Leading with Resilience and Compassion

Building Capacity for Strategic Momentum

Compassionate Leadership

Current Focus

- Redefines compassion as a skillset, not an inherent trait

- Teaches how to lead with empathy and action, especially amid campus-wide fatigue

Resilient Leadership

EAB's Initial Study

- Helps leaders identify and avoid crisis thinking pitfalls

- Teaches how to craft a long-term strategic mindset in times of disruption

Transitional Leadership

Forthcoming

- Provides strategies for interims to maintain momentum and avoid inaction

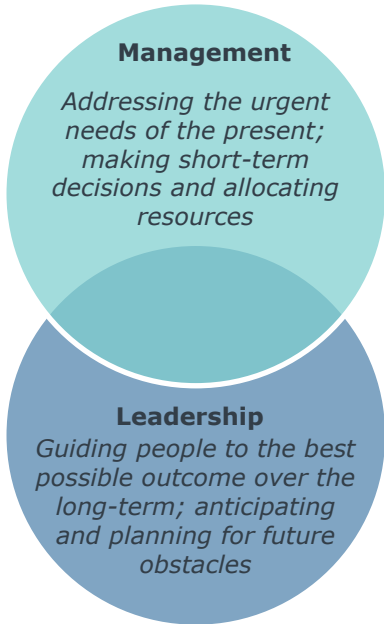- Prepares cabinet members to work with interim leaders effectively

Building leadership skills and behaviors to sustain strategic focus and momentum

Crises Make Managers Out of Leaders, at the Expense of Strategic Growth

Optimal Division of Mindshare

Management

Addressing the urgent needs of the present; making short-term decisions and allocating resources

Leadership

Guiding people to the best possible outcome over the long-term; anticipating and planning for future obstacles

Mindshare During a Crisis

Management

Leadership

Contributions to Crisis Management Creep

Stakeholder anxiety

No "playbook" to reference

Irrelevant urgency

Source: Are You Leading Through the Crisis…or Managing the Response?, Harvard Business Review

Self-Reflection

Consider an experience—personal or professional—when you had to navigate and support others through a crisis or challenge.

How did that experience contribute to your resilience? Consider how it made you **think, feel, and act**.
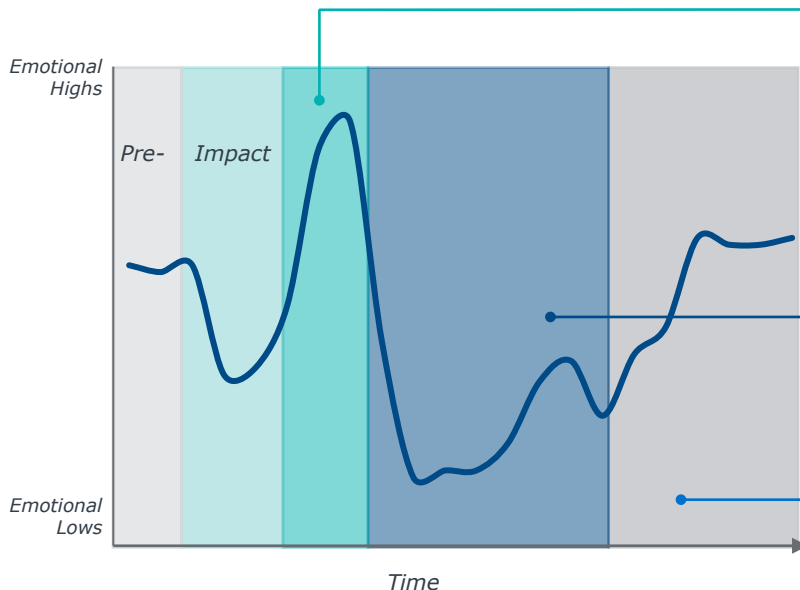
EAB

Responding to Crisis Thinking

1

Emerging from Crisis at Different Stages

Phases of Disaster Have Distinct Emotional Consequences

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Honeymoon

- Immediate threat is removed
- Community bonding occurs
- Optimism that normalcy is imminent
- **Lasts a few weeks**

