 18-month mark to incorporate any changes or revisions discovered through the pilot phase. The PLC would conduct this review and make any revisions. This new *Wise Practices* document would then shift from recommendations to guidelines for how first-year courses are designed and delivered at the University. After the 18-month pilot window, any faculty member submitting a syllabus that does not include the course design guidelines would have to submit a rationale to their chair prior to departmental approval. Table 4 maps out the SMART goals using short-, medium-, and long-term settings.

Table 4

SMART Goals Categorized by Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Settings

| Setting | Goal | | | | |
|------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------|
| | Specific | Measurable | Attainable | Relevant | Timely |
| Short-term | 1 course per decanal unit re-designed | 3 courses total | Yes—Champions within these departments already work with the Centre for Teaching and Learning | Yes—good representation across units | Term 1 |
| | Professional learning community (PLC) established | 2 meetings per term | Yes—Champions within these departments already work with the Centre for Teaching and Learning | Yes—good representation across units | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| Medium-term | 3–5 courses per decanal unit re-designed | Range 5–15 courses re-designed | Yes—PLC will help build capacity for change | Yes—helps facilitate broader change | Term 2 |
| | PLC continues—new members welcomed | 2 meetings per term | Yes—PLC will welcome a larger group to support changes & peer support | Yes—helps facilitate broader change | |
| Long-term | Up to 1/3 of first-year are re-designed | Range—Top end 30 courses | Ambitious but attainable—translates to 2 courses per department | Yes—helps facilitate broader change | Terms 3–6 |
| | PLC continues—may break into decanal units based on size of community | Continue with 2 meetings per term | Scheduling becomes more challenging but can offer multiple dates/ time for multiple meetings | Yes—helps facilitate broader change | Ongoing—Goal for PLC to become valued for “service” commitment for faculty |
| | <i>Wise Practices</i> document shifts to guidelines | After 6 terms—adopted for all new courses | Yes—Undergraduate course committee will review prior to new course approval | Yes—becomes part of the cultural practice | Ongoing—after 6 terms of new courses |

Note. Action items adapted from *Frameworks for leading the process of organizational change: “How” to lead organizational change*, by T. F. Cawsey, G. Deszca, and C. Ingols, 2016, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

As previously discussed, this change plan is not radical. The change plan is strategic and gradual. It focuses on using faculty and departments that are eager to adopt these changes as a mechanism for building momentum for wider adoption. This improvement plan outlines realistic goals that meet the SMART criteria and are short-, medium-, and long-term focused to bring about the desired future state of teaching and learning experiences in first-year courses.

Potential Implementation Issues

Weiner's (2009) work looked at organizational readiness for change. He argued that it is imperative for organizational members to have a shared belief in their collective capacity to bring about change, which is also known as organizational change-efficacy. One strategy to help organizations get ready to enact change is to establish a scope of the limitations or potential challenges of a proposed change plan. The idea here is to circumvent potential resistance to the change plan by having the plan itself outline the areas of limitations. This section introduces and gives voice to two limitations with the intention of moving forward with the plan fully informed and transparent.

The first limitation, or truth that can be told, is that quality teaching, like what is being proposed in the *Wise Practices* document, is hard. Active teaching is more challenging than passive lecturing. Watts and Robertson (2011) conducted a systematic literature review on the topic. They reported that faculty whose students reported them as excellent or extraordinary teachers were more likely to experience teacher burnout. Burnout was defined as depleted emotional reserves (emotional exhaustion); increasingly cynical and negative attitudes toward others (depersonalization); and higher levels of work-related dissatisfaction. It is imperative that burnout is taken into consideration within the human resource frame of this OIP. Resources and supports need to be available to support faculty who are striving for teaching excellence. This need can be addressed through collaborative efforts between senior administration, deans, chairs, wellness services, and union support.

