IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

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OVERVIEW

Use quantitative and qualitative information to define the core issue	Elevate innovative faculty and bring them to the center of reform	Institutionalize systems and practices for sustained improvements

At any given time, a community college may be in the midst of a number of reform strategies—the development of clear program maps within the college and/or with transfer partners, the reworking of advising systems to support student progression and graduation, the implementation of new policies for developmental education placement, the creation of new industry partnerships to deepen on-the-job training opportunities for students, and so on. While these and other changes certainly are critical to helping students as they move from entry to completion and post-completion success, the learning that happens inside the classroom will often be the key determinant of whether credentials have value. In the end, a community college's capacity to ensure high levels of student learning is essential to ensuring that higher education delivers what it promises, from the skills and habits needed for success in employment and continued education to those connected to civic engagement and leadership.

Aspen Prize-winning colleges and other excellent community colleges are distinguished by their intentional, college-wide efforts to improve student learning. While presidents and senior leaders may not be in the classroom themselves—and some may have never been faculty members—they play a vital role in driving the improvement of teaching and learning on college campuses. These leaders:

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- Define a core issue anchored in qualitative and quantitative information about where students and faculty struggle most—taking into account existing teaching strengths at the institution—and personally own the vision for teaching and learning at the college.
- Engage with and put dedicated and innovative faculty at the center of teaching reforms.
- Institutionalize systems and practices that will enable sustained improvements in teaching and learning, paying particular attention to how faculty are hired, on-boarded, promoted, and professionally developed and what resources are allocated to those human capital functions.

In the end, excellent community college presidents aren't satisfied when accreditors give them a positive check mark for having learning outcomes in place, or even when the college and its departments have agreed on a broad set of learning goals that get assessed on a mandatory schedule. They aim to lead colleges that develop and execute deep and wide strategies that deliver high and continuously improving levels of student learning at the course, program and college-wide levels. They know that many elements of leading this work are the job of the faculty, but they also know that faculty leaders and classroom professors alone cannot create college-wide excellence in teaching and learning. In the end, they deeply understand that presidential leadership is essential to help set and own a vision, charge academic leaders and faculty with executing large scale change against that vision, and align systems and resources accordingly. This module will give participants an opportunity to understand and develop strategies that leaders can implement to ensure that their colleges sustainably improve teaching and learning and to explore potential challenges that they may face in the process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

After completing this module, participants will be able to:
- Define the president's role in leading improvement in teaching and learning.
- Articulate strategies that presidents can use to drive improvement in teaching and learning.
- Develop solutions to challenges that presidents may face in regards to the improvement of teaching and learning on their campuses.
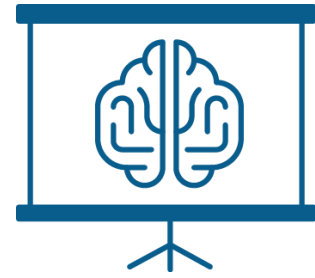
PRE-READING

- Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program. (2013). *Building a faculty culture of student success.* Retrieved from https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/creating-faculty-culture-student-success/
- Blaich, C., & Wise, K. (2015, January). *Knowing about vs. knowing how.* Practitioner's Corner, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College. Retrieved from http://www.bu.edu/provost/files/2015/10/Knowing-About-vs.-Knowing-How-C.-Blaich-K.-Wise.pdf

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- Nunley, C., Bers, T., & Manning, T. (2011, July). *Learning outcomes assessment in community colleges.* National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Retrieved from http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/CommunityCollege1.pdf
- Wieman, C. (2015, January/February). *A better way to evaluate undergraduate teaching.* Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning. Vol. 47. p. 6-15.

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KICK-OFF ACTIVITY

GROUP DISCUSSION...30 MINUTES

1. **In small groups, invite participants to reflect on two of the articles assigned for pre-reading, *Knowing About vs. Knowing How* and *Learning Outcomes Assessment in Community Colleges*.[1] Participants can consider the following questions as a starting point for their discussion:**

- What surprised you most when reading these articles? How did you react to the assertion that if the studies on research-based teaching methods in science courses "had been conducted as randomized controlled trials of medical interventions, they may have been stopped for benefit—meaning that enrolling patients in the control condition might be discontinued because the treatment being tested was clearly more beneficial"?[2]
- How did the conclusions in the articles reflect on-the ground realities at your college? Would your provost agree with you? Deans? Department chairs?
- How might you find out additional information about the quality of teaching and learning at your college to help you better answer the previous question? What systems and structures might help a president stay informed about the quality of teaching and learning?
- Consider the implications of the data and arguments put forth in these two articles for presidents seeking to drive significant improvements in teaching and learning at their institutions. What impediments to change mentioned in these articles strike you as the most significant or difficult to overcome? Why?
- How might you harness information from these articles (and the research they cite) to build urgency for leading improvement in teaching and learning at your own institution? What data and information might you collect from your own campus that could be used to cultivate urgency for change?

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[1] Blaich, C., & Wise, K. (2015, January). *Knowing about vs. knowing how*. Practitioner's Corner, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College. Retrieved from http://www.bu.edu/provost/files/2015/10/Knowing-About-vs.-Knowing-How-C.-Blaich-K.-Wise.pdf

Nunley, C., Bers, T., & Manning, T. (2011, July). *Learning outcomes assessment in community colleges*. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Retrieved from http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/CommunityCollege1.pdf

[2] Freeman S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). *Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111, 8410–8415.

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY LEARNING

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program defines college student success across four dimensions: learning, labor market outcomes, completion, and equity.[3] For community colleges, completion includes transfer with baccalaureate attainment. Ensuring strong student learning outcomes—the subject of this module—is critical both intrinsically and to support other student success goals. Why?

- **Improving career success.** Strong teaching practice is critical if community colleges are to align what students learn in community college to fulfilling lives and careers. According to a 2017 report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, only 40% of graduates with an associate's degree—and no further higher education—have a "good job," defined as those that confer $35k or more annually.[4] The remaining 60% of graduates will need to increase their educational attainment, most often by having the academic preparation to successfully transfer and attain a bachelor's degree (according to the same report, 75% of bachelor's holders have good jobs). As the world of work changes, with technology evolving more rapidly each year, colleges will be required to help students develop skills needed not just for tomorrow's jobs but to be lifelong learners.

- **Delivering broad benefits of higher education**. Strong teaching practice is essential to ensuring that college students learn the skills needed for several outcomes that cannot be measured as easily as graduation rates or employment and earnings. What students learn in college confers benefits to students and society beyond employment outcomes, including the skills needed for democratic and community engagement. If colleges are to meet their critical mission of advancing those outcomes, they need concrete strategies for ensuring that teaching

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[3] More information on this topic can be found in the module Defining Student Success.

[4] Carnevale, A., Cheah, B., Ridley, N., & Strohl, J. (2017, July). *Good Jobs that Pay without a BA*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from **https://goodjobsdata.org/wp-content/uploads/Good-Jobs-wo-BA-final.pdf**.

and learning practices are being employed to achieve them—for example, that hands-on, applied learning will increase the critical thinking and learning capacities needed for ongoing democratic engagement.

