



# Scaling Transformative Change

**Guiding Principle for Transformative Leadership:** *Transformative change is scaled when “transformative leadership” is distributed, supported, and rewarded.*

## Transformative Leadership

## Equity and Outcomes

## Strategic Capacity Building

## Policy Change

## Partnerships and Networking

## Data Utilization

## Intentional Communications

## Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to sustaining and scaling change that closes equity gaps and improves student outcomes in the community college education context.

***Be the change that you wish to see in the world.***

Mahatma Gandhi

Be the change. The late Mahatma Gandhi’s prophetic words continue to inspire us. His words suggest change is not about what others do, it is about what we do. Individual action and collective commitment are required to bring about change that matters. Everyone needs to do their part, and there are many parts to play.

We define leadership for transformation, or transformative leadership, as leaders who are acutely aware of the need to improve performance and grow impact for the larger social good. In the educational context, these leaders are passionate about enabling learners to participate fully and successfully in their desired learning activities, to achieve their aspirations to access higher education, and to reach their desired education and career goals. Transformative leaders are staunch advocates for access and equity in outcomes for all students, especially students who have struggled historically to obtain equality in higher education (Bragg, 2014). They realize that if all students are not succeeding, none of us are.

By definition, transformative leaders advocate for change that reaches the many, not just the few. They understand how to use policies, structures and lines of authority within their organizations, often coupled to networks and partnerships, to create a new architecture for the future. Transformative leaders understand how to engage and transcend position, power, and privilege on behalf of those who have few assets to create a more democratic and socially just world for all (Shields, 2010).

**Transformative leaders focus on people and performance simultaneously, using democratic strategies that strive for equitable outcomes for everyone.**

Transformative leaders understand how to inspire and engage others in change processes. They understand that capable change agents exist at all levels of an organization, and that involving them helps build a foundation of commitment and support necessary for change to endure. Spillane (2006) observes that the distributed leadership model actively engages multiple stakeholders in collective action toward a shared vision, executing short- and long-term goals and plans, and engaging actively in strategic implementation. These leaders maximize democratic processes to organize and collaborate to address complexity and resolve conflict. They offer individual and organizational support, including allocating needed human and fiscal resources to incentivize and sustain the change agents who are leading change processes on the ground. Kezar (2014) points out that the shared leadership model, like distributed leadership, is a valuable approach to accomplish change efforts in the college context. It aligns with the shared governance model that is common in community colleges. The skills required in the shared leadership model include (a) empowering others, providing training and support needed, and disseminating information across the organization; (b) providing learning and development opportunities, access to data and information, and opportunities for conversations about key issues for staff and faculty across the organization; and (c) establishing a system of accountability for everyone to ensure the distributed responsibilities are accomplished. Shared leadership models recognize that change is complex, and having more people who are well informed, responsible, and committed to improvement will inspire and enable change to occur for the benefit of everyone in the organization, especially the students.

Both evolutionary and revolutionary change is needed to transform community college education. Some authors emphasize break-through or “disruptive” change (Christiansen, Johnson, & Horn, 2010), and we agree this perspective is important. Transformative leaders understand that change is complex and sometimes requires swift and decisive action, along with relationship building to attain long-term goals. Disruption can jolt people into understanding the need to change but lasting change often requires more than a shock to the system.

## Guiding Principles for Scaling Transformative Change

Partnerships take time to build, but their potential to grow impact is critical to transformative change. This is why transformative leaders focus on people and performance simultaneously, using democratic strategies that strive for equitable outcomes for everyone.

Scaling change that produces unprecedented performance and results requires insight, dedication and persistence. Selflessness, compassion, and advocacy are also critical because they serve as the building blocks that enable individuals to practice transformative leadership; to improve the lives of others is their indelible commitment. Just like the individuals they serve, transformative leaders come from all backgrounds. They represent a diversity of perspectives, and they seek inclusive solutions to troubling issues. Administrators who hold formal leadership appointments can and often do practice transformative leadership, but so can and do faculty, staff, and students who support innovation that results in substantive and equitable results for all learners.

Our definition of transformative leadership also draws on earlier theories of transformational leadership that place a high priority on leaders nurturing followers' motivation to make a difference. Individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation characterize transformational leaders (Burns, 1978). Though we think these qualities are valuable, we don't think they are always enough to bring about transformative change. Transformative leaders understand high levels of support and provide impetus for individual performance but they also understand the ways change can be spread to and through groups of individuals and organizations. Transformative leaders improve the system on many levels by enabling and empowering others to achieve their outcomes. This idea is a driving force behind transformative leadership for improved performance in the community college context.

Transformative change in education almost always impacts instruction, and faculty leadership is critical to ensuring that change is appropriate and beneficial to students' success. Faculty can play a critical role in implementing and sustaining transformative change that impacts students most directly. Just like organizational leaders, instructional leaders should not be overlooked in scaling improved performance. Transformative leaders in the community college context are acutely knowledgeable of and sensitive to the diverse learners they teach and serve. They continuously monitor learners' performance, and they use resources strategically to help them achieve. By using data formally and informally, by nurturing inclusive engagement, and telling their stories and encouraging others to tell their stories, transformative change becomes a reality. Transformative leaders, who work doggedly on behalf of all learners by advocating for access, equity, and outcomes, make a difference.

Illustrating this idea of the relentless pursuit of equity and outcomes, Jahan (2000) described transformative leaders as individuals who "demonstrate a strong commitment in the principles of equality, equity, and empowerment.... [They] use power not as an instrument of domination and exclusion but as an instrument of liberation, inclusion and quality" (p. 3). This perspective envisions leaders as advocates for social justice. Similarly, Anderson (2008) advocates for all learners to be supported in their efforts to achieve educational and career goals. The tandem goals of equity and outcomes are central to improve outcomes for all learners, particularly learners who are historically underserved and marginalized by the higher education system (Bragg, McCambly, & Durham, 2016).

Transformative leaders believe that the only true method to achieve improved outcomes is to work collaboratively with others to ignite and encourage them to share their passion for a more just and equitable world. Shared communications, actions, and attitudes that bring about real, deep, and lasting changes on behalf of all students form the mantra of transformative leaders.

### References

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