



The Future of Leadership in Higher Education

The future of higher education will be filled with pervasive complexity, ambiguity, and change, requiring a different leadership skill set. Yesterday's approaches will not be sufficient for the challenges of tomorrow--declining resources, eroded public trust, new technologies, and shifting demographics. What are the skills that these leaders will need to be successful? How do we prepare tomorrow's leaders today? Join us in Denver this March for a unique opportunity to explore these essential questions and begin to define what tomorrow's leaders must look like.

WHERE: Denver, CO

WHEN: Friday, March 13, 2015 | 9 am-5 pm (Breakfast, lunch, breaks included)

COST: \$195

3 REASONS YOU NEED TO ATTEND

1. An exclusive opportunity to step out of the day-to-day and engage deeply and creatively with what future leaders will look like in higher education
2. You'll meet and work alongside like-minded innovators and build a collegial and diverse network
3. Leave with tangible ideas that can inform how you lead your institution today and how you develop tomorrow's leaders

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

We want to convene a group of forward-thinking practitioners, those who are dealing with the real issues facing higher education on a day-to-day basis. We need to hear the perspectives of both senior leaders and those newest to the field, and we want to include both academic and non-academic administrators. Board members and state officials are also encouraged to attend.

HOW THE MEETING WILL BE STRUCTURED

We will use the "open space" large group methodology to ensure a robust and meaningful discussion. Open space is a special type of meeting design that allows participants to create the agenda and lead the subsequent sessions using an overall purpose or theme-- in our case, the future of leadership in higher education. The meeting format has been used thousands of times around the world, with proven results.



HIGHER ED IS FACING ADAPTIVE CHANGES: WHY THIS CONVERSATION? WHY RIGHT NOW?

By Patrick Sanaghan and Jillian Lohndorf

THE CHANGES YOU FACE NOW ARE DIFFERENT THAN THE CHANGES IN THE PAST

We're well-equipped, in higher education, to meet technical change head-on. We're often less well-equipped for *adaptive change*. This is a distinction Ron Heifetz drew, first in his thought-provoking book *Leadership without Easy Answers* (1998) and later with Martin Linsky in *Leadership on the Line* (2002).

With *technical* challenges, situations arise where current knowledge, expertise and resources are enough to deal effectively. A technical problem is not necessarily trivial or simple but its solution lies within the organization's current repertoire of resources (such as updated technology, takeaways from past experience, or decisions to invest more money or people).

With *adaptive* challenges, there are fewer clear answers. Adaptive challenges cannot be solved with current knowledge and expertise, but require experimentation, risk taking, creativity and the ability to use "failures" as learning opportunities.

The problem is that we too often treat adaptive challenges as technical ones.

On top of this, many people tend to resist or deny adaptive challenges (e.g., Khan Academy, MOOCs, mobile technology in the classroom) because these challenges could dramatically change the way they think and act. Often, these people expect their leaders to come up with the solutions to the adaptive challenges because that's *their* job. Unfortunately, leaders will be unable to do this because they will need a collaborative and collective approach to solution finding that will authentically engage multiple stakeholders across their campuses. The challenge is: how do you actually do that?

We need to start by grounding ourselves in **three critical suppositions**, understand how adaptive change requires a **different leadership skill set**, and then have the **critical conversation** needed to move our institutions forward.

3 CRITICAL SUPPOSITIONS

When you, as leaders, face adaptive challenges, you need to start with these three suppositions:

1. **Complexity and ambiguity will be the new normal.** There are no easy answers anymore; only the tough, complex and sticky challenges remain.
2. **The pace of change will continue to increase** over time.
3. Leaders will have to be able to **“foster adaptation,”** (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) and help their people develop “next practices” that will enable their organizations to thrive in a complex environment. Resilience, agility and a tolerance for ambiguity will be essential leadership qualities.

A DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP SKILL SET

“The organizational adaptability required to meet a relentless succession of challenges is beyond anyone’s current expertise. No one in a position of authority – none of us in fact – has been here before.” (Heifetz, Graham & Linsky 2009)

“Often organizations try and discourage or minimize differences but that only stifles the free flow of ideas and the rich discussion innovation needs.” (Hill, Branden, Trulove & Lineback 2014)

The core leadership qualities of character, integrity, competence and compassion will remain but, in a rapidly changing world filled with pervasive complexity and ambiguity, leaders will also have to:

- **Build cross-cultural bridges** with diverse groups in service of their institution’s mission and values to identify best practices and the share expertise across the campus and beyond. This will include transferring knowledge across institutional boundaries and silos to meaningfully involve campus stakeholders so that they can help produce creative solutions to complex campus issues (e.g., student retention; branding; visioning; student debt).
- **Create a sense of authentic community** across their campus. This goes beyond “school spirit,” toward a deep sense of shared values and a sense of purpose.
- **Deal with complex and thorny issues** in a way that brings people together rather than polarizing them.
- **Understand the power of true collaboration** and how difficult it is to achieve.
- **Have the courage to take intelligent risks** and try creative and different approaches to solving campus problems and challenges.
- **Tolerate ambiguity** and a little “messiness.” As campus stakeholders share ideas, and even disagree about issues and approaches, it can get messy. With collaborative practices, there is a great deal of trial and error, and mistakes will be made as people work together to create coherent solutions, share best practices and work together on common goals. As leaders, you will need the emotional capacity and resilience to tolerate uncertainty, frustration, even pain.

- **Admit they don't have all the answers** and help create the opportunities that will engage people's thinking, stimulate creativity and innovation and even make us confront our deeply held beliefs and assumptions.
- **Support collective and coherent action** toward shared goals, including actually implementing the campus strategic plan. The track record for implementing strategic plans is dismal. Often they are well written, but when it comes to execution, not much is achieved (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Hrebiniak, 2005, 2013; Kezar & Lester, 2009). Collaborative practices can build a genuine commitment to implementation and execution (Sanaghan 2009).
- **Help other campus leaders make better decisions**, utilizing multiple perspectives, experience and information when seeking coherent solutions to tough challenges and issues.
- **Identify the "synergistic" opportunities** that are often dormant or hidden and elevate them so they can be acted upon.
- **Avoid redundant efforts**, which are unavoidable unless people throughout the campus understand what other people are doing in their silos, divisions and departments.

You will need to consciously and deliberately develop the capacity and resourcefulness of people throughout your campus, push responsibility down where it belongs and understand that the collaborative intelligence of your people is one of the most powerful strategic assets you possess. Hansen (2009); Kanter (1989); Adler, Heckscher & Prusak (2011); Sanaghan & Aronson (2009); McChesry, Covey & Huling (2012); Sanaghan (2009).

A CRITICAL CONVERSATION

Given the speed of change and complexity of the challenges we face, there is urgency to shape the future skillset and begin preparing tomorrow's leaders in dramatically different ways. We invite you to join us in Denver, CO on March 13, 2015 to be part of this important meeting.

<http://www.academicimpressions.com/forums-innovation-future-leadership-higher-education>