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MONTHLY**DIAGNOSTIC**

June 2011

DEVELOPING LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

IN THIS ISSUE:

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A Letter from Amit Mrig
President, Academic Impressions

Nearly one-half of higher ed administrators gave their institution a C, D, or F letter grade when assessing their campus's commitment to their development as a leader.

Higher ed institutions are facing impending waves of retirement at all levels of the institution and across all sectors of our industry. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, how institutions capture and transfer knowledge and identify and develop the next generation of leaders will be key determinants of their futures.

Recent research by Academic Impressions suggests that institutions have yet to meaningfully address this problem. In a survey conducted of a broad range of administrators, 40 percent of respondents indicated that their institution was not actively preparing for the upcoming retirements.

Many industries with aging workforces face similar challenges. Fortunately for higher education, the private sector is much further along in tackling the problem and has many lessons to offer.

That's why we've asked experts from both higher education and the corporate sector to share their insights and expertise on these critical issues. We hope their advice will be useful to you.

MONTHLY DIAGNOSTIC ONLINE

Download this PDF and read this issue's articles online:
http://www.academicimpressions.com/monthly_diagnostic.php?i=190

CONTRIBUTORS

Amit Mrig, President, Academic Impressions

Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide a variety of educational products and services that help higher education administrators tackle key, strategic challenges. Since 2002, AI has designed and directed hundreds of conferences and has served representatives from over 3,500 higher education institutions. Besides designing and leading events for cabinet-level officers focused on strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership development, Amit leads Academic Impressions' ongoing research into the five- and ten-year challenges facing higher education and plays a lead role in outlining each issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic* to highlight how college and university leaders can take an institution-wide approach to answering those challenges.

Daniel Fusch, Director of Research and Publications, Academic Impressions

At Academic Impressions, Daniel provides strategic direction and content for AI's electronic publication *Higher Ed Impact*, including market research and interviews with leading subject matter experts on critical issues. Since the publication's launch in 2009, Daniel has written more than 150 articles on strategic issues ranging from student recruitment and retention to development and capital planning. Daniel previously served as a conference director for Academic Impressions, developing training programs focused on issues related to campus sustainability, capital planning, and facilities management. Prior to joining Academic Impressions, Daniel served as adjunct faculty for the University of Denver. Daniel holds a Ph.D. in English.

Kimberly Eberbach, Vice President of Human Resources, Independence Blue Cross

Kim Eberbach is vice president of human resources at Independence Blue Cross in Philadelphia. In this role, Kim is responsible for the development and execution of the people and culture strategy to support short- and long-term business performance. Since joining Independence Blue Cross in 2003, Kim has held various leadership roles in the areas of training and development, leadership and executive development, employee communications, employee initiatives, talent acquisition, and compensation and benefits.

Prior to joining Independence Blue Cross, Kim spent 10 years consulting in the arenas of change management, leadership and team development, process improvement, and training and education. Her clients reflected a broad spectrum of industries and segments, including technology, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and government. Before she entered into consulting, Kim worked in higher education and clinical psychology research.

Tamara Freeman, Director of Talent Management and HR Strategy, University of Notre Dame

At the University of Notre Dame, Tammy is responsible for designing and implementing an integrated talent and learning strategy that includes recruiting, performance management, career development, and learning. In addition, she coordinates the employee engagement survey for the campus and helps leadership analyze and utilize the findings. Tammy also coordinates the human resource strategic plan and oversees the information systems for the department.

Prior to joining Notre Dame in 2005, Tammy worked in manufacturing for 24 years, most recently as a vice president of administration. Her experience encompassed all aspects of human resources, including employee development, staffing, compensation and benefits, strategic planning, safety, and labor relations. Her experience also includes independent consulting with clients in the areas of career transition and recruiting. Tamara holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in industrial management.

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Larry Goldstein, President, Campus Strategies LLC

Larry is the president of Campus Strategies LLC, a higher education management consulting firm. He writes and speaks frequently on higher education leadership and related topics. For more than 10 years, he has co-facilitated an annual leadership development program for new chief financial officers, resulting in the training of more than 10 percent of the CFOs currently working throughout higher education. He also has co-authored several publications, including *Presidential Transitions*.

Immediately prior to establishing Campus Strategies LLC, Goldstein served as senior vice president and treasurer of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). He joined NACUBO after spending 20 years in higher education financial administration. In his last campus position, he served as the University of Louisville's chief financial officer. Before that, he held administrative appointments with the University of Chicago, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the University of Virginia.

