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ABSTRACT
        This paper examines the use of professional reading groups
as a strategy to help college and university administrators stay informed and
meet administrative challenges. It reports on a study of 26 institutions by
the American Council on Education, which examined the process of large-scale
institutional change. This study's findings support reading groups as an
institutional change strategy and identified the following important change
strategies: leaders who make a clear and compelling case for change; leaders
who craft an agenda that makes sense; recognition that change benefits from a
widened circle of participation; and leaders who develop connections and
linkages. A related study by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education
examined the use of the higher education literature by practitioners. This
study found that low usage of the literature by administrators for decision
making could be addressed through reading groups. Several strategies for
organizing the literature were identified, including on-going management
reading groups, strategic reading groups, intermittent reading groups, and
professional seminars. A case study of reading groups at Portland State
University (Oregon) illustrates how such groups can identify themes, conduct
a variety of related activities, and facilitate linkages. The paper concludes
that reading groups are one way to institutionalize the concept of the
reflective practitioner. (Contains 13 references.) (DB)

Learning for Organizing: Using Reading Groups to Create More Effective Institutions

Paper presented at the 1999 AAHE
Annual Conference in Washington. DC

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Learning for Organizing:
Using Reading Groups to Create
More Effective Institutions

Problem Statement: The Challenges for Administrators and Leaders

Several conditions are influencing the future of administration in colleges and universities

and may require new tools or strategies to adequately addressing the challenges. The main issues

are: 1) unparalleled rate of change within higher education; 2) unprecedented amount of

information available, 3) pressure for accountability; and 4) organizations realizing the necessity

of collaborative leadership (Penney, 1996; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). All of these conditions

signal the need for administrators to rethink their role, preparation, and strategies for decision-

making.

First, financial pressures, growth in technology, changing faculty roles, new and

alternative pedagogies, intensified public scrutiny, changing demographics, needs of diverse

learners, assessment, new competitors, competing values, and the rapid rate of change in the

world both within and beyond our national borders make intentional institutional change an

imperative for colleges and universities (Eckel, 1998). The types of changes institutions will be

required to make are more than tinkering, and often necessitate a transformation of goals,

processes, and outcomes. Various strategies have been utilized to facilitate transformational

change including new management approaches, mission statements, strategic planning, campus

retreats, consultants, internal reviews, evaluation, accreditation reports, the list continues

(Keating, 1996). The massive changes taking place in higher education also signal the

importance of staying abreast of recent literature. There are repeated concerns that there is

simply no way to keep up with the changes (Keating, 1996; Kezar, 1999). Yet, business and other organizations are responding to the rapidly changing environment. Higher education must develop strategics, as other sector have, for keeping current.

Second, there is growth in the amount of information available for academic leaders. The Internet crystalized the trend toward proliferation of information that has characterized the information age (Guskin, 1996; Harrington, 1996). Institutions, state and federal agencies, organizations, and individuals are no longer constrained by the cost of publication. Information can be made available for virtually free. If an administrator needs to develop a study of racial or ethnic climate, they are no longer constrained to published sources. Examples of surveys are posted on websites; literature reviews related to conducting a climate survey can be found through AIR, ERIC, and other individual websites. Thus, an academic leader has greater responsibility for finding this information because it is out there. The administrator does not necessarily have to find the information on the web, but it is the responsibility of the administrator use the tools to find the growing resources that are available.

Third, the climate on college campuses has changed significantly for administrators. The public is calling for greater accountability in decision-making (Banta, 1996). Decision making informed by fact has become a strategy touted in the literature on administration and management, especially the literature on total quality management (Rudolph & Howard, 1996). Even though information delivery vehicles such as ERIC have been available for several decades these calls for accountability make it clear that there is an expectation that decision-making will be better supported by available resources.

