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Organizational Change for Sustainability: Implications for the Community College

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Organizational Change for Sustainability: Implications for the Community College

When Joliet Junior College opened its doors in 1901, the Earth's climate was relatively stable. Today, the world's climate is volatile and increasingly threatening. Organizations across sectors—governmental, nonprofit, corporate, and multinational—are scrambling to assess risks, mitigate losses, and adopt environmentally sound practices (e.g., "Global Change Research Act," 1990; U.S. Department of Defense, 2015a). At the same time, neoliberal orientations to organizational ethics deny responsibility for externalities not only for environmental degradation but also for exploitation of human resources. Corporations, governments, and other organizations are divided between those that accept responsibility for environmental and human wellbeing and those that do not. Governments such as Canada and Norway, corporations such as Siemens and DuPont (Corporate Knights, 2017; Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur, & Schley, 2010), multinational organizations such as the United Nations (UNESCO Education Sector, 2005), and nonprofits such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (World Wildlife Fund for Nature, 2016) are among the organizations leading a movement toward sustainability. These organizations are increasingly redefining the expectations society holds for organizations (Benn, Dunphy, & Griffiths, 2014). They are leading what Senge et al. (2010) call "a necessary revolution."

Community colleges ideally positioned to help lead the sustainability revolution. Indeed, sustainability is explicit in the community college mission (AACC, 2011): Colleges have a moral obligation to meet the needs of direct and indirect stakeholders, employees, students, pressure groups, communities without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well (paraphrasing Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131). This is the quintessential definition of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987). Toward this end, community colleges must "make sustainability a guiding principle for all institutional practices, offerings, and academic

programs” (S. White & Cohen, 2014, p. 6). This will not be easy, and it entails political risks. Yet community college leaders must navigate the politics of climate change, engage communities, and facilitate transformative change.

This chapter is about organizational change for sustainability. We begin with an overview of the external factors compelling organizations to adopt sustainable strategies. This includes a discussion of the theoretical basis for organizational sustainability as well as an introduction to how community colleges might incorporate sustainability into planning and organizational renewal. We then describe drivers of change organized into three categories: dynamic natural environment, globalization, and multinational agreements. Implications for community college policy and practice are discussed. The second half of the paper presents a phase model of organizational change for sustainability. The model is intended to help organizational leaders assess their current sustainability posture. As the model derives from the literature on sustainable corporations, we propose analogous practices and examples relevant to the community college.

Drivers of Change

In this section we examine the external processes that compel organizational change for sustainability and consider the implications for community colleges. The literature on organizational change for sustainability centers predominantly on corporate contexts, but it includes limited applications to higher education in general and community colleges in particular. A comparison of corporations and community colleges likely reveals more differences than similarities; however, the literature on both contexts often derives from the same body of established theory. Specifically, scholars seeking to understand organizational change for sustainability commonly deploy institutional theory, resource dependence theory, and organizational ecology theory (Benn et al., 2014; Fogel, 2016). Many studies of change in

community colleges deploy these same theories (e.g., Brint & Karabel, 1989; Gonzales & Ayers, 2017; Gumpert, 2003; Levin, 2000). We begin each subsection below with the more established body of literature—that of corporate change. Where possible, we describe the parallel higher education literature. Where no higher education literature exists, we propose analogues to drivers of corporate change as they may play out in community college contexts.

The Theoretical Basis of Organizational Change for Sustainability

Senge et al. (2010) declare organizational change for sustainability to be a necessary revolution. They describe environmental degradation as severe and the need for change as urgent. They also caution that short-term, easy fixes will only make matters worse. Senge et al. call for rapid organizational change at a global scale. Benn et al. (2014) focus on organization-level change. They organize drivers of change into four categories: dynamic natural environment, globalization, evolving forms of regulation, and new technologies and business models. Similarly, Fogel (2016) describes three sets of pressures on the firm: environmental and natural capital, social pressure, and environmental regulation. All of these models recognize extant literature on institutional and organization theory. What is unique, however, is that they account for natural-ecological pressures on the firm. For example, Fogel argues that an organization's strategy must account for six types of capital:

