



WHAT WORKS - A PKAL ESSAY

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES & PRACTICES

Vision and Goals

Institutional transformation means moving from the status quo to a transformed state. Random change does not result in transformation; changes must be in an intentional, well-defined direction. Intentional change is predicated on a common vision, goals, and set of definitions that enable the entire institution to move forward in synchrony.

- ◆ Is there sufficient institutional will— as well as vision— to sustain the institution through transformation?
- ◆ Are the institutional vision and goals clear? well communicated? Can individuals translate what those goals mean for their daily activities?
- ◆ Are there commonly shared definitions for items in the vision and goals? For example, how is student success defined? by graduation rates? grades? competencies? access?
- ◆ Is there an on-going communication strategy/campaign that ensures the vision and goals remain clear and focused?

Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment and re-evaluation help ensure that an institution is moving forward toward its intended goals. Assessment is more than collecting numbers— it is an ongoing process of review, action and feedback. As a result, effective assessment hinges on policies, practices and a culture of evidence.

- ◆ How can assessment be used to transform the institution not just collect numbers on specific courses? Does the campus have a culture of evidence so that assessment and evaluation techniques are woven into the culture? Is the evidence used to inform decisions?
- ◆ Is there enough early- and mid-process evaluation to help students improve? Reflect on their learning processes? Does the evaluation help the faculty member improve throughout the semester? Is there a role for e-portfolios?
- ◆ Do we survey the important internal and external constituencies (e.g., students, alumni, employers) to ensure an understanding of their needs and our program effectiveness? Do we move beyond assumptions to evaluation?
- ◆ Is the institution continually updating its assessment and evaluation process as new skills and competencies are identified? For example, how should one grade for specific skills like visual literacy? teamwork? problem-solving skills? Or is a course grade a good enough indicator?
- ◆ Does everyone assume responsibility for ongoing assessment and improvement? faculty? staff? administrators? students?

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KEY ELEMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

- ◆ Vision and goals
- ◆ Assessment and evaluation
- ◆ Professional development
- ◆ Support
- ◆ Structure and processes.

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PKAL Roundtable on the Future—
a PKAL Leadership Initiative (LI)
meeting.*



INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES & PRACTICES

Professional Development

Transformation requires changes in beliefs and behaviors. Professional development plays a key role in creating awareness as well as ensuring individuals have the necessary skills to make the changes.

- ♦ Is there adequate and appropriate professional development for faculty (technology, pedagogy, assessment)? Can faculty development programs be scaled to handle adequate numbers?
- ♦ What role does the scholarship of teaching and learning plan in faculty development, recognition and curricular reform?



Changing practice to capitalize on how people learn is not just an individual activity.

- ♦ Is there a role for students in professional development of faculty and staff (e.g., providing technology support through programs such as Tech Rangers)?
- ♦ Is there an active program for graduate student professional development or future faculty professional development?
- ♦ What effect can professional development play in solving persistent issues such as the retention of women and minorities in STEM disciplines?

Support

Changing practice to capitalize on how people learn is not just an individual activity— it requires institutional support.

Support needs exist at multiple levels such as technology infrastructure, space, finances, and personnel. Support must be provided for the status quo as well as to ensure future innovation.

- ♦ Is our resource base (human, fiscal, time, etc.) adequate for what we are trying to achieve? Is it reviewed periodically and adjustments made?
- ♦ Is our infrastructure adequate to meet our goals? Is there a good distribution between operational needs and innovation needs?
- ♦ Do we have adequate and appropriate space (learning spaces, physical and virtual spaces) for learning?
- ♦ Do we have adequate technical support to meet our goals?
- ♦ How can collaboration (both intra- and inter-institutional) augment existing support structures (e.g., through sharing of digital libraries, learning objects, development programs)?
- ♦ What options should be developed to enable students to work off-campus? with remotely collected data? with remote experts and teams?

Structure & Processes

Although individual policies and practices are important, they only become powerful when aligned across the institution. Change will be more rapid, replicable and sustainable due to the synergies that arise from alignment.

- ♦ What is the institution's decision-making process (e.g., is it based on data or assumptions)? Are learners involved? external groups? internal constituents?
- ♦ Are roles and responsibilities aligned with the reform the institution wishes to achieve?
- ♦ Do tenure/promotion and merit awards reflect our institutional goals? Do the processes and outcomes help or hinder improvements in STEM education?
- ♦ Do institutional structures and policies encourage sustainability, replicability and scalability?
- ♦ Is collaboration encouraged? Does the institution's structure/process make it easy for individuals to work across organizational boundaries (e.g., interdisciplinarily, matrix approach)?
- ♦ Is there an on-going communication process and strategy to ensure buy-in and good communication? ■