Organizational Change From the "Inside":
A Study of Department and Faculty
Sensemaking

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During the past two decades, leaders of higher education in the United States have identified the need to make significant changes in our universities and colleges. These changes include a renewed emphasis on undergraduate education (e.g., Bok, 1992), a reexamination of faculty priorities (e.g., Lynton and Elman, 1987; Boyer, 1990), and a transformation in the relationship of higher education and its diverse publics (e.g., Lynton and Elman, 1987; Enarson, 1989; Schuh, 1986; Boyer, 1990; Bok, 1992; Magrath, 1993). Prefacing these calls for change is a simple question with a complex answer: How do universities change? Answers to this question depend, in part, on how we look at the university.

We can look at how organizations change from two contrasting perspectives -- an "outside-in" perspective (the prevailing view) and its alternative "the view from the inside" (which I present in this paper). From the "outside-in" perspective, we might frame organizational change as two broad activities: initiation and implementation. According to Rogers (1995), initiation activities include information gathering, conceptualizing, and planning for the adoption of an innovation or change initiative. Implementation activities consists of the events, actions, and decisions involved in putting the innovation or change into use. Using this perspective, we might respond to the above question by focusing on what led to the adoption of a change initiative or innovation, how this innovation was adapted to fit the institution, and look for evidence that the innovation had or had not become an ongoing element in the organization's activities.
The "outside-in" view often misses the complexity of the implementation process. When the control of and responsibility for the change process shifts from the initiator (the administrator) to the implementer (the faculty), the initiator typically loses sight of how organizational members implement the innovation. This shift is, of course, complicated by the unique structure of higher education institutions where faculty authority may supersede that of administrators (Clark, 1987), where institutional and departmental goals are often diverse and ambiguous (Birnbaum, 1991), and where departments act as loosely-coupled units to preserve their identity (Weick, 1976). Consequently, administrators (often the initiators) are not likely to know whether and how faculty members and departments are adapting, redefining, restructuring, ignoring, or resisting the changes that they, perhaps with the support of faculty governance committees, initiated. As Birnbaum (1991) writes, university administrators "often see only the inputs and the outputs and then have to make plausible (but often untestable) inferences about the relationships between them" (p. 38).

Another view, and one less developed in studies of higher education policy and practice where the outside-in perspective remains prominent, is a perspective of organization change from the "inside" -- though by "inside," we refer to more than the analysis of internal political or leadership dynamics. Some organizational scholars recognize the need to go "inside" even more deeply -- to examine how people in organizations experience and make sense of change; they are concerned with the interpretive and emotional dimensions of change, viewing change as personal inasmuch as it is organizational and professional. For example, Eveland (1986) wrote that to understand how change occurs we must examine how people think about, understand, and feel about change relative to their lives and interests, and how their thoughts and feelings lead to human action. Fullan (1991) stated that the lack of understanding of how people actually experience change is at the heart of
educational innovations' failures. This inside perspective is one means for capturing Birnbaum's (1991) "plausible (but often untestable) inferences" made about the implementation of an innovation in colleges and universities.

Underlying the inside perspectives is the view that change is a process of social construction; I suggest that it is also a process of personal (and interpersonal) construction (Neumann and Peterson, 1997). Social construction is a view of the world as created through human interaction, whereby social reality is created rather than discovered (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Applied to organizations and related settings, social construction posits that organizational members actively create, or enact, the realities they inhabit (see for example Daft and Weick, 1984; Isabella, 1990; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; and Neumann, 1995). From a social constructivist perspective, we are concerned with the words and actions of persons initiating or responding to changes, and the socially shared meanings they construct through the use of such symbols. From a personal constructivist perspective, we are concerned with individuals' learning, shared or not -- how they make sense of change, and how it relates to their understandings of themselves as professionals and persons, often with unique aspirations.

Using the "inside" perspective, then, we might answer the question of how universities change by focusing on how the change is experienced by those charged with its implementation and how they respond or anticipate responding to the change. This study examines a major academic change (initiated by university administrators) from "inside" the work and lives of those people expected to enact it (departments and professors). The major academic change I studied is labeled "the outreach initiative" and this initiative, led by university administrators, sought to encourage faculty members to extend their work to audiences outside the university as part of their scholarship and regular responsibilities by making outreach an important part of each department’s mission and the institution’s mission. This paper,
which reports on the study, begins with an outside-in perspective by tracing an institution's adoption of the change. It then moves to the "view from the inside" by examining selected experiences and views of those expected to enact the change. Thus, it looks at change both relative to intent (the outside-in view) and realization (the "view from inside").

Design and Method

I used qualitative research methods and adopted an interpretive approach to develop three interrelated case studies portraying the introduction of outreach at Central State University\(^1\). Two of the cases describe the two focal departments: the Disciplinary Program and the Professional Department. The two academic departments are located in the same college (i.e., the over-arching organizational unit), but they vary in their pre-initiative orientation to outreach activities: The Disciplinary Program does not have a history of engaging in outreach activities whereas the Professional Department has a history of engaging in outreach-like activities. Case data were drawn from single 90-minute interviews or two one-hour interviews with seven Disciplinary Program professors and eight Professional Department professors (department chairs included); professors were selected to represent diverse interests in academic work (teaching, research, outreach) and diverse career stages (assistant, associate, and full professors). The third case study, and the first one discussed, drew on institutional documents and personal interviews with seven Outreach Committee members (professors and administrators) to portray the historical/political context of the outreach initiative at Central State University (CSU).

\(^1\) Central State University and all other names of people, places, committees, and reports are pseudonyms.
Data analysis was based on a format suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), using start-up lists of codes which were developed using a grounded approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). After coding the data with these start-up codes, a second set of more abstract codes encompassing several of the first order codes was developed. Next, recoded data was grouped into concepts or themes. Finally, these themes and their descriptive data were sorted using matrices that assembled data from the cases in a standard format. I then looked across the matrices for common themes and themes of difference. These themes focused primarily on the sense study participants made of the outreach initiative and on how they did so.

