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Becoming and Being an Age-Friendly University: Strategic Considerations and Practical Implications

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Abstract

Becoming and being an Age-Friendly University (AFU) requires developing a strategic plan for enlisting support across campus for the AFU principles and embarking on an on-going process for continuing to promote them as an academic community. Throughout this process, the use of a conceptual framework for change in academic settings can be helpful. The University of Rhode Island (URI) recently became an AFU after a campus-wide process of identifying activities that already supported AFU principles and enlisting key sources of support for embracing them. In particular, an emerging emphasis within URI on developing lifelong-learning and intergenerational programs provided a firm foundation upon which to build the case. This paper proposes a conceptual framework for developing a strategy for change in an academic setting, and then illustrates how URI has utilized it to move forward with becoming more "aging friendly." Implications for continuing development consistent with the AFU principles will be discussed.

Key terms

Theories of change, strategy, intergenerational

Introduction

Change does not usually come easily in higher education. Many universities, particularly public ones, have extensive bureaucratic layers of approval needed for the development of new programs and initiatives, often with entrenched political interests that make it difficult for them to adopt new academic programs or implement structural changes. Typically, the development of new initiatives requires a lengthy and laborious process of submitting extensive written proposals and documentation of need, to be reviewed at multiple levels both inside and outside the university. Because of this, the development of a proposal for an Age-Friendly University (AFU) designation can be fraught with potential challenges in the review and approval process. A strategic plan can be invaluable in guiding a process that culminates in receiving approval from a senior university administrator, such as the Provost or President.

Responding to developments in European higher education supporting age diversification of the student body in universities, Dublin City University in Ireland first developed and piloted the AFU approach in 2012, leading to the formulation of ten key principles that incorporate the interests of older adults in a university's core teaching, research, and outreach activities (Talmadge, Mark, Slowey, & Knopf, 2016). Essential to achieving these goals is an interdisciplinary strategy to address the unique needs and interests of older adults in the institution's mission. This approach should encompass the development of intergenerational learning programs and a recognition of the changing nature of the life course to a more dynamic model incorporating education, work, family, and retirement.

This paper explores the experience of developing an AFU proposal at URI, based on an understanding of the conceptual and theoretical basis of change in higher education. The first section sets the stage by describing the context and characteristics of URI that formed the basis for an AFU proposal. URI's unique mission, history, and programs focusing on gerontology and geriatrics were the foundation for developing a plan. The process of forming a work group to develop the proposal, articulating a strategy to move it forward within the institution, and the

construction and contents of the actual proposal will be presented.

The second section discusses how the advocacy process was conceptualized, based on the theoretical framework of institutional change concepts within organizations in general and in higher education in particular. The third section explores specific activities and strategies that were developed within the stages of change framework to move the realization of the AFU mission and vision forward. Next, the application of two AFU principles to this specific context will be explored within an intergenerational setting as the foundation for URI's proposal. Specific aspects of each of these principles will be highlighted as they relate to the development of a strategy for AFU approval and plans for future developments. We will end with some general recommendations based on the change framework for ways in which to move forward in operationalizing the AFU principles in higher education settings. Overall, the goal is to use the URI experience to illustrate some important change techniques that can be used strategically in other academic settings to promote the adoption of the AFU principles.

Developing a Strategic Plan for an AFU at URI

Founded as the state's agricultural college in 1892, URI is a medium-sized state institution, with a strong history of commitment to the land-grant ideals of reaching out to the community through a variety of programs and projects. In addition, the university has a strong commitment to the field of gerontology, with its roots dating back 60 years and founded on interdisciplinary principles and a university-wide mission to support research, teaching, and outreach on aging and older adults. The last 20 years have seen significant growth in the number of faculty involved in aging-related activities, including several federally funded research proposals, educational grants, and foundation gifts establishing an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). The university has identified gerontology as an area of investment for the future, given the high percentage of older adults in the state, growing national recognition of the impacts of aging on American society, and the potential for increased funding for research and program development in this area.

Inspired by the vision of the AFU movement as a global network of universities with the objective of making higher education more open to older adults, URI faculty attending an international meeting on gerontology and geriatrics returned to their home institution energized to develop a proposal to make their university an age-friendly one. Advocates for the adoption of the AFU principles at URI met early in the fall semester of 2017 to discuss how to proceed in the development of a proposal to the senior administration of the university. Led by the Director of the Program in Gerontology, the group included key faculty members and representatives of relevant campus programs, including the OLLI and the Alumni Association. After meeting monthly for six months, we produced a detailed proposal to the university's senior administration, detailing the vision for an AFU URI, systematically addressing each of the ten principles in terms of what the university was currently doing, and recommending next steps that focused on particular strengths and resources.