- **Ensuring equitable outcomes.** Traditional methods of teaching have been correlated with inequities in student learning. Research from Claude Steele, for example, has demonstrated that bias in traditional learning environments can lead to inequitable outcomes for students of color.[5] Others have demonstrated that traditional methods of teaching can fail to engage racial and ethnic groups under-represented in higher education.[6] Improving teaching practice in ways that intentionally seek to ameliorate inequities is an essential strategy for closing equity gaps.

- **Promoting completion**. One hypothesis for why students fail to persist in college and complete their degrees is that they are too often unengaged in the classroom. Excellent community colleges often increase course and degree completion rates by shifting from traditional modes of teaching—including an over-reliance on lectures— to more engaged and individually tailored forms of teaching and learning, such as project-based and applied learning approaches. In the words of one president from an Aspen-Prize winning college, "If students learn, they will complete."

And yet, as the readings referenced in the kick-off section of this module reflect, few colleges have adapted their teaching practices even though there is no shortage of research supporting effective approaches to teaching. Why have highly effective, research-based pedagogies not become the norm in college classrooms?

- Blaich and Wise assert that there are a few reasons for this incongruence, primarily that faculty are not sufficiently trained to teach research-based strategies; rather, they are often simply *told* about the best practices and provided with materials to implement them.[7]
- According to research by Carl Wieman, current practices for evaluating teaching are also lacking, as the commonly used methods of evaluating instruction do not enable faculty (or other observers) to determine teaching quality or define next steps for improvement.[8]

What is the president's role in advancing excellent teaching and learning?

Perhaps more than any other student outcome, achieving high levels of student learning through strong college-wide teaching excellence requires leadership from dedicated faculty, department chairs, and deans. After all, faculty members and faculty leaders generally devise curriculum, and it is the faculty that teach students, grade papers, and

[5] Aronson, J. & Steele, C. (1995). *Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Vol. 69, No. 5. p. 797-811. Retrieved from http://users.nber.org/~sewp/events/2005.01.14/Bios+Links/Good-rec2-Steele_&_Aronson_95.pdf

[6] See: Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.* American Educational Research Journal. Vol. 32, No. 3. p.465-491.

Treisman, U. (1992, November). *Studying Students Studying Calculus: A Look at the Lives of Minority Mathematics Students in College.* The College Mathematics Journal. Vol. 23, No. 5. p.362-372.

[7] Blaich, C., & Wise, K. (2015, January). *Knowing about vs. knowing how*. Practitioner's Corner, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College. Retrieved from http://www.bu.edu/provost/files/2015/10/Knowing-About-vs.-Knowing-How-C.-Blaich-K.-Wise.pdf

[8] Wieman, C. (2015, January/February). A better way to evaluate undergraduate teaching. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning. Vol. 47. p. 6-15.

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spend more time with students than anyone else on a community college campus. In light of this, presidents often struggle to define their role in improving teaching and learning and may defer responsibility for leading excellence in this student outcome to provosts, deans, department chairs, and other faculty leaders.

Exceptional community college presidents do otherwise. They understand that their college must continuously improve teaching and learning if it is to achieve student success goals. They know that the president plays an indispensable role in ensuring strong teaching and learning, in part by putting strong faculty leaders at the center of the improvement effort and fully supporting them through words and deeds. They understand that, while highly effective teaching and learning requires improvements in classroom practice, faculty teaching practice must relate to not only course success but also to program-level and institution-level learning objectives if students are to succeed after they graduate. And they understand that the college's leaders and administrators play a central role in communicating the need for and ensuring scaled implementation of teaching and learning improvement, often by strengthening and resourcing the many systems required for this improvement—including faculty hiring, onboarding, promotion, and professional development.

This module explores three key actions that highly effective community college presidents take to ensure excellence in teaching and learning:

- Define a core issue anchored in qualitative and quantitative information about where students and faculty struggle most—taking into account existing teaching strengths at the college—and personally own the vision for teaching and learning at the college.
- Engage with dedicated and innovative faculty, and put those faculty members at the center of teaching reforms.
- Institutionalize systems and practices that will enable sustained improvements in teaching and learning, paying particular attention to how faculty are hired, on-boarded, promoted, and professionally developed and what resources are allocated to those human capital functions.

WARM-UP DISCUSSION: THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE...15 MINUTES

2. **In small groups, invite participants to share their thoughts regarding the president's role in leading improvement in teaching and learning by considering the questions below:**

- Which faculty members at your college are the best teachers? How do you know?
- Which institutional leaders most value those faculty members? How specifically do they act on their appreciation for quality teaching?
- How (and how often) does your president communicate to the college that she/he strongly values student learning and high-quality teaching? What specifically does the president say or do that signals his or her leadership in improving teaching and learning to the college community as a whole?
- What strategies might presidents implement that would have the greatest impact on ensuring that faculty understand that the president values highly effective teaching that results in high levels of student learning?

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE IN LEADING IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHING AND LE ARNING

DEFINE THE CORE ISSUE

KEY LEARNING

At colleges that successfully make scaled improvements in teaching practice and learning outcomes, leaders make sure that the college has defined a clear teaching and learning improvement agenda anchored in a strong understanding of the challenges in current learning outcomes and/or teaching practice. Sometimes those challenges are in specific areas of student learning—for example, the inability of many students to effectively read texts and divine meaning, high gateway course failure rates, inequities in STEM degree participation or completion rates, or misalignment of skills with the demands of the labor market or four-year coursework after transfer. At other times, those challenges are more firmly rooted in shared definitions of gaps in teaching practice and conditions that prevent student learning, things such as overreliance on lecturing (as opposed to active learning strategies), widespread failure of faculty to change their practice based on information about gaps in student learning, or a professional development and/or tenure system misaligned to the goals of good teaching practice.

Successful presidents engage their innovative and dedicated faculty and academic leaders in understanding and exploring one or two of those particular challenges and defining the strategy aimed at resolving them. Before working with the instructional team to create structures and practices to support engaged teaching and improved learning, leaders must help lead the college to develop and rally around *an urgent reason* to change current practice, grounded in faculty's understanding of what it will take to sustainably improve student learning at scale.

As they begin to define the most urgent or important problem for their particular institution, presidents and their senior leadership teams can consider the following:

What are the important teaching and learning challenges at my institution?
- *Anchor the inquiry in evidence.* Ground the exploration of challenges in the data—college-wide assessment data, post-completion employment data, learning outcomes data. Where are students succeeding best? Where are they not succeeding? What is working? What needs attention? How do you know? Where did your data come from, and what are the limitations? What questions still remain?
- *Listen to faculty and students.* Make sure that you deeply understand the challenges that both students themselves and faculty see in student learning. Go deeper than surface explanations, asking what is meant by the identified learning challenge. For example, asking *why* "students aren't very good at critical thinking" might reveal different conclusions, such as "they don't have adequate reading skills to understand underlying material" or "they may know the material but struggle with verbal analysis and presentation" or "they need greater capacity to express ideas in written form" or even "they don't feel a sense of belonging in the classroom and therefore at times don't fully engage." Those diagnoses may suggest different specific learning challenges and different college-wide strategies to improving teaching and learning.

