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Keywords

leading, university, strategic, change, sustainable

Leading and Managing the 21st Century Research University: Creating, Implementing, and Sustaining Strategic Change

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Abstract

Universities are competing in an environment in which only the most adaptable to sustainable change will prosper. In order to evolve in this challenging time, universities must embrace strategies for transformational change. This paper reviews two case studies that illustrate the universal applicability of theories of Change Science for achieving sustainable change in stressful times of prosperity and austerity. Understanding the phases of the Change Process that include Creating Vision, Implementing Vision, and Sustaining Vision can promote sustainable change directly related to the culture and mission of the institution.

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Using Constructs and Models from Change Science to Ensure Success

Universities are experiencing a time of change in every way. In general, current results are not seen as satisfactory by many policymakers, community members, parents, students, and faculty. However, as has been said, if we keep doing what we have been doing, we will continue to produce the same results. The only way to achieve new outcomes is to have *change*. In many ways, society is facing the need for transformational change.

An important beginning point for change is to have an image of the changes that are needed. Equally important, but often less thought about, is *how* the change will be accomplished. Change science offers several important perspectives and strategies that can be used in considering and accomplishing major change initiatives. Several important ways of thinking about change and selected strategies that have been used effectively are introduced here.

Illustrations also are provided from the experiences of two institutions in which these perspectives and strategies have been applied successfully, albeit for the short term. Reference will be made to the special challenge of dealing with those who are most reluctant to change, and the special challenges related to sustaining new avenues of change.

Change is a Process with Three Phases

An important first assumption is that change is a process, not an event (Hall & Hord, 2015). Simply mandating change rarely results in meaningful new practices becoming operational. Particularly in universities, change entails a process that takes time, as well as focused leadership. Three important phases to the change process need to be addressed:

- **Phase I - Creating the Vision:** The first phase entails a process of engaging all key constituents, e.g., faculty, students, alumni, and administration, in conducting an analysis of the current situation and developing a vision for the ideal future. The Organization Development (OD) change perspective (see, for example, Bryson, 2011) offers a set of process strategies typically referred to as “Strategic Planning” that is frequently applied to the process of creating the vision.

The strategic planning process begins with the identification of a planning committee with broad representation and the completion of a SWOT analysis. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are identified and evaluated. The process continues with the determination of potential directions and priorities. The final product is a strategic plan that describes the

new vision, strategies for getting there, and indicators of success.

Typically, this creating process requires one to two years. All too often, for various reasons that will be noted here, the publication of the strategic plan becomes the end of the change process, rather than completion of only the first phase.

- **Phase II - Implementing the Vision:**

Nothing is changed unless implementation occurs of the new vision. In many ways, implementation is its own process, and it is accomplished over several years. Ideally, the work of the planning committee continues, and steps are taken to continuously involve all constituents. An annual review of progress and necessary adjustments in strategies should occur.

Over the last several decades, change process researchers have studied implementation extensively. There is now sufficient understanding and widespread acceptance of this phase, and many discuss "Implementation Science." Many of the models and constructs can easily be applied in efforts to transform universities.

One of the important evidence-based constructs that has had extensive application in the implementation phase addresses the personal feelings and preoccupations that are part of change processes. Individuals possess a variety of feelings, perceptions, and worries as they experience change, with moments of doubt and of satisfaction. Some are enthusiastic supporters, and others resist. Change process researchers use the construct of Stages of Concern (Table 1) to assess this personal side of change (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Table 1
Stages of Concern: Typical Expressions of Concern About the Innovation

	Stages of Concern	Expressions of Concern
IMPACT	6 Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5 Collaboration	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what my co-workers are doing.
	4 Consequence	How is my use affecting clients (students)?
TASK	3 Management	I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready.
SELF	2 Personal	How will using it affect me?
	1 Informational	I would like to know more about it.
UN-RELATED	0 Unconcerned	I am concerned about some other things.

As a change process unfolds, participants have different types of concerns. For example, during the Creating Phase, most faculty, particularly those who are not members of the planning committee, likely will not be concerned about it. They will be focused on their teaching and scholarship, and perhaps how well the football or hockey team is doing. They are at Stage 0, Unconcerned.