Lastly, more and more campuses are realizing the necessity of collaborative leadership in

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a time period with rapid, comprehensive change and information overload. Collaboration assists in the development of buy-in, support, communication, and implementation of change initiatives. Information is critical when trying to negotiate between campus decision makers (Townsend &Bassopporo-Moyo, 1996). Hierarchical models did not allow for as wide a range of choices from which administrators are faced with evaluating. Decisions about direction are best made based on the broader context of information available about trends in higher education nationally, at a state level, and within certain sectors, or regions. Collaborative leadership also rests on information sharing, sometimes characterized as becoming a learning organization.

In order to meet future and current administrative challenges, higher education professional must develop tools since interpreting, managing, and leading change, balancing opposing claims; and defending and promoting demands for accountability will all require that administrators be well versed in the literature and research for higher education. Some campuses have begun to develop strategies for addressing these challenges. The focus of this paper will be on one promising strategy called reading groups.

Responding to the Challenge: Campus reading groups

Many college campuses are initiating professional seminars or reading groups, the goal of which is to explore a topic in-depth and provide campuses with a common language and knowledge base about a particular issue, such as faculty workload, community service learning, portfolio assessment, or even the mission and purpose of the institution. Creating common language and knowledge base does not necessarily mean that individuals agree. What it does mean is that the issues have been thoroughly explored and that through discussion and focused

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reading, the issue is well understood and articulated. One of the most common problems with change is that change initiatives lack reflection and intentionality. Reading groups are a strategy to capture these elements. Reading groups also tap into highly developed skills readily available on a campus, inquiry, focused thought, writing and contemplation. Reading groups focus the talents of faculty and administrators on the institution itself.

The structure of readings groups vary. One version is a cross-campus committee of 15-25 that meet monthly over the academic year. A second version is several hundred people who read common materials before a campus-wide retreat. A third model is when various committees across the institution are assigned readings to be discussed at school-wide or departmental committee meetings on their own terms. The readings themselves may be selected by a central coordinating committee or they may come as recommendations by participants. At some institutions, all participants read a common list, at others, participants select a limited number from a longer list. The conversations may focus on one reading or they may work across readings for synthesis and transference.

Promising strategy: Evidence from a multi-institutional study

For the past four years, the American Council on Education (ACE) has been working with 26 colleges and universities to better understand the process of large-scale institutional change. This study's findings support the contributions reading groups make as an institutional change strategy. The project focus on large-scale or comprehensive institutional change which is a type of change that is deep and pervasive. The elements that make comprehensive change unique are (1) that its effects are not limited to particular elements or functions of an institution,

but rather touch most, if not all, of the institution and, (2) it modifies many of the underlying assumptions and values that influence the institution's way of doing business (Eckel, Hill, Green, 1998). Large-scale change does not imply a radical overhaul of everything or the drastic shift in institutional identity, say from a regional comprehensive institutional to an international powerhouse. Institutions are grounded in their histories, traditions and personnel. A faculty committed to teaching most likely will not become singularly focused on chasing the federal research dollar. Nevertheless, most of the institutions participating in the ACE Project were intent on changing their assumptions of how students learn, what faculty do, and how scholarship is defined and carried out while remaining true to their values that define the institution.

A common thread across the findings below is the power of campus conversations. Conversations are an important tool for making a clear and compelling case and exploring "why" an institution must change. Through conversations rationales become clarified, new ideas are tested and incorporated or discarded, and new arguments (defenses) are articulated and practiced. Conversations help refine ideas and make them more sensible. By continually engaging in informed dialogue ideas become crystallized and concepts clarified, assumptions become explored and tested, and offensive ideas rethought. Those new to the conversation ask probing questions, challenge assumptions and offer new ways of seeing and perceiving. Conversations, finally, create linkages. Through focused campus dialogues people and their ideas become connected. Conversations provide an arena and a purpose for new ideas to become linked. They are the medium through which energy becomes created. One strategy to create conversations important to change and that capture and reflect the above insights are through focused reading groups.

