

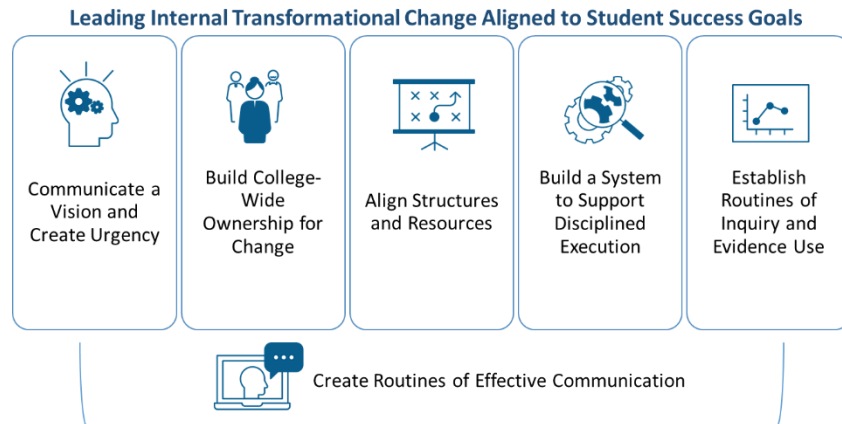
LEADING INTERNAL TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE



LEADING FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXCELLENCE: CURRICULAR RESOURCES

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

OVERVIEW



It is commonly lamented that bringing about change in higher education “is like moving a cemetery...there’s not a lot of internal support for it.”¹ And yet, some institutions achieve dramatically better or much more rapidly improving student outcomes than others. While current rates of success (or failure) are not natural or inevitable, achieving the kinds of internal changes necessary to fundamentally improve the student experience requires strategic and persistent work. It requires changing not just the way colleges deliver programs of study, but also the underlying structures and policies as well as college-wide cultures that affect ways of thinking and acting.

The goal of this module is to provide community college leaders with a leadership framework that supports transformational change within their institutions that is aligned to student success goals. Participants will learn strategies designed to communicate a vision for change; articulate a corresponding college-wide agenda; align structures, resources, and systems to support the implementation of that change; and establish routines of inquiry and data use to monitor their effectiveness. Strong communication is vital to everything a president does, and transformational change-leadership requires that presidents develop a disciplined approach to internal communication. Throughout the module, participants will be introduced to strategies for supporting transformational change through the use of strategic communication.

Before beginning this module, participants would benefit from reviewing the content in the module *Defining Student Success*. This will provide participants with an opportunity to define and develop their own visions for student success

¹ The source of this quote is unclear; James Hearn noted that it is sometimes attributed to Lee Dreyfus, former governor of Wisconsin and chancellor of University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, but that it has also been attributed to Woodrow Wilson.

at their institutions before thinking through the structures, systems, and routines critical to transformational change efforts and improving student success.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE & OUTCOMES

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Effectively communicate a strategic vision for student success.
- Build urgency for change through the strategic use of data.
- Identify and implement strategies to build ownership for transformational change throughout the college by building stakeholder investment in the change.
- Evaluate current institutional structures and align them to support student success goals.
- Identify and engage stakeholders around those factors that commonly derail reform efforts.
- Put processes into place for ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Plan for a student success research agenda that includes data inquiry and consideration of the student experience.

PREWORK

- Participants should bring copies of agendas from three recent meetings of their college leadership team for use in the “Agenda Review” activity.

PRE-READING

- Aiken, C., & Keller, S. (2009, April). The irrational side of change management. *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2. Retrieved from <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-irrational-side-of-change-management>
- Gawande, A. (2013, July). Slow ideas. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/29/slow-ideas>.
- Heifetz, R. A., Kania, J. V., & Kramer, M. R. (2004, winter). Leading boldly. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from https://ssir.org/pdf/2004/WI feature_heifetz.pdf

- Klempin, S., & Karp, M. (2015). *Leadership for transformative change: Lessons from technology-mediated reform in broad-access colleges*. CCRC Working Paper No. 83.
- Shugart, S. (2012). The challenge to deep change: A brief cultural history of higher education. *Planning for Higher Education*, 41(2). Retrieved from http://www.scup.org/page/phe/read/article?data_id=31499&view=article
- Optional: Kotter, J. (2012). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press.

KICK-OFF ACTIVITY



To be used at the beginning of the module to spark discussion around transformational change in the community context. Can be used with any audience.

- 1. Present participants with the following prompt, and invite them to independently reflect for 10 minutes, using Handout 1.**

Imagine your community college five years in the future, after you and your leadership team have brought about great internal change needed to achieve much higher levels of student success. Utilize whatever quantifiable “stretch” goals for student success your college has developed or devise your own (e.g., a 15 percentage point increase in graduation rates; a doubling of the number of students who transfer to four-year colleges; a 20 percentage point increase in the number of CTE graduates who earn more than \$30,000 annually in the year after graduating). Picture what the student experience at this college will be like after five years of your successful change leadership. Independently reflect, using the following questions to guide your thinking. Jot down your ideas and be prepared to share with your peers.

- What will be fundamentally different about the college experience? What changes will you have made? What will data reveal about student success?
- What will students see? In the classrooms? In the advising offices? In the administrative offices? Across all parts of the campus?
- What will students hear? From faculty? From the community? From senior administration? What will you as the leader hear from students?
- Whom will you applaud for contributing to this success? What did he or she do?

- 2. Next, invite them to take 15 minutes to discuss their visions with their table groups. Focus the discussion around the following questions:**

- What alterations in mindsets or assumptions would need to happen before these changes could take place?
- Was there a “tipping point” in the change process? If so, what did it take to get there?
- How would you characterize the student experience in your vision of the college, as opposed to the current reality?

- 3. Bring the group back together and allow participants to share key takeaways.**

COMMUNICATING A VISION AND CREATING URGENCY



KEY LEARNING

Note for Facilitators: The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program defines and evaluates student success at the community college through the use of four criteria:

- **Learning:** Do colleges and faculty set expectations for what students should learn, measure what is learned, and use that information in a process of continuous improvement?
- **Completion & Transfer with Bachelor’s Completion:** Do students earn degrees and other meaningful credentials, and do those who transfer go on to earn bachelor’s degrees?
- **Labor market:** Do graduates find strong employment opportunities in well-paying jobs?
- **Equity:** Do colleges achieve equitable access and outcomes for underserved minority and low-income students?

