



Inside Outreach

The Pursuit of Greatness

March 2005

Dear Colleagues,

The pursuit of greatness is a journey that never ends.
Jim Collins

In my experience in higher education, the advent of spring is one of the busiest times of the year; however, I must admit that I am pressed to find any slow time in our work in Outreach. That being said, I realized that I it has been 18 months since I joined Penn State Outreach and embarked with you on the journey to take Outreach from "Good to Great." During that time, we have made significant progress in applying the concepts derived from Jim Collin's work on studying the companies with sustainable long-term success.

Get the right people in the right seats - With much thoughtfulness and ongoing analysis, many Outreach staff now find themselves with new responsibilities, new colleagues and new titles more closely aligned with organizational priorities and their own unique skill sets. We will continue to focus our energies, first on "who" before we decide "what."

Identify and implement a hedgehog concept - From a direct conversation with Jim Collins, coupled with much internal deliberation, we in Outreach identified that serving as the catalyst, connector, and collaborator between the needs of our various constituents and stakeholders and the programs, research, and services of Penn State--is a mission we can be passionate about, a mission that will provide a healthy return on our investment, and a mission that we can be the best in the world at.

Confront the brutal facts (but never lose faith) - Many units within Outreach conduct "blameless autopsies" to evaluate our successes and failures. Also, we are developing a system to first, broadly share and manage our budget and second, set and monitor strategic metrics

Establish a culture of discipline - We are making progress in this area--focusing on advancing the practice of disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action. We still have much work in this area, especially with the discipline of saying no to current and new initiatives that do not align with our core mission and priorities.

Advance the flywheel and avoid the doom loop - Collins found that the change process in long term successful organizations is not about banners, celebrations, and great fanfare to motivate the troops, but rather a slow deliberate process of figuring out what needs to be done and doing it. I believe that the flywheel is turning, but slowly, as we advance our new direction.

Because we are focusing on the heavy lifting of gradually building the momentum to accelerate the flywheel of change, our changes in Outreach are not as evident. Now that the Outreach flywheel is turning more quickly, I think it's timely to take a moment to assess where we are on the good to great continuum.

In taking stock of where an organization is, Collin stresses how important it is to focus on results and achievements rather than on future promises. John Kotter, another expert on corporate culture and the change process, agrees with this tactic. Kotter points out that one of the pitfalls of organizational transformation is not planning for and creating short-term wins. He goes on to emphasize that real change takes time, and the transformation can lose momentum if the organization does not celebrate its achievement of short-term goals without losing sight of the long-term vision. So with that in mind, I'd like to highlight some of the recent wins in the Outreach change process.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

There were many major recommendations from the earlier Strategic Positioning Process to advance the new Outreach.

Focus our work on strategic themes - the process of implementing the strategic themes is underway: education, health care and economic and workforce development. Each theme initiative is being led by representatives from the academic colleges and Outreach.

Education:

Kyle Peck, College of Education
Babs Bengtson, Outreach

Health Care:

Luanne Thorndyke, College of Medicine,
Fred Vondracek, College of Health and Human Development
Stephanie Tyworth, Outreach

Economic and Workforce Development:

Martin Shields, College of Agricultural Sciences
Jack Gido, Outreach

Each theme will be led by a team of faculty, administrators and Outreach professionals who will coordinate the programming and initiatives, as well as manage the new Outreach Thematic Initiative Funding (TIF) to support efforts in these thematic areas.

Establish Liaisons with Colleges-The academic colleges and their faculty are central to all of Outreach's accomplishments and goals, and we are working diligently to nurture and grow our relationships with the colleges. As I mentioned in an earlier edition of *Inside Outreach*, the associate vice presidents and I recently completed meetings with the dean of every academic college and the CEO of each campus in order to discuss how Outreach could advance the outreach agenda of the colleges' strategic plans and align our work with their priorities. As part of that effort, we have named an Outreach liaison for each college and campus who can facilitate communication and problem solving in situations in which a college or campus needs general advice to help find solutions to outreach-related problems. The Outreach liaisons will be critical to enhancing our relationships with the colleges and campuses, and a liaison training session will be conducted in April. Below is a list of colleges/campuses and the designated Outreach liaisons.

