
LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE

A Faculty Development Center at the Heart of Institutional Change

Catherine E. Frerichs, Diana G. Pace, and Tamara Rosier

Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach chapter 4, (2006) examined and identified current practices and future issues in faculty development based on responses from 494 faculty developers across the United States and Canada (a 50% response rate). As developers, they argue that we are now in the “Age of the Network,” where “the challenges and opportunities appear more intensified and complex” (p. 160), and point out that we face challenges that no single part of a university can address alone. These “forces of change” include the changing professoriate; the changing student body; and the changing nature of teaching, learning, and scholarship. Even though it is paramount for faculty developers to recognize these changes, “support of institutional change priorities” (Sorcinelli et al., 2006, p. 160) was only sixth in a list of new issues addressed by faculty developers. While faculty developers as a group recognize the necessity to focus on student learning, they have not seen *organizational* change as a high priority for centers or the role of directors. Sorcinelli et al. (2006) document the extent to which developers continue to focus on individual faculty while also recognizing that they must work collaboratively within their institutions if complex issues such as general education reform, matters of race, class, and gender, and assessing learning outcomes are to be addressed.

From Marginalized to Key Leader

The 2002 five-year self-study of the Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (Pew FTLC) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) showed a center true to

its mission. It was indeed “enhancing student learning by supporting faculty members in their efforts to teach effectively.” The center had strong faculty support, a high level of satisfaction with programing, an extensive grants program, and an award-winning mentoring program for new faculty. The center was thriving; why make any significant changes? However, an outside consultant who visited in early 2003 challenged the Pew FTLC to “play a more central role in deliberations about teaching and learning at GVSU.” Chism (1998) outlines the features of such a teaching and learning center (TLC) role change. The center focus she describes is less on individual consultations and more on organizational development, less on providing answers than asking questions, and less on service than on leadership. In short, it is a shift “from the basement office to the front office” (Chism, 1998, p. 141). The dean of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies concurred: the director had completed six successful years at GVSU, why not do more?

Although a significant departure from the director’s existing level of institutional involvement, her role shifted from the successful but narrower focus solely on faculty and instructional development. At GVSU, the *Claiming a Liberal Education* (CLE) initiative was collaboratively envisioned, initiated, and led by a team that included the director of the Pew FTLC. Through the process of bringing about broad institutional change through the CLE initiative, the director and center’s roles underwent a dramatic transformation. As a case study participant in the study underlying this book, the director described the center’s level of institutional involvement as having moved from “marginalized to key leader” (see chapter 4). What events and actions on the part of the institution, the center, and the director would explain this significant transformation of the center? A brief summary of the institutional context precedes an outline of the change process, the director’s role as a codirector of the initiative, and the outcomes of a significant institutional change process.

Institutional Context

Institutional Growth Sets the Stage for Institutional Change

In 2003, GVSU, a comprehensive, regional university, then 40-years old, had grown quickly to 21,500 students, 17,800 of whom were undergraduates. At that time, GVSU was the fastest growing university in Michigan. For each of the previous five years of self study the university had added between 80 and 110 new faculty. As the 2003 data for freshmen from the Cooperative

Institutional Research Project (CIRP) indicated, more students than at comparable institutions were unlikely to have come with an understanding of what a university education entails. More than half had at least one parent without a college degree. One-quarter of the 2003 students attending college for the first time came from homes with an estimated family income of below \$50,000. Two-thirds indicated that they would be working to help pay college expenses. Students of color were disproportionately represented in these groups (Henderson-King, 2004a).

Despite this growth, GVSU had also recently completed a process of redefining the university's purpose. It had grappled with answering how it was going to define itself for the early years of the twenty-first century. As a result, the newly revised statements of mission, vision, and values *reaffirmed* the orientation with which the university had been founded; *excellence in teaching* was to continue to be the primary focus for faculty, and the university was to remain grounded in the *ideals of liberal education*, which one sees today in the lead statement on the GVSU website:

A strong liberal education serves as the foundation for Grand Valley's wide array of undergraduate and graduate homepage programs, fostering critical thinking, creative problem solving, and cultural understanding. Through personalized learning enhanced by active scholarship, we accomplish our mission of educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. (www.gvsu.edu)

Investigating and Cultivating the Need for Change

Claiming a Liberal Education (CLE), the broader institutional initiative described in this chapter, had quiet beginnings. As one of the early documents in the CLE initiative noted, "This degree of growth and change has led to questions about the content, goals, and standards of a university education" (Henderson-King, 2004a, p. 1). Through informal conversations in spring 2003, faculty had reported frustration in their teaching role, stating that student consumerist views of their role put pressure on them to lower their expectations. Two events at GVSU occurred simultaneously but independently to bring to light the growing frustration and dissonance with current expectations about teaching and learning. If the institution undertook wide-scale change that affected teaching and learning around these issues, the opportunity to expand the director's role and shift the center to the core matters of the institution would be possible, although not guaranteed.

