Organization Intervention
CHANGING CENTRAL UNIVERSITY: LARGE SCALE CHANGE
D. D. Warrick
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Copyright © 2006 D. D. Warrick

Colleges and universities are at a crossroads. Many will have to reinvent themselves to respond to the changing delivery and technology of education, and others will need to make significant changes to remain relevant and viable and to attract and retain dedicated students, faculty, staff, and sufficient resources. Otherwise, they will face the very real prospects of declining enrollments and resources and struggling to survive as a shrinking organization that is behind the times.

In short, those college and universities that are willing to make needed changes and invest in learning how to lead and manage change and build a culture that welcomes and effectively and quickly adapts to needed change will reap the rewards and the rest will reap the consequences of not changing or changing too slowly. Imagine, for example, the advantage a college or university would have if they had a clear vision and mission, clear strategic goals designed to help them succeed in today's changing times, united leaders skilled in transforming organizations, and faculty, staff, students, and supporters working together to create a great college or university. On the other hand, imagine what it would be like to work in an organization where budgets, resources, and programs are being slashed, and you may be the next to go!

The Challenge:
Accomplishing Transformational Change in a Setting Rarely Designed for Change

The dilemma is that colleges and universities are not typically designed for change. They are staffed by independent minded, free thinking faculty who operate somewhat like independent contractors rather than team players committed to the organization's goals and who often distrust their leaders. They also tend to have unusually bureaucratic, regulated, and slow moving structures and governance procedures that make it difficult to change without endless meetings attended by people with differing agendas. Add to this the relatively autonomous department design with few incentives to collaborate, and it is easy to see why change is so difficult. In fact, a viable question to consider is, Can colleges and universities be changed and transformed?

Overlooked Resources for Making Needed Changes

The irony about the struggle colleges and universities have with change is that they often have within their walls some of the best expertise available regarding organization development, leading and managing change, and building high performance organizations that get great results. Many departments, such as Business, Public Administration, Education, Psychology, Sociology, and Communications teach these subjects, and some colleges and universities are well known for their executive education seminars on these subjects. Curiously, most of the top experts and authors in the world on these subjects are college and university faculty members. While colleges and universities rarely avail themselves of these resources that may sit at their doorsteps, it should be emphasized that the expertise needed to help them make needed changes

is available, whether internal or external, and often at a cost that is far less than the alternatives they are likely to choose and that are unlikely to succeed in adapting to changing times.

The Case of Central University

Central University is a case in point of a university that recognized the need for change and decided to launch an all-out effort to change and position itself for future success. The university has an overall enrollment approaching 30,000 with approximately 20,000 students on campus and 10,000 students involved in off-campus programs. It is a regional university recently reclassified as a doctoral research university. It now has 25 degree options and 8 doctoral programs and is trying to gain more national and international recognition and status. Its College of Extended Learning (CEL), with more than 60 locations throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, is one of the leading and largest providers of off-campus programs in North America.

Three-and-a-half months prior to the intervention, the university board of directors appointed a new president. His predecessor was 71 and was an accountant by background. He was much more of a manager than a leader, and, while he made a number of valuable contributions during his tenure as President, he also left a university that was somewhat bureaucratic and resistant to change. Changes in the board resulted in a visionary and proactive board that was committed to building a pace-setting university. They diligently sought a new president they thought could do the job.

The board surprised many people by selecting a new president who was only 34 at the time of his appointment. He was a very energetic, focused, goal-oriented leader who understood the importance of relationship building and who was by nature humble, approachable, and engaging to be around. At 27 he had been named the acting president and shortly thereafter the president of a Silicon Valley university where he developed a strong partnership with the business community and excellent relationship with the faculty and was able to achieve a major turnaround in the success, growth, and funding of the university. He was then appointed president of a larger university and now was heading yet another much larger university.

In his first three months in office, the new president worked feverishly and passionately to create a simple and powerful vision for the university with the board who agreed on his objectives and what he would be held accountable for. He also worked hard to establish relationships in the legislature and business community and to visit with faculty, staff, and student groups on the campus and share his vision and listen to their ideas and concerns.