The group determined that the best approach at our institution was to work "from the bottom up" with a survey of existing activities at the university that addressed the requirements embodied in the ten AFU principles. This decision was explicitly based on a strategy of showing the university's administration that our institution was already involved in a number of activities consistent with the AFU principles, thus reducing the apparent gap between our vision and current reality at URI. The process incorporated meeting with key mid-level administrators who could provide critical information or perspectives on how best to make the case for an age-friendly URI.

This approach was deemed preferable to the alternative, which would involve seeking first the approval of the senior administration before starting to work on the proposal. Our strategy was based on the assumption that a strong case assembled before approaching the Provost or President would be more effective in eliciting a positive response. We were guided in our thinking by some core principles on institutional change that we had previously used in the development of other programs and projects at the university that helped to focus our efforts

and energies. These frameworks include the Lewinian model of force field analysis and other models of change specifically developed for higher education institutions. Following a description of the key elements of these change frameworks, we will describe their application to the development of the URI strategy to become an AFU.

Understanding the Change Process in Higher Education

The social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951) suggested that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (p. 169). Our AFU work group at URI was informed both by years of experience at our particular institution and by theories explaining the potentials and pitfalls in changing academic programs and priorities. This theoretical framework was helpful in informing the initial development of a proposal to embrace the ten AFU principles and guiding the subsequent on-going work to move the university forward on those principles. The discussion below includes force field analysis and other organizational change stages, processes, and strategies. Key features of these frameworks are summarized in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

Force Field Analysis

Developed by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951), force field analysis helps to conceptualize organizational change by considering both the current situation (status quo) and the future desired state or objective. It envisions the present as a state of power equilibrium between driving forces for change and restraining forces against it. The former are positive, reasonable, conscious, and logical; while the latter are negative, emotional, unconscious, and illogical. The relative size of these forces, their magnitude, can also be assessed. To make change easier and longer lasting, it is better to reduce the forces against change than to increase those promoting it.

Importantly, this model of change that we utilized in our process incorporates stages or steps, including: (1) unfreezing (reducing the strength of forces maintaining equilibrium), (2) moving (developing new values, attitudes, and behaviors), and (3) refreezing (stabilizing after

change and developing a new equilibrium). Extending over time, this framework suggests an on-going, incremental, and continuous process of change, in which small steps of unfreezing/moving/refreezing are repeated in cycles, similar to the quality improvement cycles that are now associated with health care (Taylor et al., 2014).

Organizational Change Stages, Processes, and Strategies

Similar frameworks for describing and fostering intentional transformation have been developed by other theorists of institutional change. For example, a three-stage model of institutional change with corresponding actions for each has been proposed by Kezar and Lester (2009) and Kezar and Elrod (2012): (1) mobilization, in which the system is prepared for change, including recognizing the need for change, articulating a vision, mobilizing support, and enlisting leadership; practices and policies that embody the institutional culture start to be challenged; (2) implementation, in which change is introduced, including developing support, generating incentives and rewards, and expanding resources; new initiatives and supports to maintain the changes start to emerge; and (3) institutionalization, in which the system is stabilized in its changed state; this includes incorporating and sustaining changes by integrating them into the organizational value system and culture.

In addition, Ginsburg and Tregunno (2005) emphasize the need for both intrinsic, voluntary forces and extrinsic, forced mechanisms to promote organizational change. This "carrot and stick" approach echoes the earlier work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on institutional theory. In this view, three types of pressures lead to organizational change: (1) coercive forces (e.g., pressures from regulatory agencies); (2) mimetic forces (e.g., pressures to imitate peer organizations); and (3) normative forces (e.g., standards imposed by professional licensure, certification, and accreditation) (Hanson, 2001).

The URI Experience of Developing an AFU Strategy

The experience of the advocacy work group for URI to become an AFU was tied to specific strategies associated with the different stages of (academic) organizational change, and the

discussions in our group reflected particular elements linked to them. The following sections provide examples of the kinds of activities associated with the first two stages of the three-stage model of institutional change, as we are still working toward the third stage.