Acting on this reported frustration in collaboration with the vice provost for student affairs became the first critical juncture in what was to grow into a full-scale institutional initiative. As a result, the director's role expanded to include broader institutional involvement.

Initiating Dialogue and Collaboration

First, as a response to these informal conversations, the center's director and the vice provost for student affairs *brought together* members of the center's advisory committee, student affairs staff, representatives from faculty governance and student senate, as well as other students and faculty for a discussion. This step clearly entailed not only collaboration but also *initiating* collaboration.

The initial topic was the reported faculty frustration in their teaching role, given the consumerist views of many students. Some faculty believed that easier classes would get them higher ratings and acted accordingly. Faculty cited the personnel practices that compounded this problem; the only evidence required by the faculty handbook for effective teaching was student ratings of faculty. Some of the students participating in the discussions saw themselves primarily as consumers whereas others said that they cared first about their learning. Faculty could expect more from them and they would meet those expectations. The result was a mixed range of expressed frustration. It was ironic that these opinions emerged so strongly after the university had just reaffirmed to remain grounded in the *ideals of liberal education*.

The second event highlighting the current attitudes toward teaching and learning came from the Seidman College of Business at GVSU. A group of Seidman faculty were conducting research on teaching and learning taking place in its own college, funded by the Pew FTLC. Using faculty and graduating seniors as subjects, they reported that 81% of their students attend college primarily to obtain a credential, and that "The faculty dramatically underestimated the amount of course-related outside work students are doing" (McKendall, Bhagwat, Giedeman, Klein, & Levenburg, 2006, p. 47). Just as with the discussion themes, these research results were consistent with the literature on faculty and student views of their roles (Levine & Cureton, 1998; Schilling & Schilling, 1999; Skorupa, 2002).

The McKendall et al. (2006) study and the collaborative, informal discussions had reported the strong utilitarian motivation of most students (and some faculty). Thus, the initial threads of motivation for institutional change derived from a growing recognition that the teaching and learning currently characteristic of GVSU conflicted with the liberal education expectations embedded in its institutional mission—expectations still supported by

faculty, administrators, and some students. Increasingly, they felt a discrepancy between ideals and actual practice.

The institutional change initiative that emerged out of this growing dissonance at GVSU had the same source of leadership as is frequently described in the literature on faculty development. The director and her supervisor recognized that *the center could be both a source and a catalyst for change*. They were also eager to continue the collaboration that had begun with student affairs, convinced that academic affairs and student affairs must cooperate if the initiative were to be successful. At GVSU, both divisions report to the provost, thus facilitating cooperation. For its part, student affairs leaders recognized that, by participating, they were following recommendations set forth in *Learning Reconsidered* (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004), a widely disseminated publication by two national Student Affairs organizations. It urged student affairs personnel to focus their efforts on the whole student with an emphasis on student learning and connecting out-of-class and in-class learning.

Diana G. Pace, associate dean of students, and Catherine E. Frerichs, director of the Pew FTLC, became co-directors of what was later called the CLE initiative. The key steps we and our colleagues took, the key conditions occurring at GVSU, and the institutional research efforts undertaken that informed this change process are captured in Table 6.1.

Leading Through Expertise, Vision, and Institutional Alignment

The leadership skills we had developed and alignment of our efforts with the institutional mission were key factors in advancing this initiative to the next step. Already familiar with the higher education literature that explains that the college or university's mission is the necessary starting point (e.g., Kezar, 2006; Legorreta, Kelley, & Sablynski, 2006; Lieberman, 2005; Taylor & Schönwetter, 2002), we framed the initiative funding proposal to the provost in those terms. *Our goal was to align student and faculty expectations with the goals of a liberal education*. We envisioned that this initiative would address the disparity in expectations between utilitarian and liberal education. We, as change agents, defined the problem in terms of the institutional mission, outlined the goals of the initiative, and requested funds for a part-time faculty researcher who had qualitative and quantitative research skills beyond those possessed by either CLE initiative director. We estimated that we were undertaking a four-to-five-year project. The changes we were seeking could not happen quickly.