Patrick Sanaghan, President, The Sanaghan Group

Patrick is the president of The Sanaghan Group, an organizational consulting firm that specializes in strategic planning, leadership development, meeting facilitation, and leadership transitions. For more than 10 years, he has co-facilitated an annual leadership development program for new chief financial officers, resulting in the training of more than 10 percent of the CFOs currently working throughout higher education.

In the past 25 years, he has taught leadership development in more than 50 organizations. Sanaghan speaks and writes frequently on leadership, strategic planning, and change management, and he has authored several books on these subjects. He is currently writing a book on exceptional leadership.

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RETHINKING HIGHER EDUCATION'S LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Daniel Fusch and Amit Mrig,
Academic Impressions

America's higher education enterprise is facing multiple challenges – increasing demands from students and government; changing demographics; structural fiscal challenges; and technologies that are disrupting how information and education is delivered. Not to mention an aging workforce and an uneven track record for developing leaders.

Without investing in identifying and developing the right talent at all levels of an institution, a college or university will be ill-prepared to thrive in an environment of increasingly complex and high-stakes challenges and rapid change.

Let's take a closer look at the challenges academic institutions face, and what's needed to move forward.

HOW PREPARED IS YOUR INSTITUTION?

In April 2010, Academic Impressions conducted a survey of senior and mid-level managers in higher education across an array of public and private institutions; 176 administrators responded to the survey. The findings emphasize the extent to which higher education is under-prepared for replacing a rapidly retiring leadership.

Perhaps the starkest finding from our survey, 48 percent of respondents graded their institution with a C, D, or F letter grade when assessing the level of commitment they felt their institution has toward their development as a leader.

We also asked respondents to identify ways that their institutions currently support leadership development: The most common response was that support for leadership development varies dependent on an individual supervisor; this speaks to the lack of a coordinated or coherent strategy at most institutions for intentionally developing future leaders. Fewer than 20 percent of institutions offer a formal coaching/mentoring program, and only one-third offer any kind of in-house leadership development program (See Figure 1).

The survey also asked the open-ended question, "How is your institution responding to the waves of faculty and administrators who will be retiring in the next five years?" 40 percent of the respondents indicated that their institutions were, to their knowledge, not doing anything at all. They offered responses such as:

• "No institution-wide strategy
• "Not doing anything"
• "Seat-of-pants approach"
• "Hoping problem goes away"

Perhaps the most troubling finding from the survey: 10 percent of respondents replied that their institution is welcoming the retirement wave as a means of bridging budget shortfalls. Amit Mrig, president of Academic Impressions, notes, "What these results indicate is that the majority of institutions are not planning for the future – a situation that will leave colleges and universities open to considerable risk."
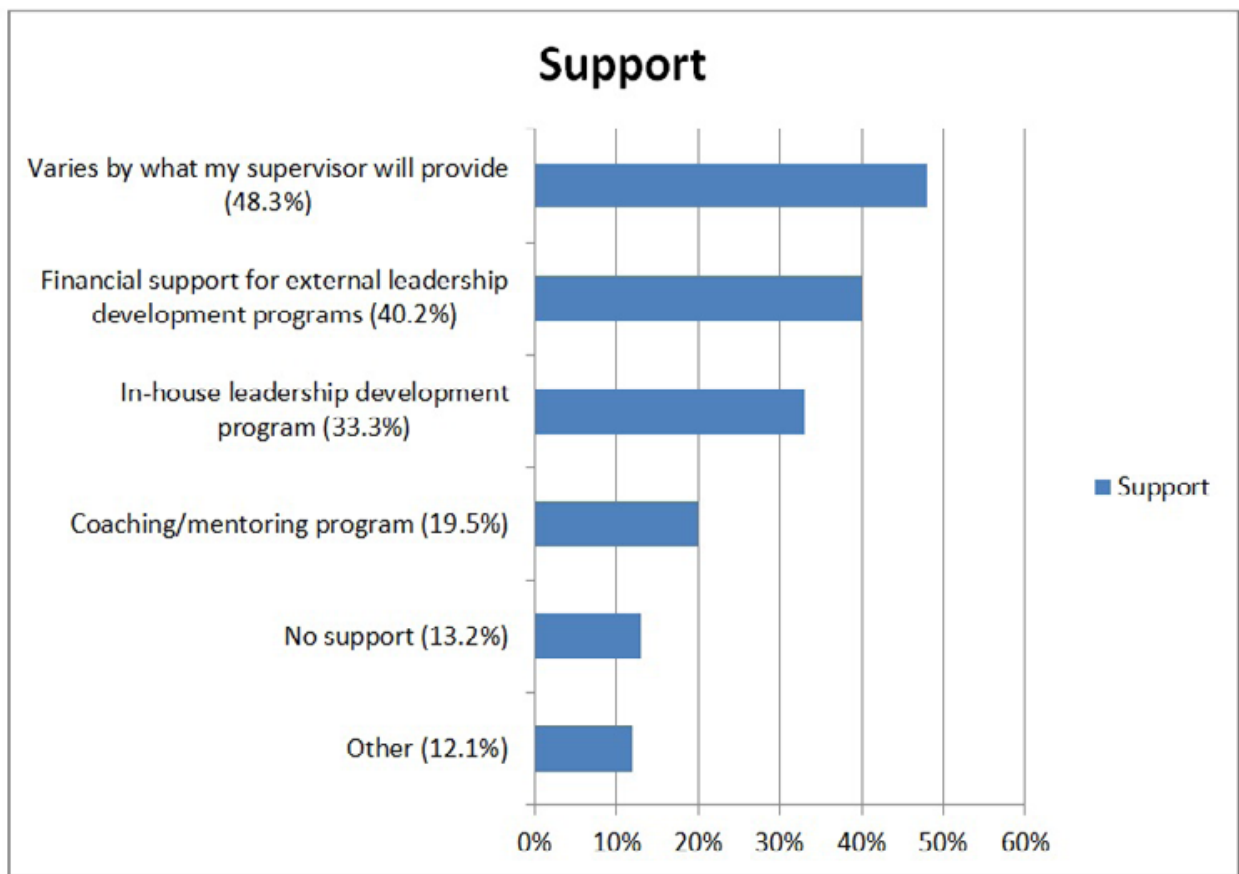
Figure 1: Institutional Support for Leadership Development