The Challenge

In many ways the university was treated like a step-child in the state university system. It ranked 12 out of 15 in per student funding and only recently had achieved doctoral program status. The university had a good reputation for providing a quality education and placed a strong emphasis on good teaching. However, it was not well prepared in terms of qualified faculty or facilities to move the university to a greater research role.

There was a lack of sophistication in how the university was run, and several key positions had not been staffed or had people in them who were questionable in terms of being willing and able to adapt to the new culture the president was trying to create. There was also

some question about the Provost, the second in command, and his fit for the new goals of the university. He was in the process of interviewing for a president's role elsewhere but had no offers. The campus needed to be made more attractive, and many of the classrooms and facilities were outdated. Some faculty members had to share office space because of limited space available. These problems were accentuated by the fact that the university had just built a first class indoor sports complex, and many of the faculty questioned the wisdom of the decision, given the other needs of the university.

Culturally, there was a lack of interest and experience in teamwork, and collaboration was lacking. There was considerable distrust of the administration, which was compounded by the fact that the faculty was unionized, and there were frictions between the union and the administration. Some faculty leaders were skeptical about the qualification of the new president and his vision for the university, although most were being quickly won over. The union arrangement included faculty and some staff, while those in leadership positions, such as Department Heads and Deans, were not. This made it difficult for leaders to lead and to have the authority to make needed changes. Overall, the culture was often described as slow, resistant to change, and having too much of an entitlement and traditional union mentality.

Given all of these challenges, and many others, and the President's sense of urgency to build a new culture and build a pace-setting university, the board encouraged the president to retain a consultant to help with the change process.

The Process

1. After three-and-a-half months on the job, the president contacted a consultant. After several conversations and proposals, the two agreed on a strategy that would meet the president's objectives of changing the culture, building commitment to change, preparing the top and middle level leaders to lead the change, and agreeing on the vision, mission, and goals that would make the university a pace-setting university.

2. The first step was to do an assessment of the university and the Executive Team (the team that reports to the President) based on the perceptions of the members of the Executive Team, Top Level Administrators, and Deans (36 people). This occurred after the President had been in office just over four months. A summary of the results is shown in Table 1. As shown in the summary, the overall average rating was 4.1 on a 1.0-7.0 scale with 7.0 being the highest possible score. The lowest items pertained to trust (2.4), morale (3.3), flexibility in responding to change (3.4), the role model provided by Top Management (3.4), the lack of clarity of the mission, values, and goals of the university (3.5), the level of bureaucracy in the university (3.5), and the lack of teamwork between departments (3.6). Ideally, it would have been preferable to survey the entire university. However, given the need for quick results, what the president was willing to do, and the resources available to invest in the change process, working with the top 36 and then involving faculty, staff, and student leaders was the chosen strategy.

3. The consultant spent two days at the university. The first day included interviews with Top Management, including the president and members of the Executive Team, and focus group interviews with Middle Management, including the top-level administrators and deans. This process produced valuable information and served as an opportunity to get to know the consultant and to build commitment to the change process. The second day included a debriefing

with the president followed by a debriefing with the Executive Team and a workshop that included Top and Middle Management. The agenda is shown in Exhibit 1. This was one of the few times this group had been together, and the workshop appeared to unite the group and break down some of the resistance to change, as well as provide leadership training, give the group an opportunity to evaluate and discuss the survey results, and develop a commitment to building the university into a pace-setting university. Foremost, the time together and time for open dialogue with the president and with one another increased the trust and confidence in the president, as well as the trust level between the participants. During the two days, the consultant also had an opportunity to work with the HR Director and work out ways to partner on follow-up efforts.

4. A month and a half later, the consultant met with the top and middle level managers for a two day Leadership Development and Planning Workshop designed to develop Transformational Leaders (leaders skilled in leading, championing change, and transforming organizations) and to provide the team with an opportunity to define the future vision, mission, core values, and distinctives for the university. The agenda is shown in Exhibit 2. This was a high energy and invigorating session that seemed quickly to establish a spirit of collaboration in the group. A follow-up team led by the Training Director had the responsibility of synthesizing the data generated in the workshop.

