The Essentials of Change Leadership
Beyond the "Hero" View of Leadership

ABOUT SOVA

Our Values.

❖ We are dedicated to advancing genuine socioeconomic mobility for more through higher education.

❖ We believe positive change is made & sustained through visionary leadership & the creative commitment of faculty, staff and administrators at all levels.

What We Do. Our team brings expertise in:

✓ Adaptive change leadership

✓ Strategic communications

✓ Process improvement

Our work focuses on supporting the creation of healthy, high-functioning, effective, and adaptive institutions capable of thriving in the mission to better meet the needs of today's learners.

OUR WORK

We support institutions & systems, philanthropies, advocacy organizations and associations.

In 2019 we supported colleges and universities in the following states:

- Arizona
- California
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- New York
- Michigan

- Minnesota
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Texas
- Virginia
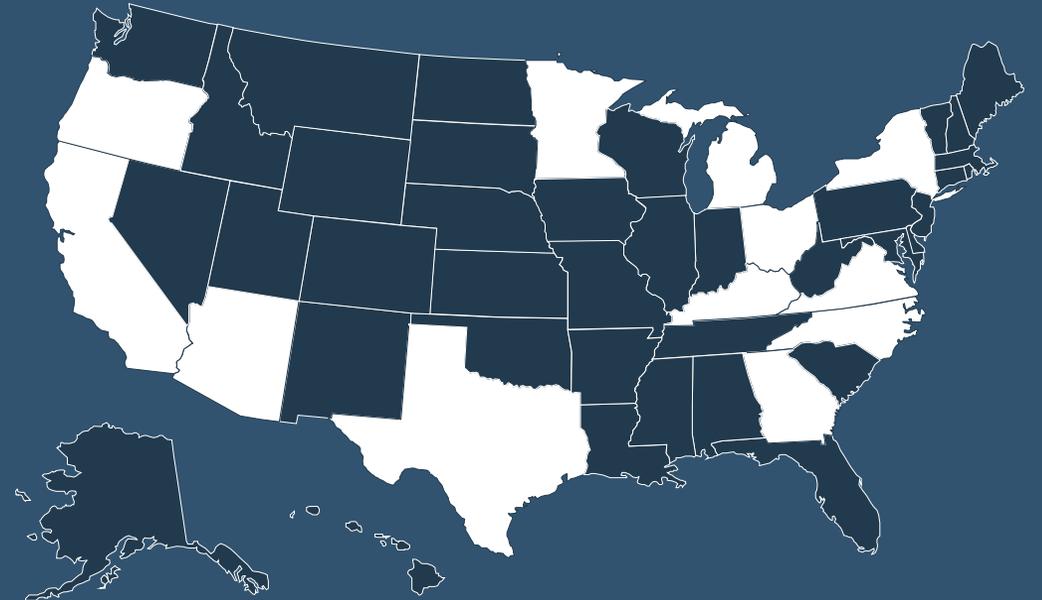
We are currently core partners in the following national initiatives:

- *The Guided Pathways Partners Collaborative*
- *Tackling Transfer*
- *Strong Start To Finish*

In addition, Sova leaders have served as founding partners of *Achieving the Dream* and the *Competency Based Education Network.*

SUNY SSTF Webinar Series

Overview of the key concepts, strategies and practices associated with leading change under conditions of uncertainty and multi-directional pressure. It will cover topics such as building and supporting healthy teams, understanding and overcoming barriers and resistance to change, and developing the skills to lead change over the long haul.

Webinar 2: Creating a Culture of Co-Ownership Among Faculty: Beyond Buy-In – March 19, 1-3pm
The second webinar in the series will focus on the specific challenges and opportunities faculty and academic leaders face as they engage in the hard work of student-focused reform efforts. It will cover topics such as the need to move beyond thin conceptions of faculty "buy-in," honoring and elevating the expertise of faculty, navigating the complexities and making the most of shared governance, and developing the skills to create cultures of mutual respect and support among faculty.

Webinar 3: Building Capacity for Cross-Silo Collaboration: Beyond Cooperation – April 9, 10-12pm
The third and final webinar in the series will focus on the challenges and opportunities of building high-functioning cross-functional teams to accelerate and improve implementation of student success priorities. It will cover topics such as practical and tactical differences between silo-busting and silo-spanning, and the strategies that can be employed to strengthen a sense of shared purpose across divisions in service of better and more equitable outcomes for students.

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Questions for Campus Watch Parties

1) What ideas seemed most relevant to your work and context?

2) What questions do you have?

3) What do you want to *do* with the information -- what will you take away to inform or improve action planning or to improve communications & engagement plans?


A webinar watch party *"is as much social fellowship and connection as it is the content; the content is somehow more special because of the shared experience; and sometimes the most memorable or meaningful part of the party is not what you watched, but rather comes from an interaction with or comment of a fellow participant. Now apply those characteristics to this, with a little processing time on the back end, and we have something new!"* –President VanWagoner (Mohawk Valley Community College)

Today's Topic

✓ **Leadership in context**

✓ **The difficulty & necessity of cultivating distributed, adaptive leadership**

✓ **Understanding barriers & resistance to change**

✓ **Skill-building for the long haul**

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Leadership In Context: Why the Work is So Hard

- Tremendous pressure from every direction

- Doing more with less amid declining public confidence

- Real student success work is profoundly counter-cultural & deeply adaptive (rather than technical)

- The global epidemic of loneliness impacts workplace

- Thin notions of buy-in and traditional hero-centric views of leadership aren't cutting it

- Modern leadership skills are in short supply

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The Target
Faculty, staff, & administrators in healthy cultures...