TABLE 6.1
Chronological sequence of leadership efforts and institutional factors

<i>Date</i>	<i>Pew FTLC and Initiative Leaders^a</i>	<i>Relevant Data</i>	<i>Institutional Factors</i>
2002	Carried out Pew FTLC self-study	—	Intensive growth, positive culture; mission, vision, and values revised
2003	Outside consultant	CIRP	—
Spring	Pew FTLC/Student affairs began discussions	Seidman College of Business research	Growing frustration
Fall	Defined problem and envisioned initiative. Prepared proposal for the provost, aligning initiative with institutional mission; enlisted researcher and identified research questions.	—	Support of the provost and president
2004	Conducted focus groups, surveys	—	—
Spring	Adopted Gladwell's change model	—	—
Summer	Attended AAC&U Institute	—	—
Fall	Organized three intergroup dialogues; sent recommendations to chairs, deans, provost; prepared CLA application to Lumina Foundation	—	161 participants; strategic planning cycle
2005	—	—	Advisory committee formed
Spring	—	—	—
Fall	—	First CLA cycle	Faculty senate supported resolution. Increased emphasis on assessment to prepare for NCA accreditation
2006/2007	CLE activities continued	—	—
2008	Conducted follow-up faculty focus groups	—	NCA accreditation visit
2009	Conducted follow-up student focus groups	—	—

Note. AAC&U = Association of American Colleges and Universities; CIRP = Cooperative Institutional Research Project; CLA = Collegiate Learning Assessment; FTLC = Faculty Teaching and Learning Center; NCA = *North Central Association*.

^aThe codirectors and leaders of the CLE initiative at GVSU are listed in the appendix.

Upper-Level Support and Credibility

This alignment between the initiative and the institutional mission cinched the financial support and enabled the center director's involvement to continue. The provost has since stated that the director "gave [us] the reins for developing the project" because our proposal fit the university's mission "so well" and was consistent with her own values and experiences when she developed a TLC at her previous institution. Fundamentally, she said, she trusted the leaders (G. Davis, personal communication, September 12, 2008). In giving the codirectors this freedom and, later, becoming one of the initiative's cosponsors, the director was enabling them to "lead from the middle," "to influenc[e] from among, rather than from above, below, or in front of one's group" (Robinson, 2002, p. 19; see also Pearce, 2003; Raelin, 2003). The provost approved the proposal as she has approved all subsequent requests of this initiative.

Collaborators in Change

As change initiators and leaders, we recognized the need to further galvanize and motivate change. The need for change is a key element in advancing the process of change. To do so required institutional research to make a strong enough case for initiating the scale of broad institutional and cultural change we were discussing and to guide it as it progressed. If both qualitative and quantitative research with a broad group of faculty and students confirmed our hunches from the informal discussions and research of McKendall et al. (2006) from the Seidman College of Business, we would have the kind of evidence-based message we needed. We wanted this research to answer the big questions that brought together the institution's reaffirmed liberal arts mission with the growing disparity in expectations between students and faculty that we had been able to capture in part. As the initiative's codirectors, we selected a social psychologist as the faculty researcher, forming the collaborative leadership core of the initiative. We decided to collect evidence to answer the following questions:

1. Are students and faculty able to articulate, and do they endorse, the value of liberal education?
2. Do students and faculty recognize the high expectations implicit in teaching and learning within the context of liberal education? (Henderson-King, 2004b)

The project's researcher, assisted by the codirectors, organized focus groups in early 2004 with 45 faculty who teach undergraduate students and,

separately, 14 undergraduate students. (It proved extremely difficult to recruit students, even with incentives.) Online surveys conducted with undergraduates and their faculty had response rates of 27% and 33%, respectively.

