Change Leadership Toolkit

Case Studies:
San Francisco State University
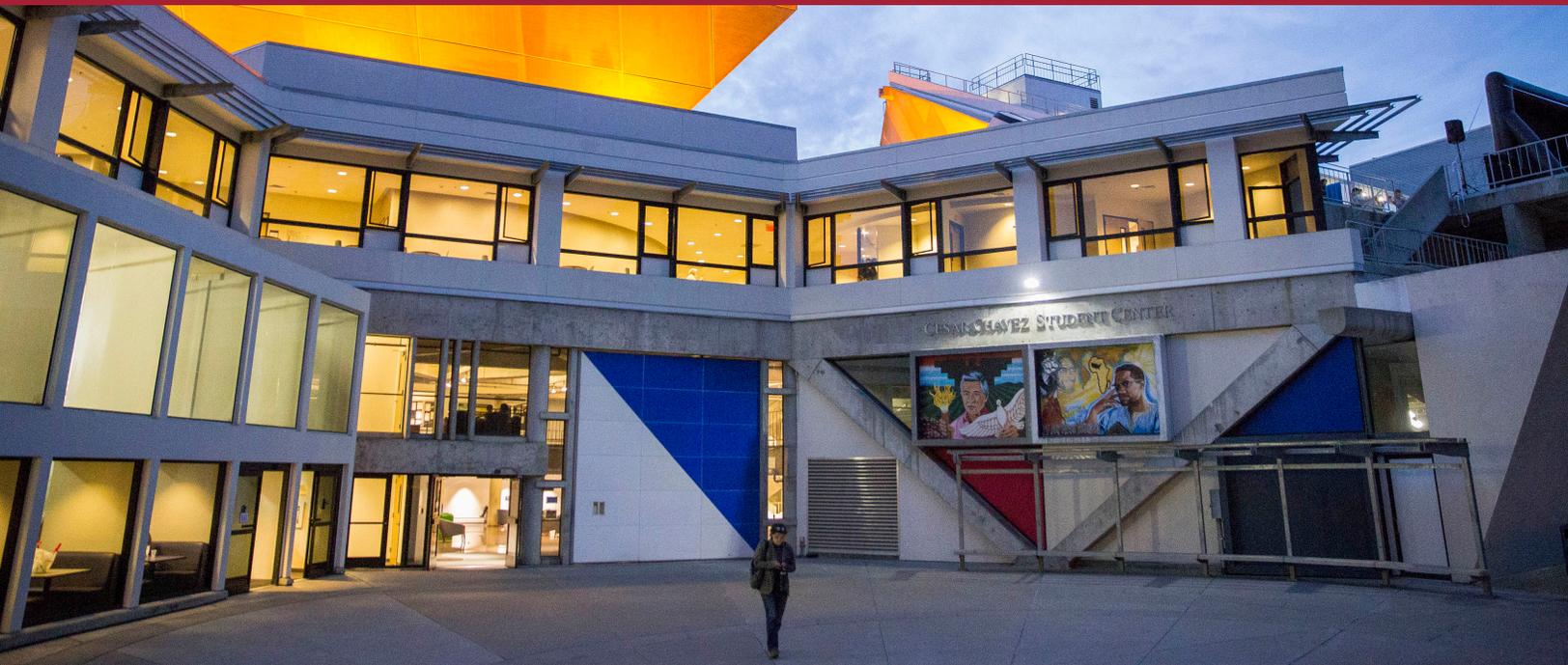
An Addendum to the

Change Leadership Toolkit:
A Guide for Advancing Systemic Change

in Higher Education

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CHANGE LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT
CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

These Case Studies accompany the Change Leadership Toolkit and demonstrate what it looks like in action to use Leader Moves to promote systemic institutional change. Each case highlights a few key Leader Moves and includes an overview of each institution, the leader at the forefront of the change process, and a description of the Leadership Context and Levers used to achieve the change goal. Collectively, these Case Studies showcase the combinations of Leader Moves and Levers that leaders can use to drive change across different types of institutions. It is important to note that given the lengthy time period for changes and keeping the document brief, these are just examples of Moves, Levers and context elements and are not fully inclusive of the leaders' change processes.