As the Implementing Phase begins, most faculty have Self Concerns. "How is this going to affect my specific academic program, department, or even my promotion and tenure decision?" As the Implementing Phase continues, Task Concerns will become more intense. "This new way is taking more time and the scheduling doesn't make sense." It is only with time (3-5 years) and continuity of support that the Self and Task Concerns will be resolved, with the potential for arousal of Impact Concerns. "This new approach is really making a difference in student and university success."

All too frequently, universities fail to systematically and, over time, facilitate the Implementation Phase. Many steps should be taken to address the different Stages of Concern. For example, Self and Task Concerns do not evaporate automatically. Regular sharing of information about the plan and its progress must occur. Logistics and structural barriers must be addressed, and campus-wide coordination by administrators and the steering committee must be continued. Leaders must continually refer to the vision and address what may be perceived as "small" worries.

In many institutions over several years, attention fades regarding ongoing support of the Implementing Phase. The planning committee meets less often. The regular turnover in administrators leads to new priorities and initiatives. The senior faculty can be heard to say, "This too will pass..." This is the phase in which most strategic change initiatives die.

This is when the third, and in many ways most critical and neglected, phase comes to the forefront.

- **Phase III - Sustaining the Vision:** Most major change initiatives fail to continue into the future. In most cases, this is due to a failure to understand this essential phase of change processes. As previously highlighted, most institutions have well-established strategies and considerable experience with creating new visions. Most also have extensive experience with the challenges, resistance, and time needed to implement new approaches. However, without addressing the Sustaining Phase, nearly all of the effort, resources, time, and talent will be for naught. The new method does not automatically continue.

A useful way of considering the change process and its three phases is the “Implementation Bridge” (see Figure 1). The metaphor begins with the current status quo of the university doing what it does. For one or more reasons (e.g., financial demands, enrollment and demographic changes, political pressures, administration changes, etc.), a need exists to change outcomes, which leads to the plan to introduce the new method that requires a major transformation. However, the size of change that is being expected and the difficulty with making change are less understood. All too often there is an expectation that faculty, students, and all can simply make a giant leap across the chasm from the old way to full use of the new method. Change process researchers suggested that, in order for change to be successful, an Implementation Bridge is needed (Hall, 1999; Hall & Hord, 2015). The Implementation Phase has to be understood and facilitated. Without continuing effort, the change initiative will fade and the old ways will return.

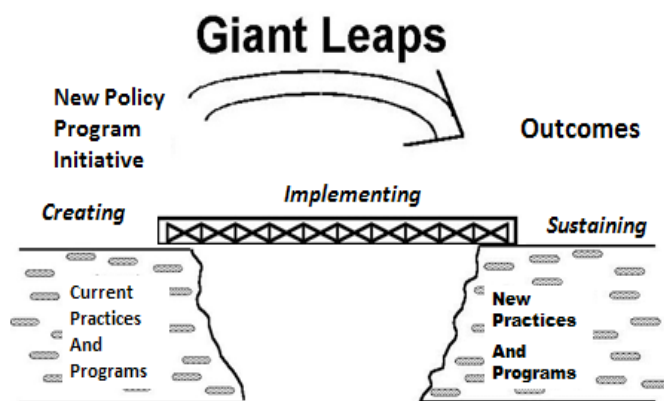


Figure 1. Three Phases of Change with the Implementation Bridge (Adapted from Hall, 1999; Hall & Hord, 2015)

The other part of the bridge metaphor addresses what needs to happen once the implementers have made it across the bridge. With rare exception, sustaining use of the new method requires changes in policies, procedures, budgets, resources, and other elements of the university’s infrastructure. Without these structural changes, use of the new method is likely to diminish and in time fade away. For example, when new administrators and faculty are hired, are the preferred applicants those who have experience in the new method? As other initiatives are proposed, do expectations exist that they must be matched with the new vision? Without making the necessary adjustments in the core systems in order to sustain the new system, even with all the effort to create and implement it, it will decline over time.