1. *human* (in the form of labor, intelligence, culture, and organization);
2. *financial* (consisting of cash, investments, and monetary instruments);
3. *manufactured* (including infrastructure, machines, tools, and factories);
4. *social* (in the form of social networks and relationships);
5. *intellectual* (intellectual property rights, patents, and codified knowledge);

6. *natural* (resources, living systems, and ecosystem services). (p. 5, emphasis in original)

Fogel observes that the value of natural capital is often overlooked in the formulation of organizational strategy. A sustainable organizational strategy, however, requires a proper accounting of natural capital. Only then can an organization accept responsibility for corporate externalities such as pollution as well as depletion of forests, species, water, and other natural resources. Further, firms that recognize the value of natural capital will see environmental degradation as a risk factor, or a threat to long-term organizational viability. In this essay, we focus on human, social, and natural capital, recognizing that, to become sustainable, organizations must manage the interactions of all six forms of capital.

This expanded scope of accounting implicates the community college in two ways. First, community colleges themselves integrate sustainability into long-term organizational strategies. Second, the community college can serve as a resource for other organizations seeking to realize sustainable strategies. This is perhaps not a novel idea. According to the AACCC (2011) “sustainability is rooted in our mission—and community colleges connect with tens of millions of people who will be the sustainability leaders of tomorrow” (p. 1).

The literature on community college and adult education is a rich resource for educators seeking help firms realize their sustainability strategies. Boone, Safrit, and Jones (2002) review 13 educational programming models—all intended to inform the process of realigning internal resources with learner needs. Boone et al. (2002) describe a conceptual model of community-based programming which involves three subprocesses: planning, design and implementation, and evaluation and accountability. The planning subprocess delineates specific tasks through which educators align internal organizational processes with the needs of target publics, or

stakeholders and interest groups in the community. A first set of tasks orient the educator to her own organization's mission, vision, values, philosophy, and goals. A second set of tasks involve environmental scanning, analyzing and prioritizing community issues, and engaging community leaders in a careful diagnosis of community needs. Here, the concept of needs is pivotal and maps directly onto international models of sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). A third set of tasks entail organizational renewal, as educators reconcile the organizational status quo with changes in the external environment. The Boone et al. model is conceptual; it explains a process for aligning organizational resources and community needs, but it does not identify specific drivers of change.

Boone and Associates (1997) adapt the model specifically for community college contexts. First, they argue that the community college is ideally situated to facilitate equitable approaches to community change: "As neutral institutions, [community colleges] commit to serve by working with the people, their leaders, and other community organizations to resolve critical issues in a time of unbridled concern over special interests" (p. 18). To the extent that community colleges engage a broad range of stakeholders and interest groups, they are positioned to lead democratic, community-based responses to changes affecting organizations of all types. Indeed, a set of case studies edited by Boone, Pettitt, and Weisman (1998) demonstrate how community colleges have helped communities overcome problems such as water quality, financial illiteracy, and community malnutrition. As pressures mount for organizations to adopt sustainable strategies, community colleges will not only change themselves but also facilitate change among organizations throughout the community (AACC, 2011; S. White & Cohen, 2014). This will require an ongoing commitment to environmental scanning, community engagement, and organizational renewal. In today's cultural, political, economic milieu,

community college must analyze and respond to drivers of organizational change—even though it poses political risks. Below we reflect on drivers of change organized into three categories: dynamic natural environment, globalization, and multinational agreements.

Dynamic Natural Environment

Economic loss due to climatic issues have increased each decade since the 1970s and the losses in the 1990s and the 2000s were more than double the losses in the 1980s (World Meteorological Organization, 2014). In November 2016, global sea ice dropped at unprecedented rates, carbon dioxide levels reached record highs, and global sea levels increased drastically (World Meteorological Organization, 2017). Severe storms such as Hurricane Matthew, extreme heat and cold, tornados, extreme snowfalls, wildfires, and severe droughts and floods wreaked havoc on communities and economies worldwide. Global warming continued, setting a record at 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period.

