



the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

Leading from the Middle

Year 3 (2015) Evaluation Report

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Introduction

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) launched Leading from the Middle (LFM) Academy in 2013 as a professional development experience for community college educators—faculty, administrators, and staff—who have formal or informal leadership responsibilities. Over the first three years, close to 150 California community college educators have participated.

Based on a commitment to learning from experience, the LFM leadership team conducts an annual internal evaluation of the academy experience. This report summarizes findings from the evaluation of the Year 3 (2015) LFM Academy and builds on the formative evaluation of the first two years.

We offer this report to share evaluation findings, promote understanding about the development of middle leaders, and highlight the roles these individuals can take in advancing institutional change. This report is written for community college educators including campus executive leaders and other administrators who are in positions to support and encourage leadership development at their colleges. In addition, current and potential middle leaders can read about the experiences of colleagues with common aspirations and challenges. The report begins with an overview of the program’s design and a description of the 2015 participants and team projects; the findings are then organized by program outcomes.

LFM Purpose and Design

LFM has an inclusive definition of middle leadership, spanning positions such as deans and department chairs, that have formal leadership responsibilities, as well as faculty who have become coordinators of the Basic Skills Initiative or Student Learning Outcomes, and staff positions, such as institutional researchers, that have the opportunity to take on leadership responsibilities in their work.

Middle leadership has particular characteristics and particular challenges. Rather than relying on authority and position, middle leaders work through collaboration, coalition building, and communication. Their work is rooted in an understanding of the local cultural context and enacted through a network of professional and personal relationships. LFM is designed to address a central question: How can more educators gain strategic skills and increase their willingness to take on leadership responsibilities?

The LFM Academy design reflects what is known about effective professional development. It focuses on practice and engages educators in college teams, facilitating collaboration with local colleagues and peers from other institutions. In turn, participating in LFM supports development of both group and individual leadership skills. In contrast to one-time events, it takes place across a calendar year through three face-to-face meetings.

LFM takes an experiential approach to learning, as demonstrated in its design, curriculum, and instructional delivery. For example, the program pedagogy is problem-based, facilitating

participant's development of middle leadership skills in the context of collaboratively planning and leading a campus-based change initiative with their college colleagues. Initially this campus project was included as laboratory experience, a setting for participants to practice new leadership skills. However, over the three years that the LFM Academy has been in existence there has been a change; teams now frequently come with projects that are connected to college priorities and see LFM as a chance to support the development of these initiatives.

The curricular content follows the process and challenges of implementing a campus change project. The first session introduces tools of making the case and mapping out project design. The second session addresses coalition building and communication, including the popular topic of engaging resistance. The final session looks cumulatively at the willingness to take risks and failing successfully as essential characteristics of leadership (see Appendix I on p.14 for more detail on LFM design, curriculum, and pedagogy and the LFM leadership team).

Leading from the Middle Outcomes

LFM aims for participants to grow in areas that will support their long-term development and efforts as middle leaders. These six outcomes are clustered in three major categories and include the following:

Leadership development:

1. Develop leadership identity
2. Develop strategies to sustain and support leadership development

Team collaboration and leadership:

3. Create and sustain professional relationships in which peers share ideas and strategize together

Leadership in the context of a college initiative:

4. Engage with existing literature
5. Apply research and evidence to make informed decisions that advance institutional change efforts
6. Strengthen capacity to prioritize and lead departmental, institutional and other changes through the process of evidence-based inquiry

LFM Evaluation Activities

LFM conducts internal evaluation activities designed to assess these program outcomes. The academy was designed to support growth and development of leadership skills. However, these outcomes are not explicitly measurable in the context and scope of this evaluation effort; this internal evaluation focuses on qualitative data. The Academy has regularly incorporated opportunities for reflection and feedback into the experience for the benefit of both participants and the LFM leadership group.

The findings in this report come from a range of reflection cards that were administered at regular intervals during each of the 2015 face-to-face sessions as well as observation of the large group discussions during these meetings, occasional surveys, and products produced by participants. We summarize the results from these evaluation activities below. The six LFM outcome grouped in the three general categories above provide the organizing framework for the findings.

LFM Year 3 Evaluation Findings

This section begins with a description of the LFM Year 3 participants and the projects they carried out through their academy experience. We then turn to evaluation results, organized by program outcome and grouped into three main categories: (1) leadership development, (2) team collaboration and leadership, (3) leadership in the context of a college initiative.

