Change Leadership Toolkit

Case Studies:
University of LaVerne

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/**.

University *of* **La Verne**

Small but Mighty — Creating a New Faculty Handbook at a Liberal Arts College

About the Institution

Situated about 35 miles from Los Angeles, the University of La Verne (ULV) is a private not-for-profit university located in La Verne, California. It serves roughly 7,000 students with over 50 undergraduate programs, more than 20 master's degrees, five doctorates, and six credential programs. ULV is a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) with Title III and Title V federal funding given its enrollment of over 25% students who identify as Hispanic/Latinx/a/o.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Leader Role(s) and Agency:** Faculty leaders Lisa Looney (chair of the Faculty Policies committee) and Sean Bernard (Faculty Senate President)

- **Goals of Change:** Create a new teaching evaluation policy and establish a new Faculty Handbook that clarifies and centralizes all faculty policies institution-wide.

- **Level/Scope of Change:** University-wide

- **Institutional Type:** Small Liberal Arts College, HSI

- **Moves Highlighted:**
  - Create Vision, Expectations and Pacing (V)
  - Foster Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (D)
  - Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics (P)
  - Communicate Effectively (C)
  - Prepare for Success Over the Long Term (L)

- **Levers:**
  - **Lever Category 3:** Governance and Power Structures

Setting the Stage: About the Project

In 2016, as part of a three person team, Lisa Looney and Sean Bernard led the efforts to create a new teaching evaluation policy and a larger set of faculty-related policies within a new **Faculty Handbook**. As chair of the **Faculty Policies Committee (Lisa) and Faculty Senate President (Sean)**, these leaders worked for 2 years with colleagues across the University of LaVerne (ULV) to launch and implement this systemic change project. The project began with the need for a new teaching evaluation policy but quickly evolved as campuswide conversations established that there was a lack of clarity and consistency on many faculty-related policies, not just those related to teaching evaluations. As a result, the project grew to encompass development of a new Faculty Handbook, which the campus had never had before. This Faculty Handbook would clarify and centralize all policies related to faculty at ULV, including evaluation of teaching effectiveness. This Case Study describes the creation of the new Faculty Handbook and teaching evaluation policy and the Leader Moves that Sean and Lisa made to enact these changes at ULV.
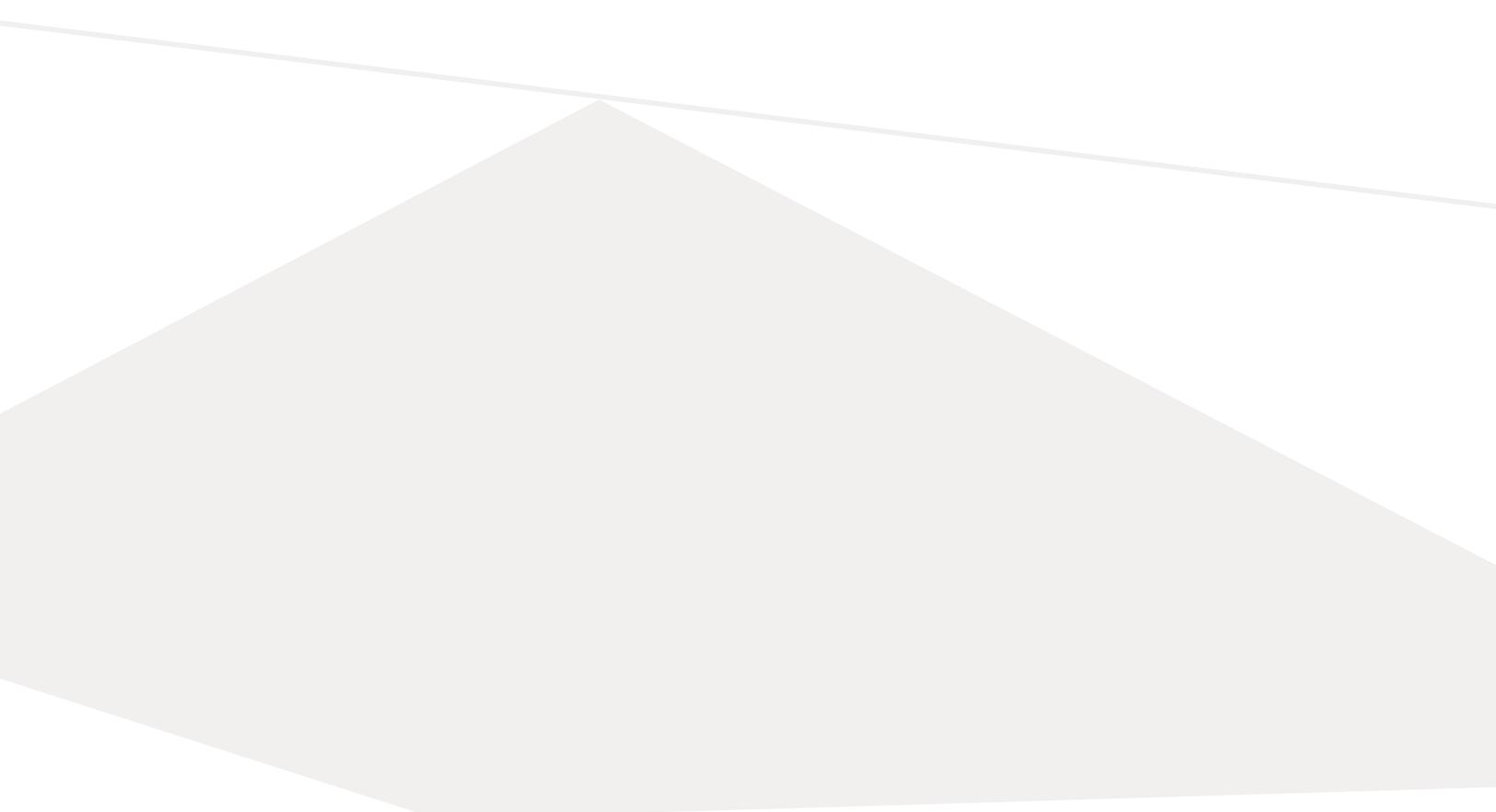
Change Leader Moves