Mobilization and Unfreezing

Our group started an exploration of becoming an AFU in the initial stage of mobilization, in which we recognized the need for change, articulated a vision, mobilized support, and enlisted leadership. For example, the vision as we presented it incorporated several recent developments across the state and within the university. The state had recently initiated a process to become Age-Friendly, with ongoing efforts spearheaded by different committees to work on incorporating the basic principles and areas of this concept into our communities (Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Long Term Care Coordinating Council, 2016). Within the university, recent developments to highlight gerontology and geriatrics--including research, teaching, and outreach on aging—were discussed and considered as the foundation upon which to build the AFU proposal. Importantly, a highly successful OLLI was seen as a key resource to incorporate into the proposal. In addition, we reached out to relevant university departments and programs, including Alumni Affairs, for their input and involvement.

Also at this point, policies and practices that embodied the institutional culture, including assumptions about the nature of education, started to be challenged. Our group recognized that the AFU concept did not mean that the university would be reaching out to just two different groups at the extremes of the life course: the young and the old. Rather, it embodied learning over the life course, or lifelong learning, as a way of extending education in a relevant and flexible way to adults as they move through life. This approach meant that education should be more than just getting the knowledge and skills necessary for the workplace at a young age; it includes creative thinking on how one spends time and energy on other important life pursuits, such as family, health, leisure, civic engagement, and spirituality. Recent reports from the American Council on Education (2007, 2008) have provided a "call for change" to higher

education institutions to reconsider their attitudes toward adults at mid-life and older ages and to map out new directions for initiatives addressing needs for lifelong learning. Taken together, these efforts addressed the ageist image of the university as a community of the young, rather than a community of all ages.

Using the Lewinian model of change, the initial strategy to unfreeze the status quo was directed at the sometimes hidden and more subtle forces that might oppose change. This approach included the previously mentioned strategy of reducing the perceived gap between what URI was already doing with regard to AFU principles and our goals articulated in a broader AFU vision. We reasoned that too large a gap would potentially jeopardize approval from the university's administration, based on the judgment that too many resources would be required to achieve the AFU distinction. In addition, our campus-wide discussions with key stakeholders, such as those in administrative positions in student enrollment and academic affairs, were intended to address potential institutional reluctance to change that might be held by key administrators. In effect, we were working proactively to avoid any potential sources of opposition to our plan.

Forces supporting change were also recognized, including consistency of the AFU with the land-grant mission of the university, its recognition of the importance of aging and older adults in our state, advantages to the university of opening it up to a more age-diverse population, and the additional potential for research and educational grants. However, we were also aware that change is more likely to occur and be sustainable if the forces opposing change are addressed at the outset.

Implementation and Moving

Following our recent approval to become an AFU by URI's Provost, subsequent meetings of our group have focused on the next stage of implementation of the ten AFU principles. This approach includes expanding membership on what will become the project steering committee, including OLLI members and other key university and community members. In addition, we

have started to reach out to the activities and programs described in the original proposal, and plans are being formulated on how to move forward. Details of these efforts are described in the next section of this paper.

Within the Lewinian model, we have publicized the new values associated with the AFU achievement across the campus as we present the vision to different constituencies. We are actively promoting the advantages of being an AFU and enlisting the support of other individuals and groups at the university. These values translate into new attitudes toward older adults and changed behaviors with respect to how the campus can create new openings and opportunities for them. Some of this strategic energy is based on the argument that higher education is ageist in its emphasis on recruiting younger adults as students, and that a more inclusive and welcoming community needs to address the pervasive stereotypes of older adults that may be held by administrators in the spirit of addressing other "ism's," such as sexism and racism.

External Forces

It is also important that the role of external forces be acknowledged in URI's development of an AFU, particularly those from professional associations such as the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), of which URI is an institutional member. The fact that AGHE is promoting the AFU model among its members became an important element in our proposal. The realization that other institutions in the New England region, particularly those with strong gerontology programs, are becoming AFUs also became another important factor. The role of these mimetic and normative forces provided the external boost to complement and reinforce our internal justifications for becoming an AFU. A final factor was the global network being created by the AFU movement, as URI has embraced an international reach as part of its current academic strategic plan. The fact that URI is also a partner institution of the research network created by the International Association on Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) added further weight to this factor.

Cycles of Stages

Finally, as described earlier, our AFU work group is beginning to recognize that our forward movement in promoting the ten AFU principles means an ongoing, cyclic progression of work, in which we move forward through the stages of change on multiple areas simultaneously. Each principle may require its own, specific set of strategies to advance the AFU vision, and each area may have its own particular challenges and ways of addressing them. This approach suggests the dynamic nature of the AFU model, in which changes are multifaceted, ongoing, and moving at different rates and directions in differing areas of focus.

