

Academic Senate Fall Retreat
September 6, 2018

What is Innovation and How Can We Foster It?

I. Some preliminary considerations

- “Innovation resembles mutation, the biological process that keeps species evolving so they can better compete for survival.” A. Hoffman and J. Holzhuter, 2012, “The evolution of higher education: innovation as natural selection,” p. 3
- What drives innovation? Recognizing that economic success is tied to quality education; the increasing specialization of organizations calling for a high levels of knowledge; the need to increase equity and improve educational outcomes; increasing costs per graduate
- “To innovate is to look beyond what we are currently doing and develop a novel idea that helps us to do our job in a new way;” should produce a significant improvement in teaching and learning, especially around productivity and efficiency. Peter Serdyukov, 2017, p. 8
- “When considering the learners, we think of studying cognitive processes taking place in the brain during learning – identifying and developing abilities, skills, and competencies. These include improving attitudes, dispositions, behaviors, motivation, self-assessment, self-efficacy, autonomy, as well as communication, collaboration, engagement, and learning productivity.” Peter Serdyukov, 2017, p. 8
- “To raise the quality of teaching, we want to enhance teacher education, professional development, and life-long learning to include attitudes, dispositions, teaching style, motivation, skills, competencies, self-assessment, self-efficacy, creativity, responsibility, autonomy to teach, capacity to innovate, freedom from administrative pressure, best conditions of work, and public sustenance.” Peter Serdyukov, 2017, p. 8
- Innovations can be categorized as: Evolutionary/sustaining (e.g. more effective teaching methods, including Inquiry based/problem based learning methods; case study; collaborative/small group environments; use of technology in the classroom); or Revolutionary/disruptive (e.g. national reforms; online learning, which produces systemic change). Osolind, 2012; Christensen and Overdorf, 2000; Yu and Hang, 2010
- Innovations can be Top down and administrative vs. grass root; homegrown vs. imported
- Some challenges: “emphasis on tools” or “technocentrism” vs. intangible innovations in pedagogy, psychology, and instructional methodology; “Innovation...requires time and

space for experimentation and a high tolerance for uncertainty.” Peter Serdyukov, 2017, pp. 13-17, citing Levasseur, 2012

- What Finland (a noted innovator in education) did not do: Standardize curriculum; employ frequent testing; Narrow curriculum to reading and math; Adopt educational ideas from external sources, rather than develop local internal capacity for innovation and problem solving; Adopt high-stakes accountability policies: rewards and sanctions for students, teachers, and schools. Pasi Sahlberg, 2010, p. 10 (and see Sahlberg 2011)

Peter Serdyukov. (2017). "Innovation in education: what works, what doesn't, and what to do about it?." *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, Vol. 10 Issue: 1, pp. 4-33, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-10-2016-0007>.

II. Group Discussion: What are the barriers to innovation?

- When people get stuck in minutiae they don't see that there might be other ways to do what they are trying to do
- We are so busy in the here and now that we don't take the time to be innovative. Are we relevant? How can we change things to move our level of engagement with our students to another level?
- We don't circle back after we make an innovation to check its efficacy and to continue to tweak it and innovate your innovation; lack of going back to assess and do constant process improvement
- The results of a team taught class: creativity is coming up with new ways of doing things or new ideas, but innovation is putting those ideas into action, moves it a step further, because you can't innovate without implementing
- Practice makes better, not perfect (because in perfection there is no room for improvement); one challenge is losing out on getting great students: some students are good at practical work rather than book work; this applies to innovation: just because we have a resource or program that is working for students, it doesn't mean that we should just let it be, but figure out how can we serve students even more, including by serving students who are good at one kind of learning rather than another
- We need to create an environment in the workplace that stimulates innovation and working together
- One barrier is our inability to tolerate failure; feeling the need to be perfect at the beginning and every time; we need more low stakes ventures so that if I don't do well I'm not going to fail; need for activities that are not graded
- True innovation is that which is directed to change and has meaningful results for the people it is aimed at. There is considerable and reasonable skepticism around the term because it has been coopted by marketing strategists who are using the term to sell a project or even education; innovation is a lot of work and so when people are asked to innovate they want to make sure their creativity is aimed at something meaningful