Change Leadership Makes the Difference

More than 100 years of systematic study has occurred relative to leaders and leadership. Most studies have been conducted in business settings (Bass, 1990). Some have been conducted in government, and relatively little in higher education. Even less has occurred in relation to leaders and change processes. Still, across all the studies and in a variety of organizations and context, the inescapable conclusion is that leadership makes a significant difference.

Whether using classic frameworks such as Fiedler’s (1967) Contingency Model, Blake and Mouton’s (1985) Managerial Grid, Vroom and Yetton’s (1973) Situational Decision Model, McGregor’s (1960) Theory X and Y, or more contemporary integrative models such as Scouller’s (2011) Three Levels of Leadership, it is clear that one important way in which to think about leaders is in terms of their *overall style* and their *individual behaviors*. One approach in change science research that encompasses both is the idea of Change Facilitator Style. Three Change Facilitator Styles have been described — Initiators, Managers, and Responders.

- **Initiators**

Initiators have clear, decisive, long-range policies and goals that transcend, but include, implementation of the current innovation. They tend to have very strong beliefs about what good universities, as well as scholarship and teaching, should be like and work intensely to attain this vision. Decisions are made in relation to their goals for the university and in terms of what they believe to be best for students, faculty, and the community. Initiators have strong expectations for students, faculty, administrators, and themselves. They convey and monitor these expectations through frequent contacts with all constituents and by setting clear expectations of the way in which the institution is to operate. When they feel it is in the best interests of their organization, Initiators will seek changes in programs or policies, or they will reinterpret them to suit the needs. Initiators will be adamant, but not unkind, and they solicit input from staff, faculty, boards, and the community. Decisions are then made in terms of the vision and goals, even though

some may be ruffled by their directness and high expectations.

- **Managers**

Managers place heavy emphasis on organization and control of budgets, resources, and the correct applications of rules, procedures, and policies. They demonstrate responsive behaviors in addressing situations or individuals, and they initiate actions in support of change efforts. The variations in their behavior are based in the use of resources and procedures to control individuals and change processes. Initially, new implementation efforts may be delayed, as they see that their staff and faculty are already busy and that the innovation will require more funds, time, and/or new resources. Once implementation begins, Managers work without fanfare to provide basic support to facilitate everyone's use of the innovation. They keep implementers and key constituents informed about decisions and are sensitive to excessive demands. When they learn that the board or other policymakers want something to happen in their institution, their first questions will be about available dollars, time, and staffing to accomplish the change. Once these questions are resolved, they support their faculty and staff in making it happen. As implementation unfolds, they typically do not initiate attempts to move beyond the basics of what is required.

- **Responders**

Responders place heavy emphasis on perception checking and listening to individuals' feelings and concerns. They allow faculty and others the opportunity to take the lead with change efforts. They believe their primary role is to maintain a smooth running organization by being friendly and personable. They want their staff, faculty, and all constituents to be happy, get along with one another, and treat others well. They tend to see their organization as already doing everything that is expected and not needing major changes. They view their faculty and administrators as strong professionals who are able to

carry out their roles with little guidance. Responders emphasize the personal side of their relationships with others. They make decisions one at a time and based upon input from their various discussions with individuals. Most are seen as friendly and always having time to talk.

Each style is seen as holistic and composed of individual leader actions. In this model, the meaning ascribed to individual behaviors is based in the followers' understanding of the leader's overall style. For example, the simple behavior of asking a faculty member, "How is it going in your online course?" will be interpreted quite differently, depending upon the leader's style. With the Initiator, the faculty member desires to talk specifics about student learning. With the Manager, the talk will be about scheduling, challenges of logins, and class size. With the Responder, a general response of "Everything is going well" will suffice.

In their studies, change process researchers consistently have found that more change process success occurs with leaders of the Initiator and Manager Change Facilitator Styles (Hall & Hord, 2015; Hall, Negroni, & George, 2013). The importance of leadership and these styles will be revisited, as three cases of university efforts to achieve major transformations are described.