Application of Age-Friendly Principles

While URI is presently engaged in programs and activities consistent with each of the ten AFU principles, this paper focuses on how URI is concentrating particularly on two principles: (1) to promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages (AFU Principle 4), and (2) to ensure that the university's research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults (AFU Principle 6)

In addressing these two principles, it was decided that an intergenerational approach could be strategically helpful in reducing the forces that might oppose change in the adoption of the AFU principles by demonstrating how combining generations would work toward achieving the current goals of education at the university.

Intergenerational Integration as a Strategic Approach

The activities that pertain to these two objectives involve intergenerational collaboration in various ways that work to address the unique needs and interests of an aging population, while at the same time addressing the benefits for traditional, younger students (Talmadge et al., 2016). Indeed, programs that facilitate intergenerational interaction can be uniquely beneficial in improving various key outcomes for both generations. For example, depending on the focus of the program, intergenerational activities can enhance generativity for older adults and reduce ageism for younger adults (Andreoletti & Howard, 2018). Importantly, many academic programs

have also utilized intergenerational service-learning to help with training and preparing university students to work with older adults (e.g., Hantman, Oz, Gutman, & Criden, 2013; Krout et al., 2010; Penick, Fallshore, & Spencer, 2014).

Due to the growing size of the older adult population and structural shifts in families that now involve less naturally occurring intergenerational exchanges, the emergence of intergenerational programs in the 1970's has led to the understanding of an intergenerational learning paradigm (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2008). This paradigm recognizes the global need for older people to be seen as learning resources and assets to the community, as well as the role of older adults in building communities that have high social capital and place value on civic engagement.

Intergenerational learning is increasingly viewed not only as personally beneficial, but also as a way to both engage older adults in the workforce longer and support younger people in developing a sustainable economy. Within this paradigm, older adults are seen as mentors to transmit knowledge and provide resources to support young persons' achievement and self-esteem and build cross-cultural understanding (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2008). The use of reverse mentoring has also emerged as a way for younger persons to share knowledge and ideas, such as technology use or current social trends, with older persons (Cotugna & Vickery, 1998; Murphy, 2012).

Colleges and universities that recognize the value of intergenerational interactions and learning in all aspects of university life, including education and research, have the potential to tap into an area of growth for higher education (Cruce & Hillman, 2012). Involving older adults in all activities of the university—including classes, events, and research activities—has the potential to improve learning for traditional college-age populations who benefit by having different perspectives in the classroom and new ideas about how to address societal problems. Similarly, older adults also benefit (with regard to health and other factors) by continuing to grow intellectually, sharing their ideas, and contributing to society far past retirement. Higher education institutions can also benefit by having a new population group taking part in the life of

the academic community—by taking classes, completing certificates or degrees, and teaching or contributing to class instruction. This can have both financial and educational benefits.

Promotion of Intergenerational Learning

A key resource in developing the URI AFU proposal was the OLLI, which has over 1,300 older adult members who participate in a wide range of educational programs, including classes, lectures, workshops, and special interest groups. The presence and success of the OLLI at URI program contributed another strategic advantage to the development of the AFU proposal, since it was already supported by the Provost and served as a testament to the advantages of opening up the university to an older adult population that could play an important role in the campus community.

Some OLLI courses have allowed URI students to take or teach the class, which both generations have found beneficial for their own learning. More recently, some URI faculty have included OLLI members in actual academic classes to enhance class discussions and experiences and provide opportunities for intergenerational interaction and learning. This is an area in which additional efforts will be made to further enable older adult participation in URI classes. This inclusion suggests recognition of the important contributions that can be made by older adults to the learning experience of traditional students.

URI also has intergenerational programs involving traditional students, OLLI members, and other older adult community members. The Engaging Generations: Cyber-Seniors Program matches older adults with URI students for assistance in the use of technology, including smartphones, tablets, and computers. The program has expanded dramatically in the last few years, and is now offered at both URI and a variety of community sites across the state (blinded for review). We plan to continue to enhance intergenerational programming at URI by further connecting with faculty in departments often less affiliated with gerontological efforts who may be interested in incorporating intergenerational opportunities into new classes and programs.

