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*Creating a culture of change is a challenge to any leader. Change leadership in tomorrow's successful colleges will foster leaders who can anticipate change, analyze the environment, act decisively and collaboratively, and affirm the value of positive change.*

## Looking to the Future: Change Leaders for Tomorrow's Community Colleges

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The old ways of managing and organizing and leading are no longer effective. The current environment calls for a different set of leadership skills from those that might have sufficed in less turbulent times. Earlier ways of predicting, modeling, and planning do not serve as well as they once did. The rational theories of management and bureaucratic order developed by Frederick Taylor and Max Weber no longer seem to be applicable (Mintzberg, 1998; Wallin and Ryan, 1994). Cohen and March (1986) point out that "leadership seems to be less a matter of straightforward instrumental action and hierarchical control than is anticipated by classical descriptions" (p. xiv).

Community colleges are changing as well, and the roles of community college leaders at all levels are in flux. Cohen and March (1986) anticipated change leadership when they suggested that in a world so difficult to predict and control, an approach recognizing ambiguity is both appropriate and useful. In fact, they posit that colleges can be seen as "changing continuously in response to various internal and external pressures and opportunities" (p. xvi). Bureaucratic practices built up over the years now stand as barriers. The role of the change leader is to remove barriers and free people to use their strengths to improve the organization, make it responsive to the community and to regional and national needs, and to look with fresh vision on the landscape that has become the field of labor for community colleges. Although it is apparent that the old models do not work as well as they once did, research and models for effective change leadership in contemporary community colleges seem to be lacking in the current literature.

This volume anticipates contributing to the existing body of literature regarding change leadership.

Contemporary change leaders must look critically at their organization and the environment in which it functions. Further, they need to effectively manage themselves (Bennis, 1989; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Drucker, 1999) as leaders. Change leaders need to be “EQ smart” (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997)—perceptive, intuitive, and reflective—as well as IQ smart to be effective. In fact, Bennis suggests that “leadership is first being then doing. Everything the leader does reflects what he or she is” (1989, p. 141). Wheatley (1999) adds to the importance of the leader’s self-awareness when she maintains that leaders are “obligated to help the whole organization look at itself, to be reflective and learningful about its activities and decisions” (p. 131). Change leaders build inclusive learning communities and seek out new leaders to encourage and mentor. In fact, “institutionalizing a leadership-centered culture is the ultimate act of leadership” (Kotter, 1998, p. 53). This is the new reality for change leaders.

Leadership is a multifaceted concept; there are as many definitions of leadership as there are scholars of the subject. In a review of prior studies, Northouse (2007) suggests that in the past sixty years there have been as many as sixty-five classification systems proposed to explain the dimensions of leadership. For the purpose of change leadership, however, a few definitions are particularly important. Bennis (1989) maintains that before anyone can learn to lead, he or she “must learn something about this strange new world. Indeed, anyone who does not master this mercurial content will be mastered by it” (p. 2). De Pree (1989) concurs with his view that “leadership is an art, something to be learned over time, not simply by reading books. Leadership is more tribal than scientific, more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information” (p. 3). Northouse (2007) sees leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). It includes influence, it involves groups, and it demands attention to goals. Fullan (2001) sees change leadership through the lens of complexity: “The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change” (p. ix). This characteristic of nonlinear change means that even though organizations change in response to their environment, “they rarely change in a way that fulfills the intentional plan of a single group of actors” (Cohen and March, 1986, p. 275). Beach (2006) looks at leadership as “the art of producing appropriate changes in an organization’s external environment, its functions and structure, its culture, and its practices in pursuit of survival and prosperity” (p. ix). In other words, he sees change as an integral part of leadership. Finally, harking back in history for a meaningful definition of contemporary change leadership, we may recall that Winston Churchill once defined leadership as “going from failure to failure with-

out losing enthusiasm” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers, 2004, p. 149)—a way of looking at leadership that might be particularly meaningful to current change leaders!

Change leadership exemplifies many of the attributes of the better-known transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms followers: “It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them” (Northouse, 2007, pp. 175–176). It was the work of Burns, however, that “laid the foundation for the concept of transformational leaders, who can create a vision for change, communicate it to others, and then help those others to accomplish that vision through their own commitment to it. Thus, while transactional leaders manage and maintain, transformational leaders promote fundamental change in the organization, helping the organization adjust to the varying needs of today’s rapidly changing society” (Roueche, Baker, and Rose, 1989, p. 35). The emphasis in transformational leadership is on a process that changes and transforms individuals. Transformational leaders frequently act as change agents in their organizations, but changes in the organization are of secondary concern relative to changes in individuals.