Varying Degrees of Change Success: Two Case Studies

CASE I. University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Creating and Implementing: Growth and Success in a Time of Plenty

The Rebel Spirit

The first classes were held in a building on the Nevada Southern Campus, an extension of the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1957. UNLV was officially named and recognized in 1969. From an early enrollment in 1970 of 5,500 students, the UNLV campus has grown in its 56th year to 356 acres, 26,210 students, nearly 1,000 full-time faculty, and 16 NCAA Division I sports competitions (UNLV, 2013d).

During those 56 years, several planning initiatives took place. In March 1971, the first "final report" of an ad hoc committee was published. A recent summary of the subsequent history stated, "Subsequently, a series of

academic master plans were developed that address the critical areas of discovering, preserving, disseminating and applying knowledge” (Moehring, 2007, p. 1). This could be interpreted as a summary statement of the Creating Phase of the Change Process at many universities — many beginnings with few implementations.

Creating Becomes a Beginning

The 1995 arrival of Carol Harter as the new UNLV President resulted in the initiation of a new strategic planning process. The process entailed the usual steps to “generate wide-spread participation” and resulted in 14 white papers and a comprehensive strategic plan, “UNLV – A Premier Urban University: A Public Agenda for 1995-2005.”

This was a time of dramatic growth for the Las Vegas area, and particularly for UNLV. The school district was opening a new school monthly to accommodate the approximately 5,000 individuals who moved into the region each month. Enrollments at UNLV grew from 22,000 in 1999 to 28,010 in 2006. It was a time of great demand, many needed priorities, and limited resources. A successful strategic plan was essential.

Implementing

President Harter took seriously the implementation of the strategic plan. For example, a standing committee was established and held monthly meetings. This committee consisted of representatives from all parts of campus and was charged with monitoring and leading implementation of the strategic plan. The committee members regularly provided presentations at the beginning of each academic year, with regular updates throughout the year. Another strategy for implementation support was to convene campus-wide planning retreats at the beginning of each academic year. Eleven were held from 1995 to 2005. Throughout the university, cabinet-level administrators, deans, department chairs, faculty senate, staff, and community members were consistently reminded of the strategic plan and activities related to implementing its strategies and goals, with a consistent view toward defined outcomes. A clear and consistent commitment existed to the Implementation Phase of the Change Process.

Several of the outcomes are noteworthy. For example, enrollment increased by 27% between 1999 and 2006 (22,000 to 28,010). Sponsored program awards funding increased 282% between 1999 and 2007 (\$28M to an all-time high of \$107M). This pattern of success in

research funding was reflected in UNLV’s rank among institutions with over \$40M in federal research funding by the Center for Measuring University Performance. As determined by total research expenditures, UNLV’s rank among public research universities ranged from 124 to 131 between 2003 and 2008. UNLV was not ranked prior to, or after, this period. Tuition and fees as a percentage of total revenues increased by approximately 2% between 1999 and 2008 (27% to 29%) on total revenues of \$122M and \$281M, respectively. During this time, a new Law School, Dental School, and Health Sciences Division were established, and the number of graduate programs increased from 75 (with 18 doctoral programs) to 108 (with 32 doctoral programs and 2 professional degrees: the JD and DMD) (UNLV, 2013a, 2013b, 2103c).

At the end of this decade of consistent strategic leadership and active support for implementing the strategic plan, UNLV was poised for engaging the sustainability phase. In 2006, coinciding with changes in directions at the Nevada System of Higher Education, President Harter retired and a new president was hired. The 10-year plan of President Harter ended, and the successor left the UNLV presidency by 2009. Although a potential new Creation Phase emerged, this period ended without Implementation or Sustainability strategies in place.

From 2009 to 2013, President Neal Smatresk charted a course for UNLV through extremely difficult financial pressures from a highly depressed Nevada economy. He ultimately reaffirmed a vision and plan for UNLV as a premier research university (a Tier 1 University) prior to his departure for the presidency of the University of North Texas in 2014.

