Effecting Change in Universities: Reflections on Four Change Efforts

Abstract

I will share what I have learned from 36 years as a professor and from four major efforts to change my university. Great patience and persistence is required. Change is typically very slow because universities are large and bureaucratic organizations with multifaceted goals that are difficult to measure. In addition, having a reputation for being someone who cares about the institution and who is both reasonable and competent is critical. In my experience, the Faculty Senate is an important source of leverage for change. Participants will be invited to share their university change experiences and perspectives.

Key Words: university service, change, persistence

Introduction

In my session, I will share what I have learned from 36 years as a professor and from four major efforts to change my university. The first effort was a survey done in 2002 which had the intent of removing the president and provost of my campus. The survey results prevented the president and chancellor from being reappointed. The second effort has taken over 15 years and resulted in a major revamping of the defined contribution retirement program on my campus. Over $1 million annual fee reductions have been obtained. The investment choice process has been greatly simplified and made more user friend and effective. The third effort is ongoing and is focused on creating a teaching center on my campus. My involvement began four years ago. The fourth is just beginning and is focused on evaluating the financial impact of student loans students received as university financial aid.

I will share some of the important things I have learned from these experiences. Great patience and persistence is required. Change is typically very slow because universities are large and bureaucratic organizations with multifaceted goals that are difficult to measure. In addition, having a reputation for being someone who cares about the institution and who is both reasonable and competent is critical. In my experience, the Faculty Senate is an important source of leverage for change.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications.

I don’t have a theoretical foundation for this session.

Session Description.

I will spend about 25 minutes describing my experiences with change at my university. I will then spend 25 minutes seeking inputs from participants regarding their change efforts at their institutions. During the last 10 minutes, I will draw things together and wrap up.