Disillusionment

- Limitations of disaster assistance is realized
- Optimism turns to discouragement and return of chronic stress
- Gap between need and assistance leads to feelings of abandonment
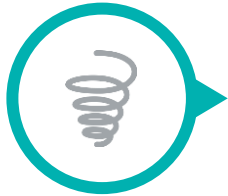- Can **last months or years**

Recovery

- Readjustment/integration to "new normal"
- See meaning, opportunity & growth from losses
- **May last for years**

Emotional Highs

Pre- *Impact*

Emotional Lows

Time

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Leaders Need Energized Teams More than Ever, but Most Are Depleted

Employees Are Not in a Great Place

to help leaders meet new priorities and challenges

Career and Morale Concerns

Stressed by Inflation

Change Fatigue

Diminished Community and Social Connections

Dealing with Own Post-COVID Trauma

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Both Are Workplace Phenomena That Show Up in Workers

Burnout at a Glance

Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

Compassion Fatigue at a Glance

State of psychological and physiological exhaustion and dysfunction that results from being overloaded by other people's stress.

1 **Energy depletion** of one's emotional or physical resources

2 **Cynicism** or an excessively detached response to various aspects of the job

3 Reduced **professional efficacy** or feelings of incompetence or lack of achievement at work

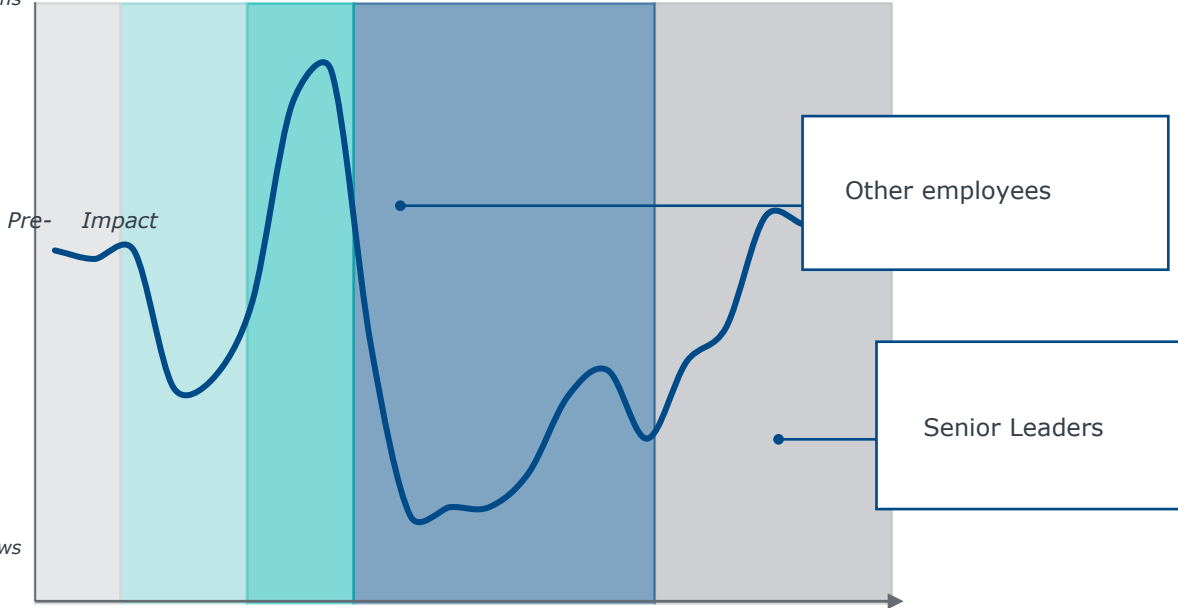**1** Being overloaded by **other people's stress**

2 **Detachment** from the people with whom you work

3 **Preoccupation** with what you can or cannot do to help your team as a manager