CASE 2. The University of Maine Creating, Implementing, and Sustaining: Growth and Success in Times of Scarcity

A Legacy of Service

The University of Maine (UMaine) was established under the provisions of the Morrill Land Grant Act approved by President Lincoln in 1862. As Maine’s Flagship and Land Grant/Sea Grant University, the institution provides study from the baccalaureate to the doctorate through the Colleges of Engineering, Natural Sciences, Agriculture and Forestry, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Education, the Maine Business School, Graduate School, and Honors College. The Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment

Station was founded as a Division of the University in 1887; in 1912, the Maine Cooperative Extension was initiated, which offers field educational programs for both adults and youth. UMaine currently participates in 17 NCAA Division I sports. In Fall 2013, approximately 11,247 students were enrolled, with approximately 545 total faculty and 2,500 total employees.

Past Strategic Plans

Under the direction of three presidents during the last 16 years, the University of Maine has developed a strong undergraduate academic and student life experience, as well as evolved a number of internationally recognized research programs relevant to its Land Grant Mission. Presidents Peter Hoff (1997-2004) and Robert Kennedy (2004-2011) both promoted the concept, impact, and modern role of the Land Grant University with its service to Maine. In 2006, the UMaine community developed a suite of strategic plans under a general university plan of UMaine LEADS (Learning, Engagement, and Discovery), with complementary plans for Research, the Graduate School, Library, and Distance Education. Although comprehensive in scope with varying specificity in each component, the overall impact of these Creating and Implementing plans did not result in overall institutional transformation due to ongoing statewide fiscal challenges. However, a number of units thrived, such as the Colleges of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the College of Forestry and Agriculture, as well as research strengths in advanced structures and composites, renewable energy (particularly offshore wind), forest bioproducts, sensors, and marine sciences.

Fiscal and Demographic Limitations

A major factor for the limited institutionally sustainable change at UMaine has been the very difficult fiscal environment in the State of Maine during the last decade, coupled to a declining demographic in high school graduates, resulting in continuous budget reductions. For example, Maine has ranked 45th in the nation in average earnings per worker; in 2011, Maine had the lowest rate of income growth (3.4%) in the country, compared to the national average of 5.1%. Additionally, between 1999 and 2013 the relative percentage of UMaine's annual budget from state appropriations was reduced by 21% (63% to 42%) and currently is approximately \$82M. The commensurate increase in the percentage of tuition and fees (60%) as part of the overall state budget has been in the face of college costs for Maine families as a

percentage of personal income, growing by 10% since 2000. Despite this situation, UMaine undergraduate in-state tuition and fees remain the lowest of the New England Land Grant Universities (Ferguson, Hopwood, Lindenfeld, St. John, & The Blue Sky Leadership Team, 2012).

Creating a Shared and Relevant Institutional Vision

President Paul W. Ferguson assumed office in 2011 during a time of uncertain fiscal future, drifting directions, and a lack of current and integrated planning processes. The SWOT analysis made clear that the University of Maine needed to identify and navigate a clear/focused/comprehensive direction to ensure overall campus fiscal sustainability. It was clear that a key strategy would be to increase entrepreneurship and philanthropy due to flat state appropriations and flat tuition increases. A related strategy would be to more closely couple its teaching, research, and outreach, creatively contributing to the renewal of the state. In order to achieve these outcomes, the University of Maine needed a better model of fiscal sustainability; improved alignment of academic programs; research and service with Maine's economic development, workforce and manpower needs; increased student recruitment, scholarship, and retention programs; better campus incentives and enrichment programs for staff and faculty; superior communication strategies; more support for the arts and humanities; improved support for professional development and support of graduate students; and an increased commitment to campus stewardship and beautification.

As the way of Creating a Vision, President Ferguson proposed and led a new and robust year-long strategic planning process entitled the Blue Sky Project, which was designed to focus attention on and develop priority strategies to address these needed improvements. The spectrum of the initial Blue Sky strategies encompassed both general and specific targets with specific outcomes and metrics. The ultimate goal was to increase institutional success and long-term sustainability, including the identification of specific programmatic areas of excellence.

Implementation and Integration

The Blue Sky Project began, and continues, as an inclusive approach to planning. Year One focused on gathering input from all constituencies under the direction of a campus-wide Leadership Team chaired by the President.