In 2016, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) (2016) sounded the alarm about four direct pressures on the planet:

1. Habitat loss and degradation results from modification or destruction of the environment through practices such as unsustainable agriculture, logging, transportation, residential or commercial development, energy production, and mining.
2. Species overexploitation occurs directly through unsustainable hunting, poaching, and harvesting, and indirectly when non-target species are killed.
3. Pollution makes the environment unsuitable for survival, decreases food availability, and affects reproductive performance.
4. Invasive species compete with or prey upon native species and introduce non-native diseases.

5. Climate change causes species migration and bewilder rhythms of migration and reproduction, which can misalign reproduction and seasonal food availability.

The impacts of this dynamic natural environment are so dire that the U.S. Department of Defense (2015b) has named climate change as a top threat to national security. According to DOD, climate change “will aggravate problems such as poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, ineffectual leadership and weak political institutions that threaten stability in a number of countries” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2015a, p. 3).

The dynamic natural environment presents direct and indirect threats as well as opportunities. Direct threats to include devastating hurricanes, increasingly frequent “hundred-year” floods, droughts and depleting municipal water supplies, deadly heat waves, and the northern migration of vector-borne diseases (S. White & Cohen, 2014). The increasingly severity and frequency of these hazards require the college to take proactive steps, including the following:

1. Assess vulnerability and risk to human, financial, manufactured, social, intellectual, and natural capital (Fogel, 2016);
2. Increase resiliency, or the organization’s capacity to respond to and recover from extreme weather events (S. White & Cohen, 2014);
3. Coordinate hazard mitigation and disaster response plans with local and regional entities (S. White & Cohen, 2014);
4. Prepare for the college to serve as a community center of operations in times of crisis (S. White & Cohen, 2014).

The dynamic natural environment also presents indirect threats. First, it has resulted in increased government spending for disaster relief. Since 1980, weather and climate disasters in

the USA caused more than \$1 billion in damage. The overall toll to the economy was \$1.1 trillion. The Federal Emergency Management Agency assists with disaster relief costs, but states also bear a substantial financial burden. For example, a severe flooding event in October 2015 cost the state of South Carolina approximately \$114 million (Haley, 2015). In 2016, damage from Hurricane Matthew cost South Carolina \$64 million (Wilks, 2016). These costs put pressures on state budgets and may reduce state support for community colleges.

Second, it has accelerated the push for renewable energy. Where state economies are directly linked to political economy of energy, appropriations to community colleges will remain unstable. Community colleges in Wyoming, Montana, and West Virginia have faced sharp decreases in funding as the coal industry falters. At the end of Fiscal year 2016, West Virginia faced a \$426 million shortfall, primarily as a result of a shift in energy markets. For the most part, the decline in demand for coal can be explained by the increased supply of natural gas. But there is a push for renewable energies (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017b). As renewable energy replaces fossil fuels, community colleges in many states will likely experience extreme budget cuts.

The dynamic natural environment also presents opportunities. As power generators pivot toward renewable energy, community colleges will need to help states modernize their economies and prepare the workforce for a green economy. Community colleges will also have opportunities to lead communities in resiliency planning. Finally, community college will have an opportunity to develop and showcase sustainable practices (AACC, 2011). The AACC has recognized these opportunities. To make the most of them, AACC established the Center for sustainability Education and Economic Development (SEED). Its goals is to support community colleges educate for and build a green economy. According to a report by SEED, “community

colleges are ideally positioned to help ensure that low-income, under- and unemployed workers can advance into family-sustaining careers, while the communities in which they live improve resilience to climate insecurity (S. White & Cohen, 2014, p. 7)..

Globalization as a Driver of Change

A second driver of change for organizational sustainability falls under the category of globalization. Steger (2008) discuss four major narratives of globalization—market globalism, justice globalism, imperial globalism, and jihadist globalism. Here, we will focus on on market globalism and justice globalism. These competing globalization narratives form the backdrop of organizational change for sustainability, or resistance thereto. As we explain below, they also inform community college practices and priorities.