Through this action research project, a series of lessons were developed. For a discussion of methodology see Eckel (1997) and for a broader articulation of lessons see Eckel, Hill, Green, and Mallon (1999.) Among the insights related to reading groups are the following:

Leaders make a clear and compelling case for change.

Institutions that made the most progress with comprehensive change had leaders who clearly articulated why change is necessary and why current approaches no longer work. These leaders realized that key constituents must recognize the necessity of action before they willingly participate. Leaders must articulate a meaningful future, one that constituents view as better not just different. The change must improve some aspect of faculty and administrators professional lives or the experiences of students that they believe to be important.

At institutions where leaders did not make a compelling case for change, they typically failed to garner support for their efforts and, in turn, failed to bring about change. Change efforts also stalled if leaders identified a change initiative that was divorced from issues the faculty believed were important. Change agendas did not generate enthusiasm if they were not meaningful to those affected by them or those expected to carry them out.

At some institutions, which did not make much progress on change, leaders did not articulate why the change was important. To extremely busy faculty and administrators the change effort became an additional burden. It was simply added to already full "to do" lists, and typically at the bottom. If individuals do not come to believe the change is necessary and important to a better future, they will not voluntarily work toward it.

An important aspect of making a clear and compelling case was allowing faculty and administrators, and frequently students, the opportunity to debate and explore the question, *Why*

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is change necessary? Without the opportunity to probe, ask questions, debate, and confer, constituents perceived the change initiative thrust upon them. An important part of making a clear and compelling case is having others believe in the case and become proponents of the cause. The way to do this is to allow them to question, address, shape, and articulate the issue in a way that is consistent with their priorities.

Leaders craft an agenda that makes sense and does not assign blame

Beyond making a clear and compelling case for why things must be different, leaders must identify a change initiative that makes sense to the campus. The proposed change must be congruent with the purposes, values and expectations of the institution, while at the same time challenging those to do things differently. A well articulated change initiative reinforces and reflects what is important to the institution and how its members view themselves.

In addition to falling with parameters that make sense, the change agenda must be crafted so it does not assign blame. Improvement and enhancement are much stronger and motivational terms than fixing or mending. Faculty and administrators invest significant time and energy in their institutions, frequently dedicating their whole lives. If they believe the change initiative implies failure or misdirection on their part, they become defensive and resistant to change. Change often threatens those who interpret the need for change as an indictment of their current or past practices and competencies. Leaders make progress much more easily when the change is framed in terms people cannot take offense from. Several institutions began their change efforts by asking a series of questions without prematurely offering solutions. This approach was consistent with the academic community's desire to solve problems, think deeply, and apply

knowledge.

Some of the institutions in the project that did not make progress on their change initiatives because they identified initiatives that did not resonate with the campus. Others thought that a well reasoned idea alone was adequate. They did not engage in an extensive process of listening, entertaining counter-arguments, or identifying supporters.

Change benefits from a widened circle of participation

The energy, knowledge, skills and abilities of senior administrators alone are not adequate to implement large-scale change. Rather institutions that made progress tapped effectively into the abilities of people throughout the institution. Many changes flounder because their leadership remains isolated. The stumbling point is that a few true believers take the burden themselves and fail to engage the campus broadly. Academic change requires wide ranging support, grass roots involvement.

Change benefits from a wide circle of participation. Successful institutions recognized individuals throughout the campus posses the stature, skills, perspectives and talents to necessary for change. Broad participation allows leaders to tap the varying and diverse strengths of many and make up for the shortcomings of a few. It creates varying avenues of involvement that allow people to flow in and out of the change process depending upon their interests and energy level. It allows for new conversations, fresh perspectives and new energy. Finally, by including more people in the change process, sharing leadership and dispersing decision making the change initiative gains additional credibility.

Institutions that did not make progress tended to use small coteries of administrative

leaders. A change initiative may stall if the participants are the same small group of campus leaders involved in every endeavor. They tend to see the same problems and offer old and tired strategies. Small groups of people also do not have the flexibility in the schedules that allow them to make the heavy investments of time periodically required. They light the fires but do not have the resources to stoke the flames.