LFM Year 3 Participants and Projects

In 2015, LFM organized a “LFM 1.0” experience for new teams and a “LFM 2.0” for continuing teams. The 2015 LFM 1.0 cohort had 46 participants from 10 colleges: College of Alameda, Alan Hancock College, Cabrillo College, Crafton Hills College, Diablo Valley College, Fresno City College, Irvine Valley College, Modesto Junior College, Palomar College, and Sierra College. LFM 2.0 had a small group of 10 participants from three colleges: Crafton Hills College, Fresno City College, and City College of San Francisco.¹ This report focuses predominantly on the outcomes of the LFM 1.0 participants.

The LFM 1.0 participants included a wide range of middle leaders across the colleges. Nine deans attended, including deans of sciences, math, and computer science; social and behavioral sciences; literature and language arts; English, math and instructional support; curriculum and instruction; enrollment services; counseling and educational support services; and student equity and student learning. Three department chairs participated, including two counseling chairs. Four teams included institutional researchers. The majority of participants (more than half) were faculty and counselors, many with the growing list of middle leadership titles including Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator, Basics Skills Coordinator, Coordinator of Academic Support, Faculty Student Success Coordinator, Professional Development Coordinator, First Year Experience Coordinator, and Academic Senate President. In addition to their formal titles, many participants noted that they had also played active roles in union negotiations.

Participants come to LFM with a wide range of familiarity and expertise with leadership roles. For example, the introductory activity asked participants to place themselves on a leadership continuum from “reluctant” to “enthusiastic.” This activity was based on the observation that some participants are initially hesitant to identify themselves as leaders. Of those who responded,

¹ Crafton Hills College and Fresno City College have sent teams every year since the first LFM cohort in 2013.

five described themselves as reluctant, six placed themselves in the middle, and seven described themselves as enthusiastic about leadership. These results illustrate the range and variance of perceptions that participants bring to the LFM Academy.

Several teams worked on similar college change projects, reflecting current community college initiatives and priorities, and giving college teams a chance to see how the projects develop in another setting. Two colleges, Cabrillo College and Modesto Junior College, both designed campus professional development institutes focused on equity. Two other colleges, Irvine Valley College and Crafton Hills College, constructed early alert systems.

All of the college teams were attentive to issues of equity in their projects; College of Alameda looked at supporting men of color, particularly in mathematics. Allan Hancock College looked at equity and online education. Fresno City College continued the work from the 2014 LFM team, developing *ME First*, looking at the implications for students and the college if students take their math and English requirements in their first semesters on campus.

Findings on Leadership Development

Develop Leadership Identity

LFM aims to provide the space, resources, and structure for a range of middle leaders to thoughtfully and realistically consider how they see themselves as leaders.

One participant noted her evolution from reluctance to acceptance in viewing herself as a leader.

- “I have learned to think of myself as a leader to a certain degree. When I first came I thought of myself as just a ‘doer.’ I have some clear leadership strategies to use now.”

Two others described their own increased willingness and confidence to see themselves as leaders because of support from colleagues.

- “I am more capable than I tend to think, and people seem to appreciate what I bring to the proverbial table.”
- “I think I am a better leader than I give myself credit for. People respond well to my ideas and I could probably be more vocal in the future.”

Two more participants could comfortably name leadership skills they now possess around listening and the iterative nature of learning.

- “I am able to listen to differing points of view and hear views that differ from mine with a fair degree of patience. I am able to remain in the gray area of not having all the answers without too much trouble.”
- “I’ve learned that my leadership skills are quite developed already. But at the same time, I can stunt my growth with negative feelings. In addition, I’ve learned some new tools around framing expectations such that they are about improvement, mistakes and iterations. I’ve already known about giving other people credit, but I haven’t had the

opportunity to use it yet.”

Toward the end of the year-long academy, when asked to summarize leadership, participants responded in ways that reflect the complexity of middle leadership, including the following quotes: “Leadership is contradictory” and “Leadership is messy.” One person added, “I currently possess tools that I am able to use in order to lead effectively in a dysfunctional environment.”

With a cautionary description of leadership, one participant noted, “Being a leader also means being a target. I’m learning that in my career. [But I’m also learning] not to internalize, not to take it personally. It’s not me, it’s what I represent.”