Overview of Leader Moves

The leaders in this case used a variety of the Leader Moves to help ground their systemic change journey. Lisa and Sean began with setting a vision around the creation and implementation of the university's first faculty handbook (V1, V2, V3,V4,V5). This systemic change was multi-pronged as it involved the faculty handbook project and the development and inclusion of a new teaching evaluation policy. Campus data mirrored national trends demonstrating bias toward women and people of color in traditional course evaluations. Lisa, Sean, and their colleagues saw an opportunity to address these biases through a new teaching evaluation policy as a part of the handbook project (D1, D2, D4, D5, D6). Lisa and Sean were intentional in how the team navigated through the channels of approval from key stakeholders to ensure buy-in into the process (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). They worked at communicating effectively at every level of the change process and with different constituents whether administration or faculty (C1, C2, C3, C4, C8). Although the change project evolved, Lisa, Sean, and the team were able to prepare for success over time because they knew how to navigate the feedback process, who to include, and when to bring key players into new iterations of the handbook updates (L1, L2, L5, L10).

> "*One of those significant changes was an emphasis on cultural competency in the new framework.*"
>
> — **Lisa Looney**

Create Vision, Expectations and Pacing (V) — Focus on V1, V2, V3, V4, V5

Within this leader move, Lisa and Sean both noted how they used every sub move (V1-V5) in order to garner support to begin the change process. They used their roles as Faculty Senate President and Faculty Policies Committee Chair to clearly delineate responsibilities as they worked to build the vision for change (V3). They leveraged their understanding of the institutional history and their relationships with stakeholders involved in previous change efforts to develop a shared vision (V1) and communicate that charge broadly across campus (V2).

Lisa and Sean considered how past change efforts to implement a handbook had fallen short in order to establish their goals and prevent similar shortcomings in this new project. Specifically, they worked to balance the tension between institutional culture, which embraced informality and tradition, and the need for systemic change in this area in order to support faculty in a more systematic and equitable way (V5). According to Lisa, this aspect of institutional culture was a challenge for the committee. She noted how they were up against an attitude of "'we've always done it this way' from the people who have been there 15-20 years" which is "why the teaching effectiveness policy was originally voted down" the last time that changes had been proposed. Lisa shared how she led the Faculty Policies Committee "toward reform through the vision of creating clarity in the handbook" since the faculty had "complained of unclear policy." As a result, the leaders and committee articulated the goals, outcomes and mission of the project with areas of faculty policy that were unclear and could be collected and clarified in a handbook. These areas included the evaluation of current promotion and tenure policies," including how teaching was evaluated," which is where the Teaching Effectiveness Evaluation framework was developed as a change.