These criteria are discussed in detail in the module *Defining Student Success*. Before proceeding with the following session activities, participants should review the Aspen Institute’s four-part definition of student success and create their own strategic vision for student success, either as part of the module or for pre-work.

DEFINING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Much has been written about transformational change in higher education. Here is one comprehensive definition that offers leaders specific discrete objectives (from *On Change*, a paper from the American Council on Education):

Transformation (1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time.²

Another common way to think about transformational change is in the context of adaptive versus technical problems, and the kinds of solutions needed to address each. In “Leading Boldly,” Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer define the difference between the two:

Technical problems are well defined: Their solutions are known and those with adequate expertise and organizational capacity can solve them...[T]he problem is clear, the solution depends on well-established practices, and, given enough money, a single organization can implement the solution.

Adaptive problems are entirely different. They are not so well defined, the answers are not known in advance, and many different stakeholders are involved, each with their own perspectives. Adaptive problems require innovation and learning among the interested parties and, even when a solution is discovered, no single entity has the authority to impose it on the others.³

In order to have the capacity to address adaptive problems—the kinds of problems often faced by community colleges and the communities that they serve—institutions must typically undergo some degree of transformational change.

COMMUNICATING THE VISION AND BUILDING URGENCY FOR CHANGE

In the literature on institutional change, a common conclusion is that people in the institution must have a significant reason to change, a sense of urgency. The question for college leaders is how to develop that sense of urgency among enough people on campus to ensure that sufficient change happens to bring about the needed improvements in student success.

To build urgency for change, transformational leaders often begin by **broadly sharing clear, limited, and important data points**. Sharing data is critical to building momentum for change, but it’s important to start with the right data and to communicate them in a way that clearly points to the need for change. When using data to communicate the need for change, the leaders can ask themselves several questions. Do the data:

- Relate to outcomes that, if improved, would make a real difference to students’ ultimate goals (e.g., bachelor’s attainment, securing a good job)?
- Elicit a “no” response to the question, “Is this outcome level acceptable?”
- Include some indicators or trends that can be changed in a reasonable period of time?
- Inspire action, rather than assign blame?
- Draw attention to institutional responsibility rather than student deficits?

² Eckel, P., Hill, B., & Green, M. (1998). *On Change: En Route to Transformation*. Washington DC: American Council on Education.

³ Ronald A. Heifetz, John V. Kania, Mark R. Kramer. “Leading Boldly.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter 2004). https://ssir.org/pdf/2004/WI_feature_heifetz.pdf

It is also important to keep in mind that the successful use of data to build urgency will include both positive and negative messages, combining “what’s wrong” with “imagining what might be.”⁴ Sandy Shugart, the president of Valencia College, describes such data presentations as a “cocktail of evidence and premise that is three parts hope and one part despair.”⁵ While the exact divide between positive and negative messages depends greatly on audience and context, leaders using data to build urgency almost always must do some of each to create the conditions for the proposed change.

While data are critical to inspire urgency, they are often not enough. Some may question the veracity of the data, while others may find them unconvincing or uninspiring. For this reason, transformational leaders further build urgency for change by **activating the student voice**. While compelling data speak to concerning trends or problems that affect the entire college or certain groups of students, the experiences of individual students can provide powerful details about how individual students are affected. Leaders can bring the student experience into the conversation through the use of student surveys, focus groups, and secret shopper programs. Practical strategies for investigating the student experience can be found in the mini-module **Understanding the Student Experience**.

By **telling a human story**, transformational leaders remind the audience of the reason for the work, and inspire them to action. Student testimonies, videos, and interviews can all play a role in reminding an audience that behind each data point is an actual student who is being impacted by the college’s failure to act.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: CASES FOR CHANGE45 MINUTES

This activity can be used with participants with all levels of background knowledge. If the group includes current presidents with successful experience making cases for change, consider having them present a data-driven case for change in addition to (or in place of) showing some of the videos. Alternatively, consider bringing in experienced presidents to model for the group how they would build urgency for change.

- Show videos of leaders making a case for change. Videos include:**
 - **Bob Templin**, former president of Northern Virginia Community College, making the case for change to a business organization
 - **Sandy Shugart**, president of Valencia College, making the case for change to a board
- While watching, participants can record key ideas on Handout 2. Then, participants will answer the following questions at table groups:**
 - How did each of the featured presidents use data in their case for change? To what effect?
 - What made each case for change compelling? What elements were consistent between the stories? What made each one unique?
 - How did the different audiences change the way in which the presidents presented the case for change?

⁴ Aiken, C., & Keller, S. (April 2009) *The Irrational Side of Change Management*. The McKinsey Quarterly. Available online at: <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-irrational-side-of-change-management>.

⁵ Shugart, S. (January 2013). *The Challenge to Deep Change: A Brief Cultural History of Higher Education*. Planning for Higher Education, Volume 41, No. 2. Available online at: http://www.scup.org/page/phe/read/article?data_id=31499&view=article.

- Which story do you see as aligning most closely with your own leadership style?
- What elements did you see in these examples of building urgency that you could incorporate into your own work?

3. Allow between 15 and 20 minutes for table group discussion before bringing the group back together. Ask: what did you see in these cases for change that made them most effective?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY: ARTIFACT REVIEW20 MINUTES

If working with teams of participants from the same college, consider having them use only artifacts from their own institutions. Alternatively, participants could review artifacts from their own college for pre-work and come to the session ready to discuss what they found as a shorter activity.