These data confirmed our expectations. Both students and faculty had much to say that was positive about teaching and learning at GVSU. At the same time, the faculty frustration with students who saw themselves primarily as consumers was palpable. Faculty agreed unanimously that students do not do the best work they are capable of. They do what they need to in order to get by. When students were asked in focus groups how often they did their best work, their responses were mixed. Some faculty, the researcher found, may actually be encouraging low expectations, a finding confirmed as well in the McKendall et al. (2006) study, where one-third of the faculty admitted that fear of negative evaluations affected their teaching actions.

When faculty were asked in focus groups whether students were well educated when they left GVSU, most hesitated, then said they were unsure. The researcher summarized what they were sure of: “Many faculty and some students would like to see a change in the Grand Valley culture. They would like to see a richer intellectual environment that would foster liberal education and all that it entails” (Henderson-King, 2004c, p. 2). Faculty also recognized the need for a major structural change—less emphasis on student ratings of faculty during personnel reviews—if they were not to be penalized for expecting more of their students.

The focus group data also corroborated broader research for this initiative from other focus groups of faculty and students conducted by students in the introductory research classes in advertising and public relations, 2004–2006. The research in itself furthered our goals—students carrying it out learned about liberal education and student/faculty expectations, as did the participants in their groups.

Another source of data provided helpful evidence that strengthened the case for institutional change. Prior to the CLE initiative, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a measure of the level of engagement of undergraduate freshmen and seniors in educationally effective practices, had not been used at GVSU. It was administered for the first time in early 2005 as a means of gathering additional information about GVSU freshmen and seniors and their perception of their education at GVSU. The results confirmed to us that while we, and many faculty, were not satisfied with the level of expectations at GVSU, our students were not so different from those at peer institutions where students had taken the survey. Our students, both freshmen and seniors, responded similarly to questions about their engagement in an academically rigorous curriculum. GVSU seniors reported lower

gains than their peers in several areas of concern to us, such as “learning effectively on your own” and “solving complex real-world problems,” whereas GVSU freshmen reported similar gains in those same categories (Office of Institutional Analysis, NSSE 2005).

Institutional Leadership Support

Neither our surveys and focus groups nor the NSSE results gave us direct measures of student learning outcomes or enough evidence on actual outcomes to reinforce and unite the institution toward making a significant change. We looked to a new instrument—the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)—to provide us this information. The CLA, developed by the Council for Aid to Education, assesses critical thinking, problem solving, written communication skills, and the ability to construct and evaluate arguments—all skills at the heart of liberal education. With the support of the provost and president, we prepared a successful application to participate in a longitudinal study of the CLA, funded by the Lumina Foundation. A random sample of freshmen and seniors took the test in fall 2005. The longitudinal study would enable GVSU to document the difference that a GVSU education makes, for the first time ever. The freshmen “did not demonstrate particular writing skill beyond that expected based on their SAT scores”; the seniors, however, “perform[ed] well on writing tasks relative to other seniors with similar SAT scores” (Guevara, 2006)—evidence for value added from a GVSU education.

A Model for Change

The results of data gathering from these multiple sources made explicit to us and our supervisors that in attempting to align student and faculty expectations within the context of liberal education, the institution’s original and reaffirmed mission, we were undertaking nothing less than changing GVSU’s current culture. We had a consistent philosophy in our foundational documents, had even recently reaffirmed our mission, and the institution was still living out a conflicting experience in the daily lives and classrooms of teachers and students.

Leading from the middle as we were, we needed an egalitarian model to guide our next steps in the change process. It also required a systemic approach to change: literally, all parts of the university were going to be affected and therefore must be involved in the change. Finally, it required leaders who had the respect of the university community and who were actively supported by administrators at higher levels.

Expertise and Organizational Change Model

We found our model in Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (2000). Gladwell begins with the premise that the best way to understand certain kinds of change is to think of them as epidemics: "Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do" (p. 7). Why did Hush Puppies shoes become fashionable so quickly, and why did a dramatic fall in murder rates occur in New York City over a five-year period in the early 1990s? Even though we knew we could not use the language of epidemics and viruses when we discussed the initiative with broader university audiences, we wanted a change in student and faculty expectations to spread like a virus. We envisioned an epidemic of liberal education overtaking the campus. The actual metaphor we often used in our discussions came from our proximity to Lake Michigan. We imagined the university as one of the giant, ocean-going freighters we often saw far out on the lake. What did it take to get one of them to shift course?

There are three parts to Gladwell's model for change framed as conditions: the three groups people who *initiate* the change, the message itself, and the larger group that *embraces and spreads* the change.