The remainder of this paper presents three case studies -- the Outreach Initiative, the Disciplinary Program, and the Professional Department -- followed by conclusions and implications drawn from the case studies.

The Outreach Initiative

The outreach initiative, the change of concern in this study, at Central State University is a set of strategic efforts aimed at strengthening the University's extension and application of knowledge to the needs of society. The outreach initiative sought to encourage faculty members to better appreciate the scholarship potential of working with nontraditional constituents (e.g., community groups, neighborhoods, professional organizations) and, ultimately, to encourage more academic departments and faculty members to engage in outreach activities.

Viewed from an historic perspective, this outreach initiative has been incubating for about 20 years. It began as a review of continuing education in the early 1970s and gradually, though not consistently, evolved under the tutelage of at least four university administrators. Perhaps the earliest administrative action linked to the current outreach initiative was the convening of the Continuing Education
Committee appointed by CSU's president in the early 1970s. This committee's report, the Continuing Education Report, made recommendations that primarily focused on modifying and expanding administrative activities and institutional structures to increase continuing education opportunities at Central State. The immediate impact -- that is, in the 1970s -- of the report was minimal. It the mid-1980s, however, the then-chief Academic Officer implemented recommendations made by the Continuing Education Committee. His actions focused on restructuring the administration of continuing education such that colleges, departments, and schools rather than a separate unit at CSU was responsible for continuing education.

The genesis of the current outreach initiative began in the late 1980s with the creation of a new administrative position -- the Chief Outreach Officer. The Chief Outreach Officer, Dr. Burns, assumed control of an administrative effort to redefine and reposition continuing education and called this concept "outreach." Supporting the Chief Outreach Officer was a newly created Outreach Office staffed by small group of administrators who, along with and under the direction of the Outreach Officer, recommended to CSU's chief academic officer changes in university policies and procedures to enhance the campus outreach mission.

With an administrative structure in place to support the outreach initiative, Dr. Burns began to diffuse the outreach initiative into the academic domain (versus the administrative domain). Dr. Burns and Dr. Heaton, the Chief Academic Officer, chose to link their administrative efforts to the academic domain of the university through a university committee. This committee -- the Outreach Committee -- was comprised of twenty committee members, selected by Dr. Heaton and Dr. Burns, a little more than half of whom were senior faculty members and the rest of whom were college or university administrators. Dr. Heaton charged the committee with developing and disseminating a report that would articulate a conceptual foundation for outreach and that would include recommendations for further strengthening university outreach.
The Outreach Committee met for over eighteen months during the early-to-mid-1990s. During the first ten months that the committee members met they read and discussed documents pertaining to higher education organization, scholarship and outreach; interviewed campus faculty and academic staff about the current status of outreach at CSU, and the potential value and vision of outreach at CSU; reviewed similar outreach-related efforts at other universities; and interviewed approximately 100 key constituents representing private industry, public agencies, community organizations, and educational institutions across the state about their organizations, communities, and regions and how CSU could assist them in the future. Committee members spent the next six to eight months writing, reviewing, and editing a final report -- the Outreach Report. Upon completing the report, the Outreach Committee disseminated it to university administrators (e.g., the president) and to the university community (e.g., governance bodies, department chairs, faculty, academic staff, students) for discussion and possible action.

The Outreach Committee formalized, more or less, the outreach initiative through the Outreach Report. The report, then, became a tool for introducing the outreach initiative to the larger university community. The Outreach Report consists of two parts. The first part of the report embodies a detailed discussion of the university's definition of outreach. The second part consists of nearly twenty recommendations for strengthening outreach at Central State University. Faculty were the main audience targeted in the report. Here, I review the definition of outreach and a key recommendation that calls for changing departmental reward structures.

The Outreach Report's Definition of Outreach

The Outreach Report included what its authors called "the intellectual foundation of outreach" (Outreach Report, 1993). The report defines outreach as a form
of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service. **Outreach** consists of generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences consistent with university and unit missions. According to this report, the new definition sets outreach apart from traditional perspectives of extension and service. It does so by identifying outreach as scholarship, outreach as a cross-cutting activity, outreach as a direct benefit to external audiences, and outreach as a university and unit mission.

The most emphasized aspect of the outreach definition is the focus on outreach as scholarship. The Outreach Committee stated that for outreach to become valued in ways similar to research and teaching, particularly in promotion and tenure decisions, faculty would need to see it as a form of scholarship and not as a substitute for public service. Thus the report states that outreach, like research and teaching, is a scholarly activity consisting of the generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving of knowledge. In addition, by defining outreach as an activity that must be compatible with university and unit (i.e., department) missions\(^2\) the committee hoped that departments would address outreach as a primary function, not as a minor or ancillary function or a function recognized in rhetoric but minimized in practice.

Committee members crafted a definition of outreach that, by virtue of outreach as represented by scholarship, as consistent with research, teaching and service (and not as a replacement for service), and as a primary function of department missions, would hopefully help faculty interpret outreach as compatible with their work lives. In this way, presumably, faculty members would be more likely to adopt the definition of outreach and, thus, the outreach initiative.

\(^2\) At Central State University, each department is expected to develop its own mission statement -- which must be compatible with the mission statement of the university. Departments are encouraged to develop their own mission statements to reflect the values and goals of their disciplinary affiliation.
Recommendation: Changing Departmental Reward Structures

The recommendation with the greatest potential impact on departments, and, therefore, on faculty members, called for members of academic departments to develop guidelines and criteria that clearly value outreach when making merit, tenure and promotion decisions. The report stated that the valuing and rewarding of faculty participation in outreach is the centerpiece for advancing university outreach at CSU. The report acknowledged that some faculty question the value of outreach and consider it to have limited scholarly value. The report also stated that outreach is often rejected as a legitimate activity when making tenure decisions for junior faculty members. The report argued these points, saying outreach is a scholarly activity and, therefore, it can and should serve as a way for junior faculty to build a scholarly foundation.