Where are your institutional teaching and learning strengths?
Understanding who is most committed and what work has already been done to improve teaching and learning can help leaders decide the range of likely strategies that can sit at the center of a college-wide reform effort as well as determine who is most important to include in the leadership group to develop and lead execution of those strategies.
- *Understand who does the best teaching.* Leadership of college-wide teaching and learning reform is most likely to succeed if it includes faculty and faculty leaders who are most committed to the work, so presidents should work to find out who those faculty are. At most colleges, there is some understanding of which professors are doing the most innovative and effective work to improve teaching. Don't assume that they are the individuals responsible for faculty professional development or are leading efforts to institutionalize learning outcomes assessments. Look specifically for those actually working in the classroom to consistently evaluate and change their practices to improve student learning.
- *Identify common areas of strong practice around which college-wide improvement can be organized.* There are several ways to improve teaching and learning, including through the scaling of active learning strategies, action research, embedded reading strategies throughout the curriculum, ensuring strong professional-skills development in every technical program, etc. By speaking with the most innovative faculty, presidents can find out where common practices of excellent instruction have taken hold that may become a core part of a college-wide strategy.

What can we borrow (and be careful not to steal)?
- *Understand the field.* As you and your team work to define the teaching and learning challenges at your college, it is important to review and discuss literature about learning. What is known about the teaching practices that lead to the greatest learning gains among adults? What is known about learning barriers faced by students of color? What evidence exists from other colleges that have achieved strong learning results and exceptional levels of faculty engagement?
- *Avoid adopting solutions before you've defined and diagnosed the problem.* There is a risk in adopting solutions that other colleges have enacted without carefully defining and substantiating the goals for teaching and learning improvement at your institution. The field is replete with colleges that have tried and failed to replicate successful learning strategies from another institution. For example, a study of Kingsborough Community College's Open Door Learning Communities program found that participation in the program led to enduring long-term positive impact on students' educational outcomes, but that learning

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communities programs at six other colleges showed only modest (or little) impact on student outcomes.[9] Often, problems start when college leaders don't know *why* they are adopting that strategy and what specific problems they want the strategy to address. Highly effective leaders are able to ask the right questions and issue the right charges to ensure that problems are clearly identified before jumping to specific interventions.

The identified challenge will likely fall into one of two categories:

1. **A gap in student learning.**

   Example 1: West Kentucky Community and Technical College: As part of its Quality Enhancement Plan for reaccreditation, the president of West Kentucky Community and Technical College charged faculty and administrators with defining a big college-wide learning challenge.   The conclusion: not enough students are effective at reading for meaning. To test this, West Kentucky administered the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Proficiency Profile, and found that only 40 percent of West Kentucky students were capable of basic reading skills, compared to about 60 percent nationally. Examining students' scores on the ETS Proficiency Profile solidified the understanding among faculty that the college needed to focus attention across disciplines and programs on improving students' reading ability. While students undoubtedly struggled in other areas, such as writing and basic math, the college focused on building the collective will to address a specific problem that impacted student performance across multiple disciplines. That specificity allowed administrators to engage faculty across programs in a clearly defined process with an achievable goal. Once the college set goals around increasing reading proficiency, professional development was aligned accordingly. Faculty members across all disciplines participated in professional development focused on how to teach students not just typical course content but also a set of reading strategies proven to improve reading ability (e.g., Cornell notes). Today, West Kentucky students perform significantly higher than the national mean in reading. While it was important for West Kentucky administrators to set the expectation that goals for student learning would be set across the college, ensuring that actionable steps were developed to address those goals required that faculty (1) had a good reason to teach differently and (2) developed a clear area of focus.

   Example 2: Odessa College: President Gregory Williams was concerned that Odessa College students withdrew from courses, especially at times when jobs in the surrounding oil industry were most available. When Associate Dean for Arts and Sciences Donald Wood closely examined the college's course drop rates, he learned that drop rates differed significantly by instructor, even when controlling for other factors such as course level (100 vs. 200) or time of day. After observing classroom teaching and interviewing faculty, Wood concluded that instructors with lower drop rates had stronger relationships with their students, which were rooted in specific, engaged instructional practices. In response to these findings, Odessa implemented its Drop Rate Improvement Program, designed to teach instructors best practices for cultivating a sense of belonging among their students (such as interacting with students by name at the beginning of a new semester and meeting with students one-on-one). Implementation of the Drop Rate Improvement Program led to an increase in in-class retention rates from an average of 83% to 95%.[10]

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[9] Weiss, M. et. al. (2014, March). *A Random Assignment Evaluation of Learning Communities at Kingsborough Community College: Seven Years Later.* MDRC. Retrieved from: **https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/A_Random_Assignment_Evaluation_of_Learning_Communities_KCC.pdf**

[10] Information on Odessa College's Drop Rate Improvement Program adapted from: Kistner, N. & Henderson, C. (2014) *The Drop Rate Improvement Program at Odessa College.* Achieving the Dream and ZogoTech. Retrieved from: **http://achievingthedream.org/resource/13784/the-drop-rate-improvement-program-at-odessa-college**

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LEADING FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXCELLENCE: CURRICULAR RESOURCES

2. **A teaching challenge that stands in the way of better student learning at scale.**

   Example 3: Valencia College: At Valencia College, faculty members were unhappy with the college's tenure process—which, as far as they could tell, resulted in the awarding of tenure based largely on how many hours faculty sat in various orientations and met with program heads and advisors. The process seemed disconnected from the work of teaching students, did not help faculty improve, and was not aligned with college-wide learning goals. When Sandy Shugart became president in 2000, he appointed Helen Clarke to redesign the tenure process to focus on better teaching and learning. Ultimately, the college agreed to institutionalize a new approach to tenure that was built on a commitment to high-quality teaching and measuring what students learn. During the process, faculty receive extensive support from an innovative, well-resourced Teaching/Learning Academy, which provides a structure and processes for all faculty members (including adjuncts) to work on improving student learning outcomes, including through "action-research" projects. Early in the development of Valencia's learning-centered culture, leadership and faculty members collectively developed seven Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator:
   • Assessment as a tool for learning
   • Inclusion and diversity
   • Learning-centered teaching practice
   • LifeMap
   • Outcomes-based practice
   • Professional commitment
   • Scholarship of teaching and learning
   These seven competencies define what it means to achieve excellence in teaching at the College. Because faculty members are invested in this vision of teaching excellence, these competencies have become a touchstone for the hiring process, tenure, most aspects of professional development at the college, and even post-tenure review. This clear vision of teaching excellence communicates the expectations for faculty responsibilities and establishes the crucial role of teaching practices in student success.