The second limitation is the potential for students to resist the proposed changes in teaching approaches. Similar to how some faculty may be resistant to changing their teaching practices, students may be resistant to changing their learning practices. For example, one faculty

reported to the CTL that when they shifted to a student centred/active learning approach in their large first-year class, the students asked if the faculty member could “just lecture at them like their other professors” (Qualitative comment section, CTL Report, 2015). The students did not want to engage or participate in the learning activities. Seidel and Tanner’s (2013) work explored the idea of student resistance to active learning and taking directions from faculty during lectures. They posed the research questions, “What if the students revolt? What if you ask them to talk to a classmate and they simply refuse?” (p.586). Their work argued that faculty must be explicit with their students about the “why” of their course design and the “why” of their teaching approach. This clarity of direction and applicability of content is something that can be explored and discussed within the professional learning community proposed in this OIP. Another potential solution would be for faculty to include their teaching philosophy or pedagogical approach in their syllabus or make reference to their approach during the first class. Seidel and Tanner explained that students need to be informed and understand the theory behind the teaching decisions. Although both these limitations are part of this OIP, the literature provides strategies on how they can be addressed and, ultimately, mediated. These strategies have been incorporated into the change plan.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

As outlined in Chapter 2, the plan, do, study, act (PDSA) model is being used to integrate the two solutions proposed in this OIP. In this section, this PDSA model will be presented in parallel with the two selected leadership approaches to change models: AI and Kotter’s eight-stage change process model.

The first stage in the AI model is Discovery, which is in line with the Plan frame of the PDSA model. The CTL will make an open call for instructors and anyone else who interacts with

the first-year academic experience to participate in a working group. The aim of the group will be to inform and author the *Wise Practices* document. This group will meet to express and reflect on what is working well within first-year teaching and learning at the University. These results will help inform the guide. Sample questions could include: What first-year courses are working well? Who are our first-year faculty champions? Which courses are students gravitating to?

The second stage of AI is Dream. Here, the working group will have the opportunity to imagine optimal best practices for first-year teaching and learning at the University. Voice will be given to people's ideas and goals for the institution moving forward in relation to first-year teaching and learning. The working group will start drafting proposed areas of focus and concepts for recommendations, a process that aligns with the Do frame.

The next stage of AI is Design. This is a secondary level within the Do frame previously mentioned. Here, the group will be charged with drafting the *Wise Practices* document by incorporating the results from the two previous stages of AI. The group will circulate the *Wise Practices* document for feedback. The group will also ensure that the recommendation strategies are consistent with empirically informed practices. This work connects to the Study frame.

The final AI stage is Destiny, which is in line with Act frame. Here, the group will solicit feedback from the larger teaching community to bring the *Wise Practices* document into practice based on the strategic rollout phases per decanal unit discussed earlier in the chapter. Table 5 shows the interconnections and parallels between the AI model and the PDSA model, which are presented with the OIP action items.

Table 5

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Model and OIP Connections Compared to the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Model

| AI Phase | PDSA Phase | Action within OIP |
|-----------|------------|---|
| Discovery | Plan | Form working group with the aim of establishing recommendations and authoring the <i>Wise Practices</i> document. |
| Dream | Do | Begin preliminary brainstorming and writing. Identify the key concepts and main recommendations. |
| Design | Study | Map out the <i>Wise Practices</i> document. |
| Destiny | Act | Circulate working draft of the <i>Wise Practices</i> document for broad review and feedback cycle. |

Note: Appreciative inquiry model adapted from *Appreciative Inquiry: Toward a Methodology for Understanding and Enhancing Organizational Innovation* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), by D. Cooperrider, 1986, Department of Organizational Behavior, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

Kotter's eight-stage change process model supports the overarching aim of this OIP of realigning the first-year academic experience with the mission and vision of the University. The goal is to provide an educational experience that is personal, purposeful, and transformative with the specific focus on first year. Kotter's model is anchored to the idea of a big opportunity, which is the *Wise Practices* document and a strategic rollout of key courses within decanal units adopting the recommendations. The following sections articulate how each of the eight stages will unfold in relation to the proposed changes within this OIP.

Create: sense of urgency. A broad-reaching communication plan will present the *Wise Practices* document and its recommendations. The communication plan will also map out how these recommendations will be implemented for a select group of courses within each decanal unit. The reallocation of funds for first-year courses, new course design practices, human

resource changes, and new class room allocations will all support the goal of creating a sense of urgency for change. The plan will be transparent and readily distributed.

Build: guiding coalition. The working group and faculty in the selected pilot courses will naturally transition into the role of guiding coalition that will implement the desired changes. Ideally, faculty from the group will self-select to participate in the PLC or offer support through a separate community of practice. The CTL will help facilitate these groups. A second coalition will be formed through the support of these changes through the deans, chairs, and senior administrators who will support the work of the CTL.

Form: change vision. The *Wise Practices* document lays out the desired change to the teaching and learning practices of first-year courses. This document and the accompanying communication plan will help demonstrate the change vision.

