

Change

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings to all of you as we begin the new academic year together. In this second issue of "Inside Outreach" I am going to discuss "**change**" and what that means for our organization. I recognize that when a new vice president begins a conversation by focusing on change, it can create anxiety within an organization. Mark Twain once said, "I'm all for progress, it's the change I can't stand."

My intent in choosing this topic for conversation is to reduce the anxiety that could potentially be associated with change initiatives that we will implement over time. I am not talking about sweeping changes, however, I believe that some change will be necessary if we are to more fully realize the Promise of Outreach. I am sharing my perspective on organizational change and discussing the issues we face as a University and an organization in an effort to help you understand the rationale for change when it occurs. Why? Because in the words of Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "Nothing endures but change." Change is not an occasional bump in the road, rather it is simply part of the road.

In the spring of 1998, President Spanier addressed the Joint Council of Extension Professionals. At that national meeting in Washington D.C. he noted, "There is emerging a renewed commitment to outreach, to students, to progress, recognizing that higher education must keep up with the profound changes that are taking place in society if universities are to remain centers of learning for the future. If our institutions are not supportive of the learning needs of people of all ages and the expanding knowledge needs of society, other educational enterprises surely will supersede us in this responsibility -- enterprises that won't have the rich interplay of disciplines, mission, commitment to public service, and research that makes the land-grant university so well suited to promote economic, human, and cultural progress...Broad societal change has created unprecedented opportunities for the nation's land-grant universities to become fully engaged with their communities and make a difference in

the quality of life. But to fulfill this potential, change also must come from within.”

Many substantive changes have been made within Outreach and across the University to reach the potential referenced in Dr. Spanier’s remarks in 1998. Successful organizations, however, are fluid. To truly realize the Promise of Outreach, we must continue to build upon the solid foundation of accomplishments evident in this organization. Organizations and their people are constantly in motion. Deliberate change emphasizes taking hold of the motion and guiding it in a particular direction. This is dramatically different from early thinking about the change process where an ice cube was often used to illustrate change metaphorically. Traditional thinking suggested that the organization goes from a state of unfreezing to changing to refreezing. Unfortunately, change is not that simple or direct. It is bumpy and challenging. Change is not a linear process with a beginning and an end, rather it is best manifested when a combination of history and core values, environmental forces, and solid strategies intersect. This course must be communicated at all levels of the organization, embraced collectively by its members, and then passionately and enthusiastically put into motion—I will be counting on all of you as we put our plan in motion (Kanter, Stein, Jick). One point is clear in the change process, organizational change does not occur due to the single-mindedness of the leader, but must be broadly embraced by the entire organization.

So, as we continue this job of strengthening Outreach to maintain our national leadership as the premier outreach organization in higher education, what is the bottom line? Our driving principle should be to aggressively “preserve the core and stimulate progress” (Collins). We will use leadership expert John Kotter’s eight steps to guide our change efforts: 1. increase urgency; 2. build the guiding team; 3. get the vision right; 4. communicate for buy-in; 5. empower action; 6. create short-term wins; 7. don’t let up; and 8. make changes stick. The following questions and answers parallel Kotter’s eight points and provide a status report on our progress to date.

1. Why Change? Implementing a change process must originate from acute challenges. The timing is right to take a fresh look at the role and contributions of our organization given rapidly changing expectations for public higher education funding, new opportunities opened up by technology, and marketplace forces that impact our business. With the magnitude of these external changes, we in

Outreach have no choice but to aggressively respond and direct our future. Here are the forces that underscore this sense of urgency:

- Eroding public funding for higher education in general and the specific funding cuts that have deeply affected Cooperative Extension and Outreach at Penn State and challenge our land-grant institutions mission;
- Increasing sensitivity to the use of tuition dollars for non-student centered activities;
- Growing expectations that outreach endeavors provide a greater financial return to academic partners;
- Changing economic and sociopolitical developments that demand higher education to play an increasing important role in addressing economic, social, and educational issues;
- Increasing need for Outreach to build funds for research and development of new programs and technologies;
- Emerging new avenues for content and instructional delivery created by digital technologies, including digital broadcasting and online learning; and,
- Expanding opportunities for increased integration across Cooperative Extension, Continuing Education, Distance Education/World Campus, and Penn State Public Broadcasting in support of programmatic, functional, and administrative enhancements and efficiencies.