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

How We Can Think and Lead Better in a Crisis

Crisis Thinking		Adaptive Strategies
Instinct to protect one's own prevails, e.g. hoarding essential supplies	**Isolationism**	Leverage uncertainty to build a new collaboration infrastructure by appealing to shared goals and a shared identity
Focus on what's been lost and how to avoid further loss, vs. looking for alternative gains	**Loss Aversion**	Quantify the greater risk of the status quo; adopt a third-person perspective
You go first: people unwilling to change behavior until they see others doing so	**Need for Social Proof**	Appeal to stakeholders' desire for certainty, especially during volatile periods
Experiencing loss of control leads to seeking control in other, less important areas	**Irrelevant Urgency**	Upskill those deeper in the organization to lead on crisis response; ruthlessly guard strategic time and mindshare
Consistent exposure to extreme levels of suffering or difficulty leads to withdrawal and inaction	**Psychic Numbing**	Leverage individual stories and experiences to break through the noise

Source: Van Bevel et al., Using social and behavioral science to support COVID-19 pandemic response, PsyArXiv, 2020; Loss Aversion, The Decision Lab; Even as behavioral researchers we couldn't resist the urge to buy toilet paper, The Guardian

Isolationism

Thinking Pattern

Doubling down on the instinct to protect what you have and withdraw from the outside environment (e.g., hoarding essential supplies)

Planning Implications

Silos get exacerbated as each unit tries to protect its own interests without considering larger institutional imperatives

Adaptation Strategy

Leverage uncertainty to build a new collaboration infrastructure by appealing to shared goals and a shared identity

Loss Aversion

Thinking Pattern

Focusing on what's been lost and how to avoid further loss, versus looking for alternative gains

Planning Implications

The urge to stymy losses of traditional resources (e.g., loss of annual funding sources) obscures opportunities for alternatives

Adaptation Strategy

Quantify and communicate the greater loss of not moving forward and broadening the strategic horizon

Need for Social Proof

Thinking Pattern You go first mentality: being unwilling to change behavior until you see others doing so

Planning Implications Sector-wide reluctance to announce plans and innovations before others in the industry for fear of being wrong

Adaptation Strategy Appeal to stakeholders' desire for certainty, especially during volatile periods

Irrelevant Urgency

Thinking Pattern

Experiencing loss of control leads to seeking control in other, less important areas

Planning Implications

Scarce leadership capacity devoted to lower-level operational tasks, not strategy

Adaptation Strategy

Upskill those deeper in the organization to lead on crisis response; ruthlessly guard strategic time and mindshare

Psychic Numbing

Thinking Pattern : Consistent exposure to extreme levels of suffering or difficulty leads to withdrawal and inaction

Planning Implications : Motivation and engagement wanes over time

Adaptation Strategy : Leverage individual stories and experiences to break through the noise

Discussion

Which crisis thinking pattern has been most prevalent at your institution?

Share examples of how you (or how you have observed others) have overcome these thinking patterns.

How We Can Think and Lead Better in a Crisis

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Leading with Compassion

2

Compassion Fatigue | *noun*

1: state of psychological and physiological exhaustion and dysfunction

2: result of repeated exposure to others' stress

3: combination of burnout and secondary traumatic stress

Widespread Threat Across Campuses

- Healthcare concept mainstream
- Most acute among counselors, student support roles
- Occurs in employees at all levels of organizations

Common Signs of Compassion Fatigue—How Many Apply to You?

☐ My staff/faculty's stress affects me deeply.

☐ I question my choice to work in higher ed.

☐ I feel overwhelmed by unfinished business.

☐ I don't know how to help my staff/faculty address their problems.

☐ I know how to help my staff/faculty, and I can't.

☐ If I try to care more, it will negatively affect me.

☐ I struggle to separate my personal and professional life.