In any systemic change project, there are a variety of conditions that may influence the Moves leaders choose to make, the Levers they may use, and the ultimate change that is made. As a result, for these Case Studies, we chose to represent leaders in different roles, institutions with varying characteristics, and various types of change projects in order to reflect this diversity and showcase how the Toolkit is useful in a variety of situations. Visit our Change Leadership Toolkit Case Studies web page to see other examples, **https://pullias.usc.edu/clt-case-studies/**.

Women are Scientists Too: Leader Moves for Advancing STEM Faculty Pipeline

About the Institution

San Francisco State University (SF State) is a public institution that was founded in 1899 and is one of the 23 California State University (CSU) system campuses. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of about 25,046 (fall 2022) and is situated on 142 acres within the city of San Francisco. As of fall 2022, about 20% of undergraduates in STEM majors were students of color with nearly half of them being Latinx/a/o undergraduates, which aligns with SF State's HSI designation and values to promote equity and serve diverse students.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Leader Role(s) and Agency:** Sue Rosser, Provost at San Francisco State University

- **Goals of Change:** Evaluate the impact of service on women faculty and develop systemic approaches to increase the participation, retention, and advancement of tenure-track women in academic STEM careers at SF State.

- **Level/Scope of Change:** STEM departments throughout the institution

- **Institutional Type:** Primarily undergraduate institution (PUI), public comprehensive, HSI and AANAPISI

- **Moves Highlighted:**
  - Create Vision, Expectations and Pacing (V)
  - Develop Strategy and Resources (S)
  - Fostering Diversity (D)
  - Leading People and Teams (T)
  - Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics (P)
  - Communicatre Effectively (C)
  - Prepare for Success Over the Long Term (L)

- **Levers:**
  - **Lever Category 3:** Governanace and power structures
  - **Lever Category 7:** Funding streams and sources

Setting the Stage: About the Project

Over a 3-year period starting in 2014, Sue Rosser, Provost at San Francisco State University, worked with women faculty in STEM to explore their experiences and determine their priorities for career advancement during their time with the university. Preliminary data from SF State STEM departments had revealed a high service burden for tenure-track women faculty. This data was a major impetus for advancing the work in evaluating the impact of service on career advancement of tenure-track women faculty at SF State. As Sue noted:

> *"The focus that we chose for the particular topic that would be studied actually emerged from the faculty. When I came to San Francisco State, there had been interest in issues surrounding women in science and STEM. But I helped start a Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) group with the faculty. I came in 2009 and we started it pretty much right away, so by 2014 they were talking about preparing one of these grants [NSF ADVANCE GRANT] and deciding what would be the focus. The faculty felt that this issue of service would be appropriate since particularly women faculty in STEM and especially women of color in STEM felt that service was not sufficiently evaluated and wasn't defined as well as teaching and research was in the tenure and promotion process and leading to what you might call cultural taxation or an extra burden of service for them."*

As Provost, Sue worked to develop teams that would tackle how to address the evaluation of service and how to account for it appropriately in the tenure and promotion process for women in STEM. She worked with faculty to start the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) group. This beginning work was critical in the ongoing Leader Moves that helped acquire an NSF ADVANCE IT Catalyst grant. The NSF ADVANCE initiative is focused on developing systemic approaches to increase the participation, retention, and advancement of women in academic STEM careers. Sue provided insight into how the NSF grant works in supporting institutional transformation. According to Sue, "the NSF ADVANCE IT Catalyst grant prepares institutions like the CSU and more comprehensive or teaching-oriented institutions to be able to compete successfully for a larger ADVANCE institutional transformation (IT) grant." The grant funds provide resources for institutions to conduct self-assessments and identify opportunities to implement research-backed strategies for addressing gendered issues for STEM faculty. The work that had been done in capturing data around service and taxation on this extra labor for women faculty in STEM, paired with Sue's vision and leadership, was foundational in acquiring an IT Catalyst NSF grant and ultimately transforming how service was evaluated. This Case Study showcases how Sue's Leader Moves varied across different parts of the change process, from pre-phase through grant acquisition to after she transitioned into a new role.[1]

