

Operating Capacities

Communications & Engagement

Putting observed practices to work

This activity walks you and your team through a collection of observed practices — good ideas from lean institutions that are making progress in narrowing attainment gaps and increasing student success. Let them serve as a source of inspiration for brainstorming.

Observed practice

Create mechanisms to revise policies that are not in the interest of student progression; remove barriers to success.

To discuss

- What institutional, particularly departmental, policies can act as barriers to graduation?
 - Why do these policies exist (i.e., what were they initially solving for)?
 - How might we review and revise each policy? Who should be involved?
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Observed practice

Confirm that key messages are disseminated across all levels of the organization; information about change is delivered top-down, rather than contained at just the executive level, and it is adjusted as necessary at various planning stages.

To discuss

- **What's considered a key message at our institution?**
 - **Who gets to generate a key message (map out the entire process for several recent messages)?**
 - **Who receives these messages and how?**
 - **Is our current way or ways of sharing information working?**
 - **What other ways might we better share information (e.g., text, in addition to emailing, students important registration information).**
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Observed practice

Create opportunities to send and receive feedback across the institution (e.g., climate surveys), and then take actionable steps to address this feedback

To discuss

- **How do we send and receive feedback at our institution?**
 - **How does feedback flow based on sender/receiver?**
 - **What does positive feedback look like at our institution? What about negative feedback?**
 - **How might we make the flow of feedback more efficient?**
 - **Has our institution done a climate survey?**
 - **How do we ensure that actionable follow-up steps happen?**
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Observed practice

Encourage cross-functional collaboration through inclusive working groups or task forces; institutional stakeholders are empowered to form groups to solve for specific problems and have access to leadership to share findings. Cross-functional stakeholders serve as change agents

To discuss

- **What cross-functional working groups and task forces do we have now? Are we missing any?**
 - **What individuals are currently involved in these groups? Is anyone or a particular community or perspective missing?**
 - **Is genuine collaboration happening? How do we know?**
 - **Are participants in these groups empowered to make real change?**
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Observed practice

Include faculty and staff as active partners in the transformation journey. Make sure faculty have ownership of and flexibility in areas related to academic content and instruction

To discuss

- **How might we bring faculty and staff along the transformation journey?**
 - **How can we show these groups that we value their expertise?**
 - **In particular, what points along our transformation journey involve academic content and instruction? Are faculty members involved at each of these points?**
 - **Which points matter most to faculty? Which matter most to staff? Which points matter to both groups?**
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Observed practice

Communicate clearly and often when introducing changes, and use multiple channels (e.g., town halls, emails) to make information accessible to all stakeholders

To discuss

- **What are our institution's channels for communication? How and how often does information flow through these channels?**
- **How do we know that they're effective?**
- **Are any channels missing? Does communication break down at any point? How do we know and what can be done to address such issues?**