Neoliberalism. In the 1960s and 1970s, national policy agendas (Peck & Tickell, 2002), landmark Supreme Court cases ("Buckley v. Valeo," 1976; "First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti," 1978), and academic work (Friedman, 1962) increasingly promoted a neoliberal view of the firm. These discourses excused corporations for externalities such as human exploitation and environmental degradation. Most prominently, perhaps, Milton Friedman (1962) rejected any claims that corporate managers should act to benefit society:

Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by the corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible. This is a fundamentally subversive doctrine. If businessmen do have a social responsibility other than making maximum profits for stockholders, how are they to know what it is? (p. 133)

This quotation demonstrates skepticism of any management goal other than the pursuit of profits. As this view gained prominence, the US Supreme Court shifted from a view of the corporation

as an artificial entity created by concession of the state (e.g., "Teachers of Dartmouth College v. Woodward," 1819) to the corporation as a nexus or aggregate of contracts (e.g., "Buckley v. Valeo," 1976; "First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti," 1978).. As such, the state held corporations accountable the rights of investors and not the public interest (Birch, 2016; Lozano, Carpenter, & Huisinigh, 2014; Padfield, 2014, 2015; Petrin, 2013). Dazzled by neoliberalism, the Court reinforced the right of managers to "focus, almost solely, upon short-term profitability with little or no focus upon the long-term social, environmental consequences or impacts" (Lozano et al., 2014, p. 430).

This view of the firm coupled with the neoliberal agenda of the Reagan administration facilitated a fundamental shift in the role of corporations in society. Its obligations to employees were minimized and defined fundamentally by contracts with individual employees, and the power of unions was severely constrained (Peck & Tickell, 2002). One result was that Fordist ideals of a job for life were abandoned in favor of flexible hiring and firing practices. Responsibility for economic wellbeing devolved from a national policy objective to an individual responsibility, and national goals shifted from full employment to full employability (Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak, 2008).

Community colleges substantially appropriated the economic rationalities of the neoliberal regime (Levin, 2006), inflicting harm upon faculty, students, and communities. First, colleges relied on higher proportions of part-time faculty, expected increased productivity with fewer resources, and troubled the professional identity of faculty (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). Second, nontraditional students were forced to compete with traditional, more privileged students for access and opportunity. Community college programs emphasized employability skills, local workforce development, and the implementation of welfare-to-work policies (Levin,

2001; Mars, 2013; Shaw & Goldrick-Rab, 2006). It prioritized the interests of employers and assumed these interests to be the same as the needs of learners (Ayers, Miller-Dyce, & Carlone, 2008). Third, the community college role in community engagement also suffered. Colleges appropriated a discourse in which economic activity at the global scale transcends regulation, the nation-state lacks the moral authority to influence markets, and local communities are forced to adapt (Swyngedouw, 1997). The community college was caught in the incompatibilities between the interests of local communities on one hand and those of globally mobile employers on the other (Ayers, 2013; Ayers & Carlone, 2007; Bauman, 1998; Holland et al., 2007; Peck, 2002; Uitermark, 2002). As will be discussed below, the priorities and practices associated with neoliberalism can be associated with exploitation of human resources and destruction of natural resources. Community college cannot simultaneously align practices with a neoliberal worldview and assume a morally defensive posture toward sustainability.

As early as the 1990s, social movements formed to counter neoliberal hegemony. According to Steger (2008), a coalition of leftists with a social justice agenda bonded together to form a large, multi-national network of activists with varied interests, all embedded in humanitarian causes. One example of this movement is the student led fossil-fuel divestment movement, in which college students pressured higher education institutions to divest from fossil fuel industries (Grady-Benson & Sarathy, 2016; Healy & Debski, 2016). A second example is the campus movement against inhumane labor practices and sweatshops (Cravey, 2004). A third example is the environmental justice movement. In North Carolina, the swine industry caused severe damage to the environment. Its activities disproportionately affected poor and minority members of the community (Nicole, 2013). The swine industry was not held accountable for its harmful practices, but the events prompted an international movement for environmental justice:

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies...It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and has equal access to the decision-making process to ensure a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017a)

More recently, sustainability has become a movement and challenge to neoliberalism:

“Sustainability has become an important alternative to neoliberal economics, the dominant socio-economic paradigm, which tends to focus, almost solely, upon short-term profitability with little or no focus upon the long-term social, environmental consequences or impacts” (Lozano et al., 2014, p. 430).

