

Conclusion: Making Institutional Changes That Last

We began this book by laying out some general principles for creating a fair and inclusive educational institution. We end by outlining a few general principles for how to create institutional structures that will solidify and enhance desirable changes and, most of all, will make those changes stick—that is, survive turnover in the leadership and the faculty that first tried to encourage movement toward their ideal institution. We have developed these general principles based on our experience trying to implement changes in our own institutions as well as by observing efforts of others at theirs. The principles guided many of our specific recommendations in each of the chapters of part II, but we articulate them here in a more general form because institutional change efforts will inevitably raise issues not covered in this book at all. We hope these general principles will provide an effective framework for thinking through how to make changes that will last.

Six Principles

1. *Change requires a focus on policies and practices.* It can be tempting to treat the issue of creating a fair, equitable, diverse, and inclusive institution (or any other institutional change) either as simply requiring education (changes in knowledge) or as simply requiring attitude changes (which are notoriously difficult to accomplish in a lasting way; see, e.g., Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Eagly & Chaiken, 1995; McGuire, Lindzey, & Aronson, 1985). Institutional changes often do require educating oneself, one's colleagues, and academic leaders about one's institution and about issues, but once a path toward a change has been identified, it is neither practical nor necessary (and is possibly disrespectful) to try to change people's opinions and attitudes. If you believe, as we have argued throughout this book,

that nonconscious schemas and reasoning are playing a role in recruitment and evaluation processes at your institution, then we recommend that you focus on *mitigating* those biases on the ground—in terms of everyday institutional policies and practices—rather than trying to *change* the biases themselves.

That does not mean that we recommend ignorance! We have described at length the data and theories that we hope will become more widely known and appreciated, so that people can understand how and why inequities can persist despite a genuine commitment to merit and inclusion. Knowledge, however, is not enough. As noted above, it is difficult to change attitudes in general (and perhaps nonconscious associations in particular; Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011). Over a lifetime we are exposed to many “inputs” (from family members, school experiences, peers, media, etc.) that have provided the informal basis on which we built our associations between social groups and particular roles and traits (see Valian, 1998, for a discussion about why schemas will persist). A workshop, lecture, or program can make us aware of schemas and overly fast thinking and persuade us that we can be led astray in important decisions and judgments. However, only policies and practices aimed at mitigating and buffering the impact of schemas will actually prevent us from being led astray. That strategy has been the hallmark of the recommendations we made throughout this book and undergirds our focus on the social science research that can help us understand what our decision-making limitations are and therefore how to address them. (See Fenstermaker, 2011, for some excellent examples.)

2. *Ground efforts to produce desired institutional outcomes (e.g., fair decision-making) in social science knowledge.* Diversity is actually minimized when we try to change individuals to fit the dominant or status quo model of how something is done. Moreover, changing individuals' beliefs and attitudes is not only difficult, but smacks of a kind of social engineering that is distasteful to most faculty members. A focus on the outcome we are aiming for (a fair and accurate judgment) will lead us to emphasize processes of judgment and decision-making that enhance our ability to deliberate fairly and to minimize our reliance on flawed automatic cognitive processes.

There is considerable research evidence about what kinds of policy changes and “rollout” practices are most and least effective. For example,

transparency about policies and broad diffusion of information are critical to policy implementation, as are engaging the key actors, monitoring impact, and demanding accountability (Dobbin & Kalev, 2015; Dobbin, Schrage, & Kalev, 2016; Mitchneck, Smith, & Latimer, 2016). In contrast, workshops that offer only information and discussion of values—without the other features—have less impact. As you consider implementing a policy or policy change, think through what the process of rolling it out will be—how it can be made a high priority for the community in the immediate term. And just as important, consider how you will keep it “fresh” and meaningful through gathering and disseminating data on impact.

3. *Remember that all policies and practices are local.* It is improbable that a policy or practice can be exported wholesale from one institution to another and have the same impact. Universities and colleges have wildly diverse histories, cultures, governance systems, and procedures for adopting and changing policies. We hope you have read about policies and practices in this book that sounded like a good idea. If you try to introduce them into your department, school, college, or university, you will need to adapt them to your local culture. This may require small “tweaks” in language or major alterations. That’s desirable! The process of discussing how to adapt a policy or practice allows crucial academic actors—administrators and faculty in this case—to commit to and take responsibility for the policy or practice. And a broad commitment is critical for ensuring that the policy will be implemented.