Gladwell's condition 1: Change initiators

Gladwell argues that three types of people must be involved in initiating the change: connectors, mavens, and persuaders.

Connectors: Connectors know many people. Because we as co-directors had extensive experience at GVSU and, between us, knew most of the faculty and all of the Student Affairs staff, we believed we qualified well as Connectors, as did our supervisors, who, combined, had even more history at GVSU than we did and provided upper-level support throughout.

Mavens: Mavens are people with the relevant knowledge. We needed Mavens. We directors had unique and broad expertise and knowledge of the institution, of the literature of faculty and student expectations. We had also read widely in the literature on liberal education, as well as engaged in years of discussion about it with colleagues at several institutions. Our researcher provided us with the specific knowledge that we needed for this initiative through focus groups and survey data. NSSE and CLA results enabled us to put the institutional data in a national perspective.

Persuaders: Knowing how to apply the results of the research would have to come from other people in various positions throughout the university. They would become Gladwell's Persuaders, who embodied Senge's (2006) idea of systems thinking.

Gladwell's condition 2: Change message

All entities in the organization needed to be a part of this initiative, from the secretaries who saw students on a daily basis to the president and Board of Trustees. When it came to actually making changes, we knew that GVSU's generally positive culture, optimistic tone, and can-do attitude would work to our advantage. Almost anyone at the university would carry our message well. The message itself also mattered—Gladwell's second condition for change. Gladwell claims that a message needs to be “sticky . . . so memorable, in fact, that it can create change, that it can spur someone to action” (Gladwell, 2000, p. 92). We believed that the results of our on-campus research, combined with data from national sources, had created a “sticky message.” The lively discussions that resulted when we presented these data to faculty confirmed this conclusion.

Gladwell's condition 3: Spreading a contagious message through groups

We decided how we would apply Gladwell's third major condition for change, the function of groups in spreading a contagious message, during the summer of 2004. An expanded group of us—the two directors and the faculty researcher, and in addition, a faculty member, an administrator, a student affairs member, and a student—spent a week in Snowbird, Utah, as part of the Greater Expectations Institute, a program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). As with the other case studies in this book, the Pew FTLC director's involvement with the AAC&U Snowbird team greatly enabled her involvement with the core planning and implementation of this large initiative. For a century, the AAC&U has championed liberal education, and in recent years, has put a particular emphasis on new research and language to make its ideals continually relevant.

Before leaving Snowbird, the team had to determine how we would bring the plan that we had developed for the initiative back to GVSU. We wanted to think that our message and plan would immediately appeal to our various constituents. The freighter might even turn itself. Our administrative leader drew us back to the reality of our university's culture. We were not selling Hush Puppies. We were bringing a complicated set of ideas to colleagues with multiple, legitimate, and sometimes conflicting agendas. Reminding ourselves of Gladwell's use of multiple groups became the starting point for rethinking our approach. Even though we were leaving Snowbird with a plan, we would first educate the university community about the issues and invite them to tell us what should happen next.

Gladwell cites a number of studies to show that groups of 150 or less are optimal for getting the word out, whether one is selling a book or deciding how to reorganize a company (pp. 175–192). We determined that we would recruit 150 people from across the university who understood and supported what we were doing. The mechanism for achieving this goal came from a technique, Intergroup Dialogues (IGDs), which had been presented at Snowbird (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Zuniga, 1998). Groups are organized to discuss a particular issue, consisting of representatives from larger interest groups and the results are then analyzed. Through this informal qualitative research, we would be moving the CLE initiative forward by inviting others to assist in defining it (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

From our work in Snowbird, we could see that the IGDs would also allow us to introduce issues of diversity into the discussion of liberal education and expectations and to move beyond simply considering who our students were. Now we had the vocabulary and perspective to consider diversity in another way by incorporating it more explicitly into our definition of liberal education through the lens of “inclusive excellence” to “comprehensively link diversity and quality and place them at the center of campus planning and practice” (AAC&U, 2008).