5. The next activity involving the consultant occurred two months later and was designed to assess how the rest of the university community viewed the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the university and to engage all parts of the university in the change process. Focus groups were chosen from faculty leadership, staff leadership, academic department chairs, employee group leaders (union leaders), and student leaders. The highlights of the interviews were summarized for each group and reported according to what they identified as Major Strengths and Major Opportunities for Improvement. A report of this information was given to the top and middle level managers and to the follow-up team led by the Training Director. The results were debriefed with the president as many interesting insights came out of the interviews, as well as issues that had not been previously surfaced or addressed.

6. One month after the previous visit the consultant made one more two day visit. The purpose was to involve the leaders from all levels of the university community in learning change skills and in applying the skills to helping change the university. Each of the focus groups was invited to attend the sessions, and others who were interested were invited as well.

A series of 1_ hour sessions was held on the first day to provide training in leading and managing change. On the second day, a series of 2 hour sessions were held to involve participants in evaluating the focus group results and to develop recommendations for the Executive Leadership Team. The agendas are shown in Exhibit 3. These sessions developed a commitment to change and produced a wealth of valuable ideas for the Executive Leadership Team to consider.

At the conclusion of these sessions, the consultant met with the top and middle level managers for a period of two hours to finalize the vision, mission, core values, and strategic goals of the university. It was incorrectly assumed that this would be a somewhat routine session since previous discussions had taken place and a follow-up team had been assigned to develop the final recommendations. People began to take and push for positions, and it became difficult

to manage as there were over 30 participants. Data were collected, and the information was given to the follow-up team to consider.

7. A final report was written that included the recommendations for improvement and change from each focus group, along with a rank order listing from each focus group on what was most important to the group.

Results

The formal part of this intervention lasted only six months and required a strategy of engaging large groups of people at strategic times and relying on internal change champions for follow-through assignments. The information reported in this case only scratches the surface of all that happened over the six months of the intervention. Many changes resulted from the change effort, including consistent reports of a significant change in culture that now encourages openness, collaboration, trust, and being much more action oriented. The president has continued his efforts to dialogue with faculty, staff, union leaders, student leaders, the business community, the legislature, and alumni. There have been significant gains in support from the business community and the legislature, and funding has improved. Efforts have been made to recruit research capable faculty and reward current faculty interested in research, and a Director of Research has been appointed to encourage research. Money has been invested in improving the appearance of the campus and in improving classrooms. Based on the recommendations of the students, some of the processes and activities affecting students are being better coordinated and performed. Union relations have improved considerably. Most important, the vision, mission, core values, and goals have been made much clearer throughout the university community.

What hasn't happened? The follow-up team concept has not worked as well as hoped, and the follow-up on the recommendations has been left more to the president to choose and implement changes rather than a planned effort based on a sound change process. No efforts have been made to build the Executive Leadership Team into a high performance top leadership team so they appear to be performing well but could likely do better. Fortunately, even though follow-up has not been as well planned and thorough as hoped for, a strong president who continues to talk to people and listen to people and who is a visionary leader who will be satisfied with nothing less than excellence and a strong HR Department and Training Director have perhaps made up for the lack of planned follow-up.

Table 1
Central University Summary Assessment Results

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

Averages:

ET	=	Rating of C UNIV by the Executive Team
ADM	=	Rating of C UNIV by the Top Level Administrators
DNS	=	Rating of C UNIV by the Deans
OA	=	Overall Average of C UNIV by All Raters Combined

Scale:	1.0 - 2.0	2.1 - 2.9	3.0 - 5.0	5.1 - 5.9	6.0 -7.0
	POOR	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	GOOD	OUTSTANDING

OVERALL RESULTS

	ET	ADM	DNS	OA
OVERALL AVERAGE	4.4	4.0	3.8	4.0
NUMBER OF RATERS	6	18	12	36

SUMMARY OF RESULTS BY CATEGORY

UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY	4.2
LEADERSHIP	4.1
VALUE-ADDED MANAGEMENT	4.1
UNIVERSITY STURCTURE	3.9
UNIVERSITY CULTURE	3.6
WORKING CONDITIONS	4.4
EMPLOYEE UTILIZATION/DEVELOPMENT	4.0
TEAMWORK	3.8
UNIVERSITY PROCESSES	4.1
RESULTS	4.1