Community colleges succumbed to neoliberal hegemony at the turn of the century, but not completely. In a longitudinal analysis of community college policy actors’ reasoning about globalization, Ayers and Palmadessa (2015) documented an emerging resistance to neoliberalism beginning in the early 2000s. This resistance manifested as primarily as discourses of global citizenship. In fact, community college policy actors at times directly challenged the assumption that community colleges existed for the purposes of economic development. More recently, discourses of sustainability have been observed in community college mission statements (Ayers, 2015).

Multinational Agreements

Globalization was a vehicle for neoliberalism; however, it also facilitated pro-sustainability networks among corporations, governments, multinational organizations, and non-

governmental organizations (Benn et al., 2014). In 1983, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, appointed Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harem Brundtland to chair a newly established World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The task before the WCED was to orchestrate a multilateral approach to developing economies while preserving the planet's resources for future generations. Over the next four years, this commission, informally known as the Brundtland Commission, conducted a broad analysis of the crises and opportunities associated with a newly coined term: sustainable development. The commission observed that the “downward spiral of poverty and environmental degradation is a waste of opportunities and of resources. In particular, it is a waste of human resources” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 7).

Brundtland and her team quickly recognized that ameliorating this waste required effort on behalf of developing nations and industrial nations alike. The commission concluded that “humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 16). This project, they argued, must be global in scope and involve all of societies' institutions, including to no small part education. Given the emphasis on education, the Brundtland Commission maps directly onto the community college mission. For example, the Brundtland Commission stated the following:

People are...a creative resource, and this creativity is an asset societies must tap. To nurture and enhance that asset, people's physical well-being must be improved through better nutrition, health care, and so on. And education must be provided to help them become more capable and creative, skillful, productive, and better able to deal with day-to-day problems. (Brundtland, 1987, p. 93)

Community colleges have demonstrated longstanding commitments to economic development, human resources development, and community development, but these commitments will increasingly be expected to reconcile economic growth with an ethos of sustainability (Senge et al., 2010).

When the Brundtland Commission introduced the concept of sustainable development it supplied a powerful counter-narrative to neoliberalism. Numerous multinational agreements followed, including the following:

1. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1973)
2. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987),
3. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1989),
4. The International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides,
5. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997), and
6. The Paris Agreement on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016).

These agreements secured nearly worldwide commitments to key elements of sustainability. The extent to which nations respect their commitments remains to be seen, however.

International cooperation has also led to international sustainability standards and voluntary sustainability reporting. Three prominent standards and reporting mechanisms are described below.

1. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) “is an international independent organization that helps businesses, governments and other organizations understand and communicate the impact of business on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights, corruption and many others” (Global Reporting Initiative, 2017).
2. The International Standards Organization (ISO) is a Geneva-based organization that “brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges” (International Organization for Standardization, 2017). ISO has developed or is finalizing development of standards related to sustainable procurement, energy efficient computing, sustainable water use, and sustainable employability management, among others.
3. The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) is a coalition of regulators, investors, companies, standard setters, accounting boards, and non-governmental organizations. Its members prepare integrated reports on the following eight elements of organizational sustainability: organizational overview and external environment, governance, business model, risks and opportunities, strategy and resource allocation, performance, outlook, basis of preparation and presentation, and general reporting guidance (International Integrated Reporting Council, 2013).

As these agreements and reporting mechanisms attract more and more users, they add to the inertia of the sustainability movement.