The primary goals were to build consensus-based priorities, define strategies, and achieve comprehensive buy-in. Year Two focused on beginning implementation, addressing key initiatives, and measuring progress. Year Three evolved into a year of integration, with significant progress on initiatives and the President's Cabinet working with campus constituencies to assume focused responsibility for implementation of each of the major initiatives and strategies. This will be essential for ensuring sustainability. As the Implementation Phase unfolded, the Blue Sky Pathway Implementation Teams evolved naturally into new Blue Sky Advisory Teams that reported to the respective vice presidents. Frequent campus forums were held to seek feedback. Continuing presidential leadership and communication around the Blue Sky Plan have been the hallmark of this planning process, affirmed consistently with the Blue Sky Vision.

The Blue Sky Vision for the University of Maine focuses on an aspiration to be the most distinctively student-centered and community-engaged of the American Research Universities. The strategic initiatives to accomplish this vision were organized in Five Pathways: (1) *Serving our State: Catalyzing Maine's Revitalization*; (2) *Securing our Future: Ensuring Financial Sustainability*; (3) *Embracing a Culture of Excellence: Promoting Spirit, Collaboration, and Community*; (4) *Transforming Lives: Strengthening the UMaine Undergraduate and Graduate Student Experience*; and (5) *Restoring the Dream: Renewing Pride and Stewardship of Place*.

Several outcomes were noteworthy in the third year of the Blue Sky Plan. Most significantly, due to the intensive communication efforts of the President and the Leadership Team, with a renewed marketing and communications component of the Blue Sky Plan focusing on outcomes and progress toward results. The majority of the University community, both internal and external constituencies, has embraced the role and scope of the Blue Sky Plan as the driving vision and set of initiatives to guide UMaine forward.

Early Indicators of Effects

College- and department-based strategic plans have closely aligned with the overall outline of the Blue Sky Plan. A new Blue Sky Financial Model has been developed based upon an All Funds Report that fully encompasses new sources of revenue and cost efficiencies. As part of that plan, total university enrollment has increased as a result of new enrollment management strategies, with

new first-year students increasing by 21% in the last two years. The Maine Business School enjoyed a 21% increase in enrollment during 2013. Due to intensive retention strategies through Blue Sky Pathway 4, overall student first- to second-year retention increased by 4% to 81%, with the College of Engineering reaching 88%. Despite the reduction in federal appropriations, sponsored programs awards remained generally constant from 2000-2013; however, research expenditures reached a peak in FY12 at \$122M. Reflecting this research funding, UMaine improved its ranking in the 2012 edition of *The Top American Research Universities* by the Center for Measuring University Performance (Lombardi, Phillips, Abbey, & Craig, 2012) to 94th among public research universities, with over \$40M in federal research funding. The UMaine Advancement Partners reported 2,000 new first-time donors in the third year of the Blue Sky Plan; and, coupled to the rebound of the economy, the combined endowments for the University were at an all-time high of \$232M. As part of Blue Sky Pathway 5, nearly \$85 million in infrastructure improvements, as well as classroom and laboratory renovations, have contributed to an enhanced environment for learning and discovery (University of Maine, 2013a, 2013b).

In 2014, the University of Maine System more fully recognized a major fiscal structural gap that reflected decreased revenues from three years of flat state appropriations, three years of Board of Trustees mandated flat tuition, declining student enrollments at all campuses except the University of Maine and one other small campus, and resolution of a collective bargaining agreement with system-wide faculty and staff funding raises at levels greater than originally budgeted. Although the UMaine Blue Sky Plan generated unprecedented revenues from increased enrollments, increased philanthropy, and campus efficiencies, system-wide budget impacts required the use of UMaine financial reserves.

President Ferguson left the University of Maine in 2014, becoming the 15th President of Ball State University. Dr. Susan Hunter, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Maine System and former UMaine Provost, became the 20th UMaine President on a two-year appointment with a public affirmation and commitment to continue support of the Blue Sky Plan.

