

Change Facilitators Committee Final Report and Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Bold Aspirations, the university strategic plan, and *Changing for Excellence*, the administrative efficiency study, are guiding KU's path to being recognized as a top-tier public international research university. Each effort focuses on how KU can best achieve its long term vision, and both efforts involve changes that would engage collaborators from across campus during the implementation process. To be successful, significant organizational change requires knowledge of the climate and players, and an understanding of the capacity for change of both.

Thus, the Change Facilitators Committee was convened in fall 2011 to build the capacity for organizational change at the University of Kansas. The committee was charged to build the capacity for organizational change at KU by 1) applying knowledge from a variety of academic fields within the climate of KU and 2) providing educational materials and facilitation assistance to campus leaders and groups tasked with effecting the changes that determine the future course of our university.

Applications and nominations for committee members were sought in September 2011 for individuals who were interested in helping campus change leaders and who had the ability to see the big picture for KU and were already established effective communicators with a variety of constituent groups. (See *Appendix I for membership.*)

The following resources were developed:

- An Organizational Change Workshop
 - This 90-minute workshop was helpful to deans, directors, chairs, change leaders, facilitators, and members of groups tasked with implementing change at KU and illuminated strategies for implementing change and reasons for resistance to change. (See *Appendix II for evaluative workshop assessment and additional topics requested.*)
- Facilitation Services
 - These services were provided to groups working on organizational change projects. The facilitator's job was to support everyone to do their best thinking and practice. To do this, the facilitator encouraged full participation, promoted mutual understanding and cultivated shared responsibility. By supporting everyone to do their best thinking, facilitators enabled group members to search for inclusive solutions and to build sustainable agreements. (See *Appendix III for more about the change process.*)

Accomplishments

The Organizational Change Workshops:

Committee members began by reaching out to KU faculty and staff who engage in research relevant to organizational change or who have successfully applied change management principles in their own units. The committee thus gained awareness of significant research findings from a variety of academic fields that contributed to our education program (see *Appendix IV for a listing of the literature used*) as well as a deeper understanding of the readiness of the KU environment for cultural change (see *Appendix V*). Additionally, those who were asked to participate expressed tremendous satisfaction in being able to apply their academic expertise and administrative know-how to the change process. Many of those we talked to indicated this was the first time they had been asked to help contribute to a solution at their home institution and deeply appreciated the opportunity to do so. Over 90 individuals

participated in interviews, assisted with the development of workshop content, or provided feedback on pilot workshops that helped hone future workshop offerings.

Nearly 800 participants in more than 40 workshops explored the concepts of successful organizational change, resistance to change (and how it can be helpful), and ideas for helping the community move forward during a time of great and rapid organizational change at KU. All levels of KU administrators, faculty and staff participated. Instructors provided examples of each basic concept that related to the work of each particular audience. This approach resulted in a common view of organizational change process across academic and administrative units.

Facilitation Services:

To appropriately support change leaders, a group of 31 volunteers were trained as facilitators, learning how to manage group process in order to ensure effective participation. Twelve of these facilitators were deployed to work with 7 different groups, taking care to match a facilitator’s style and knowledge-base with groups and leaders with which they would be most effective. For example, two facilitators who are members of the faculty worked with the group tasked with redesigning the core curriculum, a group comprised of faculty members and administrators. Other groups included one focused on funding for doctoral education, a steering committee for broad-reaching redesign of facilities services, and several supporting groups carrying out that redesign (administrative processes, custodial services, energy and sustainability, an electronic work-order system, and a zone maintenance approach). Leaders of these change efforts expressed great appreciation for the assistance provided by facilitators.

Recommendations

As typical of learning organizations, it is important to review both successes and opportunities for improvement in the change process. Participants in various change processes were interviewed to determine their perceptions of the process (not the success of their particular change). The University has the opportunity to improve our ability to be successful with organizational change by implementing the following recommendations (*see Appendix VI for additional detail, including quotes from the interviews*).