To address these concerns, the report suggested that department faculty and academic staff come together to discuss and create a shared vision and strategy for satisfying the outreach obligation at the department level. According to the report, an outgrowth of these discussions would be the establishment of guidelines regarding the role and value of outreach in the faculty evaluation and review process.

To summarize, the outreach initiative began as a series of administrative decisions designed to make outreach the responsibility of all academic units and not any one unit (for example, outreach would not be the responsibility solely of a unit for continuing education or the domain of the extension unit on campus). Most of the early activities associated with the outreach initiative focused on changes to or the addition of administrative jobs, offices, reporting structures, and responsibilities. The Outreach Committee facilitated the transition of outreach from the administrative domain to the academic domain. They did so by attempting to define and adapt outreach so that it would fit with the culture of the academy. Their vision of what
outreach could be is described in the *Outreach Report*.

In many ways, the Outreach Committee modeled "good" organizational change practices by involving the recipient or the implementer -- in this case, faculty members -- in the defining and shaping of the innovation. However, it is not clear if this careful planning of the outreach change initiative has or will result in the implementation of the outreach initiative by academic departments and faculty members. What follows is an analysis of how faculty members in two departments -- the Disciplinary Program and the Professional Department -- made sense of the university outreach initiative; how they experienced it and how the responded or plan to respond to it. Their responses will tell us whether or not the university outreach initiative is being implemented in these departments, and perhaps why this is not happening.

The Disciplinary Program

The Disciplinary Program is one of several programs in the Academic Department. The other programs are professional programs. Interviews with seven faculty members in the Disciplinary Program are the basis for the discussions and descriptions in this case study. All seven faculty members affiliate with the same discipline. Using descriptors of academic fields developed by Biglan (1973), I describe the Disciplinary Program as (1) representing more than one paradigm; that is, not all members of the field subscribe to the same body of theory, (2) more concerned with knowledge generation than with the practical application of knowledge, and (3) focused on life systems (e.g., plants, people, microorganisms) and not with nonlife systems (e.g., engineering, computers). The Academic Department has about the same number of faculty positions -- about 30 -- as it did ten years ago. Almost half of the faculty members are full professors, and the remainder are assistant and associate
professors. Nearly one-half of the faculty members in the Academic Department have primary appointments in the Disciplinary Program.

Faculty responses to the university outreach initiative are the focus of this study. These responses shed light on what can be viewed as the implementation phase of an organizational change model. The implementation phase is a trial period of sensemaking when faculty members "try-on" outreach to see how, or if, it fits in their lives. I explain faculty members experiences with outreach in three steps: Clarifying, contextualizing, and deciding. These steps are not necessarily time ordered. However, for organizational purposes, I retain this order to enhance clarity of presentation.

Clarifying the Outreach Initiative

As faculty members come in contact with the university outreach initiative they attempt to clarify both its content (especially the definition of outreach) and purpose.

**Content.** Most faculty members in the Disciplinary Program found out about the university outreach initiative "in dribs and drabs," from faculty and student newspapers, speeches by high ranking administrators, university committees, and "pieces of paper that come across my desk." Six of the seven faculty members say they looked at the Outreach Report for information about outreach -- and several quickly located copies of the report on their desk during our interview.

These various information sources are helpful in acquainting faculty members

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3 The three stages -- clarifying, contextualizing, and deciding -- emerged from faculty responses. **Clarifying** activities include how faculty members seek or discover information about the initiative and how they personally define it. **Contextualizing** involves faculty members placing outreach alongside their other activities and responsibilities, the department's and the discipline's mission, and, within the reward system. **Deciding** covers how faculty members anticipate the department will respond and how they personally will respond to the university outreach initiative.
with the university outreach initiative, but faculty members still find the outreach initiative to be ambiguous. Faculty members say that university administrators have not defined or communicated clear and consistent outreach expectations to the faculty. Professor Erdmann does not know what administrators are looking for because, "I don't think it's ever been fully announced or defined what the university really means by outreach." Professor Fried says the Outreach Report's definition of outreach "...can present itself in such a myriad number of ways and forms. Where does it begin and end? You can make of it what you like." The ambiguity of the definition is a problem according to Professor Brown: "One of our problems is that we've never... had a common understanding in this faculty, in this department, about what outreach is."

To reduce this ambiguity faculty members in the department formed a committee to investigate the various ways university administrators use the term outreach, they discussed outreach at a faculty retreat, and one faculty members sent memos to his colleagues where he asked "whether or not we are being appropriately mindful of the people we are meant to be serving. And heavy in that question is the whole issue of outreach."

How did faculty members in the Disciplinary Program define outreach? Consistent with the Outreach Report's definition, each faculty member defined outreach as connecting university/faculty activities or knowledge with clients or community members external to the university -- an indication of a direct benefit to external audiences. Professor Alvarado expresses this understanding by saying, "I can see that outreach is any activity that has a direct impact on the individuals or organizations outside the university." In addition, and again consistent with the Outreach Report, most faculty define outreach as a cross-cutting activity. For example, Professor Brown describes outreach as "...cross-cutting teaching, research, and service, so that you can do non-outreach teaching and outreach teaching, and etc."

In contrast to what the Outreach Report called for, faculty members did not
define outreach as a primary mission of their department or as a scholarly activity distinct from service and extension. For example, Professor Erdmann says that he “doubts that the department collectively is going to assert that this [outreach] is a primary mission for all of us.” Likewise, Professor Glass doubts outreach will ever have a “focus equal to teaching and research.” Furthermore, most faculty members in the Disciplinary Program did not set outreach apart from traditional perspectives of service and extension. For example, Professor Brown says, "I don't know, we used to call it service, and that term gets mixed up with outreach these days." And Professor Glass sees outreach as what the “cooperative extension service does.” In addition, faculty members did not use the word “scholarship” when defining outreach and they did not associate outreach with the generation of knowledge -- one of the key attributes of scholarship identified in the Outreach Report.