Additional plans are currently underway to expand the level and types of intergenerational

learning opportunities on campus. For example, every fall URI sponsors the Honors Colloquium on a major topic of interest and importance to both the campus and the surrounding community. Invited speakers give lectures to students and community members related to the colloquium theme. Many participants are older adults who attend the multiple lectures sponsored as part of the series. We are now in the process of exploring how to create more extensive involvement of older adults in the lecture series, including meeting with small groups of students to explore colloquium topics from an intergenerational perspective.

These activities embody the appeal of intergenerational approaches discussed earlier, and they afford an important strategic advantage in support of AFU principles. Indeed, it is interesting to note that one of the original justifications for the AFU movement was the importance of intergenerational learning (Talmadge et al., 2016). In this respect, intergenerational programs positively impact the experience of the traditional younger generation upon which the university was established, but they do so in a way that extends and enhances the community to embrace the reality that society is growing older and different social institutions, including higher education, need to accommodate to this reality.

Research for an Aging Society

For many major universities, the research mission is the pre-eminent goal of the institution, since research has the potential to attract significant external funding, including the prestige and overhead it represents. In this regard, with older adults representing an increasingly important demographic group, an emphasis on the importance of aging-related research becomes more relevant and attractive. Many funding agencies are beginning to recognize the importance of research on the issues and problems of aging and older adults.

With the development of more age-related programs tied to economic development of the state, it is likely that increased numbers of older adults will participate in a range of research and educational programs. URI also recently focused its efforts on enhancing health education and research efforts across campus by forming a new College of Health Sciences, an Institute for

Integrated Health and Innovation, and the Academic Health Collaborative, which have the potential to continue to expand interdisciplinary aging and health-related research initiatives across campus. Making explicit the important interconnection among aging, health, and research for potential economic development for the state provided yet another important element in the argument for an AFU for URI.

As another example, an engineering professor has established a wearable bio-sensing lab focused on developing products to assist in tele-monitoring disease symptoms and for remote health care management. This research facilitates intergenerational collaboration between students in the lab and older adults in the community, who help with idea generation and product testing. Student groups, faculty, and older adults come together to develop innovative products and services to meet the needs of the older adult population. Current plans to expand these activities in the future will facilitate new research ideas among faculty and students, as well as encourage industry groups to work with faculty and students to bring ideas to market.

Finally, faculty across the campus have recently come together to consider how the university can build a life-care retirement community on campus. This retirement community would be an opportunity to test best practices in providing housing and services for older adults. It would give faculty a space to conduct potential research projects, and students potential internship or service-learning opportunities. The OLLI at URI program could also be co-located in this setting, further reinforcing the connection between lifelong learning and living as one grows older. These plans are currently moving forward, fueled in no small part by the achievement of the AFU status.

Recommendations and Discussion

Change in most universities is usually slow and deliberate, with many requirements to be addressed and political hurdles to be overcome. This situation is particularly the case when resources are required or redirected for the change to occur. Insofar as most universities are focused on the education of young adults, opening the academic doors to adults through midlife

and into old age can be seen as a significant departure from the university's traditional mission and market in our society. For all these reasons, becoming an AFU can be fraught with potential challenges and barriers. The development of an AFU proposal requires strategic considerations and an understanding of the specific context to frame the reasons and benefits for an AFU designation. We suggest that the following recommendations, based on our recent experience at URI, may be helpful for other universities as they consider developing their own proposals. These suggestions include: (1) reducing forces opposing change, (2) matching strategies to stages of change, (3) utilizing external forces and factors to promote change, and (4) conceptualizing change as a set of ongoing cycles.

Reducing Forces Opposing Change

The Lewinian model of promoting change, force field analysis, suggests that it is easier to make long-lasting change by reducing the forces opposing it than by increasing the forces promoting it. Therefore, university groups should remember that these former forces are often negative, emotional, unconscious, and illogical. In this context, recognizing that higher education has traditionally focused almost exclusively on the younger adult population is key. Connecting to university-wide diversity initiatives may also prove worthwhile, as age is one aspect of diversity that is often overlooked but is an important aspect of being an inclusive community. The US model of education emphasizes career preparation for life and overlooks on-going life-long training and education. This "one and done" model excludes training and educational needs over the life course, and embodies assumptions about older adults that may be ageist.