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[1] More information about Sue's prior experiences leading systemic change efforts for women in STEM can be found in Kezar (2009) *Rethinking Leadership in a Complex, Multicultural, and Global Environment: New Concepts and Models for Higher Education*.

Change Leader Moves

Overview of Leader Moves

This Case Study offers a unique insight into how the positional authority and formal power structures of her senior role as Provost provided SF State Provost Sue Rosser with a multi-pronged approach to the Leader Moves. Sue had prior experience with large-scale systemic change projects, as she was co-PI during the first cohort of an NSF ADVANCE institutional transformation (IT) grant when she served as Dean at a prior institution. To begin the change project, Sue leaned on this previous experience and decided to co-create with faculty a vision and expectations for the project goals in alignment with the broader institutional mission (V1, V2, V3). Sue was also intentional about the role she played at different points of the change process, such as the pre-phase of the grant, grant acquisition, and post-grant implementation (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5). Another key part of her strategy was selecting team members with diverse backgrounds and experiences to ensure various voices and perspectives in the change process

were included (D3, D4, D5, D6). In addition to developing and leading the project team, Sue engaged and secured key stakeholders such as high-level administrators and faculty for the project's advisory board who "became champions" for this work early on (T1,T2, T3, T4, T9). Sue used her political savvy to place specific leaders at certain junctures of the change project — for example, faculty presenting in front of faculty when needed — to deliver project updates and garner further support (P1, P2, P5). She was also intentional in how the team communicated to faculty and administrators across campus, taking care to also gather insight and feedback throughout the change process (C2, C5, C8, C9, C10). As she moved through various phases of the project and into grant acquisition, Sue provided pathways for leaders who had engaged in and led aspects of the project to advance into institutional leadership roles, which, in turn, helped sustain the changes generated by the project (L7).

Create Vision, Expectations and Pacing (V) — Focus on V1, V2 and V3

Sue played a key role in activating the Leader Moves around shared vision and goals, outcomes, and timing. From her expertise in leading various systemic change processes throughout her career, she understood the importance of aligning initiatives with institutional vision, as well as broader California State University (CSU) System goals. Given the momentum and prior work that had already taken place before Sue's arrival as Provost at SF State, the acquisition of the grant for the project was instrumental for the pacing of the ADVANCE implementation. The fact that faculty had played a key role in conceiving the project and spearheading the foundational work ensured not only that the faculty union would not object, but also that there was wide-ranging faculty support, since acquisition and implementation of the grant was not seen as a top-down charge. According to Sue, "They [faculty] were aware of [the project], so it was not viewed as some kind of top-down initiative from the Provost," which facilitated the momentum and organization of the project.

Faculty buy-in facilitated Sue's ability to create the vision of how to tackle the problem through use of data and coalesce around solving the issue. It allowed her to inform project vision by asking constituents about project priorities and then aligning that vision with the overall institutional tenure and promotion process (V1). Sue added, "I think that once people decided what they wanted, then I could help them create the vision, since it really was their idea. I facilitated the strategy development, building on our shared vision." She articulated the alignment with CSU-wide priorities and goals (V2) as an important move to help scale these departmentally-based changes to an institution-wide endeavor. Sue shares, "As Provost at SF State (2009—16) and then as special advisor at CSU Chancellor's Office (CO), I could articulate how project priorities connected with SF State and CSU System goals" (V2, V3). Additionally,

given SF State's longstanding history of being a social justice-focused institution, leading a project focused on improving the STEM conditions for women faculty and those from minoritized backgrounds was a straightforward sell to get the project going.