- Not being able to accept failure is a barrier to innovation: we can combat this by encouraging risk
- The Tenure process currently does not lend itself to risk and the possibility to failure
- The culture we want to create when it comes to failure is a culture of resilience; it is powerful for students to learn that their engineering professor failed at an engineering class when they were an undergraduate; this should be a campus effort and not just a faculty effort, including the Counseling and Wellness center; opportunities are needed for students to try new things
- Students need to be awarded points for risk
- It is important for us to understand what our students mean by failure; is coming in second failing? Some students today are 100% or nothing; it is our responsibility to help them learn from experiences, little slips, and little setbacks, and to reframe these as something other than failure
- Another reframe: Fail = First Attempt At Learning
- What we are really talking about is having a “growth mindset” (vs. having a “fixed mindset”) as formulated by Carol Dweck (<https://www.edglossary.org/growth-mindset/>): this is about promoting effort vs. the belief that students either have or do not have a stagnant ability. We can try to foster risk and possible failure in classroom but it has to be a campus wide effort, a school wide shift; there is a level of anxiety for many students that is taking them over the edge; we need to balance teaching a technology to get to content vs. spending time teaching a technology because of student anxiety
- In design and design thinking and in this conversation: a lot of what we are saying here is that success in innovation is an iterative process; there is not a right answer and a wrong answer and you don’t get to it in one step; but you take risks, you move forward and take three steps back, you are resilient, and you keep moving forward; innovation is a process, it is what we do throughout life, it is an iterative process
- We have to help students understand that it is not about failing, but how we respond to it; we as leaders and faculty have to help students understand that we had failure and that that is part of the process and part of the journey and that we have all been there
- Some of the most successful teaching on our campus is with our coaches who try to get students to do something better than they did yesterday, and make it a family event, with teammates and coach encouraging and supporting them
- Do we have an institutional tolerance for failures in our processes?
- For those disciplines that at evidence to arrive at different interpretations, this is not a proposition that involves failure; there are skills that are involved here, but these disciplines don’t involve judging students about this kind of failure
- Where do we go from here? Some of our constraints are imposed upon us by the State or by the CSU, but how we teach is really up to us; we need to create assignments

where students have 3 chances, or we can foster working in groups and experiential learning and that is up to us

III. **Breakout Groups:** Pedagogy and Technology, Civic Engagement; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Curriculum; Workload

A. **Pedagogy and technology**

- Pedagogy includes things like mentors and community conditions; these are conditions under which we ourselves learned; we can't just talk about Ed Tech
- Areas of conversation for Senate during the rest of the year: working thoughtfully with data and getting a handle on campus on what we even mean by student data; dashboards indicating how students are doing in our classes based on maybe different kinds of demographics; we are nervous about some of that data because we should not be counseling students *out* of certain majors based on trends or socioeconomic class ; access and equity is not irrelevant to technology and data; students should be invited to such a conversation, because students are disturbed that we know how many times they log into Blackboard, but they should know that we can see that, so a conversation around thoughtful uses of data is important
- There is a need for structures to support alternative platforms (learning management systems) for teaching (i.e. there needs to be alternatives to Blackboard Learn); some structures for using other platforms that are productive and helpful and that TLP can help; vetting around these platforms in recognition that TLP can't support everything; and recognition of faculty expertise; there is a lot of ad hoc support from faculty but not institutional support
- There is a need for technology support *for students*
 - Support for students outside of ITSS for struggling with using Zoom, etc.; where do students go when *they* have problems using these tools?
 - What is our multi modal support for students on this campus? (e.g. for distance students)
- We need to encourage the *application* of learning and knowledge
 - Applying theory right away; gets students excited about the material
 - Make sure students can *use* what they learn
 - What are you asking students to *do* or to *make*?
- Technology and Pedagogy should be used to create authentic connections to learning and/or each other (not just because it's "cool")
- Technology does not always consist of electronic devices; we can ask students what their composing process is and what works best for them, and sometimes what they need is a pen and paper

B. Civic Engagement

1. Learning is not done in isolation: e.g. being involved in your environment
2. Civic engagement should remain a strategic objective for the university and for all of us; Some disciplines may be civically engaged by the very nature of their discipline
3. Civic engagement produces feelings of value and worth, not just for students but also for faculty and the institution; in some disciplines, communication with the outside world is not just something you do, it is essential to how you practice that discipline (for instance to the scientific method); are we really doing our job if we are not fostering this?
4. Diversity of opinion promotes civic engagement: probably something that hasn't been said enough in this planning session. We have to welcome different opinions; it is ok to have bias, but if the data don't support it you are forced to scrap it and come up with something else.

In a Venn diagram, if the values and worth for the individual/identity, strategy objectives, and diversity of opinion represent separate circles, the areas that they overlap consists of learning that is not done in isolation.