Communication: vision buy-in. As previously noted, the communication plan of the desired state of first-year courses will serve as a tool to support buy-in and adoption. It is crucial that the pilot courses run as the communication plan rolls out. This concurrent launch will help reinforce that change is happening at the present. The pilot courses will already have the reallocated funds and additional human resource supports; therefore, it is less likely that faculty will resist the change plan based on the argument that senior administration would not fund the plan.

Empower: broad action. The redesigned courses roll out in two phases. Phase 1 is one course per decanal unit (three in total) for semester one. Phase 2, in semester two, increases the redesigned courses to three to five per decanal unit each semester (18–30 courses). By the end of the second phase, it is possible that 30 courses would have been adapted, which would equal

approximately a third of first-year courses. This realistic target of having one out of three courses following *Wise Practices* will help to empower faculty who adopt the change plan.

Generate: short-term wins. The short-term wins will be each of the courses that are redesigned and faculty who adopted new teaching practices. Phase 1 is three courses that serve as exemplars moving to three to five courses per decanal unit, as the change plan rolls out. Another short-term win will be forming the PLC. The aim is for this group to meet monthly.

Sustain: momentum. The intention within this OIP is that changes to first-year teaching practices evolve to become common practice. It will be imperative that senior administration, deans, and chairs continue to support these course redesign practices including human resource factors, such as staffing plans and marking support, and physical space requirements. The CTL will also need to ensure continued support for new changes by maintaining the communities of practice, conducting research, and providing professional development opportunities.

Institute: culture change. The *Wise Practices* document will include examples of teaching practices that will shift the teaching culture based on pedagogical theory. These newly adopted approaches to teaching first-year courses will help the University differentiate itself from other institutions, which help maintain the culture change. It will become part of the identity of the first-year academic experience and facilitate the realignment of the academic experience with the vision and mission of the University. The PLC will continue to meet and can be applied toward the service component required by faculty. Deans will use the *Wise Practices* document recommendations for new course approvals. In Table 6, Kotter's eight-stage change process model is represented with the corresponding OIP action items.

Table 6

Kotter's Eight-Stage Change Process Model Represented with the OIP Action Items

| Kotter's Model Stage | OIP Action Items |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1) CREATE: sense of urgency | Communication plan outlines new approaches to first-year teaching and learning and circulates to broader community. |
| 2) BUILD: guiding coalition | Key members transition from the working group into pilot teaching courses and develop the PLC community of practice for instructors. |
| 3) FORM: change vision | The <i>Wise Practices</i> document maps the desired change of the state of first-year courses. |
| 4) COMMUNICATION: vision buy-in | Key courses serve as exemplars. |
| 5) EMPOWER: broad action | Three phases of redesigned courses: Phase 1: One course per decanal unit (three total) Phase 2: Three to five courses per decanal unit (18–30 total) Phase 3: Goal of 30 courses or 1/3 of all first-year courses |
| 6) GENERATE: short-term wins | Goal 1: Phase 1: Three courses Phase 2: 18–30 courses Phase 3: 30 courses or 1/3 of all first-year courses Goal 2: Form community of practice |
| 7) SUSTAIN: momentum | Senior administration, deans, and chairs support the recommendations. CTL continues supporting the recommendations and providing resources. |
| 8) INSTITUTE: culture change | University differentiating itself supports sustainable culture change and becomes part of the University's identity. Professional learning community continues to support and mentor faculty. Deans approve new courses using the <i>Wise Practices</i> document. |

Proposed Tools and Measures to Track Changes, Gauge Progress, and Assess Change

The previous sections presented the two key areas of change proposed in this OIP: developing the *Wise Practices* document and forming a PLC. This section will introduce tools and measurements to track changes and gauge progress. It will also provide the opportunity for refinement of the changes and discuss how the implementation plan can be adapted if needed.

The *Wise Practices* document proposes a series of recommendations and considerations for first-year teaching and learning in two main areas: inside the classroom and outside the classroom. To measure the changes inside the classroom, there are three areas of data collection: 1) instructor reflection, 2) student feedback, and 3) course design through the syllabus. Outside the classroom will require connecting with chairs and deans. The recommendations outside the classroom involve human resourcing, physical environment (classrooms), and first-year course size caps. To measure and track the changes outside the classroom, there are three areas of data collection: 1) staffing plans, 2) room bookings, and 3) registrar data of course enrolment. Table 7 presents the measurement areas with examples of which tools will be implemented for each category.