The Challenge of Sustaining Change

Understanding Components of Sustainable Change

True transformations in higher educational institutions must be characterized by sustaining the new methods. This last phase in the change process, and the most critical for long-term institutional success, also is the most neglected. Kezar and Eckel (2002a) suggested several components for transformational change that include: “(1) a willing president or strong administrative leadership; (2) a collaborative process; (3) persuasive and effective communication; (4) a motivating vision and mission; (5) long-term orientation; (6) providing rewards, and (7) developing support structures” (p. 298).

Kezar and Eckel (2002b) further suggested that, despite the remarkable challenges currently facing higher education, such as financial pressures, growth in technology, changing faculty roles, public scrutiny, changing demographics, competing values, and the rapid rate of international change, institutions struggle with accomplishing transformational change. Sustainable change must be related to the culture of the institution and often is related to the role of culture in that change. A key point of their research in sustaining transformational change in the culture of the institution should be a *modifying element* of that change, rather than the *subject of the modification*.

These seven identified strategies for transformational change, as well as the aspect of understanding the institutional culture, were characteristic of both the Blue Sky Project at UMaine and the UNLV approach to developing a Premier Urban University. Both processes fully explored and valued the positive qualities of campus culture and adapted the process to engage its members for collective improvement. By the point of integration for each process, the majority of campus members had become full “adopters” of the change as part of a natural transformation toward the common vision.

However, continuing risks and challenges exist for sustaining transformational change. One of the most critical is accommodating change in the leader at the strategic apex of the organization. Another critical factor is the role and impact of university systems.

A Challenge: The Role of Leader Succession

One of the major challenges in sustaining change is the impact on continuity of the Vision and Implementation

Strategies when the visionary president departs. Generally, for public institutions, the outgoing president has little or no input or recommendation in the selection of a successor. In public organizations, rather than an effort to select a leader who will continue the initiatives and directions of the outgoing leader, all too often a concerted effort occurs to find someone who is “different.” A reaction formation exists against having the same type of leader “again.” The Change Facilitator Styles provide an easy-to-use model to illustrate the problem.

In most settings, creating and implementing a new direction is most successful when the university president possesses the Initiator Style and has vision and passion. The president also possesses what one of the authors refers to as “strategic sense.” As leaders, they view their organization as complex, with each “piece” moving in unique ways. They anticipate moves and respond accordingly. While attending to the moment-to-moment, they consistently maintain the long-term vision. After experience with the strong ideas and initiatives of an Initiator Style president, many on the faculty (and perhaps the board as well) will want someone less “strong.” This theme likely leads to the employment of a Responder, often a well-known administrator who has been at the university for a long time. “He (or she) is so friendly and charismatic.” By definition, Responders have little commitment to *sustaining* initiatives of the predecessor. They are friendly and always have time to chat. However, their decision making tends to be moment-to-moment, rather than strategic. Loss of continuity in vision through leader succession, particularly in public universities, is a major threat to sustaining transformational change.

Another Challenge: Potential Impacts of University Systems

Berdahl, Sample, and Rall (2014) suggested the existence of a natural tension between flagship research institutions and the larger systems in which they are governed. They suggested that the initial emergence of such systems in statewide governance was justified for “statewide coordination to allocate resources, guide growth, and avoid unnecessary duplication of programs” (para. 4). However, the move to decentralization in the 1990s that led to more independent and entrepreneurial campus activity was directly related to the era of austerity with limited resources and growth. The authors quoted Katharine C. Lyall, who aptly summarized the challenges faced by such campuses as UNLV and UMaine in this “new normal” time period:

...Systems can no longer help campus leaders obtain funds, buffer them from governmental intrusion, and demands or compete with other universities for faculty members and research monies. They [the campuses] feel caught in regional orientations and structures while trying to compete in national and global venues. Systems, seemingly caught flatfooted by these wider visions for their campus, have responded by challenging or removing innovative presidents to protect traditional system power rather than using these ideas to fashion new missions for both system and campus. (para. 29)

Such system decision making and orientations can significantly confound and obstruct sustainability of change.

