BUILDING A MENTAL CONCEPT ABOUT COLLABORATION WITH FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS BEFORE PROPOSING BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE SPACE

spaces that work

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"Toto, I have a Feeling We're not in Kansas Anymore."

1. The idea of individual creativity became the widely accepted model for the modern creative process around the mid 20th century.

Now, after almost 70 years since it was introduced, there is a growing concern that the modern model of individual creative process and the mythology surrounding it are fraying around the edges.

We live in a world of changes. Today the landscape is marked by complex, continuous changes. Advances in technological disruption, globalization, artificial intelligence, automation and a climate of uncertainty—in addition to other changes we cannot predict—challenge us with problems that are more complex every day.

Given these dynamically complex circumstances, Davidson found that expertise in a single discipline is becoming less important than adaptability and collaboration (2017).

Yet Henry Ford's assembly line model of management still prevails.

The curricular structures of academic production lines in higher education bear a striking resemblance.

Faculty reward systems, publishing protocols, grading structures, course rotation plans, etc. do as well.

None of these encourage shared creation.

No wonder so many faculty and administrators in the academy don't think too much about **collaboration** though we all champion **communication**.

The professional structures and curricula that we have constructed to institutionalize and celebrate the power of the individual creator have been enormously successful.

2. Preparing faculty to model for students how they may also make meaningful contributions in creative collaboration is much more complex.

Since we tend to cling to past practices associated with the idealism of the individual as entrepreneur and creator in the workplace, we are much more comfortable with leader-follower management and self-managing teams than with group creativity.

Group creativity can be defined as the creation of shared meaning in a group.

In a 1987 Harvard Business Review article, Robert Reich argued for "a new mythology, a new set of stories, for the workplace" (as cited in Schrage, 1990, p.58).

The need for a paradigm shift that celebrates groups of people in the workplace, not only lone individuals could equally apply to higher education today.

It's Not Just What You Know

3. The need to rethink creativity as a collective form would entail the idea that creativity is not just to be found *within* ourselves but also *out there*, not just as an individual enterprise but one that is also collective (Fullan, 1993).

But changing attitudes about creativity and swapping one set of stories for another is not enough.

So much about being creative and innovative in the 21st century is pressing us to go out there beyond our comfort zones.

If the future of work is creative collaboration, do we really have a choice?

Maybe the best thing we can do is to become creativity's transformative change leaders by finding tools we can use to make the journey.

There Goes the Neighborhood!

4. I created a working group of faculty who wanted to volunteer to explore collaborative learning spaces.

They visited other facilities in the country for 6 months.

Monthly, they reported to the general faculty with slide presentations and notes about what the users in each location liked and disliked.

After the field research process, they proposed a collaborative learning and performance neighborhood of buildings that would bring all the arts departments together for collaborative projects, presentations and productions.

We decided against the neighborhood concept, which was not as active as a collaboratory as we needed.

If You're not at the Table, You're on the Menu

5. The programming phase began with a one-day retreat to establish a mission for the new facility.

All faculty and administrators were invited to offer input based on critical needs that we might consider.

Whole group and department meetings met with an architect consultant.

Mission that emerged: A facility that would inspire wonder.

We wanted a building that would play with faculty and students over the next 35-50 years, as different projects would be focused on changing purposes, mediums, disciplinary intersections and technologies that haven't even been invented yet.

We wanted spaces that would take students on wonderful and inspiring adventures like Disney rides.

The retreat gave everyone an opportunity to give input on the programming of else their ideas would not be prioritized.

Final decision was to integrate all the separate structures into a single complex under one roof with multiple collaboratory portals and connector spaces.

Multiple social spaces for informal gatherings, flexible furniture, café, and labs emerged from that decision.

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