The evaluation revealed that as they grew in their identities as leaders, more of the participants seemed willing to act, move forward, take the long view, and stay the course. One participant stated, “If we don’t risk anything, things won’t get better. Feeling vulnerable is part of leadership.”

Participants also identified passion as a key driver in choosing to be an educator at a community college and as a motivator to continue developing skills to do their work better; this passion moved them first to work in community colleges and now to leadership. Some participants described this passion in the following ways:

- “Why we’re here on Saturday...our jobs don’t end when contract ends. We love what we do. Maybe we can’t teach passion, but can reignite it.”
- “Why do I get up every day to do what I do?... I want students who are not privileged to have the same experience that privileged students have.”
- “The root of passion is the word to suffer...what will I suffer for?”

As leaders, the participants extended their growing sense of responsibility to include and support colleagues, to “bring more people into the responsibility fold, and empower others.”

See Appendix II on page 18 for additional quotes about what participants learned about themselves as leaders.

Develop Strategies to Sustain and Support Leadership Development

If leaders understand that they are in for the long haul, they need to thoughtfully consider how to maintain commitment, energy, and the will to keep going when things get difficult. During a discussion at the last face-to-face academy in October 2015, participants talked about the individual things that they do to keep balance in their lives.

Some participants indicated that a connection to other people was part of their long-term support plan. Two participants described this support:

- “You need to maintain relationships, have your peeps, those that are safe, confidential, so you can vent and they can support you...enjoy your colleagues.”

- “Find a way to keep the joy in the heaviness of this work. The joy comes from relationships and working alongside others.”

Participants additionally spoke about the need for self-care as a strategy for sustaining their leadership. People talked about personal ways of nurturing themselves, including receiving bodywork regularly or gardening; some participants talked about the personal value of spirituality, prayer, and meditation.

Findings on Team Collaboration and Leadership

Create and Sustain Professional Relationships in Which Peers Share Ideas and Strategize Together

Collaboration and coalition building are central to middle leadership; in LFM professional relationships take multiple forms. The team is a home base for collaboration and provides the foundation for expanded coalition building on campus.

In describing relationships among the team, participants had a clear sense that taking the time to build familiarity and trust was essential to the strength of their groups. Some of the teams had worked together on campus before coming and knew each other well, while in other cases, the participants met at LFM for the first time. Participants were conscious of the challenge of keeping the core team engaged in their overtaxed work environment. In the words of one participant:

- ...take time, to play together, and invest in each other. Then we're more willing to do the slog and hard work...the things we do, the rituals. We know we have each others' back, and that makes the work possible and pleasurable.

The team offered a setting where different perspectives could be appreciated. As one participant said, “Everyone sees and thinks differently. Some are big thinkers; some in the weeds; [we] need them both.”

See Appendix III on page 18 for more descriptions of what participants learned about collaborative leadership.

In building coalitions and extending relationships on campus, the teams acknowledged a caution not to create an “in group” that inherently left other people feeling excluded. Another team traced the future trajectory of their project, stating, “The team owns the idea, but if we are successful, no one owns it.”

Some participants felt that middle leadership defined a more equitable relationship among colleagues, rather than a hierarchy of “leaders and followers” they felt they were learning “...to help leaders work together, for the greater good.”

As part of the LFM experience, teams were prompted to consider who else at their campus they needed on board for the project to advance and/or who could help enlist allies. For example, a

project looking at inviting and supporting African American and Latino students in STEM fields went to programs that serve those student populations, explaining, “MESA has STEM majors, and we realized that Umoja and Puente have the students we are interested in, so we incorporated them early.”

At the same time, participants realized that when they asked for input, they had to be genuinely responsive to those ideas. One participant articulated this responsibility as follows:

- Listen and trust...these are good reasonable people. Trust you will get to a place *even if it's not your place*. We know that everyone shares the passion for student success, and it will take everyone across campus to make it work.

More than one team reported the experience of hitting an unexpected wall or losing a team member without explanation. LFM emphasizes in its curriculum that learning to rethink and recalibrate is an essential part of the change process. Participants indicated those lessons helped them to understand the value of time and resilience in the trajectory of change. Two participants described this learning as follows:

- “Sometimes we think we have an alliance, but we may have missed a step. We have to go back...People want to be involved. They want to be invited.... It pays off to ask everyone.”
- “Timeframe...Change doesn’t happen rapidly. One person dropped out...You have to understand, failure isn’t bad. You can learn from it. But we had to face our fears.”