Change leadership, however, even though embodying transformational leadership, is both broader and deeper, involving individual and organizational change alike. Its theoretical roots emanate from Lewin’s three steps of organizational change: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. Unfreezing is related to creating willingness and motivation for change through anticipating the future and analyzing the possibilities of change, change means seeing things differently and acting to move toward a more desired state, and refreezing establishes new ways to affirm the change and secure the new desired behavior (Burke, 2008). Change leadership at its core involves an ongoing search for better ways of doing things. Change leaders are constantly identifying potential opportunities and threats; they are aware of and anticipate changes in the environment that might affect the college and its mission. Change leadership is a process that anticipates change; requires analysis of the internal and external environment; acts by means of appropriate and timely data and the strengths of team members; and is reflective in affirming, sustaining, and reviewing actions with a mind-set of continuous organizational improvement.

## Four Essential Characteristics of Change Leadership

In fact, change leadership can be seen to embody four essential characteristics, what might be called the four A’s of change leadership. First, change leadership *anticipates*. It is visionary and forward-looking. It avoids

reactionary thinking and acting. Second, change leadership is constantly *analyzing* the environment, both internal and external, to gather reliable data on which to make decisions. It engages in strategic and tactical planning to make the most of the moment. Third, change leadership *acts*. With a vision and a plan, with accurate and current data, action is collaborative and inclusive; however, it is also immediate and decisive. It builds on the strengths of team members. It is accountable to stakeholders. Finally, change leadership *affirms*. It is not enough to have a vision, a plan, and action. Once action is implemented, attention is given to continuing to review and affirm the change. Here is a summary of these four characteristics of change leadership.

**Anticipate.** Drucker (1999) was very much aware of the importance of anticipating change in organizations. He claimed that “one cannot manage change. One can only be ahead of it” (p. 73). Community college leaders operate in an environment of volatility, which requires them to be ahead of change. Tichy and DeVanna (1990) studied how leaders anticipate change. They wanted to understand how leaders anticipate change in conditions of rapid technological changes, social and cultural changes, and increased competition, all of which apply to today’s community colleges. Their findings suggested a three-act process for anticipating change: (1) recognizing the need for change, (2) creating a vision for that change, and (3) institutionalizing change.

**Analyze.** Bennis (1989) rightly observes that “resisting change is as futile as resisting weather, and change is our weather now. It is that constant and that unpredictable. Leaders live in it, and so do organizations. And there is much organizations can do to make the process easier” (p. 172). One thing a change leader must do to act as a catalyst for change in an organization is carefully analyze, examine, and understand the environment, both internal and external, in which the college works. This includes gathering accurate and timely information to base one’s actions on. It also includes strategic and tactical planning. Beach (2006) suggests that even though leadership is about change, it is not about arbitrary change. Change for the sake of change is most often detrimental and destabilizing to an organization. He maintains that a continuous assessing of the environment is critically important to initiating successful change efforts. Assessing the environment, internal and external, is one of the primary responsibilities of a change leader: “The leader’s job is to make the organization a viable participant in the game by fostering an understanding of its external and internal environments and by promoting changes in both of them that enhance its ability to react to or anticipate opportunities and threats, with the goal of surviving and prospering” (2006, p. 2).

**Act.** The art of leadership, according to De Pree (1989), is “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible” (p. xx). It is preparing them to act, both individually and as members of a team. Building on the existing strengths of teams is the key to

successful organizational change. The Gallup organization's leadership assessment, *StrengthsFinder* (Rath, 2007), the result of an extensive longitudinal study, found that organizations spend far more time and money on trying to buttress employee weaknesses than they do building on existing strengths and talents. Their studies show that "people who do have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general" (p. iii). If a college is to be accountable, and to act quickly with insight and integrity, it must expend resources in developing and growing its internal leadership at all levels, not just at the top. Riggs (2009) emphasizes the importance of midlevel leadership. Presidential leadership is critical, but it is the midlevel leaders, the deans, vice presidents, directors, and others who carry out many of the functions of the college and are responsible for much of the success of the college.