Higher education has demonstrated its own successes with international agreements and sustainability reporting. In 1990, college and university presidents convening in Talloires, France pledged to incorporate sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, operations, and outreach. By 2017, more than 500 academic leaders from 50 nations had signed onto the Talloires declaration (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 2015). Within the United States, more than 650 college and university presidents have signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), representing a short-term commitment to monitor, report, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a long-term commitment to become climate neutral. Community colleges were well represented among the early ACUPCC signatories. Of the 379 signatories to the ACUPCC in 2007, 92 were community colleges (S. S. White, 2009). Nearly 800 colleges and universities have assessed their sustainability posture using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS includes measures of 17 distinct aspects of campus sustainability within topics of academics, engagement, operations, and planning and administration (see Table 1).

Phases of Organizational Sustainability

Many of the world's most profitable companies have committed to sustainability strategies. At the top of the list of the world's most sustainable corporations are Siemens AG (Germany), Storebrand ASA (Norway), Cisco Systems Inc. (USA), Danske Bank A/S (Denmark), and Ing Group (Netherlands) (Corporate Knights, 2017). On the other hand, many corporations blatantly reject calls for increased sustainability. Benn et al. (2014) synthesize the literature on phases through which organizational progress toward sustainability. This model includes six phases organized in three waves. Benn et al. foresee two uses for their model. First,

it can be used “to characterize an organization’s characteristic way of treating the human and natural resources it employs” (p. 15). Second, it can be used “to trace the historical trajectory that the organization has taken in getting to where it is and to chart possible paths forward” (p. 15). Benn et al. depict their model as unique in that it integrates both environmental and human sustainability. Finally, although the phases are mapped onto a continuum, Benn et al. note that organizations may progress only to regress to more primitive phases. They also content that organizations may undergo transformative change and skip to more advanced phases of sustainability. These three waves and six phases are described below. As each wave is described, we propose analogues and examples within the community college context.

First-wave Organizations

Rejection. First wave organizations are characterized by two phases: Rejection and non-responsiveness. The theme of the rejection phase is “exploit resources for maintaining short-term financial gain.” In this phase, managerial elites view community resources plunder to be exploited for economic gain. This leads to abuse of employees, community infrastructure, and the ecological environment. The firm exists to maximize profit and will attempt to thwart any challenge to this end. Described as “stealthy saboteurs and freeloaders” (Benn et al., 2014, p. 16), these organizations actively oppose sustainable practices. Corporations in this phase are externalizing machines; they push costs off to the local community or into the future (Greenfield, 2011). Minimal resources are devoted to developing human potential. Health and safety are expenses to be avoided if possible. “Stealthy saboteurs and freeloaders” succumb to short-term myopia and ultimately destroy value.

Non-responsiveness. The theme of the non-responsiveness phase is “business as usual.” Whereas “rejection” describes deliberate antagonism toward sustainable practices, “non-

responsiveness” describes organizations operating out of convention, ignorance, or lack of awareness. Their unsustainable practices are an artifact of tradition rather than active opposition. Benn et al. (2014) describe these organizations as bunker wombats: “they prefer to avoid the light of day and hunker down in their dark bunkers away from where the action is taking place” (p. 16). “Bunker wombats” disregard the corporation’s impact on both the ecological environment and the wellbeing of the community. Human resource strategies focus on developing a compliant workforce. Organizations in this phase do not destroy value, but their business-as-usual practices constrain their potential to create value.

Community colleges as first-wave organizations. A community college may embody the principles of first-wave organizations in their impact on the local socioeconomic systems and ecologies. As “stealthy saboteurs and freeloaders” or “bunker wombats,” colleges may actively or passively resist attempts to promote sustainable practices relating to energy, transportation, materials. Community colleges also collude with first-wave organizations to the extent that they align their missions with neoliberalism. This may involve offering training programs that prioritize the interests of employers over those of employees, families, and communities (e.g., Ayers & Carlone, 2006). Colleges may also reflect the tendencies of first-wave organizations when they exploit part-time faculty, align enrollment management strategies to game performance funding schemes, or resist fair governance practices. Similar to coercive climates described by Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) and Baker (1992), these college may maintain authoritarian climates which impose expectations of compliance upon faculty, staff, and students.