Develop Strategy and Resources — Focus on S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5

As Provost, Sue felt she could best foster strategy and resources by applying for the NSF ADVANCE grant and helping create the team that would execute the grant. Her work centered on developing this approach of bringing in resources, creating the priorities to do the work, and identifying the right people to work on the grant. Because Sue was positioned in a senior-level role that provided influence and authority, the Moves she made to develop a strategy that aligned with not just the institution but the broader System office allowed mobilization and coordination for change (S1, S4). Sue's role in this change process spanned various phases of change, such as the pre-phase of the grant, grant acquisition, and post-grant, and her strategy changed with these different phases. During the grant cycle, she transitioned from Provost on the SF State campus to Special Advisor to the Executive Vice Chancellor at the Chancellor's Office within the CSU System. This transition caused her to shift how she engaged the Leader Moves, from being more hands-on and detail-oriented to taking broader oversight of the grant and its implementation. Sue described how this change influenced her role and the Leader Moves she made:

> "… I was Provost and then I stepped down as Provost just shortly after we got the grant and went to the Chancellor's Office, so I was not then officially on campus as Provost any longer. But, I was still serving as PI on the grant so I was able to informally mentor them [faculty leads] and discuss stuff with them. Of course when we had our leadership team meetings and everything, they [faculty leads] felt free to ask me things, and I knew all of them quite well."

The positioning of key people on the team to carry out this work was a strategy Sue used to amplify the momentum built from faculty buy-in at the inception of the systemic change (S1, S2). The team Sue helped create engaged the broader faculty via data collection through surveys and focus groups to capture the pulse of those involved in the tenure and promotion process. This information was then shared during the lunch breaks for WISE group meetings, larger faculty retreats, and symposia. Creating groups that met regularly to review data was a key part of her strategy and was inspired by her prior change work at Georgia Tech.

Because this SF State project started in some capacity before the grant through previous conversations with WISE and other STEM faculty, trust had been built over a three-year period. After receiving the grant, Sue worked to collaborate and generate buy-in across different leaders on campus through meetings, campus events, and input via surveys (S1, S3, S4, S5). For example, Sue mentioned how "…in terms of sending the people out…and being able to use the different members of the team to communicate with different stakeholders or different groups … those were extremely important [Leader Moves] for creating changes we wanted to make on this particular topic." The development of networks through WISE provided a large group of change agents that could be drawn upon to meet with faculty in other departments and units in order to talk about the problems they had identified with service in the tenure and promotion process and to suggest and obtain support for the need for broader policy changes.

The preexisting surveys and buy-in to address service impact on women in STEM allowed Sue's team to move toward grant acquisition as a strategy to further move the systemic change project along (S2, S5). Sue mentioned that timing was extremely important: the time was right for systemic change to occur given the ongoing efforts to review the service evaluation process for tenure-track women faculty in STEM and the grant acquisition.

Foster Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion — Focus on D3, D4, D5 and D6