Because LFM offers a venue for participants to connect with colleagues not only on their own campus but at other institutions, evaluation findings showed that participants were able to recognize that others—wherever they are in the system—have struggles. In many cases, the challenges they encountered were similar. Moreover, many participants also reported having similar intentions to improve. Three participants described these revelations as follows:

- There are many [people] in the system who feel the same about leadership and their institutions.”
- “[I understand now] that my/our situation is not unique and that I’m in the right place to get the information I need.”
- “[I realize now] that our issues are all the same. The system as a whole is experiencing the same pros and cons.”

Through their LFM experience, participants reported extending their network of colleagues to include educators across the state. One person summed up the experience of hearing colleagues from across the state engaging in similar conversations, stating, “It makes us feel less alone.” Another participant articulated finding her own courage and similarly encouraged others, saying, “Never be afraid to challenge the status quo. You have allies all across the state of California.”

Findings on Leadership in the Context of a College Initiative

Engage with Existing Literature

Many educators admit that they would like to read the literature and be up on current research; however, they often feel caught between heavy work demands on their time and the overwhelming amounts of existing and new literature. The LFM curriculum included focused readings with two chapters from the *Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership*, one by Michael Fullan on change, and one by Roland Barth on risk taking, as well as Davis Jenkins' *Guided Pathways Overview* and a chapter from Aaron Anderson's book, *Engaging Resistance*. In addition, the group read poems by Marge Piercy and Claudia Schmidt and quotes from Sandy Shugart's book *Leadership in the Crucible of Work* to invite perspectives on the personal and internal process of leadership.

After discussing Michael Fullan's chapter "Understanding Change," participants expressed a greater understanding of the importance of listening to doubters and adversity. As one participant observed, "We have a tendency to surround ourselves with people who agree with us." Others agreed that reading the literature reinforced the importance of being inclusive of different perspectives when leading. One person responded to Fullan's article with an insight that was reinforced in later LFM discussions about resistance, saying, "When you introduce something that people are competent at and pull the rug away from under them, you need to acknowledge that [they are feeling] loss."

A few participants reported sharing the LFM readings with colleagues at their colleges.

- "The Fullan and Andersen articles were well received by a few colleagues and faculty peers. A few found the Aspen Report to be eye-opening and inspirational (more initiatives, anyone?)"
- "We have shared some of the working with resistance ideas with folks on campus. Most importantly, the college is reading *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* and hopes to redesign our curriculum into pathways. We know this will take a long time and are currently doing the reading, planting seeds and preparing the ground for this change."

Apply Research and Evidence to Make Informed Decisions that Advance Institutional Change Efforts

Community college educators are increasingly attentive to utilizing data and fostering a culture of evidence. Recent legislation, statewide initiatives, and accreditation standards all now require educators to engage in inquiry-based data-driven improvement efforts.

LFM participants indicated a strong appreciation for the notion that data is the backbone of equity. They articulated an understanding that data make inequities visible and serve as a powerful resource to advocate for change. In the words of one participant, "The hard facts

around equity—we say we’re about success; we pride ourselves on transfer, but for African American and Latino students, we’re not doing well.”

Part of developing a college initiative is gathering a range of data, often calling for the collection and/or observation of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative evidence, including student perspectives. Many participants reported recognizing the importance of data to understanding how to develop their projects; three participants described this understanding as follows:

- “We realized we know nothing about students who are interested in STEM. We need data to answer those questions. We found 30% of the students change their major six times on the way to completion.”
- “[We need to] talk to students, listen to what obstacles they encounter, hear their experiences and take more time with what they say, ‘Do I belong here?’ ‘Do I have confidence that I can succeed?’”
- “We need a student survey [to ask], ‘Did you take math and English?’ ‘What was your experience in assessment?’ Bringing in student voice can change the conversation.”

However, participants’ perceptions of data were also mixed; people indicated that they recognized both the strengths and the limitations of data. They reported having seen data applied in effective and ineffective ways, so they described approaching their use of evidence with caution. Two participants explained:

- “Data is not truth. In equity, where there is the greatest disparity, the numbers are small, and the picture can get skewed. We need discussion and discernment.”
- “Data tells a certain story, and there are other stories to weave together. . . . We want to be able to merge data patterns and stories, which we listen to, and remember.”