2. How will we implement change? Later this month, we will embark on a strategic positioning process and charge organization-wide teams to address objectives and make recommendations to the Executive Team (Weidemann, Alter, Book, Krichels, Miller) in the following four areas: Outreach Core Competencies; Fiscal Stewardship; Academic Relationships; and Innovation. Each team will be chaired by one of the Associate Vice Presidents and will include broad participation throughout Outreach. Teams will be asked to identify key strategic directions for the future of Outreach and tactical recommendations in support of strategic initiatives. Initial findings and short-term recommendations will be due by November 1, 2003 with the final report completed for the spring Board of Trustees meeting.

3. What is our vision? We face enormous complexity in the midst of compelling mission and challenge. Our work is important—impacting thousands of lives within Pennsylvania and increasingly beyond. Our vision is to be recognized as the premier outreach organization among the nation's institutions of higher education—today, tomorrow, and in

the future. We will remain deeply committed to preserving our core purpose and our core values while striving for unequivocal excellence in addressing new organizational priorities and implementing strategies that stimulate progress. New challenges and opportunities for higher education nationally, for Pennsylvania and Penn State, and for our organization internally call for new strategies to realize the full **Promise of Outreach** for Penn State's future.

4. How will we be kept abreast of the change process? Working closely with the Executive Team, we will put our new strategic positioning process in place that will guide our thinking and assist us in addressing the pressing challenges I mentioned earlier. I will continue to communicate about the strategic positioning process with all of you as it unfolds. In this process we will be carefully thinking through issues and opportunities to make the best decisions for outreach, for Penn State, and for the people we serve. We will make every effort to inform you and will remain committed to being informed by you.

5. What is our individual and collective role? Given the talent in this organization, I am confident that we can achieve greatness and leave a legacy to build the next 100 years of Penn State's outreach mission. We will be bold in our pursuit of this greatness. German writer and scientist Johann Goethe is credited with saying, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now." I am counting on your commitment to leadership, entrepreneurship, excellent service, community and learning to realize the full Promise of Outreach. This change process is not a study, but ultimately about execution. The entire Outreach staff will be challenged and empowered to implement approved changes and recommendations. Nothing less than your enthusiastic participation is warranted to pursue bold new directions.

6. What can we do today? This organization has proven its ability to adapt to change, yet the uncertainty of change can create anxiety. We will work hard to ensure that you are kept informed of the process and have opportunities to help shape, respond, and participate in the process. We will want to hear from you and we will be looking to all of you to assist us in identifying opportunities to realize some immediate victories.

7. What is required to implement successful change? Easily the most significant cause for change processes to fail is allowing the sheer enormity of the process to become overwhelming—causing an organization to quit. This frequently occurs after the initial enthusiasm

wears off. Calvin Coolidge once said, "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence...talent will not...genius will not...education will not....Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." The Executive Team is committed to carrying out this process; however, it will require all of us in Outreach to be fully committed to its completion. Don't let up!

8. How can we make changes stick? Change never truly ends. In fact this new planning process is not an organizational strategy, but truly a permanent change in our way of doing business. Permanent change requires tenacity. We have achieved a great deal and should be very proud of our national leadership. In order to maintain our leadership role, we must focus on becoming a more agile, dynamic, entrepreneurial organization; stronger financially, providing a significant return to the University coupled with an appropriate financial reserve for future endeavors; more closely aligned with the University priorities; and well positioned for a bright and enduring future. Outreach must walk the talk of entrepreneurship, leadership, excellent service, and learning and community.

By now you may be asking: What does all this change mean for me—in my daily work life? The expectations for Outreach employees are the same as they have always been: to give the best effort that you can give to further the University's Outreach mission. We need you to be imaginative and creative and we need your passion and commitment to succeed. Frances Hesselbein, Chair of the Board of Governors of the Drucker Foundation notes, "our time calls us to move beyond the old walls and together find the courage to carry on as we are called to do...whatever the challenge, leaders will rise, finding the heart, the language, the caring that embraces and sustains."

As we build upon the Promise of Outreach, we will depend on each person bringing his or her substantial experience to bear on each day's challenges. Only the sum of those efforts can create the organization that we envision together today.

I hope this edition of Inside Outreach gives you a better understanding of the change process and rationale as we embark on this journey. As always, I encourage you to contact me with your comments and concerns.

Thanks for your leadership,

Craig