

# CASE STUDY A: Department Fantastic

## Leader Practice Scenario (you are persuading your Dean):

You are the Chair/Head of Department Fantastic at a Universal Public University (UPU). Department Fantastic has a pretty good track record in most areas—decent external funding for research, students have quite a good matriculation rate, and while enrollment could be better it's not something that keeps you up at night. While your faculty (mostly) get along you have to admit that there is very little collaboration. The faculty are a bit more like a fleet of different ships all headed in more or less the same direction—but each faculty seems to have their own concerns and their own crew (labs staff, etc.)

One thing you do have that is a shining star in your department is your experiential laboratory. You have worked incredibly hard to make this dream a reality. It's taken years and years of fundraising—which at times has gotten raided during financial crises and set you back in your goals. You just bit your lip and tried to smile your way through those times. There were some uncomfortable days when you had donors all lined up but then came some confusion about whether their support should go to school-wide issues or to the creation of this innovative teaching model. But you got through it all and they came through for you. They saw the brilliance of this new teaching approach and enthusiastically jumped on board. The lab is built now and it's been up and running for almost two years. Now this lab is a required course for all your students and it gives them real hands-on experience. The application of theory from some of their other courses into this practical and applied experience is, in your eyes, invaluable. While there are always some squeaky wheels and there were a couple of bumps in getting things up and running (like some PETA protestors about the animal involvement in some of the lab work), all is operating smoothly now. Mostly you hear back from students that the experience helps them move into their first jobs more smoothly because even if they don't do that kind of work, they understand better what the work in some specialty fields is like. You have heard from some employers of your graduates that the experience seems to set your graduates apart from applicants from other schools where the learning was in theory or not applied. You have even had students from totally outside your College/School apply to take the lab courses because there is a general interest in “knowing where my food comes from”.

You see this approach to teaching and learning as the future of university-based instruction. Sure, it's expensive to offer, but in the big picture it's an investment worth making. It sets the department (and thus the school) apart from others and while a lot of schools have great lab experiences, the one your department offers is truly cutting edge and innovative. Few can boast

of something like the infrastructure you have built. However, your boss, the Dean, is not quite on board. You are going to meet with her/him today and you need to be persuasive because financially times are tough and you have heard that yet another round of budget cuts are imminent. You've just about tapped out your donors, who are also feeling the economic pinch. You need the budget level you have to maintain the lab experience. This is a big idea that is right for these times and you firmly believe that this is a teaching model that can set you apart from "all the other programs out there". If you were the Dean, you'd want every department to have a similar lab experience to really translate science to on-the-ground-applied learning. It would certainly be a benefit to a couple of the smaller departments which are really struggling.

What is your S-P-I-N? Situation Problem (and *implied* need) Implication (and *explicit* need) and

Need Payoff:

## CASE STUDY B:

### The New Director—"Persuadee" Role

You are Dr. ABC. At mid-career, you have established a very good reputation in cultural competence and meaningful partnerships with underserved communities. Your strong talents in writing and publishing have propelled your research career. Eight months ago, you were recruited to be the first *New Institute Director* at the large "Organization" which has a good reputation but a scant presence in the research world around the service or engagement arena. Your charge is to bring together all the disparate and varied activities and help the Organization create a recognized research presence around partnering and serving marginalized populations (they used to call it "charity work"). You moved half-way across the country to take this position, leaving behind Big City, where you grew up, went to school and had been working for years. This is a strange new place—much different than you thought it would be. You are a bit amazed how cities can be so different.

As part of your new responsibilities, you work 25% FTE in *The Center*, run by one of your colleagues. This Center is fully self-funded and provides services (direct services, consulting, etc.) to individuals and groups in need who often have neglected concerns and thus face a lot of challenges. Your previous Center in Big City was well-funded and highly structured with clear

lists of best practices that all the Specialists followed—after all, you were collecting data for important research. Deviating from the decision tree was strongly frowned upon as quality of data was paramount. This new Center presents a bit of a challenge for you: so many groups asking for help and it's more exhausting than you thought it would be. To complicate matters, the Specialists who staff this Center, your new colleagues, don't follow any established best practice guidelines. They weigh the price of every meeting, assessment, or consulting approach and are absolutely mercurial. This trade-off between cost and quality is totally new to you and you don't see how you can choose anything other than quality now: that would be an injustice to community members and organizations who are clearly already very stressed. These other Specialists seem very confident in their penny-pinching approach and not at all bothered by the deviation from “those high falutin” published and established best practice guidelines. Perhaps if you had spent your whole career in a setting like this, you might have the kind of bravado and confidence that would allow you to “shoot from the hip”, but you've only ever been in highly structured, protocol driven and research-based organizations. Working without guidelines is like working without guardrails—and publishing on data that is so inconsistent? Never. Thank goodness it's just 25% of your time!

Much preferred is the 75% of your time that you spend launching the New Institute, a thrilling challenge. With that portion of your time, you do 50% research and 25% senior administration. Part of your job has you giving many talks including a recent address to hundreds of people. It's an exciting opportunity to share your vision of how all the different Centers, Institutes, Projects and community-based activities fall under the same unified umbrella, even if they are literally spread out all over the city. It's rather ironic: lots of great things are happening but little press comes from it. You want to raise that profile and give all this important work the presence it deserves. It might be a challenge because people here are quite unassuming and humble. You wonder if collectively they have confidence issues? You offered to help author a paper on the activities underway but got the rather abrupt feedback that you would be 4<sup>th</sup> author. Given the lack of successfully published research, this sounds more like dreaming-than-actual publishing productivity. You were brought here in part to increase the academic publishing of this center.

Your colleague (Dr. XYZ), has expressed concerns that some feel you take credit for their work in your presentations. That baffles you. Obviously, you are talking globally about the Center and Organization's success as the *New Institute Director*. Of course no single person could do all that work. You are curious if these new colleagues might be rather needy if they require being personally acknowledged every time you get up to talk about the accomplishments of and vision for the *New Institute*? To you that seems rather unprofessional. It's just not how it was done at your last organization.