



Applying an Improvement Mindset & Strategies to Authentic Engagement of Faculty & Staff

Accelerating progress, building a culture of co-ownership for student success

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OVERVIEW

- Why adopt an “Improvement” Approach to faculty & staff engagement?
- How to use improvement cycles to accelerate & improve your engagement efforts?
 - Choosing your focus/aim (Drafting a “Charter”)
 - Analyzing your challenges (Building a “Driver Diagram”)
 - Executing a 3-month improvement project (Planning a “90-day Cycle”)

Level-Set

What are we aiming at & why?

- A culture of true, widespread co-ownership of student-success efforts is something that can & must be built in order to achieve lasting gains on behalf of students.
- Change is hard under any circumstances, but people are significantly more effective, productive, reliable, thoughtful, optimistic and creative when they feel respected & supported.
- Leaders at every level have much more power to influence culture & climate than most typically realize or own.
- People, not ideas, make change.

Undergirding Assumptions

Applying an Improvement Mindset to Culture & Climate

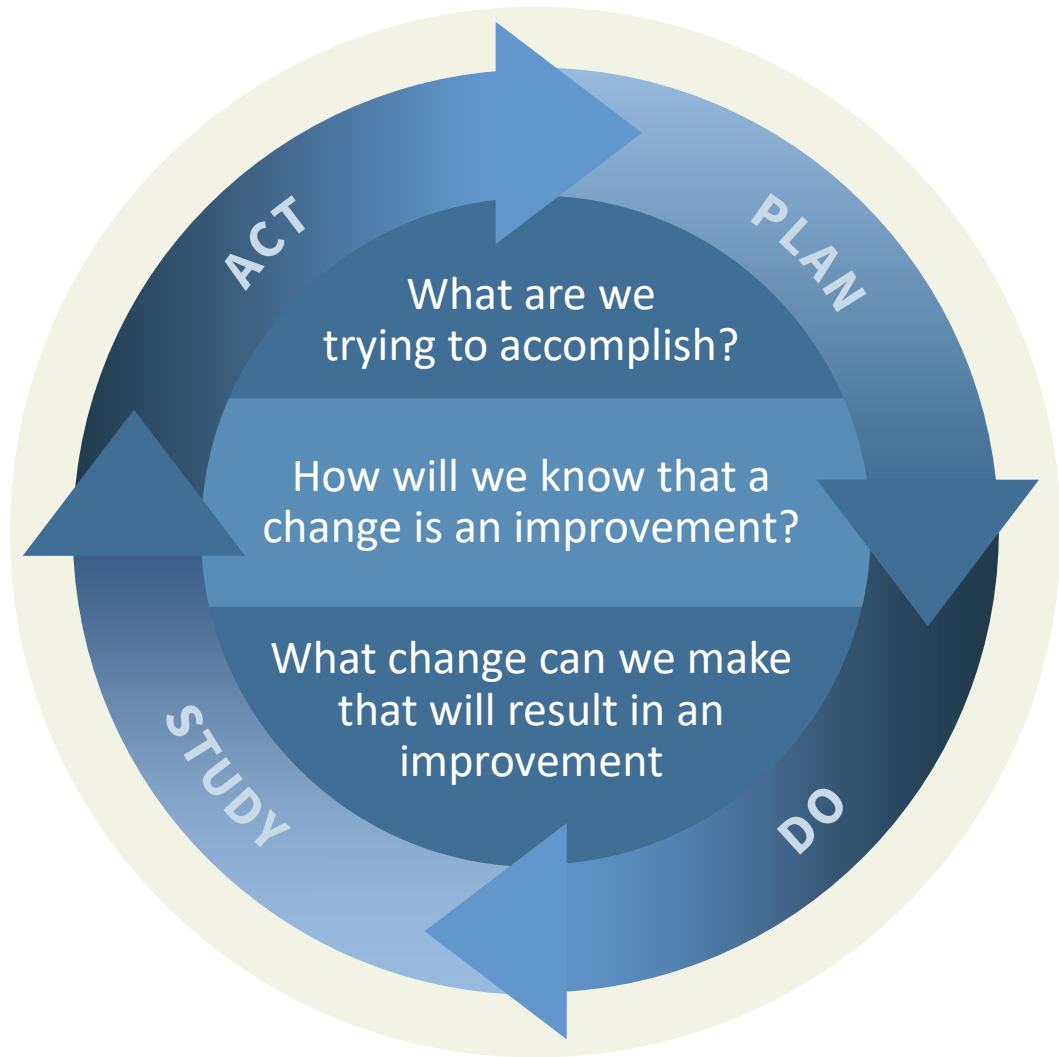
- Effective engagement isn't something one does and completes, rather it's ongoing work of building a sense of shared ownership and purpose.
- Successful internal engagement depends on meeting people where they are, and thus must begin with interests and values.
- Institutional culture and climate is largely the product of structures and habits.
- Your work rises and falls according to the quality of relationships that are cultivated in the context of implementing large-scale student success work.

Why an “Improvement” Approach?

- Begins with a concrete challenge, not an abstract one.
- Based on the evidence-based conviction that large complex problems can be broken down into ‘bite-sized’ pieces.
- Anchors practice in disciplined inquiry (90-day PDSA cycles).
- Is as relevant for ‘adaptive’ challenges, as it is for technical problems.

Why 90-Day Cycles? A Model of Improvement

- 90-day cycles provide a structure for learning, doing and improving. They also provide a project management ethos, intentionality, and accountability for project teams.
- 90-day cycles work best when they're kept simple, with manageable/realistic charters, and run on an ongoing basis with 1-2 weeks between cycles.
- 90-day cycles are designed to accelerate complex work by forcing early learning and allowing for, and encouraging comfort with, mid-course corrections.



