Inductive Engagement
Professional Acculturation in Student Affairs

Jonathan O’Brien, Ed.D.

Student Development in Higher Education
California State University, Long Beach
jobrien@csulb.edu
Significance for Practitioners

- Know the values and conduct necessary to make wise choices as you establish a reputation in the field
- Learn a vocabulary to engage colleagues on difficult topics related to ethical practice
- Articulate your values clearly in a job search or other professional activities
- Ask critical questions about institutional culture and values
Dispositions

- Grounded in research on teacher education
- Complex repertoire of behaviors that arise from cognitive processes involving one’s values, beliefs, and motives
- Self-regulated rather than involuntary
- Context-dependent, constructed and enacted by the individual to achieve a specific outcome in inter-personal interactions

(Burant, et al., 2007; Diez, 2007; Freeman, 2007; Ritchhart, 2002; Sockett, 2009; Villegas, 2007)
Inductive Engagement

- **Why?**
  - To be an ethical practitioner who adapts to a variety of professional contexts

- **Who:** You; specifically, your dispositions
- **Where:** The culture of your institution
- **What:** A critical incident, e.g., a dilemma
- **How:** Select a strategy
- **Evaluate and repeat**
Your Dispositions

- **Values**
  - Principles you hold in high esteem

- **Motivation**
  - Willingness to act, often driven by your emotional or “gut” reaction and/or external pressures

- **Inclination**
  - Tendency to act or feel in a particular way, based on personal beliefs, attitudes, or values

- **Awareness**
  - Knowledge to identify if a situation is a critical issue that requires some action

(Freeman, 2007; Ritchhart, 2002)
Pair Share

- Find a partner to share these elements from your ethical will:
  - self-discovery process
  - values and commitments to serve others
  - plan to engage in ethical professional practice
  - how you will know you’ve accomplished your plans

- Report back to the group
Group Report

- Action phrases that describe ethically affirmative practices to promote student learning and success

- Some examples
  - I believe all students can learn
  - I advocate for students who lack the cultural capital to navigate higher education
  - I challenge institutional policies that limit assistance to students who are academically underprepared
Where: Institutional Culture

- **Obvious and tangible aspects**
  - People, places, technology, events, slogans, and rituals that you experience/use in practice

- **Less obvious and intangible aspects**
  - Institutional values, mission, and goals that you read on websites and in handbooks

- **Unspoken but highly influential aspects**
  - Unquestioned assumptions, values, traditions, practices that influence how insiders work

(Schein, 1985)
Dispositions require a context in order to function

A formula to explain how context influences an individual’s dispositions:

\[ C \rightarrow (T \rightarrow B) \]

(Freeman, 2007; Splitter, 2010)
Situations when our dispositions conflict with the values and goals of the institution and/or those of our colleagues

Some examples include:
- Granting exceptions to policy
- Dealing with colleagues transparently
- Keeping commitments (deadlines, etc.)
- Using resources appropriately
- Being loyal to supervisor and/or profession
- Hiring family members or close friends
- Reporting data accurately

(Adapted from Janosik, Creamer, & Humphrey, 2004)
Dear Editor,

As a new professional staff member at Loyola Marymount University, it was shocking for me to see First Amendment advocate Larry Flynt's speaking engagement cancelled during First Amendment week here.

Assistant Dean of Students Jonathan O'Brien's assertion that Flynt's "message is not compatible with the University's mission and its Catholic identity" was chilling not only to any lover of free speech and the First Amendment, but also to those who value the Western world's tradition of encouraging a maximum degree of tolerance for the free expression of alternative ideas and viewpoints in academic environments.

This, to me, is the most dangerous kind of thinking of all that can take place on a University — that the University can only accept speakers who are compatible with a certain mission, or with a certain kind of identity — and is also precisely the kind of thinking which the First Amendment seeks to protect us from, even when those who are the custodians of our own academic tradition fail us.

There was a silver lining in this sad story from last week, and that was the Loyolan's excellent coverage of this controversy. Congratulations to the Loyolan for doing an excellent job on diving deeply into this vital and important story, even though its outcome was so very regrettable for the University.

Joseph Mailander
Coordinator of Marketing and Special Projects
LMU Extension
Drivers & Restrainers

- Learn to recognize your motivations and the forces that influence your practice

- *Drivers* are your dispositions
  - Values, motivations, inclinations, awareness

- *Restrainers* are the tension between the institutional culture and your dispositions
  - The tangible artifacts, implicit values, and unspoken assumptions of colleagues
Environmental Scan

- A process to inform your choices and the strategies you use to function at work
- Use your instincts and skills to “read” an institution’s culture, its people, networks, rules, traditions, etc.
- Create “working assumptions” about the institution based on the “data” that you collect
Activity: Environmental Scan

What to look for …

- Demographics
- Mission
- Services Offered
- Physical structure
- Leadership styles
- Interactions

- Personnel structure
- External and internal policy influences
- Trends: past, current, future
- Your “gut” reactions
Environmental Scan

How to do it …

- Observing your environment as an “outsider”
- Reviewing documents, websites, reports
- Asking questions to clarify values, mission

Then …

- Check the accuracy of your working understandings (be tactful with colleagues!)
How: Strategies

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a desired outcome or goal.

Select a strategy that maintains *congruence* between your dispositions and the culture of your institution:
- Assimilation
- Separation
- Integration
- And others ...

(Anderson, Harbour, & Davies, 2007)
What’s Your Strategy?

- **Assimilation**
  - Your values and actions are suppressed in favor of the values of the profession or institution

- **Separation**
  - Your values and actions remain apart from the values of the profession or institution

- **Integration**
  - Your values and actions interact with the values of the profession or institution, influencing each other over time

(Anderson, Harbour, & Davies, 2007)
Accept the Implications

- Your strategy is the means by which your dispositions are put into practice

- Colleagues view you according to the strategies you use and the degree to which your values are congruent with the institution

Own your dispositions and your strategies, they are the essence of your character!
Inductive Engagement Cycle

1. Know and articulate your values, motives, inclinations, and abilities
   ◦ *The ethical will can guide your thinking*

2. Gather data on the institutional culture
   ◦ *Do an environmental scan*

3. Create ongoing, working understandings of the rules that govern the context
   ◦ *Reflect on your interpretations with trusted colleagues and mentors*
5. Assess the drivers and restrainers
   ◦ Recognize the tension between your dispositions and the institutional culture

6. Select a strategy true to your dispositions and compatible with your institution
   ◦ Your dispositions reflect your character

7. Return to step 2
   ◦ Periodically scan the context
   ◦ Continually assess the effectiveness of your strategy
Evaluate the Impact

- Is it right?
- Is it fair?
- Who gets hurt?
- Would you be comfortable if details your actions were made public the media?
- What would you tell your child or young relative to do?
- How does it “smell”?

(Center for Business Ethics, Bentley College)
Dispositions in Context

- Assemble in your issue groups

- Individually reflect
  - How do your dispositions influence your practice?
  - What strategies do you use? How? Why?

- Collectively discuss
  - The context of your case study and/or the quality of your group’s process thus far.
  - How might your dispositions and strategies influence your collaboration with other members?
References


