
Buller (2015) emphasizes that traditional top down management of colleges and universities including strategic planning often fails to produce long term, sustained, improvement and change. Buller draws upon many leadership frameworks, lenses, and approaches to demonstrate that engaging the university’s faculty in decision making evokes ownership of the university’s development. Attempts to change the campus culture from above are futile. Rather, a leader’s ability to organize constituents around a common problem, facilitate and stimulate discussion, and work with the staff to pull together a vision and plan of action will create an interdependent culture committed to excellence and innovation. An effective leader works to find what is going well, exploit it, and capitalize on this unique identity to further promote the values and mission of the organization. Rather than focus on a strategic destination, a university should embark on a continual journey guided by a strategic compass. This allows for future leaders to continually build on the work of their predecessors with a unique combination of flexibility and focus.
All academic leaders, regardless of the level of the institution, would benefit from Buller’s (2015) combinations of analytical, reflection, and planning frameworks. Buller provides examples of thought processes in case studies, and provides guidance on the pitfalls of leaders. Buller helps leaders understand how to go from managing change to leading it.


Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers (2015) concerned themselves with informal and formal professional development’s impacts on the employability of university faculty. Employability encompasses five dimensions including building occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization (staying current in one’s field and acting upon this knowledge), personal flexibility, having a corporate sense, and achieving work-life balance. Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers inquire beyond generalized informal and formal learning to understand how faculty learn best. They hypothesize that social informal learning activities are more impactful than formal learning activities (p. 140).
Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers (2015) surveyed 209 teaching faculty members in a university in the Netherlands. The survey used a 5 point Likert scale (1 totally disagree, to 5 totally agree) to measure faculty’s informal learning (external information seeking, acting upon feedback from superiors and peers, and help seeking). An open ended question to measure formal learning inquired about the number of hours faculty spent in trainings, workshops, and seminars in the last year. Employability (occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, and flexibly) was measured using a previously designed 31 item questionnaire and a 6 point Likert scale.

Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers (2015) found that social informal learning related to employability, whereas formal learning did not correlate to employability. Specifically, external help seeking, acting upon feedback related to staff’s ability to anticipate changes and be flexible in their work (p. 145). Staff also must be empowered to drive their own professional learning. Formalized learning activities are insufficient for staying employable in higher education (p. 147). Leaders must create systems and workplaces that are conducive to social interaction including mentoring, collaboration, and help seeking.

While formalized learning opportunities such as workshops and seminars will probably never disappear as a way to share information and ideas across universities and to broader audiences, higher education leaders will do well to
understand the increased importance of social interaction on faculty’s ability to secure and maintain employment.


LePeau (2018) defines a social gadfly is a person who pushes the status quo and people in power positions (p. 402). LePeau (2018) sought out leaders in academic affairs (AA) and student affairs (SA) and who were self-identified social justice advocates, or social gadflies. LePeau examine not only how the participants enacted social change, but the experiences of these people and their journeys to become social justice activists. This grounded theory study was comprised of the interviews of 22 participants (mostly white) from four institutions from across the United States. Each participant was interviewed twice (p. 405).

Common themes emerged from the study. It was apparent that the participants operated from the frame that student diversity and inclusion needed to be at the forefront of academic and social encounters on campus. Curriculum and policies were questioned and people (professors, administrators, and other students) held accountable for practices that were not culturally inclusive. These social gadflies shared life experiences that impacted their diversity outlooks such
as growing up in the Civil Rights Era, teaching in alternative K-12 settings, and studying diversity and equity issues in graduate courses (p. 408). The participants also experimented with job positions requiring attention and collaboration centered around diversity and inclusion (p. 411). It also seemed that these gadflies attracted others that were endeared with social justice and equity mindsets and collaborated to shift cultures, practices, and policies (p. 412).

Academic and student affairs positions are poised to observe and impact student life and success on campus. Administrators concerned with social justice and equity should consider people in these positions to strategically carry out this work. Leaders and other educators should become aware of social gadflies and may want to encourage these change agents and their agendas, or manage, or stop them. Leaders need to be aware that while well intentioned, other stakeholders may become upset with these activists and may need to intervene.