**Motive.** In addition to finding information about the outreach initiative -- and particularly the definition of outreach -- ambiguous, faculty members in the Disciplinary Program expressed doubts about university administrators’ reasons for and support of the outreach initiative. Faculty members suggest that the motives or reasons for administrators introducing the university outreach initiative to the organization are primarily political -- “a response to attacks on higher education across the county,” a desire for the university “to improve it’s image in the state,” and as a means to “garner more state appropriations.” Professor Alvarado summarizes this sense of cynicism: “Faculty have a right to be cynical about initiatives like this... What are they [administrators] trying to do, who are they trying to please, and what money pot are they after? What political egos are they trying to stroke?” Only one professor voices a less cynical motive where he says the motive might be “a fairly sincere conviction that, at least a certain part of CSU, can in fact assist, help, heal, create, solve on behalf of the people of [the state.]”

Several faculty members in the Disciplinary Program also express doubts about
the support of the president and chief academic officer for the initiative. One faculty member said that he is "... not clear in my own mind as to where [the president] and [the chief academic officer] come down on this. To the best of my knowledge... they have not officially endorsed that report." Another faculty member says that he hears more being said about outreach then he used to hear but he does not know "whether it's rhetoric or not."

Professor Erdmann relates skepticism about the university outreach initiative to other university initiatives as he reflects on previous administrative efforts:

...ideas come and go. [Each new administrator] brings an agenda. And part of those agendas have worked out and been institutionalized and a lot of them haven't. Where outreach fits into that I'm not sure... I think that people are a little skeptical that that's this decade's emphasis and that . . . we'll change gears again and we'll be back to some other push in some other direction from on high...

Faculty members are skeptical of administrator’s motive for initiating this change as well as their support for the change. However, as Professor Erdmann’s comment suggests, this skepticism is tangled with previous change initiatives. That is, faculty members may not be responding only to the university outreach initiative, but to a series of change initiatives led by administrators at CSU.

The information provided by the university, including the Outreach Report, serves the purpose of informing faculty members about the university outreach initiative in a general way. Yet, faculty members are unsure what administrators mean by outreach and they are skeptical of why administrators are asking faculty to implement this initiative. In addition, it seems that faculty members in the Disciplinary Program have not adopted or do not share the definition of outreach found in the Outreach Report. What follows is
an examination of how outreach activities (versus the outreach initiative) fit within the context of faculty lives.

Contextualizing Outreach

Faculty responses to the university outreach initiative extend beyond clarifying the content, purpose, and definition of outreach. Faculty members also respond to outreach activities within the contexts of their professional lives — both within the department and at a more personal level.

The Departmental Context. Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program develop criteria, which the discipline and university also influence, to measure the relative importance of activities when reviewing faculty performance or productivity, or both. Consistent with the observation made in the Outreach Report, faculty members in the Disciplinary Program generally agree that current promotion and tenure criteria downplay the importance of outreach activities. Most faculty members in the Disciplinary Program, however, are not inclined at this time to make any changes in the promotion and tenure guidelines to legitimate outreach. Professor Glass summarizes the sense of these faculty members saying, "outreach may be mentioned at a promotion and tenure meeting but that's about all." Only Professor Casey argues for outreach related changes in promotion and tenure criteria. He says, "[We] have to change the mind-set around here, get people seeing that outreach is legitimate. It has value and should be rewarded."

The Outreach Report stresses that outreach should serve as a way for junior faculty to build a scholarly foundation. This view is not held by faculty members in the Disciplinary Program. The chair of the department says, "It takes a long time to set up a research agenda, to get going on research for a new faculty. So it wouldn't be
a good use of their [junior faculty] talents to ask them to do a lot of outreach.... [In fact] it just might jeopardize their tenure and promotion." Professor Erdmann says that the department is "advising younger faculty not to get involved in particular ways with outreach activities and to develop their careers as, I guess, what one could say is more conventional scholarship and so forth." These views are consistent with faculty comments that although outreach is compatible with the mission of the discipline, it is not, as one professor says, "what the profession or discipline pays off on."

Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program have, as the Outreach Report recommended, discussed the outreach initiative, but these discussions have fallen short of resulting in changes to the reward structure to encourage faculty member, and particularly junior faculty members, engagement in outreach activities.

**Faculty Work Lives.** Most faculty members indicate that outreach, as they define it, is sometimes compatible with their work. Professor Brown says outreach is quite compatible with his work since much of his research has an applied or outreach component to it. Professor Alvarado says outreach is compatible with his work in "some cases." Professor Glass says outreach is compatible with his work depending on how you define outreach. These and other faculty members in the Disciplinary Program also talk about outreach being compatible with their work at different points in their careers. Professor Doty does not find outreach to fit with her current research or teaching, but it has been an important component of her teaching in the past. Professor Casey looks back over his career and says: "I think some of the work that I did could have been targeted to outreach audiences...." And Professor Erdmann says outreach was once very compatible with his work, but now he is more interested in traditional research and teaching. Outreach is not, however, compatible with all faculty members', work -- past, present, or future. Professor Fried says that, as a successful researcher, expecting him to engage in outreach is a "waste of my
time."

Most faculty members identified aspects of their past or current work that are compatible with outreach. It may be that outreach is compatible with faculty activities at different points in a faculty member's career. Or, it may be that outreach is compatible with faculty work but not a central aspect of what faculty members view as their work.

Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program are "trying on" outreach within the context of their work lives. Outreach is not a perfect or, in some cases, even a good fit for most of these faculty members as they see it. Outreach's compatibility with faculty work seems to depend on the types of activities faculty members are engaged in -- and these change over time. Most faculty members say outreach is compatible with their discipline, yet faculty members are reluctant to acknowledge outreach in promotion and tenure decisions. Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program acknowledge that outreach is not an important part (if any part) of the criteria used in making promotion and tenure, and merit decisions. Only one faculty member suggests that it should be part of these decision criteria. Clearly, most faculty members do not see a reason or need to change these criteria and, thus, they appear not to be implementing the recommendation made in the Outreach Report that calls for departments to change their reward structure to better value outreach.

It may be that outreach is compatible with the work lives of faculty members, but not of central interest to them, either personally or relative to their disciplinary community.