Second Wave Organizations: Value Conservers and Value Creators

Second-wave organizations exist in three phases—compliance, efficiency, or strategic proactivity—according to Benn et al. (2014). The more primitive second-wave organizations

seek to conserve the existing value of the corporation. The advanced organizations see sustainable practices as an opportunity to create value.

Compliance. The theme for the compliance phase is “avoid risk.” Organizations in the compliance phase seek to reduce the risk of litigation and damaging publicity. They abstain from practices that damage the environment and acknowledge minimal standards for human resource practices. Environmental and human resources practices are viewed in isolation from the organizational mission. Although the organization may identify as a responsible corporate citizen, it merely reacts to legal requirements and societal expectations. These firms react to governmental regulation and to systems of voluntary compliance. This strategy helps the firm contend with the expectations of community groups. Benn et al. (2014) refer to organizations in the compliance phase as “reactive minimalists,” because they pursue sustainability only to the extent that it is required (Benn et al., 2014, p. 17). “Compliance adds value by providing easier access to finance, improved relationships with regulators and the basis for a positive reputation as a good corporate citizen” (Benn et al., 2014, p. 17; see also Senge et al., 2010).

Efficiency. The next phase of organizational sustainability is the efficiency phase. The theme of this phase is “do more with less.” Benn et al. (2014) refer to these firms as “industrious stewards.” These organizations avoid waste by scrutinizing their use of water, energy, heat, and materials. What may typically be regarded as waste or byproducts are viewed as potential resources for other organizations. Benn et al. offer the example of a brewery that regards spent hops not as a waste product to be discarded but a resource that can be sold as cattle feed. The brewery thus converted into revenue what was originally regarded as waste. With regard to human resources, “industrious stewards” maximize human potential by preventing absenteeism, lack of motivation, waning commitment, and the loss of skills through employee turnover. They

also seek to avoid the dysfunction of internal conflict, political processes, and unintegrated work systems (Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Lawler, 2014). Fogel (2016) provides advice for organizations entering this phase:

Do not expose people to conditions that systematically undermine their capacities to meet their needs. This principle addresses human-capital needs and helps firms consider waste, working conditions, pay, and all interactions between an organization and those providing supplies to the organization. (p. 116)

As these organizations explore sustainable practices, they realize payoffs in both efficiency and reduced costs.

Strategic proactivity. The next phase of organizational sustainability is the strategic proactivity phase Benn et al. (2014). The theme for the strategic proactivity phase is “lead in value-adding and innovation.” Whereas organizations in the efficiency phase regard byproducts of production as a potential resource, these “proactive strategists” also acknowledge the costs of unrealized innovations. Failure to up-skill the workforce, enter emerging markets, gain market leadership, and shed obsolescent practices are equated with loss of market share and forfeited revenue. Innovation is a priority, both in terms of environmental and the cultivation of human resources. Proactive strategists reinterpret climate change and the no-carbon economy as a business opportunity. Human resource strategies focus on becoming an employer of choice. Proactive strategists “see sustainability as integral to business strategy and actively pursue its business advantages” (p. 18).

Community colleges as second-wave organizations. A community college may reflect basic second-wave organizations by meeting basic regulatory requirements or accountability standards. They are concerned with accreditation requirements, but perhaps only when

approaching a reaccreditation visit. Leaders are acutely concerned about public perceptions of the college, and the fear of bad publicity may cause leaders to balk at potentially advantageous projects and innovations. As “reactive minimalists,” colleges are risk averse.

The phrase “do more with less” permeates the professional literature on community colleges. As “proactive strategists,” community colleges may seek energy efficiency as a means of maximizing resources. These strategies may lead to cost saving. For example, Valencia College retrofitted and upgraded chiller plants, HVAC equipment, building automation systems, and lighting. Six of the college’s buildings were built to LEED Gold standards. The college also developed a behavioral energy efficiency program. Through these programs, the college saved \$1.3 million (Green, 2013). Similarly, Southern Main Community College reduced a facility’s heating costs by 33% and cooling costs by 27% by installing a unique sea water head exchange system (Beatty, Klinedinst, & Reinheimer, 2013).