Table 7

Measurement of Implementation of Proposed Changes from Organizational Improvement Plan Sorted by Inside and Outside the Classroom Categories

| Area of Change Focus | Sources of Data | Tools |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Inside the classroom | Instructor reflection | End of course reflection questionnaire: self-report |
| | Student feedback (informal) | Start-stop-continue exercise: in classes |
| | Course review | Environmental scan: conducted by Centre for Teaching and Learning |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Outside the classroom | Human resourcing: deans and chairs | Staffing plans and hiring reports: unit reports |
| | Room bookings | Environmental scan: first-year classes and room allocations |
| | Class sizes | Report: registrar's office Class enrolment data |

Each semester, a review of the measurement tools will be conducted by the CTL to produce a brief and succinct OIP update report (three reports per year). Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. This report will be circulated and presented to the deans and the provost at the Provost Planning Group. The membership of this committee is senior administration, decanal deans, and the provost. The report will include a narrative summary of strengths, weaknesses, and wayforwarding recommendations. The group will be able to support and facilitate the distribution of resources that will support the OIP and required modifications, if needed. Delvin and Samarawickrema (2010) argued that using a multi-faceted approach to measuring change in teaching effectiveness is required to capture a holistic picture of an academic experience. The second area of measurement and review is the work of the PLC. The scholarship of teaching and learning has several approaches to studying and evaluating the impact of PLCs in university settings (Wenger, 1998; Hughes & Kritsonis, 2007; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003). For example, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) model suggests evaluating a PLC through a series of cycles to measure where value has been created by participating in the PLC. As seen in Figure 4, the model is a five-category cycle of perceived value.

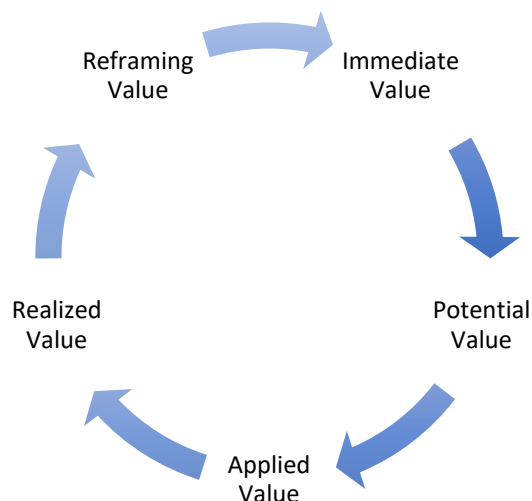


Figure 4. Wenger et al. (2002) model of value cycle for measuring impact of communities of practice.

Adapted from *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, by E. Wenger, R. McDermott, and W. Snyder, 2002, Boston: Harvard Business Press.

The Wenger et al. (2002) model can serve as a measure within the OIP to evaluate the value added by using PLCs to support collaborative learning for the adoption and advancement of the recommendations within the *Wise Practices* document. The aim is to indirectly improve the teaching and learning practices within first-year courses through opportunities for collaborative dialoguing, professional development through teaching enhancements and space for reflection. The model of value cycle is presented in Table 8 with further details about each category and a summary of how each can measure the value of participation within the PLC lead by the CTL.

Table 8

Model of Value Cycle for Measuring Impact of Professional Learning Communities

| Value area | Action |
|-----------------|--|
| Immediate value | Members have questions answered or find information from the community. Example: Learn about a repository of scholarship on teaching and learning within their disciplines. |
| Potential value | Exchange of knowledge can contribute to someone's work, but outcome not yet established. Example: Participant finds an approach they learned about of interest and wants to incorporate it into their own teaching practice. |
| Applied value | Participant has applied knowledge they have gained through the professional learning community and have changed their work or practice as a result. |
| Realized value | Participant has applied knowledge from their professional learning community to change their teaching practices, and this has had a measurable positive effect on the work's success (according to whatever indicators of success are used to measure the activity concerned). |
| Reframing value | Participating and interacting within the professional learning community have started the conversation and have acted to re-examine its definition of success or its way of thinking about teaching and learning. Moving forward change is happening as a result. |

Note: Adapted from *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, by E. Wenger, R. McDermott, and W. Snyder, 2002, Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Using the Wenger et al. (2002) model, the CTL can host biannual focus groups to capture the instructors' perceptions of the cycles of value within the PLC. This feedback will be included in the OIP review report, which will provide the opportunity for reviewing and modifying the PLC as needed.