**Affirm.** "Transformation begins with trust. Trust is the essential link between leader and led, vital to people's job satisfaction and loyalty, vital to followership. It is doubly important when organizations are seeking rapid improvement, which requires exceptional effort and competence" (Evans, 2000, p. 287). Leaders need to be able to instill trust in followers if they hope to sustain meaningful change. Implementation of change is never simple and rarely linear. Unexpected problems and unanticipated issues will develop; there is no doubt that it is difficult to maintain change. Wheatley (1999) summarized the challenge of maintaining change when she observed that "any living thing will change only if it sees change as the means of preserving itself" (p. 147). So it is important for the change leader to realize that many organizational changes translate to personal or professional loss for individuals. It is vital for the change leader to be reflective, constantly review and reassess changes, and communicate openly and frequently about them. As O'Banion has suggested (2008), in many ways it is not as much fun to work in community colleges as it once was: "Being a leader in today's environment and dealing with enormous change are challenges that require special skills and abilities, patience, humor, and courage that exceed by far that required of leaders 40 years ago" (p. 1). Being reflective and affirming in implementing and sustaining change is one of those special skills and abilities required of today's change leaders.

## Conclusion

Lorenzo and DeMarte (2002) make the point that there is nothing particularly new about the call for organizational change and for leaders to take the helm as champions of change. They maintain that

there is almost unanimous accord that tomorrow's leaders must become adept at reshaping their organizations in fundamental ways. These strong and

pervasive sentiments lead to two basic assumptions about the future of community colleges. First, to remain viable, community colleges must continue to change in significant ways. Second, the colleges' success will probably be determined by their ability to recruit and develop effective leaders [p. 47].

Perhaps what is new is an increasing interest on the part of graduate programs, grow-your-own local leadership programs, and professional association leadership programs in the concept of change leadership. Perhaps it is the realization that things really are changing, that tomorrow will not be the same as yesterday, regardless of the politics or the economy of the nation.

Drucker (1999) insists that change leaders must abandon yesterday if they are to act on today:

The first need is to free resources from being committed to maintaining what no longer contributes to performance, and no longer produces results. . . . To maintain yesterday is always difficult and extremely time-consuming. To maintain yesterday therefore always commits the institution's scarcest and most valuable resources—and above all its ablest people—to nonresults [p. 74].

Thus, if a college believes the future lies in training students for green jobs, something currently within the curriculum has to be deleted. Resources—dollars and personnel—cannot be extended to cover both existing and declining programs while funding and staffing new and innovative programs; “it is futile . . . to ignore the changes and to pretend that tomorrow will be like yesterday, only more so” (Drucker, 1999, p. 92). This is the type of policy and practice most likely to be adopted by institutions that were successful in earlier periods. Those organizations are likely to suffer from the delusion that tomorrow will be like yesterday. Community colleges have been remarkably successful in the past; that is no guarantee they will continue to be. Community colleges and their leaders must be vigilant to ensure that the institutions have both the resources and the leadership to make necessary changes to remain successful.

The chapters that follow in this volume are illustrative of change leadership in a variety of settings and circumstances. Amey discusses the abilities of change leaders to understand and implement mutually beneficial partnerships, while Basham and Mathur look at the role of teams in rapidly changing environments. Three chapters deal with the emerging research and practice in preparing change leaders. Campbell and colleagues examine a leadership program that emphasizes assessment to develop change leaders; Sullivan and Wiessner review a program targeting Hispanic leaders that highlights the importance of reflection for change leaders; and Friedel describes the components and development of a new doctoral program focused on preparing leaders to act as change agents. Ebbers and coauthors detail the importance of leadership development for middle management

and faculty; Floyd and colleagues present leadership crises as potential opportunities for growth, and Cloud brings these many disparate change leadership experiences together and places them in an historical context.

Change leadership in contemporary community colleges is leadership that anticipates the future, analyzes the internal and external environment, acts by means of appropriate and timely data to ensure accountability while building on the strengths of its teams, and affirms and sustains change. In a time of limited resources and an uncertain economy, community colleges are more important than ever to meet the employment and educational needs of citizens in their communities. Visionary change leadership that sees beyond current dilemmas to a positive future will make the difference between those mediocre institutions that remain wedded to the old ways of managing and leading and those new stars that see opportunity in adversity and challenge and excitement in creating a culture of change in tomorrow's community colleges.

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