Strengthen Capacity to Prioritize and Lead Departmental, Institutional, and Other Changes through the Process of Evidence-Based Inquiry

The college change initiative offered each team the chance to learn about and apply a range of tools for planning and implementing their college project. Teams articulated their theory of change through a concept map and then further developed details in a logic model. This LFM experience also allowed teams to see and discuss logic models of other college projects. Creating a logic model provided participants the opportunity to think through desired outcomes, identify landmarks, and plan for evaluation. During the year, however, almost all of the participants reported experiencing a reality check that reminded them that change is not a linear process and rarely follows a well-organized plan.

At the end of the first convening, teams crafted and delivered a short elevator pitch, summing up the case for their project. They identified the audiences on campus that would benefit from receiving their pitch. In ongoing discussions, participants considered how others might hear their message, particularly those who might not respond positively, in other words, resisters. The

evaluation found that many participants took this particular lesson to heart. Four participants described this learning as follows:

- “When you deliver a message, stand in the shoes of each stakeholder.”
- “Resistors may see themselves as champions, and vice versa.”
- “People may feel left out of the loop. People want to feel they know and understand what’s going on, that they have a voice and are part of the decision-making. If they don’t participate, then [it’s easy to] criticize later.”
- “Resistors are not the enemy; they are important for creating better programs/products and should be included/given a voice as much as possible.”

One LFM 2.0 participant, who has had more time with the leadership tools and perspectives, reflected on a strategic change in his pattern of planning, saying, “Now when I have an idea, I seek out resistance; I don’t just sit at my desk. I seek out someone I think will resist and ask [them].”

The experience of shepherding a campus initiative over the period of a year gave participants a more realistic perspective on what the change process entails. This more textured understanding resulted from the LFM experience and reflection. Three participants explained:

- “We view conflict as negative. As individuals, we avoid conflict. But change takes positive conflict.”
- “(We can see)...the need to be patient. Real change takes time and a lot of planning.”
- “...[we are] re-learning how to ‘think’ about the steps in a change process. Too many times, change projects fail due to lack of clarity, knowledge of steps and lack of support.”

As one participant summed up what it means to prepare for a long-term effort, “Change is a marathon.”

Conclusion

Leading from the Middle was created by a group of experienced middle leaders to provide the big picture of what leadership entails, to point out some of the predictable pitfalls, and also to make clear the reasons for taking on the challenges. One dean’s comment exactly echoes the original motivation for LFM’s creation, stating, “We’re hungry for leadership. When I moved from faculty to dean, I never had support.”

A growing number of community college educators are now in positions where leadership is an explicit or implicit responsibility. As represented in some of the LFM participant titles, an increasing number of faculty and counselors are becoming directors and coordinators of campus-wide programs. However, without support and guidance, individuals may first learn about what it means to be a leader through encountering pitfalls or obstacles.

LFM aims to give individuals and teams a space to gain and practice skills in a supportive environment with like-minded colleagues to reflect on what it means to be a leader. The input

and feedback collected through the LFM evaluation indicates that participants appreciated the time, structure, and support of the academy experience. They reported gratitude for having substantial time away from campus to work with their team and focus on their project. The two or three days—instead of a one-hour meeting on campus—allowed concentration and continuity that is not available in the daily demands of workload. Three LFM participants articulated this appreciation:

- “LFM created the space and offered support for our team to have deep and meaningful conversations that helped shape up our project work and strategically plan its delivery.”
- “It was nice to look at our project away from home; focusing on the positive was worthwhile, [it] made the negative more palatable.”
- “We need to have intensive periods of time to be able to think together creatively...the collaboration is essential. There are no lone rangers in transformation.”

When participants finished the LFM Academy, they said that they could be more strategic about planning and more intentional about communication. When they propose changes, particularly significant ones, participants indicated they could sympathetically recognize that “people put work into the old model and are afraid of change...[afraid of] losing what they’ve done.”

Along with a sense of the challenges and complexity of change, participants reported that they took away a quiet determination and even optimism. In response to a question about what they had learned about the process of change, one person said “...that change is possible, despite the odds!”