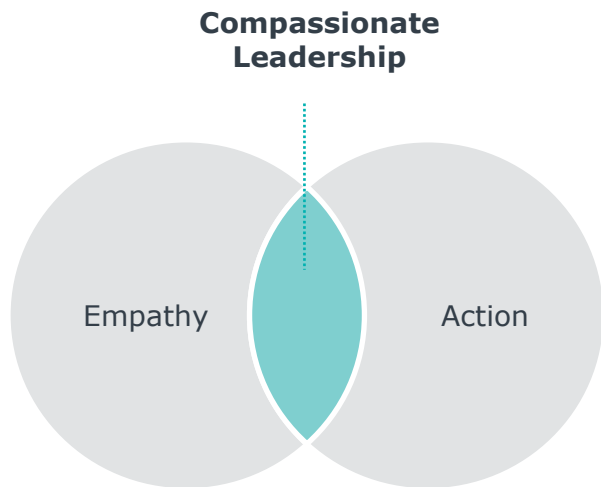☐ I can't care for myself because I'm dealing with others' issues.

Source: ProQOL Measure (2021). AAFP's Compassion Fatigue Self-Assessment (2000).

Compassionate Leadership Means Hardwiring Actionable Skills and Behaviors
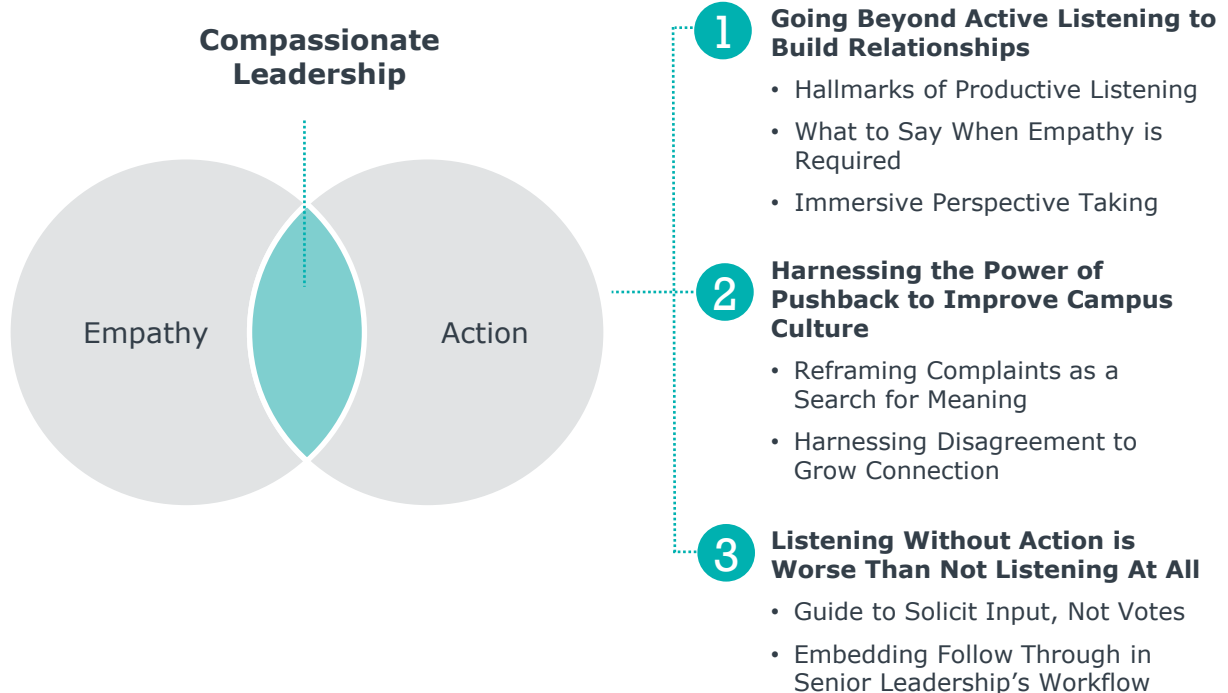
Compassionate Leadership

Empathy | Action

1 Going Beyond Active Listening to Build Relationships

- Hallmarks of Productive Listening
- What to Say When Empathy is Required
- Immersive Perspective Taking

2 Harnessing the Power of Pushback to Improve Campus Culture

- Reframing Complaints as a Search for Meaning
- Harnessing Disagreement to Grow Connection