Leaders develop connections and linkages

Part of widening the circle of involvement is making connections and linkages. Institutions that made progress found ways to create synergy between various related efforts both on- and off-campus. These linkages helped create and sustain the energy required for large-scale change. They led to new connections among individuals who shared a common passion. The connections led to new conversations, which in turn, sparked original ideas and new insights. The connections brought together individuals who possessed different portions of the larger solution. By bringing them together they discovered that together they formed a complete equation.

At the same time, connections were formed across institutional boundaries with other institutions, funding agencies, experts and fellow change agents. Understanding how issues at a particular institution are tied to those of higher education in general or to the challenges other institutions are facing helps leaders overcome problems of insularity. The connections add important outside voices which bring an important level of legitimacy to an institution's efforts.

<u>Potential challenges for the development of reading groups?</u>

The ERIC Clearinghouse on higher education recently conducted a study of practitioners use of the higher education literature. The ERIC Clearinghouse acts as the main collection and dissemination point of higher education literature. Almost all higher education literature produced is examined in the Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse responds to information requests from researchers and practitioners on a daily basis. In playing this role, Clearinghouse staff noticed that many practitioners seemed to be unaware of a great deal of the literature available. Also, they seemed unable to develop ways to manage the overwhelming amount of information. However, the evidence to support these concerns remained anecdotal. Collecting systematic information examining practitioners use of literature and comparing the views of practitioners and researchers seemed critical to understand this issue better. The goal was to identify any strategies that practitioners had developed for addressing the problem of effectively utilizing literature for decision-making. A related concern that brought the Clearinghouse to the study was that there was a growing gap between practitioner's concerns and the research and literature being produced. Was the literature meaningful and useful to practitioners, was it in useful formats, were issues covered those they felt needed to be prioritized. These issues are addressed in a separate paper (Kezar, 1999).

In order to address these questions, ERIC conducted focus groups at national higher education conferences. Over the past three years (1996-98), focus groups were held at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Association for the Study of Higher Education, American Educational Research Association, American Association for Higher Education, and Association for Institutional Research. Practitioners were typically department

chairs and deans, institutional researchers, student affairs officers, other academic affairs

administrators, or administrators from other areas such as alumni affairs, development, or

associations. A survey was also posted on the ERIC website.

Overview of Findings

There are several finding from the ERIC study that are critical for campuses attempting to

develop reading groups and to meet the administrative challenges of the next century: 1) on the

whole, administrators do not utilize the literature for decision making, management, or

leadership within their institutions and there are few, if any, institutional incentives for doing so;

2) many lacked the knowledge about the key literature in higher education or outside higher

education and lacked the time to try to become familiar; 3) many were unable (or lacked the

incentives) to devise strategies for reviewing the literature even if they were familiar; and, 4)

reading groups emerged as a strategy for some campuses/individuals.

Missing link: Using the literature for Decision-making

Individuals within the study acknowledged that they do not use information for decision-

making even though they know they should or would like to. The reasons for not using the

literature ranged from time, perceived lack of value of the literature, accessibility, institutional

value of time being spent on reading and keeping abreast, lack of understanding about the

literature, and most often a feeling of being overwhelmed. This quote epitomizes administrators'

reactions:

I know this sounds horrible, but I have stacks of materials and I never refer to it. There isn't even just one reason it sits there, but so many. If the people I work for do not value the effort, that is the biggest disincentive. But mostly it is time, I just can never even get the time to think about how I could use the information. Then as it grows, I feel like I will never wrap my arms around it. I just hope it doesn't start to wrap its arms around me.

This reinforces anecdotal observations as well as the public's concern. Boards, state legislatures, and presidents need to be aware of this finding and more carefully.impress the necessity of using information to inform decision making. These same groups also need to express this as a value within the institution and encourage use of the literature. Incentives need to be put in place that reinforce professional reading and use of information for decision-making. The overwhelming response from administrators was that not only were there no incentives, but that bringing information to meets was often discouraged and seen as a waste of other people's time.