To address this situation, emphasizing the benefits—educational, social, and economic— that can be achieved by expanding the traditional age range for educational opportunities can help. In our experience, this involves promoting the benefits of intergenerational learning, particularly (though not exclusively) for the younger adult generation. For example, creating mentoring opportunities related to career goals, including older adults in classes to provide

different perspectives, and modeling lifelong learning through involvement in programs like OLLI are all related to this objective. In addition, the business model of education, increasingly the dominant model at many universities, suggests identifying new markets for students that go beyond the traditional young adult demographic group. Lifelong learners and older adults represent just such an expanding demographic market (Vacarr, 2014). Educational programs could include career-related certificates, special short courses, workshops, and encore career opportunities.

At URI we also linked the research mission of the university to opportunities represented by an aging society. By recognizing the increasing number of faculty interested in research on older adults, we reduced a barrier tied to an assessment of the current capacity of URI to engage in this area of research. In other words, the capacity already existed and did not require the investment of more money in new faculty hires. Of course, the positive forces attached to the prospect of increased external funding for research in gerontology and geriatrics also played a role. However, we felt that this was secondary to the recognition that the university was already poised to benefit from this growing area for research funding and did not have to expend additional resources to acquire the research capability.

Matching Strategies to Stages of Change

As the Lewinian model of organizational change and others related specifically to transformation in higher education, academic institutions go through predictable steps or stages in this process. Whether we conceptualize these as "unfreezing, moving, and refreezing" or "mobilization, implementation, and institutionalization," the message is the same. Each stage requires specific activities, methods, and strategies to move change forward and to stabilize it once it has been achieved. These distinct stages and their corresponding actions should be considered in the development of proposals for AFU initiatives.

Each university setting has different groups, leaders, and resources that can promote change; they need to be recognized and enlisted in the change process. Resources should be

identified with regard to human capital, constituencies on and off campus, and other groups and organizations that share the common vision. Probably the most important stage is that of maintenance or institutionalization, ensuring that the change remains permanent and does not revert to the previous status quo. In this regard, having a critical mass of faculty, students, staff, and administrators who endorse the vision of an AFU and create an ongoing work group or committee to sustain it becomes critical. Similar to the age-friendly communities initiative, university stakeholders must come to understand that making a university more age-friendly means that everyone will benefit, not just older community members.

Utilizing External Forces and Factors to Promote Change

Recognizing that change comes from both internal and external forces is also important. Looking beyond the university can create outside supports for change. As already stated, in the URI case we were aware of the active promotion of the AFU movement by AGHE. As numbers of "sister" institutions with strong gerontology programs became AFU members, there was a strong sense of not being "left behind" in achieving this distinction. Perhaps even more importantly, as Rhode Island moved toward becoming an age-friendly state and as proposals for tying the future economic development of the state to initiatives focused on research and projects on older adults, it became more apparent that the university itself needed to become aligned with this trend. Especially as the state land-grant university, URI had a moral responsibility to take a leadership role in recognizing the importance of older adults for our state's future. We plan to leverage our connections to overall age-friendly state efforts and collaborations with such organizations as AARP and Senior Corps to continue to enhance university offerings while also contributing to these larger efforts towards age-friendliness.

Conceptualizing Change as a Set of Ongoing Cycles

It is symbolic and fitting that the culmination of the approval to become an AFU is the creation of a university group or committee to work on ensuring that the ten AFU principles are being actively promoted across campus. Subscribing to the principles requires an ongoing

commitment to working on their realization at the university. Thus, the task is never completely finished, and there is always more effort possible in making their attainment ever more a reality.

The ten principles effectively create ten distinct areas of work with on-going efforts to mobilize, implement, and institutionalize change. Of course, not all ten principles need to be worked on simultaneously. At URI, we chose a more focused number of "next step" opportunities in which the university has already established activities or programs that could be built upon for realizable improvement in the near-term. Another important implication of this cyclic approach to change is that there is always room for making more progress.

Conclusion

Becoming an AFU requires a strategic approach and understanding of the university climate for bringing about change. Utilizing a theoretical framework for considering how best to bring about change in higher education can help with successfully becoming and being an AFU. URI recently went through this process and carefully considered how current initiatives related to aging and health fit within the AFU principles. Particularly by recognizing the value of intergenerational interactions and learning, URI was able to successfully make the case to the senior administration to become an AFU, and is now focusing on next steps by building on existing strengths and reducing opposing forces to produce thoughtful change. Other universities can translate this approach to their settings as they work to promote the adoption of AFU principles.

Table 1. Theories and concepts of institutional change

Force Field Analysis	Organizational Change	Intrinsic and Extrinsic Forces
Unfreezing	Mobilization	Coercive forces
Moving	Implementation	Mimetic forces
Refreezing	Institutionalization	Normative forces

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