This section introduced potential measurement tools and evaluation opportunities for gauging the changes proposed within the OIP. A series of data points (self-report, surveys, and reports), both qualitative and quantitative, will be collected from the perspectives of inside and

outside the classroom. These sampling techniques are based on the recommendations from the *Wise Practices* document. To measure and evaluate impact and effectiveness of using professional learning communities, Weiner's (2009) model of value cycle for measuring impact of communities of practice will be used biannually. All data will be collated and reported to the senior administration team at the end of each semester by the CTL. This review will provide the opportunity to refine the changes as needed and set in motion the necessary wayforwarding directions.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

In this section, the plan for building awareness of the need for change within the organization will be presented. Specifically, key ideas and actions for stakeholders will be introduced using the Cawsey et al. (2016) communication plan model. The second section will introduce Husain's (2013) model, which is being used to ensure that the people impacted by the change plan are considered. Next, potential lines of inquiry and potential responses will be anticipated and responded to. Last, communication avenues, with specific examples, will be presented.

In 2015, the CTL conducted a study of the first-year academic experience. The results from this study, which included input from instructors, students, and academic support staff, indicated a need to revisit the first-year academic experience. The respondents shared that the first-year courses had grown exponentially over the last few decades and were no longer in alignment with how the University distinguishes itself from other institutions. First-year was meant to be personal, purposeful, and transformative. This OIP addresses the erosion of the first-year academic experience by realigning teaching practices to reflect the University's mission and vision. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the University's mission and vision statements

articulate the importance of fostering and supporting student learning. The decline of a student-centred first-year academic experience happened over time, according to input from the CTL study (CTL, 2015). Although the University was once renowned for small class sizes, innovative pedagogy, and commitment to transformational learning experiences through relationships and community, the current scope of teaching and learning within the first-year is making meeting these goals more challenging. The University community was likely aware of the changes and the slow erosion of personalized learning over the past two decades as evidenced by the institutional history presented in Chapter 1. The CTL study (CTL, 2015) reported that faculty recognized that class enrolment had increased, seminars had been removed, and lecturing became normative, while the students received little feedback from their standardized multiple-choice tests. However, it was not until the CTL study in 2015 that the actual state of the first-year experience was examined extensively and a report generated. This CTL study (CTL, 2015) will be used to facilitate awareness of the need for change within the organization and is a central leveraging document throughout this OIP. The next section introduces how the communication plan will be established.

Jorgensen, Owen, and Neus (2009) argued that it is imperative to not improvise change management. They explained that a clear communication plan is required and that the plan itself is as important as the changes that are being made. The authors discussed how the communication plan helps to facilitate buy-in and acceptance of the changes with the people-related factors, which are typically more difficult than the process changes. To frame this OIP communication plan, the Cawsey et al. (2016) model will be used. This approach is a four-phase communication model: 1) pre-change approval, 2) creating a need for change, 3) midstream

change and milestones communication, and 4) confirm and celebrate change. Table 9 outlines the communication plan phase with identified stakeholder and action items.

Table 9

Four Phases of the Communication Plan with Stakeholders and Actions

| Communication Plan Phase | Stakeholder and Action |
|---|--|
| Pre-change approval | Senior administration approval Financial commitment for resource allotments Approval for changes to class sizes and space Deans and chairs buy-in for staffing plans |
| Creating a need for change | Teaching and learning broader community Includes deans, chairs, instructors and students Need for change, rationale, reassurances and steps/plan |
| Midstream change and milestones communication | Inform teaching and learning community of progress Obtain feedback—opportunity to refine Report back on changes thus far Map what is coming next Three update reports per academic year (authored by Centre for Teaching and Learning) |
| Confirm and celebrate change | Inform teaching and learning community of successes Celebrate the changes made Prepare for the next change/sustainability of the changes made Annual report: Revitalizing the First-year Academic Experience (authored by Centre for Teaching and Learning) |

The first phase will involve having the OIP approved by senior administration. This is the pre-change approval phase. Once this plan is approved, communicating with first-year instructors as well as the deans and the department chairs will be important. Since only a few select courses will be adopting the new first-year course design recommendations, those taking part will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss the changes in more detail. This invitation will also serve as the first open call for forming the PLC.