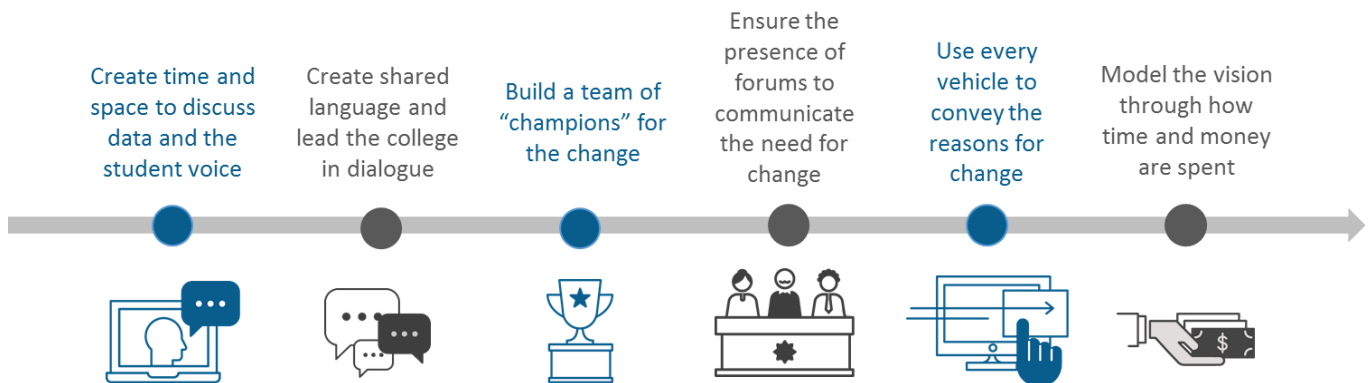
1. Gather several sets of artifacts (admissions brochures, letters to alumni, website homepages, etc.) from different community colleges.
2. Participants will review the artifacts from *one* of the colleges. Make clear to participants that they should *not* seek out the Mission and Vision pages on the colleges' websites, but instead look at the provided artifacts. Participants will answer the following questions in their table groups and record answers on Handout 3:
 - Based on the artifacts, what do you think is the vision of the college?
 - Complete the following statement for the college based on the artifacts: "It's clear that the top three or four things this college cares about are . . ."
 - Do these artifacts reflect goals and values related to equity? Labor market outcomes? Completion? Learning? All of the above? None of the above? How?
3. Next, participants should look for similar artifacts on their own college's website, answering the same questions. Participants should discuss findings and then share across groups, noting common themes. Ask: Is a vision aligned with student success clearly communicated by these artifacts?

BUILDING COLLEGE-WIDE OWNERSHIP FOR CHANGE



KEY LEARNING

While creating a meaningful strategic vision is difficult, it can be even harder to successfully build college-wide ownership around the proposed change. Transformational leaders use a number of strategies to communicate their vision in a way that builds ownership from stakeholders throughout the college community.



Create time and space to discuss data and the student voice. As discussed in the section above, transformational leaders employ both college-wide data and the experiences of individual students to build urgency for change. By creating regular opportunities for these data and experiences to be discussed with a range of stakeholders—including senior leadership teams, faculty, board members, community and industry partners—these leaders are able to better communicate the *why* behind the need for reform.

Create shared language and lead the college in dialogue. People are far more likely to commit to outcomes that they played a role in choosing for themselves. Aiken and Keller remind us of a famous behavioral experiment:

Half the participants are randomly assigned a lottery ticket number, while the others are asked to write down any number they would like on a blank ticket. Just before drawing the winning number, the researchers offer to buy back the tickets from their holders. The result: no matter what geography or demographic environment the experiment has taken place in, researchers have always found that they have to pay at least five times more to those who came up with their own number.⁶

College leaders thus must ensure that faculty and staff play a significant enough role in designing reforms that they feel as though they have come up with their own “lottery numbers”—in this case, shared goals and language for the change being pursued. Presidents should not do all the work themselves. To be clear, the president’s vision can and should be embedded in this story. By presenting data that create urgency and hope around very specific student outcomes, leaders can help direct the scope of reforms. Presidents can also share specific reading and other material that suggest direction for potential reforms to be considered. However, the specific changes the college will adopt to improve student success rates must, to a significant extent, be co-created if change is to be scaled and sustained. Developing a college-wide agenda for student success requires the president to lead the entire college—through its existing communication channels—in a process of dialogue. In these conversations, it is important for the president to facilitate discussion to help move away from familiar language and jargon around institutional effectiveness, learning outcomes, data use, and so on, and to develop new language—free of previous negative associations with prior policies or periods of reform—that feels authentic to the team and the community.

Build a team of “champions” for the change. Effective teams act as the command and communications center for change efforts. They are the line ambassadors of change—mapping out, guiding, and monitoring the strategies for implementation, and continually reinforcing the change message to their individual constituencies. Leaders can look for three major factors when building a team to lead transformational change efforts:

- **Composition:** Leadership teams should be composed of strong institutional leaders and mid-level leaders who have diverse expertise as well as credibility and trust. Too often, change-oriented entrepreneurs are working in silos across the campus on changes or initiatives that will not be scaled and cannot significantly improve student success. Leaving these leaders on the sideline of reform will rob the institution of needed drivers for change. Transformational leaders can identify these committed, diligent, and creative people from across several divisions and create a structure that puts them at the center of institutional reform efforts. It is not enough to simply put these leaders on committees—they need to be placed at the center of reform.
- **Direction:** An effective team needs clarity of purpose and an ability to make decisions aligned with clear guiding principles, and is in agreement about why they are doing what they are doing.
- **Actions and responsibilities:** The team must design the strategies to achieve the vision for change, empower others to engage in the change, coordinate implementation of activities, and monitor and assess progress. Who on the team is responsible for each of these items?

Ensure the presence of forums to communicate the need for change. Getting others on board with a change vision takes time. A critical step in creating a college-wide mandate for change is to establish transparency around why the goals and proposed changes are being pursued, and then to create time and space for different college constituencies to reflect on how these goals intersect with their priorities and values and with each person’s work. Research tells us that successful leaders make dedicated efforts to ensure the presence of forums for sense-making (with the help of a strong data story!) and dialogue to introduce the idea of change. The first step for the president is simply to **be present**; the president’s mere presence at committee meetings, faculty senate meetings, and other settings that constitute the lifeblood of higher education organizations is a critical communicative practice for reorienting the college around a

⁶ Aiken, C., & Keller, S. (2009, April). The irrational side of change management. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Retrieved from <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-irrational-side-of-change-management>

change agenda. However, the president should not go into meetings expecting to make a presentation about student success reform and leave. Instead, the president should come into these settings expecting to **facilitate a conversation and listen**.

Use every vehicle to convey the reasons for change. Leaders should identify and work with their leadership team to make use of the many different existing forums within academic institutions for communicating the vision—committee meetings, faculty meetings, board meetings, newsletters, blogs, and social media. One big mistake a leader can make is to send out a single email “announcing” the vision for change and expecting it to serve as the rallying cry. The vision, however forceful, needs to be communicated repeatedly and consistently by multiple actors throughout the “living spaces” of the college. College leaders can think about how to operationalize their vision—what are the central messages that need to be communicated? Presidents can use some of the following strategies for communicating these messages about change:⁷

- Change the agendas and structures of meetings. Old agendas may be habituated to prioritize old or obsolete values and priorities. Rewrite agendas to position your vision for student success as the unifying and overarching goal of individual college efforts.
- Develop new ways to hold meetings, such as changing locations, meeting in small groups, developing technologies to report back, or using survey technology to gather information from much larger groups than a committee can realistically engage.
- Start every meeting with data related to students. Use data that reflect institutional priorities and foster questions and conversation. What do these data tell us? What do we want to know to change (or replicate) these outcomes?