Deciding the Role of Outreach

Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program respond as a collective (a departmental decision) and as individuals (a personal decision) to the university outreach initiative.
Departmental Response. What actions, if any, will the department take in response to the outreach initiative? Several professors suggest that the department will be more willing to acknowledge outreach activities in the future. Professor Casey says his "gut feeling is that [outreach] will be accorded more respect in the long run." Professor Erdmann believes "collectively, as a department, we will probably wind up saying that outreach activities are appropriate for individuals and groups of individuals to engage in and that they should be rewarded and encouraged." Earlier comments by faculty members suggest, however, that they have no intentions of changing the formal reward structure.

Several faculty members do not expect any departmental changes in response to the initiative. Professors Alvarado and Brown say that the department is already conducting outreach and what it needs to do is acknowledge these activities, not necessarily engage in more of them. In particular, they suggest that the department only needs to change how it records and advertise existing outreach activities. Professor Fried does not expect any changes in the department, at least not until outreach becomes a mandatory versus voluntary activity.

Faculty members' expectations of how the department will respond to the university outreach initiative vary slightly, but no one seems to expect much change beyond some type of verbal acknowledgement or better record keeping. That is, any changes will be informal and not changes made in formal guidelines or departmental policy. Overall, faculty members suggest that little will change at the department level in response to the university outreach initiative.

Personal Decisions. Faculty members in the Disciplinary Program say they do not intend to change their professional behavior in response to the university outreach initiative. Professor Erdmann does not see himself engaging in outreach because "of the way I want to spend the remainder of my career." Professor Doty views her future work as being an indirect form of outreach such that communities
can use the knowledge and tools she will generate, but she does not anticipate engaging in direct outreach activities.

Professor Glass expects to continue serving on statewide policy committees and national committees, but that is the extent of Professor Glass's planned involvement in outreach activities. Professor Brown does not anticipate changing his behavior because he already engages in outreach: "Personally, if someone came and told me that I was supposed to do outreach, I'd say I already am, and so what else is new?" Professor Alvarado says that if he does "any outreach I'll maybe make a note of it. But as far as I understand it, I was not hired here to do outreach, and I have not heard otherwise, and so I will not do anything different." Professor Fried also does not expect to change his behavior and says he will "try to stay away from this outreach thing."

Professor Casey is active in his pursuit of becoming more personally involved in outreach activities. Professor Casey stresses, however, that his decision was prompted by "changes that are going on have gone on in my own mind" and not changes in the university or department.

In summary, the decision that faculty members -- individually and collectively -- appear to be making in the Disciplinary Program is what researchers (e.g., Rogers, 1995) would call an non-adoption decision. That is, faculty members, perhaps as a result of clarifying the outreach initiative and contextualizing outreach activities, have decided not to change their personal or collective behavior in ways articulated in the Outreach Report. As such, we can conclude that the university outreach initiative is not being implemented in the Disciplinary Program.
The Professional Department

The Professional Department is among the oldest departments of its type in the United States, and one of a small number of such departments at a land-grant institution. The Professional Department consists of one program. Interviews with eight faculty members in the Professional Department are the basis for the discussion and description of this case study; some have been at CSU for only a brief time and others for over 20 years. Again, using descriptors of academic fields developed by Biglan (1973), I describe the Professional Department as (1) having more than one paradigm; that is, not all members of the field subscribe to the same body of theory, (2) concerned with the practical application of knowledge, and (3) concerned with life systems (e.g., plants, people, microorganisms) and not with nonlife systems (e.g., engineering, computers). The Professional Department and Disciplinary Program are alike in characteristics 1 and 3 above but differ on characteristic 2 -- the Professional Department is concerned with practical application of knowledge whereas the Disciplinary Program is concerned with knowledge generation.

This case study differs in a very important and unexpected way from the Disciplinary Program case study. In the Disciplinary Program faculty were responding to the university outreach initiative. In the Professional Department, however, faculty members seem to be responding to a departmental research initiative and not to the university outreach initiative. The departmental research initiative appears to be an effort led by the department chair to emphasize the role of research in the department and to do so possibly by reducing the department’s historic commitment to outreach.

Each Professional Department faculty member that I interviewed said that the department is changing, that the department is focusing on research, publication and grant writing more than it has in the past. Professor Radakovitz describes the
department as "moving in a direction that is probably you can say less applied... that's a new ball game." Professor Tully comments, "We started as just outreach and we've shifted slightly by becoming more balanced in terms of research, outreach, and teaching."

The chair of the department plays an important role in steering the department toward more basic research activities. He took on this administrative position in part because he wanted to see the department more involved in research. Newer faculty members say they were hired to facilitate the new research focus of the department. One new professor says, "That [basic research] was one of the things we [the new faculty] were brought here for. I guess to gear the department more toward research and getting external grants." Another aspect of the focus on basic research and publication is an increased reliance on specialists (non-tenure track administrative specialists) to perform duties, particularly outreach duties, once primarily performed by faculty members.

Thus, faculty members in the Professional Department appear to be responding to outreach but in reaction to a departmental research initiative that may be challenging the department's historic commitment to outreach -- a commitment most faculty member equate as being the department's key strength -- and not in reaction to the university outreach initiative.

Although this case study deals with a different initiative (the department's research initiative), I use the same categories of clarifying, contextualizing, and deciding to organize and describe how faculty members in the Professional Department talk about outreach. As stated earlier, these activities are not necessarily time ordered although I retain this linear order to enhance clarity of presentation.

Clarifying the Outreach Initiative

Faculty members in the Professional Department are not attempting to clarify
the content and purpose of the university outreach initiative -- in fact, most are largely unfamiliar or unaware of the initiative.

**Content.** Several faculty members in the Professional Department have heard of the university outreach initiative although they could provide little or no detail about it. A couple of faculty members have never heard of the outreach initiative. Professor Wu says that he is “not familiar with the particular project. If there's some information on it, I didn’t, I guess I didn’t read it.” And Professor Radakovitz is not aware of an outreach “push” by university administrators and suggests that faculty members may not be getting information about the initiative.