   Example 4: San Jacinto College: At San Jacinto, department chairs have been made permanent positions. Rather than focusing primarily on administrative duties, they serve as teaching and learning leaders and are trained to coach faculty on strengthening students' course completion rates through improvement of teaching practice. Department chairs review student learning outcomes data and course success rates with each instructor, help them devise plans for improvement, and track how students perform in subsequent courses. Rather than start with a specific gap in student learning, leaders at San Jacinto chose to begin improving student learning by providing job-embedded supports designed to help all faculty develop into stronger instructors.

Ultimately, colleges need to seek improvement both in teaching practice and student learning outcomes. But where a college president decides to start will vary, depending on culture and the depth and breadth of faculty engagement and the readiness of faculty and leadership to develop a shared vision. Starting with a measurable gap in student learning has the advantage of clarity and can yield specific, rapid, and measureable accomplishments in what students actually know, but may not result in new systems that can be used to replicate that success in other areas of student learning improvement. Conversely, seeking to improve teaching practice across the institution through new systems and structures can have broader benefits but may take longer to implement, and impact may be harder to measure. This can delay the benefits that come from faculty across the college collectively experiencing visible improvements in student learning. Beginning with a specific gap or challenge in student learning can highlight learning goals in a complacent culture, whereas strong existing subcultures and faculty leadership may be an important predicate to developing new college-wide systems that promote improved teaching practice.

With a sense of the challenge in mind that, if addressed, will lead to significant improvement in student learning, the president can begin to coalesce a team for a conversation about the "why" in a way that will resonate. *Why* should the college change its approach? *What are* specific range of areas on which the college should focus?

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: CHOOSING A STARTING POINT.......................40 MINUTES

1. **Split participants up into small groups, with each group assigned one of the following current challenges in student learning:**

- Ineffective approaches to developmental education
- High gateway course failure rates
- Inequities in STEM pathways
- Misalignment between the skills learned in certain programs and the demands of the labor market
- Misalignment between student learning in courses at the community college and the skills needed for success in corresponding upper-level courses after transfer

2. **Considering their assigned challenge, participants will take 30 minutes to work with their assigned small groups to discuss the following questions, using the template provided on Handout 1.**

- **Collect and analyze data and information.** What data and information might a president need to gather to determine whether or not this challenge is a significant and urgent concern at his or her institution? Where would this information come from? What student populations would be important to include? How could the data be disaggregated? Consider the following areas of inquiry:
    - Data on students' course and completion rates, overall and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, etc., and as compared to success rates at peer institutions.
    - Data on community characteristics, such as changes in demographic composition by race, ethnicity and income level; poverty rates; educational attainment rates; and labor market demand for degrees.
    - Student's post-graduation success data, including transfer and bachelor's degree attainment rates of community college students, employment and earnings outcomes, and student-loan default rates.
    - Information on the student experience, collected through CSSEE/NSSEE data, focus groups or surveys.

- **Define the "why."** Assume that—upon analyzing the relevant data—the president determines that your group's assigned issue is in fact the most pressing challenge in teaching and learning at the institution. What is the best case to make to faculty that the college change its approach? How might the idea of improving this outcome feel threatening to faculty? What could be discussed to combat that sense of threat or impending loss? Considering your experience and the case examples 1-4 on pages 12-13 above, what might be appealing to faculty about specific changes that might enable improvements in this outcome? Is there anything in the mission of the institution that could be used to appeal to faculty that change is needed? *(Participants can consider the missions of their own colleges when considering this question.)*

- **Build urgency with key groups of faculty.** What specific groups of faculty would be important to engage first around this issue? What strategies might the president use to build urgency among those faculty? What types of data and information would be the most compelling to share? How specifically could the student voice be integrated into a communications strategy? Who should the "messengers" be to communicate with faculty (consider specific faculty members, administrators, staff, and others)?

3. Bring the group back together for a debrief discussion, giving groups the opportunity to share highlights from their discussions with the full group. What commonalities do you see in the role of the president across these issues?

ENGAGE FACULTY AND PUT FACULTY INNOVATORS AT THE CENTER OF REFORM

KEY LEARNING

Far more than administrators, faculty are responsible for teaching and learning. After all, they are the ones who devise curriculum, teach courses, grade tests and papers, and advise students academically. There is both important expertise and inherent trust among faculty members. For this reason, presidents must understand that motivated and innovative faculty – as well as faculty leadership – need to be at the center of any effective teaching and learning reforms, playing a central role in driving both strategy and execution. For that to happen, presidents must identify effective and innovative faculty members; elevate, empower and support them in the development and enactment of college-wide teaching and learning improvements; and ensure that those improvements in fact advance student learning at scale.

Every community college has faculty members and faculty leaders who are deeply engaged in and committed to measuring student learning, reflecting on results, and using that information to improve their teaching practice. Presidents who have built strong faculty cultures at their community colleges understand the key role of these exemplary faculty members and faculty leaders. They empower those individuals to design systems that allow all faculty to have the tools they need to become better teachers. Those systems should encourage faculty to share the results of their classroom practices so that others can learn what works. Together, these strategies promote and reinforce faculty ownership of the process. The leadership challenge is to find faculty who will help move the college beyond isolated examples of excellence to a college-wide culture of faculty teaching excellence that will, in turn, result in scaled and sustained improvements in student learning.

This requires that presidents enact several key strategies:

Find and elevate the faculty doing the best work in teaching and learning. Innovators dedicated to highly effective teaching and learning exist on every campus. Who are they? What do they care about? The president empowers and elevates these faculty, ensuring that they are recognized for their good work, have platforms to share their practices, and are provided resources to support others as they implement similar practices.

Strategically organize those faculty around one (or a few) particular learning goals and/or structures to reform teaching practice. Bring faculty engaged in strong teaching practice away from the fringes to the center of the college's teaching and learning strategy. Convene them to discuss their work, what they have learned, and what they have in common. In light of those commonalities, consider with them what goals the college might set for student learning and/or high quality teaching. Imagine with them a college with scaled and sustained improvements in teaching

excellence. What specifically would faculty be doing differently? What would motivate faculty? What systems not in place drive behavior away from such scaled improvements in practice?

Charge faculty leaders with developing a strategy to advance student learning goals across the entire college.
Have them consider goals for student learning (reading, belonging, etc.) and systems that support strong faculty teaching (hiring, professional development, tenure, etc.). Empower faculty leaders to develop a theory of change that answers key questions, such as:

- What are the major learning objectives we have as a college?
- What do students struggle with most, college-wide?
- In light of those goals and challenges, what does success look like substantively?
- What cultural changes at the college would signal success?
- Through what mechanisms/strategy will the college achieve success? On what timeline?
- How will we all – including faculty and administrators – know progress has been made?
- How can we ensure execution of the strategy? What resources will be needed? How will leaders need to communicate the importance of executing on this strategy?