3 Listening Without Action is Worse Than Not Listening At All

- Guide to Solicit Input, Not Votes
- Embedding Follow Through in Senior Leadership's Workflow

Hardwiring Actionable Skills and Behaviors

Compassionate Leadership

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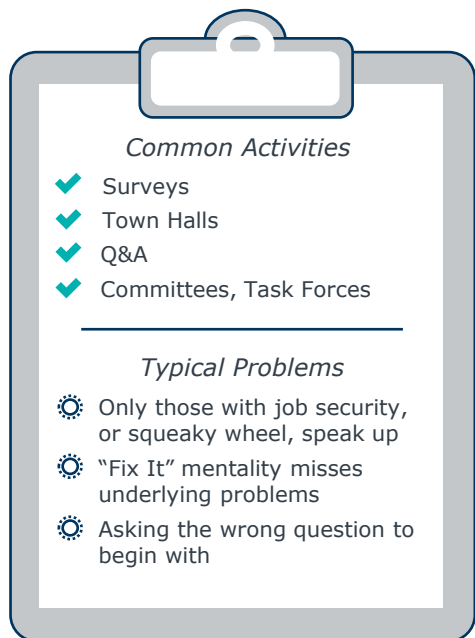**3 Listening Without Action is Worse Than Not Listening At All**
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Discussion

What are some of the mechanisms in place at your institution to assist with listening to stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, community members)?
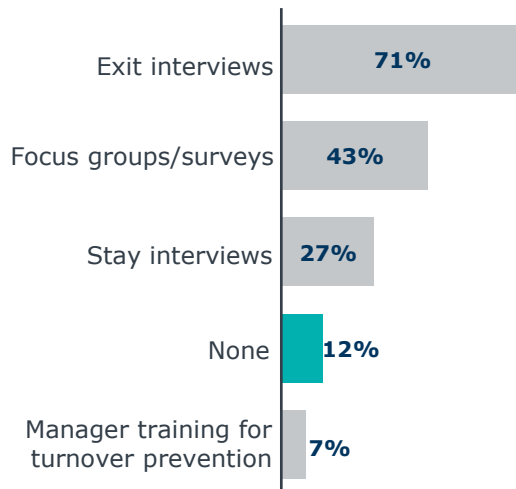
Easy to Think We've Got Our Bases Covered on Soliciting Feedback

Common Activities

✔ Surveys
✔ Town Halls
✔ Q&A
✔ Committees, Task Forces

Typical Problems

☼ Only those with job security, or squeaky wheel, speak up
☼ "Fix It" mentality misses underlying problems
☼ Asking the wrong question to begin with

But Missed Opportunities Abound

What initiatives related to internal feedback and work adjustments has your institution tried since July 2021 to improve staff recruitment/retention?[1]

Exit interviews — **71%**
Focus groups/surveys — **43%**
Stay interviews — **27%**
None — **12%**
Manager training for turnover prevention — **7%**

Unproductive Listening

Productive Listening

❌ Avoiding questions that open a can of worms

❌ Only hearing the "squeaky wheel"

❌ Responding to surface-level concerns

✔ Taking time to reflect during and after listening sessions

✔ Hearing the "squeak" and looking for a broken axle

✔ Validating emotion, empathizing

Results of Unproductive Listening

⚠ Compassion fatigue, psychic numbing

⚠ Unused feedback causes distrust

Counterintuitive Signs You're Listening Well

((•)) Asking more questions

((•)) Getting more complaints

Empathy Requires A Different Script

When You Need More Information

"What has this been like for you?"

"What I'm hearing is that you are feeling _____. Is that right?"

"Is there anything else you want to share?"

When the Problem is Unsolvable

"That sounds really _____."

"I can see how that would be difficult."

"Wow. I don't know what to say."

When Someone Shares a Personal Challenge

"This must be hard to talk about. Thanks for opening up to me."

"Thank you for trusting me with that information."

"I'm glad you told me."