NOT JUST NEW LEADERS, BUT NEW KINDS OF LEADERS

Complicating the issue, not all of the leadership development programs and mentoring programs currently in place in higher education are equally effective. Programs that emphasize traditional leadership skills may be inadequate to prepare higher ed professionals for the leadership challenges of the next 10 to 20 years. As the rate of change in higher education policy and practice has accelerated, the challenges higher ed leaders will face in future years are likely to be more complex and multifaceted than the more tactical problems with which most leaders are familiar.

In *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Harvard Business Press, 2009), Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, co-founders and principals of Cambridge Leadership Associates, suggested that increasingly, leaders in all industries face adaptive rather than just technical challenges. Adaptive challenges, as opposed to technical ones, require deep-rooted behavioral changes to solve a problem, not simply the application of existing tools. A skilled surgeon can treat a heart patient's clogged arteries with existing skills, tools, and technologies. But to improve the patient's long-term health, the patient must fundamentally change the behaviors and practices that led them to this point.

Higher education today is rife with adaptive challenges. Pressure on college completion rates that don't have unintended consequences on access will require innovative and "outside-the-box" solutions, including new collaborations between colleges and school districts. The rising costs of delivering a post-secondary education coinciding with a crisis in state funding will require public institutions particularly to adapt and re-evaluate who they serve and how – looking, for example, to collaborations with other institutions, new markets to serve, and new ways of delivering education.

These are just a few examples; any college president could name 10 more. Ensuring that your institution not only survives but thrives in a rapidly changing environment requires that you build a strong bench of leaders with adaptive skills.

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FOUR QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

Developing your next generation of leaders requires a strategic approach and is essential to the future health and competitiveness of your institution. To build an effective talent bench and ensure adequate leadership capacity to meet future challenges, every institution will need to address four questions:

- What skill sets will our future leaders need?

- How do we identify the staff within our organization who already exemplify these skills?

- What programs and practices will assist us in developing these leadership skills in our staff?

- How do we systematize our leadership development efforts across all divisions and at all levels of our institution?

In this issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic,* we've interviewed past provosts and chief financial officers, together with leadership development experts from both higher education and from the corporate sector, to bring you practical tips to help you answer these four critical questions. ∎

EMERGING LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Join us in Boston, MA on July 18-19, 2011. This practically focused, two-day leadership program will provide participants with tools and strategies that will enable them to effectively navigate the increasing complexity facing higher education.

MEETING ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES: THE NEW LEADERSHIP SKILL SET

Daniel Fusch, Academic Impressions

To define the leadership skill set needed to meet adaptive challenges, we turned to Larry Goldstein, president of Campus Strategies LLC, and Pat Sanaghan, president of The Sanaghan Group. Having consulted for decades with institutional leadership teams, Goldstein and Sanaghan are uniquely positioned to comment on what makes academic leaders effective.

Here is their take on five critical leadership skills needed to meet today's – and especially tomorrow's – challenges.

1. LEADERS NEED TO BE SYSTEMIC THINKERS

The critical initiatives that will move your institution forward – whether improving student retention, reducing your carbon footprint, or raising money from alumni – will involve and affect multiple divisions within your institution. This makes it especially critical that not only your institution's president but leaders within each division are able to recognize the impact of a given issue or a given effort on financial, academic, and programmatic decisions across the institution.