Understanding the Higher Education literature

A commonly noted sentiment was that people were not familiar with the higher education literature or other relevant fields that could inform decision-making. As issues change or emerge, they do not know what newsletter or journal would assist them in examining the current topic. As a result of these findings, ERIC has added a section to the its website called "primer on higher education resources" that attempts to provide an overview of all the literature in the area of higher education and related disciplines. This has also made the Clearinghouse more aware of promoting its free services to the higher education community.

Searching for strategies

Another group of practitioners was familiar with the literature but was struggling to find strategies to keep up with the literature within higher education, let alone the literature from business, sociology, psychology and other fields that might have bearing on the decisions they are faced. It is important to note that those familiar found higher education publications important to their work and when used helped them make better decisions. Practitioners were quick to mention several publications in higher education as the most helpful and useful to their work. *Change* magazine, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *NTLF Newsletter*, *AAHE Bulletin*, *New Directions Series*, *NY Times*, *PEW Policy Perspectives*, and *On the Horizon* were discussed most prevalently.

Administrators noted that the literature outside higher education could also be very informative to practice. Within an interdisciplinary professional field such as college an university administration, the challenge of reading is much more complex. Practitioners realized that they needed to read works from business and management, sociology, and K-12 literature. One practitioner noted that she was extremely interested in performance indicators, but that there was very little literature in higher education:

> I have to look to the business literature. I also find myself doing this to find literature on collaboration and assessment. I find myself in other literatures quite often.

This illustrates the vast literature that administrators need to keep abreast to meet current administrative challenges.

There was acknowledgment on the part of practitioners that they need to develop

strategies for reading literature (for example, reading groups) because simply putting their hands

up and saying, "I cannot read anything over six pages" will not help them to resolve the issues:

> We need to use the higher education literature to frame the work that we do, but to
> be honest there is lots of literature, and it is hard to have the time to determine
> what is good and worth reading. Especially since we pull in literature from
> business and management, sociology, public policy, as well as higher education.
> An institutional reading group that shares important references and resources
> would cut down on each individual's work. Our institution has begun what we
> call a collective read. Everyone is assigned different literature sources to review
> and summarize and to let others know about important pieces that everyone
> within the institution should read or know about. I think if more institutions did
> this, then there would be more use of the valuable resources out there.

Strategies for organizing the vast literature

Several similar strategies emerged for utilizing and managing the breadth of literature.

Some described a *Development Opportunity* organized through staff or faculty development

center/divisions that provide training and the recent literature on a particular issue, for example

instructional technology. In this model, certain divisions or groups are responsible for keeping

the campus aware of particular issues. On a handful of campuses this responsibility was

delegated to a variety of centers or divisions that had the overall task of sifting through and

sending out the literature to people on campus, e.g., human resources, staff development, etc.

Others described *on-going management reading groups* (as described in the quote above) where

the whole campus is divided up and responsible for different areas of literature. Another model

is the *strategic reading group*. A task force or committee assembles a set of readings based on a

particular problem or issue. All members read the works and debate them working to develop a common language and direction. *Intermittent reading groups*, are set up by a particular group or division that wants to begin a dialogue, but does not want to come to any resolution. For example, the provost might set up a reading groups to discuss the climate for minorities on campus. Articles are assigned monthly and sent out to interested parties who attend the meetings and discuss the content of the articles. The group itself has no agenda, it is involved in an on-going dialogue. Others called their model a *professional seminar* where a group is established like a course, reviewing material, writing up papers or summaries, and culminating the collective response to the readings for a report on the topic.

Other models exist that we did not tap into. The significant aspect of hearing about these various models is that those who used them felt in better control of decision making, felt that there was greater agreement campus wide about directions and decisions, and empowered that the decisions they were making were accurate and appropriate.