Facilitating and Initiating Dialogues

During fall 2004, we organized a series of three IGDs among our three constituency groups: faculty, staff, and students. The number who participated, 161, enabled us to meet Gladwell’s third criterion for significant change. The meetings were organized around readings related to liberal education, student/faculty expectations, the results of the focus group discussions the previous spring, diversity, and inclusive excellence. As a result, further plans developed as part of the CLE initiative. For example, the groups strongly recommended clear, consistent communication regarding liberal education and expectations and the necessity for continuing dialogue on these issues. The recommendations, and means to implement them, were sent to department chairs, deans, and provost’s office administrators, since the university was in the midst of a round of strategic planning (Pace, Henderson-King, & Frerichs, 2005).

Two years after the first informal conversations about conflicting expectations among students and faculty, in the spring of 2005, even before we had the results from NSSE and the CLA, we felt confident enough in our message and the supporting research to form a university-wide advisory committee. Along with the IGD participants, they were to become Gladwell’s

Persuaders. The positions of the CLE advisory committee members enabled the institution-wide change we were seeking as well as indicated the broad and deep support we already had from university leaders.

We secured cosponsorships from the provost, the vice provost for student affairs, the Pew FTLC, and the Colleges of Interdisciplinary Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences. Any public statement about the initiative included its goal—aligning student and faculty expectations with the goals of a liberal education—and its sponsors. Later that year, the faculty senate recognized the advisory committee and passed a resolution supporting the CLE initiative. We could not have continued our work without the support of the faculty senate.

Table 6.2, which summarizes the changes that occurred over the life of the CLE initiative, also makes evident the range of representation from across the university. We gathered together in the advisory committee the people who could either set the change process in motion or actually make the needed changes that would permeate the institutional culture and structures. During the committee's two meetings in 2005–2006, and again in 2006–2007, members reported on change in their areas. The CLE initiative cannot claim credit for all of the changes reported in Table 6.2, but most would not have occurred without the heightened university-wide awareness of liberal education and an emphasis on higher expectations for both students and faculty.

Space limitations do not permit a detailed discussion of other changes that may be at least indirectly linked to the CLE initiative—the results of the second cycles of NSSE and CLA and a second round of focus groups, in 2008 with 73 faculty and in 2009 with 95 students. The 2007 NSSE scores increased significantly in areas related to high expectations and connecting learning inside and outside the classroom (Office of Institutional Analysis, NSSE 2007). The CLA results demonstrated that rising juniors scored as expected on the basis of their performance as freshmen (Guevara, 2007).

Understanding of and support for liberal education remained strong among faculty. Our analysis of the faculty focus group discussions provided evidence for significant shifts in faculty's view of themselves as teachers and of their students as learners, due in part not only to the initiative but also, surely, to a greatly increased emphasis on assessing student learning outcomes during the years of the initiative to prepare for a North Central Association accreditation visit in 2008. Unlike in 2004, faculty could now articulate what they did to encourage high expectations in their students. Again, unlike in 2004, they had a basis for determining whether GVSU students were well educated (Frerichs, 2008).

TABLE 6.2
Claiming a Liberal Education (CLE) initiative direct or indirect institutional changes 2004–2008

Provost

Instituted and funded initiatives that directly support CLE goals: assessing and strengthening advising program, developing model for student success. Funded four years of discussion on liberal education with faculty, staff, and students. Revised new faculty orientation for greater focus on liberal education. Established task force to study feasibility of university-wide student rating form.

Institutional Marketing

Focus groups of faculty and students to develop brief, direct messages about liberal education. Current university tagline is a result. Previous themes of convenience and affordability no longer foregrounded.

Academic Services

Summer orientations for first-year students revised to emphasize liberal education and academic challenge.

College of Interdisciplinary Studies

More than doubled sections of Introduction to Liberal Education; about one-third of freshmen take course, continued the IGDs with focus on diversity, organized provost's liberal education discussions, instituted Community Reading, now in fourth year, and organized team for second Greater Expectations Institute with focus on engaging students by integrating the curricular and cocurricular.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Liberal education expectations now in all position descriptions; faculty statements on liberal education in their courses now on CLAS website; unsuccessful attempt to develop college-wide student ratings form, with research funded by Pew FTLC.

Seidman College of Business

Included liberal education in strategic planning.

Faculty Governance

Passed resolution supporting the CLE initiative, recognized the CLE advisory committee as provost's committee.

Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center

Aligned programs with initiative. Set aside grant funds for CLE-related projects; continued to make liberal education a priority in grant funding; offered programming designed to publicize and discuss CLE research and principles; CLE codirectors discussed liberal education with secretarial staff, plant services, and public safety personnel; Liberal Education Academy established to enhance practice of liberal education for faculty.