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Case Study

Immersive Perspective Taking Accelerates Understanding

KING UNIVERSITY

Challenge:

Faculty question student-athletes' academic prioritization

Solution:

Immersive program allows faculty to live student-athlete experience

How It's Done

- Each team assigned a Faculty Associate (FA)
- FAs attend occasional practices, team meetings, road games on team bus
- FAs have team to house for meals, meet family

Example Outcome

- FA mediates compromise in scheduling conflict between athlete and professor re: tournament game and grad requirement
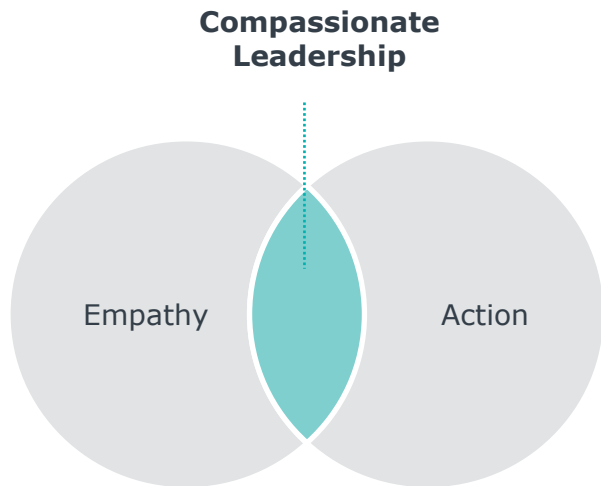
Scaling Perspective Taking Across Faculty, Staff

▶ Develop staff rotation programs

▶ Place central admin and faculty on each other's committees

▶ Ask different stakeholders to observe decision-making process in other units

Additional Out-Of-Sector Ideas

- Role play scenarios as customers, guests, managers, subordinates

- Engage in perspective taking activities – Empty Chair (include empty chair in meeting for those not represented in the room)

Source: King University, Bristol, TN; EAB interviews and analysis.

Hardwiring Actionable Skills and Behaviors

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Caption This....

Reflection

Consider the complaints you've heard in the last few weeks.

Are there 2-3 that stand out because the content of the complaint seems trivial?

Jot them down for yourself.

The Downside of Communication: Complaining Circles in Group Discussions (2010)

Evolutionarily wired to repeat the complaints of others

Complaint ➡ Support ➡ Complaint

Negative effects of complaining contagion:

Repeated exposure to negative thought patterns rewires neurotransmitters

Teams have lower productivity, satisfaction with the organization

Town Halls Occasion for "President to Take a Beating"

" *The President and I hold an open forum/Q&A session in all faculty senate meetings and those are the times when we take a beating. Faculty members use that time to provide direct feedback more than ask questions. There are always a few people with axes to grind.*"

– Provost, Large Public Institution

Suppressing Internal Complaints Only Incites Backlash

- Silencing complaints doesn't make them go away; they often resurface as flashpoints

- Rising number of flashpoints takes time away from strategic work

What If We Reframed Complaints as a Deeper Search for Meaning?

" Feelings of discontent, emptiness, and sadness — **stemming from a lack of meaning, but not necessarily understood as such** – often lurk behind complaints about management."

MIT Sloan Management Review

Questions to Filter Out Venting and Look for Meaning

1. What's the complaint behind the complaint?

2. What does this person really want or need?

3. What's preventing them from getting it?

The EAB Complaint Translator™

What You Hear → *Underlying Search for Meaning*

"My office is too cold—budget cuts strike again." → Perceived prioritization of institutional efficiency over individual wellbeing

"Grade inflation ruins our reputation." → Misalignment of individual's valuation of the nature of their work and reality

"They have two remote days per week, but we only have one." → Lack of equality, valuing one group over another

Source: MIT Sloan Management Review (2022); EAB Interviews and Analysis.

