Creating the Conditions for Cross-Silo Collaboration

Virtual Clinic Series
About Sova

Mission Driven Focus on Building Capacity for Student-Success Change Efforts

Accelerating the pace and improving the quality of complex problem solving in higher education and workforce development;

Helping higher education leaders move from strategy to action, from solution to implementation, and from pilot to scaled intervention;

Specifically, helping higher education leaders with change leadership, process improvement, and business planning for large-scale student-success focused work
About Sova

Our Approach

High-quality innovation that is evidence-based, sustainable, and scalable;

Attention to both the technical and human dimensions of change;

Clear-eyed attention to resource allocation and business modeling;

Rigorous focus on process design;

Planning for meaningful engagement of critical stakeholders;

Improving collaboration between groups to make work better, to build will for change, and to drive progress on key initiatives.
Topics for today

The inescapable necessity of silo-spanning

Building the skills required for effective silo-spanning

The difference between silo-spanning and “silo-busting”

The role of the leader in cross-silo collaboration

Silo-spanning practices to move your work forward
Level Set: Why a Focus on Cross-Silo Collaboration?

➢ When the student and the student experience are placed firmly in the center of the institution’s mission, vision, and strategy, silo-spanning isn’t optional – it’s a necessity.

➢ Silo-spanning is not something an institution completes, it is part of the ongoing work of becoming a truly student-focused enterprise. It is not work that ends.
Key Question

What are the skills necessary for effective silo-spanning and how do you build them in yourselves (and support their development in your colleagues)?

Insights are based on:

— On-the ground work in dozens of institutions
— Implementation Science & Healthcare Research
— Deliberative Democracy
Silo-busting vs. Silo-spanning

Full-blown restructuring is costly, confusing, slow and rife with unintended consequences (it can be done well, but implementation is a significant barrier... and it’s not the only option)

Silo-Spanning: A World of Bridging & Gluing

• Requires a transformational/adaptive view of leadership (relationship-driven)

• Dependent on a growth mindset (resilience)

• Requires a subset of people at every level who are comfortable with liminality (the ability & willingness to think across boundaries & live on multiple sides of a barrier)

• Less about culture change, and more about cultural exchange

Casciaro, Edmonson, Jang (HBR, May-June 2019)
The Basics of Silo-Spanning: Cooperation vs Collaboration

Cooperation isn’t enough to accomplish transformation; success depends on collaboration.

Cooperation is...

— Short-term
— Transactional
— Focused on independent goals

Collaboration is...

— Long-term
— Relational
— Focused on shared goals

Ashkenas (HBR, May 2015)
The role of the leader in silo-spanning

Leaders Working to Inspire Cross-Silo Collaboration Must

— Make the specific goal clear: What silos need spanning and to what specific end?
— Set the vision & paint the picture: What will look like/feel like to the student when we’ve got the ideal in place?
— Develop & support silo-spanners in multiple forms: Identify, develop, unleash “Bridgers” & “Gluers”
— Model the behavior
  • learning about others & relating to them
  • attending to process & nurturing collaboration
Essential Practices

“New insights fail to get put into practice because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works.”
—Senge

Learning & Relating
• Inquisitiveness
• Empathy
• Active perspective-taking

Attending to Process & Nurturing Collaboration
• Ask better questions
• Have better meetings
• Map your processes with humans in mind
The Art of Inquiry: Asking Good Questions

Don’t...

— Start with yes/no questions
— Ask overly general questions (“What’s on your mind?”)
— Assume that you understand what people are saying
— Assume that the collaboration process will take care of itself

Do...

— Start with open-ended questions that minimize preconceptions
— Ask questions that focus on specific issues, but leave lots of room for people to elaborate
— Check your understanding by summarizing what you’re hearing and asking explicitly for corrections or missing elements
— Take the time to ask questions to help people share their experiences with relationships/processes (What can we be doing to work together more effectively? What makes it easier and harder for you to bring your best to your work?)

Gino (HBR, Sept-Oct 2018)
Meetings Matter (and most fall short of their potential)

Good meetings have...

— Clear, achievable goals
— Right people at the table
— Skillful facilitation
— Honest appraisal of barriers & opportunities
— Clear outcomes with actions attached
— Time dedicated to communication & engagement implications
What’s Next

✓ Take stock & identify specific priorities for silo-spanning
✓ Commit to the discipline associated with better meetings
✓ Take time to generate the right questions & to listen carefully
✓ Skill-up in facilitation (Sova Facilitation Guide is a free, user-friendly resource available through OH SSTF)
✓ Reject easy answers & the “fundamental attribution error” as you make your way
✓ Identify where you may benefit from neutral situation-analysis or outside facilitation training
Thank you.