<p>1. Improve Process to Appoint Committees and Task Forces</p>	<p>It is recommended that the University carefully consider group size, criteria for selection, schedule, and timing of group work in relation to the academic calendar before embarking on wide-scale change efforts.</p>
<p>2. Develop Specific Charges</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Provost’s Office consistently develop clear and specific charges and allow time in the process for the group to understand the charge in relation to the mission and values of KU.</p>
<p>3. Provide Three Types of Support Required for Success</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Provost’s Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide <i>content support</i> for all groups being asked to lead substantial change • ensure administrative staff have the skill sets to provide appropriate <i>administrative support</i> for the topic/context

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a pool of faculty and staff who are qualified <i>facilitators</i>.
4. Improve Physical Space for Group Work	It is recommended that the Provost's Office work with campus units to improve space for group work.
5. Enhance Targeted Communication	Communication in the change process is critical. Leaders should consistently communicate with transparency, in audience-appropriate language and at the time of need. It is important to provide a rationale for the change and the impact of the change through story telling.
6. Prepare Middle Managers	Middle managers (academic and administrative) play a critical role in change processes. Sustained focused effort on their development and education is needed along with allocation of resources aimed at programs that deliver a return on that investment.
7. Embrace Resistance to Change as an Opportunity to Engage with the Community	Communications that appear to be resistance should be viewed as an asset. When such communications are shared with leaders, this is healthier for an organization than resistance that is being articulated informally. Leaders should engage with resisters to learn what contributions they might make to the change strategy.

Conclusion

The University has accomplished significant change in the past year and is positioned to continue that success into the future. Critical knowledge has also been gained regarding KU's institutional climate and aptitude for change (*see Appendix V*). We can build on that knowledge by further improving our communication between and among internal stakeholder groups, considering audience needs when developing communication channels and messaging, providing effective support and space for change processes, and addressing the development and education needs of staff, particularly academic and administrative managers.

Appendix I

Members of the Change Facilitators Committee were:

Marilu Goodyear, Chair of Change Facilitators Committee and Director, School of Public Affairs and Administration

Stuart Day, Chair and Associate Professor, Spanish and Portuguese

Dennis Grauer, Associate Professor, School of Pharmacy

Curtis Marsh, Program Director, KU Info and the Learning Studio

Jenny Mehmedovic, Assistant to the Provost

Peggy Palmer, Administrative Professional, Office of the Vice Provost of Student Affairs

Brian Patton, Custodial Supervisor, Facilities Operations

Kathy Pryor, Managing Director and Budget Director of University Theatre

Noel Rasor, Assistant Director, School of Public Affairs and Administration

Margaret Severson, Professor, School of Social Welfare

Rebecca Smith, Executive Director of Communications, Advancement and Administration, KU Libraries

Tom Volek, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, School of Journalism

Appendix II

Workshop Assessment and Additional Topics Requested

Participants responded to evaluations in which they were asked to rank the workshop on a five point scale with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The responses were generally positive, with the highest marks received for workshop content that was relevant/useful (4.3) and a subject that was valuable (4.15). The lowest ratings (although still above average at 3.11) consistently revolved around the lack of sufficient time to cover all the content provided.

In response to needs reflected in the evaluations, an additional workshop was created and offered to audiences who indicated an interest in effective policy and rule-writing. The workshop that was created is based on current research in public administration (DeHart-Davis, 2009), and explores the five primary elements of effective rules and how to foster effective rule-making and enforcement.

In addition, the Libraries identified the concept of Appreciative Inquiry as especially helpful. Appreciative Inquiry involves starting a change process by appreciating what's working well and cultivating an environment that allows those things to thrive. A workshop on this topic is currently offered through Human Resources Learning and Development. See http://www.hr.ku.edu/training/info/course_details.aspx?course=152

Appendix III

The Change Process

In addition to providing workshops on organizational change, the Change Facilitators Committee deployed a process to assist groups with managing their change project. The process was designed to support the change leader in working with the group to build consensus toward a change goal. The key elements of the process included:

- **A change sponsor** who can define the purpose and nature of the change
- **A diverse group** to work and guide the change; the group should include dissenting voices
- **A knowledgeable leader**
- **A clear charge** including 1) rationale for the change, 2) parameters for the group's work (what is expected; what is off limits), 3) timeline for the work, and 4) an outline of expected results (reports, decisions, etc.)
- **Consistent support for the leader and group** including
 - *Facilitators* (faculty or staff) who structure group process and assist the leader and group with process issues
 - *Administrative support* staff that are knowledgeable about the topic and are able to summarize progress made in the meetings, format group results and assist in writing final reports
 - *Content support* (faculty or staff) that are knowledgeable on the topic and are available to research data, options, etc. and assist in writing final reports
- **Consistent planning of the group's work** including the following:
 - an initial meeting between the group and the change sponsor to clarify the charge and to build "urgency" around the need for the change
 - an anticipated timeline for the work
 - regular planning meetings attended by the leader, facilitator, content support team, and administrative support staff that focus on:
 - ensuring each group meeting agenda is planned well
 - the processes planned match group needs for data and working through issues
 - anticipation of issues that might arise and possible solutions
 - analysis of the effectiveness of group process
 - seeking feedback from the group on meeting effectiveness and improvements