HIGHEST RATINGS FOR C UNIV

The University is technologically up-to-date.	5.0
The University excels at providing superior service to students.	4.8
The University provides competitive wages and benefits.	4.6
The University is service oriented at all levels.	4.5
The University is effectively organized to achieve the best results.	4.5
The University has a strong commitment to excellence.	4.5
Excellent teamwork and cooperation exists "within" departments in the University.	4.5

A high level of trust exists throughout the University.	2.4
Morale in the University is high.	3.3
The University is flexible and responds quickly to opportunities and needed changes.	3.4
The Top Management Team provides an excellent role model for teamwork.	3.4
The mission, values, and goals of the University are clear to all employees.	3.5
The University operates efficiently with minimal red tape and bureaucracy.	3.5
Excellent teamwork and cooperation exists "between" departments in the University.	3.6
The University is a pace-setter that is the standard for others to follow.	3.7
The University seeks constant improvement and quickly learns from mistakes.	3.7
Managers are well trained in the latest thinking in management.	3.7

Exhibit 1
Central University Initial Workshop for Executives and Managers

---

POSITIONING THE UNIVERSITY FOR SUCCESS WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 12:30-4:30

WORKSHOP AGENDA

I.   Changing Times and the Need to Be a Pace-Setting University

II.   Preparing Personally for Success in Changing Times and the Importance of Developing Skills in Transformational Leadership (Skills in Leading, Championing Change, and Transforming Organizations)

III.   Overview of the Survey Results and Prioritizing of Major Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

IV.   Exploring What it Would Take for Central University to Be a Pace-Setting University

V.   Planning Next Steps and Appointing a Follow-Up Team to Work with the Executive Staff Team to Assure that Targeted Actions Get Accomplished

Exhibit 2
Leadership Development and Planning Workshop
For Executives and Managers

WORKSHOP PURPOSE
The purpose of this workshop is to develop transformational leaders who have the skills to lead the way in transforming Central University into a pace setting university that becomes the standard for others to follow.

DAY 1 AGENDA

I.   Introduction
      A. Challenge to Lead the Way by President Smith
      B. Workshop Overview
      C. Participant Objectives

II.   The Essentials for Success
      A. Participants Will Develop the Essentials It Will Take for Central University to Be a Pace-Setting University (For example, focused leadership, a willingness to work together for common goals, clear goals and plans etc.)

III. The Six Critical Skills for Future Leaders
      A. Transformational Leadership Skills (Skills in leading, championing change, and transforming organizations)
      B. Value-Added Management Skills
      C. People Skills
      D. Skills in Building High Performance Teams and Teamwork
      E. Skills in Leading and Managing Change
      F. Life Management

IV.   Transformational Leadership
      A. Distinguishing between Leadership and Management
      B. Great Things Are Possible When Leaders Lead
      C. What Followers Most Want from Leaders
      D. Thinking Like Leaders
      E. Acting Like Leaders
      F. The Shepherd Model of Leadership
      G. Planning Three Ways You Could Become a More Effective, High Impact Leader

V.   Value-Added Management
      A. Good Managers Think in Terms of How They Can Add Significant Value to the Organization through Their Management Skills
      B. The Changing Role of Managers
      C. The Importance of Developing a Sound Management Philosophy and a Sound Management System
      D. Planning Three Ways You Could Become a More Effective, Value-Added Manager

VI.   Developing Leadership Principles for Cornerstone
      A. The Participants Will Be Involved in Thinking of the Best Leadership and Management Practices and then Integrating These Thoughts into a Set of Leadership Principles for a Cornerstone that Leaders and Managers at All Levels of the University Can Use to Increase their Effectiveness

VIII. Refining The Cornerstone Vision, Mission, Core Values, And Distinctives

Exhibit 2 (Continued)

DAY 2 AGENDA

I. People Skills
    A. The Critical Role of People Skills in a Fast Moving and Changing Environment
    B. Understanding Human Behavior
    C. The Essential People Skills
    D. Changing Behavior
    E. Skills for Working with "People Challenges" and "Challenging People"
    F.   Practice in Working with People Challenges and Challenging People

II. Skills in Building High Performance Teams and Teamwork
    A. The Urgent Need for Teamwork and High Performance Teams
    B. A Systems Approach to Teamwork
    C. The Characteristics of a High Performance Team
    E. The Essentials of Developing a High Performance Team
    F. Developing Teamwork between Teams
    G. Evaluating Your Team and Developing a Plan for Building a High Performance Team and Improving Teamwork
       between Teams