Model the vision through how time and money are spent. The change must also be modeled through the leaders’ own actions and choices about how to spend time and money, as discussed in the next section of this module. Aligning structures and resources with the proposed change is vital both for building college-wide ownership and ensuring that the reform has the resources needed for its success.

ACKNOWLEDGING AND WORKING THROUGH RESISTANCE

As community college presidents embark on the process of transformational change within their institutions, they must understand resistance in order to assess organizational readiness for change and plan the steps needed to enact change. Rather than seeing resistance as something to be avoided, presidents can work through resistance as part of the process of building momentum for change. A good place to start is by understanding and empathizing with the sources of resistance:

- **Cognitive resistance:** Does the reform require a substantial change in practice, with a steep learning curve for those expected to implement the reforms? Does it require the adoption of new technologies or fundamentally different routines?
- **Emotional resistance:** Does the change reflect (or could it be perceived to reflect) a shift in values? Does it require faculty or staff to change the nature of their interactions with students? Does the change involve a significant shift in the amount of autonomy or professional discretion faculty or staff have in their daily work?

⁷ From a conversation with Sandy Shugart, president of Valencia College.

- **Organizational/structural resistance:** Does the change call for faculty or staff to change their behaviors in ways that are contradictory to existing incentive structures? (For example, does it ask faculty to document time spent advising when performance evaluations previously measured only classroom teaching activities?)

All of these factors are sources of rational resistance to change by faculty and staff. Effective leaders use the processes of dialogue, data use, and listening described above to uncover and confront these sources of resistance. They understand them as organizational tensions that need to be resolved in order to create momentum for implementation.

In “A Survival Guide for Leaders,” Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky provide several strategies that can be helpful to leaders as they work through resistance to change at their institutions, summarized here:⁸

- **Operate in and above the fray:** Leaders must maintain perspective while simultaneously being acutely aware of all that is going on around them. A great leader is able to “get off the dance floor and go to the balcony” while also being an active participant in the work.
- **Court the uncommitted:** Successful leaders will ensure the faculty see that the leader truly comprehends the changes being asked of the faculty by “naming the loss”—clearly acknowledging the loss of the safety and comfort of the status quo. Leaders must also make clear that they are serious about their intentions, perhaps by letting people go if they cannot commit to the necessary change.
- **Cook the conflict:** Leaders can manage tension and resistance within an organization by controlling the conflict and harnessing the constructive energy that may come out of it. Leaders can do this in two ways: by creating safe spaces where conflicts can emerge and people can work through them together; and by “controlling the temperature” of a conflict, perhaps by slowing the rate of change, by taking on “quick wins” before attempting messier reform, or by easing tensions with breaks or parties.
- **Place the work where it belongs:** Rather than providing people with answers or solving all problems themselves, successful leaders know when to transfer work and problem solving to others in the organization. It is not the leader’s job to solve all organizational issues; rather, a leader should create and support teams and structures as they work through problems.

INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION ACTIVITY: CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE.....20 MINUTES

1. **Allow participants 15 minutes, either independently or with others from their institution, to work through the following guidelines to plan for the creation of a team of “champions” for their proposed change effort using Handout 4.**
 - Identify the most committed, diligent, and creative people on your campus (at least some of whom are great collaborators). Consider faculty and staff from across multiple divisions—for example, CTE professors, advisors, staff in finance, etc.
 - Chart where these people currently spend their time—consider classes, committees, projects, etc. What could be removed from their workload?
 - What structure could be put in place that brings these people together and puts them at the center of the reform?

⁸ Heifetz, R., & Linsky, M. (2002, June). A survival guide for leaders. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2002/06/a-survival-guide-for-leaders>

2. Bring the group back together for a quick debrief conversation. Invite participants to share their ideas for structures that bring these change leaders together at the center of reform efforts.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: “DEAR ABBY” LETTERS40 MINUTES

This activity will encourage participants to troubleshoot common areas of faculty resistance. Encourage experienced leaders to share some of their strategies for overcoming resistance to change in their institutions.

1. Assign each table group one of the following “Dear Abby” letters using Handout 5. Each group should discuss their assigned letter, drawing on ideas from the pre-reading and the information covered in this section and considering the following questions:
 - Why are these faculty resistant to the change? What is the real problem here?
 - What could the president do to better build college-wide ownership for the change?
 - What strategies might the president use to build urgency and communicate the need for change given the situation?
2. Give groups around 20 minutes to discuss the questions.

Letter A:

Dear Change Leadership Guru,

Please help! Our college is about to begin the process of building guided pathways, and some of my colleagues and I are questioning if we can ever do our jobs well enough so that we can just keep things the same for a while. It’s so hard to be part of such a committed faculty and staff who are always being told we have to do things differently because our current best efforts aren’t good enough to reach the stats and outcomes desired by administration. Our president says we are an exceptional faculty and staff—you should hear the praises we get at convocation. But then each year (or at least that’s how it seems) in comes another proposed major change that clearly signals we aren’t doing our jobs correctly. First it was about reducing the number of failing students in gateway courses, then it was about writing Student Learning Outcomes, now it is about guided pathways. It’s disheartening to feel like you are working so hard for these students, many of whom come to us horribly underprepared for college, and still we are told to take on even more roles and try even more shiny new initiatives, all of which take away from the time we need to spend on teaching and working with our students. Will we ever get it right? Help us help our administration understand why we aren’t enthusiastic about this change.

