**Inclusive Leadership: The Importance of Inclusion and Change**

*Community College Planning: What Inclusive Leadership Is*

Diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of all or most academic institutions. It is well known that academic institutions are becoming increasingly diverse; however, many constituencies synonymously utilize the word “diversity” as a means to describe a wide array of characteristics in their institution. But what does “diversity” really mean? Is it describing a representation of demographic characteristics? Does it consist of a place that holds multiple identity group perspectives? Is it the representation of distinct opinions, experiences, knowledge, or resources and status? Or could it be a combination of all of these definitions? If this is the case, the question should focus on “how” and/or “who” can successfully manage these differences to effectively create an inclusive environment in which one can learn to utilize these differences and continue to grow.

Inclusive leadership (IL) is a great leadership practice and is essentially an extension of diversity and inclusion management (Booysen, 2014). IL lends itself to community college planning by providing collegial consultation when integrating critical initiatives for community college success. Therefore, it is critical to note that in order to create a more inclusive academic institution, leadership training needs to also be inclusive and include both the relationships and relational practices that undergo the interconnected systems (systems – a group of interacting, interrelated, and interdependent components; Senge, 2006) within an organization. Thus, the intent is not only to introduce the concept of IL and its role within community college planning, but to also inform the different constituencies (e.g., faculty, colleagues, direct supervisors, classified professionals, community members, emerging leaders, peers, and students) within the community college about the benefits that IL can offer.

IL is an ongoing cycle of both practice and learning. Specifically, it is a respectful and collaborative relational practice that enables individuals to be directed, aligned, and committed towards a common and shared pursuit, while retaining a unique sense of self (Gallegos, 2014). IL goes beyond the obvious prominence of directing activity and into a participative involvement between two or more individuals—where voices are heard and valued. In doing so, IL fosters inclusive cultures focusing on the management of equality, social justice, fairness, and the leveraging of diversity effects in the system (Booysen, 2014). Inclusion involves both being fully ourselves and allowing others to be fully themselves in the context of engaging in a common goal. It means collaborating in a way in which all parties can be fully engaged, and ye, still believe that they have not compromised, hidden, or given up any part of their self-identity (Gallegos, 2014). For individuals experiencing inclusion in a group or organization, individuals feel fully part of the whole while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness. Thus, IL extends our mindset—it removes obstacles that cause exclusion and marginalization by pushing our thinking beyond the process of adapting to a set of organizational plans but also to empowerment and participation of all.

*Systems Level of Inclusive Leadership*

Inclusive leadership is a two-way interdependent relationship that may be made possible through the reciprocal exchange between two or more individuals that can occur in multiple levels: micro (individual), meso (group), and macro (organization). Refer to page 3 for a crosswalk demonstrating inclusive leader behaviors at different levels within the system.

**Individual level system**

* Demands cultural humility, courage, and tolerance for imperfection and ambiguity. Furthermore, one must develop greater emotional intelligence to influence outcomes among heterogeneous populations.

**Group (relational) level system**

* Focus on people-relationships. Attend to people with shared goals to increase likelihood of accomplishing critical outcomes and marshalling personal and political power in order to get things done.

**Organizational level system**

* Be agile in both alignment and coordination of meaning and action with others. Thus, process is complex and needs continuous self-examination, along with a thoughtful reflection by all members of the organization.

*Why IL Matters*

**IP Model – Five Components**

1. *Discover*
2. *Develop*
3. *Implement*
4. *Evaluate*
5. *Report*

Inclusive leadership serves as a catalyst for the Integrative Planning (IP) model that has been central to various determinants of community college success.[[1]](#endnote-1) Notably, IL is a relationship-based perspective, and thus it is more process- and context-focused. Through IL, various forms of reciprocal social interactions are created, enabling thoughtful and reflective practices such as collaboration and power sharing, which create an empowering and fruitful environment. IL identifies and drives the human and systemic interactions between structure and agency needed to set a concrete foundation for educational diversity (Gallegos, 2014). Educational diversity refers to a range of individual differences, consisting of a set of social and personal elements, which shape a key aspect in any and every educational setting.

Inclusive cultures are constructed through IL by paying attention to how differences (e.g., opinions, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, experience, and racial/ethnic differences) are managed in organizations. More importantly, it supports conditions that increase the likelihood that those differences will be noticed, valued, and welcomed. In doing so, IL can help avoid generic generalizations and assumptions that occur within the community college system and brings all people to plan, collaborate, share, and learn together. In other words, IL can help prioritize the student body; identify the right people to join and contribute to planning efforts by leveraging external perspectives; guide and direct a collaborative inquiry process; and have the ability to recognize when flexible planning is needed – ultimately, addressing five key themes previously found to be critical in the application of IP. [[2]](#endnote-2)

*How IL Aligns with Integrative Planning (IP)*

A crosswalk of the IP components/phases with the multiple levels of system are shown below. Behaviors of an inclusive leadership style will be demonstrated in each phase of the IP model to better illustrate how IL fits with each IP phase in each system level.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Discovery** A phase that allows a college to take a step back and evaluate how planning is done.  | **Develop** A phase where the main focus lies on the creation of the plan itself. | **Implement** A phase where the goals, objectives, and strategies of the plan are operationalized. | **Evaluate** A phase that evaluates the progress towards goals on a regular basis, at least annually. | **Report** A phase that comprises a sharing process - share the results broadly.  |
| **Micro** Individual Level | - Recognize and explore your own identities and cultural orientations to be aware of when others complement or contradict the values and orientation of others- Accept responsibility for your actions- Invite challenging interactions, even those that foster tension | - Be open, available, and accessible to the greatest degree possible- Expect to have your current assumptions challenged- Identify common goals to bind people together | - Be aware of and recognize others’ contributions- Have trusted advisors from different identity groups to seek feedback- Time and manage the pace of change by focusing on subtle aspects that can accelerate or derail change efforts | - Utilize frequently evaluated progress as opportunities for organizational learning rather than for compliance - Demonstrate skills in data-gathering and problem-solving- Be personally and actively involved with all constituencies  | - Provide honest communication- Respect and acknowledge everyone who is involved in or affected by the process by communicating results |
| **Meso** Group Level | - Intentionally involve a wide range of people and include diverse perspectives-Always look out for who might be missing- Consider possible blinders or unquestioned assumptions | - Increase direction, alignment, and commitment across groups focused on shared outcomes- Allow for communication to foster a rich dialog- Support with new methods of learning and caring to allow for creativity  | - Allow for different ways of problem-solving, leading, and getting work done- Stress for a forward-looking approach- Recognize intergroup fault lines when working together | - Recognize existing and implicit norms- Continually examine and revise to assure fit across cultures and subcultures to minimize bias | - Be responsive and pay attention - Listen and be fair when communicating- Recognize who is affected by the planning process - Provide tools and build skills to help diverse teams communicate clearly  |
| **Macro** Organizational Level | - Establish a clear vision of an inclusive culture that recognizes and respects the added value of both between- and within-group differences | - Collaboratively develop philosophies regarding inclusion-Develop a case for valuing differences that communicate specific rationale for connecting initiatives to the shared goal | -Be responsible and explicit about organizational norms and behaviors that support inclusiveness for all constituencies | - Provide thoughtful examination- Be agile in alignment and coordination with others’ actions - Create systems of accountability to hold all responsible  | - Provide quality educational opportunities to intentionally build organizational knowledge (sharing of information) among all constituencies |

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1. The RP Group. Integrative Planning – Conceptual Model of Integrative Planning. (Resource) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The RP Group. Integrative Planning – Literature Review – Themes. (Resource) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)