



FLANNERY COLLEGE (B)

A “huge,” “unbelievable” change...

The communications team launched its intranet and the self-exploration team disbanded. The new Provost, selected from the Flannery faculty, approved all of the recommendations of the Leadership Development Programs team. As a result, Flannery’s Center for Leadership was established, governed by a council of nine staff, two faculty members (including Lori Keet), and the new Provost. In the Center’s “Leadership Lab,” annual cohorts of employees experience a range of programming offered by the Center. The workshops, toolbox, and collaborative spaces are available to the entire campus community year-round:

Leadership Lab primary programming components

Social Change Leadership Course

A nine-month course that combines the best practices of adult education with dynamic instruction rooted in research-based leadership theories and practices

Catalyst Teams

Working groups that provide leadership course cohort members with opportunities to employ their acquired knowledge toward addressing University issues and challenges

Social Change Leadership Workshops

Workshops enable all members of the community (students and employees) the opportunity to develop their leadership potential (offered once per quarter)

Toolbox

A comprehensive leadership development suite of resources that is accessible by all community members

Collaborative Spaces

Specially designed collaborative workspaces located in the University library, the University’s learning commons

This case was written by Lukas Wenrick and Kiernan Mathews for the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It is designed solely as the basis for classroom discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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Two years after the launch of the Roundtable, Lori Keet reflected on the astounding success of the new leadership programs that emerged:

“As crazy and amorphous as it is right now, the fact that it even exists, that people even now see that that might be a thing that would be useful on this tiny little campus, is huge. On the staff side, it’s great. They’re thinking about themselves as potential leaders as they never had before. And it’s a safe place to air some grievances, and that’s powerful. We have this culture now of talking about issues, of talking about problems... It is unbelievable where we have been and where we have gone. I credit John with a lot of the tangible and intangible change that has taken place here.”

... but what about the faculty?

Despite the “tremendous success” of the program, Keet was ambivalent about the faculty’s proper role in the new initiatives.

“The cohort that I’m a part of is a tremendous success right now. It’s not as robust as I would like... I’m still the only faculty person in the Lab, for example. Faculty are not sure about what this is, and not sure that they have time for it. They don’t know if this is like some kind of training for deanship, or is this some kind of staff development thing that they have no part in. I don’t know how that will move forward but I think, right now, faculty are not sure if it would benefit them. But I think, you know, we’re getting there. I think that’s a success.”

Perhaps, Keet wondered, her absence and Finch’s meant that the trajectory of the Roundtable might follow paths they had not imagined.

“Some of it was developed while I was on sabbatical so I came back and it was sort of like, oh, *what* now? I care about this and I got left out a little bit. And I think also with John stepping away and going elsewhere, there’s a little bit of the sense of like, wait, wait, wait, we’ve lost maybe some of what it *could* be... I think the six or seven of us who ended up in that personal learning group miss the roundtable and really got a lot out of it and appreciated having likeminded people to talk with about things that were bubbling up.”

Looking back, Finch recollected his rationale for limiting the number of faculty on the Roundtable—and admitted that he could have taken a different approach.

“So [at the beginning] there were faculty who observed that there were very few faculty on the Leadership Roundtable and they thought that was an issue, and I tried to help the faculty who were on it reach those people and say, you know, they felt it was valuable, that they didn’t feel that there was a need for a lot of faculty to join at this moment, that there might be – that the group could evolve. There was nothing permanent about it. There might be another version of the group in the future, who knows, that might involve more faculty. More faculty might be interested at some later point...”

In the end, Finch believed he was right to let these changes in Flannery's culture "take root" among staff first.

"The comparatively few faculty involved was, in my view, a judgment not against faculty per se, but mainly about how many people were ready to contribute to such a group. If the Leadership Lab gains traction and does good work with staff, it might then naturally attract faculty, too, which would be good. I have a hypothesis that many changes will proceed most effectively if they take root first in staff (avoiding conflicts with faculty), and then faculty consider that success and whether it should apply to them."

[END]