Sincerely, Never Good Enough

Letter B:

Dear Change Leadership Guru,

Please help! Our college is about to undergo yet another major change initiative, and this one really has me and many of my fellow faculty and staff gravely concerned. We worry that this guided pathways redesign is going to limit students’ choice and turn our community college into a job factory rather than a learning institution. We question whether it is right to push students onto a pathway and not allow them to explore their possibilities to the fullest. Isn’t higher education about intellectual curiosity and self-exploration? Community colleges are open access institutions, but now we are limiting students’ access to the possibility of falling in love with a major they didn’t even know about when they

arrived here. Our college is adamant about moving forward with this change, but I'm not sure it syncs with my true beliefs—and I am not alone in questioning this clash of values. All the administration has done to date has been to show us data that our students are failing to meet success outcomes—but does that mean that pathways is the right answer? I don't know. Help me and my colleagues help our administration understand why we aren't enthusiastic about this change.

Sincerely, Validating Values

Letter C:

Dear Change Leadership Guru,

Please help! Our college is about to undergo guided pathways redesign, yet another major change initiative, and many of us faculty are gearing up to take on more and different responsibilities that are nowhere to be found in our job descriptions. Most faculty are at this community college because we love teaching and our academic disciplines and want students to find their own spark in learning. But now with this change, we are going to add more advising responsibilities on top of our heavy course loads, make time to enter info into a new early alert system, track attendance and participation, serve on data inquiry committees, and on and on. When will we have time to stay current in our disciplines and focus on improving our teaching? They don't tell new faculty all of this during the hiring process, and no one has changed our job descriptions. My colleagues and I want to continue to earn high performance marks each year, but now it's getting confusing as to what matters most at this college. Were we hired to enter student data into tracking systems, or are we supposed to teach and work with students? Help us help our administration understand why we aren't enthusiastic about this change.

Sincerely, Which Way to an A?

Letter D:

Dear Change Leadership Guru,

Please help! Our college is about to undergo yet another major change initiative, and our president has gone MIA. Back when conversations first started about this initiative, our president was excited, and it seemed like every other week we were getting a message about how important faculty engagement in the effort was going to be. Big deal at convocation, town hall meetings, department presentations, you name it. It felt like this was going to be *the* big change and we were all part of a major revitalization that mattered. Now, we hear from administrators who've been handed the baton, and it seems that the president has moved on to other interests. Don't get me wrong—I admire our leadership team members. But there's a tone of "get it done" management that leaves me and my colleagues craving inspiration and vision. Add on top of that a big question mark of who has legitimate authority to lead this change. Will it last if it doesn't have strong support from the president? Or is this just the fad of the week? Help us help our administration understand why we aren't enthusiastic about this change.

Sincerely, Desperately Seeking Leadership

Letter E:

Dear Change Leadership Guru,

Please help! Our college is about to undergo yet another major change initiative, and my faculty colleagues and I have reached the point of initiative overload. We love our students and want the best for each and every one of them, but how much more of our time can we give for activities that go above and beyond our teaching commitments? Now, administrators are adding onto our plates even more formal responsibility for advising students (without, of course,

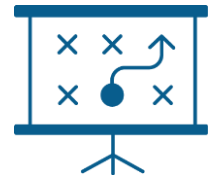
adding on any more pay or reducing our teaching loads). I am not a trained advisor, I didn't go to graduate school for counseling, and I'm exhausted from taking on more and more responsibilities each year as we add one "student success" initiative after another without ever stopping to figure out if the last one worked. A small group of us faculty have decided to organize our colleagues. We are starting to make more noise at faculty senate meetings and are holding conversations within each of the departments to build an alliance against this student-success-at-any-cost drain on faculty and staff. It seems like all of these changes are whims rather than well-thought-through strategies, and the growing frustration may result in a vote of no confidence in the president. Before it comes to that, help us help our administration understand why we aren't enthusiastic about this change.

Sincerely, Survival of the Fittest

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: SUPPORT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS20 MINUTES

1. Based on the number of participants, hand out cards with the following stakeholder designations: Student Services, General Education Faculty, CTE Faculty/Workforce Development, Administrative Services (Finance and HR), President's Cabinet/Council.
2. Ask participants to identify the core "responsibility/expectations" of their "department" (imagining they hold this role at the college where they work) and the key practices that support their efforts in fulfilling that responsibility, using Handout 6. Then ask them to articulate the core values of their own actual college: Based on the college's mission and vision statement, and what you know about your college, what does the college value? Based on these answers, ask the groups to address the following questions:
 - What do you see as the tensions between the goals of the department and the core values of the college?
 - Give examples of how these tensions might play out in real time—with leadership, with other departments, with performance reviews.
 - What kind of communication or administrative processes could you put into place that would be helpful in resolving the tensions between core values and departmental goals/expectations? What is the role of the president in this work?
3. Bring the group back together and discuss the role of the president in engaging the support of each group.

ALIGNING STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES TO THE STUDENT SUCCESS AGENDA



INQUIRY ACTIVITY: “THE TEN STUPIDEST THINGS WE DO”15 MINUTES

Valencia College president Sandy Shugart commonly asks his staff to think about “the 10 stupidest things we do”—that is, the things the college does that are clearly and unnecessarily misaligned to current goals and priorities. For example, when Shugart became president, Valencia (like many colleges) routinely distributed reports to faculty and staff that focused attention on enrollment despite the college’s recently adopted priority goal of improving completion and other elements of student success. This simple practice was so familiar that it was easy to miss how directly the priorities it conveyed contradicted new organizational goals.

Often these “stupid things” are embedded in 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 over time that they are invisible to us, leaders have to find ways to help the organization uncover and interrogate these practices.

1. **Using Handout 7, table groups will select a student success reform goal listed (or add a new one of equivalent specificity) and brainstorm practices at each participant’s college that may contradict the goals of the reform effort. Then, participants should think about possible changes that could be made to better align these incentives. If time permits, continue working on one or more of the other goals listed.**

Student Success Goal	Practices/Incentives Misaligned to Student Success Goals	Possible Changes to Align Incentives
Getting all students on a clear pathway to a credential	e.g., tying advisors' success metrics to enrollment and course completion	
Ensuring that 80% of students achieve a college-wide learning goal (e.g., college-level reading comprehension)	e.g., professional development funding for faculty that prioritizes training in their disciplines	
Doubling graduation rates	e.g., budgeting based on prior year enrollments	
Increasing transfer and bachelor's degree attainment by 15%	e.g., student financial aid planning documents that end with the attainment of a two-year degree or a one-year certificate	
Other		

KEY LEARNING

Because community colleges were created as access institutions, important incentives for the institution and its divisions have long centered on enrollment and balanced budgets. Recent efforts to improve completion have added new incentives, including those aligned to completion of credit-bearing math and English courses, the achievement of certain “momentum points” related to credit accumulation in specific periods of time, and graduation. As the field moves toward improving students’ post-graduation success, we are beginning to see incentives that are aligned with employment, earnings, and bachelor’s degree completion.