Encourage a bold vision and remind faculty of why this matters. Encourage faculty to be bold in their thinking. During the process of designing new strategies, ask questions that remind faculty of *why* improving learning matters so much, such as "How will this change help all of our transfer students gain the skills needed for success at the four-year level?" Or, "How will this change ensure that we double the number of students who complete gateway courses so they can go on to earn degrees and have fulfilling academic and post-college careers?" In this way, presidents can work with faculty leaders to maintain urgency for change. Rather than assuming that faculty and staff know why this problem is, in fact, a problem, excellent change leaders convey explicitly how the problem is related to the mission of the institution and *why it is important.* In what ways does this issue reflect a short-fall of the college's missions, goals, and aspirations?

Show up. In addition to working to identify and engage faculty leaders as key members of the reform effort, presidents can work to deepen trust and engagement from the faculty as a whole by "showing up" for faculty in visible ways. Presidents can make their commitment to faculty and teaching visible by teaching a course, regularly visiting classrooms, and communicating quality teaching as a value of the college. When adopting new reforms or practices— for example, guided pathways implementation—the president needs to take the opportunity to make clear how the reform in question will support quality teaching and student learning, rather than lower expectations or act a as a competing priority for the college.

Creating the conditions for a faculty-led vision for learning excellence is key to promoting a culture of ongoing improvements in teaching practices, and for positioning faculty as leaders in a concerted, college-wide effort to achieve stronger student outcomes. Once the president has ensured that a reason for change has been established with the leadership team and a strategy has been developed, the job is still not done. He or she must work with that team to maintain urgency around the problem with key groups of faculty.[11] Combining qualitative and quantitative data helps with this effort, creating a story that can reach all faculty members and drive urgency across the institution. This story should explicitly connect the college's mission and the need to solve the identified problem. With the problem identified and a core group of faculty on board, the college can begin the process of identifying interventions or aligning structures and policies to support identification of effective interventions at scale.

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[11] Additional strategies for building urgency for change can be found in the module *Leading Internal Transformational Change.*

SETTING COURSE, PROGRAM, AND COLLEGE-LEVEL GOALS

For community colleges to deliver strong student learning, several layers of learning goals must be pursued. Setting and achieving course-level learning objectives are essential because they relate directly to what faculty do, and thus what faculty can most easily assess and improve in their daily practice. Program level outcomes are necessary to ensure that what students learn across degree and other credential programs adds up to what students need to be successful in whatever comes next, whether that's a job or transfer to a four-year institution. College-wide outcomes are important both as a unifying mechanism—allowing all faculty and staff to work together towards a common goal, such as improving critical thinking or reading skills—and because some critical educational goals should be set for all students and require multi-semester pursuit, such as the critical thinking skills needed to ensure effective democratic engagement and capacity for lifelong learning. While a college may be focused in one area at a given time, exceptional college-wide teaching and learning practice ultimately requires practice that advances goals at all three levels.

- **Course level:** Faculty members assess student learning against course learning objectives, using those assessments to identify gaps in student learning, altering teaching practices to close gaps, measuring impacts, and modifying interventions accordingly. At Odessa College (TX), for example, a recent change to 8-week semesters provided faculty the opportunity to redesign their courses to better building assessment, feedback, and improvement of their own teaching practice based on student course-level outcomes. A "Teaching and Learning" division provides mandatory professional development workshops on assessment for all faculty members—including adjuncts—further supporting faculty in their use of course-level learning outcomes to improve teaching and learning.

- **Program level:** Faculty, department chairs, and deans work within disciplinary areas to define learning goals for programs of study, and then assign to courses within those programs learning objectives aligned to program objectives. Faculty then work to assess the extent to which students completing programs achieve those learning objectives, then modify curriculum and teaching practice accordingly. At Lake Area Technical Institute (SD), for example, all programs have five to seven program-specific learning outcomes that are fully mapped across the program's courses. These program goals are "backwards designed" from the job for which the College is preparing students. Performance targets are established for each program-level learning outcome, and are assessed through capstone projects that use rubrics to assign a score for each outcome. To ensure further alignment between these program level goals and post-completion job success, some programs involve industry professionals from their advisory committees in the assessment of program-level outcomes through the examination of student work.

- **College level:** Faculty agree on skills and abilities essential for all students across the college to acquire—such as reading, communication, critical thinking, and employability skills—and then establish structures and professional development opportunities designed to measurably improve student acquisition of those skills. As described earlier in this module, West Kentucky Community and Technical College administrators worked with deans and faculty to define global areas of weakness in student learning by sharing data. Examining students' scores on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile led to college-wide goals in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

GROUP DISCUSSION: DILEMMA OF A COLLEGE PRESIDENT..............................25 MINUTES

1. **Provide participants with the following scenario on Handout 2. Invite them to discuss the scenario and the questions for 20 minutes.**

You are the president of a community college that has been working for the past five years to improve the completion and four-year transfer rates of your students. The college has redesigned its intake and orientation process for new students, revamped its advising and financial aid systems, created student success courses, redesigned developmental

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studies, and eliminated late registration. However, completion rates have barely budged, and student participation and success rates in gatekeeper math and English course are abysmal. You have come to realize that while some faculty are generally supportive of change, most are not meaningfully engaged in reform. For example, despite the presence of strong early alert technologies, only 37% of faculty regularly enter grades and other information needed to assess which students are struggling, and only 24% of faculty assigned to follow-up with students identified as struggling actually do so. As you and your leadership team have worked to increase those percentages, you have discovered that many of the faculty most enthusiastic about the early alert system are part of a Faculty Inquiry Group focused on hands-on learning—consisting of 23 faculty across seven disciplines. Further inquiry increased your awareness about some impressive results: five science faculty have successfully replicated the experiment done by a chemistry professor three years ago, finding that courses that included group-conducted experiments for every unit resulted in an increase in student learning—as evidenced on final exams—of at least 20% and as much as 50%. Interestingly, one sociology and one history faculty member both tried to have students blog about field trip experiences, and one found that students became measurably better writers by the end of the course while the other found no difference. You are pleased with what you have learned, but your main issue right now is engaging the remaining two-thirds to three-quarters of faculty in the early alert system.

- Why specifically do you think the faculty utilizing the early alert system tend to be the same faculty members engaged in teaching and learning improvements?   What do you—as president—need to do to test those hypotheses?
- How can these faculty be employed to support the scaling of the early alert system? What might motivate them to do so?
- What should be your role as president in elevating and convening a group of faculty to explore this problem? What problem do you want them to discuss? Who should be involved?
- During this meeting, how can you play a role in building urgency for change? What data might you present (or have others present)? How could you engage the student voice?
- List five questions you would want to ask this group that might move the conversation towards a strategy that could accomplish twin goals: scaled improvement in teaching and learning and much higher faculty participation rates in the early alert system.

