Organizational Theory in Higher Education
Iowa State University Leadership Development

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My Perspective...

- Research on Student Success
- Assessing Effective Educational Experiences
- Using Data to Improve

Student Learning Outcomes

Transparency
Assessing Educational Quality

• Are students experiencing what matters for learning?
• Do institutions use data about student outcomes to make change?
NSSE measures student engagement through annually gathering valid, reliable information on the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to proven educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes.

- Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from college.
- Items represent behaviors associated with student learning and development.
NSSE

• Based in research on effective educational practices
• Designed and tested for validity & reliability
• Stable over time
• High credibility of self-reported data
• Over 275,000 students at 600+ institutions annually

Iowa State 2000 – 2009; 2011,2013 and FSSE 2003, 05, 06,08,11
Iowa State and NSSE

IR Reports and Surveys

FACULTY SALARY COMPARISONS

2003-2004 through 2013-2014
2002-2003 through 2012-2013
2001-2002 through 2011-2012

NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement was changed for the 2013 administration to reflect an increased understanding of what matters for student success, institutional improvement efforts, and properties of the NSSE survey itself. Compared to NSSE 2012, about a quarter of the items are new, a quarter remain unchanged, and half of the survey experienced some minor changes in wording. To see the updated survey please visit nsse.iub.edu/links/surveys.

The comparison group displayed in the snapshot consists of other institutions who have the same Carnegie Classification as ISU who also participated in NSSE 2013. Those institutions are:

- Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, PA)
- Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College (Baton Rouge, LA)
- Michigan State University (East Lansing, MI)
- Mississippi State University (Mississippi State, MS)
- North Dakota State University (Fargo, ND)
- Ohio State University, The (Columbus, OH)
- Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR)
- Tulane University of Louisiana (New Orleans, LA)
- University of Alabama in Huntsville (Huntsville, AL)
- University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR)
- University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH)
- University of Colorado Boulder (Boulder, CO)
- University of Connecticut (Storrs, CT)
- University of Houston (Houston, TX)
- University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS)
- University of Nebraska at Lincoln (Lincoln, NE)
- University of Oklahoma (Norman, OK)
- University of South Carolina Columbia (Columbia, SC)
- University of South Florida (Tampa, FL)
- University of Utah (Salt Lake City, UT)
- University of Washington-Seattle (Seattle, WA)

- 2013 NSSE Snapshot
- 2013 NSSE High-Impact Practices
- 2013 NSSE Administration Summary
- 2013 NSSE Response Rate FAQ
- 2013 NSSE Effect Size Guide
The goal of NSSE is not just to administer a survey but to foster evidence-informed improvement.
NSSE Objectives

- Focus on Practices that Matter
- Provide Student Engagement Data, Foster Action on Results
- Encourage Meaningful Comparisons, Action
- Compare over-time, measure improvement
- National Survey of Student Engagement

nsse.iub.edu
Purpose of Assessment:

• **To inform** – faculty and other decision-makers of the contributions & impact of program/unit

• **To prove** – demonstrate what program/unit is accomplishing

• **To support** – campus decision-making activities... program review, strategic planning, external accountability activities, accreditation

• **To improve** – provide feedback to determine how the program/unit can be improved

(Adapted from Maki, 2004; Suskie, 2009)
Does Assessment Make Colleges Better? Who Knows?

By Erik Gilbert

August 14, 2015

Does Assessment Make Colleges Better? Let Me Count the Ways

By Joan Hawthorne

August 19, 2015
Assessment focuses our attention on learning. That matters.
Why do we do Assessment?

- To compare performance to purpose
- A vehicle for improving what we care about most
- Review, renew, and re-imagine
- Investigate our students’ success
- To foster a culture of learning

At IOWA STATE
Calls to Improve Higher Education

• Reform on higher education agenda for nearly 30 years

• More recent insistent press for improvement

• Demands for accountability, data-informed decision-making, and evidence of quality have pushed colleges and universities to launch reform initiatives.
College Attainment Report: The Challenge is Urgent

• ALL colleges and universities must marshal the resources to make completion a priority

• **Change campus culture** to boost student success
  – Create student-centered culture
  – Improve the academic experience

• Institutions must take steps to increase the chances that students will be successful, and ensure that *students are active & engaged*

ACE College Attainment Report, January 23, 2013
What is on Iowa State’s improvement and reform agenda?
What do Challenges Demand?

Can colleges and universities respond to the pressure for reform?
“Colleges and universities tend to see themselves as entities that differ fundamentally from other organizations, but the reality is that the managerial skills required are very similar to those of other organizations.”

Agree or Disagree and Why?

Colleges & Universities are Complex Organizations

• Bess & Dee frame 4 challenges:
  – Environmental – external pressures
  – Structural – highly specialized
  – Interpersonal – webs of human interaction
  – Cultural – ritual, organizational symbols
Table 1.1   Historical and Current Tensions in Higher Education

Specialization versus Integration
(particularly as expressed in the curriculum)

Professionalism versus Adaptability
(particularly as expressed in faculty relations)

Individualism versus Community
(particularly as expressed in student life)

Interdependence versus Independence
(particularly as expressed in academic freedom)

Flexibility versus Structure
(particularly as expressed in organizational forms)

Public versus Private Good
(particularly as expressed in public financing of higher education)

Competitive versus Collaborative
(particularly as expressed in administrative practice)
Organizations and Organizational Theory

• “Organization” first used in 1930s to define structure through which individuals cooperate systematically to conduct business.