Similarly, Sean shared how he established a faculty/administrator subcommittee within the Faculty Senate to expand the specific materials faculty turn in as part of promotion and tenure (P&T) process. According to Lisa, the provost shared that the Board of Trustees (BoT) would be voting to approve the Faculty Handbook within a year and that "whatever wasn't in the Handbook would not be voted on by the Board." Lisa used this opportunity to create a sense of urgency and emphasize to faculty the importance of getting their input quickly to ensure that their feedback and comments were included in the final version for the BoT (V4).

Foster Diversity, Equity and Inclusion — Focus on D1, D2, D4, D5, D6

Lisa and Sean also made Moves in fostering diversity. Both spoke about their conscious efforts to emphasize the need to change existing policy given that course evaluations often showed bias toward women and people of color (D4). Lisa shared that "one of those significant changes was an emphasis on cultural competency in the new framework." Sean echoed the same message in raising "awareness [and] intentional addressing of cultural competencies" as a key part of the new framework (D1, D5). Lisa added that it was "[her] responsibility as Chair of the Policies Committee and a faculty leader to represent a diverse array of faculty voices (men, women, faculty of color) in the process of achieving change in the Faculty Handbook" (D2, D5, D6). Sean also reflected on his ability to push forth change and addressed the need for cultural competency. His awareness of his unearned privilege of being a white male, Sean shared, "shaped implicitly" his desire to make these changes (D4, D5). Furthermore, he recognized how systems at play facilitated his engagement with little resistance in comparison to how leaders with minoritized identities might engage with such a project (D6).

Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics — P1, P2, P4, P5, P6

As Chair of the Faculty Policies Committee and Faculty Senate President, Lisa and Sean were able to use their positional power and authority to influence change. Lisa described these Navigating Politics Moves as "what has to happen behind the scenes." She noted that she had frequent and direct access to the Provost and President through her leadership role on the Faculty Policies Committee. Lisa used her political acumen to navigate these power structures (P1). For example, she designated Sean to lead the subcommittee. Given his role as Faculty Senate President, he was well-positioned to mobilize other faculty and gain their buy-in and trust in the handbook development process (P2, P4, P5). Both Lisa and Sean understood how to effectively work across roles (their own as Chair and President), disciplines (communicating across colleges), hierarchies (including the senior leaders named in earlier sections), power structures (the governance process), and institutional culture (one that wasn't fond of change) as ways to navigate the difficult dialogues, negative perceptions, barriers and emerging opportunities for the handbook (P4, P6).

Communicate Effectively — Focus on C1, C2, C3, C4, C8

Communication Moves were foundational and supported all the other Moves that Lisa and Sean made. Sean used his role as Faculty Senate to develop a coherent message about the vision and goals of the Handbook and the new teaching effectiveness framework and communicate that message to his faculty constituency (C1). Sean shares how he "served as 'public face' of the new framework during the first attempt at seeking approval/adoption from faculty."

Because of his role in the Faculty Senate, Sean mentioned that he understood the systems and the channels in place where faculty convene and communicate (C8). He notes, "I think communicating was easy for me because I just knew where to communicate and with whom to communicate and how." Not only was it about where to communicate but being transparent and clear with articulating goals and what Sean mentioned, aligning their messaging with "the larger context with the handbook proposal and then communicating to everyone"(C3, C8). These communication efforts led to transparency in the process. Later, as Sean was establishing the subcommittee on the evaluation policy, he presented early drafts of the new teaching effectiveness framework at institutional bodies such as college meetings, department chairs' meetings, Faculty Senate, Faculty Assembly, and also sought feedback from administrators including deans (C1, C2, C4, C8). Lisa adds how faculty were able to see firsthand how their feedback was integrated into drafts of the handbook. She shared, "It was not just me, others that would communicate on behalf of the committee were able to do that in a way that people felt that they were a part of the process." These regular presentations to faculty colleagues showed them that Lisa had done her due diligence in gathering feedback, integrating it, and then presenting new iterations of handbook (C8). As team leaders, Lisa and Sean were intentional in how and to whom they communicated information about the project.
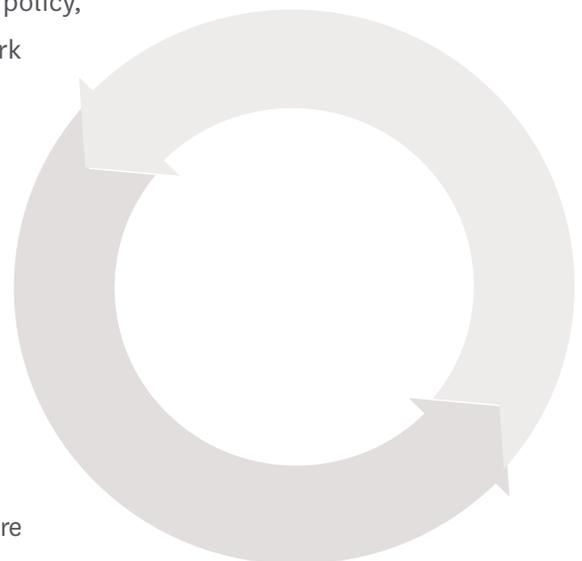
Prepare for Success Over the Long Term — Focus on L1, L2, L5, L10