C. Diversity, equity and inclusion

- Diversity, equity and inclusion must be interwoven into the fabric of our institution; it should be part of all of our topics rather than a separate topic
- More interdisciplinary collaboration across colleges, divisions is *innovative* and be more relevant for our students; innovation will have no room for silos, in curriculum, in our traditional units and divisions, or between university and community
- Interdisciplinarity, collaboration, and interdependence - lead to cultural diversity at its best; a framework for innovation/action
- Equity in curriculum, teaching, and campus culture: constructive ways of building stronger sense of belonging and a feeling of being welcome on the part of our students; how we achieve that is still very critical; e.g. why do over 6000 Latino students feel like they don't feel welcome or don't see other people like themselves on campus?
- Town and gown relationships: we need to think of diversity beyond our campus limits; there is equity and inclusion work to be done in our city
- Freedom of speech: we need to be able to create safe places where brave conversations are happening, esp. in today's sociopolitical environment. Think about how to conduct dialogue in constructive ways. Faculty learning community theme possibility
- We're trying to pivot from the past into the future and that's where innovation is, being true to our values, but looking ahead 3-5 years (and accepting that our resources are not coming back); We need to hold on to our values; build and innovate from them, bravely and boldly

- We need to communicate what our progress our institution is having to our students after they leave (i.e. to alumni); they only see us for 2-6 years
- We have diversity/equity/inclusion trainings. To what extent, do they change our behavior?
 - An alternative to a broad audience training that may be “preaching to a choir” might be to teach each other in spaces we can reach our peers (dept. or committee meetings)
- What do we really mean when we say “equity”? How do we measure/assess our progress?
- We need to consider innovation that disrupts/decolonizes our institution’s racist structures
- Does our institutional language foster inclusive excellence?
 - E.g., the URM label, “achievement” gap – this is deficit language, not indicative of a growth-mindset
- Learning communities foster rich, safe dialogue, exchange of ideas/best practices, innovation.... but could we move from faculty learning communities to professional learning communities that involve others in our campus community?

D. Curriculum

- Innovation in curriculum can be at so many different levels: at the course level, but also at the university or program levels; or it could involve mode of delivery or interdisciplinary work
- What are some barriers to this kind of innovation? (e.g. workload)
- Interdisciplinary opportunities as places where we can potentially do more with less; because there are so many courses and programs that could cross-pollinate; e.g. team taught courses or interdisciplinary new majors, new minors, new certificates that don’t involve not so much resources if you reach out to other programs, e.g. English reaching out to Computer Science to think about Digital Humanities, or Humanities programs reaching out to Business and Environmental Studies to create a Sustainability certificate or major
- How do we bring people together who may not know that they have something in common so that they can innovate in curriculum?
- Co-teaching opportunities can be especially valuable opportunities for students and faculty (and to remove the bureaucratic barriers to enable this, e.g. release time that faculty can get to do this and how this is an impediment to having enough people involved)
 - cross-pollination amongst programs
 - Hire new, young faculty with new ideas
 - Avoid “siloeing” among programs

- Possible regular standing groups/ongoing meetings/luncheons/coffees to bring people together from different programs together to talk about their progress; include students or community members
- Importance of having clear goals: Why is it necessary to innovate?
 - E.g. Arts/Humanities innovation is essential in order for these disciplines to thrive or even to exist because of nationwide trends
 - innovation can bring about increased student success or to find new ways or more engaging ways for them to be more vibrant in the classroom
 - innovation may involve participation in Public Private partnerships or connections
- We get curricular innovation when we hire new faculty: the infusion of young faculty with new curricular ideas
 - New faculty bring current practices and are current in field
- The importance of allowing risk and the possibility of failure
 - Incentivize risk taking, innovation, and collaboration, including in the RTP process
 - Chairs, Deans, and unit managers should encourage faculty, units, direct reports to consider trying things out to incentivize innovation

E. Workload

- Identify Goals: How do we find equity in workload? Before we can identify our goals, how do we measure workload—FTEs, budget; can we measure it qualitatively and not just quantitatively? What do we value?
- Challenges and Barriers (many)
 - Institutional structures
 - Inertia
 - Measuring workload
 - The diversity of what people do and how you measure it
 - Technology and keeping up with technology is a barrier
 - There are growing expectations in research and in general is a barrier
 - The role of lecturer: we can't look at workload without looking at lecturers. How can we treat lecturers more equitably considering the important role they play on campus? How can we make their workload more equitable?
- Models for how workload can be managed: what models are out there?
 - In some schools new faculty choose or identify whether they are in a teaching or research track; this decision would affect how they are assessed
 - Another model at some schools: banking excess time worked/creating your own workload, or take a semester off because you paid for that time

- Looking outside of academia: What are some of the models for workload from industry? Some people punch a clock, but what other ways are there for dealing with this issue
- Looking at different models from across campus: an example is how the Department of Political Science manages workload: FTEs goal, budget, faculty talk with each other and create their own workloads within parameters