Reframing Academic Leadership

Real improvement in teaching and learning is hard because...

- Policies and mandates fall short…
  - Produce foot-dragging and reluctant compliance instead of learning and internal commitment
- Real change requires skilled and savvy leadership
- Colleges and universities come with many brakes and few accelerators

Leadership and Sensemaking

- The hardest part about leading in colleges and universities is sensemaking -- knowing what’s going on.
- The second hardest part is doing anything about what’s going on.
- What’s going on is “VUCA” (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous)
  - Multiplicity of tasks and goals (teaching, research, service)
  - Multiple disciplines and constituencies on and off campus
  - Goals are often vague, disputed, and hard to measure
  - Situated in a turbulent, not always-supportive environment
- Universities are designed to give individual academic units and scholars substantial autonomy ➔ adaptive at local level but inertial at the institutional level
  - Loosely coupled — hard to get the whole herd moving in any particular direction
  - Fractionation: competing values and ideologies ➔ political strife
Images: How university leaders describe their work

Leaders’ images of academic leadership
- “Herding cats.”
- “Rowing without an oar.”
- “Driving nails into a wall of pudding.”
- “Pushing a pea uphill with your nose.”
- “Hanging wallpaper in a gale with one arm tied behind your back.”
What is leadership?

Leadership is...

- A relationship of mutual influence
- Leading to collective effort
- In the service of shared or compatible purposes and values
- In a context of uncertainty and conflict

Reframing:
Choosing to view the same thing from more than one perspective
Reframing:
Some say love, it is a river, that drowns the tender reed.
Some say love, it is a razor, that leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love, it is a hunger, an endless, aching need.
I say love, it is a flower, and you its only seed.

Leadership Orientations

• Do your results seem right?
  • Are they different from what you expect?
  • Is something missing?
• Given the leadership challenges you face (and anticipate facing), will this pattern get you where you need to go?
A Rational/Structural View

- **Metaphor**: complex machine
- **Leader**: analyst, architect
- **Strategy**: do your homework, analyze, design, new approach, implement
- **Focus**: data, logic, structure, plans, policies
A Human Resource View

- **Metaphor:** Extended family
- **Leader:** servant, catalyst
- **Change strategy:** build relationships, listen, educate, be open, empower others
- **Focus:** skills, attitudes, teamwork, communications

A Political View

- **Metaphor:** jungle
- **Leader:** advocate, negotiator
- **Change strategy:** map terrain, create agenda, network, attract allies, defuse opposition, negotiate
- **Focus:** build a power base, get access, influence key players
Lincoln and the 13th Amendment

- Lincoln issued Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 under his authority as Commander in Chief; it applied only to the ten states of the confederacy.
- Lincoln and many others doubted that the proclamation would survive a legal challenge after the war and believed a constitutional amendment was the only sure way to end slavery.
- The 13th Amendment was passed by the Senate in April, 1864, but failed in the House in June.
- Passage was a plank in the Republican platform on which Lincoln was re-elected in November, 1864.

Scenes from Spielberg's *Lincoln*:

- Part I: Lincoln meets members of the “Seward Lobby,” political operatives engaged by Secretary of State William H. Seward to rope in Democratic support in the House.
- Part II: Alexander Coffroth (D-PA) pays a call on Thaddeus Stevens (R-PA), an anti-slavery zealot and leader of the “Radical Republicans” in Congress.
3 P’s of Change in Colleges and Universities

- Patience
- Persistence
- Process

A Symbolic View

- **Metaphor:** theater, temple
- **Leader:** prophet, poet
- **Change strategy:** reframe, use self as symbol, stage rituals and ceremonies, tell stories, create drama
- **Focus:** meaning, belief, faith
Qualities of Great Leadership

- Focus
- Passion
- Wisdom
- Courage
- Integrity

A closing thought...

"Si me preguntan qué es mi poesía, debo decirles no sé; pero si le preguntan a mi poesía, ella les dirá quién soy yo."

--Pablo Neruda

[If you ask me what my poetry is, I have to tell you I don't know; but if you ask my poetry, she will tell who I am.]

• Our work tells who we are
• Our leadership defines our legacy
• Make it a good one