2. **After the discussion, bring the group back together for a quick debrief. What part does the president play in incentivizing and elevating faculty innovation and leadership?**

INSTITUTIONALIZE SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES THAT WILL ENABLE SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

KEY LEARNING

1. Human Resource Polices

Human resource policies and practices related to community college faculty are rarely aligned to college-wide student success goals. While tenure, contract renewal, and evaluation policies may require centralized approval, academic departments often hire and onboard faculty based on specific goals and resources within a discipline or program. To the extent that such systems are common across departments and programs, similarities are often the result of terms in union contracts, state law, or long-standing system or institutional policies. Excellent leaders intentionally consider how to devise hiring, onboarding, promotion, and professional development policies and practices with the goal of advancing student success. While presidents may or may not be directly involved in the design of these systems, they must ask the right questions (of the right people) to ensure that these practices support the college's learning and other student success goals.

Example: At Odessa College (TX), the hiring process is very intentional, with elements that are common across the college. Interviewers begin by explaining the culture of the college and what the faculty are expected to do to be part of it. In addition to evaluating candidates' subject-specific expertise, interviewers look for mindsets that are aligned with the college's mission. Questions asked throughout the selection process and interview include:
- Do you believe that all students can learn?
- Do you accept responsibility for student success?
- Do you want to make a critical difference in the lives of our students and our community?

The process is further aligned to college-wide goals through the president's involvement; President Greg Williams personally interviews all new faculty, reinforcing the mindset and culture of the college for each new hire.

Changing promotion structures in particular can create some risk. If the focus on improving student learning is not emphasized strongly enough from the start, faculty may believe that the central impetus is top-down accountability. Thus, they may be reluctant to advance processes to examine teaching practices—especially when measurements of student learning can be tracked to individual professors. Faculty members are likely to be skeptical and resistant to administrators' involvement in assessing students' learning unless they genuinely believe that they will be supported in their teaching practice. The task of addressing faculty attitudes and moving beyond this resistance rests with leaders. They must clarify the thinking behind the initiative, while also emphasizing that the focus on assessment and teaching practices in promotion practices is designed to *support faculty practice so it can in turn advance student learning*.

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2. **Professional Development**

Well-designed, job-embedded professional development has been shown to result in improved teaching practice and improved student learning outcomes.[12] The process of continuously improving student learning through examination and modification of teaching practices requires dedicated professional development resources. When aligned to the college's student learning goals, setting aside time for professional development dedicated to the improvement of teaching practices serves a dual purpose: to reinforce the college-wide goals around improved student outcomes, and to continuously improve faculty members' ability to teach. Strong professional development programs have been built on several common elements:

- **They are based on a goal-oriented plan, rather than generalized topics**. At West Kentucky Community and Technical College, once the college set goals around increasing reading proficiency based on results from college-wide assessments, professional development was aligned accordingly. Faculty members across all disciplines participated in professional development focused on how to teach students a set of reading strategies alongside their course content. Today, all new full-time faculty members participate in year-long professional development meetings focused specifically on strategies for assessment and student engagement; in their second year, they are trained on how to teach the reading strategies that are part of the college's vision for teaching and learning. At Odessa College, faculty professional development is aligned to the college-wide AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program, an initiative and philosophy designed to close achievement gaps through a set of social and academic skills and behaviors taught to all students. New faculty take an initial AVID course (AVID 101); veteran faculty continue with an advanced AVID course focused on high-engagement teaching techniques. Each semester, a professional development leader and department chair visit each faculty member's classroom to provide feedback on the faculty member's adoption of AVID techniques.

- **They ensure professors are active learners, through practices such as learning circles and peer observations**. The professional development meetings for new faculty at West Kentucky, as described above, take place in small "learning circles" that incorporate active practice of teaching strategies into monthly meetings with mentors. Veteran and novice faculty members alike use common assessments and rubrics across course sections, and they periodically meet for department-level professional development to discuss results and norm on grading practices. When faculty members discover that others are doing better on specific outcomes, they frequently observe one another's practice to determine what techniques will help them to emulate others' success.

- **They support instructors as they improve their teaching practice in applied settings, typically with guidance from peers.** During the five-year tenure process, every faculty member at Valencia engages in at least one deep action research project, where they try something new in the classroom and rigorously measure its effectiveness. Action research is a model of inquiry and learning particularly well suited to faculty-led change, allowing faculty to focus on a particular aspect of their teaching in an evidenced-based framework. Supported by Valencia's Teaching/Learning Academy (TLA), action research utilizes faculty members' research backgrounds as an asset that can be leveraged to improve individual practices as well as institution-wide practices and policies. At Valencia, action research opportunities now extend well beyond the tenure process, serving as a significant aspect of faculty development, offering opportunities for innovation and reinforcing the value the college places on experimentation leading to measurable improvement in student outcomes.

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[12] Kraft, M., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2016, November.) *The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence.* Brown University Working Paper.

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Regardless of the specific methods or frameworks used, finding ways to engage faculty in the actual investigation into student learning outcomes and the development of improved methods of teaching leverages their expertise, increases motivation, and creates a foundation for sustained engagement.

3. Finances and Budget Priorities

The college's financial resources can be intentionally aligned to support the improvement of teaching and learning. Too often, large portions of professional development funds are controlled by departments and programs so that faculty can access them to attend conferences or to bring speakers to the college on a first come, first-served basis. Centralizing a portion of these funds can support particular institution-wide purposes aligned to student success goals—such as professional development to advance every faculty member's capacity to improve student reading or to conduct and evaluate action research projects. For additional strategies for allocating and aligning resources to student success goals, facilitators and participants can reference the Aspen curricular module *Strategic Finance: Acquiring and Aligning Resources for Impact,* to be made available in Summer 2018.

Example: When Sandy Shugart became the president at Valencia College, he directed the CFO to share a transparent budget with college stakeholders, including the board, administrators, and faculty. He then introduced a new budgeting process that eliminated protected funds in order to reallocate resources to practices that would advance the college's established learning goals.[13]

4. Communication

The president can make clear throughout speeches, memos, and other types of communication that improving student learning is in everyone's interest. Individual faculty members may not typically have access to the big picture—for example, how students' labor market outcomes impact the college's relationship with regional or state elected officials, or how strengthening teaching and learning may create new opportunities for the college to partner with four-year institutions. When presidents attempt to build urgency through the presentation of data, faculty may become defensive, believing that their performance or teaching methods are being attacked. There are strategies that presidents, in particular, can use to diffuse this defensiveness. At the outset, presidents and administrators can help reduce anxiety by generalizing student learning gaps rather than attributing them to specific departments or individuals. The choice of language is always important in setting the tone of a conversation or presentation:
- **The college** faces challenges in helping students learn to read.
- **We all** need to find ways to better integrate attention to literacy in our courses and programs.
- Finding ways to improve students' success in math will require a **coordinated effort**.

Presidents also have the opportunity to publicly celebrate success in teaching and learning, considering some of the following questions: Where are students showing strong learning outcomes? In what ways has the college improved teaching practice in recent years? What steps have departments or programs taken that are showing promising results? What are some examples of teaching excellence across the college, and how could you recognize them?

