

Change Leadership Toolkit
Case Studies:
University of Portland



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/>.



Leader Moves for Redesigning STEM Courses through Collaborative Pedagogy

About the Institution

The University of Portland (UP) is an independently-governed Catholic university that serves more than 4,000 students. It has been guided by the Congregation of Holy Cross, a Catholic order of priests and brothers, since its founding in 1901. With more than 40 undergraduate programs and 30 minors, as well as 18 graduate programs, UP features small class settings (12:1 student-faculty ratio). The University of Portland Academic Division consists of a College of Arts and Sciences, and four professional schools in Nursing, Education, Business and Engineering. As of fall 2021, over 40% of undergraduate students self-report as historically underrepresented (based on race and ethnicity).

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Leader Role(s) and Agency:** Stephanie Salmone, Department Chair of Mathematics and Director of the STEM Education and Outreach Center
- **Goals of Change:** To adopt and increase highly effective, evidence-based STEM teaching methods using peer observation through the Redesigning Education For Learning through Evidence and Collaborative Teaching (REFLECT) project.
- **Level/Scope of Change:** STEM educators from multiple departments and divisions of the university
- **Institutional Type:** Private, Catholic, Regional Comprehensive
- **Moves Highlighted:**
 - Sensemaking and Learning (SL)
 - Create Vision, Expectations and Pacing (V)
 - Leading People and Teams (T)
 - Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics (P)
 - Communicate Effectively (C)
- **Levers:**
 - **Lever Category 1:** Campus (system) culture, norms and networks
 - **Lever Category 7:** Funding streams and sources

Setting the Stage: About the Project

This Case Study describes how Stephanie Salmone, Department Chair of Mathematics and Director of the STEM Education and Outreach Center at the University of Portland (UP), led a project called Redesigning Education For Learning through Evidence and Collaborative Teaching (REFLECT). The REFLECT project was funded by an **NSF IUSE: EHR grant** (#1710735) and was designed to increase the use of evidence-based teaching methods in STEM at UP, with a special focus on peer observation and feedback to improve teaching and learning.

In 2016, Stephanie and a team of UP faculty members attended the **WIDER PERSIST** conference at Boise State University on evidence-based instructional practices. This conference inspired the team to begin pushing for change in undergraduate STEM teaching at UP, and ultimately led to creation of the REFLECT project. The project aimed “to promote novel, creative and transformative approaches to generating and using new knowledge about STEM teaching and learning to improve STEM education for undergraduate students.” Stephanie shared there were two goals: “One was around increasing the number of faculty using evidence-based practices in STEM teaching, and we also wanted to create and pilot protocols for peer observation for formative assessment of teaching.” Intervention was two-fold. Faculty participants in the REFLECT program attended a multi-day institute on using evidence-based instructional practices in their classroom, then worked over the summer to add modules using these practices to their courses. Before classes started in the Fall, participants regrouped to discuss their work, were trained on the peer observation protocols, and were placed in observation cohorts of two or three members. In Fall and Spring terms, the faculty observed one another in class and provided feedback for one another using the protocols.

Change Leader Moves



Overview of Leader Moves

To begin to advocate for changes in pedagogy, the REFLECT team collected and analyzed data to learn what kind of teaching was already happening in STEM classrooms at UP (SL1, SL2). In conjunction with this Change Leader Move, Stephanie had intentionally formed her team of six leaders to represent different faculty ranks and departments to ensure there were different voices who could speak to varying stakeholder audiences (T1, T2, T4, T5). With this data and the information that emerged, Stephanie worked with her team to develop a vision and charge as to why redesigning STEM courses was needed (V1, V2, V3, V4). Given her multiple campus leadership roles, Stephanie was strategic in how she engaged her team in order to protect their time, and showcased their insight and contributions as they navigated the political landscape of the University of Portland as a Catholic institution of higher education (P1, P4, P7). Navigating politics also involved developing specific communication strategies tailored to the

different stakeholders involved (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C12). Below we showcase the Leader Moves made by Stephanie and her team toward achieving the goals of the REFLECT project.

Sensemaking and Learning (SL) — Focus on SL1 and SL2

To understand what was happening within STEM classrooms, part of the systemic change process of REFLECT was learning about current pedagogical practices. To gain this understanding, the leadership team conducted an assessment early on in the project. Stephanie shared how they “surveyed in department meetings all the STEM departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and in the Shiley School of Engineering.” Survey questions asked about the use of evidence-based teaching practices and the frequency of peer observation of teaching. This move to gather information and understand the current landscape helped Stephanie and her team develop a plan

to bridge the gap between the skills and knowledge of best practices faculty already had, and the skills and knowledge they would need to enact the vision (SL2). Through the survey results, the team found a low usage rate of evidence-based practices and collaborative teaching. She noted that “people are still lecturing, which aligns to national trends, there was no surprise there.” Gathering this data was all done collaboratively with the team and the faculty in the STEM departments that were surveyed, and the data was shared in various departmental meetings (SL1).