Learn Fast, Fail Fast, Improve Quickly

Elements of 90-day Cycles



Drafting a “Charter” – What Do You Want to Do?

- What are we trying to accomplish? (What is the existing condition you hope to improve? What is the evidence that it needs improvement? How good, for whom, by when? How will it pay off?)
- What can we reasonably accomplish in a year? In 6 months? In 3 months?
- How will you know if the change is an improvement? (What are the progress measures? Any unintended consequences?)
- Whose input & support is essential for your progress? What are the likeliest barriers to garnering that support?

Charter Example

CASE: Initiative Fatigue Impeding Progress on Faculty/Staff Collaboration in Advising

What's the problem & what are we trying to accomplish? *Our efforts to build strong/effective processes for faculty & staff collaboration in better advising students around career exploration, program selection, internships/employment are slowed by active & passive resistance from both faculty & staff. It's our hypothesis, based on listening to colleagues/observing behavior/reviewing relevant literature in organizational development that our college suffers from a feeling of "initiative fatigue" around our guided pathways work. We believe we can improve this condition, and that by doing so we will accelerate progress on knitting our advising processes on behalf of better outcomes for students.*

What can we reasonably accomplish in 3 months? *We believe that in 3 months we can 1) get a complete, nuanced picture of the factors impeding advising redesign as part of our guided pathways work, 2) generate a mutually agreed upon list of priorities for addressing leading challenges manifesting as initiative fatigue, 3) bolster confidence in leadership by visibly working to listen to those who are closest to students and most impacted by our student success reforms and 4) begin to provide better support to faculty, staff and administrators tasked with refining or redesigning our advising processes within the context of the guided pathways model.*

How will we know if we're improving? *If we do it right, we expect to see faculty and staff expressing gratitude for our taking the time to address root challenges in a way that honors their expertise/commitment. This would be a key progress indicator that we are capable of improving morale. Achieving consensus among the leadership team about the nature and relative importance of the challenges contributing to initiative fatigue will be another key progress indicator for us. Most ambitiously, we believe that in 3 months we can use this work to establish a widely agreed upon plan for removing or mitigating barriers to successful implementation of a refined or redesigned advising model.*

Whose input & support is essential for our progress? What are the likely barriers to that support? *A wide cross-section of our college community – faculty, staff and administrator implicated in advising redesign will be engaged deeply and their frontline expertise will be the source of our learning. The extent to which low morale has contributed to a culture of blame, we anticipate this ethos being a challenge that we will have to overcome through listening, empathy and action-oriented focus.*

From Charter to Action: Driver Diagrams

A good driver diagram...

- ... forces delineated articulation of key challenges.
- ... serves as the theory of action to guide the creation of an effective 90-day plan.
- ... helps translate a high-level improvement goal into a logical set of underpinning activities or projects.
- ... captures the scope of leading challenges in a snapshot.
- ... can be a powerful formative assessment and continuous improvement tool (if used well).

Driver Diagram Example

CASE: Initiative Fatigue Impeding Progress on Faculty/Staff Collaboration in Advising

Absence of unifying vision for how faculty & staff collaboration in advising 'fit' within broader guided pathways model & vision

- Identify impediments to senior leadership prioritizing and communicating effectively about the college's vision of an ideal advising model
- Connect advising redesign to the strategic plan and make visible as a vital piece of the college's ability to achieve its mission

Lack of coordination across different student success initiatives under the guided pathways umbrella that pull faculty & staff in many directions

- Map all guided pathways initiatives to better understand dependencies, resource challenges, impacts on divisions, etc.
- Create focused, silo-spanning conversations to help leadership of student services, academic functions and operations better understand what improved collaboration in advising means & entails

Insufficient supports for those tasked with implementing new forms of collaboration between faculty & staff

- Engage in listening/dialogue with mid-level managers, front-line faculty & staff implicated in improving collaboration across academic divisions & student affairs
- Carefully distinguish between unmet PD/training needs, staffing shortfalls, communications breakdowns, and perceived threats to the status or professional identities of the people being asked to collaborate more effectively

90-Day Cycle Template

30	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
60	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
90	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
	Revisit Driver Diagram, Summarize Cycle, Draft New Charter					

90-Day Cycle (partial example)

CASE: Initiative Fatigue Impeding Progress on Faculty/Staff Collaboration in Advising

30	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
	1) Map all initiatives underway around guided pathways				Template	
	2) Locate/connect advising priorities within initiative map & strategic plan					
	3) Document & assess effectiveness of senior leaders' case-making practices around advising redesign & pathways generally					
60	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
	1) Engage cross-functional team in deliberation about the initiative map & implications for implementation of advising priorities					
	2) Engage mid-level managers & front-line F&S in cataloguing support/training needs, communication challenges, engagement needs related to perceived threats					
	3) Re-engage cross-functional team in deliberation to make initial decisions about priorities for communication, engagement, training					
90	Activities	Owner	Due Date	Others implicated	Needs	Status
	1) Summarize leading takeaways, prioritize key messages & leading areas of need with respect to deeper engagement/training					
	2) Engage senior leaders in constructive, action-oriented deliberation about findings & implications for communication				Outside facilitation?	
	3) Deploy college-wide communications strategy to elevate F&S collaboration in advising within a comprehensive vision			Comms team		
	4) Final prioritization & resourcing of PD/training needs, draft next 90-day cycle charter					



Thank you.
(and onward!)

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