Summary and Discussion. Implications for Future Leaders of Sustainable, Transformational Change

In his book, *No Equal in the World: An Interpretation of the Academic Presidency*, Joseph Crowley (1994) chronicled the transitions of leaders and leadership styles during the past two centuries. He clearly outlined the necessary passage from the foundational role of the “Great Men” presidents such as Charles Eliot of Harvard, to modern day “Mediator” presidents such as Clark Kerr of the University of California. He reviewed sources, suggesting that:

the great man hypothesis gave way to a concept of leaders created by the tides of history... the presidency became an ever more difficult undertaking... Surrounded by growing limitations and a perilous environment the office went from a heroic effort to one that emphasized mediation and conflict management, (rather) than crisis management. (p. 92)

Although the presidential position description has no doubt changed, a clear need remains for presidents who have vision and passion for leading change in 21st century research universities. According to Hay (2006), such vision and passion is the hallmark of a transformational leader who “fosters capacity development and brings higher levels of personal commitment amongst followers to organizational objectives...and such leaders “engender trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect.” (p. 3) As educator/leader John W. Gardner affirmed, “A prime function of a leader is to keep hope alive.” (Hay, 2006, p. 2). This

is particularly true, as the political, social, and economic environment for higher education has changed.

That hope, loyalty, and respect must be extended to the vision and mission of the university. It should become part of the culture of the organization, not just the vision of the leader. Much is known about creating and implementing change. Nearly all universities have had multiple experiences with these two phases of the change process. Less is known, and most universities have much more limited experience with sustaining change, particularly transformational change.

In order to ensure sustainability, despite the increasingly shorter terms of modern day presidents, a clear focus is needed on the key aspects of change processes:

- Understanding and addressing all three phases of change processes (Creating, Implementing, and Sustaining);
- Encouraging and maintaining visionary presidential leadership;
- Building strong leadership teams among the cabinet, faculty, and off-campus constituencies;
- Ensuring strategic continuity across leader successions;
- Building strong consensus around the substantive change package;
- Building to institutional cultural strengths;
- Discerning strategic elements of institutional capacity;
- Ensuring a financially sustainable business model and maintaining relevant and strategic alignment with state needs;
- Accurately applying process of change models: Discerning stages of concern and discerning character of participants (early adopters to saboteurs);
- Employing aggressive / effective / fresh and continuing communication to all constituencies;
- Holding on to patience with tenacity; and
- Keeping the vision in mind, especially when competing forces and distractions emerge.

In many ways, this is an overwhelming list. At the same time, this list is incomplete. The totality of all that is required to create, implement, and sustain transformative change processes is indeed large. Accomplishing major change in higher education is difficult, and it cannot be accomplished by leadership, planning processes, and time alone. Universities and colleges are not isolated/independent agencies. Each is part (a subsystem) of

much larger systems. For example, many external forces affect the accomplishments of an institution. Federal and state governance, concerns and needs of society at large, the agenda of the business community, and even movements in other countries can deter and/or contribute to the accomplishment of transformational change.

This larger global view brings with it the need for different ways of thinking. Rather than thinking in terms of traditional paradigms such as organizational structures, economics, contingencies, and missions, some scholars recently proposed very different metaphors for understanding organizational change. One such perspective is the emerging discipline of “organization ecology” (Baum, 1996; Baum, Dobrev, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2006). The application of concepts from biology triggers new ways of thinking about institutions and change processes. For example, consider the different ways of thinking and acting about an institution’s role and processes when ecology concepts such as niche theory, age, size, density dependence, community interdependence, and evolutionary approaches are used to plan, implement, and sustain transformative change. The internal processes of the institution now must be considered within the context of it being considered as one member of the greater system ecology.

Regardless of the many challenges and complexities, the need for creating new directions within universities will remain. As successful as educational systems have been at conducting strategic planning processes, they have been much less effective in implementing the plans. The track record of sustaining strategic agendas across years, and the challenge of maintaining continuity with leader successions and impacts of university systems, have been very limited indeed. Despite all of its complexities, it is possible to accomplish major change. Universities that do so will be very successful competitors within their ecosystems.

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