• Organizational theory is the sociological study of formal social organizations, and their relationship with the environment in which they operate... it complements studies of organizational behavior and human resource studies.
Organizational Schools of Thought


- **Carnegie** – Herbert Simon – bounded rationality and satisficing; James March – risk orientation

- **Human Relations** – Abraham Maslow – motivation based on human needs; Hawthorne studies at Western Electric

- **Post modernists** – Peter Senge – 5th Discipline (1990); organizational systems theory, learning organization. Margaret Wheatley- chaos
Organizational Theory & Higher Education

• Provides heuristic, a way to think about colleges and universities and what goes on in institutions

• Enhances understanding of “how colleges work” and approaches to managing and leading
Bess & Dee: Three Perspectives on Organizational Theory

• Positivist
• Social constructivist
• Postmodern

Which perspective resonates for you?
Apply the 3 Perspectives to this issue:

A liberal arts university (4,000 students) has experienced a slow & steady enrollment decline. It’s general education distribution requirement is 40 yrs. old: students see it as “something to get through as fast as possible,” few faculty want to teach, and nearly everyone agrees it isn’t meeting today’s student needs. After 3 years of GE task force effort, no alternative proposal is in sight, and even the faculty committed to working for change are disillusioned.
How Colleges Work

- Effective administration may depend not on overcoming it [the chaos of an open system] but on accepting and understanding it” (41)

- “The beliefs held by administrators and others who influence institutional life affect how they behave, how they interpret their experiences, and even what they ‘see’” (xiv)

Birnbaum’s Models of Organizational Functioning

- **Collegial** – sharing power
- **Bureaucratic** – rational structure
- **Political** – power/resources/competition
- **Anarchical** – finding meaning among autonomous actors
- Integration into **cybernetic** model – self-regulating system
Birnbaum advocates nonlinear thinking in circles and subsystems for administrators... arguing that an effective administrator is more interested in understanding the system than ruling over it with an iron fist.

A well-run college is managed by those who can identify patterns.
Reframing Organizations: Bolman & Deal

Structural Frame

Human Resources Frame

Political Frame

Cultural/Symbolic Frame

Four Frames
Bolman & Deal Four Frames

*Lenses* — focus, filter some things and allow others to pass through, help us order experience.
Structural Frame

• From sociology and management science
• Emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships
• Structures (Organization charts) fit organization’s environment and technology
• Responsibilities, rules, policies, procedures
Human Resource Frame

- From psychology
- Organization as an extended family
- Individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations
- Capacity to learn—and capacity to defend old attitudes and belief
Political Frame

- Rooted in political science
- Organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles
- Different interests competing for power and resources
- Conflict—differences in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles
- Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, compromise, coalitions
Cultural/Symbolic Frame

• Draws from social and cultural anthropology
• Organizations as tribes, theaters, or carnivals
• Culture—rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths
• Organization is theater—actors play role while audiences form impressions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Human Resource</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Cultural/Symbolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor for</strong></td>
<td><strong>Factory or</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jungle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Carnival, temple, theater</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Machine</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment</td>
<td>Needs, skills, relationships</td>
<td>Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics</td>
<td>Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Image of Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Social architecture</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Attune structure to task, technology, environment</td>
<td>Align organizational and human needs</td>
<td>Develop agenda and power base</td>
<td>Create faith, beauty, meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization Ethic</strong></td>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
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Source: Bolman & Deal (1997), p. 15 & p. 344
Example of Frames in Practice: Decision Making

- **Structure** — rational sequence to produce the right decision
- **Human** — open process to promote commitment
- **Political** — opportunities to gain/exercise power, bargain, negotiate
- **Cultural/Symbolic** — ritual to confirm values, rely on organizational stories
Applying the Frames to a Campus Strategic Planning Effort

What approaches to starting this effort illustrate these frames?

— Structure
— Human Resource
— Political
— Cultural/Symbolic
Example of Frames in Practice: Strategic Planning

- **Structure** — strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources
- **Human** — gathering to promote participation
- **Political** — arenas to air conflict and realign power, town halls
- **Cultural/Symbolic** — rituals to signal beginning of process, responsibility and to negotiate meaning

Suggests that leaders display leadership behaviors in one of four types of frameworks

Four Frames

FACTORY,
FAMILY,
JUNGLE,
THEATER

The holistic implementation of all 4 frames optimizes success
## Getting Back to Change....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Structural</th>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barriers to Change</strong></td>
<td>Loss of clarity and stability, confusion, chaos</td>
<td>Anxiety, uncertainty, feelings of incompetence, neediness</td>
<td>Disempowerment, conflict between winners and losers</td>
<td>Loss of meaning and purpose, clinging to the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential Strategies</strong></td>
<td>Communicating, realigning and renegotiating formal patterns and policies</td>
<td>Training to develop new skills, participation and involvement, psychological support</td>
<td>Creating arenas where issues can be renegotiated and new coalitions formed</td>
<td>Creating transition rituals: mourning the past, celebrating the future</td>
</tr>
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Reframing Change – What perspectives do you see? What strategies lend insight into the challenge?

A liberal arts university (4,000 students) has experienced a slow & steady enrollment decline. It’s general education distribution requirement is 40 yrs. old: students see it as “something to get through as fast as possible,” few faculty want to teach, and nearly everyone agrees it isn’t meeting today’s student needs. After 3 years of GE task force effort, no alternative proposal is in sight, and even the faculty committed to working for change are disillusioned.
Change is Hard. But, Institutions Are Doing It!!!

Stay focused on IMPROVING Student LEARNING
“Positive Restlessness”

Q. What distinguishes institutions that are unusually effective in terms of student success and educational effectiveness?

A. Continuous Improvement, Constant Tinkering;
Data aid decision making; drive for richer improvements & deeper outcomes;
Systematically collected information about student & institutional performance validates anecdotes and personal experiences.

(from Student Success in College, 2010)
Organizational Theory in Higher Education

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Insights?

Questions?

Concerns?

THANK YOU!