Use of teams to drive organizational change - To advance an organization of innovation, push decision-making throughout the organization, and nurture leaders across all units, we have begun to develop the use of self-directed teams to address a myriad of critical initiatives within Outreach.

Executive Team - led by Craig Weidemann to develop the strategic direction, monitor and enhance our financial position, and manage the programmatic direction of Outreach.

Outreach Diversity Council - led by Janet Patterson to ensure that Outreach aggressively advances a diverse work place, develops programs covering diverse topics, and provides programs that attract diverse audiences.

Product Development/Revenue Enhancement Team - led by Bob Igo to consistently consider the revenue potential of new programs/products/services and the expansion of established program/products/services.

Chief Financial Officers Team - led by Jeff Smith to develop a budgeting system that is consistent and open to informed decision making.

TONIC Team - led by Lynn Melander Moore to develop systems and processes to enable Outreach to win external grants and contracts.

Information Technology Team - led by Jeff Smith to coordinate and maximize our information technology capabilities.

Organizational Culture Team - convened by Melinda Stearns to create a culture that fosters creativity, leadership and entrepreneurship.

Internal Communications Team- led by John Carfagno to build systems to ensure formal and informal communication vehicles.

This is just a sample of the teams operating within Outreach, and there will be additional teams developed soon to address emerging issues within Outreach. We continue to evaluate the management and effectiveness of Outreach teams. One of the priorities of the new Outreach training director will be to help provide training for the team members in developing high-performance teams.

Finally, there will be additional organization-wide changes to announce soon as the University considers and alters its own organizational structure this spring.

While we must focus on our organizational progress, we must not lose sight of the purpose of our work--to transform lives. I encourage you to look at our upcoming spring *Outreach Magazine*. I think you will be amazed by the breadth and reach of our work with our academic partners.

Looking back at recent accomplishments, I am excited about the progress we have already made on our Outreach journey from good to great. However, as Collins points out, the truly great organizations never think they are great, never think of themselves as "being there," and always believe they are not doing as well as they could be. While I can honestly say that we are making progress on the good to great continuum, we're not great yet. But we are getting closer every day thanks to your leadership, innovative thinking, and constant focus on our objectives. So let's celebrate our achievements, continue to assess our strategies, and admit that we're not great yet. Our journey continues!

After change enterprises get rolling and have some wins, they don't stop there. They go back and make wave after wave of other actions necessary for long-term, significant change.

John Kotter

Craig

PS: Recently a number of new Outreach employees commented on the inordinate number of e-mails they receive since coming to Outreach in contrast to their previous organizations. E-mail is an incredibly powerful communication tool; however, it can also create personal distance, produce hours of inefficient and low value work, reinforce a focus on the urgent rather than the important, and can be highly ineffective in addressing difficult issues. Let's work hard to cut down on unnecessary and volatile e-mail. pick up the phone or talk face-to-face with your colleagues.

Academic Unit

Abington, Berks-Lehigh Valley
Arts & Architecture
Agricultural Sciences
Altoona
Commonwealth College

Communications, University Libraries
Education
Earth & Mineral Sciences
Engineering
Erie
Great Valley
Harrisburg

Health & Human Development,
College of Medicine
Information Sciences & Technology
Liberal Arts
Science
Smeal

Outreach Liaison

Bill Curley
Melanie Doebler
Daney Jackson
Wayne Smutz
Pete Rubba

Tracy Vosburgh
Babs Bengtson
Jack Watson
Jack Gido
Pete Forster
Fred Loomis
Tim Kerchinski

Stephanie Tyworth
Kate Domico
Blake Withall
Suzanne Wrye
Melinda Stearns