Most importantly, participants indicated they could see and value the roles they can play in the change process. In the words of one participant, “Middle leadership is critical to establishing and maintaining a coherent vision.

At the completion of the third year, more than 150 community college educators have participated in the Leading from the Middle Academy. LFM has raised the visibility and value of supporting development of middle leadership. Participants reported that they gained skills and strategies to lead campus efforts. Yet, the evaluation findings indicate that their views of change are not simplistic, nor unrealistic. They have refined skills for communicating and collaborating in the local setting of their own college culture.

At a time when an increasing number of community colleges are looking toward major structural and cultural shifts, middle leaders across the system have active roles to play in transforming institutions and supporting equity and student success. These evaluation findings indicate that LFM continues to contribute to the development of this critical group of individuals.

Appendix I: LFM Design, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

Design

The LFM Academy design is rooted in principles of effective professional development: it is ongoing over the course of a year, directly connected to work, and is shared with colleagues. The LFM Academy has three interrelated components: face-to-face meetings, webinars, and coaching.

1. Face-to-face academy meetings were held in February, June and October, for two or two and a half days each, providing more than 50 hours of contact.
2. Webinars were scheduled between the face-to-face meetings and were intended to extend the curriculum.
3. Members of the LFM leadership group, experienced middle leaders themselves, were connected to college teams as coaches, meeting by phone or in person to touch base with the team.

Webinars and meetings with LFM coaches were intended to maintain contact with teams between the face-to-face academies. Participant feedback in the first two years indicated that the face-to-face meetings were a strong, useful experience. However responses to the coaching and webinars were uneven; when participants attended they were well regarded, but the logistics of getting a team together for a webinar or coaching meeting was identified as a major obstacle. In 2015, after the first two webinars, LFM experimented with an online asynchronous activity.

The LFM Academy started with the flexible design quality of a prototype: a first iteration constructed to learn from the experience. The LFM leadership team continues to both refine the LFM 1.0 Academy based on participant feedback, and in the spirit of a prototype, experiment in new directions. In 2015, along with LFM Academy 1.0, LFM created an LFM 2.0 series for continuing teams, and organized LFM at City College of San Francisco, focusing on participation of teams within one large college district.

Curriculum

The LFM curriculum presents literature on leadership and the change process that has been chosen from the perspective of professional experiences of Laura Hope (Dean of Instructional Support at Chaffey College), Bob Gabriner (Director of the Education Leadership doctoral program at San Francisco State University) and others in the LFM leadership group.

Curricular topics address issues that participants will encounter work and include:

- Making the Case/Using Evidence

- Understanding and Analyzing Institutional Cultures for Successful Leadership
- Building Teams and Coalitions
- Engaging Resistance
- Using Design Tools (concept mapping, prototyping, case studies and logic models)
- Failing Successfully
- Taking Risks
- Communicating Successful

Pedagogy

LFM pedagogy at the face-to-face academies is interactive and rooted in problem-based learning. College teams work on a college initiative that serves as a laboratory setting for teams to go through the change process. As part of this experience, they are able to examine their local setting, strategize for communication and implementation, and reflect on what they are doing.

During the first face-to-face meeting participants had the opportunity to write and rehearse an ‘elevator speech’ and create a logic model for their initiative. At the last meeting, teams wrote a local case study. In addition, at each face-to-face academy, some of the content is presented through a case study that was written for LFM and focused on issues that are common in the sense that they are both frequent and shared. Products created by the college teams were shared with another team for feedback or presented to the broader audience of participants for discussion.

In the spirit of progressive education, regular opportunities to reflect on the content and experience were built into the schedule. This reflection gave participants a chance to reframe what they were learning in personal terms and provided feedback to the LFM leadership team.

LFM Leadership Team

LFM 2015 CO-DIRECTORS

Robert Gabriner, Director, Educational Leadership Program, San Francisco State University

Laura Hope, Dean, Instructional Support, Chaffey College

LFM LEADERSHIP GROUP

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Barbara McNeice-Stallard, Director of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, Mt San Antonio College

Debra Polak, Dean of Instruction, Mendocino College

Mollie Smith, Director of Occupational and Noncredit Programs, Palomar College

Rebecca Wong, Division Chair and Math Instructor, West Valley College

Leadership Reflections on the LFM Academy 2015

The LFM leadership regularly applies tools and design principles to itself, looking to refine and improve the academy through observation and change and to experiment in new directions. In 2015, LFM offered a 2.0 Academy for continuing teams who participated in the 2014 Academy. Three teams with a total of ten people participated. While participants valued the experience, the scale felt too small to continue. Several of the LFM 2.0 participants have joined the LFM leadership group and will be coaches for 2016 LFM 1.0 Academy.