Professor Ohashi was the only faculty member to mention the Outreach Report. Professor Ohashi had just received a copy of the report but did not know who sent it:

> And I got the [outreach] report. I don't know if you were instrumental in having it sent to me⁴, but I got the report for some reason just in the mail one day. I have no idea why. I mean, it wasn't like it was sent to everybody because it had a little post-it note on it saying "thought you might be interested." So I don't have a clue who it came from. That's how I knew about the [chief outreach officer], because I just by some reason got that in the mail. Other than that I just hear words thrown around.

According to faculty members, the outreach initiative has not been a focus of discussion in any subcommittees, department meetings, or retreats in the Professional Department. The lack of information seeking and sharing in the Professional Department about the outreach initiative might reflect a decision by the chair that such discussions are not necessary:

> We toyed with [an outreach committee member] coming to our annual

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⁴ I did not distribute any information regarding the outreach initiative.
retreat or a faculty meeting. But it never really seemed to matter. I guess that I don’t really see a big need to discuss externally what outreach is.

In addition, the chair has not distributed copies of the Outreach Report to faculty members (and faculty did not indicate that they had read a copy of the report which was printed in a faculty and staff newspaper).

Although faculty members are largely unaware of the university outreach initiative, including the Outreach Report, they define outreach in terms similar to those found in the report’s definition. In defining outreach, faculty appear to rely on personal experiences or on the department’s history of conducting outreach. Each faculty member describes outreach as involving the external application of university, department, or faculty knowledge. For example, Professor Wu describes outreach as "the transfer of knowledge from the classroom or academe to the community."

Professors Ohashi, Radakovitz, and Shefner describe outreach as applying knowledge to "real world settings," "the community," and "applied settings," respectively.

Most faculty members in the Professional Department see outreach as attached to other activities and not as a stand-alone activity. This characteristic is similar to the Outreach Report's definition of outreach as cross-cutting, but faculty members do not use this word or label. On professor describes outreach as “synergistic... [Outreach] helps me in my research... helps my writing.... It integrates together.” Another professor says outreach "is my work. You can't really divide it.... For example, our research is in many ways outreach or is relevant to outreach."

Faculty in the Professional Department also define outreach as compatible and even central to the mission of the unit which is consistent with the Outreach Report's definition. Most faculty members voice an opinion in agreement with a comment made by Professor Whalen, “This unit is all about outreach so I think it [outreach] is very consistent with the mission.”
Although the faculty in the Professional Department were not familiar with the definition of outreach found in the Outreach Report, their definitions of outreach closely match key aspects of report’s definition: Outreach is an extension of knowledge, outreach is not a stand-alone activity and is linked to teaching and research, and it is central to the mission of the department. Although faculty members did not use the word “scholarship” when defining outreach, most defined it as part of their work such that outreach is their research and vice versa. From these types of statements, we can infer that outreach is, for most faculty members in the Professional Department, a form of scholarship.

Motive. As part of most interviews, I told faculty members in the Professional Department about the university outreach initiative. Based on this information, and perhaps on other information, several faculty members did identify possible motives for the development of the initiative. Most faculty say that administrators are possibly promoting the university outreach initiative for political reasons: Outreach is a way for the university to garner more resources from the state legislature. For example, Professor Tully believes university administrators are supporting the outreach initiative "because politically they think that's what they've got to do to define the university in a positive light to get money from the legislature and to get state support."

A couple of faculty members see the outreach initiative as a way for the university to express the land-grant mission. Professor Ohashi says the outreach

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5 I read to each faculty member: One of the things going on here at CSU is an administratively led effort to strengthen university outreach. This effort includes the creation of the office of the Chief Outreach Officer and a report from the Chief Academic Officer's Outreach Committee. This effort was encouraged in part by a grant from [a large, national foundation]. At times, faculty in the Professional Department would ask questions about the outreach initiative and I would try to answer them.
initiative helps the university define a "niche from the perspective of translating knowledge as a responsibility, I'd look at that as the responsibility from the land-grant [side of the university]." Professor Whalen thinks university administrators have initiated the outreach policy "because [the university] is the only institution in America that takes the land-grant tradition seriously."

Even with little knowledge of the university outreach initiative, or with knowledge just acquired through the interview process, most faculty members in the Professional Department say administrators are promoting the initiative for political reasons. However, two faculty members suggest that the motive for sponsoring the outreach initiative may be a desire by administrators to extend the CSU's land-grant mission.

In summary, efforts by central university administrators to communicate with faculty members about the outreach initiative appear to have failed in the Professional Department. Yet, faculty members in the department define outreach in terms quite similar to that found in the Outreach Report. Perhaps the Outreach Committee defined outreach close to how a group of faculty, most of whom have a history of engaging in outreach activities, have long defined outreach. Further, even those faculty familiar and supportive of outreach activities, as are most faculty in the Professional Department, are skeptical of administrators reasons for supporting an all university outreach initiative. Perhaps like the faculty in the Disciplinary Program, faculty in the Professional Department base their impressions of the purpose for the university outreach initiative on previous experiences with university initiatives

Contextualizing Outreach

The Professional Department, as described by eight of its members, appears to be at a crossroads where the future seems to look different from the past. The changes related to the department's research initiative, as described earlier, may be altering
the context in which faculty members consider how compatible outreach is with their department and their own work.

The Departmental Context. Outreach is, or has historically been, central to the mission of the Professional Department. It is also, according to most faculty members, central to the discipline’s mission. However, according to most faculty members in the Professional Department, outreach is not what assistant professors need to emphasize in order to be promoted and receive tenure. Faculty members say that the Professional Department emphasizes research and publication when assistant professors apply for tenure and promotion to associate professor. Several professors suggest that the department, by way of written documents such as promotion guidelines, purports to value outreach activities when making tenure and promotion decisions, but in practice these decisions are based on research, publications, and, to a lesser extent, teaching. Professor Ohashi comments:

Assistant professors should have some effort toward outreach, but we don’t expect too much. For promotion, they better have their publications down. Better show up for classes…. The reality is, to promote [e.g., tenure] you better darn well have some publications and research.