As new goals are added to old ones, there is a risk that the accumulated set of goals—and associated incentives—could confuse faculty, staff, and others who are held responsible for achieving them. In a sense, having too many incentives in place can have the same effect as having none at all. To counter this, leading change requires regularly examining existing systems and incentives and culling them. Put another way, transformational change requires shifting focus and corresponding incentives to match new priorities by not only adding new measures of success but also subtracting (or at least deemphasizing) others.

One of the most common mistakes in organizational change efforts is to overlook the operational incentives that influence the way people do their work. Faculty, for example, are typically evaluated on a mix of teaching and service (and sometimes scholarly activity), and yet the specific measures used to assess performance in these categories may

not reflect the values of the student success agenda. The following are examples of common disincentives that are misaligned with a culture of student success:

- Faculty performance is measured by credit hours taught despite the fact that the college has set a vision for improving completion.
- Faculty promotion is based on years of service or course enrollments rather than measures of change in student learning or improved teaching practice.
- Advisor performance is assessed solely by student contact hours and student retention, even though institutional goals have shifted to ensuring entry into a clear pathway and completion.

Transformational leaders must also consider the college's resources, financial and otherwise. How can colleges, already operating at the lower limit of public support and tuition rates, afford the initiatives at scale to achieve quantum improvements in these outcomes? Where will the resources come from? How can they be focused on the work that will produce these outcomes? How will the college know if these investments are achieving the outcomes desired? And how will this focus on acquiring and aligning resources to specific purposes affect the culture and climate of the institution?

Colleges can vary significantly in their underlying financial models – their mix of revenues, tuition and fee structures, and governing authority over the acquisition and allocation various kinds of resources. However, nearly all of these institutions have several important commonalities on which to build a strategy for acquiring and aligning resources for impact. These commonalities include:

- College finances are a powerful shaper of culture, both within the institution and as it relates to outside funders and partners.
- Resource constraints and the need for resourcing improvement and change at scale is a never-ending challenge and thus requires a systemic institutional approach that ensures disciplined models of investment for mission impact as well as sustainability in the institution.
- Colleges operate within ecosystems – including other educational institutions, employers, government actors, and community based organizations – that include many sources of revenue and other assets that can be accessed through partnerships to effect cost savings and to achieve student success goals.

The topic of strategic finance is more extensively covered in its own module, *Strategic Finance for Leaders*, which will be released in Summer 2018.

In addition to the college's financial resources, presidents must examine the time that faculty, staff, and students are spending on various activities and ask the question, "Are those activities aligned to student success goals?" For example, a president and the college leadership team might consider:

- How is time spent in committee meetings? Could that time be better aligned to student success goals?
- What regular reports are prepared for vice presidents, deans, and department chairs with the expectation that they will review them? Do these reports cover college-wide student success goals such as retention and completion rates?
- How is student advising at registration assessed? Is registration considered complete if students have any number of courses on their schedule and financial aid forms complete? Or, are there student-success-aligned targets, for example, numbers of students attending full-time or on transfer pathways?
- How are students spending their hours in and out of the classroom? How can the college incentivize students to spend more time on actions that are aligned to success goals, for example, visiting the tutoring center?

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: ALIGNING INCENTIVES & RESOURCES40 MINUTES

This activity is designed to encourage participants to reflect on what needs to change at their institutions in order to make transformational change possible, as well as to draw on the experiences of their fellow participants to eliminate disincentives to change.

- 1. Using Handout 8, participants will independently reflect on a student success goal toward which their college is currently working. Participants will select three critical areas of practice or policy that must change in order for their college to reach the goal, any resources, list practices, and incentives that are currently misaligned (the “stupidest things we do”), and brainstorm ideas to better incentivize or support change (the “smartest things we aren’t doing”). Take 20 minutes to work independently.**
- 2. Then, ask table groups to discuss the following questions for 20 minutes:**
 - What are the most and least effective incentives that operate in your college? Why do they work or not work?
 - What are the most viable strategies for altering incentives or changing existing practices?
 - What incentives would have to be removed for new incentives and practices to take hold?
 - What possible effective incentives for change have you not yet explored? What obstacles might need to be overcome in order to implement these incentives?
 - Think back to the earlier sections of this module. How could the president’s skills in communicating a vision and overcoming resistance help make these changes?

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: AGENDA REVIEW25 MINUTES

This activity will allow participants to reflect on the practices of their own college. If you are working with a group of participants from a college that already regularly makes conversations about student success a priority in leadership meetings, consider instead holding a discussion around where in the college that is not happening. What steps do leaders need to put in place to make sure that student success measures are regularly discussed in all meetings?

- 1. As pre-work, ask participants to bring agendas from the three most recent meetings of their college leadership team. In table groups, participants will discuss which priorities of the college are revealed by the agendas, taking notes on Handout 9. Participants should consider the following questions:**
 - Time is a valuable resource. How is time being spent at leadership team meetings? Are equity, learning, completion, and labor market outcomes reflected in these agendas, and if so, how?
 - What trends do you notice as you consider the agendas of your own college as well as those from your peers’ institutions? Are certain student success goals represented more frequently than others? Which ones? Are certain other topics (fundraising? enrollment?) represented frequently? Why do you think you see these trends?
 - Are there structured opportunities (and time) for you to review the selection of goals and the effectiveness of implementation strategies around specific student success goals that arise during the meeting? If not, what procedures might you put in place to reinforce the awareness of the connection between student success goals and implementation issues?
 - If you were to rewrite one of these agendas to reflect the alignment of your strategic vision, student success goals, and implementation strategies, what would it look like?
 - How might this discussion inform how you structure other forms of written communication at your college to reflect student success goals?

BUILDING A SYSTEM TO SUPPORT DISCIPLINED EXECUTION OF A STUDENT SUCCESS AGENDA



INQUIRY ACTIVITY: SLOW IDEAS25 MINUTES

This activity will encourage participants to consider reforms at their college in the larger context of change management across fields. This is an optional activity. If you would like your group to move directly to application of the concept, consider simply sharing the key ideas from the article and then moving on to the Key Learning section.