The activities of coaching and webinars were designed to maintain connection between face-to-face meetings. However, the response was similar to the first two years—uneven. Those who attended them found them useful, but the logistics of getting the team together for either webinars or coaching meetings was identified as an obstacle. Instead of a third webinar, LFM shifted to an asynchronous online activity that participants could do on their own time schedule. This modality will be expanded in 2016. Teams appreciated having coaches with them during the face-to-face meetings, listening and asking questions, so coach assignments will continue, possibly linking coaching meetings between to the content of the asynchronous activities.

In addition to the LFM Academy at Kellogg West that ran from February through October, LFM organized an academy for City College of San Francisco in September 2015, with 40 participants from across the college campuses. The schedule at CCSF was altered to be shorter (one day) sessions delivered more frequently. This academy is still in progress; those who are facilitating the sessions note that the different schedule does not seem to provide the same immersion and continuity.

Appendix II: Participant Reflections on Individual Leadership

At the final academy, participants had the opportunity to respond to reflective questions in a survey. One of the questions was

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF AS A LEADER?

- I am able to listen to differing points of view and hear views that differ from mine with a fair degree of patience. I am able to remain in the gray area of not having all the answers without too much trouble.
- I have learned that I enjoy working as part of a dynamic team. so much of my leadership has been on my own at my campus as SLO Coordinator and with others in the RP group and the statewide Academic Senate. This is the first time I have been with a team at my college trying to make change. We have met great resistance and it has been helpful to have a tribe of sisters with whom to strategize, grieve and creatively plan. It has called on different skills than those I developed as a solo leader and has been a nice change. I am more flexible and resilient. I don't have to carry the project on my own. I have a group to share both the burdens and joys.
- I prefer collaboration because I need the others for their vision and strengths. This workshop also reinforced my sense of capacity as a leader. I have been at collaborative work for a long time and can rely on my instincts and experience to some extent. I also am aware of my tendency to get frustrated when others seem to have "forgotten" issues that I thought we had discussed thoroughly.
- I've learned that my leadership skills are quite developed already. But at the same time, I can stunt my growth with negative feelings. In addition, I've learned some new tools around framing expectations such that they are about improvement, mistakes and iterations. I've already known about giving other people credit, but I haven't had the opportunity to use it yet.
- I have learned to think of myself as a leader to a certain degree. When I first came I thought of myself as just a "doer". I have some clear leadership strategies to use now.
- I think I am a better leader than I give myself credit for. People respond well to my ideas and I could probably be more vocal in the future.
- I currently possess tools that I am able to use in order to lead effectively in a dysfunctional environment.

Appendix III: Participant Reflections on Collaborative Leadership

Another question on the final survey focused on the team experience and collaborative leadership. The question was:

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR TEAM HAS LEARNED ABOUT COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP?

- I believe our team has learned selecting the right mix of people is important. Our team may have been small, but the collaboration between student services and instructional faculty has been powerful. We understand each other roles and contributions to the organization so much more.
- We work well together. We enjoy each other. We each bring very different strengths and angles of vision to the project. We share the tasks, working from each person's strengths.
- That we need to have intensive periods of time to be able to think together creatively. Our sense of humor and playfulness has been essential to buoy our spirits when we experience resistance from others, or have differences of opinion that can get strongly stated. I also know that the collaboration is essential--there are no lone rangers in transformation.
- We each have a different perspective, and bring unique abilities - we are stronger and smarter as a group!
- It's powerful. If you can get the right players in the room together and get them invested in the idea, then more creative insight can happen. For instance, it was fundamental for us to add a student services voice into the mix and then, once the Dean of Student Equity was hired, to embrace her and get her intimately involved in the project. Listening and being in the present moment is important for collaborative work. Sharing the load allows for more risk taking.
- I believe the team has learned that collaborative leadership is beneficial but complex
- That we all are able to support one another as we go through this process/project. We've also been open to continue to "go back to the drawing board with our project"
- I believe the team has learned that we need to frequently go back to the WHY

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