> There is such a big difference between decisions made before our reading groups. They felt more willy-nilly. Now they feel decisions are well thought out, I feel like we are leading not just surviving.

Also, each model adapted to the particular climate and culture of the campus they were located.

> For our campus, a highly collaborative model was necessary. We each select readings for a particular week. A different person leads the discussion. The provost started the group but does not convene every time. She lets different people lead sessions and set direction. But this might not work at another campus. What is important is that people read, learn, transform, engage ideas, and ultimately make better decisions.

<u>Cast Study: Portland State University</u>

Portland State University, a campus that has established and benefitted from reading groups,

discusses its experience with using them as an intricate element of their change agenda.

As one of the twenty-six institutions invited to participate in the national ACE project on

Leadership and Institutional

As one of the twenty-six institutions invited to participate in the national ACE project on

Leadership and Institutional Transformation, Portland State University selected the campus topic

"Developing Faculty for the Urban University of the 21st Century." With this end purpose in

mind, 15 faculty and administrators agreed to organize initially as a reading group. For the first

year, once-a-month discussions centered on common readings. The provost facilitated these

meetings and assigned articles and books that led the group toward a common vocabulary and

understanding of higher education and the changing roles of faculty.

The goal of the project was to develop a comprehensive plan of faculty development to

enable the University to create the faculty appropriate to its place in higher education and to

successfully fulfill its mission. The proposed comprehensive plan would identify needed

resources, infrastructure and activities and reward processes.

<u>Emergent Themes & Symposium</u>

At the end of the first year, the Team (the original members of the reading group)

identified five themes that needed to be addressed across the campus. These five themes were:

(1) Campus technology and faculty development; (2) Implication of the new definition of

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scholarship for faculty development; (3) Examination of faculty involvement in curricular management and structure; (4) Examination of the effectiveness of the compartmentalization of faculty and support roles and structures; and, (5) Identification of factors that would enhance the sense of "community" at PSU.

In relation to each theme, the reading group formed subgroups and developed a research question for the themes. The subgroups built a set of readings related to each research question and then recruited a larger group to participate in "theme-based roundtables." The Team members facilitated these roundtables. Comments and recommendations of each roundtable were summarized and then presented to the original reading group. These themes and summaries (posted on the PSU homepage) formed the foundation of the annual fall campus symposium intended for all PSU faculty.

Concurrent Changes Across the PSU Campus

The project and its activities (common readings, roundtables, university-wide symposium) began in the inaugural year of PSU's Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). Many of the suggested outcomes of the reading group project have been threaded into the activities of the CAE. Three other initiatives were developing on campus concurrent with the ACE project. First, the University Studies undergraduate education program was adopted across the campus. This is a four-year undergraduate education program that is grounded in interdisciplinary teaching and learning culminating in a senior year of community based learning activities. Second, "scholarship of teaching" and "scholarship of community outreach" were integrated into the promotion and tenure guidelines. Third, the human resource management

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structure was re-organized and a new campus-wide student and personnel "paper management" system was adopted.

Visible Activities

In the effort to enhance support and development opportunities for faculty development, several activities are now solidly in place. It is difficult to track activities that are directly related to any one of the specific initiatives mentioned above. However, it is quite apparent that either a direct relationship or an interaction effect resulted in the following activities:

Center for Academic Excellence Advisory Board

Members of the original ACE project team were invited to form the core of the new CAE Advisory Board. Five members of the group expressed interest in becoming part of the board while other faculty and staff from across the campus were solicited. The Board has continued to meet on a regular basis and serve as feedback forum on CAE activities, a liaison to particular units on campus, and an initiator of new ideas for the Center.