Student Affairs

Reorganized welcome-week activities for greater academic focus, including emphasis on liberal education; staff discussed readings on liberal education; developed diversity action plan, including goal of 25% people of color on staff; Housing staff planned programing designed to encourage students' critical thinking and appreciation for diversity, new programing communicated to faculty; working with faculty, established learning communities for first-year women in science and engineering, also for prelaw men and women.

Note. CLE = Claiming a Liberal Education; CLAS = College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; IGD = Intergroup Dialogues.

Students in the 2009 focus groups showed clear differences from the 2003 groups in their views of learning and a liberal education. They indicated greater positive personal change since arriving on campus and were more willing to take responsibility for their learning. There were far fewer comments that indicated a consumerist perspective. All of the students could define liberal education whereas none could in 2003 (Pace, Frerichs, Rosier, & Ellenberger, 2010).

In Hindsight: Factors Enabling Broader Involvement

Over the past six years, the Pew FTLC at GVSU has demonstrated that it can fulfill its original mission *as well as* take on a much broader role in the university as a whole. A number of key factors worked together in accomplishing the transformational change in the role of the center and director *as well as* in the institution. Together, this constellation of factors enabled redefinition of the director and center's role into a highly visible leadership role that collaborated through all aspects of initiating broader scale institutional change. The *Coming in From the Margins* study by Connie Schroeder, the center- and institution-based factors that enable involvement in the liberal education institutional initiative at GVSU, included:

GVSU Center director-based factors

- Skills
 - leadership
 - facilitation
 - initiative
 - envisioning
 - proposal/grant writing
 - collaboration
- Expertise and knowledge
 - organizational change processes and models
 - culture
 - governance system
 - institutional data
 - research; interpreting research results; institutional research studies
 - national resources; instruments (NSSE; CLA)
 - literature on liberal education, increasing expectations

- National professional association involvement (AAC&U)

GVSU Center-based factors

- Center alignment with institutional mission
- Center advocates

GVSU Institution-based factors

- Supervisory and upper-level support
- Institutional leadership
- Institutional culture

Lessons for Faculty Developers in Leading From the Middle

Not only did GVSU successfully enact institutional-level change but the Pew FTLC also transformed itself, as Chism (1998) suggested, from an already successful center to the front office or “front lines,” collaborating and cultivating a tipping point as initiators of change. The center’s initiatives are examples of what Senge (2006) calls a “learning organization.” The members of a learning organization use systems thinking, “a discipline for seeing the ‘structures’ that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change” (2006, p. 69). If members can look beyond individual parts to see the whole, they can help to create the reality of their organization and not simply react to particular events. The following recommendations are key for any center that is undertaking a similar large-scale initiative:

1. Cultivate a bird’s-eye view of the institution, understanding its mission and major obstacles to achieving the mission. Align with the institutional mission.
2. When a problem is identified that is within the purview of the center, identify others who care about the problem, who may work with you, as Gladwell’s model suggests. Raise awareness of the need for change.
3. Select a model to guide your change, preferably one that carries with it emotional weight, such as Gladwell’s tipping point. The model in itself can help to recruit allies.
4. Communicate with appropriate administrators, seek their support, and keep them informed.
5. Gather and publicize baseline data, keep accurate records during the initiative, and gather and publicize follow-up data.

6. Educate a broad selection of the community about the problem and modify your definition of the problem based on their responses; invite their assistance and do not second-guess their efforts.
7. Be involved in the change yourself. The Pew FTLC director taught a freshman-only section of Introduction to Liberal Education for four years of the project; the associate dean of students also teaches every year.

Note

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Appendix: Claiming a Liberal Education Leaders

- Frederick Antczak, dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, co-sponsor.
- Gayle Davis, provost and vice president for academic affairs, co-sponsor.
- Catherine Frerichs, director of the Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, 1997–2009; currently, professor of writing; codirector.
- Donna Henderson-King, associate professor of psychology, faculty researcher.
- Bart Merkle, vice provost and dean of students, co-sponsor.
- Diana Pace, associate dean of students, co-director.
- Tamara Rosier, assistant director, Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, assisted in follow-up research.
- Wendy Wenner, dean, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, CLE co-sponsor.