Community colleges operating as second-wave organizations also pursue sustainability through strategic human resources practices. Community colleges may seek to become an employer of choice. One example is Cuyahoga Community College, which has been named as a Northcoast 99 employer of choice. The college seeks “to attract, retain, and motivate a quality workforce in order to ensure that the overall mission of the [c]ollege...is achieved” (Cuyahoga Community College, n.d.). Toward this end, the college commits to continuous learning, leadership in innovation and technology, community outreach, and wellness. Similarly, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* named the Community College of Baltimore County in its list of “Great Colleges to Work For.” The college’s recruitment strategies include not only good pay and benefits but also “wide-ranging learning opportunities...and an exciting work environment” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, n.d.).

Third Wave Organizations

Sustaining organizations. The theme of the sustaining organization is “lead in creating a sustainable world.” Benn et al. (2014) refer to sustaining organizations as “transforming futurists.” The sustaining corporation seeks to provide returns to investors, but it also promotes sustainability in the industry and throughout society. Senior executives and most organizational members commit to working for a sustainable world. The organization collaborates with governments and communities to promote sustainability in public policy. It ensures sustainable practices across the entire supply chain and shares its successes with other organizations. The sustaining corporation reinterprets its existence as “an integral self-renewing element of the whole society in its ecological context” (Benn et al., 2014, p. 22). As an example, sustainability is not part of Du Point mission—it is *the* mission (Senge et al., 2010). Transforming futurists “are not only concerned with the ongoing transformation of their own organizations to align with the requirements of a more sustainable world, but they are also actively involved in transforming the larger economy and society in the same direction” (p. 20). The sustaining corporation joins international agreements, and it subjects its progress to external, independent auditors.

Community colleges as third-wave organizations. The history of the community college exemplifies an organic affinity with the values underlying sustaining organizations. As “transforming futurists,” community colleges maximize the personal, civic, and economic productivity of individuals whose talents might otherwise remain untapped. As Christopher M. Mullin (2010, September) explains, “each student denied the opportunity to engage in higher education who might benefit from it constitutes an idle asset” (p. 7). Leaders of these community colleges take risks and are willing to defy the organization’s status quo and the community’s status quo. Examples might include a college that promotes diversity where xenophobia

permeates local cultures. Another example might include a college that promotes renewal energy when the state legislature actively opposes it. These educators lobby community leaders and elected officials for policies that promote social and environmental justice. They also integrate an ethos of sustainability and social justice into all educational programs. “Transforming futurists” seek out sustainable businesses in purchasing, and they divest from industries that contradict college values. Colleges also reflect the features of third-wave organizations when they realize the following recommendations by the AACCC (2011): colleges (a) “make sustainability a guiding principle for all institutional practices, offerings, and academic programs,” (b) “establish a variety of formal sustainability commitments such as becoming carbon neutral,” and (c) “integrate sustainability principles into campus governance structures and operations” (p. 7).

Conclusions

For more than a century, the community college has persisted amid profound technological, political, economic, and cultural changes. It has adjusted to shocks and transformations as dire as the Great Depression, two world wars, the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement, near hegemonic neoliberalism, increased global integration, and exponential technological change. As it contended with these developments, the community college created an institutional narrative unlike any other. Likely a result of its innovating nature, the community college continues to add new chapters to its story. In the future cultural, political, economic, and technological revolutions will continue to disrupt organizational strategies. To ensure ongoing viability, community colleges must become sustaining organizations.

Table 1

Seventeen Aspects of Campus Sustainability Measured by STARS

Topic	Specific Aspects of Sustainability
Academics	Curriculum, research
Engagement	Campus engagement, public engagement
Operations	Air and climate, buildings, energy, food and dining, grounds, purchasing, transportation, waste, water
Planning and administration	Coordination and planning, diversity and affordability, investment and finance, wellbeing and work

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