Focus on Faculty Day

Each fall the Center for Academic Excellence and The Office of Academic Affairs sponsors a one-day event to welcome and support new faculty and staff, junior faculty and senior faculty. Two major objectives are addressed throughout the day. First, to provide resources and answers to their process questions (e.g., how do I get a parking sticker) and to their professional career questions (e.g., how do I find out about promotion and tenure issues); and, second, to provide plenary sessions and workshops throughout the day facilitated and attended by faculty and staff. Many of these plenary sessions and workshops are either suggested or facilitated by

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members of the CAE advisory board. This day kicks for the academic year and is intended to communicate a supportive climate and create "community" among faculty and staff.

Faculty Focus

The Center for Academic Excellence produces a bi-annual publication (*The Faculty Focus*) that focuses on articles written by PSU faculty and staff about teaching and learning issues. Several of the articles are written by advisory board members who have either facilitated a Focus on Faculty workshop or plenary session. The advisory board also makes recommendations about what types of articles to further solicit. Most of the articles, written by faculty and advisory board members specifically address activities that can be labeled either "scholarship of teaching" or "scholarship of community outreach."

The Classroom Research Resource Team

The "Classroom Research Resource Team" is a group of faculty who volunteer to serve as resources to their colleagues who are interested in classroom research and scholarship of teaching. This group meets on a regular basis serving as resources for individual faculty in the following process: first, identifying classroom objectives and student learning outcomes; (2) identifying the assumptions about which teaching strategies are related to which student learning outcomes; (3) designing a classroom research case study to "measure" student learning in relation to teaching strategies; (4) helping to collect student learning data; (4) helping to analyze student learning data; (5) finding publication or presentation outlets for disseminating the results of the classroom research.

Participating in the Carnegie-AAHE Teaching Initiatives on the Scholarship of Teaching

PSU is now participating in the Carnegie-AAHE teaching Initiative on the Scholarship of

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Teaching. The PSU team participating in this initiative is focused on designing a campus wide initiative that supports faculty who choose to design and conduct classroom research and take it to the dissemination stage: scholarship of teaching.

Provost Reardon's yearlong series: The Current State of Higher Education

Many of the readings for the ACE reading group have been incorporated into Provost Reardon's year long series addressing issues in higher education today. This series served as a reading group and seminar that Provost Reardon delivered and facilitated. Faculty and staff across campus signed up for the year long (every three weeks, two hours per session) series. Thirty faculty and staff committed to participate in this series. Interviews at the outset and at the close of the series with each of the participants revealed that the amount of information they gained about the state of higher education today has significantly deepened their understanding of why Portland State University is making certain choices about academic and professional direction. In particular, participants expressed great appreciation of the broad coverage the Provost paid to the history of higher education, as we know it today. The series is being repeated again this year for thirty more faculty and staff. Due to the number of requests for repeat sessions, we are video taping the sessions so that all who wish to view the sessions may.

Academic and Professional Portfolio Support

When the university adopted the broader definitions of scholarship (scholarship of teaching and scholarship of community outreach) and rewrote the promotion and tenure guidelines, new challenges faced those who were conducting scholarship activities as well as those who were evaluating scholarship activities. With these increased challenges, greater support was needed. Annually, the Center for Academic Excellence identifies one faculty

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member to be "The Faculty-In-Residence for Portfolios." This faculty member works with individual faculty who are seeking help with Academic Portfolio construction. He/she also facilitates a year-long portfolio working group for faculty (primarily junior faculty) who desire a "working group" that meets two times per month to support each other throughout the development of each person's portfolio. The group reports that the collegiality within this group is a tremendous asset for providing feedback on portfolio construction and academic feedback.

Invisible Outcomes of the ACE Project

Four outcomes emerged from this project that can be considered invisible outcomes, but in very identifiable ways have strongly influenced activities and initiatives at the PSU campus.

Repeat Interactions with campuses within our cluster

Each time a sub-group from the ACE Project Team went for the quarterly Washington DC meetings, the group would return and lead the discussions about the "reports" from the other campuses. These reports served as the fodder for discussion about activities and direction of Portland State University. We began to see how other universities were meeting challenges that could be applied to our own campus.

