

Standard 1: Visionary Leadership

Tonya A. Melvin-Bryant

Coastal Carolina University

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Introduction

Visionary leadership is important to any organization's ability to implement change based on changes seen in stakeholder preferences. According to Lashway (1997), creating a vision provides a standard for which leaders can gauge their efforts. Typical stakeholders include students, businesses, parents, administration, and faculty/staff. In response to these changing needs, visionary leaders drive the educational organization to consider what transformation is needed to meet the need and how the organization can implement and sufficiently support development. Often technology is a side-effort of the development rather than an early consideration. The definition of visionary leadership provided in this week's lecture material defines this leadership as the onus of education leaders to inspire those within the organization to recognize the vision and lead these individuals into development and implementation of said vision. The key importance in this definition for me, is the specific mention of the integration of technology to support the transformation, carry out the vision and as a part of the vision, in the organization. Excellence is mentioned as a part of this development and I agree that if serious thought is used in considering needed changes, technology is placed at the forefront for integration, and stakeholders are included as a part of the process, then excellence will be obtained without direct effort.

I am performing my research at Coastal Carolina University in the department of computing sciences. I have been on a mission to change the face of programming and project management courses since becoming a faculty member in 2016. The ability to make more decisions happened quickly when I became coordinator for the beginning algorithms course and co-coordinator for the project management course. I proposed changes, using processes from a

variety of Education Specialist program courses, related to content format in the learning management system (LMS), technology related to textbooks, and external technology resources.

Methodology

Our department standards are primarily based on ABET accreditation (<http://www.abet.org/accreditation/>). Understanding required content from this resource is straight-forward; however, the task of determining written standards in our department is more difficult. I started my research by searching our department website. When I did not find any information there, beyond program descriptions, I asked our administrator if the department had written standards and if so, where are they would be stored. The question was forwarded to our current department chair and soon to be chair (August 2018). I have not received any information.

In thinking about the processes that our department has used over the past two years, I realize that most of our standards are based on committee and department voting. We have two committees, one coordinating computer science and one coordinating information systems and information technology combined. The general consensus is that our committees should be able to vote within its membership. Any decisions that would affect all degree programs are brought forward to the department meetings for a vote. This process works as long as we make decisions within the ABET accreditation.

Indicator 1

In determining how leaders facilitate shared development of the department's vision, and satisfy the needs of stakeholders, I look to where information is stored, posted, or sent through media. The ABET information is posted on the walls in a central area of the department for

students to read. Information that faculty will need is sent via email and disseminated during the department meeting for use in our end-of-semester course summary (W. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). Faculty Course Assessment Report (FCAR) is an end-of-semester activity used to determine whether classes used as a part of the ABET accreditation meet that criteria (J. French, personal communication, September 28, 2016). A number of faculty also use mid-semester surveys to obtain feedback from students on whether the course is meeting their needs. Course evaluations are available for students, but are primarily based on college and university standards (<https://coastal.campuslabs.com/courseeval/>). There is a meeting between the department chair and each faculty member to discuss the course evaluations.

Indicator 2

Again, our department works in committees to plan course changes and technology changes for courses. The committees continually review what is working in the class as it relates to student success. For instance, if there are a number of complaints from students concerning a particular textbook, the coordinator for that course will meet with the committee to suggest a plan of action. This may include asking various publishers to send new books for review to, in the case of a technology-based solution, asking the publisher to come to campus and present new technology solutions or resources for that particular course. The process, the plan, remains with the coordinator for the course.

Indicator 3

The leadership in our department does not place restraints on risk taking in the area of technology integration in the classroom. The department wants faculty to be innovative and forward thinking when thinking of the best way to present information to students. The only

caveat is that we adhere to ABET criteria and that the students benefit. Free resources, including textbooks or external applications, are always supported. A number of faculty in our department look for bundled solutions that will provide a discount for students. Also, many of the resources for the classroom allow students to work inside and outside of the classroom. The reason our department has such an open mind concerning self-governance stems from restrictions that occurred before my time (various, department meeting, various dates). The department wants to ensure academic freedom in teaching, as long as it remains within our accreditation criteria and is a benefit to the students.

Indicator 4

I honestly cannot speak specifically to the types of data collected by the department overall in making leadership decisions. I can only note that many of the instructors use student feedback to modify their courses during the semester (R. Foutlz, personal communication, March, 2017) and moving into the following semester. This collection of feedback is gathered from a Moodle survey (very few use paper surveys). Students are asked about the usefulness of the textbook, whether they use the textbook to gain content for the class, whether they are receiving needed information from the instructor, and do they feel comfortable asking questions.

There is of course the university-wide course evaluation that asks a variety of the same questions listed above for the course, the faculty member, and the technology used in the course. Whether this information is actually used to inform decisions for the department's courses is unclear. Our department chair has an open-door policy for both students and faculty should there be issues in the classroom. The chair does immediately create a 'paper trail' via email to track such issues.

The formal data collection is for our accreditation. Faculty must report data collected for courses that must meet criteria directly related to this accreditation. This is completed use the e-Assess system (<http://ww2.coastal.edu/e-assess/login.php>), written by former students in the department. This data is gathered by the accreditation coordinator (a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in our department) and a summary is written for ABET and stored electronically for the future accreditation visit.

Indicator 5

The leaders in our department support all research-based efforts related to technology. Course coordinators are asked to lead these efforts. For instance, should a faculty member who is not a coordinator believe there could be more and/or better technology use in the classroom, they should approach the coordinator to discuss possible changes/solutions (W. Jones, department meeting, January 2017). There are certain courses that are in the common core for the university. It is especially important that the coordinator for those set of courses work closely with faculty, the department chair, and even the dean, when there is a need to effect changes. This is important because those changes affect students in departments beyond our own. It is equally important for this coordinator to have a written plan for requests that come from outside our department to make changes in those courses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our department's visionary leadership is one of self-governance. I do have concerns that there is not a formal process to develop and implement technology across the variety of courses offered by the department. I enjoy having the freedom to suggest changes that I feel would benefit students. I am sure other faculty members feel the same. This type of

leadership is good for moral, which is on the upswing in the past six years, since faculty feel more open to make suggestions. The downside to this type of leadership is that there is not a formal, written plan in place. Although we are guided by our accreditation body, plans are still within the silo of individual committees, not department-wide. This can create a hoarding effect should a group of like-minded faculty served on a single committee and never report to the department for a vote. This can lead to separatism among degree programs and even create an air of elitism.

I believe there should be a written plan for the vision of the department. I also believe there should be a higher level of reporting from individual committees to the entire department. During a department meeting, any individual should be able to raise to a vote a matter that they feel is not beneficial to students, faculty, or the department. The ultimate goal for leadership is to create successful students, develop a clear plan for technology integration, maintain a cohesive department (working well together), and show overall growth in the careers of the individuals that make up the department. This type of goal will create and maintain a successful department and this success is especially important when the fast paced world of technology is the department's primary business.

References

Lashway, Larry (1997). Visionary Leadership. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/3332>.

Setting the Standard Worldwide. ABET Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Programs 2016 2017 Comments. <http://www.abet.org/accreditation/>.