Different Complaints Require Different Responses

Complaint Pattern	How To Identify	Examples	What To Do
Venting	Frequently complains about inconsequential issues	"I hate teaching 8am classes!"	Empathize. Acknowledge their emotions and move on
Chronic Criticism	Consistent source of hollow criticism	"The Institution never does anything to help the staff."	Acknowledge their complaint and push them to recommend solutions
Challenging	Regular source of productive opposition	"This initiative wouldn't help the staff. Here's why."	Put them to work. Include them on task forces, other initiatives to solve campus issues
Meaning Seeking	Complains infrequently, but true concerns are obscured	"I don't understand why the Provost says x and does y."	Ask probing questions to get to the meaning behind the meaning of their complaints
Signaling	Points out relevant and solvable campus issues	"I've heard this is an issue across departments."	Encourage input and include them with *Challengers* on task forces, other initiatives to solve campus issues

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Different Complaints Require Different Responses

Types of Complainers	How To Identify	Examples	What To Do
Venting	Frequently complains about inconsequential issues	"I hate teaching 8am classes!"	Empathize. Acknowledge their emotions and move on
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Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Case Study

Deploying Faculty Challengers, Not Just Champions, on Sensitive Issues

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY.

- Initiative to publicly post average course GPAs, help students with course selection

- President and Provost move forward despite faculty resistance

- Include most vocal faculty challengers on Task Force, helps anticipate objections, articulate benefits

- Initiative re-introduced to faculty with improved online tool for soliciting faculty input and support

How to Mitigate Risk

▶ Include different perspectives to ensure challenger isn't the loudest voice

▶ Communicate that an invitation to the Task Force is not a promise to implement all of a challenger's ideas

Guide to Involving Challengers

• *How*

Proactively seek their input

Take advantage of their enterprise/expertise

• *When*

In information-gathering, for troubleshooting

In implementation phase, more so than decision-making

• *Why*

Challengers think critically about meaningful issues

They influence others; use it for good

Source: Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS; EAB interviews and analysis.
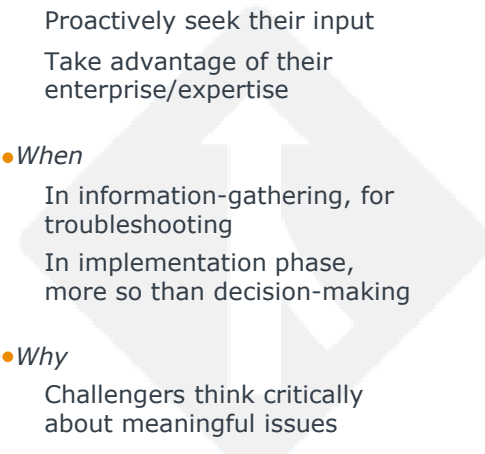
Discussion

Which types of complainers are most common
on your campus?

Tell us about your best complainer (not your worst!)

Tell us about a time you turned a complainer
into an asset.

Hardwiring Actionable Skills and Behaviors

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How Cabinets Can Normalize Disagreement

Harness Disagreements to Build Relationships with Staff and Faculty

Model Productive, Positive Feedback

- Resist the urge to silence disagreements
- Addressing disagreements produces comprehensive results

Overcommunicate to Achieve Shared Understanding

- Listen for commonalities
- Patterns make it much simpler to identify solutions to complex issues

Overcome Power Dynamics by Elevating Vulnerable Voices

- Check assumptions by soliciting new opinions
- Diverse perspectives build collective understanding and push the institution's thinking forward

What it Sounds Like in Practice:

"Thank you for providing a differing viewpoint – it's so valuable to hear other ways we could do things."

"What leads you to that opinion? It sounds like you have a strong opinion about X. Tell me why."

"We'd like to hear from some new voices today. Can someone without tenure speak to this issue?"

