Systemic Shocks & Systemic Change: What Graduate Education Leaders Can Do

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About me

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What is systemic change? Why are we perfectly positioned for it?

Cases of innovation & collaboration

Steps we can take
Most of us are wondering when life will get back to normal but normal is what brought us to such a precarious place. Nothing should ever be the same again and while that is an unnerving prospect, it may also be our saving grace.

Eventually, doctors will find a coronavirus vaccine, but black people will continue to wait, despite the futility of hope, for a cure for racism. We will live with the knowledge that a hashtag is not a vaccine for white supremacy. We live with the knowledge that, still, no one is coming to save us. The rest of the world yearns to get back to normal. For black people, normal is the very thing from which we yearn to be free.
Change typically comes slowly in higher education, but these are not typical times.
Most systemic change comes about precisely through exogenous shocks.
The direct & indirect consequences of our actions – including our responses to COVID — can haunt or help us.
Evaluative cultures explain why academics define merit in ways that undermine diversity.

- Program culture → Criteria & processes in use
- Disciplinary culture → Logics, language
- Academia’s culture → Ambivalence about change; discomfort talking about race
What does it take to interrupt this vicious cycle?

- Few women or people of color
- Program admits a few such individuals, but does not question the rules.
- Admitted students see lack of critical mass & pick up on climate cues
- Students enroll elsewhere.
**SYSTEM:**
a set of elements connected by feedbacks, dependencies, and interactions—internally and with the environment— that helps to achieve something.
SYSTEMIC CHANGE:
“...occurs when change reaches all or most parts of a system, thus affecting the behavior of the entire system.” Mark Connolly, writing for the Accelerating Systemic Change Network
Examples of systemic change

Improving connections
Examples of systemic change

Improving connections

Creating levers that affect large portions of the system
Examples of systemic change

- Improving connections
- Creating levers that affect large portions of the system
- Managing complexity
Examples of systemic change

Improving connections

Creating levers that affect large portions of the system

Managing complexity

Revisiting the outcomes to which elements and their connections are directed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline/Field</th>
<th>Focus of equity effort</th>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Physics</td>
<td>Race &amp; Gender</td>
<td>PhD Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>PhD Program</td>
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<td>Civil Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>Race &amp; Gender</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Geology</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Field Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational Learning

• “A head-hanging embarrassment”: The departments ranking sank amid multiple failed tenure cases for women

• A groundswell for change in the 1990’s: “This isn’t who we are”

• A step back: Coordination with the ADVANCE program to systematically investigate what was going on.

• A systematic change effort: Reformed evaluation & hiring practices

• A “watershed moment”: hiring ”the top candidate in the country her year, of any chemist.”

• Optimism & development of a critical mass of new women faculty.

“Critical mass went a long way to organically attracting women PhD students.”

The department became known for being “friendlier to women, particularly in certain areas like organic synthesis which is typically really macho.”

Attention to experiences and “small cues” sent in recruitment and within lab life.

Questioning their own goals & values enabled recognition that they’d been short-sighted.

-Example: Hiring women as “diversity hiring” vs. Hiring women in the intellectual core of the department.
From a vicious to a virtuous cycle of learning

Improving policies, representation, and the climate for women faculty made it natural to take on the improvement of these issues for graduate students.

Now, they are taking on institutionalized racism.

They are more confident and skilled in addressing racial inequities in both the faculty and student populations.

Possibilities that come with
- A **goal** of equity (vs. diversity)
- A **strategy** of organizational learning
Examples of systemic change

- Improving connections
- Creating levers that affect large portions of the system
- Managing complexity
- Revisiting the outcomes to which elements and their connections are directed.
- The “what” of this moment
- Imposed upon us
- Structure
- Mostly feels negative
PRESSURES

UNCERTAINTIES

SYSTEMIC SHOCKS PRODUCE

SYSTEMIC CHANGE INVOLVES

INNOVATIONS

COLLABORATIONS

The “what” of this moment
-Imposed upon us
-Structure
-Mostly feels negative

-The “how” of this moment
-Chosen responses
-Agency
-Source of hope
The California Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Education (C-CIDE) is a research-practice partnership of faculty and administrators in major research universities that aims to reduce inequalities in graduate education by developing and advancing equitable admissions, recruitment, mentoring, and training practices.

The Consortium supports change-ready graduate programs that are rethinking policy and practice, and it supports graduate schools who want to develop a sustainable infrastructure for faculty learning opportunities.
Administration

Campus Liaisons
Administration

Campus Liaisons

PhD Programs
Membership Types and Tracks for 2022

**MEMBERSHIP TYPES:**
**PARTNER:** Workshop series + Facilitation Training + Learning Community
**COLLABORATOR:** Workshop Series + Facilitation Training
**AFFILIATE:** Workshop Series

**TRACKS:**
- Admissions & Recruitment
- Mentoring & Wellbeing

Interested? Connect with us at bit.ly/GradEdEquity equity@usc.edu
WHAT CAN GRAD ED LEADERS DO TO LEVERAGE SYSTEM SHOCKS INTO SYSTEMIC CHANGE?

• Acknowledge pandemic fatigue (in yourself, students, colleagues)
• Resist the tyranny of the urgent
• Resist the back-to-normal impulse
• Take care with communications
• Build collaborations across offices (eg, IR, counseling center, DEI)
• Create spaces for leaders to gather and learn– from outsiders and from one another
• Let your office be the system hub that it is meant to be
Thank you!
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