Introduction

Our topics:
1. Contemporary challenges in higher education
2. Colleges are different
3. Self studies need a theory of change
4. Resistance to change
5. Ten critical process variables
6. Final thoughts
7. References and resources
Learning objectives …

1. **Review contemporary challenges** to colleges and universities
2. Understand the argument that self study *process* is more important than *content*
3. Understand that a self study needs a *theory of change*
4. **Review critical process variables** when managing self study and planned change
My research question …

- What do we know about planned change in colleges and universities, especially change introduced by a searching self study?

- We’ll treat planned change and self study as roughly equivalent terms because a good self study drives many levels of planned change.

- We’ll discuss current research on planned change in education and business as well as new developments in organizational theory.
1. Contemporary challenges in higher education

Some are shared but the threat list varies by sector.

We’ll look, first, at challenges in common and, second, the challenges of one sector, public research universities.
Some common threats …

- Slow, uncertain path out of a deep global recession
- Reduced state and federal support as well as reduced family resources
- Growing cost of college and doubts that leaders have the vision and will to control cost by restructuring
- Ever-new information technologies that prove “disruptive” and threaten traditional curricula
- Recent studies that college learning outcomes are uneven
- Increasing worries about return on investment, and, for all these reasons,
- Weakening support by political leaders and the voting public
Let’s hear from Robert Zemsky about one sector, public research universities …

Title of his 2012 talk at UVM says it all …

"Between a New Rock and Bad Hard Place: Public Research Universities at Risk"
The "bad hard space" has three threats …

1. Research universities appear ungovernable because, in part, of poor board engagement.
2. Turnover in college leaders is too high, reflecting the stress and causing more stress.
3. Power of sports is too dominant in campus decisions (and I'd add the disproportionate power of a professional school of law or medicine).
Zemsky’s "new rock" defined …

- Major shifts in higher education, largely external as well as off shore, responding to global economic challenges:
  - 70% of higher education will be narrow-cast, technology-close, vocational preparation in community colleges using standardized curricula, an approach we might emulate from Germany or Switzerland
  - Increasing competition from aggressive and nimble for profits who know how to market themselves
  - Universities need to reduce unit cost
  - Too many institutions for all to survive
Zemsky adds other challenges to quality …

- Weak General Education requirements
- Departmental competition for course time and visibility that adds to inefficiency
- Too little communication among faculty members about what they teach and why
- Shared governance becomes a smokescreen for lack of shared responsibility
What is to be done?

- “Muddle through” as Guskin and Marcy put it?
  - Piecemeal changes protect the status quo and slowly erode quality
  - Reduced new investment in quality of student learning as well as innovation
  - Slow downward spiral

OR
Restructure to reduce cost while also increasing quality of teaching and learning?

- Bold leadership toward a new and shared vision
- Hard as it will be, zero-based budgeting to reduce cost
- Improve quality of work life of faculty
- Better integrate staff in support of learning while reducing inefficiency
- Use technology to stimulate and document learning regardless of time or place

Guskin and Marcy (2003)
2. Colleges are different!

"loosely coupled" organizations (Weick, 1982)

less responsive to command and control authority (Kezar, 2001; Burke, 2011)

Hard to steer or turn this ship in bad weather …
Colleges are unique cultures …

- A values-driven academic culture where words matter
- Distributed leadership structure
- Ideal of shared governance, however imperfect
- Low turnover of core stakeholders like faculty
- Different constituencies have disparate goals not easily yoked together

Adrianna Kezar, 2009
An education system resists change like a sponge returning to its boxy shape just as soon as we stop leaning on it, or poking it.

Robert Zemsky, 2008
Planned change needs a *theory* of change …

Better for it to be explicit and testable than implicit and full of surprises.
Kezar’s (2009) definition of “theory of change” ...

- "a predictive assumption about the relationship between desired changes and the actions that may produce those changes - If I do x, then I expect y to occur, and for these reasons."

- A theory of change, usually implicit, underlies any policy or program change (as well as daily existence)

- Theories of change in the social sciences are highly context dependent
Six major theories of change …

1. Evolutionary
2. Lifecycle
3. Teleological or management science
4. Political
5. Social cognition
6. Cultural

Adrianna Kezar (2009)
A good theory of change surfaces and challenges various types of resistance to change.
Types of resistance ...

- Psychological
- Cultural
- Political
5. Ten critical process variables

Two immodest assertions:

1. Self study process is more important than content!

2. If we monitor the right process variables, we can improve change outcomes!
Ten process variables to monitor …

1. How is the case for change and evidence assembled?
2. How is the new vision constructed?
3. How is sensemaking given explicit, sustained focus?
4. How are campus staff, students and faculty involved?
5. How is change leadership distributed vertically and horizontally?
6. How are people leading teams educated about managing change process?
7. How does the leadership communicate with people not close to the change or self study?
8. How are formative and summative evaluation results used to improve process?
9. How are evaluation outcomes used to feed the next cycle of self study and change?
10. How are change momentum and tempo built and sustained?
6. Final thoughts …

Suggestions for theory building and research about planned change

Practical suggestions for self study coordinators and campus leaders
7. References and resources


Thank you!

For an updated version of my CHE presentation and the paper I’m writing with full references and graphics, please contact me at:

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