We discussed some practices as if they were always done in more or less the same way across the institutions that adopt them. But of course they are not. One example is the “short-list review” described in chapter 6. In some institutions, historical information about recent hiring is required for a review of the short list; in others, the short list is reviewed in terms of whether it is diverse on its own terms; in others, diversity of the short list is compared with national pool availability; in some, the dean conducts the review; in others, the chief diversity officer or the provost does so. Those details may or may not matter to the success of the outcome (we lack good cross-institutional data comparing outcomes for similar institutions whose versions of the policy differ in the details), but they matter to the faculty and administrators’ confidence in and understanding of how the process fits into the overall faculty recruitment structure of the institution.

Similarly, family-friendly policies use many different concepts and terms at different institutions (leaves, modified duties, reduced workload, etc.), sometimes describing the same practices in different terms and sometimes describing different practices with the same terms. Legal, historical, and cultural meanings are different in different locations, and those meanings often dictate choices of language and links between policies. The important things are that the policies “fit” the institution, are transparent to those who need to use them, and are equitably administered.

The language with which policies are discussed also matters. Language referring to “trailing spouses” and “lead hires”—which inadvertently diminishes the accomplishments and potential of partners of potential hires—is counterproductive. Neither partner will be attracted if the language used diminishes one of them. Equally, language like “extra time” damages those who have time “off” the tenure clock for personal or professional reasons. That time was granted precisely because the individual did *not* have the necessary and appropriate time for their work. To imply that the policy of stopping the clock gave them “extra time” undoes its intent, implicitly suggesting that the person should be held to a higher standard of accomplishment. An accurate description that does not imply an altered standard is “time provided to compensate for time lost.”

Changing the language used to discuss such issues is easier than it may seem! The goal is to avoid language that unintentionally excludes or offends some group. For that reason, it is best to make changes based on a broad process of consultation with a wide range of different faculty members. Once the new language is embedded in policy documents that are transparent and widely available, and once campus leaders consistently use the new language, campuses shift to the new terminology almost without noticing it. This kind of change not only affects how decision makers frame individuals and their accomplishments, but also improves the climate of belonging and inclusion that we are aiming to create.

4. *Review the impact of changes in policies and practices for their effects on different constituencies. Use data to assess the differential impact of changes.* Some institutions take up a particular policy for consideration for a variety of immediate reasons: perhaps there is pressure from some group of faculty for more childcare, perhaps there is widespread distress among students

about the lack of faculty of color on campus, or perhaps a new provost or dean wants to achieve a more family-friendly campus. Alternatively, institutions may take up a systematic review of policies that affect faculty all at one time, prompted by a broad consideration of issues of diversity (as the University of Michigan did in 2004; see three reports archived at <http://advance.umich.edu/researchreports.php>, visited January 24, 2018).

In either case, a review must consider the impact of the policies and practices for everyone, not just the “average” faculty member (which was once and sometimes still is White, straight, and male), and not just the faculty currently at the institution but the faculty it hopes to attract. There is a lot of diversity to consider—race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, rank, ability status, age, dependent care demands, partner status, health, and more. Only by considering how policies and practices differentially affect different groups of faculty can those policies be altered to fit the needs of most or all the faculty. By consulting individuals from a range of backgrounds, those conducting the review can ensure a more favorable reaction to the resulting document. Recall our principle of universal design: the goal is to benefit as many faculty as possible.

Specifically thinking about how parental leave policies will apply to those who acquire new stepchildren, adopt children, foster children, or are appointed as guardians for children, for example, will ensure that faculty who become new parents outside the more frequent situation of experiencing their own or their partner's childbirth feel included in the vision of the institution. At least as important, faculty who face intense demands for caregiving to sick or dying family members must be recognized and included in policies that are supposed to feel “family friendly.”