Appendix IV References of Literature Used

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Appendix V

The KU “Change” Climate

The literature indicates that in change processes, individuals go through a series of common reactions to change, often identified as denial, judgment, acceptance, and transformation (Scott and Jaffe, 1988; Piderit, 2000). Once an individual moves past denial, often the person begins to make judgments about the change. During the judgment phase, an individual is trying to determine the rationale for a particular change and whether or not they agree with it. During the acceptance stage, an individual is beginning to come to terms with the fact that the change is going to impact them in some way and begins making plans for that impact. The third and final stage of reaction to change is transformation, when the individual embraces the change process. While all reactions in the series are normal and expected, it is only when individuals reach the acceptance stage that they can begin to experience the potential for having a voice in creating the new reality.

The committee deployed a process to determine the *change climate* on campus. Most of the workshops began with a brief exercise in which participants were asked to provide three words that described change at KU. The results of this exercise were captured for each group on a flipchart divided into columns that represented the reaction phases of judging, accepting, and transformation (we eliminated denial since the individuals were already engaged in the change process). This exercise gave the instructors information to gauge the climate for change that the participants were experiencing at that point in time. Table 1 provides the compiled data for all the workshops.

Table: KU’s Organizational Climate for Change

Category	Representative Words	Percent of total words submitted
Judgment	anxiety, apprehension, fear, chaos, confusion, disruption, frustrating, imposed, overwhelming, slow, stress, uncertainty, and why?	44%
Acceptance	adapt, adjust, how?, inevitable, necessary, and reorganization	36%
Transformation	advancement, aspiring, cathartic, change, evolutionary, exciting, exhilarating, finally!, forward-thinking, future, growth, improvement, innovation, multi-dimensional, opportunity, optimism, progress, promising, refreshing, and vision	20%

While the judgment category was the largest, the committee was pleased that 56% of the participants (combining acceptance and transformation categories) were beginning to engage in the change process. There were even several groups (among them groups that had more access to information about the change) where the Transformation column outweighed the other two columns. It is hopeful that as more changes are realized and benefits seen across campus, transformative reactions will become more apparent.

However, the committee believes that it is essential for our community to acknowledge what we can learn from those who are still in the judgment and acceptance stages. During these stages individuals are seeking to understand by questioning or probing for answers or by expressing emotional dissatisfaction with potential changes. We have the opportunity to engage with these individuals in

order to learn from their experiences and welcome them as participants in the change process. Perceived resistance to change is often the fear of potential negative consequences (Lewis, 2011). Understanding this creates an opportunity for communication which can be addressed by leaders.

Contemporary views of resistance link successful change to the ability to engage stakeholders in communication about their ideas/feelings and incorporate them into the change process (Piderit, 2000). KU was blessed with talented leaders who in most cases were able to engage stakeholders in a transparent and positive way.

There were a number of observed aspects of our engagement with stakeholders that point to unique aspects of KU culture. They are discussed below along with suggested approaches.