III. Skills in Leading and Managing Change
    A. The Significant Impact Leaders Have on the Success or Failure of Organization Change and Transformation
    B. Why 70% or More of Organization Changes Fail and How to Achieve a 70% or More Success Rate
    C. Leading Change
    D. The Three Stages of Change and How to Manage the Change Process
    E. Transforming Organizations
    F. Practice in Planning Needed Change

IV. Leading and Managing Change at Cornerstone
    A. Prioritizing High Impact and Just-Do-It Changes at Cornerstone
    B. Assigning Teams to Develop Change and Implementation Plans and Developing Preliminary Action Plans

V. The Importance of Life Management in Turbulent and Opportunistic Times
    A. Living a Reasonably Balanced Life in a World Out of Control!
    B. Managing Stress in a High Stress World
    C. Managing Your Life and the Implications for You and Others

VI. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Exhibit 3
University Leaders Workshops

PREPARING UNIVERSITY LEADERS TO SUCCESSFULLY LEAD CHANGE
TUESDAY APRIL 11, 2001, 1/12 HOUR SESSIONS

8:00-9:30	Faculty Leadership	1:30-3:00	Academic Department Chairs
9:45-11:15	Student Leaders	3:00-5:00	Employee Group Leaders (Union)
11:30-1:00	Staff Leadership		

I.   Preparing for the Future
    A. Changing Times and the Implications for Universities
    B. Positioning the University for Success in Changing and Increasingly Competitive Times
    C. Preparing Personally for Success in Changing and Increasingly Competitive Times

II. Leading the Way
    A. United Leadership at all Levels around a Common Purpose Is the Number One Key to a Successful Future
    B. Why Leadership Is So Important
    C. Understanding Leadership
    D. What Followers Most Want from Leaders
    E. Identifying Best Leadership Practices for the University

III. Skills in Leading and Managing Change
    A. The Significant Impact Leaders Have on the Success or Failure of Organizations
    B. Why 70% or More of Organization Changes Fail and How to Achieve a 70% or More Success Rate
    C. Leading and Managing Change through the Three Stages of Change and Seven Steps in the Change Process
    D. Practice in Planning Change

IV. Wrap-Up

INVOLVING UNIVERSITY LEADERS IN RECOMMENDING CHANGES
WEDNESDAY APRIL 12, 2001, 2 HOUR SESSIONS
MORNING SESSION: 10:00-12:00   AFTERNOON SESSION: 1:00-3:00

I.   Purpose of the Session

II.   Overview of the Focus Group Results

IV.   What Is Most Important to Your Group and What Recommendations for Improvement Would You Make to
      the Executive Team?
    A. Meet with Your Group (Faculty Leadership, Staff Leadership, Staff Leadership, Academic Department Chairs,
        Employee Group), Elect a Team Leader and Spokesperson, and for Each Question Below, Brainstorm Ideas
        and Prioritize the Best Ideas
    B. What Is Most Important to Your Group (Rank Order the Top Five)?
    C. What Recommendations for Improvement Would You Make to the Executive Team (Rank Order the Top Five)?

V.   Addressing Key Issues at the University
    A. Meet in Mixed Groups (People from Various Groups) and Answer the Questions Below. Elect a Team Leader
        and Spokesperson, and for Each Question Below, Brainstorm Ideas and Prioritize the Best Ideas
    B. What Expectations Do You Ideally Have of University Leaders? List the Top 3-5 Expectations for Each of the
        Following:
        1. The President   3. Deans
        2. Vice Presidents   4. Department Heads
    C. What Would the University Culture Need to Be Like for the University to Be a High Performance, Action-
        Oriented University that is a Great Place to Work (Rank Order the Top 5 Characteristics)?
    D. What Would Most Improve Productivity and Effectiveness at the University (Rank Order 5)?
    E. What Are Some Innovative Ideas That Would Make The University Unique (Rank Order 5)?

VI. Wrap-Up
    A. The Urgent Need to Turn Talk and Planning to Action
    B. What Will You Do to Help the University Change?
    C. Striking While the Iron Is Hot! Change Now or Others Will Pass You by