One assistant professor, concurs with the above comments. He says that he needs to focus on research now, and, perhaps in a few years, he will concentrate on outreach. The chair of the Professional Department also indicates that it is research, publication and teaching, and not outreach, that faculty members need to concentrate on as they work towards tenure and promotion. However, the chair notes that outreach becomes progressively more important as faculty members seek promotion from associate to full professor and that he would be alarmed if a tenured faculty member did not engage in outreach or “relate to the practitioner.”

Like the reward system in the Disciplinary Program, the reward system in the
Professional Department does not reflect the view expressed in the Outreach Report that departments should encourage junior faculty to use outreach as one way to build a scholarly foundation. However, this may not have always been the case. Professor Preston suggests that outreach may have been accorded more importance in tenure and promotion decisions in the past. He says: “Fifteen years ago I think outreach received a lot more reward, a lot more recognition.”

Faculty Work Lives. All but one faculty member in the Professional Department consider outreach compatible with their work. Professor Shefner says outreach is "part and parcel of my work and my research too." Professor Tully makes a similar point: "It [outreach] is my work." Professor Wu says outreach is "highly compatible with what I do." Likewise, Professor Vigmostad says outreach is "very compatible" with her work. Professor Ohashi laughs when he says outreach is "probably compatible" with his work since most of his time is spent on outreach activities. Only one faculty member suggested that outreach might not be compatible with his work, he says “This is an extra burden of what you have to do.” Outreach, then, is compatible with the work of most, and particularly senior, faculty members in the Professional Department, and several say that outreach is their work.

Faculty members in the Professional Department appear to see things differently from their colleagues in the Disciplinary Program. Outreach appears central to the work of many of the faculty members in the Professional Department. Indeed, outreach is integral to some professors, work -- intertwined with their research and teaching. Outreach also appears to be integral to the discipline which seems attuned to working with people and organizations external to the university. However, the reward system in the department does not seem to value outreach activities, especially for junior faculty members. In this respect, the Professional Department is not adopting the recommendation made in the Outreach Report that calls for the valuing and rewarding of outreach activities. In fact, the Professional
Department may be moving away from a reward system that more fully valued outreach in the past.

Deciding the Role of Outreach

Although faculty members in the Professional Department are not engaged in decision making about the outreach initiative as defined and described by university administrators and the Outreach Report, they do seem to be engaged in decision making about the future role of outreach within their department and their own professional lives.

*Departmental Decision.* Although most faculty members in the Professional Department are currently active in outreach, several faculty members say that the department's historic commitment to outreach as central to the department could change in the future. All but one of the several tenured faculty members I interviewed in this department expressed doubt about the future commitment of the department to the traditional outreach orientation. These faculty suggest that the future of outreach in the department depends upon new faculty members. One professor's comment is reflective of comments made by other senior faculty members:

I think we'll continue it [outreach]. I mean continue with the same interest. Depends on how the character of our department changes in terms of new faculty and how they're socialized. Some of the schools... our newest faculty members came from... emphasize the theoretical side... much more than the outreach side. And unless they're socialized into the outreach mode here, then it might wither some.

The tentative voice used by the senior faculty members is not present in the department chair's voice. He is optimistic about the future of outreach. The future for outreach he says is, "Great! I think everyone here values it."

Senior faculty members' uncertainties about the future importance of outreach
in the department may be supported by the views of several junior (i.e., not tenured) faculty I interviewed. The consensus among these junior faculty is that outreach does not have to be a part of every faculty member's work. As one junior faculty member says:

I don't think that each individual faculty should be responsible for it [outreach]. I think there are some people that really don't want to get involved with the community very much.... So, I really don't think that every faculty member has to be responsible for a certain amount.

The department's research initiative, led primarily by the department chair and enacted, in part, by hiring outreach specialists, may be changing the role that outreach has historically played in the Professional Department. The department is bifurcated with respect to outreach. Many of the senior faculty members built their careers on outreach. Newer faculty members, however, are building their early careers on research and publications -- the activities that are necessary for achieving tenure and promotion to associate professor. At the department level, it appears that the responsibility for outreach may also be shifting as outreach specialists conduct outreach activities once performed by faculty members.

**Personal Decisions.** The tenured faculty members I interviewed say they plan to continue conducting outreach activities in the future. One tenured professor says he plans to continue to engage in outreach, but may slow the pace. Another tenured professor says he will continue to conduct outreach "as long as I'm able to do that." The remaining tenured professors plan to continue to engage in outreach activities, saying outreach is integral to their work.

Newer faculty members are not of one opinion about their future plans regarding outreach. One new professor sounds certain about engaging in outreach in the future and says that she will be involved in more protects involved in community setting in the next few years. Another new professor is less clear about the role of
outreach in his future work and says he is not thinking about outreach right now or how it might fit into his future work. A third new faculty member implies outreach will probably play little role in his life "unless I have something that really strikes my fancy in the outreach sense, I'm going to write. Cause that's what I like to do."

What is the future role of outreach in the Professional Department? And within faculty member's lives? Most faculty members, and especially the senior faculty members, say that unless new faculty members are socialized into outreach, the department may lose its strength in this area. This idea may be borne out by decisions at the personal level. Faculty members who have traditionally been committed to outreach plan to continue to conduct outreach, but junior faculty members, who are without outreach experiences, and who themselves say they were hired for their research skills, express less certainty about the role that outreach will play in their work.

In summary, the faculty members in the Professional Department are not making-sense of the university outreach initiative -- an effort they are largely unaware or unfamiliar with. However, these faculty members are trying to make sense of what role outreach will play in the department's future as they respond to a departmental initiative aimed at encouraging faculty members to increase or emphasize research and publication efforts perhaps at the cost of engaging in outreach efforts. In some respects, it appears that several years ago the Professional Department might have closely fit the model of outreach described in the Outreach Report. Now, however, they are moving toward an academic model that looks more like what we find in the Disciplinary Program -- a model that values research, and to a somewhat lesser extent, teaching, but that does not emphasize outreach, especially for junior faculty members. The model that the Outreach Report is proposing, may be very close to the model the Professional Department is moving away from.
Conclusion and Implications

What does this study -- a study of change from the “inside” -- contribute to our understanding of how universities change? The patterns I just described -- of how faculty members in two departments responded to the university outreach initiative -- lead me to extend the views of higher education organization and innovation that prevail in much of the literature of higher education and that initially framed this study. I state these extensions below as propositions aimed at improving our existing knowledge of higher education organizations and how researchers might study them, particularly with regard to issues of change:

Proposition One: The view from the inside allows for observations that cannot be made from the outside.