Stakeholder Engagement Observations	Opportunities for Improvement
<p>KU’s culture of “anti-centralization” was evident in many change processes. In some cases urgency was built for a centralized solution due to data that indicated an institutional threat. Another approach provided for communications that demonstrated the benefits of the change for both the campus and the unit.</p>	<p>It is recommended that we continue to <i>provide communication that is focused on university-wide benefit as well as local unit and individual benefit.</i></p>
<p>The sense that change was too fast generated assumptions that feedback would not be heard. Obvious documentation of feedback and specific incorporation of feedback into final projects and reports helped to mitigate this perception.</p>	<p>Given the long standing view that feedback is not utilized by leaders, KU needs to do all that it can to <i>demonstrate that feedback is taken seriously.</i> Communications should emphasize the changes in processes and projects that are made because of feedback.</p>
<p>The meaning of some change processes were not well understood at the beginning of the process. There was a strong need for specifics WAY before the change processes were able to provide them.</p>	<p>Communications should convey specific information when known, <i>and if unable to do so, should at least define the process that will be used to arrive at those decisions.</i> Always linking back to the mission and values of that process in communications is recommended.</p>
<p><i>Lateral dissent</i> (expressing dissatisfaction to someone other than the leader) was apparent in almost every project. The opinions of stakeholders were heavily influenced by colleagues and tended to not be binary (for the change or against the change) and were often expressed in terms of improvements that could be made to the strategy (Lewis, 2011).</p>	<p><i>Providing an opportunity to give consistent feedback and interact with change leaders went a long way toward addressing resistance.</i> Leaders should be aware that those who express openly their concerns tend to be a relatively small group and that feedback from a broad audience is needed to ensure that an accurate picture of responses is built.</p>

Appendix VI Recommendations in Detail

1. **Improve Process to Appoint Committees and Task Forces**

It is recommended that the University carefully consider group size, criteria for selection, schedule, and timing of group work in relation to the academic calendar before embarking on wide-scale change efforts.

Size - Members of groups should be appointed based on both expertise and impact (those most likely to be affected). Groups that need to ensure input from all Schools and the College should utilize a second order group for feedback on recommendations in order to keep groups to a manageable size. Only when buy-in from each unit is essential should groups be large enough to be representative of each unit and in these cases facilitation can be critical to the success of the group.

The ability of the group to move forward was compromised by the inability of members to consistently attend the meetings.

Breaking the group up into smaller groups during meetings to accomplish work was effective, but not everyone was part of every discussion; this was mitigated somewhat by the facilitators work.

When the group is too big, conversation is stifled; everyone is waiting for everyone else to talk.

Schedule –A meeting time should be determined before the group is appointed so that those who are nominated know whether they can participate.

Some members were not able to attend the meetings on a regular basis which left them out of the process even when they obviously cared and would have liked to participate.

Criteria for selection–

- Go beyond supportive members – it is important to bring the dissenting opinions into the room where they can be processed (see resistance section below).
- Seek members who have an open attitude and do not engage in turf defending (using a representative model for group selection can encourage turf defending).

Timing of group process – All groups should begin in August with a spring break report deadline. This would leave time for the work and also time for campus-wide discussion of the report before the summer break.

Selection of the leader – Leaders should be appointed based on their ability to lead a group through transformative change and on their ability to garner respect and build trust with the group. In addition, leaders must have adequate staff to support their ongoing daily responsibilities, plus the added responsibilities that managing a large project group entails.

Leaders of change need support for their other responsibilities; a support structure is important so they can focus on the change activities.

2. Develop Specific Charges

It is recommended that the Provost's Office consistently develop clear and specific charges and allow time in the process for the group to understand the charge in relation to the mission and values of KU.

Research shows that a clear charge defines the likelihood of success of a change (Kotter, 2002). The development of a specific charge which includes the following items is important.

- Rationale for the change
- Specific expectations of the work to be accomplished
- Listing of any elements of the work that have already been decided or are "off limits" for analysis
- Specific delegation of the work to that group (with a commitment from the sponsor to support the group as long as it functions within the limits previously established)
- Timeline (which allows the group to see their task in time context, thereby creating urgency)

In addition, allowing time upfront for the group to fully explore and understand their charge with the sponsor is essential and will save time by avoiding confusion about the charge and level of delegation. Some changes are so significant that it is vital for the group to spend time documenting the values that underpin the desired change. Doing so will enable the group to navigate difficult waters that may arise later because all group members understand both the charge and the core values behind the change.

3. Provide Three Types of Support Required for Success

It is recommended that the Provost's Office

- provide *content support* for all groups being asked to lead substantial change
- ensure administrative staff have the skill sets to provide appropriate *administrative support* for the topic/context
- maintain a pool of faculty and staff who are qualified *facilitators*.

Content support – the provision of staff (or faculty) who have content knowledge and time to gather data, analyze data, research alternatives, etc. In many cases, presentation of data to the groups was key to building urgency for a change and consensus on approaches.

There were many "ah ha" moments when data was presented.