The CTL will take the lead in preparing the change report that will introduce the change plan to the broader teaching and learning community. This report will use the CTL 2015 study to help establish the need for change. Included within this report will be explicit details about how the changes will be rolled out. The phased-in course redesign map with course target goals will also be included here. The PLC will also serve as a network-improvement committee, as previously discussed. The CTL will author the three reports per year that capture the midstream changes and milestones. This reporting process will provide the opportunity for reflection and refinement.

The final phase, confirming and celebrating change, will also be the responsibility of the CTL. The CTL reports will include information pertaining to the change plan, including successes and details about how the changes will be carried forward in a sustainable manner. Each year, as part of the CTL annual report, a reserved section, called Revitalizing the First-year Academic Experience, will track the changes over a three-year minimum as suggested by Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007). These authors argued that organizations need to allow time for not only procedural changes but also symbolic changes to take hold. This idea of allowing time and space for symbolic change is important for this OIP since its aim is to ultimately impact the teaching culture and University identity.

In addition to the change communication phases presented, for optimal likelihood of adopting this change plan, it is important to look more deeply into the personnel side of this plan. Faculty, staff and students will be impacted by the proposed changes, and it is important to be mindful of this impact. One approach to being mindful is to incorporate Husain's work into the change plan. Husain (2013) argued that to effectively communicate change, it is paramount that change leaders address the apprehensions and issues that arise for the people being impacted by

the changes. Husain developed a personnel communication model that addresses key areas change leaders should also consider and communicate to the membership (Figure 5).

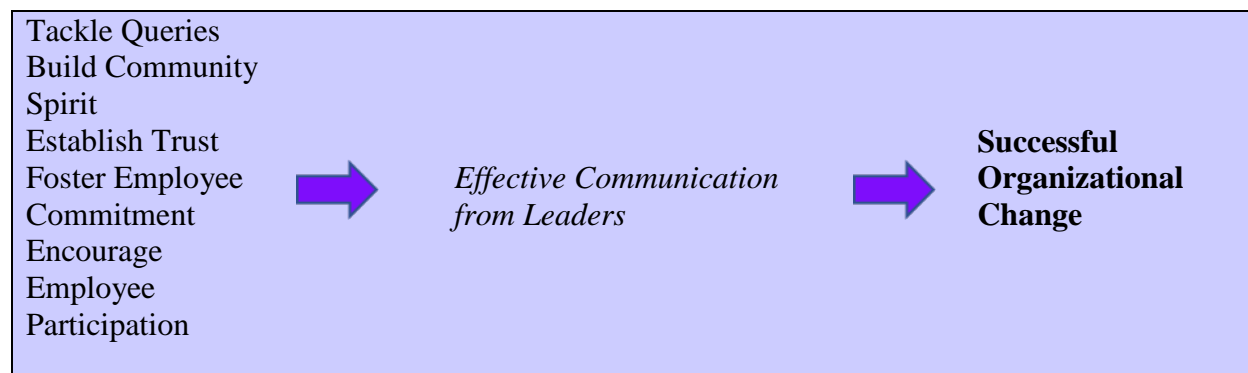


Figure 5. *Husain's (2013) Change Communication Model.*

Husain's research found that when employees' questions were addressed, a sense of community established, and when employees trusted the change plan, they were more motivated to participate and execute the behavioural changes required to make the changes. With this strategy in mind, a series of potential questions and responses are outlined next.

Based on the findings from the 2015 CTL study (CTL, 2015), the following section explores potential lines of inquiry that may arise around the change plan. Four main questions are proposed and responded to in Table 10.

Table 10

Potential Questions and Responses Pertaining to the Organizational Improvement Plan Rollout

| Potential Question | Response |
|--|--|
| How will the courses be funded and selected? | Senior administration will fund first-year revitalization and realignment plan (human resources and physical space). Each decanal unit dean will work in consultation with chairs and instructors to select a schedule of course redesign within their departments. |

| | |
|---|---|
| How will instructors be acknowledged for redesigning their courses? | Instructors will be acknowledged within the professional learning community, communication plans, and reports. Instructors can include their course changes in their annual performance reports for recognition. |
| How will the chairs recognize that a course has been refreshed and therefore could be affecting preliminary instructor evaluations? | Research shows that when instructors make changes to their teaching, teaching evaluations occasionally show a decrease in student satisfaction prior to improving (Murray, 2005). Instructors who have made changes can mark on their teaching evaluations that this course was part of a pilot program to meditate any concerns pertaining to course evaluations anomalies. |
| How will the Centre for Teaching and Learning be able to support this project? | Additional staff may be required. Educational developer: To support instructors learning and applying new pedagogical practices from the <i>Wise Practices</i> document and to support the professional learning communities. Project management/research assistant (supporting role): Report preparation and tracking as well as potential research opportunities to support those instructors who may be interested in conducting scholarship on teaching and learning on their teaching. |