This study provides a small (but, I believe, meaningful) amount of empirical evidence in support of the assertion that to understand change, we need to go inside the change to learn how the people experiencing the change respond to it. Had I not gone inside, I would not have uncovered that faculty members in the Professional Department were responding to outreach as an important topic in their lives, but not to the university outreach initiative. I may have also interpreted Professor Casey's new-found commitment to outreach as a response to the university outreach initiative when, by his own admission, this new commitment is due to change in his own thinking and not to the university outreach initiative. Finally, and perhaps most important, the faculty members' interpretations of their respective initiatives did vary by faculty member, although common themes did emerge. The inside view illustrates that, as Van de Ven and Rogers (1988) remarked, the social construction of change is a highly uncertain and complex behavior. To this I would add that it is also a highly personal process.
Proposition Two: We may think of faculty members as constructing their responses to an innovation, in this case outreach, through an iterative process of clarifying, contextualizing, and deciding.

Initially, I tried to fit my data with the established model of organizational change that defines implementation as composed of three stages: redefining/restructuring, clarifying, and routinizing (Rogers, 1995). But this literature-based framework forces an analyst to look at the organization from the outside rather than at how people in the organization experience change which is what I wanted to do. When the focus is on those who experience the change, a better framework to describe the change process may be: clarifying, contextualizing, and deciding. This framework, emerging from this study, suggests that faculty members are "trying-on" an innovation and that they are "trying-on" the initiative as well. That is, faculty members base their responses to outreach (the innovation), in part, on their perceptions of the initiative (the university outreach initiative). In particular, faculty members frame their response to outreach based on their perceptions of why the initiator is promoting the initiative at this time, including the credibility and believability of that initiator. This framework also suggests that faculty members are trying-on outreach atop a full wardrobe that includes the history of previous university initiatives, the department and the discipline's interests and, not least, their personal and professional interests and goals.

Proposition Three: University administrators may have little control over the dissemination of information to faculty members about a change effort.

University administrators may also have little control over how faculty interpret this information.

The failed implementation of the university outreach initiative may be viewed, in part, as due to poor communications. Each department chair received a copy of the
Outreach Report, a copy of the report was also printed as an insert in a faculty newspaper, and the Outreach Committee held numerous informational meetings about the outreach initiative across the CSU campus. Still, in the Professional Department most faculty members had never heard of the Outreach Report and most knew little, if anything, about the university initiative. Perhaps these faculty members choose not to stay abreast of university initiatives. But it also possible that people who control the flow of information, such as department chairs, may choose not to share university information with faculty members. Thus, efforts by committees or university administrators to disseminate information may be disrupted at departmental or other levels within the university.

It is also possible that a faculty who receives and discuss information about a university change initiative, as did the faculty in the Disciplinary Program with regard to the university outreach initiative, may require yet more information to reduce the ambiguity they associate with such an initiative. In particular, they may need information about the administrative context surrounding the initiative -- such as why it is being initiated and who supports it and to what extent. In lieu of, or even in addition to, this information, faculty members may rely on their own individual and collective experiences to make sense of a change effort. Thus, university administrators may have little control over how faculty members interpret a change initiative.

Proposition Four: The adoption and/or implementation of an innovation (outreach) seems to require that the innovation be meaningful to, and not just compatible with, the core activities (even the values) of the intended implementer (faculty members).

The Outreach Committee crafted a definition of outreach that would hopefully help faculty interpret outreach as compatible with their work lives. In this way,
presumably, faculty members would be more likely to adopt and implement the outreach initiative. Most faculty members in the Disciplinary Program said that outreach was or had been compatible with their work, and each faculty member offered examples of outreach they were or had conducted. Yet, outreach is not central to the work of most of these faculty members. Outreach is not, to paraphrase Professor Erdmann, the way most faculty members want to spend their time. Or to paraphrase Professor Alvarado, outreach is not what faculty members were hired to do. The responses from faculty members in the Disciplinary Program suggest that teaching and research are central to their work and that outreach is somewhat peripheral (though compatible) to their work. It seems, then, that outreach is not as personally meaningful to faculty members’ work lives as is teaching and research. Perhaps, then, we can conclude that the adoption and/or implementation of an innovation (outreach) requires the innovation to be meaningful or central to, and not just compatible with, the core activities (even the values) of the intended implementer (faculty members).

Proposition Five: Inaction can represent decision.

The innovation literature says that organizational members may adapt, redefine, restructure, ignore, or resist an innovation. I would add to this list that organizational members may choose not to act, which is what faculty members in the Disciplinary Program appear to have chosen. These faculty members did not ignore the outreach initiative -- in fact, they held several discussions about it. They also were not resisting the initiative; no one was speaking-out or acting-out against the initiative. Rather, individual faculty members, and the department as a whole, appear to have decided to just not to respond to the initiative. Their inaction represents a purposive decision.
This study proposes that researchers who study organizational change within higher education institutions and administrators who lead such institutions need to move (conceptually) more deeply “inside” to understand how change does and does not occur -- in universities, in departments, and importantly, in people. The study concludes that moving “inside” in this way is likely to illuminate what, substantively, faculty members are responding to, as well as why. Moving “inside” may also help us see that some university change initiatives may have but little bearing on what faculty consider to be of value, while other changes may have more meaning for them. Finally, moving “inside” may help us to understand what happens when change, devised on the outside (even studied from the outside), meets the scholarly values and commitments of a faculty life lived on the “inside.”
References


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