Administrative support – the provision of staff that are able to take notes *in context* and summarize group findings and next steps. This skill set goes beyond mere minutes and requires critical thinking skills and the ability to create thought maps under pressure.

I did not have to worry about logistics of the meeting which helped me focus on content.

Facilitation support – the provision of credible faculty or staff who focus on group process and the attainment of the goal (coming to the issue with neutrality). The skill set includes facilitation techniques as well as the interpersonal skills to interact and influence group members toward honest but productive communication. Also important are the skills to assist the leader in understanding their strengths and utilizing them to lead the group process.

Benefits of facilitation include:

- Allows the group leader to participate in content instead of having to focus on process
- Allows multiple eyes and ears on the process enabling the leader to have a broader view of group process
- Ensures full participation by all group members
- Ensures understanding of anticipated outcomes is developed during initial group formation

Debriefing the meeting afterwards with the facilitator showed what was actually accomplished, as seen and heard by multiple eyes/ears in the room who are all sensitive to the desired outcomes and whether they were achieved or not was very helpful.

There is a need for a knowledgeable uninterested third party who can also talk KU talk.

It is essential to have faculty facilitators as they are already clued into the psyche of faculty participants and issues.

I believe that all group leaders need education in facilitating techniques especially for over and under participators.

4. Improve Physical Space for Group Work

It is recommended that the Provost's Office work with campus units to improve space for group work.

Groups met in various places and in rooms with different capabilities. Many of those we interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the rooms we have available for group work and the lack of appropriate tools (like smart white boards). For some, meeting outside of Strong Hall seemed to provide a more collaborative feeling.

5. Enhance Targeted Communication

Communication in the change process is critical. Leaders should consistently communicate with transparency, in audience-appropriate language and at the time of need. It is important to provide a rationale for the change and the impact of the change through story telling.

Communication is known to be a key to effective organizational change. Several aspects of communication appear to have been important (and will continue to be important) in our processes.

Transparency – consistent communication about changes that incorporate questions and feedback from the stakeholders is essential.

Language – the use of language that has meaning for the stakeholder is essential. This dictates that multiple communication channels are often necessary.

Point-of-need – the provision of web sites (that are easy to navigate) provide the opportunity for stakeholders to find answers to their questions at the time when they seek the information.

Provide the rationale and tell a story – research consistently shows that urgency for change is often best built by providing an emotional appeal (Lewis, 2011) and providing opportunity for stakeholders to envision the change, see examples, and feel the impact (Kotter, 2002).

The “fishbowl” aspect of University communications - Internal communication is essential during a change process and yet it is difficult for leaders to communicate to groups of employees without the communication becoming immediately external. Appropriate balance between internal and external exposure should be found.

Communication between change groups and their sub-groups can be a challenge in rapid change. Sustained focus on that communication is another benefit of deploying facilitators who can ensure communication alignment.

6. **Prepare Middle Managers**

Middle managers (academic and administrative) play a critical role in change processes. Sustained focused effort on their development and education is needed along with allocation of resources aimed at programs that deliver a return on that investment.

During this year we have made progress on educating middle managers about change processes. However, much remains to be done on strengthening the skills of our academic department heads and administrative managers. The use of position-based competency outlines and the acquisition of education programs based on quality research about management and leadership has been a key to success at other higher education environments. Increasingly, coaching is proving to be a key for transferring education directly into change leader/manager behavior. Several leaders we talked to indicated an interest in coaching and underscored the value it would provide.

7. **Embrace Resistance to Change as an Opportunity to Engage with the Community**

Communications that appear to be resistance should be viewed as an asset. When such communications are shared with leaders, this is healthier for an organization than resistance that is being articulated informally. Leaders should engage with resisters to learn what contributions they might make to the change strategy.

Keys to positive utilization of resistance include:

- Development of both general stakeholder and audience specific justifications for change

- Cost saving arguments alone are NOT effective, particularly if where the money is going remains a vague concept
- Widely accepted goals create the best opportunities; such as effective student learning, faculty productivity, etc.
- Arguments focused on University quality and remaining competitive are effective but need to be in language that is accessible and understood (generally rankings are not well understood and appear to some to be unrealistic)

Leaders may need guidance and assistance determining how to engage with resisters. Learning how to do so could become a component of management and leadership development or coaching programs.