Sue was very intentional in applying a DEI lens to situate the work, develop strategies, address cultural issues, and ensure diverse voices and perspectives in the change process. The project itself centered DEI as a catalyst for change since the goal was to understand potential barriers to advancement for women and women of color faculty at SF State, with an emphasis on the role of service in the tenure and promotion process (D6). To inform goals and measure progress, Sue used disaggregated data, pilot data from an Academic Senate survey, as well as data from SF State/CSU fact book, disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity. During the implementation of the grant, faculty surveys were disaggregated not only by gender and race/ethnicity, but also LGBTQIA status (D3). Because the change objective was to increase the participation, retention, and advancement of tenure-track women in academic STEM careers, Sue was determined to examine how service was being evaluated, rewarded or overlooked in the tenure and promotion processes and explore their relationship to disciplinary
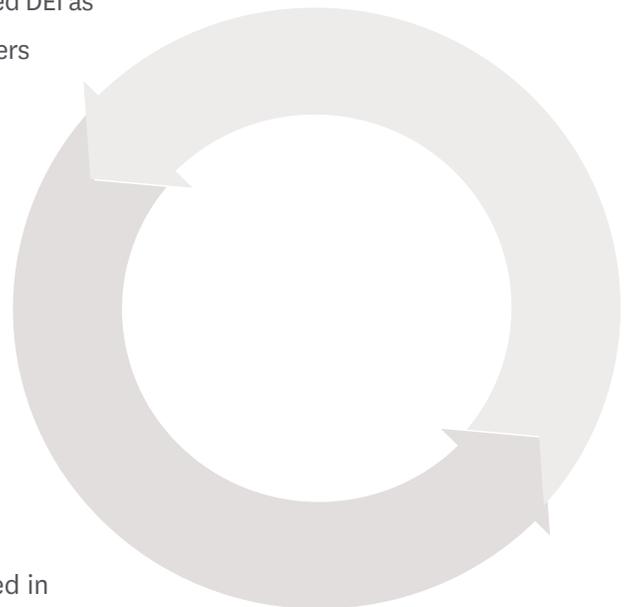
cultures, as well as cultures of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual identity (D4, D6). During the change process, some of the Deans and University Tenure and Promotion Committee members did not agree that service and its assessment in tenure and promotion might differ based on race, gender, and sexual identity, or intersections of these identities. However, committee members were shown survey data in interviews that were part of gathering qualitative data to complement survey insights, which Sue noted were an avenue to "educate" them on unconscious bias (D4, D6).

Once the team was able to secure the NSF ADVANCE grant to continue the ongoing work, Sue was intentional about the creation and maintenance of a diverse team. She mentioned, "I tried to encourage the women of color to be out front with regard to that. It didn't seem appropriate to me that I should do that as a white woman, not to mention being Provost." Out of a team of seven, four were people of color, six identified as women, and two as members of the LGBTQIA community. The team thus represented a wide range of races/ethnicities, sexual orientations, and disciplinary backgrounds; she further shared that "three out of the four Co-PIs were women of color" (D5).

Lead People and Teams (T) — Focus on T1, T2, T3, T4 and T9

As previously mentioned, Sue had experience in developing teams for similar types of systemic change projects. Therefore at SF State "building teams via a representation lens" was a critical Leader Move (T1, T2). A total of four Co-PIs in addition to Sue helped lead the change project. Moves within this category happened in conjunction with others, such as those highlighted above around fostering diversity through building an intentionally-diverse team (T4). Not only was the team one that represented diverse voices and experiences across race, ethnicity, and LGBTQIA identities, they also represented different roles across ranks that carried varying

levels of positional power. Sue shared how making certain campus leader Co-PIs on the grant created a huge opportunity to diversify the team and incentivize engagement, stating "Another opportunity was that the Co-PIs were a group of women faculty who were tenured, senior-level and had been on the campus a long time, so they had a lot of credibility with their colleagues and were also in a variety of pretty powerful positions."

Sue engaged and secured key stakeholders such as administrators and faculty for the project's advisory board who "became champions" for this work early on (T2, T3, T4). Establishing a diverse team allowed the advisory board of deans and key faculty, as well as the WISE group of faculty, to be major stakeholders in the change process (T2, T3, T4).

During the meetings and gatherings related to the NSF ADVANCE project, Sue and her team created an environment using food or receptions that helped people feel valued. "When I was Provost, I was able to invite everybody for lunch and we could have little receptions and stuff that were not paid for by the grant because we made it part of WISE, or we would make it part of some other budget," she said.

Sue further helped to develop and empower effective team leaders and provide opportunities to reward this work (T9) such as encouraging and enabling the Co-PIs to conduct research and publish findings of the systemic change process itself.

Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics — Focus on P1, P2 and P5

Given her leadership position, Sue knew the campus and system-wide politics and policies well, and she used this political savvy as a "major Move" (P1). Sue noted that navigating politics helped maintain momentum of the project by engaging key stakeholders in specific areas. Sue shared:

> *"A major part of our strategy was navigating politics and I know how to do that. In addition, I knew the institutional and system politics, so I could fill people in on that. In terms of navigating politics, I would not be giving proper credit if I didn't mention the importance of the co-PI who is Chair of the Faculty Senate, because she knew exactly what the Faculty were saying, and all that kind of thing. Then another co-PI who became the Interim Dean knew what was going on with the chairs and STEM departments, so that was very important, given the importance of the departmental level."*

As mentioned above, the Senate Faculty Chair was one of the Co-PIs of the grant and was a member of the team who had a pulse on the faculty (P2, P5). Additionally, other team members represented various administrative ranks and could communicate and advocate for projects across different campus settings. Sue also worked intentionally to lift up and empower other leaders on the team, adding "When I went to the Chancellor's office, I think that it forced other people to take more of a leadership role which was probably a good thing" (P6). She leveraged this challenge of her departure from SF State for a position at the CSU Chancellor's Office to elevate the stature of other team leaders and maintain momentum for the change. These Moves nicely illustrate Sue's framing of this systemic change project as really being faculty-driven and led with her support rather than her directive.

> **"I tried to encourage the women of color to be out front with regard to that. It didn't seem appropriate to me that I should do that as a white woman, not to mention being Provost."**
>
> **— Sue Rosser**

Communicate Effectively — Focus on C2, C5, C8, C9 and C10

Sue was very effective in working across stakeholders to gather insight and feedback, while also regularly communicating updates on the project. She shared how the team would delegate tasks or communications based on leaders' positions across campus. As noted above, Sue showcased how the Faculty Senate Chair (one of the Co-PIs) was able to share updates and process on project goals in Faculty Senate meetings. Sue and the team were also intentional in structuring communication in a way that simultaneously delivered information about the project and gathered feedback from stakeholders. The faculty surveys and focus groups, plus the lunch breaks for WISE, retreats, and symposia, generated engagement and excitement while also providing streams of communication across the team and the campus (C2, C5, C8, C9). To update constituents, Sue activated this Move via multiple methods of communication, stating "We took advantage of both our WISE meetings…and then also the Deans' meetings and the external advisory groups. We would try to present updates at various campus events, as well as some national events, and provide feedback on the data analytics from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews with the Deans and so on."

These communication techniques generated buy-in from faculty (C8) and allowed the team to give presentations to Deans' Council, Cabinet, chairs' meetings, Senate, and other groups (C2, C8, C9, C10). Sue shared how since the channels of communication were at "various levels," the team could carefully consider the best way to share information, how to engage with which group, "like who should go to the Black faculty group …the Asian American faculty group, and the Latino group? So we were able to do that consciously" by using these Communication Moves.

Prepare for Success Over the Long Term — Focus on L7

As noted several times throughout this Case Study, Sue transitioned to a different role at the CSU Chancellor's Office soon after the team at SF State acquired the NSF grant. However, during her time at SF State, she was intentional about selecting co-PIs who were tenured, experienced faculty who were well-suited for promotion opportunities and institutional leadership roles (L7). One year into the grant, one co-PI became Interim Dean and eventually permanent Dean, and one co-PI became Senate Chair (L7). As Sue transitioned out of her role, she shifted from Provost to special advisor, using her PI role to connect the work happening at SF State with work happening at the CSU System (L7). Both these examples of restructuring leadership roles or creating support via new roles and alignment of resources highlight Moves that leaders in positions of formal authority and power can make to sustain and achieve change (Kezar, 2014).