1. ...see a strong connection between personal/professional goals and the student success priorities of the college

2. ...believe that innovating for better student outcomes is of urgent importance to everyone at the institution, including themselves

3. ...feel respected and valued by colleagues and institutional leadership

4. ...know how proposed changes will impact them day-to-day

5. ...understand how student success initiatives align with institutional priorities

6. ...believe they have the support and guidance to be successful in their roles

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"The most common leadership failure stems from trying to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges." –Heifetz

Technical Problems

▶ Easy to identify and define

▶ Clear solution (tried & tested)

▶ Solved by expertise or authority (by fiat)

▶ Requires small changes within clear boundaries

▶ People are natural receptivity to technical solutions

Adaptive Challenges

▶ Both the problem, as well as the solution(s), are difficult to define and require the insight of multiple actors

▶ Solution requires the insight of those closest to the problem

▶ Expertise and authority aren't enough to get it done

▶ Raise hard trade-offs and require careful consideration of values as well as facts.

▶ People are naturally unsettled by adaptive challenges because of the inherent uncertainty

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Adaptive Challenges Require Adaptive Teams
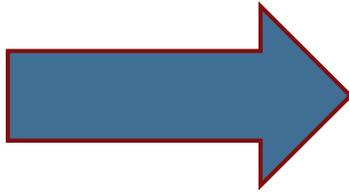
Why Have Shared and Distributed Leadership?

✓ When it comes to large-scale student-success efforts, no idea is good enough and no evidence is strong enough to take the place of strong, high-functioning working relationships that make collaborative problem solving under stressful conditions possible.

✓ How people feel about their work and each other makes an enormous difference in productivity and positive outcomes for faculty, staff, and students.

✓ Cultivating a growth-minded culture of care, respect, and mutual support is a primary burden of post-hero leadership because it's the building material for shared purpose.

✓ When faced with undermining forces, command & control solutions are unlikely to be successful. Cultivating and empowering potential champions is essential.

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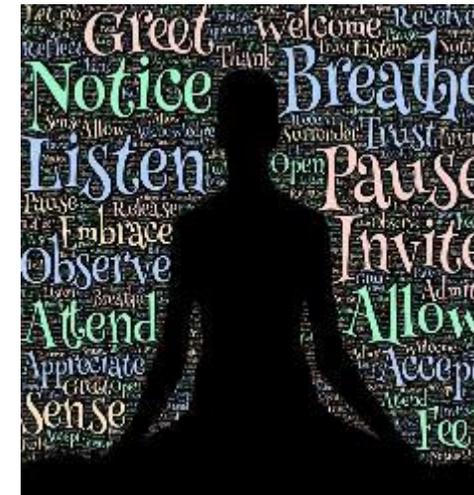
Leading Barriers & Strategies

Barriers	Strategies
Misaligned Leadership	Assess leadership messaging and align internally first
Lack of Authenticity	Practice meaningful engagement (early, often, transparent, inclusive, collaborative)
Initiative Fatigue	Interrogate decision-making – how are initiatives launched, communicated, resourced, coordinated, assessed?
Resistance to Mandates	Create opportunities for collaborative design among those impacted, embrace case-making as ongoing/evolving
Fear of Change	Understand sources of resistance; find or create new win-wins
Ineffective College-wide Communication	Understand the difference between communications & engagement – do both skillfully & respectfully on ongoing basis
Incentive Gaps	Consider disciplinary or division expectations relative to institutional incentives
Entrenched Silos	Create space for blame-free communication across divisions to collaboratively name problems & identify solutions

Leading Over the Long-Haul: Getting Real, Getting Going

➢ Case-making for change is iterative, ongoing, evolving – and the circle of those capable of, and invested in, case-making must widen at each step of your work

➢ No easy answers, no shortcuts. Accept that it will be hard and practice rejecting the "fundamental attribution error"

➢ Relationships are the heart of the work, not a distraction. Accept the burdens of post-hero leadership (awareness, humility, empathy, persuasiveness, vision) and make space for "working through"

➢ Practice transparency & honesty and set near term targets to help people see the path and increase comforts with unknowns (go slow to go fast, build leadership capacity from the middle)

➢ Plan carefully for implementation and don't underestimate the importance of real project management skills (PM is more than a Gantt chart or ability to schedule meetings – it's about translating human aspiration into workflow amid conditions of uncertainty and stress)

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Communications & Engagement: A Deliberation & Planning Tool for Distributed Leadership

What is our vision of student success? What are we trying to accomplish?

How will we know if we're successful? (what will look/feel different to students? To faculty & staff?)

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	POWER (to impact pace/quality of implementation)	CORE VALUES & CONCERNS	KEY MYTHS & RELEVANT DATA	ENGAGEMENT NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES	OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP (creative agency)	IMPEDIMENTS, NEEDS & NEXT STEPS (risks, support, peer learning)

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Upcoming Webinars

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Thank you!

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