transformative change

Leadership

Adoption and Adaptation

Evidence

Storytelling

Networks

Dissemination

Technology

Spread and Endurance

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Guiding Principle for Leadership: Scaling of transformative change will occur when leaders envision, encourage, and support innovation that supports all learners.

Be the change that you wish to see in the world.
Mahatma Gandhi

Be the change. The late Mahatma Gandhi's prophetic words continue to inspire us. They suggest change is not as much about what others do as it is about what we do. It is about the individual action and collective commitment that is required to bring about change that matters. To bring about transformative change, everyone needs to do their part, and there are many parts to play.

We define leadership for transformation, or transformative leadership, as leaders who are acutely aware of the need to improve performance and grow impact for the larger social good. These leaders are passionate about enabling all learners to achieve their aspirations to access higher education, to participate fully and successfully in their desired learning activities, and to reach their desired intended college and career goals. Transformative leaders are staunch advocates for access, equity, and opportunity for all students, especially students who have struggled historically to obtain equality in accessing and benefiting from college (Bragg, 2014). They realize that if all students are not succeeding, none of us are.

> Transformative leaders focus on people and performance simultaneously, using democratic strategies that strive for equitable outcomes for everyone.

By definition, transformative leaders advocate for change that reaches the many, not just the few. They understand how to use existing organizational structures and lines of authority to create a new architecture for the future. Transformative leaders understand how to engage and transcend position, power, and privilege on behalf of those who do not have such assets in order to create a more democratic and socially just world (Shields, 2010).

Transformative leaders understand how to inspire and engage others in change processes. Shared leadership, also called distributed leadership, is needed to implement and scale innovation. Spillane (2006) observes that distributed leaders actively engage multiple stakeholders in collective action toward a shared vision, executing short- and long-term goals and plans, and engaging actively in strategic implementation. They know how to use democratic processes to organize and collaborate to address complexity and resolve conflict. They offer individual and organizational support, including allocating needed human and fiscal resources, to incentivize and sustain the change agents who are leading change processes on the ground.

Both evolutionary and revolutionary change is needed to transform community college education. Some authors emphasize break-through or "disruptive" change (Christiansen, Johnson, & Horn, 2010), and we agree this perspective is important. Transformative leaders

understand that change is complex and sometimes requires swift and decisive action, along with relationship building to attain long-term goals. Disruptive change can jolt people into understanding the need to change but lasting change often requires partnerships that take time to build. This is why transformative leaders focus on people and performance simultaneously, using democratic strategies that strive for equitable outcomes for everyone.

Scaling up innovation and change that produces unprecedented results requires dedication and persistence of many. Selflessness, compassion, and advocacy are the building blocks of educators who practice transformative leadership. An indelible commitment to improving the lives of others is essential. Transformative leaders come from all backgrounds. They represent a wide diversity of perspectives, and they seek inclusive solutions to the most troubling issues facing our nation's educational systems. Administrators who hold formal leadership appointments can and do practice transformative leadership, but so can and do faculty, staff, and students who support innovation that results in substantive and equitable results for all learners.

In this regard, our definition of transformative leadership draws upon earlier theories of transformational leadership that place a high priority on leaders nurturing followers' motivation to make a difference. Charisma, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation characterize transformational leaders, and we think this is vitally important to bring about change. However, we believe transformative leaders do more. Transformative leaders improve the system by improving performance (results) and enable and empower others to reach their goals. This idea is the driving force behind transformative leadership for reform in the community college context.

In the current environment, transformative leaders who are scaling innovation in community colleges are acutely knowledgeable of and sensitive to the diverse learners they serve. They continuously monitor learners' performance, and they use resources strategically to help them improve their performance. By using data formally and informally, by nurturing inclusive engagement, and telling their stories and encouraging others to tell their stories, transformative change becomes a reality. Transformative leaders, who work doggedly on behalf of all learners by advocating for access, equity, and outcomes, make a difference.

Illustrating this idea of the relentless pursuit of equity and outcomes, Jahan (2000) described transformative leaders as individuals who "demonstrate a strong commitment in the principles of equality, equity, and empowerment…. [They] use power not as an instrument of domination and exclusion but as an instrument of liberation, inclusion and quality" (p. 3). This perspective envisions leaders as advocates for social justice. Similarly, Anderson (2008) has advocated for all learners to be supported in their efforts to achieve educational and employment goals. The tandem goals of equity and outcomes are central to improve outcomes for all learners, particularly learners who are historically underserved and marginalized by the higher education system (Taylor et al., 2009).

Transformative leaders operate in a consensus-oriented, participatory, and transparent way. They believe that the only true method to achieve improved outcomes is to work collaboratively with others who share a passion for a more just and equitable world. Shared communications, actions, and attitudes that bring about real, deep and lasting changes on behalf of all students form the mantra of transformative leaders in TCI.

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