Focus On: Leadership Context

Leadership Context involves the set of internal and external influences that shape a leader's change landscape, influence the Moves made, and provide opportunities or challenges to consider when developing a change strategy. At SF State, one significant contextual factor was institutional type. SF State is a public comprehensive university with a diverse population and a strong focus on equity and social justice. Knowing these characteristics of her institution helped Sue think about the best way to promote the project. Sue was able to use Vision Moves (V) to tie the project — promoting equitable changes for women and women of color faculty in STEM — to the institution's mission and values. Relatedly, externalities — specifically SF State's status as a member of the CSU system — shaped Sue's Leadership Context. She again used Vision (V) moves to connect the project to the larger system-wide mission and goals, while also using key Strategy Moves (S) to develop connections to the larger university system. These connections were especially important after Sue moved to a system-level role. Another key aspect of Leadership Context was politics. SF State is a unionized campus with a strong and active faculty. Sue used Moves related to Navigating Politics (P) and Leading People and Teams (T) to emphasize faculty leadership and ownership of the project and circumvent any potential resistance or hesitation from the faculty union.

Leadership Context

- Institutional Type
- Leadership & Governance
- Culture
- Politics
- Human Capital & Capacity
- Physical & Financial Resources
- Externalities

Focus On: Levers

When leaders engage in systemic change efforts, they are faced with many opportunities to amplify change. In the Toolkit, these opportunities are referred to as Levers. A Change Lever is an opportunity that can be leveraged or that can be "pulled upon" or manipulated to advance or accelerate the desired change. In this section, we describe the most prominent examples of Change Levers from Sue's project.

Levers

many leaders making moves

Leader Moves Being Made

SYSTEMIC CHANGE OUTCOMES achieved and sustained over time

LEVER

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Internal and external influences that can shift the context in favorable or unfavorable directions
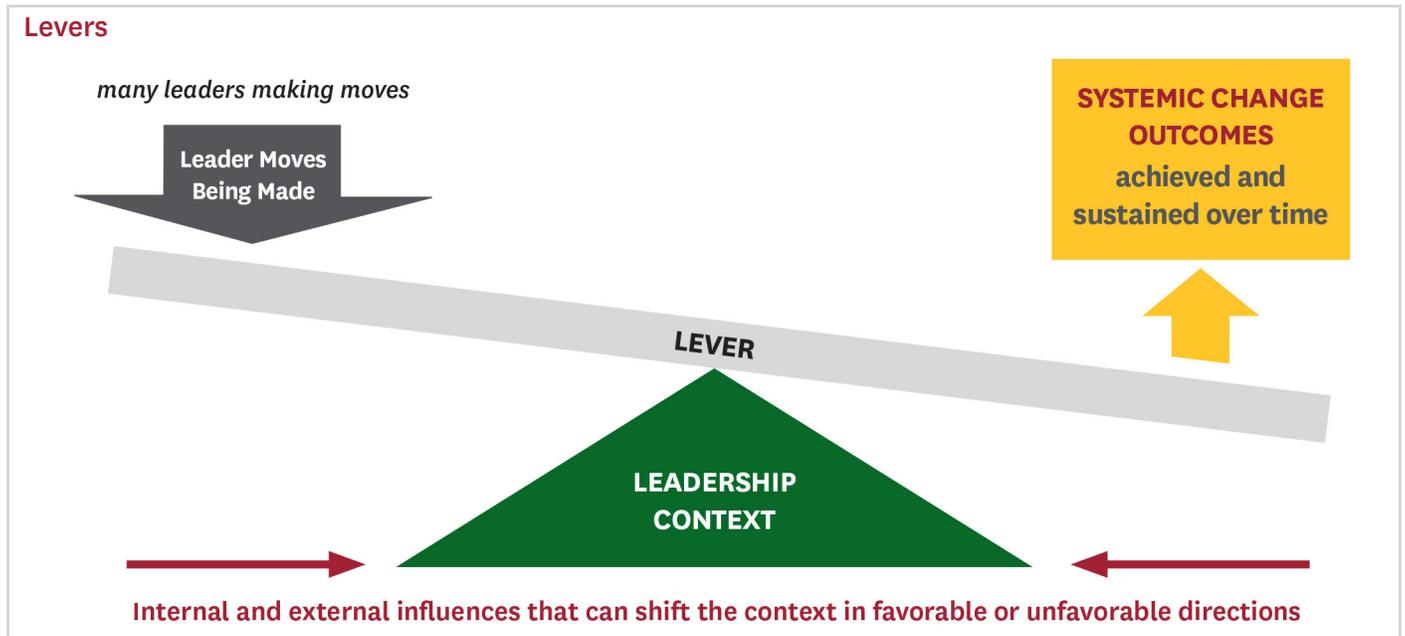
1. **Lever Category 3: Governance and power structures:** Sue and her team leveraged the shared governance structures at SF State — specifically the Academic Senate — in order to promote faculty participation and buy-in. One of the project co-PIs was elected as Chair of the Academic Senate during the project. The team was able to leverage this leadership role to facilitate regular and transparent communication about the project with faculty through these shared governance structures. In addition, Sue was intentional about bringing other key stakeholders with positional power into the project through a variety of mechanisms, noting:

    > *"Given the leadership I described with the chair of the Academic Senate as a Co-PI, with the various Councils and committees, such as the Dean's Council, we set up external advisory groups. Before I stepped down as Provost, I had already set up these advisory groups in my capacity as PI, and so we were able to use those Levers quite well, given our formal leadership positions. Sometimes I see projects where the people who are leading them do not have structural leadership positions in the institution and that can cause difficulty in making change so then things have to be done more informally or by working on convincing the formal leadership or whatever. In this case we actually had both kinds — formal and informal leadership — going on, and so that was helpful."*

2. **Lever Category 7: Funding streams and sources:** As described throughout this Case Study, the goal of evaluating service loads and their impact on the career trajectory of tenure-track women in STEM was strengthened through obtaining an NSF ADVANCE grant. The award of the NSF grant was a significant lever for the buy-in, execution, and sustainability of the systemic change process. Receiving funding from a prestigious entity provided a powerful lever as it focused attention on the project and allowed the team to gather data which might not have been accessible to them without the grant. Sue reiterated that "it was very helpful that we did have the grant; that made a big difference."

Key Takeaways

As a senior-level leader with experience leading systemic change, Sue was well-positioned to lead this project at SF State. When she was not on the ground executing the project, Sue was intentional in positioning certain leaders in roles where they could effectively enact Moves that would advance the project's goals. Additionally, Sue understood that her prior experience leading change was helpful in how she created the strategy for change and helped carry out that strategy. As a more senior leader, she felt her most effective Change Leader Moves were focused on providing oversight and guidance, using mission, vision, grants, resources, and networks in ways that perhaps grassroots leaders may not have been able to access. Sue also provided support in navigating the politics of the project and the institution with her team. A key aspect of this political navigation was ensuring the project was faculty-led and faculty-driven. The presence of a diverse group of experienced and influential faculty members on the project's leadership team helped accomplish this aim. Upon completion of the project, the team was able to secure another grant and keep the momentum for change going.

Sue's Case Study provides leaders, especially those in senior-level roles, with an example of how and when to make key Leader Moves, showcasing how at the beginning a senior-level leader might make more hands-on Moves; in the middle they might step back and let grassroots leaders take charge; and at the end they might re-enter the work more overtly to ensure that the project will be sustained over time.

Reflections to Help You Ignite Change

This Case Study provides an example of how Sue used the Moves outlined in the Change Leadership Toolkit to enact systemic change at her institution. We offer the following questions to get you thinking more deeply about Leadership Context, Leader Moves, and Levers:

→ How did Leadership Context shape Leader Moves in this case?

→ How did this Case Study help you to better understand Levers and how they can help motivate or amplify change?

→ What stands out for you in terms of significant Leader Moves that were made?

→ What influence did the leader role and/or agency have on the project?

→ What did you learn that you can apply to your campus change initiative? How might you use the Toolkit to advance change leadership on your campus?