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Guide to Solicit Input, Not Votes

How to Solicit Productive Input in Four Steps

Establish Decision-Making and Expertise	Identify Staff Needs, Not Wants	Communicate Decision with Stakeholders	Implement Final Plan Campus-Wide
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

- Determine and outline what is feasible for your institution
- Decide where input is needed to move forward (does not need to be everything)

- Ask what's needed for stakeholders to implement potential plans, not what they want
- Use surveys, focus groups, or other method(s)

- Share final decision with community
- Highlight how input was used (e.g., "Most respondents needed little support for X, but not Y")

- Use resources strategically to introduce next steps
- Continually reinforce decision and reasoning

Sources: Prosci, The ADKAR Model; McNeill et al. (2021). K-12's Path Forward: The Seven "Wonders" of a Post-Vaccine World [Slide 29]. EAB; Ruben et al. (2021). How One University Harnessed Internal Knowledge and Expertise to Effectively Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic; EAB interviews and analysis.

Guide to Solicit Input, Not Votes

Learning From How Rutgers Deployed Framework Effectively During Covid

Establish Decision-Making and Expertise	**Identify Staff Needs, Not Wants**	**Communicate Decision with Stakeholders**	**Implement Final Plan Campus-Wide**
1	2	3	4

RUTGERS
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

| In January 2021, President plans to reopen campus safely via a campus vaccine mandate, identifies several potential plans | President mobilizes task forces leaders and SMEs, asking what they need to make the plan for re-opening campus successful | In March, final plan to mandate vaccine and re-open campus shared with all stakeholders, along with explanations of how input was used | In Fall 2021, President's Office implements plan, then communicates audience-specific updates, including weekly health reports |

Maintaining Lowest Infection Rates Among Institutions in Northeast Region

1st University in U.S. to mandate Covid-19 vaccine for all its students, March 2021

60 Students out of 64,636 deregistered in Fall 2021

Sources: Prosci, The ADKAR Model; McNeill et al. (2021). K-12's Path Forward: The Seven "Wonders" of a Post-Vaccine World [Slide 29]. EAB; Ruben et al. (2021). How One University Harnessed Internal Knowledge and Expertise to Effectively Combat the COVID-19 Pandemic; EAB interviews and analysis.

Building Credibility One Follow Through at a Time

Small "Gives" Have Outsized Impact on Employee Perceptions of Leadership

Ted Lasso's Suggestion Box

▶ Kansas football coaches hired to coach UK soccer team

▶ Created suggestion box to generate buy-in, only one actionable idea

▶ Built trust by … increasing water pressure in showers

ELON UNIVERSITY

Souped-Up "Suggestion Box" With Senior Leader Accountability

- Anonymous online suggestion box that goes directly to President, Chief of Staff

- CoS tracks progress in shared spreadsheet, follows up when feasible and unfeasible

- Standing agenda item in weekly meetings, semiannual all-staff presentations

Illustrative Example of Meaningful Excel Spreadsheet

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Suggestion	Status	Sent to	Date	Action Taken
2	Door handles in student center bathrooms not accessible to all mobility devices	In progress	Director of Facilities	4/5/2022	Assigned to staff to measure current handles, research accesibility
3			Facilities Staff	4/7/2022	Measured handles, determined incompatible with elbow forearm crutch. Reported findings to Director.
4			Director of Facilities	4/11/2022	Assigned staff to research accessible door handles, create budge & implementation proposal.

EAB Illustration

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Action Planning

What is one thing you will implement immediately as a result of today's session?

What is one complaint/complainer you will view with a more empathetic lens after today?

FPI Reflection and Next Steps

EAB

❑President as Leader and Coach

❑President as Student Advocate

❑President as Enrollment Strategist

❑President as Storyteller
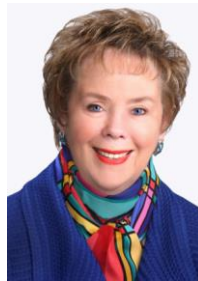
❑President as Visionary

VII: Search Firms Panel

Tuesday, October 31 | 1 – 3 pm ET (virtual)

Ernest Brooks

Isaacson, Miller

Partner

Marion Frenche

Greenwood Asher & Associates

Senior Executive Search Consultant, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Practice Leader

Jan Greenwood, PhD

Greenwood Asher & Associates

Co-Founder, GA&A and Senior Advisor

Jay Lemons, PhD

Academic Search

President and Senior Consultant

Lucy Leske

WittKieffer

Senior Partner