Conclusion

Chapter 3 has mapped out how the University can effectively enact two proposed solutions to address the PoP. These solutions and implementation plan will create the opportunity for realignment of the first-year academic experience with the University's mission and vision. Using SMART goals, in short-, medium-, and long-term increments, the change plan will be tracked, monitored, and adapted when required or if needed. A brief discussion of potential limitations was also discussed and addressed. The PDSA model and Kotter's eight-stage change process model were compared, and a series of tools for evaluation were presented, including the Wenger et al. (2002) model of value cycle for measuring impact of communities of practice. The

chapter concluded with a detailed and empirically supported approach for a communication plan. Potential lines of inquiry and responses were presented as well as communication avenues to report, acknowledge, and celebrate adoption of the change plan. The presented OIP has set a plan in place for the CTL to champion improvements to the first-year academic experience for instructors and, ultimately, their students. The next section concludes this OIP by exploring potential next steps and future considerations.

Conclusion: Next Steps and Future Considerations

In this section, next steps and three future considerations will be discussed. The PoP asks, how can a small liberal arts institution align first-year courses with the University's mission of student learning experiences being personal, purposeful, and transformative? This OIP endeavoured to address this PoP through an empirically supported approach to first-year course redesign through a comprehensive inside- and outside-the-classroom guiding document and the formation of a PLC. The change plan proposal recognized the level of change readiness of the University and proposed a staggered approach to the adoption of new course design practices. At the final phase, it was estimated that up to one-third of first-year courses would have adopted a student-centred focus, with reduced class sizes taught in active-learning style classrooms. A potential future consideration would be to include larger upper-year courses into the course redesign cycle. This expansion would allow for quality learning practices to cycle upwards.

A second future consideration would be to have the PLC expand to serve as a venue for peer support for pedagogical research that could inform teaching practices. This additional avenue could include the PLC becoming a community of practice for instructors who may be interested in conducting scholarship of teaching and learning on their teaching. Another theme to consider is measuring the effectiveness of pedagogical changes in the classroom. The evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a challenging issue (Monterio, Wilson, & Beyer, 2013), and more research is needed to clearly understand the relationship between pedagogical development and impact in the classroom. Ebert-May, Derting, and Hodder (2011) argued that professional development with university faculty focused on pedagogical improvements is more effective when the instructors conduct research on their teaching. Therefore, building this recommendation into the OIP as a next step for the PLC is important. This future consideration

may also serve as remedy to relieve the reported tension between teaching and research within the University setting. Faculty who engage in scholarship on teaching and learning can take the theory learned in the professional development settings and apply it directly to their teaching practices and classrooms. This process of research and application provides the opportunities for feedback and refinement, which are essential for becoming a reflective practitioner (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Brookfield, 1995). Zamorski (2002) argued that research-led teaching and learning practice bridges the gap between teaching versus research and improves quality teaching practices in the process.

The final future consideration is to use this revitalized approach to quality first-year teaching to recommit to the value of liberal arts education in the 21st century and its service to the broader community. Within the academy and beyond, in time of division and conflict, the capacity to see others' viewpoints and assess our own positionalities with critical reflection are skills that are very much needed. Dix (2016) writes,

A liberal arts education can be very frustrating. It forces students to see multiple viewpoints and continually challenge their own. It removes the comfort of assuming there are "right" answers to big questions, that civilization moves in a linear fashion or that facts are facts no matter who looks at them. But it also introduces students to the pleasures of debate and the ever-expanding world of ideas. It opens doors, enabling the mind to go wherever it wants in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. It bends toward openness instead of containment (p.1)

This quote sums up beautifully the value, the importance, and the necessity of preserving access to liberal arts education. The vital importance of providing a safe academic space to challenge thinking and to invite collaborative dialogue is captured in this passage. The aim of this OIP was to develop a plan to address the erosion of the first-year academic experience at a small liberal arts university. The next step will be to shepherd in this OIP by setting in motion

the change plan. I intend to lead this change process through a servant leadership approach, backed by my deep appreciation for quality liberal arts education and my commitment to the University.

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