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[13] Brown, J., & Kurzweil, M. *Collaborating for Student Success at Valencia College.* Ithaka S+R (2015). http://www.sr.ithaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SR_Case_Study_Collaborating_Student_Success_Valencia_College1029151.pdf

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5.   **Systems to Monitor and Discuss Progress**

Presidents can begin the process of deepening the college-wide focus on improving teaching and learning by ensuring that systems exist to monitor and discuss progress towards learning goals, including providing equitable opportunities and ensuring equitable outcomes. Using both qualitative and quantitative data to measure progress creates a more nuanced understanding of student learning gaps that is likely to resonate with a range of faculty experiences and expertise. The following assessment tools and methods can be employed in this effort:

- **Standardized assessment tools** can be used to establish a common understanding of students' learning and to set benchmarks for institution-wide improvement. Though all community colleges use a range of assessments to collect data on student learning and engagement, data collection is likely to be too infrequent for the data to be strategically useful to faculty. However, there may be other assessments that could contribute to a more timely and comprehensive view of student outcomes. For example, if the college is already administering an assessment like the Community College Survey of Student Engagement or the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) Plus, data could help create a sense of urgency about improving college-wide student learning outcomes.

- **Self-study and program review practices associated with accreditation** are additional tools that can help people come to agreement on significant gaps in student learning, which can provide a strong starting point for sustained improvements in teaching practice. As was done at West Kentucky to begin the process of improving student reading skills, community college presidents have also employed accreditation, which is generally seen as a compliance exercise, to begin the process of developing and sustaining institution-wide engagement in improvement.

Beyond these existing systems, presidents and other leaders can put in place new structures and opportunities to discuss data and progress toward goals. For example, faculty committees might engage in cycles of inquiry and data collection around the questions like the following: How many students across the college participate in research? How many improve on critical thinking assessments? How is that progress disaggregated by race, ethnicity, income, gender and other measures? Opportunities for data analysis and reflection cannot be one-time events; rather, systems need to be put in place so that faculty and administrators have structured, repeated opportunities to monitor and discuss progress toward goals.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: THE 10 STUPIDEST THINGS WE DO................25 MINUTES

1.   Give participants 10 minutes to independently consider the human resources processes at their colleges related to faculty, including tenure, onboarding, promotion, professional development, and hiring. On Handout 3, participants should list the "10 stupidest things" their college does with regards to hiring and tenure, meaning things that are misaligned to improving faculty teaching and student learning. What specifically does the college do that contradicts or undermines student success goals? What disincentives are in place that might prevent faculty from improving their teaching practice? Often these are related to institutional routines—things we do "because we've always done them that way," even if no one remembers why. Because some routines and practices become so familiar that they are invisible to us, leaders have to find ways to help the organization identify and interrogate these practices.

2.   Then, allow participants 15 minutes in table groups to discuss the following questions:

- What similarities do you see in standards and processes for hiring, onboarding, promotion, professional development and tenure across colleges?

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- Are they aligned with college-wide goals for improving teaching and learning? Program goals? Course-level goals?
- If not, what are some of the most important and impactful ways they might be improved?
- What changes could be made to align hiring, tenure, and professional development practices with student success goals?

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: DILEMMAS OF A COLLEGE PRESIDENT............35 MINUTES

1. **Assign each group one of the following scenarios. Provide them with 20 minutes in small groups to think about the role of the president in their assigned scenario, using the questions on Handout 4 as a guide.**

    ### Scenario A: Professional Development

    You are the president of a large community college in a rural area. Your college administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) to a representative sample of students in credit-bearing courses, and the results show that only 40 percent are proficient at "critical thinking" and that your college ranks in the 37th percentile of all community colleges that have administered the CLA exam nationally.

    You are meeting with faculty leaders to discuss the outcomes of the critical thinking assessment and to elicit faculty leadership in drafting a professional development plan that you will present to the board. Consider the following questions:

    - How would you involve faculty in making the case for including a large increase in spending on faculty professional development or other activities dedicated to improving student learning in the face of revenue shortfalls or budget cuts?
    - What is your role as the president in this situation?
    - How can you ensure that the proposed professional development plan is in line with college-wide student success goals?

    ### Scenario B: Hiring and Promotion Practices

    You are the president of a large community college located just outside of a major city. Two-thirds of your students are underrepresented minorities, a percentage that reflects the population of your service area. However, only 18 percent of your full-time faculty are minorities. Knowing from the research that students' sense of belonging—and ultimately, student learning learning—can be increased if they see themselves reflected in the faculty, you decide that it is important for the make-up of the college's faculty to better reflect your students. So, you assign a task force to take a closer look at your college's hiring process. The task force discovers that when full-time positions have been posted, the hiring committees received large numbers of diverse, qualified candidates from across the country. However, over 90 percent of the time, the hiring committees decided to hire one of the department's existing adjunct faculty members to fill the full-time position, and these new hires were predominantly white men and women. When asked, the deans cited a number of reasons for hiring out of the pool of adjunct faculty: hiring committee members are familiar with the adjunct candidates' teaching performance, the adjunct faculty are already familiar with the college and its community, and the adjunct candidates have "earned it" by putting in years of part-time teaching at the college. However, this method of hiring perpetuates the low number of diverse faculty members at your college.

- As the president, what do you do with this information? What is your role in aligning hiring and promotion practices at your college to your diversity goals?
- How can the president make hiring a diverse faculty an institutional priority at this college? How can the president help the college understand why this issue matters?
- What is the end goal in this situation? In what ways should the president help the college keep the end goal in mind?

2. **Bring the group back together. Have each participant who discussed Dilemma A pair up with a participant who discussed Dilemma B to share their findings. What lessons did you learn about the role of the president in addressing these dilemmas?**

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ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

KEY LEARNING

A number of "sticking points" may emerge as a college moves toward an articulated college-wide focus on improving teaching practice. Presidents and their top administrators are likely to encounter skepticism from faculty concerned that a systematic analysis of learning outcomes could negatively impact their daily teaching practice or their careers. For example, when a president makes a presentation before the faculty calling for a new college-wide focus on improving student learning outcomes, the president may hear statements like:

- We're already doing learning assessment; it's called grading.
- We've been through this before. You're just trying to find ways to assess my performance based on factors beyond my control (i.e., student effort, student preparation, quality of instruction in the course[s] before mine).
- You can't tell me how to teach; our college has an academic freedom policy.
- You're asking us to take on work outside our collective bargaining agreement.

These types of initial reactions and responses are rational and—at least to some extent—true. Presidents need to keep in mind that any effort to change the way faculty approach their teaching and assessment of student learning will occur within the context of an array of entrenched practices that have developed over time—practices rooted in history, prior initiatives or accountability systems, and policy. Leaders will benefit from thinking through these possible challenges and their potential solutions.

IMPROVING TEACHING PRACTICE IN A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTEXT

In a unionized context, engaging faculty in new practices designed to improve teaching and learning can be complicated. Collective bargaining agreements generally include definitions of what faculty members are expected to do in exchange for compensation and benefits as well as what gets valued during the promotion, tenure, and course assignment processes. For example, "bumping rights" based on seniority may supercede quality teaching as a criterion for who teaches more sections during a particular semester.