Here, too, language matters. If accommodations for birth mothers begin from a “sick” or “disability” leave policy, faculty may feel that a natural reproductive process is being labeled as something it is not. Equally, if policies supporting the adjustment to a new child in the household only apply to women, men and their partners may feel that the importance and value of men's childrearing is diminished in value and in fact.

Language also matters in framing goals for inclusion of different races and ethnicities. Majority and minority individuals may respond differently to the same language. For example, one study showed that racial minorities use cues about diversity approaches (e.g., that are “color-blind” or

“assimilationist”) to assess their safety in an environment and the degree to which they can trust it (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008).

Considering the often-unintended consequences of policy coverage and language, while also considering changes in the policies themselves, is a critical part of a process that ends with a more inclusive policy covering more diverse faculty and resulting in better outcomes.

Finally, the potentially differential impact of any change in policy or practice can only be assessed with data. We have stressed throughout the book the crucial role of institutional data that are fine-grained and disaggregated enough to detect differential impact for different groups, as well as the importance of holding administrators accountable for gathering and monitoring the data and taking appropriate steps to address inequities that are uncovered. All of this should be built into the change process itself.

5. When possible, adopt policies and practices widely. Provide necessary educational and informational support so that all crucial actors can adopt the policies. It is common in large institutions to implement a change (e.g., in policies stopping the tenure clock or in recruitment procedures) and to provide substantial information to the relevant community at the time of the change. Ideally, this information will include a thorough explanation of the goals of the policy, the considerations that went into adopting it, and a description of precisely how it will be administered and monitored.

However, updating will also be required. “The community” is constantly changing, with departures of some key actors and arrival of new faculty, new department chairs, and other institutional leaders. Over time, understanding of the policy’s goal, as well as the reasons for how and why it was implemented in a particular way, decay in the community. This could lead to a healthy reexamination of the policy, but only if that is based on a full understanding of the thinking behind it. For that reason two things are crucial: (1) full documentation of the rationale and process of developing the policy and (2) frequent and repeated communication about the policy with all of the crucial actors.

It is hard to maintain changed policies when new upper level administrators and faculty arrive. Newcomers may have assumptions or misapprehensions about what the policies are, based in part on their earlier experiences. At the moment of arrival newcomers are overwhelmed by a

volume of information they cannot fully assimilate. What will help in maintaining beneficial policies is identifying a set of crucial policies that maintain institutional fairness, diversity, and inclusion; labeling and describing the policies; and recognizing that they need to be explained in a coherent and transparent way—over and over! In order to transfer knowledge about policy beyond the moment of implementing a change, it is helpful to create meaningful educational opportunities for new department chairs and upper level administrators in which they can learn about the rationales underlying all crucial policies and practices and talk together about how to address some of the knotty difficulties in implementing them. Many campuses have workshops to “train” administrators on procedural issues (legal, budget, and other processes). Fewer provide real opportunities for formal leaders to share their questions with each other and learn about best solutions. Increasing those opportunities can be a step toward a more thoughtful policy change process.

6. *Change what you can where you can.* Almost everyone would like to change more things more quickly than is feasible. Moreover, some institutions are more “ready” for change than others, and some leaders are more interested in supporting or making change than others. Whatever your role in your institution (formal leader, informal leader, or faculty member), you will need to make a judgment about where change is most possible. We emphasize that some change is always possible. Sometimes what you “can” change is a small part of a policy rather than all of it. For example, you may hope to make it possible for faculty not only to receive “modified duties” (freedom from teaching) for many kinds of caregiving responsibilities, but also to have the option of changing their appointment from full- to part-time. At some institutions it may be very difficult to do both. At some it will be easier to adopt modified duties for caregiving, and at others to permit faculty to be part-time. We support the idea that some change is better than none, with the provisos that we have already mentioned (such as consulting a wide range of people). Some change often sets a process in motion that leads to more change in the not-too-distant future.

A different approach is to shift the person who will initiate the change. For example, sometimes the fastest way to get a dysfunctional department to develop fair procedures is not to work on the problem inside the department, but instead to have the dean mandate procedures across departments.