1. Participants will independently consider all the major reforms that have been implemented at their college over the last five years and list them on Handout 10.
2. Then, participants will review Atul Gawande’s article [“Slow Ideas”](#) from *The New Yorker*, and code each of the ideas on their list as a “fast idea” or “slow idea.” For each “slow idea,” participants will brainstorm reasons why they believe the reform stalled or did not deliver scaled improvements.
3. In table groups, participants will discuss why they think “slow ideas” fail to deliver intended improvements in the community college setting. What could help these ideas get adopted and scaled more quickly? Discuss any “fast ideas” as well. What helped to make the implementation of these ideas successful? Were any of your ideas slow to scale because of cost (or quick to scale despite large costs)? What strategies could be used to revise or change a “slow idea” into a fast one?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY: PRE-MORTEM ANALYSIS30 MINUTES

This activity is suitable for all levels of experience. If possible, have participants use a real reform effort that is on the horizon at their college.

1. Participants will read Gary Klein’s article “[Performing a Project Premortem](#)” from the *Harvard Business Review*. Then, participants will break into table groups and do the following using Handout 11:

- Identify a large scale reform effort at your college (e.g., guided pathways reform, revamping onboarding and professional development for faculty).
- Assume that, five years from now, you have failed to achieve that goal (or, if it is a long-term strategy, have failed to achieve the elements you expected to have achieved in five years).
- Identify on the chart on your handout the likely major causes of that “mortality.” Consider what specifically might happen that could derail the effort? Who are the actors? What are their motivations?
- For each cause, delineate specific leadership strategies you will employ to anticipate and avert or address the challenges.

KEY LEARNING

What makes ideas move quickly? Gawande’s article *Slow Ideas*⁹ and other research on diffusion of innovation suggest that the rate at which innovations are adopted, scaled, and institutionalized depends on:

- How well the idea corresponds to a deeply felt and “visible” need among adopters.
- How well intended adopters can align the idea to their existing professional or personal identities and roles.

To move beyond urgency, ideas and vision, community college leaders must pay attention to the common reasons why reforms fail. As the college plans for implementation, strategies can be put in place to preempt some of these common reasons why reforms fail:

- **People blame the student.** Rather than acknowledging the structural issues at the college that may be preventing students from succeeding, people may blame the students, saying that they come to college “already behind” or “unprepared,” or that the students don’t take advantage of the interventions offered to them. To counteract this issue, transformational leaders repeatedly activate the student voice. By bringing students’ experiences and concerns to the forefront of the conversation—by sharing data and anecdotes from student focus groups, inviting students to share their stories at faculty meetings and other gatherings, or using other strategies—the president and other college leaders can dispel misconceptions and refocus the discussion on what the college can do to support students.
- **People don’t believe the reform is going to get done—they think it will “blow over” and the college will move onto the next thing.** Faculty and staff—especially those who have worked in community colleges for some time—have likely seen many initiatives come and go. As a result, faculty, staff, and administrators can begin to view new reforms as the “flavor of the week,” and may not fully invest their time and efforts in supporting the change. To preempt this problem, presidents must persistently repeat their message about the change—focusing both on the reasons why reform is needed and the strategies for implementation—using every possible vehicle. Specific strategies for doing this are covered in this module’s section on building college-wide ownership for the change.
- **The college is suffering from a failure to focus and initiative fatigue.** In the interest of improving student success, community colleges often adopt multiple reforms, failing to wait until evidence about one set of reforms is gathered before beginning another. As a result, overlapping initiatives can conflict, leading faculty, staff, and administrators to feel overwhelmed and uncertain of what to prioritize. Transformational leaders maintain

⁹ Gawande, A. (2013, July). Slow ideas. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/29/slow-ideas>

discipline for multiple years before taking on major new college-wide initiatives. Before taking on a new major reform, presidents and their leadership teams must ask: "Is this worthy of a unique institutional focus for two to three years?"

- **There is a lack of infrastructure to know what is working and what isn't.** When initiatives begin, expectations for execution often lack a set of measures for success or timelines for deciding whether something is working. Goals and measurements may not be clearly defined at the outset; outcomes may not be regularly tracked. When beginning an initiative, it is crucial to decide how the college will know if it has been successful. Baseline data must be collected using common data definitions, a schedule needs to be set for tracking outcomes, and systems must be put in place for frequent communication among stakeholders.
- **The colleges failed to engage external partners, so they do not have the resources they need to ensure student success.** Strong, student-success-oriented external partnerships are vital to bringing about reform that supports students' success in post-college outcomes. Transformational leaders build external partnerships that are clearly aligned to student success goals, considering: Where are students coming from? Where are students going next? What do students need that may not be within the college's core strengths and could be more efficiently delivered by others, or for which external resources may be available?

CLARIFYING AND AFFIRMING CORE VALUES

People don't resist change, they fear loss. It is the president's job to affirm what's *not* going to change. What are the common values of the organization that will not be negotiated? Those values form the DNA of the organization. Sandy Shugart, president of Valencia College, notes, "It's critical to keep in mind that reinforcing core values is a conversation about mission, not about practice: 'We teach x,' or 'We use y data' is a practice, not a value. 'We care deeply about our students and will work together to ensure they graduate' is a value."

In moving toward a broad understanding and commitment to the college's core values, one potentially effective strategy is to have a series of low-threat conversations with key stakeholders that emphasize not how *they* will change, but how the *institution* will change.

PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Participants have built urgency around the need to improve student outcomes; they've built a strong team to lead the change; they've figured out how specific elements of reform can be introduced and framed in order to respond to the felt needs and values of the campus community, helping the campus build its own new shared language around student success; and they've figured out many of the things that could go wrong. Now what?

Moving from planning to action can be challenging. Often leaders spend a lot of time planning, and then send the task force or student success committee off to figure out how to implement a change, without a clear sense of how to sequence implementation steps. The challenge is that some of the easiest steps may not necessarily be the ones that have to happen first. In planning for implementation, it's important that leaders be thoughtful about how they sequence the policies and practices that constitute the design blueprint of implementation: What needs to happen first? Can some steps happen at the same time? Which steps depend on others to be done first?

Successful change leaders also consider the processes through which the change will be implemented and institutionalized, and consider whether these strategies are likely to scale across the entire college or remain pockets of activity isolated from the rest of the college culture. It is vital that leaders plan for sustainability and consider potential vulnerabilities of the structures they put in place: What will happen to the change effort if a grant ends or if a champion for change leaves the college?