As leaders embark on institutional efforts to improve teaching practice in unionized contexts, they can familiarize themselves with such definitions, understanding what is specifically prohibited, what is ambiguous, and who is covered by the relevant contract(s)—full-time, part-time, tenured, and/or adjunct professors. In the end, strategies and tactics for engaging unionized faculty in improved teaching practice will vary based on contextual factors, including current contract terms, historical management/union relationships, and the amount of time remaining under the current contract.

Across contexts, however, developing cultures where leadership and faculty buy into a shared vision for improving teaching practice make it much easier to negotiate contracts that are aligned to student learning goals. For this reason, outside the collective bargaining context, it is essential that conversations between leadership and faculty center—from the outset of reform efforts—on the convergence between what students need to be more successful and what faculty need to help more students acquire those skills and abilities. Elevating the connection between student learning and faculty resources can help leaders align contract negotiations with student learning goals.

Consider the case of Pierce College Fort Steilacoom, located in a suburb of Tacoma, Washington. In 2006, Pierce administrators and faculty were reviewing the terms of a new contract, with the faculty salary structure lying at the center of negotiations. At the same time, the college's top leaders and a group of faculty were increasingly focused on improving faculty professional development in the area of instruction. Seeing an opportunity to couple these issues, leaders developed and proposed to the faculty union a new Master Teaching program that provides faculty with an opportunity to explore pedagogy, showcase effective teaching, troubleshoot instructional problems, and test curricular changes. The new contract provided that those who successfully completed the program would receive a $2,500 increase to their base salary.

Today, the Master Teaching program provides faculty with two things they highly value: increased salaries, and a way to work with other professors on how to teach better. When the idea was first broached, recalls Pierce President Denise Yochum, "the union saw the new Master Teacher program as a way to boost salaries while the administration saw it as a way to improve teaching and learning." By tying the two together and establishing a clear, shared set of expectations, administrators were able to get faculty on board from the outset. Over time, faculty came to realize that the professional development itself was rewarding, not just financially but professionally as well.

Including a new structure to guide teaching and learning in the Pierce union contract had another benefit: It made clear to everyone how much teaching practice mattered. "Because this was a base [salary] increase, it was permanent—it required a lot of financial commitment," notes Yochum. "When faculty sees the administration putting resources into something that's important, both the Master Teaching program and salary increases, then I think they get a different picture: This is a priority for leaders."

Committing substantial financial resources in a union contract is not without risks. At Pierce, for example, some faculty members who have gone through the Master Teaching program are coming back and asking, "What's our next opportunity? It's been four years since the last raise." But raising expectations for salaries was worth it, says Yochum. "Adding to base is a lot more expensive," she admits, but it allowed leaders "to ask for a lot more from faculty and the union."

ENGAGING ADJUNCT FACULTY

It's well-documented that adjunct faculty at community colleges outnumber full-time/tenured faculty.[14] Even when a college has a strong culture that values improvements in teaching and learning, adjunct faculty who often are hired to teach only a course or two and may work at several colleges to cobble together a reasonable income may not have the time to be "socialized" into a college's culture. Excellent colleges can address this challenge by purposefully focusing on ways to engage adjunct faculty in the improvement of teaching and learning.

At Virginia's Patrick Henry Community College, leaders decided to focus their Achieving the Dream reforms on shifting teaching practice to more engaged, cooperative learning. So, recognizing that it was not reasonable to mandate the training for adjuncts (as was the case for tenured faculty), Patrick Henry leaders and faculty alike understood that for student success to improve, all instructors, full-time and adjunct, needed to be involved. In the process of developing professional development for all instructors, the college agreed to provide a $100 per credit hour adjustment to the base salary of adjuncts who participated in the training.[15]

In other ways as well, effective community colleges include resources for adjunct faculty when planning initiatives to improve student learning. Through committee service or "release time," full-time/tenured faculty generally have much more input than adjuncts into how professional development resources will be allocated. Most full-time faculty recognize the importance of including adjuncts in professional development, but inviting adjuncts to participate to the same degree as full-time faculty could cut deeply into the full-time/tenured professional development budget. Overcoming this challenge as a leader requires:

- Consistently communicating the reason professional development is so important—to improve student outcomes.
- Sharing data that make clear the important role adjuncts play in educating students, such as the number of courses taught by adjuncts.
- Asking (and acting on) input from full-time faculty on strategies to increase adjunct faculty engagement.
- Dedicating enough resources to professional development efforts so that full-time faculty will see it as a "win-win" and not as a zero sum effort.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: DILEMMAS OF A COLLEGE PRESIDENT............20 MINUTES

1. **Provide participants time to read the following dilemmas on Handout 5, choose one, and discuss the questions in table groups.**

Dilemma A: Improving Teaching and Learning in a Unionized Setting. You are the president of a college with a strong faculty union. The union contract spells out specific factors that can be used to evaluate faculty. Among other things,

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[14] Community College Survey of Student Engagement. (2014). *Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus.* Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF_Special_Report.pdf

[15] Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program. (2013). *Building a faculty culture of student success.* p. 17. Retrieved from https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/creating-faculty-culture-student-success/

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the number of students who succeed in a particular course or the next course in a sequence is not a factor that can be used. Once new faculty have moved out of their probationary period, they are no longer observed or evaluated by a supervisor—instead, they complete annual self-evaluations. Student learning outcome and course completion data show wide variation between faculty, and it is clear that many students aren't learning at the requisite levels. As the president, how will you improve teaching and learning in this environment? How will you make this an institutional priority? What barriers to change can you expect, and what should you do to surmount them? How will you know if you have been successful? What should your role be in this situation? What next steps might you take? What questions should you be asking, and to whom should they be addressed? Who needs to be in the room?

Dilemma B: Engaging Adjunct Faculty in Professional Development. You are a new president at a small community college. Under the previous president, the Office of Academic Affairs developed a robust professional development program with a focus on teaching and learning—including structures for peer observation and learning circles—that has been well-received by full-time faculty members, for whom some participation in these professional development offerings is mandatory. Adjunct faculty are invited to participate in the college's professional development offerings, but these programs are not mandatory for adjuncts, nor are the adjunct faculty compensated in any way for the time spent in professional development. Over 50 percent of courses at your college are taught by adjunct faculty, and analyses of student learning and course completion outcomes have shown that students in classes taught by adjuncts are performing slightly lower than their counterparts in courses taught by full-time faculty. What can you, as the president, do to engage the college's adjunct faculty in professional development to improve teaching and learning? How will you make this an institutional priority? What barriers to change can you expect, and what should you do to surmount them? How will you know if you have been successful? What should your role be in this situation? What next steps might you take? What questions should you be asking, and to whom should they be addressed? Who needs to be in the room?

2. **Bring the group back together to discuss how a president might respond to each of these dilemmas. What lessons can we take away about how presidents might prepare for challenges like these?**

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