Lisa frequently informed Policies Committee members about successes in the teaching effectiveness framework and overall Faculty Handbook project. Celebrating these successes became a regular part of discussions with faculty groups while managing "trying not to not be overbearing" in order "to not lose anyone" (L1, L2). Lisa described her role in helping the team prepare for success over the long term:

> "It was definitely part of my general nature as the Chair of the Policies Committee to discuss general Faculty Handbook setbacks in a positive light (as those did occur) with my committee members, always making sure we evaluated what we could learn from the setbacks and encouraging them to move forward. As stated previously, the teaching effectiveness framework was part of a larger project of policy change [through the Faculty Handbook], and that process was long, tedious, and frustrating at times, requiring me to keep momentum going."

Lisa celebrated success and progress and did her best to achieve major milestones in the systemic change project. While the team met their initial deadlines, the Provost decided to extend the time to allow for more policy discussion. Lisa shared that the additional time allowed them a chance to create clarity through the development of new policies and the modification of existing policies and procedures (L5). She added that she thought new policy conversations would continue to become more streamlined as they now knew what to do: "We became reflective in the process; over time as we saw success, we knew the formula, knew who [to] talk to develop the strategy, navigate those politics" (L10).

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 ULV, important elements of Leadership Context included institutional type and culture. As Lisa and Sean considered which Moves to make around Navigating Politics (P) and Communication (C), their small institutional size served as an opportunity for them to get near-universal feedback from other faculty and build buy-in without struggling to work through the large bureaucratic structures or decentralization that exist at many other institutions. The culture at ULV placed a deep value on tradition and an "always done it this way" mentality. This aspect of Leadership Context was challenging for the ULV team, as they faced some pushback from skeptics who had seen prior similar initiatives fail, and it influenced their Moves in the Navigating Politics (P) and Vision (V) categories. In particular, Lisa and Sean focused on creating a shared vision that considered the institutional history of reform and positioned this project as a response to faculty demands for clearer policy instead of a repeat of past efforts.

Leadership Context

- Institutional Type
- Leadership & Governance
- Culture
- Politics
- Human Capital & Capacity
- Physical & Financial Resources
- Externalities
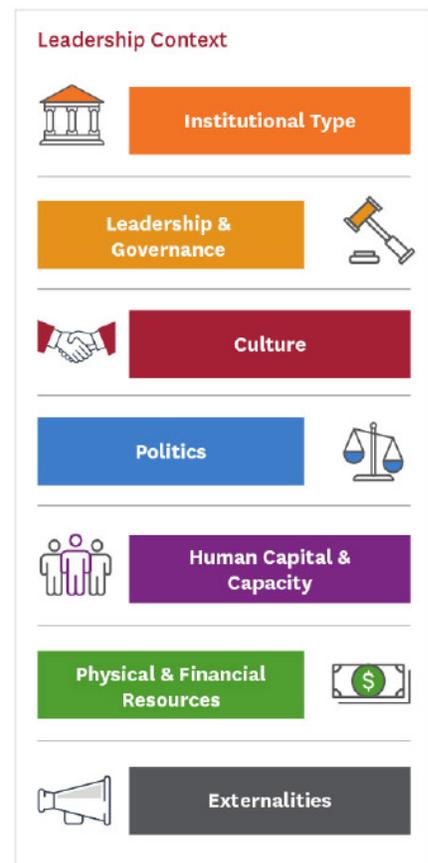
Focus On: Levers