MANAGING IMPLEMENTATION

Concerned about implementation, community colleges periodically adopt systems to improve execution, such as Franklin Covey's Four Disciplines of Execution and Baldrige Performance Excellence Processes. While each of these programs offers a somewhat different approach, each attempts to create a rigorous system through which leaders can execute against defined goals. Common elements of performance management systems include:

- Identification of strands of work that impact the goals, tied to operational functions (who has responsibility for what)
- Disaggregation and sequencing of tasks into actionable steps that connect individual and unit activity to broader goals
- A benchmarking system of defined Key Performance Indicators that provide baseline data and interim measures of progress
- An established set of routine communications on a defined schedule to provide feedback to individuals and units about their performance on tasks and overall progress toward the goals
- Links from performance measures to existing incentive structures in the organization

The resulting process of systematically and continuously disaggregating and measuring progress can (if implemented thoughtfully) help connect individuals' activities to broader goals and, in turn, enable individuals to see how their actions contribute to those goals.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?20 MINUTES

1. People often resist new reforms because they fear loss—for example, faculty might be resistant to the creation of program maps because they fear losing a favorite class they've always taught. Give participants 15 minutes in table groups to consider some of the key practices in guided pathways implementation, identifying what different audiences might "lose" by making the change, using Handout 12. Then, invite participants to list ideas for what could be done to mitigate those losses or ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard.
2. Bring the group back together for a quick debrief conversation. Ask: What can the president do to affirm what's *not* going to change for these stakeholders?

USING INQUIRY AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE



WARM-UP ACTIVITY: A WEEK IN THE LIFE20 MINUTES

Consider having leaders look at their own weekly schedule instead as a starting point for a conversation around how much time they truly spend looking at and discussing data with key stakeholders.

1. **Participants will receive Handout 13, which includes a mock schedule for a week in the life of a college president. Table groups will go through the schedule and identify which parts of the week are devoted to examining student success data.**
2. **Participants should consider the following questions:**
 - How much time is explicitly allotted to analyzing student success data?
 - Who do you think is present when those data are being analyzed? What type of data are they analyzing? Who might be missing from those conversations?
 - Where do you see other opportunities for structured time to be established for data conversations? What data might be used?
 - What structures could be put in place to increase the amount of time devoted to collaboratively looking at data?

KEY LEARNING

All colleges and universities produce an overwhelming amount of data—mostly for compliance with various state, federal, or external funder requirements. But the use of data as a tool for motivating and sustaining change remains a

challenge at many institutions. Why, if we have so much data at our disposal, is it nonetheless hard to harness that data to support learning and change?

The movement over the past decade to improve community colleges’ capacity to use data to inform practice, including through Achieving the Dream and Completion by Design, has resulted in a field-changing wave of practices, frameworks, metrics, and tools for inquiry. Emerging from these and other initiatives are valuable lessons about how data can and should be used as a tool for change leadership. Specifically, there are different needs within transformational change leadership that require both different forms of data (e.g., different indicators, different levels of statistical rigor) and different questions to be asked of those data. In broad strokes, these different needs implicate the use of data for two main purposes:

- To help diagnose gaps, design intervention strategies, and evaluate the effectiveness of practices
- To tell a story, build urgency, and inspire change

There are ample resources available in the field to help community colleges collect and analyze data in support of reform efforts. The National Center for Inquiry and Improvement developed a series of comprehensive Inquiry Guides for Completion by Design that help colleges understand their students’ experiences from the point of connection to completion.

For leaders, the key to developing an effective *research agenda* is to link it to the vision and goals for student success, as examined earlier in this module. Reflecting ideas throughout this curriculum, a research agenda that supports transformational change helps *frame the vision, define gaps and build urgency, and benchmark progress*. It reflects a defined scope of evidence that the leader must attend to throughout the change process. While there are many uses of data throughout the institution that are critical to support implementation, evaluation, and practice improvement, successfully managing change requires that leaders build clarity around a few key high-level questions about student success—and routinely collect the data that answer them.

What is our vision of student success?	Where are we now in relation to that vision?	How will we know that we’re making progress?
How do we qualitatively and quantitatively define what success looks like?	<p>What are the quantitative gaps between current outcomes and our student success goals?</p> <p>Qualitatively, how do students currently experience the college and how does that compare to our ideals for what students would experience?</p>	What are the most critical indicators for measuring our progress?

What is the president’s role in building a culture of inquiry? Three of the most important strategies presidents can use to help build a culture of inquiry around data use are:

- Create (and ensure the ongoing presence of) structured times and settings for collaborative sense-making and focused discussion around data—especially data collected in support of the student success “research agenda” discussed above
- Ask questions—repeatedly and consistently—that reinforce an emphasis on and value for data-driven practice.
- Find ways for leadership and staff to consistently hear the student voice and understand the student experience through, for example, focus groups or secret shopper programs. The examination of quantitative data is an important part of change management, but so is a deep understanding of the student experience. What do

students actually experience as they move through the college? To learn more about strategies for understanding the student experience—including student focus groups, secret shopper exercises, and student surveys—refer to the mini-module **Understanding the Student Experience**.

GROUP APPLICATION ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING NORMS OF INQUIRY30 MINUTES

1. In table groups, participants will discuss the following prompt, recording their thoughts on Handout 14.

Imagine that your institution is one year into a comprehensive set of pathways reform efforts. It's the end of the academic year and you (as president or senior leader) have asked to be put on the agenda for a series of meetings across the campus. For each of the meetings listed below, discuss as a group (*specifically related to pathways implementation*): What questions would you ask specific to the group and why? What data would you ask to see? What information or data would you want to present to the group?

2. Based on time constraints, the facilitator may also want to assign just one of the categories below to each small group, and then bring the group back together at the end to share their ideas. Assignments could include meetings of the following groups:

- Student success committee tasked with leading implementation of a major reform (e.g. guided pathways redesign)
- Faculty senate
- Department chairs
- Advising staff and academic affairs administrators
- Division deans and academic/student affairs vice presidents
- Academic computing and institutional research staff
- Board of Trustees

This exercise can be adapted to a specific reform context—for example, made more specific around a particular element of pathways reform or a specific student success goal (e.g., improve transfer outcomes or learning outcomes). The idea is to provide a space for senior leaders to share tactics and ideas with each other about how to embed routines of inquiry as they circulate through the settings on campus where these different groups are meeting, making decisions, and evaluating progress.