WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Politics and Process of Curricular Change
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Why use the term "politics"?
- suggests special interests, negotiation, competing alliances
- requires leadership, advocacy, inspiration, continuing support
- calls for collaboration, building consensus, transparent decision making, closure to implement

Robert's Rules of Order—never meant to manage major curricular change—know the whip count!

Why is process so important?
- change is fundamentally a strategic planning process
- all talk and no action is frustrating
- listening and learning improves the product
- involvement builds commitment to implementing change
- need to manage the ripple effect of change

Have your read "avoiding the potholes"?

Steps in curricular change process:
1. Develop a collective sense of need
2. Organize the process
3. Develop task force capacity
4. Engage the campus community
5. Develop framework of shared principles
6. Consider alternative proposals
7. Take steps to secure approval
8. Design the full program and implementation plan
9. Commit to assessment and ongoing development

Why do you want change?
- It was about time. Faculty have new ideas.
- Students don't understand purpose of Gen Ed.
- Institutional research data shows problems.
- Leadership has new strategic directions.
- Campus needs to be revitalized and reaffirm its mission.

Step 1: Develop a collective sense of need.

Setting the Agenda
"Calling a meeting is a political act in itself." (David Coelmen)

- List several items that are the explicit reasons for curricular change on your campus.
- List several items that you believe are or will be part of the "hidden" agenda.
- What techniques help get everything on the table?
How do you manage change?

- make sure the charge for the task force is clear to others
- plan the communication process, decide how to involve others
- identify the leadership and clarify the role of the administration
- strategize about the parts that will make comprehensive change
- establish timelines but take your time, set milestones to maintain momentum, and remember "everything is a failure in the middle"

Step 2: Organize the process.

Change Agents

- List several of the leaders, followers, and innovators you can count on. What role do they play?
- List several of the cynics, naysayers, and curmudgeons. What role do they play?
- Can they/should they work together?

What can be learned from experience?

- Learn from your past success: what kind of leadership, guidance, follow-up worked for other initiatives.
- Learn from others: review other campus websites, it takes most campuses 3 to 5 years to make significant change.
- Learn from reading: educate yourselves and colleagues, some pitfalls are predictable but every campus is different.

Step 3: Develop task force capacity.

Common Language

Pop Quiz:
- List the Essential Learning Outcomes
- List the High-Impact Educational Practices
- List three reasons to use e-portfolios?

Are you speaking the same language as your colleagues?

Can you create a climate for change?

- read the norms and expectations of the campus, what is the level of trust, look for the right timing
- sponsor retreats, discussions, speakers, and use language such as refresh, adapt, update
- attend to other positive initiatives—strategic planning, accreditation, faculty development, across-the-curriculum initiatives, assessment
- identify who can help, be realistic, how many faculty or units need to be involved to make a difference, understand conflict as positive

Step 4: Engage the campus community.

Campus Culture

Every campus is different—What bumper sticker captures the culture of your campus?
What intellectual framework will guide your work?

- mission, vision, symbolic values are expressed in the program
- tension between tradition and change limits new perspectives
- legitimacy and authority of the disciplines affects decisions
- faculty loyalties are complex—to the field, the discipline, the department and lead to honest disagreements
- interdisciplinary work is not always understood or supported

Step 5: Develop shared principles and/or goals.

Finding Common Ground

Draw a Venn diagram showing where there is agreement on what "learning" students will need for their future?

How do you decide what is best?

- a closed process or a single proposal is always suspect
- gather suggestions, be open to ideas, encourage feedback
- hear concerns, respond to questions, identify differences early
- look at the pros and cons from the standpoint of others
- with guiding principles you can be sure you are all having the same conversation and working toward the same goals

Step 6: Evaluate alternative proposals.

Network for Success

- What forms of communication are the most reliable on your campus?
- What informal communication processes might inhibit success?

How do you get to “yes”?

- decide at the outset on the decision making process
- include implementation, staffing, oversight with the plan
- work with the community face-to-face, but follow with writing
- be prepared to step back in order to continue to go forward
- hold last minute hearings to work out lingering concerns

Step 7. Secure approval for the program.

Winners and Losers

- List those who expect to be winners if the curriculum changes?
- List those who fear they will be losers if the curriculum changes?

How can everyone WIN?
Internal Politics of the Committee

- what problems are you solving and who says so
- share leadership, understand what each can contribute
- know your capacity and build your capacity as a team
- if the process becomes dysfunctional, take time out and fix it
- make adjustments as you go along, be open to discovery
- have milestones and decision points to track progress
- ensure all have a sense of urgency and passion about the task
- forget about who will get credit

Coach or Captain?

Turning your vision into action—

What pep talk will you give your colleagues in order to be successful?