Amit Mrig, president of Academic Impressions, notes those institutions that are most successful in responding to these common challenges are those that approach them systematically. Examples include institutions that have effective collaboration between deans and front-line fundraisers; or institutions that not only recognize the importance of faculty involvement in student retention but actually incentivize it and make it part of tenure or promotion reviews.

In practice, encouraging systemic thinking means both forming task forces that cross divisional boundaries, and asking the difficult questions that will help your institution assess both the short- and long-term impacts of possible solutions.

2. LEADERS NEED A DIAGNOSTIC MENTALITY

In an environment of "pervasive complexity, ambiguity, and fast-paced change," Goldstein and Sanaghan suggest that successful leaders will need to:

- Be comfortable with not having all the answers

- Know how to ask the right questions

- Solicit input broadly and transparently, and report back findings in ways that build trust

Goldstein and Sanaghan refer to this as a "diagnostic mentality"; it involves being able to quickly diagnose a situation and determine which questions matter and what represents the root of a problem.

> **A leader needs to assess what parts of the institution will be affected and who to bring into the dialogue. If you don't ask the right questions, you could create a lot of work for a lot of people, and waste a lot of scarce resources.**
>
> **Larry Goldstein, Campus Strategies LLC**

By way of example, Goldstein cites the classic scenario of long registration lines. While the example may be dated, it illustrates the point:

Most of the mid-level managers in enrollment management at Anonymous College assume that the long registration lines represent a problem with physical space. Others assume the issue involves inadequate technology. Then one member of the team visits the bursar and interviews the front-line staff about their daily frustrations.

What emerges from this quick assessment is that Anonymous College has set up the office so that the front-line staff dealing with loans and financial aid worked on one side of the physical space, and those dealing with

tuition billing on the other. But because the two sets of front-liners had not been cross-trained, if students entered the wrong line, the staff would not be able to assist them with their inquiries. There was a problem with the physical space, but the larger problem had to do with staff training. Anonymous College needed to establish a one-stop approach to fielding student inquiries during the registration process.

The effective leader is one who can assess a situation and identify what questions need to be asked and who needs to be at the table in order to answer them. At Anonymous College, the front-line staff had not been invited to the table, and they had information critical to solving the problem.

3. LEADERS NEED TO BE ADEPT AT CROSS-BOUNDARY COLLABORATION

"In the past," Goldstein says, "the typical approach to problem-solving would be for the senior leader to bring together a few members of an executive team and brainstorm. This won't be as successful in the future. Technical challenges lend themselves to that kind of solution, but adaptive challenges require you to listen, gather your data, and identify unintended consequences that will affect other divisions."

Successful leaders, Goldstein and Sanaghan suggest, will demonstrate willingness to:

- Share their early thinking on an issue and collect feedback from a broad set of stakeholders

- Establish an inclusive planning process, maximizing rather than minimizing participation from other divisions, and collecting as much input as possible so that you can make the most informed possible decision

- Look outside of the institution to find partners, such as other institutions who may have resources to share in meeting a shared problem

Meaningful engagement of stakeholders throughout the institution allows you to get authentic buy-in and harness the collective brainpower of your staff.

The challenge, of course, is building and maintaining trust. "In a high-trust environment," Sanaghan notes, "you can do many things even with limited resources. But if you have low trust, even with high resources you can't get much done. To build trust, you need transparency with information – especially around financial realities, decision-making roles, and process."

PLANNING IN A LOW-TRUST ENVIRONMENT

Read this March 2011 Higher Ed Impact article to review specific steps for establishing a planning task force and an inclusive process in such a way as to build trust and buy-in. While the article is focused on institutional strategic planning, many of the recommendations are also applicable to task forces or committees addressing initiatives of smaller scope.

4. LEADERS NEED CREATIVITY

In their book *21st Century Skills* (Jossey-Bass, 2009), Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel, co-board members on the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, cite "creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration" as the top leadership skills needed in this century. The adaptive challenges facing higher education will require creativity and innovation, and institutions of higher education include large pools of creative, innovative minds. The challenge is to get their ideas shared.

"Even a leader who is not particularly creative can encourage and support creative thinking," Sanaghan notes. "Create safe space for getting all ideas on the table, no matter how unlikely an idea may sound at first; there will be time to review them later. Allow for brainstorming. Complex problems need outside-the-box thinking, new strategic alliances, challenges to stagnant processes and policies and procedures. You need leaders who are willing to experiment and learn."

