Seeking Effective Implementation Of a Curricular Proposal

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Objectives
- To summarize essential points covered in Gaston and Gaff and to offer a "capstone experience."
- To invite more detailed discussion and some practical strategies
- To sustain through a useful local metaphor a pragmatic, realistic approach to curricular implementation by both four-year and two-year institutions.
- Hence, the real/title of this session . . .

Patching the Potholes

Four Critical Components
- Curriculum
  - Build a secure, easily maintained curricular roadway
- Approval
  - Plan for a timely, successful opening
- Implementation
  - Create a plan that respects the road hazards
- Assessment
  - Commit to a regular maintenance program

Four Guides For Effective Construction
- Keep the challenges of implementation in mind throughout curricular design
- Develop survival strategies for the Gaston & Gaff potholes warnings
- Create a construction plan that respects all "frames"—including the political
- Expect the unexpected

And pause, now and then, for the General Education wisdom that comes with every drop of less filling, great tasting . . .
After a long day at the Institute on General Education, there's nothing more refreshing than a tall, cold, frosty glass of

Gaff & Gaston Light
Brewed from the clear, clean waters of the Mississippi River. It's the Official Beverage of General Education Reform!

Construction Protocols and Principles

Understand the Task
- Remember that you are manufacturers, not importers.
- Respect the advantages of an incremental change strategy.
- Be willing to challenge prevailing practices (but not the individuals who may have a vested interest in them).

Organize Effectively
- Listen to the motorists honking their horns, but make sure the progress towards your completion date continues.
- Assure adequate support.
- Adopt a realistic time frame.
- Call home and write often.

Temper Your Vision with Realism
- Dream ambitiously—but be prepared to face budgetary realities.
- Risk pushing your colleagues—but know what the community thinks.
- If priorities compete, consider reconciling them.
- Watch your language.
- Commit to seeing it through.

Work From—and Offer—a Broad Knowledge Base
- Avoid limiting definitions.
- Provide for learning outside class.
- Seek allies along the road.
- Engage allies in a discussion of responsibilities.
Operate Strategically

- Work both sides of the road.
- Beware the "five month" academic year.
- Respect legitimate concerns.
- Consider alternate approaches to approval.
- Consider incremental implementation.

In short...

- Use reliable blueprints.
- Be aware of how much distance a grade change requires.
- Respect (and circumvent, if possible) significant hazards.
- Keep your course steadily towards your construction deadline.

PATCH THAT POTHOLE

Every third person has received an envelope. In the envelope there is the description of a pothole. In three-person teams, review the pothole, then prepare for the group (a) a description of the pothole and (b) your best suggestion as to how it might most effectively be "patched."

Mapping Strategies with "Frames"


STRATEGIES:
- Offer pointers to what must be done.
- Provide a clear sense of implementation priorities.
- Weigh against oversights.

FRAMES:
- Offer understanding as to why.
- Provide a comprehensive sense of implementation considerations.
- Weigh against underestimations.

"Frames" offer the capacity to understand the college or university simultaneously as...

- A machine (structural frame)
- A family (human resources frame)
- A jungle (political frame)
- A theater (symbolic frame)
"Frames" require...

an appreciation for the ways in which any change "causes people to feel incompetent . . . , creates confusion and unpredictability, generates conflict, and creates loss."


"Frames" offer...

the single most collegial, rational, and effective context for creating a strategy for change.


The Structural Frame

The University as a Machine

- Does the proposal show awareness of how the structure of the university will promote/inhibit change?
- Will the proposal enjoy the visible support of president and provost?
- Does the proposal clearly define an authority structure?

The Human Resources Frame

The University as a Family

- Is the proposal sensitive to academic values, e.g.: collegiality, access to esteem, access to opportunity?
- Will the proposal alienate some? Is there a strategy to disarm such a response?

In what ways does your institution operate like a machine?
The Human Resources Frame
The University as a Family

- Will the presentation of the proposal "emphasize common goals," demonstrate a willingness to "test its assumptions," and balance advocacy with inquiry?

In what ways does your institution operate as a family?

The Political Frame
The University as a Jungle

- Does the committee understand that "a combination of the right idea . . . and legitimate authority" are the starting points for effective implementation?
- Does the committee understand that the right idea and appropriate authority are not sufficient?

The Political Frame
The University as a Jungle

- Does the proposal offer "a vision of what can and should be" as it offers "a strategy for achieving that vision"?
- Does the proposal incorporate approaches to coalitions so as to develop common goals?

In what ways does your institution operate as a jungle?
The Symbolic Frame
The University as a Theatre

- Does the committee understand that the critical question is not “what will happen” but “what will it mean to me?”
- Can the committee employ the university’s accepted symbols to enhance the opportunity for success?
- Can the committee use ritual to promote its proposal? To reward its advocates? To celebrate its acceptance?

In what ways does your institution operate as a theatre?

Testing Strategies with Frames

Consider best practice, useful axioms, sound advice—but remember that every situation requires individual attention.

Good Advice . . . Or Is It?

- Proposals should be realistic.
- Incremental change may succeed when massive change will not.
- There must be incentives for support.

- Proposals should be visionary.
- Massive change may succeed when incremental change will not.
- Faculty support will rest on the strength of the proposal.

Good Advice . . . Or Is It?

- The program should attempt to attract strong faculty.
- Generous allocation of resources is critical to success.
- A clear timetable should guide implementation.

- A compelling program will rejuvenate stagnant faculty.
- Curricular reform is too important to be tied to available resources.
- Successful implementation depends on agility.

Roadbuilding Exercise
Roadbuilding Exercise
Pair off with someone not from your team.

Roadbuilding Exercise
Both team members are "road warriors." Each route planner will draft a brief plan (or "self-study") that identifies two impediments that might impede or prevent the implementation of his or her team's likely recommendations:
- One fairly obvious obstacle: a challenge to which the team may already have given some thought.
- One hidden snag: a less obvious, but potentially problematical challenge that may not have appeared before on the blueprint.

Roadbuilding Exercise
- Exchange plans.
- "Road builders" are now "construction consultants" to one another. That is, each consultant should develop advice for his client regarding both the anticipated impediments and the hidden snags identified in the roadbuilding plan.
- Engage in consultant-client discussion. Then switch roles.

Roadbuilding Exercise
Our concluding plenary will consider the most interesting impediments—and those strategies that appear most broadly applicable, resourceful, pragmatic, and creative.

Tell your friends:
Here's the answer to the thirst for effective General Education reform!