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 Lisa and Sean's project.
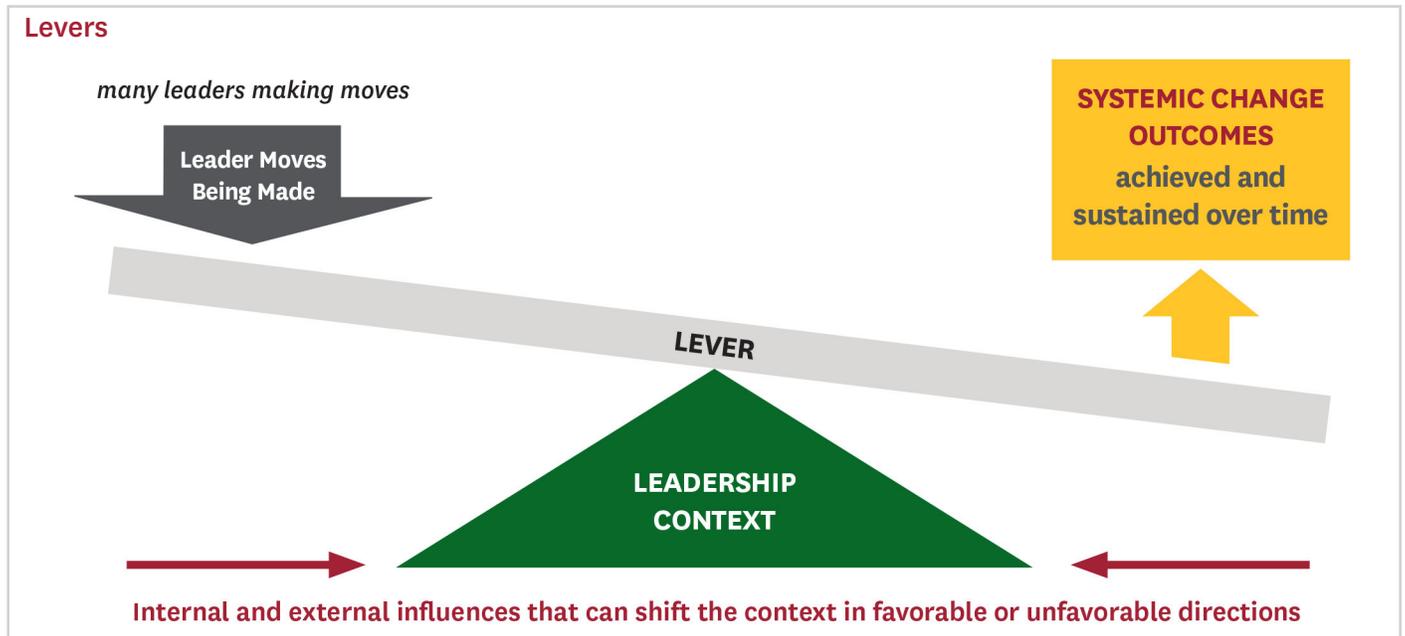
- **Lever Category 3: Governance and power structures**: Previous attempts to amend faculty policies had been led by faculty who were not in positions of power and influence, and those efforts failed. Lisa and Sean leveraged their own positions of power and influence in faculty governance to advance the goals of their change project. As President of the Faculty Senate (Sean) and Chair of a key campus committee and department (Lisa), they were able to use their deep knowledge of faculty governance structures and their relationships with key faculty stakeholders to build trust and gain buy-in for the project. For example, they ensured that different drafts of the handbook were slated for review at Faculty Senate meetings, which provided transparency as well as an opportunity for faculty to weigh in and provide feedback. Their leadership roles within the formal hierarchy also gave them credibility and influence that helped shepherd the change along.

Key Takeaways

This Case Study demonstrates how leaders can use existing projects to drive further changes, even when those changes may have been unsuccessful in prior attempts. By nesting the teaching evaluation policy within the larger Faculty Handbook project, Lisa and Sean were able to capitalize on the structures and processes that were already in place to advance the Handbook project and repurpose them to move the teaching evaluation policy along. Their institutional context — specifically their small size and liberal arts institution type — influenced the Moves they made and how they went about implementing change. For example, the institution's small size meant that the number of faculty members at ULV was relatively small and could come together fairly easily. Lisa and Sean were able to get near-universal faculty input on the teaching evaluation policy as a result. Additionally, the small size meant that the institutional hierarchy was relatively flat — Lisa and Sean had fairly easy access to senior-level leaders, who were also able to contribute meaningfully to the change process. Their attention to context and savvy linking of the teaching evaluation policy with the Faculty Handbook ultimately helped Lisa and Sean accomplish significant systemic change at ULV.

Reflections to Help You Ignite Change

This Case Study provides an example of how Lisa and Sean used the Moves outlined in the Toolkit to enact systemic change at their 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?