We saw that happen when one dean helped a new chair alter the decision-making structure of a department that had relied on a secret powerful committee of the same older White men for decades. The dean mandated school-wide adoption of openly elected committees and transparent procedures. An open process already characterized most departments, so widespread change was not necessary. The problematic department quickly adopted the new policy and practice because it was required, even though its faculty had been unable to come to consensus about doing so for years before.

On the other hand, sometimes the highest level leaders who are relevant are reluctant to make a change. It may nevertheless be possible for one department chair or dean to make that change and to see that change propagate throughout the institution. If that change is successful, even a reluctant dean or provost may be happy to make it known to other department chairs and deans (and in any case the department chair or dean can do that), and in this way to encourage voluntary “bottom-up” change. In another example we know of, a department chair required (not merely encouraged) all faculty on search committees to attend a workshop on fair and equitable faculty recruitment procedures. When the dean of that school learned about that action, he decided that if that chair had survived mandating the workshops, so could he, and he immediately implemented workshops for search committee members college-wide. The school thus reaped the benefit of rapid diffusion of knowledge about practices that mitigate biases in hiring processes.

We recommend a two-step process: assess who or what level of the institution can and will make a change, and work at that level first; then take advantage of opportunities to work at other levels. In one institution we know of, a dean adopted a more generous family leave policy in their small school than was available campus-wide. When other deans indicated that they too were going to adopt the more generous policy, the provost requested that they hold off until the policy could be adopted university-wide. The provost wanted to ensure that the policy would be fairly and equitably available across the university. In this example, bottom-up change was followed by top-down change very rapidly, and a new and more generous policy for the entire institution was adopted over a single summer.

Change often begets more change. When it becomes clear that the academic sky has not fallen when one part of a broadly based set of

family-friendly policies is adopted, it is often more possible to imagine adopting the other parts. That is why we suggest simply starting whenever and wherever change is possible.

Sustaining Change and Change Makers

As we noted at the outset of this book, not only have we worked within our own institutions on changes like those we have outlined here, but over the past 15 years we have visited many institutions that have been working on these issues. We have drawn good ideas and confidence from their efforts and have learned a great deal about the goodwill and hope for change that is present in many places in many institutions.

Everywhere we have met individuals with great ideas and hopes for improving their institutions. Some of them have been at places where they found rapid acceptance and implementation for those ideas at many levels, but most have faced some degree of resistance from either administrative leaders or faculty members. Resistance could be due to worries about the potential unintended impact of well-intentioned changes, a reluctance to give up certain privileges of inequality, an impression that the time was not right for pursuing a particular goal, or an objection to the goal itself. Resistance is discouraging—intentionally so. We have been sustained through periods of slow or stalled change by understanding that institutional change is slow, and by our collaborations with others, sometimes at the same institution and sometimes at different institutions. We also have found that respectful, serious engagement with those who do not support change at the outset nearly always helps sharpen our ideas and allows us to improve them. If we meet resistance with openness, the result may be better changes and new allies.

Like our colleagues at other institutions, we have discovered that hand in hand with unexpected resistance, we have met unexpected allies and collaborators in change making both at lower and higher levels of the institutional leadership. That discovery of collaborative partners can itself make the institution feel more inclusive. Working with colleagues helps us to consider more perspectives and contexts and to propose more well-grounded changes than we could do on our own.

We hope that it is clear that we believe that it is possible and worthwhile to make changes in our institutions to bring them into better alignment

with our ideals. That is easiest when most people in the institution agree. However, some changes can be made—and can be made to stick!—in almost every institution, even by single individuals and small groups of like-minded people. Keep our six principles in mind as you plan how to move toward the most ideal version of your institution.

Finally, we note that institutional change, even if slow, is in fact inevitable, or, as twentieth-century U.S. President John F. Kennedy said in a speech in Germany in 1963, “the law of life.” The question is whether as individuals we will actively engage in making positive change. In our view, engagement in improving our institutions is the only way they will ever become more inclusive and realize our idealistic vision for them. In a speech in 2008, twenty-first-century U.S. presidential nominee Barack Obama said, “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” We agree. Hope for the future—that the diverse generations of future faculty and students will find institutions that embrace, affirm, and support their best efforts to make the changes *they* seek—will give us the confidence and determination to make our own worlds better now.

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