Establishing a long term relationship with one university in our cluster

At the Washington DC meetings, the PSU team formed a strong relationship with The University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus. This relationship led to visits between the two campuses. The UPR team visited the PSU campus on two separate occasions. As a result of these visits the UPR team gave PSU feedback on their observations. It was quite useful to hear what visitors who had followed our progress in the DC meetings told us about our perceptions of the PSU reality and their perceptions of the PSU reality. The PSU team visited the UPR

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campuses one time and provided similar feedback to their team. Two of the PSU team members were invited back to present specific workshops to the UPR faculty on "Scholarship of Teaching," "New Faculty Orientation," and "Classroom Assessment Techniques."

Visible Outcomes on the UPR Campus

Following the visits to PSU, the UPR campus designed their own Center for Academic Excellence. Their Center is modeled after the PSU Center for Academic Excellence and is tailored to meet the needs of their faculty and continues to be a central focus in the ACE project discussions.

Increasing Collegiality at Portland State University

The members of the PSU ACE project met regularly throughout this project. Many of the members would not otherwise have sought out opportunities to meet for other than "just-in-time" problem solving. The ACE meetings provided a scholarly forum to discuss issues that were not necessarily emotionally based or to related to any one member's personal agenda. By providing these types of meetings, colleagues began to listen to each other more. A respect formed between and among group members that carried throughout the project and beyond.

Challenges along the way

Two major challenges occurred throughout this project, each related to sustained energy and broader campus engagement.

Sustaining group energy

Each member of the PSU ACE Project Team wears many hats. These multiple roles mean that everyone on the team has multiple responsibilities in differing contexts across the campus. Taking the time to stop and participate in the ACE project was a constant challenge. At

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times each member expressed concern that they did not have the time or energy needed to participate to the extent they would like. The Provost was very supportive of this and merely asked members of the group to read as much as they could and be present at the meetings as often as possible. This attitude served the group well. Feelings of guilt for not completing all readings were at a minimum, and the group progressed at a comfortable pace.

Engaging faculty outside the group

The ACE group members developed a common understanding of the group purpose and directions for next steps (emergent themes, roundtables, and campus symposium). Faculty outside the original group were not exactly sure why they were invited to participate in the roundtables or themes. One of the most frequent concerns focused on the fear that time spent and energy expended in the roundtable and symposium might not lead to any changes in the university. We soon discovered that if faculty felt that their contributions to these roundtables and symposium were not "heard" outside of the actual forum, then their time was not well spent. PSU has learned that efforts to promote sustainable change are only successful when there is strong administrative and faculty support for it. One without the other may be enough to implement some change but the tension to revert back to the "known" or "past" is ever present, and as a result, the change agents must be ready to defend every move. Enlarging the discussion through forums such as roundtables and symposia is important.

Next Steps

February 1999, the ACE clusters met in Washington DC. The PSU contingent included some members from the original project team as well as three new members of the Center for Academic Excellence Advisory Board. This group identified "next steps" for keeping the

original ACE Project Team's initiatives present and dynamic on the PSU campus.

Conclusion

In many ways, what we are proposing is not new. We have taken Schon's concept of the reflective practitioner and developed a way to institutionalize this concept. Schon describes one of the most significant roles of the professional as the engagement in purposeful reflection about their practice. Reading groups are a vehicle for encouraging reflection within organizations. One of the greatest challenges is to maintain this type of purposeful reflection within an environment of cost containment. Although the proliferation of knowledge makes it more difficult to keep up with the literature, cost concerns on campuses pose the greatest threat to reflection. More and more middle managers are being let go and each professional is being asked to do more with less resources. Ultimately this impacts the time available to reflect. Reading groups are a more efficient way to continue reflection since the reading is delegating among a group of people.

We challenge each of you to see yourself as part of the dissemination chain (and reflective practitioner ethic) and to realize the value of establishing some sort of strategy individually and for your campus for making decision that are accountable and thoughtful and for providing the needed leadership in the next century.

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