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

Stephanie and her team of change agents developed a vision for why this particular change was needed. Their buy-in strategy consisted of creating a sense of importance and urgency (V4) for more effective teaching in all of the STEM programs on campus. In their communication of the vision, they made connections between the REFLECT efforts and institutional culture and norms. They aligned their efforts with the CACAO (Change, Adopters, Change Agents, and Organization) theory of change in order to gain funding and buy-in. The CACAO model focuses on four interconnected elements needed for successfully implementing a change process — the change itself, adopters of the change, change agents, and the organization. This model helped Stephanie and the team frame the project and understand that faculty, administrative leaders, and external institutional partners (i.e. ASCN) were all “change agents in the organization” (V1,V2).

In addition, Stephanie’s team used the four-square typology of change strategies from Henderson, Beach, and Finkelstein (2011) to help map out their vision for the project (V2, V3). The four categories of change strategies in this model are directed specifically at changes to undergraduate instructional practices in STEM. They include tools for curriculum development and

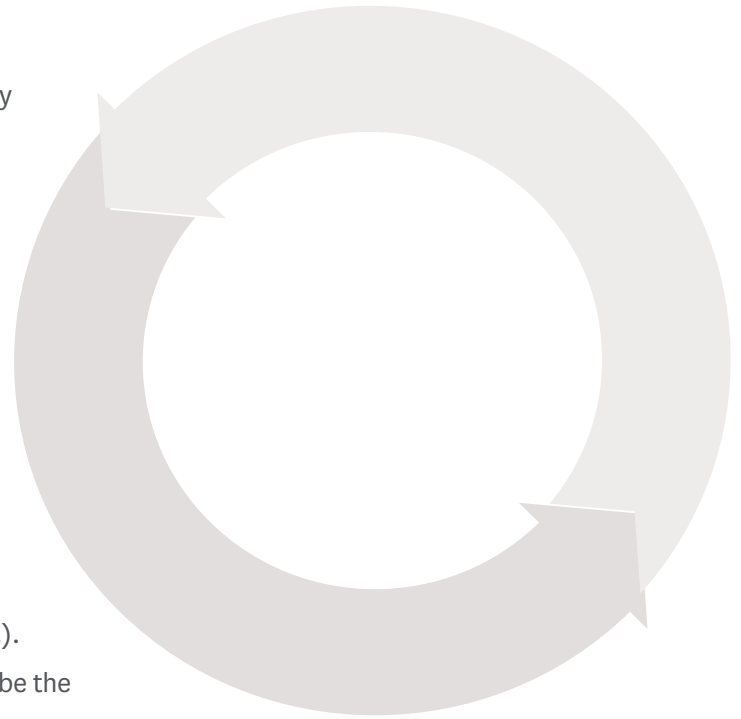
pedagogy, developing reflective teachers, enacting policy and fostering a shared vision. This framing also supported the team in looking at the project at individual, departmental, and systemic or institutional levels in relation to their intended outcomes. Stephanie and the team decided to “address all four of those quadrants in different ways.” The first step was “creating a vision statement for teaching and learning at our institution, we weren’t telling [our faculty participants] anything, we were running a simulation having them work together to co-create a vision. But the vision wasn’t for them individually, it was for STEM learning or for teaching and learning at the University of Portland” (V1,V2). These mechanisms to engage people in the vision-building and creation were foundational in getting the REFLECT project going at the University of Portland.

Leading People and Teams (T) — Focus on T1, T2, T4 and T5

As noted earlier, Stephanie led a team of five other faculty leaders that represented different ranks and disciplines. She had people on her team who were “clued into what’s working for students,” who were eager to support other faculty in moving along the change adoption spectrum (T1, T2). Stephanie underscored the importance of having a diverse (in terms of discipline and gender) leadership team for the project; the team included five female scientists and one male faculty member from the school of education (T2). The STEM faculty were able to provide discipline-specific knowledge, while the education faculty member had expertise in the intersection of technology and the human experience. Stephanie noted that most of her role as the leader of the change project “was really to amplify the voices of the leadership team in the areas where they had expertise” (T4). She also garnered support from members of the University leadership (President, Provost, Deans) by inviting them to participate in parts of the project (T1).

Faculty members on the leadership team were typically charged with communicating about the project to their own departments. However, one of the team members was a pre-tenure faculty in engineering. In this case, Stephanie was concerned about how much to nudge the engineering faculty toward adopting new STEM evidence-based practices in a way that would also protect her pre-tenured faculty leader. She did not want to share information about the project that suggested to engineering faculty that their teaching was ineffective, as the pre-tenure faculty member could get blowback that would negatively impact her chances of getting tenure (T5).

Instead, Stephanie suggested that a biology faculty member be the communications point-person with the engineering department to protect the pre-tenure engineering faculty member. She mentioned, “maybe it’s better if someone else goes to the department, rather than that individual [an untenured engineering faculty]” (T5). Being mindful of these dynamics helped Stephanie create an environment on the team that was safe for risk-taking and alleviated potential consequences of challenging conversations for the engineering faculty member (T5).



Engage in Advocacy and Navigate Politics (P)— Focus on P1, P4 and P7

Within this Leader Moves category, Stephanie shared a number of submoves that she made to advance the REFLECT project. She demonstrated that she recognized her political acumen (P1) by understanding how her roles and positionality could be used to guide faculty in STEM disciplines to change their teaching practices. She shared, “I recognize that I had, in that context, considerable power as a Department Chair and as Director of the STEM Center...I could do this work without risk.” Stephanie was able to navigate the power structures (P1) in a different way than her team members and gain buy-in from diverse key campus stakeholders (P7) because of ways she could show up and engage in her advocacy for change with a sense of safety. She clearly stated:

“The one that was easiest for me of your eight [Change Leader Moves] was navigating the politics and that’s where I think my positionality came in. I could say to our campus leadership, ‘here’s what we’re doing,’ not ‘can we do this?’ ‘Here’s what our plan is’ and ‘here’s how we’re going to make it work.’ I was very aware of the fact that I could do that without risk to my career or without risk of micro-aggression, without risk of repercussions of any kind that would be harmful.”

In recognizing her positional roles and the levels of agency they provided in connection to formal power structures, Stephanie maneuvered the political landscape for this change project effectively across roles, disciplines, hierarchies and the institutional dynamics (P4). The awareness of her positional roles was also something she used with her team and adds that they talked about

“sharing power” as a way to “leverage the knowledge in the room of the people who were advanced practitioners” (P4). Activating this Change Leader Move, working effectively across roles, hierarchies and power structures (P4), goes back to the way Stephanie established and led teams to best engage stakeholders.

Communicate Effectively (P) — Focus on C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8 and C12

All the Change Leader Moves described above involved communicating effectively across stakeholders and happened in conjunction with the Communicate Effectively Move. Sharing the vision of the REFLECT project and its progress was key in achieving the project’s intended outcomes. Stephanie mentioned that “letting people know, even people unassociated but in leadership positions, ‘here’s what’s going on, here’s what we’re trying, here’s how this money is being spent,’ was important for transparency and for garnering buy-in” (C2, C3). In particular, developing a compelling and coherent message about the vision, goals and value of the initiative by having transparent and inclusive conversations about the systemic change project was important because of the culture of STEM disciplines (C1, C2). Stephanie mentioned that “mathematicians don’t generally have training in communication, therefore that’s not something that’s really valued in our field, but it is valued in this work [of learning about teaching]” (C2, C3, C5). As disciplinary scholars, faculty are generally not trained in teaching practices, but at a teaching-focused institution such as UP, faculty are generally interested in learning more about evolving best practices, so framing communication about the effort in this way also helped Stephanie build support.

Stephanie was also attentive to communication strategies within the project leadership team. The six team members shared “power in order to meet the needs of the group and if somebody else [had] expertise” they would find ways to get “them the floor, amplify their voice” (C6, C12). For example, the team leader from the School of Education worked in the area of human-technology intersection. Stephanie added that “when it came time to talk about education and technology or teaching and technology, he was the natural choice” (C1). Similarly, when it came to demonstrating teaching in the classroom, the team looked to one of the team members whose degree is in math education, and who could really speak from the literature and cite evidence in a way that might appeal to scientists. Stephanie and her team engaged in ongoing conversations across stakeholder groups in order to be responsive to potential challenges and establish support from stakeholders across the departments and programs (C2, C6, C8, C12).



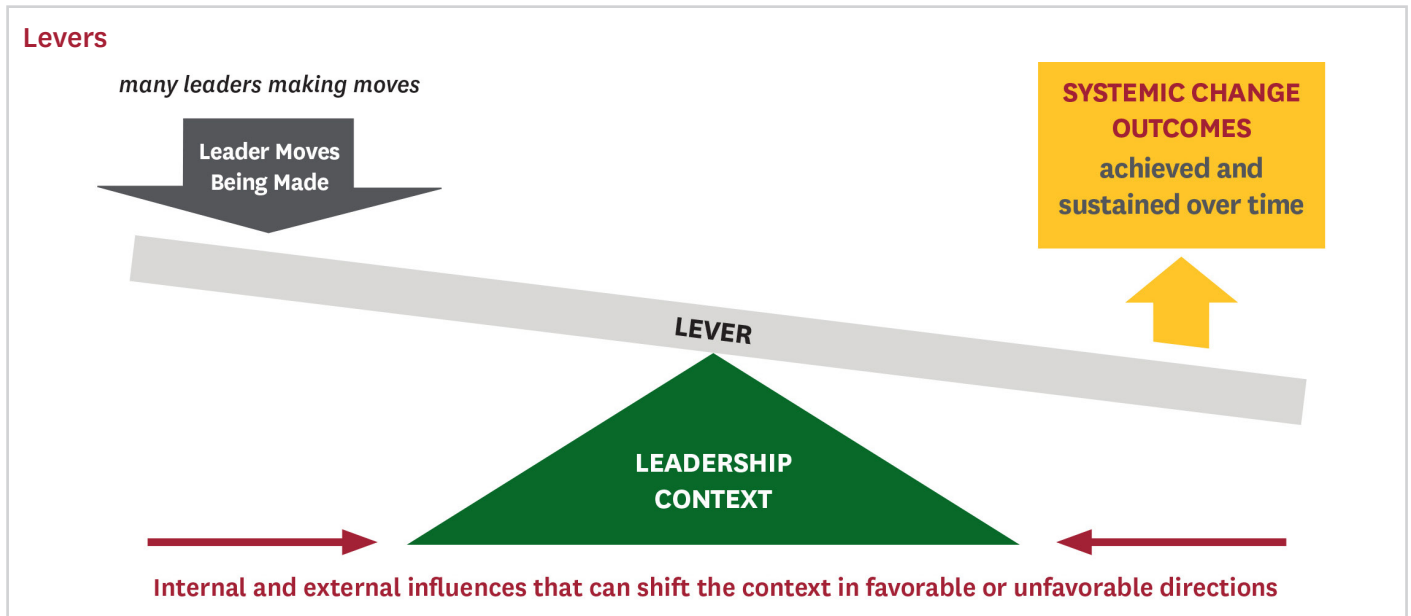
Focus On: Leadership Context

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 University of Portland, one significant contextual factor in the REFLECT project was institutional type. Stephanie shared that UP's status as a Catholic-affiliated institution informed the chain of command in decision-making processes, resulting in what she identified as a hierarchical organization. Relatedly, institutional culture was strongly connected to the Catholic affiliation in that hierarchies and formal chain of command were strongly valued at the institution. This context meant that leaders in positions of formal authority within the organizational structure played a significant role in influence and decision-making and could not be excluded from change processes. As a result, Stephanie was intentional about making Moves in the Navigating Politics (P) category in order to navigate these very hierarchical power structures. She leaned into her own positional power as Department Chair and Director of the STEM Center to connect with, and gain buy-in from, senior leaders in a way that the average faculty member likely could not. She also made Moves in the Leading People and Teams (T) category that took this context into account. Specifically, she invited senior leaders such as the Provost and Deans to participate in different parts of the project, and she used her positional power to advocate for the members of the team with less formal power.

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 Stephanie's project.





- Lever Category 1: Campus (system, state) strategic plan(s), including mission, master plan, diversity plan and other plans:** Stephanie ensured that the Moves she made amplified and aligned with the mission of the institution, a religiously-affiliated comprehensive university. She mentioned, “I’ve done the work to understand the Catholic part of the institution and that ethos, to be able to tie our work to the mission, to tie the work to the strategic plan.” She intentionally aligned the work of REFLECT with the mission, vision and strategic plans of UP, which was a key Lever that helped get other campus stakeholders on board with the project goals.
- Lever Category 7: Funding streams and sources:** The NSF IUSE grant was a major lever to get buy-in for adopting REFLECT. The project required faculty to take time to participate in peer observation and assessment as they implemented student-centered, active learning methods in their classrooms; the grant provided funds for this activity and was thus a major lever for implementing the REFLECT changes.

Key Takeaways

Stephanie and her team engaged in a variety of Leader Moves to advance the REFLECT project. In particular, she utilized Leader Moves around Sensemaking and Learning (SL), Communication (C), Creating Vision (V), developing the Team (T), and Navigating Politics (P) at the institution. These Moves aligned with Levers Stephanie used to maximize the impact of the change process, such as alignment with mission of the institution and altering rewards structures to promote wider engagement. The institution’s Catholic affiliation and affinity for hierarchical, top-down leadership processes were a key aspect of Leadership Context that Stephanie considered as she made Moves. Ultimately, Stephanie noted the project was “successful” and resulted in increasing the number of faculty using evidence-based practices in STEM teaching.

Reflections to Help You Ignite Change

This Case Study provides an example of how Stephanie 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?