5. LEADERS NEED TO BE WILLING TO TAKE MEASURED RISKS

Be willing to take intelligent risks. Be intentional about how much you're willing to put at risk, and mitigate risk by piloting objectives before implementing something new across the campus. Or adopt a phased approach, so that you aren't taking all the risks at one time. But in either case, measure what you can afford to have go wrong, then make the risks that seem reasonable.

Larry Goldstein, Campus Strategies LLC

"Quick, predictable fixes may not apply to issues such as under-prepared students or improving quality of education in response to increased demands for accountability," Sanaghan adds. Adaptive challenges require both a tolerance of ambiguity and a willingness to risk new approaches and then monitor results.

"Leaders need to be able to leverage and learn from failure," Sanaghan says. The *Harvard Business Review* recently devoted an entire issue to how CEOs can learn from failure – a testament to how seriously the corporate sector is taking this issue. Review how your institution handles mistakes; in an environment that increasingly requires risk-taking, mistakes will be inevitable; the institutions that thrive in the future will be those that have cultivated an internal culture that values learning from mistakes.

"In a high-trust culture," Sanaghan says, "people aren't afraid to take a measured risk – and they know they will be supported if they do make a mistake. This is a defining factor in the quality of your institution. When you deal with complex issues that require creative solutions, failure will be part of the learning process. It is critical that your people aren't terrified of taking risks." ∎

IDENTIFYING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL IN YOUR STAFF

Daniel Fusch, Academic Impressions

Once you have identified the skills that are essential in tomorrow's higher ed leaders, you will need ways to identify the staff within your institution who demonstrate those skills – these are the people whose leadership development you want to invest in, and whom you want to entrust with greater responsibilities and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to your institution's success.

Larry Goldstein and Pat Sanaghan offer the following tips to guide you in identifying emerging or potential leaders at your institution.

AVOID COMFORTABLE CLONING

We tend to hire and promote people who remind us of ourselves, who think like us. The courageous and effective act is to choose people who have different background, different perspective. You learn through diversity, not through looking at yourself in the mirror all the time.

Pat Sanaghan, The Sanaghan Group

The practicing of replicating the demographics (in terms of race, gender, and socioeconomic background) and the leadership philosophy of current leaders can be referred to as "comfortable cloning." It's comfortable, but ultimately not as effective as establishing a more diverse talent bench. "We need to look instead to people who are very different from us," Sanaghan advises, "who can provide new, unexpected solutions to adaptive challenges."

A crucial step in identifying a more diverse pool of high potentials is re-evaluating what characteristics and skills we expect to see in a leader.

STYLISTIC INVISIBLES

Too often we have mental models for what we expect leaders to look like. When looking for future leaders to mentor, we seek out verbal, charismatic, quick decision-makers. They look like leaders. But there are other people who don't seek the limelight but do act with great integrity and great strategic thinking, and they get results. They're right in front of us, but we don't see them.

Pat Sanaghan, The Sanaghan Group

Goldstein and Sanaghan cite the concept of "stylistic invisibles" – a term coined by Linda Hill to indicate those professionals who, because their leadership style is markedly different from an institution's norm, often remain effectively "invisible" to the institution's current leaders. Selecting only the charismatic and outspoken personalities as future leaders narrows your pool and constricts the talent available to you.

The challenge is to find ways to allow the untapped potential to become more visible. Goldstein and Sanaghan offer this advice:

- Encourage diversity on your institution's most critical committees and task forces (e.g., for strategic planning, retention, and student learning assessment); Sanaghan recommends focusing especially on generational diversity – "have people under age 30 on the task force, and get the perspectives of young staff who are close to the future"

- Take note of staff who pull together teams and informal task forces to address issues within your organization: who formed your employee health and wellness committee? Who gathered ten to 15 volunteers to come clean one portion of the campus on a Saturday morning? Goldstein and Sanaghan suggest that these "quiet heroes" and "grassroots leaders" may show exactly the skill sets you want to develop within your institution

- Identify your institution's "cultural travelers"

CULTURAL TRAVELERS

Effective leaders will be able to coordinate effectively across your institution's multiple subcultures, across departments and colleges, in order to get things done. These leaders know how to build "relational capital," and they know how to translate ideas between different perspectives.

Pat Sanaghan, The Sanaghan Group

"Who already serves your institution across several boundaries or silos?" Sanaghan asks. "You need to assess who your cultural travelers are."

Goldstein and Sanaghan offer these criteria for identifying effective cultural travelers:

- A reputation for credibility on campus
- Hard workers
- A passion for the institution
- A knack for problem-solving, but not necessarily joined with concern about getting the credit
- Relationship builders
- Great listeners
- A proven record of coordinating efforts, resources, and staff (whether formally or informally) across multiple offices

HIRING PRACTICES

Finally, if leadership development is to be a strategic priority for your institution, then you also need to invest in bringing the right people into your institution. This entails defining what your institution sees as critical leadership skills, and ensuring that that list of core principles guides practices in hiring, professional development, training, supervision, and performance evaluation. "If cross-group problem-solving and creativity are two core principles," Sanaghan comments, "then you need to hire and evaluate for those. You need to reward and incentivize collaborative problem-solving and creativity. That creates not only a strong talent bench but also alignment and trust: we know that this person is in this position because this person exhibits the core values and leadership philosophy of our institution." ∎

FEATURED EVENT:

On June 19-21, 2011, join us to learn how to identify which programs should be grown, cut, downsized, or merged.

Prioritizing Academic and Administrative Programs

BUILDING AN IN-HOUSE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Daniel Fusch, Academic Impressions

Once you have clarity on the leadership skill sets your institution is seeking – and a commitment to look beyond the "usual suspects" when identifying future leaders – the next challenges involve offering meaningful opportunities for your institution's "stylistic invisibles" to become visible and providing an intentional and deliberate process for developing your high-potentials as future leaders. There are three critical steps in achieving these aims:

- Create a robust peer network of emerging leaders within your institution
- Adopt a "proving ground" approach by engaging emerging leaders in the real work of the institution
- Incentivize and reward "deep mentoring" at all levels of your organization

Several institutions have taken steps in this direction, but much of the most innovative and effective work on in-house leadership development over the past decade has been done outside the walls of higher education. The corporate sector, particularly, has become increasingly alert to its aging workforce and the threat that a leadership crisis presents to an organization's profit and sustainability.

For this reason, we reached out not only to one of the leading higher ed experts – Tamara Freeman, director of talent management and HR strategy for the University of Notre Dame – but also to Kimberly (Kim) Eberbach, vice president of human resources at Independence Blue Cross, a Philadelphia-based insurance firm. Independence Blue Cross has conducted a rigorous leadership development program for five years, seeing considerable early success in developing and harnessing in-house talent.

Here is what Eberbach and Freeman advise.

CREATE A PEER NETWORK OF EMERGING LEADERS

The critical step is to create a peer network within your organization. Build a community of practice, in which your people understand that they can leverage each other.

Kim Eberbach, Independence Blue Cross

This means developing cohort groups of emerging leaders and providing both programming for them (in the form of seminars, workshops, or Q&A panels) and structured opportunities for them to coach each other. Eberbach and Freeman stress the importance of ensuring that cohorts are both cross-functional and representative of different generations and degrees of experience; effective cohorts will assemble leaders who operate at similar levels within the institution (for example, separate tracks for front-line managers, middle managers, and senior leaders).

While the University of Notre Dame launched all three tracks together, Independence Blue Cross took a different approach aimed at fostering a stronger practice of mentoring throughout their organization. "We made a strategic decision," Eberbach notes, "of starting with the senior-director level, those managers who 10 years from now will need to take on top leadership roles. We coached them in developing a network of peer leaders, and then gave them the tools and support to begin building a bench of leadership talent among their staff, mentoring their direct reports. This improves the whole organization."

Whether you have the resources to launch a multi-track effort or begin at one level and then scale up, design the program with great attention to instructional design. (In fact, this program does not need to be organized solely by human resources or by the office of the president; leverage those individuals within your institution who have expertise with instructional design and facilitation.)

Make sure your leadership development program includes:

- A long-term series designed to develop each cohort as an effective network

- Problem-solving assignments

- Expert speakers and mentorship lunches

"Programs packaged like a mini-certificate are much more effective than one-off offerings or events," Freeman advises. For example, the University of Notre Dame offers a program called "Leading with Impact," a series of one-day classes over an eight-month period. The series is facilitated by executive education faculty from the business school, and between classes, small groups work together on problem-solving assignments.

Internal candidates for guest speakers include both faculty from the business school and senior leaders at your institution (the CFO, the provost, the president). Larry Goldstein, president of Campus Strategies LLC, cautions, however, against using guest speakers to just speak; he recommends instead setting up structured mentorship lunches. "These need not be scripted," he suggests. "The real learning takes place when up-and-coming leaders have the opportunity to ask the tough questions, whether anonymously on index cards or face-to-face. Invite them to ask senior leaders about their greatest challenge, the biggest mistake they've made, their biggest ethical dilemma they've faced, what they learned in that situation, what worked, what they regret doing."

ADOPT A "PROVING GROUND" APPROACH

Eberbach, Freeman, Goldstein, and Sanaghan all concur on the importance of establishing a "proving ground" for emerging leaders. "Ultimately, you don't become a leader by reading about a challenge or discussing a challenge but by addressing a challenge," Goldstein advises. "Use real projects and assignments as leadership experiences."

> **Don't create a simulation; engage your leadership cohorts in real work in service to your organization.**
>
> **Kim Eberbach, Independence Blue Cross**

To establish a "proving ground" for future leaders, and to build capacity within your organization for meeting adaptive challenges, Eberbach and Freeman recommend:

- Create cross-functional teams and task forces to address real issues facing your institution

- Provide these teams with clear guidance as to the desired outcomes of their efforts

- Encourage the task force to talk about cultural barriers to overcoming or addressing the challenge -- what is working in your institution's culture, and what isn't?

- Have them work together to conduct the necessary research and identify the resources that will be needed to confront a given challenge; a task force should interview stakeholders across the institution, synthesize findings, and provide recommendations to senior leaders

Freeman refers to this approach as creating "mini, in-house consulting teams" within your institution. They need to be established at all levels of your institution, from a high-level student retention task force to a sustainability committee to shorter-lived teams that are called together to tackle immediate problems. At the University of Notre Dame, for instance, the manager of the dual career assistance program wanted to determine how to use social media to help place spouses; a team was assembled in-house to research the opportunities and make specific recommendations.

At Independence Blue Cross, leadership teams add a "teach back" step. "Require small groups of four to teach something that impacts a particular office or a set of front-line staff," Eberbach suggests. "They can 'teach back' a skill or an approach they have learned. This is how you build the bench; as you strengthen a cohort of developing leaders, you involve them in developing and mentoring the next set."

REWARD AND INCENTIVIZE "DEEP MENTORING"

Pat Sanaghan, president of The Sanaghan Group, suggests that as a critical strategy for encouraging talent development at all levels of your institution, deep mentoring involves:

- Encouraging senior leaders to mentor not only their direct reports but also the "up-and-comers" who may be two or three reporting levels below them

- Ensuring that mentoring relationships cross boundaries (such as age, race, or gender) – this will help to avoid "comfortable cloning" and will build a more diverse leadership pool

- Making mentoring a key item in performance review for supervisors at all levels of the organization

> **If you want real, meaningful mentoring to occur, you need to set the expectation that mentoring is a core job responsibility. This needs to be expressed in job descriptions, hiring and training practices, and in performance review.**
>
> **Pat Sanaghan, The Sanaghan Group**

FOR FURTHER READING

"Addressing the Academic Leadership Crisis: Presidents and Provosts as Mentors" (Sept 2010)

"Keeping Faculty Mentoring Meaningful" (March 2010)

DEEPENING YOUR TALENT BENCH: HORIZONTAL CAREER LADDERS

Daniel Fusch and Amit Mrig, Academic Impressions

Historically, the pathway to the presidency in higher education has been through traditional academic ranks – tenured faculty or department chairs becoming a dean, and then later a provost. But as Academic Impressions president Amit Mrig notes, "the competencies required to ascend the academic hierarchy don't necessarily match those required to lead increasingly complex organizations in an increasingly competitive marketplace."

Rather than increase reliance on the private sector as a source for future leaders, institutions may do well to take a cue from the private sector's approach to leadership development. To prepare for a globalized economy where talent, ideas, customers, suppliers, and financing will come from different markets around the world, the best-managed corporations like General Electric, IBM, and PepsiCo are intentionally requiring emerging leaders to manage major projects or even run entire divisions in different parts of the organization – units that may be far outside their discipline or home town. This strategy of building horizontal career ladders not only builds cross-boundary collaborations and global connections, but gives these future leaders a systemic view of the organization.

HORIZONTAL CAREER MOVES

Versatile leaders develop transferable problem-solving and diagnostic skills that allow them to assess the strategic – not just the technical – implications of a given situation; when finely honed, these are skills emerging leaders can bring to a newly merged department, or in transitioning to lead a newly redefined department.

Larry Goldstein, president of Campus Strategies LLC, offers the examples of a rising star in the accounting office who is given an opportunity to direct an auxiliary business unit (such as dining services). "This is not the logical track of a payroll manager who moves up to a controller, then systems controller," Goldstein remarks, "but this is the track of an individual who exhibits sound business sense, adaptability, and transferable problem-

solving and leadership skills – skills that were needed elsewhere in the finance and administration division."

Here's another scenario. Suppose a large research university is in need of a finance officer who will manage post-awards for sponsored programs, coordinating effectively with various academic departments across the institution. Rather than only look within the sponsored programs unit, the institution also considers senior budgeting officers for the various colleges. Perhaps the senior budgeting officer for the college of arts and sciences has a proven track record of the type of coordination needed in this situation.

"You need versatile leaders," Goldstein concludes, "and your institution's senior leadership needs to create an environment that encourages and supports this type of horizontal career move as your institution requires more flexibility in the future."

BUILDING EFFECTIVE HORIZONTAL CAREER LADDERS

Kim Eberbach (Independence Blue Cross) and Tamara Freeman (University of Notre Dame) both represent organizations that have taken some of the initial steps in this direction, and they offer advice for institutions on what efforts can get you started. Independence Blue Cross, for example, is pursuing three concurrent efforts to maximize its ability to leverage leadership potential across functions within a given division:

- Establishing **cross-functional mentoring** or a rotation program

- Undertaking an **ethnographic study** to inform possible ladders and skill sets

- Charting a **"trajectory" of competencies** to be developed along a career ladder, and then using that information to design tailored development paths for individual leaders

Here is more information on how these three efforts work.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL MENTORING

For your leadership peer network to truly be effective, you need to get your emerging leaders informing each other about their roles, the work that they do, and how their work is interconnected. Your future leaders need to understand each other's roles and each other's worlds.

Kim Eberbach, Independence Blue Cross

The key to effective cross-functional mentoring (rather than merely cross-functional training) is to have colleagues from different departments engaged in long-term, problem-solving assignments together, collecting data, evaluating, and recommending solutions to real problems faced by the institution.

The University of Notre Dame has formalized cross-functional mentoring in the form of a rotation program. Participants in the program seek a more systemic view of their institution and the opportunity to develop and apply leadership skills in different contexts over the course of 18 months by taking three- or six-month assignments in other departments across the campus. Candidates are nominated by their vice president and are interviewed by human resources and by the institution's executive vice president; then, during the program, participants meet regularly with human resources and with the executive vice president to review progress and discuss career planning and possible assignments.

The criteria for rotation assignments are that they need to offer work of real value to the institution, and they need to be structured in such a way as to promote dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Here are examples:

- An audit or process improvement assignment – working with a team in another department to provide an outside perspective in auditing and improving that department's communications and processes

- An integration assignment – such as embedding the developing leader within the budget office, to work alongside the budget office's staff and learn the budgeting process from A to Z

- An immersion assignment – experiencing all aspects of a particular department and perhaps directing a major project

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

In order to design effective, cross-functional career paths, Eberbach recommends taking an "ethnographic approach" – an effort that Independence Blue Cross is currently embarking on.

Interview 25-50 of your most successful leaders within the institution and learn what they did, map out the career path they followed, and the opportunities and challenges they faced along the way.

Kim Eberbach, Independence Blue Cross

Examine each stage on those individual career paths:

- What were the stepping stones and the major decision points?

- What leadership challenges did they face in those roles, and how did they overcome them?

- Looking back, what do leaders wish they had known at that stage? What resources do they wish they'd had access to?

What you want to identify, Eberbach suggests, is what has worked well for your institution in the past: "It is always beneficial to leverage what has been successful within a given culture," he says. In other words, don't just rely on what the research says works at other institutions; find out what has been working – and not working – for you.

For example, use your ethnographic study to determine:

- Optimum career paths for learning particular skill sets (What leadership skills are most effectively developed at a particular stage? Do some stages along the path require more or less time than others?)

- What career trajectories have your most successful leaders taken? Are those trajectories still effective now?

- What decision-making processes and problem-solving approaches have worked particularly well for developing leaders on particular paths?

- Given the answers to the previous questions, how might a coach, mentor, or other support structure assist an individual in working a particular career ladder?

Note that an ethnographic study may not be as difficult to resource as it might appear; your institution likely has access to faculty researchers who would be excited to help design and conduct the project.

CHART INDIVIDUAL TRAJECTORIES

"If you were to lay out on a trajectory the competencies you want your future senior leaders to have," Eberbach suggests, "what is the natural progression of knowledge and skills they would need to develop?"

This type of work can inform a highly effective rotation or leadership development program, because it will inform you in charting horizontal career ladders that can be tailored to an individual leader's needs. Perhaps one director within your institution is already good at building collaborative teams, but requires greater financial acumen; perhaps another is excellent at encouraging collaboration but needs to develop a more systemic view of the institution. "Develop leaders not in a one-size-fits-all approach," Eberbach suggests, "but according to the competencies you need. Design a career ladder for the individual, to help them capitalize on their strengths and fill gaps."

To scale the effort up, build discussion of horizontal career ladders into the work of your peer leader cohorts; as a cohort takes ownership of its work and the development of its members, developing leaders can coach and mentor each other, assisting each other in spotting opportunities to fill gaps in their